

PERCEPTION OF DOrSU-CEC STUDENTS: A SURVEY ON THE RE-IMPOSITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive research design to gather and analyze numerical data. The findings revealed that most respondents are young adults aged 21-30, with a relatively balanced gender distribution and a predominance of Roman Catholics. The study showed strong support for the death penalty among students, who viewed it as essential for justice, deterrence, and societal safety despite recognizing its ethical and moral implications. Concerns about justice and equality and views on rehabilitation and alternatives also reflected strong support for capital punishment. Significant differences in perceptions based on age, gender, and religion were identified. Age influenced concerns about justice and equality, gender differences were significant in support of the death penalty, and religion significantly affected ethical and moral objections, justice concerns, and overall perception of the death penalty. Based on these findings, implementing educational programs, involving students in policy discussions, and providing support services to facilitate informed and critical engagement with the death penalty's ethical, legal, and social dimensions are recommended.

Keywords: death penalty, justice, equality, ethical, moral objections, sanctity of life, age, gender, religion

1. INTRODUCTION

The perception of the re-imposition of the death penalty in the Philippines is a complex issue that has been debated extensively in recent years (Conde, 2020). According to Odchigue and Sobradil (2019), the death penalty is as old as humanity itself. As initially instituted as retribution and crime deterrence, the practice involves, among several others, mutilation, drowning, public dissection, quartering, garrote, stoning, burning at stake, skinning alive, and crucifixion up to the commonly used method of lethal injection, electrocution, hanging, and shot by firing squad. Perspectives reflect the diverse views within Philippine society and the broader international community regarding the reimposition of the death penalty, with debates centering on issues of justice, human rights, and the effectiveness of punitive measures in addressing crime (Olar et al., 2015).

Generally, people tend to possess differing positions relative to the reimposition of the death penalty in the Philippine criminal justice system. The history of the imposition of the death penalty in the Philippines shows a volte-face attitude that depicts the divided opinion and reception of our people towards the purpose, aptness, and effectivity of the punishment (De Lima, 2019). Proponents push for the revival of the death penalty, claiming that the death penalty would deter crime (Tomacruz, 2019). They also stated that there is a must to reinstate the death penalty for heinous crimes related to illegal drugs and plunder (Ranada, 2019). Contrarily, critics regard the death penalty as a legalized murder (Buan, 2020). Amnesty International (2017) further concurred that the resumption of executions will not rid the Philippines of problems associated with drugs or deter crime and that the death penalty is an inhumane, ineffective punishment that can never be the solution.

Nearly six in every 10 Filipinos agree that the death penalty should be reinstated for heinous crimes (Cabico, 2018). In a study conducted at Maramag, Bukidnon, Philippines, results showed that respondents were consistently aware of the proposed reimposition of the death penalty in the Philippines and that there were 81.3% who favored the proposal primarily because it was viewed as the most legitimate act by the state to incapacitate criminals from committing heinous crimes (Odchigue & Sobradil, 2019). Conde (2020) contradicted this by stating that the death penalty should not be reinstated, given that it will lead the Philippines to descend further into a rights-violating abyss.

Ironically, the need for research should increase with the use and favorability of the death penalty waning (Winter, 2015). Despite a rich literature on public opinion on capital punishment, only a few studies examined people's death penalty support or opposition within specific contexts (Liang et al., 2021). The matter seriously concerns possible alterations in the criminal justice system. Despite the urgency, it is very noticeable that none have explored the perceptions of the public on the reimposition of the death penalty in the local area. Thus, the current study aims to fill this gap.

The study seeks to uncover the level of public perception of the reimposition of the death penalty. Generally, this research will contribute to the literature concerning death penalty matters.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized quantitative research methodology, specifically descriptive design. According to Bhandari (2023), quantitative research collects and analyzes numerical data. It can find patterns and averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalize results to wider populations. Bhat (2020) also stated that descriptive research is a quantitative method that attempts to collect quantifiable information for statistical analysis of the population sample. This quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data regarding the perceptions of criminology students on reimposing the death penalty. Thus, the chosen research design is deemed appropriate.

