

Basic Principles of Shariah: UiTM Law Foundation Student's Attitude & Perceptions

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Abstract

Islam implies the complete submission and implementation of the commandments of Allah (swt). For that reason, Islamic law or shariah is essential for the maintenance of civilised life of Muslim community irrespective of race, nationality, creed and colour. Not only that, shariah law which comprises of several branches i.e. morals, worship, beliefs, contracts and punishments is governed to develop a society in which equity and justice are secured for every individual. In order to spread the ideals and values of Islamic jurisprudence, education should be a process that is infused with meaning and purpose in which later every individual will gain deeply held beliefs. On that note, the fundamental aim and objective of Basic Principles of Shariah embedded in the syllabus at UiTM is to establish and promote Muslim individuals who take interests in religious commands and prohibitions. In fact, the course is offered in the second semester of the programme and delivered according to specific objectives in an age-appropriate manner. This is crucial in providing Muslim graduates with a holistic view of their faith and its practice. This study employed questionnaire in order to collect data from 230 Muslim students enrolled in the course of Basic Principles of *Shariah*. All these students were majoring in the Foundation Programme of Law at UiTM Pahang Kuantan Campus for the years of 2012 and 2013. The results found were mean value between 3.69 to 4.79 and mean value between 2.43 to 4.50 for each research objective and this suggested that the Basic Principles of Shariah has successfully expanded students' knowledge about Islam and further encouraged the students' implementation of religious values in life. The results obtained also proposed that the respondents agreed with the relevancy and flexibility of shariah in the light of changing social and cultural circumstances yet remaining faithful to the key tenets and central objectives underpinning shariah.

Keywords: Basic Principles of *Shariah*, UiTM Law Foundation, Attitude & Perceptions

Introduction

Islam attaches great importance to knowledge and considers it the basis of human development and the key to growth of culture and civilisation. '*Shariah Islamiah*' or in English usage, '*sharia*' indicates the moral code and religious law of a prophetic religion. In this context, shariah is all-embracing where it embodies acts of devotion (*ibadah*), commercial transactions (*mu'amalah*), political system (*siasah*), marriage or family laws (*munakahat*) as well as the concepts of offences, crimes and punishments (*jinayat*). It is, therefore, vital for every Muslim to have a clear understanding of the basic components of Islam and

this will make one ready to accept with complete responsibility the teaching of Islam. According to Zahiruddin (2012), *shariah* is the divine revelation which is exclusive for the guidance of mankind sent through Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). *Shariah* demands for '*amal* or good deeds which may come in many forms. Some of them are acts of devotion whereby a true Muslim is required to perform such as prayer (*solat*), fasting (*sawm*), alms giving (*zakat*), as well as pilgrimage (*hajj*). Meanwhile, other good deeds may denote to some actions which are not mandatory but are performed for the pleasure of Allah (swt) like *tasbeeh* and *tahleel* (chanting of the greatness of Allah), reciting the *Quran*, doing good to the relatives,

neighbours, orphans and poor.

Islamic Studies is an important field of study in order to develop comprehensive knowledge of the religion in terms of faith, worship, ethics, Islamic upbringing and religious rulings that one must have in his individual and social life. Therefore, courses such as *Shariah Islamiah*, Quranic Studies and Islamic Ethics should be given greater emphasis in the structure of elementary to tertiary education system. Thus, the present study aimed to investigate the extent to which the students of UiTM comprehend Islamic norms and values as embedded in the syllabi of Basic Principles of *Shariah*. It was also an attempt to discover challenges encountered by the students to nurture such values in their daily life. In addition, the implications and contributions of the course particularly on the students' behaviour were also analyzed. This is important so that a comprehensive evaluation of various aspects in the course can be achieved. In the end, it is not only the intellectual structure of the students is built, yet their religious awareness specifically on shariah is strongly enhanced.

