Government Effectiveness and Corruption Control to the Global Competitiveness Level of ASEAN Countries

Herben M. Tautho

Abstract

This study is a validation of the varied parameters of global competitiveness level of the ASEAN countries. Government effectiveness (GE) and corruption control (CC) are the direct predictors and independent variables while global competitiveness (GC) is the response variable. The determined causal factors affected by government effectiveness and corruption control are human development (HD) and enabling trade facilitation (ETF) which have varied impacts to global competitiveness. The researcher utilized a path analysis where 6 path models were established from the predictors (x) to its response variable (y) to determine which among these factors creates a huge impact. Path coefficients were generated and the summation of value effects was determined. Findings revealed that government effectiveness and corruption control were substantial elements that influenced the dynamism and vitality of global competitiveness landscape. However, GE has a strong direct effect to GC as compared to CC and from amongst the indirect effects, the correlation between GE and HD relative to GC has the highest path coefficient. The existing economic and political conditions of the individual ASEAN member countries reflected by the implications of the raw data collected are seen as an impediment to a more collective performance. Hence, this study implies a two-fold re-evaluation and strengthening of the policy formulation and implementation individually and collectively as a regional bloc.

Keywords: path analysis, government effectiveness, global competitiveness, corruption control, human development, enabling trade facilitation

1.0 Introduction

Today is a time of variability, changeability and inconstancy fueled by socio-economic, geo-political, cultural and environmental turmoil and fragility. These apparent characteristics of global modern economy are attested by the latest global competitiveness report (2016-2017) where it indicated the disparity of time contradictions with unparalleled possibilities brought by the surging momentum of change. According to this report that the different engines for global competitiveness like factors, efficiency and innovation must be holistic and encompassing all institutions both public (government) and private (businesses) as the strong collaboration between two sectors reported by World Economic Forum on ASEAN Capital Outlook (June 2016) does not only leverage innovation opportunities but also strategize long term sustainable growth and development drivers. Venturing into pioneer schemes of evaluating competitiveness, human capital resources and innovative strategies are

benchmarks to prioritization of policy alignment agenda so as to layout the conditions to revitalize competitiveness productivity performance. Global competition takes new parameters to measure how one state's presence can thrive and survive and create influence to others in the international market in terms of economic and political policies and regulations. The global competitive platform among ASEAN nations must be continually monitored, assessed and re-crafted so as to strategize pro-growth competitive programs as the conceptualization of ASEAN as a regional economic bloc is a manifestation of globalization (Suci, Asmara, and Mulatsi, 2015). The global architecture of competitiveness is a composition of several indicators and phenomena that will gauge how far each nation-state fared in the competition cycle. What does it take to be globally competitive and on what measure can one state survives in the competition?

Global competitiveness index is used to indicate the substance of competitiveness reform agenda that necessitates the direction for future inclusive growth and enabling economic and political environment where these growth elements for innovation are cultured. It defines competitiveness as the composition of set of good policies, strong factors and sound institutions that ascertain the magnitude of productivity of a given economy which sets the standard of affluence a country can potentially achieve. Competition is a vital spirit that drives people to be innovative (Pillania, 2009; Shah, 2016) and its trend on Butler's (2001) view redefined how social, political and economic reforms are redesigned. Globalization maneuvered a radical change politically and economically where one's worth is based on his/her productive efficiency. International

trade policies create free trade agreements by liberalizing trade barriers like tariffs, regularization and protectionism (Suci, et.al, 2015; Amadeo, 2017; Kuepper, 2017) in order to provide for better job opportunities, free flow of goods, financial and capital investments and economic growth. As a respond, the AEC was established to reduce or remove many trade barriers within the region with the goal to facilitate the free movement of goods, services, capital, and skilled labor within the bloc (Poolttlwong and Ramirez, 2016). But such conducive economic environment necessitates a strong and stable government (Butler, 2001). The country's level of global competitiveness is largely dependent on the soundness of its political institution (Heniz, 2002). Its political institution framework attracts investment and validates the notion of the vitality of good governance as potent tool in influencing dynamism.

On the ideas of Furr and Dyer (2015), there is a need for the government as the political decision-makers to innovate so as not to put its economic condition on a stalemate. Boone (1995) expressed that the kind of government the country has and the quality of its performance is pre-determined by the kind of politicians it composed of. Plumper and Martin (2003) added that economic growth rate and how long can it be sustained is largely affected by the bureaucracy of the government to innovate and optimize its comparative advantage (Pillania, 2009) with the other countries in producing goods and services with a minimal amount of opportunity cost. As Pologeorgis (2016) puts it, the innovative strategies of an organization like the ASEAN put itself in a greater position in the competitive ladder of globalization. Thus government effectiveness translate to a sound fiscal and monetary balance, an impressive operational micro and macroeconomic

policies and how are these transformed into tangible results like the production of goods and services available and beneficial to the people in the widest sense. It also means ability to control corruption and maintain transparency in the bureaucracy.

