

Values-Based Recruitment (VBR) in Malaysia: A Way Forward

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Abstract

Purpose: With the increasing demands for soft skills among employees in all industries and almost all jobs, together with the increasing issues of employee misconduct and corruption in the organisations, perhaps there is now the time to revisit the existing practise of competency-based recruitment into more values-based recruitment and selection. This paper addresses the need for a values-based type of recruitment and selection in Malaysia.

Design/methodology/approach: This paper is a conceptual paper that uses a qualitative research method of literature review to understand the themes of the study and arrive at its findings and conclusion.

Findings: The finding indicates that hiring employees via values-based recruitment can be more advantageous to achieving performance effectiveness. Values-based recruitment which focuses on finding the match between the values and competency of the candidates with the jobs and the organisations can produce a sustainable effect on human resource development as well as talent management leading to high work-related outcomes such as job performance, job satisfaction, high morale, work engagement and organisational commitment.

Research limitations/implications: This paper offers an important practical application useful for hiring all-rounded employees with competencies (i.e. hard skills) and values (i.e. soft skills) needed by most organisations. Thus, this study can be a reference for organisations and HR managers in retooling their hiring approach for the effectiveness of their talent management, HRM and organisation performance.

Practical implications: This paper opens a new horizon for Malaysian organisations to improve the existing recruitment and selection techniques that are relatively competency-based. This technique may not be highly applicable and effective in targeting employees with hybrids skills (i.e. soft skills and hard skills) and in finding the best-fit employees.

Originality/value: This paper will open a plethora of discussion and insightful ideas on the need to improve the current hiring method to a more value-based in line with the current needs of the industries.

Keywords: Values-based recruitment, competency-based recruitment, hard skills, soft skills, Malaysia

1. Introduction

A recent report by LinkedIn (New Straits Times, February 20, 2019; The Edge Markets (April 14, 2019) concerning the value of soft skills among talents in Malaysia indicates that there are demands for jobs that require hybrid skills of hard skills and especially soft skills. These hybrid skills are in great demand for all employees across industries (LinkedIn Learning, December 28, 2019; LinkedIn Learning, January 9, 2020). Soft skills are those values-related skills such as adaptability, teamwork/collaboration and leadership that become increasingly important even for technical jobs which require hard skills. While soft skills are becoming evenly important as hard skills (i.e. competency), almost all companies in Malaysia are still using the recruitment techniques designed for hiring employees with hard skills (i.e. competency) or also known as competency-based recruitment (CBR) (Azmi, 2009; Jamaudin, 2018).

Therefore, with the increasing need for soft skills and the mounting issues related to employees' unprofessional conduct, organisation in Malaysia should consider applying values-based recruitment (VBR) as the recruitment method as theoretically and empirically values have significant effects on people's actions (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998; Verplanken, & Holland, 2002), therefore, adopting VBR in which values-matched is given high consideration could help the organisations to find a perfect match between employees values and competency with jobs and the organisations.

Values should not be underestimated as empirical evidence has shown significant effects on people's behaviour (e.g., Homer & Kahle, 1988; Rokeach, 2008; Wahab, 2017). Values are defined as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (Rokeach 1973, p. 5). In organisations, values play a significant influence on employees' behaviour and work outcomes (Elizur, 1996; Goodman & Svyantek, 1999; Froese, & Xiao, 2012).

Therefore, the use of values in the employees' recruitment and selection has a huge implication for human resource management and organisational performance. VBR is starting to take hold in certain important jobs that need high application of soft skills which cannot be replaced by machines or technology. Some organisations have shifted their preference towards VBR in hiring their employees. Google (Blakley, 2021), Cardiff and Vale University (2019) and UK healthcare professions (Miller & Bird, 2014) for example, have transformed their recruitment method to a more value-based approach.

