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**AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF RELIGIOSITY AND MOTIVATION ON
EMPLOYEES' JOB PERFORMANCE: THE PERSPECTIVE OF INDIAN MUSLIM
(MAMAK) RESTAURANTS IN SARAWAK**

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ABSTRACT

Indian Muslim (mamak) restaurant operators faced challenges to survive due to manpower shortage which affected its service to customers. Past studies related to restaurants often focused on customer satisfaction rather than employees who are supposedly the backbone of the company, of which, less attention given on the aspect of religiosity and motivation. Thus, the study aimed to analyze the effect of religiosity and motivation on employees' job performance evidenced from mamak restaurants in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. This survey included 145 employees of Mamak restaurants and employed quantitative approach for data collection. Regression analysis was employed to analyze the instrument and test the study hypotheses during the analysis procedures. The finding revealed that both religiosity and motivation have positive effect on job performance. It could be described that being able to perform ibadah means a lot to employees and by having the management provide motivation in the form of monetary or non-monetary could further boost their work productivity. This study also recommended that this area be expanded as it has yet been undertaken from the perspective of employees. This research adds to the theoretical knowledge by offering empirical support on the factors influencing employee performance improvement as well as managerial contribution for restaurant operators to take religious and motivational initiatives for the betterment of the business. Management should consider improving employees' compensational package that reflect their contributions to the company.

Keywords: Religiosity; motivation; job performance; Indian Muslim restaurant; Sarawak

INTRODUCTION

Restaurant businesses are one of Malaysia's fastest expanding industries within the foodservice economy. Various of scenes the restaurants in cities and town in Malaysia. One of the popular restaurants in Indian ethnic is known as mamak restaurant. In addition, it expands fast over the period. The trade relation between Malaya and India are after 17th Century. Before 1786, the Indian Muslim community had opened businesses in the Kuala Kedah area. The progress chain of mamak restaurants is said over 7,500 premises in this country and said to earn RM8 billion annually, indicating its vast contribution to the country's economy (Chow et al., 2019; Mujani et al., 2012).

The popularity of mamak restaurant often being associated with its premises in the Peninsular Malaysia. Even in the Borneo states such as Sarawak also has no exception when it comes to having mamak restaurant for Sarawakians to have place to dine. Historically, Early Indian Muslim settlers in Kuching, Sarawak from the 1960s and 1970s was the only area served the people in Kuching and Indian Muslims buying and selling activities which subsequently established the first Indian Muslim restaurant (Wahid et al, 2021). Mamak restaurants throughout Malaysia has long become the favourite destinations for Malaysians to have their meals or hanging out with their friends and families. Therefore, it is imperative for this business to guarantee outstanding service delivered by waiters or employees so that the business can continue to survive. Feedbacks from customers often being used as indicators to see how well the business is doing at the time. Usually when the feedbacks are positive meaning it is a good sign for the company and vice versa.

Several studies have been undertaken by researchers specifically on how mamak restaurant fared in terms of the number of factors that would bring success to the business. For instance, food quality was found to be an important element in achieving customer satisfaction (Lim, 2017; Omar et al., 2014). Additionally, location also perceived as one of the essential factors that being considered by customers if they prefer to dine-in which is convenient to them (Ibrahim et al., 2017). Recent study has been done to identify success factors mamak restaurants via in-depth interview generated various common factors with customer loyalty being the most vital recipe for success in the long run (Othman et al., 2018). Although the business seems prosperous by attending to the customers' desires in the name of 'customers always right', lack of focus given on the importance of the role played by the workers or employees of mamak restaurants.

Government's decision to impose the movement control order (MCO) has affected the entire economic sector especially the food and beverage sector (F&B) with the ban of foreign workers has changed the game for food purveyors to survive. While things are getting better nowadays, F&B outlets has opened for dine-in customers, but they were not able to recapture their sales collections during pre-pandemic. Even though the business remained open, the number of orders kept increasing as the mode for delivery also became popular among customers (Poo, 2022). With foreign workers being laid off, the responsibility falls into the shoulder of local workers to entertain orders and service to customers.

The employees are currently facing heavy workloads due to shortage of staffs which were reduced by the management, a spill-over effect of the pandemic but also with extra duties involving standard operating procedure (SOP) compliances (Farhush, 2021). This would result to burnout where employees were not able to perform in their jobs which subsequently their services to customers. To boost their confidence, they need some sort of motivation for them to carry on with their job of which the management should care about. Few recent studies have highlighted the contribution of motivation on performance (Ghaffari et al., 2017; Kamaruddin et al., 2017; Omar et al., 2021). From the Islamic point of view, a business would be successful if it follows the teaching of Islam, in which the Muslim workers

are allowed to perform their religious duty such as prayer to earn barakah in their daily job. Previous studies have recorded the positive effect of religiosity on performance (Ramlee et al., 2016; Wijayanti & Nurhayati, 2021; Zahrah et al., 2016).

