

A Systematic Review of the Issues Affecting Local Government in Malaysia

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article history:

Received 19 February 2019

Received in revised form 30 March 2019

Accepted 9 December 2019

Available online 23 April 2019

This review is aimed at assessing the relevant literatures from previous studies and research which are related to the issues affecting Malaysia's local government. The authors have utilized the Google Scholar application to identify and select relevant articles which looked at issues and problems that have mired local government in Malaysia. Using such an application, the authors have found 177 articles on the topic concerning local government in Malaysia. Among the issues that were often highlighted when discussing the local government include environmental issues particularly solid waste management, environmental pollution and also quality index. In addition, the quality of service rendered by the local government was often used as a focal point. This is because the local government workforce continues to display inefficiency. The local community is also seen to be very concerned about the development, economic growth as well as basic infrastructure in their locality. As for the articles that focus on local government revenue, several articles were found to analyse the factors involved in poorly executed tax collection from the local government's point of view and proposed several solutions to improve on the matter. The very least issues discussed were management, safety and security. As for advertisements and billboards, the common quandary comprised misleading information and improper placements.

Keywords:

Local government, Malaysia, systematic
review

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1. Introduction

The administration of government in Malaysia is divided into three tiers or branches. At the uppermost tier, the Federal Government is led by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, who is chosen by the people in the General Election as the head of government (executive). He or she is officially appointed by the Supreme Ruler of the Land, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong [1]. The Federal Government holds the power at the central level whereas the respective state governments in Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Perak, Selangor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan are formed to administer the 11 states in the Peninsular. In East Malaysia, the Sarawak and Sabah

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governments are chosen in the quinquennial State Election and vested with the power of managing the state administration.

The state government is headed by an appointed “Menteri Besar” or Chief Minister upon receiving the consent of the Sultan or the Yang di-Pertua Negeri of the state. Normally, the Menteri Besar is also a member of the state legislative assembly from the political party with the most seats in the State Legislative Council. His duties also include advising the Sultan in matters of state administration.

At the lowest level in the Malaysian government system following the Federal Government and the State Government, the local government is established. Often referred to as a local council, city hall, or local authority, the local government is headed by the Malay Sultan or State Governor to carry out assessment tax collection, and to introduce and implement laws and regulations (in the form of by-laws). In addition, the local government also provides licenses and permits for any trade in the area of its jurisdiction.

