

Predicting Islamic Ethical Work Behavior Using the Theory of Planned Behavior and Religiosity in Brunei

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The objective of this study was to employ the theory of planned behavior in examining the inclusion of Islamic religiosity in predicting Islamic ethical work behavior. Islamic religiosity was included as Islam plays a dominant role in Brunei's society. Participants consisted of 370 Malay Muslim teachers. Structural equation modeling was used to test three proposed models. While Model 1 was based on the theory of planned behavior, it does not take into consideration the distinctive Islamic context of the Bruneian society. Hence, Model 2 was proposed to include Islamic religiosity. To better reflect the population, a model with Islamic religiosity was further augmented leading to Model 3. Results showed support for only two models: Model 1 and Model 3. Model 3 was revised by removing non-significant paths. Model comparison indicated that the revised Model 3 (AIC = 100.82; BIC = 103.55) is a better model than Model 1 (AIC = 141.88; BIC = 143.98). This suggests that the predictive power of the theory of planned behavior can be improved by including dominant cultural factors, such as religiosity, that affect a person's belief. In conclusion, it can be said that religion is indispensable in exploring and understanding how the people in Brunei think and behave in their workplace and society.

Keywords: Islam, ethical work behavior, religiosity, theory of planned behavior, Brunei

Culture has always been viewed as an antecedent of behavior (Lonner & Adamopoulos, 1997) with beliefs including religion being one of the several cultural factors (Frederick, 1995). Many have reviewed and observed the impact of religion or religiosity (e.g. Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003; Gorsuch, 1988) including of Islam on individual's physical and mental health, and behavior (e.g. Abu-Raiya, 2013). Its effect on a person's behavior is believed to exist because it acts as a self-regulating and self-controlling mechanism in individuals (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). This was the rationale observed concerning the role of religiosity on individuals making ethical judgment and the formation of intention to act on it (Weaver & Agle, 2002). Recent studies have also shown the influence of religiosity toward attitude and behavior (e.g. Charsetad, 2016; Graafland, 2017).

Religiosity can be assessed to predict ethical awareness (Conroy & Emerson, 2004). This is because those who are religious will strongly align their behavior with religion and the beliefs derived from it (Keller, Smith, & Smith, 2007). They are more aware of ethical issues (Singhapakdi, Salyachivin, Virakul, & Veerayangkur, 2000) and more likely to oppose behavior that goes against their religious belief (Wagner & Sanders, 2001). Hence, in investigating ethical behavior, religion is an important variable if it is a cultural factor of a specific society or among individuals.

In the Southeast Asian countries of Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia, Islam is the religion of the majority and has long played a central role in the lives of its followers. This study focuses on Brunei, which has a culture and values that revolve around the national philosophy of *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB) or the Malay Islamic Monarchy (Ibrahim, 2003). This national

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philosophy – consisting of the three core concepts of *Melayu* (Malay), Islam, and *Beraja* (Monarchy) – is an integral part of the country's national culture, which emphasizes shared values in the society, and influences government structure, policies, and even national development (Mail, 2011). Out of the three concepts of MIB, Islam plays the most significant and dominant role. Ibrahim (2003, p. 132) explained that “the focus of the philosophy of MIB on whatever activities are being conducted, politically, economically and culturally, must be based on Islamic ethos.” Thus, any activity, policy, tradition, and custom under the concepts of Malay and Monarchy that are not in accordance with Islamic teachings are either dismissed or adapted to what is acceptable in Islam. This includes daily aspects of life in Brunei (Tinkong, 2009).

It is this national philosophy of MIB that differentiates Brunei relative to other Muslim countries because it consisted of not just Islam but also concepts of *Melayu* and *Beraja*. It is significantly different than in Saudi Arabia but almost similar to Malaysia; however, the latter has a more pluralistic society and diverse ethnic groups relative to Brunei, which is uniquely homogenous.

