

TOWARDS AN EFFICIENT AND TRANSPARENT GOVERNANCE IN PAHANG STATE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

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Abstract

A nation's development level is commonly measured through the domains of economics, infrastructural, societal, residential and environmental dimensions. An excellent and organized performance measurement framework further emerged as a necessitated imposition in appraising the realization of national ambitions, whilst concurrently determines required endeavors towards greater international heights. The approach is fundamentally set to assess an organization's competencies in delivering an admissible level of pertinent services at the appropriated investments and occasions which conformed their predetermined objectives or goals. Performance evaluations ensue on the account of services' quality, capacity, efficiency and outcomes.

Facing continuous rampage of the COVID-19 pandemic, governing entities across the international landscape have constantly transformed their legislations and executions in light of residential requests for increased adaptability and certainty. Concerns tackling the lack of a comprehensive framework which describes essential elements to superior bureaucratic executions during moments of stability and ambiguity by government agencies within the state of Pahang then prevailed as a significant exploratory gap. Therefore, the objective of this study is to propose a comprehensive framework that covers various aspects of superior governance and should be adopted by all departments/ agencies in the state of Pahang. The current article is especially operationalized in addressing the mentioned loophole through centralizing both elements of efficiency and transparency as the two (2) most crucial aspects to superior state governance. Obtained findings followed the development of a comprehensive framework with five (5) generalized elements, which include 1) viable, responsive and adaptive organization, 2) livable and sustainable urban management, 3) financial resource reengineering, 4) relationship and collaborative strengthening, and 5) project management strengthening. Both values of efficiency and transparency are potentially achievable by the State Government of Pahang through implementation of these elements.

Keywords: Efficiency, transparency, good governance, integrity, performance management

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INTRODUCTION

Perception regarding a country's level of development has often been constructed above the customary bases of its economy, infrastructure, society, citizenship and the overall environment. A well-developed country is further determined on its excelling economic growth, outstripped income per capita, maximized utilization of available resources, foremost technological adoption, as well as superior capacity in engaging in-bound investments spanning different national sectors. Systematic judgment towards degree in which national goals are achieved would, nonetheless, rely on the bedrock of a robust and organized performance measurement framework towards subsequent decisions on strategic administrative and operational strategies.

Performance management is especially understood as the procedure endorsed for the evaluation of services appropriateness against their pre-established mission and objectives by measurements of the consigned delivery, monetary investment and specified timeliness. Expanded by Bianchi and Xavier (2017), performances of the services rendered are essentially gauged in terms of their quality, quantity, efficiency and outcomes. Performance management should comprise (1) Formulation of strategy; (2) Performance measurement instruments; (3) Analytic techniques; (4) Encouraging appropriate organisational responses (Zheng et al., 2019).

According to Pulakos et al. (2019), leaders have made the point that instead of just overengineering formal processes that lay beyond the regular tasks, concentration should be given to informal procedures and behaviours that assist performance on a daily basis. Establishing agile objectives so that expectations can be revised as necessary to stand appropriate and concise, offering real responses that contribute significantly to accomplishing an efficient outcomes, and attempting to remove barriers to help subordinate achieve their targets have been proposed as the most critical factors.

Rashid (2021) have further associated that an efficacious governmental performance is deemed attainable through paramount adoption of the aforementioned attributes, alongside imposition of a robust performance management strategy. Implementation of a Performance Management System has the potential to play a critical role in building accountability connections within the government sector, and thereby reflecting the effects of its actions. The central-level actors' play important roles in driving the transformation process and establishing the performance management culture have become the first requirement.

Broadened outlook on governmental efficiency would simultaneously correlate communal perceptions on the quality of public services and the extent of its independence against political pressures, eminence in both policy formulation and implementation, as well as the credibility of governmental commitments towards the established policies. Such consideration, therefore, requires multi-faceted intelligence by government bodies in managing political involvement, whilst handling diverse external interference within the process of policy making, routine operations and practices leading fundamental decisions. In light of the earlier discussion, this article essentially allocates its primary

emphasis in exploring the two most important components among documented elements that contribute effective governance, namely efficiency and transparency. Argument concerning significance of both components is, nonetheless, made on the international efforts by legislative entities across multiple countries towards overcoming adverse turmoil has brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. On similar note, exploration would then precede overturning of formerly entrenched conceptions regarding controversies of inefficiency, power abuse, task-oriented misconducts, corruptions and deceits throughout operations of 1.7 million civil employees within the public sectors of Malaysia.

