

Investigating the Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Operators' Job Performance: A Case Study in Southern Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Employees with higher emotional intelligence demonstrate stronger adaptability, communication, and overall effectiveness at work. However, if they possess low emotional intelligence, they will encounter difficulties in managing stress, communicating effectively, and collaborating with team members. This negatively impacts their job performance by causing errors, conflicts, and reduced efficiency in operations. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance among operators in a manufacturing company situated in southern Malaysia. A total of 103 operators from a manufacturing company located in southern Malaysia was selected as the sample of study. The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) and the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) were utilized as the research instruments for collecting data. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 27 and SmartPLS software version 4.0 were then used to analyse the data. The findings of the study reveal that there was a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance among the studied respondents. Lastly, recommendations were also given for studied company and future research.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Job Performance, Operators

INTRODUCTION

The study highlights emotional intelligence as a crucial skill in organizational behaviour and human resource management due to its significant impact on job performance (Lubis et al., 2023). Emotional intelligence first articulated by Salovey and Mayer (1990), has garnered increasing attention in organizational behaviour and human resource management. It plays an essential role in the effective management of emotions in the context of the operator. Emotional intelligence defined as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions encompasses dimensions such as self-awareness, emotion regulation, and interpersonal skills, which significantly influence workplace outcomes, including performance, collaboration, and stress management (Mayer et al., 2000). Employees with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage stress, communicate effectively, and resolve conflicts, which are critical skills for maintaining high standards of job performance (Goleman, 2018). The study emphasizes the importance of understanding and leveraging emotional intelligence in order to maintain consistent levels of employee performance in the midst of global disruptions such as pandemics (Sadikovic et al., 2020). Employees with emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage interpersonal relationships and adapt to workplace challenges, which collectively enhance their overall job performance.

On the other hand, job performance is widely recognized as a critical organizational indicator that measures an employee's effectiveness in fulfilling tasks and responsibilities, serving as a cornerstone of organizational success (Koopmans et al., 2011). It includes dimensions such as task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviours. The present study examines how emotional intelligence influences these aspects of job performance, emphasizing that emotionally intelligent employees are better equipped to handle stress, communicate effectively, and foster positive relationships with coworkers and clients (Joseph et al.,

2015). These traits contribute to improved productivity, enhanced customer satisfaction and higher employee retention rates (Richardson et al., 2017). Organizations increasingly value emotionally intelligent employees for their adaptability and professionalism, which are pivotal in maintaining a positive attitude and achieving superior performance, even in challenging situations (Miao et al., 2017). A 2016 Hay Group study found that 70% of successful workplace results are directly related to employee emotional intelligence, emphasizing its crucial role in improving cooperation, decision-making, and overall performance (Hay Group, 2016). On the other hand, a 2020 survey by the International Labour Organization found that 65% of high-performing organizations invest in emotional intelligence-focused training programs to mitigate workplace conflicts and enhance productivity (International Labour Organization, 2020). In the Malaysian manufacturing sector, stress-related absenteeism, attributed to self-emotion appraisal, increased by 12% between 2018 and 2021 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022). This trend underscores the critical importance of implementing strategies rooted in emotional intelligence to address workplace challenges effectively.

Research Objective

This research aimed to investigate the correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance among operators from a manufacturing company located in southern Malaysia. To be specific, the research aims to:

1. To identify the level of emotional intelligence among operators from a manufacturing company located in southern Malaysia.
2. To identify the level of job performance among operators from a manufacturing company located in southern Malaysia.
3. To identify the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance among operators from a manufacturing company located in southern Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence highlights its critical role in both personal and professional success. It is defined as the ability to recognize one's own feelings as well as those of others, motivate oneself, and effectively manage emotions in ways that enhance both personal and professional outcomes (Sarrionandia et al., 2020). Emotional intelligence involves the capacity to understand and regulate emotions effectively, emphasizing its contribution to self-motivation and interpersonal relationships (Sarrionandia et al., 2020). Sarrionandia et al. (2020) further described emotional intelligence as a collection of interrelated social and emotional abilities that influence an individual's capacity to navigate pressures and demands in their environment successfully. High emotional intelligence has been associated with improved performance in workplace, educational, and clinical settings, as well as reduced vulnerability to challenges such as anxiety, depression, and substance abuse (Sarrionandia et al., 2020). The Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) is a widely recognized framework for assessing emotional intelligence, focusing on individuals' abilities to perceive, facilitate, understand, and manage emotions effectively. It employs a performance-based approach to minimize response biases, providing a more objective evaluation of emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2018).

The MSCEIT consists of four branches which are perceiving emotions, utilizing emotions to enhance cognitive processes, understanding emotional meanings, and managing emotions, which offer a structured and comprehensive model for analysis. Fan et al., (2021) emphasize the effectiveness of the test in assessing emotional intelligence as an ability, underscoring its significance in predicting workplace performance, particularly in roles that demand advanced interpersonal skills. However, criticisms have emerged regarding its ecological validity, as hypothetical scenarios used in the assessment may not fully capture real-world emotional complexities (Roberts et al., 2020). Additionally, Antonakis and Dietz (2019) questioned whether the MSCEIT differentiates emotional intelligence from cognitive abilities, while MacCann et al., (2020) noted cultural variations that could influence its applicability. Despite these limitations, the MSCEIT remains a popular tool in emotional intelligence research and practice, with ongoing refinements recommended to enhance its ecological and cultural relevance.

