THE INTERACTION ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STRESS, DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS AND JOB PERFORMANCE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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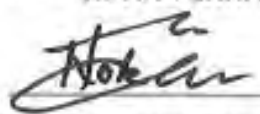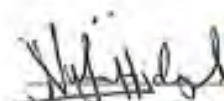
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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the relationships between stress and depressive symptoms on job performance. The role of emotional intelligence (EI) was used to determine whether it has a moderating effect on relationships. Stratified sampling was utilized to select 282 secondary school teacher in Kelantan. Stress, depressive symptoms, EI, and job performance were measured using the Job Stress Scale, the Major Depression Inventory, the USM Emotional Quotient Inventory, and the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire 1.0, and all of these were translated back-to-back. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis methods were used to analysed the data. The results indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between stress and job performance $r = .169$, whilst there was a significant negative relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance among those secondary school teachers $r = .-174$. In addition, it found that there was no significant effect of EI on the relationships between stress and job performance ($\beta =.08$, $p>0.05$), as well as on the relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance among secondary school teachers ($\beta =.03$, $p>.05$). This study highlights the importance of reducing stress and depressive symptoms among school teachers to maintain their performance and it suggests the school's management to take proactive measures to support teachers' mental well-being.

PERANAN INTERAKSI KECERDASAN EMOSI DALAM HUBUNGAN ANTARA STRES, GEJALA KEMURUNGAN DAN PRESTASI KERJA DI KALANGAN GURU SEKOLAH MENENGAH

ABSTRAK

Kajian kuantitatif bertujuan mengkaji hubungan antara stres dan gejala kemurungan ke atas prestasi kerja. Peranan kecerdasan emosi (EI) digunakan untuk melihat sekiranya terdapat interaksi di antara hubungan tersebut. Sejumlah 282 guru sekolah menengah dipilih melalui persampelan berstrata di Kelantan. Stres, gejala kemurungan, kecerdasan emosi dan prestasi kerja diukur menggunakan *Skala Stres Kerja*, *Inventori Kemurungan Utama* (MDI), *Inventori Kecerdasan Emosi USM* (USMEQ-i) dan *Soal Selidik Prestasi Kerja Individu* (IWPQ) 1.0. Analisis korelasi Pearson dan regresi berganda telah digunkan untuk menganalisis data. Dapatan analisis korelasi Pearson menunjukkan terdapat hubungan positif yang signifikan antara stres dan prestasi kerja $r = .169$, manakala hubungan negatif yang signifikan di antara gejala kemurungan dan prestasi kerja di kalangan guru sekolah menengah $r = -174$. Di samping itu, analisis regresi berganda menunjukkan tiada kesan signifikan kecerdasan emosi terhadap hubungan antara stres dan prestasi kerja ($\beta = .08$, $p > 0.05$), serta hubungan antara gejala kemurungan dan prestasi kerja di kalangan guru sekolah menengah ($\beta = .03$, $p > .05$). Kajian ini menunjukkan kepentingan mengurangkan stres dan gejala kemurungan bagi mengekalkan prestasi kerja di sekolah dan kajian ini mencadangkan pengurusan tertinggi sesebuah sekolah boleh mengambil langkah proaktif untuk menyokong kesejahteraan mental guru

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CP   Contextual Performance

CWB   Counterproductive Work Bahavior

DSM-IV   Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder

EI   Emotional Intelligence

EQ   Emotional Quotient

IWPQ   Individual Work Performance Questionnaire

MDI   Major Depression Inventory

PSI   Person Separation Index

SCAN   Schedule for Clinical Assessment in Neuropsychiatric

SPSS   Statistical Package for Social Science

TP   Task Performance

UPSI   Sultan Idris Education University

USMEQ-i USM Emotional Quotient Inventory

VIF   Variance Inflation Factor

LIST OF SYMBOLS

M	mean
p	probability value
SD	standard deviation
SE	standard error
n	sample size
r	Pearson correlation coefficient
R^2	regression square
ΔR^2	regression square change
F	frequency
ΔF	frequency change
$Sig.$	significant Value
B	Beta

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief overview of the study and its main
components. It begins by providing a background of study, which includes relevant
information about the topic being investigated. Following the background, the chapter
presents the problems statement. This statement articulates the specific issue or gap in
knowledge that the study aims to address. Additionally, the chapter introduces part of
the research question and research objective. These are the main inquiries or goals
that the study seeks to answer or achieve, and help to guide the research process and
provide a sense of direction for the study. Besides, this study also discusses the
research scope, explaining more clearly and outlining the components encompassed

within the study. This serves to a comprehension of the main focus of the research. To ensure clarity and understanding, the chapter also explains the definitions of variables used in this study. The chapter then specifies the conceptual framework, which helps to organize and structure the research, highlighting the key variables and interconnections. Moreover, the chapter presents the research hypothesis. This hypothesis is a tentative statement or prediction about the relationship between variables that will be tested in the study. Finally, a conclusion is included at the end of the chapter.

