

Relationship between Occupational Stress, Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance: An Empirical Study in Malaysia

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***Abstract.** This study was conducted to examine the effect of emotional intelligence in the relationship between occupational stress and job performance using 104 usable questionnaires gathered from academic employees who work in private institutions of higher learning in Kuching City, Malaysia. The outcomes of testing research hypothesis using a stepwise regression analysis showed that relationship between occupational stress and emotional intelligence significantly correlated with job performance. Statistically, the result confirms that the inclusion of emotional intelligence in the analysis has mediated the effect of occupational stress on job performance in the organizational sector sample. Further, implications and discussion are elaborated.*

Keywords: occupational stress; emotional intelligence; job performance.

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JEL Codes: M12.
REL Codes: 14C.

Introduction

In organizational context, occupational stress is also known as job stress and/or work stress. These terms are often used interchangeably in organizations, but its meaning refers to the same thing (AbuAlRub, 2004, Harrison, 1978, Jamal, 1985, Larson, 2004). It has two major dimensions: physiological stress and psychological stress. Physiological stress is often viewed as a physiological reaction of the body (headache, migraine, abdominal pain, lethargic, backache, chest pain, fatigue, heart palpitation, sleep disturbance and muscle ache) to various stressful triggers at the workplace that directly and negatively affects an individual's productivity, effectiveness, quality of work and personal health (George, Jones, 1996, Newell, 2002, World Health Organization, 2005). For example, changes in eating, drinking, sleeping and smoking habits (Beehr et al., 2001, Sadri, 1997). While psychological stress is often seen as an emotional reaction (anxiety and depression burnout, job alienation, hostility, depression, tension, anger, nervousness, irritability and frustration) experienced by an individual as a result from the stimulate at the workplace (Luthans, 1992, Millward, 2005, World Health Organization, 2005).

In terms of eustress perspective, occupational stress occurs when employees' knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes can cope with or match to their work demands and pressures in organizations. In this situation, it may increase the ability of employees to manage their physiological and psychological stresses (Adler et al., 2006,

Cartwright, Cooper, 1997, Wetzel et al., 2006, World Health Organization, 2005). Conversely, in a distress perspective, occupational stress presents when employees' knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes cannot cope with or do not match to their work demands and pressures in organizations. Consequently, it may decrease the ability of employees to control and manage physiological and psychological stresses, such as disturb their self-regulatory bodies, and cannot meet their duties and responsibilities as a member of an organization and a good citizen of a country (Basowitz et al., 1995, Cartwright, Cooper, 1997).

Recent studies in this area show that the ability of employees to manage their physiological and psychological stresses may have a significant impact on job performance (Hsieh et al., 2004, Leka et al., 2003, Wetzel et al., 2006). Job performance is often defined as the ability of individuals to accomplish their respective work goals, meet their expectations, achieve benchmarks or attain their organizational goals (Bohlander et al., 2001, Campbell, 1990, Eysenck, 1998). In an occupational stress model, several scholars believe that the ability of employees to properly control and manage their physiological and psychological stresses in performing job may lead to higher job performance in organizations (Adler et al., 2006, Hourani et al., 2006, Wetzel et al., 2006, Zhong et al., 2006). This finding is significant, but it has neglected to explain about how effect of occupational stress on job performance is not consistent in different situations (Karasek, Theorell, 1990, Lazarus, 1994, Spector and Goh, 2001, Wetzel et al., 2006).

