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The Effect of the Financial Reward of Restaurant Employees towards Job Satisfaction During Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to analyze the effect of financial reward of restaurant employees towards job satisfaction during the Covid-19 pandemic. A total of 104 respondents involved which contributed to the empirical data collected. A statistical tool of Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis and Partial Correlation Coefficient Analysis are used to test the relationship between the observed variables. The results showed (financial reward- salary and bonus) have a negative relationship with the dependent variable (job satisfaction) during the pandemic of Covid-19. This study finding also indicated that the current study explores the awareness of the critical nature of job satisfaction during the pandemic and its relationship with increased workload for restaurant employees.

Keywords: Employee, Casual Restaurant, Covid-19, Financial Reward, Job Satisfaction

Introduction

Coronavirus disease was reported in 2019 (Covid-19), discovered in Wuhan, China. Since then, there have been several outbreaks worldwide, and it has been declared a global pandemic by World Health Organization (2020). There have been 3.4 million infections and over 240,000 deaths globally since the virus was discovered in December 2019 (Abu Bakar, 2020). Hence, lockdown measures were deemed necessary to prevent the virus from spreading, as the virus spreads rapidly from person to person (BBC News, 2020). Similarly, in Malaysia, the government has announced Movement Control Orders (MCO) to curb the diseases.

As of March 18, 2020, Malaysia has implemented the MCO as a result of the pandemic Covid-19 (Jamil et al., 2021). From the first MCO, the majority of economic activities such as service provider, manufacturing, retailing, hotel, and tourism sectors including restaurant operations have been forced to close or operate partially with very strict procedures. Therefore, many restaurant operators have changed the way they do business during this pandemic season to limit the spread of infectious diseases. In mid-2020, most restaurants started adapting to the new service landscape, where customers can only dine-in based on standard operating procedures, take away food, or delivery (Madeira et al., 2020). However, the decline in

capacity has been exacerbated by the implementation of online ordering services and dine-in restrictions, which have prompted restaurant owners to reduce staff (Norris et al., 2021)

To sustain the business operation, the business owner seeks an amicable agreement with the employees to avoid terminations to find the best way to reduce operating expenses (Mustapha, 2020). In the case of employees who are still working, their salaries will be reduced from what they have previously earned, or they may even only work the hours they need to get by (Rodriguez-Anton et al., 2020b; Lim, 2020; Astro Awani, 2021). In the past, researchers have found that pandemics can adversely affect employee health and performance (Goulia et al., 2010; Bassegy et al., 2018; Shultz et al., 2015). To relate with the current situation, the Covid-19 situation indirectly affects employee's motivation as they need to deal with job insecurity, mental health issues, job demoted, low job performance, or even fear of getting infected by Covid-19 (Khan et al., 2021a; Hamouche, 2020; Harian, 2021; Bernama, 2020b).

In a way to encourage employee motivation in a restaurant, it is important to increase the synergy of motivation among the workers (Watson et al., 2018). At the same time, the majority of the previous job satisfaction study only covered the scope outside of Malaysia, different states, other fields and performed before the pandemic of Covid-19 context (Khuong, & Linh, 2020; Bajrami et al., 2021; Awang, & Yusuf, 2020; Balwa et al., 2021). In this regard, it is relevant for more studies to be conducted in this area.

Therefore, the study is crucial to fill the empirical gap in data regarding job satisfaction in Malaysia's southern state, especially the city of Johor Bahru, due to the limited resources that have been allocated to this study. This study is hypothetically conducted to seek the gap of employee working motivation variables such as financial reward that indirectly predicted will influence job satisfaction among restaurant employees during the pandemic period.

Literature Review

Covid-19 Pandemic in Casual Restaurant Context

Malaysians' daily lives changed dramatically overnight due to the Malaysia Movement Control Order (MCO) restrictions, which went into effect on March 18, 2020, in response to controlling the pandemic outbreak (Prime Minister's Office, 2020). An MCO will not be lifted until the virus is diminished, consequently tightened restriction purchase of goods. Additionally, the government has recognized the virus as impacting the hospitality industry's economic health (Hooi, 2021). Hence, the lockdown brought strict regulations against customer dining in restaurants across the country following the announcement of the MCO. Even though such places are not permitted to operate, restaurants can fulfil takeout orders or deliver meals (Astro Awani, 2020). This global pandemic particularly hard-hits restaurants. Many people prefer to eat at home rather than go out, which means that empty dining rooms are no longer uncommon. To help with financial support, the restaurant service and kitchen team up to offer delivery services during the crisis. However, restaurants are only permitted to offer takeout and are not permitted to serve guests on-premises

