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A Case Study on the Intersectional Realities of Muslim Women residing in Muslim Towns in Quiapo, Manila and Maharlika Village, Taguig and their Voting preferences

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ABSTRACT

Little is known about the intersectional realities of Muslim Women and what it means to be identified as Muslim woman who lives in Muslim towns in Metro Manila, especially within a socio-political context of dominant narratives. Despite the plethora of advocacies focused on gender equality, ethnic minority women are still underrepresented, disempowered, and disrespected. With this, the study aimed to determine the intersectional realities of Muslims who reside in Quiapo Manila and Maharlika Village, Taguig, and their voting preferences. The claim was strengthened through the employment of Politicized Collective Identity (PCI) theory because it underscored how in-group members' power struggles encompass much larger contexts and realities. This framework also led up to a series of antecedent processes from the awareness of shared experiences to the adversarial attribution, and the involvement of society by triangulation. To holistically grasp the realities of the participants, a qualitative case study approach guided the research design to explore how Muslim women who reside in Quiapo, Manila, and in Maharlika Village, Taguig make sense of their belongingness and voting preferences. The research participants identified various key components that are central to the intersectional realities that they experience. This also signified the complexities of the intersectional realities of Muslim women, which emphasizes that they are not solely affected by Islamophobic exclusion and prejudice. Through this identification, intersectionality provided causality to how these inequalities impact their voting preferences which stressed their concerns over larger policies, platforms, and political initiatives inside and outside their domains.

Keywords: *Muslim women, intersectional realities, voting preferences, sense of belongingness*

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INTRODUCTION

Intersectionality is predominantly described through lives lived and the knowledge that arises from the intersection of social structures such as gender, religion, class, and ability (Bernstein, 2020; McDonald, 2019; Nash, 2017). This also recognizes the structural differences of individuals and groups, which translates to a more diverse view of their lived realities. In societies today, there are persisting problems of inequality with how people interact with each other. Even if there are progressive ideas that demand gender equality for women, conservative and prejudicial ideas still dominate and justify the discrimination against minorities--particularly Muslim women. This is further strengthened by traditional foundations of structural inequality that confines them into the hierarchical system which favors masculinity over femininity (Gupta et, 2019; Khalifa, 2021).

Despite the mobilization of movements and advocacies upholding gender equality, ethnic minority women still feel underrepresented, disempowered, and disrespected (Tariq & Syed, 2018). Many ethnic minority women have made substantial contributions to alleviate themselves out of their conditions; however, their presence has been incessantly devalued through the stereotypical associations hammered to them every day (Abdelhadi, 2019). The stereotypes they experience are standardized roles that deprive them of expressing their individuality (Abdelhadi, 2019; van Es 2016). For

example, Indonesian Muslim women are deprived of their right to inheritance and equal marriage. They are forced to engage in arranged marriages which undermines their choices; thus, showing gender inequality (Prihatani, 2018). Also, the economic stature of Muslim women can be fleshed out through the notion of low-income wages because they subject themselves subconsciously to these normative structures. It then justified the suppression of wages of Muslim women. Another instance is Indian Muslim women who participate in different kinds of labor; however, they are positioned to work in their homes (Mezzadri, 2016). In this kind of work, there are practices of low mobility and restrictive works that put them in lower statuses both in labor and in the global supply chains (Abdelhadi, & England, 2018).

Most literature focus on the dwindled involvement of Muslim women in public spaces due to their ethnic and religious background, which roots in the systemic inequalities that they experience (Abdelhadi, & England, 2018; Spierings, 2016). This places Muslim women in their own secluded spheres that expect them to prioritize their family's obligation over their economic responsibility. In particular, since western nations are more disposed to prioritize their economic development, there are still a significant number of communities that adhere to their traditional roots. Muslim women in the US (Khattab et al., 2017) and the UK (Khattab etl., 2019), for instance, still adhere to their religious obligations and are still attuned to prioritize their

families (Carlos & Cudra, 2017; Zubair, S. & Zubair, M., 2017). With this, the sense of belongingness of Muslim women is not only limited to their experience with the out-group but also struggles inside their communities.

Literature on the participation of Muslim women--whether in political or economic contexts--has gained moderate development, especially in the realm of intersectionality. The gradual growth of studies is premised on the inherent Islamic culture, overwhelmingly patriarchal, that subsumed these gendered minorities under a myopic lens (Shirazi, 2009). Much of the research attributes Muslim women as submissive, uninterested, and uninformed individuals that are unable to stand up for their rights; hence, it further compels them not to engage in civic affairs (Joly & Wadia, 2017). However, varying generations of Muslim women have their take on their identity especially those who wear veils as a sign of their adherence (Rahbari, 2019). Some of the first generations display more strict compliance to actualize their faith; it stresses the importance of wearing veiled symbols to emphasize their identity (Gohir, 2015). These symbols draw the attention of people in public places, especially among Western European countries (Brunig, 2015; Marko, 2019). On the other hand, while the second and third-generation Muslim women focus on more flexible clothing, they still are cautious about not misrepresenting their cultural identity (Gohir, 2015). This is a natural tendency of an attachment to their religious and cultural identity, but

they are still targets for standardization which exacerbates existing Islamophobic stereotypes (Abdelhadi, 2019). Although they are commonly associated as "veiled" women, it does not dismiss the fact that they do not embody such a monolithic characterization. Karaman and Christian (2020), for example, point out that Muslim women use their hijabs as a form of protest against the racialization of their ethnicity. The French government, in 2004, passed a law banning religious symbols (e.g., hijab, niqab) in public spaces. This conservative policy was usually misinterpreted and abused by the Parisians even though it is construed with the best possible intentions (Blair et al., 2017; Shirazi, 2010; Tell MAMA, 2016). Misrepresentations directed at Muslim women are still based on their religious and ethnic roots (Ali & Sonn, 2017). As a result, it blemished other complex issues to be recognized because of the narrowed discourse circling around these minorities.

