

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE



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## PERCEPTION OF PEOPLE TOWARDS RUU355: A STUDY ON IUM STUDENTS

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### Abstract

The objective of the study is to know the perceptions of people towards recent introduction of Act 355 *Shariah* Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965, (RUU355). This study also seeks to construct factors influencing people's perceptions towards RUU355. Besides, the present study aims also to discover whether there are relationship between political affiliations, religious background, and legal understanding with their perceptions towards RUU355. The survey was conducted by distributing questionnaire among 309 IUM students. The data analyzed by descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and cross-tabulation analysis using SPSS software. The results suggested that there are three factors that influence people's perceptions, namely, state religion factor, political environment, and knowledge. It is also worth to note that religious background becomes an important characteristic that shapes the perception towards RUU355. Besides, people who have inclination towards PAS have more tendency to agree with RUU355 implementation. It is also suggested that people with more knowledge about RUU355 will have more tendency to support RUU355

**Keywords:** Perception, RUU355, Malaysian Legal System, cognitive, affective, evaluative

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## 1.0 Introduction

Since independence, the issue of *Shariah* Laws implementation has always been discussed in Malaysian politics. Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) had put the long term objective of their party to establish the *Shariah* Laws in the country. As a party motivated by Islam, PAS always look at various means to establish the Islamic State in the country (Luqman Thaib, 2013)<sup>1</sup>. In fact, in 2003, the party has published the Islamic State Document to emphasize their existence in the political sphere of Malaysia. In 2016, the party President, Dato' Seri Haji Abdul Hadi bin Awang had tabled a private bill in the parliament to amend the Act 355 (referred as RUU355 afterwards) of the Federal Constitution of which the party deems as a way to strengthen the *Shariah* Court in the country. This has produced a lot of reactions from people in the country. It can be observed that there are mixed reactions from people in terms of the acceptance towards the bill. Some people seems to be skeptical with the introduction of the bill while some of them are very much supportive. Thus, it is worth to study the factors behind the differences in perceptions among people towards RUU355.

People who support and reject the bill come from various background. There are a number of variables that can become factors for the acceptance and rejection of the bill. Thus, it is significant to examine whether there is a correlation between the variables and the perception of the people in accepting or rejecting the bill. The variables are among others;

1. Affiliation to certain political parties
2. Religious education
3. Legal understanding

This study aims at understanding peoples' perception towards RUU355. Besides, this research also focuses on constructing the factors behind people's perceptions towards the introduction of RUU355. This research also targets to elucidate the presence of correlations between the aforementioned variables and their perceptions towards the introduction of the bill. This research is important because it will enable us to understand the reasons that drive the Malaysians' mixed perception towards a policy introduced by either government or political parties. The results obtained from this study will serve as an important platform from which to further understand the justification of Muslims who are still skeptical and even stand-up against the bill, despite the pure objective of the bill introduction is to strengthen the *Shariah* Court in Malaysia.

## 2.0 Malaysian Legal System

As a country that practice federal system, the state governments are empowered with the authority related to religious affairs. The *Shariah* court is under the jurisdiction of state

government. The provision enumerated in the federal constitution in List II, Ninth Schedule of state lists outlines that:

“Except with respect to the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Labuan, and Putrajaya, Islamic law and personal and family law of persons professing the religion of Islam, including the Islamic law relating to succession, testate and intestate, betrothal, marriage, divorce, dower, maintenance, adoption, legitimacy, guardianship, gifts, partitions and non-charitable trusts; *Wakafs* and the definition and regulation of charitable and religious trusts, the appointment of trustees and the incorporation of persons in respect of Islamic religious and charitable endowments, institutions, trusts, charities and charitable institutions operating wholly within the State; Malay customs; *Zakat*, *Fitrah* and *Baitulmal* or similar Islamic religious revenue; mosques or any Islamic public places of worship, creation and punishment of offences by persons professing the religion of Islam against precepts of that religion, except in regard to matters included in the Federal List; the constitution, organization and procedure of *Shariah* courts, which shall have jurisdiction only over persons professing the religion of Islam and in respect only of any of the matters included in this paragraph, but shall not have jurisdiction in respect of offences except in so far as conferred by federal law, the control of propagating doctrines and beliefs among persons professing the religion of Islam; the determination of matters of Islamic law and doctrine and Malay custom.” (Federal Constitution)

