



Influence of Leadership, Social Support, and Emotional Intelligence on Job Performance among Public Service Middle Managers: Insights from Malaysia

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KEYWORDS

Emotional intelligence
Job performance
Middle manager
Social support
Transformational leadership

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 29 January 2025
Received in revised form
17 May 2025
Accepted 12 July 2025
Available online 12 August
2025

ABSTRACT

This study specifically aimed to determine predictors of job performance among middle managers in Malaysian Public Service (MPS) organizations supported by Job Demand Resource (JD-R) and Conservation of Resources (COR) theories. In this study, the researcher focuses on job resource factors (transformational leadership and social support) and personal resource factors (emotional intelligence) as job performance predictors. Using a descriptive and correlational design, 316 middle managers in Putrajaya participated via a self-administered questionnaire. Based on descriptive analysis, it was found that transformational leadership ($r = .54$), social support ($r = .55$), and emotional intelligence ($r = .58$) were positively and significantly related to job performance. However, only transformational leadership HA1: $\beta = 0.255$, $t = 2.444$) and emotional intelligence (HA3: $\beta = 0.401$, $t = 5.72$) recorded to significantly influence job performance among middle managers in the public sector. Supported by JD-R and COR theories, the study implies that employees' high emotional intelligence and were supervised under transformative leaders would perform better in their job.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Middle managers in public sector organizations are key to policy implementation and organizational success (Mollick, 2011; Ramly & Mansor, 2017). Their involvement with staff and stakeholders is essential for driving performance and managing change (Supramaniam & Singaravelloo, 2021). These managers ensure continuity and help maintain competitiveness (Pachayappan et al., 2022). However, despite various improvement efforts, civil servants often struggle to achieve optimal performance (Hassan et al., 2019). Challenges such as limited resources, bureaucracy, and complex decision-making hinder performance (Noor et al., 2023), while declining global government efficiency rankings highlight the need for reform in Malaysia's public service (Johari & Yahya, 2019).

Public sector performance is crucial to a nation's economy (Issa & Masanja, 2022). While Malaysia's productivity has improved, it still lags behind regional peers, and its government efficiency ranking dropped in 2024 (IMD, 2024). The Twelfth

Malaysia Plan stresses improving public service delivery and enhancing the skills of middle managers, who play a critical role in driving success (Abdullah, 2021). Strengthening middle managers' performance is vital for achieving quality service in the public sector.

Despite these efforts, the Public Complaints Bureau (PCB) has reported a significant rise in complaints about civil servants' performance, with a 167% increase in 2023 compared to 2018 as indicated in Table 1. Many complaints focus on issues like delays, misconduct, and abuse of power, particularly at the ministry level (Annual Report PCB, 2022). This indicates that improving job performance in the public sector remains a critical challenge.

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<https://doi.org/10.56532/mjbem.v4i2.116>

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Table 1. Number of Complaints Received by PCB (2018-2023)

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of Complaints	6,387	9,177	8,727	10,455	16,652	17,053

Source: Public Complaint Bureau, Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia 2024

Notwithstanding its importance, there is a notable gap in research on factors influencing job performance at the employee level in the public sector, particularly regarding middle managers (Aziz et al., 2022; Abdullah, 2021). Most research has focused on specific public sector roles, leaving a gap in understanding the performance of middle managers, who are pivotal in policy execution and maintaining public trust (Ahmad et al., 2020; Samah, 2021). Accordingly, the questions of what factors contribute to job performance among public service middle manager arised. Subsequently, this study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining the job performance of middle managers in MPS, with a focus on how personal and job resources, leadership styles, and emotional intelligence contribute to performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Job Performance

Job performance is a multifaceted concept encompassing both the outcomes and the behaviors employees exhibit to achieve organizational goals (Egemen, 2024; Bhatti et al., 2018). Researchers have emphasized that job performance includes behaviors contributing to organizational success and the results of those behaviors (Pandey, 2019; Sonnentag & Frese, 2005). For example, Campbell (1990) defined it as actions related to organizational objectives. These definitions highlight job performance as a complex interplay of task completion, behavior, and outcomes.

