

The title 'JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE' is displayed in white, uppercase, sans-serif font. 'POLITICS' is the largest word, with 'AND' in a smaller size to its right. 'GOVERNANCE' is split by an orange right-pointing triangle. A thin orange horizontal line is positioned below the text. The background is a blue gradient with a network of white dots and lines, and a faint city skyline silhouette at the bottom.

Editorial Team

Editor-in-Chief:

Sanyarat Meesuwan, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

Associate Editors:

Chinnawat Chueasraku, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

Kuboon Charumane, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

Wanida Phromlah, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

Journal's Advisor:

Dean of College of Politics and Governance, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

Sida Sonsri, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, Manipur University, India

Editorial Board:

Ahmad Aldrie Amir, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

Amanda L.Kennedy, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

Antonio P. Contreras, University of the Philippines Los Bano

Eko Priyo Purnomo, University Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Gamolporn Sonsri, Mahidol University, Thailand

Godwin Ehiarekhian Oboh, Benson Idahosa University, Nigeria

Hidayat Ullah Khan, National University of Modern Languages, Pakistan

Imon Chowdhoree, BRAC University, Bangladesh

James Ockey, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand

Jenn-Jaw Soong, National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan

Kristoffer B. Berse, University of the Philippines, Philippines

Mohammad Zahidul Islam Khan, American International University, Bangladesh

Muhammad Kashan Surahio, Hefei University of Technology, China

Park Eun-Hong, Sungkonghoe University, South Korea

Prasongchai Setthasuravich, University of Tokyo, Japan

Poowin Bunyavejchewin, Thammasat University, Thailand

Sharima Ruwaida Abbas, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

Somboon Sirisunhirun, Mahidol University, Thailand

Somchai Phatharathananunth, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

Editorial Assistants:

Kawin Pimjanna, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

Worachat Rungwiriyanich, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

Contents

Research Articles:

- The Human Security Imperative in West Africa: An Analysis of ECOWAS' Response to Emerging Non-Military Security Threats 1-16
Adiat A. Abiodun
- Development of a Model to Support Teaching and Learning Management in a Bilateral Participatory System for Workplace Trainers 17-29
Boonluea Thongkatkeaw, Pairote Stirayakorn, Sayam Kamkhuntod
- Integrating Public Values into Organizational Resilience: A Case Study of the Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA) 30-44
Kaniknan Sangmahachai
- Environmental Politics in Thailand: An Analysis of the Policies of the Pheu Thai Party and the Move Forward Party in the 2023 Elections 45-60
Ladawan Khaikham
- Assessing the role of ethnic armed organizations in local governance of post-conflict Myanmar: A case study of New Mon State Party 61-74
Minn Myoh Minn Oo
- Gender and Participation in Governance of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Karnataka 75-89
Narayana Billava, Shiddalingaswami Hanagodimath
- The Development of Curriculum on South Korean Foreign Policy Studies: Analysis of Outsiders and Insiders Perspectives on Korean Studies 90-104
Narut Charoensri, Wannapa Leerasiri
- Policy Network Management and Community Enterprise Potential: The Mediating Role of Promoting Community Enterprise Management in Northeastern Thailand 105-122
Phanavich Nakhonsong, Viyouth Chamruspanth, Sukanya Aimimtham
- Arms Proliferation and Insecurity in Nigeria's Niger Delta 123-136
Sunday Toyin Omojowo, Ahmed Olawale Moliki
- A Study of The Participation Model of Partners in Driving the Calories Credit Challenge Under the New Economic Mode 137-152
Wanchalee Noriya, Satjawat Jarueksil, Suttinee Sriburi
- Muslim Countries and the Supportive Roles for Peacebuilding in the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand 153-166
Yasmin Sattar

The Human Security Imperative in West Africa: An Analysis of ECOWAS' Response to Emerging Non-Military Security Threats

Adiat A. Abiodun ¹✉

¹Development of International Relations Faculty of Administration Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, © Authors

Article history:

Received: February 9, 2025

Revised: March 24, 2025

Accepted: April 11, 2025

Keywords:

ECOWAS,
Human Security,
Regionalism,
Security Studies,
Conflict Prevention

Abstract

This study examines the challenges of non-military human security threats in West Africa and also appraises ECOWAS credibility as a security actor in addressing these threats. The study utilised both primary and secondary data. For the primary data, in-depth interviews were conducted with 22 respondents who are chosen purposively from the ECOWAS Commission, Selected Embassies in West Africa and Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nigeria. Secondary data were sourced from ECOWAS documents such as protocols establishing the various organs, institutions and modus operandi of the institution. The study revealed that ECOWAS mechanisms which include its various policies for addressing human security challenges in the sub-region are good, but they have not been effective due to some factors which include: lack of political will by member states to implement protocols, weak infrastructure within the member states and inadequate funding. Through the regional body, human security agenda has gained more importance in most of its member states. The study concluded that ECOWAS through its several policy frameworks has the capacity to address non military human security threats in the sub region. However, there is need for more synergy between the regional and national policy frameworks for effective response to these threats.

Introduction

The dissatisfaction with the focus of security studies during the cold war era which laid more emphasis on state security at the detriment of other aspects of human lives necessitated a new security paradigm (White, 2018). Thus, it brought about a paradigm shift from state to human as the referent of security efforts. The intellectual

origin of this can be traced to the works of Buzan (1984 and 1997) where he argued for an alternative conception of the concept of security from the narrow military perception of the cold war era. However, Mahbub Ul Haq also attracted the global attention to the concept of human security in the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report of 1994.

The report gave an explicit definition of Human security from two main perspectives which include freedom from fear and freedom from want. The freedom from fear perspective refers to violent threats such as civil wars, terrorism, and armed robbery among others (Mark, 2004). The freedom from wants on the other hand refers to non-violent threats such as poverty, disease, hunger among others (Thakur, 2004). Collins (2013) argued that while violent threats have been at the core of security discourse, non violent threats should be given equal and adequate attention. In West Africa, Previous studies (Zabadi, 2005: Ismail, 2011: Dinshak and Dan Fulani, 2018) on ECOWAS and human security threats have focused more on military or violent threats. These include threats such as inter and intra state conflicts, cross border criminality, terrorism, proliferation of militia groups and ethnic crisis. These studies also advocated for a collective response through a regional framework in addressing these human security vulnerabilities. This is apposite because, security threats in the sub region are intertwined and this put a doubt on individual state efforts at pursuing national security (Aning and Atta-Asamoah, 2011). For instance boko haram crisis which started in the North Eastern part of Nigeria had spilled over to neighboring countries of Chad and Niger republic (Felter, 2018). Furthermore, banditry and farmer\herder crisis have also become an interstate security menace in the sub region for its prevalence in Nigeria and Burkina Faso. These violent or military security threats have been described as the cause of non military threats such as mass poverty and refuge crisis (Aning and Atta-Asamoah, 2011). Against this background, this article identified and discussed the challenges of human security in West Africa from the freedom from want perspective and also examines ECOWAS credibility as a security actor in addressing these threats. While the study acknowledged that there are numerous non-military human security

threats in West Africa, the focus of the work will be on four major non-human security threats which include mass poverty, bad governance, food crisis and Epidemic Diseases. Poverty among many West African states represents some of the worst or highest levels in the world while many of its member states such as Niger and Sierra Leone are among the 10 least developed countries in the world. The sub region is also heavily reliant on the importation of food while there is also a challenge of food accessibility because of the dwindling purchasing power. Health insecurity in the sub region is evident in the chronic lack of access to medical facilities as well as rampant epidemics such as malaria, Ebola, Lassa fever among others. All these problems are exacerbated by the menace of bad or failed governance as many of its member states are ranked low on the Chandler's governance index. This is due to high level of corruption and mismanagement among the political leaders. These four threats are considered significant because of the direct and immediate impact they have on human lives as well as the impact they have had as causal factor of conflict and insecurity. Furthermore, the study also examines ECOWAS credibility as a regional security actor in addressing these challenges. This study is significant as it intend to show the symbiotic effects of human security threats from its two standpoints of freedom from want and freedom from fear and the need for an effective regional framework in addressing them.

Literature Review

ECOWAS and Human Security in West Africa

Literature on ECOWAS and Human security in West Africa are quite expansive while most have focused more on the freedom from fear perspective. In most of these articles, focus has been on the analysis of violent threats such as terrorism, trans-border crimes, inter and intra state crisis, arms proliferation and ECOWAS

response to addressing these challenges. In his study, Olawale (2011) identified material and human destruction in violent conflicts, trans-border insecurity and dislocation as emerging human security threats that has attracted lesser attention on ECOWAS human security agenda. The main argument of the paper was that ECOWAS security agenda should extend beyond armed conflicts to include other violent threats such as terrorism; youth militias, refugee crisis and sub-national violence which have expose the citizens of the region to different degrees of vulnerabilities. While he noted that the ECPF of 2008 is a good effort by ECOWAS in promoting human security agenda in the region, the study noted that the objective of the framework is far from been realized. Nwangwu et al (2019) in their study on the relevance of ECOWAS as a regional framework focused on ECOWAS successes in the areas of peace and security, democratization and good governance as well as its protocol on free movement of goods, person and services. The sub regional body was described as a pertinent regional integration framework within the global political economy. While the work does not have human security focus, its recognition of ECOWAS efforts on peace, security and development shows that ECOWAS is making some progress on its human security agenda. According to Anning and Atta-Asamoah (2011), violent and protracted conflict in Sub Saharan Africa in the Post Cold War era is prevalent more in West Africa with negative implications for the region's stability. These include instabilities in West African states such as Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. This position is further buttressed by Gawi and Abdullahi (2024), as they argued that West Africa has been plagued with numerous security threats which include terrorism, armed conflicts and organized crimes. These threats are noted to constitute obstacles to regional stability in the area. In Akinyemi et al (2024), the resurgence of military coup in the sub region is described as

a security threat that impedes ECOWAS quest for socio-economic development in the sub-region. Dinshak and Dan-Fulani (2018) writing from the narrow school perspective of human security identified arms trafficking, human trafficking and drug trafficking as human security challenges in the sub region and also examined ECOWAS efforts in addressing these challenges. The study concluded that lack of harmonious approach in responding to human security challenges in West Africa by ECOWAS is a major impending factor against ECOWAS in its effort to promote human security in the region. Ogwu (2008), arguing from the broad school perspective identified child soldiers, refugee crisis, HIV, transborder crimes, poverty and conflict as human security challenges that requires ECOWAS effort as a collective security mechanism in the region. While she extended her view beyond the freedom from fear component, her study did not take into considerations important human security threats such as endemic diseases, environmental degradation, food insecurity, mass unemployment. Osagie et al (2017) in their assessment of ECOWAS credibility as a regional security actor argued that ECOWAS as an institutional framework has been able to evolve conflict management strategy and security framework which has resulted in significant progress in conflict management in the region. The study further identified that issues of poverty, human right abuses and election fraud should be given adequate attention by the sub regional organisation. The essence of this is to strengthening the peace building efforts of ECOWAS as an institutional framework. The studies review noted various threats to human security in the West African sub region which include both military and non-military threats. However, these threats have not been interrogated within the broader context of an integrated and broader context of human security which the broad school signifies. Furthermore, ECOWAS as a credible security actor within the context of hegemonic stability

theory has not been given much attention in previous studies. It is to this task that this study avails itself.

Research Methodology

Primary and secondary data were sourced for this study. For primary data, 22 in-depth interviews were conducted at the various departments of ECOWAS, which include: Political Affairs, Agriculture and Environment, Gender and Human Development, Trade and Free Movement, as well as Infrastructure. In addition, in-depth interview were conducted at the Department of Political Science of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies of six West African countries in Nigeria. These embassies include Liberia, Mali, Ghana, Benin Republic, Guinea and Sierra Leone and they are purposively selected to include stable and unstable democracies in the region. The respondents included five people in the senior cadre rank from ECOWAS who are deeply involved in the activities of ECOWAS which is the main organization that the work has as its focal point. The choice of the officers in senior cadre is essential as a result of the sensitivity of the information that was elicited from them. These respondents were able to give adequate information about the activities of their organization as regards human security in the sub region. For the academic institution, three respondents who have worked extensively on ECOWAS and related areas were interviewed. Lastly, two respondents each, who are senior members of staff, were interviewed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies of the six selected West African countries. These respondents were selected because of their familiarity with the various issues of insecurity in their countries and ECOWAS efforts at addressing them. Secondary data were sourced from ECOWAS documents, such as protocols establishing its various organs and institutions. Also data were collected from books,

journals, articles, magazines, newspapers and unpublished literature. The data generated was analyzed through the use of descriptive content analysis. The research questions are segmented into themes while the responses of the respondents are coded and analyzed in line with these themes.

Theoretical Framework

This study utilizes the theory of hegemonic stability to explaining ECOWAS credibility as a regional security actor in addressing non military human security threats in the West African sub region. The Hegemonic stability theory is an International Relations theory which postulated that international economic openness and stability is only attainable by the presence of a single dominant state (Webb and Krasner, 1989). A hegemonic distribution of power in this context implies a condition in which a single state has a predominance of power that is relatively conducive to the establishment of a stable and open international economic system (Krasner, 1976). The theory was developed and popularised by several scholars such as Keohane(1980), Kindleberger(1973) and Gilpin(1984). Specifically, the theory's argument is that there is a causal relationship between hegemony and systemic stability. This means that for a system to be stable there must be an hegemon that will act as a stabilizer for the system. However, the hegemon alone cannot exercise a preponderant power but can play a dominant role in the constructing significant and essential rules for the system (Bergstein, 1975). The theory has been applied to explaining regional frameworks and political instability in developing countries with useful insights (Sotirios, 2007). Within the context of this study as and in relation to the credibility of ECOWAS as a security actor, Nigeria is usually considered as the hegemon in the sub region. This is due to its vast political, economic and military power which is also perceived as partially a determinant factor of ECOWAS credibility as a security actor.

However, Nigeria as an hegemon within ECOWAS must operate on the basis of consensus with other member states and not unilateral use of force. In this regard, the theory is deemed useful and significant to this study in the following ways: First, it helps in examining the credibility of ECOWAS as an effective regional security with the capability to respond to non-military human security threats in the region. Thus, it is used to explain the reasons why in spite of the adoption of several protocols and agreements, little implementation has been observed. The study also utilizes the broad school approach to human security to explain the significance of its focus on non-military aspect of human security. This approach to human security indicated that human security is beyond violent security threats which mean that it combines both freedom from fear and freedom from wants (Kerr, 2013). These theories help to provide sufficient framework of analysis for explaining the subject matter of the study.

Non-violent Human Security threats in West Africa

Extreme Poverty and Human Deprivation

In West Africa, most states in the sub region in the last two decades have experienced development from the macroeconomic perspective (Oxfarm, 2021). For instance, out of ten fastest developing economies globally, six are in Africa while three of them are in West Africa (African Development Bank, 2020). These include Ghana,

Cote d'Ivoire and Benin Republic. This growth is unprecedented based on the fact that the economies of states in the sub-region have been underdeveloped for several decades since independence from colonial rule. However, a major problem with this macro economic development is that it has not translated to reduction in poverty and human deprivation in the region. The economic growth in the states that witnessed it was only successful in enriching the wealthy minority while the majority is getting poorer (Oxfarm, 2021). The most immediate consequence of rising poverty among the people of West Africa is rising inequality which eventually results in human deprivation (World Bank, 2016). While all forms of inequality cannot be linked with conflict and insecurity, the prevailing inequality in Africa because of its exploitative nature has been a cause of increasing human deprivation in the sub region. More importantly, poverty in West Africa by its nature is multidimensional and it is more common among the youths (Fonta, Yameogo, Tinto, Huyen, Natama, Compaore and Fonta, 2020: World Bank Group, 2020). Considering the youthful nature of the region's demography, this will have an adverse consequence on violence and conflict in the region. According to Hallum and Obeng (2019), inequality instigated by mass poverty among the people of West Africa is at a crisis level. This is because more people continue to fall into poverty despite an improved economic growth in the region. Table I and II on the next page is an illustration of the unemployment rate and multi-dimensional nature of poverty in West Africa.

Table 1

Population Size and Unemployment Rate in West African States

Countries	Population	Unemployment Rate
Niger	24,206,636	0.69
Nigeria	206,139,587	9.01
Gambia	2,416,664	9.64
Sierra Leone	7,976,985	4.6
Ghana	31,072,945	4.53
Senegal	16,743,930	7.1

Countries	Population	Unemployment Rate
Burkina Faso	20,903,278	4.96
Guinea	13,132,792	4.35
Guinea Bissau	1,967,998	3.13
Mali	20,250,834	7.5
Togo	8,278,737	4.05
Liberia	5,057,677	3.3
Cote d'Ivoire	26,378,275	3.5
Benin	12,123,198	2.54
Cabo Verde	555,988	13.41

Statista, 2022 and World Bank, 2020

Table 2
Poverty Profile of Fourteen West African countries

Country	Multi-dimensional poverty indices	Intensity of deprivation	National Poverty line	Population living below \$1.90 PPP per day	Standard of living	Population in severe Multidimensional poverty
Nigeria	0.254	54.8	46.0	53.5	40.9	26.8
Sierra Leone	0.297	57.9	52.9	40.1	52.4	30.4
Republic of Benin	0.368	55.0	40.1	49.5	42.9	40.9
Senegal	0.288	53.2	46.7	38.0	33.0	32.8
Burkinafaso	0.519	83.8	40.1	49.5	42.9	40.9
Gambia	0.024	41.6	48.6	10.1	35.9	18.8
Guinea Bissau	0.372	67.3	69.3	67.1	44.7	40.4
Republic of Guinea	0.373	66.2	55.2	35.3	40.3	43.5
Ghana	0.138	30.1	23.4	13.3	47.2	10.4
Togo	0.180	37.6	55.1	49.8	50.9	15.2
Mali	0.376	68.3	41.1	49.7	39.3	44.7
Cote d' Ivoire	0.236	46.1	46.3	28.2	40.4	24.5
Liberia	0.320	62.9	50.9	40.9	52.1	32.1
Niger	0.590	90.5	44.5	44.5	42.4	74.8

World Bank Group, 2020

Note I: All figures are expressed in percentage.

Table 1 and II above shows unemployment rate and poverty level in the sub-region, while the degree of poverty level among the countries in the sub-region varies. The variation in the statistics of unemployment rates among West African states can be attributed to several factors such as economic diversification, macro-economic stability, infrastructure development, and insecurity. In states with diversified economies such as Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, as reflected on

the tables, they tend to have lower unemployment rates compared to states with mono-cultural economies such as Liberia and Sierra Leone. Furthermore, countries with limited investment in human capital and critical infrastructure such as roads, ports, energy systems tend to have higher unemployment rates compared to those with high investments in these areas. However, these factors are the major reasons for the high level of unemployment across several states in the West African sub region. The mass

unemployment in the sub region has resulted into high level of poverty as shown on table two. This is mainly because individuals without jobs are unable to earn a stable income thereby leading to reduced consumption and investment. The existence of economic insecurity in the sub region as make many individuals and groups to get involved in criminal activities or violent extremism as a means of economic survival. As a consequence, the growing insecurity in the region is undermining its development and worsening poverty level among the people. This is because lack of employment with a consequent rise in poverty has been identified as a causal factor of violence and criminality in the region (Anna, 2014). Hence, the issue of mass poverty in West Africa has ominous effect on conflict and insecurity in the area. This shows the importance of addressing human security threats in the West African sub region within the broader and integrated approach of the human security broad school. This is because both military and non military security threats both have a symbiotic effect for conflict and insecurity. Furthermore, as a result of the weakness of most states in the sub region, there is need for the willingness of Nigeria as an hegemon to provide resources for the purpose of collective peace and stability.

Bad Governance and Political Instability

West Africa for a long-time have experienced prolonged period of protracted violence, economic and political instability (UNSC, 2014). Many

countries in the sub-region have been agonized by political crisis which was caused by authoritarian regimes, political corruption, and military coups that ravaged the sub region in the 20th Century and in the later part of the 21st Century (Bala and Tar, 2021). This suggests that, bad governance has been a major problem that has been plaguing the continent since independence. The civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote D'Ivoire in the 1990s and early 2000s were not just the only evidence of political instability in West Africa. This is because the majority of the countries in the sub region have experienced coup de tats and civil wars. According to George and Pita (2004), West Africa is the most politically unstable region in the world with the region's experience of about 42 coup de tats since 1963. Presently, the region is still politically unstable as a result of insurgent and terrorist activities in Mali, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger Republic. The activities of the terrorist groups have led to massive loss of lives and properties. More recently, there has also been a military takeover in West African countries of Mali, Republic of Guinea and Niger Republic. Many of these coup de tats and insurgent activities have been blamed on bad governance and corruption. According to Chandler good governance index of 2021 which ranked 104 countries globally, only five out of the fifteen member states of ECOWAS were ranked with very poor positions.

The table below shows the good governance index of five West African states

Table 3

Poverty Profile of Fourteen West African countries

	Leadership and Foresight	Robust Laws and Policies	Strong Institutions	Financial Stewardship	Attractive Market Place	Global Influence and Reputation	Helping People Rise	Position out of 104 countries Ranked
Senegal	36	77	67	68	62	94	83	71
Ghana	47	74	57	85	54	90	87	72

	Leadership and Foresight	Robust Laws and Policies	Strong Institutions	Financial Stewardship	Attractive Market Place	Global Influence and Reputation	Helping People Rise	Position out of 104 countries Ranked
Burkina Faso	67	89	91	80	75	103	96	96
Mali	81	94	100	79	99	102	104	100
Nigeria	98	85	101	88	97	72	98	102

Chandler Institute of Governance, 2021

The five West African countries that were ranked on the table are lowly placed while there figures demonstrates that there is high level of bad governance in the region. All the West African countries ranked as shown on the table lack strong institutions, attractive market place and global influence that is needed to attract investment for development. The prevalence of bad governance in the sub region can be identified as a major cause of rise in insecurity across the region (Yagboyaju and Akinola, 2019).

Diseases and Epidemic

The West African region is experiencing a recurring outbreak of epidemics which national health systems are not able to respond to adequately (WAHO, 2022). Some of the major epidemic diseases in the region include Cholera, HIV/Aids, Ebola, Polio and Covid 19. With the exception of Haiti, the sub-Saharan Africa which West Africa is an integral part accounted for 86% of reported global cases of cholera and 99% of deaths in 2011 (Martin et al, 2014). The disease has been more prevalent in the following West African Countries which include Togo, Ghana, Benin, and Guinea. Nigeria which is the most populous nation in the region has the worst cases of cholera with 3513 and 1803 cases in 2019 and 2020 respectively. These cases are just illustration of the nature of the cholera epidemic in the sub-region, as the disease is on the rise every year. While there has been a reduction in the outbreak of Ebola, HIV

Aids, Polio and Covid 19 in Africa, they still exist in some West African states. For instance, transmission rate of HIV Aids is still very high in republic of Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea Bissau with adult prevalence of 2.70% and 3.4% respectively (World Fact book, 2021). However, Nigeria has the highest number of people living with HIV in the region with a population of about 1.8 million (Ibid). Ebola outbreak is also present in Guinea which recorded an outbreak in 2021(IFRC, 2022). Polio outbreak in West Africa has not occurred since 2016, but there is vaccine derived polioviruses in about six West African countries which include Ghana, Nigeria, Niger, Togo, Benin and Cote d'Ivoire(WHO, 2019). Despite the global spread and fatality of COVID 19, West Africa infection and fatality rate has been relatively low with 906,913 confirmed cases and 12198 deaths (Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat, 2022). In spite of these, weak health infrastructures and inadequate access to healthcare posed a serious threat to the management of epidemic diseases in the region.

Food Crisis

Food Insecurity in West Africa is basically of two forms. It includes lack of economic access to food in some countries, while in others; it is lack of both physical and economic access to food. More worrisome is the serious case of undernourishment in the sub-region as a result of the higher energy, low vitamin and protein in

food production in the region. According to Mensah (2016), West Africa has made tremendous strides in reducing the proportion of hungry people by 60% thus achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1c target compare to her counterparts in the Eastern and Central Africa where progress is slow. In spite of this achievement, there is still about thirty-six million undernourished West Africans and several millions of people are faced with the problem of food emergencies every year (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015). Food insecurity is widespread and children are more vulnerable, with nearly 36% of children below 5 years suffering from stunting and 15% underweight (Ibid). In general, 37% of children in West Africa under age 5 suffer from stunting whereas 28.3% are underweight (Food and Agricultural Organisation, 2015). Civil insecurity, banditry and inter-communal conflicts, coupled with the disruption of livelihoods and the depletion of food stocks during the lean season, are among the factors that drastically limit the availability and access to food in the most affected areas (CILSS, 2017).

ECOWAS' response to challenges of Human Security in West Africa

The identified non-violent human security challenges in West Africa are numerous while the findings show that ECOWAS have undertaken numerous efforts in responding to these problems.

ECOWAS and Economic Security

Specifically, the organisation has developed a number of policies and protocols which aims at addressing the menace of poverty in the sub region. Some of these policies include:

- The West African Common Industrial Policy (WACIP) which was developed in 2010. Its purpose is to strengthen the integration process in the region with the aim of bringing the region out of poverty. Essentially the policy seeks to

maintain a solid industrial base structure which is globally competitive and environmentally friendly. The essence of this is to bring about significant improvement in the standard of living of its people. Through the policy, ECOWAS aims at utilising the abundant natural resources in the member states and also to diversify and broaden the region's industrial production base. This is to be done by progressively raising the local raw materials processing rate from 15-20% to an average of 30 % by 2030. The objective here is create new industrial production capacities and also to upgrade the existing ones. WACIP as an economic initiative by ECOWAS has not been able to achieve its objective of creation. Specifically, it has not been able to increase the productive capacity of states in the region, especially in the aspect of food production. For instance, rice which is an essential commodity in the region because of its high level of consumption is still imported in huge quantity. The sub region spends approximately 4 billion United States dollars on the importation of rice every year (ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development, 2024). This has negative implication for food insecurity in the region because of its reliance on external source for food importation.

- The ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of goods and person which was adopted in 1979 seeks to liberalize people and good's movement within the sub region. It also intends to ease the living standard of the people and create opportunity for free market zone with mutual benefits.

- ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme which is a custom union that was developed in 2006 to promote inter-community trade by the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers to import and export of products originating from member states.

The most important among these policies is the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) which was adopted in 2008. As noted by a respondent:

ECOWAS in recognition of the enormous challenges to human security in the region and its implication for security developed a conflict prevention framework (ECPF) in 2008. The essence of the framework is to strengthening and promotes human security in the sub region through state and regional governance (Interview, 15.10. 2022).

The ECPF serves as a reference point for the regional body and its member states in their efforts to strengthen human security in the sub region (ECOWAS, 2008). The study revealed that ECOWAS conflict prevention framework and other policy frameworks have made some significant achievements at macroeconomic level in the promotion of economic security in the sub-region, but there is still a lot to be done. For instance, the economic performance of 2021 indicates a brighter economic environment in 2022 in the sub-region while the sub-region's economy grew by 3.7 per cent which is 0.7 percentage points lower than that of 2021 (ECOWAS Report, 2022). In spite of the complexity embedded in the global and sub regional environment in which the West African states are located in 2022, some economies in the sub-region had better economic performances in 2022, compared to 2021 as contained in the ECOWAS annual report of the year. These states include Niger, Guinea, The Gambia, and Togo. In spite of the achievement of economic growth in some member states, the success was threatened by the upsurge in inflation rate in the region. This is well captured in the annual report of 2022 as it stated that:

Inflation rate in the region reached 21.1 per cent in 2022, against 12.9 per cent in 2021. The inflation rate was driven by the inflation recorded by the WAMZ countries, whose inflation reached 25.1 per cent in 2022, against 15.1 per cent in 2021. The WAEMU, which has historically had low levels of inflation, also suffered from this inflationary surge with an inflation rate of 7.3 per cent in 2022, against 3.5 per cent in 2021 (ECOWAS Annual Report, 2022).

The inflation rate in the region has continued to worsen across its member states and they continue to experience an unprecedented upsurge in price of goods and services. Specifically, the inflation rate in the region in 2023 was forecasted at 20.9 percent, while Nigeria which is the largest economy in the region and Sierra Leone have recorded highest rate of inflation at 42.9 percent and 42.2 percent respectively (Statista, 2023). The inflationary surge in the region was caused by many factors which include supply chains disruptions, energy price increases and the depreciation of several national currencies in the sub-region against the euro and the dollar (ECOWAS Annual Report, 2022). As a consequence, poverty level in the sub region is getting worse despite ECOWAS efforts at addressing poverty and rising unemployment through its frameworks. This is shown on table two which presents information about multi-dimensional nature of poverty in the region. As noted by a respondent who is a scholar on regionalism:

ECOWAS effort on the region's economy has witness relative success in the macro aspect of the economy of most of its member states while the micro aspect has witness little success with risen poverty index in most of the states in the sub region. This negates ECOWAS objective of improving living standard in the sub-region (Interview, 17.10. 2022).

In spite of the numerous policy frameworks that has been put in place by ECOWAS to address micro economic insecurity in the region, the result shows that ECOWAS successes on economy of the region has been relatively low. Basically, its efforts have contributed to the macro economic strength of states in the sub region which has been drastically affected by several other negative factors. The result also reveals that the organisation has not been able to impact negatively on economic development in the sub region. Hence, its credibility in this regard is fraught with the challenge of lack of implementation of many of its policies

that has the capacity to improve poverty condition among the people of the region by its member states (Schofberger, 2021). For instance, in spite of the existence of a protocol on free movement of goods, persons and services across the sub region, the existence of conflicting national laws from member state has been a great impediment. This has given rise to the need for ECOWAS to re-establish norms for free movement and plan for implementation in other to address intra and interstate security threats that are militating against the success of the free movement protocol (Zanker, Arhin-Sam, Jegen and Bisong, 2021). This is because the success of the free movement protocol is critical for the promotion of economic prosperity in the region.

ECOWAS and Political Instability

ECOWAS response to bad governance and political instability among its member is through its National Early Warning and Response Mechanisms (NEWRM). In this regard, the organisation has undertaken a lot of activities for the effective and efficient deployment of the NEWRM through a participatory approach involving key stakeholders in the Member States. As noted by a respondent who is an ECOWAS official:

The National Early Warning and Response Mechanisms (NEWRM) have been effective in preventing conflicts among states, most especially during elections. For example the measure helps to curb tension in the Nigerian general elections in 2015 and Gambia general elections from resulting into violent crisis that can engulf the country and the sub region at large (Interview, 18.09. 2022).

Aside from this, the organization in its effort to promote good governance has undertaken some efforts which included:

The establishment of a civil society organization platform to institutionalize CSO involvement in the promotion of Accountability and Transparency; evaluation of the report on

the human rights situations and the rule of law in the ECOWAS region; as well as the organization of a meeting to promote media involvement in participatory governance (ECOWAS Annual Report, 2016).

While the involvement of the CSOs and the media in transparency and accountability process in the region is an important effort by ECOWAS, the prevalence of pseudo-democratic regimes and their negative human right records is a negation of this effort. For instance, there have been massive human rights violations in the West African countries of Mali, Burkina Faso and Nigeria by armed groups which has resulted in deaths, displacement and injuries (Transparency International, 2020). The responses of the state security agencies have also resulted in wide spread of human rights violations such as extra judicial killings, enforced disappearance and torture (Ibid). This implies that CSOs and the media in most states across the region do not have free space to undertake their responsibilities. The regional organization in its effort to curtail widespread corruption in the region has also made some effort in this regard. According to a respondent, ECOWAS instituted Intergovernmental Action Group against Money Laundry in West Africa (GIABA) in the year 2000 as major instrument for combating the menace of corruption in the sub region (Interview, 18.09.2022). The framework based on further insights from the respondent is expected to be domesticated in the national laws of the member states. It is also expected that the member states should provide a strong retributive measure as deterrence against corruption in the region. More recently, ECOWAS organized a five days workshop for the training of law enforcement agents in the region on financial crimes investigation (Interview, 17.10.2022). The essence of the workshop is to strengthen the combat against the menace of corruption across its member states. While these efforts demonstrates the importance of regional framework in addressing

human security threats in West Africa, low commitment from member states, unwillingness to share information and inadequate legislative are some of the impediment to the success of ECOWAS anti-corruption fight.

Specifically, political instability, corruption and bad governance are still a problem across West Africa sub region. Recently, there was a military coup in Mali (2020) and Guinea Conakry (2021) while the prospect for political instability in the region remain very high as a result of rising poverty and human deprivation among the people of the region. As shown in table ii, bad governance is still very much prevalent across West Africa while out of the recently ranked 104 countries globally by Chandler good governance index; only five West African states make the ranking in very poor and pathetic positions. The implication of this is that in spite of frameworks put in place to ensure transparency and accountability in the sub region, little result has been seen in few of its member states.

ECOWAS and Endemic Diseases

The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework of 2008 is the major mechanism for addressing the issue of epidemic diseases in the region. According to one of the respondents who is a staff of ECOWAS, he explained that:

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) guided by the ECPF has been active in combating epidemic diseases in the West African region and it has played vital role in coordinating and implementing strategies to prevent, detect, and respond to outbreaks of diseases such as Ebola, cholera, and Lassa fever (Interview, 20.10.2022).

Similarly, another respondent who is a senior officer at ECOWAS also noted ECOWAS efforts on the epidemic spread of diseases in the sub region, it was noted that:

ECOWAS through the West African

Health Organisation (WAHO) designed a strategic plan which is to cover the period 2009-2013. The main essence of this strategic plan is to improve the quality of health systems in the sub region and also to support health services in the member states (Interview, 22.10.2022).

An assessment of this strategic plan after the expiration of its target period shows that, it has a hybrid effect on health security in the region. This means that it was able to achieve some of its set target and others were not met. An assessment of the strategic plan of the 2009-2013 period revealed that WAHO was able to achieve in the following areas:

- increased harmonisation of regional health policies
- implementation of traditional health policies and legislation
- improved institutional capacity building
- development of human resources for health capacity of member states
- Improved availability and access to medicine

The assessment also showed that the strategy under achieved in the following areas:

- Ineffective implementation of strategies developed for the reduction of infant and maternal mortality
- Inadequate surveillance and response to epidemics
- Control and eradication of malaria and HIV aids
- Promotion of health research
- Development of e-health and strengthening of capacity for local production and supply of medicine

The defects associated with the 2009-2013 strategic plans resulted in the designing of another strategic plan which covers from 2016 to 2020. In spite of this effort, ECOWAS have had little effort in promoting health security

to medical facilities and continued presence of infectious diseases in some of its member states.

ECOWAS and Food Security

Ensuring food security has been an item on ECOWAS agenda for promoting human security in the sub region. Specifically, the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) is the main instrument the organization is using to address the problem of food insecurity and malnutrition in the region. Through this policy, a number of activities have been undertaken to improve productivity, most especially that of strategic crops (rice, maize, cassava) and livestock products through the intensification of farming systems and as well as the restructuring of sub-sectors. As contained in the annual report of ECOWAS (2016), it was stated that:

Regional Food Security Reserve is to serve as a regional instrument to complement national strategies which aim at combating food insecurity in the region. This forms ECOWAS initiative to guarantee food security for West Africans through the "Zero Hunger" scheme which aimed at overcoming hunger and malnutrition by 2025 (ECOWAS Annual Report, 2016).

Sequel to the above, ECOWAS in 2019 organize a conference as part of its effort ensuring food security in the sub region. The essence of the conference is for the implementation of bio-safety regulation in the Agricultural sector in other to ensure food security in the region and also to achieve a dream of zero hunger in the region the year 2030 (Interview, 18.09.2022). The implementation of the bio-safety regulation is expected to improve institutional, technical and human capacity in member states in their efforts to combat food insecurity in the sub-region (Interview, 11.10. 2022). In spite of these efforts by ECOWAS at improving food security in the sub-region in policy terms, access and availability of food still remain a significant threat in the region. For

instance there has been a significant spike in food insecurity across Africa which West Africa is an integral part. Between 2019 and 2020 the population of people in West Africa countries of Burkina faso, Niger and Mali increased from 3.2 million to 12.7 million (African Center for Strategic Studies, 2021). Food insecurity in these countries is worsening by the protracted conflict of banditry and terrorism. About 27 million West Africans require immediate food assistance which was caused by economic and environmental malaise such as poverty, displacement, poor trading integration, high cereal prices and environmental degradation (World Bank, 2021). This worsening food insecurity in the region shows that ECOWAS efforts have not been able to subside the menace of food insecurity in West Africa.

Conclusion

This study examines challenges of human security in West Africa from the non-military perspective. It further assess the credibility of ECOWAS as a security actor with capacity to addresses these problems. Four non-military human vulnerabilities were examined and they include poverty and inequality (Economic Insecurity), bad governance (Political insecurity), food crisis (Food Insecurity), diseases and epidemics (Health Insecurity). The study revealed that the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) is the organisation's blueprint for addressing the hydra-headed problems of human insecurity in the sub region. Others include: ECOWAS protocol on free movement (1979), West African Common Industrial Policy (WACIP, 2010 and ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (2006). The National Early Warning and Response Mechanism (NEWRM) and Inter Governmental Action Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) are the organisation's two main instrument for the addressing the menace of political instability and mass corruption in the region. On epidemic

diseases, the WAHO is ECOWAS main instrument for promoting regional health integration with the aim of improving access to standard health facilities. ECOWAP is the major policy instrument that ECOWAS is using to promote both financial and physical access to food across the states in the sub-region to ensure food security. This plethora of policy instruments used by ECOWAS to respond to non-military human security threats has a miniature effects on the human security profile in the region. This puts a doubt on ECOWAS credibility as a security actor in providing security efforts in the area. This is because its credibility is fraught with numerous challenges which include lack of political will by member states to implement protocols, weak infrastructure within the member states, endemic corruption and inadequate funding. This has resulted in worsening human insecurity in the sub-region. This finding is significant because it contributes to the existing body of knowledge on ECOWAS and Human Security in West Africa. This is through its interrogation of the non-military security threats in the sub region within the context of the broad school of human security. Thus it helps to demonstrate the symbiotic effect of military and non-military security threats on conflict and insecurity in the sub-region. Furthermore, the study is also significant by its use of the hegemonic stability theory to examine the credibility of ECOWAS as a security actor with capability to respond to these threats.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that there should be a broader and effective integration of national and regional frameworks for addressing non-military threats in the sub region. It is suggested that future research should focus on the exploration of how to achieve effective integration between regional and national frameworks in the sub-region. The exploration of this area of research is significant

to reveal how a synergy under this arrangement can improve human security and regional governance in West Africa.

Acknowledgement

This research was facilitated by the support of African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) and UK research and Innovation (UKRI) through its project at the Obafemi Awolowo University under its principal investigator, Professor K.O Olayode. We acknowledge greatly, the financial and institutional support provided by ARUA and UKRI. We also appreciate the trust and confidence placed in us that by ARUA and UKRI to complete this research work.

References

- Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2021). *Food insecurity crisis in Africa*. <http://www.africacenter.org/Eclairrages.html>
- African Development Bank. (2020). *African economic outlook 2020: Developing Africa's workforce for the future*. <http://www.afdb.org/knowledge-publication.html>
- Akinyemi, O., Apeloko, D. O., Ossymen, G. U., & Ekene, C. (2024). The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the resurgence of military coups in West Africa. *Journal of African Union Studies*, 13(2).
- Bala, B., & Tar, U. A. (2021). Regional cooperation in West Africa: Counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency. *African Security*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2021.1929747>
- Bergsten, C. F. (1975). *Toward a new international economic order*. Lexington Books.
- Chandler Institute of Governance. (2021). *Chandler good government index report*. <http://www.chandlergovernmentindex.com.html>
- CILSS. (2017). *Food security and nutrition situation in Sahel and West Africa (March–May 2017)*. <https://reliefweb.int/food-security-and-nutrition-situation-sahel-and-west-africa>
- Colin, A. (2013). *Introduction: What is security studies?* Oxford University Press.

- Dinshak, L. D., & Dan-Fulani, W. A. (2018). ECO-WAS and human security in West Africa: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 23(12), 75–82.
- ECOWAS. (2008). *ECOWAS conflict prevention framework*. ECOWAS Commission.
- ECOWAS. (2017). *ECOWAS common external tariff (CET): Achievements, challenges and prospects*. ECOWAS Commission.
- Felter, C. (2018). *Nigeria's battle with Boko Haram*. Council on Foreign Relations. <http://www.cfr.org/background/nigerias-battle-boko-haram.html>
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2015). *FAOSTAT*. http://faostat3.fao.org/download/D/*E
- Fonta, C. L., Yameogo, T. B., Tinto, H., Huysen, T., Natama, H. M., Compaore, A., & Fonta, W. M. (2020). Decomposing multidimensional child poverty and its drivers in the Mouhoun region of Burkina Faso, West Africa. *BMC Public Health*, 20, 149. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-8254-3>
- Gawi, Y. A., & Abdullahi, A. (2024). Security challenges in West Africa and the imperative for ECOWAS military intervention. *Journal of Global Economics and Business*, 5(17), 70–83.
- George, K. K., & Pita, O. A. (Eds.). (2004). *The military and politics in Africa*. Ashgate.
- Gilpin, R. (1975). United States power and multinational corporation: The political economy of foreign direct investment. *American Political Science Review*, 72(2), 789–790.
- Gijsbers, G., & Vrooman, C. (2007). *Explaining social exclusion: A theoretical model tested in the Netherlands*. Netherlands Institute for Social Research.
- Goyei, F. Y. (2018). Nigeria's Boko Haram and its security dynamics in the West African sub-region. *Journal of Language, Technology & Entrepreneurship in Africa*, 9(1), 102–131.
- Hallum, C., & Obeng, W. K. (2019). *The West African inequality crisis*. Oxfam GB.
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2022). *West Africa: Ebola outbreak*. <https://www.ifrc.org/emergency/west-africa-ebola-outbreak>
- Keohane, R. O. (1980). *The theory of hegemonic stability and changes in international economic regimes, 1967–1977*. Routledge.
- Kindleberger, C. P. (1973). *The world in depression, 1929–1939*. University of California Press.
- Krasner, S. D. (1976). State power and the structure of international trade. *World Politics*, 28, 317–347.
- Mack, A. (2004). A signifier of shared values. *Security Dialogue*, 35(3), 336–337.
- Mensah, E. (2016). Agriculture and the state of food insecurity in Western Africa. <https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/229976/2/saea16lkaR.pdf>
- Oxfam International. (2021). *West Africa: Extreme inequality in numbers*. <http://www.oxfam.org/west-africa-extreme-inequality-in-numbers.html>
- Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat. (2022). *Tackling the coronavirus (COVID-19): West African perspectives*. <https://www.oecd.org/swac/coronavirus-west-africa.html>
- Schofberger, I. (2020). Free movement policies and border controls: Regional migration governance systems in West, North Africa and Europe and their interactions. <http://www.reliefweb.int/report/world/migration.html>
- Sotiris, P. (2007). Rethinking hegemonic stability theory: Some reflections from the regional integration experience in the developing world. *Sixth ECPR-SGIR Pan-European Conference*, Turin, Italy.
- Statista. (2023). *Annual consumer price inflation rate of ECOWAS countries (2022–2023)*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1236461>
- Thakur, R. (2004). A political world view. *Security Dialogue*, 35(3), 347.
- United Nations Office for West Africa. (2013). *Transnational organised crime in West Africa: A threat assessment*. <https://www.unodc.org/pdf.htm>
- United Nations Security Council. (2014). *Emerging security threats in West Africa*. United Nations.
- Webb, M. C., & Krasner, S. D. (1981). Hegemonic stability theory: An empirical assessment. *Review of International Studies*, 75, 183–198.

- West African Health Organisation. (2022). *ECO-WAS: Epidemics and other health emergencies*. <https://www.wahooas.org/web-ooas/en/programmes/p03-epidemics-and-other-health-emergencies.html>
- White, J. (2018). How has the study of international security changed since the end of the Cold War? <http://www.e-ir.info/2018/07/25>
- World Bank. (2016). *While poverty in Africa has declined, number of poor has increased*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/publication/poverty-rising-africa-poverty-report.html>
- World Factbook. (2021). *HIV/AIDS – Adult prevalence rate*. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/hiv-aids-adult-prevalence-rate/>
- World Health Organization. (2019). *WHO, UNICEF help boost West Africa's capacity to respond to polio outbreaks*. <https://www.afro.who.int/news/who-unicef-help-boost-west-africas-capacity-respond-polio-outbreaks.html>
- Yagboyaju, D. A., & Akinola, O. A. (2019). Nigerian state and the crisis of governance: A critical exposition. *SAGE Open*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019865810>
- Zabadi, I. (2005). *Civil militias: Threats to national and human security in West Africa*. Routledge.
- Zanker, F., Arhin-Sam, K., Jegen, J., & Bisong, A. (2020). Free movement in West Africa: Juxtaposition and divergent interests. <http://www.ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads>

Development of a Model to Support Teaching and Learning Management in a Bilateral Participatory System for Workplace Trainers

Boonluea Thongkatkeaw ^{1*}✉, Pairote Stirayakorn ¹✉, Sayam Kamkhuntod ¹✉

¹ Faculty of Industrial Education, King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok, Thailand

* Corresponding Author, © Authors

Article history:

Received: February 3, 2025

Revised: April 9, 2025

Accepted: April 11, 2025

Keywords:

Dual Vocational Education and Training, Participatory Model, Trainer Management Model

Abstract

This research aimed to: 1) explore the future scenario of managing participatory dual vocational education and training (VET) for enterprise trainers; 2) develop and evaluate a management model; and 3) design and assess the effectiveness of a guidebook to support VET management in enterprises. The study followed a research and development methodology and was conducted in four phases. In Phase 1, the future scenario of VET management was explored. Phase 2, focused on developing and evaluating the management model. Phase 3 assessed the creation and effectiveness of the guidebook. Finally, Phase 4 involved monitoring the application of the guidebook. Data was analyzed using content analysis, including percentages and standard deviations. The findings emphasize the importance of strategic planning, clear management structures, operational systems, and support for the academic and professional development of trainers. The proposed model consisted of three key components: 1) a participatory management committee; 2) a participatory management process; and 3) trainer standards in enterprises. The model was rated as highly suitable in terms of both appropriateness ($\bar{x} = 4.57$, S.D. = 0.46) and accuracy ($\bar{x} = 4.68$, S.D. = 0.41). The guidebook was found to be both beneficial and feasible, achieving an effectiveness ratio of 87.31/81.82, which surpassed the 80/80 criteria. Follow-up evaluations showed high trainee satisfaction ($\bar{x} = 4.49$, S.D. = 0.44). Additionally, the trainees' ability to apply the guidebook's guidelines was rated very highly by the Deputy Director of Academic Affairs and the Head of the Industrial Technical Program ($\bar{x} = 4.76$, S.D. = 0.48).

Introduction

The management of dual vocational education and training (VET) in Thailand faces ongoing challenges. Despite the country's need for a skilled middle-level workforce to drive economic

growth, vocational education is still undervalued and insufficiently popular (Nammahung, 2022). Additionally, businesses are grappling with a shortage of skilled labor, often having to hire workers whose skills do not meet industry

requirements or who lack the necessary skills altogether. This skills mismatch leads to higher operational costs and diminished competitiveness (Raksakiatwong, 2016).

Within vocational institutions, the primary issues include a lack of experts in managing dual VET systems and an insufficient understanding among instructors of the dual VET system and its benefits (Manjanda, 2019). Moreover, workplace training is not systematically organized, and enterprise trainers lack the necessary skills to conduct effective training (Chimkul, 2022). Consequently, the training process fails to fully meet the needs of enterprises.

Addressing these issues requires strengthening the capacity of enterprise trainers to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver high-quality instruction and support dual VET curricula. Collaboration among public and private stakeholders is also crucial. This collaboration should include the provision of equipment, tools, mentorship, and opportunities for knowledge exchange to enhance the dual VET management system (Phannan et al., 2021).

These challenges underscore the significance of dual VET, which depends largely on workplace training to equip the workforce with practical experience, knowledge, and skills that meet industry demands. Enterprise trainers play a crucial role, since they are responsible for mentoring, training, and assessing students during workplace training in line with established training plans. However, the effectiveness of this training is hindered by weaknesses in planning, evaluation, supervision, and overall management, which prevent it from fully meeting curriculum requirements. This shortfall not only impacts students' professional competencies but also their ethical values, attitudes, and the desired characteristics of vocational graduates.

To ensure the success of student training that aligns with curriculum objectives and prepares graduates to meet the country's future development needs, this study applies systems thinking alongside

the 7-S McKinsey Framework, a widely recognized approach for fostering organizational excellence. In the present study, this framework is used to develop a participatory management model that supports the dual VET system, with a particular emphasis on enterprise trainers. The proposed model aims to strengthen the dual VET system, enabling both educational institutions and enterprises to use it for policy formulation, knowledge creation, and practical applications in the future.

Research Objectives

1. To explore future scenarios that could enhance the participatory management of dual vocational education and training (VET) for enterprise trainers.

2. To design and evaluate a model aimed at supporting participatory management in dual VET for enterprise trainers.

3. To create and assess the effectiveness of a guidebook that facilitates the participatory management of dual VET for enterprise trainers, based on the developed model.

Scope of the Research

This research encompasses the following areas:

1. Content

1.1 The participatory management support model for dual vocational education and training (VET) for enterprise trainers incorporates participatory management principles. It involves committees and management frameworks that bring together personnel from state vocational institutions under the Office of Vocational Education Commission, enterprise staff collaborating with educational institutions, and organizations responsible for occupational standard certifications. Systems thinking (Petchngam, 2022) is applied to analyze challenges arising from institutional management. Additionally, the 7-S McKinsey Framework is used to strengthen participatory management for enterprise trainers involved in dual VET administration.

1.2 The model emphasizes the provision of participatory support for dual VET students specializing in industrial technology.

1.3 The evaluation of the guidebook, which supports participatory management in dual VET for enterprise trainers, is based on the developed model. The guidebook's effectiveness is assessed using the E1/E2 criteria for theoretical components and a 75% benchmark for practical components.

2. Population and Sample

The population and sample groups for this study were determined through the following stages:

Stage 1: Studying the future scenario

The target group for data collection consisted of 19 participants, including education scholars, deputy academic directors, dual VET coordinators, supervising teachers, and enterprise trainers. All participants had at least five years of experience in their respective roles. The participants were selected using the Delphi technique (Jensen, 1996).

Stage 2: Evaluating the draft model

The target group for this stage consisted of 11 participants, selected through focus group discussions. This group included three experts,

six vocational institution administrators from the Office of Vocational Education Commission, and two enterprise administrators.

Stage 3: Testing the guidebook

For the testing phase, the target group comprised seven stakeholders involved in dual VET at Nakhon Nayok Technical College. The participants included dual VET coordinators, supervising teachers, and industrial technology experts.

Stage 4: Collecting real-world data on the guidebook

The target group for this stage included seven stakeholders from Prachinburi Technical College, all of whom were engaged in dual VET. This group consisted of dual VET coordinators, supervising teachers, and industrial technology experts.

3. Research period

The research was conducted over the course of the 2023–2024 academic years

Research Methodology

Table 1 outlines the research framework for this study to develop a participatory management support model for dual vocational education and training (VET) for enterprise trainers.

Table 1

Development of a participatory support model for the management of dual vocational education and training for workplace trainers.

Research Stages	Procedures	Outcomes
Phase 1: Exploring potential future scenarios for participatory management support in dual vocational education and training (VET) for enterprise trainers.	Step 1: Study the existing dual vocational education and training (VET) system and the management models used within it. Step 2: Analyze future scenarios for participatory management support in dual VET, specifically for enterprise trainers.	A detailed future scenario for participatory management support in dual VET for enterprise trainers
Phase 2: Developing and assessing a participatory management support model for dual VET.	Step 1: Draft a participatory management support model for dual VET aimed at enterprise trainers. Step 2: Evaluate the quality of the participatory management support model for enterprise trainers.	2.1: Draft version of the participatory management support model for dual VET enterprise trainers 2.2: Finalized participatory management support model for dual VET enterprise trainers after quality evaluation

Research Stages	Procedures	Outcomes
Phase 3: Creating and evaluating a manual for participatory dual education management support for workplace trainers, based on the developed model.	Step 1: Develop a participatory management support manual for workplace trainers in dual education. Step 2: Create a training program focused on writing professional training plans. Step 3: Conduct pilot tests and refine the manual based on feedback. Step 4: Implement the manual in practice.	- A well-designed manual that is clear and easy to follow. - An effective training program for developing professional training plans. - A practical manual that is able to address real-world needs. - A manual that can efficiently deliver information and support the training process.
Phase 4: Monitoring the implementation of the participatory support manual for workplace trainers in dual vocational education.	Step 1: Assess trainee satisfaction. Step 2: Monitor the process of writing professional training plans.	- Trainee satisfaction. - Ability to write professional training plans.

Research Results

The development of a participatory support model to manage dual education teaching systems for workplace trainers led to the following conclusions:

1. Future prospects of the participatory support model for dual education management.

The findings showed a general consensus among experts regarding the critical need to improve both the management structure and operational systems. This improvement is essential for providing comprehensive and collaborative support to develop workplace trainers within the dual education system. The main conclusions are as follows:

1) *Strategic and Tactical Planning:*

Experts stressed the importance of focusing on the management of assessments and evaluations, as well as curriculum and teaching materials (Md = 5.00, IR = 0.00). Attention was also directed toward teaching management and personnel administration (Md = 4.00, IR = 0.00).

2) *Support Structure and Components:*

Establishing participatory management committees and clearly defining their responsibilities was deemed to be highly important alongside setting policy goals and strategies for managing educational institutions (Md = 5.00, IR = 0.00).

Additionally, the processes of planning, task delegation, and implementation were emphasized (Md = 4.00, IR = 0.00).

3) *Operational Systems:*

Administrative support and the effective use of information and communication systems were given the highest priority (Md = 5.00, IR = 0.00). This was followed by efforts to promote academic advancement and foster collaboration with both domestic and international workplaces (Md = 4.00, IR = 0.00).

4) *Management Models:*

Experts highlighted the significance of participatory management, establishing operational support systems, and adhering to vocational education management standards (Md = 5.00, IR = 0.00). They also stressed the importance of developing support processes and activities that reinforce workplace values (Md = 4.00, IR = 0.00).

5) *Support for Workplace Trainers:*

Experts emphasized the high priority of determining fair compensation and benefits (Md = 5.00, IR = 0.00), along with providing opportunities for further education and career development (Md = 4.00, IR = 0.00).

6) *Academic Support:*

The highest priority was placed on training and the provision of teaching materials

(Md = 5.00, IR = 0.00). Academic collaboration for trainer development was also underscored (Md = 4.00, IR = 0.00).

