

Looking into Working Environment, Integrity and Religiosity as Enhancement for Employee's Job Performance in Malaysia

Nurul Aisyah Awanis Binti A. Rahim and Khatijah Binti Omar
School of Maritime and Business Management, University Malaysia Terengganu,
21030 Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, Malaysia

Abstract: Behind excellent companies are good performing employees. They are an invaluable asset to the companies. Without them the company cannot grow and prosper. A good performing employee has attributes such as having lots of talent, skillful and a team player, qualities that can effectively shield the company against risk and competitors. Therefore, it is crucial to keep these precious workers in a good working environment. Past studies have revealed that both working environment and integrity have an influence on employee's performance. The objective of this study is thus to see the relationships between working environment, integrity and employee job performance. Interestingly, religiosity is being picked to moderate the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. The setting of this study comprised five states in Peninsular Malaysia which are Terengganu; Johor; Pulau Pinang; Kedah and Selangor. Meanwhile, the sample is extracted from a population of each of the respective industries in Malaysia, namely manufacturing; accommodation, food and beverage; education and human health and social work activities.

Key words: Working environment, integrity, job performance, religiosity, employee

INTRODUCTION

The workforce is an important asset to a company. Particularly when they are intelligent, they cannot be replaced by any high technology machine or artificial intelligent application. Organizations of today consider employees as their top priority asset. This unique asset which has been attained needs to be retained and motivated by the organization. As this involves a process, it will consume a lot of effort in terms of time and money. Therefore, organizations need to put in place the best alternative to maintain employee performance.

The key to organizational success is a competitive workforce. Hence, a valuable worker is expected to achieve competitive advantage for the organization. As organizations of today attempt to cope with the dynamic and global competitive environments there has been a growing interest in attaining workers who are not only cooperative but who are self-made and proactive in helping their organizations to function more effectively. A worker who can pace himself or herself when doing work and requires little guidance or coaching to complete a task is a good worker. Especially when they can beat the time set for completion. In attaining workers of this type, more and more organizations are educating their workers by way of holding their employees accountable for their work

behavior. This initiative is expected to contribute to constructive improvements in the workplace (Fuller *et al.*, 2010).

Organizations that are able to maintain good performance in their employees are effective in attaining competitive advantage. This attribute is very crucial for an organization especially in the context of global and multinational operations. This can ultimately help the organization to achieve sustainable growth. Without a well trained and committed workforce, a company may lose the ability to compete at both national and international levels. In turn, this will eventually reduce economic success (Ferguson and Reio Jr., 2010). Nonetheless, the performance of good workers will deteriorate if they feel unsatisfied with what the organization has provided to them in terms of life affirming attitude and career enhancement. On that account, organizations have to be sensitive to employee satisfaction and well being in the work place in order to retain valuable workers.

At the national level, even a reasonable policy might not work as well if the execution process has not been done effectively by the person in charge. Likewise in terms of employee's job performance an organization may not be able to achieve excellence in performance if its workers are not performing at their level best. Moreover,

Dato' Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak, the Prime Minister of Malaysia has highlighted the importance of having committed employees as this factor can propel Malaysia towards a developed, high-income nation status. The government has in fact embedded the concept of '1Malaysia, people first, performance now in its newly introduced transformation plan, economic transformation program, new economic Model and Tenth Malaysia plan (2011-2015). Under the latter, the government is committed to increase the number of workforce in Malaysia. This national target requires increasing the labor force participation rate to 55% by 2015. This implies that the government is very serious about labor issues.

Besides that the employees also need to have high integrity in their daily work routine. This is because organization's rules and policies are not created to be violated. These guidelines serve as a mechanism to help employees in career growth and enhancement. Attributes such as time management and trustworthy are important criteria that need to be owned by a good performer worker. A valuable worker who knows how to complete a given task without demanding for extra time to completion will not cause waste of resources. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between working environments and integrity towards employee's job performance by treating religiosity as moderator of the relationship.