BACKGROUND

In an effort to improve the service delivery system and implement best corporate governance, the Pahang state government has implemented various efforts including introducing digital services (e-Tanah, Pahang Go Application, e-Investment, Online Title Search, Online Learning etc.), provide various training opportunities to improve the skills of officers, reviewing outdated laws and issuing various internal guidelines and regulations. However, there are various constraints in the implementation process that cause the outcome does not reach the set targets. Moreover, to this date there are still no comprehensive framework outlining the important elements that can be used as guidelines for government agencies in Pahang.

As per mentioned, the current article sets to highlight the important elements applicable by government bodies towards ensuring efficient and effective executions. Contemporary emphasis is fundamentally allocated on both values of efficiency and transparency, with noting the two (2) most critical components among comprehensive elements of superior governance.

In view of the first component, international maneuver approaching the peak of Industrial Revolution 4.0 has manifested the emergences of state-of-the-art technologies, with the like of automation, Internet of Things (IoT), big data analysis, virtual simulation, system integration, robotic applications, artificial intelligence and cloud computing which led the acceleration to a modernized community. All the more so during critical period of the COVID-19 outbreak, digitization of common operations and practices have been excelled across international borders in fortifying economic resilience. With the advent of big data and advancements in technology and analytical capabilities, an evolving performance management paradigm that intentionally attempts to maximize such data has arisen. It is now essential to monitor and track a greater range of critical indicators and relationships in both internal and external systems to provide more promptly, accurately and real-time information to leaders and managers (Munteanu and Newcomer, 2020).

Vanitha et al. (2019) highlighted on the importance of Digital Business Model (DBM) that refer to service which delivers a conceptual model for interconnected items and their relations. This model is related to 'Industry 4.0' or the 'Industrial Internet of Things (IIOT),' both of which are highly reliant on information systems. On one hand,

economic progress and continuity in multiple countries were not jeopardized amidst the movement control interval by empowerment of e-commerce and online servicing. On the other hand, rapid digitization of public services has proven essential in fulfilling residential demands for greater efficiency and transparency. Such norms, thus, possess identical significance to the technologies of developing countries like Malaysia.

According to Ionescu et al. (2021), digital technology had the ability to keep economies surviving by allowing people to access fundamental services such as education, health, work, and culture, as well as staying informed and communicating with authorities. Furthermore, in the post-COVID recovery phase, digitization is unquestionably necessary for citizens and communities to return to normalcy in a safe and effective way. Technology has proven to be a tool that has ensured the continued provision of essential public services by governments severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

However, the necessity for digitization is concurrently hindered by inadequate readiness of Malaysian civil servants in embracing later technologies, and the nation's technological development that trails the growth of neighboring counties like Singapore and Japan. A coherent, comprehensive and well-coordinated strategy that responsively facilitates advancement of digital technology within the domestic layout is, therefore, needed in realizing the extended national agenda. The government is required to uphold a principal digitalization mentality, while synchronously encourage greater adoption of digitized technologies across public sectors. In overcoming inefficiency and resource wastage, both creativity and innovativeness then emerged as crucial proficiencies among civil employees towards advancement of current work processes, elimination of redundant bureaucracy, reviewing and revision of outdated rules and laws, and the digital substitution of manual technicalities.

In actuality, inclusion of expectations and demands from domestic citizens as important stakeholders within a service delivery model is proven challenging to government bodies worldwide. Governing effectiveness in terms of service planning and execution is often transformative in accordance to the altered expectations, mobility, digital competencies and lifestyle complexity of its residents. Notably, a top-down hierarchical model which underlies the service delivery process of public sectors is unfitting to the modernized reality. Ensuing changes then focused on an increased operational efficacy and civil-public collaborations without creation of additional financial strains by means of technological and procedural shifts, cultural adaptation, admirable leadership and a sense of accountability for the development of a progressively integrated and holistic services cape.

