



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AS DETERMINANT OF AFFECTIVE
COMMITMENT AND MODERATING ROLE OF RELIGIOSITY AMONG
EMPLOYEES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES IN MALAYSIA**

WAN RAHIM BIN WAN YUNAN

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By

WAN RAHIM BIN WAN YUNAN

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

July 2019

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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July 2019

Chair: Prof. Aminah Ahmad, PhD
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The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between workplace spirituality (according to its three dimensions of meaningful work, sense of community, and value alignment) and affective commitment among employees in four different Rural Development Agencies. The study also examined the possible moderating effects of religiosity on the relationships between workplace spirituality dimensions and affective commitment.

Data were gathered using self-administered and a cross-sectional survey questionnaires from a sample of 263 employees selected based on proportionate stratified random sampling. Three measuring scales were used: 1) 21 items spirituality at work scale by Milliman et al. (2003) to measure workplace spirituality; 2) the revised version of the six items affective commitment scale developed by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1997) to measure employees' affective commitment; 3) the 10-item Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSORF) by Plante and Boccaccini (1997) to measure employee's level of religiosity. Employees' affective commitment was conceptualized using the Conservation of Resources Theory (COR). The theory explains that spiritual resources can foster employees' positives attitudes including affective commitment.

To test the hypotheses of the study, this study was conducted a correlation analysis and applied a structural equation modelling (SEM) techniques by Amos 22. The results of analysis shows that only one meaningful work) out of three dimensions of workplace spirituality has a significant relationships with affective commitment. However sense of community and alignment of values dimension have a low and non-significant relationships with affective commitment. For

moderation analysis, the study found that there is moderation effect of religiosity on the overall model. However, for the individual path, religiosity only moderates the relationship between meaningful work and affective commitment.

The study concluded that employees' affective commitment is influenced by meaningful work. The study also concluded that the employees' affective commitment was varied in the workplace by religiosity level, particularly those who are experiencing meaningful work. In terms of practice, the organization that promotes employees to experience workplace spirituality would lead to a positive impact including employees' affective commitment towards the organization.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**KEROHANIAN DI TEMPAT KERJA PENENTU KEPADA KOMITMEN
AFEKTIF DAN PERANAN MODERASI KEAGAMAAN DI KALANGAN
PEKERJA AGENSI PEMBANGUNAN LUAR BANDAR DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Julai 2019

Pengerusi: Prof. Aminah Ahmad, PhD
Fakulti: Institut Pengajian Sains Sosial

Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan antara kerohanian di tempat kerja (berdasarkan kepada tiga dimensi iaitu kerja yang bermakna, perasaan kemasyarakatan, dan penajajaran nilai) dan komitmen afektif di kalangan pekerja dalam empat Agensi Pembangunan Luar Bandar yang berbeza. Kajian ini juga mengkaji kemungkinan kesan moderasi keagamaan terhadap hubungan antara dimensi kerohanian di tempat kerja dan komitmen afektif.

Pengumpulan data telah menggunakan soal selidik secara tinjauan sendiri dan kajian secara rentas daripada sampel seramai 263 pekerja yang dipilih berdasarkan prosedur persampelan rawak berstratifikasi. Tiga skala digunakan untuk kajian ini terdiri daripada: 1) skala kerohanian di tempat kerja yang terdiri daripada 21 item dibangunkan oleh Milliman et al. (2003); 2) skala komitmen enam item iaitu versi yang disemak semula yang dibangunkan oleh Meyer, Allen dan Smith (1997) untuk mengukur komitmen afektif pekerja; 3) skala 10 item Keagamaan Santa Clara (SCSORF) oleh Plante dan Boccaccini (1997) untuk mengukur tahap keagamaan pekerja. Komitmen afektif pekerja menggunakan Teori Pemuliharaan Sumber (COR). Teori ini menerangkan bahawa sumber kerohanian dapat memupuk sikap positif pekerja termasuk komitmen afektif.

