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# Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Commitment Among Private Club Board and Committee Volunteer Leaders: A Pilot Study

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# Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Commitment Among Private Club Board and Committee Volunteer Leaders: A Pilot Study

## **Abstract**

This pilot study explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment among private club board and committee volunteer members. The top three items, ranked by mean scores, of each of three EI dimensions -- IN, OUT, and RELATIONSHIPS were discussed. A sample of 57 volunteer leaders further was split into high EI and low EI groups based on respondents' overall EI median score. Statistical differences between high and low EI groups in three aspects of organizational commitment - affective, continuance, and normative commitment - were present. 4 t-test results showed that the difference between high and low EI groups in affective commitment among private club volunteer leaders was statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

## **Keywords**

Operations, Private Club, Volunteering, Emotional Intelligence

# Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Commitment Among Private Club Board and Committee Volunteer Leaders: A Pilot Study\*

By Ronald F. Cichy, Jaemin Cha, Seung Hyun Kim and James B. Singerling

*This pilot study explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment among private club board and committee volunteer members. The top three items, ranked by mean scores, of each of three EI dimensions – IN, OUT, and RELATIONSHIPS were discussed. A sample of 57 volunteer leaders further was split into high EI and low EI groups, based on respondents' overall EI median score. Statistical differences between high and low EI groups in three aspects of organizational commitment – affective, continuance, and normative commitment- were presented. A t-test result showed that the difference between high and low EI groups in affective commitment among private club volunteer leaders was statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .*

## Introduction

Until the late 1980s, the major focus of researchers was on cognitive intelligence, when they examined human intelligence. Researchers generally have found that this traditional measure of intelligence (IQ) only accounts for a small proportion of variance in outcome variables (Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Sternberg, 1997). Since the early 1990s, intelligence, however, has been expanded to incorporate experiences and expressions of emotions and feelings – known as emotional intelligence (EI). EI is generally defined as a set of abilities or capabilities whereby an individual understands, regulates, uses, and manages his or her emotions (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004). EI first surfaced in 1920 as social intelligence, defined as an individual's ability to act wisely in human relations (Thorndike, 1920). Salovey and Mayer (1990) used the term of EI initially, and defined it as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions” (p. 189). Goleman (1995) popularized the concept of EI via the book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. He claimed that EI is expected to contribute to effective performance at work as well as to success in personal life (1995; 1998).

Cichy, Cha, and Kim (2007) recently developed a new EI model, consisting of IN, OUT, and RELATIONSHIPS. They tested this EI model using various samples including leaders from the private club industry, and vending and coffee services industries (Cichy, Geerdes, & Cha, 2006; Cichy et al., 2007; Cha, Cichy, & Kim, 2007; Cichy, Kim, & Cha, 2007; Cichy, Kim, & Longstreth, 2006a; Cichy, Kim, & Longstreth, 2006b). The revised three-factor structure of their EI model showed evidence of convergent and discriminate validity. Cichy et al. (2007) suggested that the newly developed EI model can be a useful tool for application in real organizational settings.

Researchers tend to hold the view that EI can be a contributing factor to influencing positive attitudes, behaviors and outcomes in workplace settings. Researchers acknowledge the need to further test empirically the effect of EI on desired outcome variables. For one of these desired outcome variables, this present study explored the role of EI in organizational commitment among volunteer leaders, such as committee and board members in private clubs.

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Although a significant amount of research has focused on understanding antecedents of organizational commitment in business organizations, relatively little research addressed seeking antecedents relating to the organizational commitment among volunteer leaders. Currently, few researchers have discussed organizational commitment among volunteer board members (Preston & Brown, 2004; Stephens, Dawley, & Stephens, 2004).

Volunteer leaders, such as committee and board members, in private clubs are committed so deeply to their club that they volunteer numerous hours each year without remuneration to ensure that their club remains true to its mission (Cichy et al., 2006). Some private club volunteer leaders may serve as board and/or committee members, because they are attached to the club emotionally and feel loyalty to their club (known as “affective commitment”). Some private club board and committee members, on the other hand, may feel obligated to serve in their volunteer roles (known as “normative commitment”), while others may be committed to their club as volunteer leaders simply because they believe it is necessary to make important social contacts (known as “continuance commitment”) (Meyer & Allen, 1991). These are all possible explanations for private club volunteer leaders’ psychological relationships with their clubs. Understanding the person’s organizational commitment has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization (e.g., volunteer positions in the private club), according to the organizational commitment theory (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993).

