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EXPLORING THE ROLE OF DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE MALAYSIA IN ENHANCING THE EFFICIENCY OF PRODUCTIVE WELFARE

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Abstract:

This research investigates the role of the Malaysian Social Welfare Department in optimizing productive welfare programs, focusing on poverty alleviation, and enhancing the lives of the B40 group. The study encompasses a qualitative exploration, engaging senior officials from the department and experts in social sciences, primarily through in-depth interviews. The pivotal concern of poverty has led to the establishment of welfare programs in Malaysia, with key objectives revolving around improving cooperation among stakeholders and addressing capacity-building challenges within the department. This study's significance lies in pinpointing weaknesses in welfare program implementation and aims to refine policies and coordination among relevant agencies. The research employs variables such as inter-agency cooperation, capacity building, monitoring mechanisms, community involvement, and policy influence, as derived from a comprehensive literature review on welfare and social development. The study utilized a qualitative research methodology, particularly Basic Qualitative Inquiry, focusing on the Malaysian Social Welfare Department. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with five participants, including senior department officials and esteemed academics in social sciences. Thematic analysis was employed for data analysis, exploring core themes emerging from the interviews. Findings emphasized the pivotal role of comprehensive monitoring and structured collaboration among stakeholders. The discussions underscored the importance of tailored staff training, policy review, insights from foreign models, and community engagement as critical elements for improving welfare programs. In conclusion, the study offers a comprehensive overview of the Malaysian Social Welfare Department's role in welfare programs, proposing a Productive Welfare Improvement Model (MPKP) and synthesizing the findings. MPKP encompasses monitoring, collaboration, staff capacity building, policy review,

insights from foreign models, policy influence, and community engagement. Aligned with the 2 Years Exit Program (2YEP), MPKP promises to strengthen welfare initiatives and drive poverty alleviation, thereby contributing to a brighter future for all Malaysians.

Keywords:

Inter-Agency Cooperation, Capacity Building, Monitoring Mechanisms, Community Involvement, Policy Influence

Introduction

Alam and Islam (2021) underscored Malaysia's response to poverty through the establishment of productive welfare programs designed to address and alleviate the nation's poverty impact (Mohd, Mohamed, & Xavier, 2020). Despite their intended benefits, these programs face critical challenges, notably inadequate cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders implementing welfare initiatives and gaps in capacity building and training within the Malaysian Social Welfare Department, posing significant barriers to efficient program execution.

Productive welfare program success relies heavily on strong cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders, including the Malaysian Social Welfare Department, other government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (Fakher et al., 2021). Challenges in attaining optimal cooperation led to inefficiencies and delayed welfare assistance, compromising the objectives of enhancing productive welfare in Malaysia (Lim, 2021; Seprillina et al., 2020).

Jamaluddin and Hanafiah (2020) highlighted challenges in capacity building and training for Social Welfare Department personnel, emphasizing the need for skill enhancement in areas like monitoring and resource management. The absence of appropriate professional development opportunities may compromise the effectiveness of welfare program delivery (Jamaluddin & Hanafiah, 2021). Evaluating the efficiency of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms employed by the Malaysian Social Welfare Department is imperative for judicious resource use and effective program management (Syazwani, 2020).

The Malaysian government's response to poverty led to initiatives like the 2 Years Exit Program (2YEP), aiming to address and alleviate poverty's adverse effects (Jamaludin and Hanafiah, 2018). However, critical challenges, including inadequate cooperation, collaboration, and capacity gaps within the Social Welfare Department, hinder optimal success and efficiency (Osman et al., 2015). Achieving robust cooperation among stakeholders remains arduous, resulting in inefficient resource utilization and challenges in timely welfare assistance delivery (Wong et al., 2023).

The study also focuses on research objectives, assessing cooperation levels and training needs within the Malaysian Social Welfare Department for the Productive Welfare Program's efficient execution. Significantly, this study aids the Malaysian government by pinpointing weaknesses in welfare program implementation, refining policies, and enhancing coordination among agencies, ultimately benefiting the targeted community (Ramli, 2019). It amplifies the efficiency of welfare programs, improving community quality of life through streamlined aid and access to services, skills, and economic opportunities (Syazwani, 2020; Ramli, 2019).

Furthermore, the study contributes to the social development and welfare industry by emphasizing the need for capacity building and staff training, fostering industry advancement and improving long-term welfare service delivery (Golhasany & Harvey, 2023). In the realm of knowledge, it sheds light on the Social Welfare Department's role in productive welfare, enriching understanding of social and developmental issues for theory and practice advancement (Samad & Khairiyah, 2021). The study's comparative analysis of foreign policies and Malaysia's context provides insights for adapting successful welfare systems, aligning with the government's ambition for comprehensive welfare and fostering holistic development (Ashray, 2017; Samad & Mansor, 2020).

