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Emotional Intelligence as a Moderator of the Relationship Between Stress, Depressive Symptoms, and Job Performance

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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 teachers 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 analized the data. The results indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between stress and job performance r = .169, while there was a significant negative relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance r = .-174. In addition, it found that there was no significant effect of EI on the relationships between stress and job performance (β =.08, p>0.05), as well as on the relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance (β =.03, p>.05). This study highlights the importance of reducing 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.

Introduction

Teachers' job performance is crucial for determining educational quality and student success, making it a key focus in education. This performance encompasses multiple aspects, such as instructional delivery, classroom management, and the ability to engage and motivate students. Effective job performance by teachers is influenced by various factors, such as professional development, access to resources, support from the administration, and personal well-being (Yueqin & Mohammed, 2024; Lee & Jo, 2023; Ertürk, 2021; Dreer, 2024)

Well-supported and motivated teachers can create engaging and effective learning environments, significantly enhancing student understanding and performance. However, when teachers face dissatisfaction and inadequate support, their performance declines, adversely affecting student outcomes (Baluyos et al., 2019). Kumari and Kumar (2023) highlights the importance of teacher motivation in fostering positive learning environments and improving student achievement. Demotivated and dissatisfied teachers tend to perform poorly, negatively impacting student success.

Greenberg et al. (2016) pointed out that high stress levels among teachers negatively impact teachers' performance and student achievement. High stress levels can lead to burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and ultimately lower performance in the classroom. Factors contributing to teacher stress include heavy workload, lack of administrative support, and challenging student behaviour (Katsantonis, 2020; Pang, 2011; Waweru & Ndambuki, 2021). Teachers often report that excessive workload, including administrative tasks and extracurricular duties, contributes significantly to their stress levels (Collie et al., 2012). Managing diverse and often large classrooms can be a significant source of stress, particularly when dealing with behavioural issues and varying student needs (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Inadequate support from school administration and a lack of professional development opportunities are also critical stressors for teachers (Suttles, 2024).

Herman et al. (2018) stated that depressive symptoms among teachers are a growing concern. The study found that depressive symptoms significantly impair teachers' cognitive functions, decision-making abilities, and overall classroom effectiveness. According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) teachers experiencing depressive symptoms often exhibit absenteeism, lower energy levels, and diminished enthusiasm, directly impacting their teaching performance and student outcomes.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a crucial factor that influences teachers' ability to manage stress and depressive symptoms, ultimately impacting their job performance. EI involves the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as the ability to recognize, understand, and influence the emotions of others. Brackett et al. (2010) found that teachers with higher EI reported lower levels of stress and burnout. They were more effective in managing classroom behaviours and fostering positive student-teacher relationships. Mérida-López and Extremera (2017) indicated that EI can buffer the negative effects of stress and depressive symptoms on job performance. Teachers with higher EI were more resilient and maintained higher performance levels despite adverse conditions. Collie et al. (2012) also emphasized the role of EI in promoting well-being among teachers. It highlighted that teachers with higher EI experienced lower stress and higher job satisfaction, leading to better performance.

Rashid et al. (2022) stated that workloads and role overload contribute to teacher stress. Therefore, it emphasized the need for effective stress management programs to improve teacher well-being and performance. Herman et al. (2018) focused on the effects of depressive symptoms on teachers' instructional effectiveness and student engagement. It highlighted the importance of early identification and intervention for mental health issues among teachers. Mérida-López and Extremera (2017) review underscored the role of EI in mitigating teacher burnout. It suggested that developing EI can be an effective strategy for enhancing teacher resilience and job performance.

The study has emphasized the necessity of investigating teacher job performance due to its pivotal role in shaping educational outcomes. High-quality teaching is fundamental to student learning and achievement, making it imperative to understand the factors influencing teacher performance. By identifying the drivers of effective teaching, the study can develop targeted interventions and policies aimed at improving teaching quality and enhancing educational outcomes. Additionally, as educational systems evolve to meet the needs of diverse learners and technological advancements, research on teacher job performance becomes essential for informing pedagogical practices that align with modern educational standards.

