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### Community Development Practices by Local Government

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#### ABSTRACT

People's involvement in local government is an important factor to enhance productivity and community development. All the community development services of local authorities actually represent a new and significant approach to nurture better productivity in response to the problems raised by people. However, many of the initiatives are not in tandem with the needs of the people as the local government tends to merely adapt existing policy instruments in planning development for the community. The public rightfully has high expectations of local community development services level and are often critical of the local government services. This is because it is common to have people's expectation that exceeds the delivery by the local government. This study identifies various initiatives which have been actively promoted by the local government for community development and the level of satisfaction of the people. Besides that, this study also examines the differences involved between expectation and delivery of community development. Study shows that there is a significant difference between the total expectation and actual level of delivery of community development services. The disparity between total expectation and delivery indicates a lack observed in the community development services.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Local government is the third tier of the government and is governed mainly by the Local Government Act 1976. It practices an integrated approach to the communities in sharing the common goal by developing local initiatives (Oluwu and Ayo, 1976). In Malaysia, local government is the nearest government to the people and encourages wider participation in community development. It is evident that there is an increasing interest of local community in assisting the local government in the development process (White, 1986). According to Hardev (2007), one of the programs developed was Agenda 21 that recommends public participation in progressing towards sustainable development. She explains that Local Agenda 21 helps the local communities and local authorities to identify and analyze the local sustainable development issues and is useful in formulating and implementing action plans to address rising issues. It shows that local government plays a significant role in providing the best services to the community to achieve productivity and sustainability and generally improve the quality of life. According to McKinlay (2011), the community forms a strong relationship with local

authorities to seek collective means in shaping their requirement. However, it also means that the efforts initiated by the local government invites the participation of local communities and stakeholders in the program.

Community development is an important tool for the community in fulfilling their basic needs through their own efforts or assisted by local authorities (Angba and Itari, 2012). Boland (2011) says the development by local government always give a big view to the community to involve in a decision making process as it is important aspect for the community to create a good environment. There has been rapid growth in the number of programs initiated by the government to promote public involvement and the public has been directly involved in decision making (Roberts, 2004). Almost all local government programs contain some element of public participation. Community development programs initiated and controlled by local governments are frequently involved in modifying and improving government services and polices. Yet, we are still facing problems in achieving better community development. Thus, community involvement is pertinent in ensuring the development of a local government. According to World

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Development Report (1993), lack of community development attempts in developing countries would not help the countries to develop in the future.

Participation is one of the tools for the community to voice out their choices in community development (Bishop and Davis, 2002). Peoples' participation at the local level helps to create more viable local governments in many countries and enhance the productivity of the country. Mayer and Keyes (2005) state that during the 1990s, community development was treated as a supporting tool to enhance the community development. This was done by getting the peoples' involvement or expertise in development of the community. Communities are always seeking the best ways to get involved in the local issues which they have interest (Herriman, 2011).

### **Methodology:**

The study employs a quantitative approach in its methodology. The focus of the research is on the level of effectiveness in terms of community development initiatives and quality of community development services in two local authorities namely, Shah Alam City Council (SACC) in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur City Hall (KLCH) in Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. Both are cities, being the highest level of local authorities in Malaysia. The researcher chose these councils due to its active involvement in the community development programs and due the accessibility and willingness of its staff and residents to participate. This study utilizes stratified random sampling in which is considered to be an important form of probability sampling. This sampling technique helps to estimate population parameters; there may be identifiable subgroups of elements within the population which may be expected to have different parameters on the variables which are of interest to the researcher (Chua, 2012). This sampling technique is used to identify the differences of effectiveness in the community development services and quality of service through the responses of the randomly selected respondents at two different locations.

In a general term, the selection of sample size should be based on the estimated size of the population that is related to the research issue (Sekaran & Bougie, 2012). Respondents are randomly selected among the participants in community development programs that were conducted by KLCH and SACC. There were a total of 102 respondents for this study. This sample of respondents was chosen based on Sekaran (2013). In simple random sampling, the selection of one individual is independent of the selection of another individual (Terhanian and Bremer, 2012). The authors add that adding one or more sample source to the original might address the need for more respondents, but some evidence suggests that it might also decrease sample representativeness and

reduce response accuracy.

Data was collected through self-administered questionnaire to respondents chosen by stratified random sampling to ensure equal representation of population. It was designed for the respondents to assess the level of effectiveness of community development initiatives by the local authorities and the process of getting people involved in participating in community development as well as to analyse the challenges of the local authorities in community development. A five-point Likert scale is used as it allows accurate assessment of opinions, which are often conceptualized in terms of gradation (Evans and Lindsay, 2002). Data are analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22.