1.1 Problem statement

Organisations in Malaysia, in general, are still using competency-based techniques in their hiring process (e.g. Siddiquee, 2013; Abd Manaf, 2017). Although few organisations have started to add some elements of values-relatedness in their interview evaluations, some public sector agencies have also started to embed values in their hiring process, especially in the interview evaluations (i.e. for some critical and/or high job positions). However, the values evaluated are restricted to for example adaptability, leadership, communication skills, teamwork and integrity (Kenayathulla, Ahmad & Idris, 2019). Although these values are

important, the method used is still emphasising competencies which means that the values are still used with restrictions and were not objectively designed for the effectiveness of the particular jobs/positions, especially in terms of their reliability and validity. Furthermore, it was normally evaluated at the interview stage and the evaluations were relatively subjective and mostly for some higher positions such as executive levels or degree holders and above. Values-based techniques, on the other hand, test some particular values important to effectively perform the job (value-job fit) (Långstedt, 2021) via psychometric tests (i.e. objective and/or semi-subjective questions) and also via values-based job interviews. In addition, VBR includes testing candidates for the qualification, education and so forth as found in CBR (Ma & Allen, 2009; Patterson, Prescott-Clements, Zibarras, Edwards, Kerrin & Cousans, 2016). Therefore, the employees hired through VBR potentially tend to be more effective as it tests for both values and competency-matched requirement. The only difference is in VBR, the hiring decision was made only if both the candidate values and the competency needed for the job were matched with the values required to perform the jobs effectively. If the candidates' values were found unfit or lack of fit, the candidates were still considered unfit although fulfilling the competency requirements. This VBR is particularly most suitable for the context with many candidates applying for jobs but limited positions available, such as in many countries, including Malaysia, which are experiencing the global economy slowing down. It is also particularly suitable for jobs that need at least some equal importance of soft skills in order to perform the job more effectively.

In addition, nowadays, there are growing concerns regarding the need to recruit and develop holistic employees who are good, not only in terms of skills, talents, abilities, and knowledge as desired by the organisation, but also possess work values important to carry out the job effectively and efficiently (Abdullah-Al-Mamun, 2012; Hecklau, Galeitzke, Flachs & Kohl, 2016). Hiring employees through CBR may result in getting employees having competencies, but may not get employees with values, because the CBR emphasises more on competencies, rather than values. Studies such as Leite, Pinto and Nunes (2018) and van den Broek, Boselie and Paauwe (2018) have highlighted the crucial need to have employees with values that are compatible with the job yet irreplaceable with the machines. Therefore, the conceptual framework of the study is shown in Figure 1.

1.2 Research objectives

This study proposes an improvement approach to hiring employees via VBR. This technique/method can bring significant changes not only in finding the competence and qualified employees but also with values needed to perform effectively on the jobs and also important to guide employees' behaviours from involving in workplace related problems.

1.3 Significance of the study

This paper offers an important practical application useful for hiring all-rounded employees with competencies (i.e. hard skills) and values (i.e. soft skills) needed by most organisations. Thus, this study can be a reference for organisations and HR managers in retooling their hiring approach for the effectiveness of their talent management, HRM and organisation performance. In addition, hiring employees with competencies and values-job fit via VBR can help the HR managers select talents with better values practices, thus decreasing the chance of hiring unqualified, incompetent, unethical and immoral employees.

