

Received: 6 October 2025

Revised: 10 March 2026

Accepted: 17 March 2026

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION: A MIXED-METHODS EVALUATION IN NORTHEASTERN THAILAND

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(This article belongs to Theme 1: Politics, Policy & Societal Development)

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Abstract

This study comprehensively investigates municipal administration within the context of good governance in Thailand's upper northeastern provinces—Nakhon Phanom, Mukdahan, and Bueng Kan. Employing a convergent mixed-methods design, the research evaluates administrative effectiveness, examines the precise impact of specific governance principles, and proposes actionable developmental guidelines. The study systematically collected quantitative data from 398 stakeholders, including citizens and municipal staff, and qualitative insights from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 15 seasoned municipal administrators. Multiple regression analysis demonstrated that good governance principles collectively account for 75% of the variance in municipal administration (Adjusted $R^2 = .75$, $p < .001$). Notably, accountability, participation, cost-effectiveness, and morality exhibited robust, statistically significant positive effects on administrative performance. In contrast, the rule of law and transparency functioned as baseline institutional prerequisites rather than independent performance drivers. The qualitative findings fundamentally reinforce that cultivating active accountability mechanisms, structured participatory governance, and stringent internal auditing are vital for advancing sustainable municipal administration.

Keywords: Municipal Administration, Good Governance, Local Government Organization, Participatory Governance, Mixed-Methods Evaluation

Citation Information: Thongrueang, K. (2026). Good Governance and Municipal Administration: A Mixed-Methods Evaluation in Northeastern Thailand. *Asian Political Science Review*, 10(1), Article 12. <https://doi.org/10.14456/aprs.2026.12>

Introduction

Decentralization has become a major global public administration reform, based on the idea that transferring power and resources closer to the people will improve the efficiency of public service delivery, enhance accountability, and increase responsiveness to public needs (Rondinelli et al., 1983). In Thailand, decentralization has been formally ratified through constitutional and legal changes that have increased the role and powers of local administrative organizations, along with establishing frameworks and processes for transferring responsibilities to local administrative organizations such as municipalities (Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, 1997; Determining Plans and Process of Decentralization to Local Government Organization Act, 1999). However, experience in both Thailand and other developing countries shows that decentralization does not automatically lead to improved governance outcomes, as local administrative organizations often face limitations in capacity, complex political and administrative incentive structures, and persistent central control mechanisms, which can impact transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency (Haque, 2010; Yilmaz et al., 2008).

In this context, the concept of "good governance" has become a fundamental principle in Thai public administration. National laws and royal decrees require government agencies to prioritize public interest, efficiency, transparency, public participation, and systematic oversight. They also define key principles of good governance, including the rule of law, ethics, transparency, participation, accountability, and cost-effectiveness in resource utilization (Regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister on the Establishment of a System of Good Governance, 1999; Royal Decree on Principle and Procedure for Good Public Governance, 2003). Recent policy assessments indicate that these royal decrees remain a crucial mechanism for enhancing the efficiency of the Thai public sector and improving public services (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020).

Although many municipalities report a "high" level of governance performance, research indicates that governance principles do not consistently translate into effective administrative management. Certain measures, such as accountability frameworks and institutionalized participation, tend to have a more direct impact on local government performance because they allow for modifications to incentive structures, governance systems, and discretionary power (Yilmaz et al., 2008). Meanwhile, empirical research in Thailand has found variation in how local areas implement governance elements, and these variations are linked to perceived administrative outcomes (Nanta, 2023; Sucharitkul, 2020). Furthermore, a knowledge gap has been identified regarding the upper northeastern region of Thailand, particularly in studies analyzing the comparative impacts of various governance principles using mixed-methods approaches.