Surprisingly, a thorough review of such relationships reveals that effect of occupational stress on job performance is not consistent when emotional intelligence is present in organizations (Diggins, 2004, Lyons, Schneider, 2005, Lopes et al., 2006, Slaski, Cartwright, 2002). Many scholars, such as Goleman (1998, 2003), Manna et al. (2009), and Salovey and Mayer (1990, 1997) state that emotional intelligence (EI) has two major dimensions: interpersonal competency (how well we manage ourselves) and intrapersonal competency (how well we interact with others). According to Goleman (1998), interpersonal competency consists of three components, i.e., self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation. Interpersonal competency includes two components, i.e., empathy and social skills. Self-awareness refers to the ability of individuals to recognize their strengths, emotions, worth and capabilities. Self-regulation is often seen as the ability of individuals to resist emotional wish (think before acting). Motivation is often related to the internal driving force that enables individuals to focus on the task at hand and continue to reach the desired goals. Empathy is frequently viewed as the ability of individuals to understand the feelings of others and this may help them to act on those feelings and meet others' needs. Social skills are needed to develop and nurture good working relationships. Relying on an organizational behavior perspective, several scholars generally conclude that EI is a group of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills (Bar-On, 1997), as well as a form of social intelligence (Salovey, Mayer, 1990, 1997) where EI will act as a catalyst to

increase the ability of individuals to identify emotions, use emotions to guide thinking and actions, understand and manage emotions, and to promote emotional and intellectual growth. If EI is properly managed this may motivate employees to properly handle external demands and pressures (Bar-On, 1997, Salovey, Meyer, 1990, 1997).

In the workplace stress framework, many scholars think that occupational stress, emotional intelligence and job performance are distinct constructs, but strongly interrelated. For example, the ability of employees to properly manage their emotions and other employees' emotions will increase the ability of employees to cope with physiological and psychological stresses in implementing job. As a result, it may lead to higher job performance in organizations (Bar-On, 1997, Gillespie et al., 2001, Spector, Goh, 2001). However the relationship has been studied, little is known about the mediating effect of emotional intelligence in occupational stress research literature (Slaski, Cartwright, 2002, 2003, Nikolau, Tsaosis, 2002). Hence, a further investigation about the nature of this relationship is imperative.

1. Objective of the study

This study has two major objectives: first, to measure the relationship between occupational stress and job performance. Second, to measure the effect of psychological stress and emotional intelligence on the job performance. Location of this study is private institutions of higher learning in Kuching City, Malaysia. For confidential reasons, the name of the studied organization is kept anonymous.

2. Literature review

2.1. Relationship between occupational stress and job performance

Several recent studies used an indirect effects model to examine occupational stress based on different samples, such as 178 academic and general staff in 15 Australian universities (Gillespie et al., 2001), 320 middle managers working in a major United Kingdom retailer (Slaski, Cartwright, 2002), and 212 professionals from a mental health institution in Greece (Nikolau, Tsaosis, 2002). Findings from these surveys showed that the ability of employees to use their emotions and regulate other employee emotions in performing job will decrease their physiological and psychological stresses. Consequently, it could lead to higher job performance in organizations (Gillespie et al., 2001, Slaski, Cartwright, 2002, Nikolau, Tsaosis, 2002).

The findings are consistent with the notion of human emotion theories. For example, general human emotion theories, such as Harrison's (1978) person-environment (P-E) fit model, and Karasek and Theorell's (1990) job-demand-control model, state that individuals who have faced high work demands with low work-control will have difficulties to meet the job demands, this may lead to increased occupational strains. Lazarus's (1994) transactional stress model explains that inability of individuals' cognitive processes and emotional reactions to manage strain environments may lead to increased occupational tensions. Spector and Goh's (2001) emotion-centered model of occupational stress posits that individuals who feel stressful when exposing with an event

in particular environments may experience occupational strains. Cannon-bard theory of emotion (Cannon, 1927) states that a person who experiences physiological stress (e.g., heart attack) may simultaneously experience psychological stress (e.g., mental illness). Then, the concept has been expanded by Mueller and Maluf (2002) to establish a physical stress theory, which posits that the level of one's physical stress will determine the person's predictable biological response. For instance, a person who can habitually reduce his/her level of physical stress will be more experience a positive biological response compared to a person who often has high level of physical stress. This situation may lead to higher job performance (Hsieh et al., 2004, Gillespie et al., 2001, Slaski, Cartwright, 2002).

Ursin and Eriksen's cognitive arousal theory of stress states that a person's feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and inability to cope in stressful situations can trigger lower emotional health, which can potentially lead to higher negative attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, such as feelings of frustration, deprivation or discontentment (Ursin, Eriksen, 2002), and lower performance (Leka et al., 2003, Slaski, Cartwright, 2002). Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory proposes that if a person has high self-efficacy (i.e. belief to his/her ability in executing a course of action) this will not invoke his/her negative cognitive thoughts. Application of this theory in an occupational stress model shows that if persons have high belief to use their abilities in handling job stressors can result in higher job performance (Nikolau, Tsaosis, 2002, Wetzel et al., 2006). Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: There is a significant relationship between occupational stress and job performance.

2.2. Relationship between occupational stress, emotional intelligence and job performance

Several recent studies used an indirect effects model to examine occupational stress based on different samples, such as 178 academic and general staff in 15 Australian universities (Gillespie et al., 2001), 320 middle managers working in a major United Kingdom retailer (Slaski, Cartwright, 2002), and 212 professionals from a mental health institution in Greece (Nikolau, Tsaosis, 2002). Findings from these surveys showed that the properly controlled physiological and psychological stresses had increased employee capabilities to manage (understand, use and regulate) their emotions and other employee emotions in implementing job. As a result, it may lead to higher job performance (Gillespie et al., 2001, Slaski, Cartwright, 2002, Nikolau, Tsaosis, 2002).

The findings are consistent with the notion of emotional intelligence theory, which posits that individuals who have sufficient interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies can properly handle their emotions (i.e., self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation) and regulate other employee emotions (i.e., empathy and social skills) to cope with environmental challenges (Bar-On, 1997, Goleman, 1998, 2003, Salovey, Mayer, 1990,

1997). Specifically, Bar-On's (1997) model of emotional-social intelligence posits that the level of emotional intelligence will increase individuals' competencies and this may help them to decrease external demands and pressures, as well as increase human well-being. Salovey and Mayer's (1990, 1997) ability based model of emotional intelligence explains that the level of emotional intelligence will increase individuals' competencies and this can increase their ability to decrease stress situations and increase positive individual attitudes and behaviors. Goleman's (1998, 2003) emotional intelligence stresses that the level of emotional intelligence will increase individuals' competencies and this may help them to decrease environmental strains and increase leadership effectiveness in organizations. Application of the emotional intelligence theories in a workplace stress management shows that the ability of employees to properly manage their emotions and other employee emotions will not directly increase job performance, but its effect on job performance may increase if employees have sufficient abilities to cope with physiological and psychological stresses in the workplace (Gillespie et al., 2001, Harrison, 1978, Karasek, Theorell, 1990, Lazarus, 1994, Slaski, Cartwright, 2002, 2003, Nikolau, Tsaosis, 2002).

The literature has been used as foundation of developing a conceptual framework for this study as shown in Figure 1.

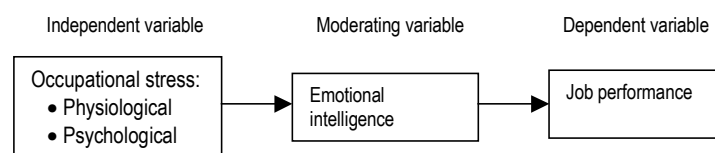


Figure 1. *Conceptual framework*

Based on the framework, it can be hypothesized that:

H3: Emotional intelligence mediates the effect of occupational stress on job performance.

H4: Emotional intelligence mediates the effect of occupational stress on job performance.

3. Research methodology

This study used a cross-sectional method which allowed the researchers to integrate the occupational stress research literature, the in-depth interview, the pilot study and the actual survey as a main procedure to collect data. The use of such methods may gather accurate, less bias and high quality data (Cresswell, 1998, Sekaran, 2003). In the first step of data collection, in-depth interviews were conducted involving four experienced academic employees, namely two female lecturers and two male lecturers who have working experienced from 3 to 20 years. This interview was used to understand the nature of occupational stress features, emotional intelligence and job performance characteristics, as well as the relationship between such variables in the organizational sector. The information

gathered from such interviews was categorized and constantly compared to the related literature review in order to clearly understand the particular phenomena under study and put the research results in a proper context. Further, the results of the triangulated information were used as a guideline to develop the content of survey questionnaires for a pilot study.

Next, pilot study was done by discussing pilot questionnaires with the lecturers. Information gathered from such participants was used to verify the content and format of survey questionnaire for an actual study. Back translation technique was used to translate the content of questionnaires in Malay and English in order to increase the validity and reliability of the instrument (Hulland, 1999, Wright, 1996).

Table 1 shows the validated items used in the actual survey questionnaires where it has three sections: physiological stress, psychological stress, and job performance. All items used in the questionnaires were measured using a 5-item scale ranging from “never/does not meet” (1) to “always/exceeds all expectation” (5). Demographic variables were used as controlling variables because this study focused on employee attitudes.

Table 1

Survey questionnaire items

Variable	Item	Source of information
Occupational stress	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Headache and/or coldness or hand and/or feet, 2. Indigestion and/or abdominal pain, 3. Backache and/or muscle ache and/or chest pain, 4. Sleeplessness and/or irregular sleep habits, 5. Weight loss or weight gain, 6. Breakouts of pimples and/or acne, 7. Excessive sweating, 8. Colds and/or flu, 9. Slower recovery from illnesses, 10. Feel unable to cope in my work, 11. Feel angry/fearful/anxious/depressed about workload, 12. Find it difficult to control emotions, 13. Feel confuse and/or cannot concentrate. 	<p>8 items were adapted from Seaward's (2005) physiological stress scale.</p> <p>5 items were developed based on Psychological stress literature (Beehr et al., 2001, Cox et al., 2000, Newel1, 2002).</p>
Job performance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I state clearly the course objectives and grading procedures, 2. I prepare well-planned and organized presentation, 3. I am confident of my comprehensive knowledge and mastery of subject matter of each course, 4. I serve competently in completing all departmental, faculty, and university responsibilities, 5. I devote adequate time and thoughts to work assignments and resource allocations, 6. The quantity of work I produce meets or occasionally exceeds job expectations, 7. I constantly discuss career interests, provide advise and feedback to staff and inspire them, 8. I effectively delegate to subordinates with clear directives and guidelines, 9. I lead, motivate, and work closely with subordinates under me, 10. I am frequently successful in reaching a common understanding with others through verbal and non-verbal communication, 11. I serve as a resource person and provide professional consultancy necessary for the technical subject matter which I am specialized in, 12. I demonstrate a strong sense of work ethic, 13. I am motivated, dedicated and demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility when a task is assigned, 14. I maintain timely and accurate records on student performance and other kinds of required evaluation criteria, 15. I work cooperatively and effectively with departmental colleagues, University administration and staff. 	<p>5 items were adapted from job performance literature (AbuAlRub, 2004, Adler et al., 2006, Beehr et al., 2001, Hourani et al., 2006, Hsieh et al., 2004).</p>
Emotional intelligence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt positive thinking and/or good self-talk, 2. Having good understanding of own emotions 3. Finding right words to express what I feel about an issue, 4. Considering own feelings in decision making or problem-solving, 5. Calming down quickly, 6. Setting goals for myself and try my best to achieve them, 7. Remaining focused on what I am doing, 8. Thinking through what I have done and said, 9. Controlling my anger and/or frustration, 10. Handling difficulties rationally, 11. Thinking positively. 	<p>11 items were modified from (Consortium for Research on emotional intelligence literature Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, 2008, Goleman,1998, 2003, Salovey Mayer, 1990, 1997, Stough, 2003).</p>

The number of private institutions of higher learning actively operating in Kuching City, Malaysia is 36 (Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia, 2008). Of the number, 9 private institutions were agreed to participate in this study. The targeted population for this study is academic employees who work in the studied organizations. In the first step of data collection, the researchers met HR managers of the studied organizations to get their opinions about the rules for distributing survey questionnaires in their organizations. Considering the organizational rules, a quota sampling was used to determine the number of sample size based on the period of study and budget constraints, are 200 academic employees. After that, a convenient sampling was chosen to distribute survey questionnaires because the list of registered employees was not given to the researchers and this situation did not allow the researchers to choose randomly respondents in the organizations. Therefore, 200 survey questionnaires were distributed to employees who were willing to answer the questionnaires. Of that total, 104 usable questionnaires were returned to the researchers, yielding 52 percent response rate. The number of this sample exceeds the minimum sample of 30 participants as required by probability sampling technique, showing that it may be analyzed using inferential statistics (Sekaran, 2003). The survey questionnaires were answered by participants based on their consents and a voluntarily basis.

A Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0 was used to analyze

the questionnaire data. Firstly, exploratory factor analysis (varimax rotation) and confirmatory factor analysis (i.e., Kaiser Meyer Olkin, Bartlett's test of sphericity, eigenvalues, variance explained and reliability) were used to assess the validity and reliability of measurement scales (Hair et al., 2006). Secondly, analysis of variance, Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics were conducted to assess the research variables and the usefulness of the data set (Foster et al., 1998, Yaacob, 2008). Finally, a stepwise regression analysis was used to assess the direct relationship between variables as well as show the causal relationship and the nature of relationship between variables. It can accurately quantify the magnitude and direction of each independent variable, and vary the mediating variable relationship between many independent variables and one dependent variable (Berenson, Levine, 1992, Foster et al., 1998). According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the mediator variable can be clearly judged when a previously significant effect of predictor variables is reduced to non-significant or reduced in terms of effect size after the inclusion of mediator variables into the analysis.

4. Findings

Table 2 shows that most respondent characteristics were female (59.6 percent), aged between 26 to 30 years old (38.5 percent), bachelor degree holders (72.1 percent), lecturers (79.8 percent) and length of service from 2 to 5 years (41.3 percent).

Table 2

Respondents' characteristics (N=104)

Respondents' Characteristics	Sub-Profile	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	40.4
	Female	59.6
Age	< 25 years old	22.1
	26 – 30 years old	38.5
	31 – 35 years old	22.1
	36 – 40 years old	9.6
	41 – 45 years old	3.8
	> 46 years old	3.8
Education	Diploma	2.9
	Bachelor Degree	72.1
	Master Degree	22.1
	Doctorate	2.9
Position	Senior Lecturer	2.9
	Lecturer	79.8
	Assistant Lecturer	17.3
Length of Service	< 1 year	33.7
	2 – 5 years	41.3
	6 – 9 years	16.3
	10 – 12 years	4.8
	> 13 years	3.8

Table 3 shows the results of validity and reliability analyses for measurement scales. A factor analysis with the varimax rotation was first done for three variables with 22 items. After that, Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Test (KMO) which is a measure of sampling adequacy was

conducted for each variable and the results indicated that it was acceptable. Relying on Hair et al. (2006) and Nunally and Bernstein's (1994) guideline, these statistical analyses showed that (1) the value of factor analysis for all items that represent each research variable was 0.5 and more, indicating the items met the acceptable standard of validity analysis, (2) all research variables exceeded the acceptable standard of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's value of 0.6, were significant in Bartlett's test of sphericity, (3) all research variables had eigenvalues larger than 1, (4) the items for each research variable exceeded factor loadings of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2006), and (5) all research variables exceeded the acceptable standard of reliability analysis of 0.70 (Nunally, Bernstein, 1994). These statistical analyses confirm that measurement scales have measured the same constructs and met the acceptable standard of construct validity and reliability analyses (Dulewicz, Higgs, 1999) as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

The results of validity and reliability analyses for measurement scales

Variable	Items	Factor Loading	KMO	Barlett's Test of Sphericity	Eigenvalues	Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha
Occupational stress	13	.45 - .80	.86	585.03	5.51	42.37	.88
Job performance	15	.64 - .85	.90	1108.19	8.21	54.70	.94
Emotional intelligence	10	.54 - .83	.90	634.12	5.96	54.22	.91

Analysis of variance techniques are used to compare the mean scores between two or more groups in the studied organization. In this case, independent samples t-tests are used to compare two different (independent) groups of people (i.e., gender) and ANOVA is used to compare three and more different (independent) groups of people (i.e., age) (Hair et al., 2006, Yaacob, 2008). The results of one-way ANOVA showed that age and education were found to have a significant

difference ($F=2.56, p<0.05$; $F=2.63, p<.05$, respectively), signifying that occupational stress was differently perceived by age and education structures. Conversely, the results of t-test and one-way ANOVA that had no significant differences were not reported in this study.

Table 4 shows the result of Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistic. The means for the variables are from 2.4 to 4.0 signifying that the levels of occupational stress, emotional intelligence and job

performance ranging from moderately high (2) to highest level (5). The correlation coefficients for the relationship between the independent variable (i.e., physiological stress and psychological stress) and the mediating variable (i.e., emotional intelligence), and the relationship between the independent variable (i.e., physiological stress and psychological stress) and the dependent variable (i.e., job performance) were less than 0.90, indicating

the data were not affected by serious collinearity problem (Hair et al., 2006). The measurement scales that had validity and reliability were used to test research hypotheses. In terms of testing direct effects model, occupational stress insignificantly correlated with job performance, therefore H1 was not supported. This result demonstrates that occupational stress has not an important predictor of job performance in the studied organizations.

Table 4

Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Pearson correlation analysis		
			1	2	3
1. Occupational stress	2.4	.68	1		
2. Job performance	4.0	.75	-.05	1	
3. Emotional intelligence	3.7	.64	-.24*	.26**	1

Note: Significant at **p< 0.01.

Table 5 shows the results of testing hypotheses using a stepwise regression analysis. These tables show that demographic variables were entered in Step 1 and then followed by entering independent variable (i.e., occupational stress) in Step 2. Job performance was used as the dependent variable. An examination of multicollinearity in the table shows that the tolerance value for

the relationship between occupational stress and job performance was 0.91, while the tolerance value for the relationship between psychological stress and job performance was 0.90. These tolerance values were more than tolerance value of 0.20 (as a rule of thumb), indicating the variables were not affected by multicollinearity problem (Fox, 1991; Tabachnick, Fidell, 2001).

Table 5

Results for Stepwise Regression Analysis

Variable	Dependent Variable (Job Performance)		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
<i>Controlling variable</i>			
Gender	-.12	-.11	-.13
Age	-.05	-.06	-.09
Education	.08	.08	.08
Position	-.11	-.11	-.08
Length of service	.02	.03	.07
<i>Independent variable</i>			
Occupational stress		-.04	.03
<i>Mediating variable</i>			
Emotional intelligence			.27**
R Square	.03	.04	.10
Adjusted R square	-.03	-.03	.04
R Square change	.03	.00	.07
F	.68	.59	1.57
F Change R square	.68	.17	7.20**

Note: Significant at ** p < 0.01.

