

Workplace Spirituality as a Potential Job Resource for Employee Engagement in Malaysia: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Academic Performance

Rabiatul Adawiyah Ma'arof^{1*}, Umi Kartini Rashid², Juzaimi Nasuredin³, Kartini Mat Rashid⁴,
Roseziahazni Abdul Ghani⁵

^{1,4,5}Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Terengganu Kampus Dungun, 23000 Sura Hujong, Dungun, Terengganu, MALAYSIA

^{2,3}Faculty of Technology Management and Business, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Johor, MALAYSIA

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100800534>

Received: 24 August 2026; Accepted: 29 August 2026; Published: 11 September 2026

ABSTRACT

Malaysian higher education institutions operate in increasingly demanding environments characterised by intensified academic responsibilities, technological advancements, and growing institutional performance expectations. These conditions may place pressure on lecturers' well-being and employee engagement, highlighting the importance of identifying job resources that can support positive work functioning. This conceptual paper proposes workplace spirituality, encompassing meaningful work, a sense of community, and alignment with organizational values, as a potential job resource for strengthening employee engagement among university lecturers. Grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, the paper conceptually integrates recent literature on employee engagement, academic work demands, workplace spirituality, and Malaysian higher education. The proposed framework suggests that workplace spirituality may contribute to the motivational process of the JD-R model by providing lecturers with meaning, interpersonal connection, and a sense of purpose, thereby fostering the three dimensions of employee engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. The conceptual synthesis indicates that workplace spirituality represents a potentially important psychological and social resource in demanding academic work environments, although its role among Malaysian university lecturers remains insufficiently examined. The paper therefore proposes a framework for examining the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement among lecturers, particularly within higher education institutions in the East Coast region of Peninsular Malaysia. The framework offers implications for university management and human resource practitioners seeking to develop meaningful, supportive, and connected academic workplaces and contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) by emphasizing sustainable employee well-being.

Keywords: Workplace spirituality, Employee engagement, Job Demands-Resource Model, Lecturers, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

The higher education sector in Malaysia has experienced a significant transformation in response to digitalization, changing educational expectations, research demands, and evolving institutional performance requirements. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) emphasizes academic excellence and digital readiness as central pillars under the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015 - 2025. However, these structural reforms have dramatically changed lecturers' workloads, forcing them to constantly balance teaching, research, postgraduate supervision, community service, and administrative tasks in increasingly complex environments. In fact, according to the Malaysian Minister of Higher Education, Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abd Kadir, lecturers in public universities teach an average of 18 hours per week, excluding research, student supervision, and other duties (Bernama, 2024). Such multiple responsibilities may increase the complexity of academic work and create challenges for maintaining employee well-being and engagement.

Several empirical studies highlight the demanding nature of academic work. Badrudin@ Muhamad (2023), in a study involving 107 community college lecturers in Pahang, found that workload was a more dominant source of stress than student-related factors, while lecturers reported a moderate level of job satisfaction. Similarly, a study among university academics by Rusdi et al. (2023) shows that workload and institutional requirements can contribute to emotionally demanding work experiences. In addition, Munusamy et al. (2024), in a systematic review of mental health among Malaysian educators, identified workload, work-family demands, and work environment as important factors associated with educators' mental health. These findings indicate that academic work environments may contain substantial demands that can affect employees' psychological functioning.

Such conditions make employee engagement (EE) an important consideration for higher education institutions. Employee engagement is characterised by vigor, dedication, and absorption and represents a positive motivational state in which employees invest energy and psychological presence in their work (Bakker et al., 2023). A recent meta-analysis based on 94 independent samples and 119,420 participants shows that work engagement is positively associated with job, social, development, and personal resources, providing support for the motivational process proposed by the JD-R model (Mazzetti et al., 2023). This finding suggests that engagement is not determined solely by individual characteristics but is also influenced by the resources available within the work environment.

