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The role of religiosity in ethical decision-making:

A study on Islam and the Malaysian workplace

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Abstract

In light of the ongoing debate on the relationship between religiosity and ethical decision-making, this thesis seeks to investigate this relationship in the Malaysian workforce environment. This investigation focuses on the Islamic religion, and considers how religiosity affects the articulation and feelings of frontline employees in ways that lead to ethical decisions. To this end, five factors were tested empirically to determine their mediation of the relationship between religiosity and ethical decision-making. These factors were: perceived importance of the ethical issue, moral judgment, ego strength, intention, and conscience.

A quantitative research study was undertaken to test eleven hypotheses developed in the thesis. With 160 responses, the initial analysis was an exploratory factor analysis, which was conducted to see how the measures might group into constructs. This analysis was followed by a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the previous analysis, and to reduce items in the scale, as well as to test validity and reliability of the scales. The final scales were subsequently used for hypotheses-testing using hierarchical regression analysis. The control variables in this study were perceived ethical environment and social desirability responding bias.

The findings of this thesis indicated positive relationships between religiosity and perceived importance of ethical issues, moral judgment, intention, and conscience. However, among these, only conscience mediates the relationship between religiosity and ethical decision-making. The thesis gives insights to the perspective of the Islamic religion, especially for Muslims in Malaysia, while contributing to the ongoing discussion in the literature on the relationship between religiosity and ethical decision-making. The

highlight in the conscience results inspires employers to hold educational talks to empower employees in terms of Islamic knowledge, on how to navigate the challenging working place. Additionally, there are benefits in using elements such as posters and calls to prayer to remind employees of religious values.

The research serves as a good basis for new investigations to explore other personal attributes that mediate the relationship between religiosity and ethical decision-making. Analysing this relationship can assist employers in developing ethical human resources in the organisation. These efforts will not only benefit the organisations, but will contribute to the betterment of society as a whole.

List of publications

1. Sulaiman, R., Toulson, P., Brougham, D., & Lempp, F. (2016). *The role of religiosity in ethical decision-making at the workplace: Focus on Islam*. Paper presented at the Asia International Conference (AIC), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
2. Sulaiman, R., Toulson, P., Brougham, D., & Lempp, F. (2017). The role of religiosity in ethical decision-making at the workplace: Focus on Islam. *Advanced Science Letters*, 23(9), 8335-8340. <https://doi.org/10.31166/asl.2017.9888>
3. Sulaiman, R., Toulson, P., Brougham, D., & Lempp, F. (2017). *Ethical decision-making at the workplace: The study of intrapersonal conflict and religiosity*. Paper presented at the 7th Annual Australasian Business Ethics Network (ABEN) Conference, Melbourne, Australia.
4. Sulaiman, R., Toulson, P., Brougham, D., & Lempp, F. (2018). The relationship between religiosity and ethical decision-making: Some observations. Paper presented at the 7th Organisational Psychology and Organisational Behaviour (OPOB) Conference, Auckland, New Zealand.
5. Sulaiman, R., Toulson, P., Brougham, D., & Lempp, F. (2018). Measuring and validating the spiritual intention scale. Paper presented at the 32nd Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM), Auckland, New Zealand.