Job performance involves several key dimensions. Koopmans et al. (2011) identified four types of performance: task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance, and counterproductive work behavior. Task performance refers to essential job duties (Bakker, 2018), while contextual performance involves actions that improve the work environment, such as teamwork and organizational citizenship behaviors (Bakker et al., 2004). Adaptive performance focuses on employees' ability to adjust to new tasks and responsibilities (Koopmans et al., 2011), and counterproductive performance includes behaviors that harm the organization (Junça Silva & Martins, 2023).

In the public sector, job performance is vital as employees are seen as service providers, influencing public trust and organizational effectiveness (Naqshbandi et al., 2023). This study explores the positive aspects of job performance, focusing on task, contextual, and adaptive performance, particularly for civil servants in service-oriented roles (Aziz et al., 2022).

2.2 Framing Job Performance

Research has shown that both personal and job resources impact employees' working conditions and, consequently, their performance (Bhatti et al., 2018; Kerk sieck et al., 2019). This study focuses on two key factors—personal resources

(emotional intelligence) and job resources (transformational leadership and social support)—to explore their impact on middle managers' job performance.

2.3.1. Job Demand Resource Theory

The Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) model, introduced by Bakker and Demerouti in 2001, initially focused on burnout but has since expanded to address both positive and negative factors affecting work outcomes. By 2011, it evolved into the JD-R theory, which helps predict employee well-being and job performance by examining the interaction between job demands, job resources, and personal resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This theory is widely applicable across various work environments, including public sector organizations (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023).

Job demands refer to aspects of work that require sustained effort, such as role ambiguity, high work pressure, and overload. Job resources, including career development opportunities, coworker support, and autonomy, help employees achieve goals, reduce stress, and foster growth (Bakker et al., 2004; Schaufeli, 2017). Personal resources, such as optimism and emotional competencies, enable employees to manage stress and effectively cope with job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

The JD-R theory highlights two key processes: motivation and health impairment. Job and personal resources fuel motivation, leading to increased engagement and performance. In contrast, excessive job demands can deplete resources, causing burnout and reduced performance. Emotional intelligence, a key personal resource, plays an important role in managing stress and maintaining motivation, thus enhancing job performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bhatti et al., 2018).

2.3.2. Conservation of Resources Theory

Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (1989) emphasizes that employees need physical, social, and psychological resources to perform well and protect themselves from negative outcomes (Hobfoll, 2001). These resources include personal characteristics, objects, conditions, and energy (Bon & Shire, 2022). According to COR theory, employees are motivated to acquire, protect, and preserve resources, as these are crucial for their well-being and performance (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). When resources are threatened or lost, employees' motivation and performance may decline.

To maintain or improve performance, employees must invest in resources to avoid losses and recover from setbacks (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Positive behaviors and job performance are more likely when employees feel that their efforts lead to gaining or safeguarding resources, especially during stressful or crisis situations (Zhao et al., 2022).

2.3 Predictors of Job Performance

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3.2.1. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that motivates employees to transcend their self-interests for organizational goals (Lee, Sim, & Tuckey, 2024; Bass, 1999). It has been shown to positively impact job performance by inspiring and empowering employees. Transformational leaders engage with their teams through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1999; Puni et al., 2021). These components foster strong relationships, stimulate innovation, and provide individualized support to employees, which are crucial for improving performance.

Research consistently shows that transformational leadership enhances employee performance, especially in public sector organizations, where leaders are expected to motivate, guide, and inspire employees (Saeed et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2023). For instance, studies have found that transformational leadership enhances public sector job performance in Malaysia (Wen et al., 2019) and other countries (Fan et al., 2023). Based on this, we hypothesize:

HA1: Transformational leadership has a significant relationship with job performance.

3.2.2. Social Support

Social support in the workplace is vital for enhancing job performance. It can be emotional, instrumental, informational, or appraisal-based, depending on the type of support provided (Giao et al., 2020). Emotional support involves empathy and care, instrumental support provides tangible resources, informational support offers guidance, and appraisal support assists with self-evaluation.

