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The impact of Islamic political thought on governance systems: A comparative analytical study between Sunni and Shia models

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Abstract

This research investigates the differential impact of Sunni and Shia Islamic political thought on contemporary governance systems through a comprehensive comparative examination. Using mixed-methods research incorporating quantitative assessment of administrative measures from 12 Middle Eastern countries (2003-2024), historical institutional analysis, and contemporary case studies, this research tests three primary hypotheses: (H1) Sunni-majority countries demonstrate superior administrative efficiency compared to Shia-influenced systems, (H2) historical duration correlates positively with institutional legitimacy in Islamic political systems, and (H3) economic development mediates the relationship between sectarian political models and governance outcomes. Statistical analysis reveals notable variations in administrative efficiency between Sunni-majority countries ($M = 0.29$, $SD = 0.52$) and Shia/Mixed systems ($M = -1.15$, $SD = 0.61$), $t(10) = 2.826$, $p = 0.018$. Correlation analysis demonstrates a strong positive relationship between GDP per capita and administrative efficiency ($r = 0.663$, $p = 0.019$). Historical analysis of six major Islamic political systems spanning 1,400 years reveals that Sunni caliphates averaged 312 years in duration compared to 170 years for Shia-influenced systems. The study concludes that while sectarian political thought influences governance structures, financial growth and organizational structure are stronger predictors of administrative efficiency than theological orientation alone.

Keywords: Comparative politics, Governance systems, Institutional theory, Islamic political thought, Middle East, Statistical analysis, Sunni-Shia divide.

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1. Introduction

The relationship between Islamic political thought and administrative efficiency represents one of the most complex and consequential questions in contemporary Middle Eastern studies. As the region continues to grapple with challenges of democratization, state-building, and financial growth, understanding how different interpretations of Islamic political theory translate into practical governance outcomes becomes increasingly critical [1]. This study addresses a significant gap in the literature by providing the first comprehensive quantitative assessment comparing administrative efficiency between Sunni and Shia political models across multiple countries and time periods.

The theoretical foundations of Islamic political thought have evolved significantly since the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632 CE, with the most fundamental division emerging between Sunni and Shia interpretations of legitimate political authority [2]. Sunni political theory, representing approximately 85-90% of the global Muslim population, emphasizes the concept of the caliphate (khilafah) as the ideal form of Islamic governance, where political authority derives from community consensus (ijma) and adherence to Islamic law (sharia) [3]. In contrast, Shia political thought centers on the concept of the Imamate, where legitimate political authority is believed to reside exclusively with divinely appointed descendants of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law [4].

These theological differences have profound implications for contemporary governance structures. Sunni-majority countries have generally adopted more flexible approaches to governmental authority, allowing for various forms of government, from constitutional monarchies to republican systems, provided they maintain Islamic principles [5]. Shia-influenced political systems, particularly since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, have tended toward more rigid interpretations of religious authority in governance, exemplified by Iran's system of velayat-e faqih (guardianship of the jurist) [6].

1.1. Research Problem and Objectives

Despite extensive theoretical literature on Islamic political thought, evidence-based investigations comparing the administrative efficiency of different sectarian models remain limited. Most existing studies focus on single-country cases or rely on interpretive examinations without systematic statistical testing [7]. This research addresses three critical gaps: (1) the lack of quantitative analysis comparing governance outcomes across sectarian lines, (2) insufficient integration of historical and contemporary data, and (3) limited testing of causal mechanisms linking theological differences to administrative efficiency.

The primary research objective is to determine whether and how Sunni and Shia political thought differentially impact administrative efficiency in contemporary Middle Eastern states. Secondary objectives include: (1) analyzing historical patterns of institutional durability across different Islamic political systems, (2) identifying mediating variables that influence the relationship between sectarian political models and governance outcomes, and (3) developing policy recommendations for improving administrative efficiency in Islamic political systems.

1.2. Research Hypotheses

Based on theoretical literature and preliminary information examination, this study tests three primary hypotheses:

H₁: Governance Effectiveness Hypothesis - Sunni-majority countries demonstrate significantly higher administrative efficiency scores compared to Shia-influenced political systems, controlling for financial growth and regional factors.

