



Self-Leadership And Trait Emotional Intelligence On The Adaptive Performance Of Distance Education Lecturers: The Mediating Role Of Work Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This research examines how self-leadership and trait emotional intelligence influence adaptive performance with work engagement serving as a mediator among distance education lecturers in Indonesia. Data obtained from 234 lecturers in an Indonesian cross-institutional distance learning environment were examined using PLS-SEM. The findings demonstrate that work engagement positively affect adaptive performance, while self-leadership and trait emotional intelligence positively affect both work engagement and adaptive performance. Additionally, work engagement significantly explains part of the link between self-leadership and adaptive performance but not significantly transmit the effect of trait emotional intelligence. The finding indicates that self-leadership and trait emotional intelligence function as distinct yet complementary personal resources for adaptive performance through various pathways. The study extends the JD_R model by demonstrating that the resource-engagement-performance process varies across personal resources. The results practically provide insights for remote education institutions to build professor development programs that enhance personal resources and assist lecturer's ability to adjust to changing work demands.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education (Pendidikan Jarak Jauh/PJJ) has emerged as a significant mode of education to expanding equitable access to higher education across Indonesia's vast and diverse geography, where infrastructure and resource disparities still limit access in remote regions (Andina, 2025; Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). Since the introduction of distance education in Indonesia in the 1980s, the field has evolved from correspondence-based learning into technology-enabled education, a transition accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and further

support by recent government policy (Dhawan, 2020; Anggraini et al., 2026). Within this system, lecturers carry central responsibility not only for communication but also for designing, facilitating, and guiding learning activities that promote meaningful learning and contribute to the attainment of the expected learning outcomes (Zhu et al., 2019; Seminar & Sarwoprasodjo, 2022; Roslaeni et al., 2025). These responsibilities require lecturers to continuously adapt their knowledge, teaching strategies, and interactions with students to technology-mediated environments, making adaptive performance an essential competency for delivering effective distance learning.

Adaptive performance describes how effectively employees adjust their behavior when confronted with shifting job demands, uncertainty, and unfamiliar work situations (Pulakos et al., 2000). Prior studies link it to both individual and organizational factors: Khoiruddin et al. (2022) found leadership style and innovative work climate shaped adaptive performance among lecturers and staff, while Herijanto et al. (2025) identified job autonomy as a significant predictor among vocational academic coordinators, suggesting adaptive performance matters most in autonomous settings like distance education, where lecturers independently manage technological, pedagogical, and interpersonal demands. Self-leadership and trait emotional intelligence are expected to help lecturers regulate this work, with work engagement serving as the mechanism connecting these resources to performance (Maden-Eyiusta & Alparslan, 2022; Costantini & Weintraub, 2022; Saha et al., 2023).

Self-leadership is a crucial human resource that allows people to control their own actions, stay motivated, and oversee their own performance. Prior research has demonstrated that self-leadership-related cognitive and behavioral techniques enhance adaptive performance in dynamic work settings (Wijayanti & Parahyanti, 2025; Leão et al., 2026). Despite the fact that these studies were carried out outside of the context of distant learning, their findings may also be relevant for distance education lecturers, who are required to adapt to frequent curriculum changes and limited infrastructure while carrying out their teaching responsibilities (Roslaeni et al., 2025).

Trait EI also contributes to lecturers' ability to perceive, comprehend, and manage their own emotional responses during interactions with students and colleagues. This allows lecturers to respond better to shifting instructional settings (Li et al., 2018). Previous research has shown that trait EI improves adaptive performance (Yang et al., 2022). However, Zeidner et al. (2004) stated that this relationship may be different depending on the context individuals execute their task. Apart from the above-mentioned factors, work engagement is another significant resource that helps people in facing uncertainty and changing work demands (Nandini et al., 2022). Higher levels of work engagement have been linked to better adaptive performance and a greater chance of gaining the knowledge and abilities required to improve the quality of their work, according to earlier research (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Nandini et al., 2022). However, there is insufficient research on this relationship among teachers of distant education.