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Table of contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| ABSTRACT | III |
| LIST OF PUBLICATIONS | V |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | VI |
| CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1. Background of the study..... | 1 |
| 1.2. Research objectives | 6 |
| 1.3. Significance of the study | 6 |
| 1.4. Overview of thesis structure..... | 8 |
| CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW | 10 |
| 2.1. Introduction..... | 10 |
| 2.2. Defining ethical behaviour | 10 |
| 2.3. Ethical decision-making process theories | 14 |
| 2.3.1. Cognitive ethical decision-making models | 15 |
| 2.3.2. Ethical decision-making is more than cognitive processes | 20 |
| 2.4. Religiosity and ethical decision-making..... | 30 |
| 2.4.1. Religion, religiosity, and spirituality | 30 |
| 2.4.2. The role of religiosity for adherents | 34 |
| 2.4.3. The role of religiosity in ethical decision-making..... | 35 |
| 2.5. The religion of Islam | 42 |
| 2.5.1. Theory adoption and justification..... | 43 |
| 2.5.2. The Islamic worldview | 44 |
| 2.5.3. The Islamic ethical system | 49 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 2.6. Individual decision-making – multifaceted perspectives..... | 56 |
| 2.6.1. Individual decision-making in the field of psychology..... | 56 |
| 2.6.2. Individual decision-making in the field of economics..... | 61 |
| 2.6.3. Individual decision-making in the field of management..... | 64 |
| 2.7. Unethical behaviour | 67 |
| 2.8. Context of the study: Malaysia | 72 |
| 2.8.1. Analysis of the country and the practice of Islam in Malaysia | 75 |
| 2.8.2. The management environment | 82 |
| 2.9. Summary | 84 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND THEORETICAL MODEL..... | 85 |
| 3.1. Introduction | 85 |
| 3.2. Theoretical framework | 85 |
| 3.3. The relationship between religiosity and ethical decision-making..... | 86 |
| 3.4. Influence of moderating effects..... | 88 |
| 3.4.1. Perceived importance of ethical issue (PIE)..... | 89 |
| 3.4.2. Moral judgment | 92 |
| 3.4.3. Ego strength..... | 95 |
| 3.4.4. Intention..... | 99 |
| 3.4.5. Conscience..... | 102 |
| 3.5. Summary | 106 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH METHOD..... | 107 |
| 4.1. Introduction | 107 |
| 4.2. Philosophical stance | 108 |
| 4.3. The thesis’s approach and justification of research | 112 |
| 4.4. Research ethics | 114 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 4.5. Questionnaire design..... | 115 |
| 4.5.1. Overview of the research instrument..... | 115 |
| 4.5.2. Translation of the questionnaire | 117 |
| 4.5.3. Pre-testing the questionnaire | 118 |
| 4.6. Sampling design..... | 119 |
| 4.7. Data collection procedures | 121 |
| 4.7.1. Phase 1 September 2016 (in New Zealand) | 122 |
| 4.7.2. Phase 2 - October – December 2016 (in Malaysia)..... | 122 |
| 4.7.3. Phase 3 - January – March 2017 (in New Zealand) | 124 |
| 4.8. Measurement of variables | 125 |
| 4.8.1. Dependent variable: Ethical intention | 125 |
| 4.8.2. Independent variables..... | 125 |
| 4.8.3. Control variables | 147 |
| 4.8.4. Summary of constructs and measurement..... | 155 |
| 4.9. Data preparation method | 158 |
| 4.9.1. Dealing with missing data | 158 |
| 4.9.2. Outliers | 160 |
| 4.9.3. Multivariate assumptions | 160 |
| 4.9.4. Scale validity | 162 |
| 4.9.5. Scale reliability..... | 168 |
| 4.10. Method of analysis | 169 |
| 4.11. Summary..... | 172 |
| CHAPTER 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS | 174 |
| 5.1. Introduction..... | 174 |
| 5.2. Results of pilot study..... | 174 |
| 5.3. Data profile | 175 |
| 5.3.1. Sample size..... | 176 |
| 5.3.2. Respondent characteristics | 176 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 5.4. Data preparation | 179 |
| 5.4.1. Data screening | 179 |
| 5.4.2. Factor analyses | 184 |
| 5.4.3. Results of validity and reliability tests | 201 |
| 5.5. Relationship testing..... | 205 |
| 5.5.1. Hypotheses related to Research Objective (1): Effects of Islamic religiosity on individual factors | 206 |
| 5.5.2. Hypotheses related to Research Objective (2): The mediation effects of individual factors | 212 |
| 5.6. Thematic analysis | 220 |
| 5.7. Summary | 223 |
| CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION..... | 225 |
| 6.1. Introduction | 225 |
| 6.2. Research objective (1): The effect of Islamic religiosity on individual factors | 225 |
| 6.2.1. The religiosity scales used in this study | 226 |
| 6.2.2. Islamic religiosity and perceived importance of ethical issue (PIE) | 230 |
| 6.2.3. Islamic religiosity and moral judgment | 230 |
| 6.2.4. Islamic religiosity and ego strength..... | 231 |
| 6.2.5. Islamic religiosity and intention | 233 |
| 6.2.6. Islamic religiosity and conscience..... | 236 |
| 6.3. Research objective (2): The link of Islamic religiosity, individual factors and ethical decision-making | 239 |
| 6.3.1. Islamic religiosity and ethical intention | 240 |
| 6.3.2. Individual factors as mediators..... | 241 |
| 6.4. The effects of control variables | 245 |
| 6.5. The discussion on thematic analysis | 246 |
| 6.5.1. The first open-ended question | 246 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 6.5.2. The second open-ended question | 250 |
| 6.6. Theoretical contributions | 253 |
| 6.7. Practical implications | 254 |
| 6.8. Research limitations..... | 257 |
| 6.8.1. Limitations in sampling..... | 258 |
| 6.8.2. Methodological limitations..... | 258 |
| 6.8.3. Limitations relating to generalisability..... | 260 |
| 6.9. Directions for future research..... | 261 |
| CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION..... | 264 |
| 7.1 Conclusions about the theoretical model and research questions | 265 |
| 7.2 Conclusions about the religiosity scales | 268 |
| 7.3 Conclusions with regards to the context of the study | 269 |
| 7.4 Generalising the findings of the thesis | 271 |
| REFERENCES..... | 273 |
| APPENDICES | 316 |
| Appendix A: Islamic epistemology and ontology | 317 |
| Appendix B: Ethics Low Risk Notification..... | 321 |
| Appendix C: Information sheet (English and Malay translation)..... | 322 |
| Appendix D: The questionnaire (hardcopy survey) | 328 |
| Appendix E: The questionnaire (online survey)..... | 359 |
| Appendix F: Changes made on the questionnaire based on the feedback received from pre-testing stage. | 379 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Appendix G: Normality checking of constructs | 381 |
| Appendix H: Results of exploratory factor analyses | 382 |
| Appendix I: Results of confirmatory factor analyses | 387 |
| Appendix J: Bootstrapping results | 393 |

