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## The Perception of Gen Y on Organizational Culture, Religiosity and Corruption in Malaysian Public Organizations

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### Abstract

Organizational culture and religion plays a vital role in shaping and controlling employees behaviour and perception regarding corruption. This paper examined the relationships between organizational culture, religious and corruption in public organization setting. The instrument used to evaluate corruption was that of Jiang et.al, (2012). For organizational culture, the study utilized the items developed by Denison & Mishra (1995) while for religiosity, the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire developed by Plante & Boccaccini (1997) were adopted. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to Gen Y employees who are currently serving at public organizations in Kedah. A total of 110 questionnaires were returned and used for further analysis. The data were analyzed using SMART PLS to investigate the relationship between the variables. Organizational culture and religious indicated positive influence on corruption.

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*Keywords:* Gen Y; Public employees; organizational culture; religiosity; corruption

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### 1. Introduction

Why do some developing country democracies have more corruption than others? Previous research have attempted this questions by studying how various social and cultural factors, economic policies, institutions and the rule of law related to corruptions. They generally agree that of these factors, high income and robust role of law

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reduce corruptions. The study of political institution leads to a vigorous debate about the precise mechanisms that link institution to corruption and the nature of their impact. However, economists argue that societal corruption is the sum of individual corrupt activity and that individuals engage in corrupt activity when an opportunity to misappropriate public funds coincides with their individual incentives to act.

Past studies have linked corruption to a number of social, economic and cultural issues. Thus, this study aims to measure and relate directly factors; namely organizational culture and religiosity that influence corruptions. The perceptions of Generation Y were to be concerned in this study. It is widely known that generation Y has their own set of values, expectations and perceptions of authority and the ideal work environment. The characteristics of the Generation Y are reported to have been influenced by leaders, development, technologies and trends of its time globally but their behavior may vary by region depending on social and economic conditions. As the number of Gen Y increases, there is a need to understand and appreciate the unique and strength of this group in order to integrate with them and other generation in the workplace. In Malaysia, the Gen Ys comprised over 40 percent of the country's population and they are currently less than 30 years old (Tay, 2011). They are the new generation of workforce and it is a challenge to employers in terms of new working behavior and attitudes, and the approach to retain them. Gen Y have their own set of values, own expectations and perceptions of authority and the ideal work environment (The edge, 2011).

The Gen Ys are described as young, smart, brash and they do not want work to be the only focus in their life (Armor, 2005). According to Islam et. al (2011), the characteristics of the Gen Y are reported to have been influenced by leaders, development, technologies and trends of its time globally but their behavior may vary by region depending on social and economic conditions.

According to Eisner (2005), Gen Y tends to have a strong sense of morality, being patriotic, willing to fight for freedom, sociable, and values home and family. The work forces which comprise of Generation Y have different expectations, values, attitude and behaviors at the work place. They are more critical and analytical of the current scenario, particularly on corruptions.

Thus, a bad corruption scenario of public organizations in the Malaysian environments has to be fought and eradicated effectively. Otherwise, there will be negative consequences in our attempt towards achieving the status of developed country. The uncontrolled corruption incidences will not only reflect the mismanagement of public resources, broken public policy but also the disclosure of the failure of good governance. Thus, a good practice of religion, culture, and the embedded values among Malaysian would be able to curb the bribery and corruptions scenario. Corruption undermines good governance, fundamentally distorts public policy, which leads to misallocation of resources, and particularly hurts the poor. Controlling it is only possible with the cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders in the integrity system, including most importantly, the state, civil society, and the private sector.

Despite these measures, the incidence of corruption has escalated. The spread of corruption, incompetence, malpractices, abuse of power, fraud and other unethical behaviour as well as the lack of work motivation, have been attributed to the decline in integrity among individuals, organizations and society at large. The review of efforts that have been made in Malaysia to combat corruption is encouraging but it is also clear that some of the major issues need to be addressed if Malaysia hopes to succeed in its attempt to reduce corruption particularly in public organizations.