Despite the growing interest in identifying the antecedents of adaptive performance, previous studies have generally examined self-leadership, trait EI, and work engagement as separate predictors rather than investigating these variables within a single model. In addition, most of these studies have been conducted in conventional workplaces or general higher education settings (Khoiruddin et al., 2022; Herijanto et al., 2025; Wijayanti & Parahyanti, 2025). As a result, research examining these relationships among distance education lecturers remains limited, even though they work independently with limited direct supervision and interaction with colleagues. Therefore, whether self-leadership and trait EI directly or indirectly affect adaptive performance through work engagement in this situation is still unclear. As The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory serve as its foundations, this study bridges that gap by investigating self-leadership and trait emotional intelligence as predictors of adaptive performance among educators in distance education, using job engagement as a mediating variable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grand Theory

Three complementary theoretical stances serve as the foundation for the investigation. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory explain how personal resources promote adaptive performance through job engagement. Self-leadership is people's ability to manage their own motivation, thoughts and behaviors and is based on Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001). This competency is particularly important for instructors in remote education, who are expected to work autonomously and be adaptable to changing educational conditions. This notion is supported by Maden-Eyiusta and Alparslan (2022) who found that self-leadership was a major predictor of work-role performance (e.g., job adaptivity) among remote workers. The COR Theory supports this approach, which states that self-leadership and trait EI are important personal resources that help individuals cope with work-related demands and sustain productive performance (Hobfoll, 1989).

According to these views, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017) depicts a motivational process in which personal resources are used to increase performance. This idea specifically claims that personal resources increase work engagement, which enhances performance outcomes. Thus, this study posits job engagement as the mediation mechanism through which trait EI and self-leadership impact adaptive performance. This relationship is supported by Lee and Jo (2023) who found that employee involvement mediated the association between personal resources and performance-related outcomes. In the context of lecturers in distance education, these perspectives provide an integrated basis for analysing the direct effects and mediating pathways linking trait EI, self-leadership, work engagement, and adaptive performance.

Self-Leadership

Self-leadership is a comprehensive process of self-influence that gives people the capacity to direct their own motivation, behaviors, and thoughts in a way that will enable them to successfully carry out their responsibilities without outside supervision. (Manz & Sims, 1980; Manz, 1986; Neck & Houghton, 2006). It consists of constructive thought-pattern procedures, natural-reward approaches, and behavior-oriented strategies (self-goal-setting, self-observation, self-reward) that work together to enhance an individual's ability to regulate his own actions. Research indicated that the cognitive and behavioral methods connected with self-leadership result in improved adaptive performance in dynamic work settings (Wijayanti & Parahyanti, 2025; Leão et al., 2026). Although these studies were conducted outside the context of distance education, their findings will probably be relevant to lecturers in distance education who have to cope with frequent changes to the curriculum and limited infrastructure in carrying out their teaching duties (Roslaeni et al., 2025). Therefore, it is believed that lecturers who are active in goal setting, monitoring their performance and regulating their own behavior would be better able to adjust to unknown or changing needs of the work.

H1: Self-Leadership has a positive effect on Adaptive Performance.

Self-leadership is also considered a personal resource that enhances job engagement and is directly related to performance. Self-leadership techniques produce a sense of control and self-efficacy that can be used as motivational fuel, consistent with the resource-accumulation logic of COR theory. Prior research generally supports the link between such personal resources and higher work engagement (Costantini & Weintraub, 2022; Maden-Eyiusta & Alparslan, 2022). Therefore, it is envisaged that self-leadership will be a crucial factor in improving workplace engagement in the context of distance education as instructors are expected to manage their motivation and lead their work on their own. Thus, the following theory is proposed.

H2: Self-Leadership has a positive effect on Work Engagement.

Additionally, it is anticipated that job engagement will somewhat mitigate the influence of self-leadership on adaptive performance through the motivational pathway proposed by the JD-R Model. Work engagement is thought to be the mechanism behind the association between self-leadership and adaptive performance since self-leadership raises work engagement (H2) and work engagement raises adaptive performance (H5). This is in line with the resource-engagement-performance sequence reported by Lee and Jo (2023).

