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Based Practice among the Members of Oman Council and the
Use and Potential Use of this Practice in Strategic Decision-
Making Process in Oman Council**

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**The Extent of Awareness of the Evidence – Based Practice among
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this Practice in Strategic Decision-Making Process in Oman
Council**

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore to what extent the members of Oman council are aware of the evidence – based practice and the use and potential use of this practice in strategic decision-making process in Oman council. It was found that 86.7% (72) of participating members had already heard about evidence-based practice and 86.3% (69) of the respondents have already used the evidence in some of their decisions. However, 55.4% of the respondent's members sometimes make decisions without using any research evidence. Moreover, it was found also that 50% (43) of the participants rely on their experience mainly in examining the accuracy of the information in the decisions of the council. This indicated that Strategic decision-making process in the council of Oman does not use the Evidence –Based practice in a systematic and structured manner in decision-making. Members of Oman council are not fully aware of evidence-based practice and not always committed to using this practice in strategic decision-making process in the council of Oman. The interview with some members showed that they were skeptical of their understanding as well as their colleagues' understanding of what is meant exactly by evidence-based practice.

Keywords: Evidence- based practice, Oman Council, Awareness

Introduction

Parliament have to make critical national decisions to mitigate many critical national issues and hold governments accountable. However, parliament's decisions might overwhelm and hinder by the adoption of Wireless access, mobile devices and applications more rapidly than expected (Inter-parliamentary, United, N, & Global Centre for Information and Communication Technologies, 2012; World E- Parliament Report, 2011; Gulf Parliament Information Network -GPIN, 2014; Yin., Mao, Leng, Jiang & Khan, 2015; Gorshe, 2014; Newman et al. 2013; Yu, Lin & Liao, 2017; Baxter & Glendinning, 2011). This raises the question of whether evidence-based practice can be used by parliament to support the quality of its decisions since such practice has already achieved success in medicine (Robert, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

Oman's economic growth faces a significant economic challenge because of its reliance on oil, the falling of oil prices, the high level of public debt, and the slowdown of economic growth in Oman. The economy needs diversity to reduce dependence on the oil sector. In addition, there is pressure to continue the democratization process and involve citizens in the political process. Oman's council has been predicted by Commentators to be Devolved by greater power in coming decades (Oxford Analytica Daily Brief Service, 2016). This, in turn, requires careful development of the Council's decision-making process through evidence-based approach to hold governments accountable and ensure a meaningful scrutiny and significant control over the executive branch. (Newman, et al. 2013). However, it is not clear the extent of awareness of the evidence – based practice among the members of Oman council and the use and potential use of this practice in strategic decision-making process in the Oman Council.

Objectives of the Study

Explore the extent of awareness of the evidence – based practice among the members of Oman council and the use and potential use of this practice in strategic decision-making process in Oman Council.

Research Questions

Did members and staff members of the Oman Council aware of the evidence – based practice? As well as, what are the use and potential use of this practice in strategic decision-making process in Oman Council?

Significance of the Study

According to the limits of the researcher's knowledge, this study might be one of the limited studies in the region, in such topic particularly in the Gulf region if not the first one. It gives considerable attention to test the awareness of members and their use and potential use of this practice in strategic decision-making process in Oman Council that has not received an adequate amount of local considerable attention, but mainly depending on studies conducted by foreign researchers in foreign countries (Mansour & Alkhurainej, 2011).

