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Public Participation and Performance of Government Projects in Thailand

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Abstract

Public participation is the inclusion of the public in the activities of any organization or project. The performance of government projects in Thailand has been slow. Some of the projects have taken a longer time than anticipated to be completed. In addition, some projects are not the priority of the citizens and they end up being of no value to the citizens. Thus, the study sought to examine the effect of public participation on the performance of government projects in Thailand. The study used a descriptive research design. The collection of the data was done using questionnaires. The study sampled randomly 1378 people in Bangkok. The analysis of the data was done using SPSS. The study findings showed public participation has a positive and significant effect on the performance of development projects in Thailand. Public participation is a basic condition in local democracy because it allows the citizen to take part and contribute to bringing more solutions to any type of problem. Most governments are called to change and give their citizens room in the decision-making processes, from the low levels of governance to the highest. The study concluded that public participation has led to the effective planning, execution, operation, and monitoring of projects. It is recommended that the project officers should encourage the participation of the community by motivating participants to offer their views on various projects. The project officers need to include locals in all relevant activities involving work sequencing, work organizing, financing and staffing. Public participation makes it possible to consider community issues. Public participation should be organized in a particular way to make sure that they contribute to the environmental, financial, and social sustainability concerns of the project.

Keywords: *Public Participation, Performance, Government Projects, Thailand*

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1.0 Introduction

Public participation can be defined as a process through which the issues of all interested parties are brought together in project decision-making (Gil, Cortés-Cediel & Cantador, 2019). The rationale behind public participation is that it is thought that including the relevant parties in the decision-making process, it brings about openness and accountability of different decision makers (Bidwell, & Schweizer, 2021). Therefore, projects are most likely to be responsive to the citizens' needs and residents can expose the projects which are of more importance to them. Solman, Smits, van Vliet and Bush (2021) reported that public participation has played a vital role in the continued planning of development projects. Public participation has some duties and advantages, specifically project design which aids to lower negative and increases favorable effects of projects and project improvements which minimizes risks.

Effective public participation is a vital precondition for clear and accountable governance (Sætra, 2020). It assists governments to take on inequality by guaranteeing that all people, consisting of those from the poorest areas of society and rural communities can take part in decisions that influence their lives. The primary motive of public participation is to motivate the general public to have important input into the decisions making process. Public participation gives room for the interaction between organizations making decisions and the interested parties (Webler & Tuler, 2021). A participatory planning process develops trust, both between a certain organization, the community and within the people involved. This trust might act as a base for future community development and community action. Public participation provides a forum for both decision-makers and interested parties to enable one to understand the variety of concerns and perspectives (Clark, 2018). It expands individuals' understanding base as they contribute to the decision-making process.

Public participation activities ought to be designed to make sure that they contribute to the environmental, financial, and social sustainability of projects (Bouzguenda, Alalouch & Fava, 2019). By enhancing project performance and sharing accountability for project results, public participation contributes to the ecological and financial sustainability of projects. Additionally, to be socially sustainable, projects should, as appropriate, deal with the social, cultural, and financial needs of individuals affected by the projects. As in the operational method, relevant social issues will be taken into account in the design, performance and assessment of projects (Li, Xia, Chen & Sun, 2018). Such issues may consist of the socio-economic needs of affected individuals, the special needs of vulnerable populations and accessibility to project advantages. The included parties work as free consultants to particular project management. In instances where the public is included, they might bring technical expertise and specific knowledge regarding how decisions will influence particular stakeholders, local experience and history, or other relevant specialized experience.

Public participation is a basic condition in local democracy (Huang, Chen & Park, 2021). It allows the citizen to take part and contribute to bringing more solutions to any type of problem. The people's active role in planning and making decisions must be highlighted to secure our shared values and basic living conditions in a progressive society. Additionally, performing deliberate public participation is a way of collecting inputs from a vast spectrum of stakeholder interests

which leads to a wide range of views in producing meaningful involvement and social inclusion for all people despite of national origin, sexual orientation, revenue, race, concerning the development, execution, and decisions made through the public participation process (Quick & Bryson, 2022). Eventually, public participation in project planning and execution is required to make sure there is an effective use of offered resources in creating sustainable projects.