2.2 Data Gathering Procedure

The following are the steps in gathering the data:

Seeking ethical clearance. The researchers asked for an ethical clearance from the office of the REO of Davao Oriental State University- Cateel Extension Campus.

Ask permission to conduct the study. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the office of the dean of Davao Oriental State University-Cateel Extension Campus. After the letter request was approved, the researcher sought participants.

Signing of Consent Forms. As part of the ethical considerations in conducting the study, the researcher secured free and informed consent before the participant answered the survey questionnaire. The respondents signed the informed consent as proof of voluntary participation in the study. They were informed and explained the purpose and nature of the study and the risks and benefits of participating in the survey.

Administration and distribution of questionnaires. The survey questionnaires were distributed by the researchers to the chosen respondents.

Retrieval of questionnaires. After administering the survey questionnaire, the filled-up questionnaires were retrieved, collected, tallied, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted confidentially and accordingly through the aid of the statistician.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Profile of the Respondents

In this part, there are three (3) tables presented to indicate the frequency and percentage of the respondents' profile in terms of a) age, b.) gender, and c.) religion.

Table 2 provides an age profile of respondents across different programs, revealing that the majority, 89.7%, are within the 21-30 age range. This significant portion, comprising 278 individuals, indicates that most students are young adults, likely in the early stages of their academic or professional careers. A smaller group, 10.0%, falls in the 15-20 age range, representing younger students, possibly recent high school graduates or early university entrants. Only one respondent,

Table 1. Profile of respondents in terms of age

Age	Frequency	Percent
15-20	31	10.0
21-30	278	89.7
31-40	1	.3
Total	310	100

making up 0.3% of the total, is in the 31-40 age range, indicating that very few older students are enrolled in the surveyed programs. Overall, the data suggests a predominantly young adult student body, which may influence perspectives and experiences within the study.

Table 3 presents the gender profile of the respondents. It shows that out of the 310 participants 53.9% are male, while 46.1% are female. The slightly

Table 3 Profile of respondents in terms of gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	167	53.9
Female	143	46.1
Total	310	100

higher representation of males suggests that more male students are in the surveyed programs than females. This gender distribution could influence the overall perceptions and attitudes observed in the study, as gender sometimes correlates with differing viewpoints on specific issues. However, the difference is insignificant, indicating a relatively balanced gender representation within the sample. Understanding the gender distribution is essential for interpreting how diverse perspectives might shape the findings, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of the study results.

Table 4 shows the profile of respondents in terms of religion. Among the 310 participants, the majority, accounting for 54.2%, identify as Roman Catholic. Iglesia Ni Cristo follows with 21.3%, while Other Christians represent 24.2%. Only a minimal percentage, 0.3%, identify as Islam. The predominance of Roman Catholic respondents suggests a significant representation within the surveyed population, which could potentially influence the perspectives on issues related to morality, ethics, and social justice, given the teachings and beliefs of the Catholic faith.

Table 4. Profile of respondents in terms of religion

Religion	Frequency	Percent
Roman Catholic	168	54.2
Islam	1	0.3
Iglesia Ni Cristo	66	21.3
Other Christians	75	24.2
Total	310	100

The diversity in religious affiliation indicates a range of perspectives that could impact perceptions of the death penalty, considering varying religious teachings and moral frameworks. Understanding the religious composition of the respondents is crucial for interpreting the results within the context of differing value systems and beliefs.

3.2 Perception of Students on the Death Penalty

This subsection delves into the perception of students on the death penalty in terms of support for the death penalty, ethical and moral objections, concerns about justice and equality, rehabilitation, alternatives, and renewal.

First, Table 5 reveals results regarding the support for the death penalty. It shows that the students strongly believe in the level of perception regarding support for the death penalty, with an average mean of 4.59. This indicates that students strongly believe the statement is highly valid and convincing, supporting the concept strongly.

Several studies and statements from global leaders highlight the complex and varied perspectives on the death penalty, particularly concerning drug-related crimes. One study found that fear of crime could predict support for the death penalty among White respondents but not Black respondents (Trahan & Laird, 2018).

