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Objective

Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI) is a journal in the humanities and social sciences. It aims to promote research and publish research articles, academic articles, review articles, and book reviews for scholars, researchers, lecturers, students at all levels, and interested persons in the dimensions of Sociologies, Anthropologies, Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, Business Administration, Politics, Public Administration, Development, Tourism, and other areas in Social Sciences. Articles that are considered for publication must be reviewed by at least 2 out of 3 qualified persons (Peer Review). Only English articles are considered for publication. Submitted works must not have been published or are under consideration by qualified persons for publication in other journals. Authors must strictly comply with the criteria for submitting academic or research articles for publication in the journal, and the referencing system must be in accordance with the criteria of the journal.

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Ownership and Management

Dr.Ket Institute Of Academic Development And Promotion 1 M.12, Laothangkham
Sub-district, Phonphisai District, Nong Khai Province, 43120, Thailand. Tel:
+66610186156
Email: ajhsi.journal@gmail.com

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E-mail: praksamphose48@gmail.com

Assistant Editor

Wannapa Bupphasopha

Dr.Ket Institute Of Academic Development And Promotion, Thailand

 Coordination and Management Department

Wannapa Bupphasopha

โทร. +66610186156, Line ID: Ketsada11

e-mail: ajhsi.journal@gmail.com

 Legal Department

Chaiwit Ritthipichaiwat

Office of the Election Commission, Thailand

 Proofreading and Book layout

Somsak Pappasen

Phra Thepbandit Wittayanusorn School, Nong Khai Province, Thailand

 Cover design

Suriyathit Phoprasit

Independent Scholar

 Print at

Digital Printing Production and Management Learning Center, Valaya Alongkorn Rajabhat University, under Royal Patronage, No. 1 , Village No. 2 0 , Phahonyothin Road, Khlong Nueng Subdistrict, Khlong Luang District, Pathum Thani Province, Thailand 13180, Tel. 0 2529 0574 7, 0 2909 1633 www.vru.ac.th

Editorial

Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI) is the second issue of the year 2024 with a total of 5 articles, 2 research articles and 3 academic articles. The journal is currently developing and improving its format and main issues to meet the journal quality assessment criteria in the TCI database to support the assessment from the Thai Journal Citation Index (TCI). In order to ensure that the quality of the articles meets international conditions and rules, it provides opportunities for scholars, researchers, and students at all levels to publish academic articles, research articles, review articles, and book reviews. The editorial team has followed the principled process of publishing articles according to the criteria of the Office of the Higher Education Commission in all respects.

The editors of Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI) would like to thank the authors, members and readers for their interest and trust in our journal. We sincerely hope that the selected articles will be of benefit to all readers. The editors would like to thank all the experts who have kindly read and suggested improvements to the research articles to improve their academic quality.

Finally, the editors sincerely hope that the contents of this journal will be of some use to readers. If readers have any suggestions for improving this journal to make it more complete, the editors will gladly accept them.

Editor-In-Chief

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An Assessment of Village Committee Members' Opinions on Governance Based on Good Governance Principles of the Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province*

Phra Somsak Kosawaro (Phadungrat)¹ and Phairat Puenchomphu²

Mahamakut Buddhist University, Thailand

¹E-mail: kosawaro@gmail.com

²E-mail: phairat1990@gmail.com

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Abstract

This research aims to 1) study the opinions of village committees on good governance management, 2) compare opinions on good governance management, and 3) study recommendations on good governance management. This research is a quantitative research. Data were collected using questionnaires from a sample of 114 people. Data were analyzed by finding the mean and standard deviation, analyzing with t-test (Independent Samples) for gender, and performing F-test (One-wayANOVA) for age and education level.

The research results found that 1. The opinions of the village committees on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province were at a high level overall. When considering each aspect, all six aspects were at a high level, ranked from the aspect with the highest to lowest average values: the principle of value for money, the principle of transparency, the principle of morality, the principle of responsibility, the principle of participation, and the principle of the rule of law, respectively. 2. The results of the hypothesis testing found that the village committees with different genders, ages, and education levels had no different opinions on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province overall. 3. The recommendations from this research, ranked from highest to lowest frequency, were as follows: administrators should administer work based on correctness and the needs of the people as the main principles; administrators and subdistrict staff should create good awareness in performing their duties; and they should manage and use limited resources with consideration of the principle of economy, using things to their full potential to create the greatest benefit for the community.

Citation



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Keywords: Participation, Village Committees, Administration, Good Governance Currently

Introduction

Good Governance consists of six main principles: Rule of Law, Ethics, Transparency, Participation, Accountability, and Value for Money. These are similar to many Thai words such as good governance, Dharmarat, or Dharma Governance. In 1989, the World Bank used this concept in determining its lending policy to countries in the Global South to solve the problems of inefficiency and corruption of governments in developing countries because they could not find the money to repay the loans they borrowed from the World Bank. As for Thailand, the economic collapse that began in 1997 forced Thailand to borrow money from the IMF, which forced Thailand to adopt the World Bank's concept of Good Governance (Yuwaboon, 2000). In addition, Thai academics at that time demanded fairness in society, allowing all parties to participate in the administration of the country. This is another reason why Good Governance or Western-style governance has gradually entered Thai society in the same direction as the evolution of politics and governance in the democratic system and the direction of Thai state management (Uwanno, 2001).

The village, which is an administrative and governmental organization at the grassroots level, is close to the people. According to the Local Administration Act (No. 11) B.E. 2551, in addition to defining the power and duties of the village headman and village elders in the administration of "relieving suffering and fostering happiness" for the villagers, it also stipulates that there must be a village committee to assist, advise and consult the village headman on matters that are under the authority of the village headman and perform other duties in accordance with the law or regulations of the government or as assigned by the district chief or as requested by the village headman. The village committee is the main organization responsible for integrating the preparation of the village development plan and managing activities carried out in the village together with other organizations in all sectors. The Department of Provincial Administration has organized training to increase the efficiency of the village committee every year so that the village committee is aware of the roles, missions and duties and can participate in the administration and development of the village effectively (Kasemsin, 1980).

Subdistrict Administrative Organization is a local administrative organization with independent power to administer and govern itself. However, over the past several years, Subdistrict Administrative Organization has encountered many problems, such as problems from the conditions of establishment, problems of authority and duties, problems of finance, problems of influence, problems of lack of administrative skills, and problems of management, etc. These many problems have led to the search for solutions to these problems. One concept that Subdistrict Administrative Organization has used to solve problems in the organization is the concept of good governance (Chaijaroenwattana and Li, 2001 : 48). Currently, the overall management of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province, still faces problems in implementing public policies regarding providing services to people in its service areas. The facilitation of public utilities to create a good life is still not complete. People still suffer from being taken advantage of. There are

few opportunities to access public services (Thailand Development Research Institute, 2000).

From the above reasons, the researcher is interested in studying the opinions of the village committees on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization. In terms of administration, how much do they adhere to the principles of good governance or give importance to the application of the principles of good governance in the administration of the Subdistrict Administrative Organization? This is to be a guideline for developing the Subdistrict Administrative Organization to be more efficient.

Objective

1. To study the opinions of the village committees on the administration according to the principles of good governance.
2. To compare opinions on the administration according to the principles of good governance.
3. To study the suggestions on the administration according to the principles of good governance.

Literature review

Good governance has become a vital foundation for effective and transparent local administration in Thailand. The principles of good governance—namely rule of law, transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness, and equity—are widely recognized by both international organizations and Thai administrative bodies such as the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) and the Ministry of Interior (OPDC, 2006).

According to Bovens (2007), accountability is a cornerstone of democratic governance, especially in decentralized systems where local administrative organizations (LAOs) serve as key actors in delivering public services. In Thailand, the Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO) has become the primary mechanism for community engagement and local development since the decentralization reforms of the late 1990s (Nagai, Funatsu, & Kagoya, 2008). These organizations are mandated to promote participatory governance, enhance local decision-making, and build trust among community members.

Research by Chaiyasit (2016) emphasized that participation from local stakeholders, particularly village committee members, is essential for ensuring that the principles of good governance are not only codified but also practiced. Village committee members act as intermediaries between the local government and the people, conveying community needs while also overseeing administrative practices. Their perspectives can reveal the strengths and gaps in governance performance at the grassroots level.

Transparency, as discussed by Hood (2001), involves both the availability of information and the openness of decision-making processes. In the context of Thai local governance, transparency has often been linked to the publication of budgets, council meeting summaries, and development plans. However, empirical studies (e.g., Phongpaichit & Piriyaarangsarn, 1994) have shown that limited civic education and local

political culture can hinder meaningful transparency, leading to a gap between legal frameworks and actual practice.

Furthermore, effective governance entails not only the formulation of sound policies but also efficient service delivery. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1997), good governance must aim for results that meet the needs of the society while making the best use of resources. A study by Boonchai (2018) on several SAOs in northeastern Thailand found that organizational capacity, leadership quality, and community collaboration were key determinants of administrative effectiveness.

Additionally, equity and the rule of law play fundamental roles in ensuring fairness and justice in local administrative practices. Equity refers to impartial treatment and resource distribution, while rule of law emphasizes compliance with legal norms and the application of regulations without bias (World Bank, 1992). The challenge, as noted by Jitsuchon and Richter (2007), lies in aligning traditional patron-client relationships with modern legal-rational authority structures.

In summary, the opinions of village committee members offer critical insights into the implementation of good governance principles within subdistrict administrative organizations. Understanding their perspectives helps assess how governance ideals translate into administrative practice and what challenges remain in ensuring equitable, participatory, and effective local governance.

Methodology

This research is a quantitative research. The researcher has proposed the research methodology according to the following steps:

1. Quantitative research the population and sample consisted of 159 village committee members in Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province, 12 villages, totaling 159 people. The researcher determined the sample size according to Taro Yamane's calculation formula, resulting in a sample size of 114 people.

2. Research instruments the researcher used a self-created questionnaire as a data collection tool, divided into 3 sections as follows: Section 1: Questionnaire on the personal factors of the respondents, including gender, age, and education level. The questionnaire was a checklist. Section 2: Questionnaire on the opinions of the village committee members on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province, 26 items, in the form of a rating scale, divided into 5 levels of measurement by setting scoring criteria (Srisat, 2010) and Part 3, an open-ended questionnaire to ask for suggestions for guidelines for developing the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province.

3. Data collection the researcher proceeded with the data collection according to the following steps:

- 3.1 Requested a letter of request from the Graduate School, Mahamakut Buddhist University, Roi Et Campus, to inform the village headmen of 12 villages in Kamphaeng Subdistrict, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province, to request their cooperation in collecting data for the research.

3.2 The researcher collected the questionnaires by himself, explaining the details of the questionnaires to the sample group by distributing 114 questionnaires and received 114 questionnaires back, accounting for 100 percent.

3.3 Collected all questionnaires from the responses for further data analysis.

4. Data analysis the researcher checked the returned questionnaires for completeness and analyzed the data using a ready-made computer program. The steps are as follows:

4.1 Questionnaire Part 1 Personal factors of the respondents Analyze data by distributing frequency and percentage, including gender, age, and education level.

4.2 Questionnaire Part 2 Village committee opinions on good governance management of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province Analyze data by finding the mean and standard deviation according to the rating scale, which has 5 levels.

4.3 Analyze data to find differences in village committee opinions on good governance management of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province according to personal factors of the respondents Analyze using t-test (Independent Samples) for gender and perform F-test (One-way ANOVA) for age and education level.

4.4 Questionnaire Part 3 Suggestions for development of good governance management of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province Analyze data by finding the frequency and presenting it in a table with explanations.

Results

The research results found that the opinions of the village committees on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province were at a high level overall. When considering each aspect, they were at a high level in all six aspects, ranked from the aspect with the highest average value to the lowest, namely, the principle of participation, the principle of morality, the principle of rule of law, the principle of responsibility, the principle of transparency, and the principle of value for money, respectively. When considering each aspect, it can be summarized as follows:

1. Rule of law It was found that the opinions of the village committees on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province, in terms of the principle of rule of law, were at a high level overall. When considering each item, they were at a high level in every item. The item with the highest average value was item 2, which stated, "The subdistrict administrative organization disseminates and publicizes the regulations to the public before they are enforced." The item with the lowest average value was item 4, which stated, "The subdistrict administrative organization has a clear work plan and publicizes it to the public."

2. Morality It was found that the opinions of the village committees on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province, in terms of morality, were at a high level overall. When considering each item, they were at a high level in every item. The item with the highest average score was Item 1, "The executives of the sub-district administrative organization and personnel perform their

duties with honesty and integrity based on morality and ethics.” The item with the lowest average score was Item 4, “The sub-district administrative organization has a goal of working for the happiness and well-being of the people.”

3. Transparency principle It was found that the public’s opinion on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Sub-district Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province, was at a high level overall. When considering each item, it was at a high level in every item. The item with the highest average score was Item 2, “The sub-district administrative organization disseminates information via printed documents, announcements, meetings, and village bulletin boards.” The item with the lowest average score was Item 1, “The sub-district administrative organization openly discloses important information to the public, such as sub-district regulations, budget ordinances, and procurement.”

4. Participation principle It was found that the village committee’s opinion on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Sub-district Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province, in terms of transparency, was at a high level overall. When considering each item, it was at a high level in every item. The item with the highest average value was item 2, “The sub-district administrative organization disseminates information through printed documents, announcements, meetings, and village bulletin boards.” The item with the lowest average value was item 1, “The sub-district administrative organization openly discloses important information, such as sub-district regulations, budget regulations, and procurement, to the public.”

5. Participation principles It was found that the opinions of the village committees on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Sub-district Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province, in terms of the principle of participation, were at a high level overall. When considering each item, they were at a high level in every item. The item with the highest average value was item 3, “The sub-district administrative organization organizes a public forum to announce its work and provide an opportunity for the public to express their opinions and suggestions.” The item with the lowest average value was item 5, “The sub-district administrative organization supports the establishment of community groups or organizations or supports the implementation of various activities.”

6. Responsibility principles It was found that the opinions of the village committees on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Sub-district Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province, in terms of the principle of responsibility, were at a high level overall. When considering each item, they were at a high level in every item. The item with the highest level was item 2, “The Subdistrict Administrative Organization has implemented projects and activities proposed by the people in a tangible manner.” The item with the lowest average value was item 4, “The Subdistrict Administrative Organization is attentive to solving the problems of the people fairly.”

7. The principle of value for money It was found that the opinions of the village committees on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province, in terms of the principle of value for money were at a high level overall. When considering each item, they were at a high level in every item. The item with the

highest level was item 3, “The Subdistrict Administrative Organization manages and uses resources economically to create maximum benefit.” The item with the lowest average value was item 2, “The Subdistrict Administrative Organization spends budget money to create maximum benefit for the local area and is most worthwhile.”