H₂: Historical Durability Hypothesis - Islamic political systems based on Sunni political thought exhibit greater historical durability and institutional longevity compared to Shia-based systems.

H₃: Economic Mediation Hypothesis - The relationship between sectarian political models and administrative efficiency is mediated by financial growth levels, with higher GDP per capita reducing the impact of sectarian differences on governance outcomes.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Classical Islamic Political Theory

The foundations of Islamic political thought emerged during the formative period of Islamic civilization (7th-10th centuries CE), when Muslim scholars grappled with questions of political authority, legitimacy, and governance in the absence of explicit Quranic guidance on political structures [8]. The most influential early theorist, Al-Mawardi (972-1058 CE), developed the classical Sunni theory of the caliphate in his seminal work "Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah" (The Ordinances of Government), which established the conceptual foundation for Sunni political thought that continues to influence contemporary governance models [9].

Al-Mawardi's theory emphasized several key principles that distinguish Sunni political thought: (1) the caliph's authority derives from the community's bay'ah (pledge of allegiance) rather than divine appointment, (2) the caliph must be selected from among the Quraysh tribe but need not be infallible, (3) political authority is contractual and conditional upon the ruler's adherence to Islamic law and effective governance, and (4) the community retains the right to remove an unjust or incompetent ruler [10]. These principles created a theoretical foundation for more flexible and pragmatic approaches to governance that could adapt to changing circumstances while maintaining Islamic legitimacy.

In contrast, Shia political theory developed along markedly different lines, emphasizing the concept of divine appointment and the infallibility of legitimate rulers. The foundational Shia text on political theory, "Nahj al-Balagha" (The Peak of Eloquence), attributed to Ali ibn Abi Talib, establishes the principle that legitimate political authority can only be exercised by divinely appointed Imams who possess both temporal and spiritual authority [11]. This theological position created a fundamental tension in Shia political thought between the ideal of divinely guided governance and the practical reality of Imam absence (ghaybah), leading to various adaptations and compromises throughout history.

2.2. Contemporary Governance Theory and Islamic Political Systems

Modern governance theory provides several frameworks for analyzing the effectiveness of different political systems. The World Bank's administrative measures, developed by Kaufmann et al. [12] offer six dimensions of governance quality: voice and accountability, governmental stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, legal governance, and control of corruption [12]. These indicators have been widely used in comparative political analysis and provide a standardized framework for measuring administrative efficiency across different political systems.

Research on administrative efficiency in Islamic political systems has identified several key variables that influence outcomes. Stepan and Robertson's analysis of democracy in Muslim-majority countries found that constitutional arrangements, rather than Islamic political thought per se, are the primary determinants of democratic performance [13]. Similarly, Fish's comprehensive study of Muslim countries concluded that cultural factors, including interpretations of Islamic political theory, have less impact on governance outcomes than organizational structure and financial growth [14].

However, recent scholarship has challenged these findings, arguing that different interpretations of Islamic political thought do create distinct institutional logics that influence administrative efficiency. Nasr's analysis of Shia political movements demonstrates how theological concepts of authority and legitimacy shape organizational structure and political behavior in ways that can either enhance or undermine administrative efficiency [15]. Similarly, Hamid's study of Sunni Islamist movements demonstrates how different interpretations of Islamic political theory result in varying approaches to state-building and governance [16].

2.3. Institutional Theory and Path Dependence

Institutional theory provides a crucial framework for understanding how different interpretations of Islamic political thought become embedded in governance structures and influence long-term outcomes. North's analysis of organizational transformation emphasizes how initial institutional choices create path-dependent processes that shape subsequent development [17]. In the context of Islamic political systems, the initial choice between Sunni and Shia interpretations of political authority creates distinct institutional logics that influence everything from constitutional design to bureaucratic organization.

Pierson's work on path dependence identifies four mechanisms through which initial institutional choices become self-reinforcing: large setup costs, learning effects, coordination effects, and adaptive expectations [18]. These mechanisms are particularly relevant to Islamic political systems, where theological interpretations of political authority become embedded in legal systems, educational institutions, and social norms, creating powerful incentives for organizational persistence.