While previous studies have separately examined the impacts of stress, depressive symptoms, and emotional intelligence (EI) on teacher performance, the current research uniquely integrates these elements to explore how EI moderates the effects of stress and

depressive symptoms. This comprehensive approach provides a deeper understanding of the interplay between these factors and offers more targeted intervention strategies.

Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), explains that stress arises from perceiving a discrepancy between environmental demands and the individual's coping resources. It emphasizes cognitive appraisal in stress responses and the importance of coping strategies. This theory helps understand how teachers perceive and manage stressors like workload, student behaviour, and administrative demands. Teachers who perceive high stress levels due to workload and role conflict exhibit lower job performance and higher burnout rates (Danish et al., 2019). Effective coping strategies are essential for maintaining high job performance in stressful teaching environments.

Beck's Cognitive Theory of Depression (Beck, 1967), depressive symptoms result from negative automatic thoughts, dysfunctional beliefs, and cognitive distortions. It focuses on the role of cognitive patterns in the onset and maintenance of depressive symptoms. Understanding teachers' cognitive patterns provides insights into how depressive symptoms develop and persist, impacting job performance. Herman et al. (2018) reveal that depressive symptoms in teachers lead to reduced instructional effectiveness and poorer student outcomes. Addressing cognitive distortions and negative thought patterns is crucial for improving teachers' mental health and job performance. Depressive symptoms have long-term detrimental effects on teacher absenteeism and presenteeism (Jonston et al., 2019).

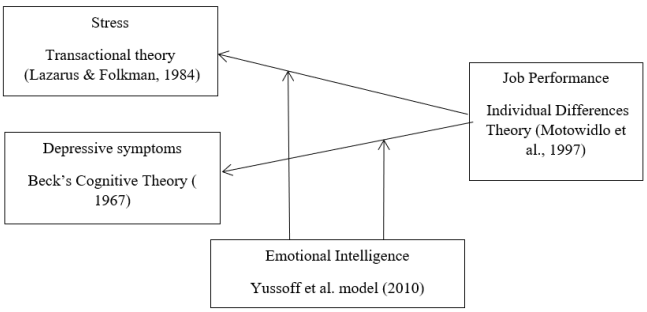
The Model of Emotional Intelligence (EI), as proposed by Goleman (1998), is structured around four key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management. This framework was further developed by Yusoff et al. (2010), who identified seven dimensions of EI: emotional control, maturity, conscientiousness, awareness, commitment, fortitude, and expression. High EI is crucial for teachers to manage stress and depressive symptoms, build positive relationships, and create a supportive classroom environment. Mérida-López and Extremera (2017) found that high EI helps teachers manage stress and reduces burnout, supporting Yusoff et al. (2010) conceptualization of EI's critical role in professional effectiveness. Developing EI through professional development can enhance teachers' resilience and job performance.

According to the Individual Differences Theory (Motowildo et al., 1997), job performance is influenced by individual differences in abilities, personality traits, and other personal characteristics. Understanding individual differences can help identify which traits and abilities contribute most significantly to effective teaching. Liu et al. (2010) explored how individual differences in teachers' stress responses and emotional regulation abilities affect their job performance.

This theoretical framework will show how stress and depressive symptoms impact teacher job performance and how EI can moderate these effects (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Shows a theoretical framework about stress, depressive symptoms, emotional intelligence (EI), and job performance.



The hypotheses aimed to investigate the following variables:
H1: Stress and job performance are significantly related among secondary school teachers.
H2: Depressive symptoms and job performance are significantly related among secondary school teachers.
H3: Emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between stress and job performance among secondary school teachers.
H4: Emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance among secondary school teachers.

In conclusion, the study conducted has provided significant insights into the complex interplay between stress, depressive symptoms, EI, and teacher job performance. These studies have validated and expanded existing theoretical models, such as the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, Beck's Cognitive Theory of Depression, the Model of Emotional Intelligence, and the Individual Differences Theory. Despite these advancements, there remain important gaps, particularly in understanding context-specific influences and effective methods for developing EI among teachers.