Untuk menguji hipotesis, kajian ini telah menjalankan analisis korelasi dengan menggunakan teknik pemodelan persamaan struktur (SEM) melalui aplikasi Amos 22. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahawa hanya satu dimensi kerohanian di tempat kerja iaitu kerja yang bermakna mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan komitmen afektif. Walau bagaimanapun, perasaan kemasyarakatan dan penajajaran nilai mempunyai hubungan yang rendah dan tidak signifikan dengan komitmen afektif pekerja. Untuk analisis moderasi, secara keseluruhannya

kajian mendapati bahawa terdapat kesan moderasi terhadap model. Walau bagaimanapun, secara spesifik, keagamaan hanya memoderasikan hubungan antara antara kerja yang bermakna dan komitmen afektif.

Secara kesimpulan, kajian ini mendapati bahawa komitmen afektif pekerja dipengaruhi oleh kerja yang bermakna. Kajian ini juga menyimpulkan bahawa tahap keagamaan mempunyai kesan moderasi terhadap kekuatan hubungan antara kerja yang bermakna dengan komitmen afektif pekerja. Secara praktikal, organisasi yang menggalakkan pekerja untuk mempraktikkan kerohanian di tempat kerja akan membawa kesan positif kepada organisasi termasuk komitmen afektif pekerja.

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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 Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Affective Commitment
AGFI	Adjusted goodness-of-fit index
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structures
AV	Alignment of values
AVE	Average variance extracted
CFA	Confirmatory factor analysis
CFI	Comparative fit index
CMIN	Chi-square
COR	Conservation of resources theory
df	Degrees of freedom
GFI	Goodness-of-fit index
HRD	Human Resource Development
IFI	Incremental fit index
JS	Job Satisfaction
M	Sample mean
MW	Meaningful work
n	Number of cases
NFI	Normed fit index
OC	Organizational commitment
PGFI	Parsimony goodness-of-fit index
POS	Perceived organizational support
r	Correlation coefficient
r ²	Squared correlation
RDA	Rural Development Agency
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation
SEM	Structural equation modelling
SOC	Sense of community
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRMR	Standardized root mean square residual
SRT	Self-Regulation Theory
TCM	Three-Component Model

TLI	Tucker-Lewis coefficient index
VIF	Variance Inflation Factors
β	Standardize regression weights
δ	Error variance
λ	Factor loading
ρ	Rho (probability)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

The public service is considered as one of the key players in spearheading the transformation of Malaysia into a high-income nation (Public Service Department, 2014). The country's public service performs a significant role in national development, particularly in driving transformational change for a better nation. Public service also perform a critical responsibility in the implementation and formulation of government's policies and programs (Siddiquee, 2014). Therefore, human resources is considered the most crucial element in dealing with the current changes, particularly in term sof socio-economic transformation towards a developed nation (Economic Planning Unit Malaysia, 2016). Because Malaysia aspires to be a high-income nation by the year 2020, the public service needs to perform efficiently and expeditiously in service delivery in order to provide more convenient and efficient services to the public and to businesses (Xavier, Siddiquee, & Mohamed, 2016). However, in the midst of preparing our public service to stay relevant in the globalized and interconnected economy, some areas require improvement, particularly the commitment and dedication of the public service employees (Farid et al., 2013).

Since independence in 1957, the government has taken necessary steps to intensify the developments in the rural areas in order to further improve the quality of life of the rural population in Malaysia. The main purpose is to narrow the socioeconomic gap between the urban and the rural areas (Economic Planning Unit Malaysia, 2010). Although the incidence of hardcore poverty in the rural areas of Malaysia dropped tremendously from 15,800 to 5,500 within five years (2012 to 2016) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2016), more efforts need to be done to ensure that the number continues to decrease. Hence, it is essential to have a highly committed workforce to provide a better service for the rural communities.