Corruption is an abuse of power and it downgrades the effectiveness of the rule of law and the quality and efficiency of service the government provides in the beliefs of Graycar and Sidebottom (2012). The correlation between poor governance and the unending cycle of underdevelopment and poverty due to corruption (Yong, 2005) implies that the level of corruption control the government strategizes speaks of its efficacy to perform its function as corruption control being a composition of government effectiveness. Asongu (2013) supported that corruption is detrimental in the management of the affairs of the state while it is a betrayal to public trust in the views of Zadjali and Wright (2012). Government transparency and low corruption rate do not only breed trust and confidence among its people but of creating a positive impression and reliability where its financial and credit implications leverage more or less foreign aids and trustworthiness to global financial institutions like World Bank and IMF. The incompetence of the country to compete globally as with the others can be a residual effect of rampant corruption. The presence or absence of corruption or its safeguard measures in the government have an equitable weight to human development and global competitiveness.

Human development primarily focuses on three dimensions namely health, education and standard of living which are composite measure of how ASEAN individually and collectively are performing. But the holistic well-being of the people is affected by intervening factors such as corruption. Individual national policies regarding education, health and employment can be assessed and strengthened especially to those countries with low HDI's. Presumably, human development is a tangible effect of government effectiveness to corruption control. Enhancing good governance considers the inclusion of the development of human resources as an integral part of global competitiveness not just on the improvement of its institutions (Yong, 2005). This posits the significance of the development of human capital in terms of life and health well-being, educational attainment, employment and income and more participation of women in the workforce as Poolttlwong and Ramirez (2016) puts it as it means high capacity of global competitiveness.

The economic (income equality gap, inflation rate, high vs. low saving economies) and political (institutional regulations, internal conflicts, integrity of government) disparities among ASEAN countries are explicit (Suci, et.al, 2015). On that end, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar have low government effectiveness and corruption control based on the Worldwide Governance Indicators (2016) which implies that corruption in the bureaucracy is a pressing national issue. Vietnam, Philippines, and Thailand also have negative corruption control while Singapore and Brunei Darussalam remained to be on top. Additionally, based on HDI Report (2015) Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar have HDI's of 0.55, 0.575, and 0.536 respectively which is lower in comparison to Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand with HDI's of 0.856, 0.779, 0.912 and 0.726. These scenarios again present a division within the ASEAN organization and can be a challenge to most of its member

countries on how to keep at par. According to the Global Competitiveness Index (2016) laying the foundation for a capacitating environment for innovation is left at the neglectful hands of the top performing members. The avalanche and repercussions of globalization call the political leaders of the government to innovate whether on the realm of education, telecommunication, transportation, investments, infrastructures, institutions, information, commerce and the like (Butler, 2001; Pologeorgis, 2016). Strong political leadership is necessary so as not to put the integration in a compromising state with the inequalities of globalization (Collins, 2015). The effectivity of its respective government to enforce rules for or against globalization is a gauge of its capacity to compete globally. With its platform of integrating the ten countries into a single bloc of economic, political and socio-cultural pillars, ASEAN must remain committed in its goal of regional cooperation to attain an equitable and inclusive development. This again goes back to the challenge of ASEAN organization to increase its capacity building of people as human capital resources are the backbone of the economy to develop and to compete globally. However, Poolttlwong and Ramirez (2016) said that despite of the disparity of economic growth and development among ASEAN member countries due to institutional and structural differences, it managed to decrease poverty level to 16% in 2010 from 45% in 2000 and increase expansion in trade and investment through promotion of goods and services and labor and capital mobilization.

