

Proposed Federal State for the Bangsamoro: Level of Acceptance among the Bangsamoro Mujahidin

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Keywords:	Abstract:
Bangsamoro, Federalism, Mindanao Conflict.	This study was conducted to determine the level of acceptance among the Bangsamoro mujahidin on the proposed Bangsamoro federal state. Convenient and quota sampling were used among the 120 respondents identified for this study. It is found that most of the participants accepted the proposed federalism of the current government, though having some conditions. The regression analysis result showed that age was negatively correlated with their level of acceptance on the proposed federal state while educational attainment on both secular and Islamic schools was positively correlated with their response to the same provision statement. This study concluded that Bangsamoro mujahidin are now more welcoming to various alternative solutions to the Mindanao conflict within the framework of Philippine territorial integrity.
Kata kunci:	Abstrak:
Bangsamoro, Federalisme, Konflik Mindanao	Kajian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui tingkat penerimaan para mujahidin Bangsamoro atas usulan negara federal Bangsamoro. Kenyamanan dan pengambilan sampel kuota digunakan di antara 120 responden yang diidentifikasi untuk penelitian ini. Diketahui bahwa sebagian besar peserta menerima federalisme yang diusulkan dari pemerintah saat ini, meskipun memiliki beberapa persyaratan. Hasil analisis regresi menunjukkan bahwa usia berkorelasi negatif dengan tingkat penerimaan mereka pada negara federal yang diusulkan sementara pencapaian pendidikan di sekolah sekuler dan Islam berkorelasi positif dengan tanggapan mereka terhadap pernyataan ketentuan yang sama. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa para mujahidin Bangsamoro kini lebih menyambut berbagai alternatif solusi konflik Mindanao dalam kerangka keutuhan wilayah Filipina.

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1. Introduction

Islamic civilization in the Philippines began with the establishment of the Sultanate of Sulu and North Borneo in 1405 (Majul, 1965: 23) and the Sultanate of Magindanaw in 1515 (Gorlinski). From then on, Muslims in the area lived free from any form any external subjugation from foreign entities. But it was not until the arrival of the Spaniards in 1521 that their sovereignty had begun to be challenged (Abubakar, 2009: 123). This effectively started the Muslim resistance in Mindanao that continued from the Spanish, the Americans, and now the Philippine government. Their persistence with their determination for self-determination earned them their marks in pages of Philippine history as “the Mindanao Problem” (Gowing, 1982: 14).

Historically, in countries that faced violence between different territorially concentrated groups, federalism has been used to ensure autonomy for the different groups on one side and their inclusion through power-sharing mechanisms in central government on the other. Federal states such as The USA,

Bosnia, Nigeria, Iraq, and Nepal are historical examples that federalism might be an important tool of conflict-resolution and addressing some needs of different opposing groups.

The Mindanao conflict, expressed in Muslim armed resistance against the state, continues and resolution and is not easy (Abubakar, 2004: 462 and Buendia, 1989: 133). The armed conflict has taken thousands of lives, destroyed millions worth of properties, and displaced a magnitude of people who sought refuge in other regions of the country as well as in neighboring countries (Magdalena, 1997: 245-246). The territorial question has been disputed more often on the battlefields than over a negotiating table (Montiel, Rodil, and de Guzman, 2012). There were various options espoused in response to the Bangsamoro quest for peace in Mindanao but failed and thus the conflict continued. Because the response was unsatisfied the main objective of the Moro struggle which is to achieve freedom and self-determination.

Indeed, in 1996, the MNLF signed a peace agreement with the Philippine government that saw the creation of an Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). However, discontent caused the group to unravel and split into a new competing faction. Today, the MILF entered a new response of the government which is the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), and change ARMM into a new expanded Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). This new peace agreement resulted in another split into Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighter (BIFF) struggle for the original objective.

Federalism, for most people, has been seen to be a popular solution for regional aspirations for autonomy, end war, and regional disparities, especially in Mindanao (Buendia, 1989: 135). But for the most part, some groups such as the Moros want a "separate nation", and not autonomy (Azimov, 2019: 519). In this case, there is a need for space to define issues between the future federal government and other separatists to convince them that a federal state is an acceptable alternative.

It is important to verify if the Bangsamoro Mujahidin will accept the proposed federal state as an alternative otherwise they will stay firm on their original aspiration – independence of Mindanao. Do they understand the system that they would accept and let them be governed? Because absolute peace will only be achieved if the Bangsamoro mujahideen as a whole (MILF, MNLF, and others) would be amenable and convinced by the new proposed system of government. Thus, this study aimed to identify the level of acceptance of the Bangsamoro mujahidin the proposed federal state as an alternative.

