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Preliminary Study on the Effect of Religiosity and Islamic Work Ethics towards Workplace Deviant Behavior among Muslim Employees

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Abstract:
The conceptual study is to demonstrate the progress of the discussions between religiosity and Islamic work ethics toward deviant behavior in the workplace. Deviant behavior is a behavior that becomes the focus of researchers and organization, because of the universality, seriousness and negative effect towards an organization and the country. Logically, religiosity and Islamic work ethics need to be in practice and become the guidelines to curb and prevent the deviant behavior. However, previous study on the relationship between religiosity, Islamic work ethics and deviant behaviors are very limited. This preliminary study aims to reveal the impact of religiosity and the Islamic work ethics towards the workplace deviant behavior.

Keywords: Religiosity, Islamic work ethic, deviant behavior, Malaysia

1. Introduction

Workplace deviant behavior has becoming more serious among the employees in the organizations today (Sulaiman & Bhatti, 2013; Omar, Halim, Zainah, Farhadi, Nasir & Khairuddin, 2011). This deviant behavior is crucial and received critical attention, because it involves economic costs and social costs to the organization and its employees (Kelloway, Francis, Prosser & Cameron, 2010; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Generally, the attitude and behavior of an individual is influenced by values, beliefs, identity and the life of a community or group of individuals in a place (Tayeb, 1997). Islam which has become the "Ad Deen" and also known as the way of life, provides guidance on all matters including the attitude and conduct of a Muslim in his life and in a workplace (Khan, Farooq & Hussain, 2010; Barhem, Younies & Muhamad, 2009). The preliminary study aims to develop a theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between religiosity and Islamic work ethics toward the workplace deviant behavior.

2. Literature Review

At present, symptoms of workplace deviant behavior occur almost in any organizations. This can be seen by the report on workplace deviant behavior in newspapers and electronic media, primarily involving fraud, breach of trust, abuse of power, social problems, sabotage, sexual harassment, and steals (Omar et al, 2011). Workplace deviant behavior which is universal in nature are serious and giving a bad impression to the organizations is increasingly becoming a major concern among academics and researchers (Omar et al., 2011; Stewart, Bing, Davison, Woehr & McIntyre, 2009; Shamsudin, Subramaniam & Ibrahim, 2011).

Malaysia, as a developing country cannot get away from the deviant behavior such as embezzlement, abuse of power and corruption which is contrary to morality, ethics and religion and creating socio-economic imbalances and damage the society in Malaysia (Omar et al, 2011) . Among deviant behavior occurred are the issue of integrity (PEMANDU, 2010), misconduct of public employees (Public Complaints Bureau, Prime Minister's Office, 2013), bribery, conflict of interest, using the company's assets as personal use, disclose the information and secret of organizations, theft of money, falsify claim, falsify sick leave, absence from work, stock theft, fraudulent expense claims, theft of physical assets (KPMG, 2013) and corruption (Transparency International, 2012; KPMG, 2013). This workplace deviant behavior is expected to increase in the future, especially when the time of financial crisis. This deviant behavior clearly affects productivity and lead to job interruption to all employees and organizations involved. This has made Malaysia becoming less productivity, less competitiveness and incompetence in the eyes of the world.

According to Tayeb (1997), values, beliefs and life in a society is known as the culture which influence the attitudes and behavior of an individual. Values are difficult to change and are a set of basic beliefs and principles of a particular community (Delener, 1994). These values affect the behavior of an individual in communities, whether it is appropriate, right or wrong in these communities (Delener, 1994). According to west researchers, religion which is the element in culture is important because it affects the behavior of

the individual (Guiso, Sapienza & Zingales, 2002; Mansori 2012; Sood & Nasu, 1995). Religion affects a person through rules, beliefs, and ways of life and in determining priorities in life (Inglehart & Baker, 2000).

The way of working in Islam is called Islamic work ethic and originated from the Quran, Hadith and the deeds of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) (Kumar & Che Rose, 2010). The main pillar of Islam is the trustworthy, honesty and fairness, skilled in the work, hard work and positive thinking (Ali, 1988; Yousef, 2001). Islamic work ethics is the requirement of Islam against individuals related to attitudes and behavior in the workplace (Rizk, 2008). Employee attitudes such as commitment, responsibility, improving the quality of work, the relationship between each other must be in accordance with the principles of Islam through Islamic work ethics (Yousef, 2001). Therefore, the work ethics of Islam are more comprehensive than conventional work ethic because it not only for the world but for the eternity. A Muslim is responsible for his actions and will be questioned in the presence of God in the next life (Er, 2008).

