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RESEARCH PROJECT MANAGEMENT OF THAILAND'S SOUTHERN BORDER PROVINCES DEVELOPMENT FOR SUCCESSFUL ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract

The follow-up and evaluation of the research project management through all 11 projects in the fiscal year 2020 received the budgets from the National Research of Thailand through the observation tool and data analysis by content synthesis and Social Return of Investment analysis, which gives the result that every project pursued the activity plan despite the COVID-19 pandemic by organizing the focus group via the online system and in-depth interviews. The research results appeared beneficial toward the target groups, divided into four groups: 1) social and cultural group, 2) commercial group, 3) technological group, and 4) policy group. The evaluation result indicates that the social return on investment result reveals that the project focuses on the low-income group according to the Islamic Principle. The current total value is 8,500,000 THB., with the result of investment value as 1,429,906.54 THB. Every THB. invested in this project could create a social benefit at 1.79 THB. Most of the projects could fully deliver the results to the beneficiary.

Keywords: Research Project, Social Return of Investment, Thailand's Southern Border Provinces

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Introduction

The National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) has allocated funds to support research projects in the southern border provinces, per the agreement with the Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre (SBPAC). The aim is to utilize research findings to address local challenges and meet the needs of the southern border areas. The research endeavors also seek to empower individuals in the region with the knowledge to advance their careers, thereby creating employment opportunities, augmenting incomes, and reducing disparities within the community. Ultimately, the objective is to enhance the overall well-being and happiness of the community and society in every dimension. Moreover, the research projects can mitigate the unrest situation in the region through effective management. For achievement, the Faculty of Management Sciences at Yala Rajabhat University is well-equipped to lead the research management project to develop the southern border provinces. The budget for this initiative is set at 960,000 THB. to oversee 11 research projects. These projects have received support and approval from the NRCT according to its performance guidelines. The specific details of the research projects are as follows.

Social and Cultural Group: 1) the roles of leaders in preventing and solving problems and participation of communities based on cultural norms and religious principles in the five southern border provinces (Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Songkhla, and Satun) in response to the Corona Virus pandemic, 2) subjectivity, belief, and social behavior are studied to determine appropriate measures for preventing the 2019 Coronavirus outbreak in the three southern border provinces, 3) creating of religious cooperation to address the impact of the 2019 Coronavirus pandemic in the southern border provinces, 4) development of communication mechanisms for community participation during the Covid-19 crisis in southern border areas, and 5) culture and belief of the Thai Muslims in the southern border provinces that are at risk for 2019 Corona Virus pandemic, guidelines to reduce and prevent the disease pandemic by Islamic principles, health condition principles, and local wisdom.

Commercial Group: 1) Drafting a proposal for the community constitution at the sub-district level in the Jana district, Songkhla province, specifically in Natub, Talingchan, and Sakom, and 2) Promoting business for society and innovation for community development in the specific economic areas of Jana district, Songkhla province.

Technological Group: 1) Developing an application to track and provide assistance to low-income individuals affected by the 2019 coronavirus pandemic based on Islamic principles, 2) Proactive publicizing using based technology during the 2019 coronavirus pandemic in the southern border provinces: a case study, and 3) Communication style and outreach strategies of the youth group in the southern border communities during the Covid-19 pandemic, both in physical and online platforms.

Policy Group: 1) Addressing stem rot and canker diseases in dragon fruit in the Tak Bai district of Narathiwat province. The total budget allocated for this project is 9,537,000 THB. The objectives are: 1) analyzing the Objectives and Key Results (OKR) and 2) assessing the research results, productivity, outcomes, and the practical applications of the research.

Literature Review

Drucker (cited in Saraket, 2012) stated that management is the art of achieving goals through collaboration. Serirat (2002) posits that management encompasses a series of activities, including planning, organizing, and commanding. These activities are intrinsically linked to the resources of an organization. Consequently, research management can be understood as a systematic approach to organizing work processes, establishing significant policies, and formulating plans for executives. It involves collaborative efforts among individuals—typically more than two—who engage in mutual practices aimed at achieving specific objectives. The ultimate goal is to ensure success in accordance with predetermined targets

while maintaining efficiency. Thammaviteekul (2021) mentioned the follow-up and evaluation that the follow-up is a behavior different from evaluation. It is significant to help projects conduct successfully, such as how many goals are needed, effective from following up and evaluating to get information expressing success, strength, weakness, and guidelines to improve and adjust the performance. It enhances work plans and project management to reach higher effectiveness (Ritcharoon, 2014). The following project achievement is an operation under the concept of follow-up and evaluation consisting of various points: 1) Purpose, 2) Indicator, 3) Goal, and 4) Plan of the intended project. The concept can determine the model to describe the managerial process of an organization as a whole. It is the concept of combined management, measuring the result according to a conceptual Balanced Scorecard under the systematic theory model.

The PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) system, as articulated by Deming (2004), emphasizes a systematic approach to continuous improvement. The initial phase, 1) P (Plan), involves a thorough analysis of the OKR within the framework established by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation. This analysis encompasses eleven research projects that are intricately linked to various strategic levels and plans. The insights gained from this evaluation will serve as a foundation for the development and establishment of Joint Key Performance Indicators (KPI), 2) D (Do) is about following-up system setting for all eleven projects in terms of participation to acknowledge the problems and is the medium of cooperation between researchers of all eleven projects, with the SBPAC and NRCT, also the organizations in the areas to watch out and learn about the people who benefit from the research work to set the database for the project evaluation, 3) C (Check) is about setting the system of follow-up and evaluation on eleven research project's executives, 'Supply-side' of the system starting from Ex-ante, On-going, and Ex-Post, and 4) A (Act) is about setting the system of outcomes and evaluation report to the NRCT according to the determined time. Simultaneously, it is about the study relating to the guidelines or theories of systematic project management.

The Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a comprehensive framework used to measure the social, economic, and environmental outcomes of various projects and activities. This methodology evaluates social impacts by assigning financial values to these outcomes, which can be compared against the costs or budgets allocated for the respective projects or activities. The primary objective of SROI is to illustrate the benefits derived from an investment in relation to its costs. For instance, a ratio of 2:1 indicates that for every unit of currency invested, there is a corresponding social value generated that is twice as much. In academic discourse, it is essential to consider the involvement of stakeholders throughout this process. Engaging stakeholders ensures that diverse perspectives are taken into account, enhancing the validity and reliability of the SROI analysis (Olsen & Nicholls, 2005; Archawananthakun & Yaemlaoar, 2014).

Social Impact

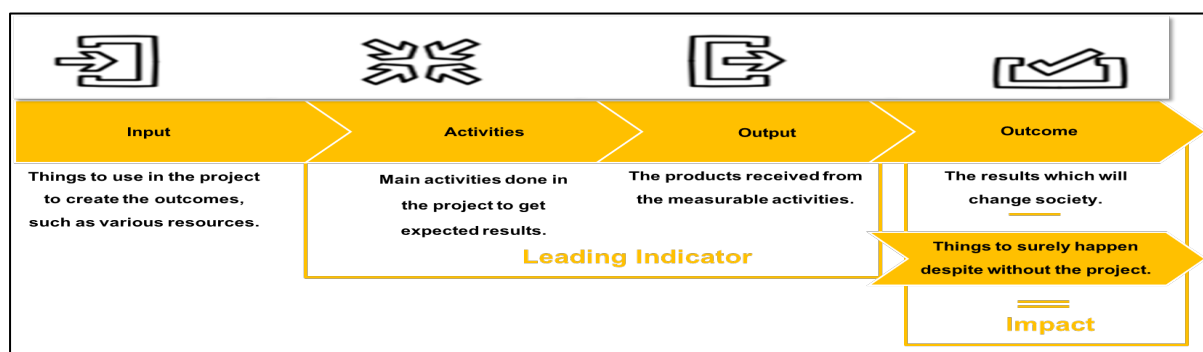


Figure 1 Impact Value Chain (Clark et al., 2003)

It can divide the calculation method into two ways: 1) using the past information to calculate, 2) using information from the prediction of value in the future by setting the hypothesis that the enterprise or organization has conducted the activities already (SROI Network, 2012). The numbers of social return on investment make the stakeholders and supporters, who expend and invest, acknowledge the outcomes that occurred from one THB. the agencies have used (Sony & Ferguson, 2017), including the social return on investment used as a tool to revise the efficiency to improve the performance in the future.