This provision invested the jurisdiction to the *Shariah* court in Malaysia over persons professing the religion of Islam. Besides, the ruling of the federal court also clearly professed the jurisdiction of the *Shariah* court in the federation. In *Sukma Darmawan Sasmitaat Madja v Ketua Pengarah Penjara Malaysia & Anor*, Mohd Eusoff CJ stated that:

Today, the *Shariah* courts in each State and in the Federal Territories have their own officers to investigate and prosecute cases in their own courts. Their court system is similar to and running parallel with the civil court system. It has its own *Shariah* subordinate court, the *Shariah* High Court and *Shariah* Appeal Court. The decisions of the *Shariah* subordinate court are appealable to the *Shariah* High Court, and the *Shariah* Court of Appeal hears appeals from their High Courts. The Chief *Shariah* Judge is the head of the *Shariah* courts and the Chief *Shariah* Prosecutor has the power to institute, conduct or discontinue any proceeding for an offence before a *Shariah* court (Ashgar Ali Ali Mohamed, 2012)<sup>2</sup>.

Although it is understood that the *Shariah* Court has the jurisdiction in Malaysia, yet Ashgar Ali Ali Mohamed (2012)<sup>2</sup> argued that the application only to Muslims personal law and minor offences is against the precept of Islam. The criminal offences are being restricted under

the *Shariah* Court (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 (Act 355) where it provides that the *Shariah* Court shall not be exercised in respect of any offence punishable with imprisonment for a term exceeding three years or with any fine exceeding five thousand ringgit or with whipping exceeding six strokes or with any combination thereof (Ashgar Ali Ali Mohamed, 2012)<sup>2</sup>. It was argued that the jurisdiction of the *Shariah* Court was far lower than the lowest tier in the civil court where the first class magistrate has jurisdiction to the maximum sentence of 10 years imprisonment. Due to this limitation, the amendment of the Act 355 was deemed necessary as claimed by those who support the amendment.

On 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017, the PAS president, Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang brought forth a motion as a private member's bill to amend Act 355 in the Dewan Rakyat. The details of the amendment can be summarized as follows:

Table 1

*Comparison Between Current Punishment and Proposed Punishment*

Type of punishment	Current	Proposed amendment
Imprisonment	Maximum 3 years	Maximum 30 years
Fine	Maximum RM5000	Maximum RM100 000
Lashes	Maximum 6 lashes	Maximum 30 lashes

### 3.0 Reactions Among People

In a general observation, we can see that there are various reasons why people support and reject the introduction of RUU355. According to Mohd Arip Kasmoo *et al.* (2015)<sup>3</sup>, their study about the perception of the Malaysian towards the Islamic Law demonstrated that Muslims in Malaysia strongly supports the implementation of Islamic laws in Malaysia. It also indicated that those who have religious background showed positive response to the introduction of Islamic Laws in Malaysia.

In general, those who support the introduction of RUU355 among others claimed that;

*It paved ways for the implementation of Hudud Laws in Malaysia*

It has been a long term objectives of PAS to ensure the implementation of *Shariah* Laws in Malaysia. Thus, the RUU355 will become a stepping stone for the country to introduce *Hudud* Laws in Malaysia. It is known to them that RUU355 will not allow full implementation of *Hudud* Laws because cases that involve murder cannot be trialed before the *Shariah* court. However, cases like adultery or fornication, drinking alcohol, and *qazaf* can be brought to the *Shariah* court. Although the implementation is considered limited and somewhat constricted, it is

better than nothing. They claim that it is a religious responsibility for all Muslims to ensure the implementation of *Shariah Laws* in the country.

