



***INFLUENCE OF MORAL INTENSITY, ATTITUDE AND RELIGIOSITY
TOWARDS ETHICAL AWARENESS, JUDGEMENT AND INTENTION
AMONG HOTEL MANAGERS IN MALAYSIA***

CHAN LING MENG

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By

CHAN LING MENG

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti
Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

April 2019

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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TOWARDS ETHICAL AWARENESS, JUDGMENT AND INTENTION AMONG
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CHAN LING MENG

April 2019

Chair : Nor Wahiza Abd. Wahat, PhD
Faculty : Educational Studies

Given the high rise of unethical conduct at workplace, there is a need to understand the nature of hotel first line managers' ethical decision intention for both academics and organizational setting. In particular, researchers try to identify the factors that encourage / prohibit them to reason and behave ethically in order to derive a prescriptive guidance that can enhance the process, while practicing managers hope to develop policies and programs that strengthened employees' ethical resolve on the job.

Past studies mainly focused on the ethics behavioral theories by component/s, hence there is a need for researcher to identify how the ethical decisions making process is work with the influences of the selected variables. In this study, an integrated model developed from the theories of Positive Theory of Marketing Ethics, and Bratman' Belief–Desire–Intention model to explain the research framework. Furthermore, based on this integrated model, the ethical decision intention component (ethical awareness, ethical judgment and ethical intention) are examined how their relationship towards each other, especially for ethical awareness.

Researcher has employed survey based approach to meet the study's objectives and self administrated questionnaires were used to gather data from 300 first line managers who work in 4 and 5-star hotels in Malaysia respectively. This survey consists of three different sections: 1) two fictitious ethical scenarios from Stevens (2001) to measure how respondents make their ethical decision intention with the influences of moral intensity; 2) instrumentation measurement for the variables of attitude and religious; and 3) demographic profile of respondents. The research hypothesis were examined through the use of quantitative statistical tests, which it employed SPSS

version 25 and Smart-PLS version 3.0 software package to analyze the collected data.

From the findings, moral intensity, attitude and religiosity explained nearly half of variance (46.80%) of ethical awareness, while moral intensity and ethical awareness explained majority of variance (65.70%) of ethical judgment. Besides that, ethical judgment explained 60.10% of ethical intention of managers when they engaging the decision making process. In addition, moral intensity is the strongest predictor in influencing managers' decision making process when encounter ethical dilemma. This indicated that the importance of moral issues can encourage managers to have better sensitivity, higher evaluation and more ethical intention to act ethically right when encounter moral dilemma. Subsequently, if the moral issue is less importance, manager may perceive it and engage less ethically right when making decision. There is a relationship between the components of ethical decision making process, where ethical awareness and ethical judgment are playing the mediating role in enhancing individuals to make ethically right decision. This has not been done by the past studies, as most researchers only focused on assessing individual components with environmental factors.

These significance findings make a unique contribution towards the development of moral theories, as researchers will not perceived them as individual but a comprehensive process to aware, evaluate and intend to act morally right. Through the findings of this study, it urges organizations to emphasize the importance of the ethical dilemma in their professional education at both the initial stage and through ongoing professional development. In the indicative content of the syllabi, there is only glancing recognition of ethics and professionalism, and occasionally reference to principles of equity, fairness, fundamental rights and obligations. As much as ethical discussion needs to be mainstreamed as a legitimate part of branch and national professional discourse, the foundation for this must be laid through the professional qualification scheme. As the conclusion of the research study, the findings suggested that the influences of attitude, religiosity and moral intensity are playing an important role in influencing how managers engage in their decision making process when encounter ethical dilemma.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PENGARUH INTENSITI MORAL, SIKAP DAN KEAGAMAAN TERHADAP
KESEDARAN, PENGHAKIMAN, DAN NIAT ETIKA DI KALANGAN
PENGURUS HOTEL MALAYSIA**

Oleh

CHAN LING MENG

April 2019

Pengerusi : Nor Wahiza Abd. Wahat, PhD
Fakulti : Pengajian Pendidikan

Lambakan pengendalian kes secara tidak beretika bagi proses pembuatan keputusan dalam kalangan pengurus barisan pertama industri hotel di Malaysia perlu diberikan perhatian oleh ahli akademik dan pihak pengurusan hotel. Hal ini demikian kerana adalah penting untuk kesemua pihak memahami ciri-ciri yang mempengaruhi keputusan beretika dalam kalangan pengurus barisan pertama industri hotel itu dilaksanakan. Menyedari hakikat ini, kajian ini dilaksanakan bagi mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi seseorang pengurus barisan pertama industri hotel membuat justifikasi dan bertindak secara beretika. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga memberikan pertimbangan terhadap usaha yang dilakukan oleh pihak hotel dalam mewujudkan program yang dapat menjaga kebajikan dan memperkuatkan resolusi etika pekerja atau staf hotel.

Sorotan kajian terdahulu menunjukkan bahawa teori tingkah laku etika hanya memberikan perhatian pada komponen membuat keputusan beretika, justeru adalah signifikan kepada pengkaji untuk meneliti bagaimana proses membuat keputusan etika berfungsi dengan pengaruh pembolehubah yang dipilih. Bagi tujuan ini, kajian ini menggunakan model bersepadu yang dibina berdasarkan kepada Teori Pemasaran Positif dan model Ethical Decision Making menerangkan rangka kerja penyelidikan. Komponen membuat keputusan etika berdasarkan model bersepadu yang diteliti dalam kajian ini terdiri daripada kesedaran etika, penghakiman etika dan niat etika. Dapatan kajian lalu menunjukkan bahawa individual yang mempunyai kepekaan yang lebih tinggi terhadap dilemma beretika, dia mungkin akan meningkatkan pemikiran penilaian ke arah tindakan yang lebih beretika.