Support from supervisors and colleagues has been shown to positively influence employees' attitudes, behavior, and job performance. It enhances self-esteem, fosters a sense of belonging, and improves coping strategies (Giao et al., 2020). Support systems in organizations create a work environment where employees feel motivated to perform at higher levels (Foy et al., 2019). Thus, we hypothesize:

HA2: Social support has a significant relationship with job performance.

3.2.3. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and regulate one's own emotions and the emotions of others. It is closely linked to job performance, as individuals with high emotional intelligence can effectively navigate interpersonal relationships, manage stress, and make better decisions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; George et al., 2022). Emotional intelligence is a crucial predictor of employee success, particularly for middle managers who must balance leadership responsibilities with interpersonal skills (Sembiring et al., 2020).

Studies indicate that emotional intelligence enhances job performance across various sectors. For example, Gong et al. (2019) and Ahmad et al. (2018) found a strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance among educators and police officers, respectively. Emotional intelligence improves resilience, creativity, and overall job proficiency, as employees with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage work-related

challenges (Chong et al., 2020; Arshad et al., 2023). Based on this, we hypothesize:

HA3: Emotional intelligence has a significant relationship with job performance.

Table 2 summarizes key research on the relationship between transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, social support and job performance in public sector.

Table 2. Comparison Table Summarizing Key Research on Transformational Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, and Social Support in Public Sector Job performance

Study	Focus Area	Key Findings	Implications for Public Sector Job Performance
Bass (1999), Lee, Sim, & Tuckey, (2024), Podsakoff et al. (1990)	Transformational Leadership	Transformational leaders inspire and motivate employees beyond expectations, fostering innovation and commitment.	Enhances job satisfaction and organizational performance in the public sector.
Goleman (1998), Bar-On (2000), Mayer & Salovey (1997), George et al. (2022)	Emotional Intelligence	Emotional intelligence (EI) is crucial for leadership effectiveness, improving decision-making and conflict resolution.	High EI in public sector leaders improves teamwork, service delivery, and adaptability.
House (1981), Bakker & Demerouti (2007), (Giao et al., 2020), (Foy et al., 2019)	Social Support	Supportive leadership reduces job stress and increases employee engagement.	Strong social support networks improve morale and job performance in public organizations.

2.4 Research Framework

Figure 1 depicts the research framework that illustrates the relationship between transformational leadership, social support, and emotional intelligence as independent variables and job performance as the dependent variable.

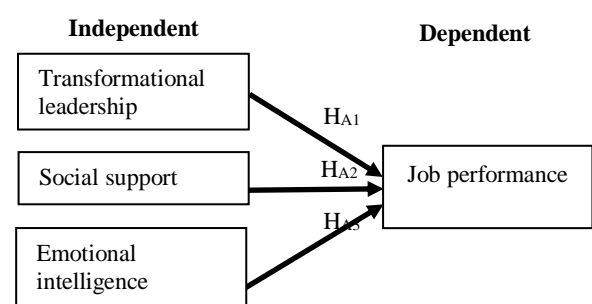


Fig. 1. Research Framework

3. METHOD

3.1 Data Collection and Sample

This study used a descriptive and correlational research design, focusing on middle managers at the Ministry of

Education (MOE) in Putrajaya. The location was selected as it serves as Malaysia’s administrative center, with middle managers in Putrajaya representing those in the broader public sector. The MOE is currently engaged in a collaborative initiative to improve service delivery at all levels, emphasizing the role of middle managers in enhancing performance. These managers are essential to the Ministry’s success, providing leadership, policy guidance, and support to drive the progress of Malaysia’s education system. Their performance is crucial to the Ministry’s strategic planning.

