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Sustainability In Delivering a Successful Public-Private Partnerships Projects in Malaysia

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Abstract

This article examines deeply into public-private partnership (PPP) projects in Malaysia, particularly from the perspective of government officials who play a significant role in decision-making. The main goal is to improve comprehension and identify solutions that are crucial to the successful completion of these efforts. In the context of Malaysia's goal of sustainable development, the study serves as a specialized guide for government officials participating in PPP development. The research analyzes the creative integration of sustainability concepts into Malaysia's theoretical framework of PPPs, which is supported by a conceptual framework of PPP Sustainability Evaluation based on system thinking. Examining project lifecycles, the study emphasizes the importance of stakeholders; the government, corporate organizations, and the public, focusing on Social, Economic, and Environmental Sustainability as critical pillars in conducting PPP projects. Emphasizing the three pillars of sustainability emerges as a crucial approach for promoting good governance in Malaysia's PPP projects.

Keywords: Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), PPP Sustainability Evaluation Framework

Introduction

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have distinguished themselves as an effective approach to facilitate collaboration between the public and private sectors in the context of



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executing extensive infrastructure initiatives. This transitions to the establishment of PPPs, which have emerged as a crucial instrument in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). PPPs leverage the respective competencies of the public and private sectors to mobilize resources, foster innovation, and advance sustainable development practices (JingFeng, Yuan, Wei Li, 2018). To ensure the successful implementation of PPPs, it is essential to resolve governance concerns, strike a balance between interests, develop capabilities, foster inclusivity, and prioritize long-term sustainability. Similar to numerous other countries, Malaysia has adopted PPPs as a means to strengthen its infrastructure, foster economic expansion, and address the changing demands of its populace. PPPs are frequently regarded as a viable resolution for situations in which the government faces financial constraints, expertise gaps, or experience limitations that hinder its ability to develop public services to a higher standard (Minxun Ma, Nannan Wang, Wenjian Mu & Lin Zhang, 2022). Although it is widely recognized that PPPs and sustainability are interdependent, concerns remain regarding the effectiveness of PPPs with a focus on sustainability, particularly when applied to large-scale initiatives.

The primary impetus for developing nations, including Malaysia, to adopt PPP is the financial gains that can be obtained by mitigating fiscal burdens and promoting sustainable local economic growth, which are considered equivalent to economic sustainability (Chan, Lam, Chan, Cheung, & Ke, 2009). Central to this exploration are the theoretical underpinnings of system definition which includes all stakeholders inclusive Public Sector, Private Entity and General Public which sheds light on the governance structures that shape PPPs, and the Framework for Disclosure in PPP Projects towards bringing transparency to the forefront. In the context of PPPs, the sustainable evaluation provides valuable insights into the governance structures, norms, and regulatory frameworks that govern these partnerships. By applying the conceptual framework, we seek to achieve satisfaction on the stakeholders' expectations on the decision-making processes, risk-sharing mechanisms, and long-term sustainability considerations within PPPs. Complementing this, the conceptual framework emerges as a beacon for transparency and accountability. As we commence this endeavor, the interdependence of PPP Sustainability Evaluation serves as a governing principle, illuminating the complex fabric of PPPs in Malaysia. It is expected that our research outcomes will contribute to scholarly dialogue and provide practical guidance for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders engaged in sustainable development and PPPs.



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Purpose/Objective

To examine PPP projects in Malaysia with the purpose of enhancing comprehension of these initiatives 1, and determining the most effective approaches and strategies for their successful execution 2.

Research Scope

1. Population scope

Putrajaya, particularly The Ministry of Finance (MOF), and Public Private Partnership Unit (UKAS) where the majority of the government officials who were directly involved in the discussion and throughout the decision-making process of the project, makes it the ideal location to conduct the study. Ten respondents coming from management-level government officials with at least five years' experience in PPP projects were involved.

2. Variable scope

The study focuses on multiple cases of PPP projects from different methods; include Sungai Besi - Ulu Kelang Elevated Expressway via Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT), MARA University of Technology Development (UiTM) Pasir Gudang Campus via Build-Lease-Maintain-Transfer (BLMT), Integrated Transport Terminal in Gombak via Build-Lease-Maintain-Operate-Transfer (BLMOT), Concession Agreement on Government Integrated Telecommunication Network Services via Build-Own-Operate (BOO), Development of Exhibition, Trade and Convention Center via Land Swap, "KL ECO CITY" Development Project via Joint Venture (JV), and Operating Agreement for Designated Airport via Management Contracts, allowing for a rich exploration of how different entities navigate throughout the framework.

