Managing Pressuring Eco-System Influencing Media Workers' Well-Being in Malaysian Creative Industries

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Abstract—**Working in an eco-system that dominantly targeting at wealth creation often force workers to face many forms of pressure and sacrifices. The situations worsen in the private sector of media industry as media workers in creative industries work for long exhaustive hours that leads to imbalance and unhealthy lifestyle including emotional wellbeing, which in the long run involved in serious health issues. This paper therefore intends to find out the influence of eco-system of a workplace influencing Muslim media practitioners' wellbeing. To what extend does the environment at a workplace influence Muslim media practitioners' life and job performance. How do they negotiate the environment, their work and religious life at workplace? Interviews among Muslim media managers in Malaysia discovered that leadership, time management, and work culture are key factors ensuring healthy eco-system for Muslim media workers in creative media industries.**

Keywords: Muslim, media worker, well-being, creative industries

I. INTRODUCTION

Creative Industries (CI) is currently emerging as one of the important and promising sector that contributes to national income of a country. UNESCO defines creative industries as 'industries that relates to creativity, production and commercialisation of product in which the UK government added 'involving skill-based and creative talents to create wealth through the exploitation of intellectual property' [1]. The British Council regards CI and cultural industries as the heart of creative economy [2]. These industries include the print and electronic media industry namely television, radio, publishing companies and film, telecommunication, arts and culture.

The creative industries account for many benefits opportunities that drives for foreign direct investment thus, foster economic growth. According to NESTA, creative industries sector account for 10 percent of UK's GDP and around two million people work in this industry [3]. Sixteen percent of all employment in London is in creative industries.

More studies were done across all continent globally particularly in developed countries – the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. In the Asian regions, studies are largely focused in Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. Most of these nations had already established policies concerning creative industries potentials growth and direction in their countries. More impactful efforts were established in Asian regions for developing economic prosperity for national creative industries.

In 2012, the Republic of Indonesia projected growth of the creative industries in the period 2009-2015 is between 7-9 percent. The contribution to GDP about 7-8 percent increased from 6.28 percent [4]. In 2015, Indonesia's creative economy sector export worth 19 billion dollar. With the intention to set Kuala Lumpur as creative hub, major effort is in progress the Cultural Economy Development Agency (CENDANA) had identified six strategies to achieve the objective which among others focus on building strong cultural sector, champion the importance of creative jobs in competitive market, good planning and fair regulation, high quality creative education and professional development programmes and developing dedicated creative business incubation and accelerating services. With impactful economic and socio-cultural opportunities for Kuala Lumpur, it is important for us to look into the issues surrounding the talent management in local creative industries particularly related to radio, television and film industries. Hence, this paper will focus on the current condition of media industries and creative worker wellbeing in the media sector as a crucial factor to achieving the underlined objectives.

A. Wellbeing of Media Workers

Despite of the potentials of local creative industries in generating wealth for a nation, other aspect that is considerably important for developing a progressive CI is the human development or creative labour and their wellbeing. Wellbeing relates to the concept of experiencing satisfaction and healthy lifestyle [5]. Studies on wellbeing at work are mostly important for increasing productivity and workforce performance. Failure to address these issues would result organization loosing on managing human capital welfare at a workplace.

There are eight important sections of life that signify work-life balance [6]: work, finances, spiritual, hobbies, self, social, family and health. Every individual attempts to achieve a balance work-life within these sections. Conflict arises particularly when two most important domains, work and family, compete with each other.

Wellbeing is related to mental health [5]. This includes emotional, psychological and social wellbeing that affects thinking, feeling and action in which eventually influence worker's behavior. It is the behavioral action of Muslim media worker (either above the line or below the line worker) that this paper is interested to study in understanding their survival response towards pressuring work and environment.