In view of the second component, transparency in civil executions has often been restricted by the issue of corruption on the country's political front. Particular remark is given on the massive interfering tendency possessed by political parties on governmental administration and finances of Malaysia which impedes a higher level of transparency, accountability and integrity to the vast public. Transparency assist in the prevention of conflicts of interest, reduces the negative consequences of their existence, promotes the

integrity of public office and civil servants, and prevents and hinders corruption, which is generally associated with informal agreements made outside of official and public decision-making channels (de Mingo and Cerrillo-i-Martínez, 2018). More often than not, apparent and strict regulations established in tackling the aforementioned issue is commonly overshadowed by communalism of interpersonal relationships between legislative and managerial parties. Further indicated by the National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACP), such concern is exemplified via a whopping 42.8% of complaints as received by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) regarding corrupted practices within the country's procurement sector. Named the most corrupted sector in Malaysia, related disclosure to the Auditor General has confirmed misconducts through unauthorized signing of contracts that valued at millions of ringgits, proceeded procurement at prices above the fair rates, acquisition of faulty equipment for dam construction projects, and preparation of public infrastructures which fall below the designated performance standards at an annual basis.

The negative phenomenon was profoundly intensified during frenzy of the COVID-19 pandemic following the misdemeanors of political leaders towards refining their authorities by ways of negligence. As reported within the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), functional exemptions on current procedures for public procurement alongside insufficient inspection and equating of monetary exchange forwarding prompt completion of inbound procurement have inevitably threatened the underlying prioritization on mutual transparency. Such deficiencies, thus, presented as a procedural loophole exploitable by political felons inside and outside of a nation's legislative system.

Nevertheless, discussed setbacks are particularly acknowledged within this article by proposition of a comprehensive framework which outlines crucial elements as the required guideline for securing an efficient and transparent governance to the State Government of Pahang.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Governments across the globe have been marking performance management as a pivotal segment on their existing agendas. Fundamentally, the delivery of public services is improved and advanced through complementary efforts between a well-designed performance management system and reinforcement of a well-instituted political structure. Noteworthy adaptability and robustness within public sectors are further attainable through adoption of an outcome-oriented and customer-focused operational culture. Such endeavors would subsequently entail heightened competitiveness of a nation (Bianci, 2016). In return, significance of both efficiency and transparency is cemented as the founding requirements for a systematic and well-coordinated national governance.

Facing the value of efficiency as an essential paramount, holistic shift from traditional administration to smart governance is reputedly important to the governing entity of a nation. In this regard, the application of big data as superior intelligence for

necessitated progress within the public sectors towards the achievement of smart governance would directly aid the constructions of smart agencies by methodical routes of improving efficiency, accelerating service delivery, promoting transparency and reducing public dissatisfaction (Sarker et al., 2018). Increased accessibility to vast amount of information further empowers the delivery of timely, error-free, cost-effective and feasible servicing; in turn, commissions sustainable stability to a nation's economy. Reviewed literature, therefore, highlighted the importance of smart governance to each agency within the public sectors through the implementation of big data technologies for enhanced accessibility, operational clarity, accountability and convenience.

On similar note, the role of digitization in services and executed process in revolutionizing the administration and dynamics of government institutions worldwide should not be overlooked. Observable through the replacement of physical paperwork by virtual interactions between authorized personnel within the board of administration, digitalization has undeniably developed into a foreseeable aspect that inspires governmental alterations. Further reported by Plesner et al. (2018), digital progress across public servicing has received conspicuous assessments by the OECD due to its immense gravity in resolving major shortcomings such as uncontrollable public expenditures, insufficient robustness, limited residential involvement and restricted transparency of public administration.

In accordance to the E-Government Development Index (EGDI) in the year 2020 which appraises a country's e-government development on the bases of online service index, telecommunication infrastructure index and human capital index; Malaysia has managed to secure a relatively higher standing for the year 2020 out of the 193 evaluated nations at the 47th position, as compared to its 48th position in 2018. However, the favorable achievement is outshined by proficiencies of other countries within the Asia Pacific region, such as Singapore and Japan at their respective 11th and 14th positions. Such underperformance is consequently seen as the results of a vague digital government plan specified for the nation's short-, medium- and long-term digital performance. On the contrary, the Digital Government Blueprint launched by Singapore that stretched over a five-year span between 2018 and 2023 have extrapolated the succession of 100% e-payment services towards its final year, whilst accompanying services comprehensively prefilled with verified government data, enabling of digital alternatives for wet ink signatures and thorough completion of transactions via the method of e-payment. Trained workforce has then been acknowledged as another core focus of Singapore following the country's ambition in possessing a total of 20,000 public officers equipped with the knowledge of data analytics and data science, while having the entire public employees being readily literate for basic digitalization (Singapore, 2018).