Based on the ASEAN Secretariat report (2016), the implementation of the AEC Blueprint (2015) has achieved a considerable amount of progress, 92.7% of its prioritized measures specifically in the areas related to trade liberalization, mobility of skilled labor, facilitation of investment, promotion of connectivity, development of competition policy frameworks and narrow development gap. Although this manifest effective governance but the implementation of its integration is a continuous response to the dynamism of the political and economic circumstances in the national, regional and global level (Lehmacher, 2016). Das (2016) mentioned that the substantial success of ASEAN breeds a new problem like the elimination of trade barriers intensify non-tariff barriers (NTB's) as that of Indonesia protecting its domestic batik industry; trade liberalization shifted to the growing nationalism and focuses on investing national infrastructures; and lack of support of the national bureaucracy. Business patronage among politicians limits the alignment of national interest to the regional interest where they either get positions in the government or influence policy-making decisions as payback to their funding support during election campaigns. To respond to these emerging issues, ASEAN replicated the AEC Blueprint 2015 to AEC Blueprint 2025 consisting of five interrelated and mutually reinforcing characteristics, namely: (i) A Highly Integrated and Cohesive Economy; (ii) A Competitive, Innovative, and Dynamic ASEAN; (iii) Enhanced Connectivity and Sectoral Cooperation; (iv) A Resilient, Inclusive, People-Oriented, and People-Centered ASEAN; and (v) A Global ASEAN. Irawan (2015) viewed the inclusion of connectivity as a separate pillar a commendable decision from the ASEAN leadership to strengthen its competitiveness. If the integration will be managed well, this can boost about 14 million incremental job opportunities or boost 7.1% growth (Uramoto, 2014). Poolttlwong and Ramirez (2016) added that

since 2000, ASEAN's GDP and income growth rate remained strong. The necessity for a sustainable, sound, responsive and transparent governance through pro-active engagement of the different stakeholders and people-oriented ASEAN will bring itself to the global megatrends. With its mechanism of collective leadership like espousing consensus and consultation and rules-based decision process as Yong (2005) puts it, ASEAN will likely be at the forefront of global governance and competition.

This study believes that government effectiveness and corruption control have direct and significant effects to global competitiveness. However these are not the sole indicators but only the prime movers. Factors human development and enabling trade facilitation are considered as other-significant factors contributory to the competitiveness level of ASEAN sovereign states. Thus this study aims to: (1) determine to what extent is the direct effect of government effectiveness and corruption control to global competitiveness; (2) identify which among the causal variables has a big impact to global competitiveness and (3) predict the percentage impact and prevalent effects of the direct and indirect factors to the competitiveness level of the ASEAN member countries.

2.0 Design and Methods

The researcher utilized the process known as path analysis to establish the relationship of the causal variables in the path analysis model. Data on each variable were obtained from reliable sources like World Bank and World Economic Forum and were analyzed using statistical software Minitab 17. Raw data were standardized and path analysis model was designed where each oval represents a variable to compare the level of significance and effect of one variable to the other. A regression was done for each variable in the model as dependent on others which the model indicates as causes. Path coefficients are determined to show the direct effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable in the model and a partial regression coefficients with models that have two or more causal variables. Any correlation between these variables may actually be causal (Wuensch, 2016).

The following are the direct (independent) and indirect (dependent) causes to gauge the global competitiveness among ASEAN member countries:

1. Government effectiveness (GE) reflects perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies (WGI, 2016).

2. Corruption control (CC) reflects perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests (WGI, 2016).

3. Human Development (HD) is taken from the human development Index where it is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living (HDR, 2016).

4. Enabling Trade Facilitation (ETF) This report evaluates 136 economies of the world with reference to their founding capacity to facilitate the flow and distribution of goods and services within and outside its borders. Each country's economy has a corresponding scorecard in the aspects of policy and practice relative to trade facilitation and how well it work. The Enabling

Trade Index highlights the significance of trade and what concrete reforms producers and consumers can conceptualize so as to improve facilitation (GETR, 2016)

5. Global competitiveness as the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country. The level of productivity, in turn, sets the level of prosperity that can be reached by an economy. The productivity level also determines the rates of return obtained by investments in an economy, which in turn are the fundamental drivers of its growth rates. In other words, a more competitive economy is one that is likely to grow faster over time (World Economic Forum, 2016).

What is interesting to note is the designed pathways and its potential impacts to global competitiveness when some or all of these factors are combined. Such potentiality can be a roadway to sound competitiveness and policy reforms as measures in reigniting the conditions for economic diversification, growth and development and to place ASEAN in a positive position in the global competitiveness landscape. Figures 1 and 2 are shown below to synthesize the different variables mentioned.
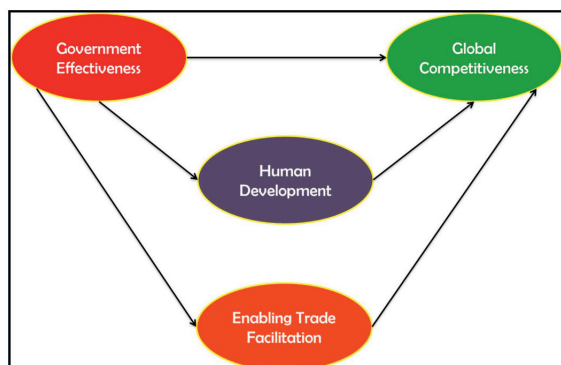