Malaysia is moving towards achieving a high-income economy and this is reflected in many of its Development Plans (e.g. 10th Malaysian Plan). Various efforts have been made to realize the plans, and corruptions have been one of the hindrances to achieve the plans successfully. The emergence of high-profile corruption cases has made the public to be more aware and sensitive on corruption and its negative consequences on the nation. The public has criticized openly the role of government in general and the MACC in particular in eradicating corruption. There are demands for government to be more transparent in providing programs and legislation for tackling corruption.

The 13<sup>th</sup> General Election in Malaysia had seen a significant change of behaviour among the younger generation (Gen Y) regarding many issues, particularly on corruptions. Factors regarding religion, culture, and values have been the dominating factors that influence youngsters' perceptions and dealing on issues related to bribery. Their perceptions towards an ideal society have changed and it is important for Malaysia to have a healthy group of nation as we move to achieve Mission 2020 of an industrialized and developed country. Furthermore, the cases of corruption occurrences in the Malaysian public sector has also been identified as the related issue of poor

governance; which is the main contributor to the overall societal corruption cases in Malaysia (Nik Rosnah, 2008; “Rasuah PBT”, 2005). Consistently, Balboa and Medalla (2006) have confirmed that corruption as an issue of governance because it influences the ineffectiveness of organizational functions as well as management of society.

In line with that, academic scholars such as Callanan and Greenhaus (2008), Edmunds and Turner (2005), Giancola (2006), Haynes (2011), Smola and Sutton, (2002) have called for additional scientific research in investigating the ever-changing values and attitudes of employees in the workplace, while Arsenault (2004) argues that generational differences have been ‘plagued by erroneous misconceptions’ mainly due to the lack of empirical research. Moreover, the entrance of huge numbers of Y-ers in the workplace strengthens the need for additional investigation.

This study is based on the notion that generation is a meaningful psychological variable, as it captures the culture of one’s upbringing during a specific time period. Each generation is molded by distinctive experiences during their critical developmental periods (Caspi, 1987; Stewart and Healy, 1989). The widespread influence of broad forces, such as parents, peers, media, and popular culture, create common value systems among people growing up at a particular time that distinguish them from people who grow up at different times. According to Twenge and Campbell (2008), change in cultures occurs gradually and takes time to appear in individuals’ personality traits and attitudes. Thus, it is imperative to determine the perception of the Gen Y on the corruption issues in Malaysian public organizations.

## 2. Corruption

According to Park and Blenkinsopp (2011), corruption occurs as a form of behavior violating the official ethics of public service. Barker and Carter (1994) define corruption as acts containing three elements: violations of law, rules, regulations, or ethical standards; misuse of an officer’s position; and acceptance of some actual or expected material reward or gain. Corruption, regardless of its forms, undermines the performance of public services and decreases satisfaction. Perceived corruption erodes public respect for the government as a service provider and disappoints citizens, thus fostering cynicism about government (Park & Blenkinsopp, 2011).

Corruption leads to further inefficiency in service delivery as public officials fail to perform their duty in anticipation of obtaining bribes (Goel & Rich, 1989). This affects the quality of service provided and causes people to lose trust in their governments with a consequent disengagement from government policies. This apathy and indifference eventually lead to a loss of faith in the government generally. Corruption also has been found to present a significant challenge to sustainable development (Davis, 2004) that can cause the governance environment and institutions to weaken further (Kenny, 2007). Moreover, Kaufmann et al. (2006) found that governance generally improves when day-to-day corruption in society is reduced.

In accordance with that, corruption or bribery is an old phenomenon and is a persistent characteristic of human societies over time (Aidt, 2003). It varies in its form and extent in different regions, societies, and cultures (Rafi, Lodi & Hasan, 2012). Literature on corruption has identified a number of factors for the variation in rent seeking behavior through bribery. These include the internal structure, size, and quality of the bureaucracy, low civil service wages, recruitment and promotion methods of public officials, government infrastructure (i.e., a country’s political, institutional and legal environment), level and availability of information, and cultural and historical factors (Ades & Di Tella, 1996; Globerman & Shapiro, 2003; Shliefer & Vishney, 1993; Tanzi, 1994; Tanzi, 1998; van Rijckeghem & Weder, 1997).

