Unraveling the Link between Emotional Intelligence and Work Performance: Public Sector Evidence

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Abstract
Organizational performance is determined by the performance of its employees. The organization cannot achieve success if employees are unable to perform well. While organizations may provide various kinds of work-related support to assist employees in performing their duties effectively, the employees themselves ultimately control their performance. This is where emotional intelligence comes into play. A substantial body of literature in this domain has primarily focused on the private sector to explore the correlation between emotional intelligence and employee work performance, raising inquiries about the extent of evidence available for the public sector context. To study the relationship between the mentioned variables, a cross-sectional online survey design was employed. The study was conducted among employees in a selected government agency. Using convenience sampling method, an online survey link was distributed through social media platform, and 136 usable responses were collected. Through Pearson Correlation Analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis, all research objectives were achieved, and four hypotheses were accepted indicating a positive and significant relationship between emotional intelligence constructs and work performance. Among the four constructs of Goleman's emotional intelligence — self-regulations, self-awareness, self-motivation and social skills — self-motivation was found to be the strongest predictor ($\beta=0.269$; $p = 0.004$) of employees' work performance. Additional studies are required to assess the generalizability of these findings to different work settings and sectors, as well as to pinpoint effective approaches for fostering improved emotional intelligence management among employees, particularly within the public sector. Considering the vital role of government servants in providing the best services for citizens, these research findings could help the government understand the importance of ensuring that employees are skilled in managing their emotion while performing their works.
Keywords: Work Performance, Self-Regulation, Self-Awareness, Self-Motivation, Social Skills, Public Sector

Introduction

Employee work performance is when an employee can fulfill and execute their given work task successfully. It may refer to how effectively and efficiently they produce their output. As organizations strive to achieve success, more work assignments and projects are created, which need to be completed by employees within the dateline. However, in an inconsistent workplace environment that could potentially impact their mental health, it is not easy for employees to sustain their good performance, unless they cultivate and effectively apply their emotional intelligence. For instance, in the post-pandemic COVID-19 era, even though life has somewhat returned to its usual state for many people, there are still lingering effects, often referred to as "deep scars on our world," as expressed by Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of the WHO.

The substantial and abrupt shifts in individuals' lives have given rise to strong emotions tied to an uncertain future concerning the contemporary work environment. These transformations have necessitated the development of fresh coping mechanisms to effectively address novel job requirements, particularly those of an emotional nature. Here, emotional intelligence plays an important role among employees in navigating social interactions and making decisions in their work. To remain competitive, organizations not only recruit qualified employees with necessary skills and knowledge about the job, but also an individual with emotional intelligence (O'Boyle et al., 2011).

Regardless of the sector that the organization is in, emotional intelligence is essential for all employees. In public sector, for instance, where the mission is to provide the best quality public services with high caliber within specified timeframes, it becomes crucial for public servants to competently manage their emotion, exercise control in expressing their feelings, and be rationale in making any decision. Consequently, workers with high emotional intelligence are able to successfully execute their tasks and meet the overall performance standard (Dhani et al., 2017). The performance of workers in the public sector is measured through key performance indicator (KPI). The goal of the KPIs is to elevate the performance of the public service, aligning with government efforts to strengthen the system of public service delivery and affirming the implementation of honesty and good governance (Zakaria et al., 2011). Therefore, every employee in the public sector needs to produce the best output which could increase their KPI and consequently the performance of the organization.

The next section discusses the significance of the current study and defines the key variables of the study and review the relevant literature. Drawing the emotional intelligence model by Goleman (1998), this section develops the hypothetical linkages between emotional intelligence and work performance. The following provides a brief account of the research methods used to achieve the objectives of the present study. The findings of the study are presented in the subsequent section. Finally, the study concludes by offering the research and managerial implications.

