

# **The Conduct of the General Election and Good Governance in Malaysia as Perceived by the Young Generation**

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*Economic development leads among others to social, economic, political and environmental changes. The perception of the people toward these changes is important aspect to be taken into consideration when planning the economic development of a country. In view of this, study on the perception of the young generation on the conduct of the general election and the good governance, which were part of the changes occurring in the country was made. 570 youth, males and females respondents randomly obtained from all over the country participated in the study. They were asked to respond to questionnaires on various issues such as politic, economic, social, and environmental and religious issues. Each question contains a proposition statement with given response choices ranging from 1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree. The booklets of questionnaire were recollected and the raw data were analyzed using the SPSS. The findings, which were presented in the descriptive form indicated that the respondents were undecided on issue of the good governance and the conduct of the general election in Malaysia.*

**Field of Research:** Sustainable Development/Governance

## **1. Introduction**

Malaysia is one of the developing countries which is undergoing a rapid economic growth. The Gross Domestic Production (GDP), which is the indicator of the economic development taking place in a country, has been increasing in Malaysia since the Independence from the British in 1957. The economic development leads to many changes in the country especially in the socio-political landscape of the country vis-à-vis, the increasing income of the people, which led to better standard of living, health care, education system and others. However economic development has also widen the gap between the income of the rich and the poor, and also caused problem to the environment and social problem. This phenomena has now being felt in Malaysia as reported by Bernama, which is the National News Agency for Malaysia. The news agency reported that there was an increase of mental health problem in the country. In 2006, the number of psychiatric patients was 324,344 while in 2012 the number increased to 379,010. <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v6/newsindex.php?id=419228>. The mental health problem was indirectly related to the economic issues because those who came from the lower income groups seemed to suffer the most.

Korten (1999) claimed that economic development which is focused solely on the creation of wealth through capitalism, leads to the issues of justice, sustainability and

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inclusiveness, and unless these issues are solved, will leads to poverty, environmental as well as social problems. What Korten claimed is related to Egoism and Individualism, which is inherent to Capitalism and free market system. Egoism and individualism will creep into the society leading to the loss of norm and consequently to anomie. Capitalism which has been in constant loggerhead with socialism is accused of being the source of inequalities and injustices (Korten :1999). Capitalism would only favors the rich and neglect the poor and it seemed that the struggle against the injustices and inequalities has been championed by socialists. However recent study conducted by the PewResearchCenter which was focused on the public view on capitalism and socialism among the American showed that the respondents view on capitalism was mixed, 50% of the respondents have a positive view on capitalism and 40% of the respondent have a negative view on capitalism. (<http://www.people-press.org/2011/12/28/little-change-in-publics-response-to-capitalism-socialism/>).

The research finding suggest that there were no conclusive opinion on capitalism and socialism, and both systems have their own followers and admirers. However, as Paul Krugman said in his article, it was cronyism capitalism and not the free market economic system which caused the inequalities and injustices. (<http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/26/creepy-cronyism/>). The Egyptian economic system is based on mixed economy in which the free market economy is practiced but there are certain elements of welfare system. However the recent revolution in 2011, indicated that the people especially the young generation were not satisfied with the authority which they claimed practiced cronyism where the wealth of the nation are being distributed among the crony of the ruling elite, and even the election to choose the member of parliaments and the president was rigged to favors the ruling party. At the backdrop of all these issues, a study was conducted to see how the young generation in Malaysia perceives the conduct of the general election, as well as other issues related to it. Malaysia is a country practicing parliamentary democracy and also free market economy similar to the system practiced with the rest of the South East Asian countries.