H6: Work Engagement mediates the effect of Self-Leadership on Adaptive Performance.

Trait Emotional Intelligence

People's self-perceptions of their capacity to recognise, comprehend, control, and apply emotions in both themselves and others are referred to as trait emotional intelligence (trait EI) (Petrides & Furnham, 2003). When interacting with students and coworkers in a distant learning environment, trait EI helps lecturers effectively manage their emotions, enabling them to respond more quickly to changing instructional demands (Li et al., 2018). According to earlier research, trait EI and adaptive performance are positively correlated (Yang et al., 2022). But according to Zeidner et al. (2004), this link might change depending on the type of workplace. Thus, this study explicitly looks at how trait EI affects adaptive performance in distance education instructors.

H3: Trait Emotional Intelligence has a positive effect on Adaptive Performance.

According to COR theory, characteristic EI can also be viewed as an affective-personal resource that enables individuals to comprehend and manage emotionally taxing circumstances without exhausting all of their available resources. According to the JD-R Model, such personal resources are expected to be positively associated with work engagement and a general support for this resource-engagement mechanism is observed in prior study (Saha et al., 2023).

H4: Trait Emotional Intelligence has a positive effect on Work Engagement.

As with self-leadership, work engagement is theorized to mediate part of trait EI's effect on adaptive performance: because trait EI fosters engagement (H4), and engagement is expected to enhance adaptive performance (H5), the JD-R Model's motivational pathway (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017) implies that work engagement should partially transmit trait EI's influence onto adaptive performance.

H7: Work Engagement mediates the effect of Trait Emotional Intelligence on Adaptive Performance.

Work Engagement and Adaptive Performance

Vigor, dedication, and immersion are characteristics of a positive, work-related state of mind known as work engagement (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). It is a useful tool for people to manage uncertainty and changing work demands (Nandini et al., 2022). Conversely, adaptive performance is the extent to which workers modify their conduct at work in reaction to shifting expectations, ambiguity, and novel work situations (Pulakos et al., 2000; Charbonnier-Voirin & Roussel, 2012). Previous studies have identified various individual and organizational antecedents of adaptive performance. For example, Khoiruddin et al. (2022) found that leadership style and innovative work climate influenced adaptive performance among lecturers and staff. Similarly, Herijanto et al. (2025) reported that job autonomy was a significant predictor among vocational academic coordinators. This implies that adaptive performance is particularly relevant in autonomous contexts, such as distance education, where lecturers must independently deal with technological, pedagogical, and interpersonal challenges.

Besides the above personal resources, work engagement is also important to promote flexible performance. According to the broaden-and-build idea, Passionate workers are more likely to acquire the knowledge and abilities necessary to adjust to shifting demands at work (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). Prior research has identified a positive relationship between work

engagementt and adaptive performance (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Nandini et al., 2022). Studies that examine this relationship in academics who learn remotely, however, are lacking in the literature. Thus, the following hypothesis is put out by this study.

H5: Work Engagement has a positive effect on Adaptive Performance.

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between self-leadership (SL), trait emotional intelligence (trait EI), work engagement (WE) and adaptive performance (AP). Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 3 was used in this reserach. PLS-SEM was chosen because it operates under fewer distributional constraints than covariance-based SEM and is well suited to prediction-focused models involving muktiple latent constructs (Hair et al., 2019).

The population of this study consists of lecturer affiliated with the distance education system at Universitas Terbuka (UT). Because UT's lecturer network draws lecturers from a wide range of home institutions across Indonesia rather than employing lecturer exclusively from within UT itself, this population is inherently cross-institutional. The unit of analysis is the individual tutor with direct distance education teaching experience.