As Harpaz (1998) had argued, religion cannot be ignored when examining practice and behavior in the workplace. But current literature concerning Brunei mostly discussed idealistic behaviors based on the national philosophy, with arguments based on custom, government policy, and history that religion affects behavior but never directly assessing them together (e.g. Ibrahim, 2003; Mail, 2011; Tinkong, 2009).

So far, there are limited studies examining Islamic religiosity (IR) and Islamic ethical work behavior (IEWB) on Muslim populations. Many focused on other similar variables such as Islamic work ethic and organizational citizenship behavior (e.g. Murtaza et al., 2014), and IR and ethical judgment (e.g. Muhamad, 2014), but not between IR and IEWB. One study had been on ethical behavior and religiosity, but simply that the sample population were Iranian Muslims and used a non-denominational measure of religiosity (e.g. Karami, Olfati, & Dubinsky, 2014). In another study, this time in Malaysia, Malay Muslim students were surveyed concerning IR in order to ascertain the relationship to tolerance levels toward unethical business activities (e.g. Muhamad, 2014). This study found that the more religious the individual, the less tolerant they are toward unethical business practices.

Additionally, researchers have observed differences in ethical behavior based on demographic variables, such as gender (e.g. Ones & Viswesvaran, 1998; Ross & Robertson, 2003; Smith & Oakley, 1997). Some have observed no differences or had conflicting results with demographic variables (e.g. Jones & Kavanagh, 1996; Lund, 2000; Shafer, Morris, & Ketchand, 2001), except when religiosity is taken into consideration (e.g. Keller et al., 2007).

This present paper attempts to examine the role of IR in predicting IEWB in Brunei. The findings will address the non-existent literature, highlight the link between religion and behavior, and determine the extent of the role of religion, which is part of the national philosophy and a cultural factor, in affecting the behavior of the population. This will assess the influence of beliefs, specifically of religious beliefs, toward behavior in the society. The findings contributed will be unique and specific to the context of Brunei.

Although previous literature had examined religiosity and behavior especially ethical behavior and those in the workplace, these findings cannot be applied to Brunei. This is because cultural factors, including religion, can cause differences in beliefs and behavior (Lonner & Adamopoulos, 1997). As an example, researchers had examined work goals in Brunei, Singapore, and Malaysia (Chan & Pearson, 2002); they noted that while these countries are similar, each has their unique differentiating factor that affects the population and cited that in Brunei, it is the national philosophy of MIB which has Islam as the dominant factor. Each population, society, and country has their own unique context; hence, findings may vary and cannot simply be generalized outside the studied population. Therefore, this current study aimed to explore IEWB with IR using a theory that is suitable for the population in Brunei.

Models and Research Questions: TPB and Religiosity

In examining behavior, the theory of planned behavior (TPB) is determined to be suitable for this study (see Ajzen, 1991). This is because of the flexibility of the model of the theory being adapted depending on context (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Based on the theory, three models are proposed in this study.

In Model 1, all three direct belief factors – attitude toward behavior (ATB), subjective norm (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) – theoretically will drive the formation of behavioral intention (BI) that can predict retrospective behavior (RB). Additionally, PBC also predicts RB. This model is strictly based on TPB. This will address the following research question (Research Question 1): Can TPB predict IEWB?

Model 1 only examines beliefs and behavior, but not religiosity. Religiosity is an important variable especially if the context is strongly related. A review study had suggested that the inclusion of values and religiosity into the model would improve its predictive ability (e.g. Godin & Kok, 1996). One study had included religiosity in a TPB model to assess the intention to sign an organ donor card (e.g. Stephenson et al., 2008). On IR, researchers in Malaysia had done this in examining the intention to undertake Islamic home financing service (e.g. Alam, Janor, Zanariah, Che Wel, & Ahsan, 2012). Therefore, in Model 2, IR is introduced as the fourth direct belief factor in predicting BI. As an extension of the theory to include IR, this will address the following research question (Research Question 2): Does the inclusion of IR as the fourth belief factor improve the model to predict IEWB?