Research Framework

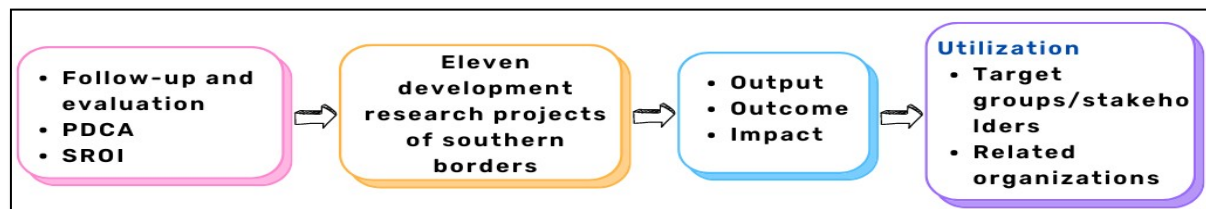


Figure 2 Research framework of project management evaluation for southern border provinces development to successful achievement

Research Methodology

The procedures of project conduction are shown in the following figure.

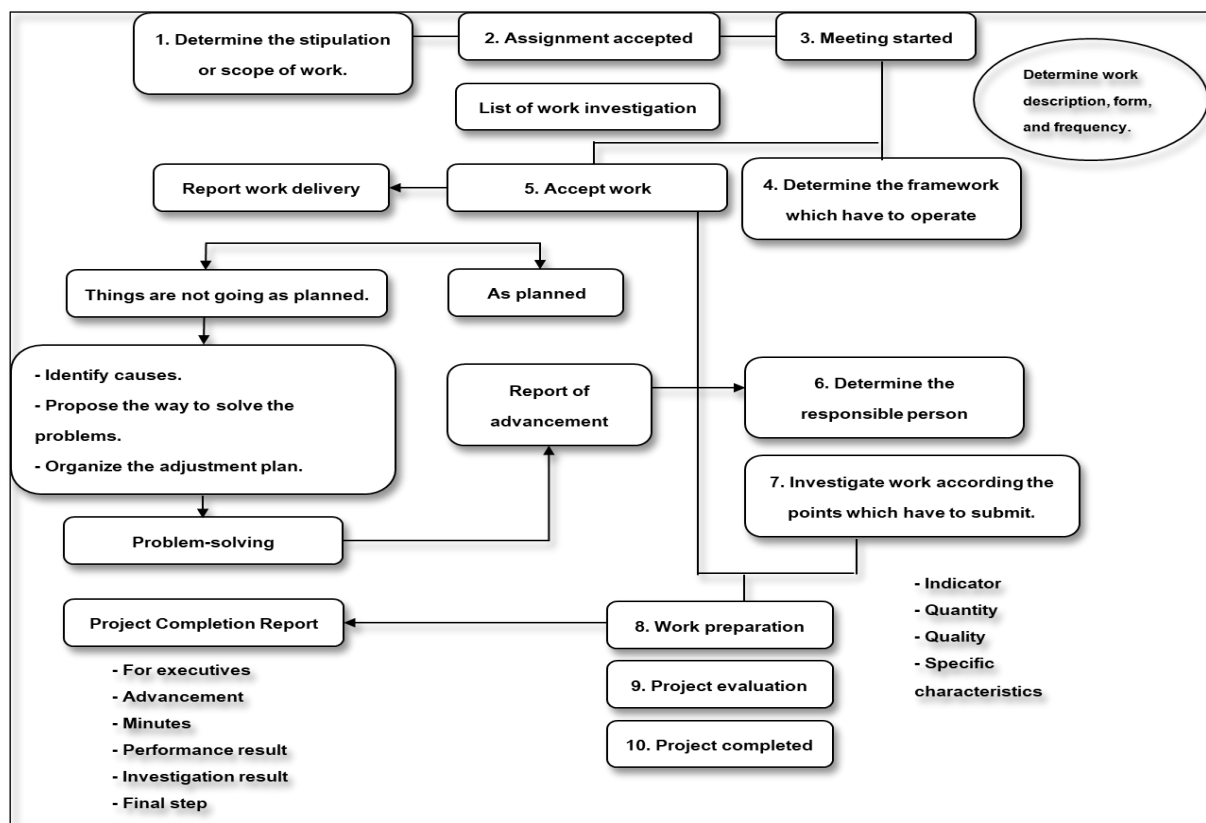


Figure 3 Operation of Management

Population and Sample

The project comprises a group of populations and a sample group across 11 projects covering research areas in five provinces: Satun, Songkhla, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat.

Data Collection

The project operated in the following manner: 1) Cooperated with the involved organizations, which are, SBPAC and NRCT, including all 11 research project heads to deliver various related documents, 2) Scheduled the date and time for the meeting and conducted fieldwork to follow up and observe all 11 projects for evaluation. I also submitted letters to inform SBPAC and NRCT about the date and time, 3) contacted and collaborated with the project leaders to clarify operational details and deadlines before the official survey, and 4) conducted fieldwork to observe and evaluate the projects per the follow-up plan.