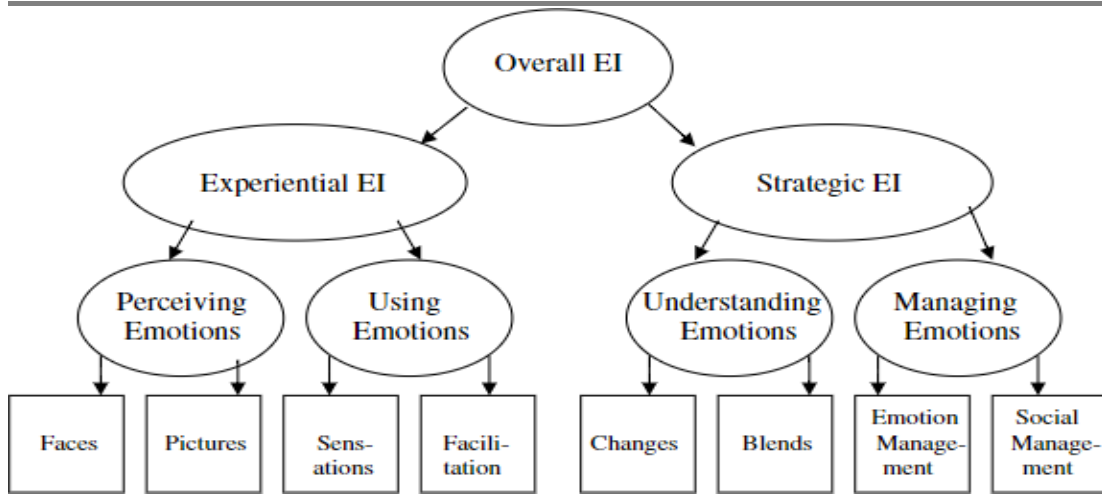


Figure 1 Implied Theoretical Structure of The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test

(Source: Mayer et al., 2003:103)

The dimensions of emotional intelligence include self-emotion appraisal (SEA), others' emotion appraisal (OEA), use of emotion (UOE), and regulation of emotion (ROE) (refer Figure 1). Self-emotion appraisal refers to recognizing and understanding one's own emotions, which is foundational for emotional regulation and linked to better mental health and job performance (Schutte and Malouff, 2018). Others' emotion appraisal involves understanding others' emotions, which is crucial for effective social interactions (Koehler et al., 2020). The use of emotion focuses on leveraging emotions to enhance cognitive processes (Mayer et al., 2018), while regulation of emotion entails managing emotions effectively in challenging situations (Gross & John, 2018). By take advantage of emotions to motivate oneself, foster positive connections, and facilitate problem-solving, individuals can navigate complexities in various contexts, contributing to personal and professional success. These dimensions influence employee's capacity to recognize, control, and utilize emotions in a variety of situations. Employees may become more self-aware, resilient, and effective in social situations by developing abilities linked to properly sensing and expressing emotions, adaptively controlling emotional reactions, and using emotions to support cognitive functions and goal achievement (Sánchez-Núñez et al., 2020; Urquijo et al., 2019). Building on these dimensions, the next section examines how effectively implementing emotional intelligence can enhance the job performance.

Overview of Job Performance

Job performance is a multidimensional construct that reflects an individual's ability to perform job-related tasks and effectively contribute to organizational goals (Ng & Feldman, 2019). It includes the execution of task responsibilities, the quality of results, and the efficiency of tasks completed within the framework of organizational standards and expectations (Ng & Feldman, 2019). Smith (2021) emphasized that the performance of the workplace is not only determined by technical skills, but also influences by factors such as behavioural and cognitive factors influencing workplace productivity and collaboration. This structure is a key indicator of organizational success because it has a direct impact on operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and overall business results (Jones & Taylor, 2021). Furthermore, employee performance is shaped by internal and external factors such as employee motivation, work environment, leadership effectiveness, and emphasizes its dynamic and contextual nature (Brown et al., 2021). Recognizing its importance, organizations often invest in training programs, performance assessments and leadership development strategies to improve and maintain employee performance (Williams & Green, 2021). This highlights its critical role in aligning individual contributions to broader organizational objectives.

The Individual Work Performance model, as shown in Figure 2 was formulated by Koopmans et al., 2011. This highlights the intricate relationship between individual capabilities, behaviours, and outcomes that collectively determine an employee's overall effectiveness in their role. The model integrates personal motivation, role clarity, and organizational support as key elements influencing performance outcomes (Yang & Kim, 2021). It also highlights the importance of contextual factors, such as the work environment and leadership styles, in

shaping how employees' approach and execute their tasks (Chen et al., 2022). According to this model, optimal performance is achieved when employees align personal competencies with organizational expectations, fostering both individual growth and organizational success (Lee & Park, 2021). The Individual Work Performance model is increasingly recognized for its ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors driving performance, guiding organizations in designing interventions to enhance employee output and satisfaction (Wang et al., 2021).