List of tables

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 2-1. The terms for the two systems used by theorists and the properties of dual-process theories of reasoning (Source: Stanovich and West, 2000, p. 659) | 28 |
| Table 3-1 List of variables investigated in this thesis..... | 106 |
| Table 4-1 Types of Corporations participated | 123 |
| Table 4-2 Comparison between Cornwall et al.'s (1986) definition of religiosity and the IR scale..... | 131 |
| Table 4-3 Ethical vignettes used to measure PIE and moral judgment | 135 |
| Table 4-4 Comparison between the Intention scale used in this study and the Islamic literature on intention. | 143 |
| Table 4-5 Some short-form attempts for Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) | 153 |
| Table 4-6 Summary of measurement design..... | 155 |
| Table 5-1 The reliability of scales (the pilot study) | 175 |
| Table 5-2 Summary of data collected | 175 |
| Table 5-3 Demographic characteristics of respondents | 178 |
| Table 5-4 The mean and standard deviation ($N=160$)..... | 180 |
| Table 5-5 Value of inflation factor (prior to factor analyses) | 183 |
| Table 5-6 Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of vignettes | 183 |
| Table 5-7 Pearson correlation (prior to factor analyses)..... | 184 |
| Table 5-8 PIE and moral judgment – variance explained..... | 186 |
| Table 5-9 Outstanding modification indices of the items in the IR scale | 189 |
| Table 5-10 Outstanding modification indices of IR (second check) | 192 |
| Table 5-11 The outstanding modification indices of the items in HR scale | 193 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 5-12 Items with high modification indices (MI) - Intention..... | 199 |
| Table 5-13 Average-variance extracted (AVE) | 202 |
| Table 5-14 Pearson correlation of refined scales (after confirmatory factor analyses) | 203 |
| Table 5-15 Correlations squared for all variables | 203 |
| Table 5-16 Scale reliability after confirmatory factor analyses have been conducted. | 204 |
| Table 5-17 Reliability analysis – Moral judgment..... | 205 |
| Table 5-18 Regression models with controls for vignettes (IR scale) | 208 |
| Table 5-19 Regression models with controls for vignettes (HR scale)..... | 209 |
| Table 5-20 Relationship between religiosity scales and mediating variables (vignettes: PIE and moral judgment). | 210 |
| Table 5-21 Regressing ego strength, intention, and conscience against Islamic religiosity scale..... | 211 |
| Table 5-22 Regressing ego strength, intention, and conscience against Hoge's religiosity scale..... | 211 |
| Table 5-23 Hierarchical regression analysis for predicting ethical intention using the IR scale..... | 213 |
| Table 5-24 Hierarchical regression analysis for predicting ethical intention using HR scale..... | 214 |
| Table 5-25 Regressing ethical intention against PIE and moral judgment (vignettes) . | 215 |
| Table 5-26 Summary of mediation analysis for PIE and moral judgment (IR scale)... | 216 |
| Table 5-27 Summary of mediation analysis for PIE and moral judgment (HR scale) . | 217 |
| Table 5-28 Regressing ethical intention against ego strength, intention, and conscience. | 218 |
| Table 5-29 Summary of mediation analysis for ego strength, intention, and conscience (IR scale)..... | 219 |

