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Bridging the Gap Between Expectations and Service Delivery in Local Government Community Development Initiatives

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Abstract

Community development initiatives implemented by local authorities represent a strategic mechanism to enhance social well-being and improve service delivery in response to citizens' needs. However, in many developing contexts, these initiatives are frequently adopted from existing policy instruments without systematic evaluation of their contextual relevance or effectiveness. This study examines residents' perceptions of community development programs and evaluates the extent to which service delivery aligns with public expectations. Using a quantitative research design, data was collected through simple random sampling across seven local authorities in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The findings reveal a statistically significant gap between residents' expectations and the actual level of community development services delivered by local governments. The results highlight structural and implementation deficiencies that limit program responsiveness. Based on empirical evidence, this study proposes a practical evaluation framework to support local authorities in designing, monitoring, and promoting more responsive and citizen-centered community development programs. The proposed framework offers policy insights applicable to local governance systems in developing countries.

Keywords: Effectiveness; Framework; Local Authorities; Residents; Responsive