Several scholars (Hudson & Croker, 2017; MacLeod et al., 2017) noted that rural settings are more geographically isolated, under-resourced, and having inadequate access to modern facilities, and these shortcomings might be a significant setback for employees to perform their responsibilities. Despite employees in the public sector having a lower level of turnover compared to those in the private sector, some agencies have reported a growing number of employees, particularly those who had longer tenure, leaving rural development agencies (RDAs) to join other local agencies (KKLW, 2016). This departure was noted to be due to (1) the limited number of posts for promotion to higher grades and (2) better benefits offered by other RDAs, such as FELDA or FELCRA. One study by Sun and Wang (2017) in New York State Education Department

revealed that pay, career advancement, and fringe benefit are among the factors predicting turnover intention, along with management, leadership, and job fit.

Morrison, Lane and Hibbard (2015) stated that employees enriched with vast experiences are the most crucial driving force towards better rural governance. In other words, employees who have long served in an RDA play a vital role in facilitating the advancement of underdeveloped areas. Therefore, the retention of experienced employees with valuable skills is considered as a critical success factor for rural development organizations (Ahsan, Fie, Foong, & Alam, 2013) and for lessening the cost of losing talents (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2014). In another study, Lori et al. (2012) revealed that another essential attribute that can facilitate the development of rural areas, particularly the communities, is the willingness of the employees to serve committedly towards the organization. Employees' willingness the organization was also noted as a necessary element that motivates their working in rural areas albeit the challenging working conditions, unimpressive remuneration, and low job satisfaction, to list a few (Borracci et al., 2015).

According to Rasmi, AlBattat, and Mat Som (2013), salary is among the factors that contribute to job dissatisfaction and employees' departure from an organization. In some government agencies, the imbalance between job responsibility and earnings has created a dilemma among experienced and skilled employees who in turn would seek another employer who offers better benefits (Noorziah, Abdul Kadir, & Dg Kamisah, 2015). Some organizations have theorized that providing more extrinsic rewards, including pay rise and improved promotion systems, would secure an employee's commitment and loyalty as revealed by Miao, Newman, Sun, and Xu (2013) and Johari and Nazir (2015). But due to financial implications, such an approach would be seemingly not appropriate to be implemented for the large public service in Malaysia. In addition, several studies have revealed intrinsic rewards or "psychological rewards" to be more significant than extrinsic rewards in enhancing employees' affective commitment (Poon, 2013; Lam & Liu, 2014). However, according to Johari, Shamsudin, Fee Yean, Yahya, and Adnan (2018), public service employees in Malaysia tend to have higher extrinsic motivation than intrinsic motivation at work. As suggested by the self-determination theory (SDT), extrinsic rewards including monetary incentives would not boost intrinsic work motivation, a factor that eventually secures an employee's commitment (Olafsen, Halvari, Forest, & Deci, 2015). Therefore, it is crucial that the role of intrinsic work motivation be established as a motivating force for individuals to be more committed and willing to continue membership with current organization (Hilaire & de la Robertie, 2018).

According to Meyer and Allen (1991), employees possessing an affective commitment would identified stronger with their organization (loyalty to their employers) and be willing to work for extra miles. In the same vein, Li, Yuan, Ning, and Li-Ying (2015) stated that affective commitment would influence employees' emotional attachment hence their preference to remain working with their current organization thus reducing turnover intentions (Albrecht & Marty,

2017). Also, Lapointe and Vandenberghe (2017) found that turnover was reduced whenever the level of affective commitment increased. Employees tend to stay with an organization that offers a favorable treatment. Affective commitment also encompasses values, a willingness to contribute more towards an organization, and a resilient emotional attachment to that organization (McKay, Kuntz, & Näswall, 2013; Poon, 2013). Some studies have also suggested that affective commitment is a more practical assessment (Bang, Ross, and Reio, 2012) and the core essence (Mercurio, 2015) of organizational commitment, compared to other components such as normative and continuance commitment.