The unit analysis of the study is individual middle managers employed in the Ministry based in Putrajaya. As of March 2024, there were 3,140 middle managers (Grade 41 - 54) identified at the ministry, which was the study population of the present study, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Total Population Based on Grade

Grade	41	44	48	52	54
Total	503	1,270	919	215	233

Source: Human Resource Management Department (HRMD), MOE (2024)

The researcher employed G*Power software to calculate the necessary sample size for this study. The proposed minimum study sample is n=119 were required for this study. Considering the potential nonresponses or respondents cannot be contacted, researchers has increase the number of sample up to 35% . Therefore, the final distributed questionnaire of the study is 340 (119/.35 x 100 = 340).

This study employed a probability sampling design with stratified random sampling in the data collection process as to increase the accuracy and generalizability of research findings. Sampling from the population in this study is divided into strata or sub-populations based on grades (grade 41, 44, 48, 52, and 54). We conducted an online survey using Google Forms, comprising 50 questionnaire items alongside nine demographic questions.

The proportionate sample size and the actual sample acquired for the study are depicted in Table 4. A total of 316 useable responses received, yielding a response rate of 92.94%.

Table 4. Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling Method

Middle Managerial Grade	Study Population	Proportion	Proportionate Sample	Actual Obtained Sample
41	503	$\frac{503}{3,140} \times 100 = 16.02\%$	54	54
44	1,270	$\frac{1,270}{3,140} \times 100 = 40.45\%$	138	130
48	919	$\frac{919}{3,140} \times 100 = 29.27\%$	100	90
52	215	$\frac{215}{3,140} \times 100 = 6.85\%$	24	24
54	233	$\frac{233}{3,140} \times 100 = 7.42\%$	26	18
Total	3,140	100%	340	316

The demographic variables included gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, educational level, service scheme, grade, duration of work experience in MPS, and working experience in the current department. The descriptive analysis of the demographic profile is depicted in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive Analysis of Demographic Profile (n = 316)

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender	Male	128	40.5	
	Female	188	59.5	
Age (years)	25 – 30	14	4.4	
	31 – 35	66	20.9	
	36 – 40	104	32.9	
	41 – 45	68	21.5	
	46 – 50	38	12.0	
	51 – 55	20	6.3	
	56 – 60	6	1.9	
Marital Status	Single	68	21.5	
	Married	236	74.7	
	Divorce or Widow	12	3.8	
Ethnicity	Malay	294	93.0	
	Chinese	10	3.2	
	Indian	4	1.3	
	Others	8	2.5	
Highest Education	Bachelor’s Degree	182	57.6	
	Master’s Degree	126	39.9	
	PhD	8	2.5	
Service Scheme Group	Education (D)	70	22.2	
	Economy (E)	2	.6	
	Information Technology (F)	30	9.5	
	Engineering (J)	16	5.1	
	Administrative and Diplomatic (M)	164	51.9	
	Administration and Support (N)	6	1.9	
	Social (S)	4	1.3	
	Finance (W)	24	7.6	
	Grade	41	54	17.1
		44	130	41.1
48		90	28.5	
52		24	7.6	
54		18	5.7	
Working Experience in Public Service	0 – 5 years	42	13.3	
	6 – 10 years	44	13.9	
	11 – 15 years	102	32.3	
	16 – 20 years	72	22.8	
	21 – 25 years	32	10.1	
Working Experience in Current Department	Above 26 years	24	7.6	
	0 – 2 years	132	41.8	
	3 – 4 years	104	32.9	
	5 – 6 years	28	8.9	
	7 – 8 years	18	5.7	
	Above 9 years	34	10.8	

The gender distribution of participants was relatively balanced, with a slightly higher proportion of females (49.5%) compared to males (40.5%). Most of respondents were in their 30s (58.2%), with 74.7% were married, and 93% Malay. In terms of educational level, all of respondents held at least bachelor's degree, 51.9% were under Administrative and Diplomatic (M) service scheme group, and 41.1% were at grade 44. Nearly 73% of the participants have been working in public

service for at least 11 years. However, most (74.7%) of them were just relocated in current department (≤ 4 years).