The study aims to significantly contribute to Malaysia's drive for enhanced welfare, ensuring equitable distribution of economic benefits and providing valuable guidance to the government for comprehensive development.

Literature Review

Inter-Agency Cooperation

This vital concept encompasses collaboration and cooperation between the Malaysian Social Welfare Department, various governmental bodies, and non-governmental organizations (Binti & Ashray, 2020). The effectiveness of productive welfare programs hinges significantly on these entities' synergy and collaborative efforts.

Capacity Building And Training

Crucial to enhancing welfare initiatives, this concept emphasizes the imperative need for continuous training and skill development within the Malaysian Social Welfare Department (Khazanah Nasional Berhad, 2019). Strengthening the competencies of staff members directly impacts the successful execution of productive welfare programs.

EFFECTIVENESS OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION MECHANISM

This concept serves as a metric to evaluate the success of the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms employed by the Malaysian Social Welfare Department (Shayan, Kalejahi, Alavi, & Zahed, 2022). It measures the efficacy of these systems in assessing and enhancing the efficiency of productive welfare programs.

Quality Of Life Of The Target Community

This crucial concept gauges the improvements in the quality of life experienced by individuals benefitting from productive welfare programs (OECD, 2021). It focuses on the tangible impact on the recipients' daily lives, opportunities, and well-being.

Comparison With Foreign Policies

Involving a comparative analysis, this concept scrutinizes the distinctions and similarities between productive welfare policies in Malaysia and those adopted in other countries (Jamaluddin & Hanafiah, 2021). Such a comparative lens provides valuable insights into potential adaptive strategies and best practices.

Resources And Budget Allocation

This concept evaluates the resources and financial allocations designated for productive welfare programs by the Malaysian Social Welfare Department. The assessment of resource deployment serves as a critical parameter for program efficiency and effectiveness.

Influence Of Policies And Regulations

This concept explores how existing policies and regulations either support or hinder the implementation of productive welfare programs (Mawardi et al., 2022). The examination of their influence delineates pathways for improved policy formulation and adaptation.

Community Interest

This concept delves into the alignment between the objectives of productive welfare programs and the actual needs and interests of the targeted community (Hashim, 2019). Understanding and addressing community interests is paramount for the success and sustainability of welfare initiatives.

Community Involvement

This concept assesses the community's active engagement and participation in the conception, implementation, and evaluation of productive welfare programs (Hoe et al., 2019). Community involvement is pivotal for ensuring programs resonate with the actual needs and aspirations of the recipients (Talib et al., 2018).

In an extensive analysis of the Malaysian Social Welfare Department's pivotal role in improving the effectiveness of productive welfare programs, the 2 Years Exit Program (2YEP) emerges as a compelling case study within the framework of fundamental welfare concepts (Massingham et al., 2023). Notably, the 2YEP, operating under the auspices of the Malaysian Social Welfare Department, exemplifies the criticality of inter-agency cooperation by accentuating the synergy between governmental entities, non-governmental organizations, and the welfare department (Hafiz, 2023).

This collaborative dynamic is a key determinant of the program's success, where the engagement and support of various stakeholders are vital for its efficiency (Jalin & Radzi, 2022). Moreover, within the context of the 2YEP, capacity building and continual personnel training stand out as pivotal components. Strengthening the skills of the department's staff significantly influences the successful execution of the 2YEP, ensuring the delivery of welfare assistance aligned with the program's objectives. The 2YEP's impact on the quality of life within the targeted community is of utmost significance (Jamaluddin & Hanafiah, 2020).

Assessing the program's tangible influence on the beneficiaries' daily lives, opportunities, and overall well-being offers critical insights into the 2YEP's efficacy (Samad & Khairiyah, 2021). Additionally, evaluating resource allocation, community interests, involvement, and the influence of policies and regulations within the 2YEP framework allows for a comprehensive assessment of its operational dynamics, providing a platform for informed strategies to fortify its efficiency and impact within the larger welfare governance structure.

Research Methodology

Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative Research Methodology, a research approach widely embraced for understanding social phenomena, emphasizes a comprehensive comprehension of the subject matter through textual, visual, or verbal data (Mezmir, 2020). It encompasses narrative and subjective analysis, delving into context, meaning, and interpretation intricacies. This approach is particularly suitable for studies exploring multifaceted and nuanced aspects, focusing on the why and how behind social occurrences (Weele & Bredewold, 2021).