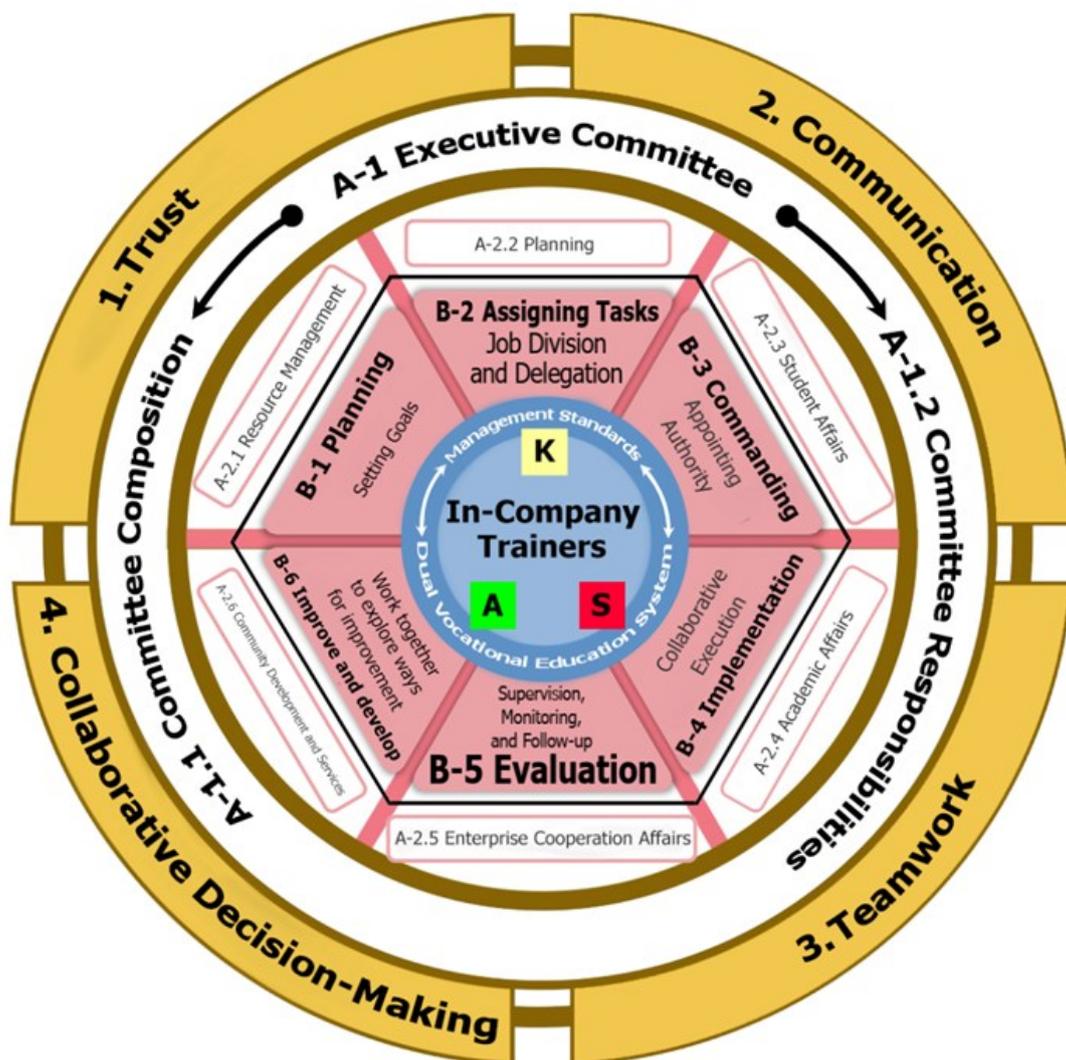
2. Results of the development and evaluation of the participatory support model for managing

dual education teaching systems for workplace trainers

The model, illustrated in Figure 1, was developed based on the findings from Phase 1.

Figure 1

Draft model for participatory support to manage dual education teaching systems for workplace training.



This model is grounded in the principles of participatory management and comprises the following key components:

- Component 1: The participatory management committee, along with its roles and responsibilities.
- Component 2: The participatory management process.

- Component 3: Standards for workplace trainers.

The quality of the model was evaluated by a panel of experts (n = 11), with the results summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Evaluation results on the model's suitability and accuracy in supporting the management of the dual vocational education system through participatory management for workplace trainers

Evaluation items	\bar{X}	S.D.	Suitability level	\bar{X}	S.D.	Accuracy level
Principles for supporting the management of the dual vocational education system through participatory management.	4.73	.43	Highest	4.66	.46	Highest
Component 1: Participatory management committee and the scope of participatory management.	4.68	.46	Highest	4.47	.50	High
Component 2: Supporting the management of the dual vocational education system through participatory management	4.70	.41	Highest	4.59	.45	Highest
Component 3: Standards for managing the dual vocational education system (B.E. 2020), as outlined by the Vocational Education Commission.	4.60	.34	Highest	4.57	.44	Highest
Overall average	4.68	.41	Highest	4.57	.46	Highest

As shown in Table 2, the overall suitability was rated at the highest level ($\bar{X} = 4.57$, S.D. = .46), with accuracy also receiving a similarly high rating ($\bar{X} = 4.68$, S.D. = .41). A closer examination of each aspect reveals that the principles supporting the management of the dual vocational education system through participatory management received the highest suitability score ($\bar{X} = 4.73$, S.D. = .43). This was followed by Component 2: The process of supporting the management of the dual vocational education system through participatory management ($\bar{X} = 4.70$, S.D. = .41); Component 1: The participatory management committee and the scope of participatory management ($\bar{X} = 4.68$, S.D. = .46); and Component 3: The standards for managing the dual vocational education system (B.E. 2020), as announced by the Vocational Education Commission ($\bar{X} = 4.60$, S.D. = .34).

When evaluating the accuracy of each component of the model, the principle supporting

the management of the dual vocational education system through participatory management demonstrated the highest level of accuracy ($\bar{X} = 4.66$, S.D. = .46). This was followed by Component 2, which focuses on the process of supporting the management of the dual vocational education system through participatory management ($\bar{X} = 4.59$, S.D. = .45), Component 3, which outlines the standards for managing the dual vocational education system (B.E. 2563) as stated in the announcement by the Vocational Education Commission ($\bar{X} = 4.57$, S.D. = .44), and Component 1, which pertains to the participatory management committee and the scope of participatory management ($\bar{X} = 4.47$, S.D. = .50).

3. The results of the development and evaluation of the handbook designed to support the management of the dual vocational education system with participatory management for workplace trainers based on the developed model, are presented in Tables 3-4.

Table 3

Evaluation results conducted by seven experts ($n=7$) on the usefulness and feasibility of the handbook in supporting the management of the dual vocational education system, with an emphasis on participatory management for workplace trainers.

Evaluation items	\bar{X}	S.D	Usefulness level	\bar{X}	S.D	Feasibility level
Principles for supporting the management of the dual vocational education system through participatory management.	4.54	.39	Highest	4.57	.39	Highest
Component 1: Participatory management committee and the scope of participatory management.	4.43	.50	High	4.44	.50	High
Component 2: Supporting the management of the dual vocational education system through participatory management	4.53	.42	Highest	4.46	.42	High
Component 3: Standards for managing the dual vocational education system (B.E. 2020), as outlined by the Vocational Education Commission.	4.48	.29	High	4.47	.47	High
Overall average	4.50	.40	High	4.49	.44	High

The results in Table 3 indicate that both the overall usefulness ($\bar{X} = 4.50$, S.D. = 0.40) and feasibility ($\bar{X} = 4.49$, S.D. = 0.44) were rated at the highest levels. When examining the usefulness of each component of the model, the principle of supporting the management of the dual vocational education system through participatory management received the highest rating ($\bar{X} = 4.54$, S.D. = 0.39). This was followed by Component 2, which focuses on the process of supporting the management of the dual vocational education system through participatory management ($\bar{X} = 4.53$, S.D. = 0.42), Component 3, which addresses the standards for managing the dual vocational education system (B.E. 2020) as outlined in the Vocational Education Commission's announcement ($\bar{X} = 4.48$, S.D. = 0.29), and finally Component 1, which covers the participatory management committee and the

scope of participatory management ($\bar{X} = 4.43$, S.D. = 0.50).

When evaluating the feasibility of each aspect, the principle of supporting the management of the dual vocational education system through participatory management was found to be the most feasible ($\bar{X} = 4.57$, S.D. = 0.39). This was followed by Component 3, which pertains to the standards for managing the dual vocational education system (B.E. 2020), as outlined by the Vocational Education Commission ($\bar{X} = 4.47$, S.D. = 0.47). Next was Component 2, focusing on the process of supporting the management through participatory management ($\bar{X} = 4.46$, S.D. = 0.42), and then Component 1, which addresses the participatory management committee and the scope of participatory management ($\bar{X} = 4.44$, S.D. = 0.50), were also evaluated.

Table 4

Demonstration of how effectively the handbook supports the management of the dual vocational education system by promoting participatory management among workplace trainers ($n = 13$).

No.	Pre-test to measure achievement before using the handbook (30 points)	In-course assessment, 4 units (60 points) (E1)	Post-test to measure achievement after using the handbook (30 points) (E2)
1	15	52	23
2	16	51	24
3	17	53	24
4	19	55	24
5	14	56	25
6	17	54	24
7	16	52	24
8	15	51	26
9	13	52	24
10	12	51	25
11	11	52	24
12	13	51	25
13	14	51	25
Total	192	681	317
Average	14.76	52.38	24.83
Average percentage	49.24	87.31	81.82
S.D	2.24	.66	.77
E1/ E2	87.31/81.82		

As shown in Table 4, the average score for in-course activities in Learning Units 1-4 was 87.31% (E1), while the post-test achievement score after using the handbook was 81.82% (E2). The effectiveness of the handbook in supporting management was calculated by dividing the in-course score (87.31%) by the post-test score (81.82%), which meets the 80/80 criteria.

4. Results of monitoring the use of the participatory support handbook for workplace trainers in managing the dual vocational education system

The researcher conducted the monitoring process in two phases, as detailed in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5

The average trainee satisfaction ratings ($n = 13$).

Item (s)	\bar{X}	S.D	Satisfaction level
1. Clarity of the training content.	4.38	.51	High
2. Relevance of the content to writing vocational training plans.	4.77	.44	Highest
3. Variety of techniques and methods used in the training.	4.69	.48	Highest
4. Trainer's knowledge and ability to deliver the content.	4.38	.51	High

Item (s)	\bar{X}	S.D	Satisfaction level
5. Response to questions and provision of advice by the trainer.	4.31	.48	High
6. Trainer's communication skills and ease of understanding.	4.46	.52	High
7. Convenience of registration and training management.	4.69	.48	Highest
8. Comfort and facilities at the training location.	4.46	.52	High
9. Time management and duration of the training.	4.31	.48	High
Total	4.49	.44	High

As shown in Table 5, the overall satisfaction of the trainees was high ($\bar{X} = 4.49$, S.D. = .44). Among the individual items, the highest satisfaction was recorded for the relevance of the content to writing vocational training plans ($\bar{X} = 4.77$, S.D. = .44).

This was followed by the variety of techniques and methods used in the training, as well as the convenience of registration and training management, both of which received an average score of 4.69 ($\bar{X} = 4.69$, S.D. = .48).

Table 6

Average trainee performance, as assessed by the Deputy Director of the Academic Affairs Department and the Head of the Industrial Technology Program.

Procedures	\bar{X}	S.D	Ability level
1. Prepare a vocational training plan for the entire course.	4.83	.39	Highest
2. Prepare a curriculum analysis chart by subject, profession, and job position.	4.75	.45	Highest
3. Study and gather information:	4.69	.59	Highest
Analyze tasks	4.58	.67	Highest
Write objectives or behavioral objectives	4.65	.66	Highest
Set the desired competency levels	4.67	.65	Highest
Define topics	4.67	.65	Highest
Determine teaching methods	4.67	.65	Highest
Select tools and teaching materials	4.83	.39	Highest
Determine assessment methods	4.75	.45	Highest
Total	4.76	.48	Highest

Table 6 indicates that the trainees' overall work performance, as assessed by the Deputy Director of Academic Affairs and the Head of the Industrial Technology Program, was rated at the highest level ($\bar{X} = 4.76$, S.D = .48). When examining individual performance aspects, all areas were similarly rated at the highest level. These included preparing a vocational training plan for the entire course ($\bar{X} = 4.83$, S.D = .39), creating a curriculum analysis chart based on subject, profession, and

job position ($\bar{X} = 4.75$, S.D = .45), and conducting research and gathering information ($\bar{X} = 4.69$, S.D = .59).

Summary and Discussion

This research focused on developing a collaborative support model for managing dual vocational education for workplace trainers. The study had three main objectives: 1) to explore the future vision of collaborative support in managing

dual vocational education for workplace trainers; 2) to develop and evaluate the collaborative support model; and 3) to create and assess the effectiveness of a support manual based on the developed model. The key findings of the research are summarized as follows:

1) Results of the study on the future vision for collaborative support in managing dual vocational education for workplace trainers

The study findings highlighted several key areas requiring development and support. These include strategic planning, the establishment of a clear administrative structure, enhancement of operational systems, and the provision of academic and career advancement opportunities for workplace trainers. Addressing these areas is essential to ensure that dual vocational education meets the needs of both the educational and industrial sectors.

Dual vocational education bridges theoretical learning with practical workplace application, requiring strong coordination to align trainers' knowledge and skills with the evolving demands of the labor market and industry. The distinct needs of these two sectors necessitate ongoing adaptation and collaboration, ensuring that trainers are continuously equipped to meet these changing requirements.

These findings are consistent with Dawreong et al. (2017), which identified key factors shaping the future of dual vocational education, including government policies, professional qualification standards, budgets, and personnel. The study also highlighted important trends in educational management, such as organizational structure, collaboration in education delivery, training methods, evaluation systems, and the alignment of education with workforce needs.

The differences in ratings for various components of the participatory dual-training management model reflect the specific contextual factors that influence the management of dual vocational education and training (VET) in

workplaces. For instance, components such as the participatory management processes received higher ratings because they align with participatory management approaches, which emphasize collaboration and the active involvement of all stakeholders in decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. By prioritizing participatory management, the model fosters transparency, accountability, and shared responsibility, leading to more effective and inclusive management practices.

2) Results of the creation and quality assessment of the participatory dual-training management model for workplace trainers

Data collected from key informants was analyzed to identify common characteristics and draw conclusions. The findings from this section are outlined in the following components:

Component 1: A participatory management committee and its scope of work

Component 2: Participatory management processes

Component 3: Standards for workplace trainers

The overall quality of the draft model was assessed to be at the highest level in terms of both appropriateness ($\bar{x} = 4.57$, S.D. = 0.46) and accuracy ($\bar{x} = 4.68$, S.D. = 0.41). This high rating reflects the model's alignment with the participatory management approach, which emphasizes the involvement of all stakeholders in decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Moreover, the model was designed to be applicable to both workplace settings and the dual education system. The model was also thoroughly reviewed and refined to ensure its accuracy and relevance to the standards and needs of both the education and industrial sectors.

This finding aligns with Panjamawat (2020), which developed a collaborative vocational education management model for the dual system. This model was implemented between

educational institutions under the Office of Vocational Education Commission and the Amata Nakorn Industrial Estate. Panjamawat's (2020) study on the opinions regarding the collaborative vocational education model found that the overall implementation of the collaboration was highly appropriate and carried out effectively. Key elements of the collaboration included sharing benefits, conducting collaborative activities, evaluating progress, and planning. Among these, sharing benefits was considered the most important, followed by the execution of activities and performance evaluation.

3) Results of the development and efficiency assessment of the participatory dual-training management guide for workplace trainers

The guide was found to be highly useful and feasible. Its efficiency was measured at 87.31/81.82, surpassing the established threshold of 80/80. This success was attributed to the alignment of the developed model with the project's issues and objectives, as well as its adherence to the standards of the dual vocational education system. As a result, the involved parties performed effectively, focusing on enhancing students' knowledge, skills, and ethical standards.

These findings were consistent with those of Srikhamnuan et al. (2017), which examined the factors influencing the success of dual vocational education management in Lamphang Province under the Office of Vocational Education Commission. The study identified that curriculum and teaching management were the most significant factors contributing to the success of dual vocational education, followed by factors related to students, workplaces, and the community. Meanwhile, leadership and teaching staff were found to have a secondary impact. Regarding overall success in the dual vocational education system, professional competence was rated the highest, followed by core competencies, general competencies, and lastly, students' desirable attributes.

Further follow-up assessments on the use of

the participatory guide for workplace trainers in the dual vocational education system showed that trainee satisfaction was high ($\bar{X} = 4.49$, S.D. = 0.44). Trainees' performance ability, as assessed by the deputy academic director and the head of the industrial vocational department, was also rated at the highest level ($\bar{X} = 4.76$, S.D. = 0.48). This success was attributed to the high-quality training design and effective implementation, including the selection of expert trainers and the use of modern teaching materials, which allowed trainees to learn thoroughly and achieve high satisfaction.

These findings were consistent with Boonsri (2019), which developed a training curriculum to prepare competencies for workplace training in the dual system. The study was conducted in three phases, competency analysis based on workplace expectations, curriculum development, and curriculum testing, and found that the developed curriculum was appropriate and aligned with workplace needs. It effectively enhanced students' knowledge, skills, and professional attributes, with students showing improvement after training and receiving high satisfaction from stakeholders.

Recommendations and suggestions

Suggestions for the development of the participatory management model for dual vocational education for workplace trainers:

1. Suggestions for applying research results:

1.1. The Office of Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) should use the findings of this research as a foundation for policy development aimed at promoting and expanding dual vocational education in affiliated institutions.

1.2. OVEC should encourage and support educational institutions under its jurisdiction to adopt the research findings in order to address current challenges in managing dual vocational education, particularly for the Higher Vocational Certificate (HVC).

2. Suggestions for future research: Future studies should focus on developing a collaborative academic network for managing dual vocational education, with an emphasis on the Higher Vocational Certificate.

Human Research Ethics

This research did not require ethical approval because it was an educational study conducted within an educational institution under the same organization in which the researcher holds an administrative position. The researcher was responsible for the management and development of the dual vocational education management system project as part of their administrative duties. In addition, the research involved general data collection that did not affect the rights, privacy, or well-being of the participants. The study required teachers to attend training sessions in order to apply the knowledge gained to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching and learning management. However, the researcher strictly adhered to research ethics throughout the research process and obtained permission and informed consent from all relevant stakeholders appropriately.

Use of AI in this research

In this research, the researcher utilized artificial intelligence (AI) technologies as supportive tools to assist in verifying the accuracy of research content, enhancing the quality of language use, and organizing the research presentation in an academically appropriate manner. Specifically, the researcher employed the "Aksorn Wisut" program for checking Thai language accuracy, including spelling, grammar, and proper writing format, and used ChatGPT as a supplementary tool to support content verification, content organization, and partial language refinement in the research writing process.

However, the use of AI tools in this study was limited to supporting purposes only. The

researcher primarily conducted data analysis, content creation, and writing independently based on academic principles. All AI-generated suggestions were carefully reviewed, verified for accuracy, and appropriately adapted by the researcher. Furthermore, all relevant sources of information were cited properly in accordance with academic standards and ethical research practices. This approach was undertaken to ensure the integrity, accuracy, and academic credibility of the research work presented.

References

- Boonsri, S. (2019). *The development of training curriculum for preparing occupational competencies in enterprise of dual vocational training students* (Doctoral dissertation, Doctor of Education in Industrial Education [Curriculum Research and Development]). King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang.
- Chimkul, T. (2022). *A creative leadership development model of school administrators in the Northeast under the Office of the Basic Education Commission* (Doctoral dissertation, Educational Administration). Faculty of Education, Srinakharinwirot University. <http://ir-ithesis.swu.ac.th/dspace/bitstream/123456789/2539/1/g611150083.pdf>
- Dawreong, J., Kulkaphadol, T., Prajongsak, S., & Dilokwuttisit, P. (2017). A scenario of dual vocational education in the colleges under the Office of Vocational Education Commission in the next decade. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Valaya Alongkorn*, 12(1), 289–300. <https://so06.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/vrurdihsjournal/article/view/85228/68948>
- Jensen, C. (1996). *Delphi in depth: Power techniques from the experts*. McGraw-Hill.
- Manjanda, W. (2019). *The dual vocational training program management for colleges in Phayao under the Office of Vocational Education Commission* (Master's thesis, Educational Administration). University of Phayao. <https://updc.up.ac.th/server/api/core/bitstreams/00f04cfb-7941-4938-b866-bb4d6f95d632/content>

- Nammahung, P. (2022). School administration in the 21st century. *Journal of Academic for Educational Administration Innovation*, 1(2), 31–43. <https://so09.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/EAIJ/article/view/920/383>
- Panjamawat, W. (2020). *Development of a cooperative model for vocational education management in the dual system between schools under the Office of the Vocational Education Commission and Amata Nakorn Industrial Estate*. Institute for the Development of Teachers, Faculty, and Educational Personnel.
- Petchngam, B. (2022). The development of writing analysis and creative communication for Grade 12 students of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University Demonstration School. *Journal of Roi Kaensarn Academi*, 7(5), 292–304. <https://so02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/JRKSA/article/view/253295/172301>
- Phannan, P., Pattaranukrom, P., & Thongglin, D. (2021). Reinforcement process for community-based research in urban areas, Bangkok. *Journal of Social Development and Management Strategy*, 23(2), 21–41. <https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jsd/article/view/249039/172860>
- Raksakietwong, N. (2016). *The reform of vocational education in Thailand*. Thailand Development Research Institute. https://tdri.or.th/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/nuthasid-vocational-educationv02_2.pdf
- Srikhamnuan, B., Thongnil, P., & Boonsong, K. (2017). Factors affecting success of dual vocational training in educational institutes in Lampang province under the Office of Vocational Education Commission. *Veridian E-Journal, Silpakorn University*, 10(2), 2352–2548. <https://he02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/Veridian-E-Journal/article/view/105590/83798>

Integrating Public Values into Organizational Resilience: A Case Study of the Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA)

Kaniknan Sangmahachai¹  

¹ Faculty of Social Sciences, Kasetsart University, Thailand, © Authors

Article history:

Received: September 1, 2025

Revised: October 25, 2025

Accepted: October 31, 2025

Keywords:

Public Values,
Organizational Resilience,
Public Management,
BMTA

Abstract

This research aims to explore how public values can be integrated into organizational practices to enhance resilience in public sector organizations, using the Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA) as a case study. This study employed Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory methodology, using purposive and snowball sampling to conduct interviews and focus groups with 22 BMTA leaders and staff, complemented by documentary analysis. Data were analyzed through open, axial, and selective coding to develop a substantive theory on the process through which public values shape organizational resilience. Findings reveal that BMTA maintained legitimacy and ensured service continuity by taking a compassionate, reactive approach that was based on efficiency, accountability, and collaborative governance during the recognition and response to core vulnerabilities. In the subsequent stage of strategic adaptability, leadership that promotes employee participation, equity, innovation, adaptability, trustworthiness, employee well-being, and public service motivation facilitated organizational transformation and strengthened public trust. This study offers a substantive theory that connects public values to management strategies, showing that organizational resilience stems not only from structural and procedural capacities, but also from the beliefs, behaviors, and collective commitment of its members.

Introduction

Organizational resilience has become a key topic of concern among academics and practitioners for many years. The main focus of studies has been to understand how various organizations bounce back from hardships that escalate into a crisis. Research on organizational resilience has become increasingly relevant to management as it provides a framework for organizations to anticipate,

cope with, and adapt to adversity. (Boin et al., 2010; Duchek, 2020). Using bibliographic coupling analysis of 1,667 articles, prior studies have synthesized fragmented literatures into distinct themes, showing that resilience informs managerial strategies, structures, and practices for dealing with uncertainty across multiple organizational levels (Raetze et al., 2022).

Scholars in the field of public administration have also noted the growing influence of resilience in both research and practice (e.g., Kim et al., 2021; Duit, 2016; Boin et al., 2010). In this context, there is an increasing need to better understand the conditions and mechanism for creating public values such as robustness and equity, which are essential for legitimate governance during turbulent times (Duit, 2016). This growing interest has led to a shift from merely addressing short-term crisis responses toward exploring how public values can be sustained and strengthened, and which practices should be retained in the long run, by examining the contexts and processes of public service delivery (Dudau et al., 2023). While the literature has expanded significantly, much of it focuses on structural capacities rather than normative dimensions that shape how public organizations respond in practice. At the same time, values such as equity, accountability, trust, and transparency not only reflect societal expectations but also lead the organization's direction. This gap is particularly salient in developing-country contexts, where public organizations often face acute financial constraints, political pressures, and high expectations, making values as equity and trustworthiness critical to both legitimacy and survival.

This research addresses this gap through an in-depth case study of the Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA), Thailand's state-owned bus operator. The BMTA has faced a financial crisis, accumulating substantial debt over the years. By fiscal year 2023, the BMTA reported a net loss of more than 5.3 billion baht, with accumulated losses exceeding 147 billion baht. The situation was severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, during which the BMTA was required to comply with government regulations even as the number of passengers drastically declined, resulting in severe revenue losses and service disruptions. Drawing on grounded theory analysis of interviews with stakeholders and documentary evidence,

this study examines how public values were integrated into BMTA's resilience processes. Identifying public values embedded in organizational practices is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the beliefs and values within the organizations during times of crisis and contribution to the advancement of organizational resilience theory.

Research Objectives

This research aims to explore approaches to integrating public values into the organizational practices to enhance the organizational resilience of the Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA).

Literature Review

The review of relevant literature and prior research conducted by the researcher covers the following topics:

1. Concepts of Public Values

Organizational values are reflected in an organization's missions, vision, and daily practices, playing a key role in shaping organizational culture and enhancing its reputation (Varlaj et al., 2023; Moore, 1995). These include general organizational values, which relate to internal operations and norms, and public values, which emphasize outcomes that benefit society. The concept of public values has been widely debated as a means of understanding what public organizations should prioritize and deliver (Bozeman, 2007; Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007). There are two main academic approaches to study the concept of public values. The first approach, derived from Mark Moore's (1995) perspective on public value, highlights the "strategic triangle", which requires public managers to ensure that strategies are valuable, politically legitimate, and operationally feasible. Moore further argues that public value exists when citizens perceive that the government is producing something meaningful and beneficial to society (Moore, 2021)

In contrast, the second approach, public values, is articulated by Barry Bozeman (2007, p. 13), who defines public values as society's normative consensus regarding: (1) the rights, benefits, and privileges to which people should (or should not) be entitled; (2) the obligations of citizens to society, the state, and to one another; and (3) the principles on which government policies should be based. Bozeman suggests that public values can often be identified through laws as a starting point. Over time, they may evolve into national myths that become embedded in public policies and political discourse. Furthermore, Bozeman and his colleagues offered a more systematic perspective on public values by compiling 72 values grouped into seven categories, ranging from internal administrative concerns to citizen engagement (Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007). Since then, the concepts of public value and public values have been examined through multiple philosophical and empirical lenses to reflect what democratic society expects from public administration.

In this study, the researcher employs Bozeman's public values framework alongside Moore's public value perspective to analyze organizational resilience. Bozeman (2007) conceptualizes public values as normative principles, such as equity, accountability, and transparency, which guide organizational action. This perspective helps identify which societal values should underpin resilience-building in public organizations. Moreover, Moore's (1995) concept is applied to examine how managers can translate such values

into practice through the strategic triangle of value creation, legitimacy, and operational capacity. Integrating these two approaches bridges normative and managerial dimensions, providing both conceptual guidance and practical tools.

The integration of Moore's public value management and Bozeman's public values frameworks bridges managerial and normative dimensions of public administration, offering a holistic view of how public organizations translate societal values into resilience practices. Rather than proposing a new theoretical model, this study applies both frameworks contextually to analyze how BMTA navigates value-driven resilience efforts in the aftermath of organizational crises. The comparison of Public Value and Public Values Frameworks is shown in table 1

This study also adopts Jørgensen & Bozeman's (2007) Public Values Inventory to the BMTA case, focusing on three categories of values that proved most salient in practice: (1) the relationship between public organizations and the citizens; (2) intraorganizational aspects of public administration; and (3) the behavior of public employees. This application contributes to refining the public values framework by illustrating how various categories gain prominence depending on organizational conditions and crisis contexts. These perspectives are particularly relevant to the BMTA, where recovery requires aligning sustainability and equity with feasible plans while addressing political and financial constraints.

Table 1

Comparison of Public Value and Public Values Frameworks.

Aspect	Moore (1995): Public Value	Bozeman (2007); Jørgensen & Bozeman (2007): Public Values	Application in BMTA Study
Core focus	Managerial approach linking value creation, legitimacy, and operational capacity (Strategic triangle).	Normative approach identifying shared societal values.	Combines managerial and normative perspectives to analyze value-driven resilience.

Aspect	Moore (1995): Public Value	Bozeman (2007); Jørgensen & Bozeman (2007): Public Values	Application in BMTA Study
Nature of values	Values are created by managers through strategic action.	Values are socially agreed norms reflected in laws and policies.	Public values such as equity, trust, and adaptability guide management practices.
Analytical dimension	Practical, outcome-oriented, emphasizing public managers' role.	Descriptive and normative, emphasizing moral foundations of governance.	Integrates both to explain how values translate into organizational behavior.
Expected outcome	Effective, legitimacy, and feasible public service delivery.	Consistent, transparent, and equitable governance reflecting public expectations.	Strengthened legitimacy and organizational resilience in crisis recovery.

2. Organizational Resilience

Resilience has become a central concept in public management and organizational studies, often defined as the capacity to withstand, adapt to, and recover from disruptions (Boin et al., 2010). Several models conceptualize resilience as a cyclical process of anticipation, coping, and adaptation (Duchek, 2020; Burnard & Bhamra, 2011), while Linnenluecke et al. (2012) proposed a five-stage model that includes proactive adaptation, coping, restoration, organizational redefinition, and future adaptation. McManus, Seville, Vargo, & Brunson (2008) extended by focusing on the resilience management process, which connects crisis response with routine organizational operations. Their model identifies three crucial functions: situational awareness, which enables decision-makers and networks to share a common understanding of the crisis context; identification of keystone vulnerabilities, both intangible and tangible, that have the potential to cause major disruptions; and adaptive capacity, which reflects the operational readiness and organizational culture to respond effectively. In this research, researcher adopted McManus et al. (2008)'s conceptual framework to analyze how organization respond to and recover from crisis. This approach emphasizes resilience as a structured management process encompassing identification of keystone vulnerabilities, and adaptive capacity.

3. The Relationship Between Public Values and Organizational Resilience

Public values are crucial in directing the crisis response and recovery efforts of public organizations, which are legally required to serve the common good of the society (Meynhardt et al., 2017; Fukumoto & Bozeman, 2019). These values are embedded in organizational missions, institutional structures, and decision-making frameworks, influencing both everyday operations and responses to disruptive events. By shaping how organizations prioritize, interpret, and manage crises, the integration of public values into institutional systems strengthens the alignment between administrative action and political expectations (Bozeman & Moulton, 2011). Values also support transformative change during times of uncertainty, influence stakeholder decisions, and help frame the perceived goals of recovery (Cretney, 2014).

Empirical studies highlight that deeply held organizational values enhance resilience by promoting flexibility, innovation, and learning, particularly in bureaucratic systems where standard procedures may constrain adaptation (Stark, 2014). Rogers et al. (2020) identify two interpretive approaches to values in resilience: the instrumental narrative, which focuses on improving efficiency and managing risks, and the critical narrative, which examines which values shape recovery

and whose are excluded. These narratives reveal that values are not peripheral but foundational in defining what resilience means, for whom it is intended, and how it should be operationalized. Overall, existing research rarely examines the role of public values in shaping strategic choices. This study addresses this gap by analyzing how the BMTA integrates public values into its organizational practices during a period of crisis and adaptation.

Research Methods

In this study, a qualitative research approach, grounded theory, was employed to develop a theoretical framework for integrating public values into organizational operations during a period of resilience, based on data collected from the BMTA. Following Strass & Corbin's (1990) framework for data collection, analysis, and theory building, the researcher adopted this structured approach to highlight and explore participants' perceptions through face-to-face interviews and focus groups. A total of 22 participants were involved, including organizational leaders, senior executives, middle managers, supervisors, bus drivers, and fare collectors. The sample of 22 participants was determined by data saturation, reached through concurrent data collection and analysis, when no new insights were emerging.

The sample was selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, focusing on individuals directly involved in the organizational recovery plan and in efforts to steer the BMTA through the crisis. This approach enabled the study to capture a diverse range of perspectives across hierarchical levels and functional areas. Interviews were conducted between April to June 2025, each lasting between 45 and 90 minutes, and were audio-recorded with participant consent. In-depth interviews were conducted with eight executives (36% of participants) due to their strategic roles in recovery planning, while three focus groups were held with fourteen frontline and

supervisory staff (64%), whose insights reflected operational realities. Structured interview questions were used to ensure that all responses addressed the research questions. The scope of research questions covered two main issues: (1) the BMTA's response to the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020-2022 and its financial crisis, and (2) the organization's internal operational adjustments aimed at aligning with the organizational resilience.

Additionally, the researcher conducted a documentary review of work plans, organizational mission and vision statements, codes of conduct, and annual reports that reflected the organization's responses to various crises between 2020 and 2024. These sources enabled cross-validation of the interview data and strengthened the reliability of the interpretations.

Data were analyzed using Strauss & Corbin's (1990) grounded theory methodology, which involves open, axial, and selective coding. The process began with open coding, in which the interview transcripts were broken down into discrete segments. These data clusters were carefully examined and grouped based on conceptual similarities, resulting in the identification of initial categories and subcategories. Next, axial coding was applied to explore the relationships among categories through the use of a coding paradigm. This paradigm model focused on identifying causal conditions, contextual factors, strategies, actions or interactions, and their consequences, thereby enabling a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Finally, all categories were integrated into the core category, from which an emergent theory was developed.

This study also adopts Lincoln & Guba's (1985) framework to establish the trustworthiness of qualitative data, focusing on four key dimensions: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of data sources across five organizational levels: executives, middle managers, supervisors, bus drivers, and fare collectors, as well as

through multiple data collection methods, including interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. To support transferability, the research provides rich descriptions of participant contexts, data collection processes, and organizational settings. Dependability was addressed by maintaining a clear and traceable record of methodological procedures. Confirmability was achieved through systematic documentation of original data and analytic processes, enabling external review and verification.

The researcher adheres to three ethical principles for human research: (1) Respect for persons by ensuring informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality through secure data storage; (2) Beneficence/non-maleficence, minimizing risks by using stress-free questions and creating a comfortable interview atmosphere; and (3) Justice, in which the researcher established clear criteria so that all qualified volunteers had an equal opportunity to participate. By following these principles, the study ensured the protection of participants' rights and autonomy, thereby enhancing its credibility.

Results and Discussion

This research presents empirical findings on the emergence of public values during organizational resilience, at two stages of resilience process: (1) recognition and response to core vulnerabilities, and (2) strategic adaptabilities. The analysis examines the arising of public values within the BMTA context and how they influence individuals, operations, strategies, policies, and practices. The discussion begins with an examination of the public values embedded in the state's foundational goals for establishing the BMTA, which represent macro-level values. Next, the researcher explores which public values appear in the data and align with the results, highlighting their relationship with resilience processes.

According to the Royal Decree in the Establishment of the BMTA (B.E. 2519), the agency's primary objectives are to provide land-based

public transportation in Bangkok (Section 6(1)) and to conduct related operations (Section 6(2)). The amended decree (No. 5, B.E. 2564) further emphasizes the use of BMTA's assets for public benefit (Section 4(3)). Together, these legal mandates underscore three foundational public values shaping the organization's mission: efficiency, equity, and fairness. Moreover, a review of BMTA's vision ("Busses for all"), mission ("Committed to providing excellent bus, related, and other services for the benefit of people in general"), and legal framework reveals additional public values including fairness, transparency, accountability, adaptability, and trustworthy management. These principles serve as normative guidelines for integration public values into BMTA's operations and are particularly critical for supporting organizational resilience during crises.

From the analysis of interviews with 22 key informants from the BMTA, on the integration of public values into work practices during periods of organizational resilience, the study identified public values that were shared across the organization in two stages of the resilience process: (1) recognition and response to core vulnerabilities and (2) strategic adaptabilities. The findings can be summarized as follows:

(1) Recognition and response to core vulnerabilities

The core category of this stage is maintaining the mission and key role of the BMTA during crises to avoid disruptions to the public's basic land transportation system. This reflects the organization's commitment to addressing two major crises: the Covid-19 pandemic and its ongoing financial difficulties. Despite constraints in finance, human resources, and information technology, the BMTA adopted a reactive strategy to safeguard essential public services during the pandemic, emphasizing compassion for both the public and employees through safe, effective, and accountable service delivery. Despite all the challenges, the organization remained committed to its mission of providing public service, as explained by a manager:

We consider the changes our responsibility, but we don't forget to think about our context and our existing role. We must add services that meet the needs of our customers. The core of the BMTA is our users. For the BMTA, it's not about making profit, but it's the public service provider to make sure that everyone is satisfied and convenient. These days our ticket costs 8 baht, we can't make any profit from that.

This statement illustrates that responding with empathy and maintaining the value of responsiveness requires employees to shift their mindset and take new actions while fulfilling their public service duties. Consequently, management transformed communication from top - down directives to empowering approach that encouraged employees to think and act collaboratively. This change reversed the traditional managerial mechanism, enabling upward decision-making, faster response time, and improved employee skills.

At the same time, the BMTA sought to address its financial challenges by reinforcing accountability, efficiency, and collaborative governance. BMTA's adoption of collaborative governance can be understood through a paradigm model. The causal condition was its chronic financial losses and debt, combined with contextual pressures from society demanding modern and digitalized services. Intervening conditions, such as government policy priorities, political oversight, and limited organizational capacity, further constrained the scope of feasible reforms. In response, the BMTA adopted collaborative governance as a strategy by engaging with state agencies, ministries, and policy actors to secure subsidies, develop digital platforms, and initiate environmentally friendly projects such as the leasing of electric EEV buses. These strategies were reinforced through dialogue, inter-organizational coordination, and shared problem-solving with both governmental and societal stakeholders. The consequences of this paradigm include enhanced

legitimacy, gradual improvement of service quality, and the repositioning of BMTA as a citizen-centered public organization committed to equity, sustainability, and accountability. Thus, the paradigm model demonstrates that collaborative governance functioned not merely as a managerial tool but as an institutional mechanism for resilience and adaptation under crisis conditions.

In parallel with collaborative governance at the policy level, the BMTA also demonstrated responsive practices within the organization to cope with various tensions. The crisis drove a shift toward more flexible and participatory practices, exposing persistent problems such as outdated systems resistant to change and a lack of modernization. This process enhanced the organization's responsiveness to evolving public needs and improved resource utilization through data-driven decision-making. as explained by several employees: "In each bus trip, we must enter the data, including fuel cost, gas fees, the number of gas refills, and the volume of fuel. Management collects this information from us daily." Such systematically reporting enabled transparent cost analysis and service adjustments.

Through this process, frontline staff and supervisors collaborated to optimize schedules and ensure efficient resource utilization, reflecting employee empowerment and collective problem-solving: "From line operators, pier operators, inspectors, drivers, and fare collectors, only some receive daily allowance. But how to make it equal to everyone? this problem encourages us to think critically together to adjust the bus schedule." Through this internal collaboration, the BMTA not only optimized resource utilization but also fostered equity, accountability, and efficiency, reinforcing the paradigm model of resilience through collaborative governance. Employee empowerment became a powerful mechanism for improving performance and generating saving through regular reviews.

To verify the reliability of these findings regarding efficiency and accountability, the researcher examined the BMTA's annual reports for 2021-2024. The data show that in 2022, operating expenses increased slightly from 2021 (approximately 10,292.81 million baht), mainly due to higher energy and maintenance costs. However, operating expenses fell to 9,555 million baht in 2023 and further to 9,321 million baht in 2024, as a result of greater emphasis on efficiency and reduced numbers of idle buses. These results indicate that the BMTA has maintained public confidence in its role as a public provider of land transportation services and strengthened its institutional legitimacy by embedding these values into organizational procedures. This foundation has also facilitated the organization's progression toward comprehensive structural reform.

The BMTA's experience supports to the argument made by Ansell, Boin, & Keller (2010) that both coordination and mobilization are essential for an effective crisis response. The BMTA relied on data-driven management, collaborative decision-making, and employee empowerment to maintain its public service mission in the face of COVID-19 and ongoing financial challenges. These behaviors demonstrate self-organization that not only strengthened institutional legitimacy and resilience but also enhanced responsiveness and resource efficiency.

(2) Strategic adaptabilities

The core category of this process is organizational transformation through the integration of public values. This transformation emphasizes equity, trustworthiness, adaptability, and innovation as guiding principles to enhance employee well-being and to respond to public needs equitably and effectively. Three operating approaches were identified: (1) A public values approach at the center of policy design and the organizational resilience (2) Promoting employee participants in organizational change, and (3) Leadership that exemplifies trust and equity for all stakeholders.

Together, these approaches embed public values into BMTA's practices at three levels:

Level 1 The relationship between BMTA and citizens: To affirm its role as a non-profit organization, BMTA seeks to reduce citizens' cost of living through affordable fares, especially during crises. It integrates equity into operational guidelines and collaborates with the government to rent new EEV buses that improve quality of life and environmental sustainability. At the same time, employees also exercise their considerations of humanity in serving passengers with special needs. These practices enhance positive image of the BMTA as a leading public transport provider that prioritizes human dignity, good welfare, equity, and fostering public confidence.

This level reflects Constellation 7 of Jørgensen & Bozeman's (2007) Public Values Inventory. Reasonable fares and a non-profit orientation uphold citizens' rights and equity, while EEV buses demonstrate a commitment to environmental protection and societal well-being. By prioritizing humanity and fairness, BMTA reinforces integrity and citizen-centered legitimacy.

Level 2 Intraorganizational transformation: Addressing internal problems and resource constraints was central to recovery. Previously, BMTA suffered from politicized practices, opaque evaluations, and poor communication of organizational vision, all of which weakened resilience. In response, the BMTA leader introduced new values and mindsets, offering participatory management tools and opportunities for staff to share ideas and contribute to decisions.

This innovative work transformation was designed by integrating public values of equity, innovation as value-driven, adaptability, employee well-being, and trustworthiness. These values were realized through strategies that fostered understanding and collaboration without conflict, such as the Bhor Or Kor Prompt Kui ("Director Ready to Talk"), which became a turning point in promoting dialogue, trust, and unity among employees.

As one female employee reflected, "I was shocked to be able to see the Director in person. We had never experienced this before. He was very friendly, listened to everyone's problems, and then offered the solutions to bring us back to unity. It made me feel good about him and put me at ease." Similarly, a bus driver recalled, "He (the director) came here. He had all employees sit down and talk. If I had a problem, I could write it down without having to sign my name, and put it in a box. Then he drew lots to read the message. He came to listen directly to everyone. It made us feel that the social class we had in the workplace was reduced". These statements reveal how the project functioned as an action mechanism, reducing hierarchical barriers and strengthening trustworthiness between leaders and employees.

The director himself confirmed this intention: "My first concept was to visit every location and build understanding. If anyone needs anything, just ask and we'll provide it. Once we've built relationships and understanding, we then explained that without the organization, they couldn't survive. So, if everyone still wants to survive, to maintain it, we must help ourselves. The first thing to ensure our survival is credibility. If we keep fighting with one another, and news spreads that we're having troubles, no one outside will want to support us. But if we stay strong and united, we can work together to make things better, then others will be willing to support us." This highlights how equity and trust became foundational values in guiding BMTA's recovery.

Beyond building trust, the project also created opportunities to address employees' welfare needs. Direct medical reimbursement replaced the burdensome system of advance payments, reducing financial stress for staff and their families. As one employee explained, "With a salary like ours... if our parents need to go to the hospital, we have to pay in advance. But with direct payment, it helps us save a lot." A supervisor added, "Now

employees don't have to borrow money with interest... which has reduced their burden. Employees therefore see that management is taking care of them." These accounts demonstrate how the value of employee well-being emerged, improving morale and motivation.

This illustrates how direct medical reimbursement helped alleviate employee anxiety. Consequently, employee well-being enhanced morale at work, as employees were no longer concerned with the expense of maintaining their own and their families' health. Employee well-being has become core value in the BMTA, inspiring employees to perform at their best.

Moreover, the BMTA has also embedded the values of innovation and adaptability as the organization strives to transform and improve itself by promoting digital systems such as mobile applications, ERP, GPS bus tracking, and e-ticketing. Through collaboration with the ICT office, employees gained access to operational data and management updates, while also contributing ideas for organizational development. In conclusion, the Bhor Or Kor Prompt Kui project acted as the catalyst for generating public values of equity, trustworthiness, and employee well-being, which in turn strengthened employee motivation and organizational harmony. Together with innovation and adaptability, these values formed the foundation of BMTA's resilience paradigm, enabling improved performance and long-term sustainability.

The BMTA's intraorganizational transformation aligns closely with Constellation 5 of the Public Values Inventory (Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007), which emphasizes robustness, adaptability, stability, reliability, and innovation. The Bhor Or Kor Prompt Kui project fostered trust and equity by reducing hierarchical barriers and promoting open communication. Employees' reflections demonstrate how equity and trustworthiness became foundational for organizational stability and cohesion. At the same time, engagement in

decision-making and collective problem-solving enhanced flexibility and responsiveness, exemplifying adaptability in practice.

Digital transformation initiatives, including ERP, GPS tracking, and e-ticketing, reflect BMTA's value-driven innovation, while direct medical reimbursement strengthened employee well-being, motivation, and morale. These interventions demonstrate how stability and innovation, reliability and risk readiness, can be reconciled to support organizational resilience. By integrating equity, employee well-being, trustworthiness, adaptability, and innovation into daily operations, BMTA demonstrates a resilience paradigm in which public values guide organizational performance and sustainable public service delivery.

Level 3 Behavior of the BMTA's employees: Initially, employees demonstrated negative attitudes toward internal management due to weak welfare systems, lack of effective problem-solving, and unmet demands, which hindered organizational resilience. However, leaders' exemplary conduct, working diligently for the common good and refusing to let the system collapse even amid multiple crises, gradually fostered a cultural shift. This leadership example cultivated a new organizational culture, prompting employees to adopt a renewed mindset toward their jobs and develop a stronger sense of civic duty, benefiting both the public and them. As one frontline staff member reflected: "Even though the organization has financial problems, we must ensure that passengers get to their destinations safely. If we do not care about them, what will they think about BMTA?"

Employees' working behaviors reveal clear evidence of Public Service Motivation (PSM) through their focus on organizational goals and their active participation in public service delivery. A collaborative learning network further supported this transformation, enabling employees to recognize the broader value of working for the public good. Furthermore, employees' compassionate care for passengers demonstrates empathy and

commitment: "Sometimes passengers with disabilities board the bus, and we try to help them even if it takes more time. They must feel safe with us."

Leadership efforts to foster a collaborative, family-like atmosphere reflect their dedication to the common good. These public values have led to significant adaptation of the organizational ethics, core values, structure, and operational methods, preparing the BMTA for future changes.

The Level 3 behavior of BMTA employees aligns closely with Constellation 6 of Jørgensen & Bozeman (2007), which emphasizes values associated with individual conduct in the public sector. Initially, weak welfare provisions and unmet needs led to disengagement from core values. Through leaders' exemplary conduct and cultivation of a service-oriented culture, employees internalized values such as integrity, accountability, and ethical consciousness. Their public service motivation, empathy toward passengers, and dedication to the common good illustrate the internalization of altruism, professionalism, and moral standards, bridging personal and organizational values. This transformation illustrates how individual employees actively contribute to organizational resilience and uphold the civic responsibilities expected of public-sector staff.

In sum, the BMTA case shows that embedding Public Service Motivation within organizational practices enables public organizations to sustain their missions during crises. This is achieved by integrating equity, compassion, adaptability, innovation, and trustworthiness into daily work. Based on this, researcher has come to the conclusion of the substantive theory from this study as below:

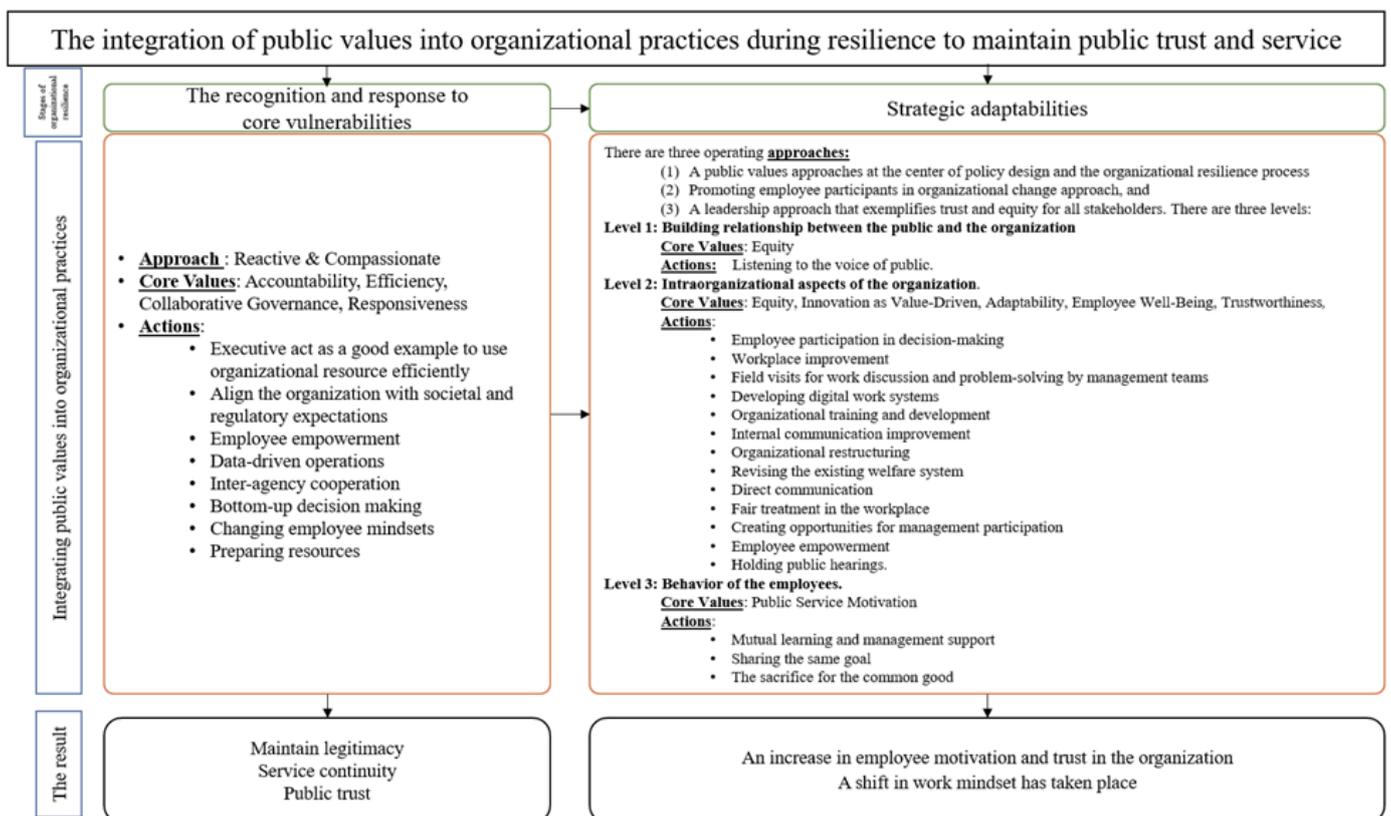
Public, and non-profit organizations can integrate public values into organizational practices by adopting a reactive and compassionate approach to maintain essential public services during crises. Furthermore,

collaborative governance, efficiency, and accountability approaches should be pursued to restore public confidence during the stage of recognizing and responding to core vulnerabilities. In building strategic adaptabilities and organizational capabilities, approaches such as public values-centered policy design, employee participation in organizational change, and value-based leadership can be leveraged to integrate public values of equity, innovation, adaptability, employee well-being, trustworthiness, and public service motivation. These public

values collectively build public trust and sustain public service missions.

This substantive theory explains the process of integrating public values into organizational practice to enhance resilience. It identifies key public values that public organizations can utilize to adapt to change, links these values to actionable strategies, and clearly demonstrates the outcomes that result from implementation. The conceptual framework was developed by the researcher, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Integrating Public Values into Organizational Practices for Resilience



The conceptual framework illustrates the substantive theory developed in this study. It shows that organizational resilience in public organizations emerges through two interrelated stages: (1) recognition and response to core vulnerabilities, and (2) strategic adaptabilities. In both stages, public values function as guiding principles that shape managerial actions and collective behaviors. Efficiency, accountability,

and collaboration enable the organization to maintain legitimacy and service continuity under crisis conditions, while equity, trustworthiness, innovation, adaptability, and employee well-being foster long-term transformation and sustainability. Together, these mechanisms demonstrate how public values are embedded in management strategies and organizational practices, forming the foundation of resilience in public service organizations.

The findings highlight the adaptive and transformative role of values in resilience processes, derived through a grounded theory approach. This extends the relationship between these two theoretical traditions. They provide a nuanced understanding of how these concepts are interconnected by revealing the mechanisms through which public managers translate values into operational practices and strategies. This extends Moore's (1995) framework by showing how public values are translated into concrete managerial practices and resilience mechanisms in public organizations. It also helps Public Administration scholars to better understand the conditions, action/interaction, and consequences of effective public value management during two organizational resilience processes: the recognition and response to core vulnerabilities and strategic adaptabilities. This directly responds to Duit's (2016) and Rogers et al.'s (2020) inquiry into how resilience can be generated in public organizations.

This study extends resilience theory by illustrating that organizational resilience is derived not only from structural capacities and adaptive processes but also from the integration of public values. The BMTA case demonstrates that values embedded at different organizational levels can guide leadership behavior, enhance employee motivation, and improve service delivery, thereby reinforcing organizational legitimacy. In hierarchical and collectivist contexts such as the Thai public sector, resilience arises as much from shared values and cultural dynamics as from formal structures. At BMTA, the vision of "Buses for All" fosters a family-like climate of trust, collaboration, and adaptability, while respect for hierarchy enables leaders to mobilize change that employees willingly embrace. These culturally grounded mechanisms highlight how integrating public values can strengthen organizational resilience and recovery beyond structural reforms.

Additionally, the results refine Bozeman's (2007) conceptualization of public values as

collectively generated preferences that guide public action. While Bozeman provides a normative foundation, the BMTA case shows how values such as equity, employee well-being, accountability, and trustworthiness can be embedded in organizational practice to restore legitimacy and public trust. Mapping BMTA's value integration onto Jørgensen & Bozeman's (2007) constellations not only empirically validates their typology but also demonstrates the dynamic interconnection between constellations, as value of equity at the citizen interface (Constellation 7) intersect with robustness and adaptability in intraorganizational transformation (Constellation 5) and integrity/professionalism in employee conduct (Constellation 6).