This study uses a convergent mixed-methods approach to study the impact of good governance on municipal administration in the upper northeastern provinces of Nakhon Phanom, Mukdahan, and Bueng Kan. The main objectives are: (1) to assess the performance of municipal administration based on good governance principles; (2) to analyze the comparative impact of the rule of law, ethics/morality, transparency, participation, accountability, and cost-effectiveness on municipal administration; and (3) to propose practical guidelines for developing good governance in municipalities, based on empirical evidence integrated from quantitative and qualitative data. This paper is part of the Research entitled "Local government administration based on the principles of good governance: A case study of municipalities in the upper northeastern provinces (Sakon Nakhon, Nakhon Phanom, and Mukdahan provinces)".

Literature Review

Local Government Administration and Decentralization

Local government administration manages and coordinates public affairs at the subnational level when the national government delegates authority for planning, policy implementation, and service delivery to local administrative bodies. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand (1997), along with later laws that made decentralization happen, officially gave local governments more freedom and made their roles in local development and providing public services stronger (Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, 1997; Determining Plans and Process of Decentralization to Local Government Organization Act, 1999). Public administration, unlike private-sector management, emphasizes public accountability, legal compliance, social responsibility, and the protection of the public interest (Rainey & Bozeman, 2000). Studies on decentralization in Thailand indicate that local governments face institutional constraints, such as bureaucratic complexity, limited administrative capacity, and reliance on central legislation and financial supervision (Haque, 2010). The effectiveness of local administration depends on decentralization policies and the quality of governance procedures that guide decision-making, accountability, and resource management in local institutions (Yilmaz et al., 2008).

The Concept of Good Governance in Public Administration

Good governance is universally recognized as a foundational pillar of public administration, emphasizing the prudent, equitable, and efficient stewardship of public resources and services. In Thailand, the principle of *Thammaphiban* (good governance) has been firmly institutionalized through national regulatory frameworks, notably the Royal Decree on Principle and Procedure for Good Public Governance (2003) and the Regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister on the Establishment of a System of Good Governance (1999). These frameworks mandate strict adherence to legality, ethical conduct, transparency, participation, accountability, and cost-effectiveness. The broader international literature corroborates that robust accountability and transparency mechanisms are indispensable for enhancing public sector performance and reinforcing institutional legitimacy (Kaufmann et al., 2011; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020). Furthermore, contemporary governance theory advocates for collaborative partnerships among governmental entities, citizens, and diverse stakeholders, moving beyond traditional hierarchical authority (Bevir, 2012). However, empirical evidence suggests that the impact of these governance dimensions is highly context-dependent. Principles such as accountability and participatory governance consistently drive immediate improvements in organizational performance and decision-making. In contrast, the rule of law and transparency often serve as essential structural prerequisites rather than standalone catalysts. This nuanced variability underscores the critical need for empirical research that evaluates the distinct, comparative effects of individual governance principles, rather than treating good governance merely as a monolithic construct.

Empirical Studies on Good Governance and Local Administration

Numerous empirical studies have thoroughly examined the use of good governance principles within local administrative bodies. Studies conducted in Thailand indicate that governance practices—particularly legal compliance, citizen participation, and transparency in public procurement—bolster public trust and improve administrative effectiveness at the local level (Shah, 2006; Yilmaz et al., 2008). Further research emphasizes leadership components, showing that accountability frameworks and ethical leadership are essential to improving organizational effectiveness and public sector performance (Menzel, 2012; van Wart, 2013). Despite these advancements, contemporary research reveals certain limits. Much of the literature relies on single-case analyses or context-specific observations, which limits the broader theoretical applicability of the results. Moreover, extensive research demonstrates

heightened levels of governance practices without examining the comparative effects of particular governance principles on administrative outcomes. Additionally, qualitative views from local administrators are sometimes poorly integrated with quantitative data, limiting a thorough understanding of how governance principles are implemented in practice. These gaps highlight the need for empirical research that systematically examines the diverse effects of governance principles on local administrative efficacy.