3. Time Scope

For data collection, in-depth interview sessions were conducted in October 2023 and November 2023, during the pre and post of Malaysian Budget 2024 presentation period.

Methodology

1. Research Methodology

The qualitative case study approach applied the PPP Sustainability Evaluation Framework to gain in-depth insights regarding the importance of its three cores which are the social, economic and the natural sustainability on delivering a successful PPP project.

2. Research Phase

Interview questions and topics will be conducted personally by the researcher on behalf of the selected department of the ministries. Employees shall be undergoing certain



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3. Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability can be achieved by including environmentally friendly methods throughout the whole life cycle of PPP projects in order to prevent or eliminate environmental harm and increase natural resource utilization efficiency (Khan, Ali, Kirikkaleli, Wahab, & Jiao, 2020). Environmental and PPP issues typically develop during the identification, planning, and implementation stages in Malaysia. Recognizing the necessity of maintaining natural resources in order to achieve environmental sustainability, the government enforced a stringent process before agreeing to a PPP project. This was explained by Participant 5, "A concessionaire must provide Environmental Impact Assessment from Department of Environment, Malaysia. So, issues such as endangerment of forest reserve and the ecosystem could be prevented." Other than that, preserving the non-renewable resources such as land, also hinder the achievement of environment sustainability. Land resources in Malaysia should be put in good use as it is being depleted rather fast. "Usually when government want to develop a project but didn't have the financial capability, they will opt for land swap method of PPP. That is why the federal government and Department of Director general of Lands and Mines, owner of federal lands, regulated that each of their land had their own purpose of which we called gazetted for specific purposes. And we can't simply change this gazetted land for a different purpose to preserve our land asset as for the use of future development needed." Explained by Participant 4. Recognizing the challenges of developing infrastructure through PPP in Malaysia is a good place to start. It may facilitate the process of planning and implementing it with the people, country, and appreciation of scarce resources in mind. "We know that the government needs to invest a lot into realizing the PPP project, for example, transportation projects," said Participant 10. "They were not only investing financially, but they were also providing the land and surrounding area. However, knowing the benefits that may be achieved from the project, not only solving traffic problems, making people less reliant on private transportation, and reducing air pollution, but also creating job possibilities and raising people's living standards."

Conclusion and Discussion

It is agreed upon that the vital role of PPPs method of doing projects in Malaysia benefits not only the government and private companies involved but also the public. However, it is not enough just to complete the projects for the sake of providing the basic infrastructures or amenities to the public. Instead, the sustainability of those projects is even crucial as to ensure that the initiatives are not going to waste the nation's resources. To deliver



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a successful PPPs project, this qualitative study examines PPP projects in Malaysia with the purpose of enhancing comprehension of these initiatives and determining the most effective approaches and strategies for their successful execution. This paper concludes that the PPP Sustainability Evaluation Framework could enhance the understanding of the driving mechanisms of which the three major pillars of sustainability; Social, Economic, and Environmental Sustainability, by the principal stakeholders involved; government, private companies, and the public, could ensure the delivery of a successful PPP project. With these understandings, stakeholders may effectively play their roles in investing effort throughout the life cycle of the PPP project to achieve sustainability, resulting in greater amenities and infrastructure for the people. However, we must acknowledge that there are limits to using this approach, such as the availability and accessibility of thorough data, particularly about the long-term sustainability impacts of PPP projects. Incomplete or obsolete data may impede an effective evaluation of the three cores elements of sustainability. Furthermore, the paradigm may fail to appropriately address the temporal dimensions of sustainability. Some sustainability, particularly those related to environmental factors, may occur gradually over time. The framework's ability to foresee and evaluate these long-term implications may be restricted. Finally, sustainable practices and expectations evolve. The framework could struggle to adapt rapidly to developing sustainability trends, such as advances in green technologies or changes in social expectations, thus making it less relevant over time.

Suggestion (If any)

To address these constraints, the PPP Sustainability Evaluation Framework will need to be continuously refined, considering comments from real-world applications and the context-specific nature of PPP projects in Malaysia. Recognizing these constraints is critical when using the framework to gain significant insights into improving the sustainability of PPPs in Malaysia. The government's continuous improvement of PPP models in Malaysia demonstrates that they recognize these limitations and are committed to improving their methods of implementing PPP, such as the recent introduction of Pelan Induk Kerjasama Awam Swasta (2023-2032), an upgraded version of Pelan Penswastaan 1991, with improved PPP models and a new financing structure capable of excelling in the implementation of future PPP projects.



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