

## Conference Paper

# The Influence of Religiosity and Motivation Towards Teacher Commitment During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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## Abstract.

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has had a severe impact on the education system, involving nearly 1.6 billion students in more than 190 countries and on all continents. The closure of schools, higher education institutions and other learning spaces affected more than 94% of the global student population. In response, online teaching and learning has been used by teachers and students on an unprecedented scale since the government announced the lockdown. As a result, teachers have encountered various difficulties in adapting to these changes and challenges. Following which, Teachers who are highly committed will have an awareness and willingness to improve the teaching profession and establish an effective learning environment to enable students to reach their goals. Previous studies have identified that religiosity and motivation significantly impact teachers' level of commitment. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of religiosity and motivation on teachers' commitment during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was conducted on 66 teachers currently working in various Islamic religious schools in Perak, Malaysia using a purposive sampling technique. A quantitative method was used and data was collected through a survey questionnaire with appended consent. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Google form was utilised as a data collection platform from respondents. The findings of the study revealed that religiosity ( $\beta = 0.310$ ,  $p = 0,004 < 0.05$ ) and motivation ( $\beta = 0.435$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ) significantly influenced the work commitment of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, the school management should highly emphasise the role of these two factors among teachers, as they could enhance the commitment of teachers, such as preparing the syllabus and educating students.

**Keywords:** commitment, religiosity, motivation, teacher, Islamic religious school

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## 1. Introduction

In early 2020, a novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) had been spreading vigorously around the world and was declared as a “Pandemic” on March 11, 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO) (Sahni, 2020). Many countries around the world, including Malaysia, are also experiencing this crisis which could lead to fever and considerable deaths. The Malaysian government declared the Movement Control Order (MCO) on March 18, 2020. The consequence of this declaration called for the closure of many work sectors, including the education sector. Various levels of education such as primary and secondary schools and universities were classified as non-essential services and had to close across the country (Scull, Phillips, Sharma, & Garnier, 2020). As such, people have been urged to start working from home as the case of COVID-19 has been rising rapidly. In the education sector, MCO has forced schools and universities to migrate teaching and learning to be fully online (Efendie, Abdullah, & Yusuf, 2020). All type of educational levels, including schools, have shifted dramatically from traditional learning settings to virtual learning.

In the school context, the shift from traditional learning to online learning has a significant impact on teacher commitment. According to Chen et al. (2020), due to the online format, teachers always have to struggle with technological glitches during their video conference sessions, which generally leads them to feel that the work task is increasingly heavy and the work pressure increasingly high. The pressure on teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic is concerning as it may affect teachers’ commitment in imparting knowledge to students. The teacher plays a central role in promoting the intellectual and social development of students (Hee, Shukor, Ping, Kowang, & Fei, 2019). As such, religiosity is a critical component in sculpting teachers’ social behaviour (Mansour & Diab, 2016). Religion is one of the most universal and influential social institutions that have a significant influence on people’s attitudes, values and behaviours, at both the individual and societal levels (Briliana & Mursito, 2017). The role of teachers is generally regarded as a driving factor in determining the quality of education in the country. Moreover, during the pandemic, teachers need to show greater commitment to their work as this can be a crucial factor in motivating students to continue studies (Baloran & Hernan, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of religiosity and motivation on teachers’ commitment during COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Commitment

The term 'commitment' refers to an attitude or psychology characterizing the relationship of the employee with his employer and in turn influencing his decision to stay or leave the organization (Kotzé & Nel, 2020). Besides that, commitment can also be defined as a binding of the individual to behavioural acts that occurs when individuals assume an attribute of commitment after engaging in voluntary, explicit and irrevocable (Reichers, 1985). Particularly, in the context of education, commitment has become a crucial aspect that needs to be developed and fostered among teachers (Thien, Razak, & Ramayah, 2014). This is because teachers who care about their students' success are more likely to devote more time and effort to their students' education (Rayo et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Reyes (1989) emphasised that among the characteristics of committed teachers are (i) less tardy, hard work, and less tendency to leave the workplace, (ii) devote more time to extracurricular activities to achieve goals of the educational organisation, (iii) perform the task effectively, (iv) influence student achievements, (v) believe in and act on the goals of the school, (vi) put more efforts beyond self-interest, and (vii) intend to remain a member of the school system. In view of this, having a highly committed teacher is regarded as an asset in any school (Thien & Razak, 2014; Thien et al., 2014). Overall, highly committed teachers are closely connected to their students, careers and schools (Huang, Lee, Zhang, & Wang, 2016).