### **Study objectives identified**

Previous studies have shown that personal characteristics are related to a person’s organizational commitment. This pilot study explored how EI is related to three components of organizational commitment – affective, continuance, and normative commitment – among private club volunteer leaders such as board and committee members. Due to the relatively small sample size, this study did not attempt to validate three dimensions of EI and organizational commitment using private club volunteer leaders. Rather, this pilot study examined differences between high EI and low EI groups, divided based on the respondents’ median score, in the three components of organizational commitment. It was necessary to examine the effect of EI on each of three organizational commitment components separately, rather than summing the overall organizational commitment score, because researchers have been defining each commitment in different ways.

### **Three dimensions of the EI model used in this study**

With the increased interests in the field of emotional intelligence (EI) and different EI frameworks, various researchers have developed their own EI models. EI frameworks developed by Goleman (1995; 1998; 2000), Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Mayer and Salovey (1997), and Bar-On (1997; 2000) have contributed to the field of organizational behavior in understanding different dimensions of individual EI abilities. Mayer and Salovey (1997) classified the emotionally intelligent person’s skills in four areas: identifying emotions, using emotions, understanding emotions, and regulating emotions. Goleman’s EI model consists of four general abilities: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman, 1995; 1998). Bar-On (1997; 2000) later developed EQ-i consisting of 15 competencies in total, in five composite scales including intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management, and general mood. Bar-On’s EI model is broader in scope than are the other models of EI developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Goleman (1995). Bar-On (2000) claimed that his model is applicable to a wider range of settings such as clinical assessment and education settings, in addition to the workplace setting. Bar-On sought to develop a general measure of social and emotional intelligence predictive of emotional well-being and adaptation. Bar-On (2000, 2006) referred to his framework as “emotional social intelligence (ESI),” rather than referring to his framework as either EI or social intelligence.

Cichy et al. (2007) observed that there are several constructs from these existing and popular EI frameworks that overlap conceptually. Another critical issue, explained by Law et al. (2004) and Schutte et al. (1998), is that some popular measures using existing EI scales are too extensive to administer in real organizational settings. For example, the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003), or MSCEIT, includes 141 items; while the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (Bar-On, 2000), or EQ-i, has 133 items. The new model of EI developed by Cichy et al. (2007) was designed to identify a practical EI assessment for real organizational settings. Their EI model consists of three dimensions: IN, OUT, and RELATIONSHIPS. This three-factor model has proven to be reliable and valid. Their definitions are as follows:

- IN is the ability to sense, lead, and utilize one's own emotions. In short, IN is a combination of self-awareness and self-leadership.
- OUT is the ability to be aware of, relate to, and understand others' emotions. OUT is a combination of an awareness of others and empathy.
- RELATIONSHIPS is the ability to integrate one's emotional experiences with his or her own thoughts and actions, while interacting with others.

### **Three components of organizational commitment explored**

In the early years, organizational commitment research emerged in the literature to attempt to understand and explain people's work-related attitudes (Buchanan, 1974; Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Porter, Steers, & Mowday, & Boulian, 1974; Wiener & Gechman, 1977). Organizational commitment has continued to be a major focus of research in organizational behaviors in recent years. It is well documented that organizational commitment is a multidimensional construct and that antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment vary across dimensions (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). What are identified dimensions for organizational commitment? Initially, Meyer and Allen (1984) argued that a distinction be made between affective and continuance commitment. They defined affective commitment as an emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization, while continuance commitment represents perceived costs associated with leaving the organization. Allen and Meyer (1990) later added another dimension – normative commitment – to their model of organizational commitment. Normative commitment was defined as a perceived obligation to remain in the organization due to the work culture and social-related issues. Meyer and Allen (1991; 1997) later presented a three-component model of organizational commitment and tested its factor structure by differentiating organizational commitment into three components: affective commitment (AC), continuance commitment (CC), and normative commitment (NC).

Meyer et al. (1993) explained that “people with a strong affective commitment remain with the organization because they want to; those with a strong continuance commitment remain because they need to; and those with a strong normative commitment remain because they feel they ought to do so.” Private club board and committee members' volunteer leadership commitments to their clubs are likely to be different depending on the nature of their psychological state.