Recent research by Cammett and Luong on organizational transformation in Muslim-majority countries demonstrates how different interpretations of Islamic political thought create distinct patterns of institutional development [19]. Their analysis shows that Sunni-majority countries tend to develop more flexible organizational frameworks that can adapt to changing circumstances, while Shia-influenced systems often create more rigid institutional structures that are resistant to change but may be more vulnerable to sudden collapse.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods investigative structure combining quantitative assessment with qualitative historical and institutional analysis. The quantitative component utilizes a comparative cross-national design analyzing administrative measures for 12 Middle Eastern countries over a 21-year period (2003-2024). The qualitative component employs historical institutional analysis to examine six major Islamic political systems spanning 1,400 years of Islamic history.

The investigative structure is organized around three analytical levels: (1) contemporary international assessment of administrative efficiency, (2) historical analysis of institutional durability and legitimacy, and (3) empirical investigation of specific governance mechanisms in selected countries. This multi-level approach enables comprehensive testing of the research hypotheses while providing a detailed contextual understanding of the mechanisms linking Islamic political thought to governance outcomes.

3.2. Sample Selection and Data Sources

The contemporary analysis focuses on 12 Middle Eastern countries selected based on three criteria: (1) Muslim-majority population (>50%), (2) availability of complete governance indicator data for 2003-2024, and (3) clear sectarian political orientation or mixed sectarian composition. The sample includes six Sunni-majority countries (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Jordan, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia), two Shia-majority countries (Iran), and four countries with mixed sectarian compositions or significant Shia populations (Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrain, Yemen, Syria).

Table 1. Sample Countries and Sectarian Classifications

Table 1.
Country Analysis.

Country	Dominant Model	Shia Population %	Sunni Population %	Sample Justification
Saudi Arabia	Sunni	10-15	85-90	Sunni theocracy, Wahhabi interpretation
UAE	Sunni	10	85	Sunni federation, moderate interpretation
Jordan	Sunni	2	95	Sunni constitutional monarchy
Morocco	Sunni	1	99	Sunni constitutional monarchy, Maliki school
Egypt	Sunni	1	90	Sunni republic, Al-Azhar influence
Tunisia	Sunni	1	99	Sunni republic, secular constitution
Iran	Shia	90-95	5-10	Shia theocracy, velayat-e faqih system
Iraq	Mixed	60-65	32-37	Post-2003 sectarian authority distribution
Lebanon	Mixed	32	28	Confessional democracy
Bahrain	Mixed	60-70	30-40	Sunni monarchy, Shia majority
Yemen	Mixed	35-40	60-65	Civil war, sectarian dimensions
Syria	Mixed	10-15	75	Alawite-dominated, Sunni majority

Data sources include the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), Freedom House's Freedom in the World reports, the Polity IV Project democracy scores, and economic data from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Historical data on Islamic political systems was compiled from primary sources, including chronicles, administrative documents, and secondary historical analyses.

3.3. Variables and Measurement

3.3.1. Dependent Variables

- Governance Effectiveness: World Bank WGI score (-2.5 to +2.5 scale)
- Political Stability: World Bank WGI score (-2.5 to +2.5 scale)
- Rule of Law: World Bank WGI score (-2.5 to +2.5 scale)
- Historical Durability: Years of continuous institutional operation

3.3.2. Independent Variables:

- Sectarian Political Model: Categorical (Sunni, Shia, Mixed)
- GDP per Capita: Continuous (USD, PPP-adjusted)
- Population Size: Continuous (millions)
- Oil Dependence: Oil rents as a percentage of GDP

3.3.3. Control Variables:

- Regional Location: Categorical (Gulf, Levant, North Africa)
- Colonial Legacy: Categorical (British, French, Ottoman, None)
- Conflict Exposure: Binary (major conflict 2003-2024)

3.4. Statistical Analysis Plan

The quantitative assessment employs several techniques to test the research hypotheses:

1. Descriptive Statistics: Mean comparisons and variance analysis across sectarian categories
2. Independent Samples t-tests: Testing mean differences in administrative efficiency between Sunni and Shia/Mixed systems
3. Correlation Analysis: Examining relationships between financial growth and administrative measures
4. Multiple Regression: Testing mediation effects and controlling for confounding variables
5. Time Series Analysis: Examining trends in administrative efficiency over the 21-year period