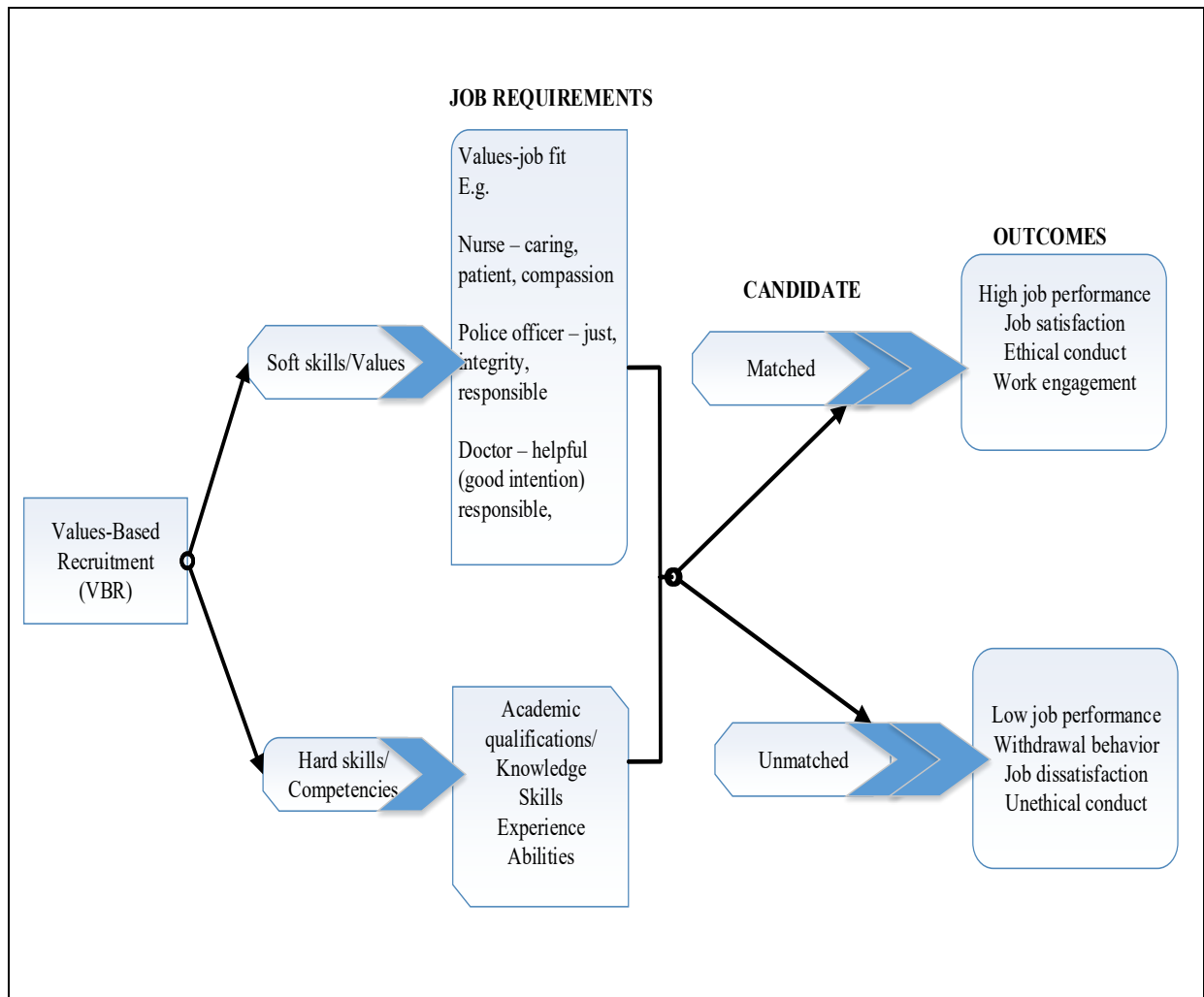


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study

2. Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative method of literature review search to extract the content relevant to the study of VBR. A systematic review of the literature involves searching, analysing and synthesising extant studies related to the topic of the study (Fisch & Block, 2018). This study starts by searching the extant literature on the topic of VBR and CBR. This was followed by reviewing the content of the literature to synthesise the information related to the topic of interest. At the initial stage, the method involved comprehensive reading and understanding the theme to organise all the related information into a meaningful interpretation. At the reviewing stage, all the related information is compiled and recorded, while the irrelevant information was segregated. The relevant information gathered through the literature review was synthesised according to the criteria to narrow the focus and to help in analysing and interpreting the content.

In searching for the relevant information, this study searches for the databases using the keywords of *values-based recruitment* and *values*. Since very limited literature was found to have used the keyword *values-based recruitment* except in some articles related to health care, this study also uses the search key of *values*.