### **Private club board and committee volunteer leaders surveyed**

The Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) volunteer leaders such as board and committee members were surveyed in 2006 in a pilot study, and 57 private club board and committee volunteer leaders responded and completed the survey. Table 1 presents the sample profile. The majority of respondents (84.2%) were male and half of the respondents' ages ranged between 46 and 55. The largest percentage (44.7%) had completed some post graduate work. Most of the clubs represented were member owned (80.4%) and golf/country clubs (86.1%).

On average, the volunteer leaders had been a club member for 15.9 years and a volunteer for 8.3 years.

**Table 1: Profile of Respondents (n =57)**

| Variables                             | Descriptions                                | Respondents   |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Gender                                | Male                                        | 84.2 %        |
|                                       | Female                                      | 15.8 %        |
| Education                             | High school or less                         | 5.3%          |
|                                       | Some college or associate (two-year) degree | 7.9%          |
|                                       | Baccalaureate (four-year) degree            | 42.1%         |
|                                       | Post graduate work                          | 44.7%         |
| Age                                   | 35 years or younger                         | 2.8%          |
|                                       | 36 – 45 years                               | 25.0%         |
|                                       | 46 – 55 years                               | 50.0%         |
|                                       | 56 years or older                           | 22.2%         |
| Number of years as a club member      | 4 years or less                             | 11.4%         |
|                                       | 5 – 9 years                                 | 14.5%         |
|                                       | 10 – 19 years                               | 39.7%         |
|                                       | 20 – 29 years                               | 22.9%         |
|                                       | 30 years or more                            | 11.5%         |
|                                       | <b>Average</b>                              | 15.9 (2.5 SD) |
| Number of years as a volunteer member | 4 years or less                             | 34.3%         |
|                                       | 5 – 9 years                                 | 22.7%         |
|                                       | 10 – 19 years                               | 28.5%         |
|                                       | 20 – 29 years                               | 5.8%          |
|                                       | 30 – 39 years or more                       | 8.7%          |
|                                       | <b>Average</b>                              | 8.3 (1.7 SD)  |
| Club ownership type                   | Member owned                                | 80.4%         |
|                                       | Corporate owned                             | 15.3%         |
|                                       | Private owned                               | 2.3%          |
|                                       | Others                                      | 2.0%          |
| Club type b                           | City / Athletic Club                        | 9.6%          |
|                                       | Golf / Country Club                         | 86.1%         |
|                                       | Yacht Club                                  | 4.4%          |
|                                       | Others                                      | 7.9%          |

*Note:* <sup>a</sup> SD in parentheses indicates standard deviation, <sup>b</sup> Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

### Measurement scales used in this study

The EI scale was adopted from a previous empirical study conducted by Cichy et al. (2007). The initial EI scale consisted of 37 items in total: IN (20 items), OUT (9 items), and RELATIONSHIPS (8 items). Since the Cichy et al. (2007) study validated three dimensions of the EI scale previously, the revised scale with 20 items was used when summing the overall EI

score to divide respondents into high and low EI groups. All items for the three dimensions of EI were measured via a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (very seldom or not true of me) to 5 (very often or true of me). Higher scores reflect higher levels of EI.

Three components of organizational commitment – affective commitment scale (8 items), continuance commitment scale (8 items), and normative commitment scale (8 items) – were assessed by utilizing the Allen and Meyer (1990) organizational commitment scale. All measures were assessed on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Again, higher scores reflect higher levels of organizational commitment.

### Three elements of EI ranked

The top three IN, OUT, and RELATIONSHIPS results are presented in Table 2. They are ranked by averages (mean scores). The top-ranked IN ability for volunteer leaders is “I am able to sense my own feelings.” Knowing oneself and having the ability to sense his or her own emotions relates to earlier research that pointed out that leadership is first, foremost, and always an inner quest (Cichy, Cha, & Knutson, 2004). Two OUT capabilities are tied for top rank: “I understand and appreciate emotions of others.” and “I am sensitive to other people’s emotions.” As a volunteer leader, it is essential that he or she understand and appreciate how he or she influences others’ emotions. At the same time, being sensitive to others’ emotions is essential for effective leaders. The top ranked RELATIONSHIPS capability is “People would say I am a co-operative, contributing, and a positive team member.” Effective volunteer leaders are cooperative and usually are optimistic. It is through these actions that they contribute to the development of others and to moving the club forward.

**Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of Top Three Ranked EI Items based on Means**

| Top Three Ranked Items                                                                                           | Mean | <i>s. d.</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|
| <b>IN</b>                                                                                                        |      |              |
| I am able to sense my own feelings.                                                                              | 4.09 | 0.61         |
| I am able to keep in touch with my own feelings as they take place.                                              | 4.06 | 0.54         |
| I am open to my feelings and am able to adjust them in myself to promote personal understanding and development. | 4.00 | 0.59         |
| <b>OUT</b>                                                                                                       |      |              |
| I understand and appreciate emotions of others.                                                                  | 4.03 | 0.66         |
| I am sensitive to other people’s emotions.                                                                       | 4.03 | 0.70         |
| I am able to be open to emotions in others to promote understanding and development.                             | 3.97 | 0.70         |
| <b>RELATIONSHIPS</b>                                                                                             |      |              |
| People would say I am a co-operative, contributing, and a positive team member.                                  | 4.31 | 0.56         |
| I can easily build and participate in mutually satisfying relationships characterized by openness and affection. | 4.03 | 0.66         |
| I am able to clearly communicate in relationships with others.                                                   | 3.97 | 0.74         |

Note: Numbers in mean column indicate means based on the scale from 1 = very seldom or not true of me; 5 = very often or true of me

### High and low EI groups and organizational commitment examined

The criterion used to divide the total sample into two groups – high and low EI groups was based on the median of total EI scores. That is, the total EI score is 100 points (5 points multiplied by 20 questions), consisting of IN (40 points = 8 items x 5), OUT (35 points = 7 items x 5), and RELATIONSHIPS (25 points = 5 items x 5). To compare group differences between overall high and low EI groups, the median score of 80 was used to divide the total sample into two groups: high and low EI.

To examine whether the differences in affective, continuance, and normative commitment were statistically significant between high and low EI groups, a t-test was performed. Table 3 shows mean differences in affective commitment between high and low EI

groups. Overall, those in the high EI group had higher scores in the composite (overall) scale of affective commitment, than had those in the low EI group. These differences were statistically significant at  $p < .05$ . This implies that volunteer leaders' EI positively influences their affective commitment.

**Table 3. Mean Differences in Affective Commitment between High and Low Emotional Intelligence Groups: t-test (one-tailed)**

| Affective Commitment                                                                     | Mean        |             | t-value       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
|                                                                                          | Low EI      | High EI     |               |
| I would be very happy to spend the rest of my time with this club as a volunteer leader. | 3.70        | 3.65        | 0.30          |
| I enjoy discussing my club with people outside it.                                       | 4.01        | 4.47        | -2.48*        |
| I really feel as if this club's problems are my own.                                     | 3.36        | 3.65        | -1.08         |
| I think that I could easily become as attached to another club as I am to this one.      | 2.82        | 2.82        | 0.00          |
| I do not feel like "part of the family" at my club. (R)                                  | 4.07        | 4.47        | -2.12*        |
| I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this club. (R)                                   | 3.89        | 4.24        | -1.43*        |
| This club has a great deal of personal meaning for me.                                   | 4.06        | 4.12        | -0.26         |
| I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my club. (R)                                | 3.90        | 4.35        | -1.65*        |
| <b>Total Mean</b>                                                                        | <b>3.73</b> | <b>3.97</b> | <b>-1.96*</b> |

Note: Numbers in mean column indicate means based on the scale from 1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree, R represents reversed coded items, \* Mean differences were all significant at  $p < .05$ .

As Table 4 shows, statistically significant differences between two EI groups in the continuance commitment were found for the following two items: "I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my volunteer leadership position without having another one lined up." and "It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave my club now." Overall, there was no significant difference between high and low EI groups in the composite scale of continuance commitment at  $p < .05$ .

**Table 4: Mean Differences in Continuance Commitment between High and Low Emotional Intelligence Groups: t-test (one-tailed)**

| Continuance Commitment                                                                                                                                                                              | Mean        |             | t-value     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Low EI      | High EI     |             |
| I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my volunteer leadership position without having another one lined up. (R)                                                                            | 2.29        | 2.94        | -2.16*      |
| It would be very hard for me to leave my club right now, even if I wanted to.                                                                                                                       | 3.46        | 3.35        | 0.37        |
| Too much in life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my club now.                                                                                                                     | 2.69        | 2.76        | -0.26       |
| It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave my club now. (R)                                                                                                                                          | 3.45        | 2.65        | 2.82*       |
| Right now, staying with my club is a matter of necessity as much as desire.                                                                                                                         | 2.12        | 2.12        | 0.03        |
| I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this club.                                                                                                                                   | 2.37        | 2.06        | 1.29        |
| One of the few serious consequences of leaving this club would be the scarcity of available alternatives.                                                                                           | 2.87        | 2.47        | 1.32        |
| One of the major reasons I continue to do volunteer work for this club is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice – another club may not match the overall benefits I have here. | 2.68        | 2.59        | 0.32        |
| <b>Total Mean</b>                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>2.74</b> | <b>2.62</b> | <b>0.76</b> |