However, these two models might not be suitable in the context of Brunei. In a highly religious society like Brunei, individuals are influenced by religion at both the individual and societal level. As religion acts as a mechanism in regulating and controlling the individual, level of religiosity may affect attitude. A similar argument with norm and perceived control can be said to affect attitude as well. There are possibilities that these variables are able to influence intention and behavior. Hence, this should be tested whether or not such model can better predict IEWB among the population. It was observed that some researchers had extended the theory to examine personal values (e.g. Jayawardhena, 2004) and religiosity (e.g. Charsetad, 2016) affecting attitude. In a more recent study, religiosity's influence on attitude and subjective norm was assessed (Graafland, 2017). Based on the literature on the cultural context of Brunei (e.g. Ibrahim, 2003; Mail, 2011; Tinkong, 2009), several considerations were proposed to be tested in Model 3.

In Model 3, three factors – IR, SN, and PBC – affect ATB. Following this, all four factors will drive the formation of BI as well as RB. This will address the following research question (Research Question 3): Is the augmented model of TPB a better model to predict IEWB in this cultural context?

Materials and Methods

Participants

The participants recruited for this study consisted of 785 Malay Muslim teachers from 10 public schools in Brunei. The criteria were Malay as this is the majority ethnicity in Brunei, and Muslim because this study is assessing IR. Teachers are selected instead of other professions because this study would like to include institutional differences into the demographic: religious education institution and mainstream education institution. It would be difficult to recruit participants of this nature if this study tried to use other occupations. Ethical approval and data collection procedure had been approved by relevant bodies. Data collection period was in February 2017. The participants voluntarily completed and returned the survey.

Measures

Demographic. Demographic items consisted of institution, age group, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, marital status, level of education, employment status, and teaching experience. Three questions were asked: 1) Do you consider yourself religious?; 2) Do you consider yourself growing up in an environment influenced by religion?; and 3) Do you consider your current work environment influenced by religion? These three questions were asked as a subjective measure to how they viewed themselves, their upbringing, and work environment, with regards to the influence of Islam, providing this study the perceived context if it exists.

Theory of Planned Behavior. Retrospective behavior (RB) was measured with a single statement consisting of target, action, context, and time. The statement was “In the past, I have been working ethically according to Islam every day at the workplace”. It was rated on a 7-point scale: false – true. For BI, it is measured with 6 items. A 7-point Likert-type scale is used to score the statements; scales include disagree – agree, unlikely – likely, and I definitely will not – I definitely will. The statement for the question was structured so that the response is relative to how the person perceived what IEWB is.

Attitude toward behavior (ATB) evaluated an individual's favorable or unfavorable attitude regarding behavior and was rated on a 7-point scale with bad – good, harmful – beneficial, and worthless – useful, unpleasant – pleasant, undesirable – desirable, and boring – enjoyable. Subjective norm (SN) measured the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior with 6 items. It was rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale, with scales include disapprove – approve, discourage – encourage, false – true, unlikely – likely, and disagree – agree. Perceived behavioral control (PBC) assessed the perception of whether or not the individual is capable of or has control over performing the behavior. With 6 items, it was rated on a 7-point scale with false – true, difficult – easy, disagree – agree, disagree – agree, and no control – complete control.