This study employed a purposive sampling method, with the inclusion criterion that respondents must have active teaching experience within the distance education scheme. Of 245 questionnaire submissions received, 234 respondents met this criterion and were retained for analysis; 10 respondents without distance education teaching experience and 1 incomplete entry were excluded. The final sample size was 234 respondents. Respondent characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	123	52.6
	Female	111	47.4
	Total	234	100
Age (years)	25-30	43	18.4
	31-35	73	31.2
	36-40	41	17.5
	41-45	29	12.4
	46-50	26	11.1
	51-55	11	4.7
	>55	11	4.7
	Total	234	100
Highest Education	Masters' Degree (S2)	191	82.9
	Doctoral Degree (S3)	40	17.1
	Total	234	100
Academic Position	Asisten Ahli	154	65.8
	Lektor	69	29.5
	Lektor Kepala	10	4.3
	Guru Besar	1	0.4
	Total	234	100
Work Region	Jawa	104	44.4
	Sumatera	42	17.9
	Sulawesi	41	17.5
	Nusa Tenggara (NTB & NTT)	18	7.7

	Kalimantan	16	6.8
	Papua	5	2.1
	Maluku	4	1.7
	Bali	2	0.9
	Multiple / Other Regions	2	0.9
	Total	234	100

Source: Data Processed, 2026

Most respondents hold a Masters' degree (82.9%) and the academic rank of Asisten Ahli (65.8%). While Java-based respondents form the largest group (44.4%), the sample also captures meaningful representation from outer-Java regions, reflecting the cross-institutional and geographically dispersed nature of UT's lecturer network described above. Data were collected between March and June 2026 using a self-administered, closed-ended questionnaire distributed through Google Form via UT's official lecturer email list and the official distance education lecturer WhatsApp group. The questionnaire opened with a screening question confirming the respondent's distance education teaching experience, followed by demographic questions and the main survey items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree/almost never, 5 = strongly agree/always).

Each concept was measured using seven variables adapted from existing scales and contextualized for the educational environment of distance education. Self-Leadership was adapted from Manz & Sims (1980), Manz (1986), and Neck & Houghton (2006) to include goal-setting, self-monitoring, self-reward, constructive thought patterns, and natural-reward processes. Trait Emotional Intelligence is conceptualized in the TEIQue framework of Petrides & Furnham (2001, 2003) which covers self-control, empathy, stress management and emotional flexibility. Work Engagement is a modified version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) by Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) and assesses vigor, dedication and absorption. Adaptive performance, including interpersonal adaptability, technology adaptation, adaptability to change, and stress tolerance under pressure, comes from Pulakos et al. (2000)'s taxonomy of adaptive work behavior. The two-stage evaluation process was followed in the analysis of the data using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 3: measurement model assessment (indicator reliability, internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, composite reliability), convergent validity (AVE), and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion, HTMT)) and structural model assessment (R² f² collinearity (VIF), model fit (SRMR), and hypothesis testing via bootstrapping with 5.000 subsamples (Hair et al., 2019).

RESULTS

Measurement Model (Outer Model) Assessment

Average Variance Extracted (AVE), outer loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, and Composite Reliability (CR) were used to evaluate convergent validity. None of the indicators were eliminated from the model because all of them had outer loadings above 0.70 (range from 0.696 to 0.852).

Table 1. Convergent Validity and Reliability results

Construct	Chronbachs' Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Adaptive Performance	0.879	0.881	0.906	0.580
Self-Leadership	0.885	0.890	0.910	0.591
Trait Emotional Intelligence	0.919	0.920	0.935	0.672
Work Engagement	0.885	0.888	0.910	0.591

Source: Data Processed, 2026

Table 1 shows that all constructs exceeded the 0.70 threshold for Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), and the 0.50 threshold for AVE. Cronbach's Alpha ranged from 0.879 (Adaptive Performance) to 0.919 (Trait Emotional Intelligence), CR ranged from 0.906 (Adaptive Performance) to 0.935 (Trait Emotional Intelligence), and AVE ranged from 0.580 (Adaptive Performance) to 0.672 (Trait Emotional Intelligence). All constructs therefore satisfy the criteria for reliability and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). The Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) were used to evaluate discriminant validity.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity – Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Adaptive Performance	Self-Leadership	Trait EI	Work Engagement
Adaptive Performance	0.762			
Self-Leadership	0.744	0.769		
Trait EI	0.755	0.721	0.820	
Work Engagement	0.693	0.689	0.732	0.769