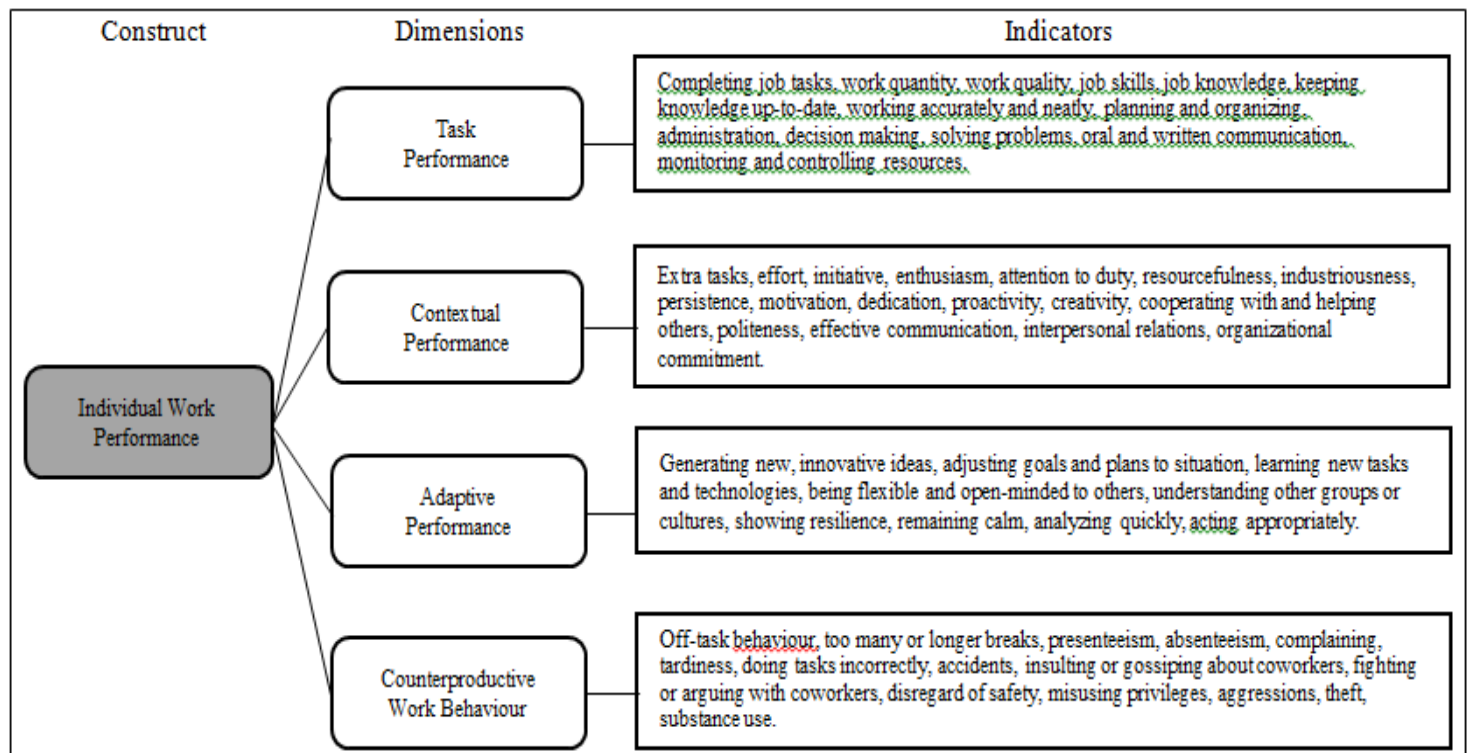


Figure 2 Heuristic Framework of Individual Work Performance (Source: Koopmans et al., 2011:863)

Job performance includes three dimensions which are task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviour. Task performance involves fulfilling the core responsibilities of a job effectively, including meeting deadlines, achieving quality standards, and efficiently completing assigned duties (Anderson et al., 2016). It focuses on how well employees can execute their core responsibilities, which is crucial in evaluating individual performance within organizations. Contextual performance, on the other hand, refers to behaviours that contribute positively to the work environment but are not part of the formal job requirements, such as helping colleagues and showing enthusiasm towards work (Borman & Motowildo, 2021). Counterproductive behaviours are actions that negatively affect the organization, such as absenteeism and theft, which can undermine team cohesion and overall efficiency. The negative impacts of counterproductive work behaviour on workplace dynamics, employee morale, and organizational performance are highlighted by research conducted by Dalal et al., (2015). Adaptive performance is often excluded from contemporary models of Individual Work Performance (IWP) due to the measurement challenges associated with its context-dependent nature and the complexity of evaluating behaviors such as flexibility, problem-solving, and coping with uncertainty (Jundt et al., 2018).

Collectively, these dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for assessing individual contributions within the workplace. The following section will examine the direct relationship between transformational leadership and job performance. Understanding these dimensions allows organizations to foster a high-performance culture by supporting positive behaviours while mitigating negative ones. This comprehensive approach to job performance helps organizations optimize both individual and collective outcomes, ultimately leading to better overall effectiveness and employee satisfaction which is further supported by research that links emotional intelligence with improved job performance across various contexts and industries (Goleman, 2018; Joseph et al., 2015).