Quantitative Research Methodology

In contrast, Quantitative Research Methodology is characterized by its emphasis on the collection and analysis of numerical data (Bauer, Churchill, Mahendran, Walwyn, Lizotte, & Villa-Rueda, 2021). It rigorously measures and tests the relationship between variables using statistical tools to draw conclusions and make generalized inferences (Rahman, 2019). This methodology is crucial for studies aiming to quantify and establish empirical relationships within specific parameters.

Application To The Study

In the context of understanding the role of the Malaysian Social Welfare Department in enhancing the efficiency of productive welfare, the choice of research methodology is pivotal. Qualitative Research Methodology becomes instrumental if the objective is to unravel the nuanced processes, contexts, and deeper meanings associated with the department's role (Rahman, 2019). This methodology facilitates a profound exploration through interviews, textual analysis, and observation. It is well-suited for unraveling individual perceptions and experiences and untangling the intricate, subjective facets pertinent to this research context (Surucu & Maslakci, 2020).

Appropriate Research Design

The most fitting Research Design for this study would be Basic Qualitative Inquiry. This approach allows the researcher to investigate a singular entity deeply, namely the Malaysian Social Welfare Department (Chilisa, 2019). It offers the opportunity to explore the department's experiences, operational processes, and the multifaceted factors that shape its role within the study context (Snyder, 2019). Basic Qualitative Inquiry is especially apt for delving into complex issues without necessitating an extensive study involving numerous entities (Jensen, 2020).

Methodological Implementation In The Study

In executing this study, the researcher opted for a qualitative research methodology, primarily conducted through face-to-face interviews involving five participants. These interviews, meticulously recorded and subsequently transcribed, formed the foundational data for the research (Stern, Lizarondo, Carrier, Godfrey, Rieger, Salmond, Apostolo, Kirkpatrick, & Loveday, 2021). A thematic analysis was employed to scrutinize and identify the core themes emerging from the interviews (Mertens, 2019). Each theme was systematically coded and integrated into the study's conceptual framework, becoming the fundamental construct for further analysis. This approach allowed for a deeper and richer understanding of the Malaysian Social Welfare Department's role in fortifying the efficiency of productive welfare, as perceived and expressed by the participants involved.

Findings

Roles In Monitoring And Evaluation Mechanism

The conversations revealed a unanimous agreement among two key participants, stressing the paramount necessity for a thorough and systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation within the landscape of productive welfare programs. Their emphasis lay on the meticulous and well-structured monitoring protocols as an indispensable element for guaranteeing the efficacy and success of these programs.

They underscored the intrinsic significance of this monitoring framework, deeming it pivotal not only for assessing the immediate and long-term impact of the program but also for instigating vital adaptations and refinements essential to maximize its overall effectiveness (Mawardi, Widiastuti, Al Mustofa, & Hakimi, 2022). As illuminated by these participants, the systematic monitoring process is the linchpin for informed decision-making and the continuous enhancement of welfare initiatives, ensuring they remain agile and responsive to the evolving needs and challenges within the socio-economic landscape.

Cooperation And Collaboration

Participants in the study fervently emphasized the fundamental significance of cultivating a strong network of cooperation and collaboration between the Social Welfare Department, governmental bodies, and non-governmental organizations across Malaysia. They emphasized the imperative nature of collaborative efforts, advocating for a seamless exchange of data concerning participant selection and the allocation of resources within the program.

This robust collaboration, they stressed, stands as a linchpin for ensuring resource efficiency while concurrently curbing redundancy in implementing these programs. Their viewpoint underscores the pivotal role of unified cooperation in streamlining efforts, avoiding duplication, and ensuring optimal utilization of available resources, ultimately fortifying the program's efficacy and impact on the targeted welfare objectives.

Staff Capacity Building

The discussions notably illuminated the pivotal significance of enhancing the skill set and capabilities of the Social Welfare Department staff. Participants strongly emphasized the necessity for tailored training initiatives, specifically focusing on finance and entrepreneurship, as crucial components for bolstering the proficiencies of the department's personnel.

They outlined this specialized training as a pivotal catalyst for empowering staff members to effectively fulfil the department's objectives, particularly in poverty eradication initiatives. The emphasis on honing financial acumen and entrepreneurial skills is a crucial enabler, enabling staff to navigate complex challenges, make informed decisions, and implement strategies that resonate with the overarching goals of alleviating poverty within the community.