Discussion

The opinions of the village committees on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province, in all six aspects, were at a high level. This can be argued that the local administrative organization, which is the agency responsible for supervising and overseeing the operations of local administrative organizations, has implemented the Royal Decree on the Principles of Good Governance B.E. 2546, which is specified in Article 5 2 , stipulating that local administrative organizations must comply with the principles of good governance in various ways. Therefore, the results of the administration according to the principles of good governance of Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization were at a high level overall, which was consistent with the results of the interviews with most of the target groups, which found that overall, Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Kaset Wisai District, Roi Et Province, administered according to the principles of good governance at a high level, but this was not consistent with the research of Naraphat Khetwat, who conducted a research on the opinions of the public on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Wang Sapparos Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Khlung District, Chanthaburi Province. The research results found that the public had opinions on the administration according to the principles of good governance of Wang Sapparos Subdistrict Administrative Organization, overall, at the highest level, and this was not consistent with the research of Nongnuch Kongprakon, who conducted a research on Public opinion on the administration of Takotapi Subdistrict Administrative Organization in accordance with the principles of good governance, Prakhon Chai District, Buriram Province. The research results found that public opinion on the administration of Takotapi Subdistrict Administrative Organization in accordance with the principles of good governance, Prakhon Chai District, Buriram Province, was overall at a moderate level.

New knowledge

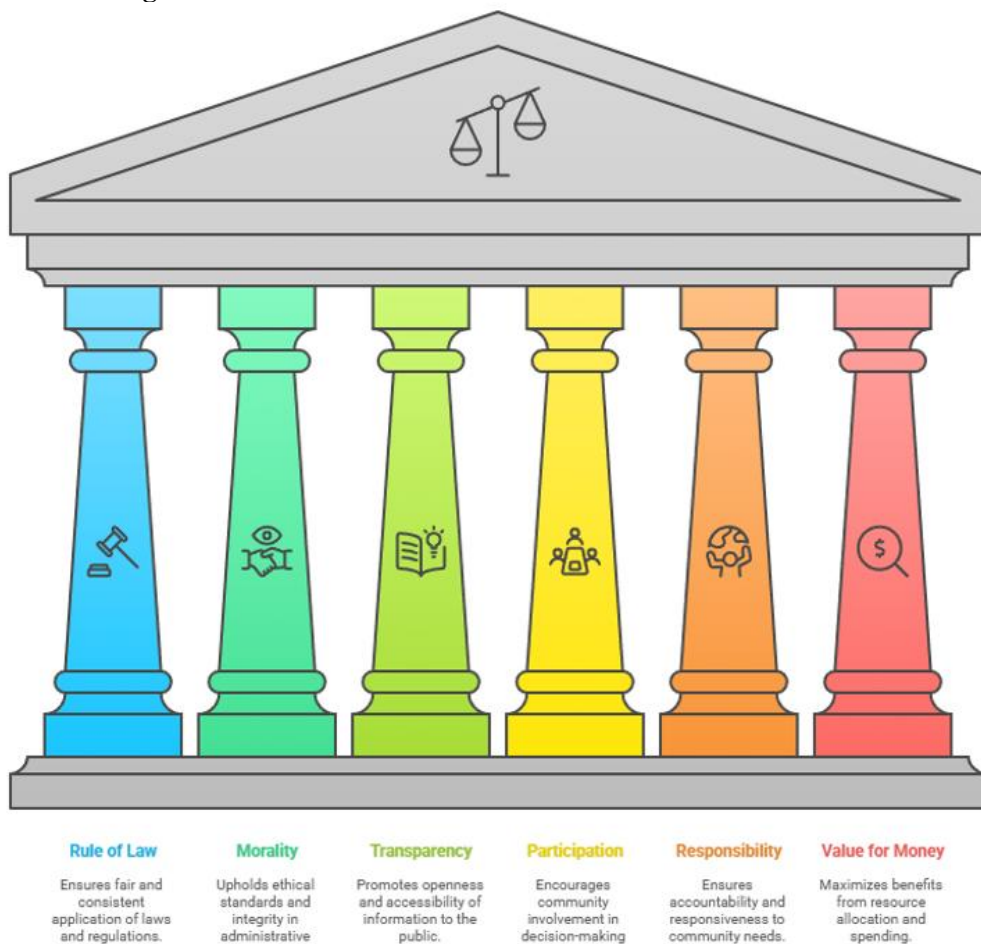


Figure 1 New knowledge, 2024

The image illustrates a Good Governance Framework in the form of a classical building with six colored pillars, each representing a core principle of good governance. Here's a description of each component:

Structure of the Framework

- The structure resembles a classical Greek temple, symbolizing stability and integrity in governance.
- A balanced scale icon at the top emphasizes justice and fairness, the overarching aim of good governance.
-

The Six Pillars of Good Governance

1. Rule of Law (Blue Pillar with a gavel icon)

- Definition: Ensures fair and consistent application of laws and regulations.
- Implication: Everyone is subject to the same legal framework, reducing corruption and arbitrary decision-making.

2. Morality (*Green Pillar with an eye and scale icon*)

- Definition: Upholds ethical standards and integrity in administrative actions.
- Implication: Officials and institutions should act honestly and ethically in the public interest.

3. Transparency (*Light Green Pillar with a book icon*)

- Definition: Promotes openness and accessibility of information to the public.
- Implication: Citizens should be informed about government processes and spending to foster trust.

4. Participation (*Yellow Pillar with group icon*)

- Definition: Encourages community involvement in decision-making processes.
- Implication: Governance should be inclusive, allowing stakeholders—especially at the grassroots level—to influence policies.

5. Responsibility (*Orange Pillar with hands icon*)

- Definition: Ensures accountability and responsiveness to community needs.
- Implication: Government bodies should answer for their actions and adjust based on citizen feedback.

6. Value for Money (*Red Pillar with dollar icon*)

- Definition: Maximizes benefits from resource allocation and spending.
- Implication: Public resources should be used efficiently to achieve the greatest impact.

Purpose and Usage

This visual framework is ideal for explaining governance concepts to officials, village committees, or the public. It serves as a diagnostic and evaluative tool for assessing how well local administrative organizations (such as the Kamphaeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization) adhere to these governance principles.

Recommendation**Recommendations for Research****1. Strengthen the Rule of Law**

1.1 Promote legal awareness among both village committee members and SAO officials through regular training on laws and administrative regulations.

1.2 Establish a transparent and accessible complaint mechanism so that citizens can report violations or unfair practices confidently and safely.

1.3 Encourage consistent enforcement of rules without favoritism to build public trust in the SAO.

2. Promote Ethical Governance and Morality

2.1 Implement a **code of ethics** for SAO staff and village committee members, with clear sanctions for violations.

2.2 Conduct integrity-based workshops and leadership development programs to foster moral leadership at the local level.

2.3 Encourage public recognition of officials who demonstrate ethical and exemplary behavior.

3. Improve Transparency

3.1 Enhance the accessibility of information related to SAO budget, planning, procurement, and operations by publishing it through online platforms and community notice boards.

3.2 Hold regular public hearings or "open house" events where citizens can ask questions about projects and finances.

3.3 Use digital tools (e.g., websites, mobile apps) to disseminate real-time updates and improve public monitoring.

4. Encourage Greater Participation

4.1 Formalize structured participation mechanisms such as public forums, community planning sessions, and participatory budgeting.

4.2 Empower village committee members to act as representatives of citizens in all development projects and ensure their voices are integrated into policy decisions.

4.3 Promote inclusiveness by actively involving women, youth, the elderly, and marginalized groups in local governance activities.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Conduct comparative studies across multiple subdistricts to explore regional variations in governance performance.

2. Explore the impact of digital governance tools on transparency and participation at the local level.

3 Investigate the role of civil society and NGOs in enhancing accountability in subdistrict administration.

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Public participation in household waste management: A case study of Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Khon Kaen Province*

Thanawat Treesoon¹ and Chanpen Charoensap²

Mahamakut Buddhist University, Thailand

¹E-mail: treesoon@gmail.com

²E-mail: charoensap111@gmail.com

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Abstract

This research aims to study household solid waste management among local residents, to compare the differences in household solid waste management practices, and to explore recommendations for improving such management. A quantitative research method was employed. The research instrument used was a questionnaire, with a sample group of 376 individuals. Data were analyzed using a statistical software package.

The research results found that: 1. The overall household waste management of people in Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province was at a moderate level (mean = 2.83). 2. The comparative results of household waste management of people in terms of waste disposal, waste reduction, waste separation and waste utilization, including all 4 aspects, showed that classification by gender and income were not different. Classification by age and education level were significantly different at a statistical level of 0.05. 3. Recommendations on household waste management can be summarized into 4 issues: 1) Waste separation before waste disposal, 2) Refraining from using certain containers or packaging, 3) Reducing waste, and 4) Maintaining cleanliness of households and communities. Additional opinions on waste management of Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization can be summarized into 4 issues: 1) Waste collection by officials 2) Providing standard trash cans and 3) Organizing projects/activities related to encouraging people to maintain the cleanliness of their homes and communities and 4) Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization The agency should provide a place to dispose of trash that meets the standards.

Keywords: Public Participation, Household Waste Management, Local Governance, Chum Phae Subdistrict, Community-Based Waste Management

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Introduction

The garbage problem in Thailand is considered a major problem that has been with Thai society for a long time. In the past, people's lives were not complicated. There was not much material development. Therefore, garbage from households became a minor problem. Even if garbage was dumped outside the house or in rivers and canals, it could decompose and be destroyed quickly. However, due to the growth of communities, the expansion of cities, and the development of industries in various aspects, the garbage problem has started from households, communities, and has expanded to society. Garbage is created from human behavior, which we no longer need to use. In addition, garbage disposal by various methods without proper knowledge and understanding has caused various impacts on the environment, such as air pollution, polluted water, and soil deterioration, which has an impact on public health because of the contamination of germs from garbage due to the spread of germs to people through the air, water, and food (Thawin, 2015).

Waste management and disposal problems are another problem that many local administrative organizations are facing, whether it is the problem of incomplete collection, residual waste, improper waste disposal methods, or lack of land for waste disposal. These problems have been accumulating for a long time and are caused by many factors, such as the rapid increase in the amount of waste, which is a result of the increase in population and the improved economic situation, which causes people to spend more on products and increase the amount of waste produced, budget constraints, and local personnel, which are not sufficient to invest and improve the waste collection and disposal system to be effective (Watcharothai, 2013).

At present, Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province has a total area of 16.51 square kilometers / approximately 10,318 rai. Most of the area is lowland with the Chien River flowing through and a dam for water storage for agriculture. According to the population registration data, the total population is 6,272 people, 3,088 males and 3,184 females, 1,880 households, and 11 villages under its responsibility (Four-year local development plan (2018-2021) Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization, 2017: 6). Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization is an economic area, resulting in a large number of residents and passersby. The current problem is the problem of waste management because the area of responsibility is extensive, including businesses such as tourist attractions and gas stations that support a large number of people traveling every day. In the waste that the Subdistrict Administrative Organization has, there is only 1 garbage collection truck and 4 personnel responsible for working in the area, which is considered very few for the number of residents. With the amount of waste generated each day There are approximately 2-4 tons of waste per day. For the waste management model, waste bins are placed along the main roads at intervals and waste collection trucks are dispatched to collect waste from 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Saturday, according to the waste collection schedule. Each village is collected one day per week, which causes the problem of rotten waste. Waste disposal sites are not yet sanitary, causing a great deal of suffering for the people. The population is increasing every year, and so is the amount of waste. This causes the problem of inadequate and insufficient waste collection, resulting in rotten waste, fuel consumption, insufficient waste disposal sites, and a large budget for waste collection each year. The executives have recognized this problem and have developed a waste management policy, which is

a national agenda to reduce waste at the source, by allowing the people to participate in waste management together, starting from waste disposal, reducing the amount of waste in their own homes, sorting waste, and making use of waste by selling waste to generate additional income for their families, which are important practices that should be able to effectively reduce the amount of waste in the community.

Therefore, the researcher as an officer working in Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization and the location of Mahamakut Buddhist University, Srilanchang Campus, Chum Phae Classroom, has seen the problem of waste management that is becoming more and more problematic. Therefore, he is interested in the waste management behavior of the people in Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province. How will the people cooperate and comply with the waste management together in a situation where the local area is not yet ready to provide comprehensive waste management services? And what can be done to reduce the amount of waste in Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization? So that executives and other interested agencies can use it as a guideline to determine the waste management policy for maximum efficiency. So that Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization will be a clean, livable city, free from waste and toxic pollution.

Objective

1. To study the behavior of household waste management of people in Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province
2. To compare the behavior of household waste management of people in Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province
3. To study the guidelines and suggestions on the behavior of household waste management of people in Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province

Literature review

Public participation is a fundamental element in effective household waste management, particularly in decentralized administrative systems. The success of waste management at the local level depends not only on policy and infrastructure but also on the extent of community involvement in the planning, implementation, and monitoring processes (Arnstein, 1969; United Nations, 2015).

1. The Role of Public Participation in Waste Management

Public participation refers to the involvement of individuals and community groups in decision-making processes that affect their lives and environment. According to Arnstein's (1969) "Ladder of Citizen Participation," real participation ranges from token consultation to full citizen control. In the context of waste management, participation may include waste segregation, recycling, composting, and engagement in awareness campaigns.

Several studies have affirmed that community engagement leads to better compliance with waste policies and fosters long-term environmental stewardship (Zurbrugg et al., 2012; Sujauddin, Huda, & Hoque, 2008). In Thailand, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) has promoted

participatory development as a key strategy in local environmental governance, including waste management (NESDC, 2021).

2. Household Waste Management and Local Governance in Thailand

Household waste, if not properly managed, poses threats to public health and the environment. The Pollution Control Department (PCD) of Thailand reported that in 2020, the country generated more than 27 million tons of solid waste, with a significant portion originating from households (PCD, 2021). Local administrative organizations such as Subdistrict Administrative Organizations (SAOs) are tasked with managing this waste under the Public Health Act B.E. 2535 and related ministerial regulations.

Studies by Troschinetz and Mihelcic (2009) and Pongpat (2017) suggest that decentralized waste management policies often face challenges due to limited technical capacity, funding constraints, and low public awareness. However, when the public is involved through education and participatory planning, SAOs are more likely to succeed in waste reduction initiatives.

3. Barriers and Enablers to Public Participation

Barriers to public participation in waste management include lack of awareness, cultural attitudes toward waste, absence of incentives, and insufficient public trust in local authorities (Moqsud, Rahman, & Mahmud, 2011). Conversely, enablers include community leadership, environmental education, and collaboration with local schools, temples, or civil society organizations (Manomaivibool & Vassanadumrongdee, 2012). In the northeastern region of Thailand, including Khon Kaen Province, several case studies have shown that grassroots involvement, especially through village committees and women's groups, can play a significant role in promoting household waste segregation and recycling (Sinthupundaja, 2019).

4. Participation Mechanisms and Practical Models

Successful models of participatory waste management often involve a mix of top-down and bottom-up approaches. For example, the "3Rs" (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) campaign has been effective when integrated with local school programs and religious institutions (JICA & PCD, 2017). Furthermore, participatory budgeting and community waste banks provide financial and social incentives for waste management at the household level.

In the case of Chum Phae Subdistrict, mechanisms such as public forums, health volunteer networks, and village-level environmental groups may serve as platforms for engaging citizens in sustainable waste practices.