To contrast the monolithic characterization of the out-group towards ethnic minority women, recent scholarship attempts to understand the way society addresses increasing intersectional issues. The majority of these studies posit the significance of improving the access of gendered minorities, like Muslim women, in formal institutions (Sifris & Tanyag, 2019). The Muslim community is well-known for its contribution in terms of culture and history, which imprinted the identity of Muslim [women]. For instance, Dutch Muslim women

attempted to peg the predominance of their image through institutionalizing varying Islamic women organizations. This encourages engagement not only among these ethnic women minorities but also towards non-Muslim communities (van Es, 2019). Through their structural and systemic efforts, it will diminish the stereotypical perception that associates Islam as an oppressive religion. Lastly, the intersectionality trend among researchers emphasizes that ethnic minority women can also combat systemic hindrances through their engagement in domains such as education, economic, and political life (Hussain, 2019).

Karaman and Christian (2020) study coincides with the literature, for they have identified that Muslim women are still discriminated against in the US due to how the out-group assumes Islam as a distinct kind of race; therefore, leading to Islamophobic discrimination. However, these gendered minorities are not always deduced rigidly due to the idea of how their identities are intersected with differing contextual nuances other than their religious affiliation (Samier&ElKahleh, 2021). The nexus put on intersectionality among different studies also tackles the participation and engagement of gendered minorities. Finlay and Hopkins (2019) strengthen the development of this type of literature by probing the multifaceted factors that affect Muslim women's political participation. To substantiate, they emphasized that not all gendered minorities, like a young Scottish Muslim

woman, would be instantly compelled to topple down oppressive structures. Several literatures reinforces this finding by acknowledging that there are varying levels of representation that these minorities currently experience (Iyer& Mani, 2019; Mansouri &Vegani, 2018). For instance, Saudi Arabia only allowed women to drive during 2017 because of their continued engagement and participation in social media platforms like twitter (Alahmadi, 2017; Altoaimy, 2018; Kattan el., 2016). This development encapsulates the progression of the literature about Muslim women and their intrinsic relation to intersectionality, because it gradually veers away from the monolithic understanding of these minorities.

Additionally, Carlos and Cudra (2017) highlight that Filipino Muslim women are resilient even if they migrate to places culturally different from what they were accustomed to. For instance, these women adapt to the practices that are common in their neighborhood, but still subconsciously disallow their culture to be saturated by the dominant practices. Contextualizing the literature in the Philippines, this stresses that Muslim women are still assumed of being the stronghold of families. Thus, the response from the dominant outgroup in dismissing the intersectional issues of these minorities becomes the perceptible problem. The [incessant] problem that they experience is how formal institutions do not become representative of their interests, since they are the best actors that could institutionally mobilize policies that

cater to their welfare (Dawood, 2019; Joly & Wadia, 2017). This problem also concretizes in the Philippines because ethnic minorities are discouraged by the existing political framework which only favors the majority, and the propensity of the electorate to vote personalities instead of credible candidates vying for a seat (Coff&Bolzendahl, 2020; Vitriol et al., 2019). Even though there are national representatives and local governments that champion their interests, it cannot completely address the problems that plague these individuals located in Metro Manila. Significantly, intersectionality literature enables the further scrutinization and cognizance of issues that contribute to Muslim women's mobility and participation. It also enables the progression of the literature to actualize in countries like the Philippines so as to ward off the immediate monolithic characterization towards ethnic minority women—especially Muslim women.

The research aimed to determine the intersectional realities of Muslim women who are residing in Quiapo, Manila, and in Maharlika Village, Taguig. To strengthen the study, a) it also aimed to illustrate the effect of their realities as Muslim women on their sense of belongingness, and b) to discuss how the intersecting issues affect their voting preferences. The research investigation centered on the Filipino Muslim women who are residing in Muslim towns Quiapo, Manila, and Maharlika Village, Taguig. The research analyzed the intersectional realities of Muslim women which affect

their voting preferences. Moreover, the study is limited to the following: (1) the study did not focus on other in-group identities as it only focused on the feminine gendered minority, (2) the researchers did not focus on the other contributory factors to how Muslim women are discriminated like in interreligious dialogue or education, and (3) the research did not delve on the historical nuances of various tribes in Muslim Mindanao and would mainly focus on Muslim women who resides in both Quiapo and Maharlika Village.

METHODOLOGY

Politicized Collective Identity

This research is based on a form of social identity which accentuates the importance of an individual's psyche on any social reality. In relation to this, Social Identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) posits that individuals intend to create a positive atmosphere for their respective groups. It is because each one of them gets to define as well as scrutinize their experiences due to their attachment to the in-group. In this study, the research focused on the Politicized Collective Identity (PCI) by Bernd Simon and Bert Klandermans. Simon and Klandermans (2001) postulated a nuanced form of social identity which positions on a politicized collective identity. The theory emphasizes that in-group members who experience power struggles encompass much larger contexts and other social actors. Under this theory, it involves concepts like that of collective identity, political struggle, and societal context,

which constitute as its foundational platform. They further argued that the PCI Theory leads up to a series of antecedent processes from: the awareness of shared experiences to the adversarial attribution and to the involvement of society by triangulation.

