



# The Presence of Bipolar Disorder Symptoms: Navigating Employees to Avoid Mental Illness for Outstanding Work Performance

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This study delves into the causes of the symptoms of bipolar disorder among teachers and examined how it was related to meeting standards of work performance. Participants were 81 male and 119 female secondary school teachers in North Malaysia. Participants were given the surveys based on three independent variables which are stress, mood and emotions and work environment that were empirically evident to become the source of bipolar disorder symptoms. Results suggested that all of the independent variables are correlated with work performance; with the highest result being for work environment (.48\*\*), then mood and emotions (.47\*\*) and finally stress (.38\*\*). Results are discussed in terms of implications for teachers to excel in their work performance.

**Key words:** *Bipolar disorder, work performance, stress, mood and emotions and work environment.*



## **Introduction**

The quality of work mostly depends on an employee's performance. Quality work performance is a typical goal for every employee whereby they must achieve the standard requirement that is expected by an employer to stay relevant in the corporation. In order to perform, workers will do several necessary things in a process to turn the input into output. Basically, they must strengthen their knowledge, skills and abilities by frequently joining any training and engaging in conferences and project, assignment and so forth. They are actually the actor behind the journey to form a successful organization. The output must have its value as measured as that when the worker continuously shows outstanding performance, it can effectively impact others' decision-making and perception that the worker has the potential to be promoted to a higher position.

However, the path to get there is not that always smooth sailing. There are many studies revealed that employees may face obstacles while completing their job. Among all of those obstacles, bipolar disorder is one of the reasons for work loss. The discussions and awareness about bipolar disorder are still rare but there is thought to be some prevalence of this disorder in many people including the top management team specifically in Malaysia. Nevertheless, its impact could harm both the individual and organization as a whole. Thus, it is of utmost importance to acknowledge the signs of bipolar disorder as a way to avoid any worse complications that a person can have.

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness that brings serious impact on moods swings and changes in sleep, vitality, considering and behaviour (Bowden, 2005). Individuals with bipolar disorder invest 47% of their energy currently, encountering side effects of mania and depression with the dominant part of that time spent in depression (Projects, Finch, Finch, & Kuncze, 2007). It is also part of a depressive episode for a person (Leahy, 2007; Monsef, & Mehrjardi, 2017).

Bipolar disorder is caused by many factors such as genetics, environmental factors, neurochemical factors (Jaya, Kumar, Lalit, Tanuja, & Deepa, 2013), mood (Biswas, 2015), work stress (Melchior, Caspi, Milne, Danese, Poulton, & Moffitt, 2007; Steven, 2001) and work environment (Woo & Postolache, 2008). It is complex and complicated to identify those that suffer with bipolar disorder in the first instance because of the confusion between normal depression and over depression experience by a worker, thus; the comprehension about the symptoms of how it is started need detailed diagnosis by a registered specialist



which should extend to the collaboration of top management and the patient's colleagues that could inform and address its occurrence in early detection. However, not all employees have the knowledge about this sickness.

This study attempted to explore and analyze the pre-early stage of bipolar disorder symptoms among employees in the context of its impact on worker performance. Stress, mood and emotions and work environment are empirically evident to be the source of bipolar disorder symptoms based on early discussions in this section. These three independent variables were chosen as they were more related to occupational factors that may lead an employee to display bipolar disorder and indirectly could affect work performance. This paper could help in enriching the available literature on the topic of bipolar disorder in Malaysia specifically to workers that spend most of their daily hours at the workplace. This is important because a worker's positive contribution to their work will affect the harmony of citizens which could bring a positive impact to the nation as a whole.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Work Performance***

Deadrick and Gardner (2000) indicated that work performance can be characterized as the achieved work results for each work activity within a predetermined time frame. According to Cheng (2004), high performance in an organization can be achieved if all people can work together and can give commitment to deliver value to the customers. Then, great results can be produced. This significant outcome can be measured by the most common used strategy of performance ratings, which are subjective evaluations obtained from sources including managers, peers, subordinates, self, or even clients, with managers being the most usually utilized source followed by peers.

The theory of work performance clarifies that work performance is a multidimensional development which consists of assignment measurement and relevant measurement (Harrison & Shaffer, 2005). Past researchers have featured many components that impact work performance, for example, objective introduction, self-viability, self-checking, assignment, and individual's introduction, connection transport ability and universal experience (Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi 2006; Wang & Takeuchi, 2007).