Methodology

This research was conducted in Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province. The quantitative research method was used. The research instrument was a questionnaire created by the researcher from studying documents and related research. The population consisted of 6,272 people in Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province. The sample group consisted of 376 people. The method used was to calculate the sample size using Taro Yamane's method. The data was analyzed using a computer program for statistics, which was analyzed in order by analyzing the personal factors of the respondents by distributing the frequency and percentage. The analysis of the solid waste management of the people in Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province was

done by using the mean () and standard deviation (S.D.). Inferential statistics included t-test and One-Way ANOVA or F-test. If there was a statistically significant difference The differences of the mean values of each pair will be tested using the Scheffé method and the public's suggestions on solid waste management in Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province will be analyzed using content analysis and then sorted by frequency (Yanan Mongkhun, 2013).

Results

The analysis of basic personal data of the respondents found that the majority of the respondents were male, 225 people, or 59.84 percent, and female, 151 people, or 40.16 percent. Most were aged 36-45 years, 139 people, or 36.97 percent. Next, they were over 45 years old, 123 people, or 32.71 percent. The fewest were aged 15-25 years, 38 people, or 10.11 percent. Most had a bachelor's degree, 223 people, or 59.31 percent. Next, they had an education lower than a bachelor's degree, 147 people, or 39.10 percent. The fewest had an education higher than a bachelor's degree, 6 people, or 1.60 percent. Most of them had an income of more than 15,000 baht, 159 people, or 42.29 percent. Next, they had an income of 10,001-15,000 baht, 100 people, accounting for 26.60 percent, and the least had an income of less than 5,000 baht, 51 people, accounting for 13.56 percent.

1 . Analysis of household waste management behavior levels found that household waste management behavior in Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization was at a moderate level overall (mean = 2.83). Households had waste management behavior in terms of waste separation more than other aspects (mean = 3.38), followed by waste reduction, waste utilization, and waste disposal, respectively. When classifying household waste management behavior by aspect, it was found that household waste management behavior in terms of waste disposal was at a low level (mean = 1.99). Collecting waste, putting it in a bag, tying the bag, and throwing it in the trash can prepared by Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization was something that households did more than other aspects (mean = 3.78). Household waste management behavior in terms of waste reduction At a moderate level (mean = 3.25) by choosing to buy products in refillable packaging, such as dishwashing liquid, shower cream, etc., instead of buying products in new containers, is something that households do more than other items (mean = 3.62). Household waste management behavior in terms of waste separation is at a moderate level (mean = 3.38) by separating degradable waste, such as food scraps, from other types of waste, is something that households do more than other items (mean = 3.54). And household waste management behavior in terms of waste utilization is at a moderate level (mean = 2.79) by choosing to buy and use products that are designed to be reusable multiple times, is something that households do more than other items (mean = 3.56).

2. Compare household waste management behavior by testing the difference in means between more than 2 groups using the F-test to compare the difference between independent variables with the dependent. It was found that households in the sample groups with different genders had household waste management behavior in terms of waste disposal that was significantly different at a statistical level of .05 and had household waste management behavior in terms of reducing the amount of waste. In terms of waste separation and waste utilization, there was no difference. The sample

households with different levels of education had household waste management behaviors and waste utilization that were statistically significant at the .05 level. There was no difference in household waste management behaviors in terms of waste disposal, waste reduction, and waste separation. The sample households with different total incomes had no difference in household waste management behaviors in terms of waste disposal, waste reduction, waste separation, and waste utilization.

3. Recommendations on waste management Data was analyzed using content analysis and presented in a narrative format. Additional ideas on household waste management were summarized into 4 issues: 1) Waste separation before disposal; 2) Refuse to use certain containers or packaging; 3) Waste reduction; and 4) Maintaining cleanliness in the household and community. Additional ideas on waste management by Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization were summarized into 3 issues: 1) Principles: 1) Waste collection by officials; 2) Providing standard trash cans and 3) Organizing projects/activities related to encouraging people to maintain the cleanliness of their homes and communities.

Discussion

The analysis of the demographic data revealed that the majority of respondents were male, aged 36–45 years, held a bachelor's degree, and had a monthly income over 15,000 baht. These characteristics are consistent with findings in similar studies which suggest that education and age are key determinants of environmental behavior (Sujauddin, Huda, & Hoque, 2008). Individuals with higher education levels often possess greater awareness of environmental issues and are more inclined to adopt sustainable practices (Manomaivibool & Vassanadumrongdee, 2012).

1. Household Waste Management Behavior

The overall level of household waste management behavior in Chum Phae was found to be moderate (mean = 2.83), reflecting room for improvement in several dimensions. Among the four aspects assessed—**waste separation, waste reduction, waste utilization, and waste disposal**—waste separation scored the highest (mean = 3.38), which aligns with research that identifies separation as the most commonly adopted behavior due to its visibility and ease of practice (Zurbrugg et al., 2012). Most households reported separating degradable food waste, a behavior linked to local cultural practices and the availability of designated bins.

Conversely, waste disposal behavior was rated lowest (mean = 1.99), suggesting challenges in final-stage management, such as collection systems, disposal infrastructure, or lack of motivation. This finding supports Pongpat (2017), who found that weak infrastructure and irregular collection services in northeastern Thailand contribute to poor disposal behavior. Interestingly, the highest specific score (mean = 3.78) related to putting tied waste bags into designated bins, indicating that while disposal infrastructure is underutilized overall, certain actions are habitual.

Households also showed moderate engagement in **waste reduction** (mean = 3.25) and **waste utilization** (mean = 2.79), such as buying refillable products or reusing containers. These behaviors demonstrate a degree of environmental consciousness but

may be limited by convenience, access to alternative products, or lack of financial incentives (Troschinetz & Mihelcic, 2009).

2. Comparison of Behavior by Demographic Variables

The analysis using F-tests revealed statistically significant differences in waste management behavior based on **gender and education level**, but not on **income**. Specifically:

-Gender influenced behavior in **waste disposal**, with males and females responding differently. This may reflect gendered divisions of domestic labor, where women typically manage household hygiene and waste (Moqsud, Rahman, & Mahmud, 2011).

-Education level significantly affected **waste utilization**, consistent with studies that link education to greater environmental literacy (Arnstein, 1969; Manomaivibool & Vassanadumrongdee, 2012).

-No significant differences were observed across income groups, suggesting that **economic status alone does not determine** waste behavior. This contradicts assumptions that higher income leads to better environmental practices and supports Zurbrugg et al. (2012), who argue that social norms and community initiatives often matter more than income in driving waste behavior.

3. Qualitative Insights and Community Recommendations

Content analysis of open-ended responses revealed four primary themes:

- 3.1 Waste separation before disposal
- 3.2 Refusing unnecessary packaging
- 3.3 Reducing overall waste generation
- 3.4 Maintaining household and community cleanliness

These responses are consistent with Thailand's 3Rs strategy (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), which emphasizes public participation and awareness (JICA & PCD, 2017). Moreover, feedback directed toward the Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization focused on operational improvements: enhancing collection frequency, providing standardized bins, and organizing awareness activities. These suggestions are aligned with prior findings that recommend empowering local governments and communities to co-manage waste systems (UNDP, 2015; NESDC, 2021).

Overall, the study highlights both individual behavioral patterns and systemic gaps in local waste management. Encouragingly, the community appears willing to engage, provided institutional support is strengthened.

New knowledge

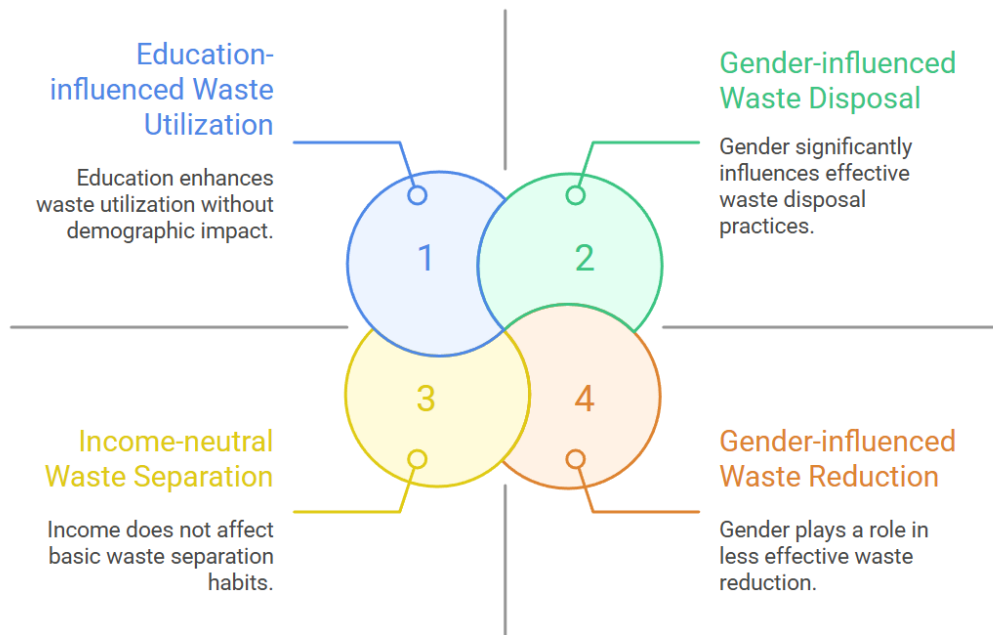


Figure 1 New knowledge, 2024

The image is a Venn diagram-style infographic presenting four key findings about demographic influences on household waste management behaviors. Each quadrant represents a specific type of waste behavior and how it's affected—or unaffected—by demographic factors such as education, gender, and income.

Visual Structure:

- The diagram is composed of four overlapping colored circles, each labeled with a number (1 to 4).
- Each circle corresponds to a specific demographic-related insight regarding waste management.
- Arrows point outward from each circle to brief explanatory texts.

Quadrant Descriptions:

1. Education-influenced Waste Utilization (Blue)

-Insight: Education improves the way households utilize waste (e.g., reuse or repurpose items), independent of other demographics.

-Interpretation: People with higher education are more likely to engage in sustainable practices such as reusing or repurposing waste materials.

2. Gender-influenced Waste Disposal (Green)

-Insight: Gender plays a significant role in determining how effectively households dispose of waste.

-Interpretation: One gender—often women, based on prior research—may be more actively involved in structured disposal practices (e.g., bagging and binning waste).

3. Income-neutral Waste Separation (Yellow)

-Insight: Income does not significantly affect how people separate their waste (e.g., biodegradable vs. non-biodegradable).

-Interpretation: Regardless of financial status, waste separation is a common behavior, potentially due to cultural habits or community-level education.

4. Gender-influenced Waste Reduction (Orange)

-Insight: Gender impacts waste reduction behavior, with one gender being less effective in minimizing waste generation.

-Interpretation: This could reflect different roles or attitudes toward consumption and packaging use between genders.

Overall Interpretation:

The diagram illustrates how demographic factors such as education and gender influence different aspects of household waste management, while income appears to have a negligible effect. It visually summarizes key research findings and provides a quick, comparative understanding of behavior patterns.

Recommendation

1. Suggestions for applying the research results

1.1 The research results from this time should be delivered to Chum Phae Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province, to be used as information for policy-making on the management, waste disposal and collection systems in households of people in the community.

1.2 The research results from this time should be given to Mahamakut Buddhist University, Srilanchang Campus, to be used as academic information.

1.3 The knowledge gained from this research should be integrated into classroom teaching.

2. Suggestions for future research

2.1 Researchers or those interested in quantitative studies should be given the opportunity to use as information, opinions, suggestions, problems and obstacles, methods for waste management, and public participation behavior in maintaining cleanliness.

2.2 Participatory action research should be conducted on guidelines for developing a waste management system, with all sectors, including government agencies, state enterprises, private companies, and the public, to participate, because the waste problem is a national problem. Everyone must participate. It is not just the duty of one person or government agency, but it is the duty of everyone in the nation to work together and be conscious of throwing away waste and separating waste. It must start with ourselves, starting with our homes. The problem of garbage overflowing in cities will disappear from our villages and our country.

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Democratic Governance and Institutional Accountability in the 21st Century^{*}

Sathaka Tanchai

Roi Et Secondary Educational Service Area Office, Thailand

E-mail: sathaka101@gmail.com

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Abstract

This article examines the evolving landscape of democratic governance and institutional accountability in the 21st century, with a focus on the mechanisms, challenges, and innovations that shape the integrity and effectiveness of modern democracies. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as democratic theory, new institutionalism, and accountability models, the study analyzes global trends using comparative case studies and cross-national governance indices. It explores successful practices in transparency and participation—such as Scandinavian anti-corruption systems and participatory budgeting in Brazil—alongside crises of democratic erosion in countries like Hungary and the United States. The article further investigates the dual impact of digital technologies, highlighting both their potential for enhancing civic oversight and the growing threat of digital authoritarianism. International frameworks such as SDG 16, the Open Government Partnership, and OECD guidelines are evaluated as normative benchmarks for reform. The study concludes that sustaining democratic governance requires legal innovation, strong civil society, public trust-building, and adaptive institutions that are resilient in the face of complex global challenges.

Keywords: Democratic governance, Institutional accountability, Transparency, Digital democracy, Civil society, SDG 16, Democratic backsliding

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed significant transformations in political systems worldwide, marked by a paradoxical trend: while democratic ideals such as participation, transparency, and accountability have gained global traction, many democracies are simultaneously experiencing erosion in institutional trust and legitimacy. Democratic governance, traditionally defined by the principles of representative decision-making, the rule of law, and responsive institutions (Dahl, 1989; Diamond & Morlino, 2004), is increasingly challenged by rising authoritarian tendencies, digital disinformation, and weakening oversight mechanisms.

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Institutional accountability, a cornerstone of democratic systems, refers to the capacity of public institutions to answer to the public and other institutions for their actions and decisions. It involves both vertical mechanisms (e.g., elections, public scrutiny) and horizontal checks (e.g., judicial review, legislative oversight) that ensure the responsible use of public power (Schedler, 1999; Bovens, 2007). However, in many democratic and hybrid regimes, these mechanisms are under strain due to the rise of populism, the centralization of executive power, and the politicization of oversight bodies (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

In this context, the need to reassess and strengthen the frameworks of democratic governance and institutional accountability becomes urgent. The digital revolution has introduced both opportunities and threats: while it enables civic engagement through e-governance and open data, it also allows for increased state surveillance and manipulation of public discourse (Fukuyama, 2021). Moreover, global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic have tested the resilience of democratic institutions, revealing both innovative practices and systemic vulnerabilities.

This article seeks to examine how institutional accountability operates within contemporary democratic governance, identifying both the challenges and pathways for reform in the 21st century. Through a comparative and interdisciplinary lens, it aims to explore the mechanisms that foster institutional integrity, evaluate cases of democratic backsliding, and propose strategies for sustaining democratic norms in an era of uncertainty.

Theoretical Framework

Democratic Governance: Concepts and Principles

Democratic governance is broadly understood as a system of political administration that emphasizes the active participation of citizens, representation through fair electoral processes, adherence to the rule of law, institutional responsiveness, and mechanisms for public accountability. At its core, it relies on constitutional and legal frameworks that guarantee civil liberties, promote pluralism, and institutionalize public participation in decision-making (Diamond & Morlino, 2004; UNDP, 2013).

