

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BORDER CROSSING MANAGEMENT BETWEEN MALAYSIA & THAILAND WITH REFERENCE TO BUKIT KAYU HITAM – SADAO AND PADANG BESAR – PADANGBASA

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ABSTRACT – The Immigration Department of Malaysia, being the first line of defense, has always been in the limelight for its success stories as well as its flops due to integrity, system, and management issues. The debatable issue in Integrated Border Crossing Management (IBM) is the difficulty for any immigration operator to maintain balance with compliance requirements. Thus, the Department needs to keep in line with the fast-emerging threats by having proper planning to keep the Department strong in the challenging emigrational environment. An IBM system commonly refers to the number of agencies manning multiple authorizations in border crossing examinations that involve the examination of people and goods. Most of the previous research has been limited to studies and limited data on the topic. Bukit Kayu Hitam and Padang Besar have traditionally operated to accommodate the locals and have expanded to be among the most challenging entry points due to their accessibility to multiple irregular activities. Thus, the aim of this research is to study the current implementation of the border crossing management system in managing the border between Malaysia and Thailand. Moreover, to suggest countermeasures to reduce the implementation gaps in managing the border between both countries, as the increasing gaps may lead to management issues. The research was conducted using a qualitative method (semi-structured interviews and ATLAS.ti 22 software), with results indicating that three major themes emerged which are Policy, Current Technology Adoption, and Border Crossing Management are factors that influence cross-border management. This illustrates the importance of having an efficient control module that reflects the smoothness of the border crossing process while maintaining national security and providing a decent examination experience to attract potential investors or business opportunities for Malaysia.

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INTRODUCTION

We are living in a fairly dangerous world today. Threats to the community arise in many ways such as terrorism, individual crimes, organized crimes, fraud, and recently, the pandemic (ASEAN Documents on Combating Transnational Crime and Terrorism, 2012). The question is how do border managers address the threats? The answer is it is not very well taken care of. The border crossing management techniques that are used today are based on outdated technology and in some areas, opportune official corruption (Donaldson, 2008). New technology and policy present both new opportunities for improvement as well as new threats. However, it is uncontemporary to deny the need for technology and policy updates to combat the unprecedented arise of challenges in border crossing management.

As challenges and threats in emigrational matters emerge, Immigration Officers in Malaysia are facing multiple changes in recent years whilst adapting to contemporary needs. Unfortunately, the capability to adapt to emerging challenges and threats are limited due to constraint in system capability and political stability. When there is a problem, there is an opportunity disguised. Insecurity and failure to manage problems may lead to bigger opportunities negatively.

Since there is a limited study conducted in measuring the effectiveness of the cross-border implementation specifically between Malaysia and Thailand with references to Bukit Kayu Hitam – Sadao and Padang Besar – Padangbasa, this study detail the effectiveness of current border crossing management implementation between the two checkpoints as well as propose a suitable countermeasure to address the issues and will enlighten and inspire governing authorities to look into the opportunities in strengthening cross-border crossing management in both ICQS.

It is a very familiar scene to experience long queues at any border checkpoints at both ICQS Bukit Kayu Hitam and Padang Besar (Zainol, Jusop, Ridzuan, & Kamaruddin, 2019). A question on many minds is whether technology can do away with such perturbations and the answer is yes. In the daily scene, it is common to see frequent travelers from both Malaysia and Thailand crossing the border without proper examination and surely, it's a compromise on security. Local practices refer to the frequent traveller between Malaysia and Thailand who hardly cooperates with the officials with the

excuse of being a daily commuter and traveling only for personal needs. However, according to *Smuggling of Migrants: A Global Review and Annotated Bibliography of Recent Publications* (2011), locals are also among the risky travellers who tend to involve in irregular border crossing activities.

Public service delivery in developing nations is still lacking and hasn't caught up to public expectations, despite continued efforts to enhance it by implementing the New Public Management (NPM) reforms into public organisations. Public organisations in developing nations are inconsistent in putting public service reforms into practise to increase their capabilities, effectiveness, and efficiency in providing higher-quality public services (Mahmoud, & Othman, 2021). An immigration examination at a border checkpoint is a man-to-man examination. As an extra precaution, most nation worldwide is using biometric technology as an additional measure after passport issuance. However, implementing the best biometric technology is always an issue for certain countries depending on their ICT accessibility and financial situation (Hassan, 2017). Malaysia for the last 21 years has been a member of Biometric Institute UK, a community of immigration practitioners that promotes wide usage of biometric equipment at border checkpoints. The most common technology used is fingerprints as every fingerprint is unique. Other technologies used are iris and facial recognition. The rapid implementation of biometrics has sparked a revolution within the global law enforcement and security industry.