Shariah (Islamic Law) And Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence)

Shariah is an Arabic term which denotes Islamic law or the Law of Allah (swt). In fact, it encompasses many aspects of life including legal issues, religion, state governance and personal ethics to name a few (Mohd. Asri, et al., 2009). Generally, *shariah* is an exclusive law which regulates belief based on *Quran* and *Sunnah* (customary behaviour of the Prophet pbuh). Given that *shariah* is not the work of human beings and considered to be of divine, it is immutable i.e. it does not change with time. In other words, Islamic law is not to be changed or replaced. In addition, Mohd Kamal (2008), emphasizes that shariah involves all religious legal matters that govern the behaviour of Muslim individual towards himself, family, neighbours, community and the Muslim society (*ummah*) as a whole. All these are executed accordingly based on the sub-divisions of *shariah* namely *ibadat* (rituals), *munakahat* (marriage or family laws), *muamalat* (commercial transactions) and *jinayat* (crimes and punishments). This further shows that *shariah* in a wider scope to be manifested in three categories:

- i. Relationship between man and Allah (swt) and unseen
- ii. Relationship between man and man
- iii. Relationship between man and other creations

However, the category stated above cannot be implemented by itself. Hence, Islamic law also deals primarily with *maqasid shariah* which specifically

means the goals and purposes of shariah. Indeed, most Muslim scholars are of the opinion that the Islamic law purposes include five main areas:

- i. Protection of Life
- ii. Protection of al-Din (Islam)
- iii. Protection of Progeny or Offspring
- iv. Protection of Intellect or Faculty of Reason
- v. Protection of Material Wealth or Resources

The *maqasid shariah* has been further classified by the Muslim scholars into three major categories which are based on the descending order of importance i.e. *dharuriyyat* (the essential), *hajiyyat* (the complementary) as well as *tahsiniyyat* (the desirable or the embellishments) (Wan Mohd Nasir, 2011). Syed Mohd Ghazali Wafa et al., (2009) assert that the establishment of *dharuriyyat* is considered to protect and promote individual's survival and spiritual well-being which are very essential. On the other hand, the second category i.e. *hajiyyat* is related to measures taken into account to minimize hardship and severity (such as shortening the prayer and forgoing the fast by the traveller) (Maliki & Zuraidah, 2009). In other words, concessions are granted to lessen inability when performing obligatory action (*ibadah*) (Ab.Latif, 2003). The third category of *maqasid shariah* which is *tahsiniyyat* refers to attempts of attaining refinement and perfection in individual's conduct and customs. Thus, it is apparent that all these prescribed *shariah* purposes are vital to ensure justice, balance and harmony in the entire human operation, moral and religious perfection, fair realization of one's responsibility and human welfare (Siti Zalikhha et al., 2001). At the beginning of the rise of Islam, the terms *shariah* and *fiqh* brought no distinctions and perceived to be synonymous. Many Muslims during that time used the terms interchangeably which were referring to belief, legal regulations, code of conduct, religious practices, way of life and so forth. They were not really aware of the confusions between *shariah* and *fiqh* until the conditions changed due to new and emerging situations. Across history and during certain events, the terms underwent changes and amendments several times in the Islamic thinking (Ab. Latif, 2003). In present times, the definitions of both terminologies are distinct. *Shariah* is connected to the idea of system of divine law that refers to the principles that lie behind the *fiqh* (Ruzian, 2003 & Siti Zalikhah et al., 2001). In contrast, Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) denotes knowledge of Islamic legal rulings that have been derived from their reliable sources which are significant for the jurists (*mujtahid*) to have clear understanding of various discussions of jurisprudence (Mohd. Saleh, 1999). In another report, Wahbah al-Zuhayli (1994) stresses that the Shafi'i school which relies

predominantly on the *Quran* and *Hadith* defines *fiqh* as a foundational law regarding one's action supported by valid specific evidences. Not only that, *fiqh* is also associated with a man's deeds which fall into five categories i.e. permitted (*mubah*), recommended (*mustahab*), disapproved but not unlawful (*makruh*), forbidden (*muharam*) as well as obligatory (*wajib*). Hence, based on the comprehensive nature of *shariah* and *fiqh*, the distinctions between the two is of paramount importance in Islamic legal thought and needs in-depth clarifications to comprehend (Ruzian, 2003). There are several scopes of Islamic law (*fiqh*) which include *ibadat* (religious observance) and *muamalat* (dealing with others). These scopes most of the times involve the process of adjudication (*ijtihad*) in order to assist the jurists to deduce the rules from the sources. Some actions that require *ijtihad* are financial transactions, endowments, laws of inheritance, penal punishments, warfare and peace and so forth. However, in other situations, *ijtihad* is not necessary as the rules are clear to discover and apply such as the actions of ritual purification, prayers, fasts, charities and pilgrimage to Mecca. With this observance, *muamalat* can be categorized into seven major divisions (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1994):