Participation is a foundational element, referring to the inclusion of citizens in political processes through mechanisms such as voting, civic engagement, and public consultations. **Representation** ensures that diverse societal interests are reflected in legislative and policy-making institutions. The **rule of law** upholds legal equality, constrains arbitrary state power, and guarantees fundamental rights. Lastly, **responsiveness** refers to the ability of institutions to effectively address the needs, concerns, and feedback of the population in a timely manner (Dahl, 1989; Rothstein & Teorell, 2008).

Institutional Accountability

Accountability in democratic governance refers to the obligation of public officials and institutions to justify their actions, accept responsibility, and face consequences for failures or abuses of power. It is generally categorized into two major dimensions: **vertical accountability**, which includes mechanisms like elections, public protests, and civil society oversight; and **horizontal accountability**, which involves inter-institutional checks such as judicial review, legislative scrutiny, and audit commissions (Schedler, 1999).

Vertical accountability enables citizens to sanction or reward political leaders through democratic processes. Horizontal accountability, by contrast, is exercised by state institutions that are legally empowered to monitor, investigate, and sanction the misconduct of other public entities (O'Donnell, 1998). The presence and strength of both forms are critical to maintaining institutional legitimacy and preventing authoritarian drift.

Key Theoretical Approaches

Several theoretical frameworks contribute to our understanding of democratic governance and institutional accountability:

- Institutionalism**, particularly new institutionalism, emphasizes how formal structures and informal norms shape political behavior. March and Olsen (1984) argue that institutions are not merely arenas of strategic interaction but are embedded with values and routines that influence outcomes over time.

- Democratic theory**, as articulated by scholars such as Dahl (1989), provides criteria for assessing democratic quality, including effective participation, voting equality, enlightened understanding, control of the agenda, and inclusion of all adults.

- Accountability frameworks**, such as those proposed by Schedler (1999) and Bovens (2007), conceptualize accountability as a relationship involving three components: information (the duty to inform), explanation (the duty to justify), and consequences (the possibility of sanctions). These frameworks help distinguish between answerability and enforceability in both political and administrative contexts.

Together, these theoretical lenses offer a multidimensional understanding of how democratic governance functions and how institutional accountability can be conceptualized, operationalized, and evaluated.

Literature Review

Trends in Democratic Governance

Over the past two decades, the global trajectory of democracy has experienced notable fluctuation. While the post-Cold War period saw a proliferation of liberal democratic institutions, recent years have witnessed increasing concerns over democratic backsliding and the fragility of democratic norms. According to the *Freedom House* (2024) report, global freedom has declined for the 18th consecutive year, with significant setbacks in electoral integrity, judicial independence, and civil

liberties. Similarly, the *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)* project (2023) reports that electoral autocracies now outnumber liberal democracies, with democratic erosion occurring even in long-established democracies.

Yet, the literature also highlights a degree of democratic resilience. Despite global pressures, many states have adapted by reinforcing democratic safeguards, engaging civil society, and adopting participatory reforms (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019). Scholars argue that resilience is often tied to institutional robustness, political culture, and active civic engagement (Carothers, 2020).

Institutional Mechanisms for Accountability

Institutional accountability remains a core component of democratic governance, with several mechanisms designed to check the abuse of power. Legislative oversight, often through committees and inquiries, plays a critical role in scrutinizing executive actions. Judicial review, as a form of legal accountability, enables courts to uphold constitutional constraints and protect minority rights (Ginsburg, 2003). In addition, independent auditing bodies such as supreme audit institutions serve to assess public sector performance and financial integrity (Schillemans, 2016).

Empirical studies suggest that the strength and independence of these mechanisms directly affect governance outcomes. For instance, O'Donnell (1998) emphasizes the need for "horizontal accountability" between state institutions, while Bovens (2007) underscores the importance of formalized accountability relationships supported by transparency and public reporting.

New Challenges in the 21st Century

Modern democracies face unprecedented challenges rooted in technological, social, and geopolitical transformations. Digital disinformation—often propagated through social media algorithms—undermines informed citizenship and fosters polarization (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). The rise of surveillance capitalism further complicates governance by allowing private corporations and governments to collect and manipulate personal data at scale (Zuboff, 2019).

Moreover, populist movements have increasingly targeted democratic institutions, portraying them as elitist and obstructive to "the will of the people" (Mounk, 2018). These populist strategies frequently erode checks and balances, politicize oversight agencies, and weaken judicial independence, creating conditions for democratic decay (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

Gaps in the Literature

While the literature on democratic decline and institutional accountability is robust, several gaps persist. Notably, there is a lack of comparative empirical research on institutional innovation—how newer accountability mechanisms (e.g., digital transparency tools, citizen assemblies, e-governance) perform across different political contexts. Moreover, existing studies often focus on either advanced democracies or authoritarian states, with less attention given to hybrid regimes or transitional

democracies. Further research is needed to assess how democratic institutions evolve under pressure and what factors enhance their resilience in the face of emerging threats.

Democratic Governance in Practice: Global Patterns

1. Success Stories

Despite widespread concerns about democratic backsliding, several countries demonstrate how institutional design, political culture, and innovation can reinforce democratic governance. The **Scandinavian countries**, notably Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, have long been recognized for their robust commitment to **transparency, low corruption levels**, and effective bureaucracies. These successes are attributed to a combination of strong legal frameworks, well-functioning ombudsman institutions, and a deeply rooted culture of trust and civic engagement (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008; Bauhr & Grimes, 2014).

Similarly, **participatory budgeting in Brazil**, first implemented in Porto Alegre in 1989, serves as a global model for **citizen engagement and fiscal transparency**. By allowing residents to directly influence budget allocations, the initiative improved service delivery, particularly in poorer neighborhoods, and increased public satisfaction with local government (Wampler, 2007; Goldfrank, 2011). Though the expansion of participatory budgeting across Brazil has faced challenges, its early success illustrates the potential of inclusive governance models in fostering legitimacy and accountability.

2. Crisis and Decline

In contrast, several democracies have experienced significant institutional erosion in the 21st century. **Hungary**, under the leadership of Viktor Orbán, has undergone systematic democratic backsliding. Since 2010, constitutional reforms, media consolidation, and the politicization of the judiciary have weakened the system of checks and balances and concentrated power in the executive (Bánkuti, Halmai, & Scheppele, 2012; Bogaards, 2018). These changes have effectively transformed Hungary into a **competitive authoritarian regime**, where elections exist but are no longer meaningfully free or fair (Freedom House, 2024).

In the **United States**, rising **political polarization** and **institutional distrust** have eroded public confidence in democratic processes. Congressional gridlock, increasing executive overreach, and the politicization of the judiciary have undermined perceptions of impartial governance (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). The events surrounding the 2020 presidential election, including efforts to delegitimize electoral outcomes, underscored the fragility of democratic norms even in long-standing democracies.

3. Digital Democracy and E-Governance

The digital age has introduced new tools to **enhance accountability** while simultaneously generating new risks. In many countries, **e-governance platforms** are improving transparency and service delivery by digitizing public services and allowing real-time citizen feedback. For instance, **Estonia's e-residency and blockchain-**

enabled public record systems are frequently cited as best practices in digital democracy (Margetts & Dunleavy, 2013; OECD, 2020). Civic technologies such as **AI-powered complaint systems, open-data dashboards, and blockchain-based procurement monitoring** have the potential to reduce corruption and bureaucratic opacity (Meijer, Curtin, & Hillebrandt, 2012).

However, the same technologies have also facilitated the rise of **digital authoritarianism**. In countries like China and Russia, surveillance technologies, internet censorship, and data manipulation have been deployed to suppress dissent and control public discourse (Feldstein, 2019). The global diffusion of these practices poses serious risks to democratic governance, especially in fragile or hybrid regimes, as governments increasingly adopt **sophisticated digital tools for repression** under the guise of efficiency or national security (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019).

Strengthening Institutional Accountability

1. Legal and Constitutional Innovations

One of the primary mechanisms for enhancing institutional accountability in democracies involves legal and constitutional reforms. In recent decades, numerous countries have enacted anti-corruption laws, strengthened ombudsman institutions, and adopted freedom of information acts (FOIAs) to improve transparency and citizen oversight. For example, the implementation of FOIAs in countries such as India, Mexico, and South Africa has significantly empowered citizens to request information and monitor government activity (Roberts, 2006; Ackerman & Sandoval-Ballesteros, 2006).

Similarly, ombudsman offices, which serve as independent public authorities addressing citizen grievances and administrative abuses, have become increasingly important in enforcing public accountability (Reif, 2004). These innovations, while often symbolic without enforcement powers, can become effective when coupled with judicial independence and political will.

2. Role of Civil Society and Media

A vibrant civil society and an independent media are vital to the accountability ecosystem. Watchdog organizations—both domestic NGOs and international bodies such as Transparency International—monitor public institutions and expose misuse of power. Their efforts are complemented by investigative journalism, which plays a crucial role in uncovering corruption, abuse, and policy failures. High-profile cases like the Panama Papers and Paradise Papers have demonstrated the transnational impact of media-led accountability efforts (Obermayer & Obermaier, 2016).

In environments where formal mechanisms are weak or compromised, civil society actors often serve as *de facto* accountability agents, mobilizing public opinion and advocating for institutional reform (Grimes, 2013). However, in many authoritarian and hybrid regimes, these actors face increasing restrictions, harassment, and delegitimization.

3. International Frameworks and Norms

Accountability has also been institutionalized at the international level through global norms and initiatives. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, for instance, explicitly calls for “peace, justice, and strong institutions,” promoting transparent governance, access to justice, and effective, accountable institutions (UN, 2015). Likewise, the Open Government Partnership (OGP) encourages member states to commit to transparency reforms, citizen participation, and the use of technology to foster accountability (OGP, 2023).

Furthermore, organizations such as the OECD have developed comprehensive guidelines for integrity, public procurement, and anti-corruption, offering member and partner countries benchmarks and best practices (OECD, 2017). These international frameworks create normative pressure on governments to maintain democratic standards and offer transnational support for domestic reformers.

4. Future Directions

Looking ahead, strengthening institutional accountability requires a multidimensional approach that combines legal structures, civic engagement, and adaptive governance. Civic education is essential to fostering a culture of accountability by building citizens’ awareness of their rights and responsibilities (Galston, 2001). At the same time, efforts to rebuild public trust must prioritize fairness, responsiveness, and institutional performance, particularly in post-crisis environments (Blind, 2007).

As political, technological, and social landscapes evolve, institutional adaptation becomes crucial. Governments must invest in open data infrastructures, develop responsive feedback loops, and support hybrid accountability models that integrate formal institutions with informal community-based mechanisms. Ultimately, sustaining accountability in the 21st century will depend on the synergy between state institutions, civil society, and informed, active citizenries.

Conclusion

The 21st century has presented both formidable challenges and promising opportunities for democratic governance and institutional accountability. While the global trend reflects increasing concern over democratic backsliding, political polarization, and the erosion of checks and balances, there remains significant variation in how different states respond to these pressures. As the literature and case studies in this article demonstrate, the effectiveness of democratic governance hinges not only on institutional design but also on the political will to uphold transparency, the resilience of legal frameworks, and the active engagement of civil society.

Countries such as those in Scandinavia and participatory models like Brazil's budgeting initiatives illustrate that well-structured accountability mechanisms can foster trust and institutional legitimacy. In contrast, the democratic regression observed in Hungary and the increasing polarization in the United States underscore the fragility of democratic norms when institutions are politicized or weakened. The rise of digital technologies has further complicated the accountability landscape, introducing both tools for innovation and risks of surveillance and manipulation.

Strengthening institutional accountability in this context demands a holistic and adaptive approach. Legal innovations, international norms such as SDG 16 and the OGP, and robust civil society participation all contribute to a more accountable and transparent governance ecosystem. However, future strategies must also address emerging threats, such as disinformation, technocratic opacity, and declining civic trust. Investment in civic education, technological literacy, and institutional reform will be crucial for safeguarding democratic values in an era of rapid change.

Ultimately, the vitality of democratic governance depends on the interplay between accountable institutions and engaged citizens. Reinvigorating this relationship—through innovation, vigilance, and normative commitment—offers the most viable path for democracies seeking to navigate the complexities of the 21st century while preserving the core principles of justice, participation, and the rule of law.

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Revisiting Classical Political Thought in Contemporary Contexts^{*}

Supattra Santirungroj¹ and Nuttha Jangaksorn²

¹⁻²*Mahamakut Buddhist University, Thailand*

¹*E-mail: supattra.tin1994@gmail.com*

²*E-mail: nuttha2539@gmail.com*

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Abstract

This article critically revisits the legacy of classical political thought in light of contemporary global challenges. Drawing from key thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, the study explores how foundational concepts—justice, sovereignty, civic virtue, and the social contract are reinterpreted in modern democratic, authoritarian, and transnational contexts. Through a conceptual and comparative analysis, the article highlights the enduring relevance of classical frameworks in shaping liberalism, participatory governance, and ethical leadership, while also interrogating their limitations when applied to issues such as gender exclusion, Eurocentrism, climate crisis, and digital surveillance. Contemporary theorists including Rawls, Arendt, and Foucault are examined for their critical engagement with classical texts, illustrating how tradition can serve as both a resource and a site of resistance. The article concludes by advocating for a pluralistic and reflexive political theory that engages with the classical canon while addressing the complexities of a rapidly changing world.

Keywords: Classical Political Thought, Democracy and Authoritarianism, Social Contract Theory, Political Theory and Modernity, Critical Reinterpretation

Introduction

Classical political thought—comprising the foundational works of thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau—continues to exert profound influence on contemporary political discourse and institutional design. Despite being rooted in vastly different historical and sociopolitical contexts, these texts provide enduring frameworks for addressing perennial political questions: What is justice? What legitimizes authority? What is the ideal form of governance? These classical theories, grounded in concepts like virtue, the social contract, sovereignty, and the common good, remain central not only to political philosophy curricula but also to modern political practice (Strauss, 1959; Coleman, 2000).

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The enduring relevance of classical political thought can be attributed to its normative power and conceptual clarity. As Sheldon Wolin (1960) notes, classical political theory offers a vision of political life that aspires to be both ethical and rational—qualities often absent in contemporary realpolitik. Moreover, the resurgence of interest in thinkers such as Machiavelli and Hobbes in the age of authoritarian populism, or Rousseau and Aristotle in participatory democratic movements, demonstrates how classical ideas are mobilized in present-day debates over power, legitimacy, and civic virtue (Tuck, 1993; Arendt, 1958).

However, a core tension emerges when these timeless ideas are confronted with the complexities of the modern world. The transformation of political life under globalization, technological surveillance, ecological crisis, and identity politics often exceeds the conceptual horizons of classical thinkers. For example, Hobbes's sovereign was designed for a territorially bounded polity, not a digitally interconnected world of transnational threats. Similarly, Aristotle's polis excluded women and slaves, raising questions about the applicability of his civic model to pluralistic democracies (Okin, 1979; Held, 2006).

