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The moderating role of emotional intelligence and HR digitalization on the relationship between compensation and employee job performance in Johor manufacturing sector

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the moderating role of emotional intelligence and HR digitalization on the relationship between compensation and employee job performance in Johor manufacturing sector. The manufacturing sector, which has contributed significantly to the Malaysian national GDP, was among the most affected sectors during the remote work movement caused by several Covid-19. One of the most critical aspects was managing human resources (HR) in remote work and the challenges faced by the employees working online. Drawing upon the Theory of Social Exchange and Ability model of Emotional Intelligence, this practical study investigated the influence of compensation (COM) on employee job performance (EJP) with the moderation of human resource digitalization (HRDi) and emotional intelligence (EI). A quantitative methodology based on online and hard-copy questionnaires was adopted. The population of this study consisted of management employees, such as directors, managers, executives, and administrators working in Johor manufacturing companies. A total of 318 responses was used in this study. Utilising SPSS and Smart PLS, the researcher analysed preliminary and pilot studies, data screening and cleaning procedures, exploratory factor analysis, as well as partial least squares structural equation modeling to assess the relationships among variables and test the hypotheses. The research findings demonstrated that compensation directly affects employee job performance. Meanwhile, human resource digitalization moderates the relationships between compensation and job performance of employees. In addition, emotional intelligence moderates the relationships between compensation and employee job performance. Policymakers are urged to encourage HR digitalization implementation and training on enhancing emotional intelligence. Besides, organizations should have plans on how to enhance their implementation of HR digitalization and improve emotional intelligence.

Contribution/Originality: This research pivots from the conventional focus on the broader employee impact during crises to a specific yet crucial segment: the managerial-level group. It also addresses the lack of the current HR framework integration of HR digitalization and EI as a moderator in compensation-job performance relationships.

1. INTRODUCTION

The coming of the COVID-19 marked a global crisis that transcended mortality rates due to the highly interconnected world. Governments worldwide, including Malaysia, responded with extensive strategies and economic aid to mitigate the pandemic's impact. Malaysia enacted a Movement Control Order (MCO) in March 2020, leading to multiple extensions and stringent measures like business closures (Al-Shameri & Omar, 2022). The manufacturing sector felt the repercussions, as companies faced shutdowns, layoffs, and disrupted supply chains. Remote work gained prominence as a solution, impacting various industries but also contributing to psychological stress among employees. This crisis significantly affected global trade, economies, and social norms, compelling organizations to adapt their operations and adopt remote work policies, further altering the manufacturing sector's dynamics (Al-Shameri & Omar, 2022).

One problem exists in the compensation systems in the organizations, which is certainly reflected in the employees' performance according to the social exchange theory. The leading Malaysian law firm, MahWengKwai & Associates, announced that they had received numerous inquiries from employers regarding many issues, including the inability of the employers to pay the employees in a timely manner, many requests for leaves, the possibility of pay cuts, and the possibility of retrenchment (MahWengKwai&Associates, 2020). According to the Malaysian Department of Statistics report, which was conducted on 23rd–31st March 2020 and involved 168,182 respondents, 10.6% have received half-paid leaves, 15.0% have received leaves, and 4.2% lost their jobs in the Malaysian manufacturing industry (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020).

The gap addressed in this research lies in the fact that it pivots from the conventional focus on the broader employee impact during crises to an in-depth exploration of the effects on a specific yet crucial segment: the managerial-level group. In addition, the current Human Resources framework lacks integration of HR digitalization and overlooks emotional intelligence as a moderator in compensation-job performance relationships (Al-Shameri & Omar, 2022). Globally, HR leaders prioritize digitalization for adapting to remote work dynamics (Boston, 2021). While HRM digitalization holds potential to enhance job performance, conflicting views exist (Narayanamurthy & Tortorella, 2021). Emotional intelligence is critical as a moderator, as demonstrated by cases in Malaysian firms where neglect led to reduced performance and extreme outcomes (Liew, 2020). In addition, studying compensation, emotional intelligence of employees, and their potential job performance in the new environment of COVID-19 is part of the contribution of this research. Within this context, the Malaysian manufacturing sector, crucial to the country's economy, faced challenges stemming from disrupted supply chains and reduced demand. The impact on the sector's supply chains heightened production costs, causing delays and shortages of materials. Remote work became vital for industries leveraging technology, yet prolonged social isolation led to psychological strain. Given the sector's significance to Malaysia's GDP, the study emphasizes the significance of HHRM in maintaining a competitive edge. HRM practices correlate positively with job performance, influencing overall organizational success. The study examines compensation, HR digitalization, and EI, and their effect on managerial job performance within the manufacturing sector in Johor, Malaysia. The study also investigates the moderating effect of HR digitalization and EI on the relationship between compensation and employee job performance. Notably, Covid-19's inclusion as a contextual example underscores the pandemic's role in accelerating the shift to remote work, prompting a deeper analysis of its lasting effects beyond the immediate crisis. In outlining the roadmap for this study, the subsequent sections provide a comprehensive examination of the research landscape. The Literature Review offers a critical analysis of existing research, laying the groundwork for our exploration of the interplay between compensation, HR digitalization, emotional intelligence, and job performance. Following this, the methodology section details the design of the research and data collection strategies utilized to address our study questions. Subsequently, the Data Analysis section employs robust statistical techniques to interpret the gathered data. The discussion section then illustrates the results in line with existing literature and displays their implications. Finally, the conclusion synthesizes key outcomes and outlines avenues for future studies and research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Employee Job Performance

Organizations view employees as their cornerstone, and their success or failure hinges on employers' ability to attract, retain, and appropriately remunerate proficient and skilled personnel. Performance is the ability an individual uses efficiently and functionally, while work performance is employees being able to use their capacities to attain the organization's goal (Ahmed, Sabir, Rehman, Khosa, & Khan, 2016). According to Pradhan and Jena (2017), for the full utilization of HR and to increase the organization's success, it is imperative for the organizations to develop and maintain an effective management system for the performance of the individuals. Employee job performance is connected with the practices of human resources because human resource personnel generally intend to enhance individuals' performance in companies by enhancing great situations, granting the employees incentives if they work appropriately, supporting staff to be content with their performance, and giving them rewards to motivate those employees (Vratskikh, Masadeh, Al-Lozi, & Maqableh, 2016). Nowadays, the organization's goal is fulfilled based on the employee's performance (Obiageli, Uzochukwu, & Ngozi, 2015), and it helps in profitability maximization and the efficiency of resources (Na-Nan, Chaiprasit, & Pukkeeree, 2018). The estimation of the employees' performance depends upon the way the tasks given are implemented and to what extent the organization's goals are achieved (Ahmed et al., 2016). As a result, it is critical for companies to have a highly motivated employees to deliver their products, attain their goals successfully, and be able to achieve competitive advantages (Tabiu, Pangil, & Othman, 2016). This leads to the fact that the performance of the employees should be improved, and companies should strive to achieve this aspect (Na-Nan et al., 2018). Three main levels of employee job performance were used to measure the job performance of the management employees working in Johor manufacturing sector.

2.2. Compensation and Benefits

A crucial strategy for enhancing employee job performance involves implementing a policy that offers compensation aimed at elevating employee output. Providing equitable and well-organized compensation has the potential to inspire employees to deliver job performance aligned with the company's expectations. Compensation is a type of reward that employees receive within an organization for their work or contributions they make to the organization (Murpin, Fatihudin, Mochklas, & Holisin, 2020). Increased compensation and better development of the employees could contribute to the enhancement of employee's performance (Darma & Supriyanto, 2017). According to Ketut, Saparuddin, Budi, Herlitah, and Indah (2018), compensation packages could improve the employee's job performance because the size of work achieved by the employees can be sensed by the family, the society, and the employees themselves through increased compensation. The researchers' findings present a discrepancy in establishing the connection between employee job performance and compensation. Some scholars, such as Jibrin-bida, Abdul-majid, and Ismail (2017), Mollel Eliphas, Mulongo, and Razia (2017), and Siswanto, Maulidiyah, and Masyhuri (2021), found no significant effect of compensation on the employees' productivity. However, several studies, including Abugre and Nasere (2020); Thiha (2019); Prihantari and Astika (2019); Rashid, Hamza, and Said (2018); Kokubun (2018); Darma and Supriyanto (2017) and Oluigbo and Anyiam (2014) identified a noteworthy influence of compensation on performance. Therefore, the following statement was hypothesized:

H_{1a}: There is a positive and significant relationship between compensation and employee job performance.