Source: Data Processed, 2026

Table 3. Discriminant Validity – Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Adaptive Performance	Self-Leadership	Trait EI	Work Engagement
Self-Leadership	0.834			
Trait EI	0.837	0.791		
Work Engagement	0.779	0.771	0.806	

Source: Data Processed, 2026

The diagonal values of Adaptive Performance (0.762), Self-Leadership (0.769), Work Engagement (0.769), and Trait Emotional Intelligence (0.820) were greater than their correlations with other constructs in the same row and column. The Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion was satisfied as the square root of AVE was greater than the equivalent inter-construct correlations for all constructs as shown in Table 2. The HTMT ratio (Table 3), which ranges from 0.771 to 0.837 for all construct pairs and is well below the cautious 0.90 criterion, also demonstrated discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

Multicollinearity was tested using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), with outer VIF values ranged from 1.654 to 2.879 and inner VIF values ranged from 2.080 to 2.666, all of which remained below both the standard threshold of 5 and the more conservative cut-off 3.3, indicating no problematic collinearity in the model (Hair et al., 2019).

Structural Model (Inner Model) Assessment

The structural model was examined to determine the explanatory and predictive capacity of the proposed connections once the measurement model's validity and reliability had been established. This evaluation comprises coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2) and model fit index (SRMR). Next step is hypothesis testing using bootstrapping.

Table 4. R^2 and R^2 Adjusted Values

Endogenous Construct	R^2	R^2 Adjusted
Adaptive Performance	0.666	0.662
Work Engagement	0.590	0.586

Source: Data Processed, 2026

The R Square values show that 66.6% (Adjusted R Square = 0.662) of the variance in Adaptive Performance is directly and indirectly via Work Engagement explained by Self-Leadership and Trait Emotional Intelligence and 59.0% (Adjusted R Square = 0.586) of the variance in Work Engagement is explained by Self-Leadership and Trait EI. Both values are in the moderate to considerable range according to Hair et al. (2019).

Table 5. f^2 Effect Size Values

Path	f^2	Category
Self-Leadership → Adaptive Performance	0.161	Medium
Self-Leadership → Work Engagement	0.132	Small-Medium
Trait EI → Adaptive Performance	0.151	Medium
Trait EI → Work Engagement	0.281	Medium
Work Engagement → Adaptive Performance	0.039	Small

Source: Data Processed, 2026

The values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 are tiny, medium and large effect sizes accordingly, using Cohen's (1988) standards. Self-leadership had a medium impact on adaptive performance ($f^2 = 0.161$) and a modest to medium impact on work engagement ($f^2 = 0.132$). Among the three predictors, Trait EI contributed the most, with a medium effect on Adaptive Performance ($f^2 = 0.151$), and a medium influence on Work Engagement ($f^2 = 0.281$) that was approaching the big effect threshold. Work Engagement, on the other hand, had just a small effect on Adaptive Performance ($f^2 = 0.039$). This means that the contribution of Work Engagement to the explanation of Adaptive Performance is limited compared to the direct channels from Self-Leadership and Trait EI.

Model fit was evaluated using the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) which yielded a value of 0.063 for both the saturated and estimated models. Since this value falls below the recommended threshold of 0.08, the proposed model can be considered to demonstrate an acceptable level of fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Henseler et al., 2016).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses were tested through a bootstrapping procedure with 5.000 subsamples at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ ($t \geq 1.96$).