From the above discussions, the objective of this study is to examine the relationship between religiosity and motivation on employees' job performance. The following sections are literature review, methodology, data analysis and results, discussions of findings, and the study's implications make up the rest of the work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study used two main underlying theories in supporting the predictors of job performance. Firstly, the religiosity theory was grounded by the idea of spiritual appreciation in carrying out Allah's commands and avoids His prohibitions which include all fardh practices, sunnah, and good deeds. It purposely to gain positive effects on Muslims' soul and character (Al-Muḥasibī, 2003; Al-Jawziyyah, Ibn Qayyim, 2001). Consequently, by practicing religiosity it would boost the confidence of Muslims in performing ibadah, in the form of doing their daily tasks (Ibrahim et al., 2020). Secondly, this study used the goal-setting Theory by Locke and Latham (1990) to underpin the motivation factor that would influence job performance. They asserted that goals could motivate people to bring up strategies to perform the required goals level. Then, after finishing the goals will lead towards satisfaction and bring up further motivation, or frustration if goals in not completed. According to DuBrin (2012), managers widely accepted this theory as a measuring tool to improve and sustain performance. As a result, the study's purpose was to determine how religiosity and motivation affect performance of Indian Muslim restaurants.

Religiosity

Religiosity can be defined as a religious lifestyle or manner of life which can be referred to as Addin in Islam, or manner of life and living religiously or appreciating religious beliefs and rituals, both of which have a significant impact on behaviour and personality (Ibrahim et al., 2020). Past studies have used various samples to examine the effectiveness of religiosity, including 150 administration staffs of Islamic higher education institutions in Malaysia (Zahrah et al., 2016), 320 employees of Malaysian public universities (Ramlee et al., 2016), and 111 employees of Bank Syariah Indonesia (Wijayanti & Nurhayati, 2021). These studies found that religiosity practices had been important determinants of employee performance (Wijayanti & Nurhayati, 2021), organizational behaviour (Ramlee et al., 2016), and job performance (Zahrah et al., 2016). Whilst the importance of religiosity was evident, it has not been investigated to what extent it would affect employee performance of mamak restaurants. The preceding development leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: Religiosity has a positive relationship on employee performance.

Motivation

Motivation is defined as a person's intensity, focus, and tenacity in pursuing a specific goal. It exemplifies an individual's willingness to take risks to achieve a specific goal, whereas direction is the channel for intensity toward the correct objective, and persistence is the duration someone maintains an effort to achieve a specific goal (Fuller et al., 2008). Previous studies were done to investigate the role of motivation based on different samples like 103 non-academic staffs grade N17 of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (Ghaffari et al., 2017), 218 female employees of several economic sectors of Malaysia, namely manufacturing, education, hospitality, and health (Kamaruddin et al., 2017), and 108 academic staffs of Polytechnics in Malaysia (Omar et al., 2021). The findings reported that motivation

is a significant predictor of employees' performance (Ghaffari et al., 2017; Kamaruddin et al., 2017; Omar et al., 2021). While motivation has been widely studied in various organizational contexts, the servicing sector such as restaurants particularly mamak are yet to be tested since its focus mostly on customer satisfaction (Ibrahim et al., 2017; Lim, 2017; Omar et al., 2014), which overlooked the importance of motivation of employees that would also integral to the success of the business. Hence, the hypothesis can be conjectured as:

H2: Motivation has a positive relationship on employee performance.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the above literature served as the foundation for developing a research framework for this study.

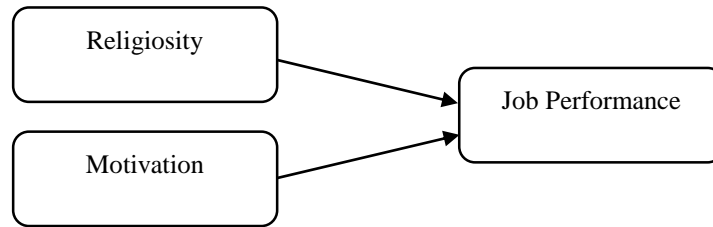


Figure 1. *Research Framework*

METHODOLOGY

The research design of this study was a quantitative approach of cross-sectional with questionnaire as the primary data collection tool in this approach. The participants in this study were from twenty Indian Muslims restaurant workers located in Kuching area of Sarawak. For data collection, the snowball sampling technique was used, also known as chain referral sampling. The questionnaire was distributed using the online medium due to pandemic restrictions in meeting the respondents face-to-face. The researcher used Google Forms and WhatsApp application to spread the links via the restaurants' supervisor and forwarded from one employee to another. Only 145 useable survey questionnaires were returned to the researchers out of 300 distributed to mamak restaurant workers, resulting in a 48.3 percent response rate.