Method

Participants

The study selected a sample of 282 secondary school teachers from Kelantan. The appropriate sample size was determined and estimated using G*Power. Respondents were chosen through a stratified random sampling technique. The gender distribution of the sample was predominantly females (74.5%), with males making up 25.5% of the participants. The average age of respondents ranged between 26 to 60 years old. Most respondents were Malay, making up 96.6% of the total sample. The respondents had a wide range of work experience, with the majority having 21 to 25 years of experience, accounting for 20.0% of the sample (see Table 1).

Table 1
Frequency of Respondent Based on Demographic Information

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Males	72	25.5
Females	210	74.5
Age		
26 – 30 years	18	6.4
31 – 35 years	14	5.0
36 - 40 years	42	14.9
41 - 45 years	53	18.8
46 - 50 years	67	23.8
51 - 55 years	56	19.9
56 - 60 years	32	11.3
Race		
Malay	273	96.9
Chinese	7	2.5
Indian	1	0.4
Others	1	0.4
Work Experience		
Less than one year	4	1.4
1 – 5 years	15	5.3
6 – 10 years	23	8.2

Table 1
(Continue)

	Frequency	Percentage
11 – 15 years	45	16.0
16 – 20 years	54	19.1
21 – 25 years	59	20.0
26 – 30 years	53	18.8
More than 30 years	29	10.3

Measurement

The instruments were divided into five sections: Demographic Information, Job Stress Scale, Major Depression Inventory (MDI), USM Emotional Quotient Inventory (USMEQ-i), and Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) 1.0.

Job Stress Scale

The 6-item Job Stress Scale developed by Crank et al. (1995) is utilized to measure stress. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale, which ranges from 1= strongly agree, 2 = mildly agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = mildly disagree and 5 = strongly disagree. The example items that are used to measure stress consist of (1) I am usually anxious when I'm working, (2) I am usually unpleasant when I'm working, and (3) A lot of time my job makes me very frustrated or angry. The Malay Version Questionnaire is as follows: (1) *Saya sering berasa runsing sewaktu bekerja,* (2) *Saya sering berasa rimas sewaktu bekerja,* and (3) *Pekerjaan saya sering membuatkan saya rasa kecewa atau marah*. The Job Stress Scale reported a good reliability score for Cronbach's Alpha which is $\alpha = .93$.

Major Depression Inventory (MDI)

Depressive symptoms is assessed using the 12-item Major Depression Inventory (MDI) developed by Bech et al. (2001) and translated by Abas et al. (2021) to measure depressive symptoms. The 12 items address depressive symptoms on a scale ranging from 1 = at no time, 2 = some of the time, 3 = slightly less than half the time, 4 = slightly more than half the time, 5 = most of the time, and 6 = All the time. The example of original items that are used to measure depressive symptoms consist of (1) Have you felt low in spirit or sad? (2) Have you felt subdued? and (3) Have you lost interest in your daily activities?. The questionnaires were back translated by Abas et al. (2021) where the original set in English language was back translated into Malay language. The example of original items that are used to measure depressive symptoms consist of (1) *Berasa tidak bersemangat atau sedih*, (2) *Berasa pasif,* and (3) *Kehilangan minat dalam aktiviti-aktiviti harian anda*. The Major Depression Inventory reported a good reliability score for Cronbach's Alpha which is $\alpha = .89$.

