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Religion and Ethics among Academics: A Work of Heart?

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Abstract: Being an academic has always being connected to continuous rewards in hereafter that whoever teaches some knowledge will have the reward of the one who acts upon it, without detracting from his reward in the slightest. Meanwhile, previous literatures prove that religion contributes to one's ethical behavior that it serves as a boundary of what is right or wrong. Having these two elements of religion and ethics embedded in oneself, this study will elicit the effect towards career management behavior of academics. Academics are the lifeblood of an education institution since they are obligated to shape the future generation. Being a role model to students, learning through exemplary is as important as the knowledge they delivered. Therefore, it is so important to investigate what drives them to treat this noble profession as one of their primacy of life fulfillment. As such, this study reviews literatures pertaining to the mutual importance of ethical value and religion on academic's career management behavior.

Keywords: Academics, Career Behavior, Ethical, Religion

1. Introduction

When you wake up in the morning, what is the passion that fuels you to start your day? Are you living this in your work? If others asked you what drives you to achieve, would the answer be obvious? The triggers that motivate people to achieve are unique for everyone. Many would say its money; more people are starting to claim that they are driven to make a difference. Regardless of what motivates you and drives you to reach peak performance, it must be managed and balanced. Additionally, every person has different motivations for working depending on what they desired for that will give an impact on their morale, motivation and quality of live.

According to Slocum and Hellriegel (2007), motivation is a term associated with the forces acting on a person causing him to act in a certain way. Therefore, understanding dynamics of motivation is a requisite for identifying what drives people to act in certain ways. Motivation is inferred in terms of behavioral changes brought in by internal or external stimuli. In this case, those stimuli are deduced with respect to the knowledge work environment. Additionally, an individual's motivation may change based upon certain factors. These factors are identified as the drivers of motivation and can be used to understand what drives motivation among workers in the knowledge-based work environment.

Academics are the most trusted person who has obligation to produce the good quality of future leader in various fields. They are the lifeblood of an education institution in which the institution would not exist without them. Therefore, it is so important to investigate what drives them to treat this noble profession as one of their primacy of life fulfillment. Additionally, in many circumstances, academics are the role model to their students. This is due to the fact that student is not only learning through what a teacher teach them in classroom, but more on their observation of how teacher act through exemplary (Kaufman, 2008). Hence this paper reviews literatures pertaining to the mutual importance of ethics and religion on academic's career management behavior while stressing out the profession of an academics who delivering knowledge and guidance to students.

2. Career Management Behavior

Although self-efficacy and other individual variables play a large role in career success, a supportive organizational climate may also influence individual success and performance. Due to the increasing use of teams in the workplace, individual career success may depend more than ever on the success and performance of teams. For example, Hetty Van Emmerik (2008) found that teachers with more team level support (measured in terms of informal networks and team orientation) had higher self-rated performance. In her study, team support was even more important than individual mentoring: she found that mentoring had no direct effect on teacher performance, and that the effects of mentoring were moderated by team level support. Her results are consistent with theories about the importance of group social capital (Oh et al., 2004). This perspective recognizes that when it comes to mentoring and supportive relationships, the more the better (Baugh & Scandura, 1999; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Higgins & Thomas, 2001; Van Emmerik, 2004). These supportive relationships may improve performance and career success.

Career management behaviours are the actions that individuals take to achieve their career goals. These behaviours occur when individuals choose to initiate and intervene in their career situation in such a way that the individual acts in a desired direction, rather than responding passively to an imposed change (Crant, 2000). These behaviours are referred to alternatively as “career enhancing strategies” (Nabi, 2003), “context-specific proactive behaviours” (Crant, 2000) and “career goal-directed activities” (Lent, 2004). These behaviours include career exploration and planning, skills development, networking and promoting one’s achievements. Additionally, participating in career management behaviours that are directed at achieving personally valued goals in the career domain are also expected to promote an individual’s career satisfaction and success (Crant, 2000; Lent & Brown, 2006). Pursuing personally relevant goals is a key way that people can contribute to their own wellbeing and enables the exercise of personal agency in career satisfaction. To the extent that an individual can set and work towards their own goals and perceive that they are making progress, they are capable of promoting their own career satisfaction (Lent & Brown, 2006).

3. Religion and Career Management Behavior

Generally religion relates to one’s relation to God (Chusmir & Koberg, 1988). Burks and Sellani (2008) stated that studies of religiosity covers two broad ideas which are religious affiliation and religious commitment. Religious affiliation refers to the membership or association of a person to a specific religious belief while religious commitment is explaining on the level of religion value embedded in their lifestyle (Burks & Sellani, 2008). In fulfilling the religion commitment, Epstein (2002) stated people should view a profession as a means to perform their religious commitment and in fact finding their spiritual fulfillment. In supporting to the view, previous literatures were in an opinion that religion does affect one’s career management behavior in term of job satisfaction, devoted effort into the paid work or performance of the employees.