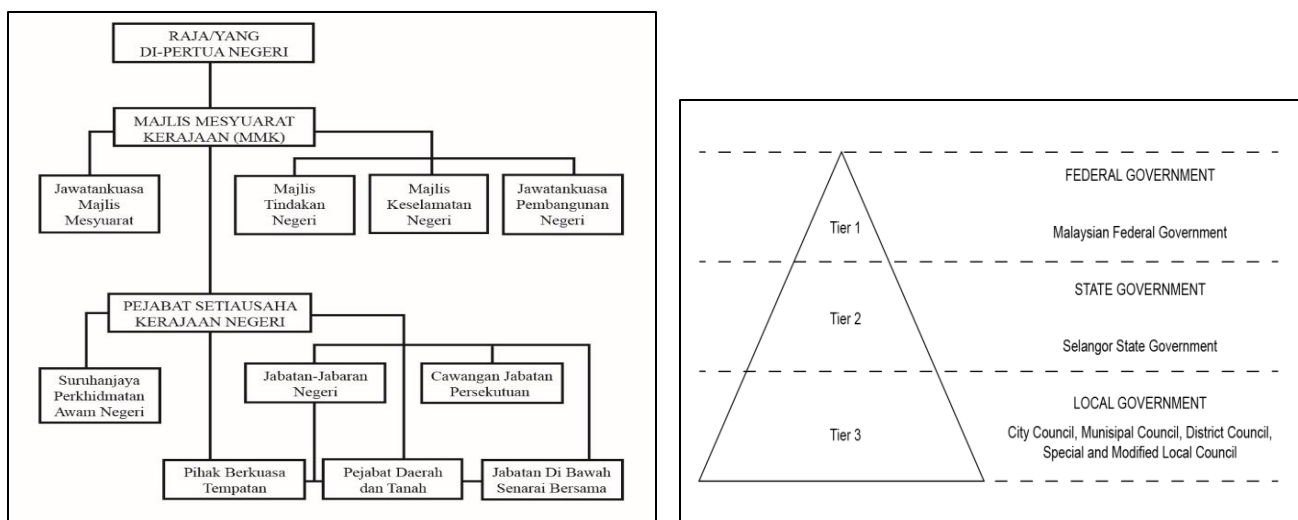


Fig. 1. Government administration at federal, state and local government levels

Based on Figure 1 above, it can be concluded that local government is the final tier in the government administration in Malaysia. Being in the front line, the local government acts as the face or voice of the civil service and is also seen as the closest to the local community.

According to Manaf *et al.*, [2], Osman *et al.*, [3] as well as Manaf *et al.*, [4], the local government in Malaysia is responsible to protect the environment, aside from ensuring the well-being of the community and economic sustainability. In addition, Osman *et al.*, [3] explained that local government also serves to provide effective and efficient civil service to everyone living within its area, especially the communities where access and connectivity are somewhat limited.

Table 1 shows the local government for each state in Malaysia. A total of 149 local governments formed across all 14 states in Malaysia with different categories and jurisdiction.

1.1 Roles of the Local Government

In Malaysia, the jurisdiction of a local government is enshrined under the Local Government Act 1976 in which the local government:

- i. Is responsible for local planning in its area, whereby it shall control the development as well as contribute to society by playing a dynamic role in the national development [3-4];

- ii. Has the power of granting license for waste collection, maintenance of road lighting, public health related activities, and upkeep of recreational parks [3,5]; and
- iii. Has the power to collect income from multiple taxes in its area, create its own local laws and rules, and grant licenses or permits for businesses in its area of jurisdiction.

Table 1
Local government according to category in Malaysia

State	Hall/City Council	Municipal Council	District Council	Total
Johor	2	5	8	15
Kedah	1	4	6	11
Kelantan	0	1	11	12
Melaka	1	3	0	4
Negeri Sembilan	0	4	4	8
Pahang	1	3	8	11
Pulau Pinang	1	1	0	2
Perak	1	4	10	15
Perlis	0	1	0	1
Selangor	2	6	4	12
Terengganu	1	2	4	7
Sabah	1	2	21	24
Sarawak	3	4	19	26
Wilayah Persekutuan	1	0	0	1
Total	14	40	95	149

In view of the above, the local government in Malaysia needs to be more responsive, efficient and effective in terms of its service and delivery in order to meet the local communities' expectations and needs.

In terms of revenue, Malaysia's local government income comes under two categories, namely through tax and non-tax revenue. The former includes assessment tax which is inclusive of property tax, garbage collection tax, and others whereby the income from such tax is fixed and will increase with the exponential growth rate of local residents and also development.

For non-tax revenue, the local government in Malaysia has access to multiple sources including business license, service fees, fixed deposits, lease and fines. It should be noted that income from non-taxes is available only if the community member uses services such as parking facilities, waste collection and many more.

Today, there are various issues that have arisen in regard to local government that affect the areas of economy, social and development — involving among other things, environmental issues on solid waste and flood management. In addition, local government workforce also experienced several constraints including mismanagement, as well as poor performance that affect tax collection and income of their respective council and state [6-7].

Therefore, this systematic review shall seek to analyze numerous scholarly articles with regard to the issues affecting the local government in Malaysia. This review shall also look at several academic papers that have been reviewed by researchers at a previous time, pertaining to the topic of local government.

2. Methodology

Commencing on October 18, 2018, this systematic review involved carrying out a background search utilizing the Google Scholar application. Using the "*Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan*" keyword, which

was in the Malay language, a total of 4200 search results were identified. In addition, the use of keywords "Local Government Malaysia" as well as "Malaysian Local Government" resulted in a total of 500,000 and 448,000 search results respectively.