Islamic Religiosity. Islamic religiosity (IR) was measured using the *Islamic Ethical Principles* subscale (Abu-Raiya, Pargament, Mahoney, & Stein, 2008). It assessed whether the person agrees or disagrees that he or she acts on recommended ethical behavior and avoids prohibited unethical behavior because of Islamic beliefs. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Analyses

For testing the models, all items within their own factor, with the exception of RB (a single item measure), were summed together, creating an aggregate measure: ATB, SN, PBC, IR, and BI. In assessing each model, effect paths were examined, whether or not significant, using the threshold of p-value being less than 0.05 in accepting the effect is significant. Any non-significant path was removed from the model. Then the model fit was evaluated, based on chi-square difference test and several fit indices. All models were assessed while controlling for age, institution, and gender, on both behavioral intention and retrospective behavior. For comparing models, analyses involving Akaike information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) were conducted. Burnham and Anderson (2002) suggest at least a value of 4 for AIC differences, which will be used here. The same value was used with BIC in determining which model has a better fit relative to others.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Only 428 out of 785 participants returned the questionnaires, and out of this, 370 completed questionnaires were identified as usable, with 152 from religious education institutions and 218 from mainstream education institutions. Majority of the participants perceived themselves as religious (88.8%), having an upbringing influenced by religion (85.0%), and that religion influenced their working environment (83.9%).

Table 1 presents the reliability of the instruments and the correlation among variables. All measures, except for PBC, were found to have excellent internal consistency, ranging between 0.89 and 0.93. However, for PBC, the internal consistency was found to be relatively low, $\alpha = 0.71$, but adequate. All correlations were significant at $p \leq .01$ (2-tailed) with r value ranging between 0.41 and 0.88.

Model 1

The path analysis for Model 1 is illustrated in Figure 1. The model fit is $\chi^2(2) = 57.88$, $p \leq 0.001$, $CMIN/df = 28.94$; $RMSEA = 0.28$; $PCLOSE \leq 0.001$; $NFI = 0.96$; and $CFI = 0.96$. Most of the fit indices show a good fit of the model, while others such as chi-square, RMSEA, and PCLOSE show a poor fit. The model explained 79.6% of the variance in BI, and 55.3% in RB.

Table 1
Reliability and Correlation among Variables

	ATB	SN	PBC	BI	RB	IR	Cronbach's α
ATB	1						0.93
SN	0.63**	1					0.89
PBC	0.68**	0.63**	1				0.71
BI	0.88**	0.63**	0.69**	1			0.91
RB	0.65**	0.70**	0.69**	0.65**	1		-
IR	0.59**	0.41**	0.45**	0.53**	0.51**	1	0.91

Note: ATB = Attitude toward behavior; SN = Subjective norm; PBC = Perceived behavioral control; BI = Behavioral intention; RB = Retrospective behavior; IR = Islamic religiosity.
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