The concept of collective identity facilitates how the researchers understand behavior of the in-group. For instance, the collective behavior they exhibit becomes evident through favoring in-groups rather than out-groups and even accepting criticisms from in-group members than from out-group members. Additionally, ethnic identity strengthens this classification, for it involves a commonality even outside the bounds of religion (Chandra, 2006; Gurr & Moore, 1997); moreover, it means that they share a culture that holds their community together. This then implies that the collective identity stretches its sphere of influence with how members perceive their political struggle (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tyler & Smith, 1999). Power struggles experienced by a group are usually asymmetrical (Ng, 1980), which are associated with the existing socio-structural dimensions that undermine an in-group's experiences and narratives even if the out-group does not intend to do so. Relating the theory's foundational platform, it also acknowledges the societal context in which communities are involved. This adds another dimension to the power struggle they come up against. To illustrate, it does not instantaneously

look as if there are two bipolar conflicts, but rather has another facet that encapsulates the society at large.

With the foundations presented, this unfolds anew because the politicization narrative intersects with the collective identity, power struggle, and societal context. This process becomes manifested through the awareness of their shared grievances that the in-group possesses (Klandermans, 1997; Lalonde & Cameron, 1994). To contextualize, it does not materialize in one specific manner but through having experienced blatant injustices, violated rights, and even through discriminatory instances. Consequently, the process does not politicize through awareness alone because it must involve a common opponent the group blames due to their circumstances (Ferree & Miller, 1985; Major, 1994). This adverse attribution incentivizes individuals to direct their anger towards how dominant narratives harm their identities. As a group shares their lived realities and adverse attribution to an external facet, they are more likely to compel a corrective mechanism from the instigator of the unfairness. With this, the act of involvement underscores the politicized collective identity's attempt to transform their relationship upon the community, therefore, resulting in an intersectional society wherein the in-group can thrive.

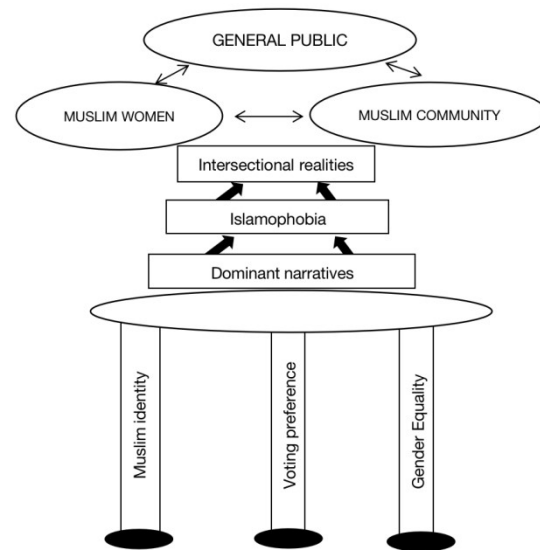


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

In this study, the salient factors give nuance through how Muslim women are grounded by the foundational platforms, which then result to the transformation and diversification of their identities. These variables provide a foundation to the construction of social worlds created by Muslim women because these give depth to their narratives they create and how they make sense of their belongingness inside and outside their domains. The impact of these factors shapes the experiences of Filipino Muslim women. Moreover, it also impacts the existing paradigm that they are in constant battle with, the fight for gender equality. Thus, this framework is aligned with how the Politicized Collective Identity Theory (PCI) operates, which then provides significance to how Muslim women go about society alongside the diverse and intersectional realities they experience.

To further contextualize the research, PCI found its relevance through understanding the foundations to which influence Muslim women through a shared identity of being a Muslim, a political struggle in voting, and the gender equality context, respectively. It is already assumed that the collective identities of Muslim women are ingrained through their ethno-religious affiliations living in Muslim-populated communities. Similarly, the shared political struggle that these Muslim women have was reflected through how they vote upon political actors that can possibly champion their interests. Lastly, the study also emphasized that the conflict of Muslim women were not dichotomous but is dynamic due to the existence of intersectional realities which subject these ethnic minority women in varying nuances.

The three foundations of the study started with the collective identity that pertains to the foundation of Islamic minorities, which cultivates their experiences and identity to different conflicts associated with that particular ethnic minority. In this regard, their sense of belongingness could be identified. The second foundation pertains to the power struggle that manifests through their participation through voting. Consequently, the last foundation concerns the gender equality as a common ground from how the patriarchal structures limit the mobility of women, which also include the gendered Muslim minority. The foundations mentioned carry on the shared grievances of Muslims in experiencing discrimination due to their association to their religion. This becomes evident through employment of different policies and approaches that undermine their minority status and intensify their fear in the community. Thus, the foundations also carry the Muslim women as the main actors that are affected by the other variables. Furthermore, this then affect Muslim women on how they would interact with the general public.

Therefore, PCI emphasizes its significance to the study through the process that the collective identity undergoes, which in turn complements the variables of the study. In the awareness of shared grievances, the first stage of the process looks into the context of dominant narratives and its effects to the gendered Muslim minority (i.e. islamophobia). The adverse attribution then aligns toward these

narratives subject Muslim women and the Muslim minority because it agitates them through their Islamophobic exclusion and discriminative assumptions. Moreover, this leads to the amalgamation of how the society involves itself in recognizing their lived realities that are compounded by intersecting narratives they experience. With this, the PCI theory was quintessential in understanding how the process transforms the behavior that Muslim women demonstrate in the status quo.

