

# The Perspectives of University Students on the Evolution of Witchcraft Laws and Their Cultural Significance in the Malaysia Setting

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the evolution of witchcraft laws in Malaysia and their cultural significance, focusing on how colonial influences and Islamic legal principles have shaped contemporary perceptions of black magic. Despite modernisation, accusations of witchcraft remain prevalent, often leading to legal and social conflicts. The research utilises a quantitative approach, surveying 100 law foundation students to assess their awareness, perceptions, and attitudes toward Malaysia's legal framework on witchcraft. Findings reveal that while many students have cultural familiarity with black magic, their knowledge of related laws remains limited. Religious and cultural beliefs significantly shape public attitudes, often influencing legal perspectives. The study highlights gendered dimensions of witchcraft accusations, with marginalised groups, particularly women, being disproportionately affected. Additionally, results suggest strong support for legal reforms, as 84% of respondents believe Malaysia's legal system should better address contemporary challenges related to black magic. The findings underscore the need for a balanced legal approach that integrates cultural, religious, and secular considerations. By analysing the intersection of law, belief systems, and societal norms, this research contributes to a broader understanding of how witchcraft laws continue to impact Malaysian society and proposes pathways for legal and educational reforms.

## INTRODUCTION

Black magic, commonly referred to as the practice of malevolent or harmful magic, is often used for personal gain or to cause harm to others. In layman's terms, black magic involves the use of supernatural forces or rituals to manipulate, control, or harm individuals. It is generally considered the dark side of magic, unlike "white magic," which is used for healing or beneficial purposes (Hughes, 2017). From the Arabic perspective, black magic (known as "sihr" in Arabic) is deeply rooted in Islamic traditions and is considered a serious offence. The Quran condemns the practice of magic, particularly when used to harm others or manipulate people's free will. It is believed that those who engage in sihr are entering into a pact with evil forces or jinn, and such acts are punishable by law in some Islamic countries (Al-Suyuti, 2011; El Shater, 2020). The Arabic concept of sihr is

thus not only a cultural belief but also a religious transgression subject to legal and social condemnation (Ibn Qayyim, 2001).

In recent years, Malaysia has witnessed several high-profile cases related to black magic, often stirring public debates. One notable incident occurred in 2023, where a woman was accused of using black magic to control her husband's actions, leading to media coverage and public discussions on the legal and social implications of such cases (The Star, 2023). Reports of individuals being accused of engaging in witchcraft or black magic have been regularly featured in online news, with victims often claiming that their lives were destroyed due to these practices (Malay Mail, 2023). The use of black magic for financial or personal gain has also emerged as a growing concern, especially in the context of social media, where practices like "online exorcisms" and "virtual spells" are marketed to the public (Malay Mail, 2023).

The issue of black magic and witchcraft in Malaysia raises critical questions about the intersection of culture, religion, and law. Despite the ongoing modernisation of the country's legal framework, accusations of black magic remain prevalent, often leading to social stigmatisation, legal battles, and, sometimes, violent outcomes. The Malaysian legal system's ability to handle such cases remains under scrutiny, particularly in balancing traditional beliefs with constitutional rights. Moreover, the societal impact of these cases, especially concerning gender and socioeconomic factors, remains under-researched (Zain, 2022).

This research hypothesises that the evolution of witchcraft laws in Malaysia has been shaped by colonial influences and Islamic legal principles, with significant implications for how contemporary society views black magic. It is expected that the study will reveal a complex relationship between cultural beliefs, religious practices, and the modern legal system, where legal frameworks often struggle to keep pace with societal attitudes toward witchcraft. Furthermore, this research anticipates that the findings will demonstrate that black magic accusations disproportionately affect marginalised groups, particularly women, and that cultural beliefs continue to exert a strong influence on both the legal system and societal behaviour despite the secular nature of Malaysia's governance (Ng, 2019; Abdullah & Zainal, 2020).

The main objective of this research is to examine the evolution of witchcraft laws in Malaysia and their cultural significance, specifically focusing on how colonial and post-colonial legal frameworks have influenced these laws and how they are perceived by contemporary Malaysian society. This research also aims to explore the intersection of culture, religion, and law about black magic, mainly through legal education. This research adopts a quantitative approach, utilising a survey method to gather empirical data. The target population will consist of 100 law foundation students from a Malaysian university, selected to represent a diverse sample of individuals with a foundational understanding of legal principles and issues. The research aims to gather insights into the students' perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes toward the legal treatment of black magic in Malaysia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Witchcraft and black magic have long been contentious issues across many societies, blending legal frameworks with cultural beliefs. In simple terms, black magic refers to the use of supernatural powers for malevolent purposes, often involving occult practices to harm others (Zain, 2022). In Islamic law, black magic (sihr) is considered a severe transgression. It is prohibited, with strict penalties prescribed for those who engage in such practices (Al-Qur'an, 113:4). Similarly, the Arabic perspective of black magic views it as a source of corruption in society, often leading to moral and social decay (Al-Shanqiti, 2019).

In Malaysia, black magic remains a subject of deep cultural significance, with both Islamic and traditional beliefs shaping the country's legal stance on witchcraft. The Anti-Witchcraft Law has been a key component in the country's response to these practices. However, the historical evolution and the cultural context of such laws have often been influenced by external forces such as colonialism and religion, particularly Islam, which plays a significant role in the legal treatment of black magic (Abdullah & Zainal, 2020).