### **Analytical Framework:**

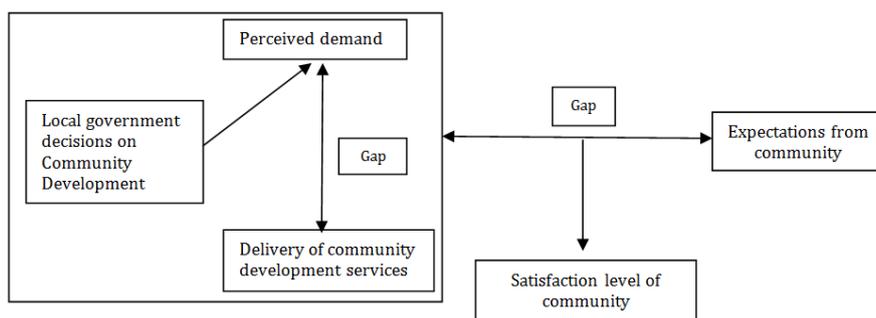
The theoretical assumptions indicate that most of the people would like to work together to develop their community through various strategies to improve any difficulties that exists as a barrier for community development (Eversole, 2011). Key ingredients for facing and solving the problems in establishing very successful community development are inclusion of ideas, energy, social capital and local knowledge among people and local government managers (Adams and Hess 2001; Wiseman 2006; Yanow 2003).

Systems theory is necessary to explain community development at local level. According to Fesler (1980), it asserts that every local government has a purpose, goal or objective in achieving better performance through excellent community development. Furthermore, this theory elaborates that citizen's performance needs to be measured against the stated objectives. Citizens' participation in community development must follow all the requirements and procedures by government at local level in order to be involved effectively. While expectancy theory is an alternative approach that assumes citizens' have a variety of goals and strength of their preferences to achieve their target in community development (Rosenbloom and Kravchuk, 2005). The authors propose that people's motivation in being involved in community development will depend on the extent to which they expect a certain activity to lead to some degree of satisfaction. For instance if they think that participating in community development would lead to a greater productivity, they will be more participative in all the activities carried out by the government. According to this approach the key to motivation is affording citizens' some opportunity to achieve their desired goals and making clear those activities or efforts which can reasonably be expected to lead to attainment of these goals (Rosenbloom and Kravchuk, 2005). Service quality (SERVQUAL) is one of the related theories for this study. The service quality instrument has been the predominant method

used to measure consumers' perceptions of service quality (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; Hsiu *et al.*, 2010). According to Hsiu SERVQUAL measurements proposes such concepts and methods which have been widely accepted and applied in the domain of service quality measurement.

The analytical framework as per Figure 1 illustrates the concepts derived from the theories, namely perceived demand and delivery of services and expectations of stakeholder. It has also associations between the effectiveness of service quality on the level of satisfaction of stakeholders on community development services. Systems theory and the expectancy theory has portrayed the gap

between the expectations and delivery of the community development services in which if the expectations are more than the delivery, it refers to local government ineffectiveness in fulfilling what is expected by the people. Theory of service quality refers to the gap of divergence between the expectations by stakeholders and the effectiveness of the community development services. It shows greater form of effectiveness of service quality when the expectations are higher than the effectiveness of the services. Based on this gap if at all there is any or none, it will affect the stakeholder's satisfaction level.



**Fig. 1:** Analytical framework of research Source: Researcher.

Systems theory has portrayed the gap of divergence between the expectations and delivery of the community development services. If the expectations are more than the delivery, then, it refers to the imaginary mode of visualization that deals with the deficiency of services. Likewise, when the delivery exceeds expectations of a person, it would refer to more adequate services by the local government. Theory of service quality refers to the gap of divergence between the expectations by stakeholders and the effectiveness of the community development services. It shows greater form of effectiveness of service quality when the expectations are higher than the effectiveness of the services. This happens because of top down decisions, many actions and plans decided by the officers which are often done from their desk without examining and checking the actual situation with the stakeholders. This therefore does not encourage people to participate. So between delivery and expectations, it is necessary to discover whether there is any gap between these two, as professed by

Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) in their SERVQUAL instrument. Based on this gap if at all there is any gap or none, stakeholder's satisfaction level will be denoted.

