

## Relationship Between Level of Mental Health and Level of work Performance Among Primary Teachers: Malaysian Experiences

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### Abstract

Mental health among teachers is important and needs to be emphasized by all parties. This is because mental health can affect the physical health, quality of life, productivity and performance of teachers at school. This study aims to examine the level of mental health and the level of work performance among teachers in several primary schools in the district of Sandakan, Sabah. The researcher also wants to identify whether there is a relationship between the level of mental health and the level of work performance among teachers in the schools concerned. A simple random sampling method was used to obtain 150 people as a study sample. This study is a quantitative study that uses a descriptive survey method through a questionnaire distributed using *Google Form*. To measure the level of teachers' mental health, the *Depression Anxiety Stress Scales* (DASS) questionnaire was used while the work performance questionnaire was used to assess the level of teacher work performance in their work production. The data obtained was analyzed in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics using the *Statistical Package for Social Science* (SPSS) software version 27. The findings of the study show that primary school teachers are at a moderately good level of mental health with a mean score of 2.66. The results of the study also prove that there is a significant relationship between the level of mental health and the level of teacher work performance with the value of the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) being .73. This study is expected to provide insight into the level of mental health among the teachers studied. Stakeholders can plan procedures to improve the level of mental health among teachers. In the final part, a similar study that can be carried out with some identified added value is also suggested.

**Keywords:** Mental Health, Quality of Life, Productivity, Work Performance

### Introduction

A career as a teacher is a very challenging social service in today's era of globalization. Teachers play an important role in conveying and imparting knowledge to students at school. Teachers are in charge of imparting and imparting knowledge to students at school. In short, teachers guide students until they achieve success and contribute to the prosperity of the

country. The knowledge they have is able to produce high quality human capital that will serve the nation, religion and country. In the world of education, there are various pressures and challenges that teachers will face while at school. Therefore, teachers need to have stable emotions and a healthy mentality to carry out their responsibilities as an educator.

Teachers' duties are not only focused on teaching students but they have other commitments such as looking after and managing the family. Kamaruzaman (2007) stated that a career as a teacher is very challenging because they not only teach but carry out various tasks and have very heavy responsibilities. Teachers need to ensure that their mental health is always in good condition in order to be able to face various challenges at work and to be able to live their daily life more perfectly. According to Intan et al., (2011) states that mental health also plays an important role in ensuring the well-being of daily life or in the future, especially for children and youth. Good mental health allows a person to deal with challenges and stress more effectively.

According to Shamzaeffa and Kevin (2016) stated that mental health problems faced affect work performance and can disturb teachers' attention while at school. Failure to manage and deal with the problem will cause an individual to experience depression and stress in himself. High work pressure affects the level of mental health of teachers during teaching and learning that is happening in the classroom. Teachers who experience high stress and emotional fatigue can also experience a decrease in work performance and work productivity. Heavy workload, constant pressure, lack of support can also affect the cognitive and emotional level of teachers. Teachers need to understand the factors that affect their mental health and know how to deal with them in order to help improve work performance.

The results of this study focus more on work performance as a contributor to the issue of mental health problems. Teachers are a social service that is often seen facing pressure and challenges (Lia et al., 2018). In the context of secondary school teachers, studies on the relationship between work stress and work performance have been done by Aini (2021), Nadzirah (2021), Gooh (2012) and Zawanah (2015). The studies carried out are still not comprehensive, many occur in the context of secondary school teachers and some studies only look at an Islamic Budding Nurturing Center. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted to see the mental health problems that affect work performance among primary school teachers.

### **Research Objective**

This study aims to identify the relationship between the level of mental health of teachers and work performance among primary school teachers. This study aims to:

- i. Identifying the level of mental health of teachers among primary school teachers.
- ii. Identifying the level of work performance among primary school teachers.
- iii. Identifying the relationship between the level of mental health and the level of work performance among primary school teachers.