The importance of work-related resources is also evident in the Malaysian higher education context. Yusof et al. (2024), based on data from 308 academics in Malaysian private higher education institutions, found that job characteristics and skills utilisation were associated with employee engagement, with the meaning of work partially mediating these relationships. This finding is particularly relevant because it suggests that the meaning employees derive from their work may play an important role in sustaining engagement among academics.

One potential resource that may contribute is workplace spirituality. Workplace spirituality concerns employees' experiences of meaning and purpose at work, connection with others, and a sense of value and purpose within the organization. Dhir and Singh (2024), through a meta-analysis of 20 quantitative studies, demonstrated the continuing multidimensionality and organizational relevance of workplace spirituality and highlighted meaningful work and related dimensions within the literature.

Recent Malaysian evidence further supports the relevance of workplace spirituality linking to employee engagement. Jaiyeoba and Hazahari (2025) examined 340 staff members in Malaysian Islamic higher education institutions and investigated factors contributing to employee engagement. Their study included workplace spirituality alongside training and development, management support, reward and recognition, trustworthiness, and job autonomy. In the Malaysian healthcare sector, Ma'arof et al. (2025) specifically proposed spirituality at work as a pathway to employee engagement among nurses in Malaysian public hospitals, focusing on inner life, meaningful work, and sense of community as potentially important psychological resources.

Therefore, workplace spirituality may represent a potentially important psychological and social resource for employees working in demanding environments. However, despite these developments, limited research has specifically examined workplace spirituality as a potential job resource for employee engagement among university lecturers in Malaysian higher education. Therefore, this conceptual paper proposes that workplace spirituality may represent a psychological and social job resource that supports employee engagement among university lecturers. The proposed relationship is grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which provides a theoretical explanation of how job resources can activate a motivational process leading to positive work outcomes (Mazzetti et al., 2023).

Problem Statement

Malaysian higher education institutions operate in an increasingly demanding environment characterised by multiple responsibilities and increasing institutional performance expectations. Lecturers are expected to manage multiple responsibilities, including teaching, research and publication, postgraduate supervision,

administrative duties, and adaptation to technological developments. Although these responsibilities are essential for institutional development and academic quality, they may simultaneously create substantial job demands experienced by the lecturers.

Evidence from Malaysia demonstrates the relevance of workload and occupational pressures among academic staff. Badrudin@Muhamad (2023) found that workload was the predominant stress factor among 107 community college lecturers in Pahang, exceeding student-related factors, while job satisfaction was reported at a moderate level. Rusdi et al. (2023), based on interviews with 12 Malaysian university academics, identified unmanageable workloads, excessive university requirements, lack of resources, work-life balance difficulties, burnout, and employee engagement as important themes. Their findings suggest that academic burnout and well-being are influenced not only by individual characteristics but also by institutional and work-related conditions. More broadly, Munusamy et al. (2024) identified workload, work-family demands, and work environment as important factors associated with mental health among Malaysian educators. The review examined evidence concerning stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout among Malaysian educators, demonstrating the relevance of occupational conditions to educator well-being. These findings suggest that academic work demands deserve attention not only because of their potential consequences for well-being but also because of their implications for positive work functioning.

From the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) perspective, the effects of demanding work conditions depend partly on the availability of adequate job resources and propose that employee outcomes are influenced by the interaction between job demands and job resources. Job demands involve aspects of work that require sustained effort, whereas job resources facilitate goal attainment, stimulate motivation, and support positive functioning (Bakker et al., 2023). Thus, the availability of adequate resources may be particularly important for maintaining employee engagement in demanding work environments.

This perspective is relevant to employee engagement. Mazzetti et al. (2023), through a large meta-analysis of work engagement, found positive associations between engagement and job, social, development, and personal resources. Their findings reinforce the motivational pathway of JD-R theory, suggesting that employees are more likely to experience vigor, dedication, and absorption when sufficient resources are available. Thus, understanding which resources can support engagement among academic staff is important.