2.3. Human Resource Digitalization

Based on Iqbal, Ahmad, MC Allen, and Raziq (2018) the integration of HR practices and policies with IT processes, known as HR digitalization, aims to improve workplace conditions and contribute value to companies. Despite the current popularity of HR digitalization, it is still a new topic and is explored by a limited number of scholars. However, its importance became more evident during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, as companies

swiftly embraced digitalization while transitioning to remote work environments. This research primarily aims to examine the moderating impact achieved by HR digitalization on the correlation between HR practices and job performance. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, the researcher tries to find the basis for this statement in previous studies. Many technological adoption aspects were investigated, including attitudes of individuals, their behaviors, and their acceptance (Baskaran, Lay, Ming, & Mahadi, 2020). Research has delved into its impact on HR functions, as seen in studies by Evseeva, Kalchenko, and Plis (2019) and Savola and Troqe (2019) as well as the pros and cons of different methods used for recruiting and challenges faced by HR managers, as highlighted by Das and Sureshkrishna (2019). Bondarouk, Parry, and Furtmueller (2017) affirmed the considerable potential for HR digitalization to improve the efficiency of HR functions and contribute to the realization of corporate goals and objectives. This is consistent with the recent results obtained by Iqbal et al. (2018) who observed a positive influence of HR digitalization on employee productivity in their study involving employees in the banking sector in Pakistan. Notably, banks that had already implemented e-HRM employed the participants in this study.

Narayanamurthy and Tortorella (2021) indicated that the implications of COVID-19 were influencing performance of employees, and Industry 4.0 technologies played a moderating role in enhancing employee job performance. The researchers emphasized that these technologies contributed to improved performance by facilitating real-time connections between physical and digital systems. This aligns with Olsen and Tomlin (2020) assertion that digitalization enables cost reduction, offers flexibility in work environments, enhances quality and speed of work, while also mitigating tensions among stakeholders, thus improving employee job performance. Lager and Milojkovic (2018) similarly found, in research conducted on the organizations adopting technological practices for employee management, that it can enhance employee engagement in organizational activities. Furthermore, Fedorova et al. (2019) found that digitalization significantly reduces routine tasks and human errors, thereby enhancing employee job performance. Despite the growing significance of HR digitalization, research on HR digitalization and employee job performance is still limited, and existing research has not explored the effect of HR digitalization as a moderator between HR practices and employee performance. Therefore, due to the scarcity of studies examining such significant moderators, this study seeks to address this knowledge. Therefore, following statements were hypnotized. Therefore, due to the scarcity of studies examining such significant moderators, this study seeks to address this knowledge. Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed based on the above discussion and the summary of the previous studies:

H_1: There is a positive relationship between HR digitalization and employee job performance.

H_2: HR digitalization moderates the relationship between compensation and employee job performance.

2.4. Emotional Intelligence

EI can be defined as the capacity of individuals working at a specific company to be aware of, control, and express one's own emotions while at the same time understanding and taking care of the emotions of others (Munir & Azam, 2017). Organizations depend on human capital in performing most of the critical operations. This human capital comes with different mindsets, behaviours, and manners. Therefore, emotional intelligence contributes to the success of organizations because different behaviours and thinking are brought into one place. This necessitates determining the emotional intelligence level of employees and examining its impact on enhancing the relationship between HR practices and employee performance. According to Lee (2018) and Wiguna and Netra (2020) emotional intelligence is a supporting factor for organizations to improve the levels of employee job performance. Individuals with high emotional intelligence are likely to demonstrate commitment to their work, and employees with strong emotional intelligence tend to outperform their peers (Dhani & Sharma, 2017).

As shown in the literature review, emotional intelligence has been used as both an independent (Ahmed et al., 2016; Chinemere Okeke, Anulika Virginia, & Okeh, 2015; Dayarathna, 2015; Mohd Ismail, 2018; Noel & Mosoti, 2016) dependent and moderator variable (Douglas, Frink, & Ferris, 2004; Mahdinezhad, Yusof, & Rambeli, 2019;

Qureshi, 2015; Rosita & Yanuar, 2019; Shoukat, Ahmad, & Ahmed, 2019; Siti, Tommy, Suyasa, & Tumanggor, 2020). However, it seems that no prior research has yet explored emotional intelligence's role as a moderator within the connection between HR practices and employee job performance. To address this research gap, this study delved into emotional intelligence's moderating role in employee job performance, presenting discussions and arguments on the subject. Applying ability model of emotional intelligence and using longitudinal intervention-based pretest-posttest experimental design, Munir and Azam (2017) found emotional intelligence of the employees significantly increased during the six-month time period, which was also reflected in the improvement of employee job performance. Emotional intelligence also affects the relation between HR practices and employee job performance in that having high emotional intelligence will lead to more perceiving of HR practices and enhance employee job performance. In the workplace, emotional intelligence factors interconnect with the employee's discomfort, depression, tension, and irritation, all of which negatively impact the employee's performance. It might lead to a higher or lower level of spirit, finally affecting the employee's performance positively and negatively (Ahmed et al., 2016). Emotional intelligence could play a significant role in the workplace environment (Srinivas & Neerupa, 2019). Therefore, it relies on competencies that assist an individual in overcoming obstacles in fulfilling work-related tasks and managing emotions to achieve these emotions. In the field of work, a person must work in groups consisting of individuals full of different opinions and thoughts (Khalid, Khaleel, Ali, & Islam, 2018). Emotional intelligence (EI) can help avoid any problems that might increase because of not controlling the employees' emotions and then producing strong teams. According to Munir and Azam (2017) emotional intelligence positively and significantly contributes to the employees' contextual and task performance. Even with effective and efficient HR practices, the employees will not be productive if their emotional intelligence is low. Therefore, based on the above discussion and the summary of the previous studies in the literature review, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1c: There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and employee job performance.

H3: Emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between compensation and employee job performance.

2.5. Conceptual Framework and Research Hypotheses

Figure 1 illustrates the research framework presented in this paper. It shows that this research investigates the direct relationship of compensation on employee job performance, which moderated my HR digitalization and emotional intelligence.

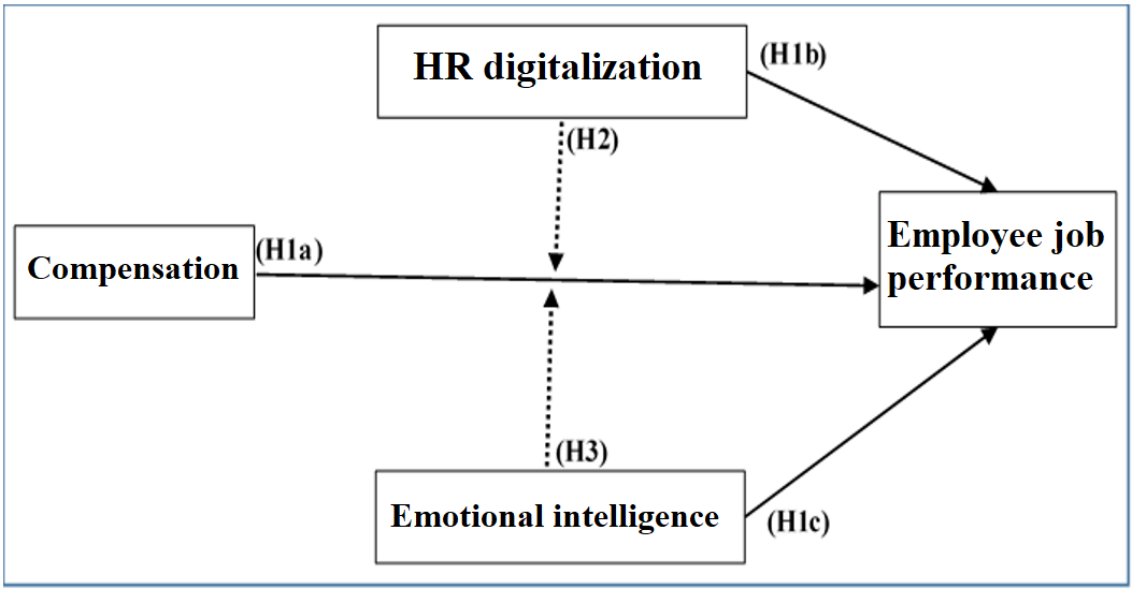

Figure 1. Research framework.

