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Generation Y's Perception Towards Law and Ethics

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ABSTRACT

Generation Y (here in after referred to as Gen Y), born between the years 1993 to 2001 is vastly different from previous generations, especially Baby Boomers. According to Eric Chester, a Gen Y observer and expert, Gen Y is also referred to as "Generation Why" because the generation wants to know the "why" before they will do the "what". They cut their teeth on computer keyboards, and to them, computer technology and the Internet are as natural as breathing (Coates, 2007). This generation has greater exposure to digital technology and promises to change not only the way families interact and communicate, but also how young people relate to school and learning. However, Dr. Randal Hansen, a published author and educator, declares that this generation also known as 'Echo Boomers' and 'The Millennials' have been called arrogant, self-centered, and possessing a short attention span. There is a general presumption that this "young generation" do not bind themselves much to the established principles of general conduct or even the law in existence even though it is evident that law and ethics serve to channel one's behavior. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine Gen Y's perception towards law and ethics based on gender, race and religion.

Keywords: **Gen Y, law, ethics, gender, race and religion**

1. Introduction

Awareness about the dimensions of law and ethics that may influence behavior is becoming significantly important among academia, government and the general public. With the growing interest and debate surrounding globalization, no one can underestimate or ignore the crucial role of the perception of ethical behavior of business and of exercising moral judgment (Ahmed, Chung and Eichenseher, 2003). According to Paul (2001), Gen Y has been heralded as the next big generation, an enormously powerful group that has the sheer numbers to transform every life stage it enters. This generation possesses an intuitive sense in understanding technology due to the environment in which they have grown up in and they bring a much more creative and innovative approach to solving problems than any previous generation.

Law and lawyers are more often identified with stability and continuity with the preservation of established traditions and precedents. Law is one of the feathers on the cap of the environment which governs the society. In totality, law embodies us at all times. It is also

undeniable that we live in a changing world and without change there would be no history to speak of. We must acknowledge and examine the relationship between law and social changes that are complex and contradictory rather than arguing what law can and cannot do. Law is more often than not seen to produce the intended change because it seeks to alter practices without understanding the economic and social considerations which underpin them and also because it meets resistance.

Throughout its meteoric rise over the last two decades, the field of business ethics has been troubled by a lack of direction and has become entangled in its own logic (Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994). This problem may stem from the lack of ethical knowledge and practice among Gen Y, who are more interested in earning money and creating wealth than conforming to ethical behavior. Moberg (1999) stated that not all corporate misdeeds are committed by bad people and that a significant number of unethical acts in business are the likely results of foibles and failings rather than selfishness and greed. In other words, good people inadvertently do bad things when faced with difficult situations.

Thus, do we, as lawyers, have a particular responsibility to try to maintain the moral integrity of our laws? Are accountants to blame for the ethical dilemmas and corporate scandals that have sparked controversies in the business world? We cannot begin to answer such questions without first clarifying the nature of the relationship between law and ethics, which is part of discussion of this paper.

The purpose of ethics is to make people good. The purpose of law, on the other hand, is to maintain order in society by upholding human rights and the common good. Therefore, law is not there to enforce ethics, but to make it possible for people to live ethically. Yet that is to ignore the law's pedagogic function, in helping to guide the individual in his ethical behavior. The state's function in maintaining the common good must include upholding by law certain basic human rights. So, it cannot be right to insist, as some do, that the law must simply reflect the standards of behavior actually practiced by people, rather than setting standards, for that is to deny its pedagogic function altogether. Hence, this research fits within an interdisciplinary of law and social behavior. The purpose of this study is to determine the perception of Gen Y towards law and ethics, and whether differences in gender, race and religion would affect this perception.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Gen Y's Perception on Law

There seem to be universal discussions on the perspective and practice of law among the current generation, Gen Y. According to positivist, John Austin (1995), law is described as a command set by superior being to an inferior being and enforced by sanction. A conservative approach view lawyers as slaves to outmoded technicalities and law as a dead hand on much needed progress. Although there may be change in the law, i.e., new statutes enacted and fresh issues arise for lawyers to argue over these changes are perceived as parasitic on developments in society. The idea of legislating morality is anathema to many citizens of liberal societies, as it risks lapsing into intolerance and coercion.