1.2   Background of study

The teaching profession is often considered difficult due to the multitude of tasks and responsibilities that teachers have to handle. From lesson planning to student management, assessment, parent communication, and administrative duties, teachers face numerous challenges that can lead to stress and mental tension. In 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledges that stress can indeed lead to feeling of worry or mental tension. Selye (1964), identified the two categories of stress: eustress and distress. Eustress is commonly known as "good stress" because it can have positive effects and enhance one's well-being and job performance. On the other hand, distress is typically referred to as "bad stress" as it refers to the negative effects of stress on physical and mental health. Selye's work highlights the importance of distinguishing between these two types of stress and recognizing their different impacts on teachers. In some ways, stress can be a good thing for teachers. It can be a motivating force to motivate us to learn, achieve goals and achieve outcomes.

It is not uncommon for some people to thrive in situations that are extremely stressful. However, stress can become a problem if it persists for a longer period than expected or if it is perceived as negative.

According to Rajabi et al. (2018), stress is a form of emotional, physical and mental response to changes that can affect job performance. There are several factors that can lead to stress, including workload (Banahatti, 2016; De Simone et al., 2016), fatigue and the environment (Banahatti, 2016). Therefore, these factors could lead to employees having issues such as lack of competence, ambiguity, inability to work and poor relationships (Olukayode, 2017). Furthermore, stress can also be caused by poor problem-solving ability (Gluschkoff et al. 2016). However, it can be difficult to identify the specific cause of stress since each individual exhibits a different level of emotional responses (Ahmad et al., 2017). It is indeed crucial for teachers to identify the sources and effects of stress to address the problem effectively. By understanding the sources of stress, such as excessive workload, lack of support, or challenging student behaviour, teachers can take appropriate steps to mitigate these stressors. Additionally, recognizing the effect of stress on their job performance is essential for teachers to develop coping strategies and seek necessary support. By proactively addressing stress, teachers can enhance their ability to manage the demands of their profession and create a healthier and more conducive learning environment for themselves and their students.

Teachers face numerous stressors in their job environment that can contribute to depressive symptoms. Moreover, stress is accompanied by uncontrolled emotions, such as depressive symptoms, that can affect teachers' abilities and reduce job

performance (Lasebikan, 2016). These stressors may include heavy workloads, time constraints, lack of resources, and administrative pressure. The stress that is associated with depressive symptoms can be attributed to several factors, including the job environment, job adversity and social support (Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016). The combination of job environment, job adversity, and social support can significantly impact teachers' stress levels and contribute to the manifestation of depressive symptoms. If left unchecked, the stress that is building up within an individual will develop into depressive symptoms.

Statistics indicate that depressive symptoms are a major cause of health problems and disabilities worldwide, with an increase of more than 18% between 2005 and 2015 (World Health Organization., 2020). According to Beardslee et al. (2012) found that 85% of patients who experienced an episode of depressive symptoms had other episodes in 15 other depressive symptoms. However, based on gender, 1.9% of men and 3.2% of women have unipolar depressive symptoms (Behere et al., 2017). As well, there is evidence that workload is an important factor in the development of depressive symptoms (Upadyaya et al., 2016).

Every individual has a different level of emotional intelligence (EI). According to Goleman (1995), EI is a key factor in improving an individual's emotional abilities. EI is also viewed as an individual's ability to show behavioural changes to improve quality of life and job performance (Wahid et al., 2016). In addition, it is strategized that it can possibly influence job performance among teachers (Wang et al., 2015), and to predict job performance (Pekaar et al., 2017). Besides, EI significantly affects teachers in the effort to improve their job performance (Wahid et al., 2016). Lastly,

Ajayi et al. (2018) argue that job performance can be reflected in an individual's abilities and organizational development.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) based on seven domains by Yusoff et al. (2010) were related to emotional control, emotional maturity, emotional conscientiousness, emotional awareness, emotional commitment, emotional fortitude and emotional expression. The different components of EI emphasize the importance of seven domains in building strong relationships and achieving success in a personal and professional context. The domains also acknowledge the importance of EI in the workplace, these skills are critical for effective leadership and organizational culture (Jim, 2018). This EI involves the ability to manage their emotions in difficult situations that can lead to stress and depressive symptoms, and these people can respond peacefully to disturbing circumstances.