USM Emotional Quotient Inventory (USMEQ-i)

The USM Emotional Quotient Inventory (USMEQ-i), developed by Yusoff et al. (2010) measures emotional intelligence (EI). This inventory comprises 46 items that span seven domains: emotional control, emotional maturity, emotional conscientiousness, emotional awareness, emotional commitment, emotional fortitude, and emotional expression, including a faking index. The rating scales ranged from (1) = not like me, (2) = a bit like me, (3) = quite like me, (4) = a lot like me, and (5) = totally like me. Examples of questions included

in the survey are: (1) I give advice to my friends and myself regularly, (2) When I successes I pray to god, and (3) I apologize for mistakes I make. The Malay Version Questionnaire is as follows: (1) *Saya sering nasihat-menasihati di antara satu sama lain*, (2) *Apabila mendapat kejayaan saya bersyukur*, and (3) *Saya mudah mengakui kesalahan saya sekiranya saya memang bersalah*. The USM Emotional Quotient Inventory reported a good reliability score for Cronbach's Alpha which is α = .96.

Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) 1.0.

The Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) 1.0, developed by Koopmans et al. (2014) was used to assess job performance. The 17-item questionnaire included three scales: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviour. The Individual Work Performance Questionnaire utilizes a five-point Likert scale that ranges from (1) = Seldom, (2) Sometimes, (3) Regularly, (4) Often and (5) Always. Examples of questions included in the survey are: (1) I managed to plan my work to make sure it could be done on time, (2) I kept my job skills up-to-date, and (3) I kept in mind the results that I had to achieve in my work. (1) *Saya merancang kerja saya supaya kerja tersebut dilakukan tepat pada masa*, (2) *Saya selalu memastikan kemahiran kerja saya sentiasa terkini*, and (3) *Saya sentiasa mengingati matlamat yang saya perlu capai dalam pekerjaan saya*. The Individual Work Performance Questionnaire reported a good reliability score for Cronbach's Alpha which is α = .90

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0 for Windows. Two types of analysis were employed in this study: Pearson's correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. Before conducting a regression analysis, it is possible to check the violation of assumptions. The assumptions to be evaluated are as follows: (1) Sample size, (2) Outlier, (3) Normality, and (4) Linearity.

Results

This part presents the descriptive analysis of stress, depressive symptoms, emotional intelligence (EI), and job performance. All variables are measured using the M value and SD. Based on the scale of 1 to 5, the mean scores can be explained as a mean score less than 2 is scored as low, a mean score of 2 to 4 is scored as moderate, and a mean score of more than 4 is scored as high (Pallant, 2016).

Table 2
Mean and Standard Deviation of Stress, Depressive Symptoms, EI and Job Performance

	M	SD
Stress	2.85	0.784
Depressive Symptoms	2.15	0.610
EI	3.64	0.495
Job Performance	2.93	0.593

Table 2 reveals that the average stress score among the sample is 2.85, reflecting the typical stress level within the group. This central tendency measure suggests a moderate level of stress. The standard deviation of 0.784 demonstrates the variability of stress scores around the mean. A smaller standard deviation indicates that most stress scores are close to

the mean, reflecting consistent stress levels among individuals. The mean depressive symptoms score is 2.15, reflecting the central tendency of depressive symptoms levels in the sample. This score indicates a moderate level of depressive symptoms among the participants. The standard deviation of 0.610 shows the spread of depressive symptoms scores around the mean. Lower variability suggests that the depressive symptoms scores are more tightly clustered around the mean. The mean score for EI is 3.64, indicating the individuals' average level of EI. This relatively high score suggests a generally good capacity for emotional regulation and social interaction within the group. With a standard deviation of 0.495, the EI scores show relatively low variability, meaning most individuals' scores are close to the average. The average job performance score is 2.93, serving as the central point around which job performance levels are distributed. This mean score suggests a moderate level of job performance in the sample. The standard deviation of 0.593 indicates the dispersion in job performance scores. This moderate standard deviation level suggests that while there is some variability, many individuals have scores near the mean.

Table 3

Correlation Analysis between Variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. Stress	-		
2. Depressive Symptoms	-0.372**	-	
3. Job Performance	0.169**	-0.174**	-

Table 3 shows the correlation analysis between stress, depressive symptoms and job performance among the 282 secondary school teachers. The first correlation analysis was explained about positive relationship between stress and job performance among secondary school teachers, with, r = .169, n = 282, p = .002. Thus, H1 is supported. In addition, the second correlation analysis showed the negative relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance among secondary school teachers, with r = -.174, n = 282, p = .003. H2 is supported.