Maria et al. (2014) conducted a research on the relationship between religion and willingness to work. Even though the study found a mixed result on the level of willingness to work over time for several religions in Europe, the author however, concluded that religion did affect the inclination to devote extra time to paid work among the employees under study. A well-known company of Volkswagen of America has the same idea on the importance of religiosity in running their business that through their executive retreats, the management was included therein religious training so called exploring “God’s ways” of running a business (Chusmir & Koberg, 1988). In short, previous studies have unveiled that religion do play a crucial role in one’s career management behavior.

The impact of religion in the career management behavior leads the attention to a hadith narrated by Anas bin Malik that the Messenger of Allah (saw) said: “Every caller who invites

people to misguidance and is followed, will have a burden of sin equal to that of those who follow him, without that detracting from their burden in the slightest. And every caller who invites people to true guidance and is followed, will have a reward equal to that of those who follow him, without that detracting from their reward in the slightest' (HR. Muslim no. 1017). Referring to this hadith, the linkage between religion and academic profession is the responsibility to deliver knowledge to others and the benefit in hereafter, believing whoever teaches some knowledge will have the reward of the one who acts upon it, without detracting from his reward in the slightest. Having this in mind, academics who acknowledge the virtues of delivering knowledge to students tend to have religious commitment embedded in their work (religious commitment). Thus lead to the direction of the work behavior (career behavior).

However, scholars have also associated religion with ethical values in oneself in a sense that religion could serve as boundary to differentiate between right or wrong. Agreeing on the association between religion and ethical values, Bettina et al. (2005) stated that religion serves as moral muscle to oneself and consequently give a major impact on one's behavior based on its study regarding consumers' ethic based on several religion.

4. Ethics and Career Management Behavior

Ethics is such a paramount issue being discussed in various disciplines including in academics field. However, the focus was directed towards ethics education in school and colleges. The research of ethics has received widespread concerns in the current years after the disasters of prominent organizations like Enron and WorldCom (Koh & Boo, 2004). Basically, ethics serves as a boundary of what is right and wrong or good and evil (Alas, 2005). However, in many circumstances, people need to use their judgement in deciding which option brings greatest benefits to people as a whole (Fantazy & Abdul Rahim A. Al Athmay, 2014). However, things that wrong to one person might not be wrong to another person. It is all depends on individual perception and tolerance towards the ethical issue.

In promoting ethical values, corporations have established code of ethics in guiding its employees and providing a foundation of ethical framework. However, study showed that, it is not enough to have this code as a control mechanism without being ethical in one self. Study by Wotruba et al. (2001) suggested that focus should be switched to the person practicing the code, not primarily on the code of ethics itself. As the employees get more familiar with the code established and have a better understanding, then only the code will become more useful in creating ethical culture in a corporation. This finding implies that ethical value in one self is far more important than other mechanism to stimulate ethical value.

Based on previous literature, ethics was found to directly affect career behavior. Koh and Boo (2004) conducted a study on Singaporean managers to explore the connection between ethical behavior and career success in term of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The result revealed they are positively related inferring being an ethical person would make them more committed and productive in performing their task by achieving job satisfaction. This finding was supported by research in India by Viswesvaran and Deshpande (1996). They found that lack of ethical values may result in distress and job dissatisfaction among the workers that consequently affecting their efficiency.

Prior literature also had extensively examined the relationship between religion and ethics. Most of the results hold that they are mutually supporting each other. One cannot be practiced without paying attention to the other (Kaufman, 2008). Fantazy and Abdul Rahim A. Al Athmay (2014) conducted a study to investigate the impact of religion (Islamic Value) on ethical behavior among university students in United Arab Emirates. They discovered that religion is one of the prevailing factors that inspire ethical behavior among university students besides ethical education and code of ethics. On the other hand, ethical behavior itself is at the heart of religions. This is due to the fact that all of religions have faith in promoting good values among its followers.

5. Conclusion

Having religion and ethics embedded in oneself, this study intends to elicit their effect towards career behavior. Based on prior literature related to this study purpose, deriving data from Indonesian Islamic microfinance institutions, Rokhman (2010) reported the combination of these two elements, Islamic Work Ethic has a direct effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Another study by Yousef (2001) revealed similar finding that employees who live their life with the strong Islamic practices will be more contented and dedicated to their career responsibilities and treat their career as their primacy of life fulfillment. Consequently, they are happy with their job and make it a work at heart. This study found religion and ethics (Islamic Work Ethic) has a direct relationship with organizational commitment and job satisfaction and act as moderator on the association between these two elements among Muslim workers in several corporations in United Arab Emirates.

This conceptual paper will act as a basis to conduct an empirical test in the future on how the combination of religion and ethics among academics would lead to their career behavior as a consequence of the level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

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