Statistical significance is set at $\alpha = 0.05$, with effect sizes calculated using Cohen's d for t-tests and R^2 for regression analyses. All analyses are conducted using Python's `scipy.stats` and `statsmodels` libraries, with robustness checks performed using alternative specifications and bootstrap confidence intervals.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analysis

The descriptive analysis reveals substantial variation in administrative efficiency across the sample countries, with clear patterns emerging along sectarian lines. Table 2 presents the key descriptive statistics for the main variables of interest. Table 2: Descriptive Statistics by Sectarian Political Model

Table 2.
Variable Analysis.

Variable	Sunni Countries (n=6)	Shia/Mixed Countries (n=6)	Total Sample (n=12)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Governance Effectiveness	0.29 (0.52)	-1.15 (0.61)	-0.43 (0.89)
Political Stability	0.30 (0.41)	-1.56 (0.78)	-0.63 (0.98)
Rule of Law	0.22 (0.38)	-1.02 (0.71)	-0.40 (0.82)
GDP per Capita (USD)	19,317 (16,890)	8,667 (7,234)	13,992 (13,456)
Population (millions)	34.3 (38.2)	25.0 (28.1)	29.7 (32.8)

The data reveal that Sunni-majority countries consistently outperform Shia/Mixed systems across all administrative measures. The largest differences appear in governmental stability, where Sunni countries average 0.30 compared to -1.56 for Shia/Mixed systems, representing a difference of 1.86 standard deviations. Economic development also shows substantial variation, with Sunni countries averaging more than double the GDP per capita of Shia/Mixed systems.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between financial growth and administrative efficiency, clearly showing the clustering of Sunni-majority countries in the upper-right quadrant (high GDP, high governance), while Shia/Mixed countries cluster in the lower-left quadrant (low GDP, low governance).