Therefore, this study aims to answer three research questions that take place in ICQS Bukit Kayu Hitam and ICQS Padang Besar considering the complexity of traveling patterns, type of criminal cases, risk of corruption, and effect on the economy which are a reflection of the border crossing management capability: (1) How effective is the current border crossing management system in managing the border between Malaysia and Thailand? (2) What are the implementation gaps in the border crossing management system in managing the border between Malaysia and Thailand? (3) What are the countermeasures to reduce the implementation gap in border crossing management between Malaysia and Thailand?

AN OVERVIEW OF BORDER CROSSING BETWEEN MALAYSIA & THAILAND IN BUKIT KAYU HITAM & PADANG BESAR

The border between Malaysia and Thailand consists of both land and sea borders separating north of Peninsular Malaysia and South of Thailand. The maritime border is divided between the straits of Malacca and the Gulf of Thailand/South China Sea. In the interest of both the economic and security interests of both Malaysia and Thailand, the two-nation established Malaysia-Thailand Border Coordination Office (MTBCO) with offices in both countries. It is located in Alor Setar, Kedah, Malaysia and Songkhla, Thailand. Officers are seconded by multiple agencies of interest such as Immigration, Royal Malaysian Polis, and Malaysian Armed Forces and led by the National Security Council. The office is tasked as a liaison of multiple bilateral meetings hosted alternately by both Government Agencies. This office operates separately from the Consulate General of Malaysia in Songkhla, Thailand. The office is responsible to overlook the interest of both parties along with the border consisting of 11 border checkpoints.

Bukit Kayu Hitam is the major access through the land between Malaysia and Thailand. It is simply connected via North-South Expressway making it the best trade road for Malaysia and Thailand. Padang Besar has located 45km from Bukit Kayu Hitam and is famous for being the next option for border trading activities in northern Malaysia. Transportation-wise, both countries are connected with international airports in Hatyai of Thailand and Penang of Malaysia. Penang also operates an International Port that connects goods from Thailand to other foreign destinations.

ICQS Bukit Kayu Hitam and ICQS Padang Besar maybe not be as crowded (the number of arrivals and departures) as many other major checkpoints like Bangunan Sultan Iskandar at Johor, KLIA, and KLIA2. However, considering the unmanned 646.4 km excluding the area of gazetted land border checkpoints between Malaysia and Thailand, the door for unwanted activities is wide open in the land checkpoints. Ministry of Home Affairs voiced about standardizing the operation hours of both ICQS in its fight to combat social problems, drug smuggling, and weapon smuggling (Radio Televisyen Malaysia, 2016).

Securing air, maritime and land borders can be extremely challenging for most of the country worldwide. Land borders can be tremendously lengthy and porous, making them difficult to monitor. Border crossing management is financially a costly business as it requires huge investment in technology, human resources, and infrastructure. It also requires strong leadership in securing the border while keeping a bilateral relationship intact. Malaysia and Thailand in particular signed two Border Crossing Agreements, first in 1940 and revised 73 years later in the year of 2013.

Land border crossing is a mutually agreed activity between two countries to allow the movement of people and goods between countries. In general, two countries will benefit from border crossing either politically, socially, or economically. In the case of Malaysia and Thailand, the locals in both countries generally benefited from the shared goods available in both areas while some even benefited socially when they are connected with the family of different citizenship. It is known that Malay, Siamese, and Chinese are in existence in both Malaysia and Thailand.

Considering the need to strengthen border crossing management, new approaches are needed, and technological advancement is the best option. With technology, data can be stored, processed, and searched extremely fast and recorded in an extremely small amount of space. Technology also reduces the amount of paperwork and can perform the work of many people and save millions in emoluments. Technology in Immigration matters generally refers to online capability in every aspect of migrations data. The mandatory capability is to provide a system that records pre-migration, during a journey of entering and leaving a country at immigration checkpoints, and especially during a migrant activity in a country.