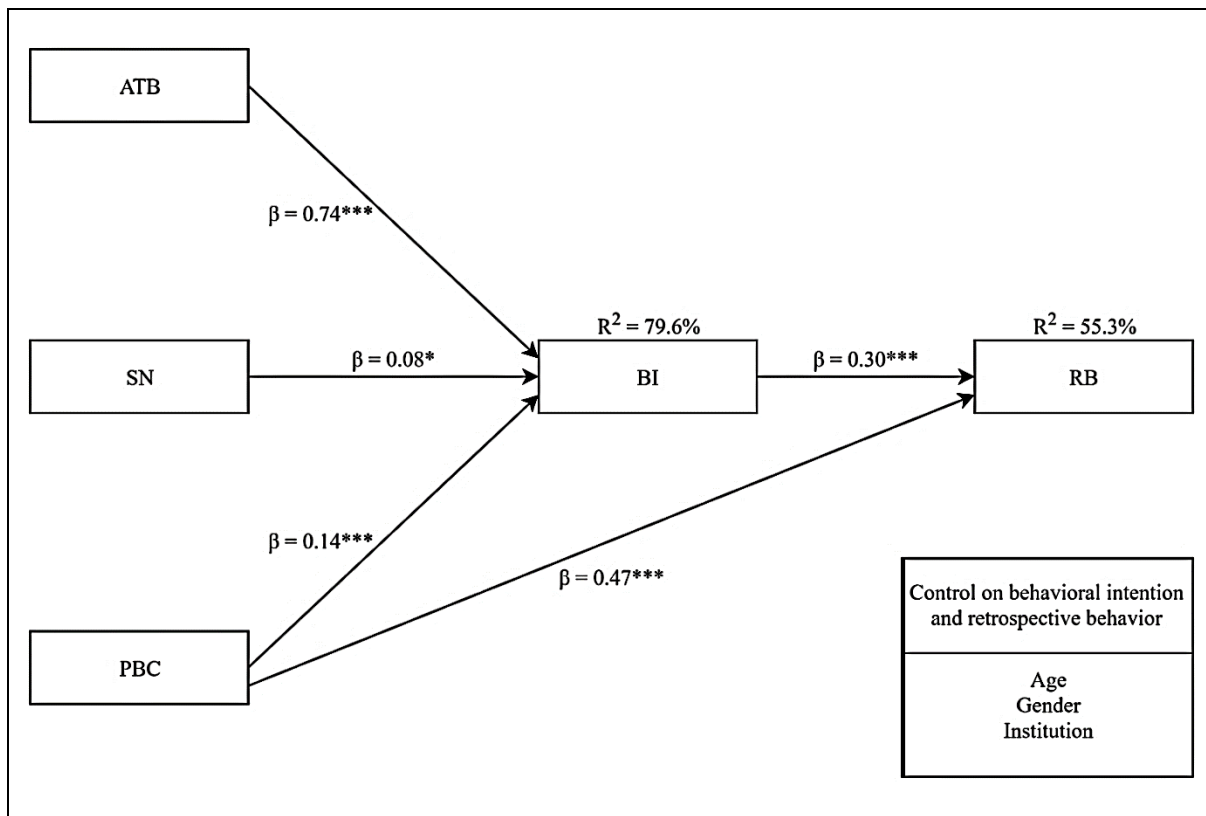


Figure 1. Path Analysis of Model 1.

Note: * $p \leq .05$, and *** $p \leq .001$.

Model 2

In Model 2, IR was included in the model as a predictor for BI. However, the result from the analysis showed that IR was not a significant predictor for BI ($p = 0.85$). This may be due Islamic religiosity playing a role through a different pathway. Hence, the research design involved three models to be tested with Model 3 having some modifications to the pathways. All other beta values in Model 2 remain the same as in Model 1. No further analysis was done on this model.

Model 3

As had been observed in Model 2, religiosity does not play a role toward affecting intention. Hence, Model 3 was tested. After initial analysis on Model 3, IR was found to be a non-significant predictor for BI ($p = 0.85$). Similarly, ATB was a non-significant predictor of retrospective behavior ($p = 0.45$). The path effect of BI to RB was also not significant ($p = 0.20$). Therefore, Model 3 was revised. This was done by removing non-significant paths one by one, starting with the path that had the largest p-value. After removing the first two paths, the result shows all paths were now significant, including the path for BI to RB.

Figure 2 illustrates the path analysis for the revised Model 3. The model fit is $\chi^2(5) = 2.82$, $p = 0.73$, $\text{CMIN}/df = 0.56$; $\text{RMSEA} \leq 0.001$; $\text{PCLOSE} = 0.94$; $\text{NFI} = 1.00$; and $\text{CFI} = 1.00$. Unlike in Model 1, the result of chi-square difference test for the revised Model 3 is not significant, indicating a good fit. All the other fit indices show a good fit. While NFI and CFI have a value of 1, the model still has some degree of freedom; hence, it is acceptable. The model explained 60.4% of the variance in ATB, 79.6% in BI, and 62.9% in RB.