Significance of the study

A substantial body of research suggests that one of the predictors of work performance is how employees manage their emotions at work (Zaman et al., 2021; Zhongwu & Yapeng, 2021; Nasir et al., 2023). Employees are expected to effectively manage and regulate their emotions at work to maintain focus on their task, avoiding distraction that could affect their quality of work. In the provision of public services, employees are often required to do multiple tasks, participate in a work meeting, engage in discussions with colleagues and

respond promptly to service requests. By cultivating and demonstrating good emotional intelligence, public servants can avoid becoming stressed or burned out, as this condition may have adverse effects on mental health and overall work productivity.

Despite this, there is still a lack of findings on employee's emotional labor and how their levels of emotion could affect their work performance (Ma et al., 2020). Further research needs to be conducted to address these research gaps. Additionally, the topic of emotional intelligence and its outcomes in the private sector have received significant attention among scholars (Kotze and Venter, 2011), questions have arisen regarding the evidence in the public sector (Ma et al., 2020) especially within the context of Malaysia (Supramaniam & Singaravelloob, 2020). To compound the issue, it has been found that the public sector performance has declined since 2014 (Zahiid, 2019). Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore the connection between emotional intelligence and work performance of employees in public sector in Malaysia. This study could offer valuable insights to the government regarding the emotional intelligence of employees in public sector, allowing them to improve the quality of services provided. By understanding and fostering emotional intelligence in employees, the government also can assure a more productive, effective and professional workforce, leading to high quality service delivery to the public.

Purpose of the study

This research aims to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance in public sector in Malaysia. Thus, this research is seeking answers for the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between self-regulation and employee work performance?
RQ2: What is the relationship between self-awareness and employee work performance?
RQ3: What is the relationship between self-motivation and employee work performance?
RQ4: What is the relationship between social skills and employee work performance?
RQ5: Which factor is the best predictor of employee work performance?

This research is one of a few that offer evidence of the correlation of mentioned variables among public sector employees in the local context. The results of this study are expected to enrich the existing knowledge, particularly from the Asian point of view. Also, it helps future researchers and the government to have greater understanding on the importance of emotional intelligence and its impact on work performance of employees.

Literature Review
Employee Work Performance

Employee work performance refers to how well an employee reacts and performs in the work environment when assigned a job (Chong et al., 2020). In other words, work performance represents the overall goal that all employees strive to achieve (Ravesangar et al., 2018). Individual job performance is essential in predicting how employees will behave or react and the outcomes of that action. Organizations rely on high employee work performance to achieve their goals (Yee, 2018). They aim to have employees who collectively can attain those goals. Therefore, employees must be able to sustain good performance and consistently deliver outstanding output. Employee work performance is demonstrated by an employee's achievements after exerting extra effort in their work (Iqbal et al., 2015).

In an organization, individuals often work in groups and teams comprising people with different backgrounds, opinions, and ideas (Ahmed et al., 2016). These dynamics test their skills in conflict management and relationship building with colleagues. Employers actively seek an individual that with great interpersonal skills as they believe that employees who possess such skills are likely to deliver outstanding work performance and collaborate effectively in teams. In this context, effective emotional intelligence management can assist employees navigate challenging situations with empathy, communicate effectively, and foster positive relationships in the workplace. Ultimately, this contributes to team performance and overall organizational success.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is defined as an ability to recognize one's feelings better than others, self-motivate, and adeptly manage one's thoughts and relationships (Goleman, 2005). It is also known as "Emotional Quotient" and encompasses the ability to understand and assess people's actions, attitudes, and create a more favorable, both within the organization and elsewhere (Afza et al., 2019). Emotional intelligence is an individual competency that helps overcome any obstacles in achieving work-related assignments and allows individuals to control their emotions while pursuing those goals (Ahmed et al., 2016). It requires maturity and empathy on the part of the employee to acknowledge emotions and transform them from turning negative which could potentially harm work relationships and goals (Ahmed et al., 2016).