II. MEDIA INDUSTRIES AND ECO-SYSTEM

Working in an eco-system that dominantly targeting at wealth creation often forces workers to face many forms of sacrifices. The case is worsened in the private sector of media industry. Most media workers in creative industries work for **long exhaustive hours** and **poor remuneration** [7]. These constraints were however recompensed by **flexibility** of working hour, mobility of workplace, welfare benefits and attire, as long as the worker able to deliver a task on time or following on dateline. Although flexibility is considerably acceptable for an information-based industry, it has indirect psychological and unconscious effects on individuals. A research on wellbeing highlighted that people working in the creative industries are three times more likely to suffer from mental health problems than the general public in which the most common diagnosed disorders amongst creative employees were anxiety (36%), and depression (32%) [8].

One of the tasks that usually influence worker's mood is the pressure of reaching datelines. As media content is regarded as cultural commodity, on time submission is paramount as time involved monetary objectives. Since the adoption of privatization policy in Malaysia, capital and income generation is the supreme. This includes advertisers' pressure in a production for commercialization. Every single level of managing tasks in a media production process must be submitted prior to specific dateline. There are no compromises about it. In fact, it is the obligation of a media worker in either small or large media organisation to fulfill this principal duty. In developing media content, Andersen criticized that the desires of a gatekeeper or editor to maximize creativity in production process often increase the pressure among developers who face difficulty in achieving the desires [9]. In fact, he added that developing ideas is dominantly business oriented instead of fulfilling viewers' desires.

With such constrains, it is norm for media workers to work at a demanding pace within a short notice. Practically, a broadcast journalist for example, would need to prepare a TV news script on-the-move, before reaching her office to catch up with the news programme slot that has already begun. This is an evident of many pressuring situations that every journalist faced daily. Flexibility in terms of space or 'how to do' were given but yet they are trapped by the limitation of time given for each task. This sort of pressure elevates as the task involve technologies of media equipment to complete a task. In the

television industry, the process begins from pre-production tasks, production and post-production. Brainstorming idea sessions, developing the idea into written script, establishing and other technical preparations are essential work. A visual editor needs to edit the rushes to form meaningful stories of programmes or commercials.

Some large media organization or television station might have good facilities and eco-system that comfort media workers. This facility does not directly influence the emotion of a worker. However, the pressuring processes that media worker faced daily in delivering work tasks to produce a product is somewhat disturbing spiritually and emotionally. Additional psychological factors disturbing creative workers' wellbeing include insecurity of income that affects relationships [7]. Social influence wellbeing of media workers is also crucial in ensuring positive environment that would encourage progressive eco-system as well as work performance.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand how workplace eco-system influences Muslim media practitioners' well-being. With such psychological challenging eco-system, how does Muslim media practitioners balance their work and religious life at workplace?

III. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative design involving face-to-face semi-interview was executed with 11 Muslim media practitioners working in government and private media organization as well as production houses in Malaysia. The informant of this study includes those who work in film, television and animation industries.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of this research had identified six main factors affecting media workers wellbeing – economic pressure, technological pressure, IP, media convergence, leadership, work culture, organization and government policies and social pressure.

A. Economic Pressure

Informants stated that local programmes were sold at cheap price in Malaysian market. In fact, the prices of programmes and films remain stagnant for almost 30 years. However, cost of living and lifestyle had changed drastically compared to in 1980s and 90s. Without any price hike, media companies were pressured to bare the increasing cost of production and gain limited profit. This will result members of production team receiving reduce or lower pay per project. Low income pressures media workers on the quality of life and spending trend for basic needs. Some also had to do multiple jobs to ensure they have sufficient income and family welfare. As one of the informant highlighted,

"For me to survive, we need to cut cost. We have to do a lot of work... To produce a television programme in Malaysia, we had to cut cost because our cost is increasing. Payment remain the same. .... they bought cheaper content from overseas, but

they want local content. It becomes worst if they produce in house. Everything is in house. We can be jobless." (Informant 11, interview, March 2019)