Before the colonial period, Malaysia's legal treatment of witchcraft was deeply intertwined with indigenous belief systems and religious practices. Witchcraft accusations often resulted in community-driven sanctions rather than formal legal processes. However, during the colonial era, particularly under British rule, local legal

systems were gradually replaced by English common law, which lacked specific provisions for witchcraft or black magic. Colonial laws typically viewed these practices as superstitions rather than crimes, and they were largely disregarded by formal legal authorities (Ng, 2019). British colonial authorities, however, introduced criminal laws that, while silent on witchcraft, were used to regulate public morality. The influence of British legal frameworks set the tone for the treatment of witchcraft in post-colonial Malaysia. This shift to a formalised legal structure created a contrast between traditional beliefs and Western legalism.

After Malaysia's independence in 1957, the legal system underwent reforms to better reflect the needs and realities of its multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. Malaysia's Shariah laws, which govern personal matters for Muslims, explicitly address witchcraft and black magic, especially through the Islamic legal concept of *sihr*. The Penal Code of Malaysia also includes provisions indirectly addressing witchcraft, such as laws against causing harm through magical practices (Zain, 2022).

However, the legal framework remains highly influenced by religious and traditional views, with little legal recourse for cases involving witchcraft unless they cause tangible harm. As noted by Abdullah & Zainal (2020), the intersection of law and religion in Malaysia is particularly significant, as religious beliefs often guide legal decisions, especially concerning morality and supernatural phenomena.

Comparative studies show that Malaysia is not alone in its treatment of witchcraft. In Indonesia, similar laws regulate witchcraft practices, particularly in rural areas, where belief in black magic remains widespread (Meyer, 2021). In India, certain states have enacted anti-witchcraft laws aimed at curbing the growing number of witch hunts (Rao, 2018). These laws often blend elements of criminal law and social justice to address the violence that frequently accompanies witchcraft accusations. By comparing Malaysia's legal approach to witchcraft with these other countries, it is evident that the treatment of witchcraft remains highly contextual, with cultural and religious beliefs playing a dominant role in shaping legal systems.

In Malaysia, cultural beliefs about witchcraft are deeply embedded in both the rural and urban populace. Witchcraft is often viewed as a social ill, with accusations commonly tied to personal or family grievances. The legal system in Malaysia, particularly within the Shariah courts, reflects the country's strong cultural ties to Islamic principles, where black magic is seen as a crime against faith and an affront to divine law (Abdullah & Zainal, 2020). These cultural beliefs are reinforced by religious leaders, who regularly caution against the dangers of black magic.

The cultural significance of witchcraft laws is also evident in the way the public views accusations of black magic. As Zain (2022) notes, many Malaysians still believe in the power of black magic to harm individuals and manipulate outcomes, which influences their support for legal actions against witchcraft. The political landscape in Malaysia has also shaped the legal treatment of witchcraft. Political leaders often use traditional and religious rhetoric to galvanise public support, with witchcraft laws sometimes invoked in political speeches to reaffirm the state's commitment to upholding moral values. This is particularly true in the case of Islamic politicians, who view witchcraft as a form of moral decay that must be rooted out for the well-being of society (Ng, 2019).

Witchcraft laws also intersect with issues of gender, as accusations of black magic are often levied against women, particularly in rural areas where traditional beliefs are more pronounced (Rao, 2018). This gendered aspect of witchcraft accusations has raised concerns about the legal system's role in protecting vulnerable groups from baseless allegations.

Despite the legal framework in place, Malaysia faces several challenges in enforcing anti-witchcraft laws. A notable issue is the lack of clear legal guidelines for handling witchcraft-related cases. According to Zain (2022), while black magic accusations are still prevalent, the lack of consistent legal precedents has led to inconsistent rulings in court. This ambiguity can create difficulties for law enforcement and result in miscarriages of justice. Moreover, recent media reports indicate a surge in public interest in black magic-related cases, particularly with the rise of social media, which has led to more publicised witchcraft trials. This has contributed to a growing perception that black magic is a real threat that needs legal intervention (Abdullah & Zainal, 2020).

A recent study by Zakaria et al. (2025) on public university students revealed that many young Malaysians view the current legal framework surrounding witchcraft as outdated and ineffective. Many respondents indicated that

they felt witchcraft should be handled more systematically through formal legal processes rather than relying on religious or cultural practices. This insight reflects a broader shift in attitudes among younger generations, who are increasingly sceptical of traditional practices and favour a more modern, secular approach to legal issues.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative methodology, specifically a survey approach, to collect empirical data. The sample will include 100 law foundation students from a university in Malaysia, chosen to reflect a diverse group with a basic understanding of legal concepts and issues (Zain, 2022). The research explores the students' views, knowledge, and attitudes regarding the legal approach to black magic in Malaysia. Recent research highlights the importance of examining the intersection between culture, religion, and law, particularly in understanding how law students perceive the changing legal frameworks related to witchcraft (Ng, 2019; Abdullah & Zainal, 2020). A convenience sampling technique will be used to select the 100 law foundation students from the university. This group was chosen because they possess some basic legal knowledge, which makes them suitable for evaluating legal issues and understanding the relationship between culture and law (Zain, 2022). The survey will be designed to gather data on the students' awareness and knowledge of witchcraft laws in Malaysia, including both colonial and post-colonial influences, as well as their perceptions of black magic and its cultural significance in Malaysian society (Abdul Rahman, 2021). It will also explore the students' opinions on the effectiveness of current anti-witchcraft laws in addressing contemporary issues related to black magic (The Star, 2023). Finally, the survey will gauge personal attitudes toward the role of religion and traditional beliefs in shaping legal practices around witchcraft (El Shater, 2020). The questionnaire will contain both closed-ended and Likert scale questions (ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree") to quantify the students' responses.