In today's highly competitive environment, employees need to be equipped with effective emotional intelligence management to cope with the pressure they may encounter, as it can have mental and physical impact on them (Krishnan et al. 2018). As the organization becomes more productive, the workload of employees tends to increase. Some employees may start to feel burdened and emotionally stressed, which can lead to difficulties in keeping up with the work tempo and subsequently affect their work performance.

It is important to note that emotional intelligence can act as a driver for regulating, directing, and controlling the emotional, personal, and social competencies of employees at work (Goleman, 2005). As such, emotional intelligence has a significant impact on work performance. Employees with good emotional intelligence skills can effectively manage their own emotions easily, which in turn, helps maintain a positive mental state and leads to increased performance at work (Kaur & Sharma, 2019; Ramanauskas, 2016).

Goleman (1998) developed an emotional intelligence model that consists of four key emotional constructs. Firstly, self-awareness refers to the "ability to accurately assess one's own emotions, motivations, strengths and hunches…" (Singh et al., 2022, p.2261). Self-awareness consists of emotional abilities that enable an individual to be more productive and build good relationships in the workplace (Okpara and Agwu, 2015). Building good relationships can create harmony and a peaceful working environment, ultimately influencing employees to perform well.

A previous study found that people who are aware of their own emotions tend to be more productive in their jobs (Okpara & Agwu, 2015). They feel confident about themselves and are able to channel that positive emotion into successfully completing tasks. Additionally, employees who know their strength can apply them to the right situation, while those aware of their weakness can acknowledge and manage them effectively to prevent any negative

impact on their work. Increased self-awareness fosters confidence, allowing employees to give their best performance at work. Thus, it can be hypothesized that

H1: There is a positive relationship between self-awareness with employee work performance.

The second emotional construct is self-management that refers to "the ability to control one's emotions in a productive way, to have strong principles and to defer gratification in order to achieve one's goal and to be resilient…" (Singh et al., 2022, p.2261). Self-management, also known as self-regulation, is where an individual can manage him/herself, regulate their feelings in all circumstances, and behave accordingly (Afza et al., 2019). Self-regulation is related to the capacity of people to control their feelings, allowing them to recover from psychological distress more quickly. A person with self-regulations would have an ability to control themselves from reacting negatively by remaining calm whenever they are involved in a work conflict or bad situation.

Self-regulation encompasses both behavioral and emotional aspects. Behaviorally, self-regulation is the ability to act in one's long-term best interest, consistent with their deepest values. It refers to the desire to behave in ways that align with their core principles and best interest in the long run. On the other hand, in terms of emotional aspect, self-regulation requires the ability to cool oneself down when experiencing anger and cheer up when feeling down. The ability to manage these emotions allows employees to work in the desired atmosphere that enables them to consistently produce outstanding work results. When actual performance does not meet a self-set standard, such as individual expectations, self-regulation requires action to bring oneself in line with the self-set standard (Heidemeier & Moser, 2019).

Individuals who exhibit high self-regulations are more likely to perform their job very well. Employees with self-regulation act professionally and successfully perform their work due to their positive attitudes, self-motivation, willingness to learn, and adaptability, all of which contribute to improved performance (Krishnan et al. 2018). Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H2: There is a positive relationship between self-regulations and employee work performance.

The third emotional construct based on Goleman (1998) is self-motivation. Initially, motivation is defined as the need for an individual to show the best performance and willingness to exert the necessary effort (Ghaffari, Shah, Burgoyne & Nazri, 2017). Motivation could help in increasing individual performance and productivity, as well as influencing strength and increase performance to achieve target (Ravesangar et al., 2018). Self-motivation is characterized by an individual's inner desire to do and achieve something, fueled by a fiery passion to prove oneself (Afza et al., 2019). Also known as intrinsic motivation, it is developed within the individual based on their inner will and without being coerced by others (Lee & Nurul, 2018). In other words, it is a driving force that compels an individual to act in a certain way. They act naturally because they believe it is the right thing to do and that it will increase their productivity in any work task. Moreover, research has revealed that the motivation of employees can be improved through various means like skills development, increasing level of responsibility, fostering a positive attitude, and introducing rewards (Kaur & Sharma, 2019).