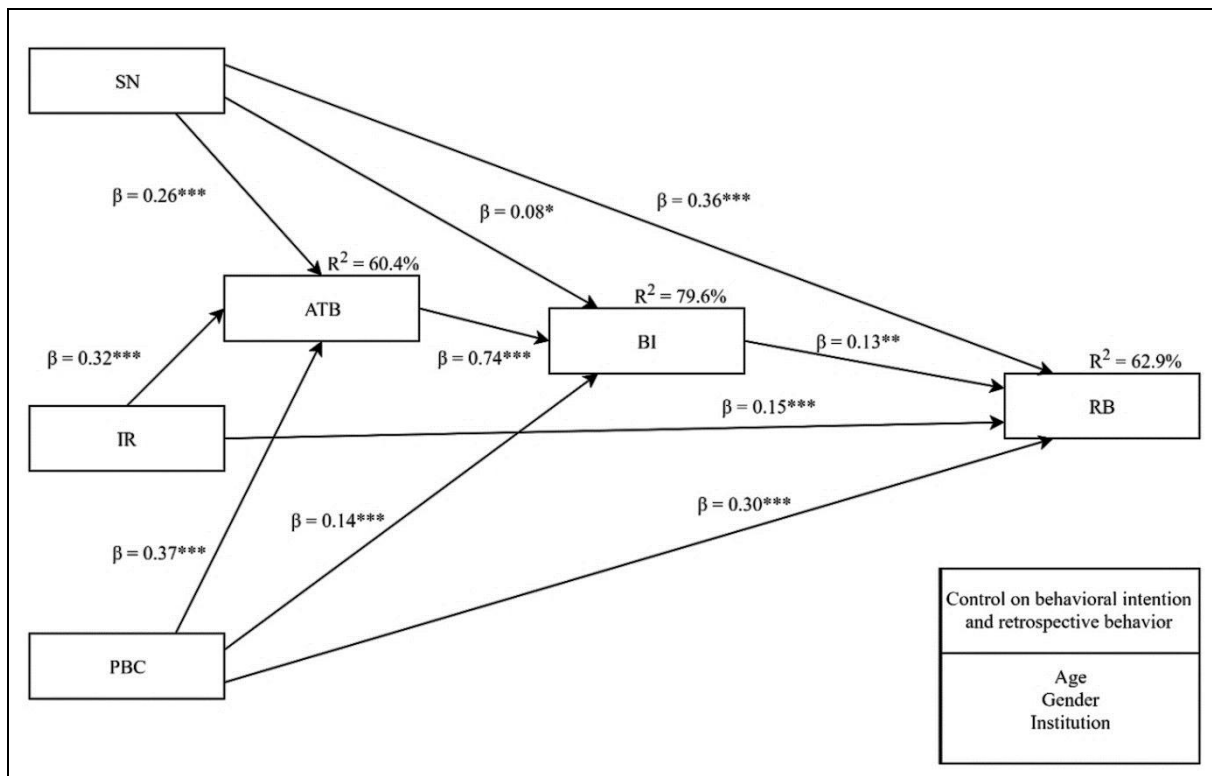


Figure 2. Path Analysis of Revised Model 3.

Note: $*p \leq .05$, $**p \leq .01$ and $***p \leq .001$.

Models Comparison

The revised Model 3 ($\text{AIC} = 100.82$; $\text{BIC} = 103.55$) has a lower absolute value of AIC and BIC than Model 1 ($\text{AIC} = 141.88$; $\text{BIC} = 143.98$). In terms of differences, AIC's difference is 41.06, while BIC difference is 40.43. All these indicate that the revised Model 3 is a better model relative to Model 1.

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore Islamic ethical work behavior (IEWB) using the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and the inclusion of religiosity to better suit the population in Brunei. The variables examined are attitude toward behavior (ATB), subjective norm (SN), perceived behavioral control (PBC), retrospective behavior (RB), behavioral intention (BI) and Islamic religiosity (IR). Overall, Model 1 is adequate to predict IEWB. It was further observed that IR plays a significant role in the revised Model 3 but not in Model 2.