A structured observation record form to monitor and evaluate the operations of all 11 projects is divided into two parts: Part 1: general information about the research project; title, name of project head, observed location, and observed date and time. Part 2: open-ended questions about recommendations for the research project.

Data Analysis

It was done by analyzing the contents of the research results, recommendations, and social results using the Impact Value Chain as a tool, including the SROI.

Research Result

The staff of the research project management of Southern Border provinces development for achievement, which comprises 11 projects, has consolidated all the research projects and categorized them into four groups as follows.

Table 1 The research results of eleven research projects

| Group/A Number of Projects | Research Result |
|---|---|
| Social and Cultural Group comprises five research projects | Under the Covid-19 pandemic situation, the Buddhist way emphasizes the teaching of the Buddha by upholding 1) Wisdom: wisdom resulting from study, wisdom resulting from reflection, and wisdom resulting from mental development, 2) Intellect, and 3) Sangahavatthu 4 (bases of sympathy; acts of doing favors; principles of service; virtues making for group integration and leadership), which leads to ethics of the individuals in the community and society. For the Christian religion, they abstain from risky activities. Leaders should instill confidence and cultivate love, hope, and security leading to the public's respect concordant with the principles appeared in the Bible. The Islamic religion has a traditional way of visiting with each other, communicating through leaders by using the religious principle called 'Six Articles of Islamic Faith', abstaining from gathering, upholding 'Al-hadiths', moral principles or I-san principles, and maintaining the cultures, customs, and traditions, the religion based on the mixture between religious principles and belief. According to religious communication and collaboration in a multicultural society, Buddhism uses social media for planning, decision-making, and implementation. Islamic religion upheld the government mechanism, proactive work, and focused on cooperation. Christian religion emphasizes the Bible, balance, and training religious leaders, including channels to make understanding. Therefore, the communication simulation form is created and categorized into as follows: input; person, budget, method, material, and equipment; Procedure; plan, conduction, material or channel, and product, caused by recognition, awareness, and acknowledgment. People and leaders then provide feedback, and the public health organizations collect and transfer it to the public agencies/locality. Such information is reflected through online channels and forwarded to people further. |
| Commercial Group comprises two research projects | There are two main mechanisms for community development innovation: 1) Business Model for Society on Biomass Power Plant, and 2) Community development innovation by community. They are connected based on the communities' participation generating the development forwarded to each other and sustainability from the communities' participation continuously. Mechanism 1: Business Model for Society on Biomass Power Plant; the proposal on the form of business conduction and management for society. It is classified into three main components: (1) participation as power plant's owners, (2) participation in the process of power plant businesses, and (3) participation in the community development activities not related to the power plant business process. Mechanism 2: Community development innovation by the community. It is the proposal to solve defects of the traditional mechanism. There are six sections for the issues received by focus group discussion through analysis and synthesis. They are addressed to a proposal draft for driving the community process, which includes 1) Philosophical concept of areas development, 2) Process before areas development, |

| Group/A Number of Projects | Research Result |
|--|--|
| | 3) Development guidelines from the basis of economic cost and traditional cultures in the communities, 4) Control and prevention system of environmental effects from industry, 5) Adjustment and treatment of the environmental impacts from industry, and 6) Community Constitution Committees and Temporary Provision. |
| Technological Group comprises of three research projects | Application development is done by indicating the poor (Fakir) and the needy (Miskin) by Masjid's committees to deliver information to the Provincial Office of Islamic Affairs Committee. The poor and disadvantaged would get the right to receive Zakat and assistance once. Also, the communication should have style, challenge, and adjustment, including the proactively participative communication mechanism. However, the proactive communication process should have a reliable and sincere messenger who understands the contexts of areas or influences. The approved content focuses on correctness without being against religious principles, beliefs, and cultures should be considered, including media and communication channels such as Facebook, video, and infographic media. Hence, these become the background of video development titled 'Travel of Covid', which includes: 1) Two risky groups with the Covid risk at home, 2) what does vaccine injection help?, and 3) Before thinking about bullying the COVID infectors and their families. These media can lead to the development of information technology for the application of geographic information systems. |
| Policy Group comprises one research project | The dragon fruit faces the stems rot and canker diseases problem caused by <i>N. Dimidiatum</i> . Therefore, there is a generation of development for the Antagonistic Microbial Pesticides and chemicals to prevent and remove such diseases with effective and sustainable management. |

According to all 11 projects of research results to consider how the social results are beneficial to the stakeholders and participants of research activities, the researchers selected one of the projects to show the analysis of social results because it is a project that can measure the social outcomes in terms of economy, society, and environment, and can estimate the value into money by using the Impact Value Chain as a tool. The tool considers Input, Activity, Output, Outcome, and Impact, including expressing the SROI. The results shown are as follows.