- a) Family Law
- b) Civil Law
- c) Criminal Law
- d) Criminal and Civil Law
- e) Constitutional Law
- f) International Law
- g) Financial and Economic Law

It is a matter of fact when Muslim community agree that they are bound by *shariah*; yet some concepts related to these Islamic legal system and Islamic jurisprudence still require deep interpretations by the experts. Clarifications of main religious concepts such as *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), *taqlid* (adherence to a *madhab* of an *Imam*), *talfiq* (combination), *qawa'id fiqhiyyah* (legal maxims) are among the scopes where the role of *mujtahids* (jurists) is necessary. This is significant so that differing views and their implications could be lessened. According to Kamus Dewan (2005), *ijtihad* is defined as the original and independent interpretation of an issue or issues not precisely covered in the *Quran* and *Hadith*. However, only qualified and competent *mujtahids* (jurists) have the right to exercise in interpreting *sharia* by the means of *ijtihad*. The death of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has marked that the revelations from Allah (swt) would not resume and thus, the practice of *ijtihad* arose in his absence. This practice continued during the era of *Khulafa Rashidun* (the first four Caliphs after Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as they were considered proficient

in jurisprudence and legislation in issuing *fatwas* (legal pronouncement in Islam) after his death. In this matter, *ijtihad* is not necessary for the matters that have been dealt with in the *Quran* and *Sunnah*. Such practice is only meant to determine applicable laws or formulate new ones when the issues are undetermined by the first two major sources. Indeed, the laws drawn should be in the light of fundamental principles of Islamic jurisprudence and legislation (Othman, 1981). On another hand, according to the Arabic lexicon, the word *taqlid* is derived from the root word '*qalada*' which means a necklace fastened around a neck. *Taqlid* refers to an action of following someone's words, ideas and viewpoints without any solid proof (Ensiklopedia Islam, 1994). Someone here signifies a *mujtahid* or an Islamic scholar who is competent in defining and interpreting *shariah*. In fact, some of the highly respected scholars of *fiqh* such as Imam As-Syaukani, Imam As-San'ani, Imam Al-Ghazali and others have defined *taqlid* as "following the legal opinion of a scholar without gaining knowledge of the detailed evidences for those opinions". This is further supported by Syeikh Muhammad Rasyid Rida where *taqlid* is perceived as belief in everything someone brought i.e. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) without having to exercise one's ability of deduction. Next concept which is *talfiq*, literally means to combine, to join, to integrate, to blend or to collect. In other words, it refers to the combination of two or more opinions of various *madhabs* (schools of thought) in a single act of worship. Apparently, a different opinion will be derived that has never been discussed by earlier Islamic jurists (Maszlee, 2005). Furthermore, it is considered as an exercise to figure out the most pragmatic view when a part of a doctrine of a school is integrated with a part from another of school of thought. In contrast, *qawai'id fiqhiyyah* is regarded as a general rule which can be applied to all of its related particulars. It has established a distinct role in the development of Islamic legal thought as a whole. In other words, it reflects settled principles of law to which the *mujtahids* (jurists) would consider to when dealing with new legal issues. It acts as a tool in which jurists will use when exercising *ijtihad* i.e. Muslim scholars are to extract religious law or rulings from their sources. Rasid et al. (2008) have listed five normative maxims of *qawai'id fiqhiyyah* as follow:

- a) *Al-Umur bimaqasidiha* – acts are judged by the intention behind them.
- b) *Al-Yaqin la yuzalu bis-syakki* – certainty is not overruled by doubt.
- c) *Al-Musyaqqah Tajlibut-Taisir* – hardship begets facility.
- d) *Al-Dhararu Yuzalu* – harm must be eliminated.
- e) *Al-Adah Muhakkamah* – custom is the basis of judgement.