3. METHODOLOGY

This quantitative research follows the positivism approach (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006; Cresswell, 2014) because it is very methodological, rational, predictive, and objective (Speziale, Streubert, & Carpenter, 2011), efficient for a relatively large sample size, and effective for studying cause-effect relationships (Cresswell, 2014). This study also follows the deductive approach because it tests new hypotheses that are based on a theory rather than developing a new theory. This study's time horizon is cross-sectional, as it took place at a specific point in time. This research designed a model to evaluate the moderating role of HR digitalization and emotional intelligence in the relationship between compensation practices and job performance. The model investigated new paths of moderating effect, HR digitalization and emotional intelligence on the relationship between compensation and job performance that were ignored in literature review. The constructs' items were adapted from previous studies; compensation (Murpin et al., 2020) human resource digitalization (Iqbal et al., 2018) emotional intelligence (Ismail, Mohd Nopiah, & Mohd Sattar, 2020; Murpin et al., 2020) and employee job performance (Koopmans et al., 2012; Sherwani & Botan Ismail, 2018; Tabiu et al., 2016).

The population of this research is the management employees who have been working remotely in the manufacturing sector in Johor, Malaysia. The respondents in this study include management directors, managers, executives (officers), administrator', and others. The selection of this population was based on the basis that this population has been experiencing remote work environments due to remote work movement during their work in the manufacturing sector because the research focuses on job performance in remote work.

According to the recent Department of Statistics Malaysia (2019) the Johor manufacturing sector employs around 473,000 individuals. However, in the absence of precise data on management employees, the sample size is estimated using the average percentage of such employees in Malaysia's manufacturing sector. The Industrial Co-ordination Act of 1975 in Malaysia mandates a minimum of 25% managerial, technical, and supervisory staff (Nigam, 2022). Additionally, Malaysia's skilled workforce constitutes 28.2% of the total workforce (Talentcorp, 2020). Applying these factors, the estimated population of management employees in the Johor manufacturing sector is 118,250, leading to a suitable sample size of 383 at a 92% confidence level based on the Morgan table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The actual number of responses returned and considered for further analysis is 319 responses. For data collection, an online questionnaire was chosen due to cost-effectiveness and accessibility despite company office restrictions. Company contact details were sourced from Google searches. Initial contact was made through emails and followed up with WhatsApp, and Facebook. Due to limited progress, hard copies were distributed to company locations after two months. Respondents were asked to disregard hard copies if they had already completed the online questionnaire to prevent response duplication.

To validate the study and confirm the problem statement of this research, a preliminary study was conducted among 6 managers working in 3 different manufacturing companies in Johor, Malaysia. For validating the measurement instrument, two tests were conducted. First, a pre-test was conducted where four subject expert maters were solicited to check the questionnaire (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013). Second. A pilot test was conducted among 24 management employees (Lawrence Neuman, 2014). Utilizing advanced statistical software, the analysis used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences SPSS 25.0 and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM), specifically SmartPLS version 3.7.9 (Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019) to assess the collected data.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Data Normality Test

The Shapiro-Wilk normality test results indicate a non-normal distribution of the data, with values below 0.05 (Field, 2013). Kolmogorov-Simirova test also confirms the non-normal distribution of data because the values are

not within the range of -1.0 to 1.0 (Awang, 2014; Hair Jr, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Table 1 displays the results.

Table 1. Results of the normality test.

No.	Construct	Kolmogorov-Simirov[a]		Shapiro-Wilk	
		Skewness	Kurtosis	Statistic	Sig.
1	Compensation	-0.455	1.109	0.961	0.000
5	HR digitalization	-1.155	3.007	0.979	0.000
6	Emotional intelligence	-0.867	1.832	0.875	0.000
7	Job performance	-1.130	2.957	0.936	0.000

Note: *a. Lilliefors significance correction applied.

4.2. Reliability Test

This test helps to examine how well the items assess their target construct (Ahmad, 2016). The Cronbach's Alpha values are more than 0.9 for all the constructs, showing high internal consistency among the components of these frameworks (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021). Table 2 presents the reliability tests.

Table 2. Results of reliability.

No.	Constructs	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
1	COM	6	0.919
5	HRDi	7	0.912
6	EI	9	0.942
7	EJP	14	0.958

4.3. Outliers Examination

Outliers typically arise when there is a numerical difference in values compared to other responses (Ghorbani, 2019). Mahalanobis test was used to examine outliers with an optimal value of 23.40 at the level of 1.00. Table 3 presents the results of this test. The number of outliers observed and removed is 9 responses.

Table 3. Outliers examination.

No.	Description	Total number	Percentage
1	Complete observation	318	100%
2	Outlier observations	9	2.34
Final observation		309	97.66

4.4. Multicollinearity Test

According to Hair Jr et al. (2010) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), there are no multicollinearity issues in this research because the tolerance values are bigger than 0.2, and the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values are less than 4.0. Table 4 presents the results.

Table 4. Multicollinearity.

Construct	Tolerance	VIF
Measurement items for compensation and benefits	0.967	1.037
Measurement items for human resource digitalization	0.891	1.129
Measurement items for emotional intelligence	0.885	1.133

The two-tailed t-test is utilized to examine non-respondent bias using the first and last 100 responses. The results show that there are not significant statistical differences between the early and late responses, and the Standard deviation values were also somehow similar. Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5. Non-response bias test results.

Variables		Mean	N	Std. deviation	Testing the equality of means	
					t-value	Sig.
COM	Early	3.5450	100	0.595	-0.994	0.323
	Late	3.6300	100	0.675		
HRDi	Early	3.6071	100	0.713	0.493	0.623
	Late	3.5614	100	0.665		
EI	Early	3.6744	100	0.638	-0.748	0.456
	Late	3.7500	100	0.693		
EJP	Early	3.6814	100	0.585	-1.185	0.239
	Late	3.7757	100	0.641		

4.5. Sample Characteristics

Table 6 presents a comprehensive overview of sample characteristics.

Table 6. Sample characteristics.