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results – Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient (O)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
H1	SL → AP	0.356	4.494	0.000	Supported
H2	SL → WE	0.335	3.834	0.000	Supported
H3	Trait EI → AP	0.367	4.295	0.000	Supported
H4	Trait EI → WE	0.490	5.631	0.000	Supported
H5	WE → AP	0.179	2.269	0.024	Supported

Source: Data Processed, 2026

Table 6 shows that all five direct paths (H1–H5) exhibited a positive coefficient and were statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. Trait EI showed the strongest positive effect on both Work Engagement ($\beta = 0.490$; $t = 5.631$; $p < 0.001$) and Adaptive Performance ($\beta = 0.367$; $t = 4.295$; $p < 0.001$), followed closely by Self-Leadership on Adaptive Performance ($\beta = 0.356$; $t = 4.494$; $p < 0.001$) and on Work Engagement ($\beta = 0.335$; $t = 3.834$; $p < 0.001$). Work Engagement also had a positive and significant, though comparatively weaker, effect on Adaptive Performance ($\beta = 0.179$; $t = 2.269$; $p = 0.024$).

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Results – Mediation (Specific Indirect Effects)

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient (O)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Direction
H6	SL → WE → AP	0.060	2.202	0.028	Supported
H7	SL → WE → AP	0.088	1.922	0.055	Not Supported

Source: Data Processed, 2026

The mediaton analysis revealed a significant positive relationships between self-leadership and adaptive performance through work engagement (Table 7) (H6: $\beta = 0.060$; $t = 2.202$; $p = 0.028$). This finding indicates that work engagement serves as a mechanism through which self-leadership influences adaptive performance. However, the indirect effect of trait EI on adaptive performance through job engagement was positive, but not statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H7: $\beta = 0.088$; $t = 1.922$; $p = 0.055$). This indicates that work engagement does not significantly transmit the effect of trait EI to adaptive performance, and it just falls short of traditional significance, which is an important point to be discussed in the Discussion section.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the direct and indirect effects of self-leadership and trait EI on the adaptive performance of instructors in distance education through work engagement. The suggested research paradigm is largely supported by the empirical results, which are based on Social Cognitive Theory, COR Theory, and the JD-R paradigm. Five of the seven investigated hypotheses were fully supported, one mediation effect was partially supported, and one mediation pathway lacked statistical significance. When taken as a whole, these results offer a more thorough knowledge of how personal resources translate into adaptive performance in the setting of remote learning, when instructors must operate independently with little direct oversight.

The results reveal that self-leadership has a favorable and significant effect on job engagement (H2: $\beta = 0.335$, $t = 3.834$, $p < 0.001$) and adaptive performance (H1: $\beta = 0.356$, $t = 4.494$, $p < 0.001$). These results suggest that lecturers with greater levels of self-leadership are more effective at leading, controlling and motivating themselves, which enhances their ability to adapt to changing work situations and leads in higher levels of engagement at work. This discovery is quite significant in the context of remote education, where instructors are expected to be highly autonomous in managing teaching and learning activities with little or no direct supervision. The ability to create personal goals, to assess progress and to govern one's own behavior is therefore an important feature in enabling lecturers to adjust to changes in institutional rules, technological improvements and the changing demands of students.

The positive relationship identified in this study supports Maden-Eyiusta and Alparslans' (2022) conclusion that employee with stronger self-leadership tend to demonstrate better work-role performance. The similarities between distant education and remote labor highlight the relevance of these results, as distance education teachers also operate with a high degree of autonomy and little direct oversight. The findings also support Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001) which claims that people are active agents (human agency) and may self-regulate their behavior and performance through self-regulatory processes. In the context of distance education, this kind of self-regulatory capacity is increasingly important as lecturers are required to make independent decisions, manage the teaching and learning process on an ongoing basis and adapt their pedagogic strategies in response to curriculum change, technological challenges and the diversity of students' needs.

Regarding mediation analysis, job engagement somewhat mediates the relationship between self-leadership and adaptive performance (H6: $\beta = 0.060$, $t = 2.202$, $p = 0.028$). This result implies that the impact of self-leadership on adaptive performance functions both directly through improved self-regulatory ability and indirectly through encouraging higher levels of job

engagement among lecturers. Higher levels of self-leadership are associated with more energy, commitment, and absorption in lecturers, which helps them adapt to changes in the teaching and learning process more skilfully.