Synthesis and Research Gap

The research underscores good governance as an essential framework for local administration in Thailand, albeit identifying notable deficiencies. Empirical data on how alternative governance principles affect municipal performance are scarce, particularly mixed-methods studies that integrate qualitative and statistical analysis. Furthermore, there has been less research regarding Thai local governance in promoting sustainable and responsible administration, or its integration within a broader Asian context. This study addresses existing gaps by analyzing municipalities in Thailand's upper northeastern region through the lens of six good governance principles and assessing their impact on administrative performance, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data. The following sections outline the study's conceptual framework and the hypotheses derived from this review.

Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework

1) Theoretical Framework: Local government administration operates within a complex institutional framework shaped by legal statutes, bureaucratic procedures, and ongoing interactions between officials and people. Public administration research indicates that effective local governance depends not only on formal authority or decentralization policies but also on the quality of governance mechanisms that guide responsibility, resource allocation, and decision-making (Shah, 2006; Yilmaz et al., 2008). In Thailand, the normative foundations of public administration are intricately connected to Thammaphiban (good governance), which has been institutionalized through national frameworks, including the Regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister on the Establishment of a System of Good Governance (1999) and the Royal Decree on Principle and Procedure for Good Public Governance (2003). These frameworks emphasize principles such as legality, ethical conduct, transparency, participation, accountability, and value for money as essential mechanisms for improving administrative performance and fostering public trust (Regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister on the Establishment of a System of Good Governance, 1999; Royal Decree on Principle and Procedure for Good Public Governance, 2003). In decentralized settings where municipalities have discretion but remain accountable to citizens and higher authorities, governance principles are expected to shape administrative behavior through practical mechanisms such as auditing, reporting, citizen engagement, and prudent resource management (Yilmaz et al., 2008). Governance studies indicate that principles do not consistently influence outcomes; accountability, participation, ethics, and cost-effectiveness often drive performance variation, while the rule of law and transparency typically serve as essential institutional prerequisites. Consequently, empirical research should examine the specific effects of individual governance principles rather than treating good governance as a monolithic concept (Shah, 2006; Yilmaz et al., 2008).

2) Conceptual Framework: This study utilizes a conceptual framework that links principles of good governance as independent variables to municipal administration as the dependent variable, drawing on theoretical perspectives from public administration and governance studies. This research defines good governance based on Thailand's public-sector governance framework, particularly the Regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister on the Establishment of a System of Good Governance (1999) and the Royal Decree on Principle and Procedure for Good Public Governance (2003), utilizing six core principles: rule of law, ethics, transparency, participation, accountability, and cost-effectiveness. These ideas are widely

accepted as important ways to improve public administration, transparency, and accountability in institutions (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020; Shah, 2006). The dependent variable, municipal administration, is a multidimensional construct that includes core functions of local public administration, such as creating bureaucratic systems, formulating policy, improving operational procedures, streamlining administrative processes, and evaluating performance. Together, these traits show how towns run their businesses and manage their resources to ensure compliance with regulations and the quick delivery of public services. Five parts are all connected: (1) making bureaucratic systems, (2) making policies, (3) making operational procedures more efficient, (4) making administrative processes easier, and (5) evaluating performance.