### **Literature Review**

#### *Teacher Work Performance*

The teacher's work performance is the teacher's ability to combine inputs related to the purpose of improving the teaching and learning process (Adeyemi, 2010). Mekonnen (2014)

also stated that teacher work performance can be defined as the tasks carried out by teachers in a certain period based on the school system to achieve the school's goals. In an organization, the individual's work performance will be evaluated through aspects of attendance, involvement, efficiency, leadership, responsibility and so on (Sharifah et al., 2006). In the field of teaching, teacher work performance is evaluated based on the teacher's teaching performance which consists of the introduction of teaching to the teacher's mastery of the subjects taught, student participation, class control, evaluation and assessment (Adejumobi and Ojikutu, 2013). Teacher work performance needs to be improved to identify factors that are linked to teacher work performance. According to Nadeem et al., 2011 stated that work performance needs to be seen from the aspect of low wages and lack of support from other staff has a significant impact on the behavior of teachers in their work.

According to Usop et al., 2013 stated that teacher's work performance is also influenced by several aspects such as subject mastery, behavior, personal character, intellectual ability, classroom environment, personality and relationship with students. Income or salary, work motivation, attitude towards work, knowledge, leadership attention and responsibility, opportunities to obtain a better education, job satisfaction and work environment are also factors that affect teacher work performance (Muh, 2005). According to Purnama (2012) explained that good work performance can be seen in terms of the teacher's effort to attend school, compliance with school rules, enthusiasm in working, completing their work on time as well as relationships and cooperation with colleagues. In the entire education system, teacher performance is one of the contributing factors in determining school effectiveness and learning outcomes.

#### *Teacher's Mental Health*

The National Union of Teachers Service (NUTP) in 2020 has reported that there are 10,000 teachers every year opting for early retirement beyond the statistics of the Ministry of Education Malaysia. On 9 November 2021, the Ministry of Education and Culture has reported that a total of 4,360 optional retirement applications were made by teachers, showing that the figure is higher than before. The increased workload of teachers since the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to the increased need for online teaching and learning, coupled with non-teaching responsibilities also contributed to the early retirement trend. According to Lia et al., 2018 stated that the teaching profession is a field that is seen as facing pressure because this field is a challenging form of social service. If the teacher fails to cope with the workload, it can cause the physical and mental health of the teacher to be disturbed. There are several factors that can contribute to mental health problems such as stress in terms of work experience factors. According to Brouwers and Tomic (2016) stated that new teachers are more vulnerable to stress. This is in line with the statement of Posada et al., (2020) which states that teachers who have more than 10 years of teaching experience are vulnerable to stress. Meanwhile, young teachers are less exposed to pressure because they still have high enthusiasm when carrying out their duties at school. However, they will feel disappointed if what they learn in teacher training is not the same as the real reality in the world of education. According to O'Brennan (2017) stated that teachers who have been in the field of education for a long time experience less pressure because they are aware of the reality of the real world of education. They are ready to face all possibilities and do not place high expectations on students.

In addition, workplace environment factors can also cause mental health problems among teachers. According to Richards et al., 2018 stated that teachers who constantly interact with colleagues do not experience work pressure compared to teachers who get less social support from colleagues. This shows that teachers who interact less with colleagues tend to do work alone without help from others. This kind of teacher attitude will cause them to have less friends to socialize with and will cause mental health problems such as depression. According to Akin and Ulusoy (2016) stated that mental health problems are avoided if the teacher receives appreciation and support from the administrator because with the support given can increase the teacher's motivation.

According to Kyriacou (2001) stated that teachers who teach students who are less motivated, students who have discipline problems and job dissatisfaction also have an impact on the mental health of teachers. While according to Skaalvik (2007) states that mental health problems among teachers are not only pressure in terms of time management and lack of support from superiors but also caused by the relationship between teachers and students, the relationship between teachers and parents and the relationship between teachers and management. Mental health is very important because it is related to emotional intelligence, behavioral strategy choices and psychological well-being. Teachers who fail to control stress will affect the quality of education and learning. This is in line with the statement of Sapora (2007) stating that mental health will affect the quality of education and the teaching profession as well as hinder efforts to create a society capable of bringing Malaysia to the level of excellence and glory in the quality of education.