### 2.2. Religiosity

Religiosity is an important institution in human life because it exerts great influence on the formation of behaviour and personality, calm emotions, increases self-esteem and happiness (Hamzah, Suandi, Hamzah, & Tamam, 2014). The term 'religiosity' is defined as an organised belief system with established rituals and practices, which are learned in places of worship (Zullig, Ward, & Horn, 2006). Religiosity is also defined as the awareness of the individual's knowledge and willingness to accept the teachings of their beliefs, and this becomes a personal belief, an internal belief, which manifests in daily activities (Novitasari, Asbari, Wijayanti, Hyun, & Farhan, 2020). In other words, religiosity is regarded as a vital factor that determines the behaviours and attitudes of people in the workplace environment, and what the right attitude will be (Bal & Kökalan, 2021).

Religiosity can manifest itself in terms of responses, observations, thoughts, feelings, and obedience to the sacred. This is considered as a significant indicator for making a decision when it comes to a basis that leads an individual to act legally and morally (Baharuddin & Ismail, 2018). It is believed that people who hold and adhere certain religious beliefs will exhibit particular behaviours through their personal and social lives (Osman-Gani, Hashim, & Ismail, 2013). This is supported by Novitasari et al. (2020), who argued that teachers with a high level of religiosity will exhibit different working behaviour than those with a low level. The authors also clarified that teachers with a high level of religiosity generally display positive attitudes such as responsibility, tolerance, and commitment to their work and colleagues. Different studies have discovered that religiosity has a significant impact on teacher commitment (Annur, 2020; Desembrianita, 2021). Thus, in order to investigate the influence of religiosity on teacher commitment, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Religiosity positively influences teacher commitment.

### 2.3. Motivation

The word 'motivation' refers to "an inner state that energises, moves, channels and sustains behaviour towards goal" (Hanson, 2003). Motivation involves the energy and drive to learn, work effectively and realise one's potential (Sinclair, 2008). This definition indicates that in order to achieve a goal, individuals must be sufficiently stimulated and energetic, must clearly focus on what is to be achieved, and must be willing to commit their energy for a long enough period to achieve their goal (Islam & Ismail, 2008). In the context of education, teacher motivation is crucial in order to increase the quality of their teaching and their interaction with students (Qin et al., 2017).

According to Salifu and Agbenyega (2013), there are two major factors influencing the motivation of teachers, namely intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors are those that come from within a person, while extrinsic motivation is mainly determined by external factors (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). Salifu and Agbenyega (2013) described that extrinsic factors affecting teacher motivation include attractive salary, student discipline, good working conditions, supportive educational policies, and high professional status. Besides that, intrinsic factors that can contribute to teacher motivation include enjoyment with children, pleasure of contributing to student learning, enjoyment of teaching favourite subjects, and opportunity to develop new skills and experiences that exert greater influence in the workplace (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). Numerous studies have found that motivation has a positive impact on teachers' commitment in

school (Annur, 2020; Desembrianita, 2021; Pourtousi & Ghanizadeh, 2020). Thus, in order to investigate the influence of motivation on teacher commitment, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Religiosity positively influences teacher commitment.

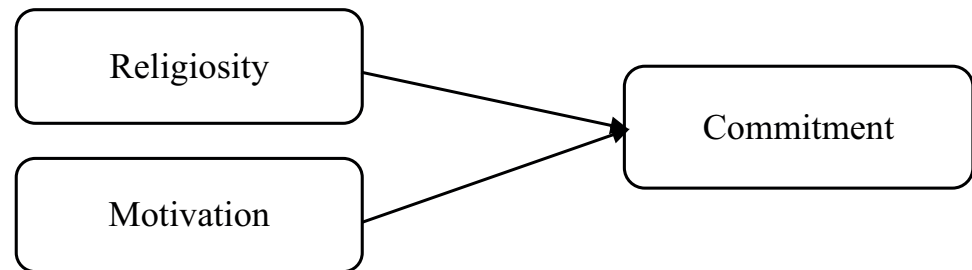


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.