Affectively-committed employees have a greater tendency to stay with an organization and working beyond their typical job obligations (Perryer, Jordan, Firms, & Travaglione, 2010). Mignonac, Vandenberghe, Perrigot, El Akremi, and Herrbach (2015) and Saini (2018) revealed that committed employees are considered to be better performers who are engaged with their job. Additionally, the committed employees are unlikely to engage in counterproductive behaviors such as absenteeism and turnover (Yousef, 2017). As stated by Farid, Izadi, Ismail, and Alipour (2014), committed employees are recognized as a fundamental and vital resource for the success of an organization. Many organizations often assert that skilled and committed employees are the only sustainable source of competitive advantage (Raineri, 2017). Chandra and Joseph (2017) have found that employees with stronger affective organizational commitment found work to be more meaningful and determined to work well, even in challenging situations.

As mentioned by Urhahn, Biemann and Jaros, (2016), most of the employers today are concentrating on materialistic inducements (wage, promotion, benefits, and job security). As a consequence, a humanistic work environment that creates an advantage for both employees and the organization has been neglected (Milliman, Gatling, & Bradley-Geist, 2017; Silla, Navajas, & Koves, 2017). The workplace has become a big part of daily life where employees spend a significant portion of their time and energy. As a result, employees consider their workplace as the right place to seek for purpose and meaningfulness at work (Barron & Chou, 2017; Frieder, Wang, & Oh, 2018). In this regard, the concept of workplace spirituality has been introduced to fulfill employees' spiritual needs and desires (Kalkim, Midilli, & Baysal, 2016; Vasconcelos, 2018a). The new paradigm shift leads to personal fulfillment and high morale that are strongly linked to positive organizational outcomes, such as organizational commitment and improved performance, which were found to have a direct impact on organization's success (Belwalkar, Vohra, & Pandey, 2018; Djafri & Noordin, 2018; Pawar, 2017).

The presence of spirituality in the workplace has fulfilled some personal and job purposes, including meaningfulness of work, ethics (McGhee & Grant, 2017) and productivity (Saini, 2018). As stated by Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson (2003), three essential features of spirituality such as beliefs, rituals, and

community can be cultivated in the workplace. Spirituality in the workplace facilitates meaningfulness in the work environment (Albuquerque, Cunha, Martins, & Sá, 2014; Neubert & Halbesleben, 2015). Recently scholars such as Barron and Chou (2017) found that spirituality could influence and guide individuals in the right direction of their lives. Spirituality lies at the core of individuals' value system (Pradhan, Jena, & Soto, 2017) and fosters the development of worldviews (Tackney et al., 2017), provides a great source of strength and meaning, as well as enhances one's ability to cope (Jacobs & Van Niekerk, 2017). Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson (2003) found that employees who experienced greater purpose and meaning at work were more committed to their organization. Besides, previous scholars (Anil & Gupta, 2017; Houghton, Neck, & Krishnakumar, 2016; Ke, Qiu, & Jiang, 2015) have identified that workplace spirituality plays a significant role in determining employees' organizational commitment. In a recent research done by Ke and Deng (2018) and Mydin, Abdullah and Pitchay (2018), workplace spirituality was found to be vital in ensuring the commitment and performance of employees in the workplace. Also, spirituality was identified as one of the factors that contributed to employees' commitment and ethical behavior (Vitell et al., 2015) and honesty (Eginli, 2017). It is also noted that workplace spirituality has a significant higher influence towards the level of affective commitment, compared to other variables such as intention to quit (Gatling, Kim, & Milliman, 2016), employees' engagement (Ke, Zhang, Yan, & Fu, 2017) and demographic factors (Bell-ellis, Jones, Longstreth, & Neal, 2013). Given these points, the present research employs workplace spirituality as the independent variable due to the crucial role of spiritual values in determining the level of affective commitment among employees.