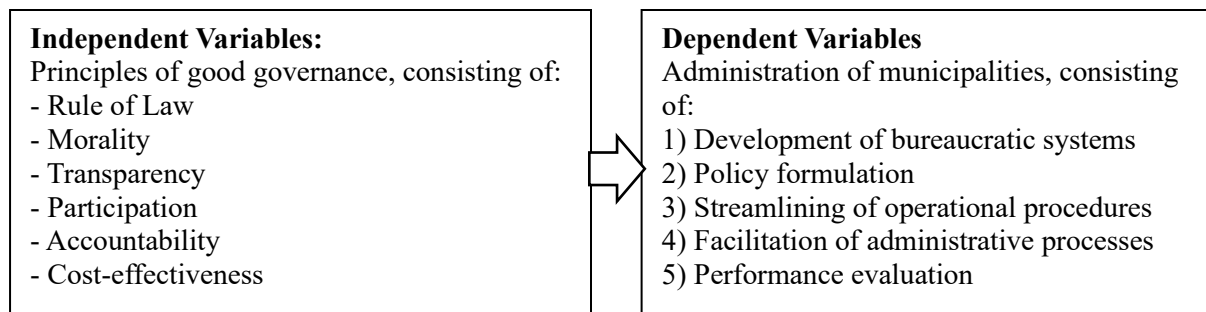


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework: The Impact of Good Governance on Municipal Administration

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a convergent mixed-methods research methodology to investigate municipal administration within the context of good governance principles in the upper northeastern provinces of Thailand, specifically Nakhon Phanom, Mukdahan, and Bueng Kan. The mixed-methods methodology enabled simultaneous collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic understanding of municipal governance procedures. The quantitative component examined municipal administration and used statistical methods to assess how governance principles affected administrative performance. The qualitative component examined governance procedures, administrative processes, and managerial experiences via comprehensive interviews with key informants. The results from both methodologies were combined during the interpretation phase to strengthen the validity and depth of the research outcomes.

Population and Sample

There were two primary groups of people in the population: (1) 774 municipal employees and (2) 77,167 individuals who lived in municipal areas in the upper northeastern provinces of Thailand. The quantitative sample included 398 respondents, comprising both citizens and municipal employees. We used Yamane's (1973) formula to determine the sample size, ensuring an acceptable level of sampling error. We used basic random sampling, using municipal personnel records and community home lists as the sampling frames.

For the qualitative part, 15 key informants were chosen at random. These informants included municipal executives, department heads, and seasoned public officials with substantial expertise in municipal administration and governance. The number of participants was deemed adequate to achieve data saturation, as persistent themes emerged throughout data collection.

Data Collection

Quantitative and qualitative tools were used to gather data. We used a structured questionnaire, based on relevant theories, government policy papers, and prior research on public

administration and good governance, to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire had four parts: demographic information; opinions on good governance principles; an assessment of dimensions of municipal administration; and open-ended questions for additional suggestions. We used a five-point Likert scale to measure the governance and administration characteristics. The scale went from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Before data collection, public administration specialists reviewed the instrument to ensure validity and reliability.

Semi-structured interviews with selected key informants were used to collect qualitative data. The interview guide was created based on the research goals and the theoretical framework. It focused on governance practices, administrative problems, accountability systems, and public involvement. Interviews were conducted with prior consent, and audio recordings and field notes were used to verify data accuracy.

Data Analysis

We used descriptive and inferential statistical methods to analyze the quantitative data. We used descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation to summarize respondents' demographic information and levels of good governance and municipal administration. We used inferential statistics to look at how the variables were related to each other. We used Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis (MRA) to examine the impact of good governance principles on municipal administration, with a statistical significance level of 0.05.

Thematic content analysis was used to look at the qualitative data. The interview transcripts were methodically coded to identify common themes and patterns related to governance and administrative processes. The qualitative findings supported and clarified the quantitative results, enhancing the understanding and validity of the research outputs.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed the rules of good research ethics. The Human Research Ethics Committee of Nakhon Phanom University (Certificate No. HE 14168) gave its ethical approval. Everyone who took part in the study was told what it was about, that they could leave at any time without negative consequences, and that they were free to do so. We obtained informed consent before we started collecting data. We protected participants' privacy and confidentiality by not revealing any personal information and by reporting findings only in groups. All interview tapes and research data were safely kept and only utilized for academic study.