*Existing Punishment is way too low*

Existing punishment for the crimes committed are considered as too low and unable to solve the problems in the society. Currently, the maximum punishment for a crime committed is merely 3 years imprisoned, RM5000 fine, and 6 lashes. The proponents of the RUU355 believe that the lenient punishment is one of significant reasons for the increasing of the moral and social issues that happen in the society. Statistics like baby dumping in Malaysia has always been mentioned in series of explanation to people when trying to justify the needs for the amendment of the laws. They believe that the man-made laws have failed miserably to curb the social problems in the society.

For those who do not support, the reasons are among others:

*It violates federal constitution*

Some people claim that the introduction of the bill violates the federal constitution. Jonathan Chia (2016)<sup>4</sup> in the report mentioned that the amendment of the Act 355 actually affect the fundamentals of the federal constitution that has been agreed by the Malaya, Sabah, and Sarawak.

*Creates more injustices in the society*

The opponents of the RUU 355 claim that the implementation of the laws might create injustice in the society where there will be two different sets of laws in the country, creating a dual system. When the laws are implemented, Muslims will be subjected to *Shariah* laws while non-muslims will be subjected to Civil laws. Besides, they also claim that there will be different sets of laws with respect to different states as well. This is due the fact the the power to enact Islamic Laws falls under the purview of the states government, thus there will be issue of the proportionality of punishment in different states. Sisters in Islam (SIS) in their websites, [sistersinislam.org.my](http://sistersinislam.org.my) is of the opinion that even the existing *Shariah* Criminal Offences Enactment (SCOE) of each state has been implemented in discriminatory fashion and often targeting minority group of society and of lower income (Sisters in Islam, 2016)<sup>5</sup>.

*It will violate the rights of the people in the democratic country*

The opponents of the RUU355 are of the opinion that the jurisdiction of the *Shariah* Court is not only limited to the issue of adultery, *qazaf*, and drinking alcohol. Other issues that are under the purview of the *Shariah* courts includes:

1. Polygamy without the consent from first wife or the state government
2. Teaching without *tauliah*
3. Giving different opinion with the opinion of mufti
4. Getting married outside the country without permission
5. Zakat collection and zakat distributions

They claim that if the punishments for such conducts are to be increased to the maximum, then it will create a lot of problems. Such thing can also leads to the intellectual stagnation in the democratic country ( Mohd Asri Zainal Abidin, 2017)<sup>6</sup>.

#### *It worsen the Islamophobic environment*

After the incident of 9/11, Islamophobia has become so prevalent in the society. Islam and Muslims have been perceived negatively and thus labelled with unfavorable views such as terrorists, extremists, radicalists, *etc.* The highlights towards the violence of IS in the Muslim world have worsen the situation. Thus, to the opponents of the RUU355, they think that it is not the right time to focus on the punishment because it will only potray that Islam is a religion of punishments and full of restrictions. They believe that as Islam comes as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to the whole world), aspects like poverty, good governance, and so on has to be prioritized.

## 4.0 Methodology

The present study is based on a survey conducted through questionnaire among 309 respondents from International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). SPSS software was used to perform statistical analysis on the data collected from the survey forms. The analysis used descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, factor analysis, and non-parametric technique using the Kruskal-Wallis test.

Table 2

#### *Reliability Statistics*

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.893	12

The reliability coefficient that always been used is more than 0.6 (MohdSalleh Abu & Zaidatun Tasir, 2001)<sup>7</sup>. This suggestion also being mentioned by Kroz *et al.* (2008)<sup>8</sup> who stated that the Cronbach's Alpha value for questionnaire should be more than 0.65. Throughout this study, the reliability analysis result was 0.893 which indicated the internal consistencies of the scales hence

deemed reliable. In this study, factor analysis was used to construct the new factors influencing students' perceptions towards RUU355. The study used the factor analysis to explore the nature of the independent variables that affect students' perceptions. Study by Hogarty *et al.* (2005)<sup>9</sup> stressed that this method is commonly used in the fields of psychology and education. The purpose of factor analysis is to summarize the information in a large number of variables into a smaller number of components.