3.2 Instruments

The analysis included four variables, which were measured using a perceptual self-report method with a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represented "strongly disagree" and 5 represented "strongly agree." The instruments were translated into Bahasa Malaysia by senior bilingual researchers, who applied a systematic translation and back-translation method to ensure accuracy and consistency.

3.2.1. Job Performance

Job performance was assessed through Individual Work Performance Questionnaires (IWPQ) by Koopmans et al. (2012), comprises of 17 items. Job performance is operationalized as individual middle managers' capabilities to accomplish their core responsibilities within a time frame and support a high-performing working environment. Three dimensions of the instrument include task performance (five items), contextual performance (eight items), and adaptive performance (four items). Examples of items include (i) Task performance: "I always completed my tasks on time," (ii) Contextual performance: "I actively participate in work discussion and meetings," (iii) Adaptive performance: "I always manage changes in jobs well in any situation."

3.2.2. Transformational Leadership

A short-scale instrument developed by Carless et al. (2000) consisting of seven items were used. Transformational leadership is operationalized as an immediate supervisor's approach to provide direction, motivate, and empower individual middle managers in the workplace. Sample item is "My supervisor communicates a clear and positive vision of the future".

3.2.3. Social Support

Eight items scale developed by Mack and Rhineberger-Dunn (2021) were used in this section. Social support is operationalized as job-related and emotional support received by individual middle managers from immediate supervisors and colleagues. Examples of an item include "My supervisor really cares about my well-being".

3.2.4. Emotional Intelligence

Ten items from Kumarasamy et al. (2022) were employed to measure emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is operationalized as the ability of individual middle managers to understand and control his/her own emotions and how these can influence other people and his/her performance. Sample item include "I have a good understanding of my own emotions".

3.2.5. Instrument Validity and Reliability

The prepared instrument went through the process of content validity by two experts. The nominated experts have vast experience related to the setting of the study. The experts were provided with an excel document consisting of all items according to construct and operational definition of each construct. Improvement were made according to recommendations from experts.

Pilot study involved 30 respondents were conducted to test the instrument reliability. Reliability results during pilot and actual studies were reported in Table 6. The Cronbach's Alpha indicated that there were no issues of reliability.

Table 6: Cronbach Alpha from Each Construct

Variable	Reliability Result for		Reliability Result for	
	Pilot Study (n = 30)		Actual Study (n = 316)	
	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Job performance	17	0.966	17	0.944
Transformational leadership	7	0.980	7	0.966
Social support	8	0.918	8	0.903
Emotional intelligence	10	0.736	8	0.885

3.3 Ethical Approval

For this study, an application to obtain approval from the Universiti Putra Malaysia Ethics Committee (JKEUPM) was submitted on 20 February 2024 (JKEUPM ref. no.: JKEUPM-2024-153) (Appendix B). MOE also has an ethical committee through the Educational Research Application System (eRAS 2.0). MOE approved this study on 18 Mac 2024.

3.4 Data Analysis

The three proposed hypotheses were tested using IBM SPSS, where descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression were performed to analyze the data. Out of the 340 distributed questionnaires, 325 responses were received. However, 9 had to be excluded from further analysis due to incomplete sections. To verify multivariate normality, we assessed skewness, kurtosis, linearity, and multicollinearity for each variable. The results indicated that there were no issues with multicollinearity.

4. RESULTS

The following subsections present the findings from the data analyses conducted to evaluate the proposed hypotheses within the context of the research framework.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 7 presents a summary of the descriptive statistics for the sample and the measures utilized. All correlations between the variables are statistically significant at the 0.01 level, suggesting a 1% probability of obtaining false results. This indicates that there is only a 1% chance of incorrectly concluding a correlation exists when it does not (Miles, 2001). The most significant correlation was found between emotional intelligence and job performance, with a value of $r = .58$, while moderate but statistically significant correlations were observed between social support and job performance ($r = .55$), and transformational leadership and job performance ($r = .54$).