This article addresses this core dilemma: how can classical political thought be meaningfully reinterpreted in light of contemporary global challenges, and what are the epistemological and normative limits of such reinterpretation? Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How are classical theories reinterpreted in light of contemporary global issues such as authoritarianism, digital governance, and climate crisis?
2. What limits exist in applying classical frameworks to pluralistic, technologically advanced, and globally interconnected societies?

To explore these questions, the study employs a conceptual and comparative methodology. It engages in a critical textual analysis of key classical works, juxtaposed with contemporary theoretical debates and political phenomena. By doing so, the article does not seek to merely historicize or idealize these classical thinkers, but rather to evaluate their contributions and limitations as tools for navigating today's political landscape.

Foundations of Classical Political Thought

1. Greek Foundations

The origins of Western political thought lie in the classical Greek tradition, where philosophical inquiry was intimately connected to questions of justice, governance, and human nature. Two of the most influential figures of this tradition—**Plato** and **Aristotle**—provided enduring frameworks that continue to inform modern conceptions of statehood and political virtue.

Plato, in *The Republic*, constructs an ideal state governed by philosopher-kings who embody wisdom and rationality. For Plato, justice is achieved when each class

within the polis performs its designated function: rulers govern with wisdom, auxiliaries protect with courage, and producers contribute through moderation. This tripartite structure reflects Plato's psychological theory of the soul, positing harmony between reason, spirit, and appetite as the basis of a just individual—and by extension, a just state (Plato, trans. 1992). Though often criticized for its authoritarian undertones and its detachment from democratic practice, *The Republic* remains foundational in normative political theory, especially in debates over meritocracy, elitism, and the role of education in governance (Annas, 1999).

Aristotle, a student of Plato, offers a more empirical and pluralistic approach in his *Politics*. Rejecting Plato's rigid idealism, Aristotle emphasizes the importance of the **"best practicable constitution"**, arguing that politics should cultivate virtue among citizens within the constraints of existing social realities (Aristotle, trans. 1998). He classifies governments based on who rules (one, few, many) and whether they govern for the common good or personal interest, thereby laying the groundwork for later constitutional theory. For Aristotle, the **polis** is a natural institution aimed at achieving **eudaimonia** (human flourishing), and political participation is both a right and a means of moral development (Miller, 1995).

Together, Plato and Aristotle shaped the foundational questions of political thought: What is justice? Who should rule? What is the relationship between the individual and the state? Their contrasting visions—idealism versus realism, theory versus practice—continue to frame debates in political philosophy today.

2. Modern Classical Thinkers

The early modern period witnessed a radical transformation in political thought, marked by the rise of the sovereign state, the decline of feudalism, and the emergence of secular authority. Thinkers such as **Machiavelli**, **Hobbes**, **Locke**, and **Rousseau** articulated new frameworks for understanding power, legitimacy, and the social contract in a rapidly changing political landscape.

Niccolò Machiavelli, in *The Prince* (1513), departs from classical virtue ethics and emphasizes **realpolitik**—the effective exercise of power irrespective of moral constraints. He argues that rulers must be pragmatic, even ruthless, to maintain authority and stability. *Virtù*, for Machiavelli, is not moral virtue but the capacity to shape fortune through calculated action. His disillusionment with the instability of Italian city-states led him to favor strong centralized rule, and his thought remains a cornerstone of modern discussions on leadership, strategy, and authoritarian governance (Skinner, 1981).

Thomas Hobbes, writing during the English Civil War, presents a bleak view of human nature in *Leviathan* (1651). He posits that in the state of nature, life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short," necessitating the formation of a **social contract** whereby individuals cede rights to a sovereign for the sake of peace and security (Hobbes, 1996). Hobbes's concept of an **absolute sovereign** continues to inform contemporary debates on state authority, emergency powers, and the limits of individual liberty.

In contrast, **John Locke** offers a more optimistic view in his *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), where the social contract is based on the protection of natural rights—life, liberty, and property. Government, for Locke, derives legitimacy from the consent of the governed and is accountable to them. Locke's ideas laid the intellectual

foundation for liberal democracy, constitutionalism, and the American and French revolutions (Tully, 1980).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in *The Social Contract* (1762), challenges both Hobbesian authoritarianism and Lockean liberalism. He argues that true freedom arises from obedience to the **general will**, a collective expression of the common good. Rousseau envisions a participatory form of democracy in which citizens actively shape laws and policies. Although his concept of the general will has been critiqued for its potential to suppress dissent, Rousseau remains a vital source for theories of civic republicanism, popular sovereignty, and democratic education (Bertram, 2010).

These modern classical thinkers shifted political inquiry from normative ideals to questions of institutional design, legitimacy, and human motivation. Their legacy endures in contemporary liberal, republican, and authoritarian political frameworks.

Classical Thought in Democratic Contexts

Classical political thought continues to inform the theory and practice of contemporary democracy. Despite originating in contexts vastly different from today's pluralistic and technologically advanced societies, thinkers such as Locke, Rousseau, and Aristotle remain foundational to our understanding of rights, civic virtue, participation, and legitimacy. Their ideas have been revisited and reinterpreted in light of the challenges faced by modern liberal and participatory democracies, particularly in the face of growing inequality, political apathy, and institutional distrust.

1. Liberalism and Locke Today: Rights, Property, and State Legitimacy in Neoliberal Democracies

John Locke's liberal framework, grounded in the natural rights of life, liberty, and property, forms the intellectual cornerstone of modern constitutional democracies. In *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke posits that government's legitimacy arises from the consent of the governed and its primary role is the protection of individual rights (Locke, 1988). These principles have profoundly influenced the development of liberal democratic institutions, particularly in Anglo-American contexts.

However, in neoliberal democracies, Locke's thought has undergone a significant reinterpretation. Contemporary political theorists argue that Locke's emphasis on property rights has been selectively amplified to support market fundamentalism and privatization, often at the expense of equality and collective welfare (Harvey, 2005). Critics note that the Lockean notion of freedom—as non-interference by the state—has been used to justify minimal regulation, despite growing disparities in power and access to resources (Brown, 2015). Thus, while Locke remains central to liberal democratic theory, his legacy in practice reveals tensions between liberty and structural inequality in neoliberal governance.

2. Rousseau and Deliberative Democracy: Civic Participation and the General Will in Participatory Models

Jean-Jacques Rousseau offers a compelling vision of democracy based not on the mere aggregation of preferences, but on the formation of the general will through collective deliberation. In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau contends that true freedom is

achieved when individuals obey laws they have a hand in creating, thereby aligning personal autonomy with civic obligation (Rousseau, 1997). This ideal has had enduring appeal in theories of deliberative democracy, which emphasize informed public reasoning and citizen engagement over passive electoral participation.

Contemporary democratic innovations such as participatory budgeting, citizen assemblies, and deliberative polls embody Rousseauian principles by creating institutional mechanisms for civic input and moral reasoning. Scholars like Jürgen Habermas and Joshua Cohen have extended Rousseau's ideas, arguing that legitimate democratic authority emerges from procedures that promote inclusion, transparency, and rational discourse (Habermas, 1996; Cohen, 1989). Nevertheless, critics caution against idealizing the general will, noting the risks of homogenization and the marginalization of dissenting voices in the name of collective unity (Urbinati, 2006).

3. Aristotelian Virtue Ethics: Revival in Political Education and Ethical Leadership

While Aristotle's *Politics* was written in the context of the Athenian polis, his emphasis on virtue ethics and citizenship as a form of ethical development has gained renewed relevance in modern democratic theory. For Aristotle, the purpose of the state is not merely to ensure security or economic prosperity but to cultivate virtuous citizens capable of achieving eudaimonia, or human flourishing (Aristotle, trans. 1998). Civic participation, in this view, is both a duty and a means of moral education.

In contemporary democratic contexts, Aristotle's thought has inspired calls for the integration of civic education, character formation, and ethical leadership in political institutions. Political theorists such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Martha Nussbaum have revived Aristotelian ethics to critique the proceduralism of liberal democracies and to argue for the role of moral virtues—such as courage, justice, and practical wisdom—in sustaining democratic life (MacIntyre, 1981; Nussbaum, 2006). Moreover, in the wake of political scandals and widespread distrust in leadership, Aristotle's emphasis on the moral character of rulers offers a framework for rethinking integrity and responsibility in public office.

In sum, classical thinkers such as Locke, Rousseau, and Aristotle continue to shape democratic theory in diverse and sometimes conflicting ways. Locke's emphasis on rights and consent underpins liberal institutions, while Rousseau's focus on collective will enriches deliberative and participatory models. Meanwhile, Aristotle's virtue ethics highlights the moral dimension of citizenship and leadership. Each provides essential, though incomplete, insights into the democratic challenges of the 21st century.

Classical Thought and Contemporary Authoritarianism

While classical political thought is often celebrated for its contributions to democratic theory, it also provides frameworks that resonate—sometimes controversially—with contemporary forms of **authoritarianism**, **populism**, and **technocratic governance**. Thinkers like **Machiavelli**, **Hobbes**, and even **Plato** offered political models that emphasize order, hierarchy, and the strategic use of power—models that find renewed relevance in modern regimes facing crises of legitimacy, security, and governance capacity.

1. Machiavelli's Relevance: Strategic Manipulation and Realpolitik in Modern Populist Regimes

Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1532) remains a canonical text in discussions of **political realism**. Machiavelli advises rulers to use deceit, fear, and manipulation to preserve power and maintain the state. While his intent may have been to ensure stability in a fragmented Italy, his ideas have been reinterpreted by both critics and admirers as a blueprint for **strategic authoritarianism**.

In the 21st century, many **populist and illiberal leaders**—from Hungary's Viktor Orbán to Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan—demonstrate what might be called a “Machiavellian” pragmatism. These leaders often cloak authoritarian tactics in democratic rhetoric, manipulate institutions, and centralize executive power under the guise of protecting national interest (Zakaria, 2003; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). In such regimes, political success is not necessarily measured by adherence to moral or democratic ideals but by the ability to **control narratives**, **neutralize opposition**, and **project strength**—echoing Machiavelli's dictum that it is “better to be feared than loved” if one cannot be both (Machiavelli, 2003).

2. Hobbes and Sovereign Authority: The Resurgence of Security-First Governance During Crises

Thomas Hobbes, in *Leviathan* (1651), posits that human beings in their natural state are driven by fear and self-preservation, necessitating an **absolute sovereign** to prevent civil disorder. For Hobbes, the social contract does not emphasize rights as much as **security** and **obedience to authority**. The sovereign—whether monarch or assembly—must be strong enough to ensure peace and protect life (Hobbes, 1996).

In times of crisis, Hobbes's thought regains relevance. The **COVID-19 pandemic**, terrorist threats, and mass migration have prompted governments across the world—democratic and authoritarian alike—to adopt **emergency powers**, restrict civil liberties, and assert centralized control. These security-first approaches often evoke Hobbesian logic: the justification of absolute authority for the sake of collective survival (Agamben, 2005; Honig, 2009). Critics warn, however, that this can normalize **states of exception**, eroding democratic accountability under the pretense of public safety.

3. Plato's Guardian Class: Technocracy and Paternalism in Authoritarian Systems

Plato's *Republic* offers a vision of justice in which **philosopher-kings**—those with knowledge of the good—govern the city. The **guardian class**, educated in philosophy and shielded from material corruption, is entrusted with ruling in the interest of all. While often praised for its moral clarity, Plato's ideal state is unapologetically **hierarchical** and **anti-democratic**, rooted in the belief that the masses are ill-equipped to govern themselves (Plato, trans. 1992).

This model resonates with modern **technocratic** and **paternalistic regimes**, where legitimacy is claimed not through popular mandate but through expertise and claimed rationality. In China, for instance, the Chinese Communist Party often frames its rule as a **meritocratic, evidence-based alternative** to Western liberalism—echoing the Platonic view that enlightened elites are better suited to govern than the uninformed majority (Bell, 2015). Such regimes emphasize economic performance, public order, and centralized decision-making over participatory governance, thereby adopting a **Platonist rationale for authoritarian control**.

In each of these cases—Machiavelli's *realpolitik*, Hobbes's sovereign absolutism, and Plato's rule by the wise—classical thought provides a **language and logic** for justifying strong rule in moments of uncertainty. While these frameworks can offer stability and direction, they also pose serious risks to **democratic values**, especially when invoked to bypass accountability, pluralism, and human rights.

Global Challenges and Classical Reinterpretation

Contemporary global challenges—including ecological collapse, transnational migration, and the growing salience of cosmopolitan justice—have provoked a critical reassessment of classical political thought. While much of classical theory was developed in pre-modern, bounded societies, its core principles—ethical universality, civic responsibility, and political legitimacy—continue to be reinterpreted in light of interconnected, post-Westphalian realities. This section explores how Stoic and Kantian cosmopolitanism, Rousseau's social contract, and Aristotle's vision of the polis have been adapted (or resisted) in response to the complex moral and political demands of global governance.

1. Global Justice and Cosmopolitanism: Revisiting Stoic Universalism and Kantian Moral Thought

The Stoics, particularly thinkers like Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, advocated for the idea that all human beings share a rational nature and belong to a common moral community—the cosmopolis. This early form of moral universalism laid the foundation for later philosophical visions of global justice, most notably in the work of Immanuel Kant. In *Perpetual Peace* (1795), Kant proposed a cosmopolitan order in which sovereign states are bound by international law and a shared commitment to moral principles (Kant, 2006).

Today, this tradition is echoed in normative theories of global justice advanced by philosophers such as Martha Nussbaum and Thomas Pogge. Nussbaum (2006), drawing on Stoic ethics, argues for a capabilities-based approach to global citizenship, emphasizing universal dignity over nationalist frameworks. Similarly, Pogge (2002) critiques the global economic order using Kantian principles, advocating for institutional reforms to reduce transnational inequality. Yet, critics note the tension between cosmopolitan ethics and political feasibility, particularly in a world increasingly shaped by populist nationalism and sovereign retrenchment (Brown, 2010).

2. Climate Crisis and Political Obligation: Rousseau's Social Contract in the Anthropocene

The climate crisis represents a paradigmatic challenge to classical models of the social contract, which were premised on intergenerational stability and territorial self-sufficiency. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in *The Social Contract* (1762), envisioned a polity in which individuals agree to govern themselves through a shared commitment to the general will, rooted in the common good. In the context of the Anthropocene, however, the boundaries of that “common good” must be redefined to include future generations, non-human life, and planetary ecosystems (Latour, 2018).

Recent scholarship has sought to expand Rousseauian thought to account for ecological interdependence. For instance, Andrew Dobson (2003) argues for a theory of “ecological citizenship”, grounded in obligations that transcend national borders and immediate communities. Likewise, Bruno Latour (2018) proposes that democratic societies must now include “representatives of the Earth”—a radical reimagining of the social contract that fuses environmental ethics with political theory. In this sense, Rousseau’s ideal of the general will has been reinterpreted as an ethical imperative to act collectively on behalf of the biosphere, despite the absence of a global sovereign.