Demographic	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	143	46.3%
	Female	166	53.7%
Age	Between 20 – 30	100	32.4%
	Between 31 – 40	122	39.5%
	Between 41 – 50	74	23.9%
	Above 50	13	4.2%
Marital status	Single	105	34.0%
	Married	192	62.1%
	Divorce	8	2.6%
	Prefer not to say	4	1.3%
Education level	Diploma	38	12.29%
	Bachelor degree	180	58.25%
	Master	81	26.21%
	PhD	10	3.2%
Position	Director	9	2.91
	Manager	76	24.59
	Executive officer	167	56.95
	Admin	33	10.67
	Others	24	7.76
Department	Human resource department	72	22.9
	Administration department	41	13.3
	Production department	41	13.3
	Accounting department	24	7.8
	Operation department	21	6.8
	Finance department	17	5.5
	IT department	17	5.5
	Sales department	14	4.5
	Marketing department	13	4.2
	Customer service department	12	3.9
	Technical department	12	3.9
	Shipping department	7	2.3
	Assembly department	7	2.3
	Research department	4	1.3
	Logistics	4	1.3
	Health, safety, security and environment department	3	1.0
Work experience	0-5 years	107	34.6%
	6-10 years	69	22.3%
	11-15 years	75	24.3%
	16-20 years	33	10.7%

Demographic	Item	Frequency	Percentage
	21 years and above	25	8.1%
Percentage of remote work	1% - 20%	30	9.70%
	21% - 40%	99	32.03%
	41% - 60%	110	35.59%
	61% - 80%	36	11.7%
	81% - 100%	34	11%
Usage of digitalized systems	Yes	254	82.2
	No	55	17.8
Remote working for management positions during COVID-19?	Yes	309	100%
	No	0	0%
Having a remote work policy during COVID-19?	Yes	243	78.64%
	No	66	21.35

In terms of gender, 46.3% identified as male and 53.7% as female. Age distribution indicated that 32.4% were between 20 and 30 years old, 39.5% were between 31 and 40, 23.9% were between 41 and 50, and 4.2% were above 50. Marital status revealed that 34.0% were single, 62.1% were married, 2.6% were divorced, and 1.3% preferred not to say. In terms of education, 12.29% held a diploma, 58.25% held a bachelor's degree, 26.21% held a master's degree, and 3.2% held a PhD (Doctor of Philosophy). Regarding positions, the majority (56.95%) were executive officers, followed by managers (24.59%), administrators (10.67%), and directors (2.91%).

In terms of departments, the Human Resource Department has the highest representation at 22.9%, followed by the Administration and Production Departments at 13.3% each. The Accounting Department constitutes 7.8%, and other departments such as Operations, Finance, IT (Information Technology), Sales, and more, make up the remaining percentages. Concerning work experience, individuals with 0-5 years of experience account for 34.6%, while those with 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, and 21+ years represent 22.3%, 24.3%, 10.7%, and 8.1%, respectively. Regarding the extent of remote work, the majority falls within the 21%-40% and 41%-60% ranges, each at 32.03% and 35.59%, respectively. The use of digitalized systems is widespread, with 82.2% confirming it. Moreover, during the Covid-19 pandemic, all respondents indicated that their company allowed remote work for management positions, and 78.64% affirmed the presence of a remote work policy.

4.6. Constructs' Descriptive Analysis

In this research, four main constructs were investigated in terms of mean standard deviation and application degree. The application degree is based on Algahtany, Almethheb, and Alomar (2011). Compensation is the independent construct with a mean value of 3.74 and a standard deviation of 0.66526. Human resource digitalization and emotional intelligence are the moderators with mean values of 3.63 and 3.77, respectively. Their standard deviation values are 0.68590 and 65410, respectively. Finally, employee job performance is the dependent variable, which has a mean value of 3.80 and a standard deviation of 0.63459. All constructs received high application degrees. The results are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Constructs' descriptive analysis.

Construct	Code	Mean	Std. dev	Application degree
Compensation	COM	3.74	0.665	High
Human resource digitalization	HRDi	3.63	0.686	High
Emotional intelligence	EI	3.77	0.654	High
Employee job performance	EJP	3.80	0.635	High

4.7. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) serves to identify the appropriate count of shared factors and highlight the practical indicators of the latent dimensions, elucidated through the factor loadings (Ledesma & Valero-Mora, 2007). The method chosen for exploratory factor analysis was principal component analysis (PCA), which was employed to extract the pertinent factors (AlMaian, Needy, Walsh, & Alves, 2016; Pallant, 2011). Rotation was implemented to enhance the explanation of variance at the component level (Field, 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The majority of scholars have suggested the use of the 'varimax' rotation technique (Howard, 2016; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Table 8 presents the results of exploratory factor analysis. The data underscores that every factor item was incorporated, with item scores demonstrating factor loadings spanning from 6.49 to 8.08, all surpassing the minimum threshold of 5.0. Moreover, the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) values fall within the range of 0.901 to 0.953, indicating a high level of these values.

Table 8. Exploratory factor analysis.

Construct	Items	Item coding	Factor loading	KMO test
Compensation	1. I am satisfied with my salary and bonuses compared to my performance during COVID-19.	COM1	0.747	0.901
	2. The compensation policy is in line with employee expectations during COVID-19.	COM2	0.723	
	3. The company provides promotions for outstanding employee positions during COVID-19.	COM3	0.750	
	4. The compensation structures are clear to me.	COM4	0.722	
	5. The organization did not follow certain cost-cutting measures (such as freezing the number of employees, unpaid leaves, and forcing employees to take annual leaves).	COM5	0.783	
	6. The organization reduced the non-contractual benefits and allowances.	COM6	0.697	
Human resource digitalization	1. My organization uses electronic HR for managing employee compensation and benefits.	HRDi1	0.696	0.911
	2. My organization uses electronic HR for recruitment and selection processes.	HRDi2	0.775	
	3. My organization uses electronic HR for internal hiring and transfer.	HRDi3	0.725	
	4. My organization uses electronic HR for formal grievances and complaints.	HRDi4	0.705	
	5. My organization uses electronic HR for work scheduling.	HRDi5	0.747	
	6. My organization uses electronic HR to appraise employees.	HRDi6	0.767	
	7. My organization uses electronic HR for talent management.	HRDi7	0.792	
Emotional intelligence	1. I have a favourable sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time.	EI1	0.697	0.943
	2. I have a decent understanding of my own emotions.	EI2	0.688	
	3. I can act calmly even though I am angry.	EI3	0.754	
	4. I manage my emotions effectively.	EI4	0.699	
	5. I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior.	EI5	0.721	
	6. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of people around me.	EI6	0.732	
	7. I can build friendly relationships with anyone.	EI7	0.670	
	8. I can work with anyone.	EI8	0.723	
	9. I always share information with my colleagues when working together.	EI9	0.682	
Employee job performance	1. I have good job knowledge.	EJP1	0.702	0.953
	2. I can perform my core job tasks with minimum time and effort.	EJP2	0.695	
	3. My quality of work is higher than average.	EJP3	0.696	
	4. My efficiency is higher than average.	EJP4	0.699	
	5. I uphold the highest professional standards and accuracy.	EJP5	0.719	
	6. I take on extra responsibilities, and I start new tasks myself	EJP6	0.649	

Construct	Items	Item coding	Factor loading	KMO test
	when my old ones are finished.			
	7. I take on challenging work tasks.	EJP7	0.670	
	8. I collaborate with others.	EJP8	0.758	
	9. I am open to criticism of my work.	EJP9	0.693	
	10. I try to learn from the feedback I get from others on my work.	EJP10	0.676	
	11. I work at keeping my job knowledge and skills up-to-date.	EJP11	0.706	
	12. I can cope well with difficult situations and setbacks at work.	EJP12	0.667	
	13. I come up with creative solutions to new problems.	EJP13	0.798	
	14. I can cope well with uncertain and unpredictable situations or changes at work.	EJP14	0.808	

Furthermore, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure value amounted to 0.925, which exceeds the benchmark of 0.6 (Shrestha, 2021). Table 9 outlines the outcomes the KMO test.

Table 9. KMO and Bartlett's test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy.		
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. Chi-square	0.925
	Degree of freedom	630
	Significant.	0.000

4.8. Common Method Variance Test

Common Method Variance (CMV) can be considered the systematic error variance, which is a result of the method used to measure the constructs of the study rather than the construct represented by the measures (Chang, Van Witteloostuijn, & Eden, 2020). In this research, Harman's single factor test using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was employed to assess common method variance. Eight factors emerged, with the first factor accounting for 40.41% of the highest variance out of a total variance of 71.75. These findings indicate the presence of a single factor from the EFA, and no single variable explains the majority of the covariance among items. Consequently, this research does not exhibit variance due to common methods or extensive interrelations among variables.

4.9. Assessment of Model Measurement

The model of this current research is built up of one major independent variable (compensation), two moderating constructs (emotional intelligence and HR digitalization), and employee job performance as a dependent construct. In this section, the first step of the model assessment process is represented in Figure 2. According to Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Hopkins, and Kuppelwieser (2014), the reliability, internal consistency of items, content, and discriminant validity should be determined when examining the measurement model.