The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance

The relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance has been widely studied, with research

consistently showing that emotional intelligence significantly impacts employees' ability to manage emotions, handle stress, and interact with others, all of which contribute to improved job performance. This underscores how emotional intelligence enhances an employee's capacity to perform effectively in their role by fostering better decision-making, interpersonal skills, and resilience in challenging situations. Employees with high emotional intelligence demonstrate superior emotional regulation, which contributes to enhanced job satisfaction and improved performance outcomes (Mayer et al., 2018; Joseph & Newman, 2017). Emotional intelligence fosters a positive workplace environment by improving interpersonal relationships, reducing stress, and enhancing motivation, all of which have a direct positive effect on job performance (Goleman, 2018). Moreover, studies have shown that emotional intelligence is crucial in diverse industries, including education, healthcare, and manufacturing, where it correlates with both job satisfaction and overall performance outcomes (Elfenbein, 2015; O'Boyle et al., 2017). These findings suggest that fostering emotional intelligence within the workforce is essential for improving individual and organizational performance, particularly in high-pressure environments where emotional regulation is critical for success.

Moreover, employees with higher emotional intelligence tend to perform better in their roles due to their ability to regulate emotions and manage interpersonal relationships effectively (Elfenbein, 2015; O'Boyle et al., 2017). Emotional intelligence enhances communication and collaboration, promoting a positive and supportive work environment that reduces stress and conflict. These abilities contribute to improved job performance outcomes, as emotionally intelligent employees can navigate challenging situations with resilience and maintain focus, ultimately leading to higher productivity and effectiveness in their roles (Deeba et al., 2021; Mayer et al., 2018). These findings suggest that emotional intelligence is a crucial skill set that can significantly impact performance in various organizational contexts, particularly in high-stress environments where emotional resilience is essential. Additionally, studies have reinforced that emotional intelligence not only enhances individual performance but also contributes to positive organizational outcomes, highlighting its critical role in optimizing workplace dynamics (Hwa & Amin, 2016).

Overall, evidence suggests a strong correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance, with emotionally intelligent employees demonstrating enhanced decision-making capabilities, higher job satisfaction, and increased productivity (Mayer et al., 2018; O'Boyle et al., 2017). These individuals are more likely to engage in behaviours that foster team cohesion, promote effective communication, and contribute to a positive organizational culture (Deeba et al., 2021). Such behaviours enhance contextual performance while simultaneously reducing counterproductive work behaviours, such as workplace conflicts and absenteeism (Hwa & Amin, 2016; Joseph & Newman, 2017). Furthermore, emotionally intelligent employees are better equipped to manage stress, resolve conflicts, and adapt to changing workplace dynamics, thereby ensuring sustainable performance and organizational effectiveness (Goleman, 2018; Elfenbein, 2015). These findings underscore the far-reaching implications of emotional intelligence as a vital component of employee success, emphasizing its value in optimizing both individual and collective outcomes. Therefore, there is a clear linkage between emotional intelligence and job performance which contributes to the hypothesis development, which is:

H₁: There is a relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance among operators in a manufacturing company at Southern Malaysia.

In the Figure 3, it is shown that the independent variable in this study is emotional intelligence, while the dependent variable is job performance. This conceptual framework proposed four-dimensional of emotional intelligence include self-emotion appraisal, other's emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion. Meanwhile for job performance, the three-dimensional are task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive behaviour.



Figure 3 Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance among operators from a manufacturing company located in southern Malaysia. A cross-sectional survey method was adopted, enabling data collection at a single point in time to assess relationship between variables without manipulating any conditions. A total of 130 questionnaires were distributed to mitigate potential sampling errors in the study (Singh et al., 2021). Consequently, 103 responses were deemed valid, resulting in a response rate of approximately 90%. The research instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire consisting of three sections which are demographic information, emotional intelligence assessment, and job performance evaluation. Emotional intelligence was measured using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) developed by Wong and Law (2002), which comprised 16 items across four dimensions which are self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion.

Meanwhile, job performance was assessed through the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) developed by Platania et al., (2023), containing 17 items that assessed three dimensions which are task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviour. For task and contextual performance, a 5-point Likert scale was used (0- seldom, 1- sometimes, 2- frequently, 3- often, 4- always), while counterproductive work behaviour was assessed using (0- never, 1- seldom, 2- sometimes, 3- frequently, 4- often). To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instrument, a pilot study was conducted involving 10 operators from a manufacturing company. The results indicated high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.891 for the scales used. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 24 was used to analyze descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Meanwhile, SmartPLS version 4.1.1.2 was adopted to analyze the linear relationships between emotional intelligence and job performance among the studied operators.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Level of Emotional Intelligence Among Operators in a Manufacturing Company at Southern Malaysia

Table 1: Findings on Emotional Intelligence and its Dimensions

Dimensions	Mean (M)	Std Deviation (SD)	Level
Self-emotion Appraisal (SEA)	5.89	1.164	High
Other's Emotions Appraisal (OEA)	5.21	1.160	High
Use of Emotions (UOE)	5.78	1.166	High
Regulation of Emotion (ROE)	5.50	1.267	High
Overall Emotional Intelligence	5.60	1.189	High

Note: 7 Likert Scale (1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- slightly disagree, 4- neither agree nor disagree, 5- slightly agree, 6- agree, 7- strongly agree).