Besides, the government is committed toward promoting transparency and accountability and to maintaining the integrity of the public service, particularly by instilling moral values among its employees. Among the significant efforts that have been made by the government include the implementation of several policies, such as Instillation of Islamic Values Policy in the Civil Service, Clean, Efficient and Trustworthy Policy and The Twelve Pillars of Civil Service (Siddiquee, 2014). Such efforts indicate that the element of religious belief is believed to be able to strengthen internal and personal values (Jones et al., 2010; Osman-Gani, Hashim, and Ismail, 2013). At the same time, religion is considered as a thrust that can guide an individual to apply positive values in their work life (Reynolds, 2017; Van Cappellen, Toth-Gauthier, Saroglou, & Fredrickson, 2016). Miller and Ewest (2015) and Benefiel, Fry and Geigle (2014) stated that religion would lead to positive job outcomes in the workplace such as commitment, performance and productivity. However, according to Hage and Posner (2015), many researchers have attempted to avoid a subject area related to religion despite many studies supporting that the element is one of the sources of motivation and self-control (Cui, Jo, Na, & Velasquez, 2015). Religiosity is also considered as a source of guidance for work ethics (Feess, Mueller, & Ruhnu, 2014) and work values (Duffy, 2010; Yeganeh, 2015). Other researchers (Salvador, Merchant, and Alexander, 2014) argued that religiosity needs to be given attention due to its role as identification for some individuals in an organization. Salvador et al. (2014) also posited that the level of religiosity might

influence an individual's attitude. According to Cheung, Kennedy, Leung and Hue (2018), the influence of religion within Asian societies are more significant compared to the Western workplace. Given this point, this study will examine the moderating effect of religiosity on the relationship between workplace spirituality and affective commitment.

1.2 Problem Statement

Nowadays, organizations have increasingly realized that their employees are a valued asset and a primary source of capacity to perform. Employees' commitment and high-quality skills play a vital role in ensuring that their employing organization remains competitive (Vem, Pearce, & Goyit, 2017). Given this point, the growing number in turnover rates among employees in the RDAs has triggered the researcher to investigate affective commitment as the best predictor of turnover intention (Fazio, Gong, Sims, & Yurova, 2017; Wong & Wong, 2017).

Although some studies on affective commitment have been done in Malaysian public service organizations, they do not focus on RDAs (Bashir & Long, 2015; Johari & Nazir, 2015). Bashir and Long (2015) have examined affective commitment among the population of academic staffs in a public university, while Johari and Nazir (2015) have chosen to conduct their study among public service employees of selected government agencies in the Northern Region of Peninsular Malaysia. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings to the public service employees may not be possible.

A meta-analysis by Jackson, Meyer, and Wang (2013) found that the strength of affective commitment among employees varies across North American, Western European, and Asian due to dissimilarities of religious belief and work values. Moreover, most of the studies on workplace spirituality have focused on Western context particularly in United States as revealed Vasconcelos (2018b) in a systematic review. Therefore, research initiatives regarding workplace spirituality should focus more on countries within Asia continents to enrich and further develop a comprehensive WS theory. This limitation has prompted the researcher to examine the relationship between workplace spirituality and affective commitment within the Asian context, particularly Malaysia, in order to better understand the phenomenon (Abdullah & Ismail, 2013; Mansor et al., 2013; Rani, Ghani, & Ahmad, 2013).

According to Pradhan, Jena and Soto (2017), the core difference between spirituality and religion is that religion presents you a set of beliefs, dogmas religion and certain values, restrictions and code of conduct for living while spirituality promotes individual's autonomy in defining and connecting to spirit as it fits your heart and mind. Studies on the integration of personal values, such as workplace spirituality in Malaysian organizations, are still in a limited number,

particularly among public service employees in RDAs (Aminah & Zoharah, 2016). Moreover, studies on workplace spirituality in public organizations in Malaysia have mainly utilized samples from healthcare (Anvari, Barzaki, Amiri, Irum, & Shapourabadi, 2017; Yusof, Yaacob, & Rahman, 2018) and educational settings (Campbell & Hwa, 2014; Djafri Fares & Noordin, 2016). Hence, a focus on the public service employees in RDAs would potentially increase the possibility of generalizing the findings within the public service.