Research Question 1

Can TPB Predict IEWB? In Model 1, RB can be predicted by BI and PBC. Then BI was predicted strongly by ATB while being predicted relatively weak by SN and PBC. This indicated that ATB is a dominant variable over BI compared to the other variables. However, the model has conflicting results regarding fit to data, as indicated by chi-square difference test, as well as RMSEA and PCLOSE, showing a poor fit. Other fit indices showed a good fit. Therefore, in answering this research question, this study can only conclude that with regard to model fit, the result suggests only partial support for the model.

Research Question 2

Does the inclusion of IR as the fourth belief factor improves the model to predict IEWB? In Model 2, IR was tested as the fourth factor in predicting BI. However, it was found not to be significant and therefore rejected. Evidence had provided support that the inclusion of religiosity as the fourth factor does not play any role in improving the model.

Research Question 3

Is the augmented model of TPB a better model to predict IEWB in this cultural context? The revised Model 3 with control variables is a good model to predict BI and RB, as well as ATB. This is because the model reflects religion and society influencing a person's perception of the behavior. The regression of BI weakened compared to the regression in Model 1 in predicting RB. It was SN and PBC that were significantly stronger predictors, followed by IR and then BI. ATB was not a significant predictor of RB and was removed, but it predicted strongly BI to the extent it overshadowed the effects of PBC and SN. For ATB, in order of strong to weak, it was predicted by PBC, IR, and SN.

Unlike in Model 1, the result for chi-square difference test for the revised Model 3 was not significant. This indicated that the model has a good fit to the data. Similarly, RMSEA and PCLOSE showed a good fit. Comparing AIC and BIC of Model 1 and the revised Model 3, there is support that the revised Model 3 is a better model. Therefore, it can be concluded that this augmented model is a better model of TPB in predicting IEWB within this specific cultural context.

Examining the Role of Islamic Religiosity in Predicting Islamic Ethical Work Behavior

The respondents perceived Islam playing a significant role in their life. Not only on them as an individual, but also on their upbringing and at their workplace. This suggests that there is a basis to religion, specifically Islam, affecting the population in Brunei; even though at this point it is a perceived effect by individuals.

However, the models tested provided even stronger evidence that IR does have a role in affecting behavior and can be assessed to predict IEWB. Both Model 1 and the revised Model 3 can be employed to predict IEWB, with the latter being a better model. It should, however, be noted that having the intention does not necessarily lead to behavior. In this current study, intention in the revised Model 3 has a weak effect compared to the other variables, although still significant. In fact, current findings in the literature on intention and behavior are somewhat inconsistent (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Chandon, Morwitz, & Reinartz, 2005).

It is common to examine PBC as a predictor variable of behavior, and sometimes even better than BI; although it should be interpreted together (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). This study further extended this notion in testing IR and other pathways as had been done by others (e.g. Charsetad, 2016; Graafland, 2017; Jayawardhena, 2004). Hence, Model 3 was examined. ATB was not found to be a predictor of RB, while IR was not a predictor of BI. The model had to be revised. The revised model 3 is a good and better model in examining IEWB in Brunei, compared to Model 1. The finding suggests that although an individual does intend to work ethically in the workplace according to Islam resulting to the behavior itself, it also depends primarily on the perceived social norm around him and the degree of control to perform it, as well the person's level of religiosity; all of which can be a predictor.

Contrary to previous studies on ethical behavior and decision-making (e.g. Singhapakdi et al., 2000; Wagner & Sanders, 2001), this study did not observe religiosity as a predictor for intention to act ethically, but as a predictor of behavior itself instead. This suggests that in the context of the population of Brunei, being religious does not necessarily translate to forming the intention. However, this does not mean religiosity has no place in predicting intention. It plays an indispensable role together with perceived norm and degree of control in shaping a person's attitude. This attitude then influences intention, with a relatively stronger influence compared to other variables. This contrast might be explained by the fact that they already dominantly influenced the attitude of a person and indirectly affected intention through attitude. This may also explain why attitude is not a predictor of behavior. A similar argument goes for why religiosity is not a predictor of intention.

