

Faith-Informed Governance: Examining Muslim Leadership Styles in Philippine Government Agencies and their Impact on Inclusive Public Service

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the integration of Islamic ethical principles into the leadership practices of Muslim officials within Philippine government agencies, with the objectives of identifying how core values—*Shura* (consultation), *Maslaha* (public interest), *Adl* (justice), and *Ibadah* (service as worship)—are operationalized and assessing their impact on promoting inclusive governance aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). The research employs a qualitative content analysis methodology, systematically analyzing publicly available online documents, official publications, policy frameworks, and digital communications from three key agencies: the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU), the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The results reveal that these Islamic principles are consciously embedded in institutional practices, facilitating participatory decision-making, directing policy toward communal welfare, ensuring equitable resource allocation, and framing public service as a moral duty. This faith-informed approach significantly contributes to governance outcomes characterized by equity, accountability, and inclusive representation. The study concludes that Islamic leadership values offer a potent, culturally resonant framework for advancing moral governance and inclusive public service in the Philippines. While structural and resource constraints present challenges, the conscious application of these principles provides a viable pathway for achieving SDG targets, suggesting that policymakers should consider faith-based ethical models in national reform and governance strategies.

Keywords: Islamic leadership, inclusive governance, BARMM, moral governance, public administration, SDG

INTRODUCTION

Various cultural societies require leadership that respects diverse identities and values. Governance in the Philippines reflects this need due to the strong role of religion in public life. Catholic norms shaped national leadership for decades. The rise of Muslim leaders, especially in BARMM, introduced governance rooted in Islamic ethics. *Shura*, *Maslaha*, *Adl*, and *Ibadah* guide leadership conduct and public service. These values are parallel to ethical and transformational leadership theories emphasizing vision, morality and service in public administration (Bass, 1990). These relate to SDG 16: Inclusive Institutions and SDG 10: Reduced Inequality. Research on Muslim leadership style is limited since many focus more on elections, contradictions with faith, and debates. Few studies examine how Islamic leadership values guide daily government practice. There isn't much available information about how administrations behave same goes for comparative studies between Muslim-led and non-Muslim-led agencies, which also remain limited. This gap matters as national reforms such as EDCOM II and global goals need inclusion and accountability. Little evidence explains how faith-based leadership fits these standards in regions where religion shapes governance. This study addresses this gap by examining Muslim leadership in selected government agencies. It focuses on inclusive public service delivery. The study uses a qualitative multiple-case design. It analyzes how Islamic values guide leadership behavior, decisions, and governance outcomes. The research looks at Muslim leaders in the context of public

administration and global governance talks. It supports efforts tied to SDG 16 and SDG 10 by providing evidence on ethical and inclusive governance guided by faith.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Governance in Multicultural Societies

According to research on multicultural governance, having leaders who reach out to people based on their cultural or religious identities is deemed to be significant (Gamon & Tagoranao, 2022), especially in places where religious behaviors impact politics (United Nations, 2015). In the Philippines, research in Mindanao indicates that Muslims react more favorably to leaders who indicate that they understand and assist in situations (BARMM, 2018). This strengthens this research on how we should focus more on understanding and researching Muslim leaders in government structures.

Islamic Ethical Principles in Leadership

According to Islamic governance literature, Shura or consultation, Maslaha or public interest, justice or Adl, and service as worship or Ibadah are considered key leadership values within Islamic governance (Pal, L. A. 2025), which have roots in (Qur'an, 42:38; 3:159; 4:58; 16:90; 21:107). Islamic value could thus be perceived as governance within Philippines.

Moral Governance in BARMM

In the BARMM, the administration boasts of its support for "moral governance," which links the practice of governance to Islamic ethics. (Bagolong & Yusof, 2023; Bangsamoro Government, 2020). Although it has been observed to have some potential for increased transparency, There is very little data to indicate the manner by which government leaders embody this within the various offices headed by Muslims. This lack of information forms the reason for the current study.