Table 2 Analysis of social results, the project of application development to follow-up and indicate the position for assisting those affected by the Covid 19 Pandemic in the lower income group according to Islamic principles

| Inputs | Activities | Outputs | Outcomes/Impacts |
|--|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budget, for an amount of 797,000 THB.; - The low-income persons as per Islamic principles; - Governmental agencies; - Religious leaders; - NGO organizations; - International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); - Jintara Foundation; - Application Downloaders; and - Researchers team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-depth interview; - Developing an application; - Testing an operation; - Evaluating an application use; - Publicizing an authentic use. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An application to indicate the position of low-income earners as per Islamic principles; - Assistance process for those affected by the Covid-19 pandemic situation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Received the donation (zakat), both internal and external areas; - Received medical treatment in case of the needy, invalid, and bedridden patients; - Career assistance and promotion for the needy who can work; - Be convenient and can work to assist the poverty; - Reduced the cost due to the mistake of assisting in the true poverty; - Convenient distribution of donations or zakat; - Reduced cost and time for seeking the poverty; - Being able to assist the real poverties |

Table 3 Social Return on Investment (SROI)

| Outcome/Impact of Financial Return | Percentage of budgets attributed from other agencies (%) | Remaining | Deadweight (%) | Net Return Value | Research budgets from NRCT (THB.) | Discount Rate (7%) | Net Present Value (NPV) | SROI |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------|
| 8,500,000 | 80 | 1,700,000 | 10 | 1,530,000 | 797,000 | 0.07 | 1,429,906.54 | 1.79 |

The SROI of the research project titled Application Development for Following-up and Indicating Position to Help Those Impacted by Covid-19 Pandemic in the Low-income earners as per Islamic Principles' compared to the yearly present value of the project with the cost value of the project conduction, the overall conclusion found that a total of present value is equal to 8,500,000 THB., with the investment values as an outcome at 1,429,906.54 THB. Investing one THB. in the project could be used for social benefits with a value of 1.79 THB.

Conclusion and Discussion

Social and Cultural Group

Islamists, Buddhists, and Christians share ways of life that emphasize living together like siblings. During the Covid-19 pandemic, they have been meeting and visiting one another. All three religions have religious leaders and community leaders who communicate with their communities to foster understanding and implement measures to reduce the risks associated with the pandemic. In the community, people strictly adhered to the measures provided by governmental sectors. They utilized clear publications through various communication channels and online systems while avoiding direct contact with those affected by the contagious disease. Additionally, they refrained from gathering in crowds. This behavior aligns with the teachings of Buddhist leaders, as articulated by Dhammacitto, (2006). He referenced a saying of the Buddha from the Thutiya Papanikkasoot that outlines three characteristics essential for an effective administrators; 1) Professionalism in thought processes, 2) Wituro, which refers to the ability to manage tasks effectively and possess specific expertise, and 3) Nissaya Sampanno, meaning the capacity to rely on others due to strong human relations and cooperation. In a multicultural society, religious communication and cooperation can be classified according to different faiths. Buddhism utilizes social media as a tool for engagement, while Islam emphasizes the importance of government mechanisms, proactive initiatives, and coordinated efforts. Christianity focuses on balancing its principles with biblical teachings. These observations align with Pattanarangsarn's (1999) assertion that communication is a vital process for fostering cooperation among individuals. It enables people to understand each other's needs and helps to mitigate conflicts. Furthermore, this aligns with Ratzan's (1998) guidelines for effective health communication, which emphasize that communication should take into account the social and cultural differences of each target group. The messenger must be an expert in engaging with the specific audience. While everyone possesses some level of communicative skill, it is essential to enhance these skills to effectively address the unique contexts and populations within different areas.