Penyelidik telah menggunakan pendekatan kajian berdasarkan objektif kajian ini. Penyelidik menggunakan soal selidik untuk mengumpul data daripada 300 pengurus baris pertama yang bekerja di hotel yang bertaraf 4 dan 5 bintang di Malaysia. Soal selidik yang disediakan mengandungi tiga bahagian: bahagian I adalah dua senario etika rekaan dari Stevens (2001) untuk mengukur bagaimana responden membuat keputusan hasrat etika mereka dengan pengaruh intensiti moral; bahagian II adalah pengukuran untuk sikap dan sentimen agama; dan; bahagian III adalah profil demografi respondent. Hipotesis kajian ini diuji dengan menggunakan ujian statistik kuantitatif SPSS versi 25 dan Smart PLS versi 3.0 pakej untuk menganalisis data yang dikumpul.

Dalam kajian ini, soalan kaji selidik telah dibina oleh pengkaji untuk mengumpulkan data daripada 300 pengurus baris pertama yang bekerja di hotel yang bertaraf 4 dan 5 bintang di Malaysia. Penemuan kajian mendapati bahawa bagi sikap, sentimen agama dan intensiti moral, diwakili oleh hampir separuh dari varians iaitu 46.80% manakala kesedaran etika dan intensitas moral telah menerangkan sebanyak 65.70% variansi penghakiman etika. Selain itu, penghakiman etika menerangkan sebanyak 60.10% variansi niat etika. Selanjutnya, dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa intensiti moral adalah peramal yang paling kuat dalam mempengaruhi proses membuat keputusan pengurus apabila menghadapi dilema etika. Di samping itu, intensiti moral adalah peramal yang paling kuat dalam mempengaruhi proses membuat keputusan pengurus apabila menghadapi dilema etika. Ini menunjukkan bahawa kepentingan isu-isu moral dapat mendorong para pengurus untuk memiliki kepekaan yang lebih baik, penilaian yang lebih tinggi dan niat beretika untuk bertindak secara etika apabila menghadapi dilema moral. Selepas itu, jika isu moral kurang penting, pengurus mungkin menganggapnya dan melibatkan diri secara kurang tepat secara etika apabila membuat keputusan.

Terdapat hubungan antara komponen proses membuat keputusan etika, di mana kesedaran etika dan penghakiman etika memainkan peranan sebagai pengantara dalam menggalakkan individu untuk membuat keputusan yang betul secara moral. Ini tidak dilakukan oleh kajian lepas, kerana kebanyakan penyelidik hanya menumpukan pada menilai komponen individu dengan faktor persekitaran sahaja. Penemuan penting ini membuat sumbangan yang unik terhadap perkembangan teori moral, kerana para penyelidik tidak akan menganggapnya sebagai individu tetapi proses komprehensif untuk mengetahui, menilai dan berniat untuk bertindak secara beretika. Penemuan ini juga mempunyai implikasi untuk amalan industri hotel, pengurus mereka, pekerja mereka serta jabatan Pembangunan Sumber Manusia. Kesimpulannya, penemuan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pengaruh sikap, sentimen agama dan intensiti moral memainkan peranan penting dalam mempengaruhi bagaimana pengurus terlibat dalam proses membuat keputusan mereka ketika menghadapi dilema etika.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Nor Wahiza Abd. Wahat, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Roziyah Mohd. Rasdi, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Siti Noormi bt. Alias, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

ROBIAH BINTI YUNUS, PhD

Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

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Name and Matric No.: Chan Ling Meng (GS 38816)

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Signature: _____
Name of Chairman
of Supervisory Committee: Dr. Nor Wahiza Abd. Wahat

Signature: _____
Name of Member of
Supervisory Committee: Assoc. Prof Dr. Roziah Mohd
Rasdi

Signature: _____
Name of Member of
Supervisory Committee: Dr. Siti Noormi Alias

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AT	Attitude
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BDI	Belief – Desire - Intention
CR	Composite Reliability
DV	Dependent Variable
EA	Ethical Awareness
EI	Ethical Intention
EJ	Ethical Judgment
HR	Human Resource
HRD	Human Resource Development
IV	Independent Variable
MI	Moral Intensity
PLS	Partial Least Square
R ²	Coefficient of Determination
RE	Religious
RO	Research Objective
RQ	Research Question
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to examine the impacts of first-line manager's attitude, moral intensity and religiosity in their ethical decision intention. Furthermore, this study also intended to further investigate the intervening effect of ethical awareness and ethical judgment, while at the same time assessing the moral intensity and ethical intention of first-line managers.

This chapter starts with establishing the study background, problem statement and research objectives. It then continues to identify the importance of the research in terms of theoretical and practical methods. The final section of this chapter covers the scope and operational definition of terms for the research.

1.2 Background of the Study

The corporate world has been hit by a chain of corporate disasters since the new millennium. Over the past 16 years (2000 – 2016), the business world has witnessed various high profile corporate scandals such as the fall of Enron, Arthur Andersen, WorldCom, Xeros and other corporate organizations in the USA, Parmalat in Italy, Vivendi – Universal in France, A hold in the Netherlands, HIH Insurance and OneTel in Australia and SK Global in South Korea (Refer to Appendix A). Frauds and unethical corporate practices ultimately resulted these companies into bankruptcy/wind-up status. Because of these unethical and unlawful corporate habits, considerable attention has been given to define and remedy unethical problems that plague the business realm in particular. Likewise, this focus is deemed significant to address the unethical and legal issues that arise in the hotel industry ("Stafford Hotels", 2009).

The hotel and tourism industry in Malaysia has experienced an excellent development trend since 2000; thus playing a prominent part in contributing to the economic growth of the country. The total number of tourist arrivals for 2010 was 24.6 million with an approximate revenue of RM 73,872 billion, and a recorded total occupancy of 168,844 units of hotel rooms (Facts & Figure, 2011). In 2017, the number of tourists' arrivals in Malaysia increased sharply to 25.9 million with an approximate revenue of RM 82.1 billions (refer to Appendix C) with the growth of 25.8% in the total occupancy of hotel rooms (Habibi, 2017). However, Cheng's study (2013), indicated that the Malaysian hoteliers shouldn't complacent and need to discover ways to stay competitive.