In this way, the BMTA case not only offers practical insights but also contributes to refining the theoretical relationship between public values and organizational resilience in the context of public sector management. This study thus contributes a substantive theory that connects public values with practical management strategies, extending Duchek's (2020) capacity-based view of resilience by highlighting values as key drivers of organizational adaptability. It complements Bozeman & Moulton's (2011) perspective on publicness and performance, and underscores that resilience is not only a structural or procedural capacity but is also deeply rooted in the beliefs, behaviors, and shared commitments of organizational members (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Fischer et al., 2023).

Conclusion

In order to enhance the resilience of public organizations during crises, the incorporation of public values into organizational practices is not only feasible but essential. Using the Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA) as a case study, this research showed how values such as compassionate response, efficiency, accountability, equity, innovation as value-driven, adaptability, employee well-being, trustworthiness, and public service

motivation can be progressively embedded in both daily operations and strategic management to sustain core missions despite severe constraints. The findings also reveal that the public values emerging through BMTA's resilience efforts are consistent with its legal foundation, which emphasizes efficiency, accountability, equity, fairness, and trustworthiness. This alignment underscores how organizational resilience remains compliant with the original intent of the law while adapting to contemporary challenges.

The substantive theory developed in this study can be applied to other state enterprises and local authorities that share similar governance and cultural contexts. Although it is grounded in the BMTA case, the key mechanisms, including value-based decision guided by public values, collaboration, and the pursuit of equity under limited resources, are common to many public organizations. Its transferability depends on the extent to which these organizations operate under comparable administrative traditions and social expectations.

This study reconceptualizes organizational resilience as a value-infused capability, showing that resilience in public organizations emerges through the translation of shared values into adaptive practices and institutional routines. The findings extend Moore's (1995) and Bozeman's (2007) frameworks by illustrating how public values are embedded in managerial practices that foster resilience, thereby empirically enriching Jørgensen & Bozeman's (2007) value constellations.

In summary, public and non-profit organizations can maintain credibility and deliver essential public services, even while addressing core vulnerabilities, by adopting a reactive yet compassionate response that prioritizes efficiency, accountability and collaborative governance. At the stage of strategic adaptability, leadership that fosters participation, equity, innovation, and empowerment builds stakeholder trust and facilitates organizational transformation.

For policymakers and public managers, the implication is clear: integrating public values into management practice is strategically crucial to long-term sustainability. Future research should expand upon these findings by examining comparative cases across sectors and cultural contexts, thereby advancing our understanding of how public values shape organizational resilience under diverse governance environments.

Acknowledgement

The author declares that ChatGPT (OpenAI) was employed solely to refine grammar and enhance the readability of the manuscript. The use of this tool was limited to language editing and did not influence the study design, data collection, analysis, or interpretation. The author is fully accountable for the scholarly integrity and validity of the work.

References

- Ansell, C., Boin, A., & Keller, A. (2010). Managing transboundary crises: Identifying the building blocks of an effective response system. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 18(4), 195–207. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5973.2010.00620.x>
- Boin, A., Comfort, L. K., & Demchak, C. C. (2010). The rise of resilience. In L. K. Comfort, A. Boin, & C. C. Demchak (Eds.), *Designing resilience: Preparing for extreme events* (pp.1–12). University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Bozeman, B. (2007). *Public values and public interest: Counterbalancing economic individualism*. Georgetown University Press.
- Bozeman, B., & Moulton, S. (2011). Integrative publicness: A framework for public management strategy and performance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 21(Suppl. 3), i363–i380. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muq078>
- Burnard, K., & Bhamra, R. (2011). Organisational resilience: Development of a conceptual framework for organisational responses. *International Journal of Production Research*, 49(18), 5581–5599. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2011.563827>

- Cretney, R. (2014). Resilience for whom? Emerging critical geographies of socio-ecological resilience. *Geography Compass*, 8(9), 627–640. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12154>
- Duchek, S. (2020). Organizational resilience: A capability-based conceptualization. *Business Research*, 13(1), 215–246. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40685-019-0085-7>
- Dudau, A., Masou, R., Murdock, A., & Hunter, P. (2023). Public service resilience post Covid: Introduction to the special issue. *Public Management Review*, 25(4), 681–689. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2023.2219690>
- Duit, A. (2016). Resilience thinking: Lessons for public administration. *Public Administration*, 94(2), 364–380. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12182>
- Fischer, C., Siegel, J., Proeller, I., & Draths Schmidt, N. (2023). Resilience through digitalisation: How individual and organisational resources affect public employees working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Public Management Review*, 25(4), 808–835.
- Fukumoto, E., & Bozeman, B. (2019). Public values theory: What is missing? *The American Review of Public Administration*, 49(6), 635–648. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074018814244>
- Gittell, J. H., Cameron, K., Lim, S., & Rivas, V. (2006). Relationships, layoffs, and organizational resilience: Airline industry responses to September 11. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 42(3), 300–329. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886306286466>
- Jørgensen, T. B., & Bozeman, B. (2007). Public values: An inventory. *Administration & Society*, 39(3), 354–381. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399707300703>
- Kim, K., Andrew, S. A., & Jung, K. (2021). Building resilient organizations: Organizational resilience as a network outcome. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 44(15), 1319–1328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2020.1758720>
- Lengnick-Hall, C. A., Beck, T. E., & Lengnick-Hall, M. L. (2011). Developing a capacity for organizational resilience through strategic human resource management. *Human Resource Management Review*, 21(3), 243–255. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2011.03.001>
- Linnenluecke, M. K., Griffiths, A., & Winn, M. (2012). Extreme weather events and the critical importance of anticipatory adaptation and organizational resilience in responding to impacts. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 21(1), 17–32. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.708>
- McManus, S., Seville, E., Vargo, J., & Brunson, D. (2008). Facilitated process for improving organizational resilience. *Natural Hazards Review*, 9(2), 81–90. [https://doi.org/10.1061/\(ASCE\)1527-6988\(2008\)9:2\(81\)](https://doi.org/10.1061/(ASCE)1527-6988(2008)9:2(81))
- Meynhardt, T., Brieger, S. A., Strathoff, P., Anderer, S., Bärö, A., Hermann, C., Kollat, J., Neumann, P., Bartholomes, S., & Gomez, P. (2017). Public value performance: What does it mean to create value in the public sector? In T. Anderer, J. Neumann, & P. Gomez (Eds.), *Public sector management in a globalized world* (pp. 135–160). Springer.
- Moore, M. H. (1995). *Creating public value: Strategic management in government*. Harvard University Press.
- Moore, M. H. (2021). Creating public value: The core idea of strategic management in government. *International Journal of Professional Business Review*, 6(1), e01040. <https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2021.v6i1.219>
- Raetze, S., Duchek, S., Maynard, M. T., & Wohlgemuth, M. (2022). Resilience in organization-related research: An integrative conceptual review across disciplines and levels of analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 107(6), 867–889. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000952>
- Rogers, P., Bohland, J. J., & Lawrence, J. (2020). Resilience and values: Global perspectives on the values and worldviews underpinning the resilience concept. *Political Geography*, 83, 102280. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2020.102280>
- Stark, A. (2014). Bureaucratic values and resilience: An exploration of crisis management adaptation. *Public Administration*, 92(3), 692–706. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12085>
- Stokes, P., Smith, S., Wall, T., Moore, N., Rowland, C., Ward, T., & Cronshaw, S. (2019). Resilience and the (micro) dynamics of organizational ambidexterity: Implications for strategic HRM. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 30(8), 1287–1322. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21690>

- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Sage Publications.
- Tierney, K. J. (2003). *Conceptualizing and measuring organizational and community resilience: Lessons from the emergency response following the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center*. Disaster Research Center, University of Delaware. <https://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/735>
- Toubøl, J., Carlsen, H. B., Nielsen, M. H., & Brincker, B. (2023). Mobilizing to take responsibility: Exploring the relationship between sense of community responsibility (SOC-R), public service motivation (PSM), and public service resilience during Covid-19. *Public Management Review*, 25(4), 836–857. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2021.2018847>
- Varlaj, S., Grmuša, T., & Vuković, D. (2023). The role of organizational values in creating reputation and organizational resilience. In *Proceedings of the 1st International Communication Digitalization and Society Symposium* (pp. 189–210).

Environmental Politics in Thailand: An Analysis of the Policies of the Pheu Thai Party and the Move Forward Party in the 2023 Elections

Ladawan Khaikham¹  

¹Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, Kasetsart University, Thailand, © Authors

Abstract

This study examines the role of political parties in shaping environmental policy in Thailand, focusing specifically on the Pheu Thai Party and the Move Forward Party during the 2023 general elections. The research analyzes how these parties integrate environmental concerns into their political agendas and how their policy approaches align with broader sustainable development goals. Using a qualitative research methodology, the study applies content and thematic analysis to data collected from campaign materials, official policy statements, and media coverage. The findings indicate that political parties play a crucial role in driving environmental policies, with the Pheu Thai Party primarily emphasizing economic development and rural welfare, while the Move Forward Party prioritizes comprehensive environmental reforms and grassroots activism. However, the study also identifies key challenges, including political instability, corruption, and conflicting interests, which hinder effective policy implementation. The findings highlight a need for clearer policy articulation, stronger democratic engagement, and stronger enforcement mechanisms to achieve meaningful environmental outcomes in Thailand's evolving political landscape. The 2023 elections represent a critical juncture for environmental policy development, providing an opportunity for political parties to present sustainable policy visions and promote community participation in environmental conservation.

Article history:

Received: January 27, 2025

Revised: April 18, 2025

Accepted: April 21, 2025

Keywords:

Environmental Policies,
Political Parties,
Liberal Democracy,
Sustainable Development,
2023 Elections

Introduction

Environmental degradation has become one of the most urgent global challenges of the twenty-first century, demanding immediate and sustained responses from both governments and political institutions. In democratic systems, political parties play a pivotal role in defining environmental agendas, translating public concerns

into policy, and integrating sustainability into national development frameworks (Boly et al., 2023). In Thailand, where issues such as air pollution, deforestation, and water scarcity increasingly impact public health and livelihoods, political parties are emerging as central actors in driving environmental reform (Elinoff & Lamb, 2022).

Thailand's environmental governance is deeply intertwined with its complex political history. Since the transition from absolute to constitutional monarchy in 1932, democratic development has been periodically disrupted by military coups and power struggles, notably in 2006 and 2014 (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2022; Jantimachaiamorn et al., 2022; Kongkirati, 2024). These disruptions have contributed to an unstable policy environment, complicating efforts to establish long-term environmental strategies. Nonetheless, political parties remain influential platforms for articulating environmental priorities, especially during electoral cycles.

As Thailand confronts escalating ecological challenges, the 2023 general elections marked a pivotal moment for environmental policymaking. For the first time, competing parties, particularly the Pheu Thai Party and the Move Forward Party, placed significant emphasis on environmental issues in their platforms. The Pheu Thai Party, rooted in populist, rural-oriented development, framed environmental concerns in relation to economic growth and community welfare, advocating initiatives such as clean air legislation, water resource management, and renewable energy promotion. In contrast, the Move Forward Party advanced a more progressive and systemic approach, emphasizing environmental justice, climate change mitigation, and civic participation (Bangkok Tribune, 2024). Drawing strong support from urban voters and youth-led movements, the party proposed bold policies focused on anti-pollution regulation, energy transition, and the democratization of environmental governance. Its platform reflects broader global trends that align sustainability with transparency, equity, and public accountability.

This study examines the role of political parties in advancing environmental policies in Thailand, focusing specifically on the strategies and commitments of the Pheu Thai Party and the

Move Forward Party during the 2023 general elections. By analyzing their environmental platforms, this research seeks to understand how political ideologies, electoral incentives, and governance structures influence the development and implementation of sustainable policy agendas. In doing so, the study contributes to the broader discourse on environmental politics in emerging democracies and underscores the importance of political competition in shaping national environmental trajectories.

Research Objectives

This research aims to:

1. Study the role of democracy and political parties in driving environmental issues in Thailand.
2. Analyze the environmental policies of the Pheu Thai Party and the Move Forward Party in the 2023 elections.

Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative research method, focusing on the exploration and analysis of content related to election campaigns and environmental policies. The data is sourced from documents such as political papers, research reports, and media related to political parties in Thailand.

Data Collection

The data collection is divided into two parts:

1. Literature Review: This includes academic articles, reports, policy documents, media, and publications related to Thailand's national elections.
2. Documentary Research: This involves analyzing various documents such as reports, policy documents produced by political parties, and media coverage during Thailand's national elections.

Data Analysis

The study analyzes policy documents and reports by reviewing media and publications produced by political parties during election campaigns. Techniques used include content analysis and thematic analysis:

1. Content Analysis: This method systematically analyzes and interprets the content of text, images, or audio data to gain insights from documents, texts, or other media (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019).

2. Thematic Analysis: This qualitative method identifies, analyzes, and reports patterns or themes within text, images, or audio data. It involves six steps: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Scope of Study

The study focuses on two main parties: the Pheu Thai Party and the Move Forward Party in Thailand's national elections in 2023.

Study Period

The research is conducted from October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024.

Ethical Considerations in Human Research

The researcher will adhere to three core principles of ethical research involving humans: respect for persons, beneficence/non-maleficence, and justice. Under the principle of respect for persons, participants will receive clear and complete information, enabling them to fully understand the study and independently decide whether to provide informed consent. However, this study is based on document analysis and related research, with no direct contact or data collection from participants. The researcher will respect participants' privacy and confidentiality by excluding any identifiable information (identifiers) from the

data records. Regarding beneficence and non-maleficence, the research poses minimal risks, primarily concerning the potential disclosure of confidential information. The researcher will take all necessary precautions to safeguard participants' data. Lastly, under the principle of justice, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria will be established to ensure fairness. Benefits and risks will be distributed equitably, and no bias will influence the research process. These measures ensure strict adherence to ethical standards in conducting human research.

Literature Review

Prior studies have predominantly focused on environmental issues through the lens of governance frameworks or grassroots social movements, often overlooking the significant role played by political parties in shaping environmental policies. This research, therefore, provides a novel contribution by analyzing the environmental commitments and strategies of major political actors, such as the Pheu Thai Party and the Move Forward Party, in the 2023 elections. By focusing on the interplay between political ideology and environmental policy, the study offers new insights into the evolving political landscape in Thailand (Kongkirati, 2024; Lundquist, 2024).

A key contribution of the study is its comparative analysis of the environmental policies of Thailand's two leading political parties. While some existing literature has explored environmental governance in a general context, limited research has directly compared the different approaches taken by competing parties. The Pheu Thai Party's focus on economic growth and rural development contrasts with the Move Forward Party's emphasis on sustainability and environmental activism. By conducting a comparative analysis, the study sheds light on how these contrasting priorities influence policy formulation and public engagement, addressing a gap in the

literature on political competition and environmental policymaking in developing democracies (Laohabut & McCargo, 2024; McCargo, 2024).

Furthermore, the research integrates electoral politics with environmental sustainability, an area that has often been treated separately in academic discourse. Most studies tend to analyze environmental policies independently of electoral dynamics, yet this study demonstrates how political competition shapes environmental commitments. It highlights the challenges parties face in balancing short-term electoral gains with long-term sustainability goals, emphasizing the need for strategic policy articulation that resonates with both policymakers and the electorate (Iheonu et al., 2023; Kenny & Langsæther, 2023).

Despite political parties' ambitious environmental pledges, their implementation remains a major challenge due to systemic obstacles such as political instability, corruption, and conflicting stakeholder interests. The study identifies these barriers as critical impediments to policy effectiveness, arguing that without institutional reforms and transparent governance mechanisms, environmental policies are unlikely to achieve their intended outcomes. This perspective aligns with recent findings that suggest political uncertainty can significantly hinder the progress of environmental initiatives, particularly in transitional democracies (Kuhonta, 2024; Prukkanone & Wang, 2016)

Lastly, the study addresses the role of public participation in shaping environmental policies, an area that has been relatively underexplored in Thai political studies. It evaluates how political parties leverage citizen engagement, particularly among youth movements and grassroots organizations, to promote environmental awareness and policy adoption. The findings suggest that political parties are increasingly relying on participatory mechanisms to build legitimacy and enhance policy support, reflecting global trends where civic engagement is becoming a vital

component of environmental governance (Elinoff & Lamb, 2022; Move Forward Party, 2023). By addressing these research gaps, the study makes a valuable contribution to the broader discourse on environmental politics and democratic governance in Thailand. It underscores the importance of political parties in advancing environmental sustainability while highlighting the structural challenges that must be overcome to achieve meaningful policy implementation.

Research Theories and Frameworks

The relationship between democracy, political parties, and environmental policies is complex and multifaceted. Political parties play a crucial role in shaping environmental policies, often reflecting their commitment to key issues, including the environment, in their political manifestos. Research indicates that strong democratic institutions can lead to more stringent environmental policies, particularly in Africa, where the quality of democracy significantly impacts CO2 emission reductions (Iheonu et al., 2023; Lundquist, 2024). In the context of Thailand, the relationship between democracy and environmental protection has gained renewed interest amid growing ecological crises and shifts in political dynamics. Scholars have examined how the quality of democratic institutions, particularly electoral processes, rule of law, and civil participation, affect the effectiveness of environmental policy-making.

1) Role of Political Parties

Political parties act as institutional links between citizens and the government, influencing policy discourse and resource allocation. They set the direction for environmental policies through campaign manifestos reflecting environmental priorities (Ferdinand, 2023; Katz, 2023). This policy direction not only represents the party's stance in political competition but also influences national policymaking. Lundquist (2022) found a direct relationship between environmental ideas in party

manifestos and the stringency of national environmental policies (Lundquist, 2024). For example, European parties prioritizing carbon reduction plays significant roles in clean energy policies and promoting green economies. In Indonesia, a multi-party system has led to improved public services and environmental initiatives, such as energy efficiency, to attract voters and achieve better policy outcomes (Sasmi & Park, 2024).

This study uses 'Political Party Theory' to examine how Thailand's major parties, particularly the Pheu Thai Party and the Move Forward Party, integrate environmental concerns into their platforms (Crotty & Katz, 2005). The theory explains how political actors' environmental priorities are influenced by their ideological orientation, electoral competition, and constituency demographics. For example, the Pheu Thai Party has traditionally linked environmental issues to welfare and economic justice, particularly in rural areas. In contrast, the Move Forward Party presents a more progressive and rights-based narrative, influenced by younger, urban voters who prioritize climate justice and environmental reform (TDRI, 2023).

2) Role of Liberal Democracy

High-quality democracy is crucial for environmental sustainability. This study is based on 'Liberal Democratic Theory' (Møller & Skaaning, 2013; Heywood, 2021), which views the state as a platform for negotiated development rather than just enforcement. Liberal democracies are thought to be more suited to long-term environmental commitments, particularly when public discourse and electoral incentives coincide. Studies in Africa indicate that improved democratic quality, such as transparency and accountability, correlates with reduced CO₂ emissions, highlighting the role of political institutions in promoting environmental responsibility (Iheonu et al., 2023). Electoral democracy, where citizens have voting rights,

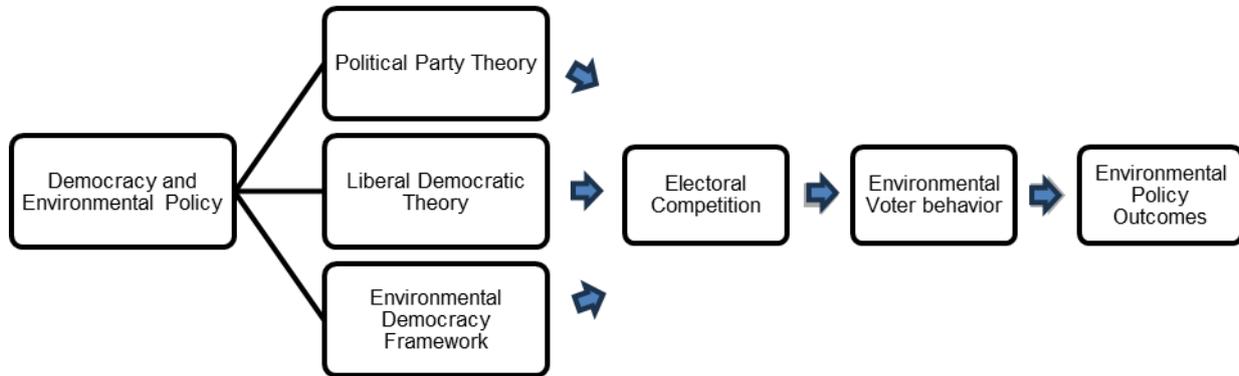
and egalitarian democracy, emphasizing fair distribution of benefits, are key variables in developing sustainable environmental policies (Iheonu et al., 2023). However, despite elected governments in Thailand, frequent military interventions have weakened policy continuity, particularly in the environmental sector (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2022).

3) Voter Behavior and Environmental Democracy Framework

In modern times, voters increasingly prioritize environmental issues, leading to support for parties with strong environmental stances, especially during environmental crises like droughts and floods (Papp, 2022). Environmentalism is recognized as a new dimension in voter preferences, independent of traditional economic or social dimensions (Kenny & Langsæther, 2023; Boly, 2023). Some argue that democratic processes delay environmental solutions requiring swift decisions due to the need for consensus, slowing climate action (Couperus & van de Grift, 2022).

This study's theoretical foundation is also based on the 'Environmental Democracy Framework,' which emphasizes three key democratic principles as central to effective environmental governance: transparency, public participation, and accountability. According to this framework, pressure from informed and engaged citizens increases the likelihood that democratic institutions will produce responsive and sustainable environmental policies. Although Thailand has formal democratic structures, their ability to translate environmental demands into actionable policy has been hampered by political instability and legal fragmentation (Boonsod, 2019).

Figure 1
Research Framework



Source: researcher, 2024

This diagram above illustrates the theoretical framework for analyzing how democracy and political parties influence environmental policy outcomes. It integrates three theoretical components: Political Party Theory, Liberal Democratic Theory, and the Environmental Democracy Framework. Each framework contributes key elements such as party ideologies, institutional quality, public participation, and voter behavior. These components interact to shape the development and effectiveness of environmental policies in democratic contexts like Thailand.

Despite the significant role of political parties in driving environmental policies, internal conflicts and external pressures can reduce their effectiveness. Therefore, balancing party policies with public expectations is crucial for successful environmental policy implementation.

Research Results

Environmental politics in Thailand has significantly developed over the past fifty years, influenced by broad social, economic, and political changes. Environmental movements are intertwined with Thailand's historical context, reflecting changes in governance and public participation (Elinoff & Lamb, 2022).

1. Democracy, Political Parties, and Environmental Issues in Thai Politics

Thailand's environmental policies have evolved due to increasing environmental challenges and a commitment to sustainable development. The evolution of community rights has been crucial in developing Thailand's environmental policies. Before 1996, community rights in environmental management were barely recognized. However, post-2007 reforms incorporated these rights into formal policies, though enforcement mechanisms remain limited. Without concrete frameworks, progress in community rights has been slow, highlighting the need for established mechanisms to ensure community input translates into impactful and enforceable policies (Ponok, 2016).

1) Democracy and Environmental Movements

The relationship between democracy and environmental movements in Thailand is complex. Environmental politics not only focus on promoting sustainability but also reflect existing power structures. The fight for environmental justice often faces challenges from centralized governance and global environmental changes affecting the movement's landscape (Elinoff & Lamb, 2022). Symbolic movements, such as monks ordaining trees in rural areas, combine spiritual values with conservation to protect natural

resources, leading to shifts in political discourse emphasizing conservation and community involvement in resource management (Walter, 2007).

The 2007 Constitution provided a legal framework for public participation in the environmental policymaking process. Despite provisions promoting structural democracy, actual public influence remains limited due to centralized decision-making. Community participation often takes symbolic forms rather than genuinely influencing policy processes (Kittisak & Guohua, 2016; Prukkanone & Wang, 2016). Environmental movements in Thailand also play a crucial role in advocating for a more transparent and just political system, although they sometimes maintain existing power structures. Public participation reflects efforts to balance power between the state and citizens, a topic needing further development.

Environmental politics in Thailand illustrate the struggle between centralized control and the need for decentralization. Challenges in establishing sustainable governance remain significant, even as local movements and public participation positively impact environmental discourse in a democratic context.

2) Environmental Concerns in Political Discourse

Environmental issues in Thai political discourse have become more prominent as modernization and economic development impact natural resources and livelihoods in both rural and urban areas (Hirsch & Lohmann, 1960). These changes have raised concerns among farmers reliant on natural resources and urban residents affected by pollution and other environmental problems. For instance, anti-logging protests in northern Thailand during the 1980s, driven by grassroots movements, aimed to protect forests from deforestation and resource exploitation (Hirsch, 1997). These movements demonstrated the public's power to pressure the authorities and highlighted environmental awareness spurred by the loss of vital resources directly affecting local communities.

These issues have been elevated to the national political stage through communication by politicians and political parties, who attempt to position themselves on natural resource sustainability. Environmental discourse has become integral to shaping policies and strategies for political campaigns, especially in areas directly impacted by environmental degradation (Elinoff & Lamb, 2022). The rise of environmental awareness in Thai political discourse underscores the importance of protecting natural resources alongside sustainable economic development. The collaboration of civil society groups and environmentally conscious politicians is a key tool for driving change in a political system that previously ignored these issues (Wise, 2024).

3) Political Parties and Environmental Issues in Thailand

Thailand's political system, comprising various political parties, reflects ideological complexities and social foundations. These parties play a crucial role in shaping environmental policies through policy statements, grassroots movements, and legislation on conservation and sustainable development. New political parties, such as the Move Forward Party, have become significant in environmental issues, emphasizing policy changes through youth groups and social movements, such as pollution reduction projects, environmental education, and natural resource protection (Laohabut & McCargo, 2024). Other parties, like Pheu Thai or Bhumjaithai, focus more on economic and rural benefits but use environmental statements during elections to attract voters.

In policy development, many political parties have shown commitment to environmental issues, such as reducing deforestation, controlling pollution, and addressing climate change. However, pushing these policies can be limited by political uncertainty, conflicting interests, or short-term benefits over long-term sustainability. Grassroots movements provide significant momentum, especially on issues affecting communities heavily impacted

by environmental degradation, such as infrastructure development conflicting with nature conservation. The formation of coalition governments allows for more comprehensive environmental policy discussions. While some parties positively contribute to environmental governance, challenges like corruption and political instability affect policy effectiveness. Although some parties use environmental policies to gain popularity, it also raises awareness and broad support for environmental issues (Apostoaie, 2016).

Therefore, political parties in Thailand play a crucial role in shaping environmental management and governance, particularly when balancing economic benefits with natural resource protection. However, sustainable policy implementation still faces challenges from internal and external political systems.

2. The environmental policies of the Pheu Thai Party and the Move Forward Party in the 2023 elections

Thailand's 2023 general elections were crucial for the development of democracy, especially after a long period of military rule. The elections mark a transition from nearly a decade of military-backed governance following the 2014 coup. Although the elections followed calls for political change led by youth in 2020, the process still operates under a hybrid regime or competitive authoritarianism (Kongkirati, 2024). In this election, 67 political parties participated, with the main

competitors being the Pheu Thai Party and the Move Forward Party. Understanding the environmental policies of political parties in the post-election political dynamics and addressing environmental challenges is essential.

The 2023 elections in Thailand highlight the importance of environmental policies and political party dynamics. This research focuses on two main parties: the Pheu Thai Party as the ruling party and the Move Forward Party¹ as the leading opposition. The traditional political faction led by the Pheu Thai Party continues to play a significant role, emphasizing populist economic policies over environmental reforms. This dynamic reflects ongoing tensions between progressive and conservative forces in Thai politics. Meanwhile, the Move Forward Party, supported by younger voters demanding political reforms, places a strong emphasis on environmental issues in its policies.

1) Pheu Thai Party

The Pheu Thai Party is one of Thailand's major political parties, with deep political roots tracing back to the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Party, founded in 1998 by Thaksin Shinawatra, a pioneer of populist policies in Thailand (Pensute, 2023). Thai Rak Thai played a significant role in revolutionizing Thai politics with policies focused on rural development, healthcare, and infrastructure projects, which gained immense popularity among voters, especially in rural areas.

Figure 1
Research Framework



Source: (Pheu Thai Party, 2023)

¹ We conducted this research prior to the Constitutional Court's decision to dissolve the Move Forward Party on August 7, 2024.

The overwhelming election victories in 2001 and 2005 led to Thaksin becoming Prime Minister and implementing key Thai Rak Thai policies, including universal healthcare and village funds. However, his success sparked intense conflicts within Thai society, leading to opposition from political rivals and a military coup in 2006, forcing Thaksin into exile and resulting in the Constitutional Court dissolving the party in 2007 (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2022).

After the dissolution, key members of Thai Rak Thai founded the People's Power Party (PPP), continuing the same policies. However, the PPP was also dissolved in 2008, leading to the establishment of the Pheu Thai Party as its ideological and electoral successor (Selway, 2023). In the 2011 elections, Pheu Thai won again, with Yingluck Shinawatra, Thaksin's sister, becoming Thailand's first female Prime Minister. She continued populist policies such as rice price support and infrastructure projects but faced major protests and legal challenges, leading to her removal in 2014. Pheu Thai remains influential in Thai politics, with strong support from rural and urban bases, particularly in the North and Northeast (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2022).

Despite facing legal challenges and internal divisions, Pheu Thai has maintained its popularity and political influence through grassroots movements, campaign management, and social media communication. Its association with Thaksin Shinawatra and populist approaches has polarized Thai politics, leading to political instability and street protests. Currently, Pheu Thai continues to play a significant role in the country's political arena, both in activism and legal battles, to drive a political agenda responsive to the people.

The environmental policy formation of the Pheu Thai Party reflects a hybrid approach rooted in its populist legacy, electoral recalibration, and the rising urgency of environmental concerns in Thailand. Initially focused on welfare and economic development for rural constituencies, the party

gradually integrated green policies in response to public demand for solutions to worsening air pollution, climate change, and sustainable energy (Varnakomola, 2023). During the 2023 election, Pheu Thai proposed more tangible environmental platforms, such as clean air laws and investment in renewable energy, as part of its 19-point agenda (Pheu Thai Party, 2023) to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, although critics noted a lack of concrete legislative roadmaps and implementation clarity (Lohatepanont & Jatusripitak, 2024). Key environmental policies include:

1) **Clean Air Initiative:** Pheu Thai proposes systematic solutions to PM 2.5 pollution through the Clean Air Act, establishing clean air as a fundamental human right, with short, medium, and long-term action plans.

2) **Water Management:** The party aims to address flooding and drought to ensure year-round access to drinking and utility water, with policies like expanding irrigation areas, developing drainage infrastructure to the sea, utilizing groundwater systems, and creating a Chao Phraya River basin management plan.

3) **Energy Policy:** Pheu Thai proposes reducing energy prices and supporting clean energy, such as investing in electric vehicle charging stations and infrastructure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, negotiating overlapping areas for cheap natural gas sources, and generating state revenue (Pheu Thai Party, 2023).

4) **Community Adaptation Programs:** The party aims to help local communities prepare for climate change impacts such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and droughts (Dueanpen, 2023).

Consequently, The Pheu Thai Party addresses climate change through two main approaches: lowering greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) and assisting communities in adapting to changing conditions. They prioritize both environmental and economic aims in accordance with their strategies

2) Move Forward Party

The Move Forward Party (MFP), established in 2020, continues the ideology and political role of the Future Forward Party after its dissolution by the Constitutional Court. The founding MFP reflects a commitment to the progressive and reformist approach of the Future Forward Party (FFP) (McCargo & Chattharakul, 2020). Founded by Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, FFP created a political phenomenon in Thailand by advocating for democratic reforms, civil liberties, and social equality. The party used technology and online media to communicate with young supporters,

gaining immense popularity among millennials. In the 2019 elections, the FFP won 81 seats in the House of Representatives, becoming the third-largest party in Thai politics (Akarapongpisak, 2022).

Despite the dissolution of FFP and legal restrictions preventing Thanathorn from holding political office, many former members, especially Pita Limjaroenrat, played significant roles in the Move Forward Party. Pita led MFP with clear reform goals in democracy, transparency, and social justice, focusing on fighting corruption and reducing social inequality (Ockey, 2020; Limjaroenrat, 2023).

Figure 3

Move Forward Party Symbol



Source: (Move Forward Party, 2023)

MFP continued to make waves in Thai politics by fielding candidates in the 2023 elections and achieving significant success, winning the most seats in the House of Representatives with 151 out of 500 seats. This success reflects ongoing popularity among voters, particularly those supporting the progressive approach of FFP. However, FFP faces numerous challenges in Thai politics, including legal restrictions, scrutiny from state officials, and legal actions against its leaders and members. These challenges highlight the political environment's resistance to the structural changes the party seeks to implement.

The environmental policy of MFP was shaped through a progressive, youth-driven, and rights-based political vision that emphasized environmental justice, decentralization, and transparency. The party's environmental platform was influenced heavily by grassroots input, civil society collaboration, and international sustainability standards. MFP prioritized anti-pollution regulations, community participation, and climate action and emphasizes comprehensive environmental solutions, with "Sustainable Environment" aiming to transition Thailand to a low-carbon economy with a net-zero emissions target by 2070

1) Clean Energy and Free Electricity Market: MFP aims to end coal-fired power generation, open a free electricity market, and increase investment in infrastructure for electric vehicles, electric buses, and sustainable public transportation, such as electric buses, trains, and infrastructure, to achieve Thailand's net-zero target (The Nation, 2023).

2) Pollution and Waste Management: The party supports the Clean Air Act and sets greenhouse gas emission caps. The industrial sector must disclose pollution data, set emission caps, promote electric vehicles in public transportation, reduce agricultural burning, manage waste in 1,000 sub-districts by 2027, and ban the import of foreign waste and single-use plastics.

3) Green Spaces and Resource Management: MFP promotes green space planting and reviews water management plans and environmental monitoring networks.

4) Promoting Social Equity: The party aims to reduce the impact of the climate crisis on vulnerable groups, emphasizing just transitions to ensure all sectors benefit from sustainable development (Move Forward Party, 2023).

Additionally, MFP has proposed further policies (Move Forward Party, 2023), including:

1) Promoting Sustainable Consumption Practices: The party encourages the public to reduce environmental impact, such as waste reduction and promoting energy-efficient devices.

2) Supporting Climate Change Education: MFP raises awareness about climate change and its impacts, which is crucial for long-term solutions.

As a result, environmental policies of the Move Forward Party reflect a commitment to comprehensive environmental solutions, driving rapid economic and social changes (Move Forward Party, 2023; Dueanpen, 2023).

Research Discussion

Thailand faces significant threats, including environmental, economic, and social challenges. In the context of elections, understanding political parties' environmental policies is crucial for voters to make informed decisions. A comparative analysis of the environmental policies of two political parties, Pheu Thai and Move Forward, reveals differences in their approaches.

Both parties support clean energy. Pheu Thai promotes renewable energy overall, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Their water management policies focus on preventing floods and droughts, emphasizing resource restoration for community benefit and strict law enforcement. In contrast, the Move Forward Party advocates a free electricity market and ending coal use. They emphasize developing green spaces and protecting marine environments, setting pollution prevention targets for industries by 2026. The Move Forward Party prioritizes transparency and public participation in environmental policies and aims to push for the Clean Air Act and promote social equity.

The commitment and actions of political parties will play a crucial role in shaping the country's response to global crises.

Figure 3
Move Forward Party Symbol

Environmental Policy	Pheu Thai Party	Move Forward Party
Clean Energy	Supports clean and renewable energy for sustainability	Focuses on opening a free electricity market, promoting clean energy, and stopping coal-fired power generation

Environmental Policy	Pheu Thai Party	Move Forward Party
Water Management	Emphasizes water management to prevent floods and droughts, such as expanding irrigation areas and increasing clean water sources	Reviews water management plans, develops green spaces, and conserves marine environments
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Aims for net-zero emissions by 2050 through promoting electric vehicles and reducing energy prices	Sets greenhouse gas emission caps for industries and bans farm waste burning to control pollution by 2026
Community Participation	Encourages public participation in resource restoration and benefiting from ecosystems	Focuses on transparency and public participation in environmental decision-making processes
Laws and Enforcement	Strictly enforces laws to protect natural resources and prevent environmental impacts	Pushes for the Clean Air Act, pollution management regulations, and promotes social equity
Adaptation Strategy	Supports community adaptation programs for rising sea levels and extreme weather	Includes social equity measures for vulnerable populations and promoting climate-resilient practices

Source: Researcher (2024)

Environmental policy has become an increasingly visible component of election campaigns globally, and Thailand is no exception. During the 2023 Thai general election, environmental concerns, particularly air pollution, PM2.5 levels, and climate change, gained traction among voters, especially younger and urban demographics who demanded cleaner air, renewable energy, and sustainable development initiatives (Jatusripitak & Ricks, 2024). MFP integrated environmental justice and systemic reform into its core platform, presenting detailed and progressive policies that prioritized local participation and transparency. Meanwhile, the Pheu Thai Party took a more moderate stance, aligning green policies with economic development and welfare goals like renewable energy promotion and pollution reduction. In addition, both parties used their environmental platforms to reach out to specific voter groups: MFP targeted environmentally conscious urban youth, while Pheu Thai focused

on rural voters concerned with livelihood and resource access (TDRI, 2023).

According to the Election Commission of Thailand (ECT), the 2023 general elections in Thailand witnessed participation from over 39 million voters, representing 75.64% of eligible citizens. This figure marked the highest voter turnout ever recorded in the country's electoral history (Election Commission of Thailand, 2023). The 2023 election results reflect changes in the political landscape and increased public participation. MFP won the most seats in the Thai parliament, with the Pheu Thai Party coming in second. However, due to Thailand's hybrid political system, where appointed senators act as a counterbalance to the majority, the election results did not align with the actual voting outcomes. Although MFP "won" the election, it was blocked by an alliance between Pheu Thai and conservative elites, leading to Pheu Thai forming the government and Move Forward becoming the opposition

leader (McCargo, 2024). This situation has sparked debates calling for electoral reforms within the political, constitutional, and legal frameworks, which limit opportunities for environmental policy reforms and make free and fair processes nearly impossible due to issues like vote-buying and lack of transparency in vote counting (Puthavong et al., 2023).

While environmental issues enhanced the credibility and relevance of party platforms, they were not the sole determinants of election outcomes; economic issues and political reform agendas remained dominant factors in shaping voter behavior (Asplund et al., 2023). The 2023 election results indicate that Thailand's political agenda still prioritizes economic policies, such as digital wallet projects or other populist measures. However, there is a growing awareness of environmental issues among voters, especially younger generations and those in areas affected by environmental problems like climate change, floods, deforestation, and air pollution. These concerns have significant implications for voting behavior, particularly in urban areas where environmental issues are more visible. Environmental policy can indeed influence election results, with voters increasingly demanding comprehensive and actionable environmental solutions from political leaders (Westerling et al., 2024). This awareness is reflected in increased public participation in environmental protection activities and movements, particularly through protests against government projects that threaten natural ecosystems and local livelihoods (Jensen & Sangkhamanee, 2024). For example, Thai citizens protest plans for the Mekong dam. Local southern communities in Thailand protest the Chana Industrial Estate Project. The P-Move network opposes forest conservation policies. Additionally, civil society organizations and local communities strongly reject the Yuam River water diversion project (Sangkhamanee, 2021). Moreover, MFP's campaign, which highlighted environmental

issues as a key policy, demonstrates a response to the rising environmental consciousness in society.

Post-Election Political Dynamics

After forming the government, the Pheu Thai Party, led by Srettha Thavisin (2023-2024) and Paetongtarn Shinawatra (2024-present), prioritized economic populism, such as the Pheu Thai Party's digital wallet project, which led to environmental initiatives being deprioritized (Kuhonta, 2024). The main environmental strategies include promoting clean and renewable energy, efficient water management, conserving natural resources and the environment, and increasing public and community involvement in conservation and resource restoration processes (Cabinet Secretariat, 2023). Additionally, there is a focus on promoting fair carbon credit trading, securing clean water sources, and developing stable infrastructure systems (Cabinet Secretariat, 2024).

Both Srettha Thavisin's and Paetongtarn Shinawatra's administrations share three similar environmental policies: clean energy, natural resource management, and water management. The Pheu Thai government emphasizes promoting clean and renewable energy, encouraging sustainable energy use among the public and businesses, and reducing reliance on environmentally harmful energy sources (Cabinet Secretariat, 2023). They also focus on natural resource management, aiming to increase public participation in conservation and restoration processes, and addressing flood and drought issues through efficient water management and clean water supply planning (Cabinet Secretariat, 2024).

Despite being from the same party, Srettha Thavisin's and Paetongtarn Shinawatra's administrations have different environmental policies. Srettha's administration focuses on restructuring the national energy sector and promoting macro-level clean energy production, generating income from land use, such as promoting

suitable tree planting and fair carbon credit trading for landowners or communities (Cabinet Secretariat, 2023). In contrast, Paetongtarn's administration emphasizes developing accessible and comprehensive infrastructure, supporting solar power generation by the public, and strictly enforcing laws to prevent and mitigate environmental and property impacts (Cabinet Secretariat, 2024).

In the future, public demand for environmental issues is likely to grow, leading to changes in political agendas. Political parties will need to adjust their policies to meet these demands, not only to gain votes but also to balance economic development with long-term natural resource conservation. This includes reforming natural resource management systems, achieving greenhouse gas reduction targets, and creating a more sustainable and inclusive green economy (Elinoff & Lamb, 2022). Such changes require momentum from civil society, along with cooperation from political, business, and international organizations, to develop approaches that balance human and environmental needs.

Conclusion

The research framework on environmental politics highlights the intricate relationship between democracy, political parties, and environmental policies. The Pheu Thai Party and the Move Forward Party (MFP), two major political entities, present distinct approaches to addressing environmental issues, reflecting their broader political ideologies and strategies. The Pheu Thai Party, with its roots in populist economic policies, emphasizes clean and renewable energy, efficient water management, and community involvement in resource conservation. Their policies aim for long-term sustainability but often prioritize economic populism, which can overshadow environmental initiatives.

In contrast, MFP, emerging from the progressive Future Forward Party (FFP), focuses on

comprehensive environmental reforms. Their policies include ending coal use, promoting a free electricity market, and enhancing transparency and public participation in environmental decision-making. MFP's emphasis on social equity and stringent pollution controls reflects a commitment to addressing environmental challenges through systemic changes.

The 2023 elections in Thailand, marked by a record high voter turnout, underscored the evolving political landscape and increased public engagement. Despite MFP winning the most seats, the hybrid political system and alliances with conservative elites led to the Pheu Thai Party forming the government. This outcome has sparked debates on electoral reforms and highlighted the challenges of implementing environmental policies within the existing political framework in Thailand.

As public awareness of environmental issues grows, particularly among younger generations and those affected by environmental degradation, political parties will need to adapt their policies to balance economic development with sustainable resource management. The future of Thailand's environmental politics will depend on the ability of political parties to respond to these demands and the collaboration between civil society, political entities, businesses, and international organizations to create balanced and effective environmental strategies.

References

- Akarapongpisak, N. (2022). *Chak "thonon" su "sapha": Kan-tang phak samanchon lae kan-long samak rub luek-tang khong NGO lae nak kit-takam nai phak ana-khot mai* [From "streets" to "parliament": The formation of the Commoner Party and the election campaigns of NGOs and activists in the Future Forward Party]. *Journal of Social Sciences Naresuan University*, 18(2), 73–106. <https://doi.org/10.14456/jssnu.2022.11>

- Apostoaie, M. (2016). Relevant determinants of the political parties' environmental preference. *Scientific Annals of Economics and Business*, 63, 163–176. <https://doi.org/10.1515/saeb-2016-0135>
- Asplund, E., Prieto, N. G., & Lindemann, C. (2023). *Reducing the environmental impact of elections: Lessons from the Asia-Pacific*. International IDEA. <https://www.idea.int/news/reducing-environmental-impact-elections-lessons-asia-pacific>
- Baker, C., & Phongpaichit, P. (2022). *A history of Thailand*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bangkok Tribune. (2024, May 22). *Policy brief: Environmental policies and challenges in the new politics*. <https://bkktribune.com/policy-brief-environmental-policies-and-challenges-in-the-new-politics/>
- Boly, M., Combes, J.-L., & Combes Motel, P. (2023). Does environment pay for politicians? *Economic Modelling*, 128, Article 106491. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econmod.2023.106491>
- Boonsod, S. (2019). *Bot-bat khong nak kot-mai thai kap kan rat-tha-pha-ran pheua nam ma su rabop pha-det-kan: Suksa korani rat-tha-pha-ran 22 phruetsapha 2557* [The role of Thai lawyers in coups leading to dictatorship: A case study of the May 22, 2014 coup]. *CMU Journal of Law and Social Sciences*, 12(2), 123–156.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Cabinet Secretariat. (2023). *Kham-thae-long na-yo-bai khong khana rat-tha-mon-tri nayok rat-tha-mon-tri settha tha-wee-sin* [Policy statement of the cabinet of Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin]. Retrieved October 31, 2024, from <https://www.soc.go.th/?p=22892>
- Cabinet Secretariat. (2024). *Kham-thae-long na-yo-bai khong khana rat-tha-mon-tri nang-sao pae-thong-tarn chin-na-wat nayok rat-tha-mon-tri* [Policy statement of the cabinet of Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra]. Retrieved October 31, 2024, from <https://www.soc.go.th/?p=26856>
- Couperus, S., & van de Grift, L. (2022). Environment and democracy: An introduction. *Journal of Modern European History*, 20(3), 276–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16118944221113271>
- Crotty, W. J., & Katz, R. S. (2005). *Handbook of party politics*. Sage.
- Dueanpen, A. (2023). *Pird na-yo-bai sing-waed-lom khong phak kan-mueang lueak-tang pi 2566* [Unveiling the environmental policies of political parties in the 2023 elections]. Urban Creature. Retrieved March 15, 2024, from <https://urbancreature.co/next-thailand-environment>
- Election Commission of Thailand. (2023). *2023 general election summary report* (in Thai). Retrieved April 10, 2025, from <https://www.ect.go.th>
- Elinoff, E., & Lamb, V. (2022). Environmentalisms in twenty-first century Thailand: Continuities, discontinuities, and emerging trajectories. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Advance online publication, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2022.2051062>
- Ferdinand, P. (2023). Political parties. In R. Garner, P. Ferdinand, & S. Lawson (Eds.), *Introduction to politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Hirsch, P. (1997). The politics of environment: Opposition and legitimacy. In *Political change in Thailand*. Routledge.
- Hirsch, P., & Lohmann, L. (1989). Contemporary politics of environment in Thailand. *Asian Survey*, 29(4), 439–451. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2644886>
- Iheonu, C. O., Muoneke, O. B., & Agbutun, S. A. (2023). Investigating the democracy and environmental sustainability nexus in 52 African countries. *Social Science Quarterly*, 104(5), 1006–1019. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.13293>
- Jantimachaiamorn, C., Phasa, B., Jantima, R., Kanchanaphiphit, P., Mongkolrat, T., & Thitawongso, P. (2022). *Kan wi-cha-ra khwam sam-phan ra-wang kan-mueang kap kan-pa-ti-wat lae rat-tha-pha-ran khong thai* [Politics, revolutions, and coups in Thailand]. *Journal of Legal Entity Management and Local Innovation*, 8(9), 177–189.

- Jensen, C. B., & Sangkhamanee, J. (2024). Rewilding Bangkok. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 48(4), 543–559. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.13241>
- Jatusripitak, N., & Ricks, J. I. (2024). Age and ideology. *Pacific Affairs*, 97(1), 117–136. <https://doi.org/10.5509/2024971-art6>
- Katz, R. S. (2023). *Political parties* (D. Caramani, Ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Kenny, J., & Langsæther, P. E. (2023). Environmentalism as an independent dimension. *European Journal of Political Research*, 62(4), 1031–1053. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12549>
- Kongkirati, P. (2024). *Thailand: Contestation, polarization, and democratic regression*. Cambridge University Press.
- Laohabut, T., & McCargo, D. (2024). Thailand's Movement Party. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 24(1), 25–47. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jea.2024.1>
- McCargo, D., & Chattharakul, A. (2020). *Future forward: The rise and fall of a Thai political party*. NIAS Press.
- Move Forward Party. (2023). *Sing-waed-lom yang-yuen* [Sustainable environment]. Retrieved March 15, 2024, from <https://election66.moveforwardparty.org/policy/collection/PolicyCategory/52>

Assessing the role of ethnic armed organizations in local governance of post-conflict Myanmar: A case study of New Mon State Party

Minn Myoh Minn Oo ¹  

¹ Myanmar University of Social Science and Technology, Myanmar, © Authors

Abstract

Ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) in Myanmar have historically functioned as both military and governance roles, particularly in regions with minimal state control or its absence. In this study, the role of EAOs is analyzed in local governance, specifically in areas of service delivery and administration through a case study of New Mon State Party (NMSP). Using a qualitative case study approach, the study employed semi-structured interviews with local residents from three townships of Mon state which was further complemented by the analysis of secondary resources for data triangulation. Findings revealed that NMSP provides essential governance services in education, healthcare and local administration matters, reflecting some of decentralization principles. In addition, the study also highlights significant governance issues such as limitations in resources and formal legitimacy, taxation problems and corruption, and service inconsistencies. Through the lens of rebel governance and decentralization theories, the analysis informs that EAO-led governance presents an alternative governance framework in a contested manner in current federalization debates of Myanmar. Even though findings indicate that EAOs contributes significantly towards local governance, there remains complications in their legitimacy and sustainability, which raises critical questions about their integration into decentralized governance in post-conflict Myanmar.

Article history:

Received: February 27, 2025

Revised: April 18, 2025

Accepted: April 21, 2025

Keywords:

Decentralization,
Ethnic Armed Organizations,
Rebel Governance,
Local Governance,
New Mon State Party

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and significance of the problem

Historically, a third-tier local government was absent in Myanmar, leading to disparities in development nationwide, especially in remote and rural ethnic regions. Successive Myanmar governments provided local governance services through centrally controlled organizations. In 1993, the central government formed Development

Administration Organizations (DAOs) under the Development Committees Law to provide local governance services (UNDP Myanmar, 2015). However, the centralized control resulted in DAOs' lack of adequate knowledge of local contexts, leading to ineffective service delivery and unresponsive governance (Arnold et al., 2015). Consequently, this did not address local issues effectively nor fulfil diverse needs in ethnic regions (Nixon et al., 2013).

Therefore, non-state actors interfered in offering alternative necessary services to local communities. Community-based organizations played an important role in provision of local services and solving grassroots problems, providing opportunities related to education, jobs and vocational training (Martin, 2021). At the same time, EAOs also stepped in by providing necessary support towards their own ethnic communities tailored to their needs (Center for Operational Analysis and Research, 2023), besides their primary resistance movements. They established their local governance mechanisms to provide local services in their respective ethnic areas. EAOs in Arakan, Mon, Karen and Kachin formed their localized institutions related to education and healthcare to provide localized services based on ethnic cultures, in parallel to state institutions (South, 2022).

Following the 2021 coup, discussions on federalism in Myanmar have intensified. Debates around decentralization, federalism and local governance for the future of Myanmar have persisted. There, the topic of local governance gained prominence such that the question of how local governance should be formed to effectively resolve local issues in post-coup Myanmar is raised. Since the country has such diverse ethnic groups of different cultures and languages, relevant knowledge is essential into incorporating policy-making processes of local governance in the post-conflict. Here, it is important to analyze non-state actors in local governance within the country including state institutions, community-based organizations and EAOs to understand grassroots complexities.

For that reason, this study examines the role of EAOs in local governance through a case study of the New Mon State Party (NMSP). It unlocks more understanding of how EAOs may have effectively performed its local governance func-

tions while exploring their challenges, and how this could contribute to broader implications for the development of local governance mechanisms in post-conflict Myanmar.

1.2 Research objectives

This research aims to

- Understand the governance structure and practices of NMSP
- Critically analyze the governance role of NMSP, assessing both its functions and challenges
- Evaluate broader implications of EAO-led governance for post-conflict Myanmar's federalization

1.3 Research questions

- This research focuses on addressing two critical questions:
 - To what extent does NMSP function as local governance actors, and what challenges does it face?
 - What are the broader implications of EAO-led governance for post-conflict Myanmar's federalization?

1.4 Definition of key terms

Ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) are defined in Myanmar's context as non-state armed organizations, representing specific ethnic groups and engaging in armed resistance against the central government (Jagger, 2018; Harrison & Kyed, 2019).

Local governance can be comprehended in Myanmar's context as the exercise of authorities for areas of development, public services and socio-economic matters by either state or non-state actors (Kyed & Engberg-Pedersen, 2008).

Post-conflict in this study refers to the period of the end of current civil war between revolutionary forces and the military in Myanmar since 2021-military coup, and the beginning of building a federalized Myanmar.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Evolution of local governance in Myanmar

Tracing back to three constitutional periods, local governance structures evolved in Myanmar under different types of regimes. From early post-independence to semi-democracy later, the country encountered different shifts in governance structures and evolution of powers, orchestrating significant changes in local governance at grassroots levels.

The first 1947 Constitution of Myanmar was enacted to eradicate post-colonial social divisions, and to promote justice, equality and liberty for all citizens (Furnivall, 1949). The constitution made a significant attempt to form a decentralized governance system which permitted local administrative autonomy at the presence of a strong central government (Coffey, 2022). These governance models tried to facilitate local service delivery from all angles of hierarchy, market and network modes (Swe & Lim, 2019). The constitution attempted to incorporate liberal principles in governance, but this led to instrumental conflicts among ethnic groups. Later, the military seized power amidst these discussions in 1962 and disrupted all these decentralized endeavors from ethnic groups (Crouch, 2019).

The 1962 military coup led to centralization under the new 1974 constitution. Local governance was much more limited under the centralized governance and the military-led government. Accordingly, the military regime controlled from the center through its appointed ministers in the state and local areas. Crouch (2019) argued that this led to the absence of local government and instead, national ministries and DAOs addressed local issues by terms of central policies rather than acting as fulfilling local needs. Lacking legislative and executive powers, these ministries and DAOs heavily relied on the support of the military government such as policies, staff, funding and infrastructure (Ninh & Kosuta, 2016). These

centralized features resulted in the lack of local autonomy and responsive service delivery at grassroots levels, leading to poor local governance under centralized institutions (Swe & Lim, 2019).

Furthermore, the 2008 constitutional period marked a transition towards a more democratic era because state and regional governments gained a certain amount of autonomy in their regions, highlighting some decentralization efforts (Crouch, 2019; Ninh & Kosuta, 2016). However, these governments were heavily dependent on national ministries, controlled by the central government for approval and funding for local matters. The approval was mandatory to be obtained from the central government for any state and local development activities (Ninh & Kosuta, 2016). The constitution is still rooted in centralization with 25% of parliamentary seats reserved for the military officers without any election, undermining these decentralization features (Crouch, 2019).

