Islamic Practices in Staffing: A Conceptual Analysis on Two Islamic Universities in Malaysia and Indonesia

Nurita Juhdi[1*]✉, Nur Arfifah Abdul Sabian[1]✉, Suhaiza Safian[1]✉,

Usmanul Khakim[2]✉

[1]*Kuliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia*
[2]*Department of Aqeeda and Islamic Philosophy, Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia*

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ABSTRACT

There is a high number of Islamic organisations that encompass various industries such as education, hospitality, and banking and finance in both countries. In the global business arena, the halal industry is thriving, and thus it is pertinent to study the human resource (HR) practices implemented in the organisations, particularly the recruitment and selection. The objective of the study was to examine the recruitment and selection practices in two Islamic universities located in Malaysia and Indonesia. Data was collected using interviews with the relevant stakeholders in both universities. The findings indicated that the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) hires people from different countries due to its internationalisation policy and the employees had the opportunity for internal mobility due to the large number of faculties there. As for the Universitas Darussalam (UNIDA) Gontor, it stresses an internal source of recruitment that comes from its Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) as a way to inculcate the unique UNIDA culture and values. The students volunteered as employees in UNIDA's diverse business units. In terms of selection, both universities shared common practices in that they stressed hiring people who have a high level of religiosity and personal values that are compatible with the universities' philosophy. The findings of the study are to be used as a point of reference for other Islamic organisations that can emulate these good practices in their staffing practices.

INTRODUCTION

Given the expanding Muslim population combined with the thriving Muslim economy, the number of Muslim organisations is growing day by day. It was shown by the State of the Global Islamic Economy 2023/24 Report that the global Islamic economy has grown from a USD1.62 trillion consumer spending market in 2012 to USD2.29 trillion in 2022. The positive prospect for the Islamic economy is supported by the fast global population growth that is made up especially by the Muslims all around the world. According to a report by the World Population Review in 2024, there are more than two billion Muslims in the world, and this brings Islam to second place in terms of the largest religion in

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[1*] Corresponding author. *E-mail address*: nurita@iium.edu.my

the world after Christianity. The report also indicated that many researchers project the Muslim population will exceed Christians by the year 2050.

With the expanding Islamic economy coupled with growing Muslim population, it is thus pertinent to sustain the positive economic prospect. For the sake of the future economy and business performance, every organisation should strive to locate talents from diverse backgrounds and then grow the talents in the marketplace (Drucker et al., 1997; Jooss et al., 2024). Since the key to organisational success hinges on human talent, hiring employees who have a high level of competence that consists of skills, capabilities and distinct characters is pertinent (Dickmann et al., 2016; Wehner et al., 2022). This implies that if recruitment and selection are not well planned and executed, the organisation's success will be at stake.

Developing human talents who are ready for employment begins at educational institutions. Higher learning institutions are given the trust to educate and inculcate good values in the students with the aim to prepare them for their life upon completing their studies at the university. Sanyal (2024) asserted that education provides people with the right knowledge, skills and good values for employment and thus, higher education institutions are regarded highly in every country. In Islam knowledge pursuit is obligatory for all men and women because those with knowledge are distinct from those who do not. This adheres to the Qur'anic verse:

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَٰنِتٌ ءَانَآءَ ٱلَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَآئِمًا يَحْذَرُ ٱلْءَاخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُواْ رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِۦۗ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِى ٱلَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُوْلُواْ ٱلْأَلْبَٰبِ ۩

Translation: Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding.

Surah al-Zumar, 39: 9

The Quranic verse shows the importance of seeking knowledge to elevate spiritual and intellectual intelligence. Educational institutions, especially Islamic universities, play a prominent role in educating and shaping the Muslim community for the betterment of the Muslim ummah. In this study, two Islamic universities have been chosen (one from Malaysia and another from Indonesia) as the subject of the analysis. These Islamic universities are well known for their reputation in producing graduates who are well rounded and possess Islamic values. It was stated earlier that human talents are the key to organisational success and thus, the objective of this study is to uncover the recruitment and selection practices of the chosen Islamic universities. The findings are expected to shed some light on how the job candidates are located and how the process of employee selection is conducted.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recruitment

In human resource management (HRM), there are two methods of recruitment - internal and external recruitment (Myrna, 2008; Razimi et al., 2017). Internal recruitment refers to the decision of the organisation to employ its existing employees by giving them the opportunities for lateral and vertical movement in the organisation (Alwi et al., 2022). The former refers to transferring employees to different departments or branches while still within the same rank. On the other hand, vertical movement means promoting employees to higher positions (Krawczyk, 2011). External recruitment is the process of identifying talents from outside the organisations. Using this approach, organisations are free to choose methods that are in line with their philosophy and most importantly, their affordability.

