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Research Article

The Influence of Shūrā on Decision-Making among Officials of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to determine the role of the Islamic principle of consultative decision-making, known as Shūrā, in the decision-making processes of the officials of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF). The proponents of this study employed a qualitative method to collect the required information, supporting this study by interviewing six executive and management-level officials of NCMF to gain their perspective on the issue, their practices, and the difficulties encountered in implementing Shūrā. The data were then subjected to thematic analysis using a six-phase data analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke. The research revealed five primary themes, including: Shūrā as an Islamic and participatory governance value; Shūrā as a form of participatory and consultative decision-making; balancing Islamic consultative values with government procedures; Shūrā as an Organizational Cohesion and Trust value; and the sustainability and institutionalization of Shūrā in NCMF. The findings revealed that Shūrā provides participatory governance, cultivates trust, and bridges Islamic values and formal government processes. However, its continued application relies on making it part of the institution, not just tied to current leaders.

Keywords: Consultation, Islamic governance, Decision-making, Public administration

Introduction

Shūrā, also known as Mashwara among Muslim Filipinos, is an “Arabic word that means consultation and an Islamic principle that calls upon Muslims to gather and, through articulate debate and sound reason, form productive opinions and strategies of implementation”

(The Islamic Institution of Shura (Mutual Consultation, 2018). It is “not the same as a meeting, but where people are consulted on different matters of public importance. In Islam, those who are made in charge of certain affairs are required to consult those who are connected to those affairs” (Darul Uloom Trinidad

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and Tobago. (n.d.)). In the Philippines, the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), an attached agency of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) (Philippines, 2018), created by Republic Act No. 9997 to support the rights, welfare, and development of Muslim Filipinos (Republic of the Philippines, 2010). The NCMF aims to include Muslim values and traditions in governance (Republic of the Philippines, 2010), making it a good example of how Islamic ideas like Shūrā can work within modern public administration and decision-making.

It is also used in finding clarity by examining all the parts of a matter. Hence, other people's opinions will be considered as supportive statements (Nairoos et al., 2022). Therefore, it is believed that practicing Shūrā is both a Muslim obligation and an essential part of collective governance. The principle of Shūrā, which values participation, consultation, and consensus in decision-making, has been viewed by Muslim scholars as the one that most closely resembles the idea of democracy (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While Shūrā is not explicitly codified as a religious principle in Philippine law, its consultative and participatory elements find functional parallels in existing governance frameworks affecting Muslim Filipinos, particularly the Local Government Code (Republic of the Philippines, 1991) and the Bangsamoro Organic Law (Republic of the Philippines, 2018), both of which institutionalize mechanisms for public participation, consultation, and shared decision-making. In this sense, democracy functions as an engine of Shūrā, governing the relationship between the people and political leadership. It is in this way that Shūrā conforms to the systems of governance that encourage accountability and participatory leadership, rather than merely reflecting a religious or cultural ideal. Shurah is also characterized as the act of examining a concept to the maximum extent in order to understand what it entails, generating ideas and proposals that promote good and prevent wrongful misapprehensions (Darul Uloom Trinidad and Tobago. (n.d.)).

In addition to this, the Institute of Higher Islamic Studies and Secondary Education clari-

fied that Shūrā is not a gathering but a consultation whereby leaders seek to consult those directly involved with an issue. It also contrasts with formal meetings, where its main objective is to get insights and feedback that may assist in making decisions, as opposed to receiving formal approval. For example, the Commission holds regular meetings of the Management and Executive Committees to discuss issues and consult all relevant officials. This realization demonstrates that Shura is crucial in promoting inclusivity, transparency, and collective responsibility within the governance system, and that it is not a one-dimensional religious practice, but a mechanism that can be effectively incorporated into the government process.

The special needs and rights of Muslim citizens in the Philippines have been acknowledged by the Philippine government through the creation of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) by Republic Act No. 9997 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). The law directs the NCMF to ensure that it is actively involved in nation-building, as well as the preservation and development of the culture, traditions, institutions, and well-being of Muslim Filipinos. It further stipulates that the NCMF will also serve as the primary government agency through which Muslim Filipinos can seek government redress and assistance, as well as the vehicle through which such assistance can be delivered to them (Republic of the Philippines, 2010). This is how the NCMF acts as a conduit between the federal government and Muslim communities. With the NCMF's endeavors to align traditional Islamic practices with the modern administration's ideologies, the element of decision-making has become an indispensable aspect of its functioning. It provides an opportunity to examine the role of Shūrā, the Islamic principle of consultation, in promoting inclusiveness, effectiveness, and responsiveness within the NCMF's institutional operations.