Policy And Allocation Review

A unanimous and resounding consensus surfaced among all participants, collectively advocating for a comprehensive and meticulous reassessment of the policy infrastructure governing productive welfare programs. They underscored the critical need for a profound evaluation of the existing policy framework, accompanied by meticulous scrutinizing budgetary allocations and available resources.

The underlying rationale behind this collective proposal resonated with the shared goal of optimizing the efficacy and impact of the program in enhancing the economic outlook for participants involved in productive welfare initiatives. The call for this in-depth review stems from a shared commitment to ensuring that policies are recalibrated to serve better the economic aspirations and overall well-being of the individuals engaged in these vital welfare programs, fostering a more sustainable and impactful support system for those in need.

Lessons From Overseas Productive Welfare Policy Models

Three participants strongly advocated for an approach deriving valuable insights and inspiration from successful, productive welfare policy models implemented in other nations. They emphasized the importance of assimilating international best practices, viewing them as a catalyst for refining and optimizing program implementation strategies within Malaysia.

Their emphasis on gleaning insights from global models stems from a collective belief that integrating successful international approaches will elevate the effectiveness and efficiency of Malaysia's welfare programs. Leveraging these external practices and adapting them to the local context is seen as a means to enhance the existing strategies, allowing for a more robust and impactful implementation of welfare initiatives within the country.

Influence Of Existing Policies And Regulations

The interview findings prominently highlighted the substantial influence of prevailing policies and regulations in Malaysia on executing productive welfare programs. Participants echoed the necessity of aligning these policies to effectively support poverty eradication goals and the economic development aspirations of the B40 group.

Community Engagement

Participants unanimously emphasized the pivotal role of community engagement as an integral and indispensable facet in the design and execution of welfare programs. They emphasized that community involvement stands as a fundamental cornerstone, ensuring that programs authentically cater to the genuine needs of the community while concurrently aligning with and achieving the outlined program objectives.

Their collective perspective underscored the profound significance of involving the community at every phase, ensuring that the program development process remains deeply rooted in the real experiences and requirements of the community members. They stressed that this active involvement is instrumental in tailoring programs to meet specific community needs and pivotal in fostering a sense of ownership and sustainability within the targeted demographics, thereby fortifying the programs' long-term impact and resonance within the community.

Conclusion And Recommendations

This study vividly showcases the pivotal role undertaken by the Social Welfare Department in enhancing the efficacy of productive welfare programs in Malaysia. Engaging senior officials from the Department of Social Welfare alongside experts in the field of social sciences has shed light on the challenges and prospects necessary to combat poverty and elevate the quality of life for the B40 group.

An unmistakable revelation from these discussions emphasizes the imperative need to revamp the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms within productive welfare programs (Alam & Islam, 2021). Participants have stressed the vital role of comprehensive and methodical monitoring as the cornerstone for achieving program objectives. Such careful oversight illuminates the program's impact and allows for essential adaptations to optimize its effectiveness.

The significance of fostering cooperation and collaboration resonates deeply within these conversations. Participants ardently advocate for forging close alliances between the Social Welfare Department, governmental bodies, and NGOs (Binti & Ashray, 2020). This

collaborative synergy ensures resource efficiency and mitigates overlap in program implementation, maximizing benefits for program participants. Emphasizing data exchange and equitable allocation determination are crucial facets of this pursuit.

Moreover, amplifying the skill set of the Social Welfare Department staff emerges as pivotal for program success (Fakher et al., 2021). Expertise in financial matters and entrepreneurship is the linchpin for successful program implementation. Providing tailored training and fortifying staff knowledge is key in this endeavour (Hafiz, 2023).

A noteworthy proposal gaining traction is the imperative need to review the productive welfare policy framework alongside evaluating budgetary allocations (Mezmir, 2020). Participants stress that this thorough evaluation is critical to align programs with their intended impact and ensure their efficacy.

Extracting insights from successful Productive Welfare Policy Models abroad is a valuable resource in this study. Participants recommended that the Department of Social Welfare strategically gather inspiration and learn from proven best practices observed in other countries (Rahman, 2019). This prudent strategy promises to enrich and enhance the implementation of programs within Malaysia.

Furthermore, this study delineates the influential impact of existing policies and regulations within Malaysia on executing productive welfare programs (Samad & Khairiyah, 2021). Within this context, participants recommended aligning policies such as the New Economic Policy with the overarching goals of poverty eradication and economic development for the B40 group. Significantly elevating the emphasis on entrepreneurship programs to augment the income of the B40 group emerged as another crucial aspect (Samad & Mansor, 2020).