Many organisations today resort to internal recruitment such as internal job posting. Nowadays, technology is used to make job posting more effective. Employers use their intranets or company emails to announce job vacancies. More often than not, managers have already selected a few strong internal candidates for certain job positions, but they are still obligated to post the job vacancies as a

formality. Recommendations from managers are popular due to the availability of the information on employees' backgrounds, which makes background checks easier (Muscalu, 2015).

Another popular recruitment method is employee referrals. Current employees are encouraged to recommend individuals who fulfil the job requirements as well as possess traits that match with the organisations' values and philosophy. Vardaman et al., (2024) indicated that using referrals helps to lower recruitment costs and foster higher performance.

Many organisations post job vacancies on their official websites or specialized job sites such as LinkedIn and Jobstreet. Internet recruiting nowadays is popular because it is able to filter the applications and shortlist applicants, hence reducing the time required to generate the qualified candidates to be employed. According to Myrna (2008), many employers nowadays strive to develop a diverse workforce by using recruiting methods that generate applications from various backgrounds. This is in line with the celebration of diversity that is against discrimination against race, colour, sex, religion and national origin.

Islam highly recommends hiring candidates who possess certain criteria, which include piousness, strong moral values and high team spirits (Khan, 2016). The job candidates must possess the qualities of good Muslims who are willing to work hard with dedication, integrity, punctuality and trustworthiness. Bhutta and Sabir (2019) stated in their paper that the second *Khulafa ar-Rashidin*, Umar al-Khattab also stressed on the key characteristics such as personal values as well as the performance potential of the candidates. They further noted the importance of carrying out the recruitment process fairly, that the recruiting manager himself should be religious and fair so that there are no discriminatory elements in the recruitment and selection. This is in line with the Qur'anic verse:

$$ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَن تُؤَدُّواْ ٱلْأَمَٰنَٰتِ إِلَىٰٓ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُم بَيْنَ ٱلنَّاسِ أَن تَحْكُمُواْ بِٱلْعَدْلِ $$

Translation: Verily God directs you to assign trusts/duties/ things to the care of whom they are due and to judge with justice when you decide between people.

Surah al-Nisa, 4: 58

Selection

One of the most important functions in human resource management is employee selection. Ineffective selection may result in poor match between the employee and the job (Razimi et al., 2017). A few key elements in employee selection include clear job specifications that are matched with the right selection techniques. Selection is all about meticulously choosing the right persons to be employed (Robert, 1997). A study by Ali et al. (2023) that conducted in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Pakistan indicated a significant effect of recruitment and selection on organisational performance.

Islam prescribes employee selection to be done by following four principles (Hashim, 2009; Razimi et al., 2017). The first principle is justice, which means putting people in the right positions. Second is competency, that refers to choosing people who possess the right knowledge and skills and not based on non-job-related factors such as cronyism, race or politics. The third principle is honesty, which requires hiring decisions to be based on transparency. Honesty can prevent the recruiter from engaging in any undesired or unlawful actions that contradict the law or legal conduct. Fourth, the job requirement must not exceed the incumbents' capacity. Asking employees to work under an extremely high workload is considered oppressive and might cause harm to them and the organisation (Bhutta & Sabir, 2019; Chowdhury et al., 2019). This aligns with the Qur'anic verse:

$$ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا $$

Translation: No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear.

Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 233

Recruiters must be truthful in stating the job information that does not lead to misunderstanding among the job seekers. Some job advertisements contain inaccurate facts about the job in order to attract more applicants. Islam forbids the act of using false information and hiding the truth as mentioned in the Qur'an:

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا۟ ٱلْحَقَّ بِٱلْبَٰطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا۟ ٱلْحَقَّ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

Translation: And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when ye know.

al-Baqarah, 2: 42

The fourth Caliph, Ali bin Abi Talib emphasized the importance of selecting the right person and its implications (Ali, 1988; Razimi et al., 2017). The Caliph asserted that selection of employees should not be based on intuition. Employers should scrutinize the job candidates' records of service before a hiring decision is made.