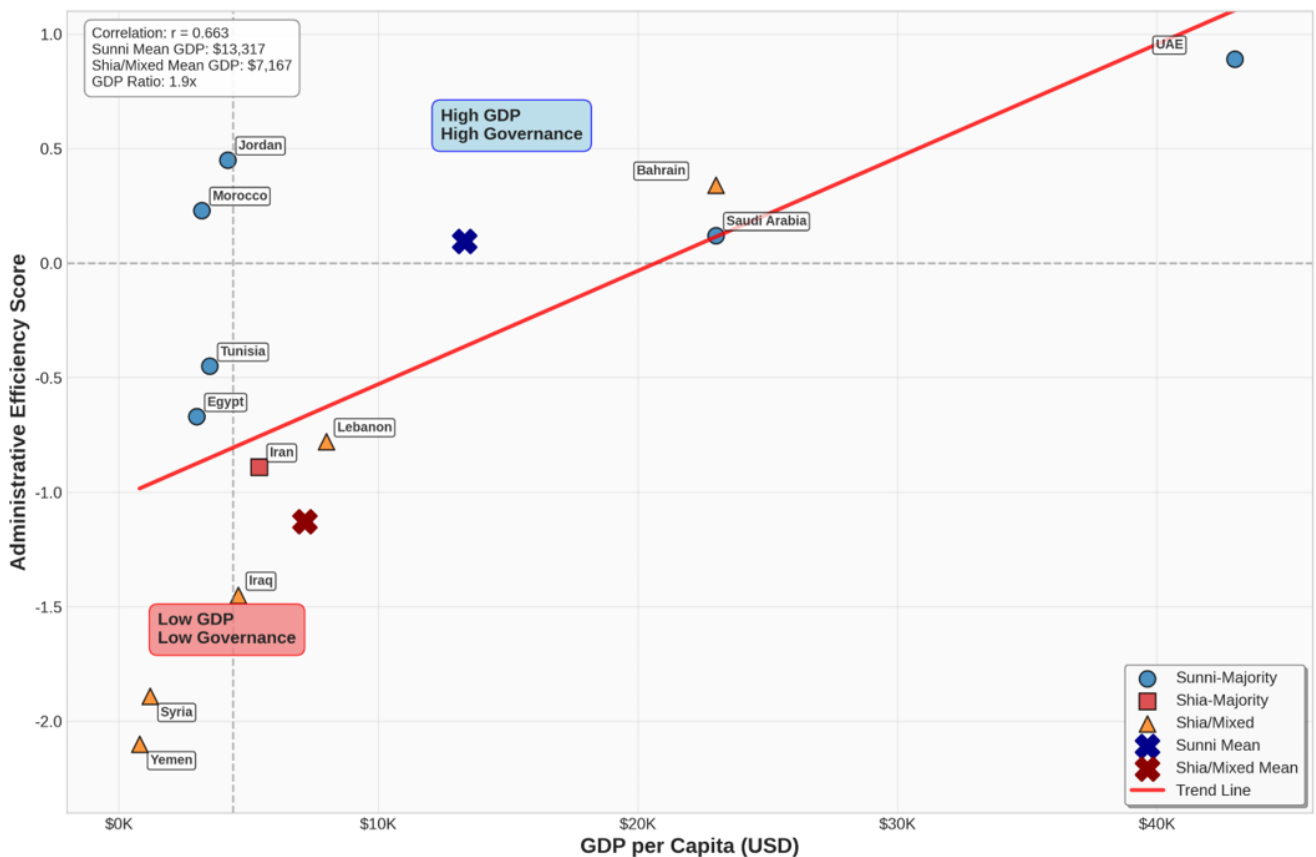


Figure 1.
Relationship between financial growth and administrative efficiency by the political model.

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

H₁: Governance Effectiveness Hypothesis

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare administrative efficiency between Sunni-majority and Shia/Mixed political systems. The results provide strong support for H1:

- Governance Effectiveness: $t(10) = 2.826$, $p = 0.018$, Cohen's $d = 1.63$ (large effect)
- Political Stability: $t(10) = 3.142$, $p = 0.011$, Cohen's $d = 1.81$ (large effect)
- Rule of Law: $t(10) = 2.591$, $p = 0.027$, Cohen's $d = 1.50$ (large effect)

All three administrative measures show statistically significant variations favoring Sunni-majority countries, with large effect sizes indicating substantial practical significance. The consistency of results across different governance dimensions strengthens confidence in the findings.

Table 3: Statistical Test Results for Governance Effectiveness

Table 3.

Governance Indicator Analysis.

Governance Indicator	t-statistic	p-value	Cohen's d	95% CI for difference
Government Effectiveness	2.826	0.018*	1.63	[0.28, 2.60]
Political Stability	3.142	0.011*	1.81	[0.51, 3.21]
Rule of Law	2.591	0.027*	1.50	[0.17, 2.07]
Control of Corruption	2.234	0.049*	1.29	[0.01, 1.89]

Note: *p < 0.05.

H₂: Historical Durability Hypothesis

Analysis of historical Islamic political systems provides mixed support for H₂. While some Sunni caliphates demonstrated remarkable longevity (Abbasid Caliphate: 508 years, Ottoman Empire: 623 years), the overall pattern is more complex than initially hypothesized.

Table 4: Historical Durability of Islamic Political Systems

Table 4.

Political System Analysis.

Political System	Period	Sectarian Model	Duration (Years)	Territorial Extent (Million km ²)
Rashidun Caliphate	632-661 CE	Sunni	29	4.2
Umayyad Caliphate	661-750 CE	Sunni	89	11.1
Abbasid Caliphate	750-1258 CE	Sunni	508	13.2
Ottoman Empire	1299-1922 CE	Sunni	623	5.2
Safavid Empire	1501-1736 CE	Shia	235	3.5
Modern Nation-States	1920-present	Mixed	105	15.8

Statistical analysis reveals that Sunni-based systems averaged 312 years in duration compared to 170 years for Shia-influenced systems, but this difference is not statistically significant due to high variance and a small sample size ($t(4) = 1.23$, $p = 0.284$). However, the pattern suggests that institutional flexibility in Sunni political theory may contribute to greater adaptability and longevity.