Research Results

Most respondents were female (55.8%), aged 41-50 years (44.5%), and held a bachelor's degree or equivalent (46.2%). Most of them were contract workers (55.8%), had worked for more than 15 years (40.5%), and made less than 15,000 Baht a month on average (46.5%). Overall, the demographic profile shows that respondents have extensive experience and knowledge of municipal administration, providing a strong basis for evaluating their views on governance and administrative performance.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Good Governance Principles)

No.	Good Governance Principles	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Interpretation
1	Rule of Law	4.41	0.57	High
2	Morality	4.38	0.57	High
3	Transparency	4.39	0.50	High
4	Participation	4.38	0.57	High
5	Accountability	4.40	0.53	High
6	Cost-effectiveness	4.27	0.57	High
Overall	Average	4.37	0.55	High

Table 1 shows how respondents rated good governance principles in municipalities in the upper northeastern provinces. The overall mean score was $M = 4.37$ ($SD = 0.55$), indicating that people viewed governance as very good. When examined individually, all six principles received high marks. The principle with the highest average score was the rule of law ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.57$), followed by accountability ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.53$) and transparency ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.50$). Morality ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.57$) and participation ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.57$) received the same rating, but cost-effectiveness ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.57$) had the lowest mean score of the six principles, though it was still high. The results indicate that respondents regarded municipalities as predominantly adhering to formal good governance standards in all aspects.

Assessment of Municipal Administration Performance

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Municipal Administration Dimensions

No.	Municipal Administration Dimensions	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Interpretation
1	Development of bureaucratic systems	4.36	0.58	High
2	Policy formulation	4.31	0.54	High
3	Streamlining of operational procedures	4.31	0.54	High
4	Facilitation of administrative processes	4.36	0.57	High
5	Performance evaluation	4.38	0.62	High
Overall	Average	4.34	0.51	High

Table 2 shows that the overall level of municipal administration was rated very high ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.51$). People thought all five parts of municipal administration were good. Performance evaluation had the highest mean score ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.62$), followed by the development of bureaucratic systems ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.58$) and facilitation of administrative processes ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.57$). Policy formulation ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.54$) and streamlining operational procedures ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.54$) also got high marks. The consistently high scores across all areas show that respondents thought the municipal administration was effective at both managing its own affairs and providing services.

Impact of Governance Principles on Administration

Table 3 Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Municipal Administration Performance

Good Governance Principles	B	S.E.	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant (a)	.375	.125	-	2.999	.003
Rule of Law (X1)	.022	.045	.024	0.485	.628
Morality (X2)	.114	.043	.128	2.640	.000*
Transparency (X3)	-.003	.042	-.003	-0.073	.942
Participation (X4)	.228	.041	.255	5.585	.000*
Accountability (X5)	.329	.045	.339	7.368	.000*
Cost-effectiveness (X6)	.220	.038	.245	5.945	.000*

Note: *Statistical significance at the .05 level.

The results of the multiple regression analysis are shown in Table 4. An investigation was conducted into how six good governance principles affected municipal management. The findings showed that four governance principles had a statistically significant impact on municipal administration at the .05 level. They were: Morality (X_2) ($B = .114$, $t = 2.640$, $p < .05$), Participation (X_4) ($B = .228$, $t = 5.585$, $p < .05$), Accountability (X_5) ($B = .329$, $t = 7.368$, $p < .05$), Cost-effectiveness (X_6) ($B = .220$, $t = 5.945$, $p < .05$). Among these factors, accountability exerted the strongest influence on municipal administration, followed by participation, cost-effectiveness, and morality. In contrast, the rule of law (X_1) and transparency

(X₃) did not show statistically significant effects on municipal administration. This suggests that while these principles are important foundations of public administration, they may function as baseline conditions that do not independently explain variations in perceived administrative performance when other governance factors are considered simultaneously.