Nonetheless, the 2008 constitution paved the way for escalating discussions around federalism, decentralization and local governance in the periods of U Thein Sein government in 2011-2015, and National League of Democracy government in 2016-2020 (Bunte, Kollner & Roewer, 2019). Under the U Thein Sein's government, EAOs gained certain space for governance discussions through a series of political reforms and peace negotiations such as National Ceasefire Agreements (Aung, 2016). These efforts allowed EAOs to participate in dual territorial control, resulting in opportunities for them to establish local governance mechanisms in their territories (Stokke et al., 2022). Despite this progress, peace talks were challenging such that armed clashes continued with EAOs. Later years, political communities, parties and EAOs gained more momentum in approaching a bottom-up approach to federalism (South, 2022), wanting for more autonomy and decentralized governance in ethnic areas. These changes conveyed the acknowledgement of

importance of good local governance across ethnic regions to balance development, equality and self-determination.

2.2 Historical involvement of EAOs in local governance

Historically, EAOs have long addressed local needs and resolved issues in their ethnic regions, particularly in regions where the central government has been less supportive. Over time, many EAOs have expanded their activities beyond their resistance, and addressed local issues in their controlled areas through their local governance structures.

EAOs such as Karen National Union (KNU) in 1947 and Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) in 1961, initially focused on their resistance movements towards the military, and humanitarian assistance for conflict-affected areas (Loong, 2022; Williams, 2017). But later they formed their own local governance services in education, healthcare and local administration in villages and remote regions to fill governance service gaps left by the central government (Jolliffe, 2015). Moreover, the United League of Arakan (ULA) emerged as an Arakan ethnic revolutionary organization in 2009, with its goals of self-determination, federation and self-rule. Over the years, armed conflicts between AA and the military fluctuated, and nowadays in the post-coup, their battles have become widespread across the state. Despite their resistance, ULA also emphasized local governance and addressed local challenges through its Arakan People's Authority (APA) unit (Jolliffe, 2014; Center for Operational Analysis and Research, 2023).

Jolliffe (2014) added that several EAOs in Karen, Kachin, Arakan, Chin, Karenni, Shan and Mon mitigated local and ethnic challenges in their respective ethnic regions through their small-scale to large-scale functions. They positioned themselves as key governance actors at grassroots levels, particularly when central institutions

failed to address local issues. They even institutionalized their governance structures and service provisions such as education and health committees, and village administration units, in parallel to central government's policies (Jolliffe, 2015; Joshi et al., 2024). These factors show that EAOs in Myanmar did not just act as resistance organizations but also may have functioned as de facto local governments in their controlled areas. Moreover, their participation in the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) process made EAOs' governance contributions easier. As a result of NCA, their peace dialogue with the central government allowed them to formalize and expand their governance activities in their controlled territories to a certain extent, providing more accessible and responsive services to local communities (Arraiza & Davies, 2020). One other reason was because EAOs allowed community participation in decision making for local matters, resource management and development activities (Crumpton et al., 2023). This highlighted EAOs' practices in decentralized governance models at grassroots levels, that drove their models to be responsive and effective to address community issues. Despite these successes, the fluctuations of the NCA progress affected these successes and so did the 2021 military coup.

Moreover, several concerns persisted about EAO's legitimacy, accountability and inclusivity in their localized governance mechanisms (Crumpton et al., 2023). These concerns have raised questions about their representation of local communities and other ethnic minorities in their territories (Joshi et al., 2024). Besides this, there are significant variations in the quality and accessibility of EAO-led services, especially in education and healthcare across different areas (Jolliffe, 2015). These conditions underscore the importance of examining EAO-led governance and its effectiveness, and its broader implications for local governance of post-conflict Myanmar.

2.3 Non-state actors and impacts of their governance

Across the world, non-state actors often take on governance roles because of political marginalization, conflict dynamics and weak state institutions. The failure of the central government to provide security, justice and essential services led to a power vacuum in conflict or post-conflict environments which is often addressed by these non-state groups, similarly in Myanmar. In fact, they expanded beyond their resistance to governance services which often helped them achieve legitimacy and community support either through service delivery or coercion.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah, a Shi'a Islamist militant and political group, developed its governance mechanisms. It provided security, social services, healthcare and education, especially in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa valley which were largely ignored by the Lebanese government (Gleis & Berti, 2012). Its governance was commended for its efficiency and reliability through its institutions such as the Jihad al-Binaa and Imdad Committee, providing public services and infrastructure to local communities. However, Hezbollah is widely criticized for its sectarian division and suppression of political opposition groups (Saab & Ranstorp, 2007). Moreover, it is also denounced for its military activities in regional conflicts in Syria and Israel (Norton, 2007).

Another non-state organization is Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) from the Bangsamoro region of the Philippines. MILF focused on its local governance in resolving local conflicts, security challenges and economic projects in its controlled region, besides provision of basic services in these areas in the absence of the central government (Breslawski, 2022). It established Sharia courts and Bangsamoro Development Agency under the Sharia Law to contribute to local communities' living conditions and economic opportunities (Tuminez, 2007). Even so, its governance faced several criticisms regarding its transparency, inclusivity and bureaucratic

efficiencies because political structures were highly influenced by former MILF commanders (Breslawski, 2022). Later in 2019, MILF transitioned into a formal political unit as a Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Similarly in Colombia, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) also formed local governance functions in rural areas for years, especially where state influence is absent or weak. It established its own public courts and taxation, offering security, taxation and justice to local communities (Provost, 2018). Despite FARC's success in stability and land reforms, its governance was often coercive and participated in illicit businesses such as drug trafficking and extortion. It was also widely criticized for its human rights abuses and criminal economic activities (Schultze-Kraft et al., 2016). Even though FARC signed the 2016 peace agreement, the following events such as criminal control in its former territories were condemned as its governance failures.

These three governance models have multiple differences - FARC lacked bureaucratic institutions but acted as a shadow government and provided revolutionary justice and taxation; MILF operated its governance traditionally and through Islamic ways, facilitating conflict resolution and providing essential public services in its territories; and Hezbollah functioned as a parallel government through its well-established institutions and offered extensive services. Despite their respective success in governance settings, they are criticized for their lack of bureaucratic inefficiencies, criminal activities, coercive actions and limited effectiveness. However, these actors also filled governance voids to a certain extent, providing localized services and decentralized institutions.

2.4 Theoretical frameworks

This study is built on two key theoretical frameworks such as decentralization and rebel governance to analyze the role of EAOs in local governance. These theories help to understand

how alternative local governance structures emerge in areas ignored by the central government. By applying these theories, the study critically assesses the extent to which EAOs function as local governance actors, and challenges they face to understand their broader implications for local governance in post-conflict Myanmar.

Decentralization theory, originated by Oates (1972), refers to the transfer of authorities, responsibilities and financial decision-making powers from the central government to state or local governments to reduce centralized control. This can lead to the formation of more responsive and context-specific local governance structures to fulfil diverse needs (Rodden, 2004; Schneider, 2003). In Myanmar, the central government failed to provide responsive local governance over the years under its centralized control, especially in ethnic regions where their institutions were absent or weak (Grindle, 2007). In these areas, EAOs acted as alternative governance actors and filled these gaps through localized service delivery. However, several questions are raised about the effectiveness and inclusiveness of these EAO-led governance. Decentralization theory is applied in this study to examine whether EAO-led governance effectively addresses local needs with its own challenges.

However, decentralization theory may not entirely explain governance structures of EAOs where rebel governance theory supplements the analysis. Rebel governance theory states that insurgent groups establish their governance functions in the regions under little control of state institutions, challenging the traditional perspective of state actors being the only government (Florea & Malejacq, 2023). Spadaro (2022) also argued that the theory examines the way rebel groups administer local affairs in conflict areas and provide governance services to local communities. In Myanmar's context, EAOs despite initially emerging as armed resistance organizations later formed their governance systems and supported

local services to ethnic communities in education, healthcare and justice matters, filling governance gaps left by the central government. By applying rebel governance theory, it will explore how EAOs in Myanmar established their governance structures and offered governance services in their territories.

2.5 Gaps in existing literature

Since most studies focus on the study of EAOs' military and political aspects, and ceasefire agreements, the study on their local governance contributions is under-explored. Since EAOs stepped in to provide local services in their territories and ethnic regions, a good understanding of their governance effectiveness and challenges has become essential for comprehension of Myanmar's broader local governance and decentralization debates. This study addresses this gap through a comprehensive case study of NMSP by evaluating its service and administration mechanisms, to comprehend the extent of EAO-led governance resolving local issues and its implications for broader discussion on local governance in post-conflict Myanmar.

3. Research methodology

This study used a qualitative case-study approach with emphasis on depth over breadth to examine the role of the EAOs in local governance. A case-study research design was selected for a thorough investigation into complex structures of local governance in practical environments (Ibrahim & Victoria, 2022; Khan, 2022). Given the distinctive political and socio-cultural distinctiveness of EAOs, this approach complemented an in-depth, context-sensitive analysis of NMSP's local governance mechanisms. While case studies do not typically lead to statistical generalizations, it provided rich and transferable insights to the study (Ibrahim & Victoria, 2022).

The study employed semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method.

This method allowed a comprehensive and structured examination of participant perspectives. Interviews were undertaken via Zoom between October 7-11, 2024, prioritizing and ensuring participants' safety and confidentiality, given Myanmar's political sensitivity.

A combination of purposive and snowball sampling approaches was conducted to ensure that participants were recruited through trusted networks, ensuring their direct knowledge and exposure to NMSP's governance mechanisms. Three townships such as Mudon, Ye and Thanbyuzayat, were selected because of their geographically diverse locations. Three participants were interviewed from each township, totaling nine interviewees. The nine-participant sample size was justified depending on the principle of data saturation, where no new theme emerged from additional interviews (Young & Casey, 2018; Sharma et al., 2024). By the ninth interview, strong thematic convergence was displayed by responses, indicating that additional interviews would have brought only diminishing returns rather than new insights.

With the recognition of the risk of selection bias, diversification of participant backgrounds was ensured, and participants were recruited depending on the following conditions:

- Aged 18 or above and permanent residents of their respective townships
- Native Mon language speakers, ensuring cultural and linguistic insights into NMSP's governance
- Completed at least Grade 9 education, ensuring informed responses
- Minimum one year of community work experience at grassroots levels in their townships
- No affiliation with NMPS to minimize potential bias

Participants came from diverse backgrounds such as teaching, healthcare sector, village administration, and local ethnic organizations. This multi-sector representation provided a

comprehensive understanding of NMSP governance beyond only one occupational lens.

Thematic analysis was implemented to identify patterns and trends in responses, extracting key themes related to governance effectiveness, challenges and implications for federalization. To enhance the reliability of findings, secondary sources were used to cross-check themes from the findings including policy reports, government documents and previous studies. The triangulation approach was carried out to foster the credibility of findings by ensuring consistency across multiple data sources.

Given political sensitivity in Myanmar, participant confidentiality was strictly ensured for safety reasons. The study's purpose, risks and voluntary nature were verbally explained to gain informed consent before the interviews. Pseudonyms were used to protect participant identities, and they were informed that they had the right to withdraw any data collected from their interviews at any stage without consequences. No video or audio recording was undertaken, and participants were informed of written notes for research paper writing purposes only.

3. 1 Limitations of the study

Despite nuanced and valuable insights from the research, the study acknowledges several limitations. The sample size of nine-participant interviews provided depth over breadth and employed theoretical sampling to make sure of production of rich and detailed narratives with transferable perspectives (Young & Casey, 2018; Sharma et al., 2024). Even so, the sample size may not contribute statistically to generalizability to all EAOs in Myanmar and further research on a wide range of EAOs should be undertaken to enhance comparative analysis. Moreover, remote interviews through zoom application were conducted to ensure participants' safety, given security concerns. But this may have restricted the capacity to understand subtle expressions.

As a mitigation, cross-checking with secondary data sources such as reports, and previous studies was performed for findings' validity. Nonetheless, methodological rigor, triangulation method and purpose sampling strategy in this study strengthened relevance and applicability of findings to ongoing policy debates on local governance in Myanmar.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Understanding NMSP's local governance

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) was established in 1958 by revolutionary Mon ethnic leaders for freedom, self-determination and human rights, acting as the political wing of Mon National Liberation Army (Mon, 2014). Since then, its headquarters have been in Ye township and provided local governance services towards ethnic Mon communities across Mon state and some areas in Karen state and Tanintharyi region, especially in aspects of education, health and local administration duties. NMSP's governance functions have evolved as a response to state ignorance in ethnic regions, aligning with decentralization and rebel governance theories.

NMSP's most effective local governance sector is educational support. NMSP opened Mon national schools in 1972 and Mon national college in 1984 to provide quality education services tailored to Mon ethnic language and needs. Since then, Mon families preferred sending their children to these schools because they offered educational services in ethnic Mon languages unlike mainstream public schools. So, their children could maintain their own languages and practice them at schools and classrooms (Participant 1, Participant 2 and Participant 3, personal communication, October 7, 2024). This expressed the alignment with decentralization theory (Oates, 1972) that NMSP's schools fulfill localized needs, addressing gaps left by state institutions and with rebel governance theory (Florea & Malejacq, 2023) that NMSP, like Hezbollah and MILF, strengthens its governance

influence by establishing parallel educational institutions.

Respondents from Thanbyuzayat claimed that the post-coup saw the increasing number of students joining NMSP's schools because public schools were short of teachers due to the Civil Disobedience Movement, and students protested by discontinuing their education. So NMSP's schools were another option to afford quality education at affordable costs. Therefore, not just students but also teachers increased at NMSP's schools to fulfil increasing demands of student size (Participant 4, Participant 5 and Participant 6, personal communication, October 9, 2024). This underscores the readiness of NMSP's local educational programs at the time of emergency for Mon ethnic communities. In the post-coup, NMSP quickly adapted and expanded its capacity by making education accessible for all new students through community-based decision making. Consequently, these ethnic Mon children continued receiving uninterrupted education at the time of critical crisis. These findings proved the alignment with benefits of decentralization and rebel governance theories on conditions that at time of crisis local Mon communities had alternative governance service to pursue their interests, particularly in education of NMSP.

Mudon respondents shared that there was no public school in NMSP-controlled areas but only Mon national schools and Mon national college, so it was convenient for Mon families to send their children to pursue NMSP's education (Participant 7, Participant 8 and Participant 9, personal communication, October 11, 2024). Thanbyuzayat and Ye respondents also implied that Mon national schools offered unavailable subjects such as Music, Technology, Computer and Development at public schools because their children felt happier learning at schools (Participant 7, Participant 8 and Participant 9, personal communication, October 11, 2024). This oversight

revealed that NMSP's education is more culture-friendly in terms of easy access and quality curriculums, consistent with rebel governance theory that non-state actors such as EAOs fill governance gaps in conflict settings.

Healthcare services are another NMSP's local service. Participants 3 and 4 claimed that the provision of healthcare services was the second outstanding. NMSP built hospitals and healthcare clinics with trained doctors, nurses and healthcare staff primarily in its controlled zones, delivering basic healthcare services. The Mon National Health Committee trained and approved healthcare professionals for quality health services from emergency care to preventive care. Additionally, they were Mon language speakers and provided more accessible services because some villages in Ye and Thanbyuzayat cannot speak mainstream Burmese, and speak only Mon language (Participant 3, personal communication, October 7, 2024; Participant 4, personal communication, October 9, 2024). This suggests NMSP's effective healthcare support through Mon language as a medium of communication. This finding resonated with Oates' decentralization theory (1972) that local communities require localized health services in more culturally accessible ways as Mon ethnic villages gain the access to language-friendly services from NMSP. Moreover, this can be seen also as another application of rebel governance theory where like FARC and Hezbollah, NMSP attempts to achieve local loyalty and trust through provision of basic welfare services. Furthermore, Participant 8 and Participant 9 declared that their villages usually receive regular visits from NMSP's healthcare staff. Also, during the Covid-19 pandemic, NMSP provided free vaccines to remote local villages with no access to any support from the central government (Participant 8 and Participant 9, personal communication, October 11, 2024). These experiences underlined the importance of localized resolutions in a local governance system, closely aligned with decentralization theory.

Besides education and healthcare, NMSP established its mechanisms for local administration matters. Participants 2 and 3 from Ye township, and Participants 4 and 5 from Thanbyuzayat township, raised that NMSP already institutionalized local courts, justice systems, laws and orders in its controlled areas. There, lawyers, judges, village heads, and NMSP representatives operated in local administration matters ranging from farming and agriculture to local businesses. Local cases such as robbery, murders, and ethnic and family disputes were handled by local courts. Participants highlighted fairness and cultural understanding as key reasons for their preferences on NMSP courts (Participant 2 and Participant 3, personal communication, October 7, 2024; Participant 4 and Participant 5, personal communication, October 9, 2024). These findings showed theoretical applications in rebel governance such that NMSP like Hezbollah, MILF and FARC act as alternative justice providers in its contested territories.

Despite its governance success, NMSP has several structural and operational issues in its governance. Participant 3 mentioned that some remote villages in Ye and Thanbyuzayat, besides not receiving any support from NMSP, often experienced forced taxation (Participant 3, personal communication, October 7, 2024). Moreover, Participant 6 and Participant 8 also extended the discourse that some NMSP staff were corrupted and accepted bribery related to the approval of local businesses and trade matters. Even some villages under NMSP control did not receive regular healthcare services despite regular taxation (Participant 6, personal communication, October 9, 2024; Participant 8, personal communication, October 11, 2024). Moreover, Participant 8 and Participant 6 remarked that the number of Mon speakers are decreasing nowadays, and urban Mon ethnic communities were not close to NMSP's local governance functions, and NMSP found it challenging to promoting its influence on urban areas (Participant 8, personal communication, October 11, 2024; Participant 6, personal communication,

October 9, 2024). These findings indicated that similar to FARC's taxation in Colombia, NMSP gains its funding from informal taxation which raises concerns about coercion. Moreover, like MILF in the Philippines, sustaining governance at the lack of external funding sources is a major challenge to NMSP's governance mechanism as well.

Furthermore, the numbers and frequency of healthcare services remained a critical challenge though NMSP's healthcare provision seemed effective because of limited accessibility. Besides this, the number of educated and qualified individuals for health, education and local administration offices proved a critical need to increase to meet growing demands. Moreover, since many youths were relocating to nearby border areas in Thailand in search for work opportunities and better life conditions, some NMSP-controlled villages have only elderly people and children left (personal communication, October 7, 2024; October 9, 2024; October 11, 2024). These findings highlighted significant issues related to NMSP's governance efficiency, and sustainability and accountability issues as discussed in governance experiences of Hezbollah, MILF and FARC.

4.2 Role of NMSP as local governance actors, and governance effectiveness and challenges

Findings indicate that NMSP functions as local governance actors in regions where state institutions lack control over, exhibiting traits of alternative governance providers. NMSP has developed parallel governance functions in education, healthcare and local administration, operating independently of the central institutions. The establishment and success of Mon national schools since 1972 demonstrates the extent to which EAOs fill governance gaps left by the state in educational needs for local communities, providing ethnic-centered education and reflecting local cultural and linguistic identities. The increase of student enrollment in NMSP's schools

in the post-2021 coup further reinforces the fact that the expansion of EAO governance structures can be seen in times of state instability. This aligns with the rebel governance theory, which suggests that power consolidation is obtained by non-state actors through addressing local governance needs in conflict or post-conflict societies (Florea & Malejacq, 2023). Likewise, EAOs such as NMSP assume state functions during crises by providing localized healthcare services, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic which further legitimizes their governance role at local levels.

While decentralization theory argues that local governance functions are more responsive to community needs (Oates, 1972), the findings also expressed several issues and limitations in EAO-led governance. One major challenge is that as EAOs do not have electoral legitimacy, this raises many concerns about whether they are representative of all ethnic majorities and minorities in their territories, like MILF's governance in the Bangsamoro region of the Philippines. Therefore, NMSP may serve the interests of Mon ethnic communities but not that of other non-Mon ethnic groups such as Pa-Oh and Karen living within the state. Moreover, there are quality limitations on NMSP-provided services in education and healthcare for its lack of international accreditation, even though nowadays NMSP's Mon national college is expanding its educational credibility with foreign universities in Thailand. Additionally, NMSP faces resource shortages in education and healthcare as schools and clinics find it challenging to secure qualified staff for services, affecting the consistency of service quality. The issues in service quality of NMSP's governance seem great challenges to its effectiveness, which were also similar problems in Hezbollah's Jihad al-Binaa and Imdad Committee, and their performance. Moreover, these restrictions resonate with critical arguments of decentralization theory where administrative and service capacity could be

significant struggles for local governance entities to sustain effectiveness and responsiveness (Rodden, 2004; Schneider, 2003).

In addition, the findings expressed participants' concerns about corruption, forced taxation and bureaucratic inefficiencies of NMSP governance, which further pointed out accountability and transparency gaps of EAO-led governance. Despite consistent taxation, inconsistencies in service provision and bribery in local administration decisions expose governance vulnerabilities. These issues were also major challenges in governance systems of MILF and FARC where rebel taxations turned to corruption and loss of public trust though the initial purpose was to fund local services (Schultze-Kraft et al., 2016). These findings strengthen the complication in the perceptions of EAOs as effective governance actors, conveying that while they may act as alternative governance roles, they are not necessarily more accountable or transparent compared to state institutions.

Furthermore, another issue is the urban-rural divide found in EAO-led governance. Urban communities in Mon state are less likely to be influenced by NMSP-governance than rural communities because urban areas are more dominated by state institutions. Moreover, findings indicate that there is a significant drop in Mon language speakers among younger generations, presenting it as a cultural and political challenge for NMSP because ethnic identity and governance legitimacy are closely linked to language preservation. These trends raise broader questions about long-term sustainability of EAO-led governance, especially if younger generations are more distant with ethnic-based governance structures.

4.3 Implications of EAO-led governance for Myanmar's federalization in the post-conflict

Findings exhibit that EAO-led governance may contribute to Myanmar's federalization and

decentralization but in an informal and contest manner. Decentralization theory argues that transferring governance responsibilities to local governments promotes responsiveness and efficiency (Oates, 1972), and NMSP's governance model reflects these principles to some extent. NMSP proves that alternative governance functions may emerge in the absence of a strong central government by offering localized services in education, healthcare and administration. However, fragmentation and inconsistency found in EAO-led governance contributes to concerns about its scalability and integration to a formalized federalization.

As one of key barriers to the integration, EAO-led governance appears to be vulnerable to legitimacy challenges. The lack of political legitimacy results in political vulnerability of EAO-led governance, subject to state objection. Moreover, ethnic-based EAO-led governance also faces representational issues. Non-Mon ethnic minorities within EAO-controlled areas may be subject to non-inclusivity and discrimination in pursuing services and administrative justice (Joshi et al., 2024), mirroring similar challenges experienced by MILF governance in the Philippines where there were concerns over ethnic exclusivity and political patronage which complicated its transition into formal governance models (Breslawski, 2022). Besides this, since the tensions persist between EAOs and the central government particularly in the post-coup, decentralization debates in Myanmar remains contested with the idea that state actors may resist formalization of EAO-led governance.

Another major implication is that different EAOs may present variations in governance effectiveness. This raises questions regarding whether decentralization in Myanmar should follow a uniform or flexible approach. Subsequently, findings state inconsistencies in service delivery of healthcare and taxation by NMSP governance, implying that not all EAOs have the

same capacity to govern effectively. These resonate with critical arguments of decentralization theory, which says that governance efficiency can be enhanced by decentralization, but it can also result in inequality service distribution and administrative fragmentation (Schneider, 2003). Therefore, ensuring consistency in governance quality across various ethnic regions would be a major challenge if EAOs were to be formally integrated into Myanmar's federalization.

Finally, the findings express the dependence of future of EAO-led governance on broader socio-political trends, especially changes in public perspectives, demographic shifts and economic mobility. Since there is an increase in youth migration of Mon population to Thailand for economic opportunities, this conveys long-term legitimacy may be a struggle to be retained by EAOs, particularly when local people become less reliant on them for essential services. Moreover, a decline in Mon language proficiency and use by urban populations highlights potential cultural shifts, imposing influence on governance dynamics in the future. These demographic and socio-economic challenges raise many questions about EAO-led governance and its sustainability in ever-evolving political landscape of Myanmar.

5. Conclusion

The study critically assessed the role of NMSP as a local governance actor, with a specific focus on its governance functions in education, healthcare and administration. Findings reveal that NMSP fill governance voids ignored by the state, particularly in marginalized ethnic groups, resonating with rebel governance theory. Even so, despite its provision of essential services, NMSP-led governance remains in informal, fragmented and contested conditions, with critiques about long-term legitimacy and sustainability.

The analysis illustrates that decentralization efforts are partially supported by EAO-led governance through provision of localized and

culturally responsive services. Regardless of that, resource limitations, taxation issues and inconsistencies in governance effectiveness underscore systemic barriers of these governance models, highlighting critiques of decentralization theory. Moreover, there are also complications in the lack of state recognition on the role of EAOs in governance in Myanmar's socio-political dynamics.

Contrasting viewpoints contend that EAO governance is deficient in accountability, inclusivity and institutional oversight, contributing to risks of corruption, coercion and ethnic marginalization. And, the gap between urban and rural populations sparks discussion on the viability of EAO governance since economic shifts and migration alter demographics and political dynamics. These factors cast doubt on whether EAOs could evolve from informal governance entities into legitimate political institutions in a federal Myanmar.

Given these complexities, further research should be undertaken to cross-examine comparative governance models in other ethnic regions of Myanmar, evaluate the adaptability of EAO-led governance, and analyze possible conditions under which EAOs could be incorporated into formal political structures. The evolving role of EAOs in Myanmar can be seen as an ongoing debate that requires further scholarly research and critical debates.

References

- Arraiza, J. M., & Davies, S. E. (2020). Enduring peace: A case study of the opportunities and the challenges for engaging in Myanmar's peace process. *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 12(1), 115–136. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1875984X-01201007>
- Arnold, M., Aung, Y. T., Kempel, S., & Saw, K. P. C. (2015). *Municipal governance in Myanmar: An overview of development affairs organizations* (Discussion Paper No. 7). Myanmar Development Resource Center for Economic and Social Development & The Asia Foundation.

- Aung, S. M. T. (2016). The politics of policymaking in transitional government: A case study of the ethnic peace process in Myanmar. In N. Cheesman & N. Farrelly (Eds.), *Conflict in Myanmar: War, politics, religion* (pp. 25–46). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Breslawski, J. (2022). Can rebels bolster trust in the government? Evidence from the Philippines. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 67(4), 728–751. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027221123319>
- Bünthe, M., Köllner, P., & Roewer, R. (2019). Taking stock of Myanmar's political transformation since 2011. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 38(3), 249–264. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103420905140>
- Center for Operational Analysis and Research. (2023, September 27). *A governance tapestry: Layered administrations and revolutionary service delivery in Western Myanmar*.
- Coffey, D. K. (2022). The drafting of the Constitution of the Union of Burma in 1947: Dominion status, Indo–Burmese relations, and the Irish example. *Law and History Review*, 41(2), 253–272. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248022000487>
- Crouch, M. (2019). *The constitution of Myanmar: A contextual analysis*. Hart Publishing.
- Crumpton, C. D., Cifuentes, M., & Roche, J. (2023). Rural grassroots governance-building in Myanmar. In J. Ockey & N. S. Talib (Eds.), *Democratic recession, autocratization, and democratic backlash in Southeast Asia* (pp. 167–197). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Florea, A., & Malejacq, R. (2023). The supply and demand of rebel governance. *International Studies Review*, 26(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viae004>
- Furnivall, J. S. (1949). Twilight in Burma: Independence and after. *Pacific Affairs*, 22(2), 155–172. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2751593>
- Gleis, J. L., & Berti, B. (2012). *Hezbollah and Hamas: A comparative study*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Grindle, M. S. (2007). *Going local: Decentralization, democratization and the promise of good governance*. Princeton University Press.
- Harrisson, A. P., & Kyed, H. M. (2019). Ceasefire state-making and justice provision by ethnic armed groups in Southeast Myanmar. *Sojourn*, 34(2), 290–326. <https://doi.org/10.1355/SJ34-2C>
- Ibrahim, M. G., & Victoria, D. M. (2022). Reflections on the use of qualitative case study design in education policy research: Contributing to the debate of generalisation in research. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention*, 9(9), 7250–7258. <https://doi.org/10.18535/ijsshi/v9i09.09>
- Jagger, S. (2018). Developing civil society in the non-state sphere: Welfare and rights-based organisations associated with ethnic armed groups in Myanmar. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 29(2), 316–343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2018.1433511>
- Jolliffe, K. (2014). *Ethnic conflict and social services in Myanmar's contested regions*. The Asia Foundation.
- Jolliffe, K. (2015). *Ethnic armed conflicts and territorial administration in Myanmar*. The Asia Foundation.
- Joshi, A., Barnes, K., Chaimite, E., Loureiro, M., & Shankland, A. (2024). Local governance networks as public authority: Insights from Mozambique, Myanmar and Pakistan. *Global Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.13363>
- Khan, N. I. (2022). Case study as a method of qualitative research. In Information Resources Management Association (Ed.), *Research anthology on innovative research methodologies and utilization across multiple disciplines* (pp. 452–472). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-3881-7.ch023>
- Kyed, H. M., & Engberg-Pedersen, L. (2008). *Local governance in fragile states* (DIIS Policy Brief). Danish Institute for International Studies.
- Loong, S. (2022). *The Karen National Union in post-coup Myanmar*. The Henry L. Stimson Center.
- Mon, P. N. (2014). *Education reform and national reconciliation in Burma*. Paper presented at the Western Conference Association for Asian Studies.
- Ninh, K. N. B., & Kosuta, M. (2016). Decentralization in Myanmar: A nascent and evolving process. *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies*, 33(2), 224–241. <https://doi.org/10.1355/AE33-2G>
- Nixon, H., Joeline, C., Saw, K. P. C., Lynn, T. A., & Arnold, M. (2013). *State and region governments in Myanmar* (Policy Dialogue Brief Series No. 1). Myanmar Development Resource Center for Economic and Social Development & The Asia Foundation.

- Norton, A. R. (2007). *Hezbollah: A short history*. Princeton University Press.
- Oates, W. E. (1972). *Fiscal federalism*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Provost, R. (2018). FARC justice: Rebel rule of law. *UC Irvine Law Review*, 8(2), 227–273.
- Rodden, J. (2004). Comparative federalism and decentralization: On meaning and measurement. *Comparative Politics*, 36(4), 481–500. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4150172>
- Saab, B. Y., & Ranstorp, M. (2007). Securing Lebanon from the threat of Salafist jihadism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30(10), 825–855. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100701561236>
- Schneider, A. (2003). Decentralization: Conceptualization and measurement. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 38, 32–56.
- Schultze-Kraft, M., Valencia, O., & Alzate, D. (2016). Decentralisation, security consolidation and territorial peacebuilding: Is Colombia about to close the loop? *Third World Thematics*, 1(6), 837–856. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2016.1338922>
- Sharma, S. K., Mudgal, S. K., Gaur, R., Chaturvedi, J., Rulaniya, S., & Sharma, P. (2024). Navigating sample size estimation for qualitative research. *Journal of Medical Evidence*, 5(2), 133–139. https://doi.org/10.4103/jme.jme_59_24
- South, A. (2022). Towards “emergent federalism” in post-coup Myanmar. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 43(3), 439–460. <https://doi.org/10.1355/cs43-3a>
- Spadaro, A. (2022). From outlaws to judges: Armed groups and the administration of justice. *Journal of International Humanitarian Legal Studies*, 13, 362–377. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18781527-bja10052>
- Stokke, K., Kham, K. K. M., Nge, N. K. L., & Kvanvik, S. H. (2022). Illiberal peacebuilding in a hybrid regime: Authoritarian strategies for conflict containment in Myanmar. *Political Geography*, 93. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102551>
- Swe, Y. L. W., & Lim, S. (2019). Associations between the mixture of governance modes and the performance of local public service delivery. *Politics and Governance*, 7(4), 301–314. <https://doi.org/10.17645/PAG.V7I4.2218>
- Tuminez, A. S. (2007). This land is our land: Moro ancestral domain and its implications for peace and development in the Southern Philippines. *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, 27(2), 77–91. <https://doi.org/10.1353/SAIS.2007.0044>
- UNDP Myanmar. (2015). *Local governance mapping: The state of local governance-Trends in Myanmar*.
- Williams, B. (2017). *Excess of love: An oral history of the Kachin Independence Organization* (Bachelor’s thesis). As College.
- Young, D. S., & Casey, E. A. (2018). An examination of the sufficiency of small qualitative samples. *Social Work Research*, 43(1), 53–58. <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svy026>

Gender and Participation in Governance of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Karnataka

Narayana Billava ^{1*}  , Shiddalingaswami V. Hanagodimath ¹  

¹ Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research (CMDR), Dharwad, India

* Corresponding, © Authors

Article history:

Received: February 13, 2025

Revised: May 17, 2025

Accepted: June 4, 2025

Keywords:

Women Empowerment,
Political Leadership,
Social Inclusion,
Affirmative Action,
Decentralized Governance

Abstract

The inclusion of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions through constitutional enactments aimed to foster an environment of equality and social inclusion. As we approach 30 years since the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, which empowered women in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), it is essential to evaluate its impact. Karnataka pioneered this initiative by reserving 25% of Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayat seats for women in 1983, emphasizing gender-inclusive power distribution. This paper assesses whether this representation has led to effective and accountable participation across caste, religion, region, and class. Combining statistical data and qualitative insights, the study analyzes women's participation in decentralized governance and planning, highlighting both positive and negative aspects. This paper explores the theoretical framework of decentralization, which argues that it enhances governance quality and service delivery through broad participation, aiming to empower marginalized classes, including women. However, patriarchal norms, gender-related violence, household duties, and male bias often restrict women's public participation. Despite these challenges, elected women representatives (EWRs) have gained socio-economic and political empowerment, improved self-perception as leaders, and increased ambition. The study collected data from four Zilla Panchayats in Karnataka namely Kolar, Dakshina Kannada, Haveri, and Yadgir and covered 40 GPs selected based on Human Development Index (HDI) values. The analysis is structured around four key objectives: Elected Women Representatives' access to decision-making, political and financial autonomy, accountability to pre-election promises, and effectiveness in sustained planning and development. Preliminary findings reflect on elected women representatives' participation in grassroots political leadership, highlighting progress and ongoing challenges in achieving meaningful and impactful political empowerment for women in decentralized governance.

1. Introduction

The constitutional provisions for the inclusion of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) were envisioned to promote equality and strengthen social inclusion at the grassroots level. As India approaches three decades since the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, which mandated women's representation in local governance, it is an opportune moment to assess its outcomes. Notably, Karnataka was a frontrunner in this initiative, having introduced a 25% reservation for women in Zilla Parishads and Mandal Panchayats as early as 1983 well before the national mandate; demonstrating a progressive approach to gender-inclusive governance. Now, we must assess whether this representation has translated into effective and accountable participation across caste, religion, region, and class. Understanding this is vital for gauging the success of decentralization in Karnataka and beyond, ensuring women's political leadership is both meaningful and impactful.

This paper looks at and analyzes the preliminary findings obtained from the field ² – a combination of statistical data and qualitative insights that characterize the grass roots reality about women's participation in decentralized governance and planning – in both positive and negative forms. It attempts to present the tentative results/findings based on the parameters of the study ³ and the theoretical bases of decentralization.

Gender, Decentralization and Social Inclusion through Affirmative Action:

Development aims to foster an environment where diverse population groups participate in and benefit from its outcomes, particularly through equality and social inclusion. It creates structures ensuring all citizens, regardless of age,

sex, caste, religion, region, or class, can easily access critical resources for sustainable livelihoods. Including women in Panchayat Raj Institutions through Constitutional Enactment was a pivotal step toward their empowerment and development. True development, based on equality, liberty, and justice, is achieved by empowering marginalized women. Political empowerment of women is essential for their economic participation, asset ownership, education, and capacity building (Sivanna et al., 2012).

Historically, attention to women's needs was minimal until the late 20th century. Women's exclusion from mainstream economic activities, resource control, decision-making, and public participation, despite their significant contributions, was only recognized in the late 1970s (GoK, 2013). The women's liberation movement and studies by social scientists highlighted their low status and representation, leading to legislative and welfare initiatives addressing women's unique challenges (Gandhi and Shah, 1992; GoI, 1974).

Over 33 years, constitutional amendments regarding PRIs have significantly boosted political and social representation for lakhs of women, especially from vulnerable groups like Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Muslims, and Christians. These provisions have enabled women not only to become members but also to attain higher positions as heads of panchayats and various Standing Committees across all three tiers. Researchers, bureaucrats, and analysts have praised the law's effectiveness in enhancing women's representation in decentralized governance. However, concerns remain about their active participation. Many elected women representatives (EWRs) come from poor, rural backgrounds, are often illiterate, and are new to politics. Efforts by

¹ Issues regarding women's participation and related matters have been discussed in all other chapters from the standpoint of gender mainstreaming. This chapter presents the findings from field data, capturing Elected Women Representative's perceptions and difficulties encountered in the process of participation and devolution of their functions.

² Access to decision making; political and financial autonomy; accountability; and integrated area development planning framework and sustainability.

Abdul Nazir Sab State Institute for Rural Development (ANSSIRD), Mysuru, and various Non-Government Organizations, along with the Women's Liberation Movement, have focused on empowering EWRs through training and capacity building. Studies (Bharathy et al., 2010) show that positive discrimination in PRIs has improved women's socio-political status and social recognition, reducing centuries-long social exclusion through active political participation.

2. Theoretical Framework

Decentralization of planning and governance in developing societies is argued to enhance governance quality and service delivery through broad participation (Villadsen 1999; Cheema and Rondinelli 1983). In India, it is seen as a strategy to empower marginalized classes in political leadership (Aziz 1996; Mathew 1995). This inclusion aims to empower and improve women's overall situation. However, decentralization often clashes with traditional patriarchal norms that restrict women's public participation. Gender-related violence, household duties, feminization of poverty, poor literacy, and male bias hinder women's freedom of movement and role-play. Studies indicate that caste and patriarchy still silence women in public spaces (Bharathy et al., 2010; Baviskar, 2003). Women in public roles face political conspiracy and manipulation, raising doubts about whether constitutional remedies alone are enough for effective participation.

However, representation has brought benefits (Sivanna et al., 2012). EWRs have gained socio-economic and political empowerment, improved self-perception as leaders, and increased ambition. Mass media and technology have aided their empowerment, and their leadership is recognized by families and communities. Women in the electorate are increasingly interested in political activities, such as attending Gram Sabha meetings. The role of building the capacities of EWRs to take on leadership roles efficiently cannot be

underestimated here, however limited its impact has been in this regard. Now that the elected women representatives (EWRs) have been in 'power' due to their political leadership conferred from more than three decades through affirmative action in Karnataka (and elsewhere in the country), question arises as to their performance with reference to specific indicators. The analytical framework used for this chapter bases itself on the four objectives that the research project set before itself, which are as follows:

- How much of access do EWRs have to decision-making in PRIs?
- What is the status of EWRs' political and financial autonomy?
- How are the EWRs ensuring accountability towards their pre-election promises to their electorate? and
- How effective is their participation in matters of sustained planning and development?

With these four questions or parameters in view, this paper proceeds to reflect upon the findings of the study on 'Devolution and Performance Index for PRIs in Karnataka' to present our findings on EWRs' participation in grassroots political leadership through the Grama Panchayats.

This paper explains the Gender and Participation in Governance of PRIs in Karnataka. Four Zilla Panchayats from Karnataka were selected based on Human Development Index (HDI) value (2015). To cover all the developmental categories, under-developed districts were selected. They are Kolar, Dakshina Kannada, Haveri and Yadgir respectively. In the second stage, from each Zilla Panchayats, one low performing taluk and one high performing taluk were selected. Thus, two TPs from each Zilla Panchayats were selected based on Human Development Index value. In the third stage, 10 Grama Panchayats from each district or totally 40 Grama Panchayats were selected. Household data was collected from the selected Gram Panchayats through structured

questionnaires during the year 2020–21. This data is the basis for case studies analysis in this paper.

3. Result and Discussions

3.a. Participation in Capacity Building Programme

Table 1 shows that a large majority (97.5%) of the EWRs in the sampled area have attended one or the other training program organized for Gram Panchayat Members, by the government and NGOs. It is surprising that 4.3 % of women and 5.6 % of male members from the general category have not received any training. Not only

the need for training but 67.9 % are women members and 80.6 % of male members have expressed the need for an additional training, so as to be able to speak in the public. Notice that political participation is equally tough to both genders; and there seems to be no gender-based difference as far as this lacuna is concerned. The share of members representing different categories expressing the need for additional training, is as follows: 63 % were from Scheduled Castes, 50 % from Scheduled Tribes, 68.6 % from Other Backward Class (OBC) and 69.6 % were from the General category.

Table 1

Details of Attendance in Training to improve Participation and Speaking in Public Place

Gender	Training Programmes			Additional Training		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Men	94.4	5.6	100.0	80.6	19.4	100.0
Scheduled Castes Women	100.0	0.0	100.0	63.0	37.4	100.0
Scheduled Tribes Women	100.0	0.0	100.0	50.0	50.0	100.0
Other Backward Class Women	98.0	2.0	100.0	68.6	31.4	100.0
General Women	95.7	4.3	100.0	69.6	30.4	100.0
Total	97.5	2.5	100.0	67.9	32.1	100.0

Source: Field Data

3.b. Participation in Meetings of the GP

The table 2 shows that participation in the General Body meetings of the GP by its members is good, with high attendance rate. Impressively, the members from the SC and ST categories have shown 100 % attendance, followed by a high incidence of participation by those hailing from the OBC (96.1%) and General categories (91.3%). Absenteeism in meetings is not only by the women members; 5.6 % of male members have also stayed away from participation in GB Meetings. A total of 96.2 % of members have stated that they have participated in the meetings. Among them

we have all from the SC and ST categories, while participation from the remaining categories is varying between 91.3 % (General Category), 96.1 % (OBC) and 94.4 % (by Males). Table 2 also shows participation in Ward and Gram Sabha Meetings, put together, 86.8 % of GPMs (Grama Panchayat Members) participated in Ward and Gram Sabha Meetings. If we analyze category-wise, we find the highest participation by male members (94.4%), followed by those from the OBC (90.2%) and General categories (86.8%). There is comparatively low participation by members from SC (77.8%) and ST (77.3%) categories.

Table 2*Details of Participation of Members in General Body Meetings*

Gender	General Body Meetings			Ward and Gram Sabha Meetings		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Men	94.4	5.6	100.0	94.4	5.6	100.0
Scheduled Castes Women	100.0	0.0	100.0	77.8	22.2	100.0
Scheduled Tribes Women	100.0	0.0	100.0	77.3	22.7	100.0
Other Backward Class Women	96.1	3.9	100.0	90.2	9.8	100.0
General Women	91.3	8.7	100.0	87.0	13.0	100.0
Total	96.2	3.8	100.0	86.8	13.2	100.0

Source: Field Data

3.c. Constraints/Hurdles Faced in Taking People's Problems to the Ward & Grama Sabhas

Table 3 depicts a large number of GPMs (OBC (92%), ST and General (90.9%) categories)

have stated that they faced hurdles in taking/raising people's problems to/in the Ward and Grama Sabhas. There is not much difference across caste categories in this.

Table 3*Details of Taking Problems of the People to the Grama Sabha*

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Men	97.1	2.9	100.0
Scheduled Castes Women	84.6	15.4	100.0
Scheduled Tribes Women	90.9	9.1	100.0
Other Backward Class Women	92.0	8.0	100.0
General Women	90.9	9.1	100.0
Total	91.6	8.4	100.0

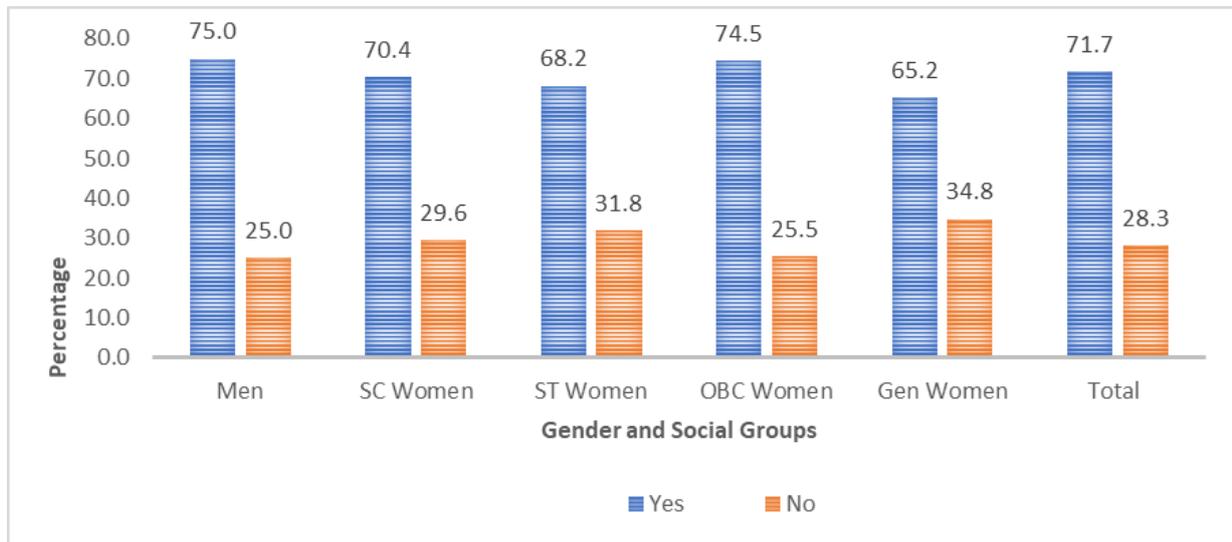
Source: Field Data

3.d. Inclusion of Suggestions from the Meetings in Plans for Implementation

What happened to the issues or plans raised/suggested by the respondent women members in the Ward and Gram Sabhas? Were they considered for acceptance and to pass resolutions? Figure 1 depicts about 72 % of total

respondents have experienced positive ending of their intervention, i. e., by way of being accepted for passing resolution. Women from the OBC category top the list with a high of nearly 75 %, followed by 70.4 % of women from SC, 68.2 % from ST and 65.2 % from General category whose interventions have resulted in positive results.

Figure 1
Inclusion of Suggestions from the Meetings in Plans for Implementation



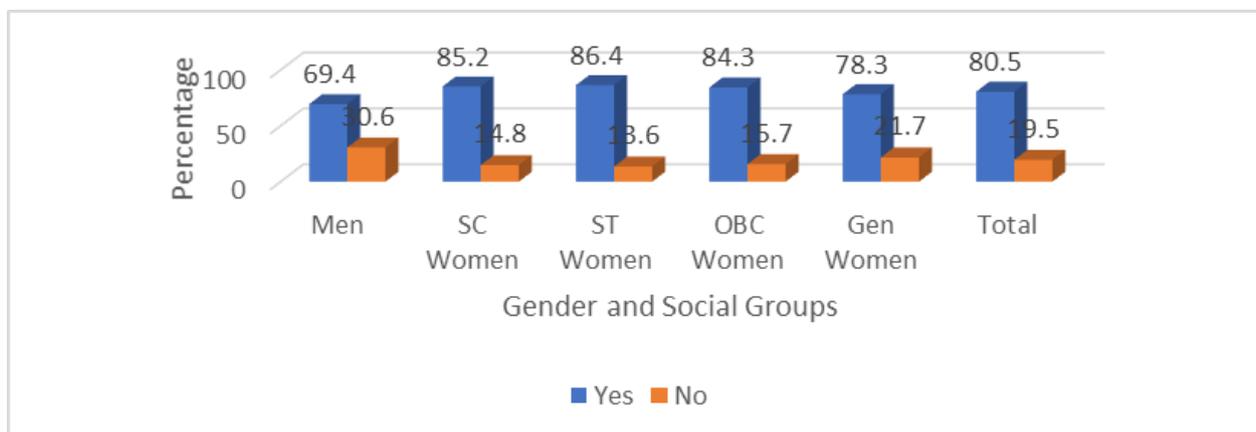
Source: Field Data

3.e Support by Fellow Members while speaking/ making a point in Meetings

An interesting issue here is to know if other women members present in the meetings offered encouragement or support to their counterparts when the EWRs tried to make a point or speak in the Ward and Gram Sabha meetings? 80.5 % of the EWRs have answered that they have received such support from other women, when they tried to talk in these meetings. But the responses in the negative, are significant, because they mirror the

continued challenges for participation by women in decentralized governance and planning. The table below gives the details: 14.8 % of SC, 13.6 % of ST and 15.7 % of women from the SC, ST and OBC categories have stated about not receiving support or encouragement towards their active participation in meetings of the Ward and the Grama Sabha, from their women counterparts. The same situation exists for women from the General category (21.7 %) and even for 30.6 % of male members (see figure 2).

Figure 2
Support/encouragement from fellow EWRs



Source: Field Data

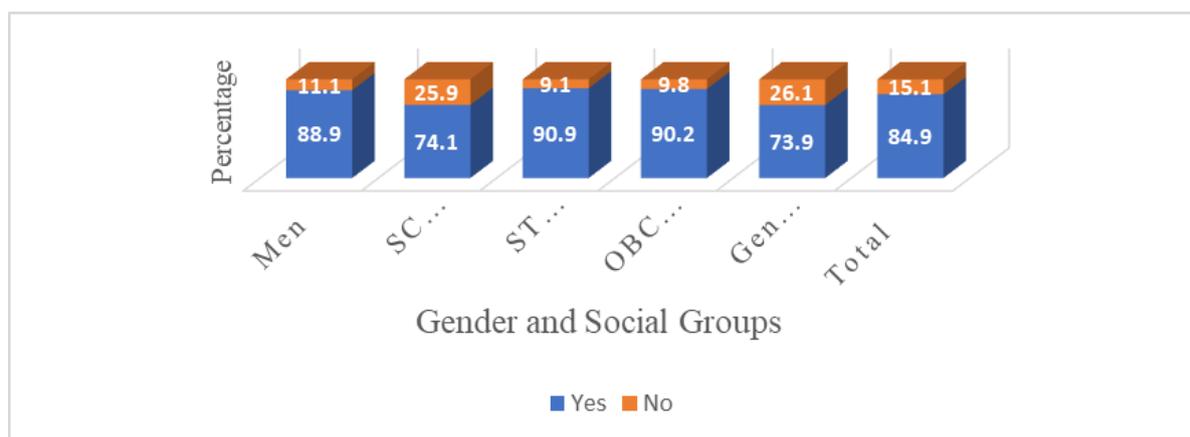
3.f. Speaking in Panchayat Meetings

When questioned whether the chairperson allowed the participation by EWRs wholeheartedly, again, the response in the affirmative is only

about 85 %. Majority of members from SC (74%) and ST (91%) categories agreed to have been allowed wholeheartedly by the chairperson to speak in meetings (refer to figure 3).

Figure 3

Allowed to Speak in the Panchayat Meetings



Source: Field Data

3.g Faced Obstructions/ Snubbing/ Degradation by Male ERs in Meetings

Although more than 90 % have stated that there were no obstructions placed during the time when they were talking in the meetings, by way of snubbing etc., we have to take note of those members who have experienced such behaviour during their participation in Ward and

Gram Sabha meetings. About 15 % from SC category have faced such a negative reaction to their talking in these meetings. However, when we find that nearly 12 % of members from OBC category, 4.5 % from ST and even from General category (8.7%) have similar experiences, this has to be analyzed more as a gender rather than caste-based issue (see table 4).

Table 4

Obstructed/Snubbed/Degraded by Male ERs

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Men	5.6	94.4	100.0
Scheduled Castes Women	14.8	85.2	100.0
Scheduled Tribes Women	4.5	95.5	100.0
Other Backward Class Women	11.8	88.2	100.0
General Women	8.7	91.3	100.0
Total	9.4	90.6	100.0

Source: Field Data

3.h. Socio-Economic Backwardness influencing Lack of Encouragement to participate in Meetings

Table 5 shows that, more than 18 % of them have opined that the continued social and economic backwardness is the cause of lack of encouragement for them to take part in meetings. Such a situation is truer not only of women from SC category (37%) but 26.1 % of women from the General category have also faced discouragement, owing to their economic backwardness. 22.7 % of those from ST and 15.7 % of the women from OBC categories have similar constraints. While ordinary male members do not obstruct women's participation in meetings (93.1%), influential

males do obstruct according to 29 % of total respondents (among whom we find 11.1 % of male members – meaning males obstructing other male members' participation. Participation is not taken seriously that is when the women members try to raise any question or even to talk in the meetings. 24.5 % of the total sample members have felt so. When we look into their social background, we find that nearly 30 % are SC members, 18.2 % are ST members and 21.6 % OBC members. The situation has not excluded those from the General category (24.5%) and Male members (33.3%).

Table 5

Poor Socio-Economic Status and Encouragement for Participation

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Men	0.0	100.0	100.0
Scheduled Castes Women	37.0	63.0	100.0
Scheduled Tribes Women	22.7	77.3	100.0
Other Backward Class Women	15.7	84.3	100.0
General Women	26.1	73.9	100.0
Total	18.2	81.8	100.0

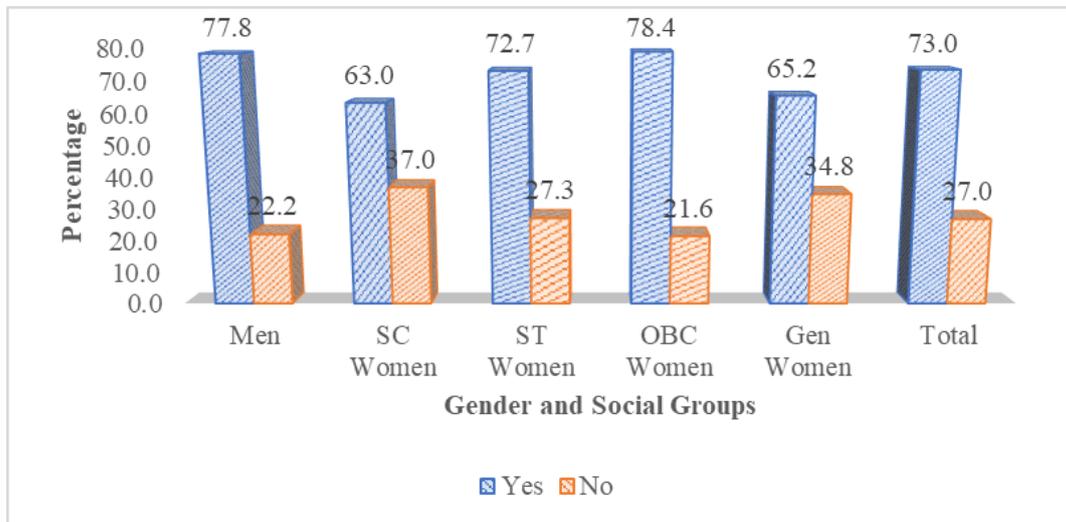
Source: Field Data

3.i. Consideration of Suggestions for Passing Resolutions

Despite their active participation in Ward Sabha, Grama Sabha and Panchayat meetings, it is sad to note that the suggestions for improvement of people's socio-economic conditions, by way of plans have failed to be considered while passing resolutions by the GPs. This is true of 27 % of the total sample (see figure 4). Highest rejection is

faced by EWRs from SC (37%) and General (34.8%) categories. This suggests that more than caste influencing such a denial, it is their gender that has weakened their ability to see that their suggestions are respected for planning. However, when we see that 22.2 % of Elected Male Representatives (EMRs) are also in similar situation, then it is a combination of caste, gender and political party related factors that have influenced it.