Table 1 presents the analysis of emotional intelligence dimensions among the respondents, indicating an overall high level of emotional intelligence, with an overall mean score of 5.60 (M=5.60, SD=1.189). Employees in the studied company are likely adept at understanding and managing their own emotions, recognizing and responding to others' emotions, effectively using emotions to enhance their thinking and actions, and maintaining emotional control in various situations. The dimension of Self-Emotions Appraisal (SEA) had the highest mean score of 5.89 (M=5.89, SD=1.164), suggesting that the respondents are highly capable of recognizing and understanding their own emotions. These findings collectively indicate the respondents possess a solid capability in self-emotions appraisal, contributing to their emotional intelligence and potentially to their job performance. This is followed by Use of Emotions (UOE) with a mean score of 5.78 (M=5.78, SD=1.166), indicating that the respondents effectively use emotions to facilitate performance. This suggests that respondents generally hold positive self-perceptions and are inclined towards setting goals and motivating themselves to achieve them. The

Regulation of Emotion (ROE) dimension recorded a mean score of 5.50 ($M=5.50$, $SD=1.267$), also categorized as high, which implies that the respondents generally manage and regulate their emotions well. For instance, the respondents have confidence in their ability to manage their temper in challenging situations. Lastly, Other's Emotions Appraisal (OEA) had a mean score of 5.21 ($M=5.21$, $SD=1.160$), indicating a high level of understanding of others' emotions, though it scored comparatively lower than other dimensions. This suggests that respondents generally possess a good ability to recognize and interpret the emotions of others. Overall, the findings indicate that emotional intelligence is well- developed among the respondents, with all four dimensions assessed at a high level. The high level of emotional intelligence positively impacts interpersonal interactions and the work environment, fostering improved collaboration and communication, thereby enhancing respondents' satisfaction, well-being, and overall organizational performance.

Level of Job Performance Among Operators in a Manufacturing Company at Southern Malaysia

Table 2: Findings on Job Performance and its Dimensions

Dimensions	Mean (M)	Std Deviation (SD)	Level
Task Performance (TP)	3.12	0.808	High
Contextual Performance (CP)	2.81	0.802	High
Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) (reversed score)	3.22	0.946	High
Overall Job Performance	3.05	0.0852	High

Note: 5 Likert scale for task performance, contextual performance (0- seldom, 1- sometimes, 2- frequently, 3- often, 4- always) and counterproductive work behaviour (0- never, 1- seldom, 2- sometimes, 3- frequently, 4- often).

Table 2 presents the findings on job performance and its dimensions within the organization, as reflected in the overall mean score of 3.05 ($M=3.05$, $SD=0.852$), which falls within the high-level category. This suggests that the respondents' perception of their job performance, encompassing the three dimensions of task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviour are high level regarding their roles and responsibilities. Among the individual dimensions, task performance emerged as the high level with a mean score of 3.12 ($M=3.12$, $SD=0.808$), suggesting that respondents are adequately performing their core tasks, meeting job requirements at a satisfactory level. This is followed by contextual performance, which demonstrated high mean score of 2.81 ($M=2.81$, $SD=0.802$), indicating that respondents are moderately contributing to the organizational environment through behaviours that are not part of their formal job roles but are essential for the organization's effectiveness. High level of counterproductive work behaviour shows that the employees behave well and positively impact the organization, had the highest mean score of 3.23 ($M=3.23$, $SD=0.946$). Counterproductive work behavior is usually seen as negative, but in this study, it was reversed to reflect positive behaviors. The moderate job performance level reveals the need for improvements in reducing counterproductive behaviours and enhancing contextual contributions.

The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance Among Operators in a Manufacturing Company at Southern Malaysia

Table 3: Summary of analysis findings on the effect of emotional intelligence on job performance

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	Standard deviation	p-value	Decision	R ²
H ₁	Emotional Intelligence → Job Performance	0.789	0.073	0.000	Supported	0.454

SEA = Self Emotion Appraisal, OEA = Other's Emotion Appraisal, UOE = Use of Emotion, ROE = Regulation of Emotion, TP = Task Performance, CP = Contextual Performance, CWB = Counterproductive Behaviour