Skill, effort and nature of work condition are a mixture which expressed as the sum of the parts that speaks to work performance. The rewards that organizations give to workers either can be in monetary, increases in compensation or of a non-financial nature like vacation advantages, Acknowledgment of certification for specific worker achievement in organizations influences workers to experience high employment fulfilment and makes them



motivated to achieve high work performance. However it is not easy to continue to maintain good working performance if employees are not good at handling the problems that arise in their daily lives.

### *Stress*

According to Piko (2006), stress is an input of a person towards his or her condition. Everyone may be able to experience stress if he or she has a negative perception towards their work environment. Shikdar and Sawaqed (2003) argue that the failure to actualize the ergonomic principles at a working environments can lead to emotional depression, physical impact and, efficiency and item quality decline. Work stress is a universal component experienced by employees around the world. Work stress has turned out to be a real issue for employers especially in developing countries where the employer does not understand the effect of stress on employee work performance (Shikdar & Sawaqed, 2003). Hanif (2004) declared stress was a general component which workers around the world are encountering as a matter of course. Employees additionally express that stress it as the single most deadly silent killer for workers particularly in times of depression.

Stress is a main issue in the occupational safety and health aspect as well as organizational prosperity (Williams & Cooper, 2002). The direct outcomes from work stress are to make a condition of imbalance between the individual capacities, needs, and desires from one viewpoint, and between requests made on the other hand. Ganster and Loghan, (2005) do not deny that the key factors for example, workplace, administration support and work load are factors that decide the level of stress at work which can influence worker physical and psychological well-being. Leka, Griffiths and Cox (2003) demonstrated that stress comes about from a mismatch between the request and relative pressures on the person.

Adler, McLaughlin, Rogers, Chang, Lapitsky and Lerner (2006) posit that there are also good aspects to stress and that good work related stress happens when representatives' learning, skills, capacities and states of mind can adapt to or match to their work requests and weights in associations. In this situation, it might build the capacity of representatives to deal with their physiological and mental burdens. S cullen, Mount and Goff (2000) indicated that stress is an undesirable response by an individual to severe pressure or different sorts of requests put upon them. An immense body of literature across multiple fields in this discipline focuses a great deal on key factors, for example, work environment, administration support, work weight in deciding how the distressing the work could be and thus its potential impact on worker physical and psychological wellness (Scullen, Mount & Goff, 2000). Stress exists in each association whether a big or small work place and the existence of stress has added



complexity to the operation of associations, work place stress has critical impacts on the workers' work performance (Jackson & Schuler, 2000).

### ***Mood and Emotions***

Feelings, emotions and mood are normally utilized terms in psychiatry practice (Pathak, Ms, Srinivas, & Batra, 2011; Miswan, & Sulaiman, 2017). Emotions are exceptional feelings that are coordinated through somebody or something and moods are sentiments that have a tendency to be less serious than emotions and that frequently do not have a contextual stimulus (Hume, 2001). Most expert's trust that emotions are shorter lived than moods. Emotions are responses to an individual for example seeing a friend at work may influence the individual to feel happy or an event like managing a rude customer may influence the individual to feel angry. Individuals demonstrate their feelings when they are happy about something, angry at somebody, afraid of something. Moods in contrast, are not generally directed at an individual or event. Emotions can transform into moods when they lose centre around the event or object that began the feeling. In addition by a similar token, great or bad moods of mind can make an individual more emotional in light of an event.

### ***Work Environment***

Work environment conditions assume a crucial part in guaranteeing worker's work performance (Naharuddin & Sadegi, 2013). Organizational condition assume a basic part for the employees. Nowadays, employees may have countless choices; therefore the environment in a workplace turns into a basic factor for tolerating or remaining in the occupation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), better working environment conditions rouse employees and create better outcomes. Additionally, the term workplace is utilized to describe the surrounding conditions in which a worker works. The workplace can be made out of physical conditions, for example, office temperature, equipment and personal computers. It can also be identified with elements, for example, work procedures or strategies. Among the physical parts of workplace environment are temperature, lighting, heavy lifting and noise.

Besides that, Rezaul (2014) argued that work environment includes the significance of the surroundings at a worker's place of occupation which incorporate inside, outside, at a work area and in a desk area. In addition, it likewise refers to the positive, negative or open mental condition of a person. A strong work environment condition is said to have the capacity in connect workers with their performance.



Numerous managers in an association have started to understand the significance of work environment towards creating positive workers and are mindful that it is the nature of the worker's work environment condition that identifies with work performance. In fact, it is the nature of work environment that most effects the workers level of work performance and inspiration (Chandrasekar, 2011). Arman, Mastura, Shardy and Samsiah (2008) acknowledged that a few variables of work environment may lead to the respective level of work performance and one of them is work fulfillment. Employees who are happy with their work are likely to perform better in the researched associations (Fisher, 2003; Herda, & Dzubur, 2017). This is on account of performance which may lead to rewards and thus the prizes bring fulfillment.