Figure 4
 Consideration of Suggestions while Passing Resolutions



Source: Field Data

3.j. Nervousness to Speak in Meetings

The paper shows that despite three factors, viz., being elected to the PRIs from nearly three decades, capacity building to strengthen their participation and socio-economic and legal opportunities to participate freely in local administration as leaders, there is still a lingering nervousness among the women members to raise questions in Ward and Grama Sabha meetings.

Table 6 explains, it is not a progressive sign to find 34.6 % of the total number of respondents to find that they felt nervous to raise questions in these meetings. Among them there are nearly 14 % of male members also. Such a fear or tendency is surprisingly high even among the OBCs (49%), and expectedly among the SC (37%) and ST (22.7%) categories.

Table 6
 Nervousness to Talk or Raise Questions

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Men	13.9	86.1	100.0
Scheduled Castes Women	37.0	63.0	100.0
Scheduled Tribes Women	22.7	77.3	100.0
Other Backward Class Women	49.0	51.0	100.0
General Women	43.5	56.5	100.0
Total	34.6	65.4	100.0

Source: Field Data

3.1. EWRs Speaking in Meetings Presided over by EMRs

There seems to be no barrier to women’s participation to speak in the meetings even when they are presided over by men. Only less than 15 %

of total respondents have felt so. Of them 22.2 % are from the SC category, 17.6 % of OBC (17.6 %) and 13 % from General categories (refer to the table 7).

Table 7
Women Members Given Chance to Speak in Meetings Presided Over by Men

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Men	8.3	91.7	100.0
Scheduled Castes Women	22.2	77.8	100.0
Scheduled Tribes Women	9.1	90.9	100.0
Other Backward Class Women	17.6	82.4	100.0
General Women	13.0	87.0	100.0
Total	14.5	85.5	100.0

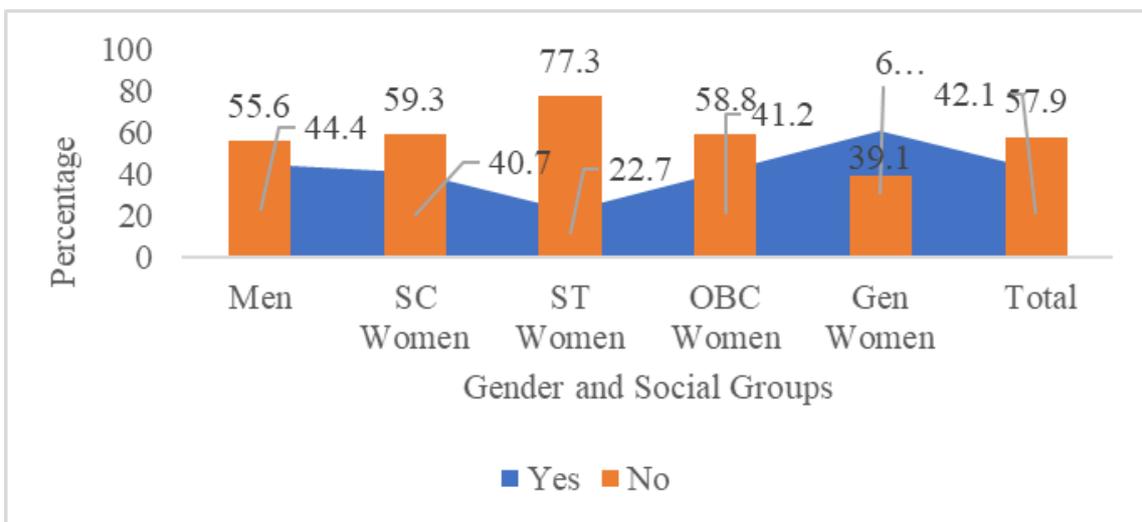
Source: Field Data

3.m. Woman Chairperson Facilitating EWRs Participation in Meetings

Regardless of whether they are EWRs or EMRs, figure 5 depicts that about 42 % of all members in the paper have felt that the presence of a woman as the chairperson of meetings would

facilitate better and easy participation for women members. Women from general category are the largest group to express this opinion (60.9%); followed by 41.2 % from OBC and 22.7 % of ST EWRs. Interestingly, 44.4 % of male members do have consensus on this point.

Figure 5
Better Choice to Speak in Meetings Presided by Women



Source: Field Data

3.n. Low Social Status of Adhyaksha Causing Inability to Manage, Lack of Chance to Speak by EWRs

The table 8 shows that the low social status of the Adhyakshais not the cause for failure to obtain a chance to speak in the meetings. More

than 90 % of the total respondents have negated the statement. 9.4 % (the SC EWRs being the largest with 18.5% followed by 11.8% of OBC EWRs) have opined that low status of Adhyaksha does matter in allowing women members to speak because of her/his inability to manage meetings.

Table 8
Adhyaksha's Low Social Status and Managing Meetings

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Men	2.8	97.2	100.0
Scheduled Castes Women	18.5	81.5	100.0
Scheduled Tribes Women	4.5	95.5	100.0
Other Backward Class Women	11.8	88.2	100.0
General Women	8.7	91.3	100.0
Total	9.4	90.6	100.0

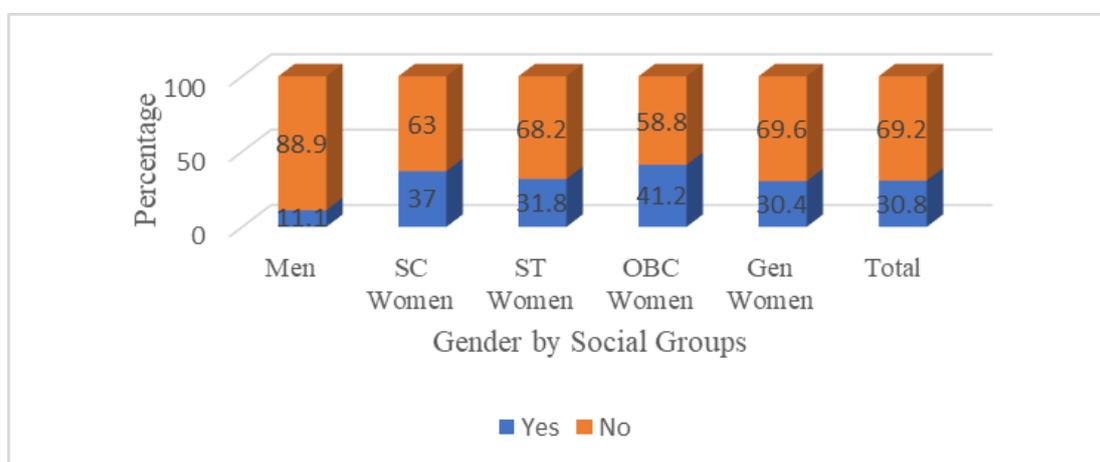
Source: Field Data

3.o. Forbidden from Participation in Meetings due to Dearth of Knowledge about Government Schemes

One cannot attribute 30 % of respondents blaming lack of information about government programs, because nearly 70 % of respondents have expressed that for them, there is no dearth of information about the various government schemes. Hence, there is no such thing as absence

of knowledge leading to poor participation in meetings. Despite transparency in the decentralized system, and the wide publicity given about schemes, 37 % of EWRs who are from SCs, 41.2 % from OBC category and 30.4 % and 31.8 % of women respectively from General and ST categories, are finding it difficult to participate in meetings, due to paucity of sufficient information about government schemes.

Figure 6
Participation and Lack of Information



Source: Field Data

4. Participation in Women Related Priority Areas and Development of the Village

4.a. Important Factors for Village Development

Studies carried out in the past have stated that EWRs generally prefer to attend to developmental works close to women's well-being and strategic needs like basic amenities - sanitation, drinking water, fuel, etc. It is true of our study also. However, interesting it is to find that even while doing so, EWRs can be classified based on their own backwardness choosing a certain element in these development works. Their choices are related to benefits that they are also deprived of. For example, women members from the SC category have stated that their choice in taking up development works are basic services such as providing toilets, drinking water and housing, which they themselves are lacking (see table 9). In addition to these, the EWRs from ST group worked (as their

first priority), for making provision for education (9.3%), drinking water (9.1%), employment (8.6%), hygiene (5.9%) and so on. Women from the OBCs have preferred attention towards housing (40 %), health avenues (37.3%), drinking water (33.3%), employment (32.8%) and so on. For women from the General category, providing housing to the needy is of utmost importance (18.3%) followed by drinking water (16.7%), health (16.4%), education (14%) and so on. Male members have worked for providing jobs as they thought it was very important (32.8%), but hygiene (31.4%) and health services (31.3%), education (29.1%) is not less important. What is interesting to note is the link between socio-economic background of the respective category and the choices they have made in choosing the most important things for the development of the village.

Table 9
Priority Areas and Development of the Village

Gender	Men	SC Women	ST Women	OBC Women	Gen Women	Group Total
Education	29.1	15.1	9.3	32.6	14.0	100.0
Health	31.3	10.4	4.5	37.3	16.4	100.0
Drinking Water	21.2	19.7	9.1	33.3	16.7	100.0
Hygiene	31.4	19.6	5.9	29.4	13.7	100.0
House	18.3	18.3	5.0	40.0	18.3	100.0
Job	32.8	13.8	8.6	32.8	12.1	100.0
Others	25.0	25.0	0.0	25.0	25.0	100.0

Source: Field Data

4.b. Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is an important duty of the decentralized bodies, especially at the grassroots level, to ensure peaceful participation of people across all sections and conducting grama sabhas meeting and ward sabhas meeting, selection of beneficiaries, implement development programmes and so on. Against this aspect, we find that nearly

85 % of all members (male and female and across categories) have stated about their involvement in handling conflict in their respective constituencies. However, among those who have not involved themselves, we have EWRs from STs (27.3%) followed by males (19.4%), women from General and SC categories (13% and 11.1% respectively).

Table 10
Handling Public Conflicts in the Ward

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Men	80.6	19.4	100.0
Scheduled Castes Women	88.9	11.1	100.0
Scheduled Tribes Women	72.7	27.3	100.0
Other Backward Class Women	90.2	9.8	100.0
General Women	87.0	13.0	100.0
Total	84.9	15.1	100.0

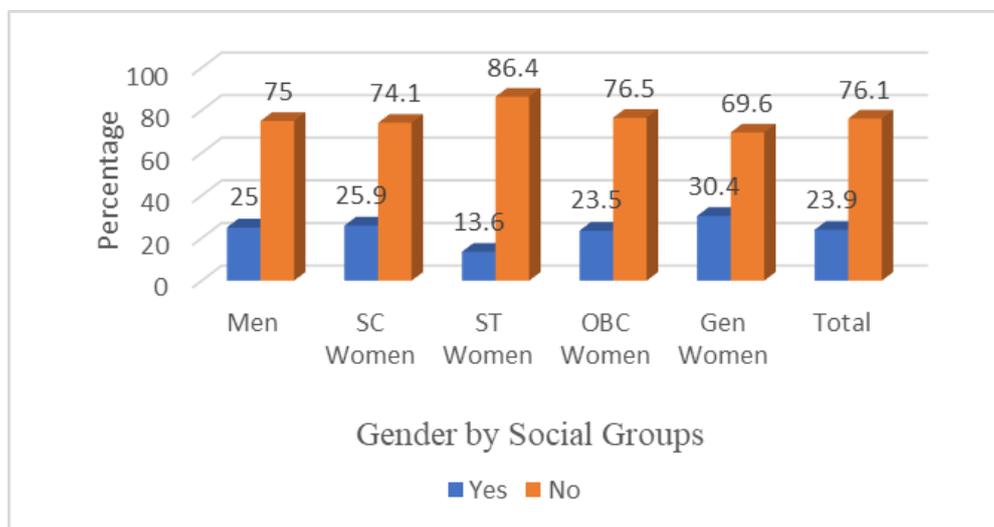
Source: Field Data

4.c. Informal Meetings to Solve People’s Problems

It is a known issue that decentralization has provided certain status and roles to the EWRs and EMRs to solve people’s problems. The respondents were questioned whether they conducted meetings beyond the regular and formal, official meetings to address the people’s problems? The answers

have been largely in the negative (76.1%). It is the elected women representatives from the General category who had organized informal meetings with the people, (30.4%) and those from the ST category form the highest number not to have done so (86.4%) followed by OBC and SC women (76.5% and 74.1% respectively).

Figure 7
Conducting Informal Meetings to Solve People’s Problems



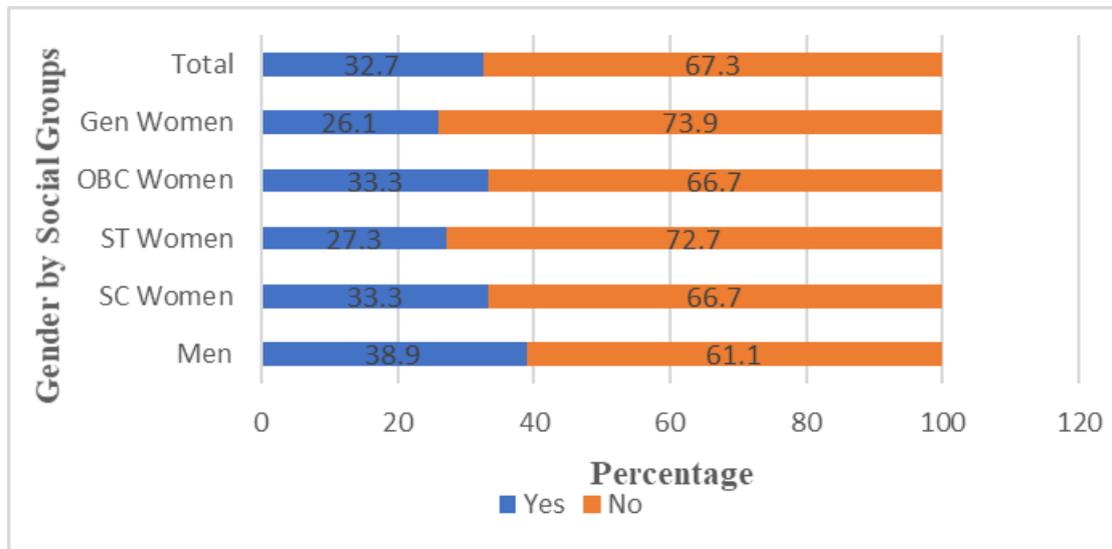
Source: Field Data

4.d. Efforts to Address Problems of Women and Children

Although it is held by a few studies that EWRs are leaders addressing problems of only women and children in their constituency, it is disproved when we find that, across various categories, (more so by EWRs from SC and ST groups) negating the statement (67.3%) (see

figure 8). The largest number having declined any such ‘women and children only attention’ are the EWRs from the General category (73.9%). However, 38.9 %of EMRs believed that the women members generally attend to solving the problems of women and children in their constituency are the male elected members (38.9%).

Figure 8
Addressing of Problems of Women and Children



Source: Field Data

4.e. Information Flow

There seems to be no problem about receiving information about the general body meeting as evidenced in the table 11 that shows more than 80 % of total respondents happy about receipt of

such information. What is worrisome is the lack of or failure to obtaining meeting notice for 18.9 %, the highest among them being women from general (26.1%), OBC (23.5%) and ST (22.7%) categories.

Table 11
Information Flow

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Men	88.9	11.1	100.0
Scheduled Castes Women	88.9	11.1	100.0
Scheduled Tribes Women	77.3	22.7	100.0
Other Backward Class Women	76.5	23.5	100.0
General Women	73.9	26.0	100.0
Total	81.1	18.8	100.0

Source: Field Data

5. Concluding Remarks

The presence of a large number of women in decentralized governance through Panchayat Raj institutions, empowered by the 73rd constitutional amendment in 1993, has significantly advanced women’s political participation. Despite the persistent barriers of patriarchy and a male-dominated political system, reserved seats have enabled women to transition from voters to active

political participants. However, they face challenges such as lack of knowledge about government schemes, administrative processes, literacy, prior political experience, patriarchal restrictions, and economic poverty. These difficulties often necessitate the accompaniment of male relatives, earning them the term 'sarpanchpathi'/ husband of the women president. Additionally, traditional panchayats pose challenges for both women and vulnerable men.

Household responsibilities, domestic chores, and the need to earn a livelihood further hinder their political effectiveness. Despite these obstacles, grassroots support from women's organizations, NGOs, and government initiatives have empowered elected women representatives. Violence in political participation, proxy governance, and tokenism remain significant issues, but many EWRs now participate independently and effectively. Progressive measures like Mahila Sabhas have enhanced their leadership skills and enabled them to address issues such as domestic violence, female foeticide, and education. Over the decades, there has been notable progress in the economic and political participation of women, leading to substantial social development.

6. Acknowledgement

This paper is based on the research study titled "Devolution and Performance Index for Panchayat Raj Institutions in Karnataka," conducted by the Centre for Multi-disciplinary Development Research (CMDR), Dharwad. The study was funded by the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) Department of the Government of Karnataka and the Decentralized Planning and Development Committee, Karnataka State. We extend our special thanks to the RDPR for their financial support, and to the research team and advisory committee members for their invaluable contributions. However, the usual disclaimer applies.

References

- Aziz, A., & Arnold, D. (1996). *Decentralised governance in Asian countries*. SAGE Publications.
- Baviskar, B. S. (2003, October). *Impact of women's participation in local governance in rural India*. Institute of Social Sciences.
- Bharathy, M., Sivanna, N., & Gayathri Devi, K. G. (2010). *With and against: Engendering rural local governance in Karnataka* (Report submitted to Agaaz Foundation). Tata Institute of Social Sciences & Institute for Social and Economic Change.
- Cheema, G. S., & Rondinelli, D. A. (Eds.). (1983). *Decentralisation and development: Policy implementation in developing countries*. SAGE Publications.
- Gandhi, N., & Shah, N. (1992). *The issues at stake: Theory and practice in the contemporary women's movement in India*. Kali for Women.
- Government of India. (1974). *Towards equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India*. Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare.
- Government of Karnataka. (2013). *A monograph on status of women in Karnataka* (Prepared by Institute for Social and Economic Change for the Department of Planning, Government of Karnataka).
- Mathew, G. (Ed.). (1995). *Status of Panchayati Raj in the states of India*. Concept Publishing.
- Sivanna, N., Bharathy, M., & Gayathridevi, K. G. (2009). *Engendering local governance: A case from rural Karnataka* (Social and Economic Change Monograph Series No. 49). Institute for Social and Economic Change.
- Villadsen, S. (1999). *Good governance and decentralization: Public sector reforms in developing countries*.

The Development of curriculum on South Korean Foreign Policy Studies: Analysis of Outsiders and Insiders Perspectives on Korean Studies

Narut Charoensri ^{1*}   , Wannapa Leerasiri ¹  

¹ Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration, Chiang Mai University , Thailand

* Corresponding Author, © Authors

Article history:

Received: February 13, 2025

Revised: March 3, 2025

Accepted: April 10, 2025

Keywords:

South Korean Foreign Policy,
Teaching and Learning,
Knowledge Status, International
Relations, Area Studies

Abstract

This article aims to assess the current status of South Korean foreign policy studies in undergraduate political science curricula, particularly in International Relations programs, and to analyze the perspectives of “insiders” (South Korean scholars) and “outsiders” (Thai or foreign scholars specializing in Korean Studies) regarding the key topics that should be incorporated into South Korea’s foreign policy courses. The objective is to contribute to the development of elective courses on South Korean foreign policy within the International Relations program under the Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration at Chiang Mai University. The central argument of this study posits that the development of knowledge on South Korea’s foreign policy should encompass three fundamental dimensions: (1) historical perspectives, (2) political institutions and interest groups, and (3) contemporary issues. These components are essential for understanding the internal transformations of South Korea, including its historical interactions with neighboring countries, relations with major powers, and shifts in the international system that influence South Korea’s strategic positioning within global political and economic structures. From a theoretical standpoint, the study of South Korean foreign policy should be approached through the lens of three major International Relations theories: structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and social constructivism. This theoretical framework enables a dual analysis of South Korea’s national interests—both from an empirical perspective, focusing on tangible geopolitical and economic factors, and from a constructivist perspective, emphasizing the role of evolving values, beliefs, and ideas shaped by South Korea’s unique sociopolitical context.

1. Introduction

When comparing the level of development in political science and South Korean foreign policy studies within the field of International Relations in Thai political science faculties, it becomes evident that these studies are significantly less developed than those on China and Japan. However, in the broader context of international relations, scholars generally recognize South Korea as a key actor, particularly within the Asia-Pacific region. Despite this, the volume of academic work on South Korea in relation to Southeast Asia remains limited, and studies on South Korea's engagement with the Mekong subregion are even scarcer.

This academic gap raises several questions: Does South Korea lack a distinct policy or strategic position regarding the Mekong subregion? In contrast, major powers such as the United States, Japan, and China have clearly articulated foreign policies toward the Mekong region. These countries have initiated regional cooperation frameworks with specific objectives aimed at engaging the Mekong subregion in various sectors, including development, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, human resource development, cybersecurity, energy, and fisheries, among others. South Korea, on the other hand, has established a formal cooperation framework, the Mekong–Republic of Korea Cooperation (MROKC). However, it has not effectively leveraged this platform to assert a leading role in the Mekong subregion.

Another aspect that warrants examination is the characteristics of South Korea's foreign policy. Unlike Japan, whose "Quiet Diplomacy" (Halpern, 1973) has been widely recognized as a defining feature, South Korea's foreign policy does not possess a distinct characteristic that differentiates it in strategic or economic terms. Instead, South Korea's international engagement is often viewed as relatively inconspicuous in both security strategy and economic diplomacy.

Conversely, a considerable body of research on South Korea focuses on its creative economy (Kim T., 2017), linking it to political development, soft power, and the use of economic policy to integrate South Korea into the global economic and political landscape (Kim et al., 2016). The country's rapid economic advancement, particularly in industries such as consumer electronics, automotive, mobile technology, entertainment (K-pop, television, and film), and cosmetics, has attracted global attention. As a latecomer to the global economy, South Korea's rapid economic growth, political evolution, and democratic consolidation have become focal points for academic inquiry worldwide.

2. The State of South Korean Foreign Policy Studies in Thailand

In Thailand, research on South Korean foreign policy and its bilateral and multilateral relations remains relatively underdeveloped, both in terms of quantity and thematic diversity. Studies within the International Relations discipline that focus on Thailand-South Korea relations are limited to specific areas, such as economic relations (Chanin Meephokee, 2000; Supitchaya Lee et al., 2024), political and security relations (Damrong Thandee, 1987; Chutidet Metheechutikul, 2024), the Korean War (Lertlit Chongwarin & Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs, 2010), the North Korea-South Korea conflict (Wichian Intasi, 2021), and the impact of illegal Thai migration to South Korea (Nimmontra Srisane, 2019; Thanu Paiasa et al., 2022). Additionally, academic works on South Korea in general remain scarce (Orapan Chantaow, 2022).

Despite this gap, South Korean Studies in Thailand has grown significantly in recent years. For example, the Master's Program in Korean Studies at Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Arts and the Bachelor's Program in Korean Studies at Thammasat University's Faculty of Liberal Arts have been introduced. Additionally, more

Thai universities now offer Korean language programs, reflecting the increasing demand for Korean proficiency in the business sector. This trend highlights the economic demand for Korean language skills in Thailand. However, proficiency in Korean alone is insufficient for trade, investment, and international business; comprehensive knowledge of South Korea's politics, foreign policy, and socio-political context is equally essential. International trade negotiations require an understanding of Korea's historical background, policy objectives, strategic positioning, and key interest groups.

Another area requiring deeper political knowledge is official development assistance (ODA) from South Korea to other countries, including Thailand. Understanding the political motivations behind South Korea's ODA and its future trajectory necessitates a broader analysis of South Korea's foreign policy, regional strategies, and diplomatic engagements. While South Korea's economic influence in Thailand has grown through business investments and trade partnerships, the academic study of its foreign relations remains disproportionately limited.

Given these circumstances, the research team, composed of scholars specializing in International Relations, recognizes the necessity of expanding knowledge on South Korea's foreign policy to provide a deeper understanding within Thai academia. The significance of this knowledge is particularly relevant in the context of Chiang Mai, which ranks as Thailand's second-largest city after Bangkok. Chiang Mai has a substantial South Korean expatriate community. According to the Chiang Mai Chamber of Commerce, in 2019, over 3,500 South Koreans resided in the province (Prachachat Business, 2019), many of whom are retirees. Furthermore, South Korean business investments in northern Thailand have been increasing. By 2025, it is projected that South Korean tourists will outnumber visitors from other nationalities in Chiang Mai (Kasemsuk, 2025).

These demographic and economic shifts highlight the growing importance of understanding South Korea from a political and international relations perspective. This knowledge is crucial for government agencies involved in international relations, local governance, security, and trade and investment. Expanding South Korean Studies beyond language training to include foreign policy and political analysis would enhance Thailand's ability to engage more effectively with South Korea on multiple levels.

This article is part of the research project "Workshops to Develop an Elective Course on 'Korea's Foreign Relations in the Asia-Pacific' at Chiang Mai University," funded by The Academy of Korea Studies. The project's objective is to examine and develop a syllabus for teaching South Korea's foreign policy within the Asia-Pacific region and its relevance to Thailand. We believe that advancing knowledge on South Korea's political system and international relations requires discussions and interviews with scholars in political science, international relations, international business, and international law, as well as officials who have engaged with South Korean counterparts. The goal is to synthesize these perspectives into a structured curriculum that effectively captures the essential knowledge needed to understand South Korea.

The research methodology consists of documentary research, in-depth interviews, and workshops involving personnel from the Embassy of South Korea in Thailand, Thai scholars, and government officials. These sessions took place between August and October 2024 in both Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Thai scholars participating in the study were from Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University, Mahidol University, and Bangkok University. In South Korea, interviews were conducted with scholars from Ewha Womans University, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University. The insights gained from these

interviews were analyzed alongside documentary research to identify key topics relevant to teaching South Korean foreign policy in Thai universities.

The documents analyzed include syllabi from South Korean foreign policy courses in Thai political science faculties, along with a survey of key topics taught in these courses. Additionally, recommendations for structuring South Korean foreign policy courses were developed based on academic studies and an analysis of South Korea's evolving relations with Thailand and Southeast Asia. It is important to note that this study focuses on course content rather than teaching methodologies (pedagogy). While some interviewees provided insights into teaching methods, the primary objective of the research was to identify key subject areas for course development.

The study's central argument is that the development of South Korean foreign policy studies should incorporate three fundamental dimensions: historical perspectives, political institutions and interest groups, and contemporary issues. These components provide a comprehensive understanding of South Korea's domestic transformations, historical experiences with neighboring countries, relations with major powers, and responses to shifts in the international system that influence its political and economic positioning.

From a theoretical perspective, the study of South Korea's foreign policy should be examined through three major International Relations theories: structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and social constructivism. This approach enables a dual analysis of South Korea's national interests from both an empirical perspective, focusing on tangible geopolitical and economic factors, and a constructivist perspective, emphasizing evolving values, beliefs, and ideas shaped by South Korea's unique socio-political context. The three theoretical frameworks were selected as the primary analytical lenses for this study as they each offer distinct perspectives on South Korea's transformation. Structural realism provides insights into changes

within the international order, shifts in polarity, national interests, and the foreign policy challenges that South Korea faces. In contrast, neoliberal institutionalism highlights the role of international organizations and the cooperative arrangements in which South Korea participates. Meanwhile, social constructivism offers a perspective centred on the construction of interests and the significance of ideas and identities. Students undertaking this course will gain a comprehensive understanding of these three major theories of international relations, which collectively serve as essential tools for analysing South Korea's foreign policy. While other theoretical approaches—such as the English School or Marxism—may also provide valuable insights into South Korean foreign policy, these three have been chosen to serve as an initial framework. This selection is intended to enable students to grasp the broader context of South Korea's foreign relations and to develop informed policy recommendations based on theoretical analysis.

The remainder of this article is structured into four main sections: (1) the status of South Korean foreign policy studies in Thai political science faculties, (2) key issues and theoretical approaches to understanding South Korea's foreign policy, (3) the development of South Korean foreign policy course, and (4) recommendations. The final section presents the conclusion of the study.

3. The Status of South Korea's Foreign Policy in Thailand

To understand the academic status of knowledge on South Korea's foreign policy within political science curricula in Thailand, the researchers conducted a survey of Bachelor's degree programs in Political Science, specifically in the fields of International Relations or International Affairs. The objective was to assess the extent to which Korean Studies are incorporated into these programs and to evaluate the current status

of South Korean foreign policy studies in Thai academia.

The findings from this survey highlight the presence—or absence—of courses related to South Korea's political system, governance, and foreign policy within Thai political science programs. A comparative analysis was conducted to determine whether South Korea is studied as a

distinct academic subject or if its political and international dynamics are only addressed within broader Asian or comparative politics courses.

The table below presents a comparative overview of courses related to South Korea's political system, governance, and foreign policy across various political science faculties in Thailand.

Table 1

A Comparative Overview of Courses on South Korea's Political System, Governance, and Foreign Policy

University	South Korean Politics and Governance	Politics in Korea	South Korean Foreign Policy	East Asian Studies
Chulalongkorn University	X	X	X	O
Thammasat University	X	X	X	O
Chiang Mai University	X	X	X	O
Ramkhamhaeng University	Politics	X	X	O
Srinakharinwirot University (SWU)	X	X	X	O
Kasetsart University	X	X	X	O
Prince of Songkla University (Pattani Campus)	X	X	X	O
Ubon Ratchathani University	X	X	X	O

Notes:

- X indicates that the course is not offered.
- O indicates that the course is available.
- The data is based on university curricula, using the latest updates available. Course descriptions were considered, but full syllabi were not examined in this study.

A comparative survey of political science curricula across various Thai universities indicates that the development of South Korean foreign policy studies remains underdeveloped within the field of International Relations. In particular, when compared to courses covering the politics and foreign policies of major global powers such as the United States, China, Japan, or the European Union, the academic focus on South Korea is notably limited.

Some programs may include courses on the foreign policies of other East Asian countries, but topics specifically related to South Korea are often subsumed within broader East Asian Studies courses. These courses typically address South

Korea in relation to geopolitical, political economy, or international conflict frameworks rather than as a standalone subject.

One key exception is universities that offer dedicated Korean Studies programs, distinct from Korean language programs. These Korean Studies programs emphasize South Korea's societal and cultural dimensions, integrating multiple perspectives. However, even within these programs, courses specifically on South Korean governance or foreign policy are largely absent. The only universities with dedicated Korean Studies programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels are Thammasat University (Bachelor's program) and Chulalongkorn University

(Master's program), neither of which includes specific courses on South Korean governance or foreign policy.

To further assess the academic availability of South Korean foreign policy studies in Thailand, a search was conducted across major university libraries, including the Chulalongkorn University

Library, Thammasat University Library, Chiang Mai University Library, and Ramkhamhaeng University Central Library. Using the Thai keyword "นโยบายต่างประเทศเกาหลี" (South Korean foreign policy), the search yielded the following results:

Table 2

Number of Academic Resources on South Korea in Major Thai University Libraries

University	Books	Theses
Chulalongkorn University	6	1
Thammasat University	7	1
Chiang Mai University	10	0
Ramkhamhaeng University	1	1

(Note: Data collected on October 23, 2024)

From this library survey, it is evident that academic resources on South Korea's foreign policy are extremely limited in Thai universities. Even at universities with dedicated Korean Studies programs—such as Chulalongkorn and Thammasat—there is a shortage of literature specifically addressing South Korea's foreign policy.

Additionally, there is a lack of diversity in the available literature. The few studies on South Korean foreign relations in Thailand tend to focus on specific areas, such as North-South Korea relations or nuclear issues, rather than providing a broad, policy-focused perspective. Scholars specializing in Korean politics and foreign policy in Thailand are also limited. Notable figures include Wichian Intasi (deceased), formerly at Naresuan University, who conducted research on North-South Korea nuclear relations, and Damrong Thandee at Ramkhamhaeng University, who has published on South Korean politics. Among newer scholars, Seksan Anantasirikiet, a senior researcher at the International Studies Center (ISC), a think tank under Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is one of the key

academics promoting South Korean foreign policy studies in Thailand.

The researchers acknowledge that analyzing academic availability through library searches and database queries has certain limitations. Academic documents are cataloged based on keywords assigned by authors. If a study on South Korean foreign policy does not explicitly label itself as such, it may not appear in search results, despite its relevance. However, this also suggests a broader issue—that authors may not see South Korean foreign policy as a primary academic focus.

The lack of dedicated courses in major Thai universities and the limited availability of diverse academic resources reflect a knowledge gap that presents an opportunity for further development. Expanding South Korean foreign policy studies within the field of International Relations would provide a more comprehensive understanding of South Korea's role in global affairs. By incorporating South Korea as a distinct case study in Thai academic curricula, universities could contribute to a broader and more nuanced discourse on East Asian international relations.

This knowledge gap presents a strong opportunity for developing specialized courses on South Korea's foreign policy. Such courses could explore key areas, including South Korea's geopolitical strategies, economic diplomacy, multilateral engagements, and security policies. The flexibility in interpreting and structuring these courses offers room for innovation in academic programs, ensuring that South Korean foreign policy is better represented in Thai political science and international relations studies.

4. Key Issues and Theoretical Approaches to Understanding South Korea's Foreign Policy

We conducted workshops and in-depth interviews with scholars from various institutions in both Thailand and South Korea. These discussions revealed significant perspectives on the development of South Korean foreign policy studies. Similar to the study of foreign policy in other countries, a fundamental starting point for understanding South Korea is the identification of key issues, which include:

1. Relevant theories and conceptual frameworks
2. Resource limitations
3. Policy relevance and regional significance
4. Key research topics
5. Changes in the international geopolitical environment

Each of these aspects is explored in detail below.

4.1 Theories and Conceptual Frameworks

In the study of politics and foreign policy, any country's policies are often analyzed through theoretical frameworks that serve as entry points for understanding. These frameworks influence how scholars approach a subject, requiring them to reflect on whether they agree with, challenge, or wish to extend existing theories. Established theories help provide initial perspectives that

scholars can debate, refine, or even replace when necessary due to shifting international contexts.

This theoretical consideration is central to academic debates between area studies scholars and international relations theorists. One key methodological debate concerns the role of language as a tool for understanding a region. Scholars in area studies argue that language proficiency is crucial for gaining deep insights, as it affects research methodologies such as data collection, interviews, phenomenological analysis, and participatory observation. Meanwhile, international relations scholars often emphasize broad theoretical models that allow for generalized explanations of regional characteristics.

Different theoretical lenses also shape the interpretation of South Korea's national interests and diplomatic strategies. For example, using structural realism as the primary explanatory approach highlights how the global order after World War II influenced South Korea's interactions with major powers and its strategic decisions. In contrast, applying social constructivism would focus on how South Korea's definition of national interests has evolved over time, influenced by historical narratives, identity formation, and changing societal values. The choice of theory thus significantly affects how South Korean foreign policy is understood.

4.2 Resource Limitations

Resource availability presents a significant challenge in the study of foreign policy and area studies. In Thailand, there is a limited number of books and online resources on South Korean foreign policy available in Thai. Moreover, some of the existing materials face academic reliability issues, as they may lack proper citations, peer review, or methodological rigor.

Participants in the workshops agreed that knowledge about South Korea—whether in politics, economics, or foreign policy—remains confined

to a small academic circle in Thailand. This limitation affects the depth and diversity of perspectives, reducing the number of available resources and hindering further scholarly development.

4.3 Key Research Topics

The selection of research topics is often influenced by whether scholars identify as "insiders" or "outsiders" to the subject matter. Insiders (South Korean scholars) possess first-hand experience, cultural insights, and a deep understanding of historical narratives, which shape their perspectives on South Korea's policies. In contrast, outsiders (foreign scholars, including Thai academics) analyze South Korea from an external viewpoint, often applying comparative methods or generalizing South Korea's policies within broader regional or global contexts.

This distinction between insider and outsider perspectives affects which foreign policy issues receive attention. For example, South Korean scholars may focus more on domestic political debates influencing foreign policy, whereas foreign scholars may emphasize South Korea's role in regional security and economic diplomacy.

4.4 Policy Relevance and Regional Significance

Understanding South Korea's foreign policy should also consider its relevance to policy-making in Thailand and the broader Southeast Asian region. While studying a country purely for academic purposes is valuable, linking this knowledge to policy formulation and diplomatic strategy provides greater practical benefits.

One major challenge in teaching foreign policy and area studies is helping students connect their knowledge to real-world applications. Encouraging students to explore how South Korea's policies impact regional affairs, Thailand's trade relations, or diplomatic engagements ensures that the study of South Korea remains relevant beyond mere academic curiosity.

4.5 Changing International Contexts

To fully understand South Korea's modern foreign policy, scholars must consider the evolving geopolitical landscape. While domestic factors (such as historical experiences and national identity) play a role in shaping foreign policy, South Korea's external interactions with the global system are equally critical.

South Korea's diplomatic relations are influenced by major power dynamics, particularly with the United States, China, Japan, and Russia. Bilateral and multilateral relationships involving South Korea often cannot be analyzed in isolation. For instance, South Korea's foreign policy must be examined in the broader strategic context of U.S.-China-Japan-Russia relations, given the interconnected nature of their political and economic engagements.

Given the existing constraints on South Korean foreign policy studies in Thailand—including academic resource shortages, theoretical differences, and the need for policy relevance—developing a well-structured course requires balancing multiple perspectives. A successful curriculum must integrate theoretical depth, empirical research, and real-world policy considerations, ensuring that students gain a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of South Korea's role in international affairs.

By addressing these theoretical, methodological, and practical challenges, South Korean foreign policy studies can be expanded and institutionalized within Thai academia, fostering a more informed and strategic approach to engaging with South Korea on both an academic and policy-making level.

5. Developing a Course on South Korea's Foreign Policy

In general, the development of academic course content is influenced by the expertise of instructors, who receive input from subject

matter experts invited to review the course structure. These processes must align with the overarching goal of enhancing students' knowledge and academic competencies within the discipline. To ensure a well-rounded and effective course design, three key principles must be considered:

1. Academic Content – The course must provide foundational knowledge on key topics such as South Korean history, the political institutions of South Korea, and the actors shaping its political system and foreign policy.

2. Skill Development – The course should help students build critical skills such as research, communication, and analytical thinking, integrating assessment methods that align with these learning objectives.

4. Curriculum Integration – The course should fit within the broader Political Science and International Relations curriculum, offering students the flexibility to explore regional and country-specific topics while maintaining relevance to the overall discipline.

With these guiding principles in mind, we gathered data from academics and professionals working in foreign policy to identify perspectives on the most important topics for a South Korean foreign policy course.

5.1 Perspectives from "Insiders"

We conducted interviews with South Korean scholars who identified five key themes essential for understanding South Korea's foreign policy:

5.1.1 Historical Context

A common view among South Korean scholars is that understanding South Korea's foreign policy requires a historical foundation. This includes examining Korea's ancient kingdoms—Goguryeo, Silla, and Baekje, the Japanese colonial period, and South Korea's democratization process. These historical experiences shape South Korean nationalism, national interests, and foreign policy tools, influencing South Korea's engagement with the global community.

5.1.2 Relations with Major Powers

Every South Korean scholar interviewed emphasized the importance of South Korea's relations with major global powers—the United States, China, Japan, and Russia. These relationships significantly influence South Korea's diplomatic positioning and policy choices. Moreover, they have a direct impact on South Korea's approach toward North Korea, shaping strategies on security, economic engagement, and regional stability.

5.1.3 Relations with North Korea

South Korea's relationship with North Korea is a critical issue in its foreign policy. Given their shared history, geographic proximity, and ongoing political tensions, North Korea remains the single most important security challenge for South Korea. Scholars argue that no analysis of South Korean foreign policy can be complete without addressing inter-Korean relations.

5.1.4 Nuclear Issues

The North Korean nuclear issue was frequently cited as a top priority in South Korean foreign policy studies. South Korean scholars view North Korea's nuclear program as a fundamental security concern that has shaped South Korea's strategic alliances, military policies, and diplomatic efforts over the past decades.

5.1.5 South Korea as a Middle Power

Many scholars highlighted the growing role of South Korea as a middle power in international politics. This shift became more pronounced during Ban Ki-moon's tenure as Secretary-General of the United Nations (2007–2016). During this period, South Korea gained confidence in its diplomatic role, positioning itself as a rule-setter rather than merely a rule-follower in global governance. Additionally, South Korea's technological and economic growth has reinforced its influence in global trade and international relations, further enhancing its middle-power status.

5.2 Perspectives from "Outsiders"

The views of foreign scholars, including Thai academics studying Korea, differ significantly from South Korean scholars. Outsiders tend to emphasize South Korea's international influence, focusing on aspects that impact foreign relations rather than domestic policy. Key themes identified by outsiders include:

5.2.1 Soft Power

Many foreign scholars view soft power as one of South Korea's most important diplomatic tools. South Korea has effectively used cultural diplomacy through the Korean Wave (Hallyu), creative economy initiatives, and global branding to strengthen its international image. South Korea's soft power strategy has been instrumental in shaping public perceptions and enhancing diplomatic influence worldwide.

5.2.2 Culture and Religion

Since Korean Studies in Thailand has traditionally been language-focused, many Thai scholars approach South Korea from cultural and sociological perspectives. This has led to an emphasis on topics such as Korean religious influences, cultural heritage, and migration trends. Some Thai scholars argue that South Korea's distinct religious and cultural background plays a significant role in shaping its foreign policy behavior.

5.2.3 Official Development Assistance (ODA)

Foreign scholars view ODA as a key element of South Korea's foreign policy. The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) is responsible for allocating ODA funds, supporting South Korea's diplomatic efforts in developing countries. Thai scholars recognize ODA as a tool for South Korea to strengthen international partnerships, particularly in Southeast Asia.

5.2.4 Trade and Investment

Many foreign scholars believe that South Korea's economic engagement with Thailand and ASEAN is a critical component of its foreign policy.

South Korea has strong trade ties with Thailand, and its investments in the Thai economy continue to expand. This perspective emphasizes economic diplomacy and trade relations as central themes in South Korean foreign policy studies.

5.3 Missing Themes in Insider Perspectives

Interestingly, three major foreign policy tools were not emphasized by South Korean scholars unless explicitly asked by researchers. These topics include:

- ODA – Unlike Chinese and Japanese foreign policy studies, South Korean scholars rarely discuss ODA as a major diplomatic tool, despite its importance in global engagement.
- Regional Economic Cooperation Initiatives – South Korea is actively involved in regional trade agreements and economic frameworks, but these are not widely discussed as defining aspects of its foreign policy.
- Business Groups (Chaebol Influence) – Unlike studies on China's Communist Party or Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), South Korean political studies tend to overlook the role of chaebols (Korean conglomerates) in foreign policy. In contrast, business groups in China and Japan are often analyzed as key political actors influencing foreign relations.

The omission of these topics suggests that South Korean scholars primarily view foreign policy through a state-centric lens, whereas foreign scholars tend to incorporate broader economic and corporate factors into their analyses.

5.4 Thailand's Role in South Korea's Foreign Policy

One of the most notable insights from interviews with foreign scholars is that Thailand is not perceived as a key foreign policy priority for South Korea. Unlike Vietnam and Indonesia, which are seen as major trade and investment hubs, Thailand's strategic importance to South Korea is comparatively lower.

This is reflected in South Korea's economic policies—Vietnam and Indonesia receive significantly higher levels of South Korean investment. Additionally, South Korea no longer classifies Thailand as a developing country, reducing the amount of ODA allocated to Thailand.

This finding highlights the need for further research on how Thailand can enhance its strategic and economic engagement with South Korea, ensuring that bilateral relations remain strong despite shifting diplomatic priorities.

The development of a South Korean foreign policy course requires balancing domestic and international perspectives, integrating historical, political, and economic factors. While South Korean scholars focus on security, history, and relations with major powers, foreign scholars emphasize soft power, trade, and economic diplomacy. By incorporating both perspectives, a comprehensive curriculum can be created—one that not only educates students on South Korea's geopolitical role but also examines its economic influence and strategic priorities. Expanding this knowledge within Thai academia will strengthen bilateral relations and scholarly exchanges between Thailand and South Korea.

6. Discussion of Findings

The study and interviews have led to four key academic conclusions regarding the understanding and teaching of South Korean foreign policy.

The first major finding concerns the perspectives of "insiders" and "outsiders." The determination of what is considered an essential issue in understanding South Korea is not solely based on academic discipline but is also influenced by whether the observer is an "insider" or an "outsider." The term "insider" can be understood in two ways: South Koreans residing in South Korea and South Koreans living abroad, such as in Thailand. Conversely, "outsiders" refer to non-Koreans, whether they are scholars studying

Korea from within South Korea or those engaging with Korean studies from abroad. The distinction between insiders and outsiders significantly influences their perspectives on key issues. Scholars outside South Korea tend to focus on topics aligned with their specific disciplines. For example, cultural and religious scholars interviewed in this study viewed South Korea's foreign policy as being shaped by religious and cultural factors, without emphasizing the political or international relations aspects. In contrast, insiders are more likely to recognize the interconnections between social issues and foreign relations, acknowledging how domestic factors influence South Korea's engagement with the world.

The second key finding underscores the divergence in research priorities between insiders and outsiders. When examining the differences in how insiders and outsiders approach academic issues, it is evident that their focus varies considerably. Insiders prioritize topics directly linked to South Korean society and daily life, such as North-South Korea relations, nuclear proliferation, and denuclearization. In contrast, outsiders tend to emphasize trade, investment, economic development, and ODA, along with multilateral cooperation frameworks. In essence, insiders focus more on the domestic conditions and constraints shaping foreign policy, while outsiders prioritize the objectives and instruments of foreign policy over the internal factors that define South Korea's stance in the global arena.

The third major conclusion concerns the role of theoretical frameworks in shaping students' understanding of South Korea. The selection of theoretical perspectives is essential in helping students grasp South Korea's foreign policy evolution and key determinants. We propose that the study of South Korean foreign policy should incorporate three core theoretical perspectives: structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and social constructivism. These frameworks allow students to analyze the international system's

influence on South Korea, its role in global governance, particularly in development and nuclear disarmament, and the changing definitions of national interests over time. Structural realism provides insights into the global power structure and its impact on South Korea's strategic decisions, neoliberal institutionalism explains South Korea's engagement in international organizations and economic institutions, and social constructivism highlights how identity, norms, and values shape its foreign policy.

The fourth finding pertains to teaching methods used in the study of South Korea's foreign policy. While this research does not primarily focus on pedagogical approaches, we gathered insights from interviews with South Korean academics about their teaching strategies. In Thailand, various teaching innovations have been introduced to enhance student engagement. However, interviews revealed that South Korean academics teaching foreign policy, governance, and comparative politics still largely rely on traditional lecture-based methods and written examinations. This approach remains dominant due to the large class sizes in South Korean universities, often ranging from 80 to 100 students, which limits the feasibility of more interactive teaching methods. Despite these constraints, some foreign academics teaching in South Korea have adopted simulation-based teaching methods. These include scenario-based learning, where students analyze and formulate responses to diplomatic

challenges, allowing them to develop practical policy-making skills. Despite facing similar large class sizes, these scholars have integrated simulations into their teaching methods to enhance student engagement.

Beyond the specific issue of curriculum development for South Korea's foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific, this research also sought to ensure that course content is relevant beyond Bangkok, Thailand's capital. Chiang Mai, for example, hosts a significant Korean expatriate and tourist population, highlighting the importance of locally relevant policy discussions. Developing a course that connects international political knowledge with national interests and local contexts is crucial. Understanding the political landscape of Thailand, South Korea, and their international relations can help generate policy-relevant recommendations for deeper engagement.

Through documentary analysis and interviews, we have developed a proposed course syllabus on South Korea's foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region. The course structure ensures that it reflects both insider and outsider perspectives, incorporating domestic and external factors that influence South Korea's diplomatic and economic relations. The findings emphasize the interconnectedness of security concerns, economic engagement, and cultural diplomacy, which collectively shape South Korea's regional and global foreign policy strategies.

Table 3

Course Topics and Hours for South Korean Foreign Policy in the Asia-Pacific Region

No.	Topic	Hours
1	Social and Political Context of South Korea	3
2	Democratic Development and Foreign Policy Decision-Making Mechanisms in South Korea	3
3	South Korea During the Cold War	3
4	Inter-Korean Relations	3
5	Nuclear Issues, International Organizations, and Security in the Korean Peninsula	3

No.	Topic	Hours
6	Economy, Business, and Official Development Assistance (ODA)	3
7	South Korea's Asia-Pacific Strategy	6
8	South Korea's International Relations with Major Powers in the Asia-Pacific	6
9	South Korea's International Relations with ASEAN Countries	6
10	South Korean Foreign Policy and Soft Power	6
11	Contemporary Issues in South Korean Foreign Policy	3
Total		45

The course topics have been designed to reflect both insider and outsider perspectives, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of South Korea's foreign policy dynamics. The course emphasizes domestic factors, particularly South Korea's relationship with North Korea and nuclear security issues, which form the foundation of its international engagements. These security concerns influence South Korea's relations with major powers and regional partners across Asia. Additionally, the course addresses economic issues, interest groups, and business relations, as well as soft power, which plays a significant role in shaping South Korea's economic and diplomatic engagements worldwide.

The theoretical framework for understanding South Korea's foreign policy is based on three core international relations theories: structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and social constructivism.

Structural realism offers a policy-oriented approach, emphasizing the international system as a structure that dictates power distribution and state behavior. Insights from interviews with both insiders and outsiders suggest that South Korea has historically been shaped by major power conflicts, particularly during the Korean War, leading to its division. This historical context necessitates a structural realist perspective to analyze South Korea's place in the international order.

Neoliberal institutionalism provides a framework for understanding international cooperation and institutional engagement. This perspective is crucial in analyzing South Korea's membership in international organizations, both economic and security-related, such as the United Nations, regional economic frameworks, and diplomatic initiatives aimed at nuclear crisis management. South Korea's engagement in regional and multilateral trade agreements also demonstrates its reliance on institutional mechanisms for economic and diplomatic objectives.

Social constructivism focuses on norms, values, and identity formation in international relations. This perspective is particularly useful in understanding how South Korea's national identity, cultural values, and soft power diplomacy influence its foreign policy. The export of Korean culture, the role of national branding, and its economic diplomacy strategies all fall within this theoretical approach. South Korea's foreign policy is shaped not only by material interests but also by the construction of its global identity, which affects its economic, political, and diplomatic relations.

The topics incorporated into the course thus integrate these three theoretical perspectives, allowing students to analyze international political structures, institutional cooperation, and identity-based foreign policy strategies. This approach ensures a holistic understanding of South Korea's

foreign relations, economic diplomacy, and strategic positioning in the global arena. It is important to note, however, that these three theoretical approaches are not taught as standalone topics. Rather, they are interwoven throughout the various lecture themes. Each lecture topic has been selected based on conceptual insights drawn from the three theories, reflecting the notion that any examination of South Korea should encompass multiple perspectives: those that emphasize the international order, those that stress international cooperation and institutions, and those that explore foreign policy and South Korean society through the lens of identity. Thus, the content of the lectures integrates elements from structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and social constructivism, without isolating them as separate modules. This integrative approach encourages students to understand South Korea's foreign policy and international positioning through a multidimensional theoretical framework.

7. Conclusion

The study of South Korea's foreign policy in Thailand remains limited compared to that of other major powers such as China, Japan, and the United States. Despite South Korea's growing role in the Asia-Pacific, academic engagement with South Korea's foreign relations in Thailand's international relations field remains insufficient, particularly concerning its interactions with the Mekong subregion.

Interest in South Korea within Thailand primarily revolves around economic and cultural dimensions, especially regarding the creative industries, soft power, entertainment, technology, and trade. However, the study of South Korea's foreign policy remains underdeveloped in Thai international relations curricula. The research findings indicate that only a few universities offer courses on South Korean politics and foreign policy, and academic resources on the topic remain scarce.

The development of South Korea foreign policy studies in Thailand has been informed by interviews and workshops with academics in both Thailand and South Korea. The findings reveal significant differences in how insiders and outsiders perceive key foreign policy issues. Insiders prioritize historical context, relations with major powers, and military security, particularly regarding nuclear weapons and inter-Korean relations. Outsiders, however, focus more on soft power, cultural diplomacy, and economic engagement, particularly regarding trade, investment, and ODA.

Based on this study, we propose that South Korea's foreign policy education in Thailand should integrate three key dimensions: historical context, political institutions, and contemporary issues. The course should also incorporate three major theoretical frameworks—structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and social constructivism—to provide a comprehensive analysis of South Korea's evolving role in international affairs.

Ultimately, the development of a South Korean foreign policy curriculum is essential for strengthening international relations education in Thailand. Given South Korea's increasing influence in Southeast Asia and its deepening ties with Thailand through trade, investment, and cultural diplomacy, enhancing academic engagement with South Korea's foreign policy will contribute to a more effective and strategic bilateral relationship in the future.

Declaration of AI Assistance

This manuscript was originally drafted in Thai and subsequently translated into English using Chat GPT-4. The specific prompt utilised during the translation process was: 'Translate this into academic English.' After the initial translation, the authors carefully reviewed the terminologies and content to ensure that the translation accurately conveyed the intended ideas and context.

Acknowledgment:

This research is part of the project "Workshops to Develop an Elective Course on 'Korea's Foreign Relations in the Asia-Pacific' at Chiang Mai University, Thailand." The project is funded by The Academy of Korean Studies under Project No. AKS-2024-E012.