### **The Relationship between Mental Health and Teacher Work Performance**

According to Shamzaeffa and Kevin (2016) stated that mental health problems can affect work performance and can disturb teachers' attention while at school. Failure to manage and deal with the problem will cause an individual to experience depression and stress in himself. According to Sprenger (2011), the teaching profession is a career field that often experiences work pressure that can cause serious health problems. According to Suhaimi and Gladys (2014) stated that mental health problems also have an impact on teachers' professionalism which is their work performance and self-efficacy. Work stress factors also have a negative impact on mental well-being, health, behaviour, work and physical performance and have an impact on academic performance, service quality and student learning (Kamentz, 2015).

### **Mental Health and Model**

There are several theories related to mental health, namely the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) Theory and the Psychological Well-Being Model that can help overcome mental health problems.

### **Theory of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)**

This REBT technique is used to identify and analyze client problems. According to Norhazirah (2020) stated that REBT was previously known as Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) and was developed by Albert Ellis in 1950. REBT emphasizes irrational beliefs in an individual that cause problems to an individual's emotions and behavior. Albert Ellis stated that humans are unique in that they have a tendency to think rationally and irrationally. There are two thoughts of an individual which are rational and irrational thoughts. A person's emotional reactions are largely due to conscious or unconscious evaluations, assessments and

philosophies. According to Albert Ellis, there are three foundations that build an individual's behavior, namely Antecedent Event (A), Belief (B) and Emotional Consequence (C). This theory can help reduce the problem of depression and self-blame for an individual.

### **A Model of Psychological Well-Being**

Ryff introduced the dimensions of psychological well-being in 1989 which aims to measure psychological well-being. There are six dimensions of the Psychological Well-Being Scale, namely autonomy in thinking and acting, personal development, mastery of the environment, positive relationships with others, self-acceptance and purpose in life.

Psychological well-being is dependent on how an individual stabilizes themselves and maintains internal and external health. A meaningful individual's life has a quality relationship with family, can stabilize the level of stress in oneself, obtain assurance of physical and psychological health and have a good relationship with friends. Psychological well-being can be achieved if individuals think positively and try to build their potential. This model can improve work performance, encourage employees to be more enthusiastic in performing tasks and increase productivity in an organization.

### **Research Methods**

#### *Research Design*

This study uses quantitative research in the form of a survey. Survey research is used to obtain information from a large number of respondents, i.e. hundreds or thousands of respondents. Survey research is also an approach that involves the collection, analysis and interpretation of data obtained from existing sources. This study uses online questionnaire distribution by sending *Google Form* with simple sampling technique. This quantitative method research by distributing questionnaires to teachers in the Sandakan district who are involved in this study.

#### *Sampel Study*

The selection of respondents in this study involved teachers in several schools in Sandakan district, Sabah. The researcher found that the teacher population in several schools was as many as N=150 teachers. The sampling of this study is done by simple random and has the characteristics of the population. The appropriate sample size in this study is S= 108 people based on the population obtained. The determination of the sample size is based on Krejcie and Morgan 1970. The sampling for this study is 150 people.

#### *Study Instrument*

The findings of the study were obtained by using the questionnaire method because it is easier for the researcher to obtain the results of the study and the information provided by the respondents is accurate and effective. This questionnaire is also to obtain information about the objective of the study which was formed and has been adapted and refined completely to facilitate respondents to answer smoothly. The questionnaire in this study is divided into three main parts involving demographic questions and using questions in the form of a five-point likert scale. Section A discusses demographic items. Part A consists of respondent information such as gender, age, education level and service period.

Sections B and C contain items in the form of a five-point likert scale. This questionnaire is the result of adaptation and modification of the original questionnaire. In part B, the questionnaire was adapted by referring to the *Depression Anxiety Stress Scales* (DASS)

questionnaire developed by Peter Lovibond and Andrew J.K in Australia in 1995. The questionnaire items are grouped into three subscales, namely depression, anxiety and stress, which aim to obtain data related to the level of mental health of teachers. As for Part C, it is a questionnaire related to the teacher's work performance. In this section, the questionnaire has been modified based on the study of Siti Nor Ain (2019) to measure teacher work performance which contains 10 question items related to work performance that are guided by the production of teacher work.