Evidence from Malaysian higher education further supports the importance of work-related resources. Yusof et al. (2024), studying 308 academics in Malaysian private higher education institutions, found that job characteristics and skills utilisation were related to employee engagement and that meaning of work partially mediated these relationships. Thus, understanding resources that enable lecturers to experience meaning, connection, and purpose may be important for explaining how engagement can be sustained in demanding academic environments.

Therefore, workplace spirituality may represent a potentially important but underexamined job resource. Workplace spirituality may provide employees with meaningful experiences, interpersonal connection, and a sense of alignment between their personal values and the organization. These experiences may support the motivational process of JD-R theory by helping employees maintain psychological energy and positive involvement in their work. Dhir and Singh (2024) synthesised 20 quantitative studies and highlighted the continuing importance of workplace spirituality as an organizational construct, including dimensions associated with meaningful work and workplace relationships.

Recent research provides initial evidence for this proposition. Jaiyeoba and Hazahari (2025) investigated employee engagement among staff in Malaysian Islamic higher education institutions and included workplace spirituality among the organizational factors contributing to engagement. Ma'arof et al. (2025) similarly focused specifically on spirituality at work and employee engagement among nurses in Malaysian public hospitals, proposing meaningful work, inner life, and sense of community as psychological resources that may support engagement in demanding healthcare environments.

Nevertheless, the existing studies remain limited in relation to Malaysian university lecturers. Much of the Malaysian evidence concerning occupational demands has focused on stress, burnout, workload, job

satisfaction, or mental health (Badruldin @ Muhamad, 2023; Rusdi et al., 2023; Munusamy et al., 2024), whereas research on workplace spirituality has increasingly considered employee engagement in specific occupational and higher education contexts (Dhir & Singh, 2024; Jaiyeoba & Hazahari, 2025; Ma'arof et al., 2025). However, limited attention has been given to conceptualising workplace spirituality as a potential job resource for employee engagement specifically among university lecturers in Malaysian higher education institutions. Therefore, further conceptual consideration is needed regarding whether workplace spirituality can function as a relevant psychological and social resource among lecturers in other Malaysian higher education settings, including institutions located in the East Coast region of Peninsular Malaysia. Drawing on JD-R theory, the paper proposes that workplace spirituality may contribute to the motivational process by providing lecturers with meaningful work, a sense of community, and value alignment, which may subsequently strengthen employee engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement (EE) refers to a positive and fulfilling work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigor reflects high levels of energy, resilience, and willingness to invest effort in work; dedication represents enthusiasm, pride, inspiration, and a sense of significance; while absorption refers to deep concentration and immersion in work activities (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Recent research continues to establish employee engagement as an important determinant of positive employee and organizational outcomes. A meta-analysis by Mazzetti et al. (2023), based on 94 independent samples involving 119,420 participants, demonstrated that work engagement is positively associated with various job, social, development, and personal resources. Their findings provide strong support for the motivational process proposed by the JD-R model, whereby adequate resources facilitate employee engagement. Similarly, Wulandari et al. (2025) found that work engagement was significantly related to job performance, while Devkota et al. (2025) reported a significant relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance.

Employee engagement is also important in higher education because lecturers are required to sustain involvement across multiple work roles. In the Malaysian context, Yusof et al. (2024), based on 308 academics from Malaysian private higher education institutions, found that job characteristics, skills utilisation, perceived organizational support, and meaning of work were relevant to employee engagement. Similarly, Jaiyeoba and Hazahari (2025) found that workplace spirituality, training and development, management support, reward and recognition, trustworthiness, and job autonomy significantly contributed to employee engagement among 340 staff in Malaysian Islamic higher education institutions. These findings indicate that employee engagement is shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by the availability and quality of organizational and job-related resources.