References

- Chutidet, M. (2024). "Restricted zones" of the military: Democracy and the process of civilian control over the South Korean armed forces. Phitsanulok: Crackers Books. (In Thai)
- Damrong, T. (1987). *South Korea: The role of the state in national development*. Pathum Thani: Korean Studies Project, East Asian Studies Institute, Thammasat University. (In Thai)
- Halper, A. M. (1973). Japan's economic giant's quiet diplomacy. *International Affairs*, 49(4), 584–599.
- Kasemsuk, N. (2025). Koreans on course to be No. 1 visitors to Chiang Mai in 2025. *Bangkok Post*. Retrieved February 2, 2025, from <https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/general/2948907/koreans-on-course-to-be-no-1-visitors-to-chiang-mai-in-2025>
- Kim, H. K., Kim, A. E., & Connolly, D. (2016). Catching up with Hallyu? The Japanese and Chinese response to South Korean soft power. *Korea Observer*, 47(3), 527–558.
- Kim, T. (2017). Creative economy of the developmental state: A case study of South Korea's creative economy initiatives. *The Journal of Arts, Management, Law, and Society*, 47(5), 322–332.
- Lertarit, C., & Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs. (2010). *Eternal partners: Thailand and South Korea – A history of Thai soldiers in the Korean War*. Publisher unknown. (In Thai)
- Meephokee, C. (2000). Economic relations between Thailand–South Korea: Past and future trends. *Thai Journal of East Asian Studies*, 11(1), 39–54. (In Thai)
- Nimmontra, S. (2019). The movement of Thai workers and illegal status in South Korea. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 31(1), 145–170. (In Thai)
- Orapan, C. (2022). *Contemporary South Korea*. Pattani: Office of Learning Technology and Innovation, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus. (In Thai)
- Pasuk, P., Worawit, C., & The Center for Energy Conservation of Thailand. (1998). *Industrial and economic development: Experiences of South Korea, Brazil, and Thailand*. Bangkok: Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University. (In Thai)
- Prachachat Business. (2019). Chiang Mai's growing popularity: South Koreans flocking to buy condos and open restaurants. *Prachachat Business*. Retrieved February 4, 2025, from <https://www.prachachat.net/local-economy/news-406708> (In Thai)
- Supitchaya, L., Wiphat, M., Pensri, C., & Waradej, C. (2024). The trade landscape between Thailand and South Korea: Trade patterns, opportunities, and challenges in Thai exports to South Korea. *Lampang Rajabhat University Humanities and Social Sciences Review Journal*, 12(1), 12–26. (In Thai)
- Thanuth, P., Suwicha, P., & Surasit, W. (2022). The struggle for survival of Thai illegal workers in South Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic: A case study of Udon Thani Province. *Journal of Social Development*, 24(1), 119–136. (In Thai)
- Wichian, I. (2021). *North Korea and South Korea: Perspectives on reunification*. Phitsanulok: Naresuan University Press. (In Thai)

Policy Network Management and Community Enterprise Potential: The Mediating Role of Promoting Community Enterprise Management in Northeastern Thailand

Phanavich Nakhonsong ^{1*}   , Viyouth Chamruspanth ¹   , Sukanya Aimimtham ¹  

¹ Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Khonkaen University, Khonkaen, Thailand

* Corresponding Author, © Authors

Abstract

This study examines the complex relationships between policy network management, community enterprise management promotion, and community enterprise potential in Thailand's Northeastern region. Despite significant policy support for community enterprises, questions remain about how policy networks effectively enhance enterprise potential. Using a quantitative approach with data from 443 community enterprises, this research employs PLS-SEM to test a theoretical model linking these constructs. Findings reveal that promoting community enterprise management significantly mediates the relationship between policy network management and community enterprise potential. A well-coordinated policy network enhances enterprise potential primarily by strengthening management capabilities across multiple dimensions, including planning, knowledge management, and technology integration. This study contributes to policy network theory by demonstrating concrete implementation mechanisms and offers practical guidance for policymakers to design integrated support systems that recognize management capacity development as a critical pathway for community enterprise enhancement.

Article history:

Received: March 20, 2025

Revised: June 4, 2025

Accepted: June 5, 2025

Keywords:

Policy Networks,
Community Enterprises,
Management Promotion,
Enterprise Potential,
Mediating Role

Introduction

Community enterprises play a vital role in Thailand's grassroots economic development, primarily aiming to add value to local resources, enhance self-reliance, and improve community members' quality of life. Despite continuous government support policies, these enterprises face significant challenges in competitive capabilities, funding access, and management skills (Nakhonsong & Chamruspanth, 2024). The implementation of community enterprise promotion policies in

izations, including resource constraints, budget limitations, personnel issues, and inter-agency collaboration discontinuity (Department of Agricultural Extension). Previous research indicates that community enterprise success depends on strong leadership, community participation, and market adaptation capabilities (Ruengdet & Wongsurawat, 2010), while entrepreneurial skill development and product innovation are essential for enhancing their potential (Cavite et al., 2023). However, existing studies on community

Statistical evidence reinforces this concern, revealing that among 75,563 evaluated community enterprises, 71.43 percent demonstrate medium or low-capacity levels requiring improvement, while over 80,000 groups have had their registrations revoked. The Northeastern region, with the highest number of registered enterprises, shows particularly troubling statistics: only 30.54 percent have been evaluated, with merely 18.72 percent classified as high performing (Department of Agricultural Extension, 2022). These challenges stem from structural limitations affecting Provincial Community Enterprise Promotion Committee Secretariat Offices and local partner organizations, including resource constraints, budget limitations, personnel issues, and inter-agency collaboration discontinuity (Department of Agricultural Extension). Previous research indicates that community enterprise success depends on strong leadership, community participation, and market adaptation capabilities (Ruengdet & Wongsurawat, 2010), while entrepreneurial skill development and product innovation are essential for enhancing their potential (Cavite et al., 2023). However, existing studies on community enterprise policy networks in Thailand primarily focus on network relationships, leadership strength, and government participation (Sangyotin, 2017; Polsen et al., 2020), revealing a significant knowledge gap regarding effective policy network management in the context of enhancing community enterprise potential. This suggests that enhancing community enterprise capacity requires not only group-level development but also systematic policy network management responsive to regional differences, aligning with proposals by Muangnam (2021) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (2017) that identify structural issues within central agencies and inadequate evaluation mechanisms as significant obstacles to community enterprise promotion in Thailand.

Research Objectives

This study examines the relationships between policy network management, community enterprise management promotion, and community enterprise potential in Thailand's Northeastern region by

1. Analyzing the direct effect of policy network management on promoting community enterprise management.
2. Investigating how promoting community enterprise management affects community enterprise potential.
3. Examining the direct effect of policy network management on community enterprise potential.
4. Assessing the mediating role of management promotion in this relationship.

Literature Review

Policy Network Management (PNM)

Policy Network Management represents a governance approach focused on collaborative relationships between stakeholders to achieve policy objectives. It addresses complex public issues requiring coordination across organizational boundaries, transcending traditional hierarchical structures (Rhodes, 2006; Moran et al, 2008). These networks involve interdependent relationships and resource exchanges among government agencies, private sector, civil society, and academic institutions (Klijn et al, 2015). Effective management encompasses establishing governance mechanisms, building trust, facilitating communication, mediating conflicts, and coordinating collective actions (Provan & Kenis, 2008). Research shows successful policy network management relies on strong leadership, appropriate governance structures, effective communication, and adaptability (Mandell & Keast, 2008).

The evolution of policy network management theory has progressed from Kickert et al.'s (1997) and Klijn et al.'s (1995) foundational frameworks to contemporary applications by Hadi et al. (2025) and Kabul (2024). This progression highlights several key insights: the crucial role of network managers in facilitating cooperation, the importance of understanding network dimensions when designing interventions, the adaptability of network concepts to developing countries' contexts, and the integration with sustainable development goals. Recent applications in addressing slum improvement and poverty reduction demonstrate the framework's continued relevance for tackling complex governance challenges requiring multi-stakeholder coordination.

Promoting Community Enterprise Management (PCEM)

Thailand's community enterprise promotion has evolved through a comprehensive policy framework anchored by the 2005 Community Enterprise Promotion Act. Despite supportive policies, Nakhonsong & Chamruspanth identified significant limitations in inter-agency integration and implementation effectiveness. The institutional infrastructure involves multiple stakeholders, with the Community Enterprise Promotion Committee providing central coordination and the Department of Agricultural Extension serving as a key implementing agency. Somswasdi et al. emphasized the need for more systematic collaboration among government organizations, private sector entities, educational institutions, and NGOs. Promotion encompasses entrepreneurial capacity building, financial support, product development, marketing assistance, and network building, with Cavite et al. proposing strategic approaches emphasizing competitive capabilities and creating added value for community products.

Recent research reveals several critical factors supporting community enterprise management that work synergistically rather than in isolation:

Strategic Planning and Knowledge Management: Pranee et al. (2024) found strategic planning directly contributes to sustainable development of community enterprises, particularly when combined with environmental sustainability considerations. Phanphairoj et al. (2024) identified participatory learning processes as crucial for developing skills and capabilities. Jarusen & Cheunkamon's (2024) measurement model confirms strategic planning as a core component affecting operational efficiency, while Phuangsuwan et al. (2024) demonstrates how systematic management of local wisdom creates added value.

Marketing and Production Innovation: Worapongpat & Khamcharoen (2024) show that digital market management systems significantly enhance customer reach, while Thetlek et al. (2024) demonstrate how production innovations improve efficiency and product value. Somthawinongsai et al. (2024) illustrates how effective digital communication builds consumer confidence and drives sales growth.

Networks, Participation and Multi-level Integration: Pholphirul et al. (2024) demonstrate how network positioning affects enterprise performance, while Nordjo et al. (2024) show that community involvement throughout all project stages is essential for sustainability. Worapongpat & Somchob (2024) provide evidence of how community engagement enhances technological adoption.

Digital Technology Management in Community Enterprises: Research by Worapongpat & Khamcharoen (2024) found that applying digital technologies in marketing management significantly enhances customer reach and expands distribution channels. However, Chaiyo et al. (2024) noted implementation still faces limitations regarding skills and member readiness.

Membership Management: Boonnual & Boonnual (2024) found that trust, collaborative networks, and member participation are vital factors influencing operational efficiency and sustainability. Phanphairoj et al. (2024) demonstrated that developing members' skills through participatory learning processes enhances enterprise potential. The literature highlights the need for integrated approaches over isolated interventions, with success hinging on synergistic combinations of strategic planning with knowledge management, digital technology with production innovation, and networks with participation. Effective models must balance tradition with modernity while fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Community Enterprise Management: Efficient community enterprise administration is fundamental for developing potential and sustainability. Jarusen & Cheunkamon (2024) developed a measurement model for community enterprise management strategies covering key administrative dimensions in finance, production, marketing, and human resource management, indicating that systematic management across all dimensions affects overall operational efficiency. Rangsongnoen et al. (2024) extended the Baldrige excellence model for managing community-based social enterprises, proposing an assessment framework encompassing leadership, strategic planning, customer focus, measurement, analysis, knowledge management, personnel focus, operations focus, and outcomes. Cavite et al. (2023) presented strategic guidelines emphasizing community context analysis, entrepreneurial capacity building, product development, and market access, while Anusonphat (2024) found that management models aligned with community contexts and needs are crucial for building strength and sustainability.

The literature highlights the need for integrated approaches over isolated interventions, with success hinging on synergistic combinations of strategic planning with knowledge management, digital technology with production innovation,

and networks with participation. Effective models must balance tradition with modernity while fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Community Enterprise Potential (CEP)

Recent studies have provided valuable insights into the components and factors associated with Community Enterprise Potential:

Mission outcomes: Mas-Machuca et al. (2024) found that when members deeply internalize the social mission, it directly enhances organizational efficiency. Nuchian et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of developing indicators that genuinely reflect social outcomes, while Li et al. (2024) revealed that high-potential enterprises typically establish clear connections between organizational missions and sustainable development goals.

Product and Service Quality: Rangsongnoen et al. (2024) emphasized the development of quality products to meet customer needs. Wongadisai et al. (2020) demonstrated that community participation in product development contributes to elevating quality standards, while Thetlek et al. (2024) found that innovation enhances quality and creates added value.

Operational Efficiency: Jarusen & Cheunkamon (2024) developed a measurement model emphasizing evaluation across multiple dimensions including finance, production, marketing, and human resource management. Singh et al. (2024) found that access to funding affects operational efficiency, mediated by entrepreneurial personality and self-efficacy.

Community Enterprise Development: Cavite et al. (2023) proposed a framework encompassing community context analysis, entrepreneurial capacity building, product development, and market access. Phanphairoj et al. (2024) found that developing systematic learning processes enhances adaptability to changes and challenges. Boonnual & Boonnual (2024) emphasized the importance of social capital and corporate social responsibility in sustainable development.

Despite these advancements, significant research gaps persist, including the need for comprehensive multidimensional assessment indicators, understanding technological transformation impacts, and developing models that successfully integrate traditional wisdom with modern innovations.

Hypothesis & Research Framework

Based on the literature review and theoretical foundation, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Policy Network Management (PNM) has a positive effect on Promoting Community Enterprise Management (PCEM).

This hypothesis suggests that effective Policy Network Management, which encompasses resource adequacy, collaboration building, democracy and fairness, and network governance, positively influences the promotion of community enterprise management. When policy networks ensure sufficient resources for implementation, build strong collaborative relationships among stakeholders, maintain democratic and fair processes, and establish effective governance structures, they create a more supportive ecosystem for community enterprise development. These four dimensions of PNM work synergistically to enhance coordination among government agencies, private sector entities, educational institutions, resulting in more coherent and effective promotion of community enterprise management.

H2: Promoting Community Enterprise Management (PCEM) has a positive effect on Community Enterprise Potential (CEP).

This hypothesis proposes that effective promotion of community enterprise management, which encompasses multiple factors including community enterprise management, operational planning, marketing management, technology management, membership management, and community enterprise network management, positively affects community enterprise potential.

When comprehensive promotion strategies address these key management dimensions, they provide community enterprises with the necessary administrative capabilities, strategic direction, market access, technological tools, human resource engagement, and collaborative networks. These integrated management aspects collectively enhance community enterprises' capacity to achieve their missions, deliver quality products and services, operate efficiently, and develop sustainably over time.

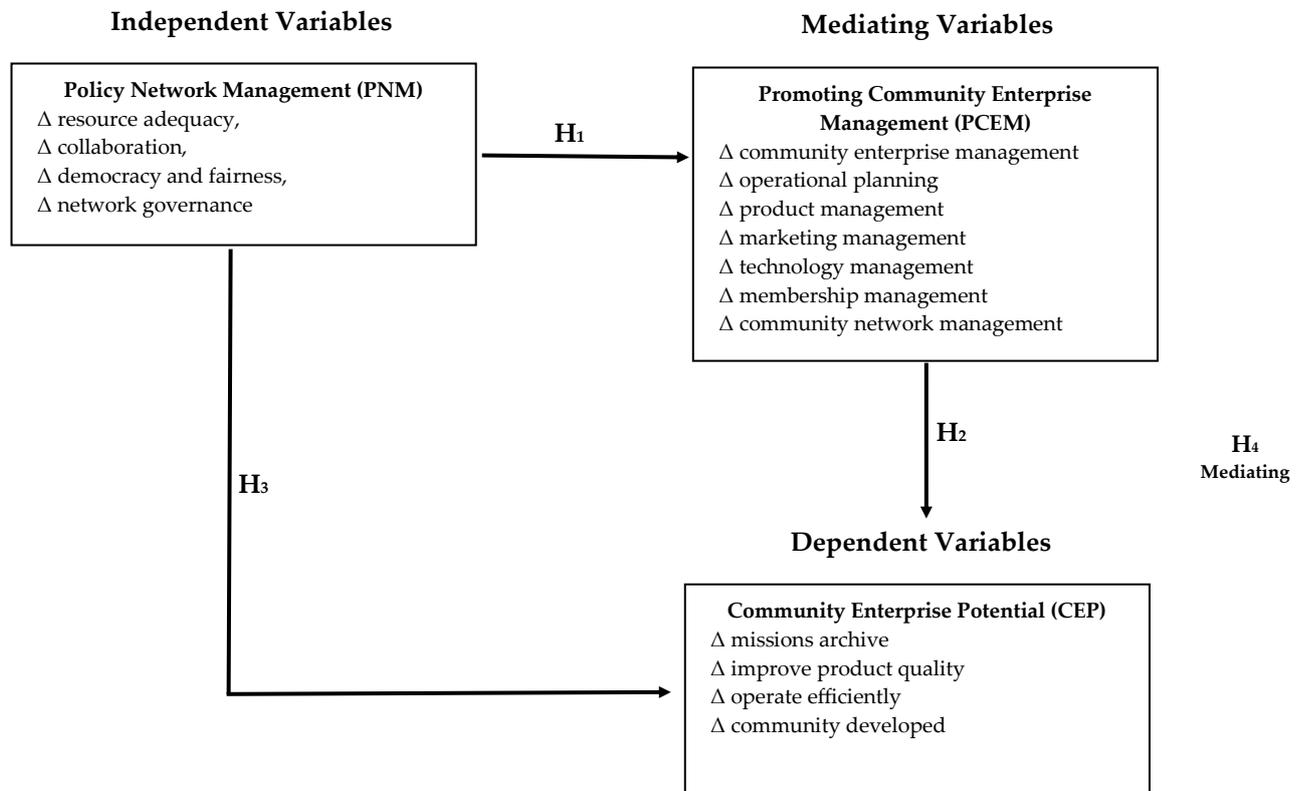
H3: Policy Network Management (PNM) has a positive effect on Community Enterprise Potential (CEP).

This hypothesis suggests that Policy Network Management directly influences Community Enterprise Potential. Well-coordinated policy networks can create enabling environments that directly enhance community enterprises' ability to achieve their missions, improve product quality, operate efficiently, and develop sustainably.

H4: Promoting Community Enterprise Management (PCEM) mediates the relationship between Policy Network Management (PNM) and Community Enterprise Potential (CEP).

Based on the comprehensive literature review and the three proposed hypotheses, a conceptual framework has been developed to illustrate the relationships between Policy Network Management (PNM), Promoting Community Enterprise Management (PCEM), and Community Enterprise Potential (CEP). This framework synthesizes theoretical insights and empirical findings from previous research to present a holistic model of how policy networks influence community enterprise development. Figure 1 presents this integrated research framework, demonstrating both the direct and indirect pathways through which policy network management contributes to community enterprise potential.

Figure 1
Research Framework



Research Method

Research Design and Sampling Approach

This quantitative study employed PLS-SEM to examine relationships between Policy Network Management, Community Enterprise Management Promotion, and Community Enterprise Potential in Thailand's Northeastern region. The study population consisted of 13,101 community enterprises registered in the Northeastern region (Department of Community Enterprise Promotion, 2022).

Sample Size Determination

Following Bentler & Chou's (1987) recommendation that an adequate sample size for structural equation modeling should be at least 5 times the number of parameters to be estimated, the sample size was calculated as:

- Number of parameters in the model: 112
- Required sample size: $112 \times 5 = 560$ enterprises

This sample size also satisfied Hair & Alamer (2022) guidelines for PLS-SEM analysis, which recommend a minimum sample size of 10 times the maximum number of paths directed at any construct in the model.

Multi-Stage Sampling Process

This research employs multivariate analysis through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) tests the hypothesized relationships between Policy Network Management, Community Enterprise Management Promotion, and Community Enterprise Potential. PLS-SEM enables simultaneous examination of both measurement models (indicator-construct relationships) and the structural model (relationships between constructs), providing comprehensive assessment of direct and indirect effects among the key variables in the research framework. A comprehensive multi-stage sampling procedure was implemented to ensure representativeness across the region:

Stage 1: Geographical Stratification

The sample was first stratified across all 20 provinces in Thailand's Northeastern region to ensure comprehensive geographic representation. This approach enabled the study to capture variations in community enterprise operations across different provincial contexts and administrative environments.

Stage 2: Performance Level Stratification

Within each province, community enterprises were further stratified by performance level based on the official assessment by the Department of Agricultural Extension. A weighted allocation sampling approach using a 50:30:20 ratio was applied following Cohen (1992) and Rigdon (2016):

- High performance of enterprises (50%):
 $560 \times 0.50 = 280$ enterprises
- Medium performance enterprises (30%):
 $560 \times 0.30 = 168$ enterprises
- Enterprises requiring improvement (20%):
 $560 \times 0.20 = 112$ enterprises

This stratification was crucial to ensure adequate representation of enterprises at different developmental stages, allowing for more nuanced analysis of factors affecting each performance category.

Stage 3: Provincial Distribution Calculation

To ensure balanced geographical representation, the sample was distributed proportionally across all 20 provinces:

- High performance enterprises per province:
 $280 \div 20 = 14$ enterprises
- Medium performance enterprises per province:
 $168 \div 20 = 8$ enterprises
- Enterprises requiring improvement per province: $112 \div 20 = 6$ enterprises

This resulted in 28 enterprises sampled from each province ($14 + 8 + 6 = 28$), with a total of 560 enterprises across the region ($28 \times 20 = 560$).

Stage 4: Purposive Selection Based on Criteria

Within each stratified group, enterprises were purposively selected based on specific criteria, including:

- Active registration status with the Department of Agricultural Extension
- Continuous operation for at least three years
- Participation in at least one government support program
- Availability of a designated representative to provide comprehensive information

This final stage ensured that the selected enterprises could provide reliable and relevant data for the study. The actual data collection yielded a response rate of 79.15% (443 valid responses), which substantially exceeded typical survey response rates in organizational research (Manfreda et al., 2008; Baruch & Holtom, 2008). This high response rate enhanced the statistical power of the analysis, reduced potential non-response bias (Sarstedt et al., 2021), and increased the generalizability of findings to the broader population of community enterprises in the Northeastern region (Kock & Hadaya, 2018).

Data Collection Methods and Instrument Design

This study employed a mixed-mode approach using both online and paper-based questionnaires structured in five sections: demographics, policy network management factors (43 items), community enterprise management promotion factors (45 items), community enterprise potential (15 items), and open-ended feedback. The instrument was developed through comprehensive literature review and qualitative findings, with measurement items assessed on five-point Likert scales (Brown, 2000; Dillman et al., 2014).

Rigorous validation included content validity assessment by five experts using the Content Validity Index following Rovinelli & Hambleton (1977) methodology, with results showing excellent content validity across all instruments:

Content Validity Results:

- Policy Network Management dimensions: CVI ranged from 0.785 to 0.983
- Community Enterprise Management Promotion dimensions: CVI ranged from 0.930 to 0.991
- Community Enterprise Potential dimensions: CVI ranged from 0.780 to 0.893

Reliability testing:

A pilot study was conducted with 30 community enterprises not included in the final sample to assess reliability. The internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) with a threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Mitchell, 1996). The reliability testing results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Reliability Testing Results (Cronbach's Alpha) for Research Instrument Dimensions

Construct and Dimensions	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Policy Network Management (PNM)		
Resource sufficiency	7	0.785
Leadership policy network	7	0.833
Governance network	10	0.866
Freedom of actors	5	0.740
Collaboration building	7	0.846
Promoting Community Enterprise Management (PCEM)		
Management	6	0.930
Planning	5	0.930
Operational planning	6	0.946
Marketing management	5	0.978
Knowledge management	5	0.969
Technology management	5	0.976
Membership management	6	0.798
Product management	3	0.976
Community Enterprise Potential (CEP)		
Mission outcomes	3	0.784
Quality of Goods and Services	4	0.863
Efficiency of Output	4	0.893
Development of Community	4	0.780

As shown in Table 1, all dimensions demonstrated excellent reliability with α values ranging from 0.740 to 0.991, substantially exceeding the 0.70 threshold recommended by Nunnally & Bernstein (1994). These results confirmed the high internal consistency of the measurement instrument, indicating its suitability for the main study.

Data collection combined digital distribution via QR codes, email, and messaging applications with in-person administration, maximizing response rates while accommodating varying technological access across Northeastern Thailand.

Data Analysis and Statistical Methods

This research employs multivariate analysis through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the hypothesized relationships. Prior to the main analysis, rigorous data screening procedures were implemented, combining univariate (standardized z-scores $|z| > 3.29$) and multivariate approaches (Mahalanobis distance at $p < 0.001$) for outlier detection, resulting in the removal of 51 cases with extreme responses and yielding 649 valid cases for final analysis. Though PLS-SEM does not strictly require normal distribution, normality assessment confirmed all variables fell within acceptable ranges for skewness (± 2) and kurtosis (± 7), indicating no severe deviations. Common method bias was evaluated using Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003), which revealed that no single factor accounted for more than 32.5% of total variance.

The measurement model assessment validated instrument quality according to established criteria (Sarstedt et al., 2022), with all constructs demonstrating exceptional psychometric properties:

1. Factor Loadings: All items demonstrated excellent loadings ranging from 0.712 to 0.917, exceeding the recommended 0.70 threshold.

2. Composite Reliability: All constructs exhibited values above 0.90, well beyond the 0.70 minimum requirement, indicating strong internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019).

3. Convergent Validity: Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.70, significantly surpassing the 0.50 threshold.

4. Multicollinearity: Absence confirmed through Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below 3.

5. Discriminant Validity: Established via Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios below 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015; Voorhees et al., 2016) and confirmed through the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

The structural model was evaluated using Smart PLS 4.0 with bootstrapping procedure (5,000 resamples), assessing path coefficients (β), significance levels (t -values > 1.96 , $p < 0.05$),

coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and model fit ($SRMR < 0.08$).

Research Result

Data Preparation and Preliminary Analysis

Rigorous data screening procedures were implemented before the main analysis. Outlier detection combined univariate (standardized z-scores $|z| > 3.29$) and multivariate approaches (Mahalanobis distance at $p < 0.001$) to ensure data quality. The final analysis was conducted with 443 valid cases from community enterprises across Thailand's Northeastern region. Though PLS-SEM does not strictly require normal distribution, normality assessment confirmed all variables fell within acceptable ranges for skewness (± 2) and kurtosis (± 7), indicating no severe deviations that might compromise significance testing. Finally, common method bias was evaluated using Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003), which revealed that no single factor accounted for more than 32.5% of total variance, suggesting measurement method did not substantially influence results and confirming the dataset's suitability for hypothesis testing.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model assessment rigorously validated instrument quality according to established criteria (Sarstedt et al., 2022). All constructs demonstrated exceptional psychometric properties, with factor loadings ranging from 0.712 to 0.917 (exceeding the recommended 0.70 threshold) and Composite Reliability values above 0.90 (well beyond the 0.70 minimum requirement), indicating strong internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). Convergent validity was confirmed through Average Variance Extracted values exceeding 0.70, significantly surpassing the 0.50 threshold. The absence of multicollinearity was verified through Variance Inflation Factor values below 3, while discriminant validity was established via Heterotrait-Monotrait ratios below 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015; Voorhees et al., 2016).

As presented in Table 2, these comprehensive results confirm that all measurement instruments possess excellent reliability and validity, estab-

lishing a robust foundation for the subsequent structural model evaluation and hypothesis testing.

Table 2
Results of Measurement Model Assessment

Construct & Items	λ	α	CR	AVE	VIF
Policy Network Management (PNM)		0.966	0.971	0.673	-
Resource Sufficiency (Res)					
<i>Res1: Quality standard equipment and tools provided for operations.</i>	0.832				
<i>Res2: Adequate technological operational support.</i>	0.854				
<i>Res3: Sufficient policy network staff available for services.</i>	0.851				
<i>Res4: Specialized experts provided for consultation and training.</i>	0.875				
<i>Res5: Support for innovative operational improvements.</i>	0.811				
Leadership Policy Network (Led)					
<i>Led1: Unanimous capacity-building agreements between group and agencies.</i>	0.833				
<i>Led7: Inclusive participation in capacity building planning.</i>	0.812				
Governance Network (Gov)					
<i>Gov3: Thorough task distribution aligned with member missions.</i>	0.768				
<i>Gov5: Formal written cooperation agreements among agencies.</i>	0.736				
<i>Gov7: Transparent, accountable operational information disclosure.</i>	0.807				
Freedom of actors in Policy Network (Fre)					
<i>Fre2: Independent decision-making without external domination.</i>	0.712				
Collaboration building (Col)					
<i>Col3: Comprehensive resource support through network collaboration.</i>	0.854				
<i>Col4: Absence of conflict between agencies during projects.</i>	0.864				
<i>Col6: Observation of preferential treatment among network agencies.</i>	0.861				
<i>Col8: Regular communication about challenges and cooperation approaches.</i>	0.819				
Promoting Community Enterprise Management (PCEM)		0.978	0.980	0.710	2.56
Management (MAN)					
<i>MAN1: Group structures work based on members' abilities, willingness, and dedication.</i>	0.856				
<i>MAN3: Group maintains systematic, transparent, and verifiable accounting and finances.</i>	0.847				
<i>MAN6: Products are designed with long-term planning to support future business growth.</i>	0.857				
Planning (PLA)					
<i>PLA1: Group can independently develop operational plans.</i>	0.856				
<i>PLA2: Group communicates operational plans to all members.</i>	0.860				
<i>PLA3: Group effectively implements operational plans.</i>	0.856				
<i>PLA4: Group develops contingency plans for emergencies, such as festival production planning.</i>	0.869				

Construct & Items	λ	α	CR	AVE	VIF
Policy Network Management (PNM)		0.966	0.971	0.673	-
Resource Sufficiency (Res)					
<i>PLA5: Group regularly reviews and improves operational plans for increased efficiency.</i>	0.873				
Marketing (MAR)					
<i>MAR3: Group can design and develop products that meet consumer needs.</i>	0.882				
<i>MAR5: Group sets appropriate prices and implements promotional strategies like discounts and giveaways.</i>	0.837				
Knowledge Management (KNO)					
<i>KNO1: Group can seek knowledge from internal and external sources for operations.</i>	0.811				
<i>KNO2: Group can create new knowledge for operations.</i>	0.828				
<i>KNO3: Group systematically stores knowledge, ready for management applications.</i>	0.813				
<i>KNO4: Group can research, synthesize, analyze, and summarize knowledge systematically.</i>	0.855				
<i>KNO5: Group can transfer knowledge to members, between groups, and to outsiders.</i>	0.852				
Technology Awareness (Tech)					
<i>Tech1: Group understands how digital technology changes impact group management.</i>	0.840				
<i>Tech4: Group possesses skills and abilities to apply computer programs, mobile phones, tablets, internet, and online applications in operations.</i>	0.820				
Member Management (Mem)					
<i>Mem3: Group appropriately, fairly, and satisfactorily motivates all members.</i>	0.848				
<i>Mem5: Group allows all members to participate in decision-making across all operational processes.</i>	0.809				
Product Management (Pro)					
<i>Pro3: Community enterprise can control and verify product quality according to established standards.</i>	0.771				
Community Enterprise Potential (CEP)		0.973	0.974	0.785	1.62
Mission Outcomes (Mis)					
<i>Mis1: Most group members have reduced expenses.</i>	0.879				
<i>Mis2: Most group members have increased income.</i>	0.876				
Quality of Goods and Services (Qua)					
<i>Qua1: The Group's products and services satisfy and are accepted by customers.</i>	0.878				
<i>Qua2: Group's products and services are quality, meet standards, and are safe for consumers.</i>	0.883				
<i>Qua3: Group's products and services are distinctive from other sources, have memorable unique identity, and are in market demand.</i>	0.917				
<i>Qua4: Group's products and services are socially responsible and do not create environmental pollution.</i>	0.901				

Construct & Items	λ	α	CR	AVE	VIF
Policy Network Management (PNM)		0.966	0.971	0.673	-
Efficiency of Output (Eff)					
<i>Eff1: Group can efficiently reduce operational costs.</i>	0.884				
<i>Eff2: Group can efficiently reduce operational errors and losses.</i>	0.885				
<i>Eff3: Group can efficiently enhance management capabilities.</i>	0.884				
<i>Eff4: The Group has increased operational profits.</i>	0.863				
Development of Community (Dev)					
<i>Dev1: All operational activities achieve their targeted goals.</i>	0.898				

Note: CR = Composite Reliability (threshold > 0.7); AVE = Average Variance Extracted (threshold > 0.5); VIF = Variance Inflation Factor (threshold < 3). All items met the required thresholds, indicating good reliability, convergent validity, and no significant collinearity issues

For discriminant validity assessment, both HTMT ratio (Table 3) and Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 4) demonstrate adequate construct distinction. All HTMT values range from 0.626-0.900, not exceeding the critical threshold of 0.9, while

the Fornell-Larcker criterion is fully satisfied with square roots of AVE (diagonal elements) greater than inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal elements), confirming proper discrimination between all constructs in the measurement model.

Table 3
Discriminant Validity Assessment Through HTMT Ratio

	CEP	PCEM	PNM
CEP			
PCEM	0.626		
PNM	0.900	0.757	

Table 4
Discriminant – Fornell Lacker criterion

	CEP	PCEM	PNM
CEP	0.886		
PCEM	0.619	0.842	
PNM	0.630	0.780	0.821

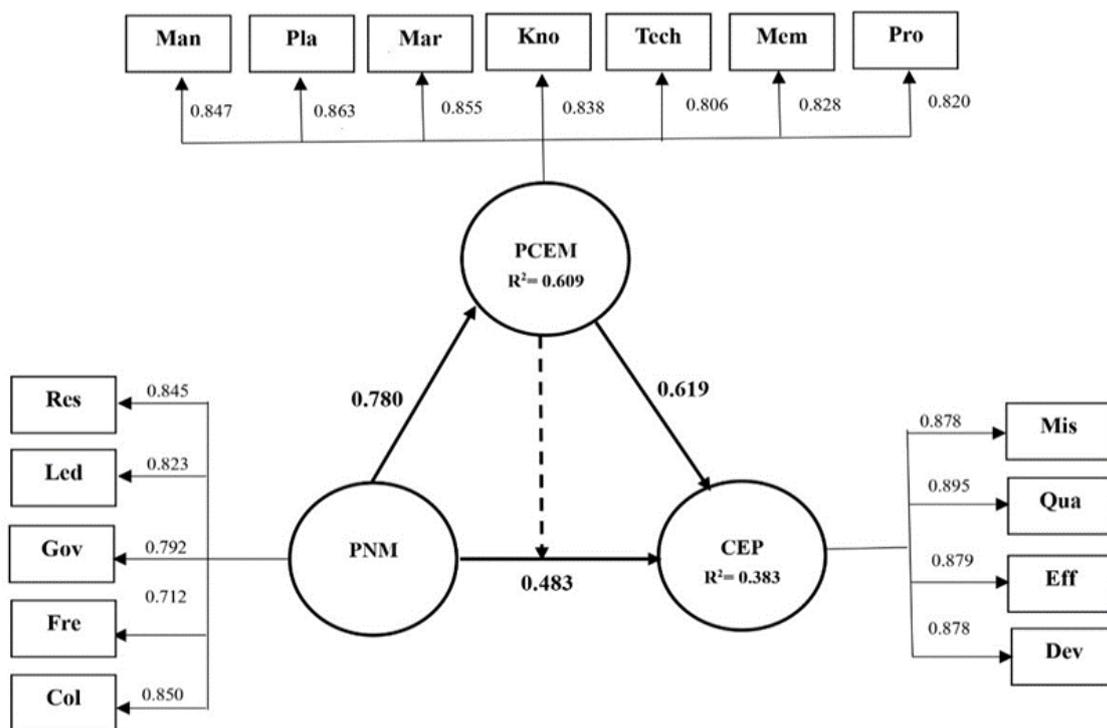
Note: CEP = Community Enterprise Potential, PCEM = Promoting Community Enterprise Management, PNM = Policy Network Management. Lower values imply good discriminant validity between measured constructs, proving each concept is unique from others in the model.

Structural Model Evaluation

The results of the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis using Smart PLS reveal significant relationships among the three main constructs. Policy Network Management (PNM) has a strong positive influence on Promoting Community Enterprise Management (PCEM) with a path coefficient of 0.780, explaining 60.9% of its variance ($R^2 = 0.609$). PCEM, in turn, significantly affects Community Enterprise Potential (CEP) with a path coefficient of 0.619. The indirect effect of PNM on CEP through PCEM is 0.483, representing a substantial mediating effect. The model demon-

strates good measurement properties with all construct dimensions showing high loadings: PNM dimensions range from 0.712 (Fre) to 0.850 (Col); PCEM dimensions range from 0.806 (Tech) to 0.863 (Pla); and CEP dimensions range from 0.878 (Mis/Dev) to 0.895 (Qua). Overall, the model explains 38.3% of the variance in Community Enterprise Potential ($R^2 = 0.383$), indicating that Policy Network Management effectively enhances Community Enterprise Potential both directly and indirectly through improved management practices. Figure 2 presents SEM model.

Figure 2
The structural equation modeling



Note: All relationships show statistical significance, with most paths significant at $p < 0.001$ level, except moderating effects which are significant at $p < 0.05$. SRMR = 0.0098 (threshold < 0.08), $Q^2 > 0$ for all endogenous constructs.

Hypothesis Testing Result

The research hypotheses were tested using Smart PLS 4.0 with bootstrapping procedure (5,000 resamples). The significance threshold was established at t-value > 1.96 ($p < 0.05$), with path coefficients (β) used to determine both the

strength and direction of relationships between constructs.

Direct Effects Analysis: Based on the SEM model, the direct effects analysis reveals significant relationships between the main constructs:

1. PNM \rightarrow PCEM ($\beta = 0.780, p < 0.001$): Policy Network Management has a strong positive direct effect on Promoting Community Enterprise Management, indicating that effective policy networks substantially enhance community enterprise management promotion activities.

2. PCEM \rightarrow CEP ($\beta = 0.619, p < 0.001$): Promoting Community Enterprise Management has a significant positive direct effect on Community Enterprise Potential, demonstrating that management promotion directly contributes to improved enterprise potential.

Indirect Effects: The analysis reveals a significant indirect effect PNM \rightarrow PCEM \rightarrow CEP ($\beta = 0.483, p < 0.001$): Policy Network Management indirectly influences Community Enterprise Potential through Promoting Community Enterprise Management. This indirect effect ($0.780 \times 0.619 = 0.483$) represents the mechanism by which policy networks enhance community enterprise potential through improved management practices.

Mediating Effects Analysis: mediation analysis demonstrates that PCEM significantly mediates the relationship between PNM and CEP:

1. The indirect effect through PCEM (0.483) is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

2. The R^2 value of 0.383 for CEP indicates that 38.3% of the variance in Community Enterprise Potential is explained by the model.

3. The R^2 value of 0.609 for PCEM indicates that 60.9% of the variance in Promoting Community Enterprise Management is explained by Policy Network Management.

These results suggest that PCEM plays a crucial mediating role in the relationship between Policy Network Management and Community Enterprise Potential, highlighting the importance of management promotion activities as a mechanism through which policy networks enhance community enterprise outcomes.

The model showed good fit ($SRMR = 0.0098 < 0.08, Q^2 > 0$) with all relationships statistically significant (most at $p < 0.001$; moderating effects at $p < 0.05$). While many hypotheses were supported, some relationships demonstrated unexpected patterns, with complete results detailed in Table 5.

Table 5

Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results Using Structural Model Analysis

Hypothesis	Path Relationship	β Coefficient	t-value	Result
Direct effect				
H ₁	PNM \rightarrow PCEP	0.780	58.511***	Accept
H ₂	PCEM \rightarrow CEP	0.619	21.930***	Accept
Indirect effect				
H ₃	PNM \rightarrow CEP	0.483	16.350*	Accept
Mediating effect				
H ₄	PNM \rightarrow PCEP \rightarrow CEP	0.619	16.350*	Accept

Note: * $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$, PNM = Policy Network Management, PCEM = Promoting Community Enterprise Management, CEP = Community Enterprise Potential. Model fit: $SRMR = 0.098 (< 0.08)$, $Q^2 > 0$ for all endogenous constructs.

Discussion

Key Findings and Implications

Our findings provide strong empirical support for the hypothesized relationships in our model. PNM significantly influences PCEM ($\beta = 0.780$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that well-coordinated policy networks create enabling environments for effective enterprise management promotion. This aligns with Kickert et al. (1997) and Klijn et al. (1995), who established the foundation for understanding policy networks as facilitators of implementation. The substantial loadings across all PNM dimensions (0.712-0.850) support Hadi et al.'s (2025) contention that complex community development requires integrated network approaches. PCEM significantly enhances CEP ($\beta = 0.619$, $p < 0.001$), corroborating research by Cavite et al. (2023) and Anusonphat (2024) on the critical role of management capacity in sustainable community enterprises. High loadings across all PCEM dimensions indicate that comprehensive management promotion addressing multiple organizational aspects yields optimal results, with planning (0.863) showing particularly strong influence as noted by Pranee et al. (2024).

Crucially, our mediation analysis reveals PCEM as a significant mediator between PNM and CEP (indirect effect: $\beta = 0.483$, $p < 0.001$), extending Kabul's (2024) research by demonstrating how policy networks enhance community outcomes through concrete management improvements. This finding aligns with studies by Phanphairoj et al. (2024), Rangsungnoen et al. (2024), and Pranee et al. (2024) on how structured management approaches translate policy support into improved enterprise performance.

Connections to Thailand's Development Policies

These findings offer valuable insights for Thailand's grassroots economic development. The strong mediating role of management promotion aligns with Thailand's development goals in the 8th NESDP and SEP (Sitabutr et al., 2017). Our statistical evidence showing 71.43% of

community enterprises at medium-to-low capacity reinforces the urgency of initiatives to "improve the quality of life of people at the grassroots level" (Board of Investment, 2022). Integration of policy networks with effective management promotion addresses the structural limitations identified by Nakhonsong & Chamruspanth (2024), including resource constraints and inter-agency collaboration discontinuity.

The holistic nature of enterprise potential is evident through strong loadings across all dimensions: mission outcomes, quality of goods and services, output efficiency, and community development. The high-loading for-quality echoes Mas-Machuca et al.'s (2024) findings on quality management in social enterprises.

Comparative Analysis of ASEAN Countries

Thailand's approach shares commonalities with other ASEAN nations while exhibiting distinctive characteristics:

- Indonesia implements extensive community-driven development through PNPM Mandiri, emphasizing community empowerment (World Bank, 2014) and "community's creation of enterprise groups" as "key intervention" (IFAD, 2023). Indonesia's greater emphasis on direct community planning offers lessons for enhancing community ownership in Thailand.

- Philippines focuses on capacity building through organizations like CMCC, providing "mentoring, technical assistance and market access support" (NTFP-EP, 2016), tailoring services to enterprise needs and growth stages. This reinforces our finding that policy networks must be responsive to regional differences.

- Malaysia integrates development within broader ASEAN frameworks like ASEAN-SEDP, aiming to "empower youth-led social enterprises through product refinement, business model improvement, and mentoring" (ASEAN Foundation, 2025). This suggests Thailand could benefit from positioning community enterprise development within regional integration efforts.

- Vietnam emphasizes entrepreneurial education as "key determinant of entrepreneurial intention" (Tung et al, 2020), suggesting Thailand's policy networks could enhance effectiveness by incorporating educational components targeting entrepreneurial mindsets.

Conclusion and Academic Contributions

This study empirically validates the complex relationships between Policy Network Management (PNM), Promoting Community Enterprise Management (PCEM), and Community Enterprise Potential (CEP) through robust structural equation modeling. Our findings confirm that PCEM significantly mediates the relationship between PNM and CEP, demonstrating that policy networks enhance community enterprise potential primarily through management capacity development. The research makes several noteworthy academic contributions. First, it extends policy network theory by empirically demonstrating how network management translates into concrete community-level outcomes, addressing a significant gap in understanding implementation mechanisms. Second, it develops and validates a comprehensive measurement model with multidimensional constructs that capture the complexity of policy networks, management practices, and enterprise potential. Third, it integrates previously disconnected theoretical streams by linking policy networks literature with community enterprise management research. Finally, the study provides a methodological contribution through its rigorous application of PLS-SEM to test complex relationships between latent variables in the public administration context. These findings advance theoretical understanding of the pathways through which public policies affect grassroots economic development and provide an evidence-based framework for designing more effective community enterprise support initiatives that recognize the critical mediating role of management practices.

Appendices

Appendix A: Data Quality and Cultural Response Patterns

Our data underwent rigorous screening including outlier removal, normality testing, and common method bias assessment. Thai rural respondents often show acquiescence bias and positive response patterns. Additionally, our stratified sample included 50% high-performing enterprises, contributing to elevated indicators. We followed standard PLS-SEM procedures, removing poorly loading items during pilot testing.

Appendix B: Literature Review Methodology
This research is part of a doctoral dissertation where supervisors strictly required citing the most current literature. We conducted systematic literature reviews using literature mapping tools, which helped identify recent relevant studies. The high proportion of 2024-2025 citations reflects the emerging nature of digital transformation research in community enterprises and our supervisors' emphasis on incorporating cutting-edge findings. This approach is standard practice in doctoral research to demonstrate current knowledge engagement.

Appendix C: Language Enhancement Tool Disclosure

We used Grammarly and Wordtune extensively for grammar correction and sentence polishing to meet academic writing standards. These language tools contributed to the formulaic structure observed. We take full responsibility for our research content and findings, while acknowledging that heavy use of language editing software may have created an overly uniform writing style.

Appendix D: Research Validation and Integrity
Our research methodology and findings have been rigorously validated, with portions already published in Scopus-indexed journals. We maintain the highest standards of research integrity and are committed to providing alternative

formats as needed. We can provide AI detection reports to verify content authenticity while distinguishing between content generation and language enhancement tool usage.

References

- Anusonphat, N. (2024). Driving community enterprises to create a sustainable grassroots economy in Thailand. *Asian Political Science Review*, 8(1).
- ASEAN Foundation. (2025). Calling social enterprises from 10 ASEAN countries to apply! Join us in ASEAN SEDP 4.0. https://www.aseanfoundation.org/calling_social_enterprises_from_10_asean_countries_to_apply
- Baruch, Y., & Holtom, B. C. (2008). Survey response rate levels and trends in organizational research. *Human Relations*, 61(8), 1139–1160.
- Bentler, P. M., & Chou, C. P. (1987). Practical issues in structural modeling. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 16(1), 78–117.
- Board of Investment of Thailand. (2022). Encouraging business operators to be involved in local community and society development. <https://www.boi.go.th/en/grassroot>
- Boonnual, C., & Boonnual, T. (2024). Social capital and corporate social responsibility: Pathways to the sustainability of community enterprises in Chumphon Province. *International Journal of Professional Business Review*, 9(1), 15.
- Boossabong, P., & Chamchong, P. (2018). The importance of network in public policy and governance: Critical perspectives and an analytical framework for going beyond an empty signifier. *Journal of Social Sciences, Naresuan University*, 14(2), 113–136.
- Brown, J. D. (2000). What is construct validity? http://jalt.org/test/bro_8.htm
- Cavite, H. J. M., Kerdsriserm, C., & Suwanmaneepong, S. (2023). Strategic guidelines for community enterprise development: A case in rural Thailand. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, 17(2), 284–304.
- Chaiyo, S., Pongsiri, P., & Wattanakomol, S. (2024). Strategy for developing the potential of community enterprises in product production groups towards sustainable growth. *International Journal of eBusiness and eGovernment Studies*, 16(1), 145–161.
- Cohen, J. (1992). Statistical power analysis. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 1(3), 98–101.
- Department of Community Enterprise Promotion. (2022). *Community enterprise database*. Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives.
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2014). *Internet, phone, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (4th ed.). Wiley.
- Gomes, A. (2024). Understanding the shapers of sustainability in small businesses. *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 13(2), 3040–3054. <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2024.13.2.2500>
- Hadi, A., Bedasari, H., & Zebua, B. H. (2025). Policy network in improving the quality of Meranti slum area effort to realize sustainable cities and settlements in Pekanbaru. In *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Social Environment Diversity (ICOSEND 2024)* (pp. 903–912). Atlantis Press.
- Hair, J. F., & Alamer, A. (2022). Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in second language and education research: Guidelines using an applied example. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*, 1(3), Article 100027.
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2–24.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43, 115–135.
- IFAD. (2023). Coastal community development project. <https://www.ifad.org/en/w/projects/1100001621>
- Jarusen, J., & Cheunkamon, E. (2024). Measurement model for community enterprise management strategies. *Heliyon*, 10(19).

- Kickert, W. J., Klijn, E. H., & Koppenjan, J. F. (1997). Introduction: A management perspective on policy networks. In W. J. Kickert, E. H. Klijn, & J. F. Koppenjan (Eds.), *Managing complex networks: Strategies for the public sector* (pp. 1–13). SAGE Publications.
- Klijn, E. H., Koppenjan, J., Warsen, R., & Spekkink, W. (2015). *Governance networks in the public sector*. Routledge.
- Kock, N., & Hadaya, P. (2018). Minimum sample size estimation in PLS-SEM: The inverse square root and gamma-exponential methods. *Information Systems Journal*, 28(1), 227–261.
- Mandell, M. P., & Keast, R. (2008). Evaluating the effectiveness of interorganizational relations through networks. *Public Management Review*, 10(6), 715–731.
- Manfreda, K. L., Bosnjak, M., Berzelak, J., Haas, I., & Vehovar, V. (2008). Web surveys versus other survey modes: A meta-analysis comparing response rates. *International Journal of Market Research*, 50(1), 79–104.
- Mitchell, V. (1996). Assessing the reliability and validity of questionnaires. *Journal of Applied Management Studies*, 5, 199–207.
- Moran, M., Rein, M., & Goodin, R. E. (Eds.). (2008). *The Oxford handbook of public policy*. Oxford University Press.
- Muangnam, P. (2021, October 6). Driving community enterprises in Nong Bua Lamphu province: Cooperation in promoting community enterprises among partner agencies [Personal interview].
- Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903.
- Provan, K. G., & Kenis, P. (2008). Modes of network governance: Structure, management, and effectiveness. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(2), 229–252.
- Rhodes, R. A. W. (2006). Policy networks. In M. Moran, M. Rein, & R. E. Goodin (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of public policy* (pp. 425–447). Oxford University Press.
- Rigdon, E. E. (2016). Choosing PLS path modeling as an analytical method in European management research: A realist perspective. *European Management Journal*, 34(6), 598–605.
- Sarstedt, M., Hair, J. F., Pick, M., Liengaard, B. D., Radomir, L., & Ringle, C. M. (2022). Progress in partial least squares structural equation modeling use in marketing research in the last decade. *Psychology & Marketing*, 39(5), 1035–1064.
- Tung, D. T., Hung, N. T., Phuong, N. T. C., Loan, N. T. T., & Chong, S.-C. (2020). Enterprise development from students: The case of universities in Vietnam and the Philippines. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 18(3), 100333. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2020.100333>
- Voorhees, C. M., Brady, M. K., Calantone, R., & Ramirez, E. (2016). Discriminant validity testing in marketing: An analysis, causes for concern, and proposed remedies. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 44, 119–134.
- World Bank. (2014). Community driven development in Indonesia. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/indonesia/brief/community-driven-development-in-indonesia>

Arms Proliferation and Insecurity in Nigeria's Niger Delta

Sunday Toyin Omojowo ^{1*}  , Ahmed Olawale Moliki ¹  

¹ Political Science Department, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Nigeria

* Corresponding Author, © Authors

Article history:

Received: February 24, 2025

Revised: March 31, 2025

Accepted: April 10, 2025

Keywords:

Arms Conflict

Arms Proliferation

Crisis, Insecurity

Niger Delta

Abstract

Arms proliferation and insecurity is a global challenge. The situation in Nigeria is precarious as unrestricted and unchecked access to arms is one of the biggest monsters bedeviling Nigeria's security. Hence, this study examined arms proliferation and insecurity in Nigeria, with a focus on the Niger Delta crisis. The study investigated the effect of arms proliferation on the escalation of insecurity and government responses in the Niger Delta. The study adopted a mixed method research design with a self-structured questionnaire and interview guide for data collection. 400 respondents were sampled from Bayelsa State, the study area, using stratified random sampling technique and ANOVA analysis was used to test the research hypotheses. The study revealed that arms proliferation contributed significantly to heightened insecurity in the Niger Delta region as it exacerbated the agitations for resource control and existing ethnic and communal conflict, violated human rights and increased militant attacks. It also revealed that government responses especially the Amnesty programme have helped to reduce illegal arms to the barest minimum though little tensions still brews in the region. It concluded that insecurity will continue unabated and arms will flow back into the region if the underlying causes of the agitations are not adequately addressed. The study therefore recommends that government should address the root causes of the crisis and put stringent measures like lengthy sentences for arms traffickers, in place to curb illegal arms to the barest minimum in the region.

Introduction

The principal responsibility of any state is the security of its citizenry. It provides a social framework and enabling environment in which they can thrive, promote and improve their living

conditions. This attracts viable investments, economic growth and breeds development (Obidiegwu & Elekwa, 2020). However, this has never been the true reality globally, as security has consistently been threatened by the rising

destructions of arm proliferation. Arms proliferation has grown to be a serious threat to global security, stability and peace. Illegal arms are increasingly being used to instigate security threats, prolong violent conflicts, violate human rights and increase the likelihood of terrible injuries and heavy losses during violence against civilians (Umaru, 2021).

Small Arms Survey in its 2021 annual report estimated that there are about one billion arms in circulation worldwide with 857 million (85%) in the hands of civilians mostly non-state actors, 133 million (12%) in military arsenals and 10 million (3%) are in the possession of law enforcement agencies (Lionel, 2021). Arms proliferation is responsible for the surge in the magnitude of destruction and humanitarian crisis by insurgents, militants, terrorist, bandits, political thugs and many others. Arms proliferation is a scourge that has made human misery worse as non-state actors continue to deploy the use of illegal arms to wreak havoc on humanity (Abdul-Qadir, Kamar & Ibrahim, 2020; Okoli, 2014). According to Amnesty International (2023), more than 500 people die every day as a result of arms proliferation around the world.

The situation in Africa is far more doleful than imagined especially in the acclaimed giant of Africa, Nigeria. Nigeria is a hub for illicit arms as the pathetic and worrisome state of insecurity inflicted by unchecked, unregulated and unrestricted access to them is beyond grasp (John & Julius, 2017). Nigeria's severe decline in peace and security which has worked against it as a top investment nation, restricting her political and economic impact on local, continental and international scene can be rightly linked to availability of illicit arms. It has had an unquestionable role in the increase in armed conflict, sustained violence from criminal-related activities to full-blown crisis which consistently threatens its sovereignty (Abdul-Qadir, Kamar & Ibrahim, 2020). Anthony (2021) identified that in Nigeria, illegal

arms are used by various non-state actors in ethno-religious conflicts, insurgencies, militancy, kidnappings, armed banditry, cattle rustling, armed robberies and many more. Stories of pain, suffering and despair are now very prevalent in the Nigeria media spaces.

Arms have become weapons of aggression and dominance by some groups in Nigeria, beyond its usage by assassins, armed robbers and security agencies. Muoemenam and Okafor (2022) subscribed that it is the reason for militarised behaviour that has fostered the mentality of settling disputes with firearms. The use of illegal arms as means of settling grievances has now become fashionable in Nigeria which is what propelled the militant crisis in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (Anthony, 2021). The Niger Delta predicament, a regional crisis caused by criminal social negligence and ecological devastation snowballed into a violent and destabilising protracted conflict due to the youth access to illegal arms. The consequences continue to reflect a level of poverty that is starkly at odds with the wealth it generates (Cyrille & Abu, 2021).