As a consequence, restaurants must make vigorous efforts to avoid surrender. During this period, restaurant management has adopted significant changes in strategies to accommodate the restrictions. Moreover, it would take a long before people are no longer

anxious about dining out, even if the pandemic ceases soon. As a result, in order for the restaurant to mitigate economic loss, digital options have become essential tools to keep visible to the customer (Mohamad, 2020). As a result, food delivery platforms like Grab Food or Food Panda are becoming increasingly popular (Berita Harian Online, 2020). Additionally, casual restaurants continue to be impacted by this outbreak due to their reliance on plates rather than plastic containers for serving. Whatever the situation, restaurants rely on cash flow to stay afloat; without a restaurant, sales are impossible.

The Impact Towards Restaurant Employment

The ban on crowded establishments and the practice of social distancing have changed restaurant consumption behaviour drastically; moreover, wholesalers and suppliers' services have been limited, which disrupts the food supply chain (Alam, & Khatun, 2021; Mohamed, 2021; Chin, 2020). Due to economic downturns, consumer consumption is reduced as households prioritize spending on essential goods (Kong, 2020). At the same time, due to the implementation of MCO, restaurant workers are unable to work remotely compared to office employees who can perform their work on computers, allowing remote work to be available easily. Work at a restaurant differs considerably from working in an office. Restaurant employees must perform operational roles in the restaurant itself (Connley, 2020). If the employees are not available in the restaurant, they cannot do their jobs. Furthermore, despite the government offering additional support to restaurant owners, staying relevant requires the business owners' self-assuredness (Rodzi, 2021).

Consequently, the current situation has led to some restaurant owners being inventive, or restaurant owners anticipate cutting their workforce (NBC Washington, 2020). In other words, obtaining job security for employees requires a distinctive approach as it will provide the employees with the ability to manage multiple tasks at once and enhance their skills in other areas (Kamarudin, 2020). This is supported by Chanana and Sangeeta (2020), in which organization developing employee engagement during the pandemic is essential to keep employees motivated and satisfied through a tough time.

On the other hand, restaurants have revised their menu items to strive for business operation. Particularly, to create appealing and appropriate menu items, chefs need to consider their target market. For example, restaurant owners have expanded their menu selection, including marinated lamb meats or premixed drinks such as milk iced tea. Hence, restaurants reorganize existing employee roles in response to changing menus and delivery methods. At the same time, to maintain their product's long-term viability, they have to stay in touch with emerging trends and consumer needs, such as deliveries or following SOP (Li et al., 2020). As a result, the kitchen area will transition from service to production, as packaged food items will be designed to accommodate fluctuating delivery schedules and demand uncertainty. Meanwhile, server staff will be responsible for clerical duties, such as checking online or phone orders and delivering food.

However, according to Bufquin et al (2021), restaurant employees who remained on the job during the pandemic had more significant emotional stress, drug abuse, and alcohol use than furloughed employees. Higher emotional stress for those who remained working was caused by concerns about economic instability and fear of not being able to find a job, which eventually affects mental health (Khan et al., 2021b)

Satisfaction

According to Cambridge Dictionary (2021c), getting what you want or have done what you wanted to do can give you a feeling of fulfillment. This is also supported by Stone and Morse (1954); one's sense of satisfaction is determined by the extent to which his or her wants, needs, and desire have been met, relatively a person's level of satisfaction is primarily related to what they want and gets from the world. Thus, satisfaction is influenced by prior expectations for the outcome (Jiang et al., 2011). The concept of satisfaction can be simplistically defined as a complex one with a wide range of dimensions. The dimension extends to a wide range of disciplines in human reality or beyond, such as economy, law, or even sociology. At the same time, satisfaction is positively influenced by satisfaction in various life domains. In order to achieve subjective happiness, the individual should be completely satisfied across different domains such as shelter, food, or self-esteem (Sirgy, 2012)

This is also supported by (Bilton et al., 2002). They stated that whether one or more people are satisfied, depends upon a variety of factors, such as the social class they belong to, like ethnicity or economic class. In supposition, satisfaction may rely upon psychological components, environment, belief system, and cultural constructs. The factor will also vary by context, such as job, view of product or services, or lifestyle itself.