Qualitative Insights on Governance Practices

Semi-structured interviews with fifteen seasoned municipal executives, department heads, and civil servants revealed several critical, recurring governance themes. Accountability and robust internal oversight—operationalized through rigorous internal audits, transparent budget tracking, and regular reporting to local councils—were overwhelmingly identified as indispensable for building public confidence and maintaining administrative control. Additionally, active participatory governance emerged as vital; public hearings and community forums were highly valued, particularly in budgeting and project implementation, ensuring citizen voices directly shape local initiatives. Administrators frequently underscored cost-effectiveness as a daily operational necessity, emphasizing the strategic maximization of limited resources in procurement and workload management to sustain high-quality service delivery. Furthermore, participants highlighted morality and ethical leadership as foundational to the corporate culture, where strict adherence to rules and an unwavering commitment to the public good ensure administrative stability. Interestingly, while participants acknowledged the fundamental importance of the rule of law and transparency, these elements were widely perceived as deeply ingrained, normative business practices rather than unique drivers of performance variation. Ultimately, the qualitative evidence powerfully reinforces that effective municipal governance relies on active accountability mechanisms, meaningful public participation platforms, and ethical, efficiency-oriented leadership.

Conclusion and Discussion

This mixed-methods study contributes to the local governance literature by identifying the good-governance principles that most strongly predict municipal administrative performance in Thailand's upper northeastern provinces. The quantitative results show that accountability, involvement, cost-effectiveness, and morality significantly improve municipal administration; conversely, the rule of law and transparency/openness are not statistically significant when evaluated alongside other principles. Qualitative evidence clarifies these patterns and suggests that “behaviorally active” mechanisms (e.g., monitoring, participation routines, ethical leadership, and efficiency-oriented management) are more likely to generate performance variation than compliance-oriented norms that may already be established across municipalities.

Governance Principles That Drive Municipal Administration

Accountability was identified as the most significant predictor of municipal administration, consistent with global evidence that mechanisms enhancing accountability—such as audits, disclosure mandates, and performance scorecards—clarify responsibilities, strengthen managerial focus, and improve responsiveness, particularly when linked to quantifiable service outputs and benchmarking (da Cruz & Marques, 2014; Alcaide-Muñoz & Bolívar, 2015). Participation has a strong positive effect, and previous studies show it becomes more important to performance when institutionalized through structured mechanisms (like public hearings, citizen committees, and co-design processes) and used effectively in planning and budgeting. This makes it easier to define problems, gives it more legitimacy, and makes citizens happier (Wu & Jung, 2016). Participation is not inherently beneficial; its outcomes depend on the quality of the process, the capacity to facilitate, and the extent of inclusion; otherwise, it may reduce to a mere symbolic gesture, become unjust, or generate significant administrative expenses (Abas et al., 2023; Migchelbrink & van de Walle, 2022). Cost-effectiveness significantly influenced administrative performance, aligning with comparative municipal

studies showing that efficiency varies because of both manageable managerial decisions and contextual constraints, revealing substantial disparities in cost efficiency among local governments even within similar regulatory frameworks (Narbón-Perpiñá et al., 2020; Narbón-Perpiñá & de Witte, 2018a; 2018b). Ultimately, morality and ethics (integrity) showed a positive relationship with administration. This means ethical leadership can improve public-sector organizational performance by creating a better work environment, reducing opportunism, and increasing employee commitment and trust. These factors can also strengthen other governance tools, such as accountability and participation (Abdi et al., 2024).