On the other hand, the Digital Government Execution Plan as initialized by Japan in the December of 2019 which expanded a seven-year period between 2019 and 2025 primarily emphasizes superior value creation and delivery to its residents and domestic businesses in capacitating their reciprocity for subsequent value generations. Being highly

user-centric, reformation of authorized administrative services, hence, embracing the main attributes of creativity, simplicity and convenience to their respected citizens. A set of 12 Service Design Principles which individually embodies the service design concept of Digital Government Promotion is hereby fabricated as an invaluable virtue to the implementation of user-centric administration and the organized pursuits for successful national projects. The Japanese government would then accentuate the country's service reformation with conforming prior intelligence regarding preceding digitization and business-transforming initiatives, and attempted service reformation norms within the global landscape.

Moving forward, the value of transparency as a predominant element for excelling governance is addressed. According to the Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI), excessive corrupted conducts in Malaysia has ultimately ranked the nation the 57th positions out of 180 assessed countries in order of the least corrupted country for the year 2020. Such ranking has, yet again, demonstrated tremendous discrepancy to the standings of developed countries within the same region, with the like of Singapore and Japan at their respective positions of 3rd and 19th. Dominance of such issue has evidently prevailed during period of the COVID-19 pandemic, in view of the government's awarding for billions of pounds in contracts without presence of sufficient executional transparency (locoucci, 2020). Reported by the National Audit Office (NAO), failures in providing formal documentations detailing the process towards important economic decisions, the procurement of resources from specified suppliers and the handling of conflicted interest were prevalent within the current governmental administration. Especially facing initial curbing of the pandemic outbreak, uniformity in operational transparency and documentation standard had been repeatedly ignored. These transgressions further corresponded other misconducts, such as the initiation of projects pending contracted verifications, delayed announcement of progressed tasks and undeclared conflicts of interest. Classified by the NAO as exceptional circumstances, the lack of well-certified, rationalized decisions in actual functional undertakings by governing entity remains a gullible oversight in justifying the appropriation of public finances.

As such, the mentioned misdemeanors have been tackled through imposition of National Anti-corruption Plan (NACP) by the Malaysian government spanning the years of 2019 to 2023 with an ingrained mission for integrity and ethical conducts. Outlined as an extensive anti-corruption framework, fundamentals of NACP are placed above six (6) key domains, namely Political Governance, Public Sector Administration, Public Procurement, Corporate Governance, Law Enforcement and Legal and Judicial, whilst chartering a total of 115 initiatives as implemented throughout its pre-set five-year executing period (Muhamad and Gani, 2020). Obtained report regarding the nation's five-year corruption trend between 2013 and 2018 has, nonetheless, uncovered greater susceptibility to corruptions among public sectors at a ratio of 63.30% against their private counterpart with a profoundly diminished ratio of 17.06%. Such occurrence, in multiple

cases, was contributed by unprofessional governance within the procurement systems, the legal and enforcement agencies, as well as the overall administration.

Reviewed literature has collectively supported both values of efficiency and transparency as utmost critical components to superior governance by a nation's government. Following the realization that Malaysia underperformed in both rankings of E-Government Development Index (EGDI) and Corruption Perception Index (CPI) against other regional counties like Singapore and Japan, registered shortcomings are seemingly resulted by absence of a systematic digital government blueprint/plan towards cushioning service-related challenges as brought about by global eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. The governments short of virtual preparedness towards circumstances of international uncertainties should act as a required guideline to secure successful delivery of public services without damaging their quality, precision and outcome amidst times of immediate uncertainty.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative approach by mean of personal interviews was particularly employed for the current study towards six specified senior state government officials currently operating within the state government of Pahang. The method is selected in view of its suitability to exploratory research by capturing the multi-dimensional thoughts of the participants through their voiced perceptions concerning the investigated topic. Respective participants were subsequently chosen due to their close associations to the governance of public services within the examined state, which enabled acquisition of complex and detailed insights regarding procedural endeavors of state management and development based entirely on their real-time experiences as verified public operators.