According to Razimi et al. (2017), the selection process in modern organisations in Muslim societies today fails to conform to the practices that are sanctioned by Islam. The selection is often influenced by the interplay between several factors such as scarcity of qualified candidates, nepotism, cronyism, bureaucracy and political considerations. Abbas (2010) asserted that among the factors that compromise the quality of employee selection are favouritism and personal relations.

The literature indicates that the main difference between conventional and Islamic practices is faith. In conventional selection practice, the major criterion used for employee selection revolves around competency and human judgment where there is no element of religion involved. Hamizam and Abdollah (2016) posited the importance of religion, that people who are religious possess Islamic spirituality. The conventional approach is mainly based on the laws and legal codes that are formulated based on human intellectuals and understandings. Islam has laid down principles to be followed based on the Quran and Sunnah as well as the recommendations by the Muslim scholars.

THE STUDY CONTEXT

The present study analyses two prominent Islamic universities, one in Malaysia and the other in Indonesia. As Islamic universities that have been running for many years, they are regarded as role models and serve as benchmarks for other Islamic higher education institutions. These Islamic universities have proven their good reputation in the global arena and thus it is worth examining their practices in recruitment and selection.

The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)

IIUM was established in 1983 by the government of Malaysia with the philosophy inspired by 1977 First World Conference on Muslim Education in Makkah. The university slogan "The Garden of Knowledge and Virtue" reflects its prominence as the centre for creation and acquisition of knowledge which contribute to the improvement of life for all mankind. To date, there are approximately 26,000 students coming from 117 countries. The university's philosophy is based on the belief that knowledge must be pursued as *ibadah* (continuous worship to God) and *amanah* (a trust) to get God's blessings. The university's vision is to be the leading international academic excellence institution to achieve the betterment of human life and civilization. IIUM has seven missions that encompass the concepts of Islamization, integration of revealed knowledge and human science, internationalisation, holistic excellence and sustainable development.

Universitas Darussalam (UNIDA) Gontor

UNIDA Gontor is an Islamic university that operates under the *pesantren* system, meaning it functions as a boarding school or educational institution that provides Islamic education through a traditional approach (Alamin, 2020). Apart from being a centre for knowledge, the university also aims to inculcate Islamic values in both the students and the faculty members. UNIDA Gontor is the

realization of the mandate stated in the Endowment Charter of Modern Islamic Boarding School Darussalam Gontor (PMDG) (Rahmawati, 2023), making it a waqf based institution (Syamsuri, Arif, Fedro & Wibisono, 2020). UNIDA Gontor waqf management covers land assets across 25 regions in Indonesia and has 20 branches of Islamic boarding schools there. In addition, UNIDA Gontor also owns business units that encompass various sectors such as retail, hospitality and agriculture. With the tagline "The Fountain of Wisdom", most of the faculty members reside on campus in order to guide and support the students.

METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. In IIUM, the research was conducted in collaboration with Management Service Division (MSD) which serves as the HR department of the university. In its efforts to transform the HR practices, MSD organised a focused group discussion (FGD) with seven deans from various kulliyyahs (faculties) located in Gombak, Kuantan and Pagoh campuses. The FGD with the deans aimed to gain their views about the HR practice at IIUM. Since the focus of this research is only on recruitment and selection, therefore the Deans' responses that are particularly related to the research topic were extracted for further analysis. Further, to gain insights based on first-hand experience with the job selection process, a newly hired academic staff was also interviewed. Subsequently, based on the inputs collected from the FGD with the deans and the newly hired staff, a follow-up interview was conducted with two (2) MSD staff members. The purpose is to seek for more feedback and clarifications from the HR department itself. Other than interviews, data were collected from secondary sources such as the university website, which contains relevant documents including job advertisement sites as well as other related documents on recruitment and selection.

At the Indonesian Islamic university, data were collected through interviews conducted in two separate sessions: the first with the university Rector and the second with the top management of the Faculty of Economics and Management.

In both universities, questions asked during the interviews were not similar, but the theme revolved around recruitment and selection practices in the respective universities. Even though both universities are Islamic institutions, they have different organisational philosophies that require the researchers to customise the questions according to the university's unique characteristics.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Recruitment Source

IIUM uses both internal and external recruitment sources. Internal recruitment at IIUM is primarily conducted through employee transfer and promotion. IIUM has a large number of *kulliyyah* (faculties), centres, divisions and offices which open the opportunity for the employees to move from one place to another. This practice serves as a platform for the employees to plan their career development which will prepare them for a variety of future career paths (Makarius et al., 2024). To date, IIUM has five (5) different campuses with 14 kulliyyahs and eight (8) academic institutes that provide the avenues for employees to be transferred or promoted to positions that are located at different offices and campuses within IIUM.