Inclusive Governance and Global/National Frameworks

Like these international guidelines, SDG Goal 16 and Goal 10: "Seek to create fair and transparent systems of government where all people are encouraged to participate and are included" (United Nations, 2015). For similar countries to respond to these changes through reforms, a similar call by EDCOM II: "requires leadership that promotes better and more inclusive culturally responsive governance through reforms" (EDCOM II, 2023). These two guidelines emphasize that it is necessary to review and determine if a "Faith-informed leadership Models within Muslim-led organizations promote inclusion" (EDCOM II, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) as its main research method to systematically examine how Islamic leadership principles are presented in publicly available online materials created by Muslim-led government agencies in the Philippines. QCA has a structure effective for analyzing textual data but still interpretive, allowing us to understand both implicit and explicit meaning of policy documents, speeches, press releases, and digital publications. As Schreier (2012) describes, QCA is "a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material" through a coding framework that reflects the researcher's theoretical perspective and analytical goals. In this study, QCA enabled us look at leadership ideas that are based on Islamic values like Shura (consultation), Maslaha (public good), Adl (fairness), and Ibadah (serving through worship), and how these ideas influence fair and inclusive government practices. The plan for conducting research was interpretive, which implies that its objective is to make sense of the situation, as opposed to looking at it from a numerical point of view. This has worldwide goals that are Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 16 and SDG 10), which seek well-run institutions and reduced inequality. By looking at materials about governance and leadership, Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) helps explain how faith-based leadership encourages good governance and inclusive services in Muslim-majority regions like BARMM. Furthermore, QCA enables the creation of a coding matrix that reflects both Islamic ethical ideas

and SDG-related indicators, allowing comparisons between different agencies over time. This follows Mayring's (2014) suggestion, which highlights the importance of theory-driven category development in qualitative content analysis. QCA is flexible and can use digital tools like NVivo or Excel for faster coding and pattern spotting, making it a good choice for studies that relieve online information and documents.

Research Environment

The research took place in the online world, where government agencies, media, and community organizations share information about leadership and governance. Such materials include government websites of Muslim-led bodies like the ministries of BARMM and local government units, public policies, press releases, speech contents of Muslim leaders, online interviews, and news articles on the effect of Islamic values on governance. This online community is also important because a larger number of individuals are using these platforms to promote transparency and citizen engagement. Finally, this online community also aligns very well with this qualitative method because, as this paper has already established, this particular qualitative method stresses analyzing text within its actual setting (Schreier, 2012).

Sources of Data

The main sources of information for this study came from publicly available documents about governance, speeches, reports from organizations, and online publications from national, regional, and global sources. These materials were collected from official agency websites, trusted government sites, and international archives. Specifically, the study used:

National Sources

Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity (OPAPRU)

Offers documentation of the peace process and strategic stories about the involvement of the national government and the Muslim leadership structures.

National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF)

Provides insights into cultural preservation, Shariah law integration, and Islamic education initiatives.

Republic Act 11054 (Bangsamoro Organic Law)

Provides the legal structure for the governance of BARMM.

EDCOM II Reports and Legislative Briefing

Narrate national reforms, governance, and leadership of education pertaining to the research topic.

Publications and Press Release issued from other Muslim-led National Government Agencies

Regional Sources

- policy papers and strategic plans for example BARMM Moral Governance Framework
- Publications at a ministerial level and online reports from
- online publications, press releases, newsletters, and website content.

Global Sources

- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 16 & SDG 10)

Establish international standards of good governance, inclusiveness, accountability, and equity.

- Foundational Islamic ethical writings

Concepts such as Shura (consensus or consultation), Maslaha (public interest), Adl (justice), and Ibadah (service as worship) provide a theoretical foundation for the coding of leadership conducts.

- Academic repositories and open access publications

All the documents were selected based on relevance regarding the leadership ideals in Islam, moral governance, and serving the public. Every document was treated using structured qualitative content analysis.