According to O’Connor and Fischer (2012), societal wealth was also associated with corruption differences between countries and with changes in each country’s corruption level over time. Finding answers to these is also essential for improving the effectiveness of efforts to reduce corruption. Global agencies such as Transparency International (2009) suggest that reducing corruption is important for achieving social and economic goals. Studies by O’Conner and Fischer (2012) link changes in values across a large number of societies to changes in levels of corruption over time. Values have previously been shown to account for a significant share of the variance in corruption (Connelly & Ones, 2008; Licht, Goldschmidt, & Schwartz, 2007). Past research has identified

correlations between various societal values and corruption (Connelly & Ones, 2008; Getz & Volkema, 2001;; Licht et al., 2007; Sandholtz & Taagepera, 2005).

Corruption also can be defined as the misuse of public office for private gain (Svensson, 2005). Usually, misuse will involve legal standard. There were several examples that can be related to the corruption; such as the sale of government property by government officials, payments in public procurement, bribery and misuse of government funds. Svensson (2005) also stated that corruption is an outcome which is a reflection of a country's legal, economic, cultural and political institutions. The reaction of corruption can be either beneficial or harmful rules such as corruption appears in response to benevolent rules when individuals pay bribes to avoid penalties for harmful conduct or when monitoring of rules is incomplete such as in the case of theft. Corruption is often a result of the actions of individuals or groups in order to achieve special interests (Omer & Syed Omar, 2012). Achieve special interest is directed by certain ethical standards to be determined whether is a desirable behavior or reprehensible.

Corruption is a global phenomenon (Adzanela, 2011). It happens all over the world but does not affect all societies/countries in the same way. It is the *scale* to which it affects an average or a non-privileged citizen in her/his everyday life that makes the difference across the societies/states. It is exactly in this sense that the corruption is brought into connection with human right and human dignity. There are two types of corruption as stated by Adzanela (2011) ; petty corruption and grand corruption. Petty corruption refer to corruption that people experience in their encounters with public officials and when they use public services while grand corruption is the corruption of heads of state, ministers and top officials and usually involves large amount of asset. From the above explanation, corruption can be defined in many ways which bring the different meaning related to the actions of corruption. Corruption happens all over the world which has been verified by Lee (2013) that Malaysia scored 50; ranking 53 out of 117 countries surveyed compared to last year's score of 49 and rank 54 out of 176 countries. Ademu (2013) said that corruption are actions of the public officer in the workplace that are contrary to the ~~to~~ the laid down rules whether they involve money, time or relationship with others.

### 3. Organizational culture

Organizational culture can be defined as the values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that represent an organization's working environment, organizational objective, and vision (Hofstede, 1984). Organizational culture affects organizational life in such a way as it influences every aspect of the organization. This leads to disturbance of the productivity level of the organization, since it influences employee's behaviour to work, as it is the input of the employees to the organization that determines the organizational productivity level (Ojo, 2012). Organizational culture may affect the productivity, performance commitment, self-confidence and ethical behaviour. Ojo (2012) also stated that organizational culture is one of the factors that influence employees' work behaviour.

According to Ojo (2012), organizational culture has been seen as a form or way a given group has developed, revealed or developed in carrying out a particular task or solving a particular problem effectively in learning at the organization. It can be seen that this is the ways of employees or group have practiced. Organization culture is a set of values that helps organizational members know that which traits are ~~is~~ acceptable and is unacceptable within the organization (Ojo, 2010). Sun (2008) defined organizational culture as typical characteristics of the organization or can be explained as the right way in which things are done or problems should be understood in the organization. Sun (2008) also defined that it was rooted values and belief that shared by personnel in an organization.

Nagel (2006) stated that, organizational culture is a common perception held by the organization's members which also means that it is a system of shared meaning. It is important to the organization because it contributes to organizational goals and is closely related to many managerial areas such as communication, decision-making process, effectiveness, leadership, and human resource management (Choi et al, 2010). There were also several characteristics of organizational culture which ~~is~~ are important to be known such as innovation and risk taking, attention to details, outcome orientation, people orientation, team orientation, aggressiveness, stability and agility (Nagel, 2006).

