



Enhancing Job Performance through Islamic Religiosity and Islamic Work Ethics

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ABSTRACT

Numerous research on the influence of Islamic work ethics (IWE) on job performance (JP) have been conducted. However, few studies have considered Islamic religiosity at the workplace in affecting JP. Thus, this study is conducted to fill the gap by investigating the role of IWEs and Islamic religiosity on JP of Muslim employees. Data were collected from 150 administrative employees in higher educational institutions in Malaysia. The data were later analyzed using partial least square method using the Smart-PLS software. Results indicate that Islamic religiosity and IWEs were found to be significantly associated with JP. Implications of the study for managers and suggestions for future research are presented.

Keywords: Job Performance, Islamic Religiosity, Islamic Work Ethics

JEL Classifications: J29, L25, M140, N350, Z120

1. INTRODUCTION

It is crucial that employees perform their job well (Bonache and Noethen, 2014) so that an organization can accomplish its goals and objectives (Siddiqui, 2014). As such, many researchers have studied various factors that affect job performance (JP), such as work ethics (Abdi et al., 2014), personality (Fang et al., 2015), engagement (Shimazu et al., 2015), and job satisfaction (Reio and Kidd, 2006), to name a few. However, the factors mentioned earlier are insufficient to explain the quality of JP of Muslim employees. In Islam, work is not performed to achieve material gains only; more importantly, it is a form of worship to obtain Allah's blessing (Sharabi, 2012). Muslim employees are expected to perform their job diligently despite facing hardships. With the belief that Allah is constantly watching their deeds, Muslim employees should strive to perform their job ethically (Abeng, 1997; Al-Kilani, 2010). From this perspective, JP of Muslim employees should be assessed by considering Islamic-related factors. Hence, this study looked at the influence of Islamic religiosity and Islamic work ethics (IWEs) on JP of Muslim employees. To achieve this aim,

this study was conducted among Muslim employees in Islamic Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the literature on Islamic management at the workplace. In fulfilling the objectives of the research, two hypotheses were proposed and discussed in next sub-section.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VARIABLES

2.1. The Relationship between Islamic Religiosity and JP

Work is a religious obligation for Muslims. However, work should be done effectively (Pfeffer and Veiga, 1999). Islam requires that Muslim employees accomplish their job to seek the blessing of Allah (Sharabi, 2012). The idea that work is an act of worship in Islam (Basharat, 2009) embodies the concept of Islamic religiosity. In general, religiosity refers to the practice and depth of engagement with one's religious values and activities (Ayranci and Semercioz, 2011). In regards of Islamic religiosity, each Muslim

must show, reflect, and practice all the Islam beliefs (Syed and Ali, 2010) that stated in Hadis and the Qur'an in order to influence their good attitudes and behavior (Sharabi, 2012).

As stated in the Qur'an Surah Adh-Dhāriyāt verse 56: "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship me." This verse indicates that one of the purposes of human creation is to worship God and to do so for the sake of obtaining his blessings (Sulaiman et al., 2014). Such belief is purported to motivate Muslims to perform their tasks effectively. In addition, as Muslims believe that Allah is watching over everyone, they should demonstrate the best behavior in life. In this regards, effective job implementation and practicing best behavior would create high JP. Hence, this study hypothesized a positive relationship between Islamic religiosity and JP among Muslim employees.

2.2. The Relationship between IWEs and JP

Work ethics are defined as a collection of human values, traits, attitude, and behavior on how one does his/her job or responsibilities. Islam strongly requires that its believers have strong moral values and follow the teachings of Islam in performing their work to seek the blessing of Allah, which is the ultimate objective in life. Hence, IWEs refer to good values whether in action, behavior, feeling or thinking while doing job (Abdi et al., 2014) and these good values were initially in light of the Holy Quran and also the teachings, sayings and actions of Rasulullah SAW (Ali and Al-Owaihah, 2008; Abdi et al., 2014).

Work ethics guide individual behavior and judgement as to what is right and wrong. In Islam, IWEs are consistent with the teachings of Islam in that Muslims should behave in the manner required by the religion to seek the blessings of Allah, which is the ultimate objective in life. At work, Muslims are expected to know what is right and wrong based on the teachings of Islam and behave and act accordingly.

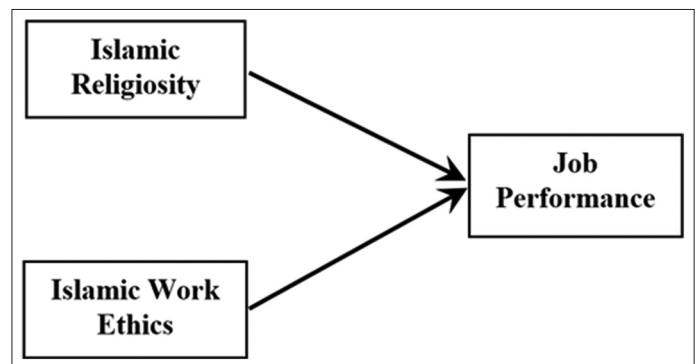
According to Yousef (2000) and, Ajmal and Irfan (2014), IWEs appreciates economic activity involvement of its believer. It defines work as a promoter of social connections and one's development (Ajmal and Irfan, 2014), that also connected to dedication to work. As Muslims are highly connected, developed, and dedicated to work through follow all good values of Islam, they will subsequently perform their job efficiently and effectively, which in return increase their JP. Therefore, based on the discussion above, this study hypothesized a positive relationship between IWEs and JP.

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed research model and the hypothesized relationships as indicated by the bold arrows. As shown, Islamic religiosity and IWEs are the independent variables while JP is the dependent variable.

3. METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from 150 administrative staff members in Islamic HEI in the northern Malaysia using survey questionnaires. The questionnaire is divided into four sections. The first section is about demographic questions. The second

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



section measures JP adopted from Goodman and Svyantek (1999). However, this study only focused on task performance, measured by nine items. The third section measures IWEs measured using 17 items developed by Ali (1992). While the last section asks about Islamic religiosity by utilizing the instrument developed by Kendler et al. (2003). But, this study only focused on general religiosity dimension (10 items), daily spiritual experiences measurement, and the remaining 5 items from religious coping measurement.

In this study, JP was defined as the extent of accomplishment of the employees in performing their work or work-related activities and the behaviors that contribute to organizational goals (Motowildo et al., 1997; Murphy, 1989). Specifically, task performance was defined as the extent of how effective a given work is carried out and contributes to the organization's technical core either directly or indirectly (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993). This study referred to IWEs as Islamic ethical standards in the workplace based on the Qur'an and prophetic traditions. IWEs emphasize a culture of promulgating goodness and preventing wrongness (Abbasi et al., 2011). Religiosity is defined as how devoted an individual is to his/her religion. Religiosity is used in different ways to portray the level of practice and involvement in the basic tenets of the religion (Hage, 2013). Religious knowledge of individuals, self-esteem, well-being, the extent to which people use their religion for their own ends, and the degree to which people live their religion are usually used to measure religiosity (Cohen et al., 2005).

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Using the Smart-PLS software, the survey data were analyzed and bootstrapping was conducted to test the significance level of the t-value (t-statistic). Table 1 presents the results of the reliability analysis, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE).

Cronbach's alpha values higher than 0.80 mean that the instrument used has good reliability, values within 0.70 mean acceptable while below 0.70 mean weak reliability (Hair et al., 2010). For AVE, the value must be >0.50. Briefly, the Table 1 demonstrates that the instrument used to measure each variable was highly reliable such that JP had an alpha of 0.926, Islamic religiosity 0.902, and IWEs 0.941.

5. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The significance of the structural model and the relevance of the path loadings between the constructs was examined by using computed t-statistics (t-value). The value of t-statistics was obtained after the path analysis on the structural model was conducted via bootstrapping using 499 bootstrap samples in Smart-PLS. Table 2 presents the results of t-statistics, path coefficient (beta or β), and the hypothesis.

The absolute and significant value of t-value must be 1.96 or higher (two-tailed) (Hair et al., 2010). Thus, based on the bootstrapping procedure, Table 2 shows a significant relationship between Islamic religiosity and JP with a t-value of 2.650. A significant association between IWEs and JP was also found with a t-value of 4.378. The significant relationships found indicate that the hypotheses received empirical support.

Furthermore, the result of variance inflation factor (VIF) or collinearity statistics showed a value above 1 but lower than 5, which means that the predictors were moderately correlated and no collinearity issues existed in this study. The VIF value of Islamic religiosity towards JP was 1.502 while the VIF value of IWEs towards JP was 1.719.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Islam is the way of life. This means that how a Muslim conducts him/herself in terms of personality, behavior, lifestyle, etc. should follow the teachings of Islam. Muslims are also expected to demonstrate perseverance and patience in the face of difficulties. They need to submit to the will of Allah in all situations, but they are also expected to make concerted efforts if they wish to be successful. Hence, the concept of Tawakal is very much required in Islam. Also, in accomplishing a job, Muslims have to do so with Amanah, that is, to perform in an honest, trustworthy, and accountable manner. In short, whatever a Muslim does, he or she does it out of sincerity and for the blessings of Allah in this life and in the hereafter.

Table 1: Reliability analysis, composite reliability, and AVE

Variable	Total items (N)	Mean \pm SD	AVE	CA	Composite reliability
JP	9	4.064 \pm 0.747	0.630	0.926	0.938
I.Rel	10	4.361 \pm 0.787	0.568	0.902	0.923
IWE	17	4.278 \pm 0.776	0.522	0.941	0.948

SD: Standard deviation, AVE: Average variance extracted, JP: Job performance, I.Rel: Islamic religiosity, IWE: Islamic work ethics, CA: Cronbach's alpha

Table 2: Hypothesis testing

H	Path	Path coefficient (Beta)	Standard error	t-value	P values	Decision
H1	I.Rel \rightarrow JP	0.201	0.078	2.650**	0.011	Supported
H2	IWE \rightarrow JP	0.475	0.109	4.378**	0.000	Supported

**P<0.05 (two-tailed test). H: Hypothesis, JP: Job performance, I.Rel: Islamic religiosity, IWE: Islamic work ethics

Although Islam requires its adherents to submit to the Islamic teachings in the course of accomplish their job, to what extent Muslim employees comply is subject to an empirical investigation. Hence, this study was carried out to examine the influence of Islamic religiosity and IWEs on JP of Muslim employees. As expected, significant relationships were found. The result is in line with previous findings (Ahmad et al., 2013; Rokhman, 2010; Sulaiman et al., 2014; Yousef, 2000). That is, people who have higher religiosity (Sharabi, 2012) and IWEs (Ahmad et al., 2013) are more inclined to work properly.

The results of the present study have important implications for managers. Based on the results, managers should strive to find ways on how to develop Islamic religiosity and IWEs in their employees. Offering formal and informal training sessions where employees are imbued with these concepts is one potential measure managers can implement. In addition, the organizational culture that reflects Islamic values will also promote Islamic religiosity and work ethics necessary for employees to perform their job effectively.

The findings of this study may encourage future researchers to investigate Islamic work-related concepts such as Islamic JP and Islamic work engagement.

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