

Strategies to Enhance Work Motivation among Islamic Studies Lecturer

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Abstract: Motivation is important in the career of a lecturer. Individuals with a high work motivation make their work become something meaningful in their lives. Work motivation is also important to form a positive attitude and enhance career performance. This study is thus conducted to identify the strategies which can be adopted by lecturers, specifically lecturers in the Faculty of Islamic Studies (FPI) in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, to enhance their work motivation. The research design is in survey form. As many as 37 out of 108 lecturers of the said faculty have been selected as study sample by way of convenience sampling. This study uses questionnaire as a data collection tool. The data is analysed by descriptive statistical method. The results of this study show that work motivation among lecturers of the Faculty of Islamic Studies (FPI) can be enhanced through four strategies that is by reinforcing knowledge and skills, creating a conducive working environment, strengthening spirituality and health care.

Key words: Work motivation, lecturer, spirituality, working environment, health care

INTRODUCTION

Work motivation is important to encourage a worker to improve productivity and achieve organisational goals. In the context of Islamic teachings, motivation means a form of internal drive experienced by humans. Motivation is a form of drive that can influence humans to perform an act. That is the reason motivation is categorised as a determinant of an individual's life activities in his endeavour to achieve his ambitions.

In linking the motivation concept with Islamic perspectives, Alawneh (1998) associates motivation with the creation of man and human relations as well as his relationship with the creator. It explains the purpose of man's existence as God's vicegerent to administer the earth with strong faith and wisdom. Likewise, Rahman and Rahman (1995) explains from Islamic perspectives that motivation required in a working organisation can be interpreted as the building of human relations requiring understanding of the *ihsan* or benevolence concept. The concept of *ihsan* as discussed by Rahman and Rahman (1995) is closely associated with Islamic work values which contribute to work attitude, work efficiency as well as responsibility among co-workers based on the existence and presence of God with *taqwa* (devotion) and *iman* (faith) in Allah SWT.

In a lecturer's career, motivation is an important matter which is particularly helpful when facing pressing

work challenges. This is because some of the said challenges are sometimes easily managed while at other times are very difficult to overcome to the extent of causing a lecturer to lose perseverance in work. Motivation is much needed in these moments as it is analogous to a catalyst for personal spiritual development to realise hope and ambition. Thus, motivation needs to be cultivated, it does not come on its own. Continuous cultivation of motivation will improve motivation and finally make work something meaningful in life (Friedlander, 1966). Work motivation is also important to form a positive attitude and enhance performance in career (Hung-Wen and Ching-Hsiang, 2009; Wijono, 1997).

A study by Wernimont *et al.* (1970) found that among the methods which help in enhancing work motivation are: a versatile employer, a challenging career as well as participation in decision-making. In addition, Katzell and Thompson (1990) found that motivation can be enhanced through job satisfaction as a satisfied worker is inclined to be more productive. Pelletier *et al.* (2002) found that teaching staff who face pressure from the superior (employer) as well as from the subordinate (student) have reduced work motivation. In view of work motivation problems and the need to identify the method which can enhance work motivation, this study is conducted to enhance work motivation among FPI lecturers of UKM.

Purpose of study: The purpose of this study is to identify the strategies of enhancing work motivation among FPI lecturers of UKM.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design is in the form of a survey study. This study selected 37 lecturers out of the total whole population of 108 lecturers in FPI. The method of sample selection is convenience sampling. Data collection in this study is by using questionnaire form in four parts. Part A is on the background of respondent, Part B concerns family background, Parts C-E concern problems faced in enhancing work motivation while Part F concerns the methods which are helpful in enhancing work motivation among FPI lecturers.