All employees need to be self-motivated in order to progress and find purpose in their actions. Each employee has their motivating factors, which may differ from others. They need to be able to identify those factors on their own and use them as driving forces to achieve their goals. Motivators will influence the employee's actions and behaviors that can help employees to take initiative in improving themselves to become better. As the intrinsic motivation of the employees increases, so does their performance (Lee & Nurul, 2018). Employees with intrinsic motivation would continuously be determined to improve their work performance. By possessing clear self-motivation, employees can push themselves to produce their best work performance as they can go through and adapt to any kind of work environment that is given to them. Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H3: There is a positive relationship between self-motivation and employee work performance.

The last emotional construct suggested by Goleman (1998) is social skills. It refers to the "…ability to engage, lead, negotiate and persuade others within group…" (Singh et al., 2022, p.2261). Social skills also known as relationship management, encompass the ability of an individual to communicate with others without being hesitant, improve interpersonal skills, freely engage with various community, share opinions openly and take initiatives in interaction (Afza et al. 2019). An employee needs to have good social skills to build and maintain a good relationship with others. This includes the ability to meet each other's needs and also exchanging information regarding how they felt among each other.

Most jobs indeed require high social interaction between employees and others. Social skills could help employees to connect with others and at the same time increase their efficiency in performing work. This is especially relevant in teamwork scenarios as many employers now assign a task that requires the employees to collaborate in a group. Working in a team is believed to expedite task completion and improve overall effectiveness. Employees with higher social skills can help improve team performance, beyond what their task specific skills alone might suggest (Weidmann & Deming, 2021). Furthermore, high relationship management skills contribute to a more functional and higher performing team. This is due to each team member is understand how to interact with one another, capitalizing on different knowledge, skills, and abilities (Krishnan et al. 2018). The synergy among members of the team fosters greater effectiveness and collective success in achieving team goals.

Employees who have improve their relationship management skills can transform their bad performance from subpar to desired level as they positively influence management and all stakeholders, thus enabling them to have all the required resources that enhance their output (Victoroff & Boyatzis, 2012). Senior and well experienced colleagues can play a crucial role in guiding and directing employees on the right path to success. Employees would then be highly motivated to give the best performance and keep on socializing with colleagues instead of being anti-social and never being able to develop themselves (Treadway et al., 2013). Furthermore, the employees can count on their senior and colleagues' valuable advice, given their mutual understanding and shared working context within the same organization. Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H4: There is a positive relationship between social skills and employee work performance.

Figure 1 depicts the research framework comprising of emotional intelligence model based on Goleman (1998) and work performance. This framework is adopted from (Mafuzah and Juraifa, 2016).
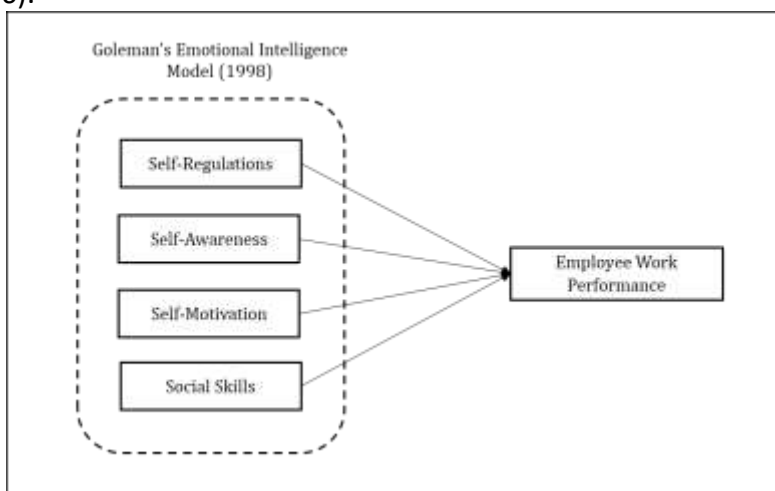