Approach

The researchers of the study used the qualitative approach. A qualitative approach forwards a process that collects and analyzes data in various stages to understand the case based on gathered data gradually. This also describes the environment as it is perceived by people in their everyday lives (Cropley, 2019). The study sought to understand a given research case focused on the intersectional realities of Muslim women in Muslim towns in Quiapo, Manila and Maharlika Village, Taguig, that affect their voting preferences. A qualitative approach was employed in the study as it significantly underscored the multifaceted realities of Muslim women that the researchers ought to study. Utilizing a qualitative approach, it also gave emphasis on studying the meaning of the group ascribed to a particular social reality (Creswell J. & Creswell J.D., 2018).

Method

In this research, a descriptive method was utilized. Descriptive method further identifies the realities of the given case, for it is reliant on understanding the study at a deeper level (Nassaji, 2015). The nature of the method underscores a thorough explanation of the variables of the study and the way in which they interact. To illustrate, variables in the study will not just be characterized at a surface-level but it was established comprehensively. This allowed the researchers to look further into the struggles of the participants. Moreover, the descriptive method created a detailed discussion on the accounts of Muslim women, and how they attributed their sense of belongingness to the intersecting issues they experienced.

Research Design

This research study employed a case study as its research design. In using case study as its research design, it incorporates a study of a case within a real-life contemporary setting. This helped the researchers gather accurate information to develop an in-depth understanding about the case regarding different issues (Creswell J. & Creswell J.D., 2018). In this design, the first step forwarded is to identify the case and then collect the qualitative data through interviews. Then, the researchers formed a discussion and meaning, which builds patterns and relationships of the case (Creswell, 2007).

Additionally, Lijphart (1971) highlights that case studies should not be used to generalize a study's research participants. The caveat, however, is through how cases shed light to existing realities rather than being used as a generalization of a participant's circumstances. The case study research design is quintessential for this research because it not only helped in directing an in-depth understanding of the intersectional realities that Muslim women experience, but also directed the researchers to determine the voting preferences of Muslim women. Furthermore, this research design bettered the understanding with how Muslim women take part in civic participation through voting in their communities.

Data and Data Gathering Technique

For the data collection procedure, the data was collected through a semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview guided the researchers and at the same time gave them room to ask essential details for the study. In relation to this, the interview questions are made of open-ended questions that further helped in understanding various contexts of the respondents in the study. Additionally, an informed consent form and guide questions were given out to the participants to also earn their approval for an interview. After being given the permission to conduct an interview with the participants, the researchers also ask the consent of the participants to video record the interview for documentation. In conducting the interview, the data

gathered was also validated by an expert in the field to direct the researcher to a richer understanding of the study.

Key Informants and Selection Criteria

The study consisted of seven participants for the interview, which was filtered through a criterion sampling that has the following qualifications: (a) Muslim Filipina (b) lives in Quiapo, Manila, (c) registered voter and (d) has participated in Philippine elections. And another seven participants with a criterion sampling of the following qualifications: (a) Muslim Filipina (b) lives in Maharlika Village, Taguig, (c) registered voter, and (d) has participated in Philippine elections. Additionally, there are two experts that were experts in the field that was interviewed to further strengthen the study.

The locale of the study is in the Muslim towns of Quiapo, Manila, and Maharlika Village, Taguig City. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority on 2017, in the National Capital Region (NCR), both Manila and Taguig City has the most the Muslim population. Both Quiapo and Maharlika Village is considered as the areas that Muslim communities migrate to. These areas are known for the Muslim community not only because of the economic incentives that they may receive, but also to feel belonged in a community where a Mosque is nearly located (Watanabe, 2008). Carlos and Cudra (2017) caveats this claim by acknowledging that the separation from

what these Muslim were accustomed to will more likely be affected by areas that deem their traditions irrelevant. Moreover, situating the locale in Quiapo, Manila and in Maharlika Village, Taguig yielded results that enabled the researchers to understand the plights of Muslim women vis-a-vis their voting preferences.

Data Gathering Procedure

The interviews were done online due to the rising cases of COVID-19 that is continuously experienced by the country. To ensure the safety precautions given out by the government, it was safer for the participants of the study, the experts, as well as the researchers to communicate through an online platform such as the Zoom cloud application or Google meets. In conducting the interview, the collection of data was through recording the session with the consent of the research participants.

Ethical Consideration

The participation of an individual in this study was completely voluntary, which means that the participant had the option to decide whether or not to take part in the study. Before the interview, the participants were given an informed consent form to make them aware about the purpose and the benefits of the study. The validity of the consent form stands, especially when the participant may feel uncomfortable, etc. With the confirmation of the participant to participate in the study, an interview question guide was sent to their email

for them to know the interview process. To ensure the privacy of the interviewees, there was no personal information that appeared in the analysis of data, as they were identified as interviewees 1, 2, and etc.; the researchers also ensured that the participant's personal information was not given out or revealed to anyone. The study was conducted for two years, and the research data will be destroyed five years after using it.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed through a thematic analysis. Before employing the analysis, the interviews from each participant were transcribed word for word and analyzed thematically. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a way to analyze, and describe data in detail. Moreover, this mode of analysis is used by researchers to fully grasp several dimensions of the case study (Huberman & Miles, 1994).

