Integrating Islamic Work Ethics in Work from Home Arrangement

Mengintegrasi Etika Kerja Islam dalam Pengaturan Bekerja dari Rumah

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in changes in the way working is perceived. The concept of work from home which was previously only associated with specific types of work has had to be implemented for many sectors in Malaysia. This concept is novel in Malaysia, thus creating a lot of uncertainties in both law and practice, including the issue of work ethics. This mode of working may be the new norm in the future, which makes it important to examine the work ethics for work from home. The objectives of this study are firstly, to analyse the concept of Islamic work ethics, and secondly, to integrate Islamic work ethics in a work from home arrangement. It is believed that the application of Islamic work ethics by both the employers and the employees may avoid conflicts at work due to different expectations. In this context, the research is based on secondary sources and analyses of existing literature, and on reading of Islamic texts (the Quran and Hadith). Islamic work ethics consist of universal values where they underline the responsibilities of employer to live up to promises, consider an employee's situation, negotiate with an employee to improve their contract, and equal treatment of employees. Apart from that, employees are also responsible for keeping their promises, being honest, working in a team and performing their jobs in good faith. This research found that Islamic work ethics can hinder conflicts between employer and employee. They are suitable for integration in working from home arrangements as the new normal in Malaysia and directly encourage the implementation of organisational justice.

Keywords: Ethics; work ethics; Islamic work ethics; work from home; work

ABSTRAK

Pandemik COVID-19 telah mengubah persepsi cara bekerja. Bekerja dari rumah yang hanya dikaitkan untuk pekerjaan tertentu kini perlu dilaksanakan dalam semua sektor di Malaysia. Oleh kerana konsep bekerja dari rumah ini masih baru di Malaysia, ia telah menyebabkan ketidakpastian dalam undang-undang dan praktis, termasuklah dalam etika kerja. Bekerja dari rumah mungkin akan menjadi satu yang norma di masa hadapan, oleh itu adalah penting untuk menganalisis etika kerja ketika bekerja dari rumah. Objektif kajian ini adalah pertamanya, untuk menganalisis konsep etika kerja dalam Islam dan keduanya untuk mengintegrasikan etika kerja Islam dalam pengaturan bekerja dari rumah. Dipercayai bahawa dengan mengkaji etika kerja dalam Islam oleh majikan dan pekerja, isu di tempat kerja disebabkan jangkaan berbeza boleh dihindari. Dalam konteks ini, kajian ini adalah berdasarkan sumber sekunder, analisis literatur dan sumber primer dalam Islam (Quran dan Hadith). Etika kerja dalam Islam mempunyai nilai universal dimana ia menggariskan tanggungjawab majikan untuk menepati janji, mempertimbangkan keadaan pekerja, berunding dengan pekerja untuk memperbaiki kontrak mereka dan melayan pekerja dengan adil. Selain itu, pekerja juga bertanggungjawab untuk menepati janji dan berlaku jujur, bekerja dalam kumpulan dan berniat baik dalam melaksanakan pekerjaannya. Kajian ini mendapati etika kerja Islam dapat menghindarkan konflik di antara majikan dan pekerja dan sesuai untuk diintegrasikan dalam pengaturan bekerja dari rumah sebagai norma baru di Malaysia dan seterusnya dapat melaksanakan keadilan dalam organisasi.

Kata kunci: Etika; etika kerja; etika Kerja Islam; bekerja dari rumah; kerja

INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, another form of coronavirus outbreak, known as COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) was discovered in China. China opted to lock down Wuhan, the province where this virus first emerged. When it became a global pandemic, many countries opted for a similar approach by closing their borders and imposing either a full or partial lock down (Jamaluddin et al. 2020). Malaysia is no exception and since 16th March 2020 until now, Malaysia has gone through various stages of total and partial lock downs. Due to these lock downs, office workers were generally restricted from traveling to work, compelling them to adapt to remote working arrangements. Working