In comparison, several neighboring nations such as Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia give comparable tourism products and services to Malaysia. The workforce in Malaysian hotels varies in ethnicity, culture, language and religion (Ahmad & Scott, 2014; Baum, Cheung, Kong, Kraji, Mooney, Ramachandran & Siow, 2016). The irregular changes in customer options and preferences, the appearance of recent traveler destinations, the competitiveness of the market, the call for manpower because of globalization, and the changes in demographic, economic, and technological evolutions enhanced the existing challenges to win customers (AlBattat & Som, 2013; Vasquez, 2014; Sangaran & Jeetsh, 2015). Thus, apart from rigorous marketing endeavors, discovery of quality management practices and their proper implementation could help Malaysian hoteliers prosper (Sangaran & Jeetsh, 2015).

Based on the 2018 of Global Economic Crime and Fraud Survey (Malaysia Report), results indicate that most kinds of offences committed by Malaysian organizations are business misconduct (45%), followed by asset misappropriation (41%) and bribery and corruption (35%). These three are Malaysia's most omnipresent economic crimes. Through Figure 1.1, it is obviously stated that employees' experienced an increased number of economic crimes from 2016 to 2018 (from 28% to 41% of total respondents). Most of the unethical practices that occurred at the workplace were committed by their own employees.

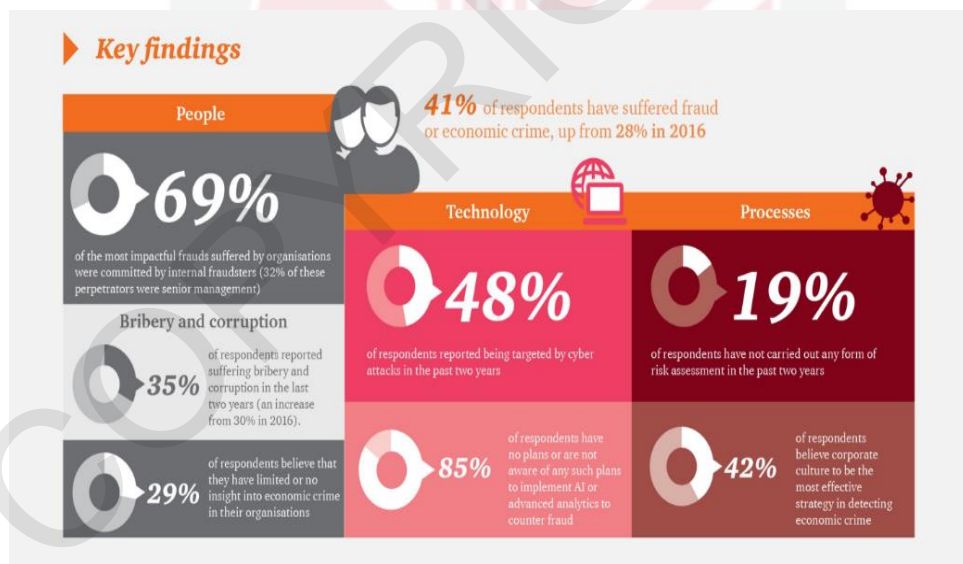


Figure 1.1: Key Findings of Global Economic Crime and Fraud Survey 2018 (Malaysia Report)

(Source: <https://www.pwc.com/my/en/publications/2018-gecfs-malaysia.html>)

Through the survey, most employees have become aware that bribery and corruption are unethical and unacceptable practices in the organization. However, in Malaysia, the level of unethical practices continued to rise

significantly, from 19% in 2014 to 30% in 2016. In the recent survey conducted by Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG) Malaysia (The Star, Jan 2014), statistics showed that 64% of respondents from 100 listed companies in Bursa Malaysia have the same perception – business in Malaysia cannot be done or accomplished without paying bribes. The survey also highlighted that the lack of awareness and an understanding of business ethics is one of the primary variables of the high rate of unethical practices at the workplace. This is further supported by the survey of Ernst & Young (EY), where the rate of unethical practices in the world rose from 17% (conducted in 2014) to 21% in 2016. In the Ernst & Young (EY) Asia Pacific Fraud Survey (2016), unethical practices (such as bribery and corrupt practices) are common in Malaysia, almost doubling the average of 21% in Asia Pacific. The rate has increased significantly due to hard economic times and increased competition. (Abdullah, 2016; Kum-Lung & Teck-Chai, 2010; Nguyen & Tran, 2018). This was further acknowledged in the Ponnu study (2011), where employees in the Malaysian hotel industry are more tolerant of the activities they believe would benefit them, even though it has an ethical dilemma. (Wong & Li, 2015)

Due to the transition from the planned economy to the market economy and with the higher percentage of corruption occurring, the scholars were encouraged with the great opportunities and new challenges to examine the ethical intention of first-line managers. Past researchers (Knani, 2014; Deale, Schoffstall & Lee, 2018) acknowledged that due to privatization and globalization in these developing countries, which resulted in the business ethics failure over the last decade, it is expected to make ethical issues be more crucial than ever before. Past researchers (Abdullah, 2016; Kum-Lung & Teck-Chai, 2010; Nguyen & Tran, 2018) recognized that these activities, such as restructuring companies, trade and finance liberalization, foreign direct investment entry into the countries, privatization of state-owned enterprises, generally contributed significantly to the cultivation of the workplace ethical dilemma. Such economic changes have certainly put a great deal of pressure on organizations, particularly first-line managers, to be more aware of the ethical issues they may encounter during the transitional period (Deale, et al, 2018).

Ethical issues in the hotel industry reflect the cash-based, people-intensive industries challenges that arise. First-Line hotel managers are now required not only to manage the hotel's operation, but also to monitor transaction errors, food and beverage pilfering, inventory disappearance and unreported sales. Ho, Zhao & Dolley (2016)'s study acknowledged that theft within the hotel industry has been rampant and costly since the 1990s, and the findings of Wijesinghe (2013) further reaffirmed that around 40% of hotel employees admitted and owned up to the truth that they were involved in unethical practices while serving as managers/officers in the hotel industry. This showed that after embezzling more than \$500,000 (RM2,051,787.11) to pay for his gambling debts, the financial controller of the Stafford Hotel in London was imprisoned. ("Stafford Hotels", 2009). A 2010 report showed that the average loss due to embezzlement in the U.S.A is \$385,000 (RM1,579,876.11) and it typically takes four and a half years to recover (Honesty, 2010).