In Islam, it is the central idea that the sources of law comprise of primary and secondary in which the former consists of *Quran* and *Sunnah*. Meanwhile, the later encompasses independent reasoning, equity, analogy as well as consensus. All these are very important in the formation and incorporation of Islamic law and jurisprudence (Ruzian, 2003). Apparently, this element can be related to a competent jurist who needs to master the content of *Usul Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *Maqasid al-Shariah* (objectives of Islamic law) and *Qawai'id Fiqhiyyah* (Islamic legal maxims) in order to be qualified to be a *mujtahid* to perform *ijtihad*. It is therefore, *qawai'id fiqhiyyah* is perceived as a means to foster creativity, to develop foundation to achieve specific goals and objectives, to nurture individual Muslims with firm principles as well as to assist an individual to act in the face of changes, challenges and new problems (Rasid et al., 2008). In relation to the abovementioned concepts, Rasid (2010) highlights that Islam is in fact a comprehensive system of life which embodies three basic important relationships that must be secured very well i.e. relationships between Allah (swt) and human being, human being and human being and also between human being and other creations. Yet, a Muslim's relationship with his Creator is the core to be protected and nourished. It is of great importance to be aware that with a balanced development of this sphere of relationships, solid and firm belief will be manifested in individual Muslim's *aqidah* (creed), *akhlaq* (good conduct) as well as *ibadah* (worship). If, however, these relationships are not fully defined, then there will be no possibility and mechanism by which the satisfaction of worshipping Allah (swt) could be fulfilled (Othman, 2007). Hence, reflecting on this issue yields deep understanding that Islam and its education provide realistic, fair and objective solutions to the individual, family, community and international problems which are in accordance to *shariah* and *fiqh*.

Shariah And Its Significance

The knowledge of *shariah* is essential at every stage of man's existence. Apart from fulfilling the existing needs, such knowledge is significant in order to construct and reconstruct the social order in accordance with the tenets of Islam. It may here be pointed out that for some issues not directly addressed in the *Quran* (words of Allah swt) nor *Hadith* (deeds and sayings of Prophet Muhammad pbuh), the application of *shariah* will be considered. It is clear from its extension through consensus of the religious scholars' (*'ulama*) thoughts to embody the consensus of the Muslim Community (*ijma'*). Another method to solve or provide a response to a new issue that may arise is through deductive analogy (*qiyas*). Here, the teachings of *Hadith* are

compared and contrasted with the *Quran* in order to apply a known injunction (*nass*) to a new circumstance and later create a new injunction. However, the new injunction must be in compliance with general Islamic principles and methodologies of *shariah*. This is to ensure that the law designed will protect the benefits and facilitate improvement and perfection of the conditions of human life on earth. This is better known as *maqasid al-shariah* (the objectives of Islamic law) which is to protect religion, life, lineage (*nasab*), intellect as well property.

The Islamic concept produces steadfastness in the heart and mind of a believer. Thus, this religion has laid down universal system covering every sphere of human life. Fundamentally, social order of Islam rests on three basic principles i.e. man's relationship and connection with Allah (swt), with fellow human beings and with other living creatures (Rasid, 2010). However, the practical success of these principles depends on the three basic axes of Islamic cores which are faith (*tawhid*), worship (*'ibadah*) and morality (*akhlaq*). Mohd Asri et al. (2006 & 2009) further affirm that these basic principles and cores will balance and maintain one's moral and spiritual values while continuing to strive on the path which leads to Allah's pleasure. In fact, *shariah* encompasses much more than the conventional understanding of law. It is a practical guide of moral, social and political codes of conduct for believers to adhere to and live by. Undoubtedly, *shariah* is also known with other terminologies such as *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *nass* (injunction) as well as *masadir al-shariah* (the sources of *shariah* law). However, whichever term used, major debate of *shariah* usually revolves around the *maqasid al-shariah* or the objectives of Islamic law which is basically to establish justice between Muslims and the rest of humanity (Mohd Asri et al., 2009).