#### 4.1 Theoretical Framework

Perception of people is important because it is a response towards stimulus that they gather around them. In explaining the perceptual biases, Jervis (2002)<sup>10</sup> indicated that people are moved by both motivated (affect-driven) and unmotivated (purely cognitive) biases in order for them to make sense of the world. The motivated biases, exist when there is a need to maintain the psychological well-being and desired self-image, while the unmotivated one exists when there is the need for short-cuts to rationality in an environment characterised by complex and ambiguous information.

Thus, based on the understanding of perception in psychology as explained above, we can conclude that generally the perception is formed by (1) emotion, and (2) cognitive. It can be illustrated as following Diagram 1:

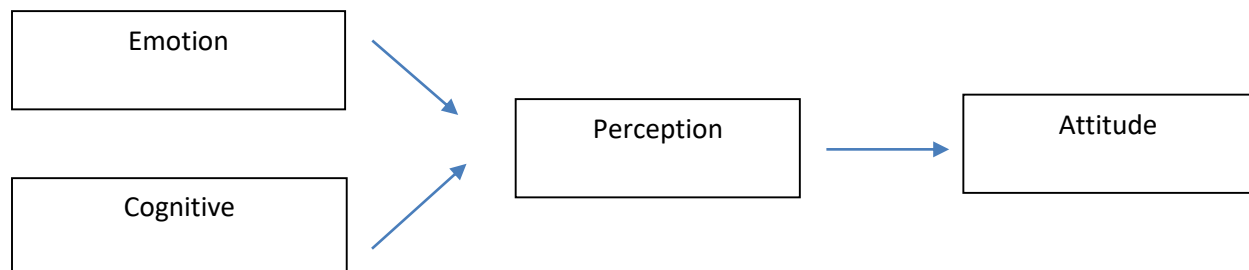


Diagram 1. Forms of Perception

On a different note, in their theory of civic culture, Almond and Verba explained about how the individual orientations in politics can be linked to political objects (Pavone, 2014)<sup>11</sup>. Orientations can be divided into three:

1. Cognitive Orientation ( knowledge and belief)
2. Affective Orientation (feelings)
3. Evaluation Orientation (judgment)



Political objects on the other hands, as outlined by Pavone (2014)<sup>11</sup> include:

1. General political system
2. Specific roles and structure in the system (such as legislature and bureaucracies)
3. Incumbents roles (such as monarch and legislators)
4. Public policies

Hence, if we combine both perspectives of psychology and political science in understanding the people’s perception, the following framework as in Diagram 2 can be used:

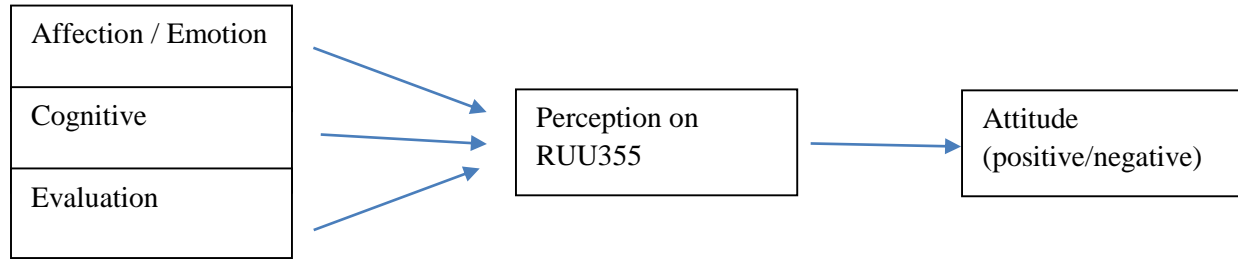


Diagram 2. Theoretical Framework

The perception is formed by their emotion/affection, cognitive (knowledge), and evaluations towards politics. The acceptance of the people, whether they support or disapprove the RUU355 might have correlation with the perception that they have formed. In the context of this research, emotion can be expressed in words like fear, angry, afraid, happy, unhappy, sad, satisfied, unsatisfied, confused, and so forth. Cognitive will measure people’s knowledge of RUU355, in terms of their awareness towards current issues i.e. news as reported by media. Words that can be used to express cognizance include know, aware, have heard, and so on. Finally, respondents’ stance towards politics was evaluated to measure their judgment towards RUU355. Words that can be used to describe perspective are good, bad, Islamic, and un-Islamic.

## 5.0 Findings

To study the students’ perception, the results are divided into several subsections which are descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and cross tabulation analysis. .

### 5.1 Descriptive Statistics

The respondents for the study were 309 of International Islamic University Malaysia students (Table 3). A total of 205 (66.3%) of female and 104 (33.7%) males responded to the



questionnaire distributed. The respondents were from both foundation studies IIUM and at degree level where 160 (51.8%) are from foundation studies. The respondents came from various academic backgrounds where 34 (11.0%) students were from religious studies, 33 (10.7%) are law students, and 242 (78.3%) students came from other programs. The respondents also came from both religious and non-religious school where 141 (45.6%) students were from religious school while majority of them, making up of 168 (54.4%) students were from non-religious school. 150 (48.5%) of respondents have no inclination towards political party while 159 (51.5%) responded otherwise. From this number, 23 (7.4%) students inclined towards Barisan Nasional, 119 (38.5%) inclined towards PAS, while 17 (5.5%) inclined towards other parties.

Table 3  
*Profile of the Respondents*

Demographic Factor		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	104	33.7%
	Female	205	66.3%
<b>Level Of Study</b>	Foundation level	160	51.8%
	Degree	149	48.2%
<b>Academic Background</b>	Religious studies	34	11%
	Law	33	10.7%
	Others	242	78.3%
<b>Previous School</b>	Religious school	168	54.4%
	Non-religious school	141	45.6%
<b>Political Inclination</b>	Yes	159	51.5%
	No	150	48.5%
<b>Political Party</b>	BN	23	7.4%
	PAS	119	38.5%
	Others	17	5.5%
	No inclination	150	48.5%

## 5.2 Factor Analysis

There are two tests that can be used to measure the sampling adequacy in order to determine the factorability of the whole matrix. The two tests are Bartlett's test of Sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO). Table 4 reports the KMO and Bartlett's tests, respectively. The value of Bartlett's test of Sphericity is significant ( $p=0.000$ ) while, the KMO value is 0.914. As suggested by Coakes and Ong (2011)<sup>12</sup>, if the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant ( $p<0.001$ ) and if the KMO measure is greater than 0.6 then factorability exists. Based on this result, it is applicable to continue with the Factor Analysis in order to study the factors influencing the perception of students towards RUU355.

Table 4

*KMO and Bartlett's Test*

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy.			.914
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square		2948.635
	df		66
	Sig.		.000

Table 5 represents the total variance explained at three stages for factors influencing the perception of students towards RUU355. Three factors were extracted because their eigenvalues were greater than 1. Figure 1 shows the scree plot for the factor analysis. By using the Catell's (1966)<sup>13</sup> scree test, it was decided to retain three components for further investigation. As shown in Figure 1, there are three numbers of factors that are greater than 1. This is consistent with the result in Table 5 that shows the three factors that can be extracted using the Principal Component Analysis method. Overall, three factors are extracted, and then 77.581 percent of the variance would be explained.