Table 4

Model Summary of Stress, EI and Job Performance

	Model 1			Model 2		
Variables	*B*	*β*	*SE*	*B*	*β*	*SE*
Constants	58.29*		.41*	58.18*		.42*
Stress	.64	.08	.42	.6	.08	.42
EI	3.90*	.49*	.42*	3.81*	.48*	.42*
Stress x EI				.59	.08	.40
R^2		.26*			.27	
ΔR^2		.26*			.01	
F		48.86*			33.43*	
ΔF		48.86*			2.17	

Table 4, in Model 1, the R2 value of .26 revealed that stress and emotional intelligence (EI) explained 26% variance in job performance with F (2,279) =48.86, p<.05. The findings revealed that stress (β =.08, p>.05) not predicted job performance and EI (β =.49, p<.05) predicted job performance.

In Model 2, the R2 value of .27 revealed that stress, EI and stress x EI explained 27% variance in the job performance with F (3,278) =33.43, p<.05. The findings revealed that stress (β =.08, p>.05), EI (β =.48, p<.05) and stress x EI not predicted job performance (β =.08, p>0.05).

The ΔR2 value of .01 revealed 1% change in the variance of model 1 with ΔF (2,279) =48.86, p<.05, and model 2 with ΔF (1,278) =2.17, p>0.05. The results indicate that there is no significant effect of EI on the relationship between stress and job performance among secondary school teachers. Thus, H3 was not supported.

Table 5

Model Summary of Depressive symptoms, EI and job performance

	Model 1			Model 2		
Variables	*B*	*β*	*SE*	*B*	β	SE
Constants	58.29*		.41*	58.27*		.41*
DS	-.35	-.04	.41	-.34	-.04	.42
EI	3.99*	.50*	.41*	3.95*	.50*	.42*
DS x EI				-.29	.03	.44
R^2		.26*			.26	
ΔR^2		.26*			.001	
F		47.75*			31.91*	
ΔF		47.75*			.42	

Table 5, In Model 1, the R^2 value of 0.26 revealed that depressive symptoms and emotional intelligence (EI) explained 26% variance in the job performance with *F* (2,279) = 47.75, p<0.05. The findings revealed that depressive symptoms (β =-.04, p>.05) did not predict job performance and EI (β = .50, p<.05) predicted job performance.

In Model 2, the R^2 value of 0.27 revealed that the depressive symptoms and EI explained 27% variance in job performance with *F* (3,278) =31.91, p<.05. The findings revealed that depressive symptoms (β =-.04, p>.05), EI (β =.50, p>.05) and depressive symptoms x EI did not predict job performance (β =.03, p>.05).

The ΔR^2 value of .001 revealed 0.1% change in the variance of model 1 with ΔF (1,278) =.47.75, p<0.05, and model 2 with ΔF (1,278) =.42, p>.05. The results indicate that there is no significant effect of EI on the relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance among secondary school teachers. Thus, H4 was not supported.

Discussion

Gender Role Theory, as posited by Eagly and Wood (2012), suggests that societal expectations shape behaviours and stress differently for males and females. Given the predominance of female teachers in the sample (74.5%), gender dynamics likely play a crucial role in these findings. Female teachers often face higher stress levels due to the dual burden of professional and family responsibilities, which can affect their mental health and job performance (Pogere et al., 2019). Khabri et al. (2023) support this, showing that while moderate stress can enhance performance through increased motivation, excessive stress leading to depressive symptoms can significantly hinder job effectiveness. Moreover, Beilock et al. (2010) found that female teachers' stress is often exacerbated by societal pressures and expectations, further impacting their job performance negatively when depressive symptoms arise. These findings suggest that while stress in manageable amounts (eustress) can be beneficial, a moderate level of stress leads to a moderate level of job performance, with gender-specific factors playing a significant role.