The analysis employed in this study is Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, a statistical method used to model the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. In this case, the dependent variable is Legal Perception, which represents individuals' perceptions of the legal treatment of black magic in Malaysia. The independent variables include Cultural Influence, Religious Belief, and Knowledge/Awareness, which measure the impact of cultural factors, religious beliefs, and awareness of black magic laws, respectively. The regression model was analysed using Python, a powerful programming language for data analysis. The data was first transformed and standardised to ensure consistency and comparability across variables. Composite scores were calculated to aggregate related items into single value. Reliability tests, such as Cronbach's Alpha, were conducted to ensure the internal consistency of the composite scores. Finally, the OLS regression was performed to assess the influence of the independent variables on legal perceptions.

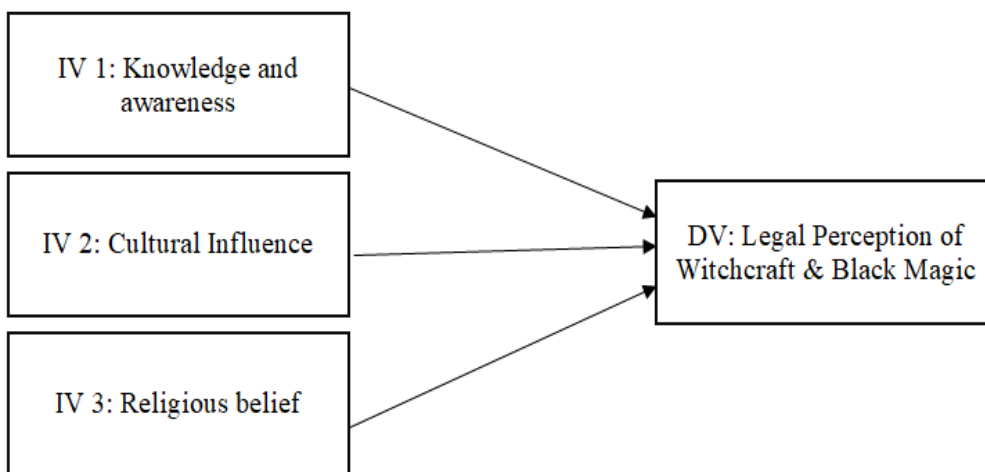


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Survey bias may occur, as the sample will primarily include individuals from an academic setting, which may influence their responses to legal questions (Hughes, 2017). Additionally, the quantitative nature of the study might limit the depth of understanding of cultural or emotional aspects that could be explored in qualitative

research (Zain, 2022). This study expects to gain insights into the degree of awareness and understanding among law students about witchcraft laws in Malaysia, the impact of knowledge, cultural and religious beliefs on legal perceptions of black magic, and whether potential reforms is needed in the Malaysian legal system to address contemporary issues related to black magic. By analysing the responses of law students, this research will provide a unique perspective on how the legal system in Malaysia might evolve in relation to traditional beliefs in witchcraft.

## LIMITATION

The study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, there is a demographic limitation, as the sample consists solely of foundation law students from public universities, which may not fully represent the broader perspectives of all university students. Additionally, the religious distribution within the sample is unbalanced, with a disproportionate representation of non-Muslim students compared to Muslim students. This imbalance could skew the findings and limit the generalizability of the results across Malaysia's diverse religious landscape. Secondly, while the overall survey design demonstrates acceptable reliability with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.71, the reliability for individual variables is only moderate, with values around 0.5. This suggests that while the survey as a whole is reliable, the measurement of specific constructs may lack consistency, potentially affecting the accuracy of the findings. These limitations highlight the need for caution in interpreting the results and suggest areas for improvement in future research, such as expanding the sample to include a more diverse demographic and refining the survey instruments to enhance reliability.

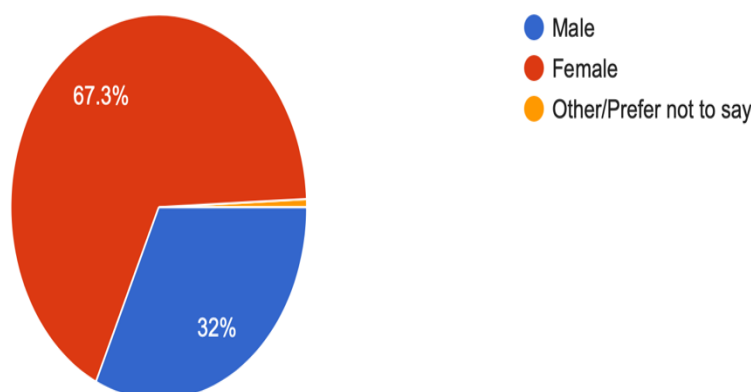
## Analysis

### Part A: Descriptive Statistics

This section presents a detailed analysis of the data collected on students' perceptions of the legal treatment of black magic in Malaysia. It begins by examining the demographic profile of the respondents, including gender, age, and religious affiliation, to understand the background of the participants. Following this, the analysis explores the respondents' awareness and knowledge of Malaysia's witchcraft laws and their perceptions of black magic and its cultural significance. The findings aim to provide insights into factors influencing perspectives on the legal treatment of black magic and highlight key trends and patterns within the responses.