Table 5

*The Total Variance Explained*

Factor	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.224	51.865	51.865
2	1.606	13.379	65.224
3	1.408	12.337	77.581

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

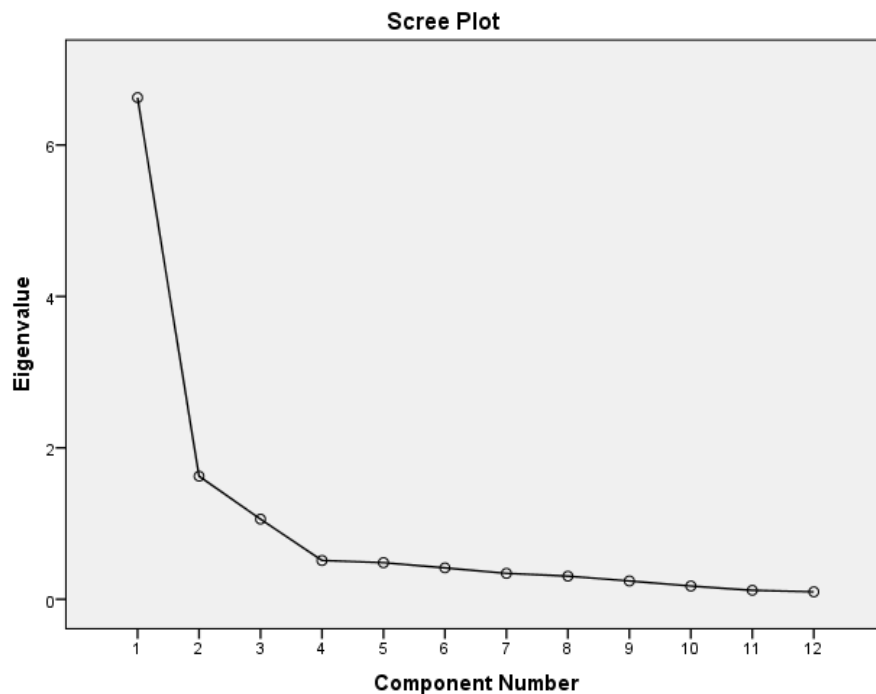


Figure 1. Scree plot

In this rotated factor matrix, there are factor loadings that must be selected. The results show that there are three new factors that are successfully constructed using factor analysis (Principal Component Analysis). These three new factors are the key elements influencing students' perceptions on RUU355. There are 12 items that belong to these factors.

According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001)<sup>14</sup>, factor loading 0.32 and below is considered less good. While, variable with factor loadings equal 0.32 to 0.45 is considered average. To identify which items belong to what factor, the present study performs the Varimax Rotation Method with Kaiser Normalization. After performing this method, Factor 1 comprised of eight items with factor loadings ranging from 0.813 to 0.992; Factor 2 comprised of two items with factor loadings ranging from 0.854 to 0.882; and Factor 3 comprise of two items with factor loadings ranging from 0.657 to 0.925. Those items are listed below in Table 6.

Table 6  
Rotated Factor Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix	Component		
	1	2	3
Generally, I think that RUU355 is beneficial.	.922		
I think that RUU355 will bring benefits to the society	.888		
I think that RUU355 is practical to be implemented in Malaysia.	.885		
I feel happy when I know that RUU355 is being tabled in parliament.	.882		
I feel safe living in the society knowing that RUU355 is going to be implemented.	.881		
I think that crime rate will decrease when RUU355 is implemented.	.845		
I think that RUU355 is in line with the objectives ( <i>Maqasid</i> ) of <i>Shariah</i> .	.826		
I am excited to see whether RUU355 is effective to curb crimes.	.813		
I think that the introduction of RUU355 is just a political game to gain support from people.		.882	
I think that this is not the right time to amend <i>Shariah</i> laws through RUU355.		.854	
I feel confused about how RUU355 will bring justice to Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaysia.			.925
Generally, I feel good about RUU355.	.425		.657

Table 7 answers the objective of the study which is to identify and rank the factors that influence students' perceptions on RUU355. The first factor shows the highest percentage of variance explained with 51.865% when it is extracted. From this table, 51.865% of the variance would be explained for state-religion factor. Hence, state-religion factor is the first factor influencing students' perception followed political environment factor and knowledge factor.