2. Materials and Methods

The researchers used descriptive and inferential quantitative design to describe the results of the study because quantitative methods are more systematic and empirical (Lasswell, 2007). It was conducted in three Municipalities of Maguindanao Province, namely: Municipality of Pagalungan, Datu Montawal, and Sultan Kudarat where the majority of Mujahidin resides. These are also the areas of MNLF and MILF formation during the '70s. The respondents of this study were the selected Mujahidin such as commanders and element soldiers in the three municipalities of the Province of Maguindanao as these members of the organization on the battlefield have a better comprehension of their struggle giving them the better position to decide whether or not Federalism can be accepted to resolve conflict in Mindanao. The convenient and quota sampling methods were used to generate relevant information from the 120 respondents who were randomly selected in the place of the study. It was used to access the respondents who were available during the conduct of the study. The researchers used an interview guide questionnaire which was consisting of two parts, namely: the socio-economic profile and survey questions about the level of acceptance of the Bangsamoro mujahidin on the proposed Bangsamoro federal state. The analysis and interpretation of data were done using descriptive and inferential statistical tools such as mean score and regression analysis that required F statistics, Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), and the Chi-square test for goodness-of-fit of the regression model utilized in this study.

3. Results and Discussion

a. Descriptive Statistics

To summary the result of the data that has been quantitatively analyzed, descriptive statistics is hereby presented to describe the characteristics of the data gathered in simple form using the mean score (Anon n.d.). The final mean score was interpreted with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly not accepted, not accepted, neutral, accepted and, strongly accepted.

Table 1. Proposed Federal State for the Bangsamoro: Level of Acceptance among the Bangsamoro Mujahidin*

Provision Statement	Mean Score	Remarks
1. A sharing of legislative and executive powers	2.97	Accepted
2. A representation of distinct regional interests	2.95	Accepted
3. Opportunity to decide on political and economic affair.	2.91	Accepted
4. Elected local government officials.	2.87	Accepted
5. State represented by six senators elected in state-wide elections.	2.86	Accepted
6. A written constitution requires among federation members.	2.84	Accepted
7. The executive and legislative power has a fixed electoral mandate	2.81	Accepted
8. Shares of Local Government Unit bigger than what is currently provided	2.80	Accepted
9. Three State Legislators represent every province/district and city	2.78	Accepted
10. Freedom of the Speech should include Freedom of the Press.	2.75	Accepted
11. Sharia which adopted as a legal basis for the settlement of disputes	2.73	Accepted
12. State functions and services that impact directly on people lives	2.72	Accepted
13. An establishment of presidential form of government	2.67	Accepted
14. Consolidation of the local governments into 11 states	2.59	Accepted
15. Two orders of government (Federal and regional)	2.58	Accepted
16. An establishment of parliamentary form of government	2.52	Accepted
17. An original design with some adaptation of other countries.	2.49	Neutral
18. Elections hold in the Bangsamoro entity that conforms to the Constitution.	2.12	Neutral
19. Federal Government that shall be responsible to a certain national and International concerns.	2.03	Neutral
20. The proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) will be revised to address constitutional concerns.	2.02	Neutral
21. Arbitration mechanism to resolve disputes	1.98	Neutral
22. Procedures and institutions for intergovernmental collaboration	1.80	Neutral
23. The executive has the capacity to call for elections.	1.52	Neutral

*) Based from the response of the 120 research participants of this study.

Table no. 1 showed that the participants responded “accepted” on the following statements: “A sharing of legislative and executive powers”; “A representation of distinct regional interests, Opportunity to decide on political and economic affair”; “Elected local government officials”; “State represented by six senators elected in statewide elections.”; “A written constitution requires among federation members.”; “The executive and legislative power have a fixed electoral mandate.”; “Shares of Local Government Unit bigger than what is currently provided.”; “Three State Legislators represent every province/district and city”; “Freedom of the Speech should include Freedom of the Press.”; “Sharia which adopted as a legal basis for the settlement of disputes.”; “State functions and services that impact directly on people lives.”; “An establishment of presidential form of government.”; “Consolidation of the local governments into 11 states.”; “Two orders of government (federal and regional).”; “An establishment of parliamentary form of government.”.

They replied “Neutral” on statements: “Elections hold in the Bangsamoro entity that conforms to the Constitution.”; “Federal Government that shall be responsible to a certain national and international

concerns.”; “The proposed BBL will be revised to address constitutional concerns.”; “Arbitration mechanism to resolve disputes.”; “Procedures and institutions for intergovernmental collaboration.”; and lastly on: “The executive can call for elections.”

b. Inferential Statistics

Model comparison was used to determine the optimal result in identifying the combination of independent variables that best predict the dependent variable (Datucali, and Sali, 2020: 81). The regression model is at its optimal capacity based on comparably higher R², Adj. R² and F statistics value while maintaining lower residual standard error term and the p-value (Prabhakaran, 2016).