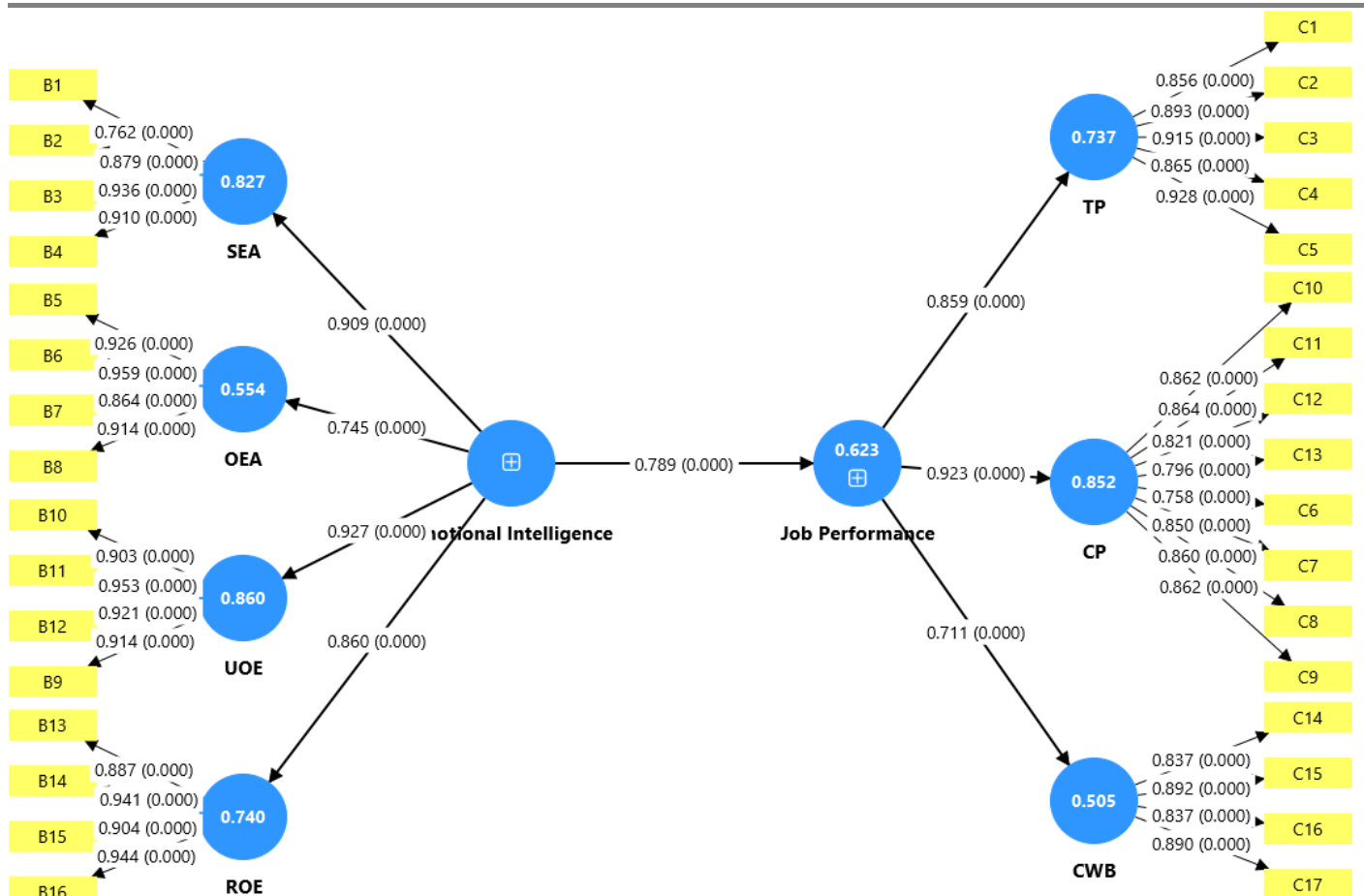


Figure 3: Analysis of the model to measure the effect of emotional intelligence on job performance

The acquired data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.0 and Smart PLS version 4.1.1.2 Thaker et al. (2020) assert that Partial Least Square (PLS) can simultaneously analyse all constructs involved. This study employs SmartPLS software to do structural equation modelling (SEM) with the partial least squares (PLS) approach. Haenlin and Kaplan (2004) emphasise that SEM, capable of testing theoretically supported linear and supplementary causal models, is the most commonly utilised second-generation multivariate data analysis approach in social research. Table 3 explains the outcomes of the structural equation modelling, whereas Figure 3 depicts the model assessing the impact of emotional intelligence on job performance. According to the recommendations established by Ramayah et al. (2018), the R^2 value is employed to assess the impact of the examined factors. An R^2 score of 0.623 indicates that 62.3% of job performance is accounted for by emotional intelligence. The p-value of 0.000 substantiated a significant impact of emotional intelligence on job performance within the examined group. Consequently, the results corroborated the study's hypothesis.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Discussion of Findings

Level of Emotional Intelligence Among Operators in a Manufacturing Company at Southern Malaysia

The primary objective of this study was to assess the level of emotional intelligence among operators in a manufacturing company at southern Malaysia. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire encompassing four dimensions which are self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion. The findings revealed that the operators exhibited a high level of emotional intelligence, particularly in self-emotion appraisal, indicating their strong ability to recognize and understand their emotional states. This aligns with previous studies, where Goleman's (2018) assertion that self-awareness is a cornerstone of emotional intelligence, critical for effective decision-making and stress management, highlights that individuals with high emotional awareness are better able to understand their emotions and reactions. This research is consistent with the work of Kotsou et al., (2019) similarly argued that individuals with high emotional

awareness are better equipped to identify emotional triggers and use this understanding to enhance job performance, especially in high-pressure environments like manufacturing, where quick decision-making and emotional regulation are essential. This research is corroborated by the findings of Brackett et al., (2020) emphasized that emotionally intelligent individuals can regulate their behaviour and maintain productive interactions, fostering a positive and collaborative workplace atmosphere with others. These findings underscore the role of self-awareness in emotional intelligence as a driver of both individual performance and organizational success.