In addition, Munusamy et al. (2024) identified workload, work-family demands, and work environment as important factors associated with the mental health of Malaysian educators, highlighting the challenging nature of academic work. Thus, understanding employee engagement requires consideration of both the demands employees experience and the resources available to support them. From the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) perspective, this distinction is important because job demands may require sustained physical or psychological effort, whereas job resources can stimulate motivation and facilitate employee engagement (Mazzetti et al., 2023). Therefore, ensuring adequate job resources and supportive working conditions is important for fostering employees' vigor, dedication, and absorption. Consequently, understanding the organizational factors that promote employee engagement among academic staff is critical for supporting employee performance, well-being, and institutional effectiveness.

Workplace Spirituality as a Potential Job Resource Driving Engagement

Workplace spirituality refers to employees' recognition of meaning and purpose in their work, a sense of connection with others, and alignment between personal and organizational values (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Milliman et al., 2003). Recent evidence continues to support the multidimensional nature and organizational

relevance of workplace spirituality. Dhir and Singh (2024), conducted a meta-analysis of 20 quantitative studies, highlighted meaningful work, sense of community, and related dimensions as important components of workplace spirituality and demonstrated its growing significance in organizational research. In the Malaysian higher education context, workplace spirituality has also emerged as an important factor associated with employee engagement. Jaiyeoba and Hazahari (2025), based on 340 staff members from Islamic higher education institutions in Malaysia, found that workplace spirituality significantly contributed to employee engagement, alongside training and development, management support, reward and recognition, trustworthiness, and job autonomy.

For the present paper, workplace spirituality is conceptualised through three related dimensions: meaningful work, a sense of community, and alignment with organizational values. Meaningful work refers to employees' perception that their work has purpose and significance. (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Sense of community concerns employees' feelings of connection, belonging, and interpersonal relationships within the workplace (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Alignment with organizational values refers to the perceived compatibility between employees' personal values and the organization's values or mission.

Within the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, workplace spirituality can be conceptualized as a potential job resource because it provides psychological and social resources that may help employees derive meaning from their work, experience connection with colleagues, and maintain a sense of purpose within the organization. The JD-R model proposes that job resources facilitate motivation and contribute to positive work outcomes, particularly employee engagement. Recent evidence supports this motivational perspective. Ma'arof et al. (2025) specifically examined spirituality at work and employee engagement among nurses in Malaysian public hospitals and highlighted meaningful work, inner life, and sense of community as potential psychological resources for sustaining nurses' energy, dedication, and focus despite demanding working conditions. Similarly, Ma'arof et al. (2024) found that inner life, meaningful work, and sense of community were positively and significantly associated with nurses' job performance in Malaysian public hospitals.

The relevance of workplace spirituality is therefore particularly important in demanding work environments such as higher education, where lecturers may experience substantial workloads, administrative responsibilities, and competing work demands. By providing meaning, interpersonal connection, and value congruence, workplace spirituality may strengthen the motivational resources available to employees and facilitate higher levels of employee engagement. This argument is consistent with recent evidence demonstrating positive relationships between workplace spirituality, employee engagement, and employee-related outcomes (Dhir & Singh, 2024; Jaiyeoba & Hazahari, 2025; Ma'arof et al., 2025). Accordingly, workplace spirituality represents a potentially important job resource for fostering employee engagement and sustaining positive employee functioning in higher education institutions. Nevertheless, studies specifically concerning university lecturers in Malaysian higher education remain limited.

Job Demands-Resources Theory

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory provides the theoretical foundation for explaining why workplace spirituality may contribute to employee engagement. The theory distinguishes between job demands and job resources and proposes that these characteristics influence employee well-being and motivation through two broad processes (Bakker et al., 2023). Job demands refer to physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of work that require sustained effort and may generate psychological or physiological costs. Evidence from Malaysian academics supports the relevance of these demands (Badruldin @ Muhamad, 2023; Munusamy et al., 2024; Rusdi et al., 2023). In contrast, job resources refer to physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of work that help employees achieve work goals, reduce the impact of job demands, and stimulate motivation and personal development (Bakker et al., 2023). Resources may include organisational support, autonomy, feedback, opportunities for development, social support, and meaningful work.