Literature review: A good worker is hypothesized to be excellent in job performance. Job performance is defined in terms of the behavioral action of an individual in the context of working for an organization which when evaluated is deemed to have a particular quality, i.e., effective or otherwise. From this view, it can be said that an organizational success or failure depends on the job performance of an individual in the organization (Saetang *et al.*, 2010).

According to Kreitner and Kincki performance management holds a "continuous cycle" concept which functionally improves job performance according to criteria such as goal setting; feedback and coaching and rewards and positive reinforcement. Hence, the job performance of an individual plays a vital role in determining an organization's growth beyond financials. Hence, job performance has an impact on the overall company's performance. It also functions as a key variable in work and organizational psychology (Sonnentag and Frese, 2002).

Studies about employee's job performance have been done by many researchers of different cultural background. Collectively, these studies have identified many factors that may enhance or regress job

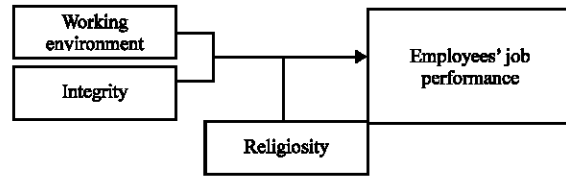


Fig. 1: Research framework

performance. These factors are working environment (Vischer, 2007), integrity (Mahdavikhou *et al.*, 2014) motivation (Fomenky, 2015) work-life culture (Shahbazi *et al.*, 2011) personality traits (Bhatti *et al.*, 2014) race (Greenhaus *et al.*, 1990) and locus of control (Chen and Silverthorne, 2008).

Abdel-Razek (2011) explained that undeniably every organization aims to achieve a high level of job performance. In relation to this, efficiency and effectiveness of an organization depends very much on the human element of effectiveness. To be effective an individual requires development; maintenance and achieving integration and balance with the organization where he or she works. When all these have been fulfilled, the individual is believed to achieve satisfaction and commitment on a permanent basis. Developing their creative energies is a factor that may help to achieve the organization's objectives in an integrated manner (De Klerk, 2005).

Therefore, the employee's job performance is clearly a delicate thing that needs to be cared seriously by each organization in order to achieve the company's ultimate goals. Hence, the main objective of this study is to investigate whether there is a significant impact that working environment and integrity may bring to employee's job performance in Malaysia.

Research framework: Research framework shown in Fig. 1.

Working environment: One of the factors that may influence employee's job performance is the working environment. The workplace environment comprises the physical structure, symbolic artifact and physical stimuli. Based on a study by Badayai (2012) physical stimuli includes elements such as sound; temperature; air; light and color and space. Next is physical structures which involves size and furniture hallways, etc. Finally, symbolic artifact refers to meaning or image of the work setting.

The business world is about achieving the best in worker's potential and this cannot be wasted as it can create a competitive business environment. Therefore,

the working environment of a work setting has the potential to impact employee morale; productivity and performance. A working environment which is poor may affect the performance of employees such as delay in work completion; frustration and may also affect the personal growth of the individual employee. The study by Naharuddin and Sadegi also supports the statement that employee's performance level is dependent upon the quality of the employee's workplace environment. Factors such as job aid, supervisor support and the physical workplace environment are related.

The condition of the workers at the industrial sectors is that they are more exposed to the hazardous environment. This includes the construction workers, factory workers and offshore workers. The exposure to the hazardous environment can make the workplace not congenial. This problem can affect the concentration and attention of the workers. Hence, the uncongenial workplace environment may reduce the efficiency in performing daily tasks by way of reducing an employee's attention span towards the tasks assigned to them.

The best working environment is suggested to have all the factors of productivity and flexibility concerning people, property and the technological infrastructure (Bradley and Osborne, 1999). Investing in a good quality physical environment will help the organization to reduce the budget allocated for real estate financing and cost of occupation and help the human resource department as the quality environment can improve the attitude and behavior of employees. A good working environment will help in terms of knowledge transfer among organization members by way of interaction, collaboration and innovation. Relocation and new installation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) will assist in reducing waste in terms of travelling time.