This research focuses discussion on Part F of the questionnaire that is to identify the strategies to enhance work motivation among FPI lecturers, UKM. In Part F as many as 24 items have been test analysed for reliability. As a result of the said reliability analysis, this study obtained a very satisfactory alpha cronbach value for the whole of the items constructed that is 0.942. Data was descriptively analysed to obtain information on the strategies to enhance work motivation among FPI lecturers. Data analysed is presented in percentage, frequency and mean.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before discussing strategies which can enhance work motivation among FPI lecturers, respondent’s backgrounds will be discussed first.

Respondent’s backgrounds: Out of 37 respondents as many as 26 (70.3%) are male and 11 (29.7%) are female 15 (40.5%) respondents in this study are from the Shariah Department, 7 (18.9%) respondents from Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah Department and 6 (16.2%) are from Arabic Studies and Islamic Civilization. Only 4 (10.8%) respondents are from Dakwah Studies and Leadership Department.

From the aspect of age in this study, most respondents are in the range of age 40-44 years that is 37.8% (14 persons). This is followed by age range 35-39 years (18.9%, 7 persons). The minimum age is 28 years and maximum age is 62 years. From the aspect of position grade, the study findings show 14 persons (37.8%) are lecturers in grade DS45. This is followed by position grade DS52 (6 persons, 16.2%). Position grades Gred DS41 and DS57, respectively have the lowest percentage that is 2.7%. The study findings also show that respondents mostly hold doctoral degrees (21 persons, 56.8%) and the rest possess a master’s degree (16 persons, 43.2%).

Reinforcement of knowledge and skills: One of the strategies adopted by the respondents in this study to enhance their work motivation is by reinforcing knowledge and skills in the field related to their career. The study findings show more than half of the respondents agree that to enhance work motivation, they need to constantly prepare in advance for an assignment (64.9%), read books on motivation (56.8%), constantly be prepared with a work plan schedule (56.8%) and focus attention on one thing at a time (54.1%). And the percentage of respondents who agree with the strategies to attend seminars on motivation is 48.6%, attend program/course on motivation is 45.9% while not to mix personal problems with work is less than half that is 42.3-48.6% (Table 1).

On comparison of the constructed items, this study found that the item with the highest mean value is to learn from more experienced persons (mean = 4.49). This mean value is followed by two items that is arrange work in orderly and systematic manner and not to mix personal problems with work whereby both have a mean value of 4.46. Study findings also show that respondents are constantly prepared in advance of an assignment and constantly prepared with a work plan schedule each achieving a high mean that is 4.19 (Table 1).

Research respondents are inclined not to mix personal problems with work (mean = 4.46) as one of the strategies to enhance work motivation. This is an

Table 1: reinforcement of knowledge and skills

Strategy	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Least agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
Read books on motivation	2 (5.4%)	1 (2.7%)	5 (13.5%)	21 (56.8%)	8 (21.6%)	3.86
Attend seminars on motivation	1 (2.7%)	2 (5.4%)	7 (18.9%)	18 (48.6%)	9 (24.3%)	3.86
Attend training/courses on motivation	1 (2.7%)	2 (5.4%)	7 (18.9%)	17 (45.9%)	10 (27.0%)	3.89
Arrange work in orderly and systematic manner	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.4%)	16 (43.2%)	19 (51.4%)	4.46
Learn from more experienced persons	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.7%)	17 (45.9%)	19 (51.4%)	4.49
Focus attention on one thing at a time	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (16.2%)	20 (54.1%)	11 (29.7%)	4.14
Get counselling services	2 (5.4%)	5 (13.5%)	14 (37.8%)	12 (32.4%)	4 (10.8%)	3.30
Constantly prepare in advance of an assignment	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (8.1%)	24 (64.9%)	10 (27.0%)	4.19
Constantly be prepared with work plan schedule	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.7%)	3 (8.1%)	21 (56.8%)	12 (32.4%)	4.19
Not to mix personal problems with work	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.4%)	16 (43.2%)	19 (51.4%)	4.46

Questionnaire, 2010

important matter as a person is usually unable to manage two matters at one time. This statement is supported by research findings of Macey and Schneider (2008) who found that workers who give a high commitment to work are inclined to reduce their attention and roles at home. This finding is in line with the study findings of Matjasko and Feldman (2006) who explained that a person who gave more time and attention to work, experiences less anxiety towards work when he later goes home. This explains workers inclination to not mix family or personal affairs with career and choosing to work longer hours at the workplace so that they can calmly go home without having to think of work matters.