## 2. Literature Review

Francis Fukuyama in his book, *The Great Disruption* (1999) pointed out that all the developed countries are facing three great problems i.e. heavy crime rate, population decline and the lost of trust. One of the reason pointed out by him as the lost of religious belief, which led to the decline of traditional marriage solemnized in the churches, while many couples to live together without marriage, as in the Denmark (1999). Ross Poole in his book, *Modernity and Morality* (1991) asserted that modernity is opposed to morality. Toynbee's *Study of History* predicted that the western civilization would collapse due to the neglect of Christianity. What had been envisaged by Korten (1990) has in fact being manifested in the demonstration dubbed as "Occupy Wall Street", in which the stated aims of the demonstration are to protest against the high social and economic inequality, high unemployment, greed as well as corruption, and the undue influence of the corporation on the government. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupy Wall Street](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupy_Wall_Street)). Most of The South East Asian

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countries i.e. Thailand, the Phillipines, Singapore, Indonesia, East Timor, Malaysia and recently Myanmar have been conducting elections to choose their leaders as well as parliamentary representative. According to a study conducted by Kaufmann, Kraay and Zoida-Lobaton (1999), only Philippines and Thailand seem to provide a good environment for accountable election. Malaysia and Singapore have a low rating because of their autocratic setups. The recent huge street protest against the election commission in Malaysia, which was dubbed as “BERSIH” or clean election was a protest against an alleged inclusion of the foreign workers from Bangladesh, Myanmar and Indonesia as voters. Kim Quek, through the Malaysia Insider portal (5 May 2012) (<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/litee/sideviews/article/psc-report-an-illusion-of-real-electoral-reform-kim-quek/>), based on the work of two researchers, Wong Chin Huat and Ong Kian Ming, claimed that the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on electoral reform report is a scam to hoodwink Malaysians into thinking that the Barisan Nasional (National Front) coalition government is finally restoring democratic election to the country. The aim of the study is thus to look whether the issues raised were also being felt by the young generation. What do the young generation think about politics and governance in Malaysia both of which are important for the continuous progress in the social and economic development of the country.

### 3. Data and Methodology

The research instrument was of the questionnaire form. The questionnaire which contains proposition statements was provided with five choices of responses i.e. 1. strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Not sure 4. Disagree and 5 strongly disagree. The research was conducted throughout the country, involving 570 respondents from the age of 18 to 40, male and female which is the age considered to be in the young generation. Two research assistants helped to distribute and recollect the booklets. The number of respondents was considered sufficient for the study because of they were randomly picked up without bias. The research was considered to be timely because of the approaching general election in Malaysia which should be conducted by March 2013. The respondents were from the urban and rural areas of the country.. The data collection was carried out for a one month. Each respondent was given a set of question booklet to be answered and the booklets were collected and the responses were analyzed using the SPSS program. Altogether there were 50 questions given to the respondents, only those questions which were directly related to the topic of the paper are reported here. The questions were related to the politic and governance.

### 4. The Respondents

The respondents were categorized as the young generation, ranging from 18 to 40 years old. The respondents place of dwelling ranges from the urban area to remote villages. The following tables show the basic biodata of the respondents.

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**Table 1: Place of Dwellings**

Domicile	Frequencies	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Traditional village	231	40.2	40.2	40.2
Felda (Land Scheme)	26	4.5	4.5	44.7
Small town	119	20.7	20.7	65.4
City	199	34.6	34.6	100.0

**Table 2: The age group**

Age	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
18-20	111	19.3	19.3	19.3
21-25	312	54.3	54.3	73.6
26-30	69	12.0	12.0	85.6
31-35	49	8.5	8.5	94.1
36-40	34	5.9	5.9	100.0
Total	575	100.0	100.0	

**Table 3: Highest Education Level**

Highest Education	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Lower Secondary	45	7.8	7.9	7.9
Higher Secondary	194	33.7	34.0	41.9
Diploma/A-Level	167	29.0	29.2	71.1
Bachelor	<b>152</b>	<b>26.4</b>	26.6	97.7
Master	9	1.6	1.6	99.3
PhD	2	0.3	.4	99.6
Primary	2	0.3	.4	100.0
Total	571	99.3	100.0	

### 5. The Questions

The questions were in the form of proposition statement and every statement was given five choices of response. The choices were in the form of Likert Scale.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Not sure
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

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1. *The general election in Malaysia is conducted in a democratic and transparent way.*