Figure 1: *The Causal Model for Government Effectiveness to Global Competitiveness*

The causal relationship of each variable relative to GC is indicated in figure 1. The original predictor stemmed from GE to HD and ETF leading to the response indicator, the GC among ASEAN members. The analysis of the path determined both the direct (GE->GC) and indirect effect (GE to: HD->GC; and ETF->GC) to GC. Linear regression was then used to determine the relationship coefficients of each path. The sum of the direct and indirect effect path coefficients tell the predominant causal relationship of GE to GC.
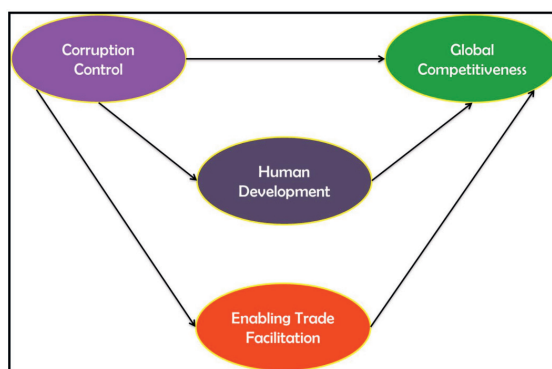

Figure 2: *The Path Diagram for Corruption Control to Global Competitiveness*

The figure above shows the causal relationship of each variable to GC. The path diagram originates from the predictors of CC to the HD and the ETF affecting to the GC as the response variable. The analysis of the path determined the direct effect (CC->GC) and indirect effects: (1) CC->HD->GC and (2) CC->ETF->GC. Again the relationship coefficients of each path were determined using linear regression which indicates the causal relationship of CC and its intervening indirect variables to GC.

3.0 Results and Discussions

The results of the regression analysis of all the paths indicated from the predictor variables GE and CC and the indirect variables HD and ETF to GC as the response variable in the pathway diagram are presented in this section. The raw data were standardized and regressed to generate its regression coefficients. The following path coefficients of government effectiveness and corruption control to global competitiveness among ASEAN states were capsuled in the figures and tables below.
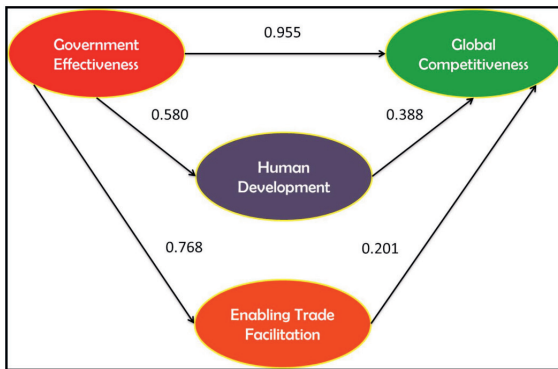

Figure 3: *The Path Coefficient Result on Government Effectiveness*

The direct effect of GE to GC is indicated by the path coefficient of a single headed arrow from GE to GC. GE is correlated with HD and ETF and GE, HD and ETF are modelled to be direct causes of GC using the linear regression. The predictor value of GE to GC is 0.955; GE to HD is 0.580 and GE to ETF is 0.768 which indicate high correlation. The predictor value of GE to GC remains relatively high in comparison with HD and ETF with coefficients of 0.388 and 0.201 respectively. This means that GE is a strong indicator to GC in comparison with HD and ETF. However it is important to note that the effectivity of the government is largely dependent on the kind of bureaucracy it has supported by its strong political will and decision-making. When there's a good balance of these factors (GE, HD, and ETF) ASEAN can easily ascend to the global arena.
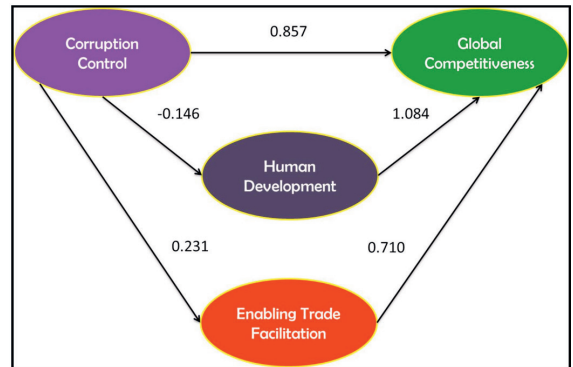