4.10. Individual Items Reliability

A general guideline for item retention or removal is to keep items with loading values between 0.50 and 0.70 (Hair Jr et al., 2014). The present study comprises 36 items. The factor loading values for the model components ranged from 0.773 to 0.884. Table 10 presents the results below.

4.11. Internal Consistency of Reliability

This assessment measures how effectively individual items evaluate the same subject through Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability coefficient (McCrae, Kurtz, Yamagata, & Terracciano, 2011; Robert Peterson, 2013). Furthermore, the dependability of internal consistency in measurements is explored by calculating the composite

reliability coefficient values. Table 10, demonstrates that the composite dependability (CR) falls within the acceptable range of 0.919% to 0.961% (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011).

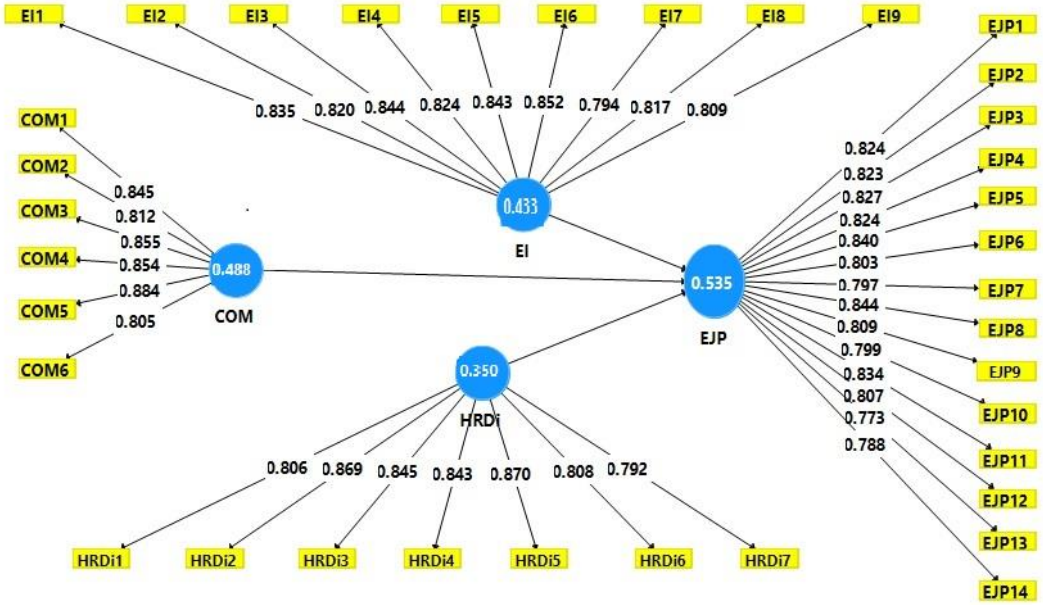

Figure 2. Measurement model.

4.12. Convergent Validity

Average variance extracted (AVE) evaluates the convergent validity of the items in the current study. An AVE value greater than 0.50 is recommended as the minimum acceptable threshold (Aibinu & Al-Lawati, 2010; Hair Jr et al., 2014). The outcomes of the test are presented in Table 10, which shows that AVE values for all constructs ranged from 0.62 to 0.710, surpassing the 0.50 value. It can be inferred that the items within each category accurately represent their respective constructs.

Table 10. Results of the measurement model.

Construct	Indicators	Convergent validity			Internal consistency reliability	
		Loadings >0.70	VIF <0.5	AVE >0.5	Composite reliability 0.060-0.90	Cronbach's alpha 0.060-0.90
Compensation	COM1	0.845	2.700	0.71	0.936	0.919
	COM2	0.812	2.723			
	COM3	0.855	2.865			
	COM4	0.854	2.554			
	COM5	0.884	3.175			
	COM6	0.805	2.125			
Human resource digitalization	HRDi1	0.806	2.282	0.695	0.941	0.927
	HRDi2	0.869	3.075			
	HRDi3	0.845	2.701			
	HRDi4	0.843	2.583			
	HRDi5	0.870	2.941			
	HRDi6	0.808	3.072			
	HRDi7	0.792	2.940			
Emotional	EI1	0.835	2.869	0.683	0.951	0.942
	EI2	0.820	2.587			
	EI3	0.844	3.009			
	EI4	0.824	2.706			
	EI5	0.843	2.876			

Construct	Indicators	Convergent validity			Internal consistency reliability	
		Loadings >0.70	VIF <0.5	AVE >0.5	Composite reliability 0.060-0.90	Cronbach's alpha 0.060-0.90
intelligence	EI6	0.852	2.953			
	EI7	0.794	2.320			
	EI8	0.817	2.903			
	EI9	0.809	2.790			
	EJP1	0.824	3.562			
	EJP2	0.823	3.378			
	EJP3	0.827	3.484			
	EJP4	0.824	3.645			
	EJP5	0.840	3.369			
	EJP6	0.803	2.910			
	EJP7	0.797	2.519			
	EJP8	0.844	3.203	0.662	0.965	0.961
	EJP9	0.809	2.863			
Job performance	EJP10	0.799	2.880			
	EJP11	0.834	3.366			
	EJP12	0.807	2.721			
	EJP13	0.773	3.539			
	EJP14	0.788	3.800			

4.13. Discriminant Validity

The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate the extent of variation in measurements of a specific concept compared to other indicators of the latent variable (Ramayah, Cheah, Chuah, Ting, & Memon, 2018). In Table 11, items highlighted in bold represent the square root of AVE values, while non-bold values indicate inter-correlation between different constructs. Discriminant validity is established if the square roots (in bold) exceed the largest correlations (in italics) with any other constructs (Hair Jr et al., 2014). In all instances, the square root of AVE values outperforms the inter-correlation values between components in their respective rows and columns. The findings confirm the Fornell-Larcker criteria.

Table 11. Correlations of variables – root square of AVE.

Construct	COM	EI	EJP	HRDI
COM	0.843			
EI	0.160	0.827		
EJP	0.348	0.526	0.814	
HRDi	0.148	0.323	0.606	0.834

4.14. Coefficient of Determination (R2)

The R2 value signifies the extent to which one or more exogenous variables can explain the variance in the endogenous construct. Drawing from the study conducted by Cohen (1998), it's observed that R-Square values for the independent and moderating variables of this research are moderate because they are between 0.33 and 0.67, as presented in Table 12.

Table 12. R-square of endogenous latent variables.

Latent construct	R-square	Result
COM	0.488	Substantial
HRDi	0.426	Substantial
EI	0.449	Substantial

According to the outcomes displayed in the table, the R2 values for the variables fall within the range of 0.426 to 0.488. This indicates that these variables significantly contribute to explaining the variance. Specifically, compensation records the highest R-square value of 0.488, signifying that it clarifies 49% of the variance in employee job performance. The second highest value belongs to EI, which stands at 0.449. Additionally, human resource digitalization demonstrates an R-square of 0.426. Table 12 outlines the comprehensive variance that endogenous constructs expound upon.

Table 13. Total variance explained by the endogenous constructs.

L	Variance explained (R^2)
Employee job performance	65%

The R-Square values for all constructs within this research model are depicted in Table 13. According to the statistics presented in table, the model explains 65% of employee job performance. Consequently, the endogenous latent construct in this ongoing study is characterized by a "significant" R-Square value of 65% (Nitzl, Roldan, & Cepeda, 2016).

4.15. Assessment of the Effect Size (f2)

The effect size evaluates the model's efficiency. This approach is appropriate for assessing the degree to which the exogenous construct contributes to the exogenous constructs. Cohen's suggestions were used to conduct this analysis (Cohen, 1998). As presented in Table 14, the effect size of all endogenous latent components is high.

Table 14. Structural model effect size of the exogenous constructs.