Research Instrument

This study used a structured coding matrix to assist in analyzing documents and academic literature. The coding

matrix was both an analytical device and a verification technique, ensuring consistency and transparency of coding. The coding matrix was employed through AI-assisted content analysis tools (similar to NVIVO and Consensus AI), which aided in quickly locating and categorizing codes within a large volume of data. While AI identified patterns and connections, the coding matrix helped interpret the data. This method ensured that human judgment was key, with AI used as a supportive tool. By combining the coding matrix with AI analysis, the study maintained a balance between efficiency and thoroughness, effectively capturing the discussions on Muslim leadership in Philippine governance.

Data Gathering Procedure/ Sampling

In our research, we compiled all data available online, including academic research articles from databases, research repositories, and online public access publications. We then began gathering data through systematic searching on search engines such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, or other popular databases for publications. For specificity, search terms relevant to our research were included in narrowing the scope of our online search. These retrieved articles had undergone screening according to our research criteria, including their relevance to our subject of study, their publication in peer-reviewed academic publications, and whether they have full text publications available. Publications that do not conform were then filtered out to maintain credible data. Finally, these articles were then archived for purposes of analysis through organization in a systematic fashion for easy identification in the analysis process.

Ethical Considerations

This study has incorporated key ethics when it comes to conducting qualitative research, especially when it involves the analysis of AI. Sources of data were extracted from a number of pages on official websites, policy statements, and articles, ensuring that there were no problems of consent, privacy, or plagiarism. This study, however, made sure to give credits where credits are due and that the process was not plagiarized, as per the guidelines provided by the APA 7th edition.

Integration of AI tools such as ChatGPT, Consensus AI, and NVivo has been carried out in such a way that ethics within the study are supported. This study focuses on ensuring that the coding, interpretation, and context are thoroughly examined to ascertain the absence of bias within the computer algorithm applied within this study to interpret coding. There are efforts to express the importance of transparency within this study, along with cultural or religious respect, while recognizing the right to intellectual ideas from individuals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reflection of Islamic Ethical Leadership Principles in Muslim-Led Philippine Government Agencies

From the analysis, key leadership principles among Muslims, including Shura, Maslaha, Adl, and Ibadah, were found to be incorporated into the policies and procedures pursued by agencies headed by Muslims in the Philippines. For instance, Shura is established through participatory and consultative processes exercised by all three organizations, which ensure that all parties are involved. Maslaha is directed at the happiness and well-being of the community, whereas Adl promotes fairness and equality. Ibadah is the concept that leadership is both moral and ethical, as exemplified in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Mapia, 2024). that applies these principles effectively, indicating that faith leadership is applicable within the governance system.

Table 1. Reflection of Islamic Ethical Leadership Principles in Muslim-Led Philippine Agencies

Islamic Principle	Definition / Focus	OPAPRU	NCMF	BARMM
Shura (Consultation)	Participatory and inclusive	Peace process frameworks	Engages consultative councils for Shariah	Institutionalized consultative

	decision-making	emphasize sustained dialogues and stakeholder consultations	law integration, cultural preservation, and education programs	mechanisms in parliamentary processes and ministry-level planning
Maslaha (Public Interest)	Commitment to the common good and welfare of communities	Peace and reconciliation initiatives serve national stability and unity	Prioritizes Muslim welfare through education, legal assistance, and livelihood programs	Social services, healthcare, and education reforms aligned with citizens' needs
Adl (Justice)	Fairness, equity, and rights-based governance	Advocates for justice in peace agreements and reintegration programs	Protects Muslim Filipino rights in Shariah law, culture, and governance opportunities	Equitable resource distribution, anti-corruption measures, and inclusive reforms
Ibadah (Service as Worship)	Leadership as moral responsibility and ethical service	Frames peacebuilding and reconciliation as service to nation and faith	Encourages leaders to serve communities in preserving culture and promoting education	Governance structures explicitly link accountability and public service to moral and religious obligation

Contribution of Muslim Leadership Styles to Inclusive Governance in Philippine Muslim-Led Agencies

Based on the analysis, the contribution that Muslim leaders make to fair governance is that they promote fairness, participation, and accountability because this analysis links the Islamic values and the actual outcome in governance, which is that the principle of Adl promotes fairness and the protection of rights, Shura promotes group decision-making and involving everyone, and Ibadah promotes leadership as an ethical mandate. Based on this analysis, leadership under faith is important because it is able to yield fair governance. The welfare-oriented governance occupies a prominent place because of the Islamic principle of Maslaha (Dusuki, 2007). meant to uplift collective benefit and social good in decisions taken by the public (Rifai, 2021).