1.3   Problem Statement

The landscape of Malaysian education has swiftly evolved in the realm of teaching and learning, prompting a heightened awareness among professional educators regarding the impact of mental health on teacher performance (Corrente et al., 2022). A study conducted by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2018 revealed that 4.4% of teachers grappled with moderate to high levels of stress (Rohman, 2018). The study identified various stress-inducing factors, including family issues, financial concerns, administrative pressures, heavy workloads, a lack of appreciation, insufficient skills in task execution, and a dearth of exposure to stress-coping

mechanisms. This recognition underscores the imperative for a holistic approach to addressing mental health issues within the teaching community in Malaysia.

Besides, teachers also grapple with mental health challenges, specifically stemming from high depressive symptoms and low job performance. Othman and Sivasubramanian (2019) study, conducted in Malaysia, revealed that 43% of teachers encounter depressive symptoms attributed to factors like workload, classroom environment, and socio-demographic elements. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to enhancing the outcomes of prior studies, aiming to address the prevalent issues of stress and depressive symptoms among teachers. Prioritizing the mental well-being of teachers emerges as a pivotal objective, therefore, essential for teachers to deliver optimal services to schools and students.

Recently, the increasing prevalence of depressive symptoms among school teachers has raised concerns, with a noticeable dearth of related research in Malaysia. A study carried out in Brazil by Oliveira et al. (2018) revealed that 33% of teachers there experience depressive symptoms. Consequently, there is a pressing need for a study to investigate the extent of depressive symptoms among teachers in Malaysia. Moreover, the objective of this study is to pinpoint the primary factors contributing to depressive symptoms among teachers.

Emotional intelligence (EI) becomes evident when an employee adeptly resolves problems without disrupting their job tasks and activities. Recent research has primarily delved into exploring the connections between EI and job performance, uncovering that EI significantly influences how teachers are perceived in their job

roles (Mohamad & Jais, 2016). Teachers endowed with high EI exhibit effectiveness in teaching and excel in their overall job performance (Hjalmarsson & Daderman, 2022; George Carri, 2018) . Various earlier studies emphasize the significance of EI in shaping job performance. Consequently, these collective findings underscore the imperative for more comprehensive and systematic exploration, recognizing EI as an indispensable trait for teachers and employees at large.

Ngui and Lay (2020) stated that a high level of EI helps teachers manage stress effectively, in which that higher levels of EI were associated with lower levels of stress among teachers. Thus, EI acts as a protective factor against the negative impact of stress (Shoukat et al.,2019; Naseem, 2018; Rakhshani et al., 2018; Anjum & Swathi, 2017). in addition, Teachers with higher levels of EI were better able to reduce stress and increase job performance (Shoukat et al., 2019). This means that EI can help reduce stress and leads to increase job performance (Asufyani et al, 2022).

Emotional Intelligence (EI) may play a role in reducing the likelihood of experiencing depressive symptoms (Martínez-Monteagudo et al., 2019). This points out that EI could potentially reduce the risk of experiencing depressive symptoms, highlighting it is significance as a protective factor against depressive symptoms, and emphasizing the importance of understanding and fostering EI in teachers (Martínez-Monteagudo et al., 2019). Individuals with better emotional skills and abilities are less likely to experience depressive symptoms (Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2016).

1.4   Research Questions

There are some issues raised in this study based on the research problem statement. The research questions are as follows:

a. Is there a significant relationship between stress and job performance among secondary school teachers?

b. Is there a significant relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance among secondary school teachers?

c. Is there no significant effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between stress and job performance among secondary school teachers?

d. Is there no significant effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance among secondary school teachers?

1.5   Research Objective

This research objective is to investigate the strength of each variable to achieve the objective and provide answers to the research questions. The research objectives are as follows.

a. To examine the relationship between stress and job performance among secondary school teachers.

b. To examine the relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance among secondary school teachers.

c. To identify the interaction effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between stress and job performance among secondary school teachers.

d. To identify the interaction effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance among secondary school teachers.