#### *Reliability of Research Instruments*

Table 1 and Table 2 below show the reliability of the questionnaire which can be seen from the value of Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. This reliability has been analyzed through a pilot study conducted on 30 teachers in several schools in the Sandakan district. The results of the analysis of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value on the level of mental health for the stress item which is (0.887) which has 7 items, for the anxiety item which is (0.923) which has 7 items and for the depression item which is (0.923) which has 7 items. The overall value of Cronbach's Alpha for the mental health level instrument which is (0.965) shows that this item can be used in this study. The results of the analysis also found that the overall value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient on teacher work performance for 10 items is (0.94). A Cronbach's Alpha value that exceeds 0.60 is used to measure the reliability index of a research instrument (Pallant, 2007).

Table 1

*Cronbach's Alpha Item Reliability Coefficient Value Against Mental Health Level*

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>	<b>Alpha Value</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Pressure	7	0.887	Good
Anxiety	7	0.923	Very Good
Depression	7	0.923	Very Good
<b>Cronbach's Alpha Overall Value</b>		0.965	Very Good
<b>Mental Health Level Instrument</b>			

Table 2

*Cronbach's Alpha Item Reliability Coefficient Value Against Teacher's Work Performance*

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>	<b>Alpha Value</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Work Performance	10	0.94	Very Good
<b>Cronbach's Alpha overall value</b>	<b>Job</b>	0.94	Very Good
<b>Performance Instrument</b>			

#### **A Pilot Study**

Before carrying out the actual study, the researcher conducted a pilot study first. A pilot study was conducted to help the researcher obtain the validity and reliability of the items in the questionnaire. The pilot test was conducted by distributing questionnaires via *Google Form* online. The researcher has used other subjects where the subjects have the same characteristics as the population subjects selected in the study. A total of 15 people among primary school teachers were selected as research subjects for the pilot study. The results from the pilot study show the alpha coefficient value for mental health level is 0.96 and the coefficient value for work performance level is 0.94.



### Data Collection Procedures

The collected data were analyzed using the *Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)* version 27. The data obtained for analysis were used as descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used in this study to describe the frequency and demographic percentage of the respondents involved. Appropriate inferential statistics are used to test research hypotheses about the relationship between the level of mental health and the level of work performance among primary school teachers.

### Findings

#### *Respondent Demographics*

Table 3 shows the demographic data of respondents related to gender, age, education level and service period.

Table 3

#### *Respondent Demographics (N=150)*

Demographic Information		Number	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	58	38.7
	Female	92	61.3
Age	20-30 tahun	118	78.7
	31-40 tahun	8	5.3
	41-50 tahun	18	12.0
	51-60 tahun	6	4.0
	Education Level	SPM/ Diploma	31
	Bachelor's Degree	114	76.0
	Master's Degree/ PhD	5	3.3
Service Period	1-5 years	104	69.3
	6-10 years	22	14.7
	11-15 years	3	2.0
	16 years and above	21	14.0

### Level of Mental Health

Table 4 shows the standard deviation and mean distribution of primary school teachers for three constructs of mental health levels, namely stress, anxiety and depression. The results of the analysis show that overall the level of mental health of primary school teachers is at a moderate level with a mean score of 2.66 and a standard deviation of 5.16 (M=2.66, SD=5.16).

Table 4

*Level of Mental Health*

No	Health Level Construct	Mean	SD	Interpretation (Level)
1	Pressure	2.58	4.9	Moderate
2	Anxiety	2.63	5.2	Moderate
3	Depression	2.79	5.4	Moderate
	Total	2.66	5.16	Moderate

**Job Performance Level**

Table 5 shows the standard deviation and mean distribution of primary school teachers for the level of teacher work performance. The results of the analysis show that overall the level of work performance of primary school teachers is at a high level with a mean score of 3.94 and a standard deviation of 7.16 (M=3.94, SD=7.16).

Table 5

*Work Performance Level*

No	Teacher Work Performance Level	Mean	SD	Interpretation (Level)
1	Teacher Work Performance	3.94	7.16	High
	Total	3.94	7.16	High

*The Relationship Between the Level of Mental Health and the Level of Teacher work Performance*

The results of the analysis found that the level of mental health ( $r = 0.73$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) has a strong significant relationship with the level of teacher work performance among primary school teachers. Therefore, it can be concluded that the mental health of teachers is closely related to work performance.