Table 2. Contribution of Muslim Leadership Styles to Inclusive Governance Outcomes

Governance Outcome	Definition / Focus	Institutional Evidence	Scholarly Literature Evidence
Equity	Fairness in resource distribution, recognition of rights, and attention to marginalized groups	Policies and programs in OPAPRU, NCMF, and BARMM ensure fair allocation of resources, protection of cultural and religious identity	Literature highlights Adl (justice) as guiding leaders to promote fairness in service delivery and inclusive policies
Participation and Representation	Collective decision-making and stakeholder engagement	Shura (consultation) operationalized through community consultations, stakeholder dialogues, and BARMM parliamentary processes	Studies emphasize participatory governance and the importance of institutionalized consultation for inclusivity
Accountability and Moral Governance	Ethical responsibility, transparency, and oversight in leadership	Agency documents show anti-corruption measures, transparency reports, and leaders framing service as moral duty (Ibadah)	Literature supports Ibadah and Adl as foundations for accountable, ethical, and service-oriented leadership

Themes and Patterns in Faith-Informed Governance and Inclusive Public Service

It can be seen that the organizations headed by Muslims both support and diverge in their approach to the objectives of sustainable development (SDGs). There is support in that they are founded on values that include

equality, accountability, and public participation in decision-making. There are, however, other divergences that might be associated with difficulties of structure, resources, or politics. These Islamic civil society bodies indicate that religiously based governance can be very similar to universal measures in terms of being inclusive and accountable. However, these bodies are also challenged by some local adaptations, which would then impact their alignment towards similar goals. Shura (Consultation), MaslaHA (Public Good), and Adl (Justice) are some Islamic values that are instrumental in influencing the adaptation of SDGs for a more religiously based construct, which is sensitive to local culture, equity, and citizen engagement, despite some resource limitations for structure and framework. These findings support the concept of Tawhidic leadership, where ethical responsibility, accountability, and peace-oriented governance are viewed as integrated moral obligations. These findings follow the concept of Tawhidic leadership (Ruhullah & Ushama, 2024).

Table 3. Themes and Patterns in Faith-Informed Governance in Relation to SDGs

Theme / Pattern	Focus / Description	Institutional Evidence	Scholarly / AI-Assisted Insights
Alignment with SDG 16: Peace, Justice, Strong Institutions	Governance practices that promote transparency, justice, and democratic processes	Peacebuilding initiatives, institutional reforms, and moral governance in OPAPRU, NCMF, and BARMM	Literature highlights ethical leadership and participatory governance as key to strong institutions and conflict-sensitive administration
Alignment with SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities	Policies and programs addressing marginalized populations and promoting cultural recognition	Targeted programs for Muslim communities; equitable resource allocation; recognition of rights and culture	Research supports Maslaha (public interest) and Adl (justice) as foundations for equitable, inclusive service delivery
Divergence due to Institutional and Resource Limitations	Gaps between goals and outcomes caused by structural or operational constraints	Limited resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies, uneven policy implementation across agencies	Studies note that contextual challenges can hinder full SDG alignment, requiring adaptive leadership
Context-Specific Adaptation of SDGs	Local reinterpretation of SDG principles through Islamic ethics	Use of Shura (consultation) and Maslaha (public interest) to adapt SDG principles to local governance	AI-assisted content analysis identifies patterns of localized, faith-informed governance balancing global frameworks and cultural norms
Balancing Faith-Based and Secular Governance	Managing tensions between cultural/religious identity and global standards	Policies and programs reflect both Islamic ethical principles and compliance with national/international expectations	Literature highlights the dual role of faith-informed leadership in reconciling moral governance with administrative efficiency