According to Super's Life Cycle Theory of Career Development (Super, 1990), individuals' career stages profoundly influence their experiences and responses to job stress. These career stages are often linked with heightened stress levels due to increased professional responsibilities and concerns about approaching retirement. Ellovido and

Quirap (2024) suggest that more experienced teachers may have developed effective coping mechanisms to manage stress. Therefore, moderate stress can boost job performance by enhancing motivation and engagement, excessive stress can lead to low job performance and significantly impair job effectiveness.

According to the Job Demands-Resources Model (Demerouti et al., 2001), job demands can lead to stress, while job resources can mitigate these effects. Teachers with extensive experience often face high job demands but possess significant job resources, such as expertise, social support, and well-developed coping mechanisms, which can buffer the negative impacts of stress and enhance job performance. Conversely, less experienced teachers may lack these resources, making them more susceptible to stress and its detrimental effects on job performance (Jain, 2021). Bakker and de Vries (2021) found that job resources such as professional development opportunities and supportive leadership can enhance teachers' ability to manage stress effectively, thereby improving job performance. Similarly, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) highlight that experienced teachers' accumulated resources enable them to convert job demands into positive stress (eustress), which can enhance performance. However, stress can lead to decreased job performance without adequate resources, especially among less experienced teachers.

This study indicated a significant positive relationship between stress and job performance, potentially due to the higher representation of female participants. High stress levels can enhance job performance, possibly because women generally exhibit a higher ability to channel stress into motivation for improved job performance. Sex Role theory (Ray, 2019; Arcand et al., 2023) suggests that women might possess certain societal influences or inherent abilities that enable them to utilize stress more effectively compared to men. This theory posits that women are often socialized to manage multiple roles and responsibilities, which can translate into an increased capacity to use stress constructively. Supporting this view, a study by Bryan et al. (2024) found that women tend to convert stress into productive energy by leveraging strong social networks and problem-solving skills. Additionally, research by Archer et al. (2024) indicates that women often have higher levels of resilience and adaptability in stressful situations, which can lead to enhanced job performance.

The study indicated a significant positive relationship between stress and job performance among secondary school teachers. This counterintuitive finding can be understood through the grand theory of stress, developed by Selye (1973), which differentiates between eustress (positive stress) and distress (negative stress). Eustress, a form of stress perceived as beneficial, can enhance motivation, focus, and performance, potentially explaining why stressed teachers may perform better. According to Anjum et al. (2023), eustress experienced in a job environment can lead to increased motivation and job performance. Fahmi et al. (2022) further elaborate that challenges and pressures, although potentially detrimental, can also enhance a teacher's motivation and discipline when perceived positively. This aligns with Selye's theory, where an optimal level of stress (eustress) enhances performance, while excessive stress (distress) has the opposite effect, leading to negative outcomes such as anxiety and reduced job performance. The study's findings are consistent with previous research by Shoukat et al. (2019), which identified a significant relationship between stress and job performance, highlighting the dual potential of stress to either motivate or hinder, depending on its level and perception.

This study also indicated a significant negative relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance, suggesting that higher levels of depressive symptoms in school teachers correlate with lower job performance. This finding is supported by recent research which shows that depressive symptoms can severely impair cognitive functions

such as concentration, decision-making, and memory, all of which are crucial for effective job performance (Fukuzaki & Takeda, 2022). Depressive symptoms can also lead to increased absenteeism and reduced motivation, further diminishing job performance (Johnston et al., 2019; Grahek et al., 2019; Lerner et al., 2010). Furthermore, a study by McLean and Connor (2015) found that teachers experiencing depressive symptoms often struggle with maintaining classroom engagement and managing student behaviour, leading to a decline in overall teaching effectiveness.