Integrity: Another factor that has been highlighted in this study is integrity. It comes from the Latin word, 'integritas' which means soundness; wholeness; blamelessness and perfect condition. In French, the word 'integrity' means innocence; blamelessness; chastity and purity. Meanwhile, Duska (2012) defined the word integrity as "having your moral acts together".

Integrity can be considered to be applied in a bonding method to rescue a relationship between employees and the organizations. Hence, integrity is necessary for establishing relationships of trust that is within the organization and with employees. A true heart and honest soul is in the people who want to work for invest in, buy from or collaborate with companies they feel will be open with them and treat them fairly.

Moreover, when employees have a choice, a lack of integrity and trust can cause long-term harm to them. As a result they may underperform or leave. Next, desirable customers may look for other alternative businesses to patronize. Suppliers may no longer become a reliable source and worse off, investors may sell their stocks.

A lack of integrity has consequences and implications for both directors and citizens. The probability of being caught may appear to favor illegal and corrupt practices. Nevertheless, the full cost of a lack of integrity is the result of a great many acts ranging from bias and favoritism to gross abuse of power.

Religiosity as a moderator: In the Malaysian context, norms and practices based on the Malaysia labor law state that the normal working hour is eight hours per day, especially for the government sector. This does not involve those who have to work the extra hours to achieve a target or complete certain tasks. Therefore, the life of a human being is spent a lot on working. A majority of employees wants to find meaning in their work. As a result, although working people have the desire to fulfill their spiritual requirements, they are unable to do so because of time constraints (Garcia-Zamor, 2003).

In response to this, many organizations have started to focus on creating a work environment that brings a greater sense of meaning and purpose. In fact, many corporations are encouraging the development of this new trend as they believe that a humanistic work environment creates a win-win situation for both employees and the organization.

Exposure to the hazardous environment can make the workplace not congenial. This problem can affect the concentration and attention of the workers. Hence, the uncongenial workplace environment may reduce the efficiency in performing daily tasks by way of reducing an employee's attention span towards the tasks assigned to them.

The best working environment is suggested to have all the factors of productivity and flexibility concerning people, property and the technological infrastructure (Bradley and Osborne, 1999). Investing in a good quality physical environment will help the organization to reduce the budget allocated for real estate financing and cost of occupation and help the human resource department as the quality environment can improve the attitude and behavior of employees. A good working environment will help in terms of knowledge transfer among organization members by way of interaction, collaboration and innovation. Relocation and new installation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) will assist in reducing waste in terms of travelling time.

Integrity: Another factor that has been highlighted in this study is integrity. It comes from the Latin word, 'integritas' which means soundness; wholeness; blamelessness and perfect condition. In French, the word 'intégrité' means innocence; blamelessness; chastity and purity. Meanwhile, Duska (2012) defined the word integrity as "having your moral acts together".

Integrity can be considered to be applied in a bonding method to rescue a relationship between employees and the organizations. Hence, integrity is necessary for establishing relationships of trust that is within the organization and with employees. A true heart and honest soul is in the people who want to work for invest in buy from or collaborate with companies they feel will be open with them and treat them fairly. Moreover, when employees have a choice, a lack of integrity and trust can cause long-term harm to them. As a result, they may underperform or leave. Next, desirable customers may look for other alternative businesses to patronize. Suppliers may no longer become a reliable source and worse off, investors may sell their stocks.

A lack of integrity has consequences and implications for both directors and citizens. The probability of being caught may appear to favor illegal and corrupt practices. Nevertheless, the full cost of a lack of integrity is the result of a great many acts ranging from bias and favoritism to gross abuse of power.