An unhealthy environment, it may affect the performance of workers especially for workers who experience bipolar disorder. Bipolar disorder has two specific mood swings which are depression and mania and they need a healthy environment to prevent resultant poor work performance.

Based on the above literature, the below hypotheses are proposed:

- H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between work stress and employee's work performance.
- H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between mood and emotions and employee's work performance.
- H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant relationship between work environment and employee's work performance.

## **Methodology**

The potential population of this research was 2126 teachers from all secondary schools located in the state of North Malaysia. The data regarding work performance, stress, mood and emotions as well as work environment have been obtained in the perspective of these secondary school teachers (self-ratings). This research has utilized the survey method in order to get the required information. A sample of 200 secondary school teachers from various secondary schools participated in this study.

Eight (8) items have been developed in order to obtain data regarding the demographic background for all respondents. Respondents are required to reveal their gender, age, marital status, qualification, monthly salary, tenure of working, status (eg. Permanent, substitute, practical) and name of secondary schools they are from, Table 1 below presents the adapted instruments which have been used for this study.

**Table 1:** Instrumentation for Variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>No of Items</b>	<b>Authors</b>
Work Performance	5	Yei, C., Men & Bee (2014)
Stress	10	Munisamy (2013)
Mood and Emotions	5	Naring, Vlerick & Ven (2012)
Work Environment	5	Yei, C., Men & Bee (2014)

Based on the five-point Likert-scale with 1=strongly disagree, to 5=strongly agree; respondents rated their degree of agreement regarding the statements about work performance, work stress, mood and emotions and work environment.

The reliability results for pilot test have been presented in Table 2 below. Given that the Cronbach's alpha values are ranged from .85 to .87, thus all of the items presented a good reliability and have been used for the actual study as established by Sekaran and Bougie (2010).

**Table 2:** Cronbach's Alpha Values for Variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha Values</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Work Performance	.86	Good
Stress	.85	Good
Mood and Emotions	.86	Good
Work Environment	.87	Good

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 22 has been used for the statistical analysis. First, the data was run for descriptive analyses. Next, the correlation and regression tests were conducted.



## Results and Discussions

Out of 327 questionnaires distributed, a total of 200 were returned and used for further analysis, giving a 61% response rate. With reference to gender composition, there is a high contribution of female respondents with 119 (59.5%) respondents as compared to 81 male respondents (40.5%). The majority of the respondents are between the age of 31-40 years old (45.5%), followed by age between 23-30 years old (26.5%), above 51 years old (14.5%), and between 41-50 years old with (13.5%).

Among the total 200 respondents, only 24.5% are single while 75.5% are married. It is generally accepted that married individuals are more family-oriented due to greater family commitments which require higher stability and security with respect to their jobs. Consequently, they are expected to be more committed to the organization they are working in as compared to their unmarried counterparts. Further, the majority (96.5%) of the respondents have the qualification of Bachelor's Degree, followed by those with a Masters Degree (2%) and lastly a Diploma/Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM) (1.5%).

The findings of the demographic analysis performed indicate that the majority (40.5%) of the respondents earned more than RM5500 as a monthly salary, followed by a monthly salary between RM3500-RM5500 (27.0%) and finally between RM2000-RM3500 (20.0%), while only 12.5% earned below RM2000 monthly. Also, 60.5% of the respondents have been working in the school for more than 7 years while 6.5% are among those who have worked between 1-3 years. Respondents who have been working in the school for less than a year consist of 17.5%, followed by those who have worked between 4-7 years (15.5%). Among all respondents, 80.5% are permanent teachers while 13% are substitute teacher and 6.5% are practical teachers. Results attained have brought an understanding that the majority of the respondents are permanent teachers, female and married, Bachelor's Degree qualified, earn monthly salary of more than RM5000, and have been working in their school more than 7 years. To achieve the research objectives discussed, this study examined the relationship of stress, mood and emotions, as well as work environment with work performance among teachers in the state of North Malaysia. Table 3 below reports the descriptive statistics while Table 4 also below demonstrates correlations of the variables used in this study. A notable statistical range of each variable's mean falls between 4.36 and 4.5 indicating a relatively high agreements in the variables examined.