Although some of the previous studies (e.g., Indartono and Wulandari, 2013; Djafri and Noordin 2018) have applied the same measurement of workplace spirituality constructed by Milliman et al. (2003), the results of each dimension (meaningful work, sense of community and alignment of values) were mixed and inconsistent. Indartono and Wulandari (2013) revealed that sense of community was not significantly related to affective commitment, whereas Djafri and Noordin (2018) found that all of the three dimensions were significantly related to affective commitment.

Other scholars (Rego and Cunha 2008; Vandenberghe, 2011) recommended that future studies investigate variables that serve as moderators or mediators that affect the relationships between spirituality and commitment. Other researchers (Conklin, Dahling, and Garcia, 2013; and Sharma and Dhar, 2016) proposed that the relationship between predictors and affective commitment could be strengthened by examining moderation effects. It is also noted that several studies employed moderating variables in determining affective commitment, but most were based on demographic characteristics, such as gender, tenure, age, education, and job level (Briggs, Jaramillo, & Weeks, 2012; Zhang & Bloemer, 2011), culture (Joo & Shim, 2010; Yiing & Ahmad, 2009), emotional intelligence (Jena & Pradhan, 2018). Hence, the present study, which employs religiosity as a moderator of the relationship between workplace spirituality and affective commitment, would further enrich the existing literature.

Despite the fact that some studies revealing religiosity as a moderating role (Achour, Mohd Nor, & MohdYusoff, 2016), very few have focused on the moderating effects of religiosity on the relationship between employees' attitudes or behavior in the workplace. According to Zafar, Altaf, Bagram and Hussain (2012), religion facilitates to determine activities that permitted to do at the workplace and forbids for engaging uncommitted attitudes. The employees engage with religiosity also means their work attitudes influenced by the religious self-identity that is formed by the internalization of the beliefs and role expectations offered by religion (Cui et al., 2015).

In fact, Malaysia is well-known as a country with diverse ethnically and a multi-religious society, with more than 99.1% being affiliated with a religious group (Tan, Mahadir Naidu, & Osman, 2018). Hence, most of Malaysian including RDAs employees are associated with a religion and identified themselves as affiliated with one of the three major religions such as Islam, Buddha and

Christian. Given these points, it is recommended that the present study will employ religiosity as a moderating variable for the relationship between workplace spirituality and affective commitment as an additional to the existing studies regarding employees and workplace.

1.3 Research Objective

General

To examine the influence of the three dimensions of workplace spirituality—meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment of values—on affective commitment, and to investigate the moderating effect of religiosity among the RDAs employees.

Specific

- 1) To determine the level of workplace spirituality, affective commitment and religiosity among the RDAs employees.
- 2) To determine the relationship between dimensions of workplace spirituality (meaningful work, sense of community and alignment of values) and affective commitment.
- 3) To determine the moderating effect of religiosity on the relationship between dimensions of workplace spirituality (meaningful work, sense of community and alignment of values) and affective commitment.

Thus, the research hypotheses are as follows:

- 1) There is a significant relationship between meaningful work and affective commitment.
- 2) There is a significant relationship between sense of community and affective commitment.
- 3) There is a significant relationship between the alignment of values and affective commitment.
- 4) Religiosity moderates the relationship between meaningful work and affective commitment.
- 5) Religiosity moderates the relationship between sense of community and affective commitment.
- 6) Religiosity moderates the relationship between the alignment of values and affective commitment.

1.4 Research Questions

The proposed research questions were investigated in this study:

- 1) What is the level of workplace spirituality, affective commitment and religiosity among the RDAs employees?
- 2) What is the relationship between dimensions of workplace spirituality (meaningful work, sense of community and alignment of values) and affective commitment?
- 3) Does religiosity moderates the relationship between dimensions of workplace spirituality (meaningful work, sense of community and alignment of values) and affective commitment?