Significance of CTU086 to UiTM Students of Law Foundation

This course exposes the students to the concept of *shariah*, its differences with *fiqh* and also with human-made laws. Besides that, the emphasis is given to issues related to *fiqh* in *ibadah* (worship) such as cleanliness (*taharah*), ablution (*wudhu'*), prayers (*solah*) and fasting. Not only that, Islamic professional ethics in nutrition, clothing and relationship are also discussed in-depth throughout the course (CITU, 2010). The course involves two credit and contact hours respectively and it is a core subject that is made mandatory for semester two students of Law foundation programme to register. The syllabus contents involve ten major subtopics as follow:

- i. Concept of *Shariah*

- ii. *Shariah* and *Fiqh*
- iii. *Shariah* and Law
- iv. Issues of *Fiqh* in *Taharah* (cleanliness)
- v. Issues of *Fiqh* in *Salah* (prayers)
- vi. Issues of *Fiqh* in *Sawm* (fasting)
- vii. Manners & Professional Ethics in Islam (Nutrition)
- viii. Manners & Professional Ethics in Islam (Clothing & Jewelry)
- ix. Manners & Professional Ethics in Islam (Relationship)

Based on the course syllabus of CTU086, it is found that the listed subtopics provide basic information to students about the differences of Islamic law (*shariah* and *fiqh*) with human-made laws. Apart from that, issues pertaining to *fiqh* and fundamentals of Islam beginning with cleanliness, *solah*, fasting as well as other related matters which are practiced in daily life are also embedded in the course. Similarly, ethics in nutrition, clothing and relationship that have become human's routine and thus require us to practice certain morals which are in line with the requirements of Islamic teachings are given emphasis for students to learn. Hence, CTU086 course is indeed beneficial as it prepares the students with a strong foundation of Islamic principles as a whole and also in accordance with their major i.e. Law foundation programme at UiTM.

Methodology

This study employed questionnaire in order to collect data from 230 Muslim students enrolled in the course of Basic Principles of *Shariah*. All these students were majoring in the Foundation Programme of Law at UiTM Pahang Kuantan Campus for the years of 2012 and 2013. The questionnaire consisted of three sections i.e. A, B and C. Section A was designed to deal with demographic profile of respondents involving four items; Gender (A1), Race (A2), Academic Qualification (A3) and Year of Study (A4). In addition, Section B specifically items B1 until B15 attempted to obtain specific information pertaining students' fundamental comprehension on the course of Basic Principles of *Shariah*. Meanwhile, Section C was directed to collect the data related to the challenges encountered by the students in nurturing Islamic norms and values as learnt in the course of Basic Principles of *Shariah*. It involved fifteen items (C1-C15) and to meet the purpose, Likert scale was used which indicating five points; 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree. Today, the use of specific computer software to analyze research data is gaining popularity and undeniably an effective alternative in data analysis. Sulaiman (2009) and Ary et

al. (2010) point out that Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is the most frequently and widely used software in the field of education when analyzing the descriptive data. Therefore, the researchers utilized SPSS software version 20 in order to analyze the data collected. In addition, descriptive statistics are used to describe the statistical characteristics of the variable / variables using indicators such as mean, median, mode, standard deviation, normal distribution and Z scores.

Data analysis and results

Students' Fundamental Comprehension on the Course of Basic Principles of Shariah

The items described in this section involved various statements about the importance of *aqeedah* (faith) and *shariah* in individual Muslim's life specifically of those students taking this course. Apart from *akhlaq* (moral), both of these elements are very significant as they are considered as the pillars of Islam. In addition, items on religious concepts and basic knowledge of the Islamic *shariah* as well as its differences with the civil law were also necessary for the respondents to attempt.