Literature Review

In Oman, the researcher reviewed eight studies in evidence-based practice all in the field of public healthcare services and all reflect limited awareness and usage of this practice (Al- Wahaibi et al. 2014; Ammouri, et al. 2014; Bhargava, Al-Lawatia, Al-Abri & Bhargava, 2012; Maheshwari & Maheshwari, 2012; Bhargava, Al-Saidi, Al-Abri & Bhargava, 2011; Al-Awaidy, 2010; Bhargava, Al-Abri & Bhargava, 2010; Al-Awaidy et al.2006). Most studies in the field of evidence based to inform policy have been focused on the Medical science (Cook., Greengold., Ellrodt., & Weingarten, 1997; Cook., Mulrow & Haynes, 1997; Wolf, Shea & Albanese, 2001; Tranfield., Denyer & Smart, 2003). The studies conducted in the Kuwaiti Parliament (MKPs) and other Africa countries have demonstrated that most of respondents lack the skills to utilize information in a systematic manner, as well as using the Library of Parliament and technology (Mansour & Alkhurainej, 2011; Mostert & Ocholla's, 2005; Alemna & Skouby, 2000; Thapisa, 1996). Policymakers' awareness of the usefulness of using research results in policy can be increased by improving access to research (Biglan, 2016; Crowley, Jones, Coffman & Greenberg, 2014; Fishbein, Ridenour, Stahl & Sussman, 2016; Oliver et al. 2014; Crowley, Scott & Fishbein,2018; Saraiva, 2018).

Methodology

The study employed a mixed-method research (quantitative and qualitative) approach in collecting data that help answering the questions of this study

Population of the Study

The population of this study included all (169) members of Oman council in the current term (2015-2019).

Quantitative Study Procedures

A questionnaire was developed as a study instruments to test the extent of members awareness regarding evidence-based practice and their use and potential use. Initially, the questionnaire designed based on careful review of the previous studies:(Inter-parliamentary, United, N, & Global Centre for Information and Communication Technologies, 2012; Al- Suqri, 2007; Thapisa, 1996; Marusich et al. 2016; Scherrer et al. 2006).

Qualitative Study Procedures

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews had been conducted based on what was reported by the survey which conducting at the first stage prior to the interviews. (Carrington & Graham, 2001; Cridland, Jones, Caputi & Magee, 2015). The targeted sample of face-to-face included 2 members from each chamber (Vice Chairman in State Council and Vice Chairman in Shura Council).

Document Analysis

Thirteen documents from Oman council were used as supplementary data sources to complement the data obtained from semi-structured interview as a secondary source of data.

The Quantitative Study Validity and Reliability

Face Validity

The questionnaire reviewed and evaluated by four referees: one from the department of information studies at the college of art and social sciences, two from psychology department at the college of education and last one from the department of political science at the college of economics and political science. The questionnaire modified based on their suggestions such as the content in relation to the topic, the relevance to question, the wording of the questions and its clarity.

Pilot Study

The questionnaire has been subjected to pilot study to be tested prior to use through sending them physically to a sample of 10 members among Oman Council to ensure that data collection goes on as expected. Only 6 participants in the group responded, and their comments and feedback have been considered by making the necessary changes to the questionnaire.

Internal Reliability

Cronbach Coefficient has been used to examine the internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951; Cronbach & Shavelson, 2004). The questionnaire included 31 items and the Cronbach's α values for those entire constructs was 0.886. This is considered as high according to the four cut-off points for reliability (Hinton., Brownlow., McMurray & Cozens 2004).

The Qualitative Study Credibility

The credibility of interview findings has been confirmed by the use of documentary review and the result of a survey (Yates & Leggett, 2016). In addition, the credibility of interviews (face – to – face) maintained by Alshenqeti, (2014) technique, including: avoiding asking leading questions, taking notes and not just depending upon recording devices as well as, giving the interviewee an opportunity to sum up and clear up the focuses they have made.

The Quantitative Study Data Analysis

The quantitative data of the study were analyzed utilizing a software called “Statistical Package for the Social Sciences” (SPSS) by means of descriptive analysis. Various descriptive analysis tests were conducted on the data including correlation, frequency, mean, standard deviation and crosstabulation analysis.

The Qualitative Study Data Analysis

The data generated from the transcripts produced from semi-structured interviews and document analysis, have been analyzed manually by reading word-by-word from the transcript to extract themes and typical responses from a large amount of textual data (Al- Kindi, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

Ethics or moral principles guided research by doing all necessary steps to ensure no harm comes to the subject of the research or to society in general (Confidentiality, Anonymity, Voluntary Participation) (Chapman & McNeill, 2005, p. 12).

Findings/Results

Only 50.8% (86) of total of (169) members of Oman Council in both the State Council (84) and the Shura Council (85) respond to the survey.