RELATED WORK

Organizational Theory

Organizational theory is the sociological study of formal social organizations, such as businesses and bureaucracies, and their interrelationship with the environment in which they operate. It complements the studies of organizational behaviour and human resource studies. There are 6 elements in the organizational design which are Work Specialization, Departmentalization and Compartments, The Chain of Command, The Span of Control, Centralization and Decentralization, and Formalization of Elements that help leaders establish a proper organizational structure and chain of command (Leonard, 2018).

For this study, the researcher adopts Organizational Theory focusing on RO1 and RO2. Out of the 6 elements, the researcher adopts Work Specialization and Formalization of Elements. Questionnaires were designed within the framework of the said elements. In Work Specialization, an organization must have a design of specific tasks and duties associated with a position. This will lead to structured human resource development. According to Tannimalay, Abdul Rahim and Hong (2021) professional growth depends on individual performance because top performers are promoted more quickly and have better career options. Organizations work to optimise and enhance individual performance in a practical sense. In the discipline of human resource management, analysis of employee performance is essential. Formalization of Elements requires an organization to formalize the proper practice of the scope of work associated with the function of the organization. This helped the researcher in concluding the study on the implementation of new policies.

Lee (2022) shows that Organizational Theory studies organizations to identify the patterns and structures they use to solve problems, maximize efficiency and productivity, and meet the expectations of stakeholders. The organizational theory then uses these patterns to formulate normative theories of how organizations function best. Therefore, this theory provides the best way possible for the researcher to identify what are the weaknesses in cross-border crossing management and how they may be improvised through new policies that are acceptable, implementable, and likely to be successful.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is an information system theory that models how users come to accept and use technology in daily routines to achieve the designated goals (Charness & Boot, 2016). The vast emergence of new technology in daily tasks requires all personnel in any organization regardless of their age to be technology savvy.

The researcher also adapts Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in completing RO3. Davis (1989) stresses that TAM is a theory where there is a willingness of every person in any organization to adopt new technology regardless of their level of service or age. Acceptance of new technology is proven to be the best way in border crossing management for years.

Singapore manage to simplify the crowd using motorcycles crossing between Johor Bharu, Malaysia, and Singapore by implementing an automated system that allows travelers to do self-check-in and self-check-out at the motorcycles lane in 2008. Malaysia follows the step by implementing M-Bike, a system that allows registered travellers using motorcycles to do self-check and shorten the process while excluding human interference.

Venkatesh and Davies (2000) extended TAM to explain the perceived usefulness and intention to use based on five elements which are the subjective norm, image, job relevance, output quality, and result demonstrability. To explain RO3, the researcher adopts job relevant, output quality, and result demonstrability. The research then develop a score scale for each element compounded within the elements.

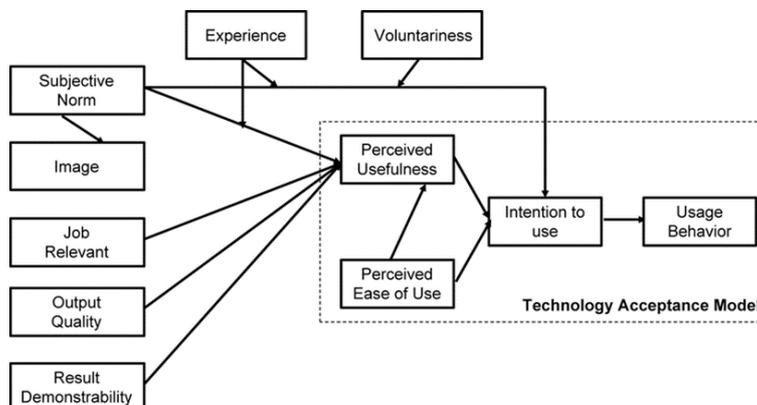


Figure 1. Technology acceptance model

Therefore, Figure 2 explains the approach used in this research. The combination of theories should meet the expected result in exploring the opportunities for developing an effective border crossing management to strengthen the security of both countries.

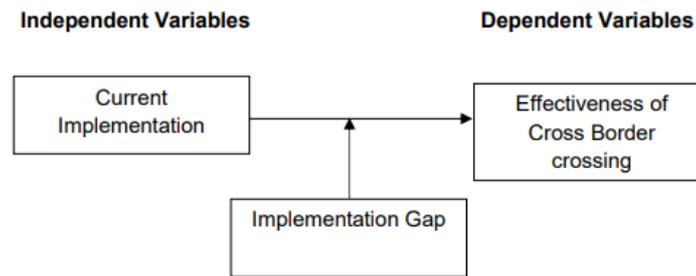


Figure 2. Theoