

Employees' Mental Health on Job Performance: A Study at Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Terengganu (JPNT)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of employee mental health on job performance among 303 staff members (129 males, 174 females) at the Department of Education of Terengganu State. Mental health was measured using the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21), while job performance was assessed with the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ). Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation were applied. Findings revealed most employees had normal mental health, with the highest performance in task performance and the lowest in counterproductive behavior. However, mental health showed no significant impact on job performance ($p > .05$). This study contributes to organizational psychology by highlighting the need for preventive mental health support in sustaining employee well-being and performance.

Keywords: Mental Health, Job Performance, Employees, Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Terengganu (JPNT)

INTRODUCTION

A nation's economic and social progress depends significantly on a highly educated and productive workforce, with mental health recognized as a critical determinant of individual productivity (WHO, 2007). Mental health challenges are widespread, affecting over 300 million people globally, of whom the majority are employed, leading to reduced productivity, absenteeism, and workplace accidents (Ritchie & Roser, 2018; Chan, 2021). Risk factors for poor mental health in organizations include workplace structure, managerial practices, and social interactions (WHO, 2019). Scholars have long emphasized the link between employee mental health and organizational outcomes, noting its effects on absenteeism, job satisfaction, and firm performance (Van Gordon et al., 2014; Yu, Park, & Hyun, 2021).

Job performance, defined as the value of behavioral episodes over time (Motowidlo, 2003), is directly influenced by mental health through focus, attendance, and emotional resilience (Hennekam, 2020; Khamisa, 2016). Empirical studies demonstrate that good mental health enhances job performance through creativity and engagement (Lu, Yu, & Shan, 2022), while poor mental health undermines both individual and organizational productivity.

Previous studies confirm that mental health significantly influences job performance, with positive mental states enhancing focus, creativity, and engagement (Lu, Yu, & Shan, 2022), while poor mental health impairs concentration, increases absenteeism, and leads to emotional exhaustion (Hennekam, 2020; Heffernan &

Pilkington, 2011; Khamisa, 2016). Consequently, mental health remains a crucial predictor of both individual productivity and organizational sustainability. This growing body of literature underscores the importance of integrating mental health support into workplace policies to optimize job performance and promote overall workforce well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mental Health

Mental health is a fundamental aspect of overall well-being, encompassing the ability to enjoy life, adapt to challenges, and make effective decisions (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2003). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) defines it as the integration of psychological, emotional, and social health, which collectively shapes how individuals think, feel, and behave. Mental health influences stress management, interpersonal relationships, and decision-making across all stages of life, from childhood to adulthood. Its determinants are multifaceted, including stress levels, lifestyle habits, trauma exposure, and genetic predispositions.

Evidence indicates that mental health problems significantly impair work performance. For instance, anxiety and depression affect cognitive functioning, decision-making, and risk-taking, thereby reducing organizational efficiency (Haslam, Atkinson, & Brown, 2005). Research further suggests that individuals with such conditions struggle with time-sensitive and structured tasks (Biederman et al., 2012). Mental health concerns are widespread, with one in six adults experiencing anxiety, depression, or stress (WHO, 2023). Moreover, absenteeism due to mental health issues has increased substantially in recent years, negatively influencing productivity, especially in high-income economies (Hara et al. 2025).

However, there is a finding that shows the contradictions. Leka and Jain (2010), highlighted that in certain occupational settings, job demand and role clarity had stronger predictive power on performance than employees' mental health, leading to non-significant effects. More recent evidence from the Malaysian context also indicates that despite high levels of stress and anxiety among employees, job performance outcomes were not significantly compromised, possibly due to cultural resilience, organizational norms, or compensatory mechanisms such as peer support and intrinsic motivation (Awang et al., 2019). Overall, mental health remains an essential aspect of an employee's overall quality of life.

Job Performance

Job performance is a central construct in organizational research as it reflects the behaviors and outcomes that contribute to achieving organizational goals. It is commonly defined as the effectiveness with which job incumbents perform activities that contribute to organizational success (Motowidlo, 2003). Scholars generally conceptualize job performance across three dimensions: task performance, which involves the execution of core job duties; contextual performance, which refers to supportive behaviors such as cooperation and organizational and adaptive performance, which highlights the ability to adjust to changes and new challenges (Nini. 2019).