Table 5 shows the result of stepwise regression analysis were summarised in the three models. Step 1 showed that demographic variables were found not to be a significant predictor of job performance, accounting for 3 percent of the variance in dependent variable. Step 2 displayed that occupational stress ($\beta = -0.04$, $p > 0.05$) was found not to be a significant predictor of job performance, accounting for 4 percent of the variance in dependent variable. Step 3 revealed that relationship between occupational stress and emotional intelligence positively and significantly correlated with job performance ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$), therefore H2 was supported. This result demonstrates that before the inclusion of emotional intelligence in Step 2, occupational stress (Step 2: $\beta = -0.04$, $p > 0.05$) insignificantly correlated with job performance. As shown in Step 3 (after the inclusion of emotional intelligence in the analysis), the previous insignificant relationship between occupational stress and job performance (Step 2: $\beta = 0.01$, $p > 0.05$) did not change to significant (Step 3: $\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.05$). In terms of explanatory power, the inclusion of emotional intelligence in Step 3 had explained 10 percent of the variance in dependent variable. This result demonstrates that effect of occupational stress and job performance have increased when emotional intelligence entered in the analysis, signaling that emotional intelligence acts as a full mediating variable in the organizational sector sample.

5. Discussion and implications

The findings of this study confirmed that emotional intelligence acts as a full mediating

variable in the relationship between occupational stress and job performance in the organizational sector sample. In the studied organizations, management teams have changed and implemented challenging jobs for academic employees to sustain and achieve their organizational strategies and goals. Majority academic employees perceive that the level of their stresses in implementing job is high, the ability to use their emotions in implementing job is high and their abilities to perform job is high. In terms of correlation, when academic employees perceive that they can properly use their emotions to cope with physiological and psychological stresses, this may lead to higher job performance in the workplace.

The study presents three major implications: theoretical contribution, robustness of research methodology, and practical contribution. In terms of theoretical contribution, the results of this study confirmed that emotional intelligence has mediated the effect of occupational stress on job performance in the studied organizations. This result is consistent with the studies by Gillespie et al., (2001), Slaski and Cartwright (2002), and Nikolau and Tsaosis (2002). In sum, the findings of this study advocate that the effect of physiological and psychological stresses on job performance is not direct, but their impacts upon job performance are indirectly affected by emotional intelligence. This finding indicates that the ability of employees to properly manage emotions will increase their capabilities to cope with physiological and psychological stresses. As a result, it may lead to higher job performance in the organizations.

With respect to the robustness of research methodology, the survey

questionnaires are developed based on the information gathered from the occupational stress literature, the in-depth interviews and the pilot study have exceeded a minimum standard of validity and reliability analysis. Thus, it may lead to the production of accurate and reliable findings.

In terms of practical contributions, the findings of this study can be used as a guideline by the management to overcome occupational stress problems in organizations. This objective may be achieved if management follows the suggestions: firstly, provide emotional intelligence based training program that focus on up to date knowledge, relevant skills and good moral values. If this training program is properly implemented it can upgrade the capability of mentors to use proper treatments in handling the mentees' needs, expectations and demands. Secondly, management should encourage employee participation in mentoring activities. For example, mentees should be allowed to provide suggestions, comments and take part in planning and managing mentoring activities. If this aspect is given due and proper attention it will increase mentees' feelings of satisfaction, trust and acceptance about the programs. Finally, management should take work-life balance initiative to reduce the employee job stress, for instance, organize company trips for the employee to relax their

mind and body. If these suggestions are heavily considered this will increase the capability of employees to manage their personal emotions and use their positive emotions to create good interactional styles with other employees. This working situation may decrease occupational problems and increase job performance in organizations.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study confirm that emotional intelligence does act as a full mediating variable in the relationship between occupational stress and job performance in the organizational sector sample. This finding is consistent with the occupational stress literature mostly published in Western countries. Therefore, current research and practice within workplace stress needs to consider emotional intelligence as a critical aspect of occupation stress. This study further suggests that properly managed emotions in implementing job will strongly increase the capability of employees to cope with occupational stress problems. As a result, it may lead to higher positive attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, and good moral values). Thus, these positive outcomes may lead to sustained and achieved organizational strategy and goals.

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