3. Competency-based recruitment

The competency-based recruitment method (CBR) refers to necessary competencies used as indications of the ability of an applicant to perform the job and/or achieve organisational performance (Campion, Fink, Ruggeberg, Phillips & Odman, 2011). There have been many definitions of competency, but most of them were referred to as knowledge, skills, abilities and other attributes, known as KSAOs (Vazirani, 2011; Campion et al., 2011). It is common for organisations and agencies to use CBR in their HR practices of pooling, recruiting and selecting employees (Pichault, 2007; Rowe, 1995). Early research on CBR found that the use of competency in recruitment has shown the strongest predictors of organisational performance (Lo, Macky & Pio, 2015).

However, CBR is becoming more like a template for recruiting employees (Rodriguez, Patel, Bright, Gregory & Gowing, 2002). Even though it may be slightly different from one organisation to another, in general, it can easily be copied by any organisations, including competitors. Many HR practitioners and managers indicated that CBR may no longer be the organisation's competitive advantage (Patterson *et al.*, 2016), especially with the explosion of industrial revolution 4.0 where technology, data analytics and software, human resource information system (HRIS), and so forth are readily available.

Nowadays, with the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic together with a high number of unemployed grandaunts, many talents with good competency qualifications can be easily pooled. Thus, CBR mostly looks for hard skills qualifications or competencies in a candidate, HR managers can easily find replacements for any job vacancy as many qualified candidates are available. Even more now, technology and artificial intelligence also can be programmed to perform the jobs which require the competencies necessary to perform the jobs that previously could be performed only by humans. However, finding good employees through CBR has one critical limitation, which may affect the organisation overall performance and reputation if candidates hired lack values-related behaviours. This can have serious consequences if the employees hired do not have the soft skills needed in terms of values that fit the job, the organisations and the morality thus may involve in job dissatisfaction, underperformed, withdrawal behaviour or may involve in disciplinary issues or unethical conduct.

3.1 Values-based recruitment

Values-based recruitment method (VBR) refers to an approach used to select or hire employees based on the right fit between values needed to be effective in the jobs with the values held by the employees/talents (Groothuizen, Callwood & Gallagher, 2018). This approach aims to find employees not only with competency (i.e. hard skills) but most importantly, with values (i.e. soft skills). In VBR, competencies such as knowledge, skills, abilities, experience and other abilities (KSAO) are very important that employees must have but the determining factors which deem candidates to be hired depend on the candidate values that match with the jobs and the company.

VBR is especially critical for jobs related to healthcare (in which negligent hiring can affect the life of the patients), enforcement authority (in which the misuse of power can lead to injustice, unrest and mistrust), governmental departments or financial institutions (which employee misconducts can lead to unethical practices, fraud and corruption) (Klingenberg & Pelletier, 2019). Porter (2021) stated that the number of misconduct among police officers can be reduced if the system was designed with VBR. It screened out candidates who might not fit the jobs, thus minimizing poor hiring. For example, in the United States, Toyota Manufacturing has screened their employees for teamwork, quality orientation, and communication ability to align with what Toyota requires (Dessler, 1999).

3.2 The effectiveness of values-based recruitment technique

Studies have indicated that hiring employees based on the values-job fit could improve employee morale (e.g. Hejjas, Miller & Scarles, 2019; Maden & Kabasakal, 2014) as they feel more appreciated and aligned with the organisational culture. This causes employees to experience less absenteeism and be more motivated to come to work (Sagie, Elizur & Koslowsky, 1996; Chatman, 1991; Swaney, Allen, Casillas, Hanson & Robbins, 2012). By integrating values into the work, create an organisational culture that appreciates good values and aligns them with the jobs, encouraging the congruence value holders to become more engaged and committed to their works (Finegan, 2000; Meglino, Ravlin & Adkins, 1989). Having employees through values and competency association can create an excellent work culture as employees were hired with a complete package (of hard skills and soft skills) relevant to the jobs, thus most likely to produce high performance.