Despite the growing problem of the workplace deviant behavior, the government has instilled some of the principle in the country such as the application of Islamic values, Islam Hadhari (Islamic civilization) and Wasatiyyah (Islamic moderation) which emphasizes the importance of religiousness and Islamic work ethics in the job. In Islam, it is importance to look at the job as a devotion and ways of worship (Barhem et al., 2009; Khan et al., 2010). As such, logically the Muslim employees should not be involved in the workplace deviant behavior, based on religiosity and ethical practice of Islam which has been implanted by the government. Therefore, it is necessary to further the study of workplace deviant behavior among Muslims employees and whether religiosity and ethical values in Islam will be able to avoid and curb deviant behavior in the work force.

2.1. Workplace Deviant Behavior

According to Robinson and Bennett (1995), deviant behavior in a workplace is a voluntarily behavior that violated the important norms of the organization and by doing so, it becomes a threat to the organization or its employees as the deviant behavior affect the company's image, reduce productivity and generate dissatisfaction among employees.

This negative deviant behavior is divided into two major categories which are the interpersonal deviant behavior and organizational deviant behavior. The interpersonal deviant behavior is the deviant behavior that is directed to individuals. On the other hand, the organizational deviant behavior is a deviant behavior that directed to the organizations (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Apart from that, the workplace deviant behavior also divided into serious and minor dimension which depend on the seriousness of the act of deviant (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). According to Berry, Ones and Sackett (2007), the negative interpersonal deviant behavior is the deviant behavior by the employees which targeted other employees of the organizations such as stealing from colleague or sexually harassing a colleague, beating, gossiping and spreading rumors, degrading another employee, deceiving and back stabbing to get a promotion. As such, even a smaller deviant behavior is an unhealthy behavior towards the employees and the organizations (Chirasha & Mahapa, 2012).

On the other hand, the negative organizational deviant behavior is a deviant behavior by the employees which is targeting the organization (Berry et al., 2007), such as stealing money from the company, sabotage and vandalism of company equipment (Bodankin & Tziner, 2009). Others negative organizational deviant behaviors involving the act of going back early, resting more than allowable time, accepting bribes, deliberately working slowly, deceive the working hours, wasting resources and surfing the internet during work (Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Iqbal, Arif and Badar, 2012). Although this behavior can be viewed as small, it will affect the productivity and image of the organization.

2.2. Religiosity

Religiosity, devotion, piety and piousness are term of measurement of commitment, loyalty, obedience, a person against his religion. Delener (1994) reiterated that religiosity is the crucial value in an individual cognitive structure and these can influence the behavior of individuals. According to his study, the person with highly religious, is more conservative, more traditional and more dogmatic. On the other hand the less religious individuals tend to be less conservative, more open minded and less dogmatic. This was caused by the alignment of an individual's behavior towards their conviction in religion.

In Islam, religion plays an important role as "Ad Deen" or way of life of a Muslim (Barhem, Younies, Muhamad, 2009; Imam, Nurullah, Makol-Abdul, Rahman & M. Noon, 2009). Islam has rules, guidelines and priorities for the Muslims or the followers which originated from the Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) (Muhamad & Ghani, 2006).

Religion is the most important values for Muslims because it is the factor that influences the attitudes and behavior of a person (Barhem et al., 2009). Highly religious person will always follow or support his behavior according to the teachings of his religion. However, on the contrary, a person who is considered least religious is not interested in changing the attitude and behavior according to the teachings of his religion (Delener, 1994; Tayeb, 1997; Muhamad & Ghani, 2006; Mansori 2012)

2.3. Islamic Work Ethics

Rukhman (2010) defines the Islamic work ethic as a set of moral principles that distinguish between right and wrong according to Islamic context. According to Wan Husin (2012) Islamic work ethics is doing the job to fulfill the need of Islamic religion and doing a good deed. While Yousef (2001) defines the Islamic work ethic as orientation to work and how to work and it is derived from the Koran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w). Islamic work ethic is an important aspect in Islam; it is a guideline for each individual to decide whether their action or behavior is according to the Islamic teaching. The Islamic work ethics is based on trust and faith, seeing work as a virtue, cooperation, compromise and socialize (Mohd Zin, Mahdi, Rahman, Abdul Latif, Sulaiman, Khalid, Ahmad, Sakat. Adi Yasran & Mohd Nor, 2012).

Islamic work ethic makes the work is important to one's needs, it is necessary to ensure that there is equilibrium between individual and social life (Yousef, 2001). Islamic work ethics express work as a way to improve self-interest economically, socially and psychologically, to defend the prestige, to provide social welfare and enhance the confidence (Ali, 2009). Islamic work ethic has been misunderstood and neglected in management and organizational studies because researchers do not have ways and means to review and discuss Islamic literature review of business and organization (Ali & Owaihan, 2008).