Religiosity as a moderator: In the Malaysian context, norms and practices based on the Malaysia Labor Law state that the normal working hour is eight hours per day, especially for the government sector. This does not involve those who have to work the extra hours to achieve a target or complete certain tasks. Therefore, the life of a human being is spent a lot on working. A majority of employees wants to find meaning in their work. As a result, although working people have the desire to fulfill their spiritual requirements they are unable to do so because of time constraints (Garcia-Zamor, 2003).

In response to this, many organizations have started to focus on creating a work environment that brings a greater sense of meaning and purpose. In fact, many corporations are encouraging the development of this new trend as they believe that a humanistic work environment creates a win-win situation for both employees and the organization.

According to Osman-Gani *et al.* (2013) religiosity and spirituality have a significant and positive relationship with employee's performance. Specifically, better spiritual condition improves performance. Hence, the researchers are focusing on the moderating effect of religiosity on employee's job performance.

Problem statement of the study: As there has been an increase in issues relating to job productivity of the workforce in recent years due to the changing work environment and standard of living, organizations are trying their level best to improve job performance of their employees and at the same time retaining the expert and trained workers. This is crucial because good performance workers will eventually lead to excellent performance of organizations (Ferguson and Reio Jr, 2010). Valuable workers need to feel comfortable at the work place in order for them to maintain their optimal performance. The performance of these potential workers will deteriorate if there is no adequate support from the organization. The company can show its support to the employees by offering them a good working environment, flexible working hours or other benefits. There are still arguments in previous studies debating about eight hours of work in the office will produce good performance or otherwise.

Despite all external problems, employees are facing some kind of internal and personal problems such as integrity. Integrity is defined as innocence, blamelessness, chastity and purity. Every worker needs to have these kinds of personality quality because they are hired to do particular tasks that are sometimes private and confidential. These qualities are very important to prevent corruption and losses on any potential projects. The problems involving integrity have always been an issue in private and non private companies. Examples of these problems are spending too much time on lunch and tea breaks and skipping working hours to run personal errands.

Malaysia is facing with critical integrity problem, for instance the 'Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah' (UPSR) of 2014 had to be rescheduled because of leaked questions for science, mathematics and tamil papers and these leakages were coming from the Malaysian Examinations Syndicate (Kulasagaran, 2014). AS a result, a few academic members were remanded to help in the investigations. This is one example of a crucial problem in integrity that involves the employee's career.

Religiosity as a huge part of human life and the duration of eight hours of daily work with an hour's break in between can affect employee's daily life routine. People nowadays are reported to spend too much of their time at work or in work-related social and leisure activities; hence have less time for anything else. There will be an issue of lack in practicing religion rituals and this may decrease or increase employee's job performance.

Hypothesis: Based on the literature search, this study has identified the following hypothesized ideas that need investigation:

- H₁: there is a significant relationship between working environment and employee's job performance
- H₂: there is a significant relationship between integrity and employee's job performance
- H₃: religiosity moderates the relationship between working environment and employee's job performance
- H₄: religiosity moderates the relationship between integrity and employee's job performance

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study needs premier data which will be used in the quantitative method. This refers to information obtained first-hand by the researcher on the variables of interest for fulfilling the specific purposes of this study. The individual is the unit of analysis. They will provide the information in the questionnaire or via observation. For this study, the data will come from the questionnaire distributed to the sampled respondents. The sources of data collections are interviews, questionnaires, observation and a variety of other motivational techniques such as the projective test. The interview method of data collection includes face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, computer assisted interviews and interviews through other electronic media. The observation method can be done through videotaping or audio recording for subsequent data analysis.

The researcher decides to use the personally administered questionnaire method because the industries involved are confined so it is convenient to assemble groups of employees to respond to the questionnaire. The important advantage of the questionnaire method is that the researcher can collect the completed questionnaires one off and any doubt that the respondent might have on any question can be clarified there and then. The researcher also will have the opportunity to introduce and explain the research topic. This method also enables the questionnaire to be administered to a large number of individuals at the same time hence, discounting on cost and time compared to the other methods of data collection.