Table 5. The level of perception of the death penalty in terms of support for the death penalty

No.	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1	Believe that the Constitution allows for the application of the death penalty.	4.65	0.698	Strongly Believe
2	Believe that the death penalty acts as a deterrent to committing crimes.	4.63	0.618	Strongly Believe
3	Believe that the death penalty allows for exact appropriate retribution.	4.56	0.688	Strongly Believe

4	Believe that justice will be served to the victims of heinous crimes and their relatives through the death penalty.	4.57	0.663	Strongly Believe
5	Believe that criminals who commit heinous crimes with life sentences are financial burdens to the country.	4.56	0.619	Strongly Believe
6	Believe that the death penalty can promote happiness, security, and well-being among non-offenders.	4.55	0.717	Strongly Believe
Average		4.59	0.585	Strongly Believe

This suggests that racial differences can influence how fear of crime affects attitudes toward capital punishment. In Indonesia, the Attorney General has publicly declared that the country's harsh stance against drug offenses is essential for national survival. He argued that despite its unpleasantness, capital punishment is necessary to save the nation (Hutt, 2018). Similarly, Malaysia has expressed that drug-related crimes are criminalized due to their contribution to other severe offenses like theft and murder (Majinbon et al., 2017).

The study reveals that respondents believe that the Constitution allows for the application of the death penalty. However, they believe that the death penalty can promote happiness, security, and well-being among non-offenders. The Philippine President has also made strong statements advocating for the elimination of drug-related offenders, citing them as a significant danger to society (Miao, 2017). This stance is reflected in legislative actions, such as the passing of House Bill 4727 by the Philippine Lower Chamber in March 2017, which aims to reimpose the death penalty for drug crimes. President Rodrigo Duterte has been a vocal supporter of this reimposition (Petcharamesree et al., 2023). Additionally, in former communist Central and Eastern Europe, public opinion still strongly favors the death penalty despite its abolition over two decades ago. There are occasional campaigns for its restoration, reflecting lingering support for capital punishment in these regions (Peshkopia, 2014).

Second, Table 6 displays that the respondents strongly believe in the level of perception of the death penalty in terms of ethical and moral objections, with an average mean of 4.53. This means that students strongly believe the statement is highly valid and convincing, supporting the concept strongly. Various perspectives on the death penalty highlight its complex and controversial nature, particularly concerning its ethical, moral, and practical implications. Mao Zedong publicly announced that 800,000 people were sentenced to death following the Communist Party's victory in 1949, a historical event that has fueled the ongoing emphasis on human rights and the abolition of the death penalty by civil rights organizations (Mbah et al., 2019).

Table 6. The level of perception of the death penalty in terms of ethical and moral objections

No.	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1	Believe that only God can give and take away life.	4.67	0.511	Strongly Believe
2	Believe that the death penalty is a violation of the right to life and the human person's dignity.	4.46	0.610	Strongly Believe
3	Believe that the death penalty promotes the culture of death and not the culture of life.	4.51	0.550	Strongly Believe
4	Believe that the death penalty is against the teachings of religion.	4.48	0.556	Strongly Believe
Average		4.53	0.439	Strongly Believe

Today, all European countries (except Belarus) and many Pacific Area states, including Timor Leste, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, have abolished capital punishment. In contrast, countries such as Botswana, Zambia, Guatemala, Japan, India, and the United States (the federal government and 32 states) retain it. South Africa abolished the death penalty through a landmark Constitutional Court judgment in the case of State vs. Makwanyara and Another on June 6, 1995 (Sheehan, 2007, as cited by Mbah et al., 2019).

The death penalty remains a highly debated issue and is considered by many to be a cruel form of punishment that violates the ethics and morality of human rights. Jessup (2022) argues that the death penalty should no longer be considered a form of punishment in the United States. From an ethical standpoint, arguments in favor of the death penalty fail to meet their standards. In practice, the death penalty perpetuates racial discrimination and has no empirical evidence to show it is a better alternative to life imprisonment. Given these issues and the failure of ethical theories to convincingly support them, Jessup advocates for its immediate abolition.