Obtained data was then appraised and interpreted through the employment of thematic analysis in revealing relevant information to the investigated topic. With both elements of efficiency and transparency across governmental conducts remain the center of this article, such analytical approach was, therefore, used to interpret, discover, followed by the reporting of patterns and clusters based off registered codes that hold similar meanings. Completed categorization further enabled consequential aggregation towards realization of major themes in adherence to their capacity to address the pre-determined research questions. As such, the list of respondents being specified for personal interviews has been given in Table 1:

Table 1: List of Personal Interview

Respondent	Position	Agencies
One	State Secretary of Pahang	Kuantan, Pahang
Two	Director of Pahang Local Government Department	Kuantan, Pahang
Three	Director Malaysian Productivity Corporation (East Coast Region)	Kuantan, Pahang
Four	CEO Pahang State Development Corporation	Kuantan, Pahang
Five	Director of Pahang Integrity Unit	Kuantan, Pahang
Six	Director of Pahang Internal Audit Unit	Kuantan, Pahang

Comprehensive management of the conducted personal interviews then conformed the standardized procedure as proposed by Creswell (2013). The referenced six main steps towards profound operationalization of personal interview have been thoroughly tabulated in Table 2:

Table 2: Preparation for the Interview

STEP	ITEM
One	Identifying the respondents
Two	Determining the type of interview
Three	Utilizing suitable recording tools
Four	Preparing an interview protocol
Five	Pilot testing
Six	Determine the place of interviews

Designated personal interviews were systematically undertaken across September to November of 2021. Each personal interview took approximately 30 to 45 minutes towards its completion, with the participants being well-informed on the research's objective prior commencement of the session. Recorded answers were evaluated by methodical technique of thematic analysis via six separate phases, namely 1) familiarization of data, 2) generation of codes, 3) searching of elements, 4) reviewing of elements, 5) definition and naming of elements, and 6) generation of report. Herewith, the main elements, sub-elements and additional sub-elements concerning the currently explored issue has been collectively tabulated in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Elements and Sub-elements

ELEMENTS	SUB- ELEMENTS	ADDITIONAL SUB- ELEMENTS
1. Viable, responsive and adaptive organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivating the practice of integrity • Empowerment of city management and councilors • Strengthened governance • Empowerment of complaint management • Preparations against any threats and uncertainties • Service improvement through digital applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of National Anti-corruption Plan across the government departments and agencies of Pahang • Empowerment of legislative enforcement in an integrated manner • Reviewing of existing legislative policies and procedures • Shortened response interval towards encountered complaints by adoption of well-coordinated systems • Institution and implementation of systematic SOP in both Risk Management Plan and Service Continuity Plan • Motivate the adoption of online payment initiatives

2. Livable and sustainable urban management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic development in accordance to local plans • Strengthening of sustainable urban implementation in congruence to the SDGs • Accelerated development of smart cities • Supported implementation of economic circulars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaken development by methods which promote optimal and well-planned land usage • Vast employment of renewable energy sources such as solar and biomass energy • Expanded implementation of smart city initiatives under the Malaysian Smart Cities Framework • Advanced proficiencies, attitudes and practices in solid waste management towards achieving a cyclical economy
3. Financial Resource Reengineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening of financial management • Generation of contemporary financial sources and incomes • Elevation of domestic economy and products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective expenditure control alongside increased revenue collection • Development of existing and new areas • Readying of business infrastructural facilities and appropriated incentives to attract investments
4. Strengthening of relationships and social collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment of community development • Enhanced collaboration between strategic partners • Maximized potential of real-time communications and applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulation and implementation of Community Development Plan • Strengthening of strategic cooperation among ministries/ public agencies/ educational institutions/ private parties and NGOs • Usage of social media as a medium for information dissemination and data collection towards ensuing developmental implementations
5. Strengthening of project management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindful selection of competent and quality contractors • Mandated comprehensive project brief alongside the fulfilment of operational requirements as specified by the technical departments • Enhanced planning towards robust handling of common weaknesses across the stages of project pre-implementation, implementation and monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing of contractors' performances through the system as provided by CIDB • Virtual execution of project briefs via the MyProject system in enabling swifter accessibility among technical departments • Enhanced competencies among development officers and the endorsement of governmental management guidelines as issued by the Public Works Department