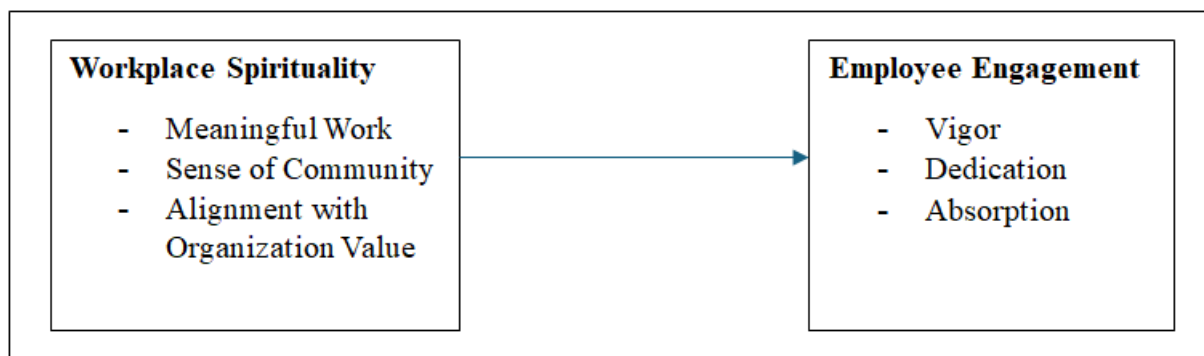
The JD-R theory proposes that job resources activate a motivational process that can foster positive work outcomes, particularly employee engagement. Meaningful work may provide lecturers with a sense of purpose and significance in their teaching, research, supervision, and service activities. A sense of community may

provide social connection, belonging, and interpersonal support. Meanwhile, alignment with organizational values may strengthen employees' perception that their personal values are compatible with those of their institution. Evidence from Malaysian higher education provides preliminary support for this proposition. Yusof et al. (2024) identified meaning of work as relevant to employee engagement among academics, while Jaiyeoba and Hazahari (2025) found workplace spirituality to be a significant contributor to employee engagement among staff in Malaysian Islamic higher education institutions. Ma'arof et al. (2025) also found evidence linking spirituality at work with employee engagement among Malaysian nurses. Therefore:

H1: Workplace spirituality is positively associated with employee engagement among university lecturers.

Research Framework

Figure 1. Research Framework



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study will adopt a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement among lecturers in higher education institutions. Quantitative research is appropriate because it allows the researcher to measure relationships between variables using standardized instruments and statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A cross-sectional survey approach enables the collection of data from respondents at a single point in time, making it suitable for examining perceptions and attitudes within organizational contexts (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). The use of a structured questionnaire will enable the researcher to gather empirical evidence on how workplace spirituality influences lecturers' engagement levels.

Population and Research Setting

The population of this study will consist of lecturers working at higher education institutions in Terengganu, Malaysia, particularly in Kuala Terengganu, Bukit Besi and Dungun. These institutions may include public universities and branch campuses. According to the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, the academic workforce in Malaysian universities continues to expand due to increasing student enrolment and institutional development (MOHE, 2023). Lecturers in these institutions perform multiple roles including teaching, research, supervision, administrative tasks, and community engagement, which makes them an appropriate population for examining workplace engagement and well-being. Studying lecturers in the East Coast region is particularly important because empirical research focusing on this geographical area remains relatively limited compared to universities located in major urban centers.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study will employ probability sampling, specifically simple random sampling, to ensure that every lecturer within the selected institutions has an equal chance of being included in the study. Random sampling is widely recommended in quantitative research because it reduces selection bias and enhances the generalizability of

findings (Hair et al., 2019). The required sample size will be determined after the target population of lecturers within the selected institutions has been established. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample-size table will be used as a reference for determining the minimum required sample based on the identified population size. To address potential non-response and incomplete questionnaires, additional questionnaires may be distributed beyond the minimum required sample. Questionnaires will be distributed through both online survey platforms and physical distribution, depending on accessibility and institutional approval.