The most influential writer within the traditional approach to natural law is undoubtedly Thomas Aquinas (1993) who identified four different kinds of law; the eternal law, the natural law, the divine law and human (positive law) and he avers that positive law is derived from natural law. Sometimes natural dictates what positive law should be for example, natural law requires both prohibition of crime and settles what its content will be. At other times, natural law leaves room for human choice (based on local customs). As for citizens, the question is what their obligations are regarding just and unjust laws. According to Aquinas, positive law which are just have the power binding in conscience." A just law is one which is consistent with the requirements of natural law, it is "ordered to the common good, the lawgiver has not exceeded its authority and the law's burdens are imposed on citizen fairly.

There are often moral reasons for obeying even an unjust law for example, if the law is part of a generally just legal system and public disobedience of the law might undermine the system, there is a moral reason for a least minimal public obedience to the unjust law. In modern times, the traditional approach to natural law has been advocated by a number of theorists. According to Finnis (1996), the law and legal theory are derivative from the ethical code which is in a sense, his primary concern. As to question regarding the obligation to obey law, Finnis follows Aquinas; one has an obligation to comply with their requirements only to the extent that this is compatible with moral norms.

Fuller (1991), offered, in place of legal positivism's analysis of law based on power, orders and obedience, an analysis based on the "internal morality" of law. Like traditional natural law theorists, he wrote of there being a threshold that must be met before something could be properly be called "law". Unlike traditional natural law theorists, however, the test Fuller applies is one of function rather than strictly one of moral content, though, as will be noted, for Fuller these questions of procedure have moral implications.

The internal morality of law consist of a series of requirements which Fuller asserted that a system of rules must meet or at least substantially meet if that system was to be called "law". Further, Dworkin (1978) argues that legal principles are moral propositions that are grounded by past official acts. There is a still a legal positivist-like separation of law and morality in this view of law, in that judges are told to decide cases based on whatever principles morality might require, but rather based on a different and perhaps inconsistent set of principles those cited in, or implicit in past official actions.

2.2 Gen Y's Perception on Ethics

Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that addresses questions about morality that is, concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime. Major branches of ethics include meta-ethics (about the theoretical meaning and reference of moral propositions and how their truth values (if any) may be determined); normative ethics (about the practical means of determining a moral course of action); applied ethics (about how moral outcomes can be achieved in specific situations); moral psychology (about how moral capacity or moral agency develops and what its nature is); and, descriptive ethics (about what moral values people actually abide by). Miller et al (2002) defines work ethics as a set of beliefs and attitudes reflecting the fundamental value of

work. Hopkins (1997) asserts that questions of ethics and its relationship to human consciousness have been the focus of philosophical consideration for thousands of years and can be understood as encapsulating "traditions of belief that have evolved…in societies concerning right and wrong behavior".

In the current era of globalization in which money is everything, Gen Y has placed unrealistically high expectations towards their chosen careers, thus causing laziness and a lack of ethics, moral values and emotional intelligence amongst the Gen Y that have joined the competitive workforce. As such, other core values such as service, respect and change are often difficult to decipher even though they are hidden way deep inside the heart of this generation (Ginchansky, 2011). According to Hansen (2011), Gen Y possesses poor work ethics as they consider the line between work and life is seamless. In other words, there is no difference between work and life as they are one. Thus, this generation prefers work to be fun and flexible because work is the means to enjoy life. Furthermore, Boyd (2010) affirms that Gen Y sees no manipulative implications in its unethical or unconventional methods because ''everybody'' engages in these tactics to secure a job.