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Methodology
Sampling and Data Collection

The purpose of this research is to investigate the influence of emotional intelligence on work performance among public sector employees. Non-probability sampling, specifically convenient sampling method was employed to select employees working in a chosen government agency as participants in this research. A survey research design is employed, and a structured questionnaire was distributed electronically. Leveraging the popularity of digital social media, the questionnaire was distributed to employees via Whatsapp and Telegram. The questionnaire was first developed using Google Forms, then the Google Forms link was sent out to WhatsApp and Telegram group chats that comprising all employees of the agency. While email remains a common medium for distributing electronic questionnaire, the utilization of group chats in social media platform significantly facilitated the online survey distribution and improved the survey acceptance among potential respondents (Verma & Rastogi, 2023).

Instrument

The questionnaire consists of six parts, comprising a total of forty-six (46) items. Part A collects demographic information such as age, gender, marital status, qualification, race, and years of service in the organization. Part B includes eight questions to measure the dependent variable which is employee work performance. The work performance scale was adopted from (Koopmans et al., 2014). Part C, D, E and F represent the four independent variables (self-regulation, self-awareness, self-motivation, and social skills) containing a total of 32 items. The emotional intelligence scale was adopted from Mehta and Singh (2013). All items in Part B until F utilize Five-Point Likert Scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Moreover, all instruments used in this study demonstrate an acceptable Cronbach's Alpha values which ranging from 0.783 (work performance), 0.761 (self-regulations), 0.801 (self-awareness), 0.868 (self-motivation), 0.844 (social skills).

Findings

This section presents the respondent's profile, reliability analysis, descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis.

Demographic Analysis

Table 1 displays the profiles of the respondents, comprising a total of 136 responses received over a two-week period. Among the respondents, 55.9% identified as female, while 44.1% identified as male. In terms of age distribution, the largest group consisted of respondents aged 31 to 40 years (36.8%), followed by those aged 41 to 50 years (35.3%), 21 to 30 years (19.1%), and over 50 years (8.8%). With regards to marital status, the majority of respondents indicated they were married (72.1%), while 27.9% reported themselves as single. In terms of race, the majority of respondents identified as Malay (96.3%), followed by Indian (2.2%) and Chinese (1.5%). Concerning educational qualifications, the highest proportion of respondents held an SPM qualification (44.9%), followed by Diploma graduates (33.1%), STPM (9.6%), bachelor's degree (6.6%), and master's degree (5.9%). Lastly, in terms of years of service, the data indicates that the highest number of respondents (42.6%) have worked between 1 to 5 years, closely followed by those with 6 to 10 years of service (40.4%). Additionally, 8.8% reported having less than 1 year of service, while 8.1% reported having more than 10 years of service.

Table 1
Profile of Respondents

Items	Categories	Frequency (N=136)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	76	55.9
	Male	60	44.1
Age	21-30 years	26	19.1
	31-40 years	50	36.8
	41-50 years	48	35.3
	50 above	12	8.8
Marital Status	Single	38	27.9
	Married	98	72.1
Race	Malay	131	96.3
	Chinese	2	1.5
	Indian	3	2.2
Academic Qualification	SPM	61	44.9
	STPM	13	9.6
	Diploma	45	33.1
	Bachelor's degree	9	6.6
	Master	8	5.9
Years of Service	< 1 year	12	8.8
	1-5 years	58	42.6
	6-10 years	55	40.4
	>10 years	11	8.1