from home has become the norm for most workers. Since this arrangement was not done mutually, but mandated by the circumstances, there was a lot of uncertainty as to the work ethics for working from home. Both the employers and the employees had to experiment with the work ethics, deciding on what worked for them during this trying time. The situation was further aggravated with all the family members being home. In the case of employees who had children at home, they had to strike a balance between work and family, including but not limited to, monitoring their children and making sure they attended their online classes, guiding them in homework and the like. As such, the ability to multi-task while staying focused and disciplined was crucial. The self-management of various expectations from work and family may possibly cause intense stress to many and may lead to other social issues (Baqutayan et al. 2021). Additionally, the practice of working from home has increased the risk of employees engaging in misconducts such as leaving home during working hours, failure to attend to their employer's call, engaging in secondary employment and inappropriate use of office devices. This is due to the lack of visible surveillance which means that employees have the time and freedom to dictate their own actions. Therefore, if these behaviours are not managed, employers will have to confront various risks in the organisation.

Working from home is not a new concept; it was previously known as 'telecommuting', an expression broadly defined as 'an alternative work arrangement in which employees perform tasks elsewhere that are normally done in a primary or central workplace' (Gajendran & Harrison 2007; Hassan & Nuruddin 2011). This concept allows employees to work from their home instead of the office (International Labour Organisation 2020), thus restricts the location of the work place to the home of the employee and not in other locations. The employees remain in contact with their employers and co-workers through the usage of technology. For this article, reference is made to working from home and not from any other places. The factors which lead to a work from home arrangement are multi-fold, such as the costs and time consumed for travelling, family commitments, and physical disabilities of the workers (Nakrošienė & Goštautaitė 2019), while reducing operational costs such as office rental and utility bills (Church 2015). Nevertheless, research indicates that there are also disadvantages to working from home such as the blurring boundaries between work and home,

24/7 access to technology leading to long hours of work, and extended hours spent sitting (Farrell 2017). Work from home arrangements may include working fully from home, or working alternate days between the home and office. Whichever arrangement is opted for, both parties must observe the work ethics suitable to the circumstances.

With the partial lock down coming to an end soon, 1/3 of Malaysian workers have indicated their interest to continue working from home (Ashman 2021). Therefore, to ensure the sustainability of work from home arrangement, work ethics must be integrated into this working environment. Furthermore, the necessity for work from home arrangement has increased due to Malaysia's digitalisation policy in gearing up towards Industrial Revolution 4.0. Perhaps working from home will be an alternative in the future, thus the time is right to understand the accepted work ethics for working from home, more so since this will be a mutual arrangement and no longer mandated. The objectives of this study are firstly, to analyse the concept of Islamic work ethics, and secondly, to integrate Islamic work ethics into a work from home arrangement. The first part of this article is the theoretical framework of the study which examines the concept, principles, and objectives of work ethics, in particular Islamic work ethics. The next part of this article is to recommend the integration of Islamic work ethics into the work from home arrangement and highlight the significance of Islamic work ethics to achieve fairness between employer and employee in the work from home arrangement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative analysis method through content analysis. According to Reis et al. (2019), content analysis involves a systematic study of contents with the aim of drawing inferences about the contexts, meanings, and intentions. In this study, we apply content analysis to the textual content of the primary sources of Islamic texts and the parliamentary statutes. The main aim is to examine Islamic work ethics across the documents. The analysis scrutinizes two Islamic primary sources; these are firstly, the Quran where relevant verses that explain work ethics are extracted from the 6236 verses in it, and secondly, from Hadith where sayings of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH regarding work ethics are analysed. A careful process of selection has been

conducted in this study. Malaysian parliamentary statutes feature a total of 833 documents covering a wide variety of areas. Given that the intention of this study is to analyse work ethics in a work from home arrangement, the following selection criteria are applied: a) acts that explain the relationship between employer and employee and b) acts that explain the duties of employer and employee. Two documents fit the criteria, the Employment Act 1955 and the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994. Apart from that, this study also analyses content from secondary sources. Journal articles related to work ethics, Islamic work ethics, and work from home arrangement are selected from library databases; a total of 40 relevant articles are retrieved and examined. Additionally, this study found relevant information in five books, three websites, one report and one PhD thesis for the purpose of content analysis. These sources of information are analysed to understand the theoretical framework of working from home, justice and work ethics and integration of Islamic work ethics in a work from home arrangement.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