Due to the inherent nature of the industry characteristics of inseparability and intangibility, Stevens (2011) argued that the hotel industry management must attend to ethical issues more carefully than other industries (Stevens & Flecknestein, 1999). Moreover, Pettijohn, Pettijohn & Taylor (2008) acknowledged that corporate organizations spent billions of dollars on building and maintaining a sound corporate image and reputation. All these labour and capital spent on keeping the positive corporate image have proven a waste soon after the unethical practices of the organization are revealed and exposed. This claim is further complemented by past studies (Hammond & Slocum, 1996; Waddock & Smith, 2000, Garavan & McGuire, 2010), adding that companies with high levels of ethical values and social responsibility tend to be more profitable than other companies. This strongly suggests that hotel organizations can benefit from conducting their business ethically and responsibly.

1.2.1 Business Ethics in Hotel Industry

The aim of this study is to examine the influences of moral intensity, attitude and religiosity on ethical decision intention among the first-line managers in the hotel industry. In order to understand this, is important to examine the contexts and environments in which the first-line managers make their decisions.

Knani (2014) acknowledged that the ethical values and job-related behaviors of the front-line employees are critical components of the business transactions and customers are not satisfied with just the tangible components of the hotel experiences like room comfort or food quality, but their satisfaction level is contingent on how they perceive they are treated during their interaction with the hotel's employees (Steven, 2001).

In the literature of servicing marketing, this communication between a hotel's guests and employees is cited as the "moment of truth". If the attitudes or behaviors of hotel workers seem to be unethical, guests will reduce their ratings on the evaluation of the service they receive (Wong, 2000).

According to the study by Wong (1998), there are four dimensions of hotel first-line managers' job related ethics: 'no harm' (e.g. making a phone call in a guest room), 'unethical behavior' (e.g. breaking a glass or plate but blaming it for the carelessness of a guest) and 'passively benefiting' (e.g. accepting tips for arranging a change of room for a guest). The author further explained that first-line managers are more tolerant of "no harm" and "passively benefiting" ethical beliefs, but less tolerant of "unethical behavior" and "actively benefiting" standards. Meanwhile, the front office and also the first-line managers of the sales and marketing departments tended to have a lower tolerance regarding essential unethical behavior compared to the first-line managers of the rooms, food and beverage departments.

A large number of publications analyzed how consumers perceived the unethical behavior of first-line managers. Harris (2012) found that first-line managers' misbehavior was common and frequent, and that customers notice these actions. Harris (2012) identified five ways in which customers believed they were being cheated: overcharging for services, extra hidden charges adding on to the bill, forcing to use those unwanted services and over charging. Through his study, Wong (2000) has attempted to explain customers' perceptions in relation to first-line managers' questionable behavior and identified unethical behavior as one of its underlying dimensions. Reports from customers indicated that they dislike any form of unethical behavior. Meanwhile, too many customers agree that flexibility is more important than rigid honesty, and they want first-line managers to exercise greater tolerance in meeting their needs. Customers very much dislike the infringement of their own property and rights. Finally, Wong & Chan (2010) identify four dimensions of customers' perception concerning first-line managers' questionable behavior infringement of guests' property, benefit at the expense of guest supplementary services against work rules and unethical behavior. Besides that, customers are also found to be intolerant towards the infringement of guests' property and unethical behavior; unless the managers attempt to enhance customer overall satisfaction and meet their needs. In contrast younger first-line managers tend to be more tolerant on unethical behavior.

Wong (1998) revealed that ethical values and job related behavior of the first-line managers are important variables of business transactions and consumer service experience in hotel industry. The study also recognized that customers are not satisfied with the only tangible elements of hotel experience, such as room convenience and food quality. The level of satisfaction of hotel customers depends significantly on their "perception" throughout the treatment they receive during their interaction with the first-line managers of the hotel. Service marketing literature extends to compliment the "moment of truth" interaction between hotel customers and first-line managers. If the attitudes or behaviors of a manager are perceived to be unethical, customers will downgrade their assessment of the service they receive.

1.2.2 Importance of Ethical Decision Intention in Human Resources Development (HRD)

From previous researches (Ardagh & Macklin, 1998; Caldwell, et al., 2011; Su & Kwong, 2011; Yoon, 2011), it was found that HRD practitioners can adopt an ethical climate such as planning, organizing, implementing, moderating and evaluating the organization's ethical behaviors and moral consciences. This study therefore recognizes that HRD practitioners play an important role in the development of ethical organizations.

In this contemporary age, the HR practitioners must be able to address ethical dilemmas that result from an imbalance between economic and social performance, as argued by Davis, Andersen & Curtis (2001). In addition, they must also gain a thorough understanding of how a philosophical ethical analysis can be carried out in business contexts.

Over the last decade, there were limited numbers of general ethical attitudinal studies that has started to emerge in the Asia – Pacific region, for example: Singapore (Metha and Kau, 1984), Hong Kong (Kam, 1980; 1981; Chan et al, 1988; Chan and Lee, 1986) and Malaysia (Zabid and Alsagoff, 1993). However, considerable effort is still needed in order for the literature in business ethics to go further than generalized statements of distaste that merely lament the erosion of ethical standards in business, or to sermonize on the consequences of increasing unethical behaviors (McDonald & Kan, 1997).

As an HR practitioner, one will face a variety of ethical dilemmas in their workplace when dealing with sensitive issues that arise from their job responsibilities, such as recruitment and selection tasks, training and development, compensation and benefits, and last but not least, handling disciplinary issues among employees. According to Danley and et al (1996), HR practitioners need to handle sensitive issues in the area of recruitment, hiring, training, compensation, promotions, job assignments, job classification, counseling, rehabilitation, substance abuse monitoring, discipline, benefits, terminations or layoffs, or retirement as part of their daily operations. Wooten (2001) acknowledged that the ethical dilemmas faced by HR practitioners in key HR activity areas are like economic justice, honesty, discrimination and workers' right and safety. He suggested that without a clear set of ethical guidelines for HR decision making, these areas will remain problematic for the individual HR practitioners. This was supported by Miner & Petocz (2003) who argue that ethical decisions have always been a part of human resources practitioners' personal and professional lives.