This result specified that respondents believe that only God can give and take away life, yet they believe that the death penalty is a violation of the right to life and the human person's dignity. On December 19, 2016, the 71st UN General Assembly adopted its sixth resolution on the "Moratorium on the use of the death penalty," with 117 countries voting in favor (United Nations, 2018). Religious organizations worldwide have also voiced strong opposition to the death penalty. For instance, Pope Francis condemned it as "cruel, inhuman, and an offense to the dignity of human life," declaring it inadmissible regardless of the severity of the crime (Catholic Charities, 2015). Lula Redmond, a Florida therapist who works with the families of murder victims, noted that many families do not experience the anticipated relief after an execution. She stated that taking a life does not fill the void left by the crime, a realization that often comes only after the execution (Muller, 2016). The debate over the death penalty has long centered on morality. Proponents argue that the punishment should fit the crime, asserting that taking a life warrants the loss of one's life. Opponents, however, argue that taking a life, even as punishment, constitutes murder. Recent arguments have increasingly focused on financial costs, discriminatory practices, issues of innocence, and the methods of execution (Walter, 2019).

Some individuals believe that capital punishment is ethical, supported by theories of punishment such as incapacitation and deterrence. The idea of deterrence suggests that executing convicted murderers will prevent others from committing similar crimes. However, the ethical justification of the death penalty remains a gray area, with the government stepping back from federal executions and more states abolishing it. The methods of execution are often deemed morally unacceptable, but the rationale behind their use is still debated (Huang, 2020).

Third, Table 7 displays that the respondents strongly believe in the level of perception of the death penalty in terms of concerns about justice and equality, with an average mean of 4.42, which means that students strongly believe the statement is highly valid and convincing, supporting the concept strongly.

Table 7. The level of perception of the death penalty in terms of concerns about justice and equality

No.	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1	Believe that the death penalty puts innocent lives at risk, especially the poor and the marginalized.	4.42	0.595	Strongly Believe
2	Believe that the death penalty cannot depend on a faulty justice system	4.44	0.586	Strongly Believe
3	Believe that the death penalty is not a guaranteed crime deterrent.	4.43	0.591	Strongly Believe
4	Believe that the death penalty is imposed without regard to the socio-economic status of the offender.	4.41	0.599	Strongly Believe
Average		4.42	0.530	Strongly Believe

By the early 1980s, only 20 countries had abolished the death penalty. However, by 2013, this number had surged to 97 countries, with 140 nations halting executions for at least a decade. This significant reduction is mainly due to the adoption of international human rights standards, which advocate for the global abolition of the death penalty as a requirement for joining the Council of Europe and the European Union (Bohm, 2013). This trend reflects a growing global consensus that capital punishment is incompatible with modern human rights and dignity principles. The United Nations (2017) reports that death sentences are still being issued in ways that violate international standards, including the right to a fair trial and the principle of non-discrimination. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees everyone equal legal protection. Furthermore, UN guidelines mandate that those facing the death penalty must receive fair trials and adequate legal representation at all stages. These violations underscore the ongoing challenges in ensuring that justice systems worldwide adhere to fundamental human rights principles.

This study revealed that respondents believe that the death penalty cannot depend on a faulty justice system. However, they believe that the death penalty is imposed without regard to the socio-economic status of the offender. Gill (2023) suggests that instead of merely focusing on abolishing the death penalty, there should be a reassessment of how states handle delays in death penalty cases. This would help recognize innocence claims earlier in the judicial process while

ensuring individuals have enough time to file necessary appeals. This recommendation is particularly pertinent given the irreversible nature of capital punishment; any procedural delays that could prevent wrongful executions should be carefully considered and addressed. There are notable disparities in how the death penalty is applied, particularly against racial and ethnic minorities. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and a 2000 report from the U.S. Department of Justice, of the 18 inmates on federal death row, 16 were minorities. Between 1995 and 2000, 80% of federal capital cases recommended by U.S. Attorneys involved people of color (ACLU, 2000, as cited by Mena, 2022). These statistics reveal deep-seated racial biases in the application of capital punishment, raising serious questions about the fairness and impartiality of the justice system.

Thus, the global trend toward abolishing the death penalty reflects a growing consensus on the importance of upholding human rights and dignity. However, significant challenges remain, including addressing systemic inequalities, ensuring fair trials, and eliminating racial biases. Efforts to reassess procedural aspects of death penalty cases and to enforce international human rights standards are crucial steps towards a more just and equitable legal system.