3. Migration and the Limits of the Nation-State: Aristotle's Polis vs. Global Interdependence

In *Politics*, Aristotle conceived of the polis as a closed, self-sufficient community in which full citizenship was contingent upon birth, property, and participation in political life (Aristotle, trans. 1998). This conception excluded women, slaves, and foreigners, and was based on the ideal of a homogenous civic body—a view increasingly at odds with the realities of contemporary global migration, displacement, and multiculturalism.

Modern democracies face profound challenges reconciling national identity and universal human rights, particularly in debates over refugee protection, statelessness, and border regimes. Some theorists, such as Seyla Benhabib (2004), argue that Aristotelian notions of political belonging must evolve to accommodate porous borders and hybrid identities. Others, like Chantal Mouffe (2000), warn that a purely cosmopolitan ethos risks overlooking the political and emotional attachments that sustain democratic engagement within bounded communities.

Aristotle's vision, then, poses both a limitation and a provocation: while the polis cannot easily accommodate contemporary transnational realities, its emphasis on active, virtuous citizenship remains a counterpoint to the bureaucratization and depersonalization of global governance. The task is thus not to discard Aristotle but to reconstruct political membership in ways that affirm both rootedness and relationality.

In sum, global challenges such as climate change, mass migration, and global inequality demand a creative and critical engagement with classical political thought. The universality of Stoic and Kantian ethics, the collective moral agency in Rousseau's contract, and the civic idealism of Aristotle's polis continue to serve as conceptual resources—albeit imperfect ones—for theorizing justice and responsibility in a deeply interdependent world.

Critiques and Limitations of Classical Political Thought

While classical political thought provides foundational insights into justice, authority, and civic virtue, it is not without significant limitations. Over the past several decades, scholars from feminist, postcolonial, and critical theory traditions have challenged the universalism, inclusivity, and applicability of canonical texts. These critiques underscore the need to reinterpret, supplement, or even move beyond classical frameworks when addressing contemporary concerns, particularly those related to gender, cultural diversity, and technological modernity.

1. Exclusion and Gender: Feminist and Postcolonial Critiques

One of the most enduring criticisms of classical political thought concerns its systematic exclusion of women and marginalized peoples from political consideration. In works such as *The Sexual Contract*, Carole Pateman (1988) argues that early modern theorists like Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau naturalized male dominance by excluding women from the social contract. While Locke famously emphasized consent and liberty, his theory presupposed a patriarchal household in which only property-owning men could exercise political agency.

Similarly, Susan Moller Okin (1979) interrogates the gendered assumptions embedded in classical texts, particularly Aristotle's claim that women are biologically unfit for rational deliberation and public life. Okin contends that the normative ideals of justice and citizenship in Western political philosophy have historically been structured around male experiences, leaving women's voices and perspectives invisible or devalued.

Postcolonial theorists further argue that classical texts often universalize norms derived from imperial and Eurocentric contexts, marginalizing non-Western forms of political organization and thought. Thinkers like Bhikhu Parekh (2000) and Gayatri Spivak (1999) caution against uncritically applying Western concepts such as the social contract or liberal individualism to societies with different historical trajectories and moral frameworks.

2. Eurocentrism: The Challenge of Applying Western Classics in Diverse Political Cultures

Many canonical political thinkers—Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau—assumed a bounded, homogeneous polity rooted in shared cultural, linguistic, and philosophical traditions. These assumptions are increasingly problematic in today's pluralistic and multicultural societies. The Eurocentric orientation of classical theory often fails to account for the moral pluralism, indigenous epistemologies, and alternative political cosmologies found across the Global South.

For instance, Aristotle's emphasis on the polis as the highest form of human association may obscure the legitimacy of other political arrangements such as confederacies, kinship-based governance, or transnational solidarity networks. Moreover, liberal individualism—as derived from Locke and Rousseau—often clashes with collectivist traditions or relational ontologies prevalent in African, Asian, and Indigenous contexts (Wiredu, 1996; Alcoff, 2007). This raises important methodological questions about whether classical theory can serve as a universal paradigm or whether it must be contextualized and pluralized to remain relevant.

3. Technological Modernity: Absence of Digital Governance and Surveillance Capitalism in Classical Frameworks

A further limitation of classical political thought is its inability to anticipate or account for technological modernity—especially phenomena such as digital surveillance, algorithmic governance, and platform capitalism. While classical thinkers grappled with power, authority, and knowledge, they did so in pre-industrial societies devoid of contemporary technologies that reshape political behavior and social control.

Thinkers like Michel Foucault (1977) have extended classical concerns about discipline and authority into modern contexts, especially regarding surveillance and bio-power. Yet, the digital age presents new forms of domination that classical frameworks are ill-equipped to address. For instance, the concept of the sovereign—as imagined by Hobbes or Locke—does not map easily onto decentralized networks of power, such as multinational tech corporations or algorithmically enforced norms on social media platforms (Zuboff, 2019).

Moreover, the crisis of democracy in the digital era—marked by disinformation, echo chambers, and the commodification of personal data—demands new political theories of agency, freedom, and consent that move beyond classical assumptions. While core insights about authority, justice, and virtue remain relevant, classical thought must be critically retooled to engage with the complexities of post-industrial and post-liberal political life.

Conclusion of the Section

These critiques do not suggest that classical political thought should be discarded, but rather that it must be reinterpreted, pluralized, and supplemented. Feminist, postcolonial, and critical theorists challenge us to rethink the normative foundations of politics in a way that is inclusive, reflexive, and attuned to contemporary

global realities. In doing so, they illuminate both the richness and the rigidity of classical paradigms—and the need for a truly global political theory.

Contemporary Theorists and the Legacy of Classical Thought

Contemporary political theory continues to be shaped by the intellectual legacy of classical thought, not through uncritical reproduction but through reinterpretation, critique, and adaptation. Thinkers such as John Rawls, Hannah Arendt, and Michel Foucault engage with the classical canon—Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Machiavelli—not merely as historical sources but as conceptual foundations for addressing modern political dilemmas. Their work illustrates how classical themes—justice, power, participation, and the public realm—remain relevant but must be reframed for a contemporary context marked by pluralism, mass society, and complex structures of domination.

1. John Rawls and Rousseau: Justice, the Social Contract, and the General Will

In *A Theory of Justice* (1971), John Rawls revives and modernizes the social contract tradition, drawing heavily from Rousseau, Locke, and Kant. Rawls reimagines the contract as a hypothetical agreement behind a “veil of ignorance,” where rational agents, unaware of their social status, would choose principles of justice that ensure fairness and equality (Rawls, 1999). This model preserves Rousseau’s normative emphasis on autonomy and collective self-legislation but avoids the metaphysical and homogenizing assumptions of the “general will.”

While Rousseau envisioned direct civic participation, Rawls’s liberalism accommodates the institutional complexity of modern democracies by focusing on procedural fairness and public reason. Yet critics argue that Rawls, like his predecessors, maintains a Eurocentric moral framework and under-theorizes power asymmetries rooted in race, gender, and global injustice (Mills, 1997). Nonetheless, Rawls demonstrates the continued relevance of classical concepts—justice, legitimacy, and consent—when applied to pluralistic, rights-based societies.

2. Hannah Arendt and Aristotle: Action, Speech, and the Public Realm

Hannah Arendt engages directly with Aristotle’s conception of politics as praxis—a space of action and speech where individuals realize their freedom through participation in a shared public world. In *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt laments the loss of the classical polis, which she saw as the highest expression of political freedom and public virtue. Modernity, in her view, has replaced political action with bureaucratic management and mass consumption, thereby eroding the conditions for meaningful public life (Arendt, 1958).

Arendt does not seek a return to the ancient city-state, but she reclaims Aristotle’s distinction between action (praxis) and labor or work as a critique of the depoliticized and instrumental logic of modern governance. Her emphasis on plurality, natality, and judgment reinvigorates classical ideals while adapting them to the challenges of totalitarianism, exile, and the mass society. In doing so, Arendt bridges the gap between ancient civic virtue and modern existential crises.

3. Michel Foucault and Machiavelli: Power, Discipline, and Governmentality

Michel Foucault reconfigures the classical concern with power—most famously articulated by Machiavelli—by shifting focus from sovereign authority to diffuse, disciplinary mechanisms embedded in everyday institutions. In works such as *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *Security, Territory, Population* (2007), Foucault critiques the sovereign-centric model of power found in Hobbes or Machiavelli, arguing instead that modern governance operates through surveillance, biopolitics, and normative regulation.

Yet, Foucault's analysis is deeply influenced by classical thinkers. He refers to Machiavelli's "raison d'État" to trace the genealogy of modern statecraft and critiques the legacy of Platonic and Christian truth-seeking embedded in modern epistemologies. Rather than rejecting the classical tradition, Foucault genealogizes it, showing how its assumptions have mutated into the microphysics of power in the modern state.

Foucault thus represents a critical appropriation of classical thought: not as a source of normative guidance, but as a discursive formation that must be historicized and deconstructed to understand contemporary forms of domination and resistance.

Conclusion of the Section

Contemporary political theorists continue to dialogue with classical texts, whether by building upon their frameworks (as in Rawls), reclaiming their civic ideals (as in Arendt), or deconstructing their epistemologies (as in Foucault). This legacy is not static—it is contested, reinterpreted, and strategically mobilized. Classical thought persists, not as dogma, but as a living archive of concepts, tensions, and possibilities for political reflection in the modern world.

Conclusion

The enduring relevance of classical political thought lies not in its uncritical preservation, but in its continual reinterpretation in response to contemporary challenges. From Plato's vision of justice to Rousseau's social contract and Aristotle's virtue ethics, the classical canon offers conceptual tools that continue to inform our understanding of power, governance, and civic life. However, as this article has shown, applying these ideas in the modern world requires critical engagement with their normative foundations, cultural assumptions, and historical limitations.

In democratic contexts, Locke's liberalism, Rousseau's participatory ideals, and Aristotle's emphasis on ethical citizenship continue to shape debates on legitimacy, justice, and civic education. At the same time, the authoritarian potential of classical ideas—particularly those of Machiavelli, Hobbes, and even Plato—resonates with current political developments, including populism, technocracy, and the securitization of governance.

Global phenomena such as climate change, migration, and digital surveillance expose the limits of classical models premised on closed polities, anthropocentrism, and sovereign rule. These challenges demand a political theory that is not only normatively robust but also responsive to pluralism, interdependence, and technological modernity. Feminist, postcolonial, and critical theorists have rightly interrogated the exclusions and assumptions of the classical canon, reminding us that the tradition is not universal but situated—and therefore subject to contestation and revision.

The legacy of classical thought today is therefore best understood not as a static inheritance but as a dynamic conversation—one in which contemporary theorists like Rawls, Arendt, and Foucault engage with, revise, and sometimes reject their philosophical predecessors. Moving forward, scholars and practitioners must continue this dialogue, drawing from the classical tradition while remaining attentive to the ethical and political demands of a changing world.

Only through such critical and inclusive engagement can classical political thought remain a living resource—one that not only explains the past but helps shape a more just, democratic, and reflective future.

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Innovations in Education: Pathways to 21st Century Learning*

Sanya Kenaphoom

Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University, Thailand

E-mail: zumsa_17@hotmail.com

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Abstract

The rapid transformation of global societies, driven by digitalization, globalization, and socio-economic shifts, has exposed the limitations of traditional education systems in preparing learners for 21st-century challenges. This article explores key innovations in education aimed at aligning teaching and learning practices with contemporary competencies such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and digital literacy. Grounded in the theoretical frameworks of constructivism, 21st-century skills, and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model, the discussion categorizes innovations into pedagogical, technological, curricular, and organizational domains. Case studies from Finland, Singapore, the United States, and Rwanda illustrate diverse pathways and contextualized strategies for systemic reform. The article also addresses persistent challenges—including inequity, teacher readiness, and the misalignment of assessments—while offering forward-looking recommendations in policy, research, and leadership. The analysis underscores the need for inclusive, sustainable, and evidence-based innovation to transform education into a driver of social equity, global competence, and lifelong learning.

Keywords: Educational innovation, 21st-century skills, Pedagogy, Digital learning, Education policy

Introduction

The 21st century has ushered in profound changes across all sectors, with education being no exception. The transition from industrial to knowledge-based economies has elevated the importance of cognitive skills, adaptability, digital fluency, and collaborative problem-solving (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Technological advancement, globalization, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution have redefined what it means to be “educated” in contemporary societies (Schleicher, 2018). As digital transformation accelerates, the ability to manage complex information, communicate across diverse platforms, and engage in lifelong learning becomes essential for individual and national competitiveness (UNESCO, 2015).

Despite these shifts, many traditional education systems remain rooted in 19th-century paradigms, emphasizing rote learning, rigid curricula, and standardized testing.

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These models are increasingly inadequate in equipping learners with the interdisciplinary, technological, and social-emotional skills needed for modern life and work (Fullan, 2013). Thus, there is an urgent need to reimagine educational practices to foster competencies that align with 21st-century demands.

Given the inadequacy of conventional teaching models, the central challenge facing educators and policymakers is: How can educational systems be reformed through innovation to meet 21st-century learning needs? The answer lies not only in integrating technology but also in transforming pedagogies, curricula, assessment methods, and institutional structures to create more adaptive, student-centered learning environments.

This article aims to:

1. Explore key innovations in education that support 21st-century skill development, including pedagogical, technological, curricular, and organizational changes.

2. Analyze the impact of these innovations on teaching and learning processes across diverse contexts.

3. Identify challenges and propose future directions for sustaining educational innovation in policy and practice.

This inquiry is particularly relevant for policymakers, who must create enabling environments for innovation; educators and school leaders, who are the frontline agents of change; curriculum designers, responsible for aligning content with modern competencies; and educational technologists, who develop tools to enhance learning. Understanding the pathways to 21st-century learning can inform reforms that ensure equity, inclusion, and quality in education globally (OECD, 2019).

The article begins by discussing theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin educational innovation. It then explores various types of innovations—pedagogical, technological, curricular, and organizational—followed by global case studies illustrating their implementation. The next section analyzes barriers and critiques, before concluding with recommendations for policy and research.

Conceptual Framework and Key Theories

1. 21st Century Skills Framework

At the heart of educational innovation lies the development of core competencies known as **21st-century skills**. These include critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and digital literacy (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). These skills are essential for learners to navigate an increasingly complex, globalized, and technology-driven world. The **Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21)** has popularized this framework, emphasizing not only cognitive skills but also social-emotional learning, adaptability, and cultural awareness.

For instance, **critical thinking** enables learners to evaluate information and solve complex problems, while **creativity** supports innovation and flexibility in thought. **Collaboration and communication** are increasingly vital in multicultural teams and online platforms, where cooperation and articulation of ideas across contexts are needed. Meanwhile, **digital literacy** equips students with the skills to access, analyze, and produce information in digital environments (Voogt & Roblin, 2012). These competencies provide a compass for educational transformation in both curriculum design and pedagogical practice.

2. Constructivist Learning Theories

Innovations in education are heavily grounded in **constructivist theories of learning**, which posit that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through experience and interaction rather than passively received from teachers (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978).

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development emphasizes stages of intellectual growth in which learners build mental models through exploration and problem-solving. This underpins **inquiry-based and experiential learning**, where students learn by doing and reflecting.