Note: Numbers in mean column indicate means based on the scale from 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree, R represents reversed coded items, \* Mean differences were all significant at  $p < .05$ .



Table 5 presents mean differences in normative commitment between high and low EI groups. Those in the high EI group had higher scores than had those in the low EI group in the following two items – “If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my club.” and “Things were better in the days when people stayed with one club for most of their lives.” There was, however, no significant difference between high and low EI groups in the composite scale of normative commitment at  $p < .05$ .

**Table 5: Effects Mean Differences in Normative Commitment between High and Low Emotional Intelligence Groups: t-test (one-tailed)**

| Normative Commitment                                                                                                                                                         | Mean        |             | t-value     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                              | Low EI      | High EI     |             |
| I think that people these days move from club to club too often.                                                                                                             | 2.54        | 2.24        | 1.40        |
| I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her club. (R)                                                                                                  | 3.01        | 3.18        | -0.56       |
| Jumping from club to club does not seem at all unethical to me. (R)                                                                                                          | 2.94        | 2.94        | -0.01       |
| One of the major reasons I continue to do volunteer work for this club is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain. | 3.54        | 3.59        | -0.19       |
| If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my club.                                                                            | 3.77        | 3.18        | 2.63*       |
| I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one club.                                                                                                         | 3.02        | 3.18        | -0.69       |
| Things were better in the days when people stayed with one club for most of their lives.                                                                                     | 3.03        | 2.53        | 2.24*       |
| I do not think that wanting to be a “company man” or “company woman” is sensible anymore. (R)                                                                                | 3.26        | 3.41        | -0.61       |
| <b>Total Mean</b>                                                                                                                                                            | <b>3.14</b> | <b>3.03</b> | <b>0.81</b> |

Note: Numbers in mean column indicate means based on the scale from 1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree, R represents reversed coded items, \* Mean differences were all significant at  $p < .05$ .

### Future research recommended

Findings of this study are fundamentally consistent with previous literature in the areas of emotional intelligence (EI) and organizational commitment. Although there was no empirical study examining the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and organizational commitment among volunteer leaders, Carmeli (2003) examined the relationship between these two concepts among senior managers; namely chief financial officers in the local government authorities in Israel. In particular, Carmeli (2003) focused on two components of organizational commitment; these were affective and continuance commitment. He found that when senior managers had high EI, they tended to develop high affective commitment to the organization for which they work, while this positive relationship was not supported for the relationship between EI and continuance commitment. Furthermore, the meta analyses conducted by Mathieu and Zajac (1990) and Meyer et al. (2002) showed some supporting evidence for the findings of this present study. They did not explore the role of EI on three dimensions of organizational commitment. Yet, according to their studies, affective commitment has been found to be positively related to variables valued by organizations, while continuance commitment has been perceived to be negatively related to or unrelated to other variables valued by organization. The relationship between normative commitment and other variables has shown to be positive, but weak. According to the findings of this present study, it provided evidence that there was a strong relationship observed between EI and affective commitment. On the other hand, there was a negative relationship between EI and continuance commitment, meaning that those in the low EI group had higher scores in the overall score of continuance commitment than had those in the high EI group, although the statistical difference was not significant at  $p < .05$ . The

finding of this present study also observed the weak relationship between EI and normative commitment.

### Future Study

Future study is required to explore the role of EI on developing affective commitment among volunteer leaders, and further to investigate the effect of EI on the other two commitment dimensions – continuance and normative commitment. Given the sample size in this pilot study, more sophisticated statistical methods could not be applied. Since it is well recognized that commitment and EI are multidimensional constructs, it would be preferred to conduct confirmatory factor analyses with this sample of private club volunteer leaders. This pilot study could not validate factor structures of organizational commitment and EI due to the relatively small size of the sample. Future research should utilize methods to obtain larger participation from volunteer club leaders.

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