The questionnaire was constructed by adapting the scales from other studies. Section A, Section B, Section C, and Section D were divided into three sections. Section A detailed the respondents' demographic details, including their gender, age, ethnicity, and duration of employment. Section B outlined religiosity, which is comprised of five items drawn from (Amin, 2011). Section C outlined the motivation which consists of five items drawn from (Barrick et al., 2002). Section D outlined the job performance which consists of eight items drawn from (Koopmans et al., 2013). All these items ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree" were rated on a 5-point scale.

For data analysis, this study utilized the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26.0 to evaluate the descriptive and inferential data generated from the respondents. Prior to hypotheses testing, this study assessed the demographic statistics of the respondents, then followed by the normality and reliability test. Next, the linkages between the independent variables and dependent variable were further tested using correlation coefficient (r) analysis and descriptive statistics. Finally, a multiple regression analysis was used to determine the variance of predicting variables as well as the target variable (Foster

et al., 1998; Berenson and Levine, 1992; Aiken et al., 1991). This procedure would include the evaluations of R2, model's analysis of variance, and coefficients for hypotheses testing.

RESULTS

Table 1 illustrates that most employees were men (91 percent) between the ages of 31 and 35 (42.8 percent), and that Indians made up the majority of the participants. (75.2 percent) and followed by non-Malaysians of Bangladesh workers (9.7 percent). Half of the employees were currently in their job for the duration between 1 to 3 years.

Table 1
Summary of demographic statistics (N = 145)

Demographic	Sub-Profile	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	132	91.0
	Female	13	9.0
Age	Below 25 years	11	7.6
	26 – 30 years	24	16.6
	31 – 35 years	62	42.8
	36 – 40 years	46	31.7
	Above 40 years	2	1.4
Ethnicity	Malay	11	7.6
	Indian	109	75.2
	Chinese	1	0.7
	Bangladesh	14	9.7
	Pakistan	10	6.9
	Others	–	–
Work Duration	Below 1 year	20	13.8
	1 – 3 years	76	52.4
	Above 3 years	49	33.8

The normality test was conducted on all variables to identify the distribution of the data prior to the next course of analysis. The outcome of the distribution would determine the next course of analysis accordingly. Hence, skewness and kurtosis were used to assess the level of normality for each variable. The results showed that religiosity, motivation, and job performance are normally distributed as the normality values were within the range of -1.96 to +1.96 (Hair et al., 2010). For the reliability test, the Cronbach's Alpha acceptable values of 0.70 for all variables have been exceeded according to Nunally and Bernstein (1994). These analyses verified that the variables used in this study fulfilled the normality and reliability standards. Table 2 displays the results of these analyses.

Table 2
Normality test and Cronbach's Alpha reliability test

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
Religiosity	-0.060	-0.503	0.795
Motivation	-0.440	-0.015	0.801
Job Performance	-0.474	-0.219	0.816

The results of descriptive and correlation coefficient analysis as presented in Table 3 shows that the variables' mean values range from 4.23 to 4.37, denoting that religion, motivation, and job performance levels ranging from high (4) to highest (5). The output of Pearson correlation coefficients were less than 0.90. It means that there was no severe collinearity problem with the data (Hair et al., 1998). Thus, this confirms the significant correlations between the religiosity, motivation, and job performance. Furthermore, the strength of the correlations between the variables demonstrating a strong positive correlations (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). At this point, motivation showed a strong correlation with job performance.

Table 3
Correlation coefficients and descriptive analysis

Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Correlation (r)		
			1	2	3
Religiosity	4.23	0.436	1		
Motivation	4.37	0.419	0.486**	1	
Job Performance	4.34	0.372	0.532**	0.603**	1

Note: significant at ** $p < .01$

The hypotheses testing was undertaken using multiple regression analysis according to its respective order. It was carried out in order to predict the relationship and impact of religiosity, motivation, and job performance. The adjusted R^2 , which indicates the amount of the variance in job performance explained by religion and motivation, is shown in Table 4. Adjusted R^2 value is 0.431 which indicates that the religiosity and motivation accounts for 43.1 percent of the variance in job performance.

Table 4
Coefficient of determination (R^2)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.662 ^a	0.439	0.431	0.281

a. Predictors: (Constant), religiosity and motivation.