Commercial Group

The two main mechanisms of innovative community development are 1) the Business Model for Society focused on Biomass Power Plants and 2) the Innovation of Community Development initiated by Community. These mechanisms are interconnected through community participation, which fosters mutual development. This aligns with previous research indicating that the Business Model for Society can be categorized into five types (Kingfisher Polymers, n.d.; Grameen Danone Foods, 2016), as follows: 1) The model focuses on creating a business unit that generates high income, 2) The business model emphasizes selling products or services in traditional markets, 3) The business model aims to construct social impacts through processes, as well as the commodities or services offered by the establishment, 4) The business model is designed for underprivileged or marginalized individuals, 5) The business model involves selling products or services within the established system. These points align with Scharfetter's (2018) research, which states that social innovation serves as a mechanism to consistently address social problems. However, it must also possess the ability for dynamic adjustments, such as identifying social needs for innovation, products, or services and integrating knowledge and new practices to evolve into culture (Breznik & Hisrich, 2014).

Technological Group

The application development aims to follow up and identify positions that assist those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among low-income earners, in accordance with Islamic principles. This initiative categorizes individuals into two groups, the poor (Fakir) and the needy (Miskin). The Masjid committees would collect and deliver this data to the Provincial Office of the Islamic Affairs Committee. Both Fakir and Miskin individuals would have the right to receive donations or Zakat, as well as assistance at one time. The goal is to help them achieve freedom from poverty. The application development took 11 months and was developed using the Flutter Framework for Android. This aligns with the findings of Blumenstock et al. (2015), who indicated that developing innovative technology utilizing Global Positioning System (GPS) tools, when evaluated for application effectiveness, shows that overall application development reaches a high standard. Furthermore, this study found that all three groups—MUSLIMITED Group, The Motive Group, and the New Generation Group—adapted their communication strategies interestingly during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. This observation is consistent with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020) report, which stated that young people are less severely affected by symptoms compared to older individuals. However, they faced challenges regarding educational access and job opportunities while striving to maintain their employment or income. The current economic conditions have a significant impact on the labor market, particularly affecting employment opportunities for individuals with lower skill levels. Effective communication is essential in this context; it should be characterized by style, challenge, and adaptability. This includes fostering proactive and participatory communication within communities. Additionally, utilizing various materials and channels, such as Facebook, videos, and infographics—can enhance engagement and understanding.

Policy Group

The Policy Group emphasizes the importance of developing strategies to address and manage stem rot and canker diseases in dragon fruit, which are caused by *Neoscytalidium dimidiatum*. This emerging disease is significant and aligns with the findings of Mohd et al. (2013), who detailed the morphological characteristics of *N. dimidiatum* as well as its role in causing stem rot and canker diseases in dragon fruit, particularly those with red textures and shells, such as *Hylocereus polyrhizus*, in Malaysia. While several factors contribute to the epidemic of stem rot and canker diseases in dragon fruit, including weak plant species, a lack of knowledge among farmers, and insufficient soil quality, research indicates that enhancing soil with organic fertilizers and incorporating organic matter mixed with *S. griseus* NBRC1 can significantly reduce the incidence of these diseases.

The evaluation of the SROI indicates that the application developed to track and indicate the position of individuals affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among lower-income earners, aligns with Islamic principles. The findings suggest that for every THB. invested in this project, there is a social benefit valued at 1.79 THB. This result is consistent with the research conducted by Pongpaiboon & Phoochinda (2019), which revealed that farmer representatives capable of providing data for SROI calculations comprised nine out of eleven groups. The overall SROI in that study was calculated to be 1.45, indicating that each THB. invested yields social outcomes worth 1.45 THB. A key factor influencing the success of organic farming is the market's support for organic products. Moreover, Jarudamrongsak (2017) found that the activity of producing herbal crisps has a value of 1.23, indicating an increase in the Social Return on Investment.

Recommendation

The evaluation of all eleven research results, classified into four groups: Social and Cultural Group, Commercial Group, Technological Group, and Policy Group, have produced significant, available, and solvable outcomes for the target audience. However, there is a noticeable gap in establishing a clear connection with related agencies that would enhance their utility in both policy and practical applications. To effectively utilize the findings in alignment with the policies and guidance set forth by the SBPAC, it is essential to manage the research issues to be more consistent with national objectives. For the next year, the research development points should be in four distinct categories: 1) Education, 2) Society, 3) Economy, and 4) SBPAC's Policy. This structured approach will facilitate better integration of research outcomes with relevant stakeholders and ensure that they contribute meaningfully to the overarching goals of the SBPAC.

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