#### Gender

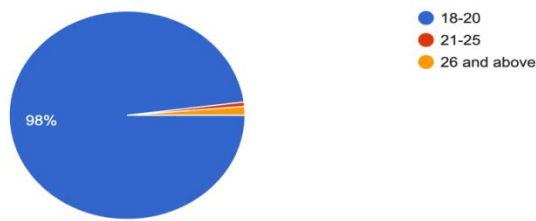
147 responses



The demographic profile of the respondents reveals a predominantly female sample, with 67% identifying as female and 32% as male, while 1% preferred not to specify their gender. This gender distribution highlights a significant female majority, which may influence the overall perspectives gathered, especially on culturally sensitive topics like witchcraft and its legal treatment.

## Age

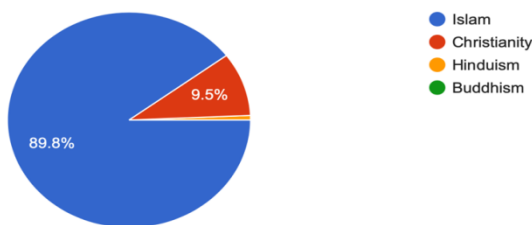
147 responses



The age distribution is heavily skewed towards younger individuals, with 98% of respondents aged between 18-20, indicating a largely student-centric population. This suggests that the data primarily reflects the views of young adults who may have limited life experience but are actively engaged in academic environments, potentially shaping their awareness and opinions on legal and cultural matters.

## Religion

147 responses



In terms of religious affiliation, the majority of participants identified as Muslim (90%), followed by Christians (9%) and a small minority of Hindus (1%). This religious breakdown mirrors Malaysia's national demographics, where Islam is the dominant faith, but it also indicates that Islamic cultural and legal perspectives predominantly shape the responses. The high representation of Muslim respondents may lead to more substantial support for religiously influenced laws regarding black magic and witchcraft.

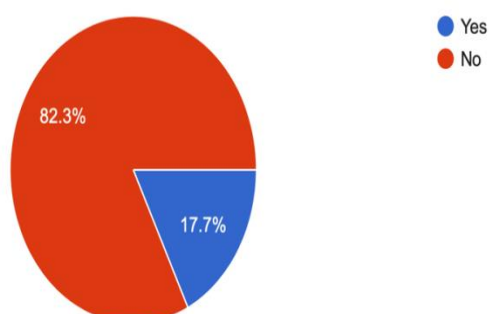
## Part B: Awareness and Knowledge of Witchcraft Laws in Malaysia

This section analyses the respondents' awareness and understanding of Malaysia's legal framework surrounding witchcraft and black magic. This component is measured using five related questions. The findings highlight significant gaps in legal knowledge despite widespread cultural awareness of black magic practices.

### Prior Study of Witchcraft Laws

Have you previously studied or learned about witchcraft laws?

147 responses



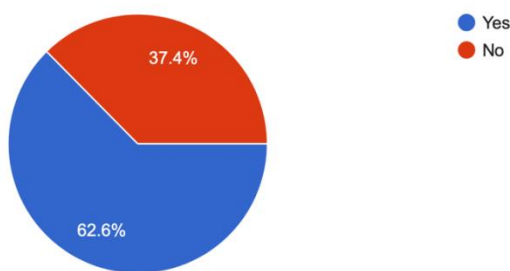
A large majority of respondents (**82%**) indicated that they had **never studied or learned about witchcraft laws**, while only **18%** reported having prior exposure to such information. This suggests that witchcraft laws are not commonly discussed or taught in academic settings, leading to limited formal knowledge among students. The low percentage of informed respondents indicates that legal education on specific topics like witchcraft is lacking, even within a student population that might be expected to engage with diverse legal and cultural issues.

This lack of exposure may contribute to misunderstandings or misconceptions about the legal implications of practicing or being accused of witchcraft in Malaysia. It also highlights the importance of integrating culturally significant legal topics into academic curricula to foster better awareness among students.

### Personal Exposure to Black Magic

Do you have any prior personal exposure or knowledge of black magic practices?

147 responses



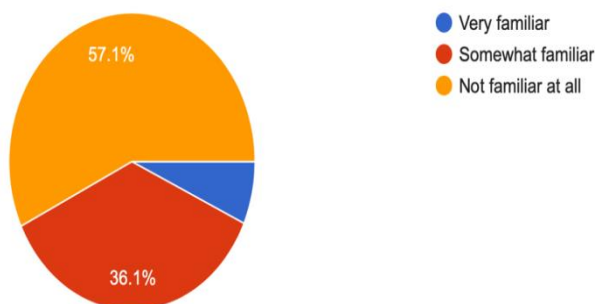
Despite the limited study of witchcraft laws, a significant **63%** of respondents stated that they had **personal exposure or knowledge of black magic practices**, while **37%** reported no such experience. This finding points to the cultural prevalence of black magic in Malaysian society, where many individuals encounter or hear about such practices through personal experiences, community stories, or media.