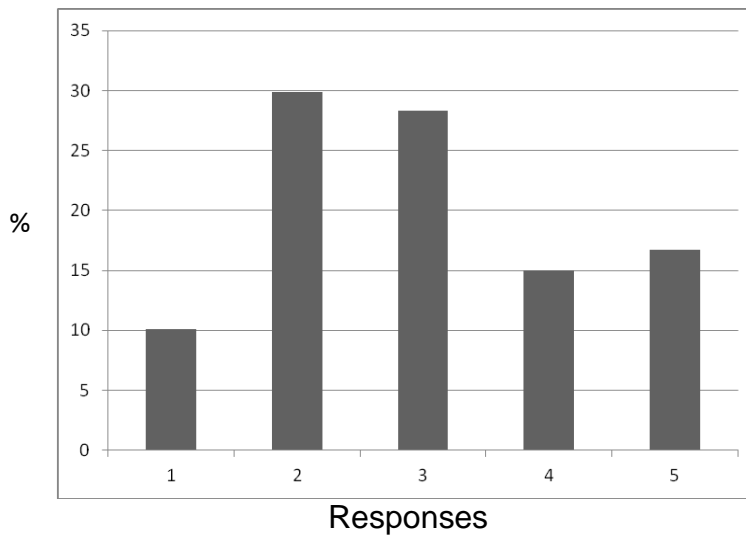
The responses was as shown in table 4.

**Table 4: Responses on the conduct of the general election in Malaysia**

	Frequency	%	Valid %
Strongly agree	58	10.1	10.1
Agree	172	29.9	29.9
Not sure	163	28.3	28.3
Disagree	86	15.0	15.0
Strongly disagree	96	16.7	16.7
Total	575	100.0	100.0

Table 4. indicates that the respondents who accepted the proposition statement were 40%, neutral was 28.3% while those who did not accept the proposition was 31.7%. There was a balance of perception on the conduct of the general election in Malaysia with those who accepted that the general election in Malaysia is democratic and transparent were slightly higher than those who claimed that the general election is undemocratic and not transparent. Those who remain neutral by saying not sure was 29.3%. To see clearer picture, a histogram was drawn

**Diagram 1: The General Election Is Conducted in Democratic and Transparent way**



2. *Money politics does not exist in Malaysia*

Money politics is a term used to describe the act of giving money to voters to solicit their votes for the particular candidates.

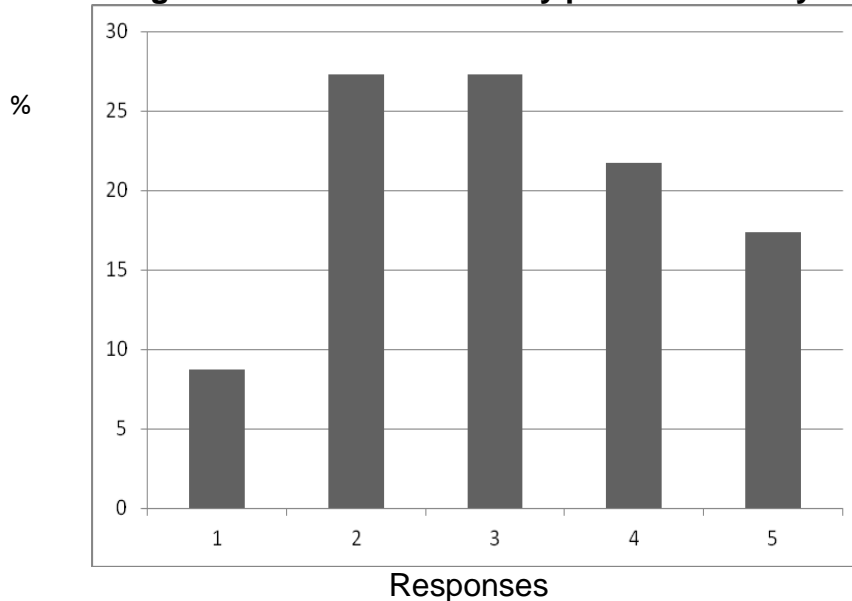
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**Table 5: Money politic does not exist in Malaysia**

	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	50	8.7
Agree	150	27.3
Not sure	150	27.3
Disagree	125	21.7
Strongly disagree	100	17.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 5 indicates that 36% of the respondents accepted the proposition statement 27.3% of the respondents were not sure and 39.1% did not accept the proposition statement . The respondent who did not accept the proposition statement was slightly more than those who agreed with the statement. Those who remain to be neutral by saying not sure was 27.3%. Diagram 2 show the responses .