This result is in line with the findings of Lee and Jo (2023), who said that personal resources are converted into better performance results through job involvement. Additionally, it offers more evidence in favour of the JD-R Model's motivational pathway (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017), which contends that personal resources boost workers' engagement at work and eventually improve performance. High work engagement levels in the context of remote learning enable the lecturers to remain enthusiastic, focused and dedicated to their teaching tasks, despite the limited face-to-face encounters and constant changes characterizing the distant learning environment.

The findings show that trait EI has the most direct impacts in the suggested model, affecting adaptive performance (H3: $\beta = 0.367$, $t = 4.295$, $p < 0.001$) as well as work engagement (H4: $\beta = 0.490$, $t = 5.631$, $p < 0.001$). The findings suggest that the ability to recognize, understand and control emotions is one of the most important human resources for increasing adaptive performance of instructors in remote education. To put it another way, lecturers are more engaged at work and better able to adjust to shifting demands if they are able to control their own emotions and comprehend those of others.

A similar pattern was also identified by Yang et al. (2002) who found that trait EI and adaptive performance were positively correlated. The COR Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which contends that emotional intelligence acts as a personal resource that enables people to handle the demands of their occupations without experiencing mental and emotional tiredness, is likewise supported by the data. In the context of distance education, this capability becomes increasingly important because lecturers must not only adapt to technological developments and changes in educational policies but also manage the emotional challenges associated with limited face-to-face interaction, low levels of student responsiveness, and various technical issues encountered during online teaching. Consequently, lecturers with higher levels of trait EI are more likely to maintain effective teaching despite working in uncertain and constantly changing conditions. These findings add to the evidence of Li et al. (2018) that trait EI allows lecturers to respond more efficiently to changes in teaching and learning contexts.

However, the findings, show that the association between trait EI and adaptive performance is not significantly mediated by work engagement (H7: $\beta = 0.088$, $t = 1.922$, $p = 0.055$). The results indicate a rather weak indirect link, suggesting that work engagement does not entirely explain the mechanism by which trait EI promotes adaptive performance, even though the p-value is only slightly above the standard significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$).

These results suggest that trait EI predominantly affects adaptive performance directly rather than indirectly through higher levels of work engagement. This outcome supports the argument stated by Zeidner et al. (2004) that work qualities and organisational setting play a major role in how emotional intelligence contributes to performance. In the context of distance education, the ability to regulate emotions enables lecturers to remain calm, think clearly, and make timely decisions when responding to technological disruptions and changes in the teaching and learning process, without first relying on higher levels of work engagement.

Taken together, this shows that self-leadership and trait EI are two key personal resources that contribute to enhancing the adaptive performance of distance education lecturers. Although both variables exert significant direct effects, trait EI demonstrates a slightly stronger effect on adaptive performance ($\beta = 0.367$) than self-leadership ($\beta = 0.356$), while self-leadership is estimated with marginally greater precision ($t = 4.494$ vs. $t = 4.295$) indicating that, despite the small difference in path coefficients, both effects are of broadly comparable strength and reliability. These findings suggest that, within the distance learning environment, which is characterized by dynamic work conditions, intensive use of technology, and limited direct supervision, the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions represents a slightly

more influential personal resource than the ability to regulate one's own behavior. Nevertheless, the relatively small difference between the path coefficients indicates that these two personal resources are complementary in fostering the adaptive performance of distance education lecturers. However, the data also reveal that these two personal resources have differing effects on adaptive performance. The indirect effect of trait EI on adaptive performance via work engagement is not significant ($\beta = 0.088$, $p = 0.055$), whereas self-leadership has a direct and indirect (via work engagement) effect on adaptive performance ($\beta = 0.060$, $p = 0.028$). These results offer a more complex interpretation of the JD-R Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017), suggesting that although personal resources generally promote work engagement, this motivational mechanism does not operate uniformly across different types of personal resources. In other words, the effectiveness of work engagement as a motivational pathway depends on the nature of the personal resource involved.

