

BM-5102 Organisational Behaviour: Course Overview

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My final year as an undergraduate in Colchester, Essex; worries began to overwhelm me when I heard the news that unemployment is on the rise and that graduates are experiencing difficulties in finding jobs in Brunei. In 2017, during a meeting with the Bruneian society in Essex and the current Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports who is also the High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam to the United Kingdom, I asked several questions to Yang Berhormat Dato Aminuddin, as to why the Brunei government is sending students abroad to major in a specific field for few years. Once the students graduate, they would return to their home country and work in an area that they do not specialize in. I further added that this issue will create workers that are not passionate and lack the understanding of the specific field and thus, decrease the quality of their work. For instance, graduates from the social sciences such as Sociology and Psychology are most likely to land a teaching job in Brunei. The minister stated that he was aware of this issue and that graduates should venture out of their comfort zone when applying for employment due to the market saturation in Brunei.

For my undergraduate degree, I majored in Sociology with Social Psychology. After graduation, I underwent a similar situation with my seniors in which I landed a job as an English teacher at a local primary school after working as an assistant. The first day working at the school, I had the opportunity of observing the previous teacher I was going to replace, and she kept emphasizing how happy she was to leave the school. Entering the staff room, it was apparent that the place was overcrowded, and everyone was focused on themselves. There was no guideline on how to teach and on performing the tasks. I was just expected to do my job and perform it well. It was quite the challenge of teaching four to six classes of around 30 students every day, yet, the innocence and curiosity of the children kept me going. However, it was the management and the culture of the organization that eventually made me decide to resign after almost a year.

Looking back at the experience, the management of the school was strictly bureaucratic. There was a clear hierarchy of authority, formal rules and procedures and impersonality was encouraged. The voices and opinions of the employees were not heard, and every suggestion made for the betterment of everyone was not considered. It was apparent that the management and the employees were not a team. The management used employees' salary against them if they were not to attend an event or perform their tasks accordingly. Organizational culture can be understood as the 'system of shared beliefs and values that guides behavior in organizations' (Schermerhorn, 2013). The school had apparent organizational subcultures based on age difference, gender and seniority. When discussing this issue with others, the responses tend to be that is the 'real world' and it is 'normal' for organizations in Brunei to function in such away. A study conducted by Musa and Idris (2020) stated that employers in Brunei tend to look for employees who have 'high

endurance' and 'positive work ethics' and view self-awareness as an asset. While I highly agree on the findings, I would like to add that it is also crucial for an employee to be self-aware and to know their limits when it comes to tolerating toxic working culture in an organization. Especially when it starts to affect their mental and physical health. It is my personal belief that organizations in Brunei need to take into account their culture and if possible, adjust accordingly to the needs of their employees rather than expecting the employees to assimilate. Reevaluating the organizational culture is needed as newer generations of employees are joining the workforce, and their perspectives may differ significantly with the older generations. Also, employees must have leaders or managers that they can seek advice, help and support when needed.

This belief is one of the main reasons as to why I have decided to pursue a career in management as I aim to foster positive and healthy working environment for employees as a manager. Although others may view this as utopian however, it is not unattainable. Another reason why I have decided to major in management at University of Brunei Darussalam (UBD) was to have better options in choosing my career path in the future.

Entering UBD, at first, it was difficult in adapting especially with the majority of the assignments being group work. A group case study was required under the core module, organizational behavior. Topics were given by the lecturer, and I decided to choose the topic on the impact of COVID-19 on Royal Brunei pilots' trust, morale and organizational on team performance. The case was selected due to the easy access to participants as I have personal relationships with some pilots. My teammates agreed on the topic, and we began the planning process. The initial plan was to interview and send out surveys to at least 22 pilots. The group relied heavily on me in providing access to data, and it was essential to get in touch with the pilots promptly. Luckily, I got invited to a gathering for Royal Brunei pilots. During the event, I managed to get 15 verbal consents to participate in the research. This information was relayed back to the team. We planned on interviewing each pilot on their experience and perspectives, however, although verbal consents were obtained, the response rate was not high. Worries began to overtake our minds as we knew that we had limited time in gathering the data. As mixed methods were the chosen instruments, my group and I gathered and finalized our survey questions and sent the surveys via WhatsApp. Again, the response rate was not high. This may be due to the majority of pilots were preparing for their simulation exam, and it can be assumed that they just did not want to participate in research. Some of the pilots were reluctant to express their opinions as they did not want the company to find out. They were afraid of the consequences even though it was assured to them that their responses will be anonymous and kept confidential. The survey reached 9 pilots, and it was a mixture of male and female first officers, senior first officers and captains.

Furthermore, there were internal issues in UBD that was unavoidable, and it affected our ethical approval in conducting the research. After consulting my lecturer, we decided to conduct a focus group instead. There were two focus groups involved; the first group involved 2 captains and 1 senior first officer. The second focus group consisted of 5 first officers. The first focus group was interviewed by myself, and for the second interview, I was joined by two of my teammates. Overall, I believe that both interviews went well, and rich, in-depth information was gathered. Although I am satisfied with the interviews, it would have been better if the pilots were to be interviewed individually. The first focus group interview, it can be suggested that some of them were reluctant to reveal their opinions due to the presence of another pilot. For the first officers,

based on their conversations, rapport was observed. One of the captains provided additional information, and this was conveyed through audio recording on WhatsApp.