**Table 3:** Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	SD
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Work Performance	4.50	.35
Stress	4.50	.40
Mood and Emotions	4.49	.47
Work Environment	4.36	.42

*SD = Standard Deviation*

**Table 4:** Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3	4
1 Stress	-			
2 Work Environment	0.31	-		
3 Mood and Emotions	0.45	0.40	-	
4 Work Performance	0.38*	0.48*	0.47*	-

\* $p < .01$

Further analysis was conducted to examine the three hypotheses proposed. Thus, linear regression analysis was performed. This is to assist in empirically testing all the hypotheses put forward earlier. Results attained are as depicted in Table 5 below.

**Table 5:** Results of The Regression Analysis

Variables	Beta	Sig.	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Stress	.16	.018		
Mood and emotions	.27	.000*		
Work environment	.33	.000*		
			.34	.33

\* $p < .01$

The results attained indicate work performance is significantly influenced by work environment, correspondingly supporting Hypothesis 1. This effect confirms the significance of work environment in attaining greater work performance. This indicates a positive work environment will positively boost work performance.

Nonetheless, mood and emotions are also shown to significantly influence work performance. The result confirmed that positive mood and emotions of the teachers will significantly enhance their work performance. Thus, greater work performance can be achieved by teachers if they are surrounded by more positive mood and emotions. This supports the



Hypothesis 2 proposed. That is, the better the mood and emotions of the teachers, the greater work performance is achieved.

However, examination of stress on work performance has detected no significant influence on work performance. Thus, it can be concluded that stress level amongst teachers has no significant effect on their work performance. This does not support Hypothesis 3 as proposed, indicating work performance is not significantly affected by stress level faced. Although this is very surprising, the insignificant result attained is explainable.

Referring to the discussion on the respondents demographic result obtained, the majority of the respondents are married. Furthermore, they are mainly among those who have worked in the school for more than 7 years. Thus, it can be explained that highly experienced and married individuals are more mature in handling stress because their work for their school as involved problem solving to confront challenges and handle stress. These are significant factors in skill development and ability to manage conflicts and challenges in balancing their stress.

Consequently, the stress level faced in their working environment does not significantly influence their work performance as they are able to balance and manage their stress. Additionally, social stability can be another driven factor of this result. As majority of the respondents are university graduates with a monthly salary of more than RM5000 and hold a permanent post, it can be concluded that they are more socially stable. Therefore, their social stress is minimized which has placed them in a better position in accordance to stress level. This can be another explanation behind the insignificant effect of stress towards their work performance. Thus, the demographic background of an individual can be the strong grounds in preparing them to manage and balance stress.

## **Conclusions**

Three independent variables (which are proved to be part of the causes of bipolar disorder in other research) were tested in this study in the context of its relationship with work performance. Work environment is the main factor that affects teachers in the study as to their respective work performance. Mood and emotions also have a significant relationship with work performance which the further discussions above in the previous section have explained. However, stress is surprisingly not the significant factor to work performance found in this study. Thus, there could be other variables that are greater determinants to stress conditions.



This research shared a couple of justifications based on existing literature re how those variables could be related. The findings of this study are that despite of a certain explanation exists for a factor relationship, it is also important to take note the demographic characteristics of the participants that may influence the outcome, as in this study.

Members of organizations including from the top management to lower level positions should share the same values of forming a work culture that is alert to obvious negative change behaviour of workers inside the organisation and or anything that is against the norm of the organization. A corporation should have the systematic policy, procedure and awareness campaign to deal with bipolar disorder symptoms or which initiate notification to specific people in charge or department. The support from the top management team is most important for this aim.

It is believed that the individual worker would be healthier if more parties took a role in achieving this goal which could benefit both; the worker and organization in the quest for excellent work performance. Happy workers will contribute more to the company. Even though it is difficult to identify those with the symptoms, however, with potential organisational or even national, (in terms of having a body to support on detail diagnosis by specialist); a reduction in the number of workers potentially at risk with this mental disorder would be achieved.

It is recommended that the topic discussed in this study can be extended to any other additional variables that can be tested. Further research could use the same research parameters but look at different job positions to those included in this research. Moreover, as a result of this study further exploration of other high-cost-of-living conditions nationally could be explored to get clear picture of understanding bipolar disorder and its affects and potential treatments through systematic plans and treatment. To conclude, a organization has to ensure that they utilize their human resources and allocate an acceptable workloads for the individual worker, based on identified capacity and other related points like working hours, selection of right worker in the position and further tools that can help employees and employers to ensure they are working efficiently, produce on time and have proper time-gaps for workers to refresh and continue to serve the company for the next day.

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