The fact that a majority of respondents are familiar with black magic practices, even without formal education on the topic, underscores the **cultural significance** of black magic in Malaysia. It also suggests that black magic is still perceived as a real and active element within communities, potentially influencing societal attitudes and contributing to fear, stigma, or fascination surrounding the practice.

### Familiarity with Malaysia's Witchcraft Laws

How familiar are you with Malaysia's laws regarding witchcraft and black magic?

147 responses



When asked about their **familiarity with Malaysia's laws** on witchcraft and black magic, more than half (**57%**) of respondents admitted they were "**not familiar at all**", while **36%** considered themselves "**somewhat familiar**", and only a small portion (**7%**) described themselves as "**very familiar**".

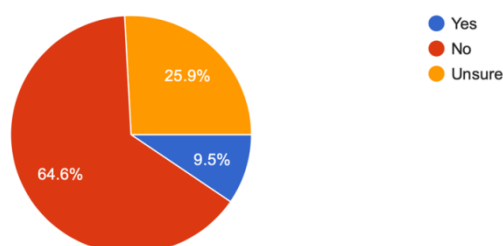
These figures highlight a significant gap between cultural awareness of black magic and knowledge of its legal treatment. While many respondents have personal exposure to black magic practices, few understand how the Malaysian legal system addresses these issues. This lack of familiarity with witchcraft laws may lead to misinformation and challenges when navigating legal processes involving black magic accusations.

The small percentage (7%) of respondents who are very familiar with the laws suggests that only a minority have made an active effort to study or research Malaysia's legal framework on witchcraft, possibly due to academic interests or personal curiosity.

## Legal System Adequacy

Do you think Malaysia's legal system adequately addresses issues related to black magic and witchcraft?

147 responses

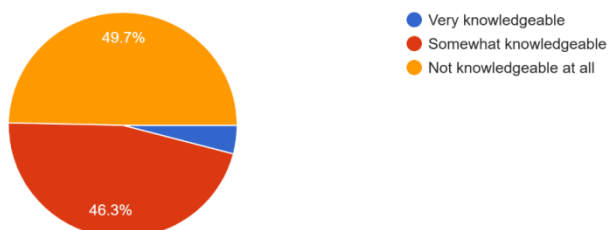


The survey results indicate a significant level of uncertainty among public university students regarding Malaysia's legal system's ability to address issues related to black magic and witchcraft. With 64.6% of respondents selecting "Unsure," it suggests a lack of clear understanding or awareness of the existing laws and their effectiveness in this area. Only 25.9% of students believe that the legal system adequately handles such issues, while a smaller percentage (9.5%) feel that it does not. This highlights a potential gap in public knowledge and education about the legal frameworks surrounding witchcraft and black magic in Malaysia. It may also reflect the complexity and sensitivity of the topic, which could benefit from more open discussions and clearer legal guidelines to ensure public confidence and understanding.

## Knowledge on colonial and post-colonial Malaysia's witchcraft laws

How would you rate your knowledge about the colonial and post-colonial influences on Malaysia's witchcraft laws?

147 responses



The survey results reveal a notable divide in the level of knowledge among public university students regarding the colonial and post-colonial influences on Malaysia's witchcraft laws. Nearly half of the respondents (49.7%) consider themselves "Somewhat knowledgeable," indicating a moderate understanding of the historical context shaping these laws. Meanwhile, 46.3% of students admit to being "Not knowledgeable at all," suggesting a significant portion lacks awareness of how colonial and post-colonial periods have impacted the legal framework surrounding witchcraft in Malaysia. Only a small percentage (implicitly 4% based on the provided data) feel "Very knowledgeable." This disparity underscores the need for enhanced educational efforts to deepen students'

understanding of the historical influences on Malaysia's legal system, particularly in areas as culturally and legally complex as witchcraft laws.

### Part C: Impact of Knowledge, Cultural and Religious Beliefs on Legal Perceptions of Black Magic

The regression results indicate that the model explains approximately 31% of the variance in Legal Perception (R-squared = 0.310). Both Cultural Influence (coefficient = 0.2585,  $p = 0.001$ ) and Religious Belief (coefficient = 0.2373,  $p = 0.000$ ) have statistically significant positive effects on legal perceptions, suggesting that cultural and religious beliefs significantly influenced the views of the legal system's handling of black magic. Witchcraft beliefs are deeply rooted in Malaysian culture, necessitating legal reforms that carefully consider cultural and religious contexts. Given Malaysia's predominantly Muslim population, aligning legal frameworks with Islamic values is crucial for public acceptance. However, tensions between religious and secular perspectives require policymakers to balance respecting religious beliefs with ensuring fair, unbiased, and inclusive legal processes. This is especially important to prevent abuses, such as black magic accusations targeting marginalised groups like women. Culturally sensitive legal reforms must navigate the interplay of cultural traditions, religious values, and secular principles to address contemporary issues effectively while respecting Malaysia's diverse cultural and religious landscape.