1.6 Research Scope

In striving to achieve the outlined objectives, the research scope holds significant importance. The current study has specifically chosen Malaysia as its geographical focus for two main reasons. Firstly, numerous investigations on stress, depressive symptoms, emotional intelligence (EI), and job performance have been conducted in countries like India (e.g., Anjum & Swathi, 2017), Pakistan (Shoukat et al., 2019), and Nigeria (e.g., Ajayi et al.), while neglecting regions such as Malaysia. Examining these factors in a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse country like Malaysia would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between stress, depressive symptoms, job performance, and EI.

The study samples comprised secondary school teachers from Kelantan. The sample selection employed the stratified random sampling approach, encompassing five districts: Bachok, Gua Musang, Kota Bharu, Kuala Krai, and Machang. Schools were chosen from each district to form the study sample.

This research employs a quantitative method, utilizing a survey to gather data from the sample. The study design incorporates a cross-sectional approach, and the variables under investigation include stress, depressive symptoms, EI, and job performance.

1.7   Definition of Variables

In this part, the conceptual definitions of the variables studied are presented: stress, depressive symptoms, emotional intelligence (EI) and job performance. Operational definitions of these variables can be interpreted through implementations of several verified and reliable scales.

1.7.1   Definition of Stress

In general, stress can be defined as the relationship between risk and protective factors (Prilleltensky et al., 2016). Stress can also be defined as physical and psychological event that affect health (Anjum & Swathi, 2017). Similarly, Opeyemi and Donald (2017) argued that stress is defined as the body's non-specific response or reaction to demands made on it. Nagi and Kurien (2019) also define stress as a psychological, physiological and behavioural response. Gligorovski et al. (2018) defines stress as an uncomfortable condition brought on by workload.

Stress is operationally defined using the score of Job Stress Scale (Crank et al., 1995). Higher scores indicate greater degrees of stress and vice versa. So, if a teacher receives a high score on the Job Stress Scale. It suggests that they are experiencing a higher level of stress. Conversely, lower scores indicate lower levels of stress of teachers.

1.7.2   Definition of Depressive symptoms

In general, the World Health Organization (2020) defines depressive symptoms are characterised by sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-esteem, disrobed sleep or appetite, feelings of fatigue and poor concentration. Depressive symptoms can be long-lasting or recurring and significantly impair a teacher's ability to function at work and cope with daily life. Besides, depressive symptoms can also be defined as excessive stress and failure in the face of problems (Pizzagalli, 2014; Sapolsky, 2015). The level of stress is beyond what is considered normal or manageable. It could be chronic, intense stress that may contribute to the development of depressive symptoms. Individuals experiencing depressive symptoms may perceive difficulties or challenges as insurmountable, leading to a sense of failure.

The operational definition specifies that depressive symptoms are based on the Major Depression Inventory (MDI) score (Bech et al., 2001). Higher scores on the MDI indicate higher degrees of depressive symptoms, suggesting a more severe manifestation of depressive symptoms. Conversely, lower scores indicate lower levels of depressive symptoms. The scoring is that higher scores correspond to higher

degrees of depressive symptoms, providing a standardized and measurable approach to assessing and categorizing the severity of depressive symptoms in teachers.

1.7.3 Definition of Emotional intelligence

According to Sharma and Bedi (2017), emotional intelligence (EI) refers to an individual's ability to identify, process information and regulate emotions. In another study, EI refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others (Alsufyani et al., 2022). EI is considered essential to solving emotional problems, such as recognizing emotions in faces, understanding the meanings of emotional words and managing feelings (Mayer et al., 2016). Besides, according to Mayer et al. (2016), EI allows an individual to evaluate and use emotional information validly to increase thought. EI, also known as Emotional Quotient (EQ), refers to the ability to perceive, express, understand, motivate, control and regulate emotions (Yusoff et al., 2011). EI is defined as the ability to understand and explain feelings (Al-Busaidi et al. (2019). EI is defined as the ability of the person to assess and manage their own emotions as well as other emotions (Navas & Vijayakumar, 2018). Therefore, EI assists an individual in controlling and overcoming the manifestation of excessive emotions that exist in an unhealthy environment.

EI is operationally defined by the scores obtained from the USM Emotional Quotient Inventory (USMEQ-I) by Yusoff et al. (2010), which includes specific dimensions of EI. This indicates that the study are using a specific inventory

(USMEQ-I) as a tool to quantify and measure EI. The USMEQ-I comprises several dimensions of EI. These dimensions include: emotional control, emotional maturity, emotional conscientiousness and emotional awareness, emotional commitment, emotional fortitude and emotional expression. The scoring for each dimension assesses a teacher's level, with higher scores indicating a higher degree of that specific aspect of EI and vice versa. A high score obtained for a particular dimension indicates that a person demonstrates a high degree of that specific dimension of EI. Conversely, a low score would suggest a lower degree of that particular dimension.

