I have decided to pursue my MSc in Cybersecurity. My career began as a Level 1 technical support executive around 20 years ago, and I have progressed to become a Practice Manager for a managed services provider in Dubai. I achieved this through self-study and on-the-job learning. Although my career path has given me broad experience and extensive knowledge of the subjects, it sometimes leaves me out of my depth, especially while dealing with complex challenges and handling issues that require core knowledge of the subject. I have decided to pursue my MSc in Cybersecurity to fill this gap in my foundational knowledge. Moving forward, I want to steer my career more towards cybersecurity than a generalist in the IT Infrastructure space, and I believe that a master's degree in Cybersecurity can help me achieve this goal.

Cybercrime has become a worldwide pandemic affecting all cultures, economies, and geographies. It affects different regions and economies in various ways. More developed economies like North America and the European Union are targeted by sophisticated cyberattacks such as ransomware and DDoS. In less developed economies like Africa and Southeast Asia, the attacks focus on Phishing, Social Engineering, and Malware. As per the predictions by Security Ventures, there would be worldwide losses of $10.5 trillion due to cybercrimes. (Pandey and Kapoor, 2025)

As per Ramezanian and Niemi (2024), the world faces a significant shortage of trained cybersecurity professionals, estimated at around 4 million by 2023. They also indicate that most Cybersecurity programs at the university level lack cooperation with the industry and do not provide the skills required by the industry. This highlights the need to choose the right university program that aligns the course curriculum with the industry workforce requirements.

Analysing the differences between short-term cybersecurity courses and a postgraduate-level cybersecurity course is essential. On one hand, short-term certificate courses are often product-specific or cover a specific discipline of cybersecurity to skill the student to fulfil the operational requirements of the task. On the other hand, a postgraduate program in cybersecurity takes a more holistic approach and equips the student with a more profound knowledge of each discipline of the subject.

The MSc in Cybersecurity at the University of Essex Online is accredited by BCS, The Chartered Institute of IT. It covers all significant computing disciplines, including software and system design, secure programming, network security, digital forensics, cyber law, social engineering, awareness training, and security and risk management. The program is designed to help candidates gain fundamental and core knowledge of all cybersecurity disciplines, allowing them to be prepared for challenges such as emerging threats, regulatory compliance, and developing secure and complex digital infrastructures.

From an individual perspective, the program will help me convert my fragmented knowledge, which I have gathered over the years, into a cohesive and structured knowledge base. I am in a perfect position to apply the knowledge that I acquire through the program in real-life scenarios through client projects. This will help enhance my practical skills in cybersecurity and help me stand out during discussions with the client's leadership.

Pursuing this degree shall help with my personal growth and, at the same time, shall also contribute to filling the gap of global skill shortage in the cybersecurity domain. The ISC2 (2024) Cybersecurity workforce study states that nearly 60% of organisations report security operations being hampered due to skills gaps in the domain. As per this study, the skills gap in the cybersecurity workforce stood at roughly 4.8 million by 2024. As per this study, prior experience in an IT position is found to be very valuable by 73% of the candidates who have entered the cybersecurity workforce. It has also been stated that 55% of candidates found an advanced degree in cybersecurity very valuable, and 29% of candidates found it valuable. It states that the wide skills gap can be narrowed if people from diverse fields take up cybersecurity as a career path. It will also help bring diverse thoughts from different domains into cybersecurity.

Hence, pursuing my postgraduate degree in cybersecurity would help fill the skills gap in the industry. Though it would create a minimal impact in this huge gap, I believe I would be able to influence more individuals to join the cybersecurity workforce. I shall be able to influence individuals in my social group by leading by example and providing mentorship to help them sail through their career path in cybersecurity.

In conclusion, an MSc in Cybersecurity and my IT background would help me move into a more impactful and specialised role. It shall also help in shaping my career path in a structured way. It shall also provide me with the skills and confidence to lead new initiatives, mentor my peers and social group, and contribute to building a more secure society.

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