Gen Y is also positioned to be the most demanding generation as compared to the Baby Boomers and Generation X as it is a truly global generation, socially conscious and volunteer-minded (Eisner, 2005). In the workplace, this generation tends to favor an inclusive style of management, dislike slowness and desire immediate feedback about performance (Francis-Smith, 2004). Research claims that postgraduate students have the tendency to cheat more than other graduate students. Furthermore, undergraduate business students allegedly cheat more as compared to non-business undergraduates (McCabe et al., 2006). Consequently, these studies postulate that these students are simply emulating real business practices (Boyd, 2010). This in turn shows a lackadaisical attitude towards the magnitude of conformance to law and ethics.

As long as shareholders are earning high returns and CEOs are staying out of jail, is stewardship being side-lined? In their personal lives, do students remain ethical disbelievers whose mindset is denominated in dollars (Boyd & Yilmaz, 2007). Boyd (2010) further states that avowing legality falls short of adopting ethics. Even when students act upon ethical premises, their value drivers may be generationally distinctive.

Based on the literature review, the research questions for our study are:

P1: Does Gen Y perceive that law creates society with good moral values and discipline?

P2: Does Gen Y perceive that law ensures fairness, justice and peace?

P3: Does Gen Y perceive that law upkeeps the well-being of the community?

P4: Does Gen Y perceive that law influences a person to be a good citizen?

P5: Does Gen Y perceive that ethics promote uniform standards of right and wrong?

P6: Does Gen Y perceive studying ethics will prepare them to behave ethically in future?

P7: Does Gen Y perceive that ethics is influenced by individual values and cultural diversity?