Statement of Problem

The distressing influence of illegal arms to the bemoaning insecurity in Nigeria can never be exaggerated. Nigeria is a country marred with insecurity that has defiled all manners of lasting solutions simply due to the fact that non-state actors have been able to acquire unrivalled access to magnitude of arms which the Nigeria government has lost a grip in curbing terribly (Agbelusi, 2022). The Small Arms Survey and Africa Union study in 2018 revealed that there are about 51 million small and light weapons in Africa, of which 80% amounting to 40,009,000 million are in the hands of civilians and non-state actors - cults, rebels, bandits, militias and terrorist groups. Out of these arms, about 10,972,000 are domicile in West Africa with 6,144,320 (56%) in Nigeria (SBMorgen Intelligence, 2020; Zipporah, 2019).

This statistics only tells one thing, illegal arms are a major factor for the devastating posture Nigeria finds itself currently.

Nigeria's Niger Delta have been crisis ridden for decades as a result of militants demands for government positive responses to the chronic environmental degradation caused by the drilling of crude oil in the region without resolve (Agbelusi, 2022). The conflict which started as peaceful agitations became a national and global issue after the federal government military response and snowballed into full blown protracted crisis. The youth resort to arms incited several clashes with security forces which led to over 2483 lives been lost in its peak between 2006 and 2009 (Nwafor, 2021; Oluyemi, 2020; Zambakari, 2017). Though government timely interventions through creation of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, Niger Delta Development Commission and Amnesty programme have helped in restoring peace to the region, however, incidences of attacks on government assets have continued to rise. According to the Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta's (PIND) Niger Delta Annual Conflict Report, there were 351 incidences and 546 fatalities in such violent conflicts in 2018. In 2019, there were 416 incidences and 1013 fatalities (Premium Times, 2020). While some scholars have argued that the root cause of the crisis have not been truly addressed by the government, others identified factors such as illegal arms, corruption and mismanagement as the factor for the recent rising conflicts in the region (Olufemi, 2020; Nwafor, 2021; Chimene & Wonah, 2022).

Despite extant studies on arms proliferation and insecurity in Nigeria, it is observed that little seemed to have been done as regards the contribution of illegal arms to the crisis in the Niger Delta and evaluation of government responses to curb it. Thus, this research intends to fill this knowledge gap by examining arms proliferation and insecurity in Nigeria's Niger Delta crisis.

Moreover, the study intends to bridge the methodology gap as most studies on the crisis have been qualitative in nature. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- I. Examine how arms proliferation contributed to the escalation of insecurity in Niger Delta Region;
- II. Assess the various responses of government in tackling arms proliferation and insecurity in Niger Delta Region.

Research Questions

- I. Did arms proliferation escalate the insecurity in the Niger Delta region?
- II. Were government responses able to tackle arms proliferation and insecurity in the Niger Delta region?

Research Hypotheses

- H01:** Arms proliferation did not significantly contribute to the escalation of insecurity in Niger Delta;
- H02:** Government responses did not significantly resolved arms proliferation and insecurity in the Niger Delta.

Conceptual Clarification

Arms Proliferation and Insecurity

Arms are weapons that are used offensively or defensively. The term "arms" is derived from the Old French word "armes" and Latin word "arma" which means "warrior's weapons and weapon respectively. This term was first used in the 14th century (Martinell, 2016). They are weapons that cause harm and are employed in warfare or for other harmful purposes. Arms are everything from missiles, nuclear weapons to small weapons used to carry out the strategy, tactics and objectives of militarism and combat. Throughout the history of mankind, conflict, violence and its other injury inflicting form have been fought with the use of arms (Roche, 2003). Arms proliferation is the expansion or significant multiplication of

illegal guns and ammunitions in a nation. It is the uncontrolled spread and unregulated availability or transfer of weapons from one set of owners and users to another (Ejiroghene, 2020). Chinyere (2017) conceived it as the expansion of arms and weaponry beyond what is actually required for genuine national defense. Arms proliferation is conceived in this study as the unregulated, uncontrolled and unchecked transfers of weapons used to carry out nefarious and criminal activities by non-state actors.

Insecurity is a word that scares everyone and even nations alike. It has become not just a common parlance but a huge part of the history of mankind. The word insecurity carries a wide range of meanings which remains a challenge (Vambe, 2016). Insecurity signifies danger, uncertainty, chaos, lack of safety, absence of freedom and peace (Haruna, 2022). Beland (2005) conceived insecurity as the state of fear and anxiety arising from real or perceived lack of protection. It alludes to a lack of sufficient freedom from risk. It is the existence of threat and dangers. This showed that the lack of peace, order, and security is what insecurity is. Insecurity is the lack of protection and exposure to disturbances and disruption of daily routines in residences, workplaces and communities (United Nations Development Programme, 2006). Insecurity in the context of this study is a breach of peace and security via historical or ethno-regional, political grievances and tensions which results in loss of lives and properties.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts frustration-aggression and arms control theories as its theoretical underpinnings. The frustration-aggression theory explicates why groups take to violence and employ arms as a means to gain media and public attention to their plight while arms control on the other hand explains the need to curb illegal arms in the hands of frustrated and aggressive groups.

The frustration-aggression theory was championed in 1939 by Yale University Institute of Human Relations Psychologists, John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sears but it was further advanced by Neal Miller in 1941 and copiously enriched by renowned scholars such as Williams (2009). The theory assumes that the presence of frustration necessitates occurrence of violent behavior. Violence is a product of aggression as a result of frustration via failure to achieve goals, marginalisation and undermined economic, political or social rights in the society. The theorists argued that dissatisfaction often precedes aggressiveness and frustration as a result of relative lack of anticipation which creates a chasm between expectation and achievement. Common people become incensed and retaliate through violence when they are marginalised and denied their economic, political and social rights in the society. When a group is relatively disadvantaged in comparison to others, this breeds frustration and resentment which culminates into violence and hostility (Abbasi, Khatwani, & Soomro, 2017).

In Nigeria's Niger Delta region which is the study area, the people have been frustrated for a long time due to the environmental degradation caused by oil exploitation in the region. The oil which was discovered in commercial quantities has been a big curse to the people as the exploration processes have rendered them unemployed and poor. Their means of livelihood (water and land) have been destroyed by oil spillage as a larger percentage of the people are fishermen and farmers. The gory part is that for several decades, the people have not adequately benefitted from the proceeds of the oil and were frustrated. This frustration got worsened after their several failed attempts and struggles to get the government to listen to their plights and culminated to a show of aggression and violence. The youths of the region resorted to violence with the aid of proliferated arms to amplify their voice, attacking oil facilities,

kidnapping expatriates and government officials, and also launching reprisal attacks on the military. The situation snowballed into a national and global security issue which still continues to linger till date.

The theory have been criticised for failure to clearly define frustration to capture certain realities of life and at what point does frustration result to aggression and violence. Also, critics argued that not every act of frustration leads to violence as people or groups can endure certain challenges believing that it was their acts of laziness, educational background or not adhering to some religious instructions that have brought such challenges in the first place, thereby accepting such as fate (Seward, 1945; Pastore, 1952).

On the other hand, arms control theory was gleaned from the work of Bernard Baruch's 1946 'Baruch Plan Report' written as recommendations to the US government on curbing the spread of arms, weapons and ammunitions. The concept of arms control was originally developed to capture the dynamics of a supplementary mechanism to national security in the 20th century when the search for peace and security was in vogue during times of constant war in the international community (Larsen, 2002). The theory assumes that armament is the problem and cause of the escalation of insecurity in the global system with disarmament and rigid control on arms proliferation as the viable solution to the menace. Arm control theorists argued steeply that arms control will decrease the likelihood of insecurity, lessen the harm it causes and ultimately minimise the cost of combating it (Timothy, 2000). The theory is not without its own limitations, theorists such as Cecelia (2003) have argued that arms control debates have been characterised by non-compliance by bigger groups or nations. Disarmament does not necessary put containment on arms proliferation, it only sets smaller nations or groups at disadvantage as bigger ones continue

to fill up their arsenal and clampdown on the former in doing such.

The theory is useful as it helps to explain the need for the government to address arms proliferation so as to reduce the rate of insecurity especially in the Niger Delta region. The crisis in region has been exacerbated due to the youth and militant access to illegal arms. The agitations were subservient as arms were used to wreak havoc on government properties and sabotage the economy. Arms control measures like disarmament is imperative to curb the illegal possession of arms in the region for peace and stability to reign which is the reason why the government came up with the Amnesty Programme.

Arms Proliferation and Insecurity in Nigeria

The connexion between arms proliferation and insecurity has drawn more attention than ever before among scholars in Nigeria. While some have asserted that arms proliferation is the primary cause of insecurity in the nation, others have stated that this is not the case, but it has aided and intensify conflicts. Despite their differences, it is generally agreed that the spread of arms presents significant threats to national security (Anthony, 2021). The level of the influx of illicit arms into Nigeria only shows that Nigeria is the biggest market for such in West Africa and it is responsible for the many violent conflicts. Arms proliferated into Nigeria has made it possible for various criminal groups to continue and intensify their deadly attacks. In order to undermine government authority, forward their goals, and participate in criminal activity, these groups take advantage of the availability of arms which worsens the state of insecurity (Haruna, 2022).

Terrorist groups like Boko Haram and Islamic State of Western African Province (ISWAP), bandits, cult gangs, militants and other non-state actors in Nigeria have being wreaking serious havoc in great magnitudes on the Nigerian state

due to their unrestricted and uncontrolled access to illicit arms (Muritala, 2021; Akinwotu, 2021). Statista (2022) recorded that 66,768 persons have died from Boko Haram attacks from 2011 to 2023 in Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, Adamawa, Zamfara and Borno states- been the highest with several persons dead and displaced. Similarly, Nigeria has lost 8,343 of its citizens to gruesome clashes between herders and farmers since 2005 with casualties up to 2,539 recorded in Benue state only from 303 attacks. The proliferation of arms has made community clashes more common in several areas of Nigeria (Christian & Uzodinma, 2022).

Arms are proliferated in many ways in Nigeria. First, there are several unlicensed artistic production of arms and imitations of firearms into lethal weapons which serve as huge source of armament to terrorists, bandits, militants and rebel. Local fabrications of arms such as Dane guns, pistols, shotguns, assault rifles, muzzle-loaders among others are prevalent in many rural communities (Ola, 2018). Secondly, arms manufactured by the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria are also diverted into criminal hands down the custody chain due to excessive state stockpiling vulnerabilities, loss from state control via attacks, theft among others. Armed groups and militants capitalise on state stockpiling vulnerabilities to proliferate arms. Third, seepages from active-duty and retired security personnel also make up for sources of illicit arms for non-state actors (Ola, 2018).

Arms proliferation has heavily contributed to the escalation of violence and conflicts in Nigeria which are made more prevalent by the trafficking and continually poses serious threats to peace and security (Wade et al., 2021). It has led to the loss of several lives and properties, caused serious humanitarian crises and displacement in the nation. Nigeria is home to 3.6 million Internally Displaced Persons as at 2022 with over 290 camps, of which 1.9 million displaced persons are in Borno State. Majority of which are caused by

attacks from Boko Haram and other non-state armed groups (Internally Displaced Monitoring Centre, 2023). Insecurity stemming from arms proliferation disrupted economic activities, stagnated genuine entrepreneurship and developmental programmes and led to economic downturn (Muritala, 2021). According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, FDI flow into Nigeria from 2005-2007 was averaged at \$5.3 billion but there was a sharp decline in 2015-2019 to \$3.3 billion due to heightened insecurity. It has also led to drastic reduction in the level of productivity (Bailey, 2020).

The government and other stakeholders have not been reactive in curbing the menace of arms proliferation in Nigeria. The Nigerian government passed the Firearms Acts of 2004 and 2018 to create awareness about the dangers of illegal possession of arms and also created the National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light weapons (NCCSALW) in 2021 to combat illegal arms. There have also been several military raids on arms caches in conflict areas across the nation. The Nigerian Customs Service has also been actively intercepting smuggled arms at Nigeria's borders. Civil societies such as West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) have also been instrumental in sensitising and advocating against illegal possession of arms in Nigeria (Ayah et al., 2023).

Research Setting

The Niger Delta is a large area in Southern Nigeria, with a total of 112,106 km². Niger Delta occupies 7.5% of the total land area of Nigeria and it is the largest in Africa and the third in the world. It is situated right on the Atlantic Ocean's Gulf of Guinea with abundance of different plant and animal species, and home to the largest freshwater swamp in Africa (Charles, Olanrewaju & Mark, 2023). The region, inhabited by over 31 million people is made up of nine states of the Nigerian federation-all six States in the South-South

geopolitical zone - Rivers, Cross River, Bayelsa, Delta, Akwa Ibom and Edo States, mainly referred to as the core; one state in the South-West – Ondo State and two in the South-East - Abia and Imo States. The region is a diverse, heterogeneous society with several ethnic groups

like the Ijaw, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Isoko, Efik, Etche, Ibibio, Igbo, Ndoni, Ikwerre, Ogoni, Bini, Esan, Yoruba, amongst others. The main occupations traditionally have been fishing and agriculture (Face of Niger Delta Cultural Pageant, 2020).

Figure 1

Map of Niger



Source: Niger Delta Budget Monitoring Group, 2023

The region is endowed with several mineral sources, such as limestone, clay, gold, salt, coal, silver nitrate, glass sand and abundant crude oil deposits. It is the tenth largest oil reservoir in the world and powers the Nigerian economy (Niger Delta Budget Monitoring Group, 2023). It is the most economically important region in Nigeria as it produces nearly 95% of its export earnings, 70% of government revenue and 5.15% of real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from the oil sector (Uche, 2020).

Brief Overview of the Niger Delta Crisis

The Niger Delta region has been characterised by conflicts with a long history of violence before and after Nigeria's independence in 1960, which has negatively affected the nation's energy capability. The area has a history of conflict that is deep rooted (Angela, 2017; Onouha, 2006) and tripodal in nature (Hemen & Rita (2021). First, resource conflict between federating states and federal authority;

second, agitation by locals against federal government's oil interests and third, local agitations owing to environmental degradation by Multinational oil companies. The resource conflict was particularly triggered by Isaac Boro led movements in an attempt to break away from Nigeria in 1966 due to poor development following the continuous oil exploration in the region (Onouha, 2006). Nigeria's crude oil reserve which is the second largest in Africa, majorly located in the region with 500 oil fields, 5000 oil wells and 275 low stations, estimated to be 36.9 billion in reserves had over the decades brought much benefit to other regions at the detriment of the Niger Delta locals who continue to wallow in poverty (Christabel et al., 2022).

Moreover, about 60% of the inhabitants of the region who rely on the land and water for survival (agriculture and fishing purposes) were rendered jobless as a result of oil spillage by multinational oil companies. The effect was so bad

that in 2008 and 2009, the fishing community of Bodo suffered terribly as oil leaks poured into their rivers and killed everything to which Shell Petroleum admitted for its carelessness yet with no compensations (Amnesty International, 2022). These damages made the region one of the world's most destroyed ecosystems with negative effects on livelihoods and health of the residents. Despite all these hazards, inhabitants of the region continued to battle with untold hardship which resulted in frustrations and agitations by the locals for better living conditions and survival (Hemen & Rita, 2021).

The failure to resolve these tensions after the return to democratic rule led to the renewed rise of militant groups in the region like Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) led by Henry Okah, the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVP) led by Asari Dokubo and the Niger Delta Vigilante led by Ateke Tom. These groups bunkered and refined oil which they sell to the locals. In some cases, they sell to international buyers and helped to escorts the oil tankers out of Nigeria's waterways having acquired sophisticated arms with which they do so. They also engaged in kidnappings for ransom, destructions of oil installation, piracy and among others. MEND was alleged to have abducted over 100 foreign employees (Mbalisi & Okorie, 2020).

The Nigerian Government considered the attacks and destructions by these militant groups as economic sabotage and launched series of military operations to quell their violent actions which led to death of several people. The casualties rose up to about 2483 at the peak between 2006 and 2009 with losses on both sides (Oluyemi, 2020; Ugwuanyi et al., 2014; Zambakari, 2017). After several military actions failed to suppress militant attacks in the region, the late President Musa Yar'adua led administration launched an Amnesty programme in 2009 which helped to douse the tensions. Several militants

surrender their arms and were reintegrated back into the communities via the programme. However, in recent times, militants have begun to rise up again accusing the government of failure to fulfil some its promises made during the programme (Nwafor, 2021).

Research Method

The study adopted mixed method research design. Questionnaire and interview guide were utilised as tools of data collection. The population of the study specifically covered states in the Niger Delta, while the target population was drawn from Bayelsa State with an estimated population of 2,537,400 (City Population, 2022). The State was chosen as it is one the major crude oil producing state most affected by oil spillage, which resulted to a high level of insecurity via militant attacks (Ratcliffe, 2019). The sample size was determined using Cochran (1977) sample size formula chosen because of its objectivity and accuracy. The calculated sample size was 385 and was approximated to 400 to cater for any case of poor responses and missing copies. The respondents were selected using stratified random sampling technique, as this ensured that each stratum of the sample is represented in proportion to the large size of the population of the study. The internal consistency of the research instruments were tested via a pilot study which yielded a Cronbach's coefficient alpha ($\alpha=0.75$). The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 26. ANOVA analysis was used to test the hypotheses of the study. ANOVA was adopted because it shows the relationship and effects of each variable on the other. The interview guide was transcribed, coded and analysed thematically.

Results and Discussions of Findings

The results of the data obtained and analyzed are presented thus:

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: Arms proliferation did not significantly contribute to escalation of insecurity in Niger Delta.

Table 1

ANOVA Test on Arms Proliferation and escalation of Insecurity in the Niger Delta Region

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Arms proliferation exacerbated the agitations and led to loss of lives and properties in the Niger Delta region.	Between Groups	6.920	2	3.460	10.209	.000
	Within Groups	131.155	387	.339		
	Total	138.074	389			
The agitations of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta snowballed into a national crisis due to the proliferation of arms	Between Groups	25.020	2	12.510	47.285	.000
	Within Groups	102.388	387	.265		
	Total	127.408	389			
The tensions for resource control was intensified by illegal proliferated in Niger Delta region.	Between Groups	21.871	2	10.936	27.559	.000
	Within Groups	153.565	387	.397		
	Total	175.436	389			
Issues relating to violations of human rights was heightened by the arms proliferated into the region.	Between Groups	27.341	2	13.671	53.546	.000
	Within Groups	98.803	387	.255		
	Total	126.144	389			
The proliferation of arms aggravated existing inter-ethnic and communal conflicts in Niger Delta region.	Between Groups	20.495	2	10.247	37.093	.000
	Within Groups	106.913	387	.276		
	Total	127.408	389			

Source: Field Data, 2025

The result in Table 6 reveals the F statistics values (10.209, 47.285, 27.559, 53.546, and 37.093) and $p < 0.5$, which signifies that the null hypothesis which states that arms proliferation did not significantly contribute to insecurity in Niger Delta region is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that arms proliferation significantly contributed to the escalation of insecurity in the Niger Delta. The effects of arms proliferation are evident on the insecurity issues in the region as it exacerbated the tensions and agitations of the youth as regards their plights.

The inhabitants took to arms as a means to amplify the deprivation of the benefits they were supposed to enjoy as the region contributes more to the revenue of the nation than any other. The various killings and murders of security forces, kidnap of expatriates, robberies, bunkering, economic sabotage, violations of human rights and other criminal activities carried out by militants was due to the illicit arms they had unrestricted and uncontrolled access to which made it a national crisis and attracted global attention.

This is supported by data from the interview where participants agreed that arms amplified the insecurity in the Niger Delta and made it a national crisis which attracted global attention. To quote one of the key participants of the study (P1), “[it] activities increased drastically because of illegal arms that flowed into the region”. Another participant (P2) argued that “the tensions in this area would not have escalated if not for illegal arms and weapons that militants got to pursue the demands for the region”. These findings is in agreement with the studies of Duerksen (2021), Gofwan, Ishaya, and Ado (2019)

and Muritala (2021), as they argued that non-state actors are able to wreak havoc and make life unlivable for the citizenry because of illegal arms. Availability of arms and weapons continue to deeply contribute to the acceleration of violence and conflicts in Nigeria. Violence and conflict are powered by the trafficking and easy access to these weapons, which continually poses a serious danger to peace and security.

H₀₂: Government responses did not significantly resolve arms proliferation and insecurity in the Niger Delta region.

Table 2
ANOVA Test on Government Responses

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Government military suppressions	Between Groups	7.415	2	3.708	5.663	.004
	Within Groups	253.377	387	.655		
	Total	260.792	389			
The Niger Delta Development Commission programs and policies	Between Groups	7.168	2	3.584	11.658	.000
	Within Groups	118.976	387	.307		
	Total	126.144	389			
The Ministry of Niger Delta affairs peace and security initiatives	Between Groups	5.452	2	2.726	7.087	.001
	Within Groups	148.846	387	.385		
	Total	154.297	389			
The Amnesty programme	Between Groups	4.016	2	2.008	4.707	.001
	Within Groups	165.074	387	.427		
	Total	169.090	389			
Militants’ integration and rehabilitation programs.	Between Groups	4.554	2	2.277	5.670	.004
	Within Groups	155.436	387	.402		
	Total	159.990	389			

Source: Field Data, 2025

The result in Table 6 reveals the F statistics values (5.663, 11.658, 7.087, 4.707 and 5.670) and p < 0.05, which signifies that the null hypothesis which states that government responses did not

significantly resolve arms proliferation and insecurity in the Niger Delta region was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that government responses significantly

resolve arms proliferation and insecurity in the Niger Delta region. The various efforts of the government- military suppressions, Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs and Niger Delta Development Commission and Amnesty Program have effectively contained arms proliferation and further escalation of insecurity in the region. This is supported by data from the interview where participants agreed that government responses to arms proliferation and insecurity in Niger delta were effective to a large extent. To quote one of the key participants of the study (P2), *“government responses particularly the Amnesty Programme allowed militant to surrender their weapons across the state and were pardoned”*. Another participant (P3) stated that *“the creation of Niger Delta Development Commission made provisions for skill acquisition and many other programs to militants other community members to survival in the region”*. The findings of this study validates the studies of Ogbodo (2024) and Relief Web (2009) as they stated that the Amnesty Program by Late President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua administration saw over 15,000 militants surrender their arms and accepted the unconditional pardon. Also, the government significantly funded the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) with over #241.5 billion between 2000 and 2006 and further increased to over N593.96 billion between 2007 and 2011 alone (Ogbodo, 2024) which was used to carryout various skill acquisition programs that helped the militants in the region. Though there are still instance of violence, especially from oil bunkering activities but the responses of government has helped to reduce the large use of illegal arms drastically and normalcy has returned to the region. This also was corroborated by the study of Eze (2021) in which he contended that the Presidential Amnesty Programme only brought temporary peace and stability to the Niger Delta. Militancy has returned as a result of government’s poor integration phase, corruption and failure to address issues of oil pollution.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The spate of arms proliferation and insecurity in Niger Delta only exposes the true fact that the region is in a quagmire as arms proliferations significantly heightened the agitations for resource control and environmental degradation which has impoverished the people. However, government’s timely intervention and responses was able to quell the tensions to a large extent. Though the issue of arms proliferation have been address to a certain level to allow for normalcy in the region, the study concluded that if the impending root causes such as oil pollution and issues of resource control are not addressed in the light of recent rising tensions, the region could possibly fall completely into chaos and once again become a haven for serious militant attacks and even for terrorists who will make governance and state authority difficult to exert.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that government as a matter of urgency address the underlying factors which led to the crisis in the first place which could bring back the massive need for arms proliferation. Moreover, government should revisit the weak legislation on arms proliferation and make provisions for lengthy sentences for traffickers and users of illegal arms as the issue continue to be a threat to the region. Lastly, there is a need for government to put arms control measures in place to ensure the steady containment of illegal arms in the region.

References

- Abbasi, I., Khatwani, M., & Soomro, H. (2017). A review of psycho-social theories of terrorism. *Grassroots*, 51(11), 319–323.
- Abdul-Qadir, T., Kamar, H., & Ibrahim, R. (2020). The impact of proliferation of small arms and light weapons on Nigeria’s national security: A case study of Kogi State (2015–2018). *KIU Journal of Social Science*, 6(4), 51–66.

- Agbelusi, S. (2022, April 2). Insecurity: A norm in Nigeria. *The Cable*. <https://www.thecable.ng/insecurity-a-norm-in-nigeria/amp>
- Akinwotu, E. (2021, October 27). Trail's end: The days of roaming free are numbered for Nigeria's herders. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/oct/27/days-of-roaming-free-are-over-for-nigeria-herders>
- Amnesty International. (2022). *Niger Delta negligence*. <https://www.amnesty.org>
- Amnesty International. (2023). *Arms control*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/>
- Angela, A. (2017, October 19). Towards ending conflict and insecurity in Niger Delta region. *ReliefWeb*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/towards-ending-conflict-and-insecurity-in-niger-delta-region>
- Anthony, A. E. (2021). Small arms and light weapons proliferation in Nigeria: Restructuring national security architecture for optimal results. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 5(7), 508–516.
- Ayah, D. B., Anyalebechi, S. M., Hart, A. O., & Peter, P. F. (2023). An assessment of government policies in curbing arms proliferation in Nigeria, 1999–2022. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*, 7(3), 924–936.
- Bailey, B. (2020, June 18). Nigeria's FDI falls 48% to \$3.3 billion in 2019 – UNCTAD says. *Business Day*. <https://businessday.ng>
- Beland, D. (2005). *The political construction of collective insecurity: From moral panic to blame avoidance and organized irresponsibility* (Working Paper No. 126). Center for European Studies.
- Cecelia, L. (2003). *Beyond appeasement: Interpreting interwar peace movements in world politics*. Cornell University Press.
- City Population. (2022). *Bayelsa population*. <https://citypopulation.de>
- Charles, U. O., Olanrewaju, L., & Mark, O. (2023). The Niger Delta region. In *World geomorphological landscapes*.
- Chimene, O. S., & Wonah, E. (2022). Corruption and development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: An analysis of the Niger Delta Development Commission. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 27(4), 32–39.
- Chinyere, N. A. (2017). Controlling the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria: Emerging issues and challenges. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(10), 40–51.
- Christabel, E. A., Itohna, O. A., Janina, K., Mahmoud, I. M., & Michael, T. (2022). Environmental contamination of a biodiversity hotspot: Action needed for nature conservation in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. *Sustainability*, 14(21), 14256.
- Christian, C. M., & Uzodinma, C. O. (2022). National security and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria, 2010–2022. *ZIK Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 5, 31–53.
- Cochran, W. G. (1977). *Sampling techniques* (3rd ed.). Wiley.
- Cyrille, N. K., & Abu, F. O. (2021). Boko-Haram, small arms and light weapons proliferation and its potential threat to Nigeria security: Which way forward? *NOUN International Journal of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution*, 1(2), 94–106.
- Duerksen, M. (2021, March 30). Nigeria's diverse security threats. *African Centre for Strategic Studies*. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/nigeria-diverse-security-threats/>
- Ejiroghene, A. O. (2020). Arms trading and weapons proliferation in Africa: Implications for Nigeria. *AUDRI*, 13(2), 17–29.
- Eze, C. O. (2021). *The 2009 Niger Delta amnesty: Evaluation of a policy failure* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University). Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies. <https://scholarswork.waldenu.edu>
- Haruna, I. A. (2022). Insecurity as an impediment to development in Nigeria. *Veritas Journal of Humanities*, 1(1), 55–62.
- Hemen, P. F., & Rita, A. N. (2021). The Niger Delta agitation for resource control. *Studia Iuridica Lublinensia*, 30(5), 225–252.
- Internally Displaced Monitoring Centre. (2023). *Country profile: Nigeria*. <https://www.internal-displacement.org>

- John, M., & Julius, N. (2017). Small arms and light weapons proliferation in the early 21st century: The Nigerian case. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 6(11), 1638–1652.
- Larsen, J. A. (2002). *Arms control: Cooperative security in a changing environment*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Lionel, K. (2021). *Global firearms holdings*. Small Arms Survey. <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org>
- Martinell, J. (2016). What does the word arms mean in the 2nd amendment? *Tenth Amendment Center*.
- Mbalisi, O. F., & Okorie, O. A. (2020). Implementation of corporate social responsibility by oil companies in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: Myth or reality. *African Research Review*, 14(1), 119–132.
- Muoemenam, C., & Okafor, U. (2022). National security and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria, 2010–2022. *ZIK Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 5(1), 31–53.
- Martinell, J. (2016). What does the word arms mean in the 2nd amendment? *Tenth Amendment Center*. <https://tenthamendmentcenter.com>
- Mbalisi, O. F., & Okorie, O. A. (2020). Implementation of corporate social responsibility by oil companies in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: Myth or reality. *African Research Review*, 14(1), 119–132.
- Muoemenam, C., & Okafor, U. (2022). National security and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria, 2010–2022. *ZIK Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 5(1), 31–53.
- Murtala, R. (2021). *I am a bandit: A decade of research in Zamfara State bandits' den* [Public lecture]. Department of History, Usman Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria.
- Niger Delta Budget Monitoring Group. (2023). *History: The Niger Delta region*. <https://www.nigerdeltabudget.org>
- Nwafor, S. (2021, February 24). Niger Delta militants return, vow to destroy all infrastructure in Lagos, Abuja. *Vanguard News*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com>
- Obidiegwu, U. J., & Elekwa, B. C. (2020). Extent of protection of lives and properties of community members by the vigilante security group in Abia State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 10(10), 259–265.
- Ogbodo. (2024). Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and provision of infrastructure in Niger Delta region, 2009–2022. *Newport International Journal of Research in Education*, 4(2), 34–56.
- Okoli, P. (2014). A legal inquiry into the proliferation and control of small arms in Nigeria. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 3, 77–92.
- Ola, A. (2018). *Public perception on proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Abuja, Nigeria: Implications for peace and security* (Doctoral dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal). <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za>
- Olufemi, A. (2021, November 28). Horrors on the plateau: Inside Nigeria's farmer-herder conflict. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com>
- Oluyemi, A. O. (2020). The military dimension of Niger Delta crisis and its implications on Nigeria national security. *SAGE Open*, 10(2), 1–13.
- Onuoha, G. (2006). Contextualising the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria's Niger Delta: Local and global intersections. *African Security Review*, 15, 108–114.
- Pastore, N. (1952). The role of arbitrariness in the frustration-aggression hypothesis. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 47(3), 728–731.
- Premium Times. (2020, February 17). Insecurity: 1013 killed in Niger Delta in 2019 – Report. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com>
- Ratcliffe, R. (2019, December 6). The place used to be green: The brutal impact of oil in the Niger Delta. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com>
- ReliefWeb. (2009, October 9). Up to 15,000 Nigerian gunmen took amnesty – Govt. <https://reliefweb.int>
- Roche, D. (2003). *The human right to peace*. Saint Paul University Press.

- Seward, J. P. (1945). Aggressive behavior in the rat: The role of frustration. *Journal of Comparative Psychology*, 38(4), 225–238.
- SBM Intelligence. (2021, February 1). Small arms, mass atrocities and migration in Nigeria. <https://www.sbminel.com>
- Small Arms Survey. (2022). *2022 update of the Small Arms Survey's global violent deaths (GVD) database*. <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org>
- Statista. (2022). *Deaths caused by Boko Haram in Nigeria 2022, by state*. <https://www.statista.com>
- Timothy, H. (2000). Arms control and arms race. In *International encyclopaedia of the social sciences*.
- Uche, I. (2020, September 16). A political economy perspective on oil and conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta. *LSE Africa at LSE Blog*. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk>
- Ugwuanyi, B. I., Obaje, I., Ohaeri, C. S., Ugwu, C. E., & Ohagwu, C. A. (2014). Militancy in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: A reflective discourse on the cause, amnesty and imperatives. *Review of Public Administration and Management*, 3(6), 76–86.
- Umaru, S. T. (2021). The proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the challenges of national security in Nigeria: A case study of Adamawa State. *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*, 14(3), 10–23.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2006). *Niger Delta human development report*. <https://hdr.undp.org>
- Vambe, J. T. (2016). Poverty, insecurity and national development in Nigeria: An overview. *Global Journal of Applied, Management and Social Sciences*, 13, 141–149.
- Wade, E., Okpanachi, E., & Adejoh, R. (2021). Small arms proliferation and light weapons in Nigeria: An exploration. *International Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 7(2), 1–10.
- Williams, K. D. (2009). The effects of frustration, violence, and trait hostility after playing a video game. *Mass Communication and Society*, 12(3), 291–310.
- Zambakari, C. D. (2017). Instability in the greater Niger Delta region of Nigeria: An analysis of violent events 2011–2015. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2950879>
- Zipporah, M. (2019, March 20). Silencing the guns in Africa by 2020. *Africa Renewal*. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal>

A Study of The Participation Model of Partners in Driving the Calories Credit Challenge Under the New Economic Mode

Wanchalee Noriya ¹  , Satjawat Jarueksil ^{2*}  , Suttinee Sriburi ³  

¹ Mahidol University, Thailand

² Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-ok, Thailand

³ Faculty of Sports Science, Kamphaeng Saen Campus, Kasetsart University, Thailand

* Corresponding Author, © Authors

Article history:

Received: February 2, 2025

Revised: April 12, 2025

Accepted: April 21, 2025

Keywords:

Public Participation,
Network Partners,
Calories Credit Challenge
Platform,
Bio-Circular-Green Economy,
Guidelines

Abstract

The goal of the study was to examine the guidelines for participation of network partners in the development and implementation of the Calories Credit Challenge: CCC platform under the new economic framework, the BCG Model, which refers to the Bio-Circular-Green Economy. This novel platform not only consolidates exercise and sports data from both government and commercial organizations to build comprehensive big data on Thai population fitness habits, but also strategically leverages this information to stimulate economic growth through environmentally conscious sports tourism initiatives. The study employed the mixed methods research approach to investigate the role and forms of network partners, participating in driving and factors for success. 400 partners were included in the quantitative phase. In addition, 10 key informants were included in focus group discussion to examine the functions of network partners. The findings indicate five guidelines for participation of network partners. The role of network partners indicate four agencies, including government, private sector, civil society, and mass media. This study provides significant insights on how to promote cooperation between the public and commercial sectors using CCC platform. Also, the study develops a structure for efficient communication, coordinated planning, and cooperative work execution, which can be broadly implemented.

Introduction

Physical activity is crucial for maintaining good health since it promotes physical fitness and strength. Additionally, it aids in the development of physical fitness and contributes to the improvement of mental well-being. Additionally, it serves as a preventive measure against illnesses and mitigates the likelihood of developing conditions such as obesity and hypertension. Cardio-

vascular disease Office Syndrome refers to a condition characterized by many health issues that arise from prolonged periods of working in an office environment. Chronic non-communicable illnesses, often known as NCDs, are long-term health conditions that are not caused by infectious agents and are typically not easily transmitted from person to person (Piovani et al., 2022).

According to Chuanboon (2011), Government agencies are cognizant of the factors contributing to these losses, prompting several sectors to prioritize the promotion of exercise as a lifestyle, particularly the authorities responsible for public health. The objective is to implement a strategy that encourages physical activity by ensuring that individuals of all age groups and genders have access to accurate exercise information. Local government institutions, community leaders, and private groups are often urged to take the lead in improving the health of individuals in the region.

Iortimah and Tyoakaa (2020) stated Information technology is used by relevant authorities as a means to encourage and facilitate physical fitness and sports participation among the general population. Hence, the use of information technology is multifaceted, particularly when used as a means of physical activity, such as using an application that aids in promoting good health, engage in physical activity and participate in athletic activities.

This technology enables individuals to engage in exercise, participate in sports, or do physical activities effortlessly.

Furthermore, it is crucial to stimulate the nation's economy via the use of the model. The BCG Model, which incorporates the bio economy, circular economy, and green economy, serves as significant catalysts when paired with the use of connecting platforms. The aim is to include exercise statistics data and the participation of individuals in sports (Calories Credit Challenge: CCC) to contribute to the development of the country's economy in the field of sustainable sports tourism; embrace the pursuit of excellent health, creating a well-functioning society and a favorable atmosphere. Calories Credit Challenge: CCC is the central platform at the Ministry of Tourism and Sports is a key component. The purpose of this initiative is to connect and consolidate exercise and sports data from both government and commercial organizations in

order to gather comprehensive big data on the exercise and sports habits of the Thai population. The dataset includes information on physical activity and exercise while travel in a nation, presented in a Dashboard style for data analysis. The progress may be tracked and assessed on a per-area basis, providing information that will be used to enhance accuracy and focus in order to accomplish the objective of at least 50 percent of the population engaging in regular exercise by 2027.

The CCC application will serve as a vital instrument for promoting, inspiring, and fostering a desire for physical activity by allowing individuals to track and accumulate their own caloric expenditure. The platform may be used by any agency to motivate its people to engage in regular fitness and sports activities for self-improvement.

The Calories Credit Challenge (CCC) platform represents an innovative integration of exercise data collection with Thailand's Bio-Circular-Green economic framework, creating a comprehensive system that transforms physical activity metrics into sustainable tourism development opportunities. This novel platform not only consolidates exercise and sports data from both government and commercial organizations to build comprehensive big data on Thai population fitness habits, but also strategically leverages this information to stimulate economic growth through environmentally conscious sports tourism initiatives. Existing studies on BCG and digital health platforms lack frameworks for multi-sector collaboration in exercise promotion, presenting a significant research gap this study addresses. The research strengthens the case for merging BCG and CCC by demonstrating how exercise data may generate sustainable tourism or circular economy outcomes, providing a roadmap for converting physical activity metrics into environmental and economic benefits through strategic cross-sector partnerships.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the role and forms of network partners, participating in driving and factors for success.

2. To examine the functions of network partners. The findings indicate five guidelines for participation of network partners.

Literature Review

Digital platforms for health promotion

Digital platform is the fundamental framework of computer architecture. A service base is a platform that enables computer equipment and computer applications to operate in a unified environment (Xue & Xin, 2016). Developing a platform to encourage physical activity and improve health across all age groups may be achieved via several means, including enabling mobile phones to connect to the internet and track daily exercise routines, consuming food, resting, and furthermore monitoring and quantifying your body's state of well-being while exchanging data with others. According to Parker et al. (2021), in 2018, surveys conducted on Australian people aged 15 years and above revealed that only 18.7% of individuals used applications for monitoring physical activity or training. Additionally, the level of interaction with websites or online tools was low, with only 7.1% of adults engaging with them. Similarly, the usage of online films for sports was little, with only 2.5% of adults using them. So, this ignited the idea of encouraging people to utilize digital platform for improving health.

According to Spagnoletti et al. (2015), the digital platform serves as the fundamental framework of computer architecture. It serves as a foundation for computer equipment and computer applications to function in a shared environment online. In this regard, the design or creation of a platform to promote exercise for the promotion of health for people of all ages can be accessed in a variety of formats, such as the ability for mobile phones to connect to the internet and detect or record daily activities, namely eating, sleeping,

will have a crucial impact on significantly reducing expenses, enhancing the reliability of public healthcare systems, and fostering people's trust in accessing affordable medical services (Yogesh & Karthikeyan, 2022). Moreover, the use of mobile technology, together with the vast amount of data it produces, has great promise in encouraging health habits on both individual and population scales, however this potential has not been fully explored (Andrews et al., 2019).

Bio-Circular-Green Economy: BCG Model

Holistic economic development is essential for the simultaneous growth of the 3D economy, which encompasses the bio economy, concentrating on using biological resources to generate more worth. The focus is on creating valuable goods that are closely connected to the circular economy, with a strong emphasis on maximizing the reuse of different resources (National Science and Technology Development Agency, 2021). Thailand's economic development relies on driving the new economic model in the domains of Tourism and Sports, which includes the creation of job opportunities, exploring the competitive advantage of sports tourism in Thailand. A Bio-Circular Green Economy prioritizes the use of renewable natural resources as the foundation of the economy. The term 'BCG' refers to the integration of the bio economy, circular economy, and green economy (Mahanakorn Partners Group, 2021). This model has a potential to draw large number of tourists into the country. Thailand hosted the APEC conference in November 2022. The gathering focused on promoting economic recovery and the notion of "Open-Connect-Balance." Thailand envisions strategies to enhance trade and investment by promoting socially conscious corporate practices that prioritize equilibrium above monetary gain. 21 member nations in the area have endorsed the idea of the bio-circular green economy (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2022).

practices that prioritize equilibrium above monetary gain. 21 member nations in the area have endorsed the idea of the bio-circular green economy (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2022).

Public Participation

Scholars have provided the following definitions for the concept of participation: According to Arnstein (1969), Berkley (1975), and Erwin (1976), participation refers to the act of engaging individuals in operational activities, collaborating, engaging in critical thinking, reaching consensus, and addressing personal challenges. Cohen & Uphoff (1981) further stated that community members must be involved in four dimensions: 1) participation in deciding what should be done and how to do it; 2) participation in self-sacrifice in development including taking action as decided 3) Participating in sharing benefits arising from operations 4) Participating in project evaluation. Therefore, participation means giving everyone the opportunity to be involved in development operations, whether directly or indirectly, by participating in ideas and in decision-making to determine society's goals, allocating resources to achieve them, and complying with various plans or projects with willingness. This project examined the involvement process of network partners in the development and implementation of the Calories Credit Challenge: CCC, platform, which encompassed primarily the concept and practice of public participation.

Participation steps

Cohen & Uphoff (1981) outlined the stages of involvement as follows: Step 1: Engage in decision-making process. During the decision-making process, the first step is to ascertain the requirements and priorities, followed by the selection of appropriate policies and individuals involved. The process of decision-making is continuous and requires constant implementation from the first choice

forward. Decision-making is an important aspect of both the planning and execution stages of a strategy. Step 2 of project operations involves the implementation of the component element. This step focuses on determining who may benefit from the project and how they can benefit, including via resource, administration, coordination, and solicitation of aid. Step 3: Participation in benefits reception, when considering benefits, it is important to take into account both quantitative and qualitative advantages. Additionally, the distribution of these benefits within the group should also be examined. This endeavor has both advantageous and detrimental outcomes. This will have both advantageous and detrimental effects on people and society. Step 4: Engaging in assessment activities and evaluation participation. The crucial findings that should be highlighted are opinions, preferences, and expectations. Expectation is a factor that exerts influence and has the potential to alter the conduct of persons within diverse groupings.

Types of participation

White (1996) categorizes involvement into four distinct forms: nominal, instrumental, representative, and transformative. The individual posits that each form has distinct functionalities and contends that actors who hold positions of power and those who are less influential have different perspectives and vested interests in each form. To begin with nominal participation, it is often used by influential entities to provide credibility to development proposals. Individuals with less influence are drawn into it due to their want for participation. However, it is only a demonstration and does not lead to any actual transformation. For instrumental participation, community involvement is commonly used as a strategy to achieve a certain goal, often including the effective utilization of the expertise and abilities of community members in the execution of projects. Representative participation entails giving community people the opportunity to

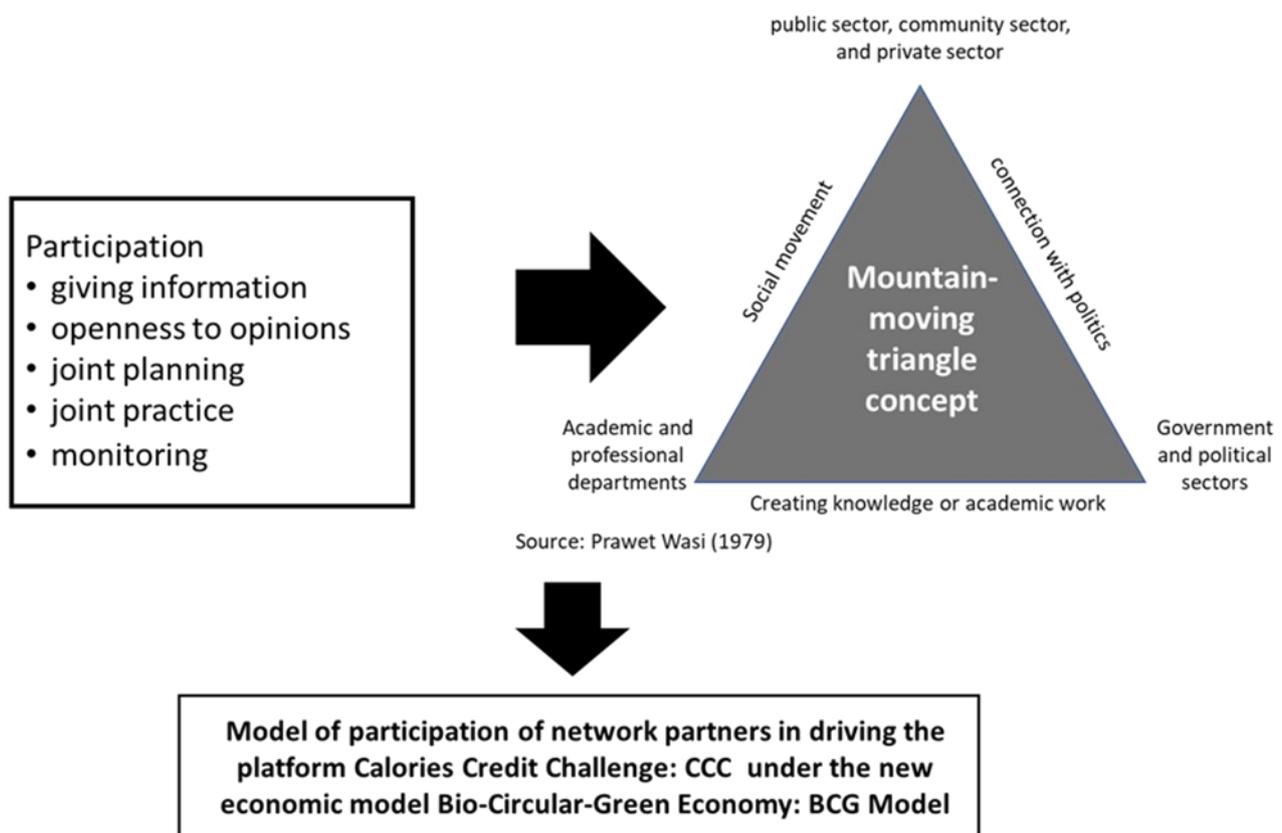
have a say in the decision-making and execution of initiatives or policies that directly impact them. For those with more influence, increased engagement by representatives enhances the likelihood of their intervention being enduring; for individuals with less influence, it may provide an opportunity for exerting influence. In terms of transformative

participation, the outcome is the enhancement of the individuals' power and subsequently, the modification of the systems and organizations that contribute to marginalization and exclusion. Quinton et al. (2022) study applied this concept to explore the engagement of older individuals via three case studies in visual participatory research.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Conceptual framework



Research Methods

This study used a mixed methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. This research approach contributes the measurable patterns of network partner participation across five domains and the deeper contextual insights into their functional roles, creating a more complete understanding of how diverse stakeholders contribute to the CCC platform's implementation under the BCG economic framework.

Quantitative Research

The research employed a mixed methods approach with a quantitative analysis to investigate the role and forms of network partners, participating in driving and factors for success. Questionnaires were distributed to gather information from network partners in the public sector, commercial sector, and provincial assembly network groups in Thailand. The sample size for this investigation was 400 participants (N=817), selected by purposive sampling to identify a particular

sample group, which included policy makers, leaders in propelling policy into practice, private agency, and people as stakeholders.

A sample size of 400 participants derived from a population of 817 network partners, achieving a confidence level of 95% with a $\pm 3.3\%$ margin of error based on Taro Yamane's formula ($n = N/(1+Ne^2)$), ensuring statistical representativeness while remaining manageable for the comprehensive quantitative survey component of the research design. For statistical data analysis, it includes frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Qualitative Research

The researchers performed qualitative research conducting focus group discussion to examine the contributions and insights gained from network partners. This research investigated their role in developing the Calories Credit Challenge (CCC) platform within the context of a new economic model. The Bio-Circular-Green Economy (BCG) model was developed by a focus group consisting of two sessions: 1) Listening to opinions on the role of network partners: The research studied with 10 key informants, including policy makers, leaders responsible for implementing policy at both the national and local levels, organizations and network partners to develop and promote the CCC platform under the BCG Model. These encompassed a range of groups such as government and political agencies, academics from educational institutions and universities,

as well as researchers from various institutes. Private sector, public sector, media, and non-governmental organizations were also involved,

Moreover, the research conducted 2) Lessons learned from network partners: The researcher performed a lessons learned session with a group of regions that have organized sports competitions utilizing the CCC platform in three specific areas: 1) Chaiyaphum Province, 2) Ratchaburi Province, and 3) Krabi Province. The research focused on government agencies, consisting of 36 key informants.

Results and Discussion

1. Research results on guidelines for participation of network partners in driving the CCC platform under BCG Model from a 400 respondents in 5 areas.

For the first objective, the results are demonstrated in 5 tables (Table1 to Table 5), which are categorized into 5 areas as follows;

1.1 Participation in providing information

In the area of information provision (Table 1), partners demonstrated moderate engagement (overall mean of 3.00) in communication activities. The strongest element was communication between administrators to establish policies (mean of 3.14), while opportunities for expressing opinions through press conferences and exhibitions scored lowest (mean of 2.95). This suggests that while formal communication channels exist, there's room for improvement in creating more interactive feedback mechanisms.

Table 1

The participation in driving the health platform in terms of participation in providing information

Participation in providing information	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level
1.1 There is communication between administrators to establish policies to drive adoption health platform applied to exercise of the people in the area.	3.14	.740	Moderate
1.2 Various media are used in providing information such as television, radio, personal media and news tower on issues related to driving exercise of local people through the use of a health platform.	2.99	.797	Moderate

Participation in providing information	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level
1.3 There is planning with stakeholders to drive the adoption of the platform for health, applied to exercise of the people in the area.	2.98	.727	Moderate
1.4 Information is provided to the public in a thorough, accurate, timely manner and easy to understand on the issue of exercise and playing sports through health platform.	2.96	.835	Moderate
1.5 There is an opportunity to express opinions about the health platform, applied to exercise of people in the area in many ways, such as Press conferences, news distribution, and exhibitions.	2.95	.785	Moderate
Total	3.00	.624	Moderate

The participation in driving the health platform in terms of participation in providing information was at a moderate level ($\bar{X} = 3.14$).

1.2 Participation in accepting opinions from the public

Regarding the acceptance of public opinions (Table 2), the overall participation level was similarly moderate (mean of 3.01). Partners were most

engaged in surveying public opinions about the health platform (mean of 3.06), but less active in creating opportunities for the public to express their needs regarding exercise through the platform (mean of 2.96). This indicates a somewhat top-down approach that could benefit from more robust bottom-up input channels.

Table 2

The participation in driving the health platform in terms of participation in accepting opinions from the public

Participation in accepting opinions from the public	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level
2.1 There was a survey of public opinions on the introduction of platform to health is used to promote exercise Physical strength of people in the area.	3.06	.798	Moderate
2.2 There was a formal discussion between the director and planners as well as the public sector to evaluate progress in promoting exercise for people in the area.	3.00	.764	Moderate
2.3 There is an opportunity to invite the public to express their opinions about the demands for exercise using a health platform as a tool.	2.96	.847	Moderate
Total	3.01	.682	Moderate

The participation in driving the health platform in terms of participation in accepting opinions from the public was at a moderate level ($\bar{X} = 3.06$).

1.3 Participation in joint planning

In terms of joint planning (Table 3), participation again registered at a moderate level (mean of 2.94). The involvement of knowledgeable experts

providing operational advice was the strongest element (mean of 3.04), while joint work between agencies and participatory problem-solving meetings scored equally lowest (both at 2.89). This suggests that while expertise is valued, collaborative problem-solving processes could be strengthened.

Table 3*The participation in driving the health platform in terms of participation in joint planning*

Participation in joint planning	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level
3.1 There are experts who have knowledge and expertise in giving advice for plan operations to lead health platforms to be used to encourage people in the area to exercise.	3.04	.771	Moderate
3.2 A working group has been appointed to work covering all sectors for planning on bringing in a health platform to promote exercise of people in the area.	2.92	.805	Moderate
3.3 There is joint work between relevant agencies and the public sector continuously to create participation in leading health platform to be used to promote exercise of people in the area.	2.89	.789	Moderate
3.4 Participatory planning meeting with stakeholders and the public sector continuously to solve problems and obstacles that arise during operation work.	2.89	.764	Moderate
Total	2.94	.628	Moderate

The participation in driving the health platform in terms of participation in joint planning was at a moderate level (\bar{X} = 3.04).

1.4 Participation in practice

For practical implementation (Table 4), the overall participation level remained moderate

(mean of 2.93). Joint activities to carry out policies scored equally highest (both at 2.93), while participation in disseminating exercise information through the platform scored slightly lower (mean of 2.91). This indicates relatively consistent engagement in implementation activities.

Table 4*The participation in driving the health platform in terms of participation in practice*

Participation in practice	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level
4.1 There is a joint activity to carry out policies to achieve the objectives.	2.93	.787	Moderate
4.2 There is a joint activity to carry out the policy on promoting exercise of people in the area in every sector.	2.93	.755	Moderate
4.3 Participate in the dissemination of exercise information through the use of the exercise platform for health that is beneficial to the public.	2.91	.812	Moderate
Total	2.93	.669	Moderate

The participation in driving the health platform in terms of participation in practice was at a moderate level (\bar{X} = 2.93).

1.5 Participation in monitoring and inspection

Finally, regarding monitoring and inspection (Table 5), participation was also moderate (mean

of 2.92). The establishment of monitoring committees scored highest (mean of 2.97), while having every sector play an important role in evaluation scored lowest (mean of 2.89). This suggests a somewhat centralized approach to evaluation that could benefit from more distributed responsibility.

Table 5

The participation in driving the health platform in terms of participation in monitoring and inspection

Participation in monitoring and inspection	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level
5.1 A monitoring and evaluation committee has been established.	2.97	.752	Moderate
5.2 There is follow-up, inspection, and evaluation in a transparent and verifiable manner.	2.94	.769	Moderate
5.3 There are various methods for monitoring, inspecting, and evaluating results.	2.90	.744	Moderate
5.4 Every sector has an important role in monitoring and evaluating.	2.89	.758	Moderate
Total	2.92	.643	Moderate

The participation in driving the health platform in terms of participation in monitoring and inspection was at a moderate level (\bar{X} = 2.97).

From studying the role of participation of network partners in all 5 areas, it can be seen that the participation of the network partners under each issue have various formats, depending on the context of each agency's role. From the results of the study, the main agency in driving the calorie credits platform (Calories Credit Challenge: CCC) can design a drive that is appropriate for groups of government agencies, private sector, and civil society so that everyone can play a role in driving the most appropriately and effectively.