In the context of distance education, these findings suggest that improving lecturers' adaptive performance cannot rely solely on strategies aimed at enhancing work engagement. Rather, strengthening self-regulatory capabilities through self-leadership, together with developing the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions through trait emotional intelligence, should be prioritized, as both personal resources make substantial contributions to lecturers' adaptive performance. Accordingly, professional development initiatives for distance education lecturers should focus on strengthening these two capabilities simultaneously to enable lecturers to adapt more effectively to technological advances, changes in academic policies, and the evolving needs of students.

CONCLUSION

This study found positive and significant impacts supporting six of the seven hypothesized links between self-leadership and trait emotional EI on the adaptive performance of distance education lecturers, through the mediating role of work engagement. The sole hypothesis that was not supported was H7, which proposed that job engagement mediates the effect of trait EI on adaptive performance. This result suggests that the relationship between trait EI and adaptive performance is not considerably mediated by work engagement. Instead, trait EI appears to directly affect adaptive performance, independent of the job engagement mechanism. Meanwhile, job engagement fully mediates the association between self-leadership and adaptive performance, which nonetheless has a strong direct effect on adaptive performance.

Overall, these results show that trait EI and self-leadership are significant personal resources that improve the adaptive performance of lecturers in distance learning, either directly or, in the case of self-leadership, through the motivational mechanism of work engagement. By demonstrating that the suggested resource-engagement-performance pathway may function differentially across personal resources, this study theoretically expands on the JD-R Model. While trait EI, an affective personal resource based on COR Theory, seems to contribute more directly to adaptive performance, self-leadership, a self-regulatory resource based on Social Cognitive Theory, seems to follow this motivational pathway. In autonomous, technology-mediated, low-supervision work situations like distance education, this distinction offers a more nuanced understanding of how various human resources contribute to adaptive performance.

Practically, these results suggest that Universitas Terbuka and similar distance-learning institutions should not rely solely on work engagement-boosting initiatives to strengthen lecturers' adaptive performance. Professional development programs should also strengthen self-leadership skills, including self-goal-setting and self-monitoring, while developing individuals' capacity to understand and manage their emotions and cope effectively with work-related stress. Developing these personal resources may better equip lecturers to adapt to technological changes, changing academic policies, and evolving student needs in the distance education context.

SUGGESTION

This study has several limitations that are significant to the research question being examined. First, because all of the data was gathered at a single point in time due to the cross-sectional methodology, the stated associations show association rather than established causation. For instance, it's still feasible that instructors who currently exhibit adaptive performance will eventually become stronger at self-leadership or emotional control, rather than the other way around. Second, all variables including adaptive performance, were assessed through self-reports collected from the same participants using a single questionnaire. This raises the risk of common method bias, which may have inflated the two strongest paths in the model: self-leadership ($\beta = 0.356$) and trait EI ($\beta = 0.367$) on adaptive performance. Third, the sample was limited to distance education lecturers within Universitas Terbuka's network. While geographically diverse, the results reflect UT's specific institutional and technological context, therefore, the results, especially the modest relationship between work engagement and adaptive performance ($\beta = 0.179$), should be generalized to distance education lecturers in other settings with caution.

Finally, the analysis examined whether work engagement transmits the influence of trait EI to adaptive performance (H7: $p = 0.055$) narrowly missed significance. With this result so close to $\alpha = 0.05$, it is unclear whether H7 reflects a true null effect or simply insufficient statistical power at $N = 234$. When taken as a whole, despite these limitations, the study's principal conclusions remain valid; rather, they establish the parameters within which they should be interpreted as proof of noteworthy relationships between self-leadership, trait EI, work engagement, and adaptive performance within a particular, self-reported, cross-institutional distance education (PJJ) context, rather than as conclusive causal or generalisable findings.

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1. Author Contributions:

NK: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Writing – Original

MMS: [Visualization, Review and Editing, Supervision.

DS : Visualization, Review and Editing, Supervision

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5. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):

The authors used ChatGPT to assist with improving grammar and translating the text. All AI-generated output was thoroughly reviewed and edited by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the article.

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