Table 7. Results of Pearson Correlation

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>	Sig-p
Job Performance	4.29	0.45	-	-
Transformational Leadership	4.12	0.79	0.537	0.000
Social Support	4.04	0.65	0.550	0.000
Emotional Intelligence	4.15	0.51	0.580	0.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

4.2 Direct Relationship Model

The direct relationship model of the study was assessed using multiple linear regression analysis to evaluate the fit of the hypothesized research model. The results showed that the model had a good fit at the 0.05 level ($F = 40.98$; Sig. $F = 0.000$), as shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Results of Multiple Linear Regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	t	Sig-p
	B	Std. Error	β		
Constant	1.844	0.231		7.992	0.000
Transformational Leadership	0.145	0.059	0.255	2.444	0.016
Social Support	0.093	0.076	0.135	1.230	0.220
Emotional Intelligence	0.354	0.062	0.401	5.720	0.000

$R = 0.666$; $R^2 = 0.444$; Adj. $R^2 = 0.433$; $F = 40.98$; Sig. $F = 0.000$

As shown in Table 8, hypotheses HA1 and HA3 were supported with statistically significant path coefficients ($t > 1.96$, $p < 0.05$). Transformational leadership was found to be significantly associated with job performance (HA1: $\beta = 0.255$, $t = 2.444$). Emotional intelligence was significantly associated with job performance (HA3: $\beta = 0.401$, $t = 5.72$). Social support however does not indicate a significant relationship with job performance ($t < 1.96$, $p > 0.05$). Cohen (1988) effect size were included to further explains the findings. The effect size for emotional intelligence considered medium ($f^2 = 0.29$), meanwhile the effect size for transformational leadership ($f^2 = 0.12$) and social support ($f^2 = 0.03$) considered small.

In summary, the result suggest that the two antecedents (transformational leadership and emotional intelligence) explained about 43% variance in job performance, while emotional intelligence indicated as the most dominant predictor.

5. DISCUSSION

This study explored the relationships between transformational leadership, social support, and emotional intelligence, and the key findings are summarized as follows. Firstly, transformational leadership was found to positively impact both itself and employees' job performance. Furthermore, emotional intelligence demonstrated a positive relationship with job performance, whereas the effect of social support on job performance was not significant. The study emphasizes that high levels of transformational leadership can significantly boost employees' job performance, in line with prior research (Liu et al., 2023; Mittal, 2023). Additionally, a

positive link between emotional intelligence and job performance was confirmed.

The findings highlight how the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) and Conservation of Resources (COR) theories can be applied within public organizations. These theories underscore the importance of personal resources, such as emotional intelligence, and job resources, like transformational leadership and social support. While the direct impact of social support on job performance was not confirmed, the moderate relationship observed in the correlational analysis indicates its potential importance. Emotional intelligence emerged as the strongest predictor of job performance in this study.

Emotional intelligence plays a key role in helping employees manage stress and cope with job demands. Middle managers, who tend to be more optimistic, confident, and emotionally capable (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), are better equipped to handle uncertainties in their roles. The study found a significant connection between emotional intelligence and job performance among middle managers in Malaysian public service organizations, demonstrating the essential role emotional intelligence plays in improving job performance.

Managers with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to perform better in their roles within the public sector. This finding is consistent with Jayan's (2006) research, which showed a positive relationship between emotional competence and managerial effectiveness. Additionally, numerous studies have repeatedly identified emotional intelligence as a critical factor in enhancing job performance. In the public sector, especially for middle managers, emotional intelligence is especially important due to the emotionally demanding nature of their roles (Lee, 2018). Public service tasks often involve emotional challenges (Guy & Lee, 2015), and employees with high emotional intelligence are more likely to maintain a positive mindset, leading to greater job satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty. This positive atmosphere fostered by emotionally intelligent individuals helps to improve overall job performance (Miao et al., 2017).

Transformational leaders can enhance employee performance by supporting employees in achieving their goals, alleviating stress, and offering growth opportunities, as outlined in the JD-R and COR theories. By recognizing employees' efforts, providing constructive feedback, and encouraging positive behaviors, leaders can improve job performance. This finding aligns with studies in the Malaysian education sector (e.g., Abd Hamid, 2013) and public sector (e.g., Manesh et al., 2018), which concluded that transformational leadership positively affects employee job performance. Similar conclusions were reached by Haryanto et al. (2022) and Sürücü et al. (2022).