According to Khanifah et al (2012), due to the strong and effect of organizational culture on organization staffs' behavior and deeds, organizational culture plays a significant role in internally controlled staffs' behavior, and at the

same time able to stop corruption. They also found significant relationship between Hofstede's organizational culture variables of power distance, individualism and avoiding uncertainty and organizational corruption.

As organization grows and develops, the organizational culture is also affected by the employees experience and practice (Schein, 1990). The current employees draw on their own experiences, and the resulting culture reflects the group's experiences as well as the parts of the leaders and founders' beliefs that seemed to work in practice (Schein, 1990). Later, when new members join the organization they socialized to the existing culture but they also brings in some individual values with them that influence how they adjust in the organization (Jaskyte, 2004). According to Jaskyte (2004), the learning experiences of group members evolves as new beliefs, values, and assumptions are brought into the organization by the new members and leaders. The leaders will motivate the group members toward achieving the mission of the organization. When new employees join an organization, they can reject the existing culture by introducing some competing values, which may tilt the existing culture if the group accepts the values (Ashforth & Anad, 2003; Beugré, 2010).

Organizational culture being the set of shared values, beliefs, and norms that influence the way employees think, feel, and behave in the workplace (Schein, 2011). Socialization and training, rites and rituals, communication network and symbols were the medium of culture transferred to an organization's members which becomes organizational culture. Organizational culture has four functions: gives members a sense of identity, increases their commitment, reinforces organizational values, and serves as a control mechanism for shaping behavior (Nelson & Quick, 2011). Organizational culture has the potential to enhance organizational performance, employee job satisfaction, and the sense of certainty about problem solving (Kotter, 2012) while Lunenberg (2011), agree that organizational culture also affect the organizational effectiveness.

Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1: There is significant influence between organizational culture and corruption.

#### **4. Religion**

Religion is an element of culture that diffuses every aspect of a society and permeates the life of individuals whether one is a believer or a non-believer (Hamza, 2010). Johnstone (1975) stated that religion is a system of beliefs and practices that dictates individual response and interpretations regarding what is supernatural and sacred. Religion cans influences people's goals, decisions, motivations, purpose and satisfaction. This influence also plays a dominant role in shaping individual's attitude and behaviour towards material goods and services.

Religion plays a vital ethical role in modern life. From a religious standpoint, the religion's laws are absolutes and shape the whole of an individual's life. Faith rather than reasoning and knowledge, provides the foundation for a moral life built on religion (Vitell & Paolillo, 2003). Religion acts as the most basic brick for an individual's cognitive world. While religiosity is defined as an individual's committed to the religion he or she professes and its teachings, such as the individual's attitudes and behaviours reflect this commitment (Johnson et al., 2001). Religiosity is also known to have an influence on both human behaviour and attitudes (Weaver & Agle, 2002). According to their argument, an individual's ethical behaviour is influenced by religious self-identity. This self-identity is in turn formed by the internalization of role expectations offered by religion.

According to Zuckerman, Siberman and Hall (2013), religiosity can be defined as the degree of involvement some or all facet of religion. Facets can be categorized as beliefs in supernatural agents, costly commitment to the agents likes offering of property, using beliefs in those agents to lower existential anxieties such as anxiety over death, and communal rituals and validate and affirm religious belief. There were two types of religiosity which are intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Gordon Allport's concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity created one of the greatest impacts on the empirical study of religiosity (Kennedy & Lawton, 1998). Allport (1950) separated religious commitment into intrinsic religiosity and extrinsic religiosity. Intrinsic religiosity is religion as meaning-endowing framework in terms of which all life is understood (Donahue, 1985) while extrinsic religiosity refers to the religion of comfort and social convention, a self-serving, instrumental approach shaped to serve oneself. Thus, intrinsic religiosity is assumed to have a positive relationship with ethical beliefs.