Furthermore, the dimension of others' emotion appraisal, which refers to the employees' ability to acknowledge and comprehend the emotions of their superiors and colleagues, also scored highly. This ability is essential in a manufacturing environment because effective operations depend on collaboration and communication. Employees that are capable of determining the emotions of others are more suited to work together, resolve conflicts, and develop a positive work environment. This aligns with previous studies, where Wong and Law (2019) highlighted a significant connection between emotional intelligence particularly the ability to assess others' emotions and improved communication and team effectiveness. Their study showed that individuals who are skilled at recognizing and understanding the emotions of others tend to communicate more effectively and work better within teams, leading to improved collaboration and problem-solving. Similarly, Rivers et al., (2020) provided evidence that strong emotional intelligence among employees enhances individual performance while fostering a supportive and cohesive workplace culture. Their research indicated that emotionally intelligent employees are better able to manage interpersonal relationships, resolve conflicts, and foster a positive work environment, which in turn boosts overall team morale and productivity.

Lastly, the use of emotion and regulation of emotion, two critical dimensions of emotional intelligence were also prominent among the employees. Maintaining focus as well as productivity requires an ability to control emotions in challenging situations and to use emotions to help in decision-making and thinking. This aligns with previous findings where Brackett and Mayer (2020) emphasized that workers with high emotional intelligence are more likely to manage stress effectively and maintain composure under pressure, which is an essential trait in industrial settings with strict production goals and deadlines. The study's strong emotional control findings suggest that employees are able to keep their emotional balance, which in turn enhances long-term performance at work. This research aligns with the study of Perera and DiGiacomo (2020) highlighted the importance of emotional regulation in achieving long-term job satisfaction and effectiveness, supporting the relationship between high emotional intelligence and better job performance in manufacturing settings.

Level of Job Performance Among Operators in a Manufacturing Company at Southern Malaysia

The second objective of this study was to evaluate the level of job performance among operators in a manufacturing company at southern Malaysia, focusing on its key dimensions. The analysis revealed that job performance is generally at a high level, with task performance achieving a high mean score. This research aligned with the study of Smith and Brown (2021), which indicates that operators consistently execute job-related tasks with precision and efficiency, which are critical to ensuring operational success in the manufacturing sector. Task performance encompasses core responsibilities such as meeting production targets, maintaining quality standards, and adhering to safety protocols. These results suggest that the workforce is proficient in their roles, contributing to the company's productivity and competitive advantage. Additionally, this finding corroborates research conducted by Williams et al., (2021), which structured training programs and clear performance expectations may support operators in effectively fulfilling their duties. The high level of task performance underscores the organization's emphasis on maintaining operational efficiency and achieving production goals. Addressing areas for improvement, such as enhancing technical skills or introducing advanced training modules, could further optimize task performance and sustain high productivity levels.

Furthermore, contextual performance is another crucial aspect of job performance, recorded a moderate level of mean score, highlighting behaviours that extend beyond formal job requirements. This aligns with the findings of Kim and Lee (2021), which include demonstrating initiative, assisting colleagues, and committing to organizational objectives, all of which foster a cooperative and supportive work environment. Their study highlighted that these actions are essential in fostering a positive workplace culture. Similarly, this outcome aligns with the findings of Chen et al., (2022), who highlighted the contextual performance plays a vital role in promoting teamwork and enhancing organizational culture, which are essential in a manufacturing setting where

collaboration and alignment with company objectives are key to overall success. The high scores may reflect the company's efforts to cultivate a collaborative atmosphere through team-building activities and employee engagement programs. These initiatives encourage employees to adopt discretionary behaviours that benefit the organization, such as volunteering for additional tasks or mentoring less experienced colleagues. This observation is consistent with the findings of Smith and Tan (2023), which improving contextual performance further could involve recognizing and rewarding these contributions, thereby reinforcing positive workplace behaviours. By prioritizing both individual and team-based achievements, the company can ensure sustained employee engagement and foster a workplace environment that supports collective success.

However, counterproductive work behaviour, the third dimension of job performance, was found to be at a high level within the manufacturing company. This aligns with the findings of Brackett and Mayer (2020), which suggest that workers with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage stress and maintain composure under pressure, essential traits in industrial settings with strict production goals and deadlines. The high score suggests that while most operators avoid disruptive actions, occasional lapses still occur. These may stem from job stress, unclear expectations, or personal challenges. Efforts to minimize counterproductive work behaviour could include implementing robust support systems, such as counselling services, stress management workshops, and clear disciplinary policies. Additionally, this observation is consistent with the findings of Kim and Lee (2021), which fostering an open communication culture where employees feel comfortable discussing workplace concerns can help prevent potential issues. Addressing counterproductive work behaviour effectively ensures a harmonious work environment and reduces the negative impact on team cohesion and productivity. Continuous monitoring and proactive measures to mitigate these behaviours are essential for sustaining overall job performance and organizational effectiveness.

Level Relationship Between Emotional intelligence and Job Performance Among Operators in a Manufacturing Company at Southern Malaysia

The third objective of this study was to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance among operators in a manufacturing company at Southern Malaysia. The findings supported the hypothesis that employees with higher emotional intelligence demonstrate superior job performance. This relationship is evident in their ability to manage stress, communicate effectively, build positive workplace relationships, and adapt to dynamic challenges, all of which contribute to improved performance outcomes. Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance, indicating that as levels of emotional intelligence increase, job performance also improves. These results align with prior studies, such as Joseph et al. (2020), which identified emotional intelligence as a critical predictor of job performance across industries. Additionally, this aligns with previous research, Wong and Law (2019) emphasized that individuals with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle job-related stress which enhances their overall performance and enable them to maintain productivity and make more effective decisions under pressure. Similarly, Côté (2018) highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in high-pressure environments, such as manufacturing, where emotional resilience and regulation play a pivotal role in achieving workplace success. Côté's research found that individuals with strong emotional intelligence can better regulate their emotions, stay composed in stressful situations, and collaborate more effectively, which contributes to improved performance in demanding work settings. These findings underscore the importance of emotional intelligence in optimizing both individual and organizational performance.