In the case of UNIDA, it has its own Islamic boarding school system, called Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor (PMDG). The school provides both religious and non-religious education such as subjects related to science, commerce and technology. Upon completion of studies at PMDG, the students have the option to continue their tertiary education at UNIDA Gontor. UNIDA Gontor's graduates have the opportunity to continue their master's and doctoral degree while teaching at the university or the schools. The students are not paid for teaching at UNIDA Gontor but in lieu of their services, their tuition fees will be waived. In addition to teaching, the students may also volunteer as employees at the university's business units. UNIDA Gontor owns various business units which include hotels, restaurants, retail outlets, hospitals and bakeries. Working as volunteers means they receive very low wages and, in some cases, no pay at all. Students are a valuable source of contingent

labor, helping to meet the university's human capital needs and labor demands by engaging in temporary work arrangements that normally include various kinds of jobs without a contract or expectation of long-term employment (Connelly & Gallagher, 2004).

Nevertheless, despite not being paid, the students willingly serve the university. The interviews with UNIDA Gontor faculty academic staff revealed that students and faculty members believe strongly in serving the university as a way to devote themselves to God which is termed as "*pengabdian*" in Indonesian language. *"Pengabdian"* is not just looking for halal sustenance because it has a broader which is close to the word '*jihad fi sabilillah*', namely believing in God (faith) and serving Him with property, body and life. This is in line with the Qur'anic verses:

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَـٰرَةٍ تُنجِيكُم مِّنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ⑩ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ وَتُجَـٰهِدُونَ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ بِأَمْوَٰلِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ⑪ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلْكُمْ جَنَّـٰتٍ تَجْرِى مِن تَحْتِهَا ٱلْأَنْهَـٰرُ وَمَسَـٰكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِى جَنَّـٰتِ عَدْنٍ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلْفَوْزُ ٱلْعَظِيمُ ⑫

Translation: Believers, shall I direct you to a commerce that will deliver you from a grievous chastisement? Have faith in Allah and His Messenger and strive in the way of Allah with your possessions and your lives. That is better for you if you only knew. He will forgive you your sins and will admit you to gardens beneath which rivers flow. He will lodge you in excellent mansions in the gardens of eternity. This is the supreme triumph.

Surah al-Saf, 61: 10-12

In Islam, seeking to earn one's living in a lawful manner is considered a religious observance (Ali, 2010). Al-Miqdam narrated the Prophet said:

مَا أَكَلَ أَحَدٌ طَعَامًا قَطُّ خَيْرًا مِنْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ مِنْ عَمَلِ يَدِهِ

Translation: Nobody has ever eaten a better meal than that which one has earned by working with one's own hands.

Reported by al-Bukhari: 286

They regard work as sustenance that is termed as '*rezki*'. That is why they are more than willing to offer their efforts and knowledge without expecting for any compensation. This is in accordance with the Qur'anic verses:

وَٱلَّذِينَ جَـٰهَدُوا۟ فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَمَعَ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ ⑥⑨

Translation: As for those who strive in Our cause, We shall surely guide them to Our Ways. Indeed Allah is with those who do good.

Surah al-Ankabut 29: 69

ٱتَّبِعُوا۟ مَن لَّا يَسْـَٔلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُم مُّهْتَدُونَ ㉑

Translation: Follow those who do not ask any recompense from you and are rightly guided.

Surah Yasin 36: 21

This scenario showed that UNIDA Gontor has an extensive supply of internal candidates for recruitment which reduces the need for external candidates for teaching positions in its boarding schools.

Working as volunteers is a way for UNIDA Gontor to inculcate its unique values and philosophy. This approach is called '*kaderisasi'* in Indonesian term (derived from the term 'cadre') which refers to a process of inculcating the unique university values in the students. The cadres are a significant source of potential employees at UNIDA Gontor. Based on an interview with the top management of the university, most of the cadres are from Indonesia but occasionally there are people who come from other countries such as Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia.