Wiley (1998) found that HR practitioners can play distinct roles in ethical situations which include advisory, monitory, educating, advocating, investigative, questioning, organizing and finally modeling type roles. It acknowledges that, as a HR practitioner one will always face difficulty in finding a balance between career, business and moral-based demands. However, it is important for the HR practitioners to strive for higher positions and to maintain the highest standard of ethics when making decisions within the organization. As an HR practitioner is an agent of firm, tough decisions regarding employee relationships the HR would be seen making decisions that are aligned with the interests of the organization, but not necessarily in the interests of the employees.

Unethical practices in hotels have attracted a great deal of attention from business practitioners, for example employee, theft, discrimination against employees, menu distrust and so on. This could cause problems in hotel organizations in the process of standardization and the monitoring of human resources. Because of this, it involves a high degree of contact and coordination between staff and guests and is so responsive, that it can leave a negative impression on hotel guests and the unethical behavior of staff towards guests can be seen. With regards to all these potential problems in services production, the HR practitioners must be quick to take decisions; in particular, when it comes to ethical decision making.

Besides that, through the years, numerous researches have been carried out to explore the psychological and moral tensions that exist when ideals and values are tested against the economic consequences of the hotel operations (Cherry & Fraedrich, 2000).

In this sector, it was expected that moral and ethical values could be addressed in many aspects, given that the human relationships are intense in the hotel business and the concept of ethics has developed as a result of human behavior. Nevertheless, the lack of comprehensive study findings on the topic at the moment motivated me to work on this study. This study primarily tries to specify, which ethical approaches first-line managers in hotel companies use in decision-making, especially when they face ethical dilemmas. The study will provide evidence of the basic perspectives of first-line managers regarding ethical decision-making such as in the hotel businesses which provide services to different interest groups. These results are also expected to help guide managers.

Lowry (2006) acknowledged that human resources practitioners who dismiss the failure (breach) in gratifying a dedication given to the guests (written or mentioned verbally) as a moral problem will gradually impede the perception of other ethical problems by the managers. This will cause some problems in the organization; hence, it will also result in the customer discontentment and eventually in the loss of clients. It changed into or determined that a breach of, written or verbally mentioned dedication usually emerges into issues regarding financial loss, ecology, quality and security. On the other hand, in the ethical dilemmas about socio-cultural and institutional reputation, it was seen that the managers behave within the content of the relativity concept and they consider these unethical issues with a lower frequency of choice. This situation can be considered as an indicator reflecting that the managers incredibly consider the commitments and agreements; while ignoring other ecological and socio-cultural values.

Based on previous studies (Gupta, 2010; Bass, Barnett & Brown, 2001), most of the findings assumed that most professions utilize a utilitarian perspective or framework in their analysis of ethical problems. Given the format of business setting, it seems that utilitarianism is a logical and methodical approach to assist the decision-making process, especially ones which involve ethical issues (McDonald & Kan, 1997). However, questions become apparent: Do HR practitioners rely exclusively on a utilitarian analytical framework to investigate and resolve ethical dilemmas or are other frameworks more prominent in ethical decision making?

1.3 Statement of Problem

Past researchers (Shashidhar & Prakash, 2016; Thomas 2016) acknowledged that the hotel organization has encountered numerous ethical challenges, as the competition within the industry itself is intense amidst the poor current

economic recession. Hence, Beck, Lazer & Scmidgall (2007) acknowledged that all of these factors will encourage “questionable and unethical management behavior” at the workplace. They suggested that past research studies also had little regard for the ethical issues raised in the hotel industry.

Moreover, Lee & Tsang (2013) acknowledged that ethics is one of the important issues raised constantly in the hotel industry, and they suggested that understanding the ethical decision intention of first-line managers should be accentuated (Goh & Kong, 2016). Scholars (e.g. Goh & Kong, 2016; Deale, et al, 2018; Lee & Tsang, 2013) asserted that the hotel industry is open to unethical practices, and frequently present its employees in ethically ambiguous situations, such as overbooking, theft, whistle-blowing, mistreatment of others, racial prejudices, sabotages, benefits at the expense of guest supplementary services, and misleading information in the restaurant menus, hotel brochures and websites (Stevens, 2011; Çelik, Dedeoğlu, & Inanir, 2015; Wong & Chan, 2010; Harris, 2012). Although there are significant numbers of empirical investigations on the ethical decision intention from past literature, only a limited number of empirical researches have been undertaken on the hotel industry. This was further acknowledged by Wong & Li (2015), stating that there is very limited theoretical basis for research in the ethics of the hotel industry.

Through the review of past studies (Lee & Tsang, 2013; Lee & Ok, 2014; Bilgihan, Severt & Kandampully, 2013), most ethics research studies have focused on ethics behavioral theories which only examined the ethics perspective from the customers’ perspectives. However, there are limited studies in the recent year (Guo, 2013; Lee & Tsang, 2013; Lin, 2014) which focused on business ethics. This study is therefore designed to integrate marketing ethics theory into the Bratman (1987) model to examine the integration ethics model based on the variable’s influences on the ethical decision. Bratman’s (1987) theoretical model is human’s reasoning process, where its mental state is characterized by three components: beliefs (B), desires (D) and intention (I). Bratman (1987) asserts that when confronted with an ethical dilemma, an individual engages in a decision making process that involves working through the following four components. Individuals move from ethical awareness which refers to the recognition of an ethical dilemma, to ethical judgment that is the evaluation of choices and outcomes, to ethical intention referring to the choosing of how one intends to act, and lastly to ethical behavior which is the actual behavior in the situation. A failure at any step in the process could result in a failure to make an ethical decision.