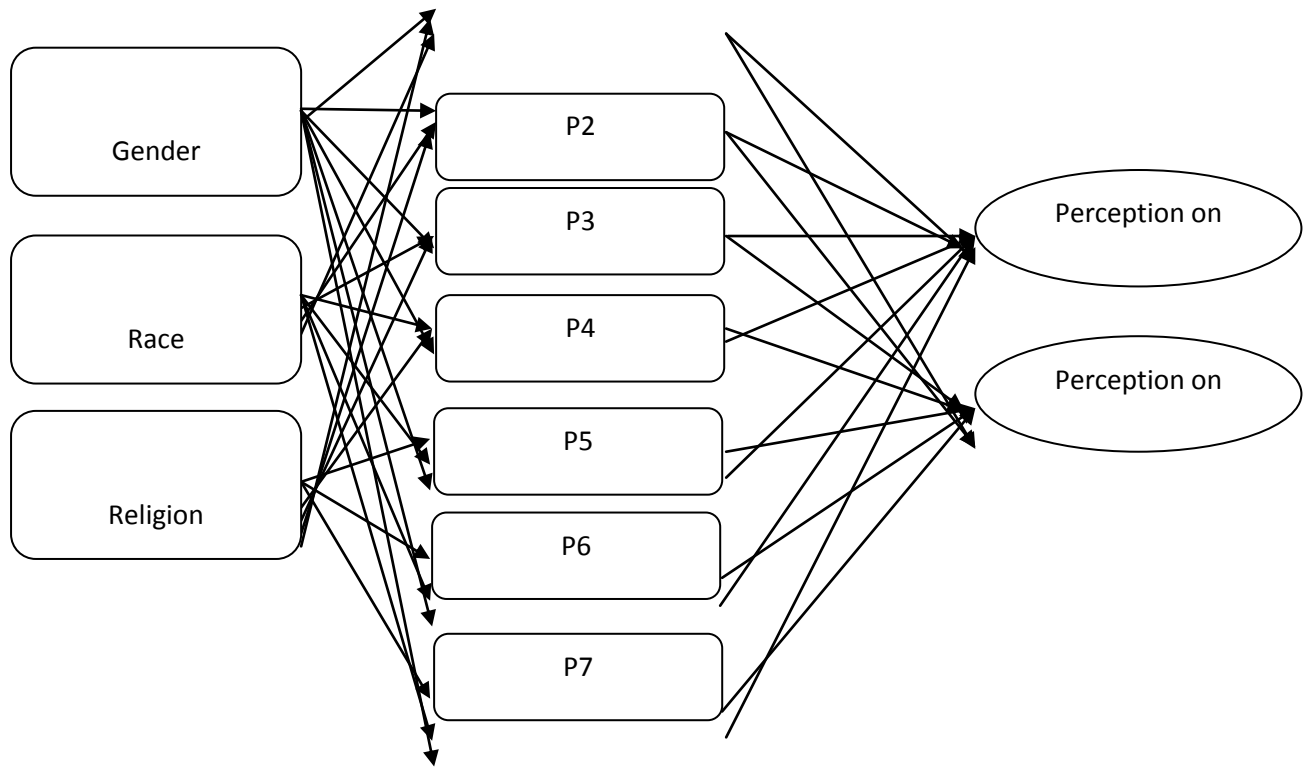Antecedents   Perception

P1

Fig.1. Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

The aim of our study is to look into the perception of Gen Y towards law and ethics. Our unit of analysis is the individual because our conceptual framework is based upon the individual explanation of the phenomenon. Individuals involved in the study are business students from two different programs taught at Taylor's Business School, namely University of the West of England (UWE) and Taylor's Business Foundation (TBF). It is a cross-sectional study whereby data collection was done only once. Convenient sampling is chosen for the study and the sample size of our study is 83 students.

The instrument used in our study is a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire (as per attached in Appendix I) consists of seven questions and was developed using the Likert-type scale to measure all the elements of value among the Y generational cohorts. Section A of the questionnaire comprises statements that address Gen Y's perception towards law and ethics.

Respondents were asked to rate the perception on law and ethics on a five- point scale as follows: 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Somewhat Agree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree.

The other part of the questionnaire covers demographic questions, namely gender, race and religion. For the purpose of gathering data, a survey was conducted during tutorial hours to investigate the perception of Gen Y on law and ethics based on gender, race and religion. Participants of the study were informed on the purpose of the study to ensure that they have a clear understanding about law and ethics. Prior permission was also obtained from the respective lecturers and the extent of researcher interference in our study is minimal.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to process and analyze the data. With reference to this, Cronbach's α was used to measure the internal consistency of three constructs consisting of gender, race and religion. In order to establish the boundary of the descriptive variable and constructs, and to ascertain the internal validity and convergence, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was utilized for the above mentioned constructs.

The data were analyzed using One-Way Anova test, which was employed to measure Gen Y's perception towards law and ethics based on gender, race and religion. Thus, the following statements of hypotheses were developed to test the objective of this study:

Ho: Gender, race and religion does not have an effect on Gen Y's perception towards law and ethics

Gender

H1:   Law creates a society with good moral values and discipline.
H2:   Law ensures fairness, justice and peace.
H3:   Law upkeeps the well-being of the community.
H4:   Law influences a person to be a good citizen.
H5:   Ethics promote clear and uniform standards of right and wrong.
H6:   Studying ethics will prepare students to behave ethically in their future careers.
H7:   Ethics is influenced by individual values and cultural diversity.

Race

H8:   Law creates a society with good moral values and discipline.
H9:   Law ensures fairness, justice and peace.
H10:   Law upkeeps the well-being of the community.
H11:   Law influences a person to be a good citizen.
H12:   Ethics promote clear and uniform standards of right and wrong.
H13:   Studying ethics will prepare students to behave ethically in their future careers.
H14:   Ethics is influenced by individual values and cultural diversity.

Religion

H15:   Law creates a society with good moral values and discipline.
H16:   Law ensures fairness, justice and peace.
H17:   Law upkeeps the well-being of the community.
H18:   Law influences a person to be a good citizen.
H19:   Ethics promote clear and uniform standards of right and wrong.
H20:   Studying ethics will prepare students to behave ethically in their future careers.
H21:   Ethics is influenced by individual values and cultural diversity.