In the study conducted by Waithima (2010) among students in Kenyan universities indicated that religious

affiliation matter in an individual propensity to act corruptly. He further indicated that people's religious affiliation matters in the fight against corruption. Study by Flavin and Ledet (2010) finds USA states with a higher proportion of the population professing Catholics to have higher level of government corruption, whereby one's religious beliefs impact on ones conduct and behaviour.

Melgar, Rossi and Smith (2010) indicate that there are no significant differences among religious groups. They further added that the degree of religiosity does influence corruption perception, where they found that attending religious services more often reduces corruption perception.

Thus, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 2: There is significant influence between religiosity and corruption

## **5. Methodology**

### *5.1. Sample*

The population of this study are Gen Y employees who are currently serving the public organizations at various departments in Alor Setar, Kedah. Gen Y are those who are less than 34 years old. The hard copy versions of the survey were distributed to the sample. From the total sample of 150, only 117 responses were collected. Fifteen responses were rejected due to partial responses. This signifies a response rate of 78%.

The 117 respondents comprised of 49 (41.9%) male and 68 (58.1%) female employees. 61 (52.1%) of them are married while the rest are single. It was indicated that 20 (17.1%) respondents aged were less than 24 years old, 52 (44.4%) aged from 25 to 29 years old, 40 (34.2%) were between 30 to 34 years old. Respondents with tenures of less than 3 years were 61 (52.1%). Majority of the respondents 88 (75.2) were from the support staff category although 39 (33.3%) have degree as their highest academic achievement. This is reflected in their income level where 51 (43.6%) received salary less than RM1500 and another 50 (42.7%) received salary of between RM1501-RM3000.

### *5.2. Measures*

The instrument used to evaluate corruption was that of Jiang et.al, (2012). For organizational culture, the study utilized 12 items developed by Denison & Mishra (1995). Religiosity used the 10 items The Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire developed by Plante & Boccaccini (1997). All the responses were made on a 5-point Likert-scale that ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

### *5.3. Validity and Reliability*

Data was analysed using Smart PLS 2.0. To ensure the measurement items are valid and reliable, the data was analyzed by few tests that consists of internal consistency (i.e. loading of each items), convergent and discriminant validity. Figure 1 depicts the results of measurement model and the details of the results of validity and reliability are indicated in the Table 1 and 2.