The performance of government projects in Thailand has been slow. Some of the projects have taken a longer time than anticipated to be completed. In addition, some projects are not the priority of the citizens and they end up being of no value to the citizens. Some of the development projects started regularly encounter strong public resistance (Nielsen, Eckstein, Nicol & Stewart, 2021). Public participation is hence regarded as important to good governance since it is accompanied by openness, accountability and responsiveness of various organizations (Ianniello, Iacuzzi, Fedele, & Brusati, 2019). Thus, the study sought to examine the effect of public participation on the performance of government projects in Thailand. ,,,

2.0 Literature Review

Chompunth (2020) argued that public participation has become an essential aspect of ecological decision-making. Even though public participation has grown tremendously in Thailand because of increasing pressure from the general public, this technique often fails to solve ecological troubles and conflicts. There is a keen for an organized examination of the general public participation process to determine whether the participation process is effective and what operates or does not operate in this respect. The study assesses the performance of the public participation process of the Hin Krut nuclear power plant project via an examination model created from relevant literature. It was discovered that the public participation process of the case study was not efficient when checked against the evaluation requirements. The affected individuals had no opportunity to offer any comments at the very start. The public participation process began too late after a decision had been made and problems among stakeholders had already noted. The general public participation process is not yet effectively developed in the Thai context. There is an urgent requirement to discover a functioning model and conditions of public participation which may assist in settling environmental issues. Lastly, a collection of suggestions for enhancing public participation process are recommended.

According to Das, Laishram and Jawed (2019) research on public participation in project execution in New Delhi has revealed public involvement is important to the execution of state-funded projects. Nonetheless, the method has come across a variety of operational and policy obstacles, therefore, the void between stipulations in the lawful structure and the real practice. The research was warranted by the reality that the majority of studies performed in the numerous sectors of public participation have disclosed reduced levels of public involvement. Due to these developments, the research looks for to in India, the case of New Delhi. The research utilized a descriptive style study approach concentrating on 7 districts of New Delhi. The target population was participants of the public in New Delhi. The target population included all individuals gotten from New Delhi. The sampling method used was multistage sampling which used 485 participants. The sampling method utilized on the district project administrators and managers was a purposive sampling approach. Primary and secondary data was accumulated making use of surveys and

record review. Data was descriptively examined. The relationship evaluation of information indicated that the accessibility to information variable had the strongest positive influence on the promotion of district project execution. On top of that, stakeholder involvement administration and problem resolution administration variables were positively associated to forecast execution. The research concluded that: insufficient organized communication in between the district organizations and the people, the basic inadequacy of openness and accountability in connecting district projects, inadequacy of funds and administration abilities for stakeholder interaction, nepotism, inadequate organizational capabilities and political disturbances in public development projects were the major factors that prevented the degree of public engagement in the New Delhi. The study hence advised the government to offer proper plans to address the ever before transforming government project execution trends, mobilize enough resources for policy formulation and application of projects, and develop a career development, increased involvement regulations to be examined and changed periodically to satisfy the demands of the different groups, approaches to facilitate far better participation, to boost the variety of individuals accessing public details on project execution. In addition, really little had been done to explore relevant individual dispute resolution approaches to enhance smooth project execution at New Delhi.