**Diagram 2: There is no money politics in Malaysia**



*3. I am satisfied with the way the government deals with the opposition*

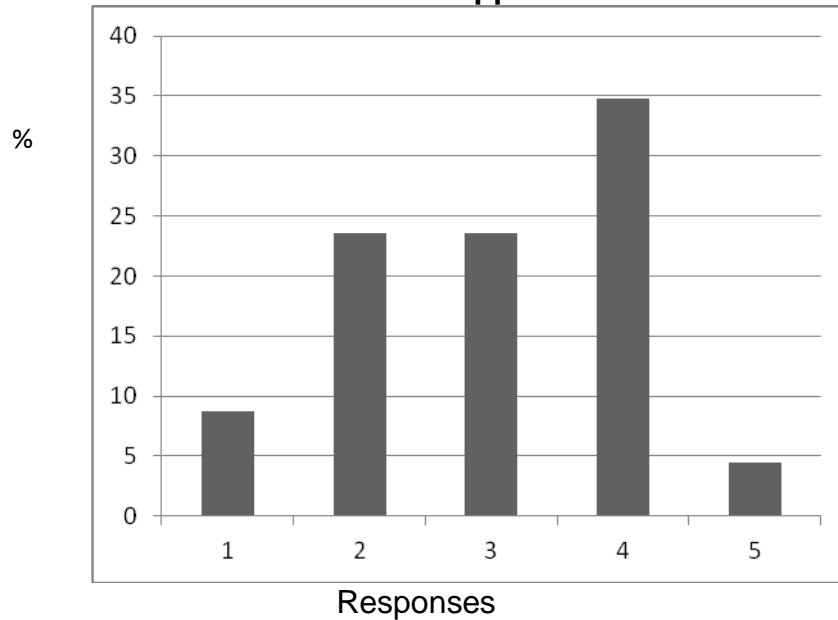
**Table 6: I am satisfied with the way the government deals with the opposition.**

	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	50	8.7
Agree	150	23.6
Not sure	150	23.6
Disagree	200	34.8
Strongly disagree	25	4.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>100.0</b>

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Table 6 show that the percentage of the respondents who agree to the statement (strongly agree and agree) was 32.3%, those who were not sure 23.6% and those who disagree (disagree and strongly disagree) were 39.3%. The responses are presented in the histogram below.

**Diagram 3: I am satisfied with the way the government deals with the opposition**



## 6. The Analysis of Means

The data was also analyzed to obtain the mean response for every question. Table 8 show the means for the three questions which are related to election and good governance.

**Table 8: The Means of Three Questions on The General Election and Governance**

Statements	Mean Responses
1. The general election in Malaysia is conducted in democratic and transparent way	2.98
2. Money politics does not exist in Malaysia	3.85
3. I am satisfied with the way the government deals with the opposition	3.58
Mean	3.46

Table 8 indicates that the mean for the proposition statement number 1 is 2.98. Proposition number 1 is about the general election in Malaysia, which is held every 5 years, or less. The general election for the past had been won by the National Front coalition of political parties. The mean response for the proposition statement was

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smaller than 3 which means that the respondents' perception is that the general election in Malaysia is conducted in a democratic and transparent way. However the mean is close to 3, and hence it is not a conclusive indication of the youth perception that the general election in Malaysia is conducted in democratic and transparent way.

The mean of means of all the proposition on governance is 3.46 in the Likert Scale. The value lies between 3 (which is uncertain) and 4 which is disagree), which indicate that there was a negative perception on the governance of the government but it was not a conclusive indicator. In order a clear indicator to be known, analysis base on every choice of response was made and the finding are shown in the table below.

**Table 9: Mean of means of respondents according to rural-urban divide**

<b>Domicile</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Village	3.34
Felda (Land Scheme)	3.20
Small Town	<b>3.37</b>
City	3.39

Table 9. show that the mean of means according to rural and urban area divide show small difference and the means lies are close to 3 which is unsure. T-test of the difference of means indicates that there was no significant different between the means. This finding show that there was no difference of perception between the rural and urban youth on the governance. There was no difference between the perception of the rural and urban young generation however that was because of the education level were almost the same. Base on this assumption, the means of the response according to the education level were studied.