Study findings also show that making early preparations and having an orderly work schedule is a skill needed by lecturers to enhance work motivation. Lack of skills in executing a task causes work stress among lecturers. Based on findings of a study by Asmawati Desa and Siva a/l S.Subramaniam on work stress among lecturers of public universities, it was found that they experience higher stress than lecturers of private universities. This situation is caused by additional workload, responsibilities and roles played by them. Therefore to lessen stress and enhance work motivation among lecturers, strategies to increase knowledge and skills of lecturers in every aspect must be given due attention by universities such as in the form of providing them training and courses.

Creating a conducive working environment: The results of this study find that a conducive working environment can enhance work motivation among FPI lecturers. The work environment in question in this study is the situation of communication relations between the employer and employee as well as between colleagues. As regards creating a conducive working environment, more than half of respondents agree that to enhance work motivation, they are required to constantly support the employer's work instructions (62.2%), recognize all the progress and achievements of other individuals (54.1%), constantly socialize with motivated persons (54.1%) and create an atmosphere of healthy competition (51.4%). This study finds that less than half (48.6%) of respondents agree that in order to enhance work motivation from the aspect of a conducive working environment, they need to constantly maintain good relations with colleagues (Table 2).

Mean analysis shows that all five items listed have a high mean value. The statement which has the highest mean value is to constantly maintain good relations with colleagues (mean = 4.46) followed by create an atmosphere of healthy competition (mean = 4.38), recognize all progress and achievements of other individuals and placing oneself in the society of motivated persons (mean = 4.35). The statement which has the lowest mean value is constantly believe and support employer's work instructions (mean = 4.24). This finding shows the factors which can enhance work motivation most in the aspect of creating a conducive working environment is a pro-active attitude of the respondent himself towards his environment.

Results of study also show that research respondents regard working environment as crucial, especially in maintaining good relations with colleagues in order to enhance work motivation. Friedlander (1966)'s study supports this statement that the social environment in work is important to all workers regardless of whether a worker has a high or low performance. This finding explains that a social environment is important not only in enhancing work motivation but also for worker wellbeing. This statement is supported by Stewart-Sicking *et al.* (2011) who find that the working environment atmosphere is important in ensuring worker satisfaction and wellbeing.

Results of this study also find that among the strategies to enhance work motivation among FPI lecturers is by recognising others' progress and achievements (mean = 4.35). Employer's recognition is important in this context so that workers feel that their contribution is appreciated. This corresponds with the study by Wernimont *et al.* (1970) which found that employer praise for good work done and recognition of constructive ideas from subordinates have a big impact on job satisfaction.

Strengthening spirituality: Among other strategies adopted by research respondents to enhance work motivation is by strengthening spiritual relationship with Allah SWT. Findings show the majority of respondents agree that to enhance work motivation, they need to consent with good will or submit to Allah's will (86.5%), properly observe their prayers (83.3%), constantly purify

Table 2: Creating a conducive working environment

Factors to create a conducive working environment	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Least agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
Constantly maintain good relations with colleagues	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.7%)	18 (48.6%)	18 (48.6%)	4.46
Constantly believe in and support employer's work instructions	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.7%)	1 (2.7%)	23 (62.2%)	12 (32.4%)	4.24
Recognise all progress and achievements of other individuals	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.4%)	20 (54.1%)	15 (40.5%)	4.35
Constantly place oneself in society of motivated persons	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.4%)	20 (54.1%)	15 (40.5%)	4.35
Create an atmosphere of healthy competition	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.4%)	19 (51.4%)	16 (43.2%)	4.38