### 3. Research Methodology

This is a quantitative study and used an adapted questionnaire to collect the data. The questionnaire was designed based on previous studies. This questionnaire was first translated into the national language of Malaysia which is Bahasa Melayu. The translated draft was checked and validated by the two experts before starting the data collection. The final version of the questionnaire was generated and consisted of a total of 20 questions. This questionnaire is divided into two main sections. Section A: Profile of the Respondents (4 items) and Section B: Religiosity (6 items), Motivation (6 items) and Commitment (4 items). The questionnaire of this study used a five-point Likert scale, representing a range of 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5= Strongly Agree.

In this study, the purposive sampling approach was applied as a sampling technique. This study was successfully collected data from 66 teachers currently working in Islamic religious schools. According to Cooper and Schindler (2011), a group of 25 to 100 people is suitable for a pilot study. This data collection process started in July and ended in August 2020. It took almost two months to complete the data collection process. The collected data were then analysed using the SPSS software version 24.0. As shown in Table 1, the results of the reliability test showed that Cronbach Alpha for Religiosity (CA = 0.877), Motivation (CA = 0.709) and Commitment (CA = 0.77), while the overall Cronbach Alpha is 0.792, indicating that the reliability test was acceptable, as reported by Cortina (1993).

TABLE 1: Summary of Reliability Test.

Variable	No. of Items	Reliability (α)
Religiosity	6	0.877
Motivation	6	0.709
Commitment	4	0.770
Overall	16	0.792

In addition, descriptive statistics were also analysed to acquire the mean score. As shown in Table 2, the scale interpretation of mean score scale was divided into four groups: Low = 1.00-2.00, Moderately Low = 2.01-3.00, Moderately High = 3.01-4.00 and High = 4.01-5.00 (Harun, Salleh, Memon, Baharom, & Abdullah, 2014).

TABLE 2: Mean Score Interpretation Scale.

Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00-2.00	Low
2.01-3.00	Moderately low
3.01-4.00	Moderately high
4.01-5.00	High

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Profile of Respondents

This study was involved 66 teachers from different Islamic religious schools in Perak. Of a total of 66 respondents, 27 respondents (40.9%) were male and 39 respondents (59.1%) were female. Regarding the age group, the majority of respondents with 35 respondents (53%) aged between 21 and 30 years, followed by 24 respondents (24%) aged between 31 and 40 years, 4 respondents (6.1%) aged between 41 and 50 years, and only 3 respondent (4.5%) aged 50 years and above. In terms of their academic qualification, most of the respondents had a bachelor’s degree with 45 respondents (68.5%). The rest had master’s degree, diploma, and certificate with respectively 7 respondents (10.6%). Finally, the largest number of respondents with 20 respondents (30.3%) have 1 to 3 years of working experience, followed by 15 respondents (22.7%) have 6 to 10 years of experience, 14 respondents (21.2%) have 4 to 5 years of experience and 9 respondents (13.6%) have more than 10 years of experience. The others have working experience of less than 1 years with 8 respondents (12.1%).

TABLE 3: Profile of Respondents.

Demographic variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	27	40.9
	Female	39	59.1
Age	21-30	35	53.0
	31-40	24	36.4
	41-50	4	6.1
	51 and above	3	4.5
Academic Qualification	Certificate	7	10.6
	Diploma	7	10.6
	Bachelor's degree	45	68.2
	Master's degree	7	10.6
Teaching Experience (Years)	Less than one year	8	12.1
	1 – 3 years	20	30.3
	4 – 5 years	14	21.2
	6 – 10 years	15	22.7
	Above 10 years	9	13.6
<b>Total</b>		<b>66</b>	<b>100.00</b>

## 4.2. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis was performed for both independent and dependent variables. As shown from Table 4, the mean score for all the items is between 3 points and 4 points above. The highest means score was Religiosity (Mean = 4.849, SD = 0.299) and the lowest means score was Motivation (Mean = 3.905, SD = 0.529). This demonstrated that the majority of the respondents are focused on the study variables, especially on religiosity and commitment.