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to describe, examine and summarize the main features of collected data. These statistics provide the average mean scores of the employees regarding their emotional intelligence constructs and work performance. Table 2 shows the descriptive analysis for each variable in the study. The mean is used to measure the central tendency of the arithmetic average of the scores. The mean scores range from 4.0625 (Work Performance), 3.7086 (Self-Regulations), 4.1581 (Self-Awareness), 4.0404 (Self-Motivation), and 4.1066 (Social Skills). The highest means is observed in the self-awareness construct, while the lowest means is found in self-regulations construct. Meanwhile, standard deviation is used to measure variability of the square root of variance providing an index of variability in the distribution of scores. In other words, a small standard deviation indicates that the data are tightly clustered around the mean, and high standard deviation indicates data are more widely spread out from the means value. The standard deviation for the variables of employee work performance, self-regulations, self-awareness, self-motivation and social skills is 0.46473, 0.48972, 0.44882, 0.52548 and 0.52452 respectively.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Work Performance	4.0625	0.46473
Self-Regulations	3.7086	0.48972
Self-Awareness	4.1581	0.44882
Self-Motivation	4.0404	0.52548
Social Skills	4.1066	0.52452

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

Correlation analysis is a statistical method used to examine whether and to what degree an association exists between two or more quantifiable variables. Correlation is used to look at the 'net strength' relationship between two continuous variables (Sweet & Martin, 2008). In this study, correlation analysis was performed to investigate the relationships between employee work performance and the emotional intelligence constructs, including self-regulations, self-awareness, self-motivation, and social skills. Table 3 presents the results of the correlation analysis, which provides valuable insights into the interrelationships between the variables of the study.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Work Performance	1				
Self-regulations	0.546**	1			
Self-awareness	0.650**	0.488**	1		
Self-motivation	0.682**	0.500**	0.703**	1	
Social skills	0.591**	0.436**	0.498**	0.634**	1

Based on Table 3, there is a moderate correlation with substantial relationship (Law, 1973) between employee work performance and self-regulations (r = 0.546, p<0.01). Secondly, there is a positively moderate correlation with substantial relationship between employee work performance and self-awareness (r = 0.650, p<0.01). The relationship between work performance and self-motivation also shows a positively moderate correlation with substantial relationship (r = 0.682, p<0.01). And lastly, there is also a positively moderate correlation with substantial relationship between employee work performance and social skills (r = 0.591, p<0.01).

Multiple Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is used to measure the amount of percentage from the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables. Table 4 shows the result of regression analysis of four independent variables: self-regulations, self-awareness, self-motivation and social skills against employee work performance.

Table 4
Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.537	0.273		1.970	.051
Self-Regulations	0.183	0.064	0.193	2.846	.005
Self-Awareness	0.275	0.084	0.266	3.254	.001
Self-Motivation	0.238	0.080	0.269	2.970	.004
Social Skills	0.180	0.066	0.204	2.737	.007
F- value	45.566				
Sig.	.000				
Adjusted R^2	.569				
R^2	.582				

R^2 indicates the percentage variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the variation in the independent variables. As shown in Table 4, the R^2 of 0.582 implies that all the independent variables which consist of self-regulations, self-awareness, self-motivation

and social skills explain 58.2% of the variance in dependent variable which is employee work performance. However, it is important to note that 41.8% of the variance in the employee work performance is not explained by self-regulations, self-awareness, self-motivation and social skills. This suggests the possibility of other independent variables not included in this study, which could further strengthen the regression equation. Meanwhile, the F-test is significant based on the p-value (given by F-Sig.) below 0.05. Therefore, the linear model is overall valid, (F=45.566, p< 0.05).

From the table, all emotional intelligence variables that are self-regulations (p = .005), self-awareness (p = .001), self-motivation (p = .004) and social skills (p = .007) have a significant relationship with work performance (p<0.05). The analysis also shows that the most important (strongest) independent variable (regressor) would be self-motivation as the magnitude of corresponding standardized coefficient is the largest, with a beta weight of 0.269; p = 0.004. The acceptability of the hypothesis developed is summarized in Table 5 below. Based on the hypotheses testing, it reveals that there is a positive relationship between employee work performance and four independent variables — self-regulations, self-awareness, self-motivation, social skills. Therefore, this shows that all four hypotheses in this study are accepted. These results affirm the significant influence of emotional intelligence on employee work performance, suggesting the notion that higher levels of self-regulation, self-awareness, self-motivation, and social skills would contribute to a better work performance outcome among public sector employees.