Fourth, Table 8 outlines that the respondents strongly believe in the level of perception of the death penalty in terms of rehabilitation, alternatives, and renewal, with an average mean of 4.41. This indicates that students strongly believe the statement is highly valid and convincing, supporting the concept strongly.

Table 8. The level of perception of the death penalty in terms of rehabilitation, alternatives, and renewal.

No.	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1	Believe that there is a better alternative: a life sentence without parole.	4.40	0.535	Strongly Believe
2	Believe that other than the death penalty, there are better ways to help the victims' families of heinous crimes.	4.39	0.557	Strongly Believe
3	Believe that the alleged criminals can still change/renew.	4.38	0.550	Strongly Believe
4	Believe in punishment according to the laws.	4.48	0.595	Strongly Believe
Average		4.41	0.464	Strongly Believe

Over the past decade, the United Nations General Assembly has consistently advocated for a global moratorium on capital punishment. Typically, this call for suspension is presented every two years around International Human Rights Day. The most recent vote occurred on December 16, 2020, resulting in 123 votes in favor, 38 against, 24 abstentions, and 8 absentees (Pascoe & Bae, 2021). Brunei and Singapore have consistently opposed the resolution within the ASEAN region, while Cambodia has always supported it. Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam generally abstain from voting. Notably, since 2018, Malaysia has shifted to voting in favor, and the Philippines, which had previously abstained in 2016-2018, also voted in favor in 2020 (International Commission Against Death Penalty, 2021).

The UN Committee Against Torture has praised the progress made by some nations in abolishing the death penalty. According to Bharti (2024), the preamble of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights emphasizes that the abolition of the death penalty enhances human dignity and the progressive development of human rights. The protocol further asserts that any measures taken towards the abolition of the death penalty should be viewed as advancements in the right to life. Supporters argue that the reluctance of international courts to impose the death penalty, even for the most heinous crimes, indicates that no crime is severe enough to justify it.

This study pointed out that respondents believe in punishment according to the laws. However, they believe that the alleged criminals can still change/renew. Sato (2022) distinguishes between two types of abolitionist governments. The first type includes those that have abolished the death penalty within their jurisdictions and adhere to human rights treaties against it. The second type consists of governments and entities, such as the European Union, that not only have abolished the death penalty but also actively advocate for global abolition. These governments have internalized the norm of abolition and promoted it internationally, thus becoming moral crusaders in the fight against capital punishment.

According to Hoffer (2021), regardless of one's beliefs—whether they stem from religious views that every human is made in the image of the Divine, from the intrinsic worldly value of human beings, or from the ethical principle of treating others as we wish to be treated—humans deserve humane treatment. Throughout his writings, Hoffer explores the inhumane aspects of the criminal justice system, sometimes suggesting alternatives and raising awareness of these practices.

3.3 Significant Difference in the Perception of Students on Death Penalty

This part discussed and presented results of the perception of students on the death penalty in a table when analyzed according to a.) age, b.) gender, and c.) religion. The discussion is as follows:

First, the analysis of Table 9 reveals that there are no significant differences in students' support for the death penalty with an F-value of 0.346 and a p-value of 0.708, ethical and moral objections with an F-value of 1.210 and a p-value of 0.299, or views on rehabilitation, alternatives, and renewal with an F-value of 0.552 and a p-value of 0.576 when grouped according to age. However, there is a significant difference in concerns about justice and equality, with an F-value of 4.647 and a p-value of 0.010, indicating that age influences students' perceptions. Overall, the student's perception of the death penalty shows no significant difference based on age, with an F-value of 1.070 and a p-value of 0.344. This suggests that while age affects specific concerns about justice and equality, it does not significantly impact general support, ethical objections, or views on alternatives to the death penalty.

Table 9. Mean comparison of the perception of students on the death penalty when grouped according to the age of respondents

Indicators	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Support for the Death Penalty;	0.346	0.708	No significant difference
Ethical and Moral Objections;	1.210	0.299	No significant difference
Concerns About Justice and Equality and	4.647	0.010	There is a significant difference
Rehabilitation, Alternatives, and Renewal	0.552	0.576	No significant difference
Students' Perception of the Death Penalty	1.070	0.344	No significant difference

The overall result indicates that there is no significant difference in students' perceptions of the death penalty based on age. As McCarthy and Brunton-Smith (2022) cite, age significantly influences attitudes towards the death penalty.