Table 2. Regression model fitting

Model no.	IV Excluded	R ²	Adj. R ²	F	Residual Std. Error	p-value
1	None	0.1796	0.1436	4.992	0.211	0.000359
2	Age	0.1429	0.1131	4.795	0.2148	0.001296
3	Income	0.1789	0.1503	6.263	0.2102	0.0001353
4	Educ At (Islamic)	0.1454	0.1157	4.893	0.2145	0.001113
5	Educ At (Secular)	0.1144	0.08364	3.715	0.2183	0.006993
6	Source of income	0.1661	0.1371	5.725	0.2118	0.0003077

Table no. 2.1 revealed that although model no. 1 showed a comparably higher R² value (.179), model no. 3, which obtained the second-highest value of R² (.178), also showed the highest Adjusted R² (.15), also highest in F statistics (6.26) and lowest in residual standard error (.210) and p-value of .0001. This indicated that model no. 3 is a good candidate for the regression model. el.

Table 3. AIC and BIC result or model comparison

Model no.	IV Excluded	AIC	BIC
1	None	-24.97888	-5.466434
2	Age	-21.73231	-5.00736
3	Income	-26.86945	-10.1445
4	Educ At (Islamic)	-22.08207	-5.357121
5	Educ At (Secular)	-17.8057	-1.080801
6	Source of income	-25.01403	-8.289084

The Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) are also two of the widely used statistical tool in determining optimal regression models (Lumley, & Scott, 2015: 1). In this case, the lower the AIC and BIC value the better the model (Long and Freese, 2000: 2 and Kuha, 2004: 188).

Table 2.2 revealed that the lowest AIC (-26.86) and BIC (-10.14) were associated with model no. 3. As the model fitting tests revealed that model no. 3 was the best regression model that can produce optimal analysis result, this study, used regression model no. 3 for conducting multiple linear regression analysis where independent variable income is excluded from the equation.

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis results

IV	β	t value	Exp(β)	p-value	Remarks
(Intercept)	2.92	40.420	18.57	2e-16	Significant
Age	-0.03	-2.257	.96	0.02	Significant
Income Source	-0.01	-1.372	.98	0.17	Not Significant
Ed.At.Islamic	0.04	2.179	1.04	0.01	Significant
Ed.At.Secular	0.05	3.009	1.05	0.00	Significant

Residual standard error: 0.2102 on 114 degrees of freedom
 Multiple R-squared: 0.1789, Adjusted R-squared: 0.1503
 F-statistic: 6.263 on 5 and 114 DF, p-value: 0.0001353

A multiple linear regression test was run to determine the effect of the participants' demographic profile on their response to survey questions (Ludbrook, 2010) about their level of acceptance on the proposed federal states for the Bangsamoro.

Table no. 2.3 revealed that the regression model explained, $R^2 = 0.178$, or 18% of the variants in the equation and statistically significant at $p = .00$. The table further indicated that independent variables; Age ($\beta = -.03$, $p = .02$) were found to have a significant and negative effect on the likelihood that they respond "accepted" on questions about the proposed federal state for the Bangsamoro. While Islamic educational attainment ($\beta = .04$, $p = .01$) and secular educational attainment ($\beta = .05$, $p = .00$) were found to have a positive statistically significant effect on the likelihood that the replied "accepted" on the same survey questions. However, the source of the independent variable of income ($\beta = -.01$, $p = .17$) was found to have no statistically significant effect over the aforementioned survey questions.

Lastly, the regression model showed that for every unit increase in the participants' age, it is associated with a decrease of .96 in the odds ratio that they will reply accepted. While an increase in Islamic educational attainment was associated with an increase in the odds ratio by 1.04 and finally an increase in secular educational attainment was found to have been associated with an increase of 1.05 in the odds ratio that the respondents "accepted" holding other variables in the equation constant.

4. Conclusion

Nations engage in war by cause of achieving freedom and self-governance is a universal right. One of the pillars of civilization is government and the people running it. The strength and stability of any civilization depend therefore on the strength and stability of its government and people. The Bangsamoro people have been in a continued quest for peace in Mindanao, a peaceful endeavor that could strengthen and stabilize the progress and development of the Bangsamoro civilization in the region. One of the political solutions put forward is proposed federalism that aimed to help lessen the conflict and solve the so-called "Mindanao Problem."

This study attempt to determine how the Bangsamoro Mujahidin responds to the proposed federal system of government. The study found that the Mujahidin are accepting the proposed federalism as a means of conflict-resolution in Mindanao. Based on this finding, it is concluded that the Bangsamoro mujahidin are fully confident in accepting federalism and believe it to be an effective alternative answer to their quest for freedom. Indeed, younger mujahidin tend to agree with federalism as the political solution to the problem, and those who obtained higher educational attainment in both Islamic and secular schools are likely to accept federalism than those who attained lower educational qualifications.

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