

## **The impact of covid-19 pandemic to the meaning of work and motivation among tourist guides in Malaysia: a conceptualization**

### **ABSTRACT**

Global businesses have been impacted by the pandemic causing job losses in various industries. Border closures meant the sectors of tourism and hospitality felt these impacts immediately with major cancellations of inbound tours which saw tourists' numbers plummet, directly impacting tourist guides in Malaysia. This study intends to explore and conceptualise tourist guide (TGs) experiences and perceptions on the meaning of work (MoW) and motivation during and post COVID-19 pandemic. This study adopts the tripartite model of the meaning of work (job, career and calling) in relation to work motivation to conceptualise the study. Besides that, Self-determination Theory's (SDT) basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) is applied to conceptualise the links between the tripartite model of MoW and work orientation. Two propositions are put forward. First, the study conceptualises that despite the pandemic, TG still perceives their work as a calling orientation. They perceive their job as significant and relevant to the tourism industry despite the pandemic because they consider the industry is resilient and will soar again in the near future. Secondly, those TG who perceive their work as a calling orientation tend to have higher work motivation since it bestows a sense of pride because of their knowledge and experience in the job compared to job orientation and career orientation respectively perceived as having low and moderate work motivation. This study contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the tripartite MoW approach and its relations to work motivation via SDT's basic psychological needs during and post COVID19. Besides that, these findings are used to expand the MoW instruments. Moreover, this study provides an insight to the government on the importance of reopening the tourism industry to protect meaningful jobs and livelihoods.