Latent construct	R^2-included	R^2-excluded	F^2	Effect size
COM → EJP	0.652	0.488	0.471	High
HRDi → EJP	0.652	0.426	0.660	High
EI → EJP	0.652	0.449	0.583	High

4.16. Predictive Relevance of Model (Q2)

The assessment of the structural model's predictive quality involves the use of the Predictive Relevance (Q2) test, which aims to evaluate the model's effectiveness in making predictions (Chin, 2009). This evaluation relies on the model's capacity to accurately forecast the indicators associated with each latent variable of interest (Hair et al., 2011). According to the findings of Sarstedt and Cheah (2019) a positive cross-validity redundancy value of Q2 indicates favorable predictive relevance for a specific model, whereas a negative value suggests a lack of predictive significance. Based on the findings of this research, Q2 is 0.422, which signifies that there is no issue with the structural model's predictive relevance. The outcomes of Q2 for the endogenous latent variable are detailed in Table 15.

Table 15. Result of predictive relevance (Q2).

Total	SSO	SSE	1-SSE/SSO
Employee job performance	4326	2498.757	0.422

4.17. Assessment of the Hypothesis Testing (Direct Relationships)

In order to evaluate the assumed relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable, bootstrapping was used. The "bootstrapping" technique uses many subsamples (5000 samples) taken from the original dataset with replacement in order to obtain a trustworthy estimated t-value for assessing the importance of the structural routes. The p-value indicates how significant an association is. When the p-value is low, an

association is more significant. In this study, three primary direct hypotheses were investigated; these are shown in Table 16. Every theory was acknowledged and back up.

Table 16. Hypothesis testing – direct relationships.

N	Relationship	β	Std. deviation	T-value	P-value	Decision
H1a	COM -> EJP	0.181	0.046	3.982	0.000	Supported**
H1b	HRDi -> EJP	0.382	0.067	5.666	0.000	Supported**
H1c	EI -> EJP	0.427	0.067	6.368	0.000	Supported**

Note: Significant at P**<0.01.

4.18. Testing the Moderating Effect

The present research included two main factors as moderators in the interaction between Compensation (COM) and Employee Job Performance (EJP): Human Resource Digitalization (HRDI) and Emotional Intelligence (EI). A moderating role for HRDI (H2) in the COM-EJP connection was theorized. It was also postulated that EI (H3) acts as a moderator in the relationship between COM and EJP. Partial Squares Structural Equation Modelling was used in the analysis to evaluate and quantify the moderators' effects. Due to the reflective nature of both the exogenous latent variable and the moderators under examination, this study utilized the product indicator approach (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019). To evaluate and estimate the strength of the moderators, Figure 3 showcases the PLS-Path Analysis of p-values.

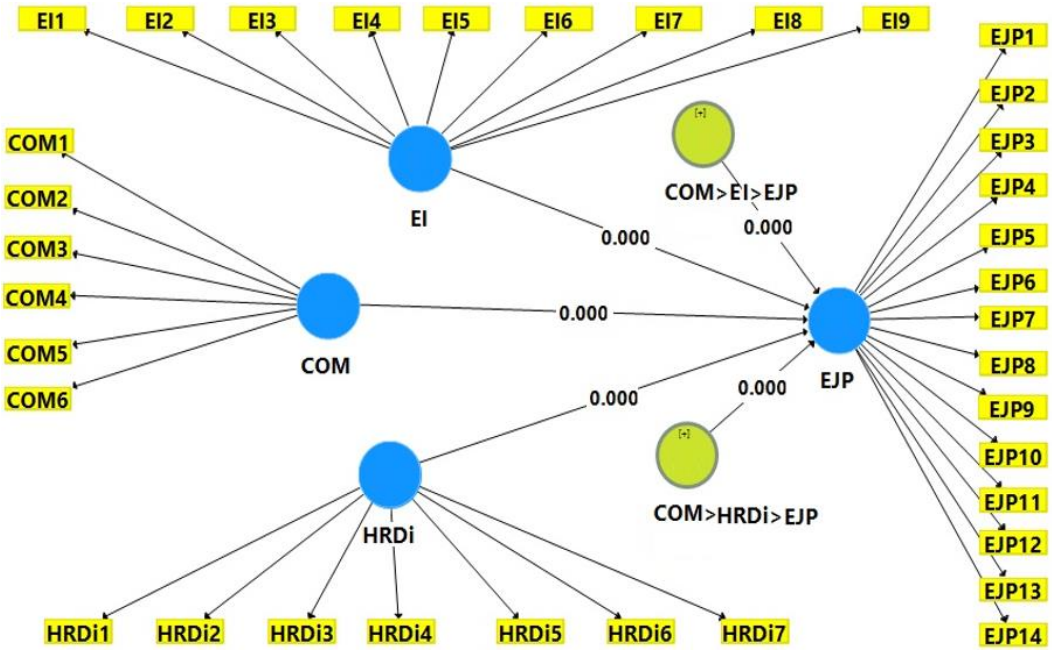

Figure 3. PLS-path analysis of indirect relations.

To assess the significance of the path coefficients, a bootstrapping procedure was employed using 5000 bootstrap samples and a dataset of 309 cases (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2012; Hair Jr et al., 2014). Table 17 details comprehensive statistics for the structural model, including estimates.

Table 17. Results of the moderating effects.

No.	Relationship	B	Std. deviation	T-value	P-value	Decision
H2	HRDi->COM->EJP	-0.209	0.049	4.232	0.000	Supported
H3	EI->COM->EJP	0.289	0.057	5.084	0.000	Supported

Referring back to Hypothesis H2, which posited that human resource digitalization moderates the relationship between compensation and employee job performance, the findings in Table 16 substantiated this hypothesis (β = -0.209, T = 4.232, p < 0.000). Thus, the hypothesis was validated. The moderating simple slope analysis, as illustrated in Figure 4, supports this conclusion.

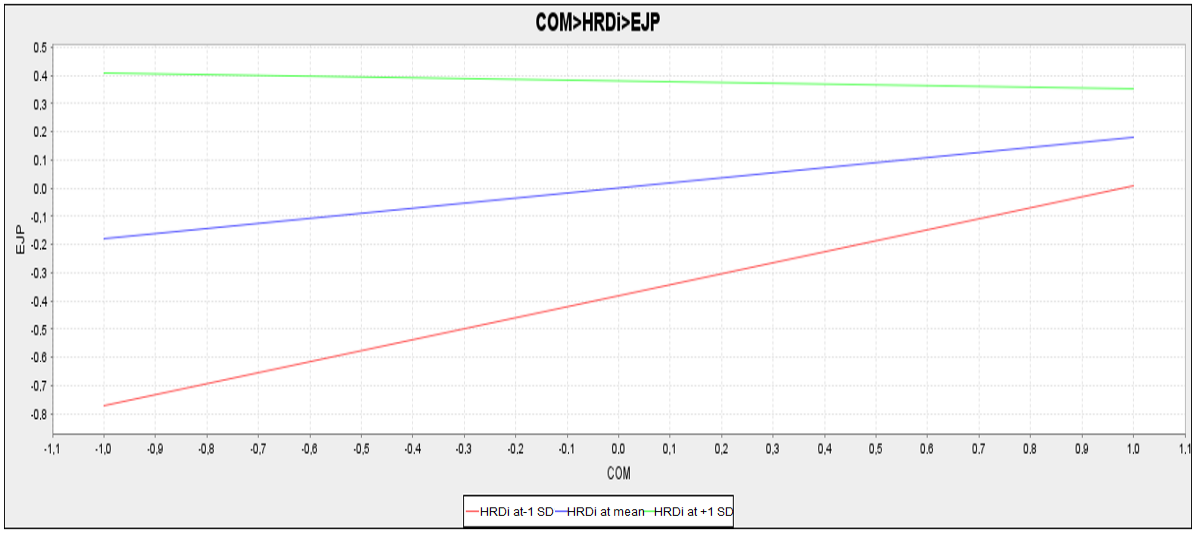

Figure 4. Moderating interaction slop for (COM), (HRDi) on (EJP).