The Descriptive Analysis of the Quantitative Data

Mean and standard deviation, and ranks of the the information were extracted to estimates the members and staff members awareness related to evidence-based. Likert scales has been used as a reliable measure to judge the factors influencing the effectiveness of decisions within Oman council (Harpe, 2015). The following table presents the calculation of average score used in this study: (five response categories instead of four categories) by dividing 4/5 and thus each distance equal to (0.79). The first distance starts from one as the lowest number shown in the five-point Likert-type scale table (Harpe, 2015; Boone & Boone, 2012). below:

Table 1. *Levels of Measurement and the “Laws” of Statistics (Harpe, 2015)*

Response Categories	Average Score
Very low	From $1.00 \leq 1.79$
low	From $1.80 \leq 2.59$
Medium	From $2.6 \leq 3.39$
high	From $3.40 \leq 4.19$
Very high	From $4.20 \leq 5.0$

The Results of the Study

This study has found that 86.7% (72) of participating members had already aware about evidence-based practice and 86.3% (69) of the respondents have already used the evidence in some of their decisions strategic decision-making process in the council of Oman. However, participating members does not use the Evidence –Based practice in a systematic and structured manner. It was found that 55.4% of the respondent’s members sometimes make decisions without using any research evidence. Furthermore, 50% (43) of the participants rely on their experience mainly in examining the accuracy of the information in the decisions of the council. In addition, the semi-structured interview with vice chairman in each chamber of the council indicated that they were skeptical of their understanding as well as their colleagues' understanding of what is meant exactly by evidence-based practice.

Discussion

Although it appears that 86.7% (72) of the participating members are familiar with evidence-based practices, 86.3% (69) of the respondents have already used evidence in strategic decision-making processes in the Oman council, but the result is that more than half 55.4% (46) of the respondents sometimes made decisions without using any research evidence indicating that respondents may not be fully familiar with practice and how to convert evidence into practice because, half of the participants 50% (43) rely on their experience primarily to examine the accuracy of information in Council

decisions. As well as, the interviews with some members who were skeptical of their understanding, as well as their colleagues' understanding of what is entirely meant by evidence-based practice. This is consistent with previous studies, which suggest that, policymakers tend to rely on their beliefs, information and sources of habit rather than consideration of all evidence relevant to policy problems (Alter & Oppenheimer 2009; Haidt 2001; Kahneman 2012; Schneider., Ingram & DeLeon, 2014; Cairney & Oliver, 2017; Lomas & Brown 2009). Therefore, evidence is sometimes not used to serve the quality of the council's decision may be because the evidence-based approach to decision-making is not fully understood by members. This is consistent also with the results of a previous study that found weaknesses in the EBP within parliaments, given the limited ability to research, understand and use research (Newman et al., 2013). The reasons for this weakness were according to a previous study due to lack of training and lack of understanding and appreciation of research, leading to non-use of bibliographic databases to find specific information that will help to find evidence based on practices (Pravikoff., Tanner & Pierce, 2005). These reasons may be a barriers to the translation of research into practice, which forms the basis of evidence-based practice (Dollahite, Fitch & Carroll, 2016). Finally, the possible weakness in the understanding and application of evidence-based practice by the members of the oman Council reflects negatively on the methodology of decision-making in this Council. This is not the case with a previous study on the importance of decision making and its close association with the quality of decision (Dean & Sharfman, 1996). Consequently, as a result, the awareness of members of the oman Council regarding evidence-based practice still needs to be developed in terms of understanding and practice, which will positively reflect on the quality of the Council's decision .

Conclusions

The study reached the conclusion that members of Oman council are not fully aware of evidence-based practice and not always committed to using this practice in strategic decision-making process in the council of Oman in a systematic approach of seeking and using information within Oman council, where 55.4% of the respondent's members sometimes make decisions without using any research evidence. Moreover, it was found also that 50% (43) of the participants rely on their experience mainly in examining the accuracy of the information in the decisions of the council. This might mean that awareness about evidence-based practices and their use in the decision-making process in Oman council is not as it should be in order to achieve the quality of the decision.

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