The findings of this study support the notion that employees who possess strong emotional intelligence tend to perform better not only in task performance but also in contextual performance. Workers with higher emotional intelligence are better at understanding and managing emotion, which helps them build positive relationships and communicate effectively. This improves collaboration, reduces conflicts, and creates more supportive work environment. This is crucial in a manufacturing setting, where teamwork is essential for operational success. This aligns with previous research, where Lee and Lee (2020) demonstrated that emotionally intelligent workers tend to engage in behaviours beyond their job roles, such as assisting colleagues and taking initiative, which contributes to improved overall job performance. Moreover, a study by Goleman (2018) found that high emotional intelligence employees are better at managing their emotions in stressful situations, which helps maintain workplace harmony and enhances group productivity. Thus, emotional intelligence not only improves individual task performance but also strengthens team dynamics, ultimately leading to better organizational

outcomes.

Although the correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance is positive, the moderate level of job performance observed in this study suggests that there are still opportunities for improvement. Emotional intelligence, while crucial, is just one component of overall job performance. Employee performance is also severely impacted by elements like work engagement, organizational support, and motivation. This aligns with previous studies, where Perera and DiGiacomo (2020) found that companies that encourage and train their staff to enhance emotional intelligence tend to achieve better work performance outcomes. However, while high emotional intelligence among operators is a positive sign, manufacturing companies should also focus on enhancing other areas of job performance, such as providing better resources, fostering a positive work culture, and increasing employee engagement, to ensure overall productivity and job satisfaction. Thus, organizations can fully realize the advantages of emotional intelligence and improve results for all aspects of work performance.

RECOMMENDATION AND LIMITATION

This research provides several recommendations to enhance emotional intelligence and job performance among employees. A key issue identified in this is that emotional intelligence is often overlooked in manufacturing environments, where the focus on operational efficiency can lead to communication challenges, unresolved conflicts, and heightened stress, negatively impacting job performance. To address this, it is recommended to implement awareness campaigns focused on self-emotion appraisal (SEA), a critical dimension of emotional intelligence. Such campaigns can promote skills like self-awareness, empathy, and effective communication through targeted workshops, which would foster an environment where employees can better regulate their emotions and respond constructively to others. Additionally, a stressful work atmosphere can undermine employees' mental health and productivity, particularly when they feel unsupported. Cultivating a supportive workplace culture that encourages open communication and constructive feedback can enhance contextual performance and job satisfaction, while reducing turnover. Management should model emotionally intelligent behaviour to foster collaboration and emotional well-being. Future research should explore emotional intelligence's impact across diverse sectors, including healthcare, education, and technology, as well as its variation across cultural and industry contexts.

This study acknowledges certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the measurements of emotional intelligence and job performance were primarily based on self-reported data, which, while useful, may be subject to biases such as social desirability bias. These biases could lead participants to overestimate their responses, potentially affecting the accuracy of the results. Additionally, self-reports may limit the assessment of personal emotional awareness or regulation, particularly for complex constructs like emotional intelligence. To improve the comprehensiveness of future research, it would be beneficial to incorporate multiple data sources, such as peer evaluations, supervisor assessments, or objective performance indicators. Despite these considerations, self-reported data offers valuable insights into individuals' subjective experiences and remains a practical and cost-effective method for data collection. Another limitation is the study's cross-sectional design, which captures data at a single point in time and does not allow for conclusions about causality between emotional intelligence and job performance. Longitudinal studies could provide a deeper understanding of how emotional intelligence develops over time and its long-term impact on job performance. Finally, the study's generalizability is limited due to its focus on operators within a single manufacturing company in Southern Malaysia. While this focus offers meaningful insights within this specific context, the findings may not be fully applicable to other industries or regions. Expanding the sample to include operators from multiple companies or sectors would enhance the external validity of the results and allow for comparisons across diverse work settings.

CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand, and manage one's own emotions and others to foster better relationships and social interactions. Likewise, job performance measures how effectively an individual fulfils their duties which directly impacting productivity and success. This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance among operators in a manufacturing company at Southern Malaysia. The findings indicate that emotional intelligence significantly enhances job performance, with key components

such as self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and emotion regulation contributing positively to task performance, contextual performance, and reduced counterproductive work behaviours. Employees with high emotional intelligence demonstrated better adaptability, effective communication, and positive interpersonal relationships, leading to enhanced productivity and job satisfaction. The study concludes that fostering emotional intelligence in employees can be a strategic tool for organizations to improve both individual and collective outcomes. It recommends integrating emotional intelligence training into development programs to optimize employee performance and overall workplace well-being. Future research should expand this study's scope to different industries and contexts to further understand the role of emotional intelligence in various work environments.

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