Using thematic analysis, the researchers were able to analyze the respondents' experiences from dominant narratives resulting to their Islamophobic perception, and its further implication toward their voting preferences. The study of Weatherhead and Daiches (2010) made use of this analysis in order to codify, and further probe the nuances to a greater extent; Furthermore, the employment of the thematic analysis would facilitate in analyzing how the voting preference of Muslim women are shaped by different contextual nuances

(e.g., gender inequalities, dominant narratives, etc.).

In order for the research to be more reliable, the proponents of this study triangulated the data through validation with an expert in the field. This ensured that the codified analysis is socially, and politically correct to clarify different biases. To contextualize, this would crystallize the knowledge and understanding of the proponents of this research when analyzing the experiences and realities of Muslim women. Therefore, validating the data through experts in the field of Islamic studies was enriched and rolled out a comprehensive understanding for the researchers to employ.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Muslim Women and their Sense of Belongingness

Effect of dominant narratives to Muslim women

Taking into account the everyday experiences of Muslim women in the study, they all conceded that existing approaches are valid. All of them are grounded that these governmental policies and approaches were essential since it upholds the protection of a state's national security. Albeit this concession, the researchers found that these Muslim women agree that there is a problem vis-a-vis the approach and the implementation of laws in the country. To illustrate, the vague and generalized definition of what a terrorist looks like underscores the predicament

they are experiencing every day. Because Muslims were already seen as militants due to events like the 9/11, this echoed the notion that Muslims are instantaneously terrorists (Norimitsu& Constant, 2020; Shahzad et al., 2020). Considering that the respondents were from different areas in the Philippine capital, the level of discrimination, as they have continuously emphasized in their narratives, are relatively similar.

The disconnect between the intention of the approaches to its implementation highlights the concerns of these gendered Muslim minorities. The majority of the respondents attributed that to better address national problems in the Philippines, they also need to acknowledge other contextual and intersectional nuances. Then, they realized that the governmental approach towards preventing and countering terrorism is flawed and one-dimensional. This coincided with the common characterization of how the governments themselves are the perpetrator of such flawed standardization.

Moreover, this cognizance enabled them to acknowledge that the existing state mechanisms (i.e. PCVE approaches) need to be strategic in attempting to mitigate such problems. Grounding this narrative, the respondents laid out the premise that the governments must not necessarily focus on one facet of the problem, nor limit itself to a specific problem--violent extremism. From the above-mentioned discussions, Muslim women were pushing for targetive strategies which focus on a much

intersectional context. It becomes consequential because it opens up the discussion of whether the multifaceted realities of Muslim women affect their sense of belongingness.

Struggle to feel belonged

In general, Muslim women have been subjected to a singular and exclusionary narrative that roots from Islamophobia. These kinds of discrimination impact a Muslim woman's sense of belongingness inside and outside their community. Experiencing out-group discrimination confronts Muslim women with frustration. Lambasted with extremist remarks, being treated as lesser humans, and judged by wearing their religious symbols (i.e., veils and hijabs) are the common out-group discrimination they experience. To emphasize the first intersection, most of the participants shared that they encountered such discrimination while wearing a hijab.

Illustrating this, she was not properly accommodated in public places (e.g., banks, school, etc.) because she is branded as someone who can probably cause harm to others. This dehumanizing reality reinforced the experience of Muslim women. To illustrate the second intersection, several participants narrated being disallowed to speak up against men as this is a sign of disrespect to them. Religious and cultural traditions made her, in her very own community, discontented due to the inherent patriarchal suppression associated with her belongingness in the community. Moreover, the

amalgamated experiences by the research participants can be sourced from out-group and in-group discrimination; this exposes them to the stereotypical perception of people when interacting with them. The biased inclination towards Muslim women is inherently linked with their Muslim identity which prompts non-Muslim individuals to falsely assume that they exhibit a homogenized behavior

Significantly, the research participants emphasized the role of media in the proliferation of bigoted narratives regarding their minority status. Many participants mentioned that social media plays a critical role in creating an image that links a Muslim woman's accountability to the prevalence of violent extremism. She stated that people, meaning those who subscribe to these biased perceptions, are amplified by the material or information they get from mainstream media. For instance, several news companies paint the minority community as violent individuals through their articles and reports.

Majority of them ascribed that this narrative is apparent due to their lack of knowledge about the community as a whole--such as not having a Muslim friend or companion, which stress the lack of awareness they have. Correspondingly, they also nuanced their experiences through the spread of news, and associate it as the biggest contributor to the exacerbation of the prejudice from out-groups. Similar to other respondents, she stated that if there are reports that stress on terrorist-

related conflict in the Muslim Mindanao, Muslim citizens from outside the region are more likely targets for discrimination, especially if they live in areas where they are considered as minorities. They causally linked this to the impact of consuming information given out by the media.

Alongside an expert on social identity and minority groups, he reinforced how the interaction with these gendered minorities is crucial in understanding their standpoints. He also pointed out the evidence of discrimination, particularly in social media, is the overarching result that outgroups find themselves in. Through this, it can be analyzed that discrimination does not operate in a vacuum, and news is not just consumed to know what is happening in the world. But it also must be seen as a factor that worsens such exclusionary associations because of the different avenues where people can acquire information (i.e., social media).