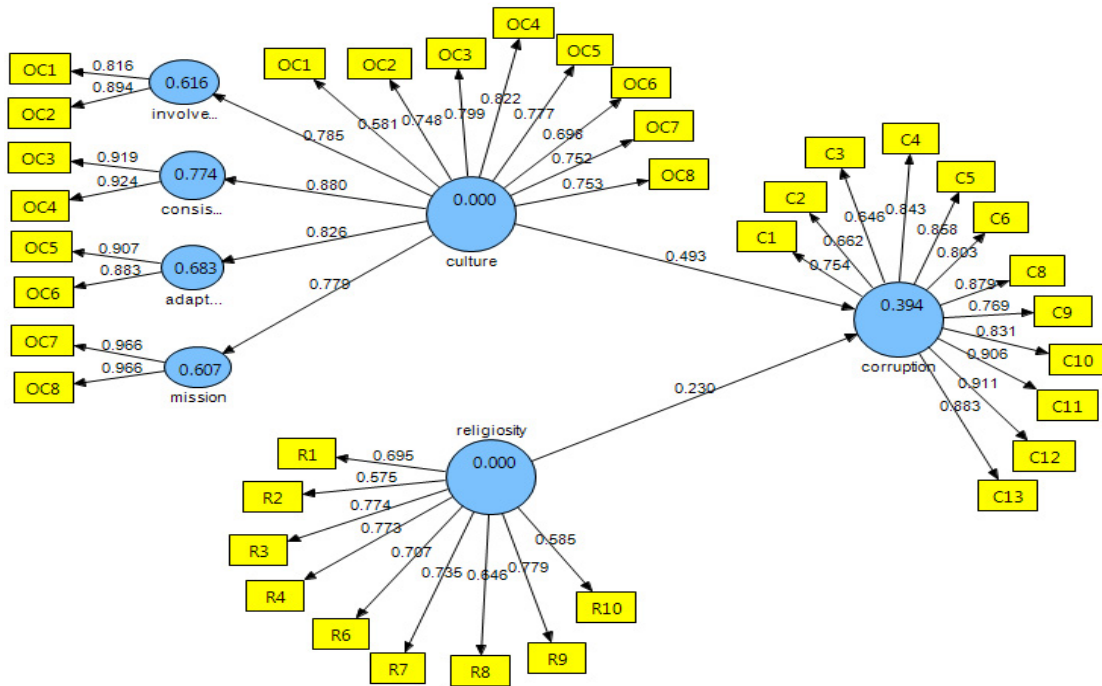


Figure 1. Measurement model

Table 1 showed the factor loadings of all measurement items. One item of religiosity (i.e. R5) and corruption (i.e. C7) were deleted due to its low loading value, which is less than 0.50. To measure convergence validity of each constructs; factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) were used. According to Barclay et al. (1995), the values of AVE for each constructs should be greater than 0.50. The results depicted that the value of AVE of all constructs were greater than 0.50 except religiosity. Although, the value of AVE of religiosity was lower than 0.50, this construct is retained since its still satisfy the criteria of content validity and discriminant validity. In addition to satisfy convergence validity, CR for all construct should be higher than 0.70 as suggested by Hair et al. (2010). As indicated in Table 2, the value of CR for organizational culture, religiosity and corruption is 0.890, 0.896, and 0.953 respectively, which are above the acceptable value of 0.70.

Table 1. Results of measurement model

Variables	Measurement item	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	R <sup>2</sup>
Organizational culture	OC1	0.581	0.670	0.890	0.883	-
	OC2	0.748				
	OC3	0.799				
	OC4	0.822				
	OC5	0.777				
	OC6	0.698				
	OC7	0.752				
	OC8	0.753				

Religiosity	R1	0.695	0.491	0.896	0.870	-
	R2	0.575				
	R3	0.774				
	R4	0.773				
	R6	0.707				
	R7	0.735				
	R8	0.646				
	R9	0.779				
	R10	0.585				
	<hr/>					
Corruption	C1	0.754	0.667	0.960	0.953	0.394
	C2	0.662				
	C3	0.646				
	C4	0.843				
	C5	0.858				
	C6	0.803				
	C8	0.879				
	C9	0.769				
	C10	0.831				
	C11	0.906				
	C12	0.911				
	C13	0.883				

Note: AVE = Average variance extracted (AVE); CR = Composite reliability;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha;  $R^2$  = R square.

Meanwhile, Table 2 shows the result of the discriminant validity of all constructs in this study. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of the value of AVE should be more than the correlation coefficient of the two constructs to support discriminant validity. As shown in Table 3, each square root of AVE value is more than correlation coefficients, thus discriminant validity is supported, suggesting that there is no multi-collinearity of items in representing their hypothesized latent factors. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the inter item consistency of measurement items. As depicted in Table 2, all alpha values are above 0.60, as suggested by Nunnally and Berstein (1994). As such, it can be concluded that all measurements in this study are valid and reliable. Besides that, the result also found that 39.4% of the variance in corruption was explained by organizational culture, and religiosity.

Table 2. Results of discriminant validity

Model construct	1	2	3
1. Organizational culture	<b>0.744</b>		
2. Religiosity	0.427	<b>0.701</b>	
3. Corruption	0.592	0.441	<b>0.817</b>

Note: Diagonals number (in bold) represent the square root of AVE while the other entries represent the correlation coefficients



5.4. Test of Hypotheses

Figure 2 depicts the structural model derived from the partial least squares (PLS) analysis and Table 3 present the results of the PLS analysis.

The results of the study showed that both independent variables, that is organizational culture ( $\beta = 0.493, t = 7.332, p < 0.01$ ) and religiosity ( $\beta = 0.230, t = 2.603, p < 0.01$ ) had a significant and positive influence on corruption. Hence, H1 and H2 were supported.