Job Satisfaction

Employee job satisfaction refers to how much pleasure the employee feels regarding his or her work (Locke, 1969). Employment satisfaction relates to an individual's thoughts on their work and the circumstances that arise due to their opinions of the task and its rewards, as well as their psychological reaction or emotional response (Davidescu et al., 2020). As a result, job satisfaction dramatically influences the hotel's financial performance and the efficiency of the organization (Borralha et al., 2016). In summary, the indication of positive morale in the workplace can be found in people's positive attitudes (Aziri, 2011). Additionally, having complete employee satisfaction, such as getting fairness treatment, satisfactory working conditions, benefits, and having good communication with a co-worker, will lead the employees in the fast-food restaurant sector to have better job satisfaction, as well as a more customer-focused attitude (Arokiasamy, 2019). This is supported by Jules et al (2017) stated that employees of casual restaurants in Malaysia are highly satisfied with their jobs due to the strong commitment between the organization and the employee.

However, even when the employees are dissatisfied with their job, they do not plan to quit because they see the job as personal growth since they are still in the early stages of career development (Lee et al., 2017). Besides that, Romero, Jimber, and Casas (2018) argued that in Europe, dissatisfaction is expressed by hotel and restaurant employees over long hours of working conditions which lead to low productivity and innovation.

Financial Rewards

According to Zaraket and Saber (2017), financial reward is where the employer pays the employee in the form of salary, bonus, allowance, healthcare insurance, and pension as a service for their work. Furthermore, rendering from Cambridge Dictionary (2021b), salary is the monthly amount of money an employee receives as salary every year, usually directly deposited into his or her bank account. Meanwhile, a bonus is monetary rewards employees receive due to hard work and the amount of money they expect (Cambridge Dictionary,

2021a). Thus, giving the employee a bonus could lead to job satisfaction (Ingsih et al., 2020; Harinoto & Iman, 2018). On the whole, it is a well-known fact that money drives many people. Salary is the most important factor affecting employees' job satisfaction. Eventually, salary reductions have been due to collective bargaining between employees and employers to enable the business to continue running during MCO (Zulkafli, 2021). Consequently, salary reductions will contribute to low job satisfaction and commitment (Wang, & Seifert, 2017; Abuhashesh et al., 2019; Pohlig et al., 2020).

On the contrary, based on previous studies (Rosalia et al., 2020; Inegbedion et al., 2020; Schwabe & Castellacci, 2020; Noor & Zainordin, 2018), salary is not a critical factor towards job satisfaction; however, a significant key factor leading to job satisfaction is physiological needs, and employee perceptions on the workload or future replacement by robots. This is also supported by Terera and Ngirande (2014) who stated that bonus is insignificant to job satisfaction because other factors such as work opportunity or training and development contribute to job satisfaction; yet, the bonus only maintains job retention

Findings

Descriptive Statistic

Dimension of financial reward and job satisfaction was measured using descriptive analyses which consists of means and standard deviation based on five-point Likert-scale (1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= neutral 4=agree, 5=strongly agree).

Financial Reward

The first analysis of the variable is financial reward towards job satisfaction. Table 1.1 below shows the magnitude of the mean scores range for five items ranging from 3.22 to 3.79, indicating that most of the respondents agreed with most of the items in this section analysis. Based on Table 1.1, FR4 possessed the highest mean value (M=3.79, SD=0.797), representing satisfaction with their benefits. The employee was also satisfied with the salary that had received monthly (M=3.59, SD=0.808). Moreover, the employee indicated that the amount of work they do is paid in fair amount with their salary (M=3.47, SD=0.775). However, FR3, which possesses the lowest mean value (M=3.22, SD=0.623), infer satisfaction with their bonus

Table 1.1

Descriptive Statistic Financial Reward of Job Satisfaction Construct

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I am satisfied with my salary	3.59	.808
2	I feel I am being a paid a fair amount for the work I do	3.47	.775
3	I am satisfied with the amount of bonus I receive	3.22	.623
4	I am satisfied with the benefits I receive	3.79	.797

Job Satisfaction

The next analysis of this variable is job satisfaction. Table 1.2 below shows the magnitude of the mean scores range for five items ranging from 3.85 to 4.10, indicating that most of the

respondents agreed with most of the items in this section analysis. Based on Table 1.2, the items were asked regarding job satisfaction towards working in the restaurant during the pandemic, and most of the respondents' answers tended to the first and second points on the scale. The highest mean score for this construct is the second item which indicates the job is important to them (M=4.10, SD=0.795). The restaurant worker also indicated they like doing the things they do at work (M=4.01, SD=0.717), and they are satisfied with their job since there is no other job choice available (M=3.99, SD=0.876). Next, they are believed to face more conflict between work and family responsibilities (M=3.91, SD=1.089), and overall, they are very satisfied with the job (M=3.85, SD=0.845)