For the background search using the Malay language keyword "*Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan*", most of the articles were found to be related to Malaysia's local government with multiple issues in relation to management, enforcement, etc. Meanwhile, the background search using keywords "Local Government Malaysia" and "Malaysia Local Government" found that most articles were related to Malaysia in general and not specifically related to the local government in the country.

Here, it should be clarified that data from the background search was scattered whereby the authors of this review did not exclusively refer to any particular scholarly database for the purpose of this paper. Thus, by continuing the search using both Google Scholar and ResearchGate, efforts to amplify the background search continued with the use of specific details in the criteria (including journal article/report/thesis, between the year 2000 to 2018, published/accepted/proceeding) for systematic review and bibliometric analysis.

The background search was also carried out using the exact phrase setting. The keywords included "*Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan*", "Local Government Malaysia" and "Malaysia Local Government" and only limited to accessible/open access databases, articles or journals. Subsequently, the exact phrase mode search found 1470 results for "*Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan*", 530 for "Local Government Malaysia" and 110 for "Malaysia Local Government".

The articles were subsequently downloaded and filtered whereby only articles directly related to the local government in Malaysia were considered and kept for further analysis.

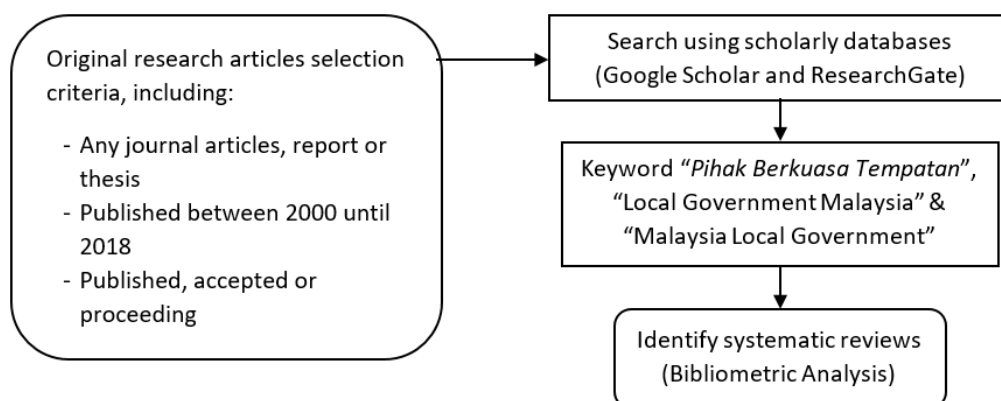


Fig. 2. Flowchart of background search for the review

3. Results and Discussion

In total, the background search for this review identified around 250 articles which were directly related to issues concerning local government in Malaysia. These articles were further reduced to 177, as some were found to be the same articles from different research databases and had unconfirmed sources, with most of them being research theses.

The chosen articles were later tabulated and grouped into specific scheme depending on the issues covered in the articles as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2
 Related articles found with their respective schemes.

Search Engines	Google Scholar & ResearchGate		
Keywords	"pihak berkuasa tempatan", "local government Malaysia" & "Malaysia local government"		
Scheme	No. of Articles (Language)		Total No. of Articles
	English	Malay	
Services Quality	22	23	45
Management	0	3	3
Tourism	9	3	12
Environment	35	16	51
Development	12	15	27
Safety & Security	0	2	2
Programs	1	8	9
Application	12	4	16
Laws	1	3	4
Taxes	3	4	7
Advertisement	0	1	1
TOTAL	95	82	177

Based on the search results, it was found that the articles selected with direct relation to the issues of local government in Malaysia comprised 95 articles in the English language and 82 articles in the Malay language. The study also found that environmental issue was the most widely covered. In more detail, the environmental issue highlighted in the articles included issues pertaining to solid waste management (which topped the list), environmental pollution and also quality index. Articles by Agamuthu *et al.*, [8], Jha *et al.*, [9] and also Kaur *et al.*, [5] all discussed inefficient solid waste management that compounded environmental problems in the city. Due to population growth, functions of the city itself, as well as economic boom in the city area, such a situation has always been of the national interest. Further, Moh *et al.*, [10] and Zamhari *et al.*, [11] explained that poor management as regards solid waste was attributed to population growth. This conundrum, according to the researchers, not only affected developing countries but could also be seen in developed countries.