ETHICS AND WORK ETHICS DEFINED

In the Western context, ethics is considered as a study of human behaviour and is anchored on morality; it defines what is a "good", "virtuous", "just", "right", or "ethical" way for humans to behave (Ellemers 2019). Ethics refers to well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues (Velasquez & Velasquez, 2002). Additionally, ethics is also defined as the code of moral principles that sets standards of good or bad, or right or wrong behaviour (Schemerhorn 2008) and is essential for effective organisational and interpersonal relations (Abuznaid 2009). The foundation of ethics can be found in religion as it provides spiritual motivation, principles and a clear objective, and it is believed to produce better results (Abdullah et al. 2013). From the Islamic point of view, ethics is based on religion which has established a universal fundamental Islamic ethics that provide not only legal safeguards, but also a very effective ethical system (Laeheem 2018). Ethics in Islam is described widely in the Quran and Sunnah (Hadith or sayings of Prophet

Muhammad). There are two dimensions of ethics in Islam: the first is ethics towards Allah as the creator through believing in and worshipping Him, and secondly towards other persons by maintaining good relationships and fair treatment (Abuznaid 2009). Based on this understanding, whatever leads to the welfare of the individual or the society and does not oppose any maxims of the religion is ethically good in Islam, and whatever is harmful is ethically bad.

Work ethics refers to the set of rules and principles that manage the behaviour of employer and worker at the workplace and it is a benchmark in evaluating if it is a good behaviour or otherwise. In the context of employment, workers perceive justice by reflecting on the work ethics practiced at the workplace, in relation to distribution of work, reward, and punishment. Therefore, work ethics at the workplace plays a crucial role in creating mutual trust and confidence between the employer and the worker. This implied duty of mutual trust and confidence addresses the expectations of both employer and worker which is reflected in the work ethics at the workplace. Numerous researches have shown the relationship between work ethics and productivity, job satisfaction, behaviour, and stress (Al-Nashash 2018; Christina 2017; Sert 2014). Therefore, it is important to identify the suitable work ethics to be implemented in the work from home environment to ensure justice and fairness are being observed. The practice of work ethics that is perceived as just and equitable will motivate the workers to perform their best (Aneesya 2020, Mahfuz & Sulaiman et al. 2020).

The concept of work ethics involves perceiving and treating work as a duty or obligation and as a moral value, consisting of norms, prohibitions and orders, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, both desirable and undesirable, connected with work valuation (Weber, 2005; Furnham, 1990). It is a social standard that encourages the conviction that working with good ethics is a basic characteristic. The main purpose of ethics is to establish a set of moral principles of behaviour that helps people to select the correct action and behaviour from different behavioural styles (Muhammad 2015). Having clear work ethics will benefit both the employers and their workers, especially in the context of working from home since the monitoring system will be different; physical monitoring is replaced with virtual oversight and fixed hours of work is substituted with flexibility in working hours. The core principle of mutual trust and confidence will be

at the forefront in creating a suitable work ethics for a work from home environment. Empirical results have revealed that commitment to work ethics is vital in the organisational set-up (Banks 2009; Arifin et al. 2021).

ISLAMIC WORK ETHICS

According to Beekun (2004), the factors that affect unethical behaviour in Islam are legal interpretations, organisational factors, individual factors, social factors, the environment, and the manager. The relationship between organisational aspects and religious values has gained the attention of researchers in dealing with the issue of employee misconduct at the workplace (Atunes et al. 2017; Sidek et al. 2018; Ahmed et al. 2019). Spiritual values promoted by religions such as Islam, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism play a major role in the formation of work ethics. Islam is a complete and comprehensive way of life that consists of a set of values including work ethics which is applicable to everyone irrespective of race or religion. Islamic work ethics is a set of values derived from the primary sources of Islamic law (Shariah). These are the Quran that consists of the principles and rules that regulate the activities of mankind and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (the Prophet). The Sunnah refers to the sayings and actions of the Prophet that reflect the way of life required by Allah as prescribed in the Quran and the solutions or approvals given by the Prophet in dealing with certain issues that were referred to him. The Islamic work ethics concept is based on the concept of Akhlaq as mentioned in the Quran and Sunnah. According to Kamaluddin and Manan (2010), Islamic work ethics is different in the way that Islamic work ethics is formed based on the values as stated in the Quran and Sunnah while Protestant work ethics is based on the Bible as the source of ideas in Christianity. Despite there being a similarity between Protestant work ethics and Islamic work ethics in respect of the values promoted, Islamic work ethics places more emphasis on intention as a measure of morality (Yousef, 2001) and stresses on the good of the community rather than individual achievements (Shirokanova 2015).