Moreover, most of the participants underscore the dynamism of discrimination, which shows the worsening reality that mainstream and social media bring. From what most of the participants revealed, the unclear definition of extremism among governmental approaches and social media's reach impacts how the out-group and general public perceive them. Furthermore, an expert who was interviewed for the study argued that the vagueness of the definition of such approaches also comes from the non-existence of a direct translation to the Filipino language or in local Moro

dialects. She believes that these will help them in comprehending and addressing the problems identified by the participants and the community at large. Compounding the already worsened narratives Muslim women experience, the impact of social media needs to be emphasized. In the realm of social media, it contributes to the homogenizing impact to Muslim women. Most of the research participants narrated their experience of using social media, and how the non-Muslims immediately associate them with prejudice and, worse, as a terrorist. The lack of interaction and awareness further moves the outgroup away from understanding their realities. Thus, Muslim women's disenfranchisement affects their sense of belongingness—especially among out-groups holdover in avenues like social media.

Intersectional Realities of Muslim Women

Upliftment of Intersectionality in Understanding Voting Preferences

Understanding the intersectional realities of Muslim women—as a gendered minority—gave rise to the acknowledgment of the multilayered of conflict which contribute to their experiences. The feeling of being misrepresented manifests across all Muslim women participants of the study. According to several research participants, Muslim issues could be better upheld if they are talked about by non-Muslims in the country. Their narratives showed that they are not divorced from the everyday experiences

of a non-Muslim Filipino. For example, most participants were drawn to political candidates that champion Muslim rights—considering that they are in dire need of representation in the political sphere. This became quintessential because it proved a causal link to the impact of dominant narratives with their religious identity. To piece up the process of the analysis, the operationalization of the impact of intersectional issues was through the varying experiences they undergo in society.

Drawing from the experiential statements of the research participants, the results showed that intersectionality of issues concerning both Muslim women and the majority's welfare must come to light. The preference in the voting of the research participants was not solely based on political candidates who uphold the rights of Muslim women, but also who prioritize different sets of issues which would promote the betterment for the country in general. A viable political candidate, based on the findings, whose platforms are focused on the plights of farmers, lower-income households, and small and medium enterprises are important. To reinforce the third intersection, it shows through the heterogeneity of their voting preferences. All of the participants gave a premium to the rights of structurally limited non-Muslims rather than choosing their plights alone. Moreover, it can be deduced that Muslim women acknowledge the significance of having a multifaceted perspective to solve the everyday struggles of the majority. An expert in Muslim women studies and a

convener of the Philippine Center on Islam and Democracy justified the need to recognize the intersectionality of political participation, and that the gendered approach is essential to have a holistic multifactored analysis.

Across all participants, their culture, religion, and gender identity do not exclusively influence their choice when choosing an electoral candidate. It is important to note that these minorities still see the betterment of society in general as a priority. Although these Muslim women are subjected to the government's prerogative and constricted in their own community, they still give high regard to other sectors that are in need of institutionalized attention (i.e., farming, education, etc.). Giving premium to these issues prove that they are not detached from the everyday realities that suppress other minorities' actualization in society. For instance, the majority of the respondents perceive that the agricultural sector needs equal attention similar to the glorification that the government has over law enforcement.

Most of them experienced the inequality of treatment between Muslims in Mindanao compared to those in the Philippine capital. Correspondingly, these asymmetrical realities prompted them to value education for the community's upliftment--regardless of their areas in the country. These illustrated scenarios underscore the factors that also motivate Muslim women in choosing a reasonable

candidate whom can effect change in the community.

The cognizance towards intersectionality postulates a viable metric in understanding the Muslim women experience. Through the awareness of this reality, it acknowledged that these minorities are not separated from the mainstream problems that everyone is facing; hence, all of this provided impetus to the government to better the existing practices and approaches (Clarke & Moghadam, 2018; Ragandang III, 2018). Inciting inclusive participation should be prioritized. To better illustrate, the focus on educational upliftment could be one of the strategies so that these gendered minorities do not feel that they are treated as an "other" citizen. It must be noted that the country still does not have an Islamic Schools law that would institutionalize the education for and among Muslims across the country. Moreover, the expert firmly believed that there should be institutionalized mechanisms apart from having gendered approaches in CVEs to better prevent varying conflicts to manifest. Even if there are already existing mechanisms that contribute to the societal awareness of individuals, the prevalence of discrimination among non-Muslim citizens are still apparent. These show that the stress towards education is important to prevent the exacerbation of bigoted narratives that subject Muslim minorities in the Philippines--especially gendered ones.

Equally significant, the recognition of how the intersectionality of issues

manifests is not enough. All of the participants constantly emphasize the idea of community building. Contrasting this discussion away from the aforementioned explanations, the lens to be utilized here is grounded upon the employment of empowerment strategies by the government towards these communities. The surface-level acknowledgment that candidates highlight in their platforms (i.e., supporting Bangsamoro Basic Law, Muslim rights, etc.) does not incentivize Muslims to fully participate even in their own communities. For example, most of the Muslim women in the study are discouraged from voting because they are women. They are also deemed to be submissive to the whims of their spouses because that is their tradition to which they need to adhere to. Furthermore, these skewed yet culturally grounded narratives reinforce the need to compel communities to participate in political affairs (e.g., voting). Even though Muslim women experience minimal and hostile attempts from the government, they believe that addressing their plights needs to be intersectional instead of linear ones.

Considering varying factors that influence their informed choice, the data suggests that the existing narratives--whether focused on homogenizing their identity or mitigating discrimination--need to be context-sensitive so as to not disempower their individual realities and their roles in their communities at large. This accentuated the significance of uplifting these communities for them not to be deemed as a stereotypical threat by the out-group members of the

country. Therefore, the intersecting realities of Muslim women affect their voting preferences.