Knowledge\_Awareness has a marginally significant positive effect (coefficient = 0.1097,  $p = 0.053$ ), indicating that knowledge of black magic laws may also influence legal perceptions to a lesser extent. This suggests that individuals who are more aware of witchcraft laws tend to have slightly more favorable perceptions of the legal system's handling of black magic. However, the effect is not as strong as cultural or religious factors. This could indicate that while awareness of laws is important, it is not the primary driver of legal perceptions. Efforts to educate the public about witchcraft laws may need to be complemented with cultural and religious considerations to have a stronger impact.

OLS Regression Results						
=====						
Dep. Variable:	Legal_Perception	R-squared:	0.310			
Model:	OLS	Adj. R-squared:	0.295			
Method:	Least Squares	F-statistic:	21.37			
Date:	Tue, 25 Feb 2025	Prob (F-statistic):	1.71e-11			
Time:	08:17:20	Log-likelihood:	-101.51			
No. Observations:	147	AIC:	211.0			
Df Residuals:	143	BIC:	223.0			
Df Model:	3					
Covariance Type:	nonrobust					
=====						
	coef	std err	t	P> t	[0.025	0.975]
-----						
const	-5.898e-17	0.040	-1.46e-15	1.000	-0.080	0.080
Cultural_Influence	0.2585	0.075	3.434	0.001	0.110	0.407
Religious_Belief	0.2373	0.058	4.090	0.000	0.123	0.352
Knowledge_Awareness	0.1097	0.056	1.947	0.053	-0.002	0.221
=====						
Omnibus:	4.059	Durbin-Watson:	2.107			
Prob(Omnibus):	0.131	Jarque-Bera (JB):	3.264			
Skew:	-0.251	Prob(JB):	0.196			
Kurtosis:	2.471	Cond. No.	2.11			

$$\text{Legal\_Perception} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Cultural\_Influence} + \beta_2\text{Religious\_Belief} + \beta_3\text{Knowledge\_Awareness} + \epsilon$$

The overall model is statistically significant (F-statistic = 21.37,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming that the independent variables collectively contribute to explaining variations in legal perceptions. These findings highlight the importance of cultural and religious factors in shaping public attitudes toward the legal treatment of black magic in Malaysia.

### Part D: Potential Legal Reforms In The Malaysian Legal System To Address Contemporary Issues Related To Black Magic

Descriptive statistics

Measure	Malaysian legal system should undergo reform to better address contemporary issues related to witchcraft and black magic.
1	3%

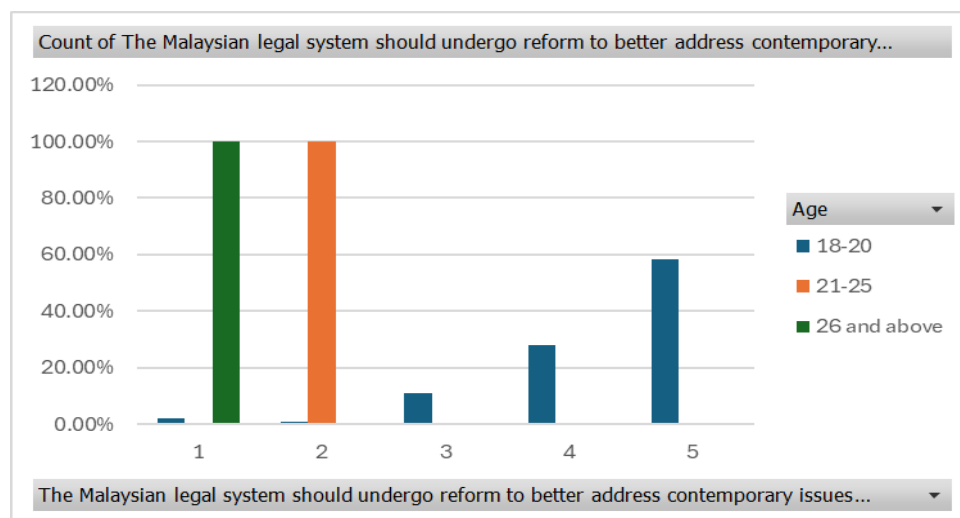
2	1%
3	11%
4	27%
5	57%
Total	100%

The descriptive statistics reveal strong support among public university students for legal reforms in the Malaysian legal system to address contemporary issues related to witchcraft and black magic. A significant majority (57%) strongly agree (rating of 5) that reforms are necessary, while 27% somewhat agree (rating of 4). Combined, 84% of respondents express a clear inclination toward the need for change. Only a small minority, 3% and 1%, strongly or somewhat disagree (ratings of 1 and 2, respectively), with 11% remaining neutral (rating of 3). This overwhelming consensus highlights a recognition among students that the current legal framework may be inadequate in addressing the complexities of witchcraft and black magic, particularly in light of cultural, religious, and social dimensions. The findings suggest a demand for legal reforms that are more responsive to contemporary challenges while respecting Malaysia's unique cultural and religious context.