There is a growing literature on application of Islamic work ethics in work environments. For example, Al Shamali et al. (2021) examined Islamic work ethics' application towards organisational change in the context of the Islamic banking sector. Islamic work ethics was found to be effective in reducing employees' displays of deviance at the workplace. Ali et al. (2018) developed an Islamic framework in the mutual relationship between employer and employee at the workplace based on Islamic work ethics; however, the study did not explore the relationship between employer and employee in a working from home environment. Other researchers in their findings revealed that promoting Islamic work ethics can add value to the performance of organisations, specifically concerning employee loyalty (Adeel et al. 2020). It has been proven that employees who adopt the principles of Islamic work ethics in their work are committed to their organisation and are hardworking and directly produce a sound environment at the workplace (Yousef, 2000; Aziz, 2018). A study on integration of Islamic work ethics in construction projects found that there are four Islamic elements or principles in dealing with issues in construction sites. They are good deeds, righteousness, piety or fear of God, and accountability and the four are believed to be deeply correlated with excellent work culture. Studies into Islamic work ethics are still few in number and not in-depth while studies on the application of Islamic work ethics in working from home have yet to be conducted by researchers (Ayob et al. 2021). Consequently, Hunsaker (2016) suggests that more robust investigations should be conducted to investigate the relationship between religious values and its impact in an organisation. This study extends the field and fills the gap, by integrating Islamic work ethics into the working from home arrangement.

Islam has expressed many morality values in its teachings including work ethics. For example, the value of teamwork and cooperation towards a common good for the sake of Allah is promoted in Islam. The Quran precisely states:

"(O you who believe) . . . help one another in piety and goodness and do not help one another in sin and aggression" (Quran, 5:2)

"And hold fast all together by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you) and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love so that by His grace ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of fire and He saved you from it. Thus, does Allah make His signs clear to you: that ye may be guided." (Quran, 3:103)

Employer and employee are required to honour the employment contract. Performing a promise is one of the elements of Islamic work ethics and this is clearly indicated under several verses in the Quran. For instance:

"But those who break the covenant of Allah after contracting it and sever that which Allah has ordered to be joined and spread corruption on earth - for them is the curse, and they will have the worst home." (Quran, 13:25)

[Moses] said, "That is [established] between me and you. Whichever of the two terms I complete - there is no injustice to me, and Allah, over what we say, is Witness." (Quran, 28:28)

In one hadith narrated by 'Abdullah bin 'Amr, the Prophet said:

"Whoever has the following four (characteristics) will be a pure hypocrite and whoever has one of the following four characteristics will have one characteristic of hypocrisy unless and until he gives it up.
1. Whenever he is entrusted, he betrays.
2. Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie.
3. Whenever he makes a covenant, he proves treacherous.
4. Whenever he quarrels, he behaves in a very imprudent, evil and insulting manner."

(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 1, Book 2, Number 33)

Additionally, Islamic work ethics encourages employers to be considerate in dealing with employee situations and to consult with employees to find solutions to the issues. This is evidenced in the said verses:

"Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbour, the neighbour farther away, the companion at your side, the traveller, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful." (Quran, 4:36)

"And those who have responded to their Lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend." (Quran, 42:38)

Apart from that, Islamic work ethics requires employers to practise equal treatment to all employees at the workplace. Fair and consistent treatment to all employees is important to avoid discrimination to a certain group of employees. This is supported by these verses:

"And do not approach the orphan's property except in a way that is best until he reaches maturity. And give full measure and weight in justice. We do not charge any soul except [with that within] its capacity. And when you testify, be just, even if [it concerns] a near relative. And the covenant of Allah fulfils. This has He instructed you that you may remember." (Quran, 6:152)

"Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes – from being righteous towards them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly." (Quran, 60:8)

"And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with an even balance. That is the best [way] and best in result." (Quran, 17:35)