**Discussion**

The results of the study found that the level of mental health among primary school teachers in the Sandakan district is at a moderate level. The health constructs of stress, anxiety and depression are at moderate levels. This can be seen from the results of the analysis with the mean score value and the standard deviation value being at a moderate level. A moderate level of mental health proves that the teachers are in a controlled, good and normal state. Teachers are able to make good decisions, can concentrate on their work, can overcome the problems faced and have high self-confidence while working. Teachers who have good mental health also have high organizational commitment because they are willing to face all challenges to implement the organization's mission.

Melissan and Balan (2019) stated that the language of mental health aspects is often associated with emotional intelligence, choice of behavioral strategies and psychological well-being. In addition, mental health is also linked to the psychological well-being of a human being which is difficult to assess because it is more of an individual need internally and externally (Ruziati et al., 2018). High mental needs and not properly controlled will cause psychological problems to occur. Teachers who have good mental health also have high organizational commitment because they are willing to face all challenges to implement the organization's mission, achieve the organization's goals and have a one-way work culture and



values. Therefore, the school will get encouraging returns such as the improvement of the teacher's work performance, the academic improvement of the students and being able to achieve the school's goals.

As for the level of work performance, the data shows that the level of work performance among primary school teachers in the Sandakan district is at a high level. This can be seen from the analysis results with the mean score value and standard deviation being at a high level. The results of this study show that teachers are able to produce a certain amount of work at school according to the set time and that teachers also place great emphasis on quality in every piece of work they do. The teachers have a positive work commitment and show the necessary characteristics in the job context. Teachers who have high commitment can show good spirit and can help teachers to work with full confidence without any doubts. Good work performance can be seen in terms of the teacher's diligence in coming to school, compliance with school rules, enthusiasm in working, completing work on time (Purnama, 2012).

The findings of this study support the results of Siti Azaha's (2022) study which was attended by 140 teachers who served in five national schools in the Hulu Langat district, Selangor has proven that the level of performance of teachers in those schools is at a high level. The results of the study show that motivation affects the work performance of teachers which acts as a trigger of enthusiasm and encouragement for teachers to continue to improve their work performance (Siti Azaha, 2022). This study is contrary to the study carried out by Nadiah et al., (2019) who found that the work performance of government school teachers in Malaysia is at a moderate level. The results of the study show that although the level of workload is high, the teachers are still satisfied with their work. Teachers are wise in managing the workload that is assigned to them.

The findings of the study also show that there is a significant correlation between the level of mental health and the level of work performance among primary school teachers in Sandakan district. This means that the level of mental health has a significant relationship with the level of teacher work performance. When teachers have high mental health, then it affects the level of work performance and job satisfaction of a teacher. In this study, the teachers have a moderate level of mental health, so it is expected not to have an impact on work performance. Work performance among the teachers studied is also high. The pressure faced can be reduced by doing activities that are not related to his job.

The findings of this study are supported by the results of the study by Aini et al., (2021) which was participated by National Secondary School (SMK) teachers in the education sector in the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia found that work stress has a significant positive relationship with work performance. This means that the higher the work pressure, the lower the teacher's work performance. On the other hand, when work pressure is low, work performance also increases. Mental health problems are factors that affect work performance and can disrupt teachers' attention while at school (Shamzaeffa and Kevin, 2016). This study proves that if the teacher's work pressure is not controlled, it can affect the mental health of an employee and have an impact on work performance.

**Conclusion**

This study supports the idea that a healthy mind is closely related to the performance of an employee. The findings of this study clearly show that teachers need to monitor the level of mental health well and ensure it is under control so that it does not have a negative impact on performance or the quality of the work. This is because society and parents have high expectations for educators. A good level of mental health also needs to be possessed by an individual to encourage them to positive development in life such as social, physical and psychological health. This can contribute to increased work efficiency, the formation of a positive personality and the effectiveness of learning outcomes. It is hoped that the findings of this study can explain the importance of having a level of mental health and the relationship with teacher work performance.

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