Items of Questionnaire (Part B)

1. *Aqeedah* (Islamic theology) and *shariah* are an important foundation in Islam.
2. It is important for students to learn about *aqeedah* and *shariah*.
3. Learning about the religion of Islam without understanding the *aqeedah* and *sharia* can be misleading.
4. *Aqeedah* and *sharia* are among vital elements in the course of Basic Principles of *Shariah*.
5. You have acquired in-depth understanding relating to *aqeedah* and *shariah* after attending the course.
6. You have been acquiring basic elements of *ibadah* (worship) since primary and secondary schools.
7. Understanding the knowledge of *ibadah* (worship) will make you a better Muslim.
8. Ignoring the knowledge of *ibadah* (worship) will lead a Muslim to become *Kafir* (infidel).
9. Understanding the concept of *ibadah* (worship) is very significant in one's daily life.
10. Learning about Islam or *shariah* is part of *ibadah* (worship) to Allah swt.
11. The contents of Basic Principles of *Shariah* are easy to understand and fun.
12. *Shariah* encompasses man's relationship with Allah (swt), with fellow human beings and with other living creatures.
13. Learning *shariah* is equivalent to learning Islamic

rules from *Quran* and *Hadith* (deeds and sayings of Prophet Muhammad pbuh).

14. The basis of *Shariah Islamiyyah* is similar to civil law governed by humans.
15. Understanding the concept of *Shariah Islamiyyah* is very significant in one's daily life.

Table 1: Mean and Percentage of Course Comprehension among Respondents (Items B1 to B15)

Items	Mean	Percentage (%)				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
B01	4.77	-	-	1.4	20.0	78.6
B02	4.79	-	-	0.7	19.3	80.0
B03	4.42	3.6	0.7	5.7	30.0	60.0
B04	4.61	-	0.7	2.1	32.1	37.1
B05	4.28	-	0.7	7.9	54.3	37.1
B06	4.13	-	3.6	13.6	49.3	33.6
B07	4.49	-	0.7	4.3	40.0	55.0
B08	4.31	1.4	2.1	12.1	32.1	52.1
B09	4.56	-	-	2.9	38.6	58.6
B10	4.71	-	0.7	2.1	22.9	74.3
B11	4.40	-	2.1	5.0	43.6	49.3
B12	4.55	-	-	4.3	36.4	59.3
B13	4.44	-	0.7	8.6	36.4	54.3
B14	3.69	5.0	11.4	23.6	29.3	30.7
B15	4.56	-	0.7	4.3	32.9	62.1

Challenges in Nurturing Islamic Norms and Values

Items in this section were more focused on course instructors, course and syllabus design, classroom facilities and students' implementation of religious values in life. It is important to note all this so that the parties who are either directly or indirectly involved in teaching and learning such religious course would be able to improve the quality of human capital which in turn is useful for the whole society. Besides, improvements in syllabi and classroom facilities can provide positive learning environment for course instructors and students. Consequently, knowledge-transmission process will become more effective.

Items of Questionnaire (Part C)

1. 14 weeks are not sufficient to discuss thoroughly the contents of the course.
2. The course contents are simple yet insightful.
3. It is important for students asking questions to lecturers in order to comprehend the contents.
4. It is necessary for the lecturers to explain the contents thoroughly particularly for some complicated chapters.
5. The course contents do not reflect the basic principles of *shariah*.
6. The implementation of the course is unstructured and disorganised.
7. The course contents are relevant for 14-week

lectures.

8. The lecturers are very knowledgeable about *shariah*.
9. Ignorance of *shariah* will produce students of low quality.
10. Detailed explanations from the lecturers are more important than merely reading the notes.
11. Entertainment is destructive and may distract the students from achieving the purpose of life.
12. Entertainment is not recommended and may lead to difficulties for students to comprehend the course contents.
13. Physiological factors such as boredom, sleepiness and short attention span will hinder students' understanding of the course contents.
14. Classroom facilities are not enough to support learning process particularly for the course of Basic Principles of *Shariah*.
15. Some students do not pay attention when learning the course and this situation affects the focus of other students.

Table 2: Mean and Percentage of Challenges in Nurturing Islamic Norms and Values among Respondents (Items C1 to C15)

Items	Mean	Percentage (%)				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
C01	3.36	-	-	3.6	28.6	67.9
C02	4.19	-	-	2.1	35.7	62.1
C03	4.29	-	-	2.1	36.4	61.4
C04	3.30	-	-	0.7	26.4	72.9
C05	2.43	-	-	2.1	28.6	69.3
C06	2.50	-	-	10.0	33.6	56.4
C07	3.88	2.1	-	11.4	32.1	54.3
C08	4.24	-	-	5.7	24.3	70.0
C09	4.10	-	0.7	0.7	25.7	72.9
C10	4.50	4.3	12.1	35.0	25.0	23.6
C11	4.09	0.7	0.7	5.0	25.7	67.9
C12	3.98	5.0	7.1	28.6	22.9	36.4
C13	3.90	-	5.0	0.7	42.9	41.4
C14	3.36	-	-	2.9	29.3	67.9
C15	4.91	-	0.7	2.1	30.7	66.4