Honesty is another important element in Islamic work ethics, as employees need to exercise honesty in performing their tasks. The requirement of honesty can be found in the following verses:

"O believers, fear God, and be among those who are the truthful ones." (Quran, 9:119)

"[They are] patient and truthful, obedient and charitable, and they plead for [Allah's] forgiveness at dawn." (Quran, 3:17)

"And he who brings the truth and he who confirms (and supports) it – such are the men who do right. And Allah will say: this is a day on which the truthful will profit from their truth. Theirs the gardens, with rivers flowing beneath their eternal home." (Quran, 5:119)

Islamic work ethics is different from western work ethics in the sense that Islamic work ethics emphasise the intention of employees when performing work. According to Islamic virtues, actions done in this world is for the sake of Allah and it is believed that Allah oversees all actions even if there is no one watching. This is supported in the following verses:

"Say; truly my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death are (all) for Allah the Cherisher of the world." (Quran, 6:162)

"Say, "O my people, work according to your position; [for] indeed, I am working. And you are going to know who will have succession in the home. Indeed, the wrongdoers will not succeed." (Quran, 6:135)

"And say, "Do [as you will], for Allah will see your deeds, and [so will] His Messenger and the believers. And you will be returned to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, and He will inform you of what you used to do." (Quran, 9:105)

This is supported in the Quran:

"The reward of Allah (in the hereafter) is best for those who believe and work righteousness: but this none shall attain, save those who steadfastly preserve (in Good)." (Quran, 28:80)

THE CONCEPT OF JUSTICE

In both Western and Islamic perspectives, the concept of justice is closely associated with ethics. A fair and just treatment is the aspiration of everyone including both the employers and the employees. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the "just" person as one who typically "does what is morally right" and is disposed to "giving everyone his or her due",

offering the word "fair" as a synonym. According to Plato, justice is a virtue establishing rational order, with each part performing its appropriate role and not interfering with the proper functioning of other parts (Bhandari 2014), while Aristotle was of the view that justice consists of what is lawful and fair, including equitable distributions (Roger 1994). Rawls analysed justice in terms of maximum equal liberty regarding basic rights and duties for all members of society, with socio-economic inequalities requiring moral justification in terms of equal opportunity and beneficial results for all (Surovtsev & Syrov 2015). Even though there are differences between the jurists, the core idea of justice still revolves around fairness and equality. Justice is an important concept in Islam as illustrated in the various revelations in the Quran such as:

"O you who believe, be persistent and stand firm in justice, bearing witness for God, even if it be against yourselves or your parents or your close ones. Whether rich or poor, God is their sustainer. Refrain from following your whims and desires lest you fail to be just, for if you fail to uphold justice, God is fully aware of what you do." (Quran 4:135)

"And God does not desire for human beings to suffer injustice." (Quran 3:108)

"O you who believe, be steadfast in your devotion to God, and bear witness justly. Do not allow your hatred towards others to lead you astray from justice. Adhere to justice for that is closer to piety, and be ever mindful of God for God is always aware of all that you do." (Quran 5:8).

Muslims are encouraged to search for moral universals that could serve as shared and common goals with humanity at large, as an essential characteristic of a universal religion that is addressed to humanity at large, and not to an exclusive cultural, social, or ethnic group (Abou El Fadl, 2017). The concept of justice in Islam is far superior than the so-called distributive and corrective justice, natural justice, formal justice, or any other man-made law. Justice in Islam includes equality, fairness, and upholding the rights and avoiding the wrong. Implementation of justice in an organisation is essential as a study shows that it could reduce employees' turnover intentions (Marri et al. 2013). Therefore, implementing Islamic work ethics in a work from home arrangement could encourage the implementation of organisational justice.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Since Islamic work ethics includes cooperation, equality, fairness in dealings, right intention, honesty and patience, responsibility, social relations, creativity, hard work, diligence, perseverance, and morality (Ali 1988; al-Douri et al. 2020; Nurhidayah 2017), these values are suitable to be integrated in working from home environments, more so as these values are universal in nature. The relationship between employer and employee is determined through the terms in an employment contract. The employment contract explains the rights, duties and responsibilities of employer and employee during the employment term; failure to perform the terms of the employment contract will subject the offending party to civil action. Employers are free to determine the terms in the employment contract with the agreement of the employee. However, for employees who are governed by the Employment Act 1955 (Act 265), any terms in the employment contract that are less favourable than the provisions under the Employment Act 1955 shall void these terms. The duties of employer and employee can be expressed in the employment contract and at the same time these duties can be made implicit. Currently, the Employment Act 1955 is silent on the position of employee and employer in the work from home arrangement. Therefore, the assumption is that the duties of employer and employee in working from home are similar to the normal working arrangement. In particular, provisions on wages, working hours, holidays and leave in the existing Employment Act 1955 are applicable to the employer and employee under the work from home arrangement. Therefore, in these uncertainties and loopholes, strong work ethics of employer and employee is essential to ensure fairness and justice is maintained at the workplace and in the context of this research, in a work from home arrangement. Work ethics is normally defined in the code of ethics of the organisation and the work ethics depends on the organisation's culture. The code of ethics of an organisation is regarded as a legally binding document between employer and employee.