1.5 Significance of the Research

Findings from the study can facilitate organizations in developing an employee-and-employer relationship into a harmonious working condition. In addition, the findings can be used by human resource professionals to gain knowledge on the issue that is occurring in their organization while increasing their employees' affective commitment.

The study is also expected to offer some new directions to the current policies, practices, and theoretical developments. For policy transformation, the findings may clarify the importance of individual, group, and organization in playing a role in strengthening human capital and reliable workforce. A dramatic and rapid economic progress has caused the high reliance on human capital development as a workforce that can enhance the country's long-term sustainable growth (Siddiquee, Xavier & Mohamed, 2017).

For practitioners, the findings of the study may inform about the wide range of current and future practices. In any situation, human resource personnel should have an appropriate framework that can guide them in dealing with employees' affective commitment in an organization. Employees are continuously being regarded as a valuable resource to many organizations, and managing human has become more complicated and even tougher. The unpredictable changes in the current workplace environment and daily routine have diverted the attention of organizations to concentrate and have a better understanding on the factors that influence employees' affective commitment. This study is also expected to inform organizations about the contemporary practice of managing employees in Malaysian public organizations by emphasizing on workplace spirituality to promote the affective commitment and retention of experienced employees. An organization may benefit from the fulfillment of workplace spirituality that enables their employees to be more committed and loyal. By empirically examining workplace spirituality as predictors of affective commitment, this study hopes to

contribute some points for the government to improve the existing work conditions.

The study is expected to offer some additional inputs for theoretical evolution, knowledge, practices, and policy development. In this study, conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and self-regulation theory (Carver and Scheier, 1998) were used to explain the relationship between workplace spirituality and affective commitment and the moderating role of religiosity. This study intends to broaden the existing knowledge on affective commitment by mainly referring to the conservation of resources theory. A focus on public service organization in Malaysia would increase the number of studies in the Asian context and non-Western setting that are based on both theories (Miao et al., 2013; Ng & Feldman, 2011). According to Hong (2011), there is a tendency of religious fragmentations in the Western world, particularly in the workplace. Additionally, most of the published studies on religiosity in Western mainly involved Judeo-Christian and English-speaking samples (Abdel-Khalek, 2010; Miller & Ewest, 2013). This present study focuses on the above argument as an attempt to provide a better understanding of public service employees' affective commitment in a non-western context. The present study also applies the self-regulation theory by focusing on the effects of the moderating variable of religiosity on the relationship among the three dimensions of workplace spirituality and employees' affective commitment. Past studies have recommended further investigation on the role of religiosity as a source of identification in affective commitment studies (Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink, & Hofman, 2012). Further, this present study is also one of the initial efforts to explore the moderation effect of religiosity on the relationship between workplace spirituality and employees' affective commitment.

For policy development, the findings of the study may clarify the importance of every person to play a role in an organization at every level, such as individual, organizational and community. It is undoubtedly that human resource is one of the most crucial elements that need to be considered for an organization to become effective and efficient.

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

This study assumes that the measurement scales and research models from Western literature would appropriate and relevant to determine the affective commitment of Malaysian public service employees. The measurement scales and research models have been widely used in most of the studies in Malaysia. However, some minor modifications need to be made on the instruments particularly the language in order to suit the context of the study. Also, the study assumed that there is no response bias by the respondents while answering questions. However, each respondents may have their own definition of objective and subjective workplace spirituality, affective commitment and religiosity varies due to individual differences in values, interests and beliefs. To

facilitate this, the survey respondents were assured the confidentiality of their feedback to reduce any potential for dishonesty in responses to the survey questions. Participants were informed that none of their responses would be traced back to them.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Research

The scope of this study as follow:

- 1) The research would involve only the public service participants specifically the employees who are currently serve at the RDAs; and
- 2) This study would measure only the three dimensions of workplace spirituality (meaningful work, sense of community and alignment of values) and explore the relationships between these dimensions and affective commitment and the moderating role of religiosity.