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Conducted interviews have unearthed a total of five (5) crucial elements, including 1) organization which upholds viability, responsiveness and adaptability, 2) urban management which endorses livability and sustainability, 3) reengineering of financial resources, 4) strengthening of relationships and social collaborations, and 5) empowering of project management competencies. In view of the first element, the aspects of viability, responsiveness and adaptability are seemingly reachable through strategic management of fundamental aspects within an organization including leadership, human resource management and service delivery blueprints. Such claim was especially confirmed through collective agreeableness of all interviewed participants on the importance of favorable public image towards advancement of specific government agencies. Holistic development of public organizations which consistently advocate operational morality, responsibility and professionalism throughout their internal cultures are deemed unavoidable in meeting and surpassing public confidence. With this being said, the value of integrity subsequently emerges as an understated pinnacle to the practices of civil employees within the state government of Pahang amid massive exposure to the negative allures of corruptions, abusing of authority and political malfeasances. Well-coordinated and cardinal regulatory enforcements are, nonetheless, imperative across state agencies towards fabricating an excelling public position to their various stakeholders. Yet, primary consideration to such endeavors would fall on the rising challenges in municipal management as induced by rapidity of domestic urbanization and the resulted swift expansion in residential composition.

Particularly highlighted by Respondent One, an integrated enforcement unit has been founded by the state government of Pahang in the year 2019 with direct coherence to recommendations as presented by the National Governance, Integrity and Anti-corruption Center (GIACC) for addressing discovered weaknesses and shortcomings in the state's regulatory enforcement. Authority as fairly awarded by the enforcement unit to the body of enforcement personnel from multiple legislative departments such as the District and Land Office in 11 districts, the Pahang State Forestry Department, the Pahang Department of Minerals and Geosciences and the Pahang Water Regulatory Authority, have providentially curbed numerous revenue losses and leakages, whilst uplifting the state's enforcement standard. Examples including the imposition of permanent forest reservations at both locations of Sungai Ichat and Sungai Bertam towards securing environmental sustainability, slope safety concerns within the Cameron Highlands region, followed by a strict regulatory legislation against illegal mining activities at the location of Tasik Chini, have subsequently succeeded as crucial milestones on the unit's efforts against intrusive conducts on the state's soil.

Interviewed respondents have also collectively agreed to the essentiality of governance strengthening for maintaining adequate susceptibility and versatility towards contemporary societal demands. With centralizing both revisions and amendments of current regulations to meet public requests, leveled standards and indicators which

benchmarked minimal prerequisites of internal operations should not be forgone pending proactive and customer-oriented organizational culture. Highlighted by Respondent Three, such responsibilities often fall within the statutory administration of PEMUDAH (The Specific Taskforce to Facilitate Business) in Pahang under regular commands of the Pahang State Secretary and the vice president of Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) which stands as strategic platform that engages collaborative attempts between both public and private sectors in reviewing affairs regarding policies, processes, rules, procedures and bureaucratic complications associating burdens of inadmissible regulatory obstacles towards pre-established standard of business conducts within the state.

Prospective implementation of Pahang Productive 2021 ensued on the intentions of constructing an increasingly transparent mechanism to the state's permit and license management process, advancing integrity within the delivery process of public services and impeding corrupted misconducts and abuse of power; through introduction of rewarding initiatives to improve the standard of licensing guidelines throughout domestic authorities within the state of Pahang. Additionally, Respondent Six then followed up with commented reassurance concerning effectiveness of the adopted initiatives in overcoming delayed investigations and sales orders to the routine operations of Kuantan District and Land Office. Recovered changes in terms of executional timeliness has, nonetheless, diminished unnecessary financial burden to mortgagors following the avoidance of extraneous interest imposed by respective financial institutions from an otherwise extended postponement.