4.   Results & Findings

The result section is divided into three parts which are the respondents' profile, measurement assessment and the correlation analysis between the perception of Gen Y towards law and ethics based on gender, race and religion. A descriptive statistics analysis was employed for data analysis. The respondents profile was generated through a descriptive analysis using frequency and One-Way Anova test was utilized to analyze the correlation between the variable and constructs.

4.1 Respondents' Profile

Table 1 presents respondents profile. This profile exhibits the business students' demographic such as gender, race and religion. The data is displayed using frequency and percentage.

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Gender:		
Male	9	10.8
Female	74	89.2
Race:		
Malay	8	9.6
Chinese	64	77.1
Indian	3	3.6
Others	8	9.6
Religion:		
Muslim	14	17.1
Christian	18	22.0
Hindu	1	1.2
Buddhist	43	52.4
Others	6	7.3

The table above describes the respondents' profile consisting of gender, race and religion. Out of the total sample of 83 students, 9 are males and 74 are females. From this sample, 9.6% are Malays, 77.1% are Chinese, 3.6% are Indians and 9.6% are from other ethnic groups. Finally, with regards to religion, Muslims represent 17.1%, Christians 22.0%, Hindus 1.2%, Buddhist 52.4% and others 6%.

4.2 Measurement Assessment

Our study commenced with one run for each construct at the initial stage and none of the variables were removed to improve the alpha value. Exploratory factor analysis was carried out on these items to examine the convergent and discriminate validity of the variables resulting in a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.772 ($\alpha = 0.772$). This depicts that all seven variables are internally consistent and reliable as the alpha exceeds the minimum requirement.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy yielded an outcome of 0.778, which is considered good as it exceeds the minimum requirement of 0.5. In addition, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded an outcome of 136.324 with a p-value that equals to 0, which is small enough to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the strength of relationship among the variables are strong and appropriate for factor analysis.

4.3 Effect of Gender on Gen Y's Perception towards Law and Ethics

In Table 2, the results of the One-Way Anova test indicate that Gen Y's perception on law and ethics does not differ based on gender as the p value is > 0.05. The means between males and females are not significantly different at 5% level. Therefore, H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6 and H7 are not supported. Therefore, we can conclude that gender difference does not have an effect on Gen Y's perception towards law and ethics.

4.4 Effect of Race on Gen Y's Perception towards Law and Ethics

The results of the One-Way Anova test in Table 3 indicate that race does not affect Gen Y's perception on law and ethics. The means of race for Malays, Chinese, Indians and other races are not significantly different at 5% level. Thus, H8, H9, H10, H11, H12, H13 and H14 are not supported as the p value is > 0.05. Therefore, we can conclude that differences in race do not have an effect on Gen Y's perception towards law and ethics.

4.5 Effect of Religion on Gen Y's Perception towards Law and Ethics

Religion does not affect Gen Y's perception on law and ethics as displayed in Table 4. The One-Way Anova test conducted showed that the means of religion for Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and others are not significantly different at 5% level. As a result, H15, H16, H17, H18, H19, H20 and H21 are not supported because the p-value is > 0.05. Therefore, we can conclude that differences in religion do not have an effect on Gen Y's perception towards law and ethics.

5. Discussion & Implications

5.1 Gen Y's Perception on Law

In the wake of recent corporate abuses and illegalities, it is important for researchers to understand what connection ethical perceptions have to a person's propensity to act ethically. When one's perception of ethical standard is low, there exists a greater possibility of one engaging in illegal acts (Bommer, Gratto, Gravander & Tuttle, 1987). If ethics education in business schools or education institutions can revise a person's level of ethical perception, then, it is possible that such an education will result in a positive impact upon future business conduct.

Our study examined seven research questions that are essential to understanding Gen Y's perception towards law and ethics. In this study, the perception of business students based on gender, race and religion and whether these factors have an effect on one's perception towards law and ethics were examined. The findings from the One-Way Anova test for

differences in means indicated that gender differences (male and female) does not affect the business students' overall perception on law and ethics.