Table 5
Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Statement of Hypotheses	Result
H1	There is a positive relationship between self-regulations and employee work performance.	ACCEPTED
H2	There is a positive relationship between self-awareness and employee work performance.	ACCEPTED
H3	There is a positive relationship between self-motivation and employee work performance.	ACCEPTED
H4	There is a positive relationship between social skills and employee work performance.	ACCEPTED

Discussion
The objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence (self-regulation, self-awareness, self-motivation, and social skills) with employee work performance. Based on the hypotheses testing, all four hypotheses are accepted, revealing a significant and positive relationship between emotional intelligence and work performance. Notably, self-motivation emerges as the strongest predictor of work performance. Employees with high self-motivation are likely to possess greater determination, a positive attitude, and a willingness to continuously improve their work

performance. This intrinsic drive helps them excel in their tasks and achieve better work outcomes.

The analysis also underscores the significance of self-regulation in contributing to the improved work performance of employees. Individuals with effective self-regulation are adept at controlling their emotions and reactions. For instance, if the employee is under job stress, they could quickly recover from their psychological distress and still be able to give the best work performance instead of letting the stress affect their work. This finding is consistent with previous studies conducted by Krishnan et al (2018) in the oil and gas sector as well as Arthi Ra and Sumathi (2016), all of which demonstrated a positive correlation between self-regulation and job performance.

The second research objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between self-awareness and employee work performance. The hypotheses testing shows that self-awareness is positively and significantly related to employee work performance. Employees who possess a high level of self-awareness tend to experience greater success in their roles. Self-awareness plays an important role in an employee's ability to be successful because it enables them to determine and understand their strengths and weaknesses. With this understanding, employees can leverage their strengths to excel in their work and achieve success. Furthermore, self-aware employees are also more likely to be conscious of their areas of improvement and actively seek opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills at work. The findings of this research align with past studies conducted by (Pourkiani et al., 2016). They found that emotional intelligence, particularly self-awareness and self-regulation, had a positive impact on organizational commitment. Job satisfaction resulting from self-awareness can lead to a stronger sense of commitment to the organization, ultimately influencing an employee's work performance positively. Similarly, Krishnan et al (2018); Mafuzah and Juraifa (2016), the current research supports the notion that self-awareness contribute to better employee work performance. When employees are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, they are better equipped to align their actions with their strengths and proactively address areas for improvement, resulting in enhanced job performance.

The third research objective of this study is to explore the relationship between self-motivation and employee work performance. The results of the hypotheses testing indicate that self-motivation is indeed a significant factor influencing employee work performance in the public sector. Interestingly, among all the variables examined, self-motivation has the most substantial impact on employee work performance. The findings suggest that developing emotional intelligence skills among public sector employees can lead to better control of their emotions and enhance their self-motivation (Afza et al., 2019). While some individuals may find value in extrinsic motivation, such as financial rewards or incentives provided by the employer, intrinsic motivation or self-motivation is even more valuable as it arises from within an individual. Employees who are intrinsically motivated possess a strong inner drive that propels them forward towards work success. They are self-driven to excel and continuously seek improvement, resulting in their best performance.

Self-motivated employees also are more likely to take the initiative in their own personal and professional development, leading to improved job performance. They are not solely dependent on external rewards or recognition; instead, they have an internal desire to perform well and achieve their goals. These findings are consistent with previous research conducted by Lee and Nurul (2018) among employees of coal mining companies in North Borneo Province, where intrinsic motivation significantly influenced work performance. The

rewards and recognition provided by organizations can act as a form of self-motivation, encouraging employees to perform well and achieve success. Similarly, the current study's findings align with the research by Mafuzah and Juraifa (2016) among Malaysian teachers, which also demonstrated a positive relationship between self-motivation and employee work performance.