Despite frequent references by Islamic organizations and offices, such as the NCMF, to the benefits of Shūrā in promoting inclusiveness, group wisdom, and accountability within decision-making processes, there is a significant gap between its normative endorsement

and its actual implementation in administrative practice. While Shūrā is often described as a principle similar to democratic practices and its role in participatory governance, there is no empirical research examining how this principle is understood, applied, or institutionalized within the NCMF, a government body mandated to represent and safeguard the interests of Muslim Filipinos. This lack of scholarly attention creates uncertainty as to whether Shūrā enhances organizational efficiency and inclusiveness or instead presents practical challenges when integrated into modern public administration structures. The absence of systematic analysis limits the NCMF's ability to critically assess and potentially institutionalize a culturally grounded governance principle, thereby constraining its capacity to fulfill its mandate and meaningfully incorporate Islamic values into its decision-making processes.

Thus, this paper aims to examine the role, application, and implications of Shūrā in the decision-making processes of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos.

The following research questions guide this study:

1. How do NCMF officials understand and interpret Shūrā in the context of their organizational decision-making?
2. In what ways is Shūrā applied in leadership, participation, and consensus-building within NCMF?
3. What challenges do NCMF officials encounter in integrating Shūrā with the modern public administration processes?
4. What is the perceived impact of Shūrā on the organizational efficiency and responsiveness in the NCMF?
5. What governance framework or policy recommendations can be developed in order to strengthen the institutionalization of Shūrā in the decision-making processes of the NCMF?

Materials and Methods

This study employed a phenomenological approach as its qualitative research design. The design suits investigating, comprehending, and documenting the lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of NCMF officials regarding the application of Shūrā in a

government organisation. The qualitative approach of the study allows the descriptive interpretation of the effects of the Islamic values on the dynamics of leadership, participation, and governance processes.

Moreover, the purposive sampling identified six (6) individuals among the population. The participants were officials and decision-makers of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) Central Office. The term "officials" or "officers" in this study adheres to the definition provided under Section 2(14) of the Administrative Code of 1987 (Executive Order No. 292., 1987), which distinguishes an "officer" from a "clerk" or "employee" as a person whose duties, not being clerical or manual in nature, involve the exercise of discretion in the performance of governmental functions. The Central Office houses the highest-ranking officials, the reason why it was included in the selection criteria. Officers whose responsibilities do not include the exercise of governmental power were excluded.

Data saturation (Sarfo et al., 2021), which is the process of determining that more responses than the chosen participants no longer provide new insights, was used to determine the number of participants. Saturation was reached after six in-depth interviews, as subsequent responses consistently reiterated previously identified perspectives and did not contribute substantively new information relevant to the research questions. A semi-structured interview guide serves as the main tool. The research questions divide the sections of the guide by considering how participants perceive Shūrā and how it is used in organizational processes, the challenges of integrating it into the government process, its perceived impact on responsiveness and efficiency, and recommendations for institutional development.

Furthermore, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. A formal request letter and a consent form were provided to the participants prior to the interview. The interviews were conducted in both English and Filipino, depending on the participants' preference. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed with the participants' consent. Responses given in Filipino were

translated into English for the purpose of thematic analysis; throughout this process, the researcher ensured that the original context, meaning, and intent of the participants' statements were fully preserved. To enhance translation validity, translations were carefully reviewed alongside the original transcripts to verify semantic accuracy and consistency prior to coding. Data obtained through interviews were characterized by the use of thematic analysis, a technique that recognizes, analyzes, and reports patterns or themes in qualitative information. The six-phase framework developed by Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was employed as a guideline when coding relevant statements and phrases, grouping them based on similar meanings, and organizing the data according to broader themes that reflect the overall views held by participants on how Shūrā affects organizational decision-making in NCMF.

As part of the methodology, the proponents of this study also ensured adherence to the ethical standards of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, non-maleficence, and academic honesty. All the research data were kept safe and only utilized in academic studies, and were disposed of appropriately. The proponents also noted the respect for Islamic ethical values, as it was sensitive to the religious and cultural contexts in the course of the interviews and analysis of the results.

Result and Discussion

The analysis was constructed based on the five key themes that emerged naturally during the interviews. These are basically the thoughts of the NCMF officials as a united body of what Shura is, its application, and the challenges it brings, and its appearance in the future of the agency. Therefore, the proponents of this study assigned the respondents labels ranging from Official 1 to Official 6 and tabulated the findings using these themes, which were supported with direct quotations from the officials to maintain the data confidentiality. The researcher also relates the findings to the pertinent literature and principles of Islamic governance previously discussed.

Theme 1: Shūrā as an Islamic and consultative Principle of Government.

Shūrā is a concept of governance that is based entirely on Islamic teachings and moral principles. It was characterized by the participants as both a religious obligation and a system through which fairness and humility are promoted, and by which efforts are made to ensure that everybody is involved in decision-making. The respondents emphasized that Shūrā is not merely a rapid administrative discussion, but rather an Islamic duty to pursue common wisdom and righteousness.

This concept directly traces back to the Quranic belief that the faithful must govern through mutual consultation (Nairoos et al., 2022), which implies that effective communication is essential for governance. This study confirms that Shūrā is a sign of authentic believers (Ismail et al., 2021), and it assists leaders in collecting multiple thoughts to create favorable outcomes and avoid misunderstandings (Nairoos et al., 2022). This principle in the NCMF guides the actions of leaders by ensuring that decisions are made with consideration not only for practicality but also for moral responsibility and service to the Muslim community.