Scope of the study: The regions covered in Peninsular Malaysia are Terengganu, Johor, Kedah and Selangor. They are representatives of the east, south, north and central Peninsular Malaysia respectively. The industries that are involved are manufacturing, accommodation and food and beverage, education and human health and social work activities.

Population: The population of this study is 11,517,200, comprising employees in Malaysia extracted from the Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010. Meanwhile, the sample comprises of employees who work in four major industries such as manufacturing; accommodation and food and beverage; education; and human health and social work activities, totaling 4,234,200 individuals. Using stratified random sampling technique, the employees in the four industries will be surveyed by using the questionnaire.

Sample size: The total number of employees in the industries is 4,234,200. This consists of 1,879,700 from the manufacturing industry; 810,700 from the accommodation, food and beverage industry; 771,700 from the education industry and 772,100 from public administration and defense and compulsory security industry. The sample size is determined based on the rule of thumb given by Sekaran and Bougie. For a population that is over 1,000,000, the maximum sample size is 384. So, for the purpose of this study, the sample size is 384 since the population of the study is 4,234,200.

Measurement items: The questionnaire is divided into five parts which are Part A-E. Part A provides details about a respondent's background such age, religion, current position and working experience with current company. Part B concentrates on the dependent variable which is job performance. Part C contains questions about the working environment and Part D is about integrity. The last section which is Part E contains religiosity items.

The job performance measurement was adopted by Suliman (2001) that involved 18 items. The so called self-administered questionnaire was used to examine six factors related to employee's performance, namely work skills; understanding work duties; quality of work; quantity of work; work enthusiasm and readiness to innovate. The first independent variable was working environment. The measurement items were adopted by Lee and Brand (2005) which consisted of 12 items divided into three dimensions, namely distractions; control and satisfaction with the workplace. Next, the measurement items for integrity have been adopted from Moral Competency Inventory (MCI) that was founded by Lennick and Kiel. The instrument consisted of 16 items which have been divided into four dimensions which are acting consistently with principles, values and beliefs; telling the truth; standing up for what is right and keeping promise. The measurement for religiosity was adopted by Hassan (2014). Based on previous studies this measurement has defined religiosity from the Islamic

perspective, developed a measurement instrument for assessing Islamic religiosity and obtained religiosity norm scores for the selected groups of Muslim youth. Even though Malaysia has different backgrounds in terms of race and religion this particular questionnaire has been improved to accommodate all types of religion in Malaysia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Previous studies showed that a decent working environment will help improve employee's performance but some researchers did not agree with this statement. It is assumed that in Malaysia, working environments are expected to have a positive relationship with employee's job performance. Also, Malaysia being a multiracial country we expect to find the citizens are free to practice their own religion and beliefs. It is also expected that religiosity will have a moderating effect on the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable.

Based on the norms in the Malaysian culture, the results of the relationships between variables are expected to be positive and significant. Moreover, being a Muslim country, the situation that should be depicted is that the people are close to their religion and people with high involvement in the religion are expected to be committed in their responsibilities (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, these kinds of personality will guide the employees to perform the best for every responsibility and task entrusted to them.

CONCLUSION

This study is conducted to investigate the impact of religion on employee's job performance. From there, the researcher will try to improve on the working environment concept in that place to suit the various religions and for employees to uphold high integrity that can bring the company and nation to the next level. Besides that, the researchers also aim to contribute to the body of knowledge in terms of providing implications to the organization as a result of the study being conducted. The expectation is for a better working place for the employees and expanding the scope of future study to include the work places of academics and other business practices.

REFERENCES

Abdel-Razek, W.A., 2011. Factors affecting the effectiveness of the job performance of the specialists working in the Youth Care at Helwan University. *World J. Sport Sci.*, 4: 116-125.