Age can be a predictor of support for capital punishment. Anderson et al. (2017) found that in the USA, support for the death penalty is highest among middle-aged individuals. Conversely, other studies, such as those by Marsh et al. (2019), have shown that older adults tend to have more punitive attitudes towards crime. This trend may be attributed to older individuals holding different moral beliefs than younger people, often exhibiting more morally idealistic views (McNair et al., 2019). On the other hand, the morality of execution methods is frequently questioned, yet their justification continues to be debated (Huang, 2020).

Second, the Table 10 analysis reveals significant differences in students' support for the death penalty when grouped according to gender, with an F-value of 2.664 and a p-value of 0.015. However, there are no significant differences in ethical and moral objections, with an F-value of 0.883 and a p-value of 0.323, concerns about justice and equality, with an F-value of 4.352 and a p-value of 0.734, or views on rehabilitation, alternatives, and renewal, with an F-value of 1.300 and a p-value of 0.149. Overall, the student's perception of the death penalty shows no significant difference based on gender, with an F-value of 3.766 and a p-value of 0.257.

Table 10. Mean comparison on the perception of students on the death penalty when grouped according to the gender of respondents

Indicators	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Support for the Death Penalty	2.664	0.015	There is a significant difference
Ethical and Moral Objections	0.883	0.323	No significant difference
Concerns About Justice and Equality	4.352	0.734	No significant difference

Rehabilitation, Alternatives, and Renewal	1.300	0.149	No significant difference
Students' Perception of the Death Penalty	3.766	0.257	No significant difference

This suggests that while gender influences support for the death penalty, it does not significantly affect ethical objections, justice concerns, or views on rehabilitation and alternatives. Demographic factors, such as gender, significantly influence attitudes toward the death penalty across different nations.

McCarthy and Brunton-Smith (2022) highlighted that varying patriarchal values and egalitarianism might shape these attitudes. Developed democracies, often abolitionist nations, tend to support gender egalitarianism more than recent democracies or dictatorial regimes (Liang & Snow, 2016). Significant disparities in gender inequality persist globally, with higher concentrations of inequality in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia—regions that also have higher rates of death penalty retention (World Economic Forum, 2020). Although individual-level attitudes and national-level variables must be cautiously linked, these factors help compare cross-national death penalty retention and abolition trends.

Some research indicates that age may not significantly relate to death penalty support. For instance, Robbers (2004, as cited by Sethuraju et al., 2016) found no significant age-related differences. Various factors, including gender, race, political beliefs, religious fundamentalism, government trust, education, and income, are linked to support for the death penalty (Messner et al., 2006; Peffley & Hurwitz, 2002; Soss et al., 2003; Unnever & Cullen, 2006, as cited by Worthen et al., 2016). Worthen et al. (2016) found that while gender and sexual orientation variables were not significant, the Empathic Concern scale had a negative and significant effect on support for the death penalty.

Conversely, a 2018 study by Lambert et al. explored cultural and gender differences in death penalty support among Indian and U.S. college students, revealing that men in both countries were more likely to support the death penalty. Men favored it for reasons of punishment, deterrence, and incapacitation, while women opposed it for reasons of rehabilitation, innocence, and moral concerns. Chaudhary and Gupta (2021) found that female participants were more likely to agree with opposing the death penalty compared to males.

Moreover, Odchigue and Sobradil (2019) discovered a significant gender difference in perceptions of the death penalty in the Philippines. Women believed the death penalty would bring significant economic, political, social, and moral development.

Third, the analysis of Table 11 indicates that students' ethical and moral objections to the death penalty vary significantly by religion, with an F-value of 3.117 and a p-value of 0.026. Additionally, there are significant differences in concerns about justice and equality, indicated by an F-value of 2.628 and a p-value of 0.050, and in the overall perception of the death penalty, shown by an F-value of 2.787 and a p-value of 0.041. However, no significant differences were found in support for the death penalty, with an F-value of 2.291 and a p-value of 0.078, or in views on rehabilitation, alternatives, and renewal, with an F-value of 1.800 and a p-value of 0.147. This suggests that while religion significantly affects students' ethical objections, justice concerns, and overall perceptions of the death penalty, it does not have a notable impact on their general support for the death penalty or their views on rehabilitation and alternatives.