Most of the ethical decision making research studies (Barnett & Johnson, 2011; Tang, 2016; Crossan, Mazutis & Seijts, 2013; Yoon, 2011; Yang & Wu, 2009; Elango, Paul, Kundu & Paudel, 2010) mainly employed Rest’s (1986) model of ethical decision making as the main tool to examine this ethical act (refer to Appendix B). However, Craft’s study (2013) noticed that these studies on business ethics focused mainly on one or two variables as predictors with variables of individuals, organizational and moral intensity. As mentioned above,

most previous research focused on only one or two components of ethical decision making (Craft, 2013), while this study examines three of the four components (ethical awareness, ethical judgment and ethical intention). Only the final component, ethical behavior, is omitted because of its sensitivity and the related challenges in examining it (i.e. observing subjects engaged in ethically right or ethically wrong behavior). Thus, this research study intended to replace the Rest's model with the Bratman's model. Bratman's model suggested that desire is influenced by emotion and rationality. So, an individual's intention will influence the individual's emotion, belief, and desire. The individual's emotion will decrease his/her rationality and then influence his/her desire. In Craft's (2013) study, emotions were suggested not only as important for rational behavior, but even necessary. People with no emotions find it difficult to differentiate important and irrelevant details. Thus the intention of individuals arises from three distinguished phases: 1) the perceived situation is appraised by what an individual thinks is relevant and important; 2) the appraisal of some situations can cause the triggered emotions; and 3) emotional feelings need to be regulated.

From the review of relevant research studies which mainly focused on business ethics (Refer to Appendix B), limited research studies (Singhapakdi, Vitell & Franke, 1999; Yang & Wu, 2009) focused on the intervening effect of the ethical decision intention components in influencing the individuals' decision intention. In the study of Singhapakdi, Vitell & Franke (1999), they acknowledge that moral intensity is one of the important components in influencing individuals in their ethical decision making. However, they did not investigate further whether ethical awareness and ethical judgment directly or indirectly influenced moral intensity on ethical intention (Yang & Wu, 2009). Similar to the Yang & Wu (2009) study, they recognized that the mediation effect, both of ethical awareness and ethical judgments on the influence on the relationship between moral intensity and ethical intention was limited by empirical support. Given the limited evidence provided by past empirical research studies, past researchers may have overlooked the varying influences of the intervening effect on ethical decision making, which can reduce the explanatory power of the established ethical model in the empirical research. This is, therefore one of the research objectives that researchers intended to explore in this study.

In the recent hospitality ethics research studies (Krani, 2014; Wong & Li, 2015; Goh & Kong, 2016) showed that there is increasing attention in the hospitality ethics awareness. Nonetheless, the inadequate research studies (Ayoun, Rowe & Yassine, 2015; Goh & Kong, 2016) focused on the attitude of hotel employees towards ethics in their workplace. The current research studies in hospitality ethics focused primarily on the consequences of unethical acts rather than on the rationale behind the questionable act, raised at the workplace. This has attracted the attention of the researcher to examine how the influences of attitude on the ethical awareness of first-line hotel managers, which will subsequently influence them on how to evaluate and engage an intention to act ethically when making decisions. In order to better understand and develop domain specific services for the hotel management, it is important

to develop a better ethical awareness by improving the managers' perceptions of ethical issues.

Shariff (2015) acknowledged that ethics and religiosity has not received as much attention within academic literature. Lau (2010) and Wurthman (2013) suggesting that religious components including a moral code should be mutually supportive. Accordingly, followers of any religion should act according to their appropriate moral code. One might assume that individuals who claim to follow a religion or individuals that have higher levels of religiosity would act more ethically than those that do not (Shariff, 2015). However, Parboteeah, Hoegl, & Cullen (2008) found out that a higher level of religiosity does not necessarily lead to a higher level of ethical behavior. Whether religiosity leads to ethics or not, religion does play a major role in the workplace. In the Gallup Survey (2013), most respondents acknowledged that religion is fairly important to their lives, and the effects of religiosity on the workforce are subjects that deserve more attention in academic research.

In their study, Graafland, Kaptein & Schouten (2006), recognized that an individual's religious beliefs play a crucial role in his/her ethical decision-making, as personal values and standards are always related to the religious background of the individual (Barnett & Johnson, 2011; Schwartz, 2016; Tang, 2016). When encountering an ethical dilemma, an individual with a strong religious belief will be more likely to follow their religious standards. Similarly, it is imperative for the hotel organization to understand and acknowledge how their employees, especially the first-line managers with different religious beliefs and perception of business ethics, to have more comprehensive guidelines to execute their ethics code of conducts in their workplace. Past studies' findings (Barnett & Johnson, 2011; Schwartz, 2016; Tang, 2016) acknowledged that individuals who are strongly committed to their religious beliefs are capable of making decisions based on their ethical convictions. Although there are significant numbers of studies conducted to investigate the relationship between the two variables, there is still much to be learned about the related issues with hotel first-line managers. This therefore had given the researcher the urge to investigate the role of religious belief in influencing the ethical awareness of hotel first-line managers. Is there a greater chance of them holding traditional views on ethical issues or accepting universal ethical standards or being concerned about the welfare of others?

Besides that, first-line managers are chosen as the subject of the study for several reasons. Primarily, though quite a number of recent studies explore on ethical reasoning and ethical behavior in organization, very few empirical studies assessed the variables which focused on the first-line managers in the hotel industry (Lee & Tsang, 2013). Scholars assert that the hotel industry is open to unethical practices, and frequently presents its employees with morally and ethically ambiguous situations such as overbooking, theft, whistle-blowing, mistreatment of others, racial prejudices, sabotage, and misleading information in the restaurant menus, hotel brochures, and websites (Stevens, 2011; Deale, et al, 2018; Meacham, Cavanagh, Bartram & Laing, 2017).

Although extensive empirical research has been conducted on the ethical behavior aspect of the business ethics literature, very scarce empirical research has been carried out in the hotel organization context. Indeed, the theoretical foundation of investigation in the hospitality industry ethics is very limited (Lin, 2014; Ponnu, 2011). From the review of past studies, it is clearly suggested that it is time to re-examine the ethical theoretical framework, as the latest research studies were conducted in early 2010 and focused primarily on the context of organizational behavior, rather than the context of individual decision-making. The study sought to find insights into which factors that influence ethical awareness, ethical judgment and ethical intention among hotel first-line managers are significantly influenced?