To support our analysis above, Table 2 and Table 3 show that differences in gender, race and religion do not affect Gen Y's perception that law creates society with good moral values and discipline or even influences a person to be a good citizen. Gen Y perceives that law creates society with good moral values and discipline as moral values are the standards of good and evil, which govern an individual's behavior and conduct. In other words, an individual's morals may derive from society and government, religion, or self. When moral values are derived from society and government, they, of necessity, may change as the laws and morals of the society change. An example of the impact of changing laws on moral values may be seen in the case of "marriage vs. cohabitation".

In past generations, it was rare to see couples who lived together without the benefit of a legal matrimonial ceremony. In recent years, couples that set up household without marriage are nearly as plentiful as traditionally married couples. But, not only are such couples more plentiful, they are also more accepted by other individuals in our society. In earlier societies, the laws and morals simply came from the Roman system of law, which was largely based on the Ten Commandments. As societies moved into the modern era, these earlier systems of law became more eroded. Therefore, the Gen Y's perception does not vary despite gender, race and/or religion.

Moral values also derive from within one's own self. This is clearly demonstrated in the behavior of older infants and young toddlers. If a child has been forbidden to touch or take a certain object early on, they know enough to slowly look over their shoulder to see if they are being observed before touching said object. There is no need for this behavior to be taught; it is instinctive. Once, however, any form of discipline is applied to modify the child's behavior, the child now gains the capacity within himself to distinguish his right behavior from his wrong behavior. Now, the child can make correct choices based on his own knowledge. The choices that are made by an individual from childhood to adulthood are between forbidden or acceptable, kind or cruel, generous or selfish. A person may, under any given set of circumstances, decide to do what is forbidden. If this individual possesses moral values, going against them usually produces guilt.

For instance, philosophers such as St. Thomas Aquinas tied the legitimacy of a state's laws to divine pedigree. Genuine obligations, both within and to the law, arise only from demands conforming to laws God laid down for our nature when he created us. Hence, genuine legal obligations arise only from laws that comport with this natural law. And the moral obligation to obey the law is grounded in our obligation to obey God (Aquinas, 1993). In this sense, Aquinas's natural-law doctrine can be regarded as having a "religious character." Therefore, this would support our study whereby although natural law has religious character but the analysis shows that different religious belief does not affect Gen Y's perception towards law.

The view that the legitimacy of law arises from acts of will, or "voluntarism," underwent a transformation as the vision of the universe grounded in God's will receded. (For recent accounts of the history of modern thought about obligation, (Darwall, 1995, and Schneewind, 1998). Human acts of will acts of choice, consent, agreement and promise came to take the place of God's will as a source of authority.

Thomas Hobbes, for instance, rejected Thomas's view that each person's good naturally comports with the good of others. Although, we are naturally entitled to seek our own good, each person's good is at odds with that of others. This conflict inevitably leads to a devastating loss for all as everyone tries to secure their own good at the cost of others. It is only by leaving this natural state that all can secure their good. Each person's natural authority over himself is transferred to the sovereign or the community, which then comes to possess an authority to enact and enforce laws obligating them. And our obligation to obey those laws is based on something like a promise we have made (Lloyd, Sharon A, 2011).

The analysis in Tables 2 and 3 reflects that differences in gender, race and religion do not affect Gen Y's perception that law ensures fairness, justice and peace. Theodore Roosevelt said, (american-presidents.com) "No man is above the law and no man is below it; nor do we ask any man's permission when we require him to obey it." It is thus essential for a free people to be a law abiding people. Only therein rests domestic security and peace." Therefore, whether law would ensure fairness, justice and peace, is an obviously debatable notion. It is a fundamental proposition that for liberty to be maintained, citizens must be obedient to the nation's laws. The opposite proposition epitomizes the antithesis of liberty, i.e., civil disobedience is anarchy.