Internal recruitment sources, as applied at both UNIDA Gontor and IIUM, are powerful methods for hiring employees who possess unique traits that align with the universities' philosophy and values. This method surpasses or at least at par with the employee orientation process for new employees get acquainted with or familiarized with the company culture and their roles in the organisation. Organisations are keen to use onboarding and orientation programmes because they can increase learning engagement and skill acquisition that eventually led to higher retention rate (Xie & Zong, 2024) as well as increasing commitment (To & Leung, 2024).

Like UNIDA Gontor, IIUM also offers education services in all stages from pre-schools to tertiary education including international syllabus and A levels. However, these institutions do not serve as feeder systems for IIUM employment, unlike what is practiced by UNIDA Gontor. The university strategically uses its schools (at PMDG) as an avenue to grow potential talents for employment at the university. At IIUM, a similar process normally starts at the tertiary level (bachelor's degree).

Recruitment sources at IIUM include online job advertisements that are posted on the MSD website, LinkedIn as well as word-of-mouth referrals. IIUM employee recruitment must comply with the Anti-Bribery Management System (ABMS) Framework. ABMS was prescribed by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to mitigate the corruption risks faced by organisations in Malaysia. IIUM took the initiative to adopt ABMS because the system is in line with IIUM's mission to ensure good values and integrity in its practices.

Internationalisation

Internationalisation is one of IIUM missions that relies on attracting talent from various countries. At present, eleven percent of IIUM academic staff are from foreign countries such as Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sudan, Nigeria, Uzbekistan, Albania, Jordan and France. IIUM serves as a melting pot of international scholars who are dedicated intellectuals motivated by the Islamic worldview and code of ethics as an integral part of their work culture. This approach aims to enhance intercultural understanding and diversity. The process of locating international talents is carried out through various ways such as personal recommendations, employee referrals and IIUM HR official website.

Notwithstanding the earlier explanation on cadres from outside Indonesia, when it comes to employee recruitment of the academic staff, UNIDA Gontor is still focusing on the talents available in its home country Indonesia. It is important to note however, that the faculty members have graduated from universities in Indonesia and overseas (such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Morocco, Egypt, Australia, Turkiye and Saudi Arabia). The interview with the participants revealed that UNIDA Gontor has the intention to recruit people from overseas but due to financial constraints, the talent pool remains limited to Indonesians. Nevertheless, the university occasionally invites guest lecturers from abroad.

Looking from the other side of the coin, hiring international talents poses possible unprecedented effects on UNIDA Gontor's unique values. Thus far, the university's ability to maintain its culture and values could be due to the homogenous community that possess common national culture. A study done by Setyaningrum, Wijaya & Subagyo (2022) using Hofstede Cultural Framework indicated that in Indonesia, despite the diverse ethnicities and spoken languages there, the country scored high on collectivism. Collectivism is the extent of an individual's priority for the family and friends' interest over his or her own needs. This could be one of the many factors that underpin the philosophy and values at UNIDA Gontor, that is the concept of Islamic brotherhood or *ukhwah*.

Globalization has impacted the way higher education institutions operate that makes universities feel compelled to increase their internationalisation efforts (Bowles & Murphy, 2020; Soler, 2019; Wahlers, 2018). At this juncture, the pressing issue is how good the university can maintain its organisation culture while dealing with international employees who practice diverse national cultures under one roof. IIUM's policy on internationalisation is to support its mission as the leading international centre of excellence in education, research and innovation. Hence for UNIDA Gontor to make its presence significant in the Muslim global world, the policy in hiring international employees should be introduced.

Selection Practices

The job advertisements at IIUM indicated key job requirements for the positions offered. For the administrative and technical posts, the key criteria related to personal traits are like positive attitude, high level of motivation and discipline as well as integrity. As for the academic staff, the key requirements are expressed in the form of key personal characters namely a person who can be a teacher *(mu'allim)*, a scholar *('alim)* and also a moral educator *(murabbi).* Given the requirements of the jobs, it is pertinent for IIUM to assess the job candidates' religiosity, personal traits and values. IIUM job application form asks about *mazhab* (that is the school of thought within Islamic jurisprudence), religion, how many Islamic books they have read and whether they perform *solat* (the five times daily prayers) in their daily life. In certain conditions, when necessary, the candidates are also asked the number of Quranic verses they memorize. To some, asking these questions to candidates is regarded as invading the human privacy as Muslims. But since IIUM stresses on hiring people with religious characteristics, probing questions that look into their daily life is essential. IIUM takes seriously the aspects of religiosity because the IIUM philosophy is based on the Quran and Sunnah that requires the community members to internalize Islamic values in their daily life. When employees equate working with doing *ibadah* (good deeds to get God's blessings), their motivation to work tend to be high.