The values of teamwork and cooperation that are encouraged in Islamic work ethics should be integrated in a work from home arrangement. This can be done through the implied duty of mutual

trust and confidence in the employment contract which requires employer and employee to treat each other respectfully, without doing anything to undermine the relationship at the workplace (Courtlaulds Northern Textiles Ltd v Andrew [1979] IRLR 84). Both parties need to accept that they are on the same team, working in the best interest of their organisation. The requirement to cooperate with each other for the betterment of both can also be seen in ensuring the safety of the workplace (Sections 15 and 24 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994 (Act 514)). These sections impose individual duties on both employer and employee, while the need to cooperate with each other is further enhanced by the establishment of a safety and health committee at the workplace (Sections 30 and 31 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994). Even though the position on duties of both employer and employee to the working from home environment is still unclear, embracing the value of cooperation in safety and health at the workplace will nevertheless strengthen the relationship between employer and employee. This is especially in the context of a work from home arrangement which requires the employer and the employee to cooperate in establishing a safe working environment at home.

Another Islamic work ethics that should be integrated in work from home arrangements is the ethics of honouring a promise. Employees owe a duty to perform their responsibilities as agreed in the employment contract when working from home. Failure to perform the duties shall subject the breaching party to penalties and civil claim and the employer can take action against any employee's misconduct that occurred when working from home. Therefore, employers must be very clear in determining actions that may be treated as misconduct because it is difficult to recognise misconduct when employees are working remotely. There may be subtle differences between acceptable conduct and one that makes an employee liable to disciplinary action. Examples of actions that can be regarded as misconduct while working from home are absenteeism during online meetings and working hours, online harassment of co-employees or employers and misuse of employer's data. Employers are also are expected to perform their promises in the employment contract even though their employees are working from home. During the

COVID-19 pandemic, work from home is essential to ensure the sustainability of an employer's business and at the same time to curb spread of virus at the workplace. Where necessary, the employment contract and company policies should be amended to suit work from home arrangements. The employment contract should state clearly the rights and duties of employer and employee in the work from home arrangement such as the length of time the employee is allowed to work from home, how the working hours are measured, proper tools required to perform work, and the usage of annual and sick leave. However, working from home is not only limited to pandemic times but is applicable in other situations so long as the terms and conditions are agreed between employer and employee.

Besides that, the employer also has a duty to ensure the safety of employees while working at home. Employers must be responsible for ensuring that the type of work done at home is suitable for the environment and safe for the employee. Employers will be responsible for any injury that afflicts an employee while performing work even if the work is done at home. This is in line with Section 15 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994 which states that an employer owes a duty to ensure as so far as practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of all his employees. Islamic work ethics encourages the employer to be more considerate in allowing working from home for employees. This is especially when it involves matters such as the employee needing to take care of elderly parents, caring for a sick offspring or a child without childcare at home, older employees and employees with disability, and other dire situations that require employees to stay at home. Employers have to be aware if their employees are having difficulties to work at the office and engage them in consultation to find the best solution such as allowing them to work from home. Consultation allows employers and employees to arrange their work accordingly and be clear on the terms of the contract. Thus, practising consultation between employer and employee as promoted by Islamic work ethics is vital in managing the work ethics especially in the context of working from home and for the continuous improvement of the practice.