In government institutions, employee performance evaluations are often influenced by the leadership style within the organization. Middle managers, who typically face challenges such as bureaucracy, limited resources, and rigid structures, can be motivated by transformational leadership to overcome these obstacles. Motivated middle managers are more likely to demonstrate higher job performance. Transformational leaders not only inspire employees to exceed their self-interests, set high standards, and offer feedback, but they also encourage them to go beyond job expectations by transforming their values, beliefs, and attitudes (Buil et al., 2019; Wen et al., 2019).

Social support from colleagues can also enhance performance by providing valuable resources, such as job-related guidance and assistance. There is an opportunity to improve supervisor support for some employees, ensuring they receive the direction needed to succeed. Clearer guidance from immediate supervisors can alleviate confusion and create a more positive work environment, improving job satisfaction and overall performance (Maduraiveeran & Abdul Lasi, 2020). Additionally, employees often feel relieved when they can share their work-related and personal problems with colleagues. Such communication can improve their well-being and boost productivity. The study highlights the importance of social support in motivating employees to improve job performance, underlining its critical role in nurturing and fostering job performance at all levels.

6. IMPLICATIONS

This study offers valuable theoretical and practical insights for HR scholars and practitioners. Theoretically, it connects personal resources like emotional intelligence and job resources such as transformational leadership and social support to job performance, particularly in the government sector. The findings support previous research showing that emotional intelligence and transformational leadership positively impact job performance (e.g., Amirian et al., 2023; Ahmad et al., 2018; Chong et al., 2020). Emotionally intelligent employees tend to exhibit a positive mindset, which enhances satisfaction, dedication, and job performance. Similarly, transformational leadership boosts employee performance by guiding rather than controlling, fostering a positive work environment.

From a practical standpoint, the study provides actionable insights for HR practitioners and managers. It suggests the importance of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership in enhancing performance, especially in diverse work settings. HR managers should consider implementing training programs to develop emotional intelligence among middle managers. These programs could focus on skills like self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal communication, which are crucial for improving job performance over time.

The study also highlights the value of transformational leadership in improving employee performance. Public sector organizations, such as those in Malaysia, could benefit from fostering transformational leadership behaviors among middle managers. Tailored leadership development programs can enhance skills like inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, which positively impact job performance. Cultivating these leadership qualities can lead to personal and professional growth, driving productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational success. By adopting the right leadership style, organizations can create a culture of high performance, leading to improved outcomes and a competitive advantage (Nugroho, 2022).

7. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study emphasizes the roles of emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, and job performance, but its generalizability is limited due to the sample being drawn only from Putrajaya. Future research should expand the sample to

include middle managers from various public sector organizations to enhance generalizability. Additionally, since this cross-sectional study relied on self-reported data, there may be bias, and causality cannot be strongly established. Specifically, "job performance" refers to perceived performance, not actual performance, so the relationship between job performance and other variables should be interpreted with caution.

Future studies could explore the dynamics between job performance and other influencing factors across different population segments. Job types, such as technical staff, administrative officers, enforcement officers, and healthcare employees, may have distinct resources and demands affecting performance. A diverse sample would provide more nuanced insights.

Adopting qualitative or mixed-method approaches could address biases in self-reported data and offer deeper insights. For example, since social support was not a significant predictor in this study, qualitative research could explore middle managers' perceptions to uncover additional factors.

The JD-R theory suggests a reciprocal relationship between job and personal resources, with engaged individuals generating their own resources. Future research could examine how transformational leadership and social support influence emotional intelligence, as well as reverse effects. Studies could also investigate different leadership styles, such as laissez-faire or transactional leadership, in various sectors. Additionally, segmenting social support into emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal types could clarify which has the most significant impact on job performance. Research by Vuong et al. (2022) suggests that social support may influence job performance through mediating variables like organizational commitment.

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