Theme 2: Shūrā as a Consultative and Participatory Decision-Making Practice.

The study revealed that Shūrā is not merely what they believe in, but also what they practice in the day-to-day operations of the NCMF. It is not formalized and embedded in the NCMF processes, yet it may be observed in the whereof normal staff consultations and committee meetings. For example, during the development of annual plans, such as the Fiscal Year Budget Folio, or the establishment of new programs, bureau and service directors discuss their ideas with their staff before making a final decision.

Even though Shūrā is not a formal meeting, it still involves talking directly to everyone involved in the matter (Darul Uloom Trinidad and Tobago. (n.d.)). It actually highlights that Shūrā encourages teamwork, openness, and inclusivity when used.

Theme 3: Balancing Islamic Consultative Principles with Government Process

The experience of the officials that were interviewed in NCMF supports the idea that democracy and bureaucracy can work with Shūrā if they are appropriately adapted to the formal government process of NCMF (Dangor, 2003).

During the interview with the participants, they discussed the challenges of integrating Islamic values into the government's official procedures. Shūrā encourages inclusion, discussion, and debate, whereas the government process requires that all is documented, compliant, and efficient. According to the officials, this usually creates issues, particularly in cases where an intensive consultation slows down a simple task or when hierarchy stifles open discussions.

The interviews conducted with officials in NCMF lend credence to the notion that democracy and bureaucracy can collaborate with Shūrā, as long as it is adjusted to the formal government procedures of NCMF (Dangor, 2003).

Theme 4: Shūrā as a Source of Organizational Cohesion and Trust

Shūrā assists in uniting people through the establishment of trust and enhancement of morale among staff personnel. When consultation is performed appropriately, it renders the staff a feeling of ownership and belonging to the outcomes. During the interview, the participants stated that the presence of leaders who respect the opinions of their staff is a wonderful motivating factor, facilitating the process of making decisions and implementing new policies significantly easier. The exercise of Shūrā will render every debate more straightforward, as everyone will know what is going on and avoid any confusion (Nairoos et al., 2022).

Theme 5: Institutionalization and Sustainability of Shūrā in NCMF

NCMF officials would like Shūrā to become a permanent component of NCMF governance. They said that the current consultation process is too casual and places too much emphasis on the leader involved. To ensure that Shūrā becomes a regular feature of NCMF, there was an indication among the officials that it had to be

formalized through official policies, establish special Shūrā councils, and incorporate it in their governance manuals.

When Shūrā becomes the formal procedure of NCMF, it ceases to be reliant on particular officials, instead becoming a part of the NCMF. This approach works well in maintaining consistency among policies and introducing cultural values within the government (Executive Order No. 292., 1987). Concisely, the participants observe Shūrā developing into a moral practice that is now a systematic and permanent guide of governance that respects Islamic beliefs and the government process.

Conclusion

The NCMF requires governance through Shūrā. Given that one of the government offices serves Muslim Filipinos, NCMF provides an ideal opportunity to observe Islamic values alongside contemporary governance. The officials at NCMF are guided by a principle that renders them transparent, enables collective decision-making, and holds them morally accountable. It is not only a concept, as one can already see it in day-to-day workings, but it is not yet institutionalized and formalized.

Moreover, practicing Shūrā makes the NCMF more effective in accommodating everyone and facilitating collaborative work. The fact that it is dialogue-based and consensus-oriented fosters confidence and respect, hence all feel a part of the decision made. Public administration includes that type of collaboration and involvement, which proves that applying faith-based concepts to the government is a brilliant idea.

The practice of Shūrā at NCMF is too informal. It basically fluctuates with the individual in charge of the organization. This is not very structured, which decreases its reliability, particularly when new individuals emerge in leadership positions. In order to remedy this, we should institutionalize Shūrā and make it clear policies, standard procedures, and train its members. That is the sure way of ensuring its longevity.

To concretely operationalize this principle, NCMF could issue an administrative order or memorandum that formalizes Shūrā

consultations for major decisions. Such a memo could include the following provisions:

- Which decisions require Shūrā consultation, such as program development, policy changes, or budget allocations;
- Procedural steps, including staff consultation, standardized documentation of recommendations, and leadership review before final approval;
- The establishment of recurring Shūrā councils or working groups to maintain continuous participatory input;
- Mechanisms to ensure alignment with both Islamic ethical principles and government procedural standards..

By formalizing Shūrā in this way, NCMF can bridge the Quranic foundation of consultation with practical administrative mechanisms, creating a governance framework that is ethical, participatory, and sustainable. This synthesis demonstrates that Shūrā can function as both a moral and institutionalized tool, guiding decision-making in a manner that respects Islamic beliefs while maintaining organizational efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

Therefore, there is an opportunity to establish a governance system based on Islamic concepts, such as Shūrā. It is a good indication that it is possible to integrate religious values and governmental processes.

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