Questionnaire, 2010

Table 3: Strengthening spirituality

Factors which strengthen spirituality	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Least agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
Properly observe prayers	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.7%)	5 (13.5%)	31 (83.8%)	4.81
Constantly strive to purify the heart from undesirable qualities such as malice, anger, envy, etc.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.7%)	5 (13.5%)	31 (83.8%)	4.81
Faith in Allah's help	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.7%)	5 (13.5%)	31 (83.8%)	4.81
Submit to Allah's will	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.7%)	4 (10.8%)	32 (86.5%)	4.84
Persevere in efforts amidst difficulties and failure	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.7%)	10 (27.0%)	26 (70.3%)	4.68
Self-reward	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (10.8%)	15 (40.5%)	18 (48.6%)	4.38
Purify intention to work as an act of worship (Ibadah)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.7%)	6 (16.2%)	30 (81.1%)	4.78
Establish Night Prayers (Qiyam al-lail)	1 (2.7%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (8.1%)	10 (27.0%)	23 (62.2%)	4.46

Questionnaire, 2010

their hearts from evil qualities such as malice, anger, etc. The (83.8%) have faith in Allah's help (83.8%), purify intention to work as ibadah (81.1%), persevere through difficulties and failure (70.3%) and establish night prayers (qiyam al-lail) (62.2%). Only one item is not so agreeable to respondents that is self-reward (48.6%) (Table 3). Submission to Allah's will is a statement which has the highest mean value that is 4.84. This mean value is followed by the three following statements, each having an average mean value of 4.81 that is: properly observe prayers, constantly strive to purify the heart of undesirable qualities such as malice, anger, etc. and faith in Allah's help. The statement with the lowest mean value that is 4.38 is self-reward. On the whole, the majority of respondents agree with the eight items presented that is strengthening of the spiritual aspect can influence the enhancement of work motivation.

Enhancement of work motivation through strengthening of spirituality is in line with study findings which show that individual motivation can be done through the process of tazkiyah al-nafs (purification of the soul) such as increasing acts of worship, frequent charity, good thoughts or expectations, gratitude and submission to God's will and eliminating undesirable qualities such as malice, bad suspicions and envy. Other studies clearly explain that the spiritual aspect lessens stress in enhancing work motivation. This is because stress is one of the causes for the decline in career motivation. Studies by Graham *et al.* (2001), Stanley *et al.* (2011) and Yong *et al.* (2011) found that the spiritual element if applied to career helps to reduce stress. In the study by Yong *et al.* (2011), it is shown that after a spiritual program given to nurses in Korea, the stress faced was lessened and the spiritual wellbeing as well as leadership value increased.

Health care: Motivation in a person's career is closely associated with level of health. A healthy body helps a person to focus in his career. That is the reason that health care is also discussed in this study as one of the methods of enhancing work motivation among lecturers. Results of study show that 48.6% of respondents strongly agree that they need to be more concerned about

their health. From analysis of the mean value, this study finds that most respondents agree that they need to be more concerned about their health (mean = 4.38).

The findings of this study are in line with those of Yahaya (2000)'s study that health care is important in a career as it is linked to personality. Individuals who have a positive attitude and are not too emotional are found to be successful in warding off disease. Conversely, individuals who are frequently anxious, easily panic or get angry have a high risk of chronic disease. This shows that aspects of mental and physical health are closely related and important to be emphasized in the life of a career individual.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that among the strategies which can be adopted to enhance work motivation among FPI lecturers are: reinforcement of knowledge and skills, creating a conducive working environment, strengthening of spirituality and health care. This study finds that it is necessary to not only emphasize aspects of skills, health and environment in a worker's life but that the spiritual aspect too needs to be given attention in order to enhance work motivation. This shows that there is a need for physical and spiritual development for an academic to realize the concept of ihsan (benevolence) and taqwa (devotion) to Allah SWT in order to achieve job satisfaction.

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