Community engagement emerged as a pivotal focus area emphasized by study participants. They advocated for active community involvement in both the design and execution phases of the program to ensure its alignment with genuine community needs and the successful achievement of program goals (Stern et al., 2021).

The insightful conclusions and discussions drawn from the study intricately correlate with implementing and enhancing the 2 Years Exit Program (2YEP), underscoring vital considerations for its optimization. To align with the pivotal role undertaken by the Social Welfare Department, the necessity for revamping monitoring and evaluation mechanisms within productive welfare programs resonates profoundly in the context of the 2YEP (Talib, Takim, Mohammad, & Hassan, 2018). Highlighting the importance of comprehensive oversight, robust monitoring is fundamental to elucidate the program's impact and effect necessary adaptations for its effectiveness, ensuring that the 2YEP meets its objectives (Wong, Owuamalam, & Williams, 2023).

Furthermore, as extensively emphasized in discussions, fostering cooperation and collaboration is crucial for the 2YEP's success. Ensuring strong alliances between the Social Welfare Department, governmental bodies, and NGOs is vital, mirroring the need for efficient resource utilization and minimizing redundancies within the 2YEP's implementation (Seprillina et al., 2020). This cooperation is integral to the 2YEP's successful execution and benefits for its participants. Additionally, enhancing the skill set of 2YEP staff is a pivotal proposal akin to the broader Social Welfare Department staff, highlighting the importance of

expertise in financial matters and entrepreneurship to achieve successful program implementation. Addressing these recommendations within the framework of the 2YEP will be crucial for its efficacy and meaningful impact on the B40 group and their communities.

New Model Proposal

Following the insights derived from this study, a proposed framework known as the Productive Welfare Improvement Model (MPKP) has been crafted to usher in positive transformations within Malaysia's productive welfare program. MPKP encompasses various vital elements distilled from the study's findings.

At its core, this model accentuates the significance of robust monitoring and evaluation within productive welfare initiatives, setting forth a structured and comprehensive mechanism to ensure the program's positive impact. Through meticulous and ongoing monitoring, MPKP facilitates necessary adaptations to optimize program effectiveness.

Additionally, fostering close cooperation between the Social Welfare Department, governmental bodies, and NGOs is a pivotal component of MPKP. This collaborative framework establishes a platform for seamless data exchange and resource allocation, ensuring judicious resource utilization, preventing redundancy in program implementation, and maximizing participant benefits.

The enhancement of the capacity of the Social Welfare Department staff assumes a crucial role within MPKP, focusing on tailored training and knowledge fortification in finance and entrepreneurship. A staff with the requisite skills fosters a more streamlined and effective program implementation. The model emphasizes continuous evaluation and adaptation of policies and resources to ensure programs align with their goals.

MPKP proposes drawing inspiration from domestic and foreign Productive Welfare Policy Models to enrich Malaysia's program implementation by assimilating best practices. The influence of prevailing policies and regulations in Malaysia on productive welfare programs is addressed within MPKP, calling for necessary policy changes to align with poverty eradication and B40 economic development goals. Finally, community involvement is a fundamental element within MPKP, essential for effective program planning, execution, and assessment. Actively involving the community ensures these programs genuinely cater to community needs while fulfilling program objectives.

Applying the Productive Welfare Improvement Model (MPKP) signifies a substantial stride in Malaysia's battle against poverty, aiming to enhance the quality of life for the B40 group. MPKP embodies a comprehensive and holistic approach, reflecting aspirations for improved welfare and a brighter future for all Malaysians.

The 2 Years Exit Program (2YEP) aligns with the Productive Welfare Improvement Model (MPKP), presenting a transformative framework for Malaysia's productive welfare. Crafted from this study, MPKP is tailored to optimize welfare initiatives through rigorous monitoring and evaluation, mirroring 2YEP's emphasis on structured assessments for program improvement.

The need for collaboration among the Social Welfare Department, governmental bodies, and NGOs, emphasized in MPKP, directly aligns with 2YEP's focus on efficient resource allocation

and cooperation. Strengthening the Social Welfare Department staff's skills through specialized training in finance and entrepreneurship, a key aspect of MPKP directly supports the 2YEP's need for skilled personnel. MPKP's continuous policy evaluation and integration of insights from different welfare models directly impact the 2YEP, aiming for enriched program implementation and adaptation. MPKP's attention to policies and regulations and their influence on the 2YEP ensures adjustments that support poverty eradication and the B40 community's economic goals. Emphasizing community involvement aligns both MPKP and the 2YEP in designing and executing programs that meet community needs. MPKP's adoption represents a significant stride in Malaysia's effort to enhance the B40 group's lives and national welfare overall.

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