In the current study, teachers with high depressive symptoms have more than 10 years of working experience, placing them at an optimal or moderate level of experience. At this stage, teachers may already be saturated with depressive symptoms, making it increasingly difficult to resist their impact on job performance. This suggests that the accumulation of negative emotions and experiences over time can have detrimental effects on job performance. Affective Events Theory (Ohly & Venz, 2021) supports this view by positing that the accumulation of negative events or experiences in the workplace can significantly impact an individual's emotional state, thereby reducing job performance. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) found that teachers experiencing prolonged depressive symptoms report lower levels of job satisfaction and higher levels of job-related stress, leading to decreased effectiveness in their teaching roles.

The top management of a school has the authority to create policies or guidelines specifically addressing the needs of school teachers in identifying depressive symptoms. By acknowledging the potential impact of depressive symptoms on teacher job performance, the top management of a school can take proactive measures to support their teachers' mental well-being. Creating policies or guidelines that address depressive symptoms allows for early identification and intervention, helping teachers seek appropriate support and treatment.

This study also produced interesting findings, revealing that emotional intelligence (EI) does not significantly influence the relationship between stress and job performance. This implies that EI does not affect the relationship between teachers' stress levels and job performance, regardless of whether these levels are high or low. This can also be seen with the study population, found that most of them are female respondents. Previous studies have highlighted the impact of gender on the connection between stress and job performance. Faizan and Haque (2019) discovered gender differences in working productivity under eustress (good stress), with females experiencing more eustress than males. Given that females constitute the majority of respondents in this study, EI may not have any significant impact on the relationship between stress and job performance. This also implies that EI does not play a crucial role in moderating the impact of stress on job performance, at least in the context of the study. Additionally, the statement implies that even if individuals possess EI, it does not have a substantial influence on the outcome of the study.

The study indicated that emotional intelligence (EI) does not significantly affect the relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance. Although EI is often praised as a key factor in enhancing job performance, this study suggests that its influence might have limitations, especially concerning mental health conditions like depressive symptoms. These findings are consistent with recent research by Suleman et al. (2020), which suggests that while EI is important for job satisfaction, it may not directly influence the relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance.

The study's limitations are attributed to factors such as generalization of result and technique of analysis. These limitations resulted in the study being conducted focusing only on 282 secondary school teachers in Kelantan. This focused sample may limit the generalizability of the findings to a larger population. The suggestion for future research is

to expand the scope of the study to include all secondary schools in Kelantan. By doing so, the data collected will be more comprehensive and representative of the entire population of secondary schools in the region. This will provide a more accurate understanding of the factors influencing the job performance of secondary school students in Kelantan. This will contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field and provide valuable insights for teachers, policymakers, and study working in of secondary education.

The suggestions put forth in the research study include expanding the scope of the research to include samples from private schools, specifically teachers from private secondary schools. By including this additional group, the study aims to explore any potential similarities or differences in the results between public and private school teachers. This expansion would provide a comparative analysis between teachers in different educational settings, shedding light on any unique challenges or factors that may exist within private schools. In terms of technique of analysis, correlation, and regression can provide valuable insights into the strength and direction of associations between variables, as well as the ability to predict one variable based on another. However, they have certain limitations. One limitation of correlation and regression analysis is that they only assess the direct relationships between variables. They do not consider the potential indirect or mediating effects of other variables. This means that important relationships between variables may be missed or not fully understood. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), on the other hand, is suggested, as a more comprehensive statistical technique that allows for the examination of both direct and indirect relationships among variables. It enables the study to assess complex relationships and test theoretical models that include multiple variables and pathways.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study highlights the significant positive relationship between stress and job performance, and the significant negative relationship between depressive symptoms and job performance, while revealing that emotional intelligence (EI) does not mediate these relationships. This suggests that while stress and depressive symptoms directly impact job performance, EI does not act as a moderator in this relationship. This underscores the critical need to address stress and depressive symptoms directly to improve job performance among teachers, rather than solely focusing on enhancing EI.

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Declarations

Author contribution. NAM was responsible for the idea implementation and study design conducted the data collection and analysis, validated the results, provided necessary resources, and authored the manuscript. NAH contributed by generating ideas, providing guidance on method and research design, monitoring research progress, verifying data results, and suggesting research implications to be summarised and reported in the paper.

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