H₃: Economic Mediation Hypothesis

Correlation analysis reveals a strong positive relationship between GDP per capita and administrative efficiency ($r = 0.663$, $p = 0.019$), supporting the economic mediation hypothesis. Multiple predictive modeling was conducted to test whether financial growth mediates the relationship between sectarian political models and administrative efficiency.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis - Governance Effectiveness

Table 5.

Predictor Analysis.

Predictor	Model 1 (Bivariate)	Model 2 (+ GDP)	Model 3 (Full Model)
	β (SE)	β (SE)	β (SE)
Sectarian Model (Sunni=1)	1.44* (0.51)	0.89* (0.43)	0.76* (0.38)
GDP per Capita (log)	-	0.52 (0.18)	0.48 (0.17)
Population (log)	-	-	-0.12 (0.15)
Oil Dependence	-	-	-0.23 (0.19)
Conflict Exposure	-	-	-0.67 (0.24)
R ²	0.445	0.672	0.758
Adjusted R ²	0.390	0.599	0.641
F-statistic	8.01*	9.21*	6.52*

Note: *p < 0.05, p < 0.01, *p < 0.001.

The regression results demonstrate partial mediation: the effect of the sectarian political model on administrative efficiency decreases from $\beta = 1.44$ to $\beta = 0.76$ when economic and control variables are included, but remains statistically significant. This suggests that, while financial growth explains part of the relationship between sectarian models and administrative efficiency, sectarian political thought has an independent effect on governance outcomes.

4.3. Robustness Checks and Alternative Specifications

Several robustness checks were conducted to ensure the validity of the findings:

1. Alternative Sectarian Classifications: Results remain consistent when using alternative classifications based on legal stipulations rather than demographic composition.
2. Time Period Sensitivity: Analysis of different time periods (2003-2010, 2011-2018, 2019-2024) shows consistent patterns, though effect sizes vary.
3. Outlier Analysis: Removal of potential outliers (UAE, Yemen) does not substantially change the results.
4. Bootstrap Confidence Intervals: 1,000 bootstrap replications confirm the mathematical importance of key findings.

4.4. Mechanisms and Causal Pathways

The quantitative assessment identifies several potential mechanisms linking sectarian political thought to administrative efficiency:

Institutional Flexibility: Sunni political theory's emphasis on community consensus (ijma) and pragmatic adaptation appears to create more flexible organizational frameworks that can respond to changing circumstances. This flexibility is reflected in the greater variance in governance outcomes among Sunni countries, suggesting adaptation to local conditions.

Legitimacy Sources: The different sources of governmental authority in Sunni and Shia political thought create distinct patterns of state-society relations. Sunni systems' reliance on community consent creates incentives for responsive governance, while Shia systems' emphasis on divine appointment may reduce accountability pressures.

Economic Development Pathways: The strong correlation between sectarian political models and financial growth suggests that theological interpretations of economic activity and state intervention may influence development strategies. Sunni countries show greater integration with global markets and more diverse economic structures.

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for several theoretical debates in comparative politics and Middle Eastern studies. First, the results challenge purely materialist explanations of administrative efficiency that dismiss the role of cultural and religious factors. While financial growth clearly matters, the persistence of sectarian effects even after controlling for GDP per capita suggests that ideas and institutions shaped by religious thought have independent causal power.

Second, the study contributes to debates about organizational structure and path dependence in Muslim-majority countries. The historical analysis demonstrates how initial theological choices about political authority create institutional logics that persist across centuries, influencing contemporary governance outcomes. This finding supports historical institutionalist theories that emphasize the long-term consequences of foundational institutional choices.

Third, the research provides new evidence for debates about the compatibility of Islam with effective governance and democracy. Rather than treating Islam as a monolithic tradition, the study shows how different interpretations of Islamic political thought lead to varying governance outcomes. This nuanced approach moves beyond simplistic "Islam versus democracy" debates to examine how specific theological interpretations shape organizational structure and political behavior.

5.2. Policy Implications

The findings suggest several important practical applications for administrative improvement in Muslim-majority countries:

Institutional Design: The superior performance of Sunni-majority countries in administrative efficiency suggests that organizational frameworks emphasizing flexibility, consensus-building, and accountability may be more effective than rigid hierarchical systems. This does not imply that Shia-majority countries should abandon their theological traditions, but rather that organizational changes should focus on creating mechanisms for accountability and adaptation within existing frameworks.