Wamsler, Alkan-Olsson, Björn, Falck, Hanson, Oskarsson and Zelmerlow (2020) articulated that rooted in national and worldwide laws regarding project planning and execution is public participation. However, it is unclear whether public projects are making it possible for adequate public input or are likely to be able to meet future management planning requirements; specifically in growing nations. Individuals' experiences were investigated when contributing to a public project decision-making to understand the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and risks to reliable public involvement. Analysis was conducted with a sample of individuals who contributed to a public project planning and review in a Venezuelan city. An assessment requirement is based on the concepts of public participation as set in the laws and includes the following components: participants' profile, their involvement in the project; objective of participation, availability of information, responses system and big picture of the participatory planning process. Information gathered included both quantitative and qualitative data and these were assessed using descriptive data and narrative techniques of reporting. Results reveal that public participation was much listed below the minimum requirement of the law and not demographically representative. One of the most crucial factor participants took part was to safeguard an interest in land, although some saw participation as a democratic right. Outcomes show that participating in public hearings was the commonest method of engagement in a project review. However, three-quarters of the participants assumed the last strategy did not take their observations and suggestions into consideration. Participants confirmed that the process was reasonably notified with opportunities for appointment meetings. However, outcomes suggest some prejudice actions as substantial percentages of participants held lack of openness and political interference flawed the project planning and review process.

Mulyasari, Harahap, Rio, Sule and Kadir (2021) conducted a study to determine the effects of public participation in the performance of effective health projects in Indonesia, Bali Province. The research concentrated on the project cycles from identification, planning, performance, management and examination. The research made use of a descriptive study layout utilizing open

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and close-ended questions from the local community and meeting within the provisional personnel. The research was directed by social capital concept and theory of modification. Sampling of participants was done with random sampling for fair depiction while stratified sampling of health facilities was used. Additionally, crucial informants from twenty provinces were meticulously picked. The research area has a population of 64,584 as per the Indonesia Census, 2014. The researcher targeted a sample of 512 participants. Information was cleansed, saved, coded, and analyzed making use of both descriptive and inferential statistics and findings presented in the form of tables, charts, and graphs, to discuss the partnership between public participation and effective project execution. Reliability and validity of the research was guaranteed with appropriate research questions and appropriate method in information gathering and interpretation. It was concluded that, public engagement affects project identification, project planning, project design, and project management and examination for effective execution of public funded health projects in Indonesia, Bali Province. The study suggests that community has to be associated with all four phases of any kind of public project to guarantee that they satisfy their goals and subsequently are accepted by the target parties.

Urcuqui-Bustamante, Selfa, Hirsch and Ashcraft (2021) performed research to analyze the impact of public participation in the administration of development projects through CLED in Colombia; Cauca State. A qualitative study strategy was used in which data was collected via document analysis and field interviews. The participants in the research included one thousand community participants amongst them were officials from the local authority and civil society institutions in the research location. Key results of the research suggested contrasting views between community and the local authority officials concerning public engagement in CLED development projects. The research developed extremely reduced community participation in CLED process, restricted awareness appearing highly as one of the reasons for poor local engagement in the development projects. According to the results and conclusions of the research, the researcher made suggestions and offered ways for the execution of community participation in the CLED process. The researcher concluded that in order for the government to attain maximum community engagement and ultimately effect on in CLED process, the local government is required to produce a favorable environment for community engagement that includes amongst others dealing with the institutional barriers and the capability gaps within the community.

A study by Cao (2022) has discovered that the theories of public participation in development, participatory governance adopted by the Office of Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) as their management standard and for execution by Thai government officials presently, are various from the western concept when used in actual technique. The research used qualitative techniques and multiple case studies. The researcher participated in the research and accumulated information with in-depth interviews, documentary evaluations, observation, field notes, and focus group discussions. The key informants were the public officers, individuals, and civil society that participated in the projects which caused in awards for participatory governance being offered to the governors of two Thai provinces. The research tried to respond to the questions: How is the present scenario engaged in by Thai residents? What are the elements that affect effective public participation? And what is the model for effective public engagement? The preliminary use of public engagement was not produced by the demands of the

community; rather, it was from projects originated by the suggestions of the governmental sectors. Public service officers are driven by the policy to improve the performance of participatory governance, and afterwards a chosen community is approached to work with.