Moving forward with the second element, comprehensive and prudent developmental planning has been recognized by Respondent One as a compelling factor contributing long-term sustainability and livability of the state's urban management. Hasty urbanization, economic growth and national globalization, thus, proven to be a major challenge to the administrative efficacy of government agencies due in the interest of intensified competitiveness facing an immensely complex, vulnerable and uncertain environment. Benefits of the greater community has, yet again, appeared as the main consideration to the state's operations towards fulfilling development needs, public expectations and surmounting of incoming misadventures. Uniformity between both technological advancement and environmental sustainability further prevails under the circumstance where conflict of interest existed between development needs, encountered challenges amidst urbanization progress such as traffic congestion and inefficient general and solid waste handling, as well as issues of unbalanced residential distribution between demographics of the developed urban and rural locations.

As acknowledged from the feedbacks by Respondent Four, urban development which failed to account for the underlying opinions and perceptions of localized citizens, whilst incapable of meeting expected fallouts of the community has frequently received severe negative backlashes and objections from the disregarded public. Such statement was then supported through voiced comment on the importance of optimal and coordinated developments that adhere the formerly established local plan. Aligning the prerequisites of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), discussion follows the requirement for

environmental sustainability thought employment of low carbon initiatives and renewable sources of energy within the state's urbanization projects. This should further be circumstantial upon the proclamation by Respondent Three on necessitated normalization of smart cities in resolving the numerous setbacks encountered within urban regions. Nevertheless, jointed ventures between legislative bodies, industrial practitioners and academic experts would emerge critical to enable an ecosystem which stimulate and support the exercising of smart and autonomous initiatives. Such endeavors inevitably commence in the form of Internet of Things (IOT) across all state agencies towards growing the level of public awareness and readiness for contemporary development and futuristic norms.

The third element is acknowledged by both Respondent Two and Respondent Six on the significance of a strengthened financial management towards state governance. An equalized tradeoff between excellent cost efficiency and service quality has demonstrated efficacious momentum on the latter among involved agencies. With recognizing outperforming income sources as pivotal inputs that assist government agencies such as the Local Authorities and State Statutory Bodies towards institution of disparate construction and socio-economic programs for improved domestic financial gains, reengineering of financial resources has seemingly arisen as an undervalued component. A counter-argument was, yet, voiced by Respondent One on exigency of considering developers' perceptions to demystify related issues and challenges from a spectrum-wide outlook, whilst easing undertaken transformations on the servicing and business landscapes.

Proceeded as a segment of the state's vision to become a contemporary frontier in economic strength, the discussed contents are simultaneously mirrored through decision by the state government of Pahang on development of a new special district enclosing core territories of Gebeng, Genting, Jelai and Muadzam which follows the imposition of features like quit rent review and e-Tanah system, the instatement of streamlined legislative units known as Unified Enforcement Unit, International Division and Revenue Recovery Unit, alongside the empowerment of GLC's organizations that comprised an array of government verified companies such as Pahang Mining Corporation, Pahang Corporation and Pahang Water and Energy Resource. The updated transformations undertaken by the state government has, therefore, been viewed as the manifestation of an efficacious action plan towards generation of auxiliary financial sources and incomes.

With this being said, revenue as acquired from local authorities remains highly dependent on conventional inputs such as assessment taxes, stall rentals, and business and entertainment licenses. Particular for urban districts like Maran, Jerantut and Bera, said monetary subset has also been densely contributed by the state government. Observably, sole reliance on tax-based revenue is insufficient to compensate the hefty expenses required for the fabrication of infrastructure and outstanding servicing standard within the state. Such financial deficit, thus, demands excerpction of expenditure from one development project in favor of other lucrative alternatives, besides limiting the investments of specified priority projects. Request for the local authorities to design a persevering economy would

ultimately commence upon increased revenue and income which counteract, if not, outweigh the financial requirements of current development projects in entirety. This has, nonetheless, been highlighted by Respondent Two as a main concern to several governing authorities of Pahang.