1.4 Research Questions

This study attempted to bridge the research gaps by addressing the following research questions:

- RQ1 : What is the level of hotel first-line manager's ethical awareness, ethical judgment, ethical intent, attitude, religiosity, and moral intensity?
- RQ2_A : Does moral intensity relate significantly with ethical awareness of hotel first-line managers?
- RQ2_B : Does moral intensity relate significantly with ethical judgment of hotel first-line managers?
- RQ2_C : Does moral intensity relate significantly with ethical intention of hotel first-line managers?
- RQ2_D : Is the relationship between moral intensity and ethical judgment of hotel first-line managers mediated by ethical awareness?
- RQ2_E : Is the relationship between moral intensity and ethical intention of hotel first-line managers mediated by ethical awareness and ethical judgment?
- RQ3 : Does attitude relate significantly with ethical awareness of hotel first-line managers?
- RQ4 : Does religiosity relate significantly with ethical awareness of hotel first-line managers?
- RQ5 : Does ethical awareness relate significantly with ethical judgment of hotel first-line managers?
- RQ6 : Does ethical judgment relate significantly with ethical intention of hotel first-line managers?

1.5 Research Objectives

This study's general objective is to extend the Bratman's Belief – Desire – Intention Model (1987) by including the direct relationship between moral intensity, attitude and religiosity of hotel first-line managers, as well as the indirect relationship through the mediating effect of ethical awareness and ethical judgment among them in Malaysia.

This study attempted to respond and fulfill the following specific research objectives in line with the current issues being discussed:

- RO1 : To identify the level of ethical awareness, ethical judgment, ethical intention, attitude, religiosity, and moral intensity of hotel first-line managers;
- RO2A : To determine the relationship between moral intensity and ethical awareness of hotel first line managers;
- RO2B : To determine the relationship between moral intensity and ethical judgment of hotel first line managers;
- RO2C : To determine the relationship between moral intensity and ethical intention of hotel first-line managers;
- RO2D : To ascertain the mediating effect of ethical awareness between moral intensity and ethical judgment of hotel first line managers;
- RO2E : To ascertain the mediating effect of ethical awareness and ethical judgment on the relationship between moral intensity and ethical intention of hotel first-line managers;
- RO3 : To determine the relationship between attitude and ethical awareness of hotel first-line managers;
- RO4 : To determine the relationship between religiosity and ethical awareness of hotel first-line managers;
- RO5 : To determine the relationship between ethical awareness and ethical judgment of hotel first-line managers;
- RO6 : To determine the relationship between ethical judgment and ethical intention of hotel first-line managers.

1.6 Research Hypothesis

The following research hypotheses are developed on the basis of the above research objectives:

- H1A : Moral intensity is significantly related to ethical awareness of hotel first-line managers.
- H1B : Moral intensity is significantly related to ethical judgment of hotel first-line managers
- H1C : Moral intensity is significantly related to ethical intention of hotel first-line managers
- H1D : Ethical awareness will be the mediator between moral intensity and ethical judgment of hotel first-line managers.
- H1E : Ethical awareness and ethical judgment will be the mediator between moral intensity and ethical intention of hotel first-line managers.
- H2 : Attitude is significantly related to ethical awareness of hotel first-line managers.
- H3 : Religiosity is significantly related to ethical awareness of hotel first-line managers.
- H4 : Ethical awareness is significantly related to ethical judgment of hotel first-line managers.
- H5 : Ethical judgment is significantly related to ethical intention of hotel first-line managers.

1.7 Significance of the Study

In the light of this study, its outcome could add significantly to both theoretical and practical contributions. The following sub-sections discuss the contributions in each of these areas.

1.7.1 Theoretical Significance

Ethical predispositions are recognized as the main criteria used in ethical decision making and are therefore associated with ethical awareness in general. While it is well known that concerns about ends and means include evaluating ethical issues, this study suggested that concerns about ends and means are present at the birth of ethical awareness, ethical judgment, and ethical intention. Through this study, it is suggested that the intention of ethical decision may not discrete elements of a formulaic thinking process, but may in fact, be interrelated in a very complex manner so that ethical intention and ethical judgment influence ethical awareness as much as or more than ethical awareness affects them. Therefore, the findings of the study may provide insights into an evaluation of ethical awareness, ethical judgment and ethical intention; and the very assumptions on which they are based, may be justified.

An emerging and growing discipline such as Human Resource Development (HRD) requires theory. Sounded theory does not proselytize or forcefully market the latest fad. Rather, theories in HRD are required to be both scholarly and successful in practice and can therefore be the foundation for the significant progress. Therefore, based on this study, the researcher proposed cross-disciplinary integration theories to enhance the flexibility of the theories themselves in both the academic and practical aspects. In this study, the researcher employed the Marketing Ethics Theory from Hunt & Vitell (1986) to integrate with the HRD theories (e.g.: Bratman's Belief – Desire – Intention Model (1987)) in order to explain how the ethical decision intention made by the first-line manager by complementing both disciplines. In most HRD theories, past researchers primarily explained human behavior based on the factors of the situation; rather than by looking at the self or questioning it. However, this study succeeded in proposing a comprehensive model by integrating Marketing Ethics to explain how the decision maker himself/herself and the issues involved play a significant role in affecting the outcome of the decision.

HRD is often seen more as a tool to satisfy the shareholders' interests than employee well being. This is in sharp contrast with the origins of the HR purpose that focused on worker welfare (Winstanley & Woodall, 2000). This poses a real challenge for HR in balancing profit maximization values and ethical values, as urged by Wright and Snell (2005). The question is likewise raised, not whether HRD is ethical, but whether HRD can be ethical. Ethical reputation is today visible as one of the key roles of an organization's ability to attract and retain talent and the HRD specialist play a key role in institutionalizing ethical culture into the organizational fabric, with measures consisting of ethics-associated decision making processes, audits, education

and training, whistle-blowing mechanism and disciplinary procedures. Therefore, embedding ethics in HRD through suitable organizational interventions and developing greater humane ways of organizing work is seen as a new approach to leading responsible organizations without compromising on profits.