Figure 4: *The Path Coefficient Result on Corruption Control*

A strong CC implies high GC with a coefficient of 0.857. But what is interesting to note is that CC has no direct significance to HD as measured by its path coefficient of -0.146. This means that even if corruption is high in the bureaucracy people still pursue higher education or look for better employment opportunities. The existing realities of most of ASEAN individual states relative to corruption control measures challenges the organization as whole relative to GC. There is also a low correlation between CC to ETF with a path coefficient of 0.231. Among the predictors of GC, HD bears the most significance with a value of 1.084in comparison with CC and ETF with path coefficients of 0.857 and 0,710 respectively. This means that even if the government is not that effective in its corruption control, human development is still possible considering individual's aspiration to progress and uplift standard of living.

Table 1. *Summary of Path Weights*

Origin	Direct Effect	Indirect Effects	Path Coefficients	Total Causal Effect
Government Effectiveness	0.955	GE->HD->GC	0.580*0.388 =0.225	(direct effect + total indirect effects)
		GE->EFT->GC	0.768*0.201 =0.154	0.955 + 0.379 =1.334
		TOTAL	0.225 + 0.154 =0.379	
Corruption Control	0.857	CC->HD->GC	-0.146*1.084 =-0.158	(direct effect + total indirect effects)
		CC->EFT->GC	0.231*0.710 =0.1640	
		TOTAL	-0.158+0.1640 =0.006	0.857 + 0.006 =0.863

The indirect effects due to the correlations of (1) government effectiveness to human development; (2) government effectiveness to enabling trade facilitation; (3) corruption control to human development; and (4) corruption control to enabling trade facilitation and its direct effects to global competitiveness are indicated by multiplying the correlations of (1) GE and HD; (2) GE and ETF; (3) CC and HD; and (4) CC and ETF by the path coefficients from (1) HD to GC; and (2) ETF to GC. The product of the coefficients along the path reflects the weight of that path. Thus the path weights of GE->HD->GC; GE->ETF->GC; CC->HD->GC; and CC->ETF->GC are 0.225, 0.154, -0.158 and 0.1640 respectively. The negative indirect effect of correlating CC->HD->GC challenges the integrity and performance of the individual government of ASEAN. This implies that in the sphere of global competition, bureaucratic corruption is always detrimental to government effectiveness (Boone, 1995) as it is translated as the ability to control corruption in the bureaucracy and to maintain transparency.

The total indirect effects of government effectiveness and corruption control to global competitiveness are 0.379 and 0.006 while its direct effects are 0.955 and 0.857. Total indirect effect is

taken when the weight of each path is added like 0.225+0.154 is equal to 0.379 and -0.158 added to 0.1640 is equal to 0.006. On the other hand, total causal effect is the sum of direct effect and total indirect effect or the sum of the values of all the paths. So the total causal effect of government effectiveness to global competitiveness is 1.334 while corruption control is 0.863. The path model GE->HD->GC has the highest path weight while CC->HD->has the lowest. It can also be noted that the path models of government effectiveness has a higher total causal effect as compared to corruption control and the total causal effects of both government effectiveness and corruption control are higher in comparison to its direct effects to global competitiveness. This implies that although government effectiveness and corruption control are good indicators to global competitiveness but it cannot stand alone by itself. Political measures of the individual member states or ASEAN in general cannot suffice to the global challenges rather it needs a solid social and economic backbone to sustain the competition in the global landscape. A sound combination of these factors is not only essential but necessary.

4.0 Conclusion

The context of work is changing and what fuels the transformation of work are technological revolutions and globalization innovation. The global competitive landscape creates a trend among world economies to continuously evaluate its competitiveness parameters so as not to be lagged behind in the race. Results indicated that the variables considered have significant effects to global competitiveness. The powerful combination of several factors like socio-political, eco-political, socio-economic, socio-cultural can bring about vitality. Formulating and adopting progressive,

effective and sustainable measures or policies relative to political, economic and socio-cultural pillars of the ASEAN is imperative. It is necessary that ASEAN reforms and policies must be two-fold (1) to revitalize the sluggish performing economies of other members in order to keep abreast with the other members and (2) to have standard measures of the collective performance. Such regulations do not only accelerate social, political and economic reforms but also bring about a more equitable and inclusive development. As globalization fostered global networks and interdependence, government effectiveness must be coupled with other variables like sound corruption control, human development programs and enabling trade facilitation poicies. A sound interplay of these create dynamism in the competition ladder as the success of ASEAN depends largely on better management of institutional and structural change and targets on innovation, research and investment on infrastructure, education and capital.

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