Apart from that, Islamic work ethics must be integrated in the implementation of work

from home arrangements as equal treatment of a person regardless of their background will prevent discrimination from happening in work from home arrangement. Discrimination refers to unjust or prejudicial treatment of people or group based on certain criteria such as race, gender, age or disability. The International Labour Organization (2011) defines discrimination as "a differential and less favourable treatment of certain individuals" because of any characteristics such as sex, race, and religion, "regardless of their ability to fulfil the requirements of the job". The rise of work from home arrangements has resulted in discrimination to employees opting to work from home. Examples of discriminatory actions towards employees that work at home are employers imposing strict measures or close monitoring for employees at home compared to employees at the office, discriminatory messages directed towards employees that work at home, and excluding these employees from promotion or benefits due to the work arrangement.

Next, honesty is one of the Islamic work ethics that should be practised by employees when working from home. As supervision is difficult in a work from home environment, employees must be honest in performing their work. Employees must perform work according to the stated working hours and refrain from doing other non-related work activities that might affect the quality of work. The employee must be available when a superior calls and to attend meetings arranged by the employer. Additionally, as working from home requires the employee to bring the employer's electronic devices such as laptop or computer back home, it is important for employees to maintain confidentiality or security of their employer's data. Employers must take appropriate action to upgrade the security of these devices and the organisation's files and websites. Similarly, employees hold the responsibility to prevent any unauthorised access of the office devices by other family members or any persons. It is recommended that separate devices are used for work and personal matters when employees work from home. Therefore, applying the belief that Allah watches over people's daily life, it is expected that employees embrace the concept and perform their work diligently in a working from home environment despite the absence of the employer. The goal of Islamic work ethics which strives for the reward in the hereafter contributes to the employee's motivation to work diligently.

It is observed that the values inculcated by Islamic work ethics include universal features which are suitable to be integrated the in working from home environment as the new normal in Malaysia. This is because principles under Islamic work ethics such as requiring employers and employees to perform promises, being considerate of and consulting employees, honesty while performing work, equal treatment of employees, and proper intention may avoid conflicts in a working at home arrangement. Additionally, it can be observed that Islamic work ethics is not only applicable to employees but the duties extended to the employer. The universal concept of Islamic work ethics which is embraced by Shariah tenets makes it possible for this principle to be applicable to non-Muslim employees. These findings are supported by findings from the work of Amin et al. (2018) that show the existence of a positive relationship between Islamic work ethics and job satisfaction and Islamic work ethics significantly influences justice at the workplace. Additionally, Razak and Mahmod (2021) found that the Islamic principle of social justice is important to promote a harmonious industrial relationship at the workplace.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The aims of this study were to analyse the concept of Islamic work ethics and to integrate Islamic work ethics in a working from home arrangement. The findings of this study can be applied not only to an organisation with Muslim workers but also for non-Muslim workers as Islamic work ethics is a universal concept that can be applicable to everyone. This study presented the application of Islamic work ethics, particularly in fulfilling promises, consideration of and consulting employees, honesty while performing work, equal treatment of employees, and proper intention in working from home arrangements. Moreover, this study demonstrated that Islamic work ethics in a working from home environment can promote justice in the organisation. Therefore, the findings of this study contribute significantly to the human resource practice especially in work ethics by recommending the integration of Islamic work ethics in working from home arrangements within the organisation in order to achieve justice for both employer and employee.

CONCLUSION

Flexibility that is offered in a working from home arrangement has benefitted many parties. Work ethics in the work from home arrangement must be embraced by both employers and employees to prevent disagreements and conflicts between these parties. Islamic work ethics is a universal concept of work ethics that is just and fair for employee and employer in the work from home arrangement. This study contributes to the theory of Islamic work ethics and work ethics as it extends the application of Islamic work ethics to the theory on work from home. Additionally, this study contributes practically to the field of human resource management, in particular it helps the employer and human resource officer in formulating their contract documentation and company policies. For future research, we recommend that quantitative research be conducted to observe the impact of Islamic work ethics on work from home arrangement.

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