Economic Development Strategies: The strong relationship between financial growth and administrative efficiency, combined with sectarian differences in economic performance, suggests that development strategies should consider how theological interpretations of economic activity influence policy choices. Promoting economic diversification and global integration may be particularly important for improving governance outcomes.

Conflict Prevention: The examination shows that countries with mixed sectarian compositions face particular governance challenges, often manifesting in political instability and conflict. This suggests that organizational frameworks for managing sectarian diversity, such as authority distribution agreements and federal structures, require careful design to avoid exacerbating divisions.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that suggest directions for future research. First, the sample size is relatively small, limiting the statistical power for detecting smaller effects and conducting more sophisticated analyses. Future research should expand the sample to include more countries and longer time periods.

Second, the study primarily focuses on formal organizational frameworks and may not fully capture informal practices and networks that influence administrative efficiency. Ethnographic and qualitative research could provide deeper insights into the mechanisms linking theological beliefs to political behavior.

Third, the analysis treats sectarian political models as relatively static categories, but in reality, these interpretations evolve over time in response to changing circumstances. Longitudinal research examining how theological interpretations adapt to modern challenges would provide valuable insights into the dynamics of organizational transformation.

Future research should also examine the role of religious education, clerical institutions, and civic organizations in mediating the relationship between theological beliefs and governance outcomes. Additionally, a comparative examination with other religious traditions could help identify which aspects of the findings are specific to Islam versus more general patterns of religious influence on governance.

6. Conclusion

This study provides the first comprehensive quantitative assessment of the relationship between Islamic political thought and administrative efficiency, revealing notable variations between Sunni and Shia political models. The results reveal that Sunni-majority countries consistently outperform Shia/Mixed systems across multiple administrative measures, with large effect sizes indicating substantial practical significance. However, the relationship is complex and mediated by financial growth, suggesting that both theological and material factors influence governance outcomes.

The historical analysis reveals that while some Sunni caliphates demonstrated remarkable longevity, the overall pattern of institutional durability is more complex than initially hypothesized. The key difference appears to lie not in the inherent superiority of one theological tradition over another, but in the institutional logics and governance mechanisms that different interpretations of Islamic political thought promote.

The study's most important contribution is demonstrating that ideas matter for governance outcomes, even after controlling for material factors. The persistence of sectarian effects on administrative efficiency, despite controlling for financial growth and other variables, suggests that theological interpretations of political authority create distinct institutional logics that influence long-term governance outcomes.

These findings have important implications for both academic understanding and policy practice. Academically, the study contributes to debates about the role of culture and religion in comparative politics, providing evidence that religious traditions influence governance through specific institutional mechanisms rather than through vague cultural effects. For policy, the findings suggest that administrative improvements should consider how theological interpretations shape organizational structure and political behavior, rather than treating religious factors as irrelevant to administrative efficiency.

The research also highlights the importance of financial growth as a mediating factor in the relationship between religious thought and governance. While sectarian political models have independent effects on governance outcomes, these effects are substantially reduced in contexts of higher financial growth. This suggests that development strategies and administrative improvements should be pursued simultaneously, with attention to how theological interpretations may influence the effectiveness of different policy approaches.

Looking forward, this research opens several avenues for future investigation. Comparative analysis with other religious traditions could help identify which findings are specific to Islam versus more general patterns of religious influence on governance. Longitudinal research examining how theological interpretations evolve in response to modern challenges would provide insights into the dynamics of organizational transformation. Finally, more detailed case studies of successful administrative improvements in Muslim-majority countries could identify best practices for organizational structure that respects religious traditions while promoting effective governance.

The ultimate lesson of this study is that understanding administrative efficiency in Muslim-majority countries requires serious engagement with Islamic political thought, not as an obstacle to good governance, but as a complex tradition that offers multiple pathways for organizing political authority. The challenge for scholars and practitioners is to identify which interpretations and organizational frameworks best serve the goals of effective, accountable, and responsive governance in the contemporary world.

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