In a similar vein, Rusli & Mubarok (2021) also reported that in UNIDA Gontor's selection process, job candidates will be asked to read the Al-Qur'an as one of the major qualifying tests before proceeding to further assessment. The job interviews conducted are to evaluate the candidates' key competence such as the knowledge about PMDG and knowledge about Islam. At this juncture, it is important to note how the university stresses the importance of hiring people who have strong fundamentals about the organisation as well as Islam. Given its status as a waqf based university, the need to hire people who possess expertise and high level of religiosity is pertinent in order to safeguard the waqf resources (Don et al., 2020) and thus ensure sustainability of the university (Sayin et al., 2016).

In UNIDA Gontor, the employees are expected to work earnestly and honestly. This means they must work hard, commit themselves to the job with the intention to get the blessings from God and thus, material rewards such as salary and benefits should not be the main motivator. During the FGD with the academic staff, a participant revealed that there is a 'trick question' that is asked to the candidates to identify their actual intention applying for jobs in the university. The question is "How much salary do you expect from us?". If the candidates replied with a monetary amount, their chance for employment is slim. Instead, if they say they would love to join the university for the sake of Allah, their chances of getting hired are high.

What is practiced by IIUM and UNIDA Gontor is not strange at all because as proposed by Herzberg (1957), employees are driven to work by two factors (motivators and hygiene factors). Both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards can increase employee motivation to work (Hua, Cheng, Hou, & Luo, 2020) and it was shown by majority research findings that monetary reward alone is not able to produce long lasting job motivation (such as Armstrong, 2007; Ellis & Pennington, 2004; Langton & Robbins, 2007; Harunavamwe & Kanengoni, 2013). Humans inherently seek meaning in life that goes beyond material rewards.

The other important aspects to be emphasized in employee selection are – person-job (PJ) fit, and person-organisation (PO) fit. PJ fit stresses on the match between an individual and the job

requirement (Edwards, 1991) and PO fit refers to the compatibility between the person and the company culture and values (Adkins et al, 1994; Kristof, 1996). These two fits have been found to have strong corelations with employee retention, commitment, citizenship behaviour and performance (Edwards, 1991; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

For IIUM and UNIDA Gontor, specific tests related to Islam and religiosity are pertinent due to the Islamization elements in the organisation. The FGD with the IIUM Deans revealed that some of the key factors leading to failure in getting employment at IIUM are due to shallow knowledge about IIUM vision and mission and lack of interest in IIUM policies and practices.

At this point, IIUM and UNIDA Gontor share common ground that they both emphasise the importance of hiring people who have strong foundations in Islam, high level of religiosity and sufficient knowledge about the organisations' philosophy. As explained earlier, hiring people whose personal characters and traits that are in line with the organisations' culture increases the chances for stronger sense of belongingness to the organisation. The individual traits that are coupled with strong job knowledge and skills would lead to high level of commitment and performance.

CONCLUSION

The paper discusses the recruitment and selection practices of two Islamic universities in Malaysia and Indonesia. Given the high reputation earned by both universities, it is interesting to examine how the universities locate and choose the right people to be hired. Based on the findings from interviews with the university employees, it was found that both of them implemented the conventional recruitment practices with greater emphasis on identifying candidates from within the universities themselves. At UNIDA Gontor, given the unique philosophy and values of the university, internal recruitment sources help locate individuals with compatible characteristics and traits. In terms of selection, both universities emphasized religiosity and personal values which are in line with Islamic principles. However, IIUM and UNIDA Gontor differ in their approach to internationalisation: the former actively recruits international staff as part of its internationalisation policy, while the latter remains domestically focused. The study has a number of limitations. First, data were collected using interviews with the relevant stakeholders. For future research, data should also be collected through quantitative methods, enabling statistical analysis to examine relationships between staffing practices and organisational outcomes such as employee motivation and performance. Second, the study only covered two Islamic universities located in Malaysia and Indonesia. For future research, the study can be extended to other Islamic organisations that adopt shariah-compliant practices.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Nurita Juhdi is the lead researcher and the main author for the paper. Nur Arfifah Abdul Sabian and Usmanul Khakim assisted with the data collection and Suhaiza Safian contributed to the process of data analysis.

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