Table 7

*Name of New Factors with the Percentage of Variance*

Factor	Name	Percentage of Variance
1	State – religion factor	51.865
2	Political environment factor	13.379
3	Knowledge factor	12.337

### 5.3 Cross-tabulation Analysis.

Average score for all scale questions were generated. This is to obtain the frequency of those who have positive and negative perception towards RUU355. If the score was more than 3 (if average > 3), then the student was considered as having positive perception while if it was less than 3 (if average < 3), then the student was considered to have negative perception. After running SPSS, the following result was generated, as presented in Table 8.

Table 8

*Perception of Students Towards RUU355*

PERCEPTION- Positive or Negative					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative Perception	62	20.1	20.1	20.1
	Positive Perception	247	79.9	79.9	100.0
	Total	309	100.0	100.0	

From Table 8, we can see that 62 (20.1%) students have negative perception towards RUU355 while the remaining 247 (79.9%) students have positive perception. In view of the results obtained, majority of respondents have positive outlook on RUU355 implementation.

Table 9

*Cross-Tabulation Between Perception Towards RUU355 and Gender*

<b>PERCEPTION- Positive or Negative * GENDER Cross-tabulation</b>					
			GENDER		Total
			FEMAL E	MALE	
PERCEPTION- Positive or Negative	Negative Perception	Count	46	16	62
		% of Total	14.9%	5.2%	20.1%
	Positive Perception	Count	159	88	247
		% of Total	51.5%	28.5%	79.9%
Total	Count	205	104	309	
	% of Total	66.3%	33.7%	100.0%	

Table 9 shows the cross-tabulation between gender of students and their perceptions towards RUU355. It indicates that 46 (14.9%) of female students and 16 (5.2%) of male students have negative perception towards RUU355. Based on the percentage, it can be concluded that more female students have positive perception towards RUU355.

Table 10

*Cross-Tabulation Between Perception Towards RUU355 and Previous School*

<b>PERCEPTION- Positive or Negative * PREVIOUS SCHOOL Cross-tabulation</b>					
			PREVIOUS SCHOOL		Total
			NON- RELIGIOUS SCHOOL	RELIGIOUS SCHOOL	
PERCEPTION- Positive or Negative	Negative Perception	Count	41	21	62
		% of Total	13.3%	6.8%	20.1%
	Positive Perception	Count	100	147	247
		% of Total	32.4%	47.6%	79.9%
Total	Count	141	168	309	
	% of Total	45.6%	54.4%	100.0%	

Table 10 shows the cross-tabulation between background of school and perception of students towards RUU355. It indicates that 41 (13.3%) of students coming from non-religious school and 21 (6.8%) of students coming from religious school have negative perception towards RUU355. Based on the percentage, it can be concluded only a small percentage of students who comes from religious school have negative perception towards RUU355.

Table 11

*Cross-Tabulation Between Perception Towards RUU355 and Academic Background*

<b>PERCEPTION- Positive or Negative * ACADEMIC BACKGROUND Cross-tabulation</b>						
			ACADEMIC BACKGROUND			Total
			LAWS	RELIGIOUS STUDIES	OTHERS	
PERCEPTION- Positive or Negative	Negative Perception	Count	10	6	46	62
		% of Total	3.2%	1.9%	14.9%	20.1%
	Positive Perception	Count	23	28	196	247
		% of Total	7.4%	9.1%	63.4%	79.9%
Total		Count	33	34	242	309
		% of Total	10.7%	11.0%	78.3%	100.0%

Table 11 shows the cross-tabulation between students' academic background and their perceptions towards RUU355. Overall, students with negative perception towards RUU355 comprised of 10 (3.2%) students coming from law program, 6 (1.9%) students coming from religious studies, and 46 (14.9%) from other programs. In comparison, students with positive perception towards RUU355 comprised of 23 (7.4%) law students, 28 (9.1%) religious studies students, and 196 (63.4%) students from other programs. Based on the percentage, it can be concluded that those who have religious background have a lower tendency to have negative perception toward RUU355. It is also can be concluded that there is no significant different between those who perceive positively and negatively among Law students.