Meanwhile, **Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory** introduces the concept of the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**, highlighting the role of social interaction and scaffolding in learning. According to Vygotsky, meaningful learning occurs when learners engage in dialogue and collaboration, guided by a more knowledgeable other. This principle supports **collaborative learning environments**, peer tutoring, and teacher facilitation—all central to 21st-century pedagogy.

Taken together, constructivist theories support innovations like **project-based learning, problem-solving tasks**, and **authentic assessments**, where learners construct understanding through real-world engagement and reflection.

3. Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) Model

The **TPACK model**—Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge—offers a comprehensive framework for integrating digital tools meaningfully into education. Developed by Mishra and Koehler (2006), the TPACK model extends **Shulman's (1986) concept of pedagogical content knowledge** by adding the dimension of technology.

The model argues that effective teaching with technology requires understanding the dynamic interaction between:

- Content knowledge (CK)** – understanding the subject matter,
- Pedagogical knowledge (PK)** – knowing how to teach effectively, and
- Technological knowledge (TK)** – understanding digital tools and platforms.

Innovative educators must blend these domains to design learning experiences that are not only technologically rich but also pedagogically sound and content-appropriate. For example, using **adaptive learning software** to support differentiated instruction, or leveraging **virtual simulations** in science to foster inquiry.

The TPACK framework has been instrumental in guiding teacher professional development, ensuring that educators are not merely using technology for its own sake but are integrating it purposefully to enhance learning outcomes (Koehler, Mishra, & Cain, 2013).

Types of Educational Innovations

Innovation in education encompasses a wide range of practices aimed at enhancing learning outcomes, equity, and relevance. These innovations can be grouped into four major categories: pedagogical, technological, curricular and assessment, and organizational and policy-level innovations. Each of these represents a paradigm shift in how learning is conceptualized, delivered, and evaluated in the 21st century.

1. Pedagogical Innovations

Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Project-Based Learning encourages students to explore real-world problems through sustained inquiry, interdisciplinary knowledge application, and collaborative teamwork. According to Thomas (2000), PBL enhances deeper learning by promoting autonomy, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. In this model, the teacher acts as a facilitator rather than a transmitter of knowledge, aligning closely with constructivist principles.

Inquiry-Based and Experiential Learning

These approaches emphasize learning through questioning, investigation, and hands-on experiences. Dewey (1938) argued that learning must be grounded in experience to be meaningful. Inquiry-based learning enables students to construct knowledge through exploration and reflection, while experiential learning immerses them in authentic contexts, such as simulations, fieldwork, or role-playing.

Flipped Classrooms and Blended Learning

In flipped classrooms, direct instruction is moved outside the classroom (e.g., through videos), allowing class time to be used for discussion and active problem-solving (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Blended learning combines online and face-to-face instruction, offering flexibility and personalized learning experiences. These models shift the focus from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction.

2. Technological Innovations

AI in Education and Adaptive Learning Platforms

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing education by enabling personalized learning experiences. AI-driven platforms such as *Knewton* and *Carnegie Learning* adjust content based on learners' pace and performance (Luckin et al., 2016). These systems provide real-time analytics for teachers and targeted feedback for students.

Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Gamification

Immersive technologies like VR and AR offer experiential learning environments that make abstract concepts tangible—for example, simulating a historical event or a biological process (Radianti et al., 2020). Gamification integrates game mechanics into learning to increase engagement and motivation, such as using points, levels, and rewards in platforms like *Kahoot!* or *Classcraft*.

Mobile and Ubiquitous Learning Environments

Mobile learning (m-learning) supports learning anytime and anywhere via smartphones and tablets. Ubiquitous learning (u-learning) extends this by creating seamless, context-aware learning experiences supported by the Internet of Things (IoT). These approaches promote self-directed learning and digital inclusion (Traxler, 2009).

3. Curricular and Assessment Innovations

Competency-Based Curricula

Competency-based education (CBE) focuses on mastery of specific skills and knowledge rather than time-based progression. Students advance upon demonstrating proficiency, allowing for individualized learning paths (Le, Wolfe, & Steinberg, 2014). CBE aligns learning outcomes with real-world competencies, such as collaboration and digital literacy.

Formative Assessment and Real-Time Feedback Systems

Formative assessment involves continuous feedback to support learning rather than merely evaluate it. Digital tools like *Edmodo* or *Google Classroom* enable instant feedback, formative quizzes, and peer review, enhancing the feedback loop and enabling timely instructional adjustments (Black & Wiliam, 2009).

Portfolio-Based and Performance Assessments

These assessments focus on students' ability to apply knowledge in real-life scenarios. Portfolios, presentations, and capstone projects showcase both process and product, emphasizing depth of understanding, creativity, and reflection (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014).

4. Organizational and Policy Innovations

School Redesign and Flexible Learning Spaces

Innovative schools are moving away from traditional classroom layouts to create flexible, collaborative, and technology-integrated learning environments. Open spaces, maker labs, and modular furniture support different learning styles and encourage interaction (Nair, Fielding, & Lackney, 2009).

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

ESD aims to empower learners to make responsible decisions that consider environmental, economic, and social impacts. Integrated into national curricula by UNESCO, ESD promotes values such as equity, diversity, and future-oriented thinking (UNESCO, 2017).

Public-Private Partnerships and Global Education Networks

Collaboration between governments, NGOs, and private entities can accelerate educational innovation. Initiatives like *Education Cannot Wait* and the *Global Partnership for Education* mobilize resources and expertise to support access and quality in under-resourced regions (World Bank, 2020).

Case Studies and Global Best Practices

To understand how educational innovations can be effectively implemented, it is helpful to examine countries that have pioneered progressive models tailored to their cultural, economic, and historical contexts. This section highlights best practices from **Finland, Singapore, the United States, and Rwanda**, each offering unique insights into holistic learning, digital integration, and systemic reform.

1. Finland: Holistic, Student-Centered Learning and Teacher Autonomy

Finland is globally recognized for its equitable and learner-centered approach to education. Central to its success is a philosophy that emphasizes well-being, creativity, and lifelong learning over competition and standardized testing. The Finnish model allows significant teacher autonomy in curriculum design and classroom management, grounded in the belief that highly trained professionals are best equipped to make pedagogical decisions (Sahlberg, 2011).

Innovation in Finland is not driven by technology alone, but by pedagogical renewal, such as phenomenon-based learning, where students explore interdisciplinary topics through inquiry and collaboration (Lonka, 2018). Assessments are primarily formative, focusing on feedback rather than ranking, aligning with the goal of fostering intrinsic motivation.

2. Singapore: Mastery Learning and Digital Fluency

Singapore's education system is an exemplar of policy-driven innovation, balancing academic rigor with a future-oriented agenda. Since the launch of its “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation” initiative in the late 1990s, Singapore has invested heavily in curriculum redesign, ICT integration, and teacher professional development (OECD, 2010).

A key feature is mastery learning, where students are encouraged to achieve deep understanding before progressing. This is reinforced by technology-enabled learning environments, including the widespread use of adaptive learning systems and digital fluency programs that begin at the primary level. The FutureSchools@Singapore initiative exemplifies a national commitment to embedding innovation across all levels of the system (Tan et al., 2017).

3. United States: Maker Education and Innovation Hubs

The U.S. has seen a grassroots rise in Maker Education, a movement that emphasizes hands-on, project-based learning through design thinking, engineering, and digital fabrication tools like 3D printers and microcontrollers. This model, often supported by public libraries, innovation hubs, and STEM-focused charter schools, aims to cultivate creativity, agency, and real-world problem-solving (Martinez & Stager, 2013).

Programs such as Fab Labs, Makerspaces, and Tinkering Studios promote interdisciplinary learning, where coding, robotics, and digital storytelling converge. These initiatives have gained traction as alternatives to test-driven education, especially in underserved communities, although scalability and equity remain challenges (Peppler et al., 2016).

4. Rwanda: ICT for Development in Post-Conflict Education

In the wake of the 1994 genocide, Rwanda's education system has undergone a transformative rebuilding process, with a strong emphasis on ICT as a catalyst for development. The government's Vision 2020 plan prioritized universal access to quality education and the integration of technology to bridge the digital divide (MINEDUC, 2015).

Rwanda has partnered with international organizations (e.g., One Laptop per Child) and implemented Smart Classrooms, where digital content and teacher training improve engagement and inclusivity. A significant innovation is the use of mobile learning platforms in rural areas, expanding access to education and information for marginalized learners (Nawaz & Gómez, 2014). Rwanda demonstrates how educational innovation can be leveraged to promote reconciliation, nation-building, and socioeconomic development.

Challenges and Critiques

While educational innovations hold promise for transforming learning in the 21st century, their implementation is not without significant challenges. Innovations often encounter systemic, social, and infrastructural barriers that impede equitable access, long-term sustainability, and widespread adoption. This section identifies and analyzes four critical challenges: equity and access, teacher readiness, assessment alignment, and sustainability.

1. Equity and Access

One of the most pressing concerns in educational innovation is the digital divide—the unequal access to technology and digital resources across socio-economic, geographic, and demographic lines. Although digital tools are designed to democratize learning, they can exacerbate existing inequalities if not implemented inclusively. For instance, low-income and rural students often lack reliable internet access, digital devices, and supportive learning environments at home (Van Dijk, 2020).

This inequality is further amplified in developing regions, where infrastructural gaps, electricity shortages, and language barriers hinder the effective use of ICT in education. As Warschauer (2004) points out, the issue is not only access to hardware but also access to meaningful digital use, which requires digital literacy, local content, and pedagogical integration.

2. Teacher Readiness and Professional Development

Teachers play a pivotal role in the success of educational innovation, yet many face challenges in adapting to new pedagogical approaches and technologies. Resistance to change often stems from insufficient training, increased workload, or fear of obsolescence (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). Without ongoing professional development, even well-designed innovations risk failure in practice.

Moreover, the technological proficiency gap among teachers remains a critical barrier. Studies have shown that effective integration of tools like AI, blended learning, or gamified platforms depends on educators' confidence and understanding of both pedagogy and technology (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). Professional development programs must therefore be sustained, collaborative, and contextually relevant.

3. Assessment and Accountability Systems

Many innovations—such as project-based learning, digital portfolios, and experiential assessments—conflict with existing standardized testing regimes, which prioritize summative evaluation and quantitative outcomes. This misalignment creates tension for schools and educators attempting to innovate within rigid accountability frameworks (Lingard et al., 2013).

High-stakes assessments often dictate curriculum pacing and instructional strategies, leaving little room for creative, student-centered practices. As a result, teachers may be reluctant to adopt alternative assessments that are not recognized by accreditation bodies or educational authorities. This highlights the need for reforms in assessment policy to better reflect 21st-century competencies.

4. Sustainability and Scalability

Educational innovations frequently begin as pilot projects—grant-funded, small-scale, or limited to experimental schools. While these projects demonstrate potential, many fail to scale up due to lack of institutional commitment, resource constraints, or policy discontinuity (OECD, 2018). Innovation often becomes person-dependent, relying on visionary leaders or exceptional teachers without embedding practices into the system.

Moreover, scaling innovation requires systemic alignment—across curriculum, teacher training, infrastructure, and policy. Without this, even successful pilots risk becoming isolated experiments rather than catalysts for widespread reform. The challenge lies in moving from innovation as disruption to innovation as integration within national education systems.

Future Directions and Recommendations

To ensure that educational innovations move beyond isolated experiments and become embedded within systems, it is essential to outline actionable pathways for future policy, research, and leadership. The integration of technological and pedagogical change must be strategically guided by inclusive, sustainable, and evidence-based approaches. This section proposes key directions to advance innovation in education.

1. Policy Suggestions

Investment in Teacher Training and ICT Infrastructure

A foundational requirement for educational innovation is investment in both human and technical capital. Teachers must be adequately prepared to integrate digital tools and new pedagogical models through continuous professional development (UNESCO, 2019). Effective training should go beyond basic ICT skills, focusing on pedagogical transformation, curriculum integration, and digital ethics.

Simultaneously, expanding ICT infrastructure—such as broadband access, smart classrooms, and learning management systems—is essential for enabling innovation at scale, particularly in underserved areas (World Bank, 2020). Governments should ensure that infrastructure investments are matched with inclusive access policies to prevent deepening the digital divide.

Integration of Global Competencies in National Curricula

In the context of globalization, curricula must be reoriented to foster global competencies—such as intercultural communication, civic responsibility, and sustainability literacy (OECD, 2018). Embedding these competencies into national education standards ensures that students are prepared not only for local success but for global engagement. These competencies align with frameworks such as UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development and OECD's Global Competence Framework.

2. Research Agenda

Longitudinal Studies on Innovation Outcomes

While many innovations show promise in pilot phases, there is a lack of longitudinal evidence on their long-term impact on learning, equity, and system-wide change. Future research should focus on longitudinal and mixed-method studies that track innovation outcomes over time, across various sociocultural contexts (Means et al., 2010). These studies can inform policymakers on scalability, sustainability, and unintended consequences.

Participatory Action Research in Educational Change

Another promising research approach is participatory action research (PAR), where educators, students, and communities co-create and evaluate innovations. PAR enhances the relevance and responsiveness of innovations by embedding them in local contexts and fostering a sense of ownership among stakeholders (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013). This democratic approach to research supports more context-sensitive and equity-oriented innovation processes.

3. Educational Leadership

The Role of Visionary Leadership in Sustaining Innovation

The sustainability of educational innovation depends heavily on visionary leadership at both the school and policy levels. Leaders must cultivate a culture of continuous improvement, encourage risk-taking, and support teacher agency (Fullan, 2001). Change agents are needed who can bridge the gap between policy vision and classroom realities, especially in navigating systemic resistance and institutional inertia.

Leadership for innovation also involves strategic collaboration, including partnerships with NGOs, private sectors, and international organizations. These collaborations can mobilize resources, generate knowledge exchange, and align reforms with global education agendas (Burns & Köster, 2016).

Conclusion

As the demands of the 21st century continue to evolve, education systems around the world face mounting pressure to move beyond outdated, industrial-age paradigms toward more dynamic, inclusive, and future-oriented models. This article has explored a multidimensional landscape of educational innovation—encompassing pedagogical reform, technological integration, curricular transformation, and systemic policy shifts.

At the heart of these innovations lies a shared commitment to cultivating critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and digital fluency—skills essential not only for workforce readiness but also for active global citizenship. Constructivist learning theories, the 21st-century skills framework, and models like TPACK provide a solid foundation for designing meaningful, learner-centered experiences.

Case studies from Finland, Singapore, the United States, and Rwanda illustrate that while the paths to innovation vary by context, common success factors include empowered teachers, visionary leadership, flexible learning environments, and sustained investment in ICT and pedagogy. However, this progress is tempered by enduring challenges—such as inequitable access, inadequate teacher preparation, misaligned assessment practices, and the fragility of pilot-based reforms.

Addressing these barriers requires coordinated action across policy, research, and practice. Governments must invest in infrastructure and teacher training while embedding global competencies into curricula. Researchers must generate longitudinal and participatory evidence to inform implementation. Educational leaders must guide change with vision, empathy, and adaptability.