A study involving 1,215 Christian, Muslim, and Hindu participants from Tamil Nadu revealed that all three religious groups largely opposed the death penalty while showing support for euthanasia and abortion. The authors suggested that these findings indicate that religions form a basis for the concepts of 'sacredness' and 'quality' of life (Anthony & Sterkens, 2018). In Islam, the death penalty is justified according to the texts in the al-Qur'an and Hadith. This form of capital punishment is known as Qishash, which applies to crimes such as murder, robbery, subversion, adultery, and religious treason (murtad) (Rokhmadi, 2019; Praja, 1995, as cited by Muryani & Rosyida, 2020). However, in cases of murder, the perpetrator can be forgiven by the victim's family by paying "diyat", which is compensation for the victim's family.

Table 11. Mean comparison of the perception of students on the death penalty when grouped according to the religion of respondents

Indicators	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Support for the Death Penalty;	2.291	0.078	No significant difference
Ethical and Moral Objections;	3.117	0.026	There is a significant difference

Concerns About Justice and Equality; and	2.628	0.050	There is a significant difference
Rehabilitation, Alternatives, and Renewal	1.800	0.147	No significant difference
Students' Perception of the Death Penalty	2.787	0.041	There is a significant difference.

In contrast, the Christian tradition, as explained by Pastor Claudius Budhianto, does not justify the death penalty. He argues that the right to take someone's life belongs to God alone. According to Christian beliefs, all crimes have the same value and should not be punished based on severity. All perpetrators should be punished, but not by taking a life (Muryani & Rosyida, 2016). Religion is a complex construct with several dimensions that may have conflicting effects on people's views toward the death penalty (Bones et al., 2018). One crucial dimension is afterlife beliefs, which suggest death is not the end of life. Concepts of heaven and hell play significant roles in giving meaning to individuals' lives and shaping their views on death (Sabriseilabi et al., 2022).

McCarthy and Brunton-Smith (2022) found that the influence of religion on death penalty attitudes varies depending on whether the country retains capital punishment. In abolitionist countries, Muslims and those who practice regular religious worship tend to show lower levels of support for the death penalty. In contrast, in retentionist countries, Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox Christians reported lower support for the death penalty, while those practicing more frequent religious worship showed a substantial increase in support.

Analyzing students' perceptions of the death penalty through the lens of social constructionism highlights how societal factors shape attitudes and beliefs (Nickerson, 2024). Age, gender, and religion significantly influence these perceptions, reflecting the social contexts in which individuals are embedded. Berger and Luckmann's theory of social constructionism posits that knowledge and reality are created through social interactions. This study illustrates that perceptions of the death penalty are not formed in isolation but are products of cultural, social, and religious influences. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending how societal norms and values are constructed and maintained. The findings underscore the importance of considering demographic factors when analyzing public opinion on contentious issues like the death penalty, as these factors shape the collective understanding and attitudes toward such topics (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study lead to the following conclusions:

1. Most respondents are young adults aged 21-30, with a balanced gender distribution. The predominant religion is Roman Catholic, followed by Other Christians and Iglesia Ni Cristo, with minimal representation of Islam. This demographic diversity influences their perceptions of the death penalty.
2. Students generally strongly believe in the death penalty for justice, deterrence, and societal safety. They acknowledge ethical and moral objections but still see it as necessary. They recognize risks to innocent lives and potential biases but favor the death penalty. They also believe in rehabilitation and alternatives, believing in legal punishment while considering better crime solutions.
3. Age significantly influences concerns about justice and equality. Gender differences are significant in death penalty support, with varying levels of support between males and females. Religion significantly affects ethical objections, justice concerns, and overall perceptions of the death penalty. However, it does not significantly impact general support for the death penalty or views on rehabilitation and alternatives. These findings highlight the role of demographic factors in shaping students' views on the death penalty.

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