### Comparative analysis based on demographic

#### Age distribution

Measure	18-20	21-25	26 and above
1	2.08%	0.00%	100.00%
2	0.69%	100.00%	0.00%
3	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%
4	27.78%	0.00%	0.00%
5	58.33%	0.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

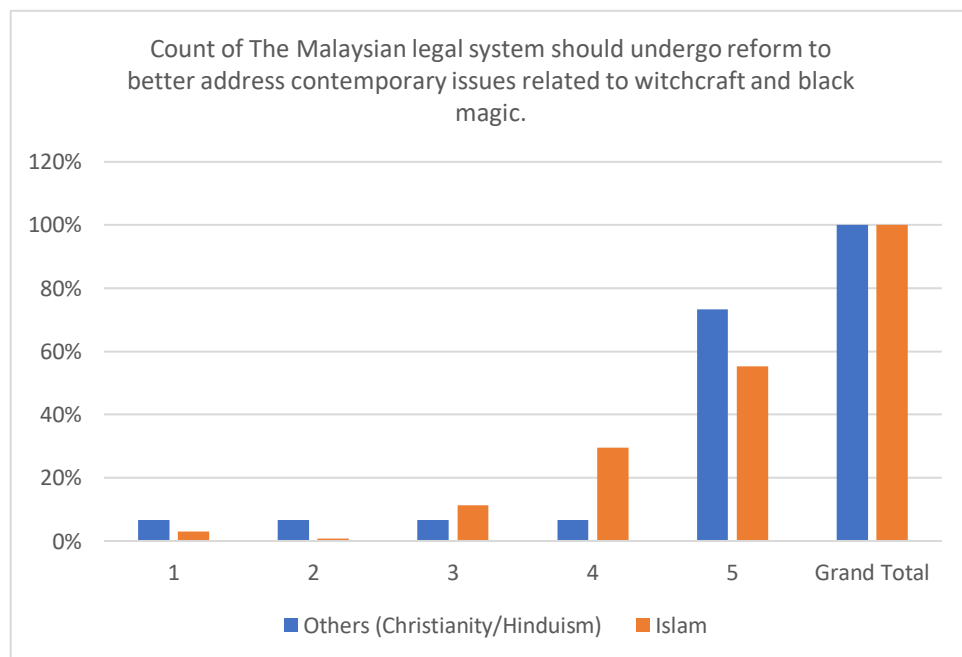


The comparative analysis based on age distribution reveals distinct patterns in the perceptions of public university students regarding the need for legal reforms to address contemporary issues related to black magic. Among students aged 18-20, a significant majority (58.33%) strongly agree (rating of 5) that reforms are

necessary, with 27.78% somewhat agreeing (rating of 4). This age group shows the highest support for reform, with only a small percentage expressing disagreement or neutrality. In contrast, students aged 21-25 and 26 and above show no support for ratings 3, 4, or 5, with the former group entirely represented by a 100% rating of 2 (somewhat disagree) and the latter by a 100% rating of 1 (strongly disagree). This stark contrast suggests that younger students (18-20) are more inclined toward legal reforms, possibly due to greater exposure to contemporary issues or a more progressive outlook. The findings highlight the importance of considering generational perspectives when designing legal reforms, as younger students appear to be more vocal about the need for change in addressing black magic-related challenges.

### Religion distribution

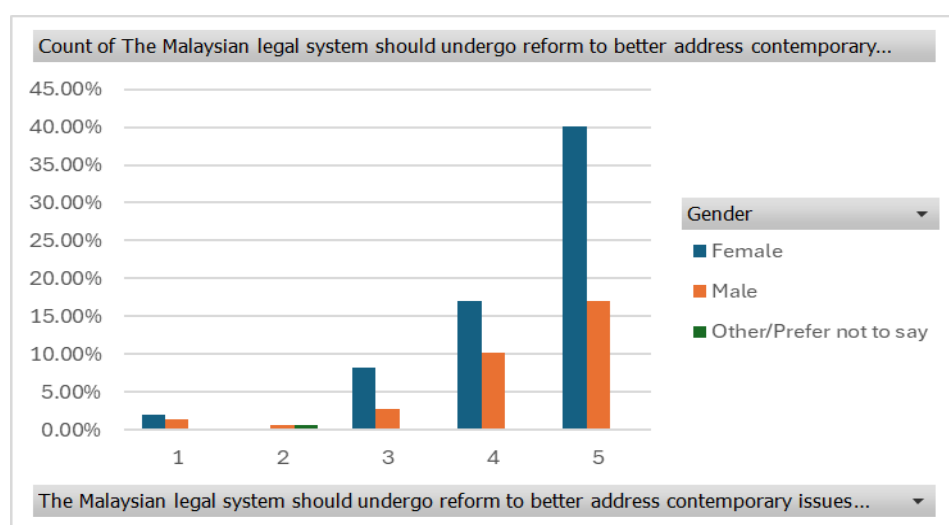
Measure	Others (Christianity/Hinduism)	Islam
1	7%	3%
2	7%	1%
3	7%	11%
4	7%	30%
5	73%	55%
Grand Total	100%	100%



The religion distribution analysis reveals differing perspectives among public university students regarding the need for legal reforms to address contemporary issues related to black magic. A significant majority of students from other religions (Christianity/Hinduism) strongly agree (73% rating of 5) that reforms are necessary, with only 7% expressing disagreement (ratings of 1 and 2). Among Muslim students, 55% strongly agree (rating of 5), and 30% somewhat agree (rating of 4), indicating substantial but comparatively lower support for reform. A small percentage of Muslim students (3% and 1%) strongly or somewhat disagree (ratings of 1 and 2), while 11% remain neutral (rating of 3). This suggests that while support for legal reforms is strong across both religious groups, students from other religions exhibit higher enthusiasm for change compared to their Muslim counterparts. The findings underscore the importance of considering religious diversity when designing legal reforms, ensuring that policies are inclusive and sensitive to the varying perspectives within Malaysia's multi-religious society.