Next, the second most discussed issue pertaining to local government in Malaysia as identified in this review concerns the quality of service rendered by the local government. As posited by Osman *et al.*, [3] and Yaacob [12], public service effectiveness and efficiency can be further improved and are highly dependent on the competence of the local government workforce. To this end, the various organizations under the local government need to put in place good quality management of their staff, with the human resource department playing a prominent role in training staff members to be more skillful and efficient in fulfilling local community needs and meeting the people's expectations. In order to increase client satisfaction, Abdul Mutalib [13], in addition, posited that local government must introduce organizational reform. He cited the example of the New Public Management (NPM) that was introduced with the purpose to increase public service efficiency. Nevertheless, previous studies have also found that even though various efforts had been implemented to enhance local government service, the results were not very significant with the local government workforce continuing to display inefficiency and more worryingly, be mired in corruption [14-15].

Overall, this study has also found 27 scholarly articles that dealt with development issues in municipal districts in Malaysia. This exhibits that the local community is very concerned about the

development, economic growth, and infrastructure in their locality. This review also ascertained that issues related to organizational management, safety and security, laws, taxes and advertisement were less emphasized in the selected articles. This may be because such issues were considered less critical compared to other issues such as environmental pollution and efficiency of local government. In total, it was also found that four articles had focused on the concept of local government management, which looked at how a municipal, city or local council should be run, its responsibilities and how the public service could effectively contribute to the society's well-being [4, 16-17]. Further, Er Ah Choy *et al.*, [18] also elucidated about the safety and security in a municipal or city due to rampant development.

This study also identified four articles pertaining to local government laws with Mohamad Rizal Mohamad Radzi [19] and Nina Izurin Yahya [20] discussing the effects of implementing Akta Kerajaan Tempatan (Act 171) and Akta Perancangan Bandar dan Desa (Act 172) on the economic, social and development of certain areas. Ng *et al.*, [21] and Norazla Abdul Wahab *et al.*, [22], on the other hand, wrote about food environment policies and halal food certification as implemented by the Government of Malaysia.

As for the articles that focus on local government revenue, Abdul Razak *et al.* [23] and Elina Mohd *et al.*, [24] described the factors involved in poorly executed tax collection from the local government's perspective and proposed several solutions to improve on the matter especially in regard to outstanding payments/arrears. Meanwhile, the articles written by Kasim *et al.*, [25]; Muhammad Akilu Umar *et al.*, [26]; Soeb Pawi [27]; as well as Soeb Pawi *et al.*, [28] all discussed transformation plan and the new model to improve tax collection and tax management, in order for them to be more efficient and effective which subsequently could lead to an improved local economy.

Finally, this study could only find one paper which focused on local government advertisement management, which was written by Mohd Fauzi Harun *et al.* [29]. Their paper discussed the circumstances of applying Arabic writing to advertisement boards as well as road signage.

4. Conclusions

This review is aimed at assessing the relevant literatures from previous studies and research which are related to issues concerning Malaysia's local government. To recap, the authors have utilized the Google Scholar application to identify relevant articles which looked at issues and problems that have mired local government in Malaysia. Using such an application, the authors have found 177 articles on the topic concerning local government in Malaysia. Among the issues that were often highlighted when discussing local government include environmental issues particularly solid waste management, pollution and also environmental quality index. In addition, the quality of service rendered by the local government was often used as a focal point. This is because the local government workforce continues to display inefficiency. In addition, the local community is also seen to be very concerned about the development, economic growth as well as infrastructure in their locality. As for the articles that focus on local government revenue, several articles were found to analyze the factors involved in poorly executed tax collection from the local government's point of view and proposed several solutions to improve on the matter. The very least issues discussed were organizational management, safety and security. As for advertisement billboards, the common quandary comprised misleading information and improper placement. Based on the findings of this review, it is clear that further studies and research are required to understand the issues pertaining to the running of local government in Malaysia in order to improve the well-being and prosperity of the Malaysian society.

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