TABLE 4: Summary of Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Religiosity	66	4.849	0.299	High
Motivation	66	3.905	0.529	Moderately High
Commitment	66	4.444	0.469	High

## 4.3. Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to measure the linear associations and how variables are related between the dependent variable (commitment) and the predictors,

namely religiosity and motivation. Based on Table 5, the findings reveal that all the independent variables have a significant correlation with the dependent variable. First, there was a positive correlation between religiosity and commitment,  $r = 0.372$ ,  $n = 66$ ,  $p = 0.002$ . Second, there was also a positive correlation between motivation and commitment,  $r = 0.479$ ,  $n = 66$ ,  $p = 0.000$ .

TABLE 5: Summary of Correlation.

Variable	Coefficient	Commitment
Religiosity	Pearson Correlation	0.372**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002
	N	66
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	0.479**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	66

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### 4.4. Hypothesis Testing

Multiple regression analysis was employed to test the hypothesis in this study. The findings of R,  $R^2$  and adjusted  $R^2$  to investigate the correlation and variance of the dependent variable with the independent variables are presented in Table 6. The R value is 0.569, indicating a positive correlation between the predictors (Religiosity and Motivation) and Commitment. The second value is  $R^2$  for the multiple regression models at 0.324, demonstrating that 32.4% of the total variation is clarified by this question. While the adjusted  $R^2$  is 0.302, which showed that 30.2% of the total variation among the values of Y (Commitment) can be described by a linear relationship with the independent variables (Religiosity and Motivation).

TABLE 6: Summary of Regression Model.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.569	0.324	0.302	0.39180

a. Predictors: (Constant), Motivation, Religiosity

As shown in Table 7, the findings indicate that religiosity positively and significantly influences teacher commitment ( $\beta = 0.310$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). Thus, the proposed Hypothesis (H1) is accepted. In addition, motivation positively and significantly influences teacher commitment ( $\beta = 0.435$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the proposed Hypothesis (H2) is also accepted.



TABLE 7: Summary Result of Regression Analysis.

Hypothesis	Path	Standardised Coefficients (Beta)	t Value	P Value	Results
H1	R → C	0.310	2.959	0.004	Significant
H2	M → C	0.435	4.156	0.000	Significant

a. Dependent Variable: Commitment

## 5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of religiosity and motivation on teachers’ commitment during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aimed to meet the study objectives of the proposed framework, involving two hypotheses. The findings generated through the multiple regression analysis indicate that religiosity and motivation significantly influenced teachers’ commitment in their work. The first hypothesis of this study showed that religiosity significantly influences teachers’ commitment ( $\beta = 0.310, P < 0.05$ ). This finding suggests that the religiosity that grows and develops in a teacher will influence his/ her commitment to work. The finding align with previous conclusions by Desembrianita (2021) and Annur (2020). It is plausible that the level of religiosity will positively influences teacher commitment, even though all teaching and learning activities were conducted through online during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also known that teachers with a high level of internal religiosity will have a high level of commitment with their works and their institutions due to emotions stemming from religious beliefs.

In addition, the second hypothesis of this study also showed that motivation significantly influences teachers’ commitment ( $\beta = 0.435, P < 0.05$ ), which is similar to the findings by Desembrianita (2021), Annur (2020) and Pourtousi and Ghanizadeh (2020). It is inevitable that the commitment of teachers has a close relationship with their motivation both in terms of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. This finding is reasonable since highly motivated teachers put more effort into their profession and have a great spirit of dedication to their students and their institutions (Ghanizadeh & Ghonsooly, 2014). Accordingly, teacher motivation is regarded as an important component to increase the commitment of teachers, especially during the period of COVID-19 pandemic, all courses or lectures have been delivered through online learning. Thus, it requires motivation to help alleviate difficulties and build teacher commitment as the teaching profession is largely stressful.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper presented the findings of the influence of religiosity and motivation on teacher commitment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Both religiosity and motivation variables were found to influence teachers' work commitment. Based on the findings, motivation has a greater influence on teacher commitment than religiosity. Meanwhile, religiosity has a slightly less influence on teacher commitment than motivation. It can be highlighted that motivation and religiosity are significant factors in enhancing teacher commitment, even though they have faced various challenges in educating students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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