Why the Rule of Law and Transparency May be Non-Significant in the Model

The minimal effects of the rule of law and transparency should not be interpreted as an indication that these values are insignificant. The data may show little variation between cities because of shared legal requirements and administrative rules. In contexts where formal regulations institutionalize legal compliance and transparency, these elements may function as essential governance prerequisites rather than independent drivers of performance. Previous studies on governmental transparency reveal that disclosure practices often depend on organizational capacity and political-administrative incentives, indicating that their relationship with administrative performance may be indirect or context-dependent (de Araújo & Tejedo-Romero, 2016; Tavares & da Cruz, 2020). Studies indicate that openness is more closely associated with citizen trust, oversight, and public demand for information than with direct improvements in administrative performance outcomes (Piotrowski & van Ryzin, 2007). Therefore, openness may improve performance primarily through intermediary procedures such as accountability and citizen participation. Municipal studies further show that the relationship between transparency and efficiency depends on the implementation method, particularly whether it prioritizes financial disclosure, service information, or procedural openness (Benito et al., 2021; da Cruz et al., 2016). If transparency is evaluated primarily by the availability of information rather than by meaningful public engagement with that information, its unique impact on administrative performance may appear limited. The qualitative findings suggest that legal compliance and openness are seen as normative administrative responsibilities rather than catalysts for improvement, supporting this view.

Governance, Sustainability, and Implications for Asia/Thailand

This study does not directly measure sustainability; rather, the identified significant predictors—accountability, engagement, cost-effectiveness, and morality—correspond with governance attributes commonly associated with sustainable local government. Accountability strengthens institutional learning and corrective oversight; participation builds social legitimacy and supports collaborative governance; cost-effectiveness promotes resilient resource management; and morality fosters integrity and trust in public institutions. International research on local governance and performance evaluation shows that sustained administrative improvement depends on continuous managerial learning, credible oversight, and public legitimacy, not mere adherence to formal regulations (da Cruz & Marques, 2014; Narbón-Perpiñá & de Witte, 2018a). In Thailand and several Asian administrative frameworks, characterized by the convergence of bureaucratic traditions and the progression of democratic participation, these findings indicate that municipalities can improve administrative performance by prioritizing pragmatic governance mechanisms, including robust accountability systems, substantial citizen engagement, effective resource management, and the development of ethical leadership within local entities.

New Knowledge

This study employs empirical data from municipalities in Thailand's upper northeastern regions to generate novel insights into local administration adhering to good governance ideals. The contributions can be summarized using three interconnected dimensions: theoretical, methodological, and practical.

- 1) **Contribution of Theory:** This research enhances the theoretical comprehension of good governance by demonstrating that governance principles unequally affect municipal administration. The results indicate that accountability, involvement, cost-effectiveness, and morality influence administrative performance more strongly than the rule of law and transparency, which primarily serve as fundamental institutional prerequisites. This contradicts previous research that regards good governance as a cohesive system. The findings offer novel empirical contributions to public administration theory, especially under decentralized frameworks. Accountability, ethical behavior, stakeholder engagement, and effective resource use seem more important for administrative performance than compliance-based principles. This shows how crucial governance dynamics are in Asian local government settings.
- 2) **Contribution to Methodology:** The research methodologically contributes through the utilization of a convergent mixed-methods approach to examine good governance at the municipal level. By combining regression analysis with qualitative insights from officials and residents, it creates a multidimensional measure of municipal administration that allows for a more in-depth assessment of administrative performance than earlier methods that use only one indicator.
- 3) **Practical Contribution:** The study provides new insights into practical governance by identifying certain levers that are most pertinent for improving municipal administration. The findings suggest that administrative performance is likely to improve significantly through reforms aimed at accountability systems, participatory mechanisms, ethical standards, and efficient resource management, rather than through reforms that exclusively address information disclosure or legal compliance. The qualitative results also show exactly how to put key governance ideas into action, such as ethical business programs, participatory budgeting processes, and internal audit systems. These results can help lawmakers and administrators develop governance improvements that fit community needs and support long-term local government. Overall, the additional information from this study helps us better understand what effective governance means in local government management. It provides empirically substantiated recommendations for improving efficient and sustainable municipal governance in Thailand and other contexts of decentralized governance, while also establishing a basis for future comparative analyses.