Nisperos and Saliga's (2018) research refer to the general public participation in project planning and executions in the District of South Upi, Maguidanao, Philippines. Specifically, it has identified the level of participation of the public in regards to project planning and executions by the Local Government Unit. The research has utilized the descriptive correlational quantitative layout and a sampling method including group of individuals associated with the development. Furthermore, the research indicates that there is a high degree of public involvement along with the awareness of the community in regards to development and sustainability of the projects in the Local Government Unit of South Upi. The research presumes that the local government unit needs to constantly strengthen the public engagement in the projects. According to this, the government needs to prioritize cascading information for the future development of the community with seminars, workshops, programs and various other publicities. Thus, the involvement of individuals in the project planning and execution would make a distinction given that it develops a sense of ownership on the projects. If these insights are considered, more individuals in the town will take part in the project planning and execution in the municipality.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study used a descriptive research design. The collection of the data was done using questionnaires. The study sampled randomly 1378 people in Bangkok. The analysis of the data was done using SPSS.

4.0 Findings

The findings included the study outcome.

4.1 Correlation Analysis

The correlation shows the association between variables. Table 1 presents correlation results.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

		Performance of Projects	Public Participation
Performance of Projects	Pearson Correlation	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Public Participation	Pearson Correlation	.612 **	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	1.000

The correlation results from Table 1 indicate that public participation is positively and significantly related with performance of government projects ($r=.612$, $p=.000$). This concur with Mulyasari,

Harahap, Rio, Sule and Kadir (2021) articulated that public participation influences project planning, project design, and project management and examination for effective execution of public funded projects.

4.2 Regression Analysis

The section consisted of model fitness, analysis of variance and regression of coefficient. The results presented in Table 2 show the model fitness

Table 2: Model Fitness

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.254a	0.458	0.419	0.000025

The results from Table 2 depicts that public participation was discovered to be satisfactory in explaining the performance of government projects in Thailand. This was supported by the coefficient of determination, also known as the R square of 0.458. This implied that public participation can explain 45.8% of the variations in performance of government projects in Thailand.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.14	1	20.14	1252.0442	.000b
	Residual	22.15	1377	0.016		
	Total	42.29	1378			

The results in Table 3 show that the overall model was statistically significant. The results indicate that public participation is good predictor in explaining the performance of development projects in Thailand. This was supported by an F statistic of 1252.0442 and the reported p-value of 0.000 which was less than the conventional probability significance level of 0.05.

Table 4: Regression of Coefficient

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.277	0.125		2.216	0.014
Public Participation	0.412	0.189	0.317	2.180	0.001

According to the results presented in Table 4, it was discovered that public participation is positively and significantly associated to performance of government projects ($\beta=0.412$, $p=0.001$). This was supported by a calculated t-statistic of 2.180 that is larger than the critical t-statistic of 1.96. The results revealed that when the public participation improves by one unit, the performance of economic development projects will increase by 0.412 units while holding other factors that influence performance of development projects constant. Nisperos and Saliga (2018) revealed that when there are high levels of public participation along with the awareness of the community in regards to development and sustainability of the projects it in turn leads to proper performance and management of the projects.

5.0 Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that public participation is positively and significantly associated with the performance of government projects. Public participation is necessary for the effective execution of development projects. Public participation is a basic condition in local democracy because it allows the citizen to take part and contribute to bringing more solutions to any type of problem. Most governments are called to change and give their citizens room in the decision-making processes, from the low levels of governance to the highest. Through engagement, local people identify their demands and the relevant goals of a program. Timely, well-organized and well-executed public participation programs lead to effective planning, execution, operation, and monitoring of projects.

6.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that the project officers should encourage the participation of the community by motivating participants to offer their views on various projects. The project officers need to include locals in all relevant activities involving work sequencing, work organizing, financing and staffing. Public participation makes it possible to consider community issues. Public participation should be organized in a particular way to make sure that they contribute to the environmental, financial, and social sustainability concerns of the project. The project executors should include the community when conducting quality assurance examinations, composing progress reports, handling communications, addressing project risks, and regulating the schedule of the development project. This participation will create trust and motivate the people's dedication to the execution and performance of the project. It is suggested that the project officers and decision-makers should enhance participatory surveillance by accepting responses from the community and expecting project concerns after it has been handed over. These monitoring and regulation will assist the project officers to provide the required product promptly.

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