The fourth element subsequently confirmed the importance of fortifying relationships and social collaborations. Under such circumstance, the state government of Pahang holds a firm belief on a need for comprehensive community development and robust bureaucratic performance by pragmatic integration of multiple administrative departments, divisions and units. Exceptional coordination between central agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private sectors would then establish mutual and reciprocated benefits in reaching a higher degree of resource optimization. Collaborated international level programs with the like of United Nations Development Program (UNDP), World Urban Forum (WUF) and Smart City Convention which advocate participated dissemination of knowledge and relevant technologies have yielded similar results among associated parties. Attention is alternatively placed on cooperation that conceives an all-rounded media communication team in exploiting the platforms' public-centric nature towards compatible government-resident communications. On the accounts of collective mindsets and authenticity, public data as collected through the use of social media was also accentuated by Respondent Two as potential intellectual inputs to convert organizational practices in accordance to mutual anticipation.

Having "*development for all*" as a founding objective of Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, strengthening of project management has, therefore, been determined as the fifth element towards superior state and national governance. Postponement in project implementation was especially noted by Respondent One and Respondent Four as a severe issue which requires immediate resolution, in view of its chained aftermaths on higher project expenditures, delayed residential benefits, stagnation of living standards within the local community, detrimental to the coordination of later projects, while actuating governmental image in a negative light. Based on the actual experience of Respondent Six, such improprieties have been fairly apparent upon inspection of internal audit, enclosing complications in site/land verifications, project briefs, allocation, procurement, design, value management, selection of contractors and consultants, permission for planning, weather, sudden strike of the global pandemic, extension of time (EOT), as well as operating policies and procedures.

Further expanded by Respondent Four, delayed completion and subpar standard of specific projects have been the common resultants of incompetent contractors. Disruptive consequents would ensue by ways of elevated project financials from extended maintenance and possible appointment of salvage contractor to recompense an otherwise unfinished development. Uncovered verdict then sways towards mandated appraisal of contractors' organizational profile, certificate of eligibility, disciplinary confrontation and list of completed tasks through the employment of Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB)'s Centralized Information Management System (CIMS). Alternative

solutions were then proposed by Respondent Five through improving the proficiencies of development officers and imposition of a comprehensive framework in assessing parties' compliance to the contracted regulations; with the latter fundamentally conforms Treasury Instruction No. 182 which stipulates a strict requirement for registered reviews and opinions by technical divisions such as Public Works Department and Department of Irrigation and Drainage upon entering a contract of service alongside a non-technical division.

In conclusion, the outcome of the interview conducted had indicate that the efficiency and the transparency of the Pahang state government can be improved through the implementation of these five critical elements as outlined in the comprehensive framework. Moreover, previous arguments have conjointly recommended mandatory adaptation of the five elements within state departments, statutory bodies, local authorities and other subsidiaries under the state government of Pahang in seek of enhancing the location's legislative, societal and economic performances for the upcoming future. These components can be substantially adopted as essential benchmarks to governmental performances, whilst evaluation of realized results being based off the annual performance appraisal report of each involved agency.

CONCLUSION

In direct coherence to the mottos of "*Pahang First*" and "*Maju Terus Pahang*", both fundamentals of efficiency and transparency are principally advocated by the legislative departments and agencies of Pahang's State Government across their routine service delivery operations. Such values are deemed essential towards common administration of the current statecraft in view of their importance in offering vast extent of social benefits to the residents, lowering unnecessary grievances and dissatisfactions, elevating performances and revenues, whilst generally enhance image of the governing body. With this in mind, qualitative research in the form of systematic interviews among administrative authorities within the state government were operationalized in the attempt of unearthing necessary endeavors that contribute the aspired outcomes. In this study, five main elements as outlined within the comprehensive framework are believed may contribute towards better achievement of the aforementioned values are disclosed. These five elements comprise 1) organizations that uphold viability, responsiveness and adaptability, 2) urban management that embraces livability and sustainability, 3) reengineering of financial resources, 4) strengthening of relationships and social collaborations, and 5) the fortification of project management competencies. Nevertheless, effectiveness of embedding the discovered elements in actual departmental and agency executions remain utmost questionable. Such ambiguity then motivates future scholastic direction through actual bureaucratic execution by the State Government of Pahang appropriating basis of the proposed framework, following the objectives of problem identification, operational and service improvements, as well as the transformational deed in conforming paramount principles of a high-income state through incorporation of the best state-governing entity.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest, whether financial or otherwise, in conducting this research.

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