From an organizational psychology perspective, job performance is one of the most important indicators of employee effectiveness (Johari & Yahya, 2016). It reflects not only task accomplishment but also the quality and consistency of work outcomes (Kumar & Giri, 2009). Moreover, job performance is closely tied to human resource management practices, which aim to enhance productivity by reinforcing positive behaviors, rewarding achievements, and motivating employees through supportive policies (Vratskikh, Masadeh, Al-Lozi, & Maqableh, 2016; Inceoglu et al., 2021). Despite varying conceptualizations, consensus exists that job performance remains a central measure of organizational success (Johari & Yahya, 2016).

Mental Health and Job Performance

Mental health has increasingly been recognized as a critical determinant of employee productivity and organizational performance. According to Galderisi (2017), good mental health enables individuals to recognize

their potential, manage daily challenges, work effectively, and contribute to both personal growth and community development. Job performance, on the other hand, has been described as the extent to which an individual's work outcomes meet or exceed organizational expectations (Afzali, Arash-Motahari, & Hatami-Shirkouhi, 2014; Shooshtarian, 2013). Prior studies highlight that work performance is shaped by various factors, including psychological climate, transformational leadership, and organizational support (Razak & Rahim, 2024).

Empirical evidence suggests that mental health challenges negatively influence workplace functioning. For instance, anxiety and depression have been shown to impair decision-making and reduce work efficiency (Haslam, Atkinson, & Brown, 2005). Conversely, improvements in mental health have been associated with enhanced employee performance (Ahmadi, Bakhshizadeh, & Balouchi, 2012; Zacher, Jimmieson, & Winter, 2012). Poor mental health, including symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression, has consistently been linked to lower productivity and counterproductive work behaviors (Montano, Reeske, Franke, & Hüffmeier, 2017). This supports the "happy-productive worker" hypothesis, which proposes that employees experiencing positive affective states are more cognitively flexible and more effective in problem-solving (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007; Fredrickson, 2002).

Nevertheless, studies have reported contradictory findings, indicating that mental health does not significantly influence job performance under certain conditions such as occupational context and intervening variables. For example, Kazar et al., (2024) reported that while job demand strongly influences performance, mental health disorders themselves showed a limited and non-significant direct effect on job performance, suggesting that external factors such as workload and organizational expectations may override the influence of mental health. Others finding also found mental health predicted engagement, the direct effect of work stress on job performance was not statistically significant, indicating that employees often maintain expected standard despite psychological strain. The absence of a significant relationship does not diminish the importance of mental health but suggests that its effect on job performance may operate through mediators such as organizational cultures and leadership supports.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed quantitative research design using a survey method and structured questionnaires to investigate the impact of mental health on job performance among employees of Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Terengganu (JPNT). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze demographic profiles and address the initial objectives, while Pearson Correlation tested the relationship between mental health and job performance. The study population consisted of all 303 JPNT employees, including both male and female staff, given the department's critical role in managing state-level education policies and overseeing schools. Due to the high demands and pressures associated with their responsibilities, JPNT employees were considered appropriate respondents. A purposive sampling technique was adopted, and questionnaires were distributed through department heads to ensure full participation. By surveying the entire workforce, the study enhanced accuracy, reliability, and representativeness, thereby providing authentic insights into how mental health influences employee job performance in a high-pressure organizational context.

Instrumentation

This study employed three sets of questionnaires to measure demographic characteristics, mental health, and job performance. Section A collected demographic data, including gender, age, marital status, education, income, and years of service. Section B used the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21) by Lovibond (1995), consisting of 21 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with a Cronbach's alpha of .74. Section C applied the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ 2.0) by Koopmans (2014), a 27-item scale assessing task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior using a 5-point Likert scale, with reliability values ranging from .78 to .85. A pilot study was conducted with 30 JPNT employees to refine the instrument and ensure clarity. Reliability analysis using SPSS (version 27) produced a Cronbach's alpha of .874 overall, with .966 for mental health and .909 for job performance, confirming high internal consistency and suitability for the main study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Mental Health – Stress Levels

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Normal	284	93.7
Mild	18	5.9
Moderate	1	.3
Total	303	100

Based on the table, the findings indicate the distribution of stress levels among employees in Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Terengganu (JPNT). The results reveal that most employees reported stress at the normal level, with a frequency of 244 (93.7%). In contrast, the lowest proportion of employees experienced stress at the moderate level, with only 1 respondent (0.3%).