**Table 10: Education level and means**

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Less than Lower Secondary School	2.9167
Lower Secondary School	3.2569
O Level	3.3849
Diploma/A Level	3.5362
Bachelor Degree	3.6320
Master Degree	4.1111
PhD	4.1667

Table 10 shows that means increases with the education level, with the biggest mean was those of the PhD level. The means are presented as a curve graph as shown by **Diagram 4**



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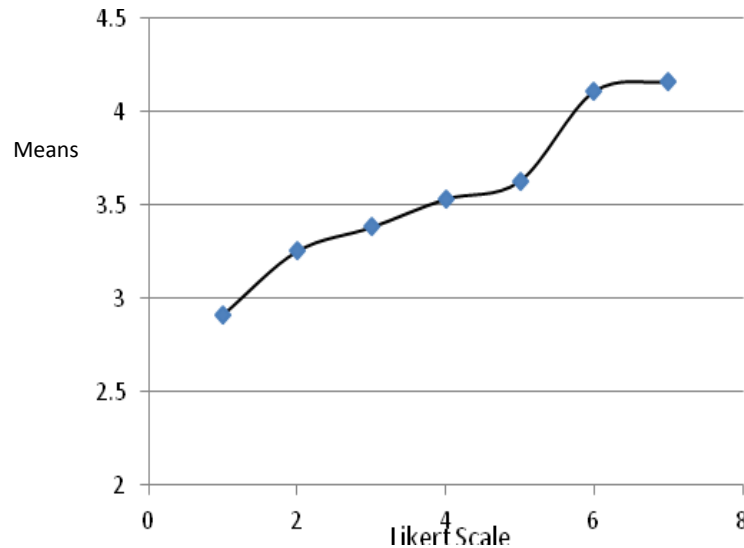


Diagram 4 shows that the mean responses increases with the education level, with the highest mean is that of the PhD holders and the lowest mean is for the lower than secondary level.

## 7. Discussion

Good governance is important in ensuring the flow of foreign investments as well as local investment in businesses and industry. Without a democratic and fair election, there will be no check and balance in the country and as such it is a paramount importance for a country to have a democratic and fair election. Judging from the response of the respondents, it was shown that those who seemed to accept that the general election in Malaysia is conducted in a democratic and transparent was 40% and the percentage of the respondents who claimed that the election was not democratic and not transparent was 31.7%. The next question was on the money politics. The statement "There is no money politics in Malaysia". The percentage of the respondent who accepted the statement was 36.6% and the respondents who rejected the statement was 39.1% More respondents rejected the statement compared to those who accepted the statement, The small differences of percentage between those who accepted and those who rejected the statement indicates that there was no conclusive opinion among the young generation on the money politics in Malaysia.

The mean response for the proposition is close to 3 (uncertain: 2.98), which shows that although generally the young generation accepted that the general election is democratic and transparent, the perception is not very strong. It would be very good if the mean response lies between 1 and 2, which will indicate that the election in the country is really democratic and transparent or between 4 and 5 which indicates that the general election in Malaysia is not democratic and transparent. The mean response for the statement "money politics does not exist in Malaysia" was 3.85. Although the mean indicate that the young generation rejected the statement that "money politics does not exist in Malaysia" the mean was also not conclusive, meaning that the young generation

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does not conclusively think that there is money politics in Malaysia. This is in contrast to the Transparency International who ranked 47th out of 180 nations on TI's 2008 Corruption Perception Index, slipping from 43 in 2007. Neighboring Singapore was fourth on the list (<http://dalje.com/en-world/money-politics-mother-of-malaysia-corruption/215168>).

### 8. Conclusion

The finding of the study shows that the general perception of the young generation both the rural and urban is that the general election in Malaysia is democratic and transparent although the finding also indicates that the perception was inconclusive. The finding also shows that the youth perception on the good governance to be lukewarm because the mean lies between 3 (not sure) and 4 (agree). The mean should also be small and lies between 1 (strongly agree) and 2 (agree). Based on these finding, the government of the day should improve the election system and the governance, so that the international business community would not hesitate to invest in the country.

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