Concerning emotional intelligence (EI), the hypothesis (H5) suggested its moderating role in the relationship between compensation and employee job performance. According to the information in Table 16, it can be observed that EI does, infact moderate the link between COM and EJP, thereby corroborating H3 (β = 0.289, T = 5.084, p = 0.000). This result further bolsters the moderating effect, as evidenced by the moderating simple slope analysis depicted in Figure 5.

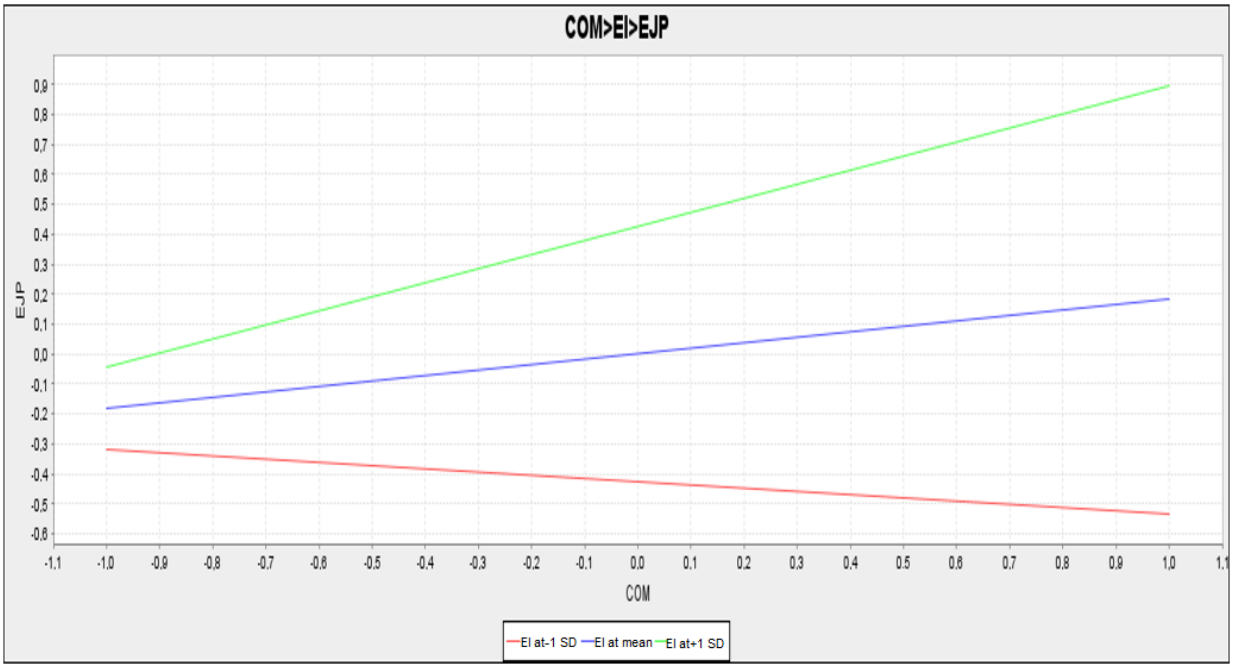

Figure 5. Moderating interaction slop for (COM), (EI) on (EJP).

5. DISCUSSION

The first objective of this research was to determine the relationship between compensation, HR digitalization, and emotional intelligence, and employee job performance. Therefore, three hypotheses (H1a, H1b, H1c) were developed to achieve this objective.

H1a assumed that compensation has a positive and significant effect on employee job performance in Johor manufacturing sector among the management employees. The hypothesis was supported and accepted (β=0.181, t=3.982, p<0.00). Therefore, the results demonstrate that compensation enhances and increases employee job performance. Although the results of the compensation variable in this research are not in support of some of the previous studies, such as Jibrin-bida et al. (2017), Mollel Eliphas et al. (2017) and Siswanto et al. (2021) the results are consistent with the findings of many previous studies. Abugre and Nasere (2020), Prihantari and Astika (2019), Thiha (2019), Rashid et al. (2018), Oluigbo and Anyiam (2014), Kokubun (2018) and Darma and Supriyanto (2017) found a positive and significant effect of compensation on employee job performance. These results are attributable to the employee's conditions during the epidemic. During the COVID-19 crisis, many employees have lost their jobs or had their salaries reduced. Therefore, the positive responses from the participants in this research reflect their value for compensation in such a critical situation. The results may also be reasonable for some other reasons as well. The first reason is financial insecurity during the pandemic. Many employees may have experienced financial insecurity, including businesses closure and job losses. Employee motivation and work performance can increase when they feel more secure in their pay. Second, more work: Many businesses have seen an increase in demand for their goods or services as a result of the pandemic. Employees may be expected to work longer shifts or shoulder more responsibility as a result. In these situations, more pay may encourage workers to maintain their production levels and provide them with better performance reviews. Acknowledging the efforts made by employees could be an additional factor. Employee stress has increased as a result of the pandemic, especially for those working in critical industries like manufacturing. Offering higher pay may be interpreted as a way to honour workers' achievements and efforts, which will boost their spirits and sense of fulfilment at work. Furthermore, the pandemic has brought attention to how crucial it is to provide for workers' basic needs, including paid sick leave and access to healthcare. By offering higher compensation, companies can guarantee that workers can meet their basic needs, as a result, enhance their general well-being and job performance.

The second concept investigated in this study is HR digitalization, utilized both as an independent variable and as a moderator. As a result, the second direct hypothesis (H1b) of this study posited a positive and statistically significant impact of HR digitalization on employee job performance. The results of the study supported this proposition, revealing a noteworthy positive association between HR digitalization and the job performance of managerial employees within the Johor manufacturing sector (β=0.382, t=5.666, p<0.000). These outcomes align with earlier research findings. For instance, after doing a thorough longitudinal analysis, Bondarouk et al. (2017) confirmed that HR digitization has the ability to improve operational effectiveness and help businesses achieve their objectives. A recent study by Iqbal et al. (2018) also found this association, highlighting the beneficial effects of HR digitalization on worker productivity among those working in Pakistani banks, especially in establishments that have implemented e-HRM systems. Beyond process acceleration and cost savings, Olsen and Tomlin (2020) claimed that digitalization can reduce stakeholder conflict and improve job performance. In a similar vein, Fedorova et al. (2019) found that digitization reduces errors and repetitive processes, improving job performance, while Lager and Milojkovic (2018) demonstrated how it increases employee engagement. Therefore, a number of elements, including the particulars surrounding the research's execution during the COVID-19 epidemic, which force businesses to accept remote work, contribute to the hypothesis' findings. One possible explanation is that the use of digital HR tools, including messaging applications and video conferencing, encourages managerial personnel to collaborate and communicate more effectively, which improves job performance. These tools also make it possible to work remotely, which promotes work-life balance and job satisfaction and improves performance. Additionally, digital HR systems

provide access to online learning and development possibilities, which are especially important when making sudden shifts to remote work and improving performance. Additionally, by streamlining performance reviews and feedback, these solutions lessen administrative workloads and allow for a greater concentration on essential work duties, which improves performance. Effective data management through digital HR solutions can also enhance performance and decision-making. Using digital platforms for feedback, communication, and acknowledgment raises employee engagement, which in turn inspires and improves work output.

The third direct hypothesis (H1c) posited within this study asserts the substantial influence of emotional intelligence on the job performance of managerial employees in the Johor manufacturing sector. As per the research outcomes, emotional intelligence indeed has an impact on employee job performance (β=0.427, t=6.368, p<0.000). In comparison to other independent variables, the effect size of emotional intelligence is bigger than that of compensation (β=0.181) and HR digitalization (β=0.382). These findings resonate with previous research outcomes that highlight the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and employee job performance. Lee (2018) and Wiguna and Netra (2020) underscore emotional intelligence as a supportive factor for elevating employee job performance levels within organizations. This is because individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to exhibit greater dedication to their roles, consequently outperforming their peers (Dhani & Sharma, 2017). Munir and Azam (2017) found similar results, demonstrating that improving emotional intelligence over a six-month period of time positively influenced employee work performance through a longitudinal intervention-based strategy. Additionally, the impact that emotional intelligence has on performance is demonstrated by its effects on morale (Ahmed et al., 2016) and by the important role that it plays in influencing the work environment (Srinivas & Neerupa, 2019). Emotional intelligence has a favourable and significant impact.