Table 2: Mental Health – Anxiety Levels

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Normal	219	72.3
Mild	61	20.1
Moderate	19	6.3
Severe	3	1.0
Extremely Severe	1	.3
Total	303	100

The table illustrates the distribution of anxiety levels among employees in Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Terengganu (JPNT). The findings reveal that most employees reported anxiety at the normal level, with a frequency of 219 (72.3%). Conversely, the very severe level recorded the lowest proportion, with only 1 respondent (0.3%).

Table 3: Mental Health – Depression Levels

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Normal	282	93.1
Mild	15	5.0
Moderate	5	1.7
Severe	1	.3
Total	303	100

The table illustrates the distribution of depression levels among employees in Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Terengganu (JPNT). The results indicate that most employees reported depression at the normal level, with a frequency of 282 (93.1%). In contrast, the lowest proportion of employees experienced depression at the severe level, with only 1 respondent (0.3%)

This study assessed the levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among 303 employees of Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Terengganu (JPNT). The findings revealed that most employees were within the normal range for all three categories, with 93.7% reporting normal stress, 72.3% normal anxiety, and 93.1% normal depression. These results suggest that most employees demonstrated good emotional balance, resilience, and the capacity to cope effectively with job demands. The findings are consistent with the World Health Organization’s (2004) definition of mental health as the ability to manage life’s stresses, work productively, and contribute to the community.

In line with past research, the study supports the view that stress levels vary depending on individual circumstances, demographic backgrounds, and environmental factors (Smith, 2025). When crises or challenges are not managed effectively, individuals may become vulnerable to stress, anxiety, or depression, whereas those

with good mental health are better equipped to adapt and cope (Schafer et al. 2024). While the overall results indicate positive mental health among JPNT employees, the study acknowledges that further analysis and expert input in mental health and statistical fields are needed to strengthen interpretations and provide more comprehensive insights.

Table 4: Job Performance

Item of Job Performance	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Collaboration with others was very productive	3.04	.798	1
I was able to separate main issues from side issues at work	3.02	.910	2
I kept in mind the results that I had to achieve in my work	3.02	.832	3
I worked at keeping my job knowledge up to date	2.90	.965	4
I knew how to set the right priorities	2.97	.857	5
I was able to perform my work well with minimal time and effort	2.92	.851	6
I spoke with people from outside the organization about the negative aspects of my work	.81	1.144	23
I did less than was expected of me	.80	1.047	24
I sometimes did nothing, while I should have been working	.75	1.076	25
I focused on the negative aspects of a work situation, instead of on the positive aspects	.73	1.095	26
I made problems greater than they were at work	.71	1.086	27

The table presents the descriptive statistics of job performance among employees of Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Terengganu (JPNT), based on responses to the distributed questionnaire. The highest mean score was recorded for the statement “Collaboration with others was very productive” ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.798$), indicating strong teamwork and cooperative engagement among employees. Conversely, the lowest mean score was observed for the statement “I made problems greater than they were at work” ($M = 0.71$, $SD = 1.086$), suggesting that employees generally did not perceive themselves as engaging in counterproductive behavior.

Table 5: Domain of Job Performance

	Mean	St. Deviation	Rank
Task Performance	2.9505	.67200	1
Contextual Performance	2.7393	.75851	2
Counterproductive Work Behavior	.8540	.95827	3

The table presents the descriptive statistics of job performance domains among employees at Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Terengganu (JPNT). The results indicate that the highest mean score was recorded for Task Performance ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 0.672$), reflecting employees’ effectiveness in fulfilling core job responsibilities. In contrast, the lowest mean score was observed for Counterproductive Work Behavior ($M = 0.854$, $SD = 0.958$), suggesting that such behaviors were reported less frequently among the employees.

The findings of this study reveal that employees of Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Terengganu (JPNT) generally demonstrate good levels of job performance across its three domains: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. The highest mean score was observed for the item “Collaboration with others was very productive” ($M = 3.04$), indicating that teamwork, interpersonal relationships, and supervisor support play an essential role in enhancing productivity, motivation, and morale. These findings are consistent with prior studies emphasizing the importance of psychosocial and supervisory support in improving employee performance and job satisfaction (Selamat, 2016; Okech & Njururi, 2016). The ability to separate main from side issues at work ($M = 3.02$) also highlights employees’ capacity to manage responsibilities effectively, supporting research on the importance of work-life balance in sustaining employee well-being (Frone, 2013; Baral & Bhargava, 2010).