The analysis in Tables 2 and 3 reflects that differences in gender, race and religion have no significant on Gen Y's perception that law upkeeps the well-being of the community. There are moral requirements to obey the law because it is valid law (legitimate) or because of what it being valid law implies, and not because of any further properties particular laws might possess. Being obligated to an authority, it is often claimed involves a certain kind of surrender of judgment. So, for instance, a moral duty to refrain from legally prohibited murders because of murder's independent moral wrongness would not constitute a political obligation nor would a moral obligation to refrain from a legally prohibited theft because of a promise made to one's mother to so refrain.

Therefore, regardless of difference in gender, race and/or religion there is no significant difference between Gen Y's perceptions towards law.

5.2 Gen Y's Perception on Ethics

Ethics is receiving increased attention across various business disciplines due to the scandals and negative publicity that have plagued business and governments in recent decades. Examples of prominent incidents and issues that have provoked controversy over organizational ethical conduct include top executives being caught on tape displaying discriminatory attitudes toward minorities, savings and loan failures, insider trading fraud, toxic waste disposal, product safety issues, and governmental officials accepting gifts that raise conflict of interest questions (Windsor & Cappel, 1999). According to Nash (1993), these ethical misconducts can cause companies to suffer heavy fines, embarrassment, loss of public confidence and reputation, low employee morale, a disruption in the normal business routine and difficulty in recruiting.

Our study demonstrates that gender, race and religion do not affect Gen Y's perception that ethics promote uniform standards of right and wrong. The results of our study also show that gender, race and religion do not influence Gen Y's perception that studying ethics will

prepare them to behave ethically in the future and the perception that ethics is influenced by individual values and cultural diversity. The perception of male and female towards ethics does not vary even though the extent of their beliefs that ethics encourage standards of right and wrong may differ. This is supported by Perkins et al (1998) in their study of community mental health providers that did not find gender differences to be significantly related to conservative ethical decision-making.

Windsor and Cappel (1999) further wrote that various models used to identify the significant influences on ethics have recognized the importance of moral reasoning to ethical decision-making. Ethical problem-solving involves the ability to identify ethical issues when confronted with them, to be mindful of affected parties and the potential consequences of alternative actions, and to consider one's own duties and obligations to arrive at well-reasoned, ethically defensible positions. Today, while it is true that males have been occupying senior positions at corporate levels that would most accommodate the concealment of unethical behavior, females are also increasingly gaining these positions. Thus, the tendency of females to commit ethical misconducts with the single-minded aim of climbing the corporate ladder in a male-dominated working environment may occur. On the contrary, if females are indeed more ethical than males, then, this transition would lead to a corresponding reduction in unethical behavior.

Modern professions incorporate the idea of ethics into practice by developing specialized codes of ethics to apply order and guide professional decision-making (Dolgoff, Loewenberg, & Harrington, 2005). The study by Perkins et al (1998) did not find significant relationships between race (ethnicity) and the tendency towards making conservative decisions in ethically challenging situations. Whilst examining issues specific to hospital social work, Csikai (1999) discovered that cultural beliefs tended to be negatively correlated with attitudes toward the legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide. However, Abbott (1999) found empirical evidence that race has a bearing on the degree to which social work values can be considered universally accepted.

Our findings that religion does not influence Gen Y's perception on ethics could be due to the fact that a majority of this generational cohort is not as religious as the previous cohorts. A study by USA Today (2010) revealed that 75% of Gen Y is more spiritual than religious. Weaver and Agle (2002) stated that although a particular religion may have ethical implications, one wonders if these implications can actually affect business behavior of that religion's adherents. Besides that, empirical research in the field of psychology and sociology of religion indicates that religion does not automatically lead to ethical behavior (Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993; Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger & Gorsuch, 1996 cited by Weaver & Agle, 2002).

In contrast with the findings of our study, Csikai (1999) found that religious, cultural and professional values impacted upon social workers' attitudes toward morally and ethically charged issues. With regards to ethical judgment, Landau (1999a) found that those who perceived themselves as religious appeared to assign greater importance to moral considerations than those who perceived themselves to be non-religious. Moreover, a study conducted on graduate students in NASW found these students were highly motivated by their own religious belief systems (Hodge, 2005). Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) assert that

the degree of individual spirituality influences whether an individual perceives a questionable business practice as ethical or unethical.