Research Instruments

Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of three main sections: demographic information, workplace spirituality, and employee engagement. Workplace spirituality will be measured using the Workplace Spirituality Scale developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000). This instrument measures three core dimensions of workplace spirituality: meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment with organizational values. The scale has been widely used in organizational research and has demonstrated strong reliability and validity across different cultural contexts.

Employee engagement will be measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002). The UWES is one of the most widely used instruments for measuring engagement and consists of three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Previous studies have reported high internal consistency for this scale, with Cronbach's alpha values typically exceeding 0.80, indicating strong reliability (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Respondents will rate items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data Collection

Data Collection Procedure

Data will be collected through an online survey distributed via institutional email lists and professional networks of lecturers. Participation in the study will be voluntary, and respondents will be assured of confidentiality and anonymity to encourage honest responses. Ethical considerations will be strictly observed throughout the research process. Since the study involves academic staff rather than medical or clinical populations, the ethical approval process is expected to be relatively straightforward and may be obtained through institutional research committees if required.

Data Analysis

The collected data will be analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics will first be used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and overall responses to the questionnaire. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha will be conducted to ensure the internal consistency of the measurement scales. Subsequently, correlation and regression analyses will be employed to examine the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement. These statistical techniques are commonly used in organizational behavior research to determine the strength and direction of relationships between variables (Hair et al., 2019).

EXPECTED RESULTS

Based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and recent empirical evidence, the study is expected to find a significant positive relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement among university lecturers. Workplace spirituality is expected to function as a potential job resource by providing employees with meaningful work experiences, a sense of community, and alignment with organizational values. This expectation is consistent with the JD-R motivational process, whereby job, social, development, and personal resources are positively associated with work engagement (Mazzetti et al., 2023). Recent evidence from Malaysian higher education also supports this expectation. Yusof et al. (2024) found that meaning of work played an important role in explaining employee engagement among academics in Malaysian private higher education institutions, while Jaiyeoba and Hazahari (2025) identified workplace spirituality as a

significant contributor to employee engagement among staff in Malaysian Islamic higher education institutions.

Specifically, lecturers who perceive greater meaning and purpose in their work, stronger interpersonal connection within their academic community, and greater alignment between their work and organizational values are expected to report higher levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption. This expectation is further supported by Malaysian evidence showing positive relationships between workplace-spirituality dimensions and employee outcomes. Syed Ahmad et al. (2024), for example, found significant positive relationships between meaningful work, sense of community, organizational trust, and employee performance among academics at a Malaysian university. Internationally, Dhir and Singh (2024) further demonstrated the continuing empirical importance of workplace spirituality and its multidimensional conceptualization.

The study is therefore expected to provide empirical evidence regarding whether workplace spirituality represents a meaningful job resource for sustaining employee engagement among lecturers. Rather than assuming that workplace spirituality directly eliminates occupational stress or burnout, the study will examine whether this resource is associated with stronger employee engagement within a demanding academic work environment. Such findings would provide a more precise application of the JD-R motivational process to the higher education context.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The anticipated findings have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study is expected to contribute to the JD-R literature by examining workplace spirituality as a psychological and social job resource associated with employee engagement. Previous meta-analysis evidence demonstrates that job, social, development, and personal resources are positively associated with work engagement (Mazzetti et al., 2023). The present study extends this perspective by examining whether workplace spirituality, particularly through meaningful work and a sense of community, can function as a relevant resource within the academic work environment.