## Gender distribution

Measure	Female	Male	Other/Prefer not to say
1	3.03%	4.26%	0.00%
2	0.00%	2.13%	100.00%
3	12.12%	8.51%	0.00%
4	25.25%	31.91%	0.00%
5	59.60%	53.19%	0.00%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%



The gender distribution analysis highlights varying perspectives among public university students on the need for legal reforms to address contemporary issues related to black magic. A majority of female students (59.60%) strongly agree (rating of 5) that reforms are necessary, with 25.25% somewhat agreeing (rating of 4). Male students also show strong support, with 53.19% strongly agreeing and 31.91% somewhat agreeing. However, a small percentage of male students (4.26%) strongly disagree (rating of 1), and 2.13% somewhat disagree (rating of 2). The "Other/Prefer not to say" category shows 100% somewhat disagree (rating of 2), but the sample size for this group is notably smaller. Overall, the data indicates that female and male students predominantly support legal reforms, with females showing slightly stronger agreement. This suggests a consensus across genders on the importance of updating the legal system to address black magic-related issues better, though attention should be given to minority perspectives to ensure inclusivity in reform efforts.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the evolving landscape of witchcraft laws in Malaysia, emphasizing their deep-rooted connection to cultural beliefs, religious principles, and colonial legal influences. The legal treatment of black magic has been shaped by historical shifts, from pre-colonial community-driven sanctions to the introduction of British common law, and later, the incorporation of Islamic legal principles. Despite the modernization of Malaysia's legal framework, black magic remains a deeply ingrained cultural phenomenon, often linked to social anxieties, interpersonal conflicts, and religious interpretations.

Findings from this study reveal that while black magic continues to hold significant cultural relevance, awareness of Malaysia's legal stance on witchcraft remains relatively low among university students. Many respondents lack formal education on the legal implications of witchcraft accusations, highlighting a gap between cultural familiarity and legal literacy. Furthermore, the study underscores the strong influence of religious and traditional

beliefs in shaping public perceptions of witchcraft-related offences. Respondents who held strong religious convictions or cultural ties to black magic were more likely to view it as a serious offence warranting legal intervention.

Additionally, the study reveals widespread support for legal reforms, with most respondents advocating for clearer legal guidelines to address contemporary challenges associated with witchcraft accusations. The ambiguous nature of current legal frameworks often results in inconsistencies in court rulings, leading to concerns about justice and due process. The gendered dimension of witchcraft accusations further raises important questions about the protection of marginalised groups, particularly women, who are disproportionately accused of engaging in supernatural practices. In many cases, witchcraft allegations have been weaponised as a means of social control, reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes and exacerbating vulnerabilities among rural and disadvantaged communities.

Overall, this research highlights the pressing need for a more comprehensive and culturally sensitive legal framework that balances religious, traditional, and secular perspectives. The study calls for increased legal awareness and education to bridge the gap between public perception and formal legal processes, ensuring that individuals accused of witchcraft are granted fair legal protections and that Malaysia's legal system evolves to meet contemporary social realities.

### Future Research

A comparative study of witchcraft laws in different countries, such as Indonesia, India, and Saudi Arabia, could offer valuable insights into best practices for handling witchcraft accusations. By examining how these nations approach legal proceedings, cultural beliefs, and human rights considerations, Malaysia could refine its legal framework to ensure fairness and protection for those accused of witchcraft. Understanding the similarities and differences between legal systems may help policymakers develop more balanced and effective strategies to address contemporary black magic concerns.

Next, the role of social media in modern witchcraft accusations warrants further investigation. The rise of digital platforms has significantly influenced public perception of witchcraft, particularly with the increasing prevalence of online exorcisms and spiritual services. The widespread circulation of misinformation or fear-based narratives on social media can fuel moral panic and lead to wrongful accusations, highlighting the need for regulatory intervention. Future research should explore the extent of social media's impact on witchcraft-related claims and assess potential measures to mitigate the harm caused by misleading content.

Additionally, Another critical area for future study is the gendered aspect of witchcraft allegations. Women are disproportionately targeted in black magic accusations, often due to deep-seated cultural biases and traditional gender roles. Examining the sociocultural factors behind these accusations, historical patterns, and contemporary trends could help policymakers address gender discrimination within legal proceedings. By identifying systemic biases, legal reforms can be introduced to protect vulnerable individuals from unjust persecution.

Finally, research on legal literacy and public awareness of witchcraft laws is essential in addressing knowledge gaps among Malaysians. Many individuals are unaware of the legal framework governing witchcraft-related offences, which may contribute to misconceptions and improper legal actions. Future studies should assess the effectiveness of educational initiatives to increase public understanding of these laws. Implementing targeted legal education campaigns in universities and local communities could bridge this gap, fostering a more informed society and ensuring that legal processes are carried out accurately and fairly. SEARCH

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