Discussions

Table 1 below shows the mean and percentage of 15 items related to the understanding of Law students on the course of *shariah*. The mean value was between 3.69 and 4.79 and this suggested that the respondents' comprehension towards the subject was positive. From the rest of 230 students involved, more than 90% believed that the course of *shariah* must be acquired as it is an important foundation in Islam. On the other hand, 97.2% perceived that the course contents were seen as forms and types of devotion to Allah (swt) and similarly 97.2% agreed that to understand Islam and *ibadah* was vital to them. Likewise, 95% thought that deep understanding was extremely significant about the concepts of *Shariah Islamiyyah* for them to apply in

daily life. See Table 1. In summary, majority of the respondents generally agreed that *aqeedah* (Islamic theology) and *shariah* are among important fields of study in the course of Basic Principles of *Shariah*. It is thus, necessary to be given greater emphasis in a believer's daily life. This is based on the percentage of respondents who responded "Not Sure" in the questionnaire was rather low i.e. between 0.7% and 23.6%. Indeed, the respondents agreed that learning and understanding *shariah* would open avenues for them to execute *ibadah* such as reciting *Quran*, praying, fasting and so forth more properly and frequently. They were also aware that *shariah* sets forth principles which deal with moral, ethical, social and political codes of conduct for Muslims at an individual and collective level. This further highlighted that misconceptions about *shariah* could be avoided if they were exposed to the contents and be guided by the instructor as revealed in the Findings. Hence, the respondents perceived that the very objective to establish a closer relationship with Allah (swt) and one another as embedded in course contents could be attained through the implementation of the Basic Principles of *Shariah*.

Table 2 provides a summary of mean and percentage values of 15 items related to challenges encountered by the respondents in exercising Islamic norms and values as learnt in the course of Basic Principles of *Shariah*. The mean value obtained was between 2.43 and 4.50. As shown, the results indicated that 99% agreed that for some challenging chapters, it was necessary for the instructor to elaborate them well. However, more than 95% opined that fourteen weeks of lecture were not adequate for them to master the contents and so the classroom facilities were limited such as the absence of LCD projectors. Similarly, 97% found that their classmates who were not paying attention during lesson were another significant challenge that affected their focus. See Table 2. In summary, it was found that majority of the respondents agreed that there were challenges in the process of nurturing Islamic norms and values in their daily life be it at home or campus. This is true when 0.7% to 35% responded "Not Sure" in the questionnaire. At the same time, it indicated that the items in Section C of the questionnaire were easy to understand by the respondents. Among the challenges encountered by the respondents including lack of focus in the classroom, emotional well-being as well as insufficient number of classroom facilities. Besides, other external factors such as entertainment that brings no benefits have also distracted the process of nurturing Islamic norms among the respondents.

Conclusions

In general, students' comprehension towards the course

of Basic Principles of *Shariah* was positive. The role of the course specifically on building Islamic influence and characters could be understood very well by the students. Evidently, they believed that failure to acquire and adopt the Islamic and *Shariah* concepts in daily life would result in progressive decline of their *aqeedah* (faith). The students understood that *shariah* and its related branches not only act as safeguards but also are complimentary to one's moral and spiritual evolution.

To conclude, the findings obtained in this research offer a number of important pedagogical and policy considerations. Though this is not an evaluative study but it provides a glimpse into certain aspects i.e. syllabus design, instructional materials, writing of prescribed books on the course, testing, facilities and equipment as well as evaluation purposes for more effective application and implementation of the course specifically among Muslim students. Additionally, if the realization is that the course of Basic Principles of *Shariah* is difficult to learn, the instructors need to become proactive and do something about it. Likewise, effecting change in the students' attitude towards learning the course is also important so that the objectives of the course can be materialized.

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