In Brunei, behavior is mostly debated using the national philosophy, whereby the religion is the most dominant factor over other factors in an ideal Bruneian society. The revised model 3 showed that while attitude is affected strongly by PBC ($\beta = 0.37$) and IR ($\beta = 0.32$), there is only a relatively weak effect by SN ($\beta = 0.26$). On intention, the effect of ATB ($\beta = 0.74$) overshadowed the others. However, when behavior is assessed directly, it is SN ($\beta = 0.36$) that has the strongest effect on it compared with PBC ($\beta = 0.30$), IR ($\beta = 0.15$), and BI ($\beta = 0.13$). This suggests that at the end of the day, the actualized behaviour, in this case, IEWB, depends strongly on the context and how it is perceived collectively by the people around. Even so, it is still necessary to look at all variables as a model, because each variable has a role. These variables, directly and indirectly, do influence behavior and therefore can be employed in assessing and predicting IEWB. They need to be examined together when assessing behavior in Brunei.

Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that there is a need to consider beliefs, namely religiosity, when examining behavior, especially in a Muslim society. Theories such as the theory of planned behavior (TPB) do not include these factors, but the theory is open to adaptation of its model to suit the context of the population. This can improve the predictive strength of the theory and model. In this present study, it has been demonstrated that an augmented model of TPB with Islamic religiosity (IR) predicting Islamic ethical work behavior (IEWB) in Brunei, that is the revised Model 3, is a better model compared to using a strict TPB model. In exploring behavior in society, it is important to take into consideration the context of the population, which in this case was sampled in Brunei where the government sanctions Islam as the primary guiding concept of the national philosophy of *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB) or Malay Islamic Monarchy. This current study had also observed a majority of the participants perceived Islam as having a significant role in their life and society. Therefore, when behaviors are to be examined in Brunei, Islam as the religion of the majority and what the population perceives as the norm cannot be dismissed easily.

Contributions and Implications

This study contributes to the current literature in relation to Brunei, especially expanding the works of Ibrahim (2003), Mail (2011), and Tinkong (2009) that are of qualitative nature, and that had claimed the society is influenced by religion, arguing based on history, custom, government, and the national philosophy. Specifically, the revised Model 3 demonstrates the role of IR in predicting IEWB, as well as being augmented with additional pathways that better reflect the sample population, and arguably to a certain extent the population in Brunei.

These findings can be used by organizations in Brunei for behavioral change in order to promote IEWB. To do this, first, it is necessary for organizations to emphasize an Islamic work culture within the workplace. Secondly, organizations need to determine and affirm what is ethical work behavior according to Islam. These two are important because IEWB needs to be established clearly as part of an organizational and work culture. Following this, the management should also facilitate these desirable behaviors and remove any obstructing barriers. In this process, no factor should be neglected because all factors have symbiotic relationships.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this study had presented original findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, this study measures retrospective behavior instead of the present. For future research, a prospective behavioral measure that will assess future or present behavior is suggested. Secondly, in a society where the norm emphasizes religion, bias may exist on measuring IEWB due to self-reported measure. Future research may employ more objective measures, although this may be costly in terms of time and money. Participants can be provided with a checklist of IEWB to be completed for a period of time. A more comprehensive approach would be for managers or supervisors at work to give periodical assessments concerning their employees' IEWB. IEWB had not been conceptualized clearly at this point due to many ethical

behavior can be relate back to Islam. For example, being punctual to work is related to the concept of time in Islam; another example is work itself being related to the Islamic concepts of hard work and responsibility. Finally, the sample were exclusively Malay Muslim teachers in Brunei and consequently there is the issue of generalization in other research settings. However, the present study has assumed that it is generalizable due to the dominant role Islam has in Brunei culture, and future researchers may expand on other professions in Brunei for further confirmation.

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