As values are an important influence that guides people's behaviour and many empirical studies (e.g., Schwartz, 2007; Bardi & Schwartz, 2003) have found significant support, therefore hiring employees via VBR can increase the chance of good hiring and avoid hiring candidates who are prone to involve in workplace related problems such as absenteeism, disciplinary behaviours, unethical practices and so forth. Many studies on ethics indicated that people's ethical behaviour can be measured by their values, belief and practices (Ford & Richardson, 1994; Trivellas, Rafailidis, Polychroniou & Dekoulou, 2019). Hiring employees via a value-based method also can avoid poor hiring as it also tests employees' competency and values or values-job fit (Taris & Feij, 2001; Andrews, Baker & Hunt, 2011). According to Park, Oh and Lee (2020), unfit or lack of values fit among employees can lead to cognitive dissonance and may experience psychological discomfort causing a decrease in their satisfaction and commitment, thus performance.

3.3 The values-based recruitment versus competency-based recruitment

Organisations using competency-based recruitment (CBR) choose their employees mainly based on competencies in terms of KSAOs (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994; Rutledge, LeMire & Mowdood, 2016). Although CBR also includes values as part of their KSAOs criteria, values received the least attention (Rutledge, LeMire, Hawks & Mowdood, 2016). Emphasising competency can disrupt the best fit principle of finding the right people for the right jobs (Callaghan & Thompson, 2002) as CBR focuses typically on finding just the best fit in terms of the competency. However, CBR is still applicable to recruit employees for jobs that need minimum requirements or for jobs that do not require soft skills to effectively carry out the jobs. However, it does not necessarily mean that VBR is not important for jobs that require minimum qualifications or jobs requiring little social interaction or jobs that need more hard skills. Jobs need values to complement the competency in order to be effectively performed. Even a low-level job that requires the least qualifications still needs values of trust, sincerity and hardworking in order to be effective.

When compared to VBR, CBR can be objectively evaluated as it deals with clear-cut competencies. Thus, for hiring a large number of employees for various job types, CBR may have more advantages in terms of recruitment costs and human capital used. In addition, the evaluation in CBR can be done objectively if not thoroughly. Instead, evaluation using VBR involves a combination of objective and subjective measures and is performed quite systematically, but perhaps, it will be costlier and more time-consuming than using CBR, especially for hiring a large number of employees as it involves many evaluations criteria. The advantage of VBR is, that it also relies on KSAOs when selecting the employees, but it

focuses more on finding the right values for the right jobs, which is not emphasized in CBR (Ma & Allen, 2009).

Hiring employees via CBR only caters toward making use of the physical and mental capabilities of employees as KSAOs criteria are more related to the application of physical and mental capacities in performing the jobs. In contrast, VBR would make use of employees' complete set of physical, mind and soul because VBR taps the use of values which links to the spiritual nature of human creation which was created with the body (physical), mental (intellect) and spiritual (soul). Values also are normally genuine which means values are difficult to be faked or forced on people (Hyun, 2001), thus hiring employees with the values-job best fit is more effective than training employees to adopt the desired values. Because values are unique to people, thus values are irreplaceable by technology or any other software as the competencies. Thus, hiring employees via VBR can be advantageous to a company in terms of achieving its competitive advantage instead of hiring employees using the CBR. Some of the key differences between VBR and CBR are summarised in Table 1:

Table 1:

Comparison Between Competency-Based Recruitment and Values-Based Recruitment

	Competency-based recruitment	Values-based recruitment
1.	Focuses on the competency of the employees such as knowledge, skills, abilities and experience (Campion et al., 2011)	Focuses on finding a match between values needed to perform the job and the values of the employees (Groothuizen et al., 2018)
2.	Values are one of the competencies but are not the main priority in recruitment decisions (i.e., less emphasis on values) (Rutledge et al., 2016)	Competencies are among the criteria in recruitment (must fulfil the competency qualification), but recruitment decision is based on values matched (i.e. more emphasis on values) (Stock, 2013)
3.	Recruitment methods - Application forms, resume/CV, tests or interviews are used to find the match between employees' competencies and the job competencies requirement (Pichault, 2007)	Recruitment methods - Application forms, resume/CV, tests or interviews are used to find the match between employees' values and the values needed to perform the job effectively (Ma & Allen, 2009).
4.	Not suitable for hiring critical jobs (Although all job requirements need competencies as a basis for the minimum ability to perform the job, using competencies alone for hiring is ineffective) (Huff-Eibl, Voyles, & Brewer, 2011).	Very critical for certain jobs. VBR also uses competencies in recruitment but some jobs require more values abilities (e.g., customer service employees require values like patience, and cooperation, more than other types of values (Patterson et al., 2016).
5.	Objective recruitment assessments (Azmi, 2010).	Combination of objective and subjective recruitment evaluations (Miller & Bird, 2014).
6.	Performance can be measured based on the output/success of the work performed - (Huff-Eibl et al., 2011).	Performance can be measured by how well the values are exhibited and utilised to achieve the goals (to perform the job effectively) (Miller, 2015).
7.	Employees' resources required – mostly body and mental.	Employees' resources involved – body, mind and soul.
8.	Potentially low competitive advantage – skills can be copied by the competitors, and can be replaced by machines/technology (Vazirani, 2011; Campion et al.,	Highly competitive advantage – hard to be imitated by competitors and cannot be replaced by machines or technology because values are