In contrast, the lowest mean scores were recorded for items reflecting negative perceptions of work, such as focusing excessively on problems ($M = 0.73$) and exaggerating issues ($M = 0.71$). This suggests that employees were less likely to engage in counterproductive behaviors, an outcome supported by earlier research linking conducive work environments to positive performance outcomes (Selamat & Zolkiply, 2017). Supervisor support was again noted as a critical factor in mitigating workplace negativity and improving productivity (Lelebici, 2012).

At the domain level, task performance recorded the highest overall mean ($M = 2.95$), demonstrating that employees are competent, skilled, and able to complete assigned responsibilities effectively. This finding aligns with prior studies indicating that qualifications, skills, and experience significantly contribute to strong job performance (Nordin & Hassan, 2019). Contextual performance followed ($M = 2.74$), reflecting employees' initiative to embrace challenges, seek professional growth, and sustain job satisfaction, supporting definitions of job satisfaction as a driver of achievement and motivation (Ismail & Abiddin, 2010). Counterproductive work behavior obtained the lowest mean ($M = 0.854$), reinforcing the observation that employees maintain positive workplace attitudes and rely on teamwork rather than individual complaints to resolve issues (Tamkin, 2005).

In conclusion, JPNT employees demonstrate strong performance across domains, reflecting their resilience, experience, and commitment to organizational goals. The findings emphasize the significance of mental health, supervisor support, work-life balance, and job satisfaction in shaping job performance. Organizations can leverage these insights by fostering supportive environments that enhance employee well-being, thereby strengthening both productivity and long-term sustainability

Table 6: Mental Health and Job Performance

		Mental Health
Work Performance	Pearson Correlation	-.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.130
	N	303

Based on the table, the results indicated a strong negative correlation between mental health and job performance ($r = -.87$, $p = .130$). However, this relationship was not statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. This suggests that although the data demonstrated a strong inverse association, the evidence was insufficient to confirm a meaningful relationship between mental health and job performance. The finding reported that all respondents have a good level of mental health, which indicates a restricted range of scores. When variability in the data is limited, statistical analysis is less effective in detecting meaningful associations. This is supported by Bland & Altman (2011) and Carretta (2022), who show how data from a restricted-range sample (only those with good mental health) may lead to mistake interference, because such a sample often underrepresents the true variability in the population. Thus, the other factors may minimize the impact of performances, such as skills and cultural norms.

In an organizational setting, where employees generally experience positive psychological well-being, the direct impact of mental health and job performance could decline. As for this study, the respondents originate from a cultural setting that prioritizes self-regulation and peer-based resolution of challenges. Within the educational context, cultural practices play a crucial role in promoting mental health by creating stress-free environments. While such practices facilitate smoother processes of adaptation and integration among individuals, they may also inadvertently contribute to a decline in job performance. One possible explanation is that performance is not solely determined by the absence of stress but also by the presence of inadequate skills and competencies. Iso-Ahola (2024) stated that even with low stress, performance can decline if skills are not developed and maintained. Without continuous skill enhancement, employees may struggle to maintain high performance levels. Furthermore, organizational culture may also play a role, as certain workplace environments might not actively encourage professional growth or performance optimization. According to the WHO (2024), the workplace represents a critical context for implementing transformative actions on mental health. Evidence suggests that fostering a supportive organizational culture plays a pivotal role in enhancing job performance outcomes. Hence, this study can be a positive case study of a healthy work environment.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of mental health on job performance among employees of Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Terengganu (JPNT). This study found that depression, anxiety, and stress, as measured by the DASS-21, did not show a statistically significant relationship with job performance ($p > .05$). The absence of significant effects is likely due to the restricted range in the data, as most respondents reported normal levels of depression (93.1%), anxiety (72.3%) and stress (93.7%). With such limited variance in the independent variables, the statistical analysis lacked sufficient power to detect meaningful associations with job performance. Therefore, the non-significant results should not be interpreted as evidence of no relationship, but rather as a limitation of the sample characteristics. Future research should consider more heterogeneous samples across different work sectors and stress levels to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how depression, anxiety, and stress may influence job performance.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in the paper.

ETHICS APPROVAL

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of Faculty of Sport Science and Recreation, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Seremban 3 and adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the [UiTM Cawangan Negeri Sembilan Branch Research Ethics Committee (BERC). All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

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