Once the interviews were conducted, the transcribing process took place. Both of the interviews took less than an hour. Majority of the first interview was transcribed by one of my group mates as she could not attend both interviews. As for the second transcription, we divided the task accordingly. Once the transcribing process was completed, inter-rater reliability took place where my teammate and I checked each other's work for consistency. There were sensitive issues that were mentioned by the interviewees, which was not included in the transcription. Personal information which was not relevant to the research revealed by the interviewees were also omitted. This was to protect the interviewees as it would have been obvious who they were if the company were to read the transcriptions. After we were satisfied with the transcriptions, we began delegating sections of the report. The introduction and literature review were done by my teammates. The methodology, the majority of the findings, discussions and overall inspection of information were carried out by myself. I knew that I wanted to lead the group with the case study as the structure and direction of the report was clear to me. Throughout the whole process of conducting the case study and completing the report, my teammates and I did not have any disagreements. However, everyone had tight schedules due other submissions. Overall, my group and I were content with the case study where we were able to investigate nine of the pilots' trust, morale and organizational commitment to Royal Brunei. Although we did not gather the amount of data initially planned, we were able to gain insights into the perspectives and opinions of the pilots. Softcopy and hardcopy of the report were submitted.

Furthermore, an individual analysis paper was required for the module, organizational behavior. Initially, the plan was to investigate the existence of a 'pilot personality' among Royal Brunei Airlines pilots. During the pilot gathering, I managed to persuade 15 pilots to participate in the research and get their verbal consents. Majority of the pilots were interested in knowing about the 'pilot personality'. Mixed methods were also the chosen instruments in which the plan was to interview and send out surveys to ten pilots. Goldberg's IPIP Big-Five Factor Markers was the chosen tool in assessing the pilots' personalities as it could be accessible online. As for the interview, it was not decided on what kind of questions I would ask as I wanted it to be concise while still maintaining their interest in the interview.

I was unsure of how to conduct the interviews as my knowledge of gathering data on personality was limited. Also, time was extremely limited, and the deadline was approaching. After the news on the limitation of access to collect primary data from the university, I decided to conduct a systematic literature review instead. The process of writing a systematic literature review was challenging as it was my first time using such method. However, the most challenging part was the lack of understanding in various aspects. I lacked knowledge in quantitative data analysis, especially on statistics. Although in my first year of undergraduate, I did learn about quantitative data, my course required more qualitative data. It was daunting to see the majority of the results on personality were examined through SPSS. However, I knew it was necessary. The studies compared were also limited due to time and the complexity of the Big Five-Factor Model. I did manage to find evidence of the existence of a 'pilot personality', but the data was not exclusively on commercial pilots as initially planned. Generally, studies have found similarities in the general personality with commercial and army aviators. However, data showed that if examined more deeply, there are apparent nuances in the data. Overall, I did manage to deepen my understanding

on the Big Five-Factor Model, and it gave me the realization of the importance of developing and acquiring quantitative skills; both quantitative and qualitative understanding is needed for researchers when venturing out into the real world. Although I did the best I possibly could in finishing the assignment, I felt dissatisfied with the work as it was rushed, and it was not up to my standard.

Now that the end of the first semester is approaching, looking back at the experience, several things can be highlighted. Master of Management at UBD is challenging, and it requires a large amount of time management. As it is my first time studying at a local university, adjustments needed to be made, especially the fact that I am studying so close to home. I have learned that I need to balance academia with my personal life for my mental and physical well-being. Another challenge was the fact that the master's program requires a significant amount of group work. According to Robbins & Judge (2014), a group can be defined as more than two individuals, cooperating and reliant on each other to 'achieve particular objectives'. Groups can also be formal or informal. In our case, informal groups were formed. Our main objective was to work together, harmoniously in producing and finishing assignments that are required for the master's program. At first, it was expected that some disagreements would occur when working with others. It was more difficult working with people that I know rather than strangers as it is difficult for some, to be honest with each other. Also, working with people who have different work ethics was extremely stressful, and it was a test of my patience. For nearly all of the group work, I had to endure people that preferred to work at the very last minute. This was a contrast for myself as I tend to start my work early in order to feel secured. The quality of work is crucial for me rather than just finishing a task for the sake of submission. This matter also highlighted the importance of choosing the people you want and can work with carefully. In a group work, everyone must share the same vision and goals for the group to function efficiently and effectively. However, this was not the case. Some people would feel threatened if their stances were to be questioned rather than making others understand their point of view. Not many are willing to take initiatives and guide each other. This can be explained by understanding the cultural values of Bruneians in which Hofstede (2001) stated that Malays tend to have high uncertainty avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance can be understood as the feeling threatened by 'ambiguous or unknown situations' experienced by individual members of a culture (cited in Musa & Idris, 2020).

Despite the challenges of working in groups, it is also essential to trust in those who will do their part in finishing the work and settle problems may arise professionally as we are all potential managers. 'Organizations as Communities' coined by Mary Follett can be applied in when working in a group. The term organization as communities can be understood as managers and employees working in agreement with each other without one party trying to control the other; they should have the freedom to communicate effectively and resolve differences and issues (Schermerhorn, 2013). Also, throughout the journey, I have bonded and developed good working relations with some of my group mates who share the same goals with myself and know that we can rely on one another when things get overwhelming.

Lastly, this experience has taught me the importance of having a healthy and stable support system outside of academia. My support system acts as a daily reminder to persevere through the challenges and to resolve issues with one another without involving personal feelings, when possible.

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