	2011)	unique to humans (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987).
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4. Discussion and conclusion

In the organisations, profit or performance is the most important factor contributing to the organisation's survival. To achieve the targeted performance, organisations rely on their employees. Thus employees are the most important asset to the organisations. Because of that, the organisations search for and develop a variety of strategies and methods to find desirable types of employees for the effectiveness of the organisations. Earlier studies (Nyberg & Wright, 2015; Campion et al., 2011) consider knowledge, experience, skills and so forth (i.e. competency/hard skills) as the precursor to employees' work outcomes. This was also studied under the topic of human capital which recognizes the role of knowledge, experience, and skills as important factors contributing to employee performance effectiveness (Ployhart, Nyberg, Reilly & Maltarich, 2014). Over time, with the development of technology and advanced research and development, having competency alone cannot help employees to sustain their performance and achieve a competitive advantage. Employees' actions are guided by their values; thus, values are useful to predict employees' tendency to involve in positive behaviour at work or otherwise. With the increasing issues related to employees' performance and ineffectiveness at work, using values as parts of hiring criteria can potentially contribute to workplace improvement.

This paper highlight the role of VBR for effective hiring employees with hybrid skills (of hard skills and soft skills). In Malaysia, growing demands were witnessed on the importance of hybrid skills in almost all jobs. The application of VBR is important as it could fulfill the industry demands for hybrid skills on employees. As job performance involves task performance and non-task or contextual performance, achieving performance requires first performing the technical core activities which may include the use of knowledge, experience, skills, and so forth. In certain jobs, values are part of the core activities needed in performing the jobs. For example, the job of nurses needs the values of patience, caring, and compassion. Without these values, having just good knowledge, experience, and skills cannot guarantee the jobs performed (i.e., the treatment and services given) are good and effective. Jobs that require social interaction especially may need more soft skills (Fan, Wei & Zhang, 2017). The contextual performance may specifically involve the use of soft skills or values-related elements such as helping other employees who face obstacles in their jobs, showing good leadership behaviours, taking responsibility in performing the tasks and assignments given and so forth.

The implementation of VBR in Malaysia can open a new horizon to the Malaysian organisation landscape as employees hired are selected and filtered for the best fit. With the increase in the unemployment rate in Malaysia, the VBR can be better applied as organisations can pool best grandaunts with a fresh mind but untainted with a bad experience of organisational culture practices, thus may have a high chance to curve to be more effective.

Malaysian organisations should not be afraid to take risks in implementing VBR as it is an improvement version of competency-based, therefore having many advantages over CBR. Infusing values in the organisation via VBR also gives a more fair share to the role of morality and spirituality elements important for employees' morale and commitment as well as organisation good corporate practices.

4.1 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Despite its promising application, VBR is quite new and not fully developed as CBR, thus some limitations warrant acknowledgement. This paper does not lay out the process of VBR and the psychometric test of each value important for performing particular positions as this paper is part of ongoing research, thus future studies could test empirically the effect of hybrid skills on work outcomes such as performance, work engagement and so forth. In addition, future studies also can carry out comparison research investigating the competency-based versus values-based techniques and to test against employees' work performance, ethical conduct and so forth.

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