The limitations of this study as follow:

- 1) The study involved only rural development organizations, generalizing the findings to all government departments may not be applicable. Accordingly, generalizing the findings to the private sector or general populations might be questionable. The organizational function, system, and structure are significantly different between government departments. Therefore, the employees' views may be diverse due to differences in the work environment, which may influence their perceptions. Also, due to a majority of employees in the Malaysian civil sector is Muslims, generalizing the findings to the entire working population in the country may not be applicable;
- 2) Workplace spirituality is not the only variable that influences affective commitment. There are several other factors that may have significant impact on affective commitment, such as organizational and job characteristic or work experiences (Ng & Feldman, 2011). Due to limited time and resources, this study focuses only on the three dimensions of workplace spirituality;
- 3) This study may also have limitations in terms of the instrument employed due to its initial development being used in the Western context. The instrument might contain culturally sensitive items that may not be detectable;
- 4) The use of a cross-sectional research design may limit generalizability of the results A cross-sectional study may not provide definite information about cause-and-effect relationships, and it offers a limited assessment of respondents' view at a different time;
- 5) The survey was self-administered, and the data were also obtained only from a single source (employees in four agencies) and the most standard

method (questionnaire with Likert like scales) was used. Therefore, the data obtained may exhibit response bias that may aggravate error in measurement and the data validity; and

- 6) The data from this study were mostly gathered from a self-administered survey. The investigations of employees' affective commitment and its predictor of workplace spirituality dimensions were based on self-reported data, and therefore, might have led to common method variance. The accuracy of data also varies according to the employees' willingness and honesty in responding to all the questions. To minimize such bias, completed instructions were provided for every section of the questionnaire.

1.8 Operational Definitions of Variables

For consistency, the following operational definitions were adopted throughout the research:

- 1) Affective commitment.

The extent to which employees evaluate themselves as emotionally attached, devote their energies and characterized by the willingness to maintain membership to accomplish the organization's goal.

- 2) Workplace spirituality

Workplace spirituality explains about the one's purpose in life, better relationship with colleagues and other people associated with workplace, and the values alignment of working organization.

- a) Meaningful work

Employees' experience of enjoyment and pleasure at work, enthusiastic about and energized by work, increased work motivation through personal fulfilling and consider their work as a sense of contribution.

- b) Sense of community

The level of individuals' feeling of deep connection to others and occurs at the group, interconnected and mutually care and supported for each other that finally develop their sense of belonging to the workplace.

- c) Alignment of values

A degree of congruency and consistency between employees' and organization's values, mission, and objectives and associated with the organization's purpose and mission.

3) Religiosity

The extent to which an individual devoted to, guided and motivated by his/her religion. Religiosity also refer to the sense of the importance of his/her religion in their daily lives.

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BIODATA OF STUDENT

Wan Rahim Wan Yunan was born in Pasir Puteh, Kelantan. He enrolled for Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia in 2001 and he graduated with the bachelor's degree in 2006. He began pursuing his Master of Science in Rural Advancement at the Institute for Social Science Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia in September 2013. He joined the public service in the year 2006 as an Administrative and Diplomatic Officer. Among the responsibilities he shouldered include as an Assistant Secretary at Ministry of Rural and Regional Development and Principal Assistant Director at Ministry of Works. Currently he is the Principal Assistant Secretary at Ministry of Transport (MOT). Wan Rahim is married to Nor Aishah Sulaiman and they are blessed with three children (Wan Akif Naufal, Wan Muhammad Ariq and Wan Muaz Muawiz).

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Journals

- WR Wan Yunan, Aminah, A., & Zoharah, O. (2017). The Experience of Workplace Spirituality : Do Age and Educational Attainment Matter ? The Experience of Workplace Spirituality : Do Age and Educational Attainment Matter ? *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(7), 62–69. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i7/3078>
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- Wan Rahim (2016). *Workplace Spirituality among Younger and Older Employees with Different Educational Attainment*. Paper presented at The Third International Conference on Youth (ICYOUTH) 2016, organized by UPM.
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