2. Research results on the role of network partners in participating in driving the CCC platform under BCG Model

2.1 Promoting exercise among people in Thailand through driving the CCC platform

Public health agencies, sports agencies, travel agencies, related educational institutions, and the general public, have become aware of how to maintain a healthy physique. As a result, various agencies have established facilities to meet the growing population of individuals seeking to engage in physical activity within different areas.

2.2 The role of network partners in participating in driving the CCC platform

The researcher summarized the roles of network partners in participating in driving the CCC platform through focus group discussions. There were a total of 10 key informants, classified into 4 sectors: 1) government agencies, 2) private sector agencies, 3) civil society and 4) mass media, as follows:

Government agencies

It is an agency at the ministerial level, namely under the ministerial of Tourism and Sports, who must actively participate in shaping and executing the platform's policies, striving for effective implementation by fostering collaboration among agencies across all sectors from both at the ministerial level and at the local level. Furthermore, they are actively fostering collaboration with both the commercial and governmental sectors, while also establishing comprehensive protocols for ongoing oversight and surveillance of activities.

Private sector agencies

They are capable of actively contributing to the development of the CCC platform across several aspects, particularly in spearheading its use for arranging sporting events or using it for people management inside the business. It is a valuable metric for assessing performance that will provide several advantages to the firm.

Civil society

They may engage in promoting health and fitness as a lifestyle choice within the community by using a novel social network called the CCC platform, which can be extended to other organizations. Individuals can engage in consistent physical activity and actively contribute to the coordination of athletic events across several tiers and collaborate to identify strategies for mitigating the environmental impact of hosting sports contests.

Mass media

They become a supporter in presenting and disseminating news and information, and publicizing accurate activity information and useful information about the CCC platform to various communication channels including newspapers, websites, and social media, including communication through groups of famous people or influencers

2.3 Guidelines for creating network partners to participate in driving the CCC platform under the BCG Model

Creating network partners to participate in driving the CCC platform under the BCG Model found that creating networks in grassroots communities is to establish networks from community, sub-district, district, and province levels. The guidelines are 1) data management without

having to go through a central department that manages everything to the extent that the district can operate to be able to use information quickly and according to needs consistent with actual use in order to further develop the district according to the actual context 2) creating community leaders at the provincial or district level (Key man) who can carry out the drive through supervision in each district and 3) setting goals and indicators for each district in driving the CCC platform.

2.4 Forms of participation of strategic partners in developing and driving the CCC platform under the BCG Model

Based on the insights gained from the lessons learned, from all three provinces in relation to the CCC platform, it has been observed that there is now a growing inclination towards prioritizing the well-being of the Thai population. This includes modifying the conduct of individuals in the contemporary day who often rely on technology to greatly assist themselves. This encompasses the use of technology in physical activity, making it a favorable occasion for the platform and will be implemented to provide more motivations for Thai people to engage in physical activity. The agencies involved in participating in driving the CCC platform can be classified as shown in Table 6.

Table 6
The agencies involved in participating in driving the CCC platform

Government agencies	Private sector agencies	Civil society
1. Ministry of Tourism and Sports	1. Financial institutions	7. Mass media
2. Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO)	2. Provincial Chamber of Commerce	8. Sports clubs
3. City Municipality	3. Tourism and hotel sector	9. Provincial Assembly Network
4. Sub district Administrative Organization (SAO)	4. Local industrial sector	
5. Village health volunteers	5. Sports Club	
6. Office of the Basic Education Commission : OBEC	6. Local businesses	
7. Schools and Educational Institutions		
8. Thai Health Promotion Foundation		
9. Provincial Public Health Office		
10. Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports		
11. Office of Commercial Affairs		
12. Thailand National Sports University		
13. Sport Association		
14. Provincial Community Development Office		

From Table 6, it is found that government agencies, the private sector, and civil society will be agencies under supervision that will be important agencies in driving the CCC platform. These are agencies that are considered close to the grassroots and can play a role in driving the Calories CCC platform, such as local level agencies such as City Municipality, Sub district Administrative Organization (SAO), and Village health volunteers which are agencies with a large number of personnel and networks joining in educating the public as well as expanding the results to households in the area, schools, and educational institutions. It is an important unit for cultivation and provides knowledge to understand the importance of exercise and playing sports for children and youth. Therefore, it is necessary to accommodate schools, and educational institutions are the medium of communication to promote exercise and playing sports by using the CCC platform. Moreover, Sports Club, Sport Association, and Chamber of Commerce are organizations that have members in both government and private sectors. Therefore, they play an important role in jointly campaigning for the use of the CCC platform through introductions, public relations among members and the media. They are agencies providing knowledge, understanding and public relations communications in campaigning for people in the area to get to know the platform. CCC is also an agency that provides knowledge on how to use the CCC platform for all age groups.

2.5 Factors for success in driving the CCC platform under the BCG Model

From lessons learned on factors for success in driving the CCC platform under the BCG Model can be explained as follows;

1) Propulsion and promote policies of government agencies that lead to clear and concrete actions of local agencies to drive the Calories Credit Challenge: CCC platform through community leaders.

2) Leaders of local government agencies recognize the importance of in driving the platform through exercise, sports and physical activities and use statistical data as information to create good health for people in the area.

3) Local agencies such as local government organizations, Sub district Administrative Organization, Village health volunteers (VHVs), which have a large network of members and being close to people in the community requires integration and cooperation to drive the platform to people in the area, especially by providing knowledge and understanding in using the CCC platform.

4) Providing access mechanisms for the platform to groups of people who do not have access to technology.

5) Promoting environmentally friendly tourism to generate income from tourism which can also be distributed to vulnerable groups in the area through the platform.

6) Creating and cultivating children in school to have an awareness of the importance and benefits that arise from exercise and sports through the learning process in educational institutions by using the platform into a medium for teaching and learning.

7) Having a public health database to organize continuously diverse competitive activities. People in the community can easily access them by using the platform to participate in an activity.

8) Carrying out activities with cooperation from government agencies, the private sector, and civil society to drive the platform.

Discussion

The study on the protocols for the involvement of network partners in operating the CCC platform under the BCG Model included a sample size of 400 participants from 5 geographical regions. The research uncovered many facets of involvement in operating the health platform.

Levels of Participation: Participation in providing information, accepting opinions from the public, joint planning, practice, and monitoring and inspection were all at a moderate level. This suggests that network partners are reasonably engaged in contributing information relevant to the health platform. It indicates that there is a foundational level of communication and data sharing among the partners, which is essential for effective collaboration and decision-making. This coincides with the study of Kho et al. (2010), which sought the participation of important individuals in a health services research (HSR) project to create an improved and more precise version of a tool used to evaluate guidelines. Partnerships between various groups across different industries have grown more prevalent in the sport for development as a means to address current obstacles (Kang & Svensson, 2022). This indicates that the network partners are actively involved in providing pertinent information for the health platform. This suggests the presence of a fundamental degree of communication and data exchange among the parties, which is crucial for productive cooperation and decision-making. However, to optimize the effectiveness of the CCC platform, it's crucial for partners to engage in robust joint planning processes that align with shared goals and objectives. The planned cooperation of government-led non-governmental groups in inter-network structures has the potential to become the prevailing approach to public engagement in tourist planning in the future (Lin & Simmons, 2017).

Role of Network Partners: Network partners play crucial roles in promoting exercise among people in Thailand through the CCC platform. Government agencies, private sector agencies, civil society, and mass media actively contribute to different aspects of the platform. The research findings shed light on the crucial role of network partners in driving the CCC platform under the BCG Model, particularly focusing on promoting

exercise among people in Thailand. The involvement of various stakeholders, including public health agencies, sports agencies, travel agencies, educational institutions, and the general public, has been instrumental in fostering awareness about maintaining a healthy physique and encouraging physical activity across different areas of the country. Networks are designed to operate as systems that may coordinate and unify tourism destinations, resulting in advantages for participating tourism companies, improving destination performance and quality, and promoting the creation of enjoyable and unforgettable experiences for visitors (Zach & Racherla, 2011). Distinct contributions and responsibilities of each sector towards the advancement of the CCC platform matter and mass media is one significant example. According to Tian et al. (2023), their research findings demonstrated a direct and positive relationship between media consumption and engagement in athletic activities. This association was influenced by factors such as the kind of media, methodologies used to quantify media consumption, characteristics of the study participants, and cultural context of the studies. The interplay between mass media and sport is reciprocal, with one sector exerting influence on the other and undergoing transformations as a result. In contemporary times, it may be said that there exists a near flawless alliance between mass media and sports (Zbigniew et al., 2012).

Guidelines for Creating Network Partners: Guidelines for creating network partners emphasized establishing networks at grassroots levels, data management, creating community leaders, and setting goals and indicators for each district participating in driving the CCC platform. Government agencies, such as the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Provincial Administrative Organizations (PAOs), and City Municipalities, are at the forefront of driving the CCC platform as studied by Devine et al. (2011). These agencies are deeply rooted in local governance structures

and possess the necessary resources and authority to implement initiatives effectively. Additionally, Sub district Administrative Organizations (SAOs) and Village Health Volunteers serve as vital grassroots entities, engaging in community outreach and education to promote physical activity and disseminate information about the CCC platform. Educational institutions are pivotal in shaping attitudes towards physical activity among children and youth. According to Eime and Payne (2009), sports organizations are advised to customize their school-based programs using established health promotion planning concepts, which should include community input, instead of persisting with their existing strategy that assumes a single solution fits all. Moreover, private sector entities and civil society play vital roles in driving the CCC platform. Civil society organizations, including mass media outlets, sports clubs, and provincial assembly networks, serve as influential advocates for the CCC platform. Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a significant role in promoting local social, economic, and environmental sustainability via various means (Nordfeldt & Dahlström, 2023). Through public relations campaigns, media coverage, and community engagement activities, these organizations raise awareness about the platform and mobilize support for its adoption and utilization.

Factors for Success: Success factors included clear policy promotion by government agencies, recognition of importance by local leaders, integration among local agencies, providing access to technology, promoting environmentally friendly tourism, cultivating awareness among children in schools, maintaining a public health database, and fostering cooperation among various sectors

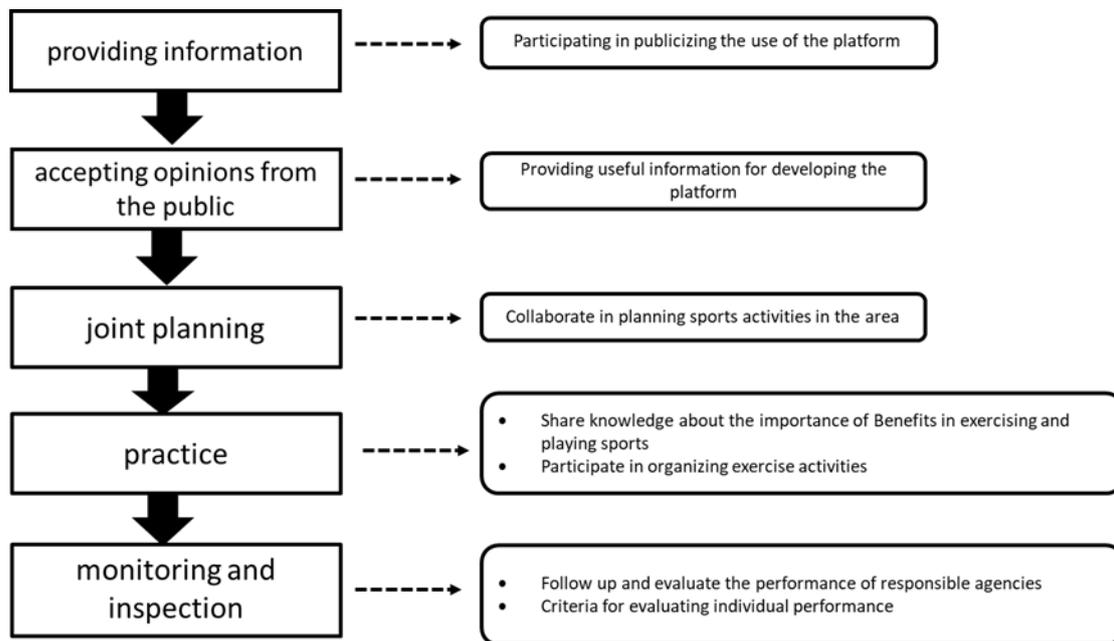
to drive the platform effectively. Using statistical data as informing tools helps to support the significance of these activities and direct decision-making processes towards establishing healthier settings. Efficient administration of sports big data is essential for the success of the national sports business, teams, and individuals (Bai & Bai, 2021). Additionally, leveraging the CCC platform to promote environmentally sustainable tourism not only generates income but also benefits vulnerable groups in the community. According to Nyikana and Tichaawa (2024), conducted a research on this issue and the findings indicate that the sport tourism industry has significant potential to contribute to the economies in the area via interconnections, resulting in major socioeconomic benefits. In order for sustainable sports tourism to effectively support government objectives related to regional development, global competitiveness, infrastructure development, and community development, it is necessary to establish an integrated framework. The research has ramifications for policy and planning.

Conclusion

From the study of the role of participation in driving the Calories Credit Challenge: CCC platform under the new economic model (BCG Model), it was found that the form and process of participation of strategic partners in developing and driving the Calories Credit Challenge: CCC platform under the new economic model (BCG Model), 5 processes include 1) providing information, 2) accepting opinions from the public, 3) joint planning, 4) practice, and 5) monitoring and inspection as follows:

Figure 2

The form and process of participation of strategic partners in developing and driving the CCC



Recommendations for the development of participatory public policy through the Digital Platform include 1) All relevant industries are necessary to have a comprehensive and conscious body of knowledge and awareness to promote the use of the CCC platform within the framework of the BCG Model; for example, advocate the dissemination of prototypes showcasing its use, such as providing influencers with access. Moreover, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports should collaborate with pertinent authorities to provide valuable information on the promotion and cultivation of awareness, in line with the BCG Model, among children, youth, and the general population, with the aim of fostering a consciousness of physical activity. Engaging in athletic activities while simultaneously safeguarding the environment will result in long-term sustainability for individuals within the community. 2) Central data standardization of the CCC platform by establishing robust protocols and measures to enhance trust and ensure high security standards for storing personal information on the platform and to connect exercise statistics data, engaging in sports and physical

activities together on the platform while effectively incorporating the use of statistical data. 3) Developing an action plan to promote exercise, sports, and physical activity. 4) Promoting the growth of Thailand's tourist industry by using sporting activities to enhance its economic worth; for example, The Ministry of Tourism and Sports together with the Tourism Authority of Thailand should create a network by encouraging the tourism business sector to participate in supporting sports activities using the platform. It is a tool for carrying out activities.

References

- Andrews, J. A., Brown, L. J., Hawley, M. S., & Astell, A. J. (2019a). Older adults' perspectives on using digital technology to maintain good mental health: Interactive group study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 21(2). <https://doi.org/10.2196/11694>
- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35, 216–224.
- Bai, Z., & Bai, X. (2021). Sports big data: Management, analysis, applications, and challenges. *Complexity*, 2021, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2021/6676297>

- Berkley, J. (1975). The policy implementation process: A conceptual framework. *Administration & Society*, 6(4), 200–??.
- BCG in action. (n.d.). *Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council*.
- Chuanboon, P. (2011). The study of the implementation of policies to promote exercise in Samut Sakhon Provincial Administrative Organization. *Academic Services Journal, Prince of Songkla University*, 22(2), 17–31.
- Cohen, J. M., & Uphoff, N. T. (1981). *Rural development participation: Concept and measures for project design, implementation, and evaluation*. Center for International Studies, Cornell University.
- Devine, A., Boyle, E., & Boyd, S. (2011). Towards a theory of collaborative advantage for the sports tourism policy arena. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 24(1), 23–41. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513551111099208>
- Eime, R. M., & Payne, W. R. (2009). Linking participants in school-based sport programs to community clubs. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, 12(2), 293–299. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2007.11.003>
- Erwin, W. (1976). *Participation management: Concept, theory and implementation*. Georgia State University.
- Iortimah, C. G., & Tyoakaa, A. A. (2020). The role of information and communication technology (ICT) in sports and exercise psychology development. *Journal of Sports Psychology Association of Nigeria*, 13, 89–95.
- Kang, S., & Svensson, P. G. (2022). The benefits and challenges of shared leadership in sport for development and peace collaboratives. *Sport Management Review*, 26(3), 383–404. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14413523.2022.2085430>
- Kho, M. E., Rawski, E., Makarski, J., & Brouwers, M. C. (2010). Recruitment of multiple stakeholders to health services research: Lessons from the front lines. *BMC Health Services Research*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6963-10-123>
- Lin, D., & Simmons, D. (2017). Structured inter-network collaboration: Public participation in tourism planning in Southern China. *Tourism Management*, 63, 315–328. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.06.024>
- Mahanakorn Partners Group. (2021). *The bio-circular-green economic model*. <http://mahanakornpartners.com/the-bio-circular-green-economic-model>
- Nordfeldt, M., & Dahlström, M. (2023). Civil society in local sustainable transformation – Can bottom-up activities meet top-down expectations? *Journal of Civil Society*, 19(4), 401–418. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2023.2255692>
- Nyikana, S., & Tichaawa, T. M. (2024). Towards an integrated framework for sustainable sport tourism development in Central Africa. *Development Southern Africa*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2024.2320119>
- Parker, K., Uddin, R., Ridgers, N. D., Brown, H., Veitch, J., Salmon, J., Timperio, A., Sahlqvist, S., Cassar, S., Toffoletti, K., Maddison, R., & Arundell, L. (2021). The use of digital platforms for adults' and adolescents' physical activity during the COVID-19 pandemic (Our life at home): Survey study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 23(2). <https://doi.org/10.2196/23389>
- Piovani, D., Nikolopoulos, G. K., & Bonovas, S. (2022). Non-communicable diseases: The invisible epidemic. *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 11(19), 5939. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm11195939>
- Quinton, S., Treveri Gennari, D., & Dibeltulo, S. (2022). Engaging older people through visual participatory research: Insights and reflections. *Qualitative Research*, 23(6), 1647–1668. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941221110163>
- Spagnoletti, P., Resca, A., & Lee, G. (2015). A design theory for digital platforms supporting online communities: A multiple case study. *Journal of Information Technology*, 30(4), 364–380. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jit.2014.37>

- Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau. (2022). *APEC 2022 under the concept of BCG*. <https://www.businesseventsthailand.com>
- Tian, Y., Yang, P., & Zhang, D. (2023). The relationship between media use and sports participation behavior: A meta-analysis. *DIGITAL HEALTH*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20552076231185476>
- White, S. C. (1996). Depoliticising development: The uses and abuses of participation. *Development in Practice*, 6(1), 6–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0961452961000157564>
- World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Noncommunicable diseases*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/noncommunicable-diseases>
- Xue, C. T., & Xin, F. T. (2016). Benefits and challenges of the adoption of cloud computing in business. *International Journal on Cloud Computing: Services and Architecture*, 6(6), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.5121/ijccsa.2016.6601>
- Yogesh, M. J., & Karthikeyan, J. (2022). Health informatics: Engaging modern healthcare units: A brief overview. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.854688>
- Zach, F., & Racherla, P. (2011). Assessing the value of collaborations in tourism networks: A case study of Elkhart County, Indiana. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 28(1), 97–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2011.535446>
- Zbigniew, D., Krzysztof, W. J., Michał, L., Julia, M., & Piotr, R. (2012). Mass media and professional sport. *Baltic Journal of Health and Physical Activity*, 4(4). <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10131-012-0028-6>

Muslim Countries and the Supportive Roles for Peacebuilding in the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand

Yasmin Sattar¹  

¹ Faculty of Political Science, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, Thailand, © Authors

Article history:

Received: March 15, 2025

Revised: April 28, 2025

Accepted: May 1, 2025

Keywords:

Southern Thailand Conflict
Muslim Countries,
Peacebuilding Identity Politics
Third-Party Roles

Abstract

This study examines the roles of Muslim countries (Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Iran, Malaysia, and Indonesia) in Thailand's southern border conflict from 2004-2019, focusing on their motivations and impacts. Using qualitative methods including document analysis, interviews, and focus groups, the research explores these countries' involvement across multiple levels of engagement. The findings reveal diverse patterns of support, from Malaysia's role as an official facilitator to humanitarian and educational assistance from Gulf states. Identity politics and shared religious bonds emerge as key factors shaping engagement, while geopolitical interests and international image-building also play important roles. The study contributes to understanding how religious identity influences conflict resolution processes and provides recommendations for leveraging these relationships to support peacebuilding efforts.

Introduction

Since the outbreak of unrest in Thailand's southern border provinces in 2004, the conflict has resulted in significant losses across many dimensions for the local population. Despite a declining trend, violence continues to persist. Meanwhile, various stakeholders have attempted to find approaches to address this internal conflict but have been unable to resolve the problems with deep-rooted causes stemming from identity factors, policy structures, and justice system frameworks.

In any conflict area, conflict management processes become more effective when there are international actors involved who help strengthen, mediate, or create an atmosphere conducive to

the development of conflict-affected areas. When considering international actors involved in the overall picture of the southern border conflict, as noted in the book "International Actors in the Southern Border Deadly Conflict: A Preliminary Survey" prepared by the Strategic Nonviolence Working Group (2016), it is evident that beyond Malaysia, which serves as a facilitator between the main conflicting parties, there are various organizations, both state and non-state actors, that have continuously supported work in the southern border areas. However, the work of these external actors must remain within the framework of non-interference in the internal affairs of a state without that state's consent.

When examining the dimension of international actors in the southern border case, there is often debate about whether actors with potential to play a role are predominantly from Western countries. This is because Western actors employ norms or conceptual frameworks centered around human rights and peacebuilding in a democratic way, attempting to expand these frameworks to become universal. At the same time, there are critiques concerning actors from Muslim countries regarding their potential and sincerity in playing roles in other regions, given that many Muslim countries themselves face issues of violence and internal conflict. The researcher finds this to be an interesting point of contention. Preliminary research shows that since 2004, there have been only a few studies examining Muslim countries in relation to the southern border conflict.

One of the important works that initiated this study is the article "The Southern Thailand Conflict and the Muslim World" by Dr. Imtiyaz Yusuf (2007), which highlights the overview of relations between Thailand and Muslim countries, specifically pointing to the involvement of Muslim countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in southern border issues. Additionally, there are several analytical works that emphasize these actors. Jaran Maluleem (2012) has analyzed the issue of the Islamic Conference Organization and minority issues in the lower southern region of Thailand, which demonstrates how the OIC platform has been used as a political space between the main conflicting parties, whether the Thai government or movement groups. Therefore, it cannot be denied that Muslim countries are actors that play a role in conflict management in the southern border areas.

Identity is certainly a dimension that cannot be separated from understanding many conflict areas and international relations, where identity politics often significantly affects decision-making

and certain actions. The identity of being a Muslim country with the conceptual framework of "Ummah" or unity is another important factor that makes Muslims tend to trust and prioritize Muslim countries. According to the findings from Yasmin Sattar's (2018) doctoral dissertation on "Türkiye's Roles and Reflections in Conflict Areas in the Southeast Region," which included the southern border area in its study scope, it was found that conflict areas with Muslims as the majority, especially at the grassroots level and among movement groups, tend to have positive attitudes toward Muslim countries, and have confidence and hope for these countries to provide assistance, even though this may create threats at the international level. Nevertheless, it results in the development of closer relationships between them.

Building upon previous research covering only Türkiye, which reflected several interesting dimensions, the researcher is interested in expanding from this dissertation by examining other Muslim countries expected to have significant roles in the southern border area. This led to this research topic which will focus on studying the pathways of countries with apparent roles in the area, preliminarily seven countries: Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Iran, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The study will explore their presence in the area and the opinions of local people and organizations to understand roles in Tracks 2 and 3, while also studying through documents and interviews with relevant individuals to understand roles in Track 1. After identifying these pathways, the research will develop policy recommendations to enhance international relations and cooperation with these influential groups to maximize benefits for the southern border area.

Therefore, this study has the main purpose of examining the roles of Muslim countries involved in the conflict in the southern border area, including their motivations and impacts, as well as developing policy recommendations that

will benefit the area. This research aligns with the national security strategy on developing systems, mechanisms, measures, and international cooperation at all levels, as well as the national research strategy on research and innovation for creating basic knowledge for the country in terms of social and human basic knowledge, and strategic plans according to the National Economic and Social Development Plan regarding international cooperation for development and strengthening national security for country development towards prosperity and sustainability.

Research Methods

This qualitative study employs multiple data collection methods to examine the roles of Muslim countries involved in Thailand's southern border provinces from 2004-2024, as well as their motivations, impacts, and policy recommendations. The research design incorporates document analysis of relevant literature, in-depth interviews with key informants, focus group discussions, and field surveys using snowball sampling techniques.

The study population includes organizations in the southern border area that have worked with the countries under study (Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Iran, Malaysia, and Indonesia), academic experts on the area and Muslim world issues, and representatives from relevant government agencies. The research process involves conducting field surveys along with studying relevant documents to obtain an overview of areas where the roles of the countries under study are evident.

For data collection, in-depth interviews are conducted with relevant individuals to obtain detailed information. Questions focus on the details of the apparent roles of the countries under study, the beginning of cooperation, attitudes, outcomes, and recommendations. Subsequently, focus group discussions are held with interviewees to exchange perspectives. After processing the data collected, another focus group discussion is organized to jointly develop recommendations.

During data collection, codes are used instead of personal information, and no information about the informants is disclosed. Participation is voluntary, including for photo and audio recording. If informants are uncomfortable, no recording takes place. The research instruments used in the qualitative approach are in-depth interview forms for conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

For data analysis, the researcher analyzes the data while verifying its accuracy, then classifies and systematizes the data. Subsequently, the data is analyzed based on the research framework and established theories, processed, and presented as descriptive text. The conceptual framework employs the main concept of identity politics, which connects to the efficiency and potential of being intermediaries at various levels among actors in conflict areas.

Results and Discussion

Identity Politics in International Relations:

Identity politics is fundamental to understanding both the dynamics of conflict in Thailand's southern border provinces and the involvement of Muslim countries in this region. Identity politics refers to political activities centered around shared identities such as language, religion, ethnicity, or tribal affiliations that influence political decisions and activities. These identity markers create perceptions of "us" versus "them," which can be forces that unite people with the same identity or generate prejudice against those who are different (Wigmore-Shepherd, 2013).

In international relations, identity is a crucial factor influencing how states perceive themselves and others, affecting foreign policy decisions and diplomatic engagement. From a constructivist perspective, international politics is constructed through frameworks, norms, and identities of people, especially policymakers. Each country has a specific identity rooted in expressions of national characteristics. Identity in international

politics is often linked to legitimizing state actions. Historical and cultural identities can be used to build nationalism and strengthen political legitimacy. Religious identity may be emphasized to create alliances or advance political agendas in international forums. In some cases, identity is used to create "common enemies" or "others," leading international politics toward conflict rather than cooperation.

In conflict areas, identity politics significantly impacts both the emergence and persistence of conflicts. Different population identities are often emphasized to legitimize maintaining specific identities while suppressing or neglecting others. This dynamic is clearly observable in Thailand's southern border provinces, where religious and cultural differences between populations noticeably affect state-citizen relationships. Malay-Muslim identity is used as a tool in political dialogue processes, while non-recognition of these identity differences leads to feelings of alienation that intensify and deepen regional conflict (Yusuf, 2007).

Patterns of Muslim Country Involvement and Motivations:

Muslim countries have demonstrated distinctive patterns of engagement in Thailand's southern border provinces, with assistance ranging from official diplomatic channels to grassroots humanitarian aid. These engagement patterns reflect complex motivations comprising religious brotherhood, geopolitical interests, and efforts to build international image.

The concept of "Ummah" or Muslim unity serves as a fundamental motivation for Muslim countries' involvement in Thailand's southern conflict. This religious and cultural brotherhood creates a natural bond between Muslim countries and the Malay-Muslim population in southern Thailand. Sattar's (2018) research found that conflict areas with predominantly Muslim populations, especially at the grassroots level and among movements, tend to have positive attitudes toward Muslim countries. These populations often express

We don't see any world being called for other groups of people at all. Saudi is just Saudi. If they were truly brothers (brotherhood), they wouldn't be killing each other so much. The concept of the Muslim world is a product of one period, created by Saudi Arabia establishing the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to counterbalance Egypt in terms of the Arab League. (Informant 6, personal interview, December 25, 2023)

This perspective reflects the complexity of relations between Muslim countries themselves, and that the concept of the "Muslim world" may be merely a political discourse created in a specific context and timeframe, rather than a practical reality.

Geopolitical and strategic interests serve as another important motivation, especially for regional powers like Malaysia and Indonesia. These countries view stability in southern Thailand as an essential component of regional security and their national interests. For Malaysia, which shares a border with Thailand's conflict area, preventing spillover effects of the conflict is a primary concern. Both Malaysia and Indonesia also aspire to establish themselves as regional powers, with involvement in conflict resolution enhancing their diplomatic status (Yusof & Jaes, 2020).

International image-building is another crucial motivation for Muslim countries' involvement. Countries such as Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait view their roles as humanitarian donors and peace mediators as **enhancing** international prestige by demonstrating their ability to contribute positively to conflict resolution and humanitarian assistance. These countries aim to build soft power and improve global standing. This motivation aligns with broader trends in humanitarian diplomacy, where emerging countries use aid and mediation as tools for conducting foreign policy (De Lauri, 2018).

international prestige by demonstrating their ability to contribute positively to conflict resolution and humanitarian assistance. These countries aim to build soft power and improve global standing. This motivation aligns with broader trends in humanitarian diplomacy, where emerging countries use aid and mediation as tools for conducting foreign policy (De Lauri, 2018).

The engagement patterns of Muslim countries also reflect their differing capabilities and regional influence. Regional powers like Malaysia and Indonesia engage more directly in formal peace processes, with Malaysia serving as the official facilitator in talks between the Thai government and insurgent group representatives. Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait focus on educational and humanitarian support, leveraging financial resources rather than direct political engagement. Türkiye has positioned itself as both a humanitarian donor and potential political mediator, drawing on historical experience and growing role as an international actor.

Types of Support from Muslim Countries:

Muslim countries have provided various forms of support to Thailand's southern border provinces, with each country participating in peace-building efforts through different channels and mechanisms. This support can be categorized into several key areas that reflect both the capabilities of these countries and the needs of the conflict-affected area.

At the diplomatic level, several Muslim countries have participated in facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties. Malaysia has had the most prominent role as the official facilitator in peace talks between the Thai government and movement representatives since 2013. This formal mediator role is crucial in creating space for dialogue, despite the peace process facing many challenges and obstacles. Indonesia has also

participated in diplomatic efforts, particularly through sharing experiences in resolving similar conflicts in Aceh (Muna et al., 2023). As one informant observed regarding Indonesia's approach to mediation:

Being a mediator is something recognized globally. Malaysia has played a role in Mindanao and Aceh, and other countries want to play a role as well. It's not surprising that Indonesia tried to take a second-place role, but ultimately other countries came in instead, which some parties were not very satisfied with. (Informant 2, personal interview, December 2, 2021)

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has served as an important multilateral forum where Muslim countries engage with the southern Thai conflict. The OIC has periodically expressed concern about the situation of Muslims in southern Thailand, sending fact-finding missions and issuing statements promoting peaceful resolution. This multilateral engagement has helped give the conflict some international attention, despite the Thai government's caution about internationalization.

The OIC's stance has become clearer that it does not support separation from the Thai state but wants Muslims in the area to be able to live peacefully with the Thai state, have freedom in religious practices, and receive support for education and religion.

Humanitarian assistance is a key dimension of Muslim countries' support for Thailand's southern border provinces. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and Türkiye have provided significant humanitarian assistance to communities affected by conflict. This assistance includes food aid, relief supplies, medical support, and funding for rehabilitation projects. Such humanitarian assistance addresses urgent needs while building goodwill between these countries and local communities (Barakat & Zyck, 2010).

As Mary Anderson observes in her influential work on aid in conflict settings, "When aid is given in the context of a violent conflict, it becomes a part of that context and thus also of the conflict" (Anderson, 1999). This highlights the importance of understanding the complex interplay between humanitarian assistance and conflict dynamics.

Education is one of the most important and enduring forms of support from Muslim countries to Thailand's southern border provinces. Middle Eastern countries, especially Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Kuwait, have provided scholarships for southern Thai students to study at Islamic universities abroad. These educational opportunities have created generations of religious leaders and professionals with international experience and connections who, upon returning to Thailand, often hold leadership positions in religious institutions, civil society organizations, and educational institutions, bringing new perspectives and capabilities to the region.

Economic development assistance is another important dimension of support from Muslim countries. Countries like Türkiye and Gulf states have funded infrastructure projects, small business development, and agricultural initiatives in conflict-affected areas. These projects aim to address economic grievances underlying the conflict by creating opportunities and improving living standards. The Islamic Development Bank, supported by several Muslim countries, has also implemented development projects consistent with Islamic financial principles.

Key Muslim Countries and Their Specific Support:

Among the Muslim countries involved in Thailand's southern border provinces, several have developed particularly significant roles based on geographical proximity, resources, and strategic interests. Each country has established specific approaches to supporting peace-building

efforts, reflecting their capabilities and relationships with Thailand.

Malaysia has served as the official facilitator in peace talks between the Thai government and dissenting groups in the southern border provinces since 2013 to the present. This role is based on geographical proximity, shared Malay cultural identity, and strategic interests in border stability. Malaysia's role in the southern border conflict reflects the complex interaction between domestic and international factors. While this conflict is an internal Thai issue, its proximity to Malaysia gives it complex international dimensions (Daoreuang, 2024).

Thailand-Malaysia relations regarding the southern border issue faced significant tension in 2005 when 131 Muslims from Narathiwat fled across the border into Kelantan. This incident led to diplomatic controversy when Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra condemned them as terrorists. However, relations began to improve after the 2006 coup, eventually leading to formal peace talks in 2013. McCargo (2014) observes that Malaysia often seems to exceed the boundaries of a facilitator toward a mediator role, creating discomfort for the Thai side. A significant challenge for Malaysia is maintaining an image of neutrality, as shared Malay-Muslim identity with the population in Thailand's southern border provinces makes it appear potentially biased toward insurgent groups.

Indonesia has positioned itself as an experienced peacebuilder with relevant lessons from its own internal conflicts, particularly the successful resolution of the Aceh conflict. Rather than seeking a formal mediator role, Indonesia has focused on sharing conflict resolution expertise and capacity building among various stakeholders in southern Thailand. Indonesian civil society organizations and academic institutions have organized workshops, training programs, and exchange visits focused on peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction. As Muna et al. (2023) point out, "Indonesia's

approach to the Southern Thailand conflict is characterized by sharing practical experiences from Aceh while respecting Thailand's sovereignty, creating an effective model of diplomatic engagement that balances external support with internal ownership of the peace process."

Türkiye has become an increasingly visible actor in Thailand's southern provinces, employing a humanitarian diplomacy strategy that blends aid, cultural engagement, and potential political influence. Turkish assistance includes humanitarian aid through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and other organizations, focusing on education projects and community development. Türkiye's cultural and educational initiatives are also prominent, including scholarship programs for southern Thai students to study in Türkiye and support for cultural exchanges (Sattar et al., 2023). Turkish involvement reveals a different approach focused more on humanitarian assistance:

Türkiye also provides some support through private organizations as they operate, but not to the point of interference. We try to make them aware of the southern border issues, but perhaps not to the point where they come to observe as it might elevate this issue. (Informant 1, personal interview, May 18, 2023)

This observation highlights the careful balance Türkiye maintains between providing humanitarian support and avoiding political interference that might antagonize Thai authorities.

Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait, have focused their engagement primarily on religious, educational, and humanitarian support rather than direct political involvement. Saudi Arabia has the longest history of engagement, having supported Islamic education in southern Thailand for decades through scholarships to Saudi universities and funding for local Islamic schools. This educational support has significantly influenced religious practices and discourse in the region, creating networks of religious scholars

with connections to Saudi institutions (Salae, 2008). In the past, Saudi Arabia played a significant role in providing various forms of assistance: Previously aiding from Saudi Arabia through various organizations, even more than Türkiye, in education, schools, orphan assistance organizations. Saudi Arabia once played an important role in this area, in this country, and in the ASEAN region. (Informant 2, personal interview, December 2, 2021) The restoration of diplomatic relations between Thailand and Saudi Arabia in recent years has had significant implications for the southern border provinces:

The connection between Thailand, especially Muslims in the South, with Saudi Arabia has continuity, but Saudi Arabia's adjustment, Vision 2030, to speak frankly, will make everything more business oriented. I'm not sure if the relationship between Muslims in Thailand and Muslims in Saudi Arabia will be the same. (Informant 3, personal interview, December 25, 2023)

An informant explained the broader impact of Saudi Arabia's policy changes on the southern Muslim community:

In the case of Muwallad, the development and changes in Saudi Arabia have pushed and expelled these people to return to the country, because these people grew up in Saudi Arabia but cannot speak Thai, have never lived in southern border province society, and must come back, with a trend of increasing numbers in the thousands. (Informant 3, personal interview, December 25, 2023)

Qatar and Kuwait have become important humanitarian donors in recent years, aiding through both government channels and Islamic charitable organizations. These countries have funded mosque construction, supported orphanages, and various community development projects. The approach of these countries typically works through local partner organizations and Islamic organizations (Milton et al., 2023).

Iran's engagement differs from other countries due to sectarian differences:

Iran might help through the education system, but we don't know for sure. Saudi Arabia through the Ministry of Religious Endowments, which is the nature of Muslim countries worldwide. Coming in this way is also exporting their ideas, through cultural methods of each ministry, working in the area... just the methods and forms are different. (Informant 4, personal interview, March 20, 2022)

These differences in approach reflect the complex interplay of religious, political, and strategic factors shaping Muslim countries' engagement with Thailand's southern border provinces.

Impacts of Muslim Countries' Involvement:

The involvement of Muslim countries in Thailand's southern border provinces has created significant impacts on the southern border area, affecting everything from community perceptions to dialogue processes. These impacts vary across different stakeholder groups and have evolved over time as international engagement has deepened.

For Malay-Muslim communities in the southern border, the involvement of Muslim countries has noticeably influenced perceptions and expectations. Research indicates that local populations generally have positive views toward Muslim countries, especially those providing consistent support through humanitarian and educational programs. This positive perception partly stems from shared religious identity, creating a sense of connection and understanding that transcends national boundaries (Nakaurairat et al., 2019).

Humanitarian assistance provided by Muslim countries has helped build trust at the grassroots level. When tangible support reaches conflict-affected communities, whether through scholarships, medical assistance, or infrastructure development, it creates goodwill and strengthens connections between local people and these external

actors. This trust-building impact is especially important in a conflict context where confidence in domestic institutions may be limited (Anderson, 1999).

The involvement of Muslim countries has significantly influenced the formal peace process between the Thai government and movement representatives. Malaysia's role as the official facilitator has institutionalized international involvement in conflict resolution efforts. While limited and the talks still face numerous constraints, this facilitation has helped maintain momentum in the peace process.

The presence of observers and supporters from Muslim countries also affects negotiating positions and behaviors. For insurgent groups, international recognition and support provide legitimacy and potential leverage in talks with the Thai government. Conversely, the Thai government has incentives to demonstrate open engagement in the peace process partly to maintain positive relations with important Muslim allies like Malaysia and Indonesia.

Investments in development projects by Muslim countries have created tangible economic benefits in conflict-affected areas. Improvements in infrastructure, microfinance initiatives, and vocational training programs supported by countries like Türkiye and Qatar have helped address some of the economic grievances fueling the conflict. While these economic interventions don't resolve the fundamental political issues at stake, they help create conditions more conducive to peaceful development (Lederach, 1998). As John Paul Lederach (1988) argues, sustainable reconciliation requires that we look at the systems and relationships that have been broken and how they can be rebuilt. This means addressing both immediate needs and the long-term structural issues that contributed to the conflict.

Despite positive engagements, Muslim countries' involvement in Thailand's southern provinces faces significant challenges and limitations.

Political sensitivities regarding sovereignty remain paramount, with the Thai government cautious about internationalizing what it considers an internal matter. These sensitivities sometimes limit the scope and engagement of Muslim countries, particularly in the political dimensions of conflict resolution.

Coordination challenges between different Muslim countries and organizations sometimes lead to duplication of efforts or gaps. The varied motivations and approaches of these countries, from Malaysia's direct facilitation to Gulf states' focus on religious institutions, create a complex landscape of external support that isn't always well-integrated. These inconsistencies may limit the overall impact and coherence of international assistance.

The involvement of Muslim countries in Thailand's southern border provinces has generated significant debates among scholars, policymakers, and local communities. These debates reveal the complex dynamics at play and help explain both the achievements and limitations of international engagement in the conflict. This section synthesizes the key debates that shape how Muslim countries engage with Thailand's southern provinces, examining how they interconnect and influence one another across conceptual, strategic, operational, and practical dimensions.

Conceptual Debates Surrounding Muslim Countries' Involvement in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces

The "Muslim World" Concept:

The very concept of a unified "Muslim world" faces significant critique among observers of the southern Thailand conflict. As Informant 3 pointedly stated:

If we were truly brothers (brotherhood), we wouldn't be killed so much. (Informant 3, personal interview, December 25, 2023)

This critique directly challenges assumptions about unified Muslim country engagement in the southern Thai conflict and reveals how religious solidarity often takes a back seat to national interests.

This tension between transnational religious identity and state-centric interests manifests consistently across Muslim countries' engagement patterns. While the concept of Ummah (Islamic brotherhood) theoretically creates transnational solidarity motivating involvement despite geographical distance, practical engagement reveals significant variations based on national interests, sectarian differences, and geopolitical calculations. This explains why Sunni-majority countries like Saudi Arabia and Türkiye have more prominent roles than Shia-majority Iran, whose limited engagement stems directly from sectarian differences with the predominantly Sunni population in southern Thailand.

The sectarian dimension also creates both opportunities and limitations that directly connect to sovereignty debates. This religious dimension creates both opportunities and constraints, with sectarian differences determining which actors can effectively engage with communities in southern Thailand.

Sovereignty and Internationalization:

The tension between religious identity politics and state sovereignty forms one of the most critical intersections in the debate. Thai security agencies predominantly view the southern conflict as a domestic issue that should be handled internally without foreign interference. Informant 5 directly articulated this perspective:

The military government views the southern border issue as a pure security matter, so they don't want outside organizations or countries to participate. They have consistently maintained that this is an internal problem that doesn't require outside interference. (Informant 5, personal interview, January 24, 2023)

This sovereignty-focused position creates concrete operational difficulties for international organizations, which face strict reporting requirements and oversight:

International organizations coming to work in the southern border area must be heavily checked. They will be required to report every 3 months. (Informant 5, personal interview, January 24, 2023)

These sovereignty concerns directly influence how Muslim countries adapt their engagement strategies. Türkiye's carefully calibrated approach illustrates this adaptive response. This strategic positioning allows Türkiye to maintain humanitarian engagement while respecting sovereignty sensitivities.

The sovereignty debate connects directly to questions about facilitator neutrality. Malaysia's role as the official facilitator in peace talks since 2013 has been complicated precisely because its shared Malay-Muslim cultural identity with the population in Thailand's southern provinces creates sovereignty concerns for Thai authorities. As one informant observed regarding Indonesia's attempted involvement:

Being a facilitator is something recognized globally. Malaysia has played a role in Mindanao and Aceh, and other countries want to play a role as well. It's not surprising that Indonesia tried to take a second-place role, but ultimately other countries came in instead, which some parties were not very satisfied with. (Informant 2, personal interview, December 2, 2021)

Even funding assistance encounters sovereignty roadblocks tied to Thai government concerns about control:

There are obstacles in terms of policy. Even though we see from requests or various things, the process that would flow smoothly in approval doesn't happen. (Informant 4, focus group, July 25, 2024)

This illustrates how sovereignty debates directly impact resource allocation and program implementation.

Top-Down vs. Grassroots Engagement:

The sovereignty debate connects directly to operational questions about whether peace efforts should focus on high-level negotiations or community-based initiatives. While formal dialogue between the Thai government and insurgent representatives continues with Malaysia's facilitation, the effectiveness of this approach faces increasing skepticism. Civil society emerges as a crucial bridge between top-down and bottom-up approaches, potentially resolving tensions between sovereignty concerns and community needs. This intermediary role offers a pathway for Muslim countries to engage meaningfully without triggering sovereignty concerns.

The effectiveness of civil society approaches directly connects to questions about coordination and sustainability:

For civil society, they might need to work together in one way, because each group has its own expertise. Another thing is working in coordination with each other. (Informant 2, focus group, July 25, 2024)

This coordination challenge reflects broader debates about how to structure international involvement effectively within sovereignty constraints.

Religious Support vs. Development Assistance:

A significant operational debate about the type of assistance Muslim countries should prioritize connects directly to questions about long-term impact and effectiveness. Traditionally, many Muslim countries have focused on religious education and support, but this approach faces increasing criticism as outdated and insufficient. Informant 6 offered a particularly pointed critique:

We've been like this for fifty, sixty years. The Muslim world has been aiding Thailand as a country that weak in religion, so they only give religious matters. Until now, I think Muslims in Thailand are ahead already, but they are still giving only religious matters. (Informant 6, personal interview, June 20, 2023)

The debate about assistance types connects directly to questions about sustainable impact. As Informant 6 recommended:

I view that the Muslim world in ASEAN, like Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, should play a more important role in interacting with people in the area, and participating in development, being partners in human resource development, elevating people in the area to have more knowledge and abilities. People in the southern border provinces already have language skills or Malay identity, but they need opportunities. (Informant 5, personal interview, June 20, 2023)

This emphasis on comprehensive development reflects an emerging consensus that religious support alone cannot address the complex factors driving conflict.

Perhaps the most forward-looking debate concerns how the southern border region should be perceived and positioned internationally. Currently, many Muslim countries approach the area primarily as a recipient of humanitarian aid rather than a potential investment partner. Informant 7 frankly described this perception problem:

We are a lower-tier area, an area where they donate, not an area where they invest in business. (Informant 7, focus group, July 25, 2024)

This perception directly impacts the sustainability and effectiveness of international engagement. A charity-based approach creates dependency and limitations, while investment-centered engagement could generate self-sustaining

development. The proposed Halal City project exemplifies this potential strategic shift:

We expect that Halal City will happen in an area...OIC or Muslim countries should give this opportunity, it's considered jointly developing Thailand. (Informant 2, focus group, July 25, 2024)

Repositioning the region as an investment destination connects directly to broader regional economic integration efforts, particularly with neighboring Malaysia:

For the three provinces area, we need groups of people coming in, such as Malaysians coming in now, should be viewed as an opportunity... This is a policy that the Thai government should continue to support. (Informant 4, focus group, July 25, 2024)

This economic integration perspective offers a potential resolution to the tension between sovereignty concerns and international engagement by framing involvement as mutually beneficial economic cooperation rather than external interference.

The investment and development approaches also directly address the limits of traditional religious engagement. As Informant 6 observed:

If talking about providing benefits to people in the southern border provinces, they have been giving continuously through charitable organizations, providing assistance, religious propagation all along, even when Thailand and Saudi Arabia had poor relations with each other...People who will benefit from this new relationship are those working in business and trade, who see opportunities from this new relationship, although in Muslim society in the southern border provinces, there may be very few people in this group. (Informant 6, personal interview, June 20, 2023)

This insight highlights the need to develop business capacity alongside religious support.

Conflict Fatigue and Sustainability Challenges:

A final critical debate concerns the sustainability of international engagement in protracted conflicts. After nearly two decades, evidence suggests diminishing international attention to the southern Thailand conflict. Informant 3 directly observed this pattern:

In the early period when situations were new, it felt like the Muslim world led by the OIC was trying to help or come to assist in negotiations, research, or things like that... The first 10 years seemed okay, but in the latter 10 years, in my feeling, I see both sides retreating, because the conflict became prolonged, causing fatigue, boredom, or it dragged on. (Informant 6, personal interview, December 25, 2023).

This "conflict fatigue" phenomenon connects directly to shifting international priorities. This perspective aligns with the concept of "post-ideological international politics" where economic interests and security increasingly trump ideological or religious solidarity.

The sustainability challenge connects directly to the need for new approaches that can maintain international engagement despite fatigue. As Informant 7 recommended:

Civil society groups must create new criteria, in terms of developing existing human resources, networks of new generations to play more roles. (Informant 7, focus group, July 25, 2024)

This generational renewal perspective offers a potential solution to combat declining international interest.

These debates – spanning identity politics, sovereignty concerns, operational approaches, assistance strategies, economic positioning, and sustainability challenges – collectively shape how Muslim countries engage with Thailand's southern border provinces. Rather than functioning as isolated issues, these debates form an interrelated system where changes in one area directly impact others. For instance, the shift in Saudi Arabia's approach under Vision 2030 connects identity

politics, development assistance, and economic investment debates. However, this same shift creates potential economic opportunities:

Benefits will be for Muslims who can adapt. Adapting here means adapting to the trading system, modern economy, communication technology, which is very rare in the southern border provinces. (Informant 3, personal interview, December 25, 2023)

Similarly, the OIC's evolving approach demonstrates how operational approaches and development strategies interconnect. Its initial stance of engaging only with Muslim representatives has evolved toward government coordination. This evolution reflects pragmatic adaptation that balances religious solidarity with diplomatic realities.

Understanding these interconnected debates provides crucial insight into both current limitations and future opportunities for international support in the peace process. As these debates evolve, they will continue to influence the effectiveness and sustainability of Muslim countries' contributions to peacebuilding in southern Thailand. The most effective future engagement strategies will likely be those that address multiple dimensions simultaneously, balancing religious solidarity with pragmatic cooperation, high-level diplomacy with grassroots engagement, and humanitarian assistance with quality of life and economic development.

Conclusion

The involvement of Muslim countries in Thailand's southern border provinces has significantly impacted peacebuilding efforts in the region. This study has demonstrated that these countries engage through various channels and with different motivations, ranging from religious solidarity to geopolitical interests and international image-building. Malaysia's role as an official facilitator in peace talks stands as the most prominent example of formal diplomatic engagement, while

countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait have focused more on humanitarian assistance and educational support.

The research highlights the importance of identity politics in shaping these international engagements. Shared religious identity creates bonds of trust that facilitate cooperation between Muslim countries and local communities in southern Thailand. At the same time, this study reveals the complex interplay between identity factors and more pragmatic considerations of national interest and regional stability.

Looking ahead, there are significant opportunities to leverage these international relationships more effectively for peacebuilding. Stronger coordination between different Muslim countries could enhance the coherence and impact of their support. The Thai government might consider expanding the scope for international involvement while maintaining appropriate safeguards regarding sovereignty. Civil society organizations could play an important bridge role between international donors and local communities.

While challenges remain, including concerns about sovereignty and religious influence, the overall contribution of Muslim countries to addressing the conflict in Thailand's southern border provinces has been positive. Their diverse forms of support—diplomatic, humanitarian, educational, and developmental—provide valuable resources and perspectives that complement domestic peacebuilding efforts. Future research should continue to examine how these international engagements evolve and how they might be better harnessed to support sustainable peace in the region.

Declaration of AI Assistance

AI technology was utilized in the preparation of this article. Specifically, Claude.ai was employed solely to assist with language enhancement and editing. The AI tool helped refine the writing style and improve clarity of expression, while all

data analysis, research methodology, intellectual contributions, interpretations, and conclusions were exclusively conducted and developed by the human author(s). The AI's role was limited to language assistance only, with all substantive content originating from human expertise.

References

- Anderson, M. B. (1999). *Do no harm: How aid can support peace—or war*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Barakat, S., & Zyck, S. (2010). *Gulf state assistance to conflict-affected environments* (Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States). The Centre for the Study of Global Governance, London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Daoreuang, P. (2024, August 28). Botbat khong Malaysia nai khwam khatyaeng chaidan tai khong Thai [Malaysia's role in Thailand's southern border conflict]. *The 101 World*. <https://www.the101.world/malaysia-roles-in-thailand-deep-south-conflict/>
- De Lauri, A. (2018). *Humanitarian diplomacy: Practices, politics, and power* (CMI Brief No. 2018:4). Chr. Michelsen Institute.
- Lederach, J. P. (1998). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Maluleem, J. (2012). Ongkan Nana Chat Islam (OIC) kap kan kaipan ha khwam khatyaeng nai phak tai khong Thai [The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the resolution of conflicts in southern Thailand]. Chulalongkorn University.
- McCargo, D. (2014). *Southern Thailand: From conflict to negotiations?* Lowy Institute. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/southern-thailand-conflict-negotiations>
- Milton, S., Elkahlout, G., & Tariq, S. (2023). Qatar's evolving role in conflict mediation. *Mediterranean Politics*, 30(1), 53–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2023.2266665>

- Muna, R. A. A., Ras, A. R., Rudiyanto, R., Widodo, P., Saragih, H. J. R., & Suwarno, P. (2023). Indonesian diplomacy in resolving the Southern Thailand conflict in maintaining regional security stability. *International Journal of Humanities Education and Social Sciences*, 2(6), 1898–1904.
- Nakaurairat, P., et al. (2019). Botbat khong nana chat to krabuankan sang santiphap nai chaidan tai khong Thai lae bang mum-mong to phap anakhot [The role of international actors in the peace process in southern Thailand and some perspectives on the future]. Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University.
- Salae, H. (2008). Ongkon Muslim kham chat kap khwam mankhong khong manut: Chak Saudi Arabia su prathet Thai [Transnational Muslim organizations and human security: From Saudi Arabia to Thailand]. Paper presented at the 9th National Conference of Political Science and Public Administration.
- Sattar, Y. (2018). *Güney Doğu Asya'nin Çatışma Bölgelerinde Türkiye'nin Varlığı ve Etkisi* (Doctoral dissertation, Istanbul University, School of Social Sciences).
- Sattar, Y., Koma, A., & Plaiyaphol, M. (2023). Okat lae kho thatthai nai khwam samphan Thai–Turki [Opportunities and challenges in Thai–Turkish relations]. International Studies Center (ISC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Strategic Nonviolence Working Group. (2016). Tua sadeng rawang prathet nai khwam khatyaeng thueng tai thi chaidan tai [International actors in the southern border deadly conflict]. Parbpim.
- Wigmore-Shepherd, D. (2013). *Ethnic identity, political identity and ethnic conflict: Simulating the effect of congruence between the two identities on ethnic violence and conflict* (Doctoral dissertation, Durham University).
- Yusof, A., & Jaes, L. (2020). Malaysia–Thailand relation in the security perspective. *Journal of Social Transformation and Regional Development*, 2(2), 20–28.
- Yusuf, I. (2007). The Southern Thailand conflict and the Muslim world. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 27(2), 319–339.



JOPAG
JOURNAL OF POLITICS
AND GOVERNANCE