- Ahmadi, K., E. Azad-Marzabadi and S.M.N. Ashrafi, 2008. The influence of religiosity on marital satisfaction. *J. Soc. Sci.*, 4: 103-110.
- Badayai, A.R.A., 2012. A theoretical framework and analytical discussion on uncongenial physical workplace environment and job performance among workers in industrial sectors. *Procedia-Social Behav. Sci.*, 42: 486-495.
- Bhatti, M.A., M.M. Battour, A.R. Ismail and V.P. Sundram, 2014. Effects of personality traits (big five) on expatriates adjustment and job performance. *Equality Diversity Inclusion: Int. J.*, 33: 73-96.
- Bradley, S. and P. Osborne, 1999. The working environment: Catalyst or constraint? *J. Corporate Real Estate*, 1: 178-190.
- Chen, J.C. and C. Silverthorne, 2008. The impact of locus of control on job stress, job performance and job satisfaction in Taiwan. *Leadership Organ. Dev. J.*, 29: 572-582.
- De Klerk, J.J., 2005. Spirituality, meaning in life and work wellness: A research agenda. *Int. J. Organiz. Anal.*, 13: 64-68.
- Duska, R., 2012. Integrity and moral courage. *J. Financial Serv. Professionals*, 67: 20-23.
- Ferguson, K.L. and T.G. Reio Jr., 2010. Human resource management systems and firm performance. *J. Manage. Dev.*, 29: 471-494.
- Fomenky, N.F., 2015. The impact of motivation on employee performance. *Proceedings of the Global Conference on Business Finance, Volume 10, May 26-29, 2015, San Jose, Costa Rica*, pp: 332-336.
- Fuller, Jr. J.B., K. Hester and S.S. Cox, 2010. Proactive personality and job performance: Exploring job autonomy as a moderator. *J. Manag. Issues*, 22: 35-51.
- Garcia-Zamor, J.C., 2003. Workplace spirituality and organizational performance. *Public Admin. Rev.*, 63: 355-363.
- Greenhaus, J.H., S. Parasuraman and W.M. Wormley, 1990. Effects of race on organizational experiences, job performance evaluations and career outcomes. *Acad. Manage. J.*, 33: 64-86.
- Hassan, S.H., 2014. The role of Islamic values on green purchase intention. *J. Islamic Marketing*, 5: 379-395.
- Kulasagaran, P., 2014. Idris Jusoh: UPSR English papers leaked. <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2014/09/11/upsr-english-papers-leaked/>.

- Lee, S.Y. and J.L. Brand, 2005. Effects of control over office workspace on perception of the work outcomes. *J. Environ. Psychol.*, 25: 323-333.
- Mahdavi-khou, M., A. Moez, A. Hossein, M. Khotanlou and G. Karami, 2014. The impact of moral intelligence on accountant's job performance. *Int. Res. J. Finance Econ.*, 123: 126-146.
- Osman-Gani, A.M., J. Hashim and Y. Ismail, 2013. Establishing linkages between religiosity and spirituality on employee performance. *Employee Relations*, 35: 360-376.
- Saetang, J., K. Sulumnad, P. Thampitak and T. Sungkaew, 2010. Factors affecting perceived job performance among staff: A case study of ban karuna juvenile vocational training centre for boys. *Int. J. Behav. Sci.*, 5: 33-45.
- Shahbazi, B., S. Shokrzadeh, H. Bejani, E. Malekinia and D. Ghoroneh, 2011. A Survey of relationship between the quality of work life and performance of Department Chairpersons of Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University. *Procedia Soc. Behav. Sci.*, 30: 1555-1560.
- Sonnentag, S. and M. Frese, 2002. Performance Concepts and Performance Theory. In: *Psychological Management of Individual Performance*, Sonnentag, S. (Ed.). Wiley, Chichester, UK., pp: 3-25.
- Suliman, A.M., 2001. Work performance: Is it one thing or many things? The multidimensionality of performance in a middle Eastern context. *Int. J. Hum. Resour. Manage.*, 12: 1049-1061.
- Vischer, J.C., 2007. The concept of workplace performance and its value to managers. *California Manage. Rev.*, 49: 62-79.