The study may also contribute to the literature on workplace spirituality by providing additional evidence from the Malaysian higher education context. Existing Malaysian research has demonstrated positive associations between workplace spirituality and employee performance among academics (Syed Ahmad et al., 2024), while recent research has identified workplace spirituality as a significant contributor to employee engagement in Malaysian Islamic higher education institutions (Jaiyeoba & Hazahari, 2025). Therefore, evidence from lecturers in the proposed study context would help determine whether similar relationships are observable beyond the specific institutional settings examined in previous studies.

From a practical perspective, the findings could assist university administrators and human resource practitioners in identifying non-material resources that may support lecturer engagement. If a significant relationship is established, universities could consider initiatives that strengthen meaningful work, collegial relationships, and connection between individual roles and institutional purposes. Examples may include structured mentoring, collaborative teaching and research communities, opportunities for lecturers to contribute to institutional decision-making, recognition of meaningful academic contributions, and leadership practices that communicate institutional purpose and values. These initiatives should complement, rather than replace, conventional HR practices addressing workload, career development, autonomy, recognition, and organizational support.

The findings may also have implications for sustainable higher education workforce management. Evidence from Malaysian educators indicates that workload and work-related conditions remain important concerns for educator well-being (Munusamy et al., 2024). Therefore, strengthening workplace spirituality should not be regarded as a substitute for reducing excessive job demands. Instead, workplace spirituality may represent an additional psychological and social resource within a broader HR strategy aimed at creating supportive and meaningful academic work environments.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The transformation of Malaysian higher education has increased the complexity of academic work and created a continuing need to understand the resources that can sustain lecturers' positive work functioning and engagement. Recent Malaysian evidence demonstrates that workload, work-family demands, and work-environment factors remain important concerns among educators (Munusamy et al., 2024), while studies of Malaysian academics indicate that meaning of work, job characteristics, and skills utilisation are relevant to employee engagement (Yusof et al., 2024). These findings highlight the importance of examining not only the demands experienced by lecturers but also the resources that may support their engagement.

Workplace spirituality represents one potentially important resource because it emphasises meaningful work, interpersonal connection, and a sense of purpose within the workplace. Recent Malaysian studies have demonstrated positive relationships between workplace spirituality and employee outcomes among academics and healthcare employees (Ma'arof et al., 2024; Syed Ahmad et al., 2024), while Jaiyeoba and Hazahari (2025) found that workplace spirituality contributed significantly to employee engagement among staff in Malaysian Islamic higher education institutions.

Nevertheless, further research is required to establish whether workplace spirituality functions as a relevant job resource for employee engagement among lecturers in other Malaysian higher education contexts. In particular, limited evidence is available concerning lecturers in higher education institutions located in the East Coast region of Peninsular Malaysia. The proposed study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement through the JD-R perspective. The findings are expected to contribute to theory by extending the application of the JD-R motivational process and to practice by providing evidence that may assist university administrators in developing meaningful, supportive, and socially connected academic work environments.

Ultimately, the study does not assume that workplace spirituality alone can resolve academic workload, burnout, or other occupational challenges. Rather, it positions workplace spirituality as one potential job resource within a broader organizational system of resources and demands. This positioning provides a theoretically grounded and empirically testable approach to understanding how Malaysian universities may support sustainable employee engagement among academic staff.

REFERENCES

1. Ashmos, D.P. & Duchon, D. (2000). Spirituality at work: A conceptualization and measure. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 9(2), 134-145. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105649260092008>
2. Badrudin @ Muhamad, N.M.A. (2023). Stress factors and job satisfaction amongst community college lecturers in Pahang. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Future Ready Learning and Education*, 29(1), 41-45. <https://doi.org/10.37934/frle.29.1.4145>
3. Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands–resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(3), 309–328. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710733115>
4. Bakker, A. B., & Leiter, M. P. (Eds.). (2010). *Work engagement: A handbook of essential theory and research*. Psychology Press.
5. Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2017). Job demands–resources theory on organizations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38(2), 273–285. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2175>
6. Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Sanz-Vergel, A. I. (2023). Job Demands–Resources Theory: Ten Years Later. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 10, 25–53. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-120920-053933>
7. Bernama. (2024, June 11). Zambry: Higher Education Ministry ready to review university lecturers' teaching hours. *Malaymail*. https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2024/06/11/zambry-higher-education-ministry-ready-to-review-university-lecturers-teaching-hours/139192?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
8. Bougie, R., & Sekaran, U. (2020). *Research methods for business: A skill-building approach* (8th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

9. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
10. Dhir, S., & Singh, S. (2024). Workplace spirituality: A meta-analysis of conceptualisation of constructs. *International Journal of Business and Emerging Markets*, 16(3), 275-294. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBEM.2024.139423>
11. Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage.
12. Jaiyeoba, H. B., & Hazahari, N. Y. (2025). Investigating the factors contributing to employee engagement in Islamic higher education institutions. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 16(1), 326-350. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-12-2022-0327>
13. Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607–610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000308>
14. Ma'arof, R.A., Rashid, U.K., Nasuredin, J., & Musa, R. (2024). Exploring the connection of spirituality at work in enhancing nurses' job performance: Insight from Malaysian hospitals. *Information Management and Business Review*, 16(3(1)S), 888-898. [10.22610/imbr.v16i3\(1\)S.3913](https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v16i3(1)S.3913)
15. Ma'arof, R. A., Rashid, U. K., Nasuredin, J., Rashid, K. M., & Noor, H. M. (2025). Spirituality at work as a pathway to enhance employee engagement among nurses in Malaysia. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(10), 3428-3435. <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.910000280>
16. Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Understanding the burnout experience: Recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World Psychiatry*, 15(2), 103-111. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20311>
17. Mazzetti, G., Robledo, E., Vignoli, M., Topa, G., Guglielmi, D., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2023). Work engagement: A meta-analysis using the Job Demands-Resources model. *Psychological Reports*, 126(3), 1069-1107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003329412111051988>
18. Milliman, J., Czaplewski, A. J., & Ferguson, J. (2003). Workplace spirituality and employee work attitudes: An exploratory empirical assessment. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 16(4), 426-447. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09534810310484172>
19. Munusamy, S., Ramasamy, S. & Sukir, N.I. (2024). A systematic review on mental health and its associated factors among educators in Malaysia. *BMC Public Health*, 24 (2634). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-19855-2>
20. Rusdi, F.A., Razak, A.A. & Embong, Z. (2023). "I find it very difficult to go to work; it is emotionally exhausting": Understanding the burnout and underlying emotions among Malaysia University Academics. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 22(10). <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.22.10.3>
21. Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., González-Romá, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two-sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 3(1), 71-92. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015630930326>
22. Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2004). Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25(3), 293-315. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.248>
23. Schaufeli, W. (2017). Applying the Job Demands-Resource model: A 'how to' guide to measuring and tackling work engagement and burnout. *Organizational Dynamics*, 46, 120-132. [10.1016/j.orgdyn.2017.04.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2017.04.008)
24. Syed Ahmad, S. F., Abdul Sabian, N. A., & Che Nawi, N. R. (2024). The impact of workplace spirituality on employee performance. *Information Management and Business Review*, 16(1(I)S), 272–282. [https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v16i1\(I\)S.3749](https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v16i1(I)S.3749)
25. Wulandari, G. A. (2025). The impact of work engagement on job performance: Exploring the mediating role of innovative work behavior in the public sector. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*, 23(1), 5005–5017. <https://doi.org/10.57239/pjlss-2025-23.1.00399>
26. Yusof, A., Ahmed, E. M., & Abu Said, A.-M. (2024). Factors determining employee engagement role in Malaysian private higher educational institutions. *International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital*, 21(3), 253–274. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJLIC.2024.138682>