Table 5 displays the F-test value (55.488, $p < .001$), signified that the model fits the data well. The p -value indicates that this model is significant.

Table 5
Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

Results of ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.745	2	4.373	55.488	.000 ^b
	Residual	11.190	142	0.079		
	Total	19.935	144			

a. Dependent variable: Job performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), religiosity and motivation.

The result of regression analysis shows that both religiosity ($t = 4.352, p < .001$) and motivation ($t = 6.270, p < .001$) have significant relationship towards job performance as shown in Table 6. Therefore, the equation for the model can be expressed as:

$$\text{Job Performance} = 1.459 + 0.267(\text{Religiosity}) + 0.401(\text{Motivation})$$

Table 6
Results of hypothesis testing – Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.459	0.275		5.311	.000
	Religiosity	0.267	0.061	0.313	4.352	.000
	Motivation	0.401	0.064	0.451	6.270	.000

a. Dependent variable: Job performance

When the other variables remained constant, the equation shows that if religiosity varies by one unit, job performance changes by 0.267 units. Both religiosity and motivational have positive coefficients, which indicates the direct relationship towards job performance of mamak restaurant workers.

The Beta value (β) shows the effect of religiosity and motivation on job performance. It may be deduced that motivation ($\beta = 0.451$) has the most impact on job performance, followed by religiosity ($\beta = .313$) in the Indian Muslim (mamak) restaurants. Last but not least, it can be inferred that religiosity and motivation have a significant impact on job performance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Mamak operators had been struggling to operate not only due pandemic restrictions, but also the manpower shortage as a result of the restriction for foreign workers to work in Malaysia. Operators are facing issues where local workers were no longer willing to commit their job because of burnout and overwork. This study asserted that factors like religiosity and motivation would at least ease out their frustrations and at the same time performing the job. The findings of this study lend credence to the study's model depicted in Figure 1 as well as the assumptions of directional connection. The model's in-sample variance had an adjusted R^2 of 43.1% for employee performance, indicating the religiosity and motivation contributed moderately to the dependent variable. The combined effect of predictors show consistency to a study by Lim (2017) in the same research setting of mamak restaurants.

Referring to specific hypothesis of the study, the findings confirmed that religiosity is significantly related to employee performance and previous studies has found similar results conducted by Ramlee et al. (2016), Wijayanti and Nurhayati (2021), and Zahrah et al. (2016). This outcome revealed that employees would appreciate if their employer considered providing some room for them to perform their religious rituals as it could boost their self-fulfillment. Employers should look at this as a silver lining for their business because in Islam, when it puts Allah SWT above personal gain, *insyaAllah* the business will get *barakah* and prosperous. The following hypothesis, the findings revealed that motivation is significantly related to employee performance and these findings are consistent with earlier investigations by Ghaffari et al. (2017), Kamaruddin et al. (2017) and Omar et al. (2021). The outcome shows that employees indeed need a good motivation for them to continue serving the company even

they are being overworked. With the right motivation initiatives from the management somehow it could retain them rather than losing it and consequently affecting the business.

This research offers two important contributions: academic contribution and managerial contribution. The study's outcomes highlight two key academic contributions: firstly, religiosity and motivation have been an important predictors of employee performance in the studied sector of business. These findings further validate the use of religiosity theory (Al-Muḥasibī, 2003; Al-Jawziyyah, Ibn Qayyim, 2001) and the goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990). Secondly, both religiosity and motivation add to the empirical literature of studies related to context of Indian Muslim restaurants by observing the perspective of the employees itself. Previously, it was merely focusing on the customer satisfaction which perceived as the benchmark for success. The findings provide clear evidence that employee performance could be enhanced tremendously by demonstrating good religiosity practices on daily basis and keep themselves motivated in doing their responsibility.

In managerial context, the results of this study shed light on some important factors led to the performance of mamak workers. It was shown that religiosity and motivation have a vital role, particularly for employees, in dealing with their daily routine. With the increasing tasks following the SOP compliances set by the government, employer or management should relax its work schedule to allow workers to fulfill their religious obligations. From the study's findings, motivation has the strongest influence on employees, which means, with the ever-changing working environment management should appreciate its employees by giving them incentives such as increment pay, bonuses etc. This often serve as an effective measure to keep them more productive and subsequently provide excellent service to customers.

This study two main limitations that provide the impetus for further research in this field of investigation. First, this research is cross sectional and measures the employee performance at one point in time that may be less generalizable as compared with longitudinal study. Secondly, the scope of this study is focusing on the premises of Kuching, Sarawak in which the generalization issues would arise as the environment might be different to Peninsular Malaysia. Therefore, future research may consider the element of culture to be investigated whether it could moderately affect the employee performance.

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