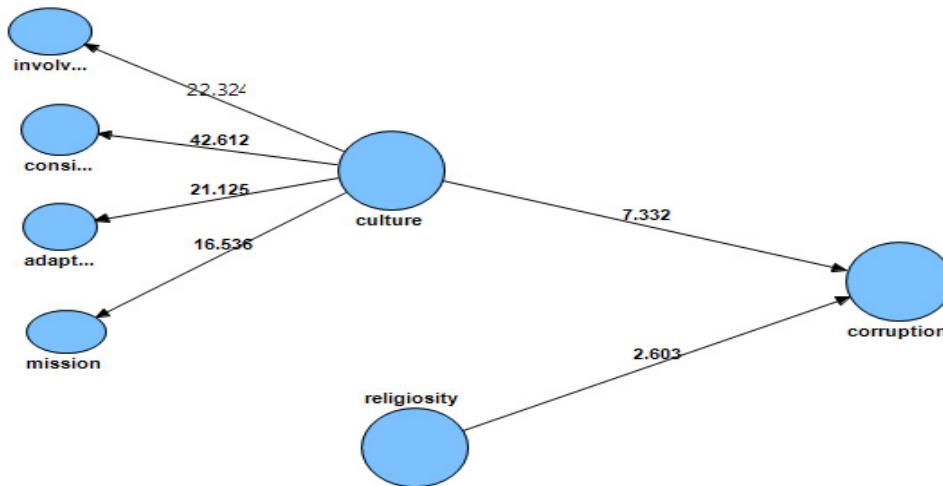


Figure 2 . Results of the path analysis

Table 3. Path coefficients and hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Relationship	Coefficient	t value	Supported
H1	Organizational culture → corruption	0.493	7.332**	Yes
H2	Religiosity → corruption	0.230	2.603**	Yes

Note: t value > 2.58 = significant at \*\*p<0.01

6. Discussion

The findings revealed that employees’ religiosity and organizational culture does play a significant role in determining corruption among Gen Y employees. The results revealed that organizational culture plays a significant role in determining employees’ perception on corruption. This means that organizational culture which comprises of values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that represent an organization’s working environment does influence corruption among the younger generation. Thus, when this happens it will erode public respect for the government as a service provider and disappoints citizens, thus fostering cynicism about government (Park & Blenkinsopp, 2011).

Moreover, religion does affect human behaviour and attitude, thus the influence of religion on corruption does play a significant influence. The Gen Y perception that organizational culture and religion does influence corruption being an important attribute that need to be taken seriously by management of public organizations and the public at large. Religiosity is also known to have an influence on both human behaviour and attitudes whereby an individual’s ethical behaviour is influenced by religious self-identity. This self-identity is in turn formed by the internalization of role expectations offered by religion (Weaver & Agle, 2002).

This study has successfully answered the objective, which is to examine the relationship between organizational

culture and religiosity with corruption. This finding has provided a better understanding of the relationship of these variables in order to enhance and improve managerial effectiveness of the public sector particularly among Gen Y. Hence, there is a need to constantly improve the existing human resource practices at the organization, particularly in enhancing organizational culture in terms of values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.

Furthermore, factors regarding religion and culture have been the dominating factors that influence youngster perceptions and dealing on issues related to corruptions. Their perceptions towards an ideal society have changed and it is important for Malaysia to have a healthy group of nation as we move to achieve Mission 2020 of an industrialized and developed country.

## 7. Conclusion

Corruption is a phenomenon that is prevalent in developing countries and is considered as an important obstacle against social progress. It could create damages on the development of the organization and society as corruption is like a virus which could lead into organization distrust. This could lead to destructive impact on the bureaucratic system, thus corruption weakens the society and should be prevented and curbed. This study has revealed that organizational culture and religiosity have a full force on corruption. Findings have demonstrated that a better understanding is needed by policy makers to identify factors that influence corruption especially among the younger generation, particularly the Gen Y. In conclusion, the results support that both religion and organizational culture have effects on corruption. Attempts to reform both the governance system and to control corruption must take into account the cultural and religious factors if such attempts are to succeed, especially among the Gen Y.

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