The Cronbach alpha obtained for all the factors are shown in Table 1, and range from 0.83 to 0.91. Adopting an alpha of  $r = 0.70$  as an acceptable criterion for the reliability of scores on this scale (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2008), the reliability of the test items used in this study is considered high and acceptable. In addition no other confusing or ambiguous questions were pointed out, hence there were no further changes made to the questionnaire. Based on Table 1, it can be observed clearly that all the selected dimensions measured by different set of items are very reliable as the Cronbach values for all the 4 dimensions are greater than 0.7. This test is compulsory as it is used to decide on the maintenance of variables for the relevant forms of tests such as parametric modes of independent and dependent samples t-test.

**Table 1:** Reliability values based on the selected dimensions of interest.

No.	Dimensions	Items	Cronbach Alpha
1	Expectation on the community Development Services by local government	24	0.83
2	Delivery of community Development Services by local government	24	0.88
3	Expectations on the community development services by stakeholders	19	0.91
4	Satisfaction level on the community development services	13	0.91

### Results:

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of the

demographical variables based on the selected types of local authorities. It can be observed clearly that

there are insignificant forms of slight differences between the variables of interest and the groups of

local authorities due to the fact that the p-values are less than 5%.

**Table 2:** Demographical details based on the selected local authorities.

Demographical variables	SACC (n=52), %	KLCH (n=52), %
Ethnicity		
Malay	74.0	51.9
Chinese	10.0	25.0
Indian	12.0	19.2
Others	4.0	3.8
Gender		
Male	56.0	50.0
Female	44.0	50.0
Age		
< 25 years	10.0	7.7
25-34	50.0	57.7
35-44	18.0	25.0
45-54	14.0	5.8
55-64	2.0	.0
>64	6.0	3.8
Highest Education Attainment		
Secondary school	10.0	7.7
PMR/SRP	2.0	1.9
SPM/STPM	26.0	34.6
Certificate/Diploma	34.0	28.8
Degree	20.0	23.1
Masters/PhD	8.0	3.8
Occupation		
Public sector employee	68.0	69.2
Private sector employee	16.0	13.5
Self employed	8.0	13.5
Retiree	8.0	3.8
Monthly Income		
<RM1000	10.0	7.7
RM 1001 – RM2000	42.0	42.3
RM2001 – RM3000	26.0	26.9
RM3001 – RM4000	10.0	15.4
RM4001 – RM5000	6.0	5.8
> RM5001	6.0	1.9

Table 3 shows the summary of paired sample t-test in a group of variables for expectation and delivery. It can be seen that there is a significant difference between total expectations and delivery of community development services as the p-value is less than 5%. Variables performance of local government and community needs attained the

significant level of .002 and .000 respectively. The gap of divergence between total expectations and delivery has indicated that greater effectiveness has been observed in the community development services and it has supported the validity of systems theory.

**Table 3:** Summary of paired sample t-test in a group of variables.

Variables	Mean (Expectation)	Mean (Deliver)	t-value	df	p-value	Decision
Efficient Training	2.41	2.49	-1.366	103	.175	NS
Roles of LG	2.37	2.45	-1.443	103	.152	NS
Performance of LG	2.25	2.44	-3.235	103	.002	Sig.
Community Needs	2.39	2.64	-3.971	103	.000	Sig.
Effectiveness of community development programs	2.66	2.73	-1.506	103	.135	NS
Community participation	2.42	2.48	-.912	103	.364	NS
Initiative of LG	2.47	2.50	-.355	103	.724	NS

### Discussion:

The paired samples t-test compares two means, when those means are from the same entities. For the significant value, if the value is less than .05 then the means of the two conditions are significantly different. Paired sample t-test indicates whether the significance levels between the group of variables namely, efficient training, roles of local government, community needs, effectiveness of community development, performance of local government, community participation and initiative of local

government differs based on the mean for expectations and delivery. The findings from this analysis provide the answers for the three objectives of the study. First is to evaluate the level of effectiveness of community development initiatives by the local authorities in the local area, and second, to identify the differences between the expectations and delivery of community development services, and third, is to examine the differences between expectations and delivery of community development services.

**Conclusion:**

Local government is the nearest government to the people to encourage wider participation in community development. Therefore, local government has to identify the problems before it embarks on more ambitious programs for themselves and the community. This would help to train the local government in seeking and achieving people participation at local levels by planning and implementing community development projects. In order to ensure that local governments play their roles in community development, innovative and responsive local authorities are needed. Furthermore, contributions to the discussion of the challenges and search of balance for the local governments in providing better services to the people in the future are very much needed in conducting community development programs for the employees and residents.

To date, studies related to community development specifically within the Malaysian context have not been properly documented and assessed. Therefore, the knowledge related to this area of investigation is still not concrete. Thus, the approach taken was to extract information from a wide range of sources and to develop the area of study, allowing the most relevant ideas and knowledge regarding key factors affecting the success of community development by local government.

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