DISCUSSION

The researchers found that the intersectional realities of Muslim women affect their sense of belongingness and voting preferences. Muslim women in the study mostly experienced the same severity of unequal treatment and discrimination due to how the in-group (i.e. Muslims) and out-groups (i.e. non-Muslims) brand them as submissive individuals and as terrorists who are threats to their communities respectively. Lack of awareness and interaction with these gendered minorities proved to be a crucial factor in understanding them. Through this identification, the synonymy of narratives provides causality to how the inequalities impact their voting preferences, which addressed the first objective of the study.

The second objective positions itself on the importance of intersectionality in the lives of Muslim women. It was demonstrated that predicaments that surround the life of a gendered Muslim minority are not only limited to violent extremism, but also through their gender and practices. Moreover, the findings suggest that identification alone would not be sufficient in addressing urgent concerns of the community. Focus on educational reforms to Islamic communities and a multifactored approach in mitigating problems linked to their communities

are essential; it prompted the analysis of uplifting the community's role in the status quo. The informed choice of these Muslim women, meaning their individual agency, is not invalidated if they still opt for a candidate that does not necessarily champion Muslim rights. Through this, it underscored the essentiality of their voting preferences because it showed that they are concerned with larger policies, platforms, and political initiatives outside their own domains. Therefore, the findings addressed the concern brought about by the second objective of the study.

Politicized Collective Identity (Simon & Klandermans, 2001) served as the framework to determine their sense of belongingness and voting preferences of Muslim women. To contextualize the theoretical framework, PCI finds its relevance through understanding the intersectional realities, which refers to the interdependent identities and inequalities experienced every day by Muslim women. The shared political struggle of these Muslim women is reflected through their experiences that translate to the misrepresentation of the in-group's identities. Since Islamophobia standardizes their experience into a singular and homogenized one, the participants in the study felt disappointed, despite having diverse experiences. Their frustration materializes through the persistent stigma from out-groups, specifically being dubbed as threats to national security in the country. In this regard, it does not only involve their political struggles but also their

respective identities. The embeddedness of Islamophobic prejudice based on the experiences of the participants describes how it influenced the perception of their gender and cultural identities, which constantly affects their sense of belongingness, whether inside or outside the community. Interestingly, all these are strengthened by the lack of knowledge and awareness that people have over their respective multifaceted standpoints.

The findings become essential because it aligns with how Muslim women process their experiences in intersecting ways. In the state of Muslim women, they have been subjected to varying forms of discrimination like racism, harassment, and misogyny (Mason-Bish & Zempi, 2019; Tariq & Syed, 2018). The discrimination that Muslim women experience strengthens the increasing portrayal of Muslim women as victims of patriarchal oppression (Garcia Yeste et al., 2020). In this case, research participants associate the discrimination that they experience both inside and outside their community to their sense of belongingness. As mentioned, the experiences of the participants to outgroup discrimination confront them with frustration. Lambasted with extremist remarks, being treated as lesser humans, and judged by wearing their religious symbols (i.e., veils, niqabs, and hijabs) are the common out-group discrimination they experience. Moreover, the experiences of Muslim women participant are strengthened by Warren (2019) that through the religious symbols that they wear like the veils and hijabs that symbolized Islamism

they experience varying forms of discrimination worsens the perception towards them.

The discrimination against the Muslim women are not only limited to above mentioned as the participants highlights the impact of social media in their sense of belongingness. The impact of social media is directed towards Muslim women in proliferating prejudicial narratives regarding their minority status. The participants linked the proliferation of bigoted narratives to the impact of consuming information given out by the media. However, the unclear definition of governmental approaches (e.g., CVE approaches) also contributed a stigmatizing perception that Muslim women experience in their daily lives. An expert interviewed for the study argued that the vagueness of such definition comes from the non-existence of a direct translation to the Filipino language or in local Moro dialects. Moreover, having a clear definition can help in addressing the problems identified by the participants—especially the discrimination that they experience that affects their sense of belongingness.

To sum up, the recognition of intersecting issues that are experience by Muslim women had an effect on their voting preference. Experiences of the participants became consistent with the politicized collective identity theory since their discontentment are not solely focused on political misrepresentation and Islamophobic stigma. The overwhelming result presents that the preference in voting of the research

participants are not only fixated on the political candidates who uphold the rights of Muslim [women], but also those who prioritize different sets of issues that would promote the development of the country as a whole. Preference is universally modified by the decision-making process that involves choice which either be consciously or unconsciously done (Lopez-Moctezuma, 2020; Osborne & Baroody, 2021). The state of making decisions, whether conscious or unconscious, has an effect on the election outcomes of the country and its own governance (Harfst & Laslier, 2021).

Even if the participants emphasize that their individual experiences are diverse, they still feel challenged and conflicted by how they are viewed in society. It should be acknowledged that there are already empowered Muslim women in the status quo. Despite striving to become distinct in their own cultural, religious, and political domains, this translates to the research participants' eagerness for in-group and out-groups to view them in a multifaceted perspective. As a result, Muslim women in the study responded to the homogenizing standardization by advocating for electoral candidates that target varying issues rather than being engrossed on a singular advocacy.