In order to prevent ethical misconducts when graduates enter the working world, universities are placing increasing emphasis on the importance of teaching ethics. In fact, ethics has been incorporated as one of the modules taught to undergraduates from various disciplines, such as business, law and medicine. For example, the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), a prominent accreditation body for business schools, identifies ethics as an important component of the undergraduate business curricula (Windsor & Cappel, 1999). At Taylor's University, two modules in the accounting and finance degree from the University of the West of England (UWE) franchise program focus on ethics, namely, 'Audit and Corporate Governance' and 'Good Business, Bad Business and Sustainability'.

Thus, the fact that graduates may or may not behave ethically in future largely depends on the ethical knowledge acquired in the classrooms, their educational background, personal aims and social upbringing as compared to gender, race and religious differences. The study of ethics can instill a greater sense of awareness and confidence in Gen Y in handling ethically difficult situations in an effective and fair manner. According to Solomon (1993), ethical knowledge may influence people to feel more comfortable when dealing with an ethically challenging situation through self-reflection and a deeper understanding of business practices. Nonetheless, whether Gen Y possesses sufficient awareness on using ethical principles in moral decision-making is arguable as they are more inclined towards creating and sustaining wealth rather than acting ethically.

To further strengthen our findings, a study by Rest (1990) discovered that beyond moral reasoning, ethical behavior is dependent on moral sensitivity (being able to recognize moral issues), motivation (desiring to do what is right), and execution (implementing the moral decision). Prior research shows that age and education lead to significant differences in moral reasoning (Trevino, 1992), which reflects that Gen Y's perception on law and ethics may be influenced by moral reasoning, which can differ according to age and level of education.

According to Boyd (2010), when Gen Y, especially students act upon ethical premises, their value drivers may be generationally distinctive as ethical notions evolve through time and can vary by age and demographic differences in attitude. As Gen Y experience different stages in their personal development, their attitude and beliefs towards ethics may be influenced by their parents, peers, popular culture, life-changing events, different stages in their career and socioeconomic status as compared to being driven by differences in gender, race and religion. This notion is supported by Twenge and Campbell (2008), Meriac et al. (2010), Pogson et al. (2003) and, Cherrington et al. (1979). Furthermore, as the level of maturity increases as age, work experience and level of education increases, so will the extent of moral reasoning, which will impact the way Gen Y perceives ethics.

6. Conclusion

Gen Y is the largest generation since the Baby Boomers and as such, poses a strong impact socially and economically in today's global environment. Hence, their perception on law and ethics that govern our society's actions and behaviour is imperative. Our study found that Gen Y's perception towards law and ethics are not driven by differences in gender, race and religion. Thus, the duty of obeying the laws of one's country arises partly from the duty of gratitude for the benefits one has received from it; partly from the implicit promise to obey which seems to be involved in permanent residence in a country whose laws we know we are expected to obey, and still more clearly involved when we ourselves invoke the protection of its laws; and partly (if we are fortunate in our country) from the fact that its laws are potent instruments for the general good (Ross, 1930). Law is important because it keeps society abreast with the changes. However, without law, there would be chaos and it would be survival of the fittest and everyman for himself, which is not an ideal lifestyle. For most, law is important because it acts as a guideline as to what is accepted in society. Laws are everywhere and it is pivotal that we follow them. Laws are constantly being amended when needed and people may disagree with a certain law but that is just the way society works. On the other hand, ethics, which is also known as moral philosophy, involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong behaviour (Fieser, 2009). Research has shown that ethical perception may be influenced by moral reasoning, age, educational background, parents, peers, social upbringing, ethical knowledge and socioeconomic status. Furthermore, previous research has also proven that the extent of Gen Y's perception on ethics may differ from the previous generational cohort, namely Gen X, with one of the most discriminating difference being their attitude towards money and wealth.

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