Above all, people with higher emotional intelligence are generally better at communicating—both to themselves and to others. This competence promotes better working relationships, fewer miscommunications, increased teamwork, and increased output. This ability is particularly important for remote workers who have few opportunities for communication because it helps to sustain productive relationships. Moreover, employees frequently work under stress during times of social and movement constraints. Being emotionally intelligent makes it easier to handle change, stress, and ambiguity. Emotional control and optimism make one more capable of facing the ever-changing obstacles of the industrial sector, which in turn improves job performance. Furthermore, conflict reduction, improved communication, increased teamwork, and refined interpersonal skills like empathy, active listening, and effective communication are all made possible by emotional intelligence, and together they improve job performance.

The second aim of this study was to explore how HR digitalization acts as a moderator in the relationship between compensation and employee job performance. Namazi and Namazi (2016) assert that moderators or mediators are crucial due to several fundamental reasons. Firstly, these constructs are indispensable for grasping intricate business challenges because they help capture subtle details that might otherwise go unnoticed. Secondly, when such variables are ignored, business models are left incomplete and ineffective at problem solving. Lastly, these constructs empower researchers to delve into inquiries regarding specific relationships, encompassing factors such as causality, timing, and mechanisms. Thus, acknowledging the moderating role of HR digitalization assumes a significant role in this study. Despite the escalating prominence of HR digitalization, there is a gap in research concerning its influence on employee job performance. Furthermore, the present research framework has yet to explore the moderating impact of HR digitalization on the relationship between compensation and employee job performance.

Referring back to H2 of this study, it was posited that the relationship between compensation and employee job Performance is moderated by human resource digitalization. The outcomes derived from the PLS path modeling showcased a statistically significant positive moderation exerted by HR digitalization on the association between compensation and employee job performance among managerial employees in the Johor manufacturing sector

(β=0.427, t=0.067, p<0.000*). Several underlying factors can account for this outcome. Primarily, the implementation of digital HR tools equips managers to effectively communicate with employees, supply performance feedback, and establish performance objectives. This feedback loop fosters a transparent and equitable compensation system that motivates employees to elevate their job performance. Furthermore, digital HR tools, including employee self-service platforms and mobile applications, empower individuals to access and amend their personal data, performance targets, and compensation particulars. This transparency also promotes engagement and trust, resulting in increased work performance. Digital HR technologies also enable managers to conduct more regular performance reviews and prompt compensation modifications. This dynamicity guarantees fair remuneration while motivating staff to improve job performance. Additionally, each employee's unique performance plan can be customised using digital HR technologies based on their experience, skill set, and work duties. By ensuring the compensation is based on competence and performance, this strategy encourages workers to improve their job performance. More research has corroborated the positive effects of HR digitization on worker performance, which supports this context. Bondarouk et al. (2017) found that HR has a lot of promise for streamlining HR processes and guiding businesses towards their objectives. Iqbal et al. (2018) conducted another study that demonstrated the positive impact of HR digitization on worker productivity, especially in Pakistan's banking industry. Human resource digitization, according to Olsen and Tomlin (2020) reduces stakeholder conflict and improves worker performance. In line with this, Lager and Milojkovic (2018) demonstrated increased worker engagement by digitising organisational operations, and Fedorova et al. (2019) revealed that digitalization can reduce human error and repetitive tasks, which in turn improves worker performance. Thus, in the Johor manufacturing sector, digitalization of human resources appears as a moderating factor that is positively associated with the relationship between employee job performance and salary. Through the enhancement of communication and feedback procedures, the augmentation of employee involvement, the facilitation of effective performance monitoring, and the customisation of performance management tactics, digital HR technologies encourage workers to improve job performance while ensuring fair compensation.

The third aim of this study was to examine how emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between compensation and employee job performance among managerial staff within the Johor manufacturing sector. Thus, hypothesis 3 was formulated to address this objective. Recalling hypothesis H3 in this study postulates a significant positive influence of emotional intelligence on the relationship between compensation and employee job performance for managerial employees engaged in the Johor manufacturing sector. The outcomes of PLS path modeling divulged a statistically significant positive moderating influence of emotional intelligence, leading to the acceptance of the hypothesis (β=0.289, t=5.084, p<0.000**). Essentially, this indicates that emotional intelligence bolsters the connection between compensation and employee job performance, suggesting that individuals with heightened emotional intelligence are more prone to enhanced performance when they receive improved compensation.

The discernible moderating impact of emotional intelligence on the compensation-employee job performance relationship can be attributed to several underlying factors. Primarily, individuals possessing robust emotional intelligence are better equipped to navigate shifts in circumstances and manage stress (Drigas & Papoutsi, 2020) aspects that significantly influence job performance.

Those in managerial roles, who frequently deal with difficult issues and high-pressure environments, should pay particular attention to this. Compensation is a powerful incentive, and when combined with emotional intelligence, it creates a productive and upbeat work environment (Sembiring, Nimran, Astuti, & Utami, 2020). When offered higher pay, people with high emotional intelligence levels may be more motivated to perform well because they understand the value of their work and feel appreciated. Therefore, companies may find it advantageous to include emotional intelligence in the remuneration plans for managers in the Johor manufacturing industry, which would improve job satisfaction.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Malaysian manufacturing has faced unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, from supply chain disruptions to the sudden shift to remote working. This study aimed to explore the key factors affecting job performance in this new remote working environment, with a specific focus on compensation, HR digitalization, and emotional intelligence. The results of this study revealed several key insights. First, the study reveals that compensation significantly and directly influences job performance. The disruption caused by the pandemic has highlighted the importance of fair and timely compensation as a motivating factor for employees. Furthermore, the study highlights the moderating role of HR digitalization. In a rapidly changing workplace environment, digitalization has proven to be a key element in ensuring effective implementation of HR practices and subsequently improving employee work performance. For Malaysian companies, adopting digital technologies has become a priority to cope with the challenges posed by the pandemic and remain competitive in the post-pandemic era. Furthermore, emotional intelligence emerges as a key factor mediating the relationship between compensation and employee job performance. Organizations that neglect this aspect may risk reduced financial performance and potentially damaging events, as research reveals close link between employees' emotional well-being and their performance. The Malaysian manufacturing industry plays a vital role in the country's economy, and in this context, these findings are of enormous significance.

6.1. Implications

To thrive in the face of disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing evolution of the workplace, manufacturing companies in Johor and beyond must consider the interplay of compensation, HR digitalization, and emotional intelligence in enhancing employee job performance. As we move forward in a world forever altered by the pandemic, organizations, agencies, and policymakers need to heed these research findings. Policymakers, represented by HR ministry, should encourage companies to enhance their digital infrastructure and employees' emotional intelligence by providing training for the HR professionals. In the same vein, the organizations should have plans, communicate their plans, and make sure they are implemented. In conclusion, this research not only contributes to the understanding of factors affecting employee job performance in the Malaysian manufacturing sector, but also underscores the importance of adapting HR practices to the evolving demands of a digitalized and remote-friendly work environment. We hope that the insights from this study will inform strategic decisions and lead to enhanced performance, resilience, and competitiveness in the manufacturing sector and beyond.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research

Furthermore, this research has some limitations, such as focusing only on management employees in one sector, utilizing only quantitative methods, and not including all HR practices. Therefore, future research should explore the topic in qualitative approach while including several practices. The qualitative research would effectively clarify why emotional intelligence and HRD improve the relationship between compensation and job performance. In addition, future research should evaluate to what extent the organizations are ready for the HR digitalization and the challenges of its implementation.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The Ethical Committee of the Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM), Malaysia has granted approval for this study (Ref. No. 03/2024 REC).
Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.
Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.
Authors' Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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