Alignment and Divergence of Muslim-Led Leadership Practices with SDG 16 and SDG 10

A critical review of the objectives shows that the Muslim-led agencies basically meet the criteria of SDG 16 (having peaceful and inclusive institutions) and the goal of SDG 10 (reduced inequalities). The agencies are tasked with peacebuilding, equality in treatment, and involving others in decision-making. But these agencies sometimes experience some issues that may end up hindering the full attainment of the objectives. Such issues include a lack of resources and political issues. Islamist organizations are closely aligned with target goal 16 and target goal 10 with respect to peace-building strategies, participatory governance, and marginalized community development programs. There are some divergences between frameworks and actuals due to institutional hurdles and lack of resources.

Table 4. Alignment and Divergence of Muslim Leadership Practices with SDGs

SDG / Principle	Focus	Institutional Evidence	Faith-Based Adaptation / Pattern
SDG 16: Peace,	Promote peace,	Peace processes, equitable	Integration of Islamic principles:

Justice, Strong Institutions	justice, and accountable institutions	policy frameworks, transparency measures, anti-corruption initiatives	Shura (consultation) for participatory decision-making, Adl (justice) for fairness and accountability
SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities	Reduce inequalities through inclusive policies	Education, cultural preservation, and social services targeting marginalized Muslim communities	Maslaha (public interest) guides welfare-oriented policies and prioritization of vulnerable groups
Partial Divergence	Gaps between intended and actual outcomes	Limited resources, bureaucratic hurdles, and uneven service delivery	Faith-informed adaptation mitigates gaps but practical limitations prevent full SDG compliance
Localization of SDGs through Islamic Values	Adapting global standards to cultural and ethical context	Policies reinterpret SDGs within Islamic ethical frameworks	Combines Shura, Maslaha, and Adl to create culturally rooted, inclusive governance practices
Tensions between Global and Local Frameworks	Balancing international standards with faith-informed governance	Negotiating between SDG compliance and religiously grounded policies	Reflects dual alignment and adaptation; highlights challenges in harmonizing global and local priorities

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The study shows that the Muslim-led government agencies in the country are models of governance influenced by faith, that is, with specific focus on Islamic leadership values such as Shura (consultation), Maslaha (public interest), Adl (justice), and Ibadah (service). In everyday practice, these would mean involving decision making, welfare concerns in programs, policy fairness, and a sense of moral duty in leadership that improve public services for all. Muslim leadership styles not only support fairness, transparency, and accountability but also hugely align with the goals of SDG 16 and SDG 10 on having fair, transparent, and inclusive institutions. Even though there are difficulties, like not having enough resources and certain structural problems, the evidence shows that governance inspired by faith offers a culturally meaningful and worldwide way to enhance inclusive governance and public services in the Philippines.

Recommendations

For Muslim leaders and officials, Start incorporating Islamic values; Shura, Maslaha, Adl, and Ibadah in creating training programs. This will help leaders to connect with their roots while effectively addressing issues.

Government agencies such as OPAPRU, NCMF, and BARMM should work on improving communication, transparency, and accountability. Create systems to evaluate their work ensuring inclusivity and fairness is present.

Policymakers and national reform efforts like EDCOM II should include faith-based leadership approaches in their policies, most importantly in areas like education and governance or even in peacebuilding. While still aligning to national policies to help create a a stronger sense of unity amongst people.

For academics and future researchers, Delve deeper onto conducting studies on faith-based governance to widen the knowledge on this particular area. Investigate alternative research techniques for better accuracy.

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Declaration of AI Use

The study uses AI tools with researcher oversight. The researcher manages coding and interpretation to limit bias. In this respect, the paper remains transparent, culturally sensitive, and recognizes new ideas.

Conflict of Interest

In other words, all the authors would like to make sure that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the above study. Nothing influenced their work, even the interpretation of results and findings, or the overall writing of this study. They also confirm that no financial, organizational, or personal connections affected their study in any way.

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