Table 1.2

Descriptive Statistic Job Satisfaction Construct

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I like doing the things I do at work	4.01	.717
2	My job is important to me	4.10	.795
3	Overall, I am very satisfied with my job	3.85	.845
4	I am facing more conflict between work and family	3.91	1.089
5	I am satisfied with my job since there is no other job choice available	3.99	.876

Inferential Analysis

The inferential analysis aims to generalize the population from a study of samples. The inferential analyses are conducted through SPSS software (Version 26) are shown below.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Using Pearson Correlation Analysis can show the direction, strength, and bivariate relationship among variables in a study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). As shown in Table 1.3, the Rule of Thumb provided the range of coefficients and their strength associations.

Table 1.3

Pearson Coefficient Range Table

Pearson Coefficient Range	Strength Association
±0.91 to ±1.00	Very strong
±0.71 to ±0.90	High
±0.41 to ±0.70	Moderate
±0.21 to ±0.40	Small but definite relationship
0.00 to ±0.20	Slight or Almost Negligible

Source: Jr et al (2011). *Essentials of Business Research Methods* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Financial Reward and Job Satisfaction

H: There is a significant relationship between financial reward and job satisfaction among restaurant employees during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 1.4
Correlations between Financial Reward and Job Satisfaction

		Financial Reward	Job satisfaction
Financial Reward	Pearson Correlation	1	.220*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.025
	N	104	104
Job satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.220*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	
	N	104	104

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation coefficient is used to determine the effects of financial rewards on job satisfaction. The result from Table 1.4 shows that the Pearson correlation coefficient for both of them is 0.220, which falls within ± 0.21 to ± 0.40 . This coefficient range explains that the strength of the correlation is small. At the same time, the p-value obtained is 0.025, which is less than the significance value of 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis is rejected with a piece of strong evidence. As a result, the Pearson correlation proved that financial reward has a small but definite relationship with job satisfaction at a 0.05 significance level.

Pearson's correlation analysis discovered that there was a weak significant influence of independent variable and dependent variable. The correlation value showed a slight or almost negligible relationship between financial reward and restaurant employee job satisfaction during the pandemic with a correlation value of 0.220. A weak connotation existed between the variables since the correlation value in ± 0.21 to ± 0.40 indicated that the independent variables cannot reasonably explain a significant relation for restaurant employee job satisfaction.

At the same time, the research hypothesis is not supported by financial rewards towards job satisfaction. The result showed that financial reward such as salary and bonus is not the mechanism that provides advantages for restaurant employee satisfaction in fulfilling their daily tasks. This is consistent with the previous study that highlighted that financial reward context could not be a measurement to measure the job motivation that leads to the job satisfaction of employees as job security have been identified as the reward factor that most influence an individual's satisfaction (Imam & Javed, 2019; Shafiq, 2015; Imran et al., 2015). According to Lee (1993), job security is referred to as the powerlessness of employees at the workplace where the environment is threatened. Furthermore, based on Basyouni and Keshky (2021a) research stated that the relationship between job insecurity and financial anxiety (salary or bonus) was positively correlated. This is also supported by the University of Connecticut article (2020), which stated that some respondents were concerned that COVID-19's effects could hurt their employment security.

Eventually, it will lead to depression and cognitive function among employees (Chapman et al., 2020). Additionally, a survey report conducted among 1,004 people from the United Kingdom found job security was the most important factor in employees' decision to remain with their employer, rather than flexible working and pay as a result of the current Coronavirus outbreak. Because the economic recovery won't be instantaneous after the restrictions are lifted, employers will have to deal with employees' concerns about job

security for some time (Sherwood's, 2021). Hence, in challenging times, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, willingness to work in difficult situations is more important than financial rewards for restaurant employees because of threats to job security. Nordin and Hassan (2019) stated that interest is the factor greatly affects job satisfaction.

Thus, it can be concluded that other aspects of motivation and satisfaction are the potential predictors of restaurant employee satisfaction during the pandemic of Covid-19. The most important point to have this literature in this study is that other researchers can analyze, reveal elements that affect specific employee motivation, and examine the interaction of these items that regulate their support towards job satisfaction. As a whole, this study proves all alternative relationships between constructs in the research framework. This research will undoubtedly open a floodgate for other researchers intending to undertake similar studies, most likely with a much bigger scope and a much broader audience in the future.

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