1.7.2 Practical Significance

The research framework suggested that it is essential to provide not only personal information about the decision maker's closeness to those affected; but also environmental information, including possible consequences and outcomes in order to improve the ethical decision outcome. The comprehensive information received would enable first-line managers to detect the possible serious damage arising from their ethically wrong decision results, and thus reduce the risk of unethical decision-making.

In this study, the existing literature was advanced in hypothesizing the influences of moral strength, attitude and religious to the ethical awareness, ethical judgment and ethical intention. This study attempted to respond to the suggestion of integrating the model of Jones' (1991) moral intensity and Bratman's (1987) into the Hunt & Vitell's (1986) General Marketing Ethics (Singhapakdi, et al, 1999; Kelly & Elm, 2003; Haines, et al, 2008). Garavan & McGuire (2010) also recognized that business ethics is too limited to focus on one or two components of Rest's Four-component model in terms of human resources development. There has been confusion over the purpose of the Defining Issue Test (DIT) instruments, a neglect of metrics other than P scores, and a weakness in connecting with broader research on ethical development within the professions. As a result, the business research started to falter after an enthusiastic early start. This study suggested that, if the ultimate goal of ethical research in human resource development is to improve the ethical performance of first-line managers, then research must consider all four components (Garavan & McGuire, 2010).

In addition, the findings of this study may be used to plot various ethical limitations to which different manager roles may be exposed. The roles of first-line managers have not been divided into good or bad roles, but they may possess potential ethical hazards through issues that are, not necessarily, all equally harmful. This study aims at improving understanding and knowledge about the ethical challenges they face.

Moreover, through this study, it may provide insights that incorporating a thoroughly planned component of ethics into the code of practice is more productive than giving warning or punishment after employees had engaged in unethical practices. It is important for the management to place a great deal of emphasis on ethics, honesty and fairness, not only in their business activities, but also to cultivate it among their subordinates, especially the first-line

managers. These ethical values should be taught and fostered among the first-line managers; and also be respected, shared and cultivated by everyone.

This study also attempted to fill the literature gap by examining the potential relationship between the ethical decision intention of first-line managers and the moral intensity, attitude and religious beliefs. It aims to help first-line managers define their ethical awareness, ethical judgment and ethical intention and find the common denominators that can provide a meaningful and consistent approach to resolving ethical issues through the process of decision making. The findings may not be able to develop any special set of standards, but it can help the organizations to create in the participants greater awareness of sensitivity to the ethical dilemma of business transactions, and an orientation for strategic and long term thinking among the first-line managers; better judgment and reasoning to develop better decision alternatives for solving rising ethical dilemma.

In addition, this study attempts to extend the state of the art research on ethical decision intention by providing evidence from Malaysia. To the best of the knowledge of the researcher, limited studies in Malaysia have tested the intention of ethical decision. Since Malaysian empirical findings on ethical awareness, ethical judgment and ethical intention in the hotel industry are not available, this study aimed at providing initial evidence of the importance of individuals and non-rationality factors in favor of ethical decision-making intention. Last but not least, this study should be conducted with experienced operational managers, such as first-line managers, who experience real life ethics dilemmas from those outside professional organizations (e.g., employees, consultants, customers, shareholders).

1.8 Scope of Study

This study was designed solely to address the population of hotel first-line managers that currently have 4- or 5-star hotels in Malaysia. The hotel industry was chosen, based on the recent support from literature (Stevens, 2011; Deale, et al, 2018; Myung, 2018), where unethical practices have highly risen, and the consequences for the hotel industry, particularly for those 4-star and 5-star hotels, of engaging in such questionable acts which have tarnished the reputation. The criteria for the choice of hotel first-line managers studied, included operating and administrating departments; holding supervisory level and over-position management, and having a minimum working experience of 2 to 5 years.

Furthermore, the study focused only on the influence of behavior, moral intensity and religious beliefs on the ethical decision intentions of hotel first-line managers. In addition, this study focused only on the three main aspects: ethical awareness, ethical judgment and ethical intention.

1.9 Limitations of Study

The concern that individuals might have been able to guess the hypotheses, the constructs of the items measured, or the desired responses, are closely related to this matter. Although this is a major concern with ethics research, these threats have also been minimized. The dependent variable items were first placed on the questionnaire, so that individuals could not make assumptions about the hypotheses or the independent variable items that could influence the responses to the mediating and dependent variables. The mediating variable items and then the independent variable items followed this question page. Once subjects submitted their answers for a question page, they were not permitted to return to that web page or any of the previous pages.

It is also important to note that the “professionals” used in this study refer to individuals working in a hotel operation-related capacity business. This study has deliberately selected these types of professionals and not academicians, who may be more inclined to have specific knowledge of repeat stress injuries and carpal tunnel syndrome. As such, effects between setting and treatment should be minimal, if any.

In addition, the data collected may not be generalizable to the whole population of first-line managers, since only the first-line managers of 4-star and 5-stars hotels in Malaysia were targeted by the researchers.

1.10 Definition of Term

The following are the operational definition of terms used in this study. Chapter 2 provides the conceptual or detailed discussion of these terms.

Ethical Awareness: First-line managers ability to understand and interpret the situation, role assuming how different to the parties involved, imagining the cause–effect chain of the event, and being aware that when one exists there is an ethical problem.

Ethical Judgment: The ability of first-line managers to determine and evaluate if their action is ethically correct or wrong.

Ethical Intention: First-Line manager’s ability to analyze the degree of commitment to engage in ethical action, place ethical values over other self-interest, and commit to ethical responsibility for the action to be taken.

Moral Intensity: A contingent issue model of ethical decision making based on the assumption that situations vary with regard to the present moral imperatives in that situation.

Attitude: Hotel first-line managers' evaluation ability to determine the ethical issues that may rise during their decision making process is ethically correct or ethically wrong.

Religiosity: The extent to which individuals adhere to their religious beliefs and to the extent to which these religious beliefs influence their decision making process.



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