2.4. Religious, Islamic Work Ethics and Deviant Behavior
Based on the previous research, the study on religiosity in Islam and Islamic work ethics which was published are less and limited (Sulaiman & Bhatti, 2013; Rukhman, 2010; Kumar & Che Rose, 2010). As such, not much is known about religiosity and Islamic work ethics (Sulaiman & Bhatti, 2013; Yousef, 2000; Yousef, 2001; Ali & Al-Kazemi, 2007; Rukhman, 2010).
According to Muhamad and Ghani, (2006), the religious person will always follow or support his behavior according to the teachings of his religion. In Islam, religiosity is the commitment toward the Islamic principles, empirically and theoretically to fulfill the obligation towards Allah (s.w.t.) which is by following the teaching of Islam, avoiding the negative and bad behavior and worship to Allah (s.w.t.) (Al-Goaib, 2003). However, on the contrary, a person who is considered a lowly religious is not interested in changing the attitude and behavior according to the teachings of his religion (Delener, 1994; Tayeb, 1997; Muhamad & Ghani, 2006; Mansori 2012). Previous qualitative research by Sulaiman & Bhatti (2013) indicates that there is a negative relationship between religiosity and workplace deviant behavior.
Yousef (2001) defines the work ethic in Islam is as an orientation towards work and how to work, as a noble values in human life and it is derived from the Al Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad   (s.a.w). The core concept in the Islamic work ethic is the concept of "kindness, charity and forbidding evil", namely implementing good and noble and reject what is bad and harmful. The concept of "kindness , charity and forbidding evil " is able to persuade and influence people to practice good values, ethics and honor that led to the prosperity of the individual and the organization (Abbasi et al., 2012).
The previous study on Islamic work ethic by Golpavar & Nadi (2011) disclose that Islamic work ethic has a negative relationship with workplace deviant behavior. However, a study done by Ugyur (2009) found that the Islamic work ethic does not influence behavior of an individuals, as the result of the study indicated that the behavior of an individuals was influenced by culture, morale and values in the community.
On the other hand, in the study of workplace deviant behavior, most researchers emphasizes the study of the material and financial aspects such as pay, promotion, office equipment and others without focusing on spiritual and religious matters. Most of the research paper is based on the west and focus on temporal aspects and the Protestant work ethic (Kumar & Che Rose, 2010).
As such, this study should therefore be increased and deepened to recognize and understand the concept of religiosity and Islamic work ethics. This will facilitate the management and employers in managing and maintaining workers in a predominantly Muslim Malaysia.

3. Proposed Theoretical Framework
In this preliminary study, the conceptual model of the relationship of religiosity and Islamic work ethics toward deviant behavior is illustrated in Figure 1.Model study focuses on investigating the influence of religiosity and Islamic work ethics as independent variables against workplace deviant behavior as the dependent variable.
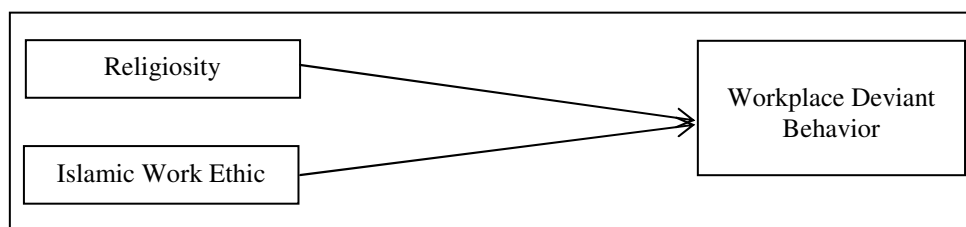

Figure 1: Proposed Theoretical Framework

Adapted from Muhamad & Devi (2006), Deleaner (1994), Abdul Khalek (2013), Golparvar and Nadi (2011), Sulaiman and Bhatti (2013)
The proposed theoretical framework in Figure 1, reveals that religiosity and Islamic work ethics have an influence towards the workplace deviant behavior (Sulaiman & Bhatti, 2013; Golparvar & Nadi, 2011). Researchers suggest that all variables are measured on a consolidated basis; this is because previously, all the variables were measured separately and there are limited studies done.

4. Conclusion
This study attempts to develop a theoretical framework for the relationship between religiosity and Islamic work ethics towards workplace deviant behavior. This study will be conducted among Muslim employees in Malaysia. Based on the preliminary findings, it can be concluded that by increasing the level of religiosity and Islamic work ethic in employment, Muslim workers in Malaysia will be able to curb and prevent the employees from doing the workplace deviant behavior.

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