Ultimately, educational innovation is not an end in itself, but a means to building resilient, inclusive, and adaptive learning systems that prepare all learners to thrive in an increasingly complex world. The challenge ahead is not only to innovate—but to do so equitably, sustainably, and with a shared sense of purpose.

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Author Guidelines

Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI)

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1. Publication Policy in Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation

Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI) is a journal in the humanities and social sciences. It aims to promote research and publish research articles, academic articles, review articles, and book reviews for scholars, researchers, lecturers, students at all levels, and interested persons in the dimensions of Sociologies, Anthropologies, Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, Business Administration, Politics, Public Administration, Development, Tourism, and other areas in Social Sciences. Articles that are considered for publication must be reviewed by at least 2 out of 3 qualified persons (Peer Review). Only English articles are considered for publication. Submitted works must not have been published or are under consideration by qualified persons for publication in other journals. Authors must strictly comply with the criteria for submitting academic or research articles for publication in the journal, and the referencing system must be in accordance with the criteria of the journal.

The views and opinions expressed in journal articles are the responsibility of the authors of the articles and are not the opinions of the editorial team. The editorial team does not reserve the right to copy but requires references to show the source.

Publication Frequency

Release scheduled of four issues per year (Biweekly 3 months per time):

Issue 1 January – March

Issue 2 April – June

Issue 3 July - September

Issue 4 October – December

2 . Types of works published in the Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation

1. Research Article is a report of the results of a systematic study, research, or development.

2. An Academic Article is a work of writing an interesting topic in which the author presents new knowledge by using theories, concepts, and related research results as information sources.

3. Review Article is an article that combines theories, concepts, and research results on many subjects, the author will synthesize the literature to compile it into a conclusion or argument on a particular matter, which is a review of the academic progress of that matter.

3. Guidelines for Manuscript Preparation and Submission

Research Articles

Title

The title should be precise, concise, and accurately reflect the article's content and focus. Clearly specify the title: AJAJ - Writing Article Titles with Initial Capital Letters. (Times New Roman, 14 pt, Bold)

Author's name and surname

Full names of all authors, without including any titles, ranks, or honorifics. For multiple authors, separate the names with commas, and for the last author, use "and." (Times New Roman, 12 pt, Bold)

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Revised xx/xx/20xx

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xx/xx/20xx

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Abstract

The abstract should succinctly summarize the article, including its objectives, methodology, key findings, and discussion, all within 300-400 words. The abstract must be written as a single, coherent paragraph. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Keywords: Keyword, keyword, keyword

Authors should provide a minimum of three keywords and a maximum of five, reflecting the core themes of the study. (Times New Roman, 11 pt; 5 keywords/phrases)

Introduction

The introduction of a research paper is a crucial component, as it is the first section that readers encounter to understand the topic under investigation. A well-written introduction should begin by presenting the general background of the issue or topic, gradually narrowing down to the specific problem that the researcher intends to explore. It should also highlight the significance and necessity of conducting the research.

Furthermore, the introduction should point out the gap in existing knowledge that the research aims to fill. It must clearly state the objectives of the study to ensure that readers can comprehend the rationale, importance, and direction of the research. A well-structured and thoughtful introduction not only enhances the credibility of the

study but also engages the reader's interest to continue exploring the entire research paper. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Objectives

- 1.
- 2.
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Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Literature review

The literature review is a crucial component of the research process. Its primary purpose is to explore relevant information, concepts, theories, and previous studies related to the research topic. A thorough literature review helps researchers understand the current state of knowledge, identify academic trends, and recognize gaps that need further investigation.

A high-quality literature review involves the careful selection of credible, up-to-date, and directly relevant sources. Researchers should analyze, synthesize, and compare information from various references to establish a clear conceptual framework or research hypothesis. Moreover, the literature review enhances the credibility of the study and demonstrates that the researcher has a deep and comprehensive understanding of the topic being studied. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Methodology

The methodology section is a critical part of a research study that outlines the systematic process for data collection, analysis, and presentation of research findings. A well-written methodology clearly specifies the type of research—whether it is quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods—and explains the sampling procedures, research instruments, data collection steps, and data analysis techniques.

An appropriately designed methodology ensures that the research questions can be accurately addressed and enhances the **credibility** and **reliability** of the study. Furthermore, a clear methodology provides a framework that allows other researchers to replicate the study if they wish to explore the same topic in future research. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Results

The results section presents the findings derived from the analysis of collected data based on the established research methodology. At this stage, no interpretations or personal opinions from the researcher should be included. The presentation of results must be clear, organized, and aligned with the research objectives.

Results can be conveyed through narrative descriptions, tables, charts, or figures to make the information easier to understand and compare. The language used should be neutral and objective, avoiding any exaggeration or interpretation beyond what the data reveals.

A well-structured results section enables readers to connect the findings directly with the research questions and objectives. It also lays the foundation for the discussion and interpretation that follows in the next section of the research paper. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Discussion

The discussion section is a vital component that demonstrates the researcher's ability to interpret and critically analyze the findings in relation to the research objectives, hypotheses, and relevant literature or theories. The researcher should connect the results to theoretical frameworks and explain whether the findings support or contradict previous studies.

This section should include logical reasoning, possible explanations, and factors that may have influenced the results. It is also important to address any limitations of the study that could affect the accuracy or applicability of the findings.

A well-written discussion reflects academic depth and shows that the researcher understands the broader context of the research. It bridges the gap between raw findings and the implications they may have for theory, practice, or future studies. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Conclusion

The conclusion of a research paper provides a concise, clear, and complete summary of the key findings in alignment with the study's objectives. It should not introduce any new information or data, but rather synthesize what has already been discussed to highlight whether the research questions were effectively answered or the research goals were achieved.

A strong conclusion also includes practical implications or recommendations based on the findings, and often suggests directions for future research to expand upon areas that remain unexplored or insufficiently studied. A well-crafted conclusion helps readers quickly grasp the core contributions of the study and appreciate its academic value. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Recommendation

The **recommendation** section is an important component of a research paper, demonstrating how the findings can be applied in practice or used to inform future research. Recommendations should be based on the results and conclusions of the study, focusing on areas that can be developed, improved, or addressed more effectively.

Recommendations are typically divided into two categories:

1. **Practical or policy-related recommendations** – for implementation by organizations, institutions, or stakeholders.

2. **Recommendations for future research** – for exploring unresolved issues or expanding on the current study's findings.

Effective recommendations should be **clear, feasible, and relevant** to the context of the research problem, offering meaningful guidance for both practitioners and future scholars. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

References

References must adhere to the *APA 7th Edition* guidelines. All cited works should follow the *American Psychological Association* referencing style, particularly for articles in foreign languages.

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Academic Articles:

Title

The title should be precise, concise, and accurately reflect the article's content and focus. Clearly specify the title: AJAJ - Writing Article Titles with Initial Capital Letters. (Times New Roman, 14 pt, Bold)

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Full names of all authors, without including any titles, ranks, or honorifics. For multiple authors, separate the names with commas, and for the last author, use "and." (Times New Roman, 12 pt, Bold)

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Keywords: Keyword, keyword, keyword

Authors should provide a minimum of three keywords and a maximum of five, reflecting the core themes of the study. (Times New Roman, 11 pt; 5 keywords/phrases)

Main Text

The manuscript should be structured into an introduction, followed by the main body, with clear subheadings or sections to enhance readability. Authors' identities must not

be discernible from the text; any self-references should use the term "author(s)" instead of personal names.

Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Conclusion

Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Acknowledgments

This section should acknowledge sources of research funding, institutional or personal support, and any contributions from generative AI tools, if applicable.

Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

References

References must adhere to the *APA 7th Edition* guidelines. All cited works should follow the *American Psychological Association* referencing style, particularly for articles in foreign languages.

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Appendix

If applicable, supplementary materials or data may be included as appendices.

Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Highlight

Authors are requested to provide a concise summary that encapsulates the key arguments and significance of their article. This summary should not exceed 50 words and should effectively convey the central themes and contributions of the study, enabling readers to quickly understand the article's primary focus and relevance.

Graphical Abstracts

A graphical abstract is a single, concise, and pictorial summary of the article's main findings. It may be the concluding figure from the article or a specially designed image.

1. **Image Size:** Provide an image with a minimum resolution of **531 × 1328 pixels** (height × width) at **300 dpi**. For larger images, maintain the same aspect ratio (e.g., **200 × 500**).
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3. **Content:** Do not include additional text, outlines, or synopses outside the image. Any text or labels must be integrated within the image itself.

*** (Attached as a separate file) Name the file **Graphical Abstracts**).

Figure X Text (Source: XXXXX) (Times New Roman, 10 pt, Align Text Left)



Figure 1 Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI), 2024



Figure 1 Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI), 2020

Table 1 Table Title

No.	Name	Mean
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Table 1 Experts specializing in the Nora performance

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References

Cite references in APA 7th edition in the manuscript

Standard references and referencing methods in APA - American Psychological Association for Foreign Language

Reference example APA (American Psychological Association) 7th

Include the complete citation at the end of your paper in a **references** section. References are organized by the author's last name in alphabetic (A-Z) order. Use an hanging indent to separate each list item.

Basic Format:

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date). Title of the work. *Source where you can retrieve the work.* URL or DOI if available

Journal Article

Author(s). Note: List each author's last name and initial as Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. Use an ampersand (&) before the final author's name. Read more from the APA Style website if there are 21 or more authors.

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3. ***Title of the Journal*,** Note: Italicize and capitalize each word in the journal.
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Online News/Magazine Article

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2. **(Year, Month Date).** Note: You do not need to abbreviate the month.
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4. **(Edition).** Note: If there is an edition or volume, include it in parentheses and use abbreviations of ed. or vol.
5. **Publisher.** Note: You do not need to include the publisher location or databases where you retrieved it.

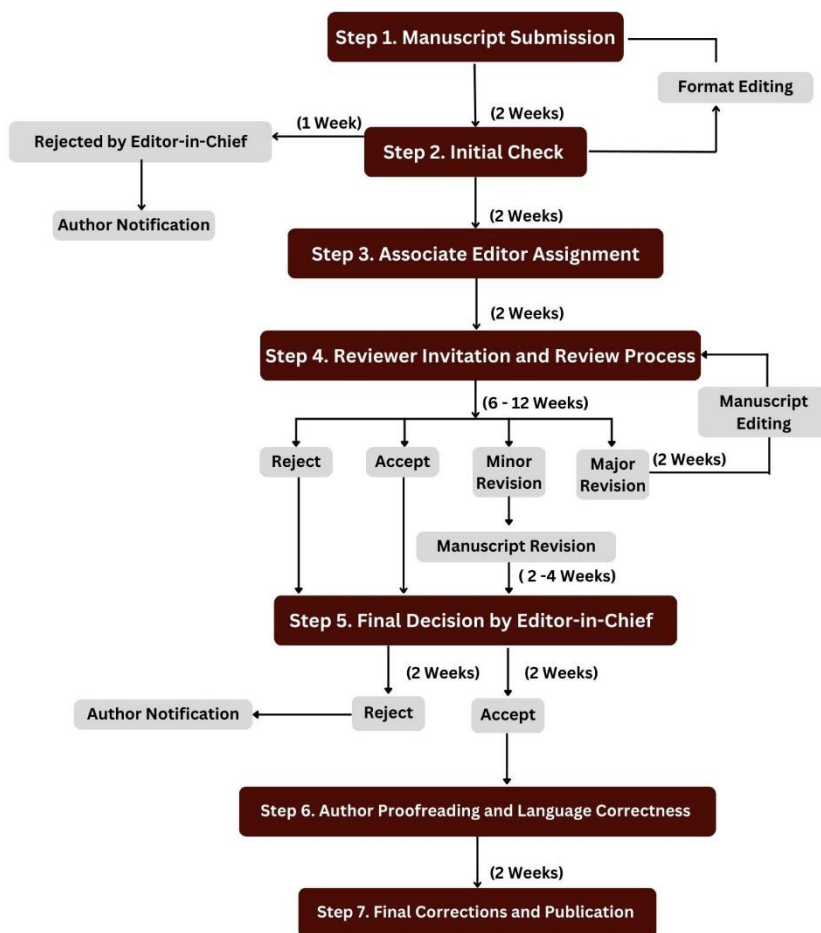
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Book Chapter with Editor(s)

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Hattha, K.(2012). Three southern border provinces, Thai history before the Sukhothai period to the present. In Thepthai,K. (Eds.), Dimensions of culture, history, and visions of the future: Restoring peace to the southern border provinces. (pp. 1-19). Ministry of Culture.

The process of reviewing articles in the Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation



Peer Review Process

Step 1. Manuscript Submission

Authors begin by preparing their manuscripts according to the ACAJ format and submitting them through the user-friendly ThaiJO online system. This system ensures the smooth receipt, processing, and review of manuscripts by the AJAC editorial team. The streamlined process maintains order and consistency, enabling efficient review and publication.

Step 2. Initial Check (2 Weeks)

Upon receipt of the manuscript, the editorial team conducts an initial assessment to ensure that the submission aligns with the journal's scope and complies with publication

requirements. Manuscripts that fail to meet these criteria are rejected without further review. Submissions with a similarity index exceeding 30% are also rejected at this stage. Additionally, the editorial team also checks the article's formatting and citation style according to the specified author guidelines. Manuscripts that do not meet these requirements are returned to authors for reformatting and resubmission. If approved, the manuscript proceeds to the review stage.

Step 3. Associate Editor Assignment (2 Weeks)

Following the initial review, the Editor-in-Chief assigns an Associate Editor with relevant expertise to oversee the review process. The Associate Editor identifies and invites three qualified reviewers with expertise in fields related to the manuscript's scope. If the initial invitations are not accepted, additional reviewers are invited. This process typically takes 2 weeks.

Step 4. Reviewer Invitation and Review Process (6-12 Weeks)

ACAJ employs a double-blinded review system with a minimum of 3 expert reviewers. Authors' names, affiliations, email addresses, and acknowledgments are anonymized by the editor before inviting reviewers. Invited reviewers should be affiliated with institutions distinct from the corresponding author. This step generally takes 6-12 weeks.

Step 5. Final Decision by Editor-in-Chief (2-4 Weeks)

The Editor-in-Chief, along with the Associate Editors, reviews the evaluation reports, comments, and recommendations provided by the reviewers. A final decision is made, which may be one of the following: Accept Submission, Revisions Required, Resubmit for Review, or Decline Submission. The final decision is communicated to the author via the ThaiJO system. If the decision is "Revisions Required" or "Resubmit for Review," the author has 2-4 weeks to submit the revised manuscript.

Step 6. Author Proofreading and English Editing (2 Weeks)

The author(s) engage in proofreading and ensure language accuracy through a professional editor. They must respond to queries from the language editor and improve any low-quality figures. The corresponding author signs the copyright transfer form on behalf of all co-authors to ensure completion within approximately 2 weeks.

Step 7. Final Corrections and Publication (2 Weeks)

After the final manuscript is submitted, it is sent to the Assistant Editor for formatting and article design in accordance with the journal's guidelines. A CrossRef DOI is assigned, and the article is published on the journal's website. This final stage typically takes 2 weeks.