Table 12:

*Cross-Tabulation Between Perception Towards RUU355 and Inclination Towards Political Party*

			POLITICAL PARTY				Total
			BN	PAS	Others	No Inclination	
PERCEPTION- Positive Negative	Negative Perception	Count	11	8	7	36	62
		% of Total	3.6%	2.6%	2.3%	11.7%	20.1%
	Positive Perception	Count	12	111	10	114	247
		% of Total	3.9%	35.9%	3.2%	36.9%	79.9%
Total		Count	23	119	17	150	309
		% of Total	7.4%	38.5%	5.5%	48.5%	100.0 %

Table 13 shows the cross tabulation between students' inclination towards political party and their perception towards RUU355. It indicates that 111 (35.9%) of students who favor PAS, 12 (3.9%) of students who favor BN, and 10 (3.2 %) of students who favor other parties have positive perception towards RUU355. Based on the percentage, it can be concluded that those who have inclination towards PAS have more tendency to have positive perception towards RUU355.

Table 14

*Cross-Tabulation Between Perception Towards RUU355 and Knowledge About RUU355*

<b>I know about the amendment on the punishments in RUU355. *</b>					
			PERCEPTION- Positive or Negative		Total
			Negative Perception	Positive Perception	
I know about the amendment on the punishments in RUU355.	NO	Count	38	68	106
		% of Total	12.3%	22.0%	34.3%
	YES	Count	24	179	203
		% of Total	7.8%	57.9%	65.7%

Total	Count	62	247	309
	% of Total	20.1%	79.9%	100.0%

Table 14 shows the cross tabulation between students' knowledge about RUU355 and their perceptions towards RUU355. Among students who are aware of the punishment in RUU355, 179 (57.9%) of students have positive perception while the other 24 (7.8%) students have negative perception. Whereas, 68 (22 %) students do not have knowledge about punishment in RUU355 still have positive perception as compared to 38 (12.3%) students who have negative perception. Based on the percentage, it can be inferred that those who are aware about RUU355 have more tendency to support RUU355.

## 6.0 Discussion And Conclusion

Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that there are three important factors that greatly influence people in perceiving RUU355, namely; (1) state-religion factor, (2) political environment factor, and (3) knowledge factor. These factors shape the perceptions because it affect people affectively, evaluatively, and cognitively.

In addition, the findings in the cross-tabulation analysis are very significant to the research. It can be concluded that people who have religious background have more tendency to have positive perception towards RUU355. This can be proven by examining at their previous schools and programs that they are in. Looking at the nature of RUU355 which is to empower the *Shariah* Law in Malaysia, it is not surprising that people with religious background will support the introduction of this bill. It is quite evident from this study that political inclination could be one of the reasons why people have tendency to have positive perception towards RUU355. Based on the results obtained, people who have inclination towards PAS have more tendency to agree with RUU355 implementation. It is also suggested that people with more knowledge about RUU355 will have more tendency to support RUU355 as they are well-informed on the motives and practicality of the amendment.

It is believed that the research objectives stated in the introduction have been met with the completion of this study. Based on these findings, it is recommended that any party who would like to table any policy change in the parliament has to ensure that people are well-informed about the amendment because the ignorance about it will result in rejection. Since the most professed religion in Malaysia is Islam, detailed work need to be carried out so that Muslims in our country become more knowledgeable on the RUU355 implementation. In theory, any policy which deems to be good and beneficial for Muslims will get more support from the people. Looking into the future, governments are recommended to ensure that Islamic values are incorporated into the policy implementation to ensure people's acceptance. In this research, no

thorough questions were asked to test the students' knowledge about RUU355. Therefore, for future works, it is suggested to be taken into account to study people's knowledge on RUU355.

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