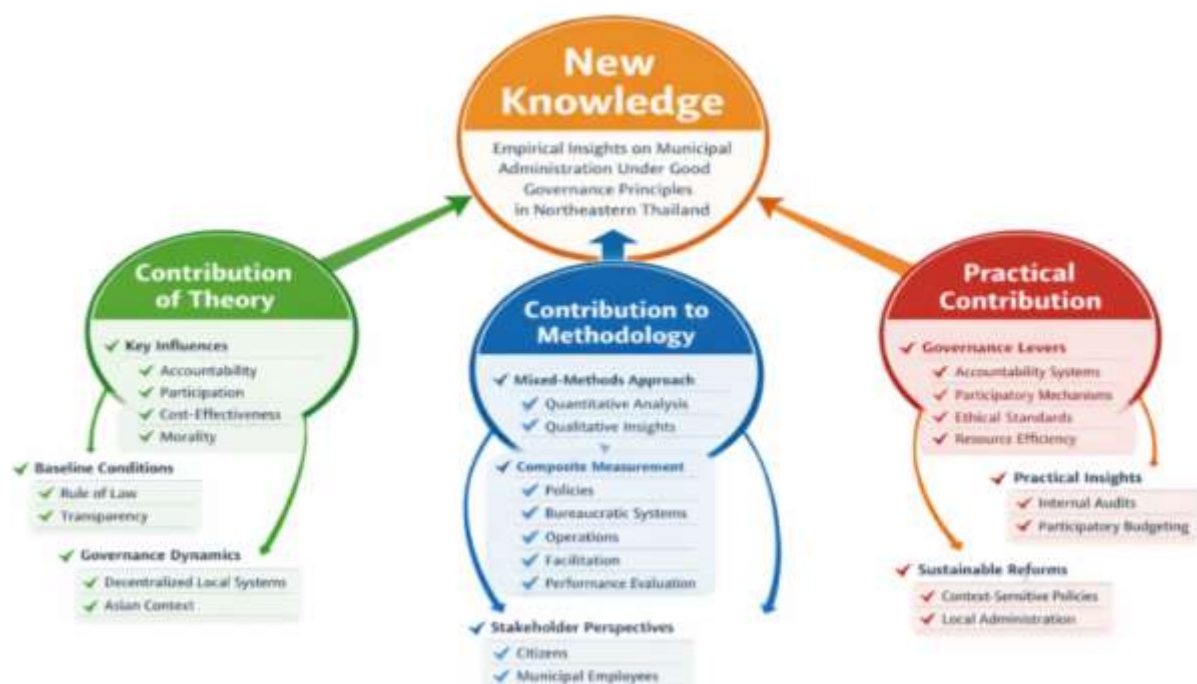


Figure 2 Theoretical and Practical Contributions to Municipal Governance

Practical and Policy Implications

Derived directly from the empirical findings, several actionable policy recommendations emerge to strengthen municipal administration. First, municipalities must operationalize accountability by enforcing rigorous internal oversight and transparent reporting to strengthen public trust. Second, local authorities should institutionalize participatory governance by embedding community forums and public hearings into budgeting and policymaking to ensure initiatives align with genuine community needs. Third, prioritize strategic resource management to maximize cost-effectiveness and sustain high-quality public service delivery despite fiscal constraints. Finally, cultivating an organizational culture deeply rooted in ethical leadership, professional integrity, and strict legal compliance is essential for maintaining enduring administrative stability and institutional legitimacy.

Avenues for Future Research

This investigation highlights several promising trajectories for future scholarship. Subsequent research should adopt a disaggregated approach, distinguishing between the perceptions of diverse stakeholder groups—such as citizens, local business leaders, and municipal employees—to capture a more granular understanding of governance dynamics. Additionally, conducting comparative studies across varied Asian institutional frameworks would significantly enhance the generalizability of these findings and deepen the understanding of decentralized governance models. Future inquiries should also explicitly integrate objective sustainability metrics, assessing how good governance directly influences long-term fiscal stability, social equity, and environmental stewardship at the local level. Lastly, employing longitudinal research designs will be critical in evaluating the enduring impact of governance reforms on the sustained performance and evolution of municipal administration.

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Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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