Anabo (2021) and Reilley (2021) stressed that voting preferences are a set of ideals wherein voters choose viable candidates during the election. These sets of ideals can also refer to where voters identify themselves whether through their values, profession, ethnic

group or political beliefs ((Boudreau, 2019; Henry & Louis-Sidois, 2020; Houle, 2018). Similarly, Kalkan et al. (2018) further characterized this by emphasizing that electoral choices are based on memberships in social groups. For instance, a Muslim Mindanaon will more likely identify themselves with a representative that comes from the same region (i.e. Duterte, Gutoc, etc.); this is reinforced by the benefit of mobilizing the Bangsamoro Basic Law (Houle, 2019; Houle et al., 2019). However, based on the results, all of the participants gave a premium to the rights of structurally limited non-Muslims rather than choosing their plights alone. These plights are centered on the agricultural rights of the farmers, the improvement of the quality of life of the lower income households and even prioritizing small and medium enterprises.

The findings underscore the importance of how intersectionality is positioned as a viable metric in understanding not only the experiences of Muslim women, but also how it shapes their voting preferences. Through the awareness of this reality, it acknowledges that Muslim women are not separated from the mainstream problems that everyone is facing. In fact, all of the issues mentioned by the participants provide an impetus to the government to better the existing political initiatives and policies. This emphasizes that there should be continuous efforts to better understand how their identities develop, since they are highly diverse groups and individuals. Aspects like their power, oppression, privilege, and participation reinforce the significance

of intersectionality. Even if Muslim women are subjected to such Islamophobic exclusion and prejudice, they are still distinctly unique individuals with varying live experiences. Moreover, an intersectional approach and inclusive participation of these gendered minorities should be prioritized.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With regard to the study's limitations, the researchers focused on the demographics of the participants especially with their respective locales. The participants are only limited to Muslim women who reside in Quiapo, Manila and Maharlika village Taguig, and who participated in the 2019 elections. Most of the participants then voluntarily disclosed that they were raised in Metro Manila with strict observation to their religious identity as they are also closely knitted to their relatives who are in Muslim Mindanao region. As such, the findings reflect the experiences of third-generation Muslim women, even though this was not an intentional sampling decision. Additionally, participants are only limited to Muslim women and to the locale mentioned. Despite the best intentions to offer a balanced research in observing the religious and gender identity of the participants, another research team with different religious and gender background may have had a different research process and interpretation in the research findings. In spite of these considerations, the findings from this study are meant to be

transferable so that readers can determine how the themes transfer to other populations, like of the LGBTQIA+ community for being a gendered minority and contexts similar to this research investigation. Thus, the transferability of the findings should be contextualized by these considerations.

For future recommendations with researches related to Muslim women groups, it can explore and extend beyond questions and paradigms that categorize Muslim identity as being binary or mutually exclusive from other identities. For example, rather than asking whether participants are Muslim women, researchers would benefit by understanding situational and contextual considerations such as available to promote multiculturalism and cultural adaptation. The consideration of their ethnic backgrounds of the participants may also be beneficial for the future studies. Another instance could be how Muslim women identify themselves as part of Tau Sug or as a Maranaon. Increasing the emphasis on contextual level factors can allow for a richer understanding of the influences that shape the participants' experiences and processes. As evidenced in this research investigation, the Muslim towns in Metro Manila such as Quiapo, Manila, and Maharlika Village provided a unique context for the participants in the study. Muslim women living in other parts of the country, such as in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao can be considered as they are likely to have a different meaning-making process which is attributed to

their sense of belongingness and voting preferences. Additionally, it should also be noted that the aim of a case study is not to generalize or be representative of a specific population or of different Muslim women populations (Creswell J. & Creswell J.D., 2018).

Another viable alternative for future studies can be the utilization of Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework (Crenshaw et al., 1995). In this framework, it encompasses the intersectionality of the participants' realities because it attempts to view varying narratives in structural ways. It includes the resistance to be trapped in a homogenous characterization and a renegotiation of their identities. Since Muslim women feel a constant need to defend their cultural identities, the response of creating a facade of cohesiveness and harmony can provide a substantial contribution to Muslim women studies. Additionally, analyzing governmental policies such as CVE approaches can further concretize how Muslim women adapt to this kind of circumstance. Future research in this aspect can help understand varying ways to mitigate and resolve conflicts they experience. Also, gendered approaches of CVE facilitated a more niched and concretized understanding as to how this affects Muslim women in the Philippines.

There is a growing body of work on conducting Muslim women studies that relate to their identity as Muslim individuals. The research contributes to this scholarship by highlighting their challenges under intersectional realities,

while taking into consideration their sense of belongingness and voting preferences. Muslim women, Muslim communities in Metro Manila, local government officials, and those working directly in crafting various government approaches would benefit from understanding how individuals negotiate their sense of individual distinctiveness while also considering their cultural belongingness to their community. While the sense of belongingness is a developmental process for all women, the process is intensified for ethnic minority women given the diversity of the group and the shared realities of having to confront religious and gendered prejudice.

It also allowed Muslim women to present inclusive participation through presenting their voting preferences. In this regard, it minimized the group's internal and external differences; thereby, allowing members to cope with anti-Muslim stigmas and discrimination. Willingness to vote for political candidates, who do not necessarily champion Muslim rights, shows that their realities are not solely based on their ethnic and religious affinity. This underscores the impact of their intersectional realities in their everyday lives. To encapsulate this further, the study findings allow for a richer understanding of how Muslim women are affected in attaining their sense of belongingness and voting preferences considering their intersectional realities.

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