1.7.4 Definition of Job Performance

Muntazeri and Indrayanto (2018), the conceptual definition of job performance, is defined as the effort and time that an employee spends to be successful. In addition, Phuong and Vinh (2021) defined job performance as the evaluation of an individual's effectiveness and accomplishment of tasks and responsibilities within their job role. Perera (2019) defined job performance as the extent to which an employee effectively and efficiently completes the tasks and responsibilities assigned to them in their job role.

The operational definition of job performance is defined as the scoring with an Individual Work Performance score (IWPQ) 1.0 (Koopmans et al., 2014). The scoring with IWPQ 1.0, with higher scores indicate higher degrees of job performance. Conversely, lower scores suggest lower degrees of job performance. Therefore, teachers with higher scores of job performance have higher job performance, while
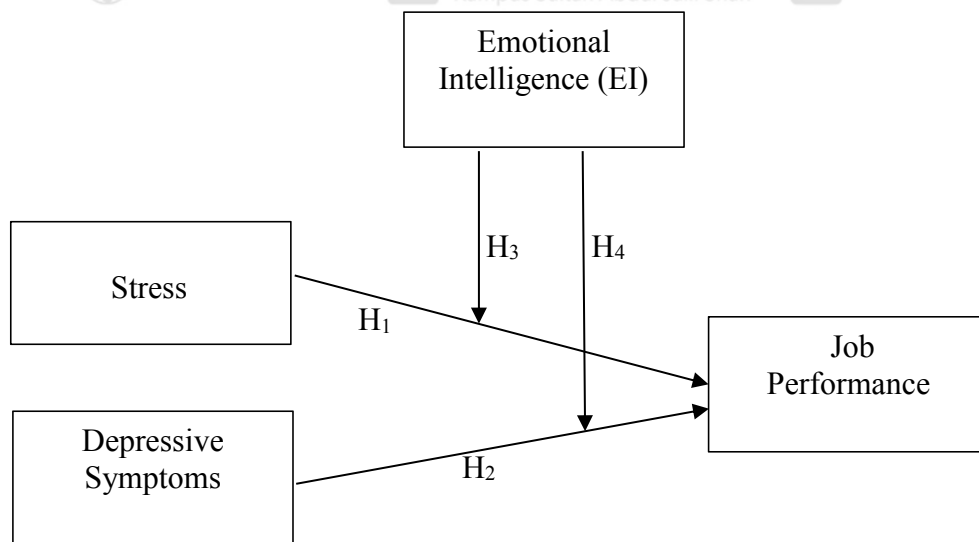
those with lower scores of job performance have lower job performance. Where higher scores correspond to better job performance.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

Based on the concept of research, the study is divided into three parts which are independent variables, the interaction and the dependent variable that is interconnected.

Figure 1.1

Emotional intelligence (EI) as a moderator of the relationship between stress, depressive symptoms and job performance.

1.9 Research Hypothesis

This research aims to investigate the role of emotional intelligence (EI) interaction: the impact of stress and depressive symptoms on job performance among secondary school teachers. The hypotheses were designed to verify the variables as follows:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between stress and job performance among secondary school teachers.

H_{A1}: There is a significant relationship between stress and job performance among secondary school teachers.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance among secondary school teachers.

H_{A2}: There is a significant relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance among secondary school teachers.

H_{03}: There is no significant interaction of emotional intelligence on the relationship between stress and job performance among secondary school teachers.

H_{04}: There is no significant interaction of emotional intelligence on the relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance among secondary school teachers.

1.10 Conclusion

The chapter begins by providing a clear and concise overview of the research topic. It offers a background of study, contextualizes the issue, and explains its significance in the broader field of study. It includes definitions of key terms and concepts, as well as

explanations of relevant theories or models that form the basis of the research. The chapter examines the current state of research on the topic and identifies gaps or limitations in the existing literature. Based on the identified gaps, the chapter presents specific research questions that the study aims to address. Additionally, the chapter outlines the research objectives, which are specific goals that the study seeks to achieve. If the research involves specific constructs or variables, the chapter provides clear definitions and conceptualizations of these terms. This ensures a common understanding and establishes a solid foundation for the subsequent chapters. Finally, the chapter outlines the overall structure and organization of the research study.