The final objective of this research is to investigate the relationship between social skills and employee work performance. The results of the hypotheses testing indicate that social skills have a positive and significant impact on employee work performance. One possible explanation for this finding is the close relationship between colleagues in the workplace, which fosters teamwork. Employees with good social skills are adept at building and maintaining positive relationships with their colleagues, leading to a harmonious and cooperative work environment. Good social skills play a critical role in resolving conflicts and addressing any hard feelings that may arise between colleagues. When employees can effectively communicate and collaborate with one another, it prevents conflicts from escalating that later negatively affect an employee's work performance. This ability to work well with others and foster a positive work environment is a valuable asset in achieving success in the workplace.

The current findings are consistent with research conducted by Krishnan et al (2018), which also found a positive relationship between relationship management (social skills) and employee job performance. In their study, they observed that employees who had a good relationship with their colleagues and sought advice from senior employees were more likely to perform well. The guidance and support from experienced colleagues helped employees overcome work-related challenges and achieve better performance. Similarly, the findings of the current research align with the study by Wangari et al (2019), which found that relationship management (social skills) significantly predict work performance of employees who worked in insurance firms in Kenya. The ability to effectively manage relationships and interactions with colleagues positively impacted the employees' overall job performance.

Conclusion

To sum up, this research emphasizes the significance of emotional intelligence on employee work performance. The results of this research provide additional evidence on the influence of emotional intelligence and work performance in the context of the public sector. Emotional intelligence helps employees not only to cope with work challenges but also to use and display the right emotions that could strengthen them and lead to success. Most organizations are keen to employ individuals who are well-equipped with good emotional intelligence management, in addition to focusing on their work-related skills and knowledge. This is because they believe that an employee with good emotional intelligence can always perform well in any work task or environment given to them. Therefore, every organization should now raise awareness among their employees that emotional intelligence can increase their performance.

Implication for Future Research

In future research, it is recommended that other scholars explore this topic among employees working in different sectors. Since employees in various sectors may have distinct workloads and working environments, this could provide varied insights into how emotional intelligence impacts employee work performance. Additionally, conducting research with a

larger sample size across diverse industries or work sectors could yield more intriguing findings regarding the effects of emotional intelligence on employee performance. Furthermore, it is worth considering the inclusion of additional independent variables, as the ones used in this study accounted for only 58.2% of the variance in employee job performance. For example, self-development could be examined, as employees who actively develop themselves tend to experience higher job satisfaction and commitment, leading to improved performance (Hameed & Waheed, 2011).

Implication for Practice

The findings of this research highlight the significant role of emotional intelligence in employee performance management. Among all dimensions of emotional intelligence examined in this study, self-motivation is found to be the most influential one. Self-motivation differs from actual motivation as it involves more personal involvement that could push employees to move forward. Intrinsic motivation, which comes from within, is more powerful than extrinsic motivation that relies on external rewards or recognition. Employees who are intrinsically motivated are self-driven and strive for excellence without necessarily seeking tangible rewards; their satisfaction comes from performing well and achieving their goals. Thus, it is proposed that the organization should focus on fostering and maintaining a motivated workforce. For a start, employers should prepare a work environment that will enable employees to be motivated (Ghaffari et al., 2017). A conducive work environment that supports employee growth, provides opportunities for learning and development, and recognizes outstanding performance can significantly impact employees' inner drive and commitment to their work.

Moreover, employers can identify the factors that motivate an employee to perform well. This might be challenging because employees with different backgrounds may have varying preferences, thus, it is crucial for employers to adopt a personalized approach to understand what motivates each individual employee. As emotional intelligence pertains to individual initiatives in managing and controlling emotions, it empowers individuals to navigate social interactions and relationships in the workplace and cope with work challenges effectively. In this context, employers play an important role in providing support to facilitate their employees' improvement in managing their emotions. A training and development program related to emotional intelligence in the workplace could be helpful for employees, enabling them to educate themselves about the importance of having the ability to manage their emotions. This, in turn, ensures the provision of the best services to the public, ultimately contributing to the success of the government agency.

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