Table 5-30 Summary of mediation analysis for ego strength, intention, and conscience (HR scale) 219

Table 5-31 Themes and sub-themes for the first open-ended question. 221

Table 5-32 Themes and sub-themes for the second open-ended question..... 222

Table 5-33 Summary of hypotheses testing 224

List of figures

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 2-1 Total motivation model for Muslim employees (Source: Ather et al., 2011) | 48 |
| Figure 3-1 Theoretical framework for the study for the effect of Islamic religiosity in ethical decision-making. | 86 |
| Figure 3-2 Diagram that illustrates the relationship testing for <i>H1</i> | 88 |
| Figure 3-3 Diagram that illustrates the relationship testing for <i>H2a</i> | 90 |
| Figure 3-4 Diagram that illustrates the relationship testing for <i>H2b</i> | 91 |
| Figure 3-5 Diagram that illustrates the relationship testing for <i>H3a</i> | 94 |
| Figure 3-6 Diagram that illustrates the relationship testing for <i>H3b</i> | 94 |
| Figure 3-7 Diagram that illustrates the relationship testing for <i>H4a</i> | 97 |
| Figure 3-8 Diagram that illustrates the relationship testing for <i>H4b</i> | 99 |
| Figure 3-9 Diagram that illustrates the relationship testing for <i>H5a</i> | 100 |
| Figure 3-10 Diagram that illustrates the relationship testing for <i>H5b</i> | 102 |
| Figure 3-11 Diagram that illustrates the relationship testing for <i>H6a</i> | 103 |
| Figure 3-12 Diagram that illustrates the relationship testing for <i>H6b</i> | 106 |
| Figure 5-1 Summary of missing data analysis | 179 |
| Figure 5-2 Normal P-P plot of regression standardised residual. | 181 |
| Figure 5-3 Scatterplot of standardised residual..... | 182 |
| Figure 5-4 Histogram showing the distribution of data | 182 |
| Figure 5-5 Single-factor solution for Intention scale based on results of exploratory factor analysis..... | 198 |
| Figure 5-6 Diagram that corresponds with Research Objective (1)..... | 206 |
| Figure 5-7 Diagram that corresponds with Research Objective (2)..... | 212 |

List of abbreviations

HR - Hoge's religiosity

HRM - Human resource management

IR - Islamic religiosity

MI - Modification indices

PIE - Perceived importance of ethical issue

SDB - Social desirability bias