Business competition within Malaysian market is considered stiff as we have integrated media organisations since 2010. Thirty years ago, production houses were not many. Therefore, income pie becomes smaller which means the market had to cater for many media players, hence the smaller/reduced amount of income by each media companies. The smaller amount of profit and without any price increase (after more than 20 years) pressures the market player to reduce production, thus media workers underpay for their work. The situation affects worker's emotions in striving to live a good and healthy life, with peaceful of mind. Studies on the relationship of insufficiency of monetary with well-being of human life indicates that there are strong psychological changes namely changing of behavior and habits, depression, anxiety, and trauma, when people are under pressure.

"Why no solution? Because there's monopoli. The effect is not soley on us, 100,000 people affected in industry. We don't have EPF, cannot lend from banks, no property because bank do not provide us (loan). So, we don't have properties. The association cannot run business entity." (Informant J, interview December 2018)

The demand of TV stations on price and content preferences also influence reduction of profit among television and film production companies. Malaysian media market is considerably small market players. Integration of key television station as a result of economic downturn in 1998 has resulted the local TV market to shrink from 7 individually owned station to only 3 media groups, owning multiple brand under one roof (Media Prima Berhad, Radio Television Malaysia and ASTRO). Only TV alHijrah, remain its operation soully since 2008, under strong government screening. In small Malaysian market size, it elevates dominancy of market player on price and product quality according to preferences. TV and film production companies are trapped between business and humanity for workers and well-being. What more if TV stations hold strongly on rating as business formula to measure product quality to sustain business.

These constraints affect psychological issues that change individual behaviour and rise of apparent health problems. According to Maslow hierarchy of needs, every human being has basic essential desire in their daily life - place to live, food preference, and safety to live with peace of mind. Therefore, insufficient monetary reasons may increase the tense to have a desired balance of life economically and social welfare.

B. Technology Pressure

Digital technology – In the era of ICT and convergence, media companies tend to opt for integration strategy for business sustainability. There are significant numbers of merger and acquisition practices globally that have resulted to form consolidated market. These media conglomerates or smaller media companies integrate with for example, telecommunication companies to form an integrated media organization to enhance their business strategies.

One of the transformation reasons is to adopt new technology system which enhance value of their product and business. The transformation influences the need to change media equipment including the hardware and software from analog system to digital system. The advancement of technology, globalization and internationalization pressure media organization to change most of their facilities system and more importantly provides added value for their workforce. This includes adaptation and training at a workplace particularly related to technical skills. The global trend had changed organizational work policies, system and trend that suit with new media technologies. Work pace becomes the ultimate target apart from commercialization objective through multiple channel delivery. Therefore, those who can deliver within short period of time is honoured, as the fittest. In this regard, media workers had to deal with the pressure to work not only beyond the existing normal working hour which already had flexibility time-limit-work constraint, but also the pressure not only be prompt but also have exclusiveness, the first to deliver information through specific channel. Health can be an issue.

"...although a producer but still under contract and without any SOCSO and KWSP advantage. Time is flexible. No going back home at 5pm. Normally we went home at 2-3am. Whether the leadership is Muslim or non-Muslim, depends on the individual herself. Drama has different culture, management of TV also is different culture, commercial as well." (Informant 3, interview, 20 July 2019)

With such development in the industry, media worker is urged to better equip themselves with the latest skills in delivery each task. Many applications at a workplace transform and upgraded to digital based system. Internet becomes essential in our life what more in today's media industry.

These situations challenge a worker to increase their job performance, job quality and efficiency. Some are motivated whilst others be demotivated by the challenge to compete with the younger generations particularly in handling work related to ICT. Companies with young workforce team are less affected compared to those whom majority of their workers are seniors whom had to learn to execute various task with the assistance of latest technology and software. Despite of their seniority level, studies reveals that they are struggling to refresh their skills with new technology. Issues pertaining to the relationship between human and technology-handling revolves around technology influence in performance, efficiency, creative creation and idea generation. So it is important that these creative industries talent be managed well in terms of welfare and well-being physically and emotionally.

C. Leadership and Work Culture

Leadership should come from the CEO or Head of Department as the individual that has the entity of power for a media organisation. Being Muslim does not guarantee a worker to produce good work. A leader or director must set intention (niat) to produce a good work as well as instilling Islamic values. A leader with Islamic values will be able to educate his subordinates. For instance, socialisation in media production

used to create miss understanding. Therefore, it is the responsibility of a leader to set good intention as *amal jariah*.

"...regulation in production, cannot wear shot pants (be it male or female). In an Islamic programme, male workers should wear decent attire and female worker must wear tudung. So the female employee that initially has no intention to wear tudung will later wear tudung. The leader must be Islamic, than the worker will become Islamic." (Informant 4)

Hectic work culture in creative industries is one of the factor that contributes to pressuring environment. In television industries, long working hours with short dateline are the norm that pressures media worker's execution of tasks. This can be worsen when they work at out-door locations and prolonged for more than couple of days or weeks. Television production basically involve 3 stages of production process – preproduction, production and post production. These pressure arise in each stage of production process. Despite of long working hours, constraints come in different ways – the heat of recording under direct sun, sudden change of weather, talent's skill and team members discipline. These factors influence the quality of work. However, an informant told that good work is somewhat subjective.

As Muslim media worker, exercising what we believe in our religion as a way of life can be the foundation in reality. For instance, an informant mentioned on the practice in a workplace.

"Most producers are Muslim and every programme production involved are based on Islamic guidelines. For example, we recite doa before start shooting every morning. That's something that people hardly notice." (Informant 4)

Some informant mentioned on the importance of self-conscious and performing religious duty as individual responsibility.

"...it depends on individual to handle themselves, how to conduct themselves as a Muslim (without ordering them to perform solat). To perform solat during recording if we want (to go), go alone. Have to make time." (Informant 7)

Some producers set certain ruling on the set or location of a recording. This ruling has been implemented according to director's preferences unto production crews. For instance, when it's time for prayer/call for prayer, everything has to stop immediately even if it's important or heavy scene. It is something that a director penetrated among cameraman, the casts and workers involved on the set.

"...there is one day, we just finished shooting Gerak Khas at the centre of Pasar Siti Khadijah. It was Friday around 12pm, we had stopped shooting and I brought all production crews including the casts go to mosque..." (Informant 4)

The above evident indicates on the importance of planning in any tasks in order to smooth execution. Shooting schedule for example must be adhered to so every preparation goes accordingly as planned.

"While in Astro Oasis, Muslim staffs fast on Monday and Thursday..... In meetings, man and woman will seat separately. So these elements of Islam, if we cannot practice as a whole,

we start small. Invite congregation prayer, fasting..." (Informat 3, interview, 20 July 2019)

A good Muslim leader by example will receive respect from subordinates and therefore succeed in developing a credible and ethical workforce.

D. Media Convergence and Changing Work Pattern

In the advent of internet technology, media organisation must extend their product and services to a wider community. Promotion of products through traditional media channel is insufficient to survive in today's local media business. Hence, internet has become the new medium for marketing their products. This means media has to create and develop online platform for promotion. The move includes developing company websites and social media accounts namely Facebook and Instagram. It changes their work pattern, whilst begin to adopt new technical skills to handle digital hardware and software's. Unfortunately, the extension of these channels create dilemma and constraint for the senior employees. Training is essential to be able to execute tasks in current working scenario in media organisation. Multitasking, speedy work pace, in a computer generated workplace begin to change media eco-system work culture.

Journalist nowadays for example uses social media as key secondary platform to gain news sources as well as transmitting news platform.

E. Organisational Ruling and Government Policies

In order to change towards positivity, leadership roles and influence by example are paramount. This factor when comply with organizational ruling namely ethical rules and transparency shall increase worker motivation. With such conditions, the construction of creative and innovative eco-system shall be activated. Flexibility and negotiation skill will complement when facing any shortcomings.

In regards to the broadcasting industry practices in government media, an informant highlighted that there are guidelines to secure the welfare of Muslim media workers.

"The government provide annual leave and special leave for workers facing urgent matters. There are also certain guidelines to balance world and the hereafter matters. It is up to the head of department's interpretation and also the individual themselves." (Informant 1, interview, July 2019)

F. Issues on Intellectual Property (IP)

The Malaysian media market adopted a system that unable them to uphold their IP. Most television station holds full copyrights of products produced by media companies. A company who sold the copyright of its product will not be able to gain additional channel to establish business with other market elsewhere. This means they will not be able to sell the same product elsewhere to gain additional income, and this limits small production companies profit, hence their sustainability in the market. The life span of the company will not be long unless they engage with good business strategies namely co-production, integration, and diversification. Financial companies are also somewhat skeptical with creative

industries businesses, hence limited financial assistance from local banks. In the US and UK, IPs are regained by a production company (IP owner) after an agreed period between seller and buyer in every product acquisition. The policy enables a seller to gain additional income or multiple financial resources for future projects, hence flourishing the local media market. Unfortunately, that is not the case in Malaysia. Most production companies need to work hard, produce and sell many programmes, to gain some wealth in a considerably constrained market.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper has identified important factors in the local media eco-system that contributed to psychological, physical and mental health of Muslim media workers in Malaysian Creative Industries. These are reflected in the findings that the pressures felt by media workers are the cause of tension working environment. The tense is being transmitted to the worker who is responsible of handling certain equipment. The fast speed of media organization work culture also contributed to the current condition of a media.

What cause the eco-system to suppress the emotions and mental health of media workers? Findings identified that disruption of workers' wellbeing are related to economic, technology, leadership and work culture. Media convergence and the influences in workplace, and organizational and governance policies are additional factors contributing to the current condition of creative media eco-system.

Economic pressure is the main issue that contributed to many conflicts in a workplace among creative media workers. This is an alarming factor that any media organization and government should improve to increase the credibility of local creative media industries. Dealing with machines and technology-based media facilities contributed to the tense that media workers felt. Leadership plays important role in a media organization to create and maintain positive eco-system. Positivity elevates high work performance. Some indicators to build up positive eco-system are by promoting fun and relax environment, having active and good health.

A work culture that requires skills in handling the hardware or software technologies is stressful in the job process in the creative industry. While the majority of employers generally have guidelines, manuals and training, the role of an expert partner or mentor greatly helps employees obtain guidance regarding job performance. Improvement can be executed with strong support system to establish learning how to cope strategies, how to handle oneself in a situation. Offer access to support system.

Work pressure and the orientation of high demanding time line often demand the sacrifice of media workers in terms of time, daily needs, socialization. Cultivating creative ideas that are more goal-oriented than the values and audience needs has caused media workers to be pressured at the urging of editors and advertisers. Habits of carrying out tasks at the last minute need to be monitored. Encourage employees to plan well and systematically.

Economic pressure is the most influencing factor in creative media industries. As a business, funding and liquidity projects the direction of a media entity including the workforce. Indirectly it is also the driver motivating development of ideas and creativity in the industry. Creativity can be hindered by the lack of funds that causes mental, physical health as well as the eco-system of media environment.

Leadership plays important role in ensuring balance and healthy workplace for media workers in the long run. Emotional support and accessing mental health service condition should be executed. We believe most media organisation had provided guidelines and took precaution actions.

What kind of 'balance' wellbeing of media workers do we currently have and what do we inculcate? We can say that capitalism had significant influence oriented workers based on reward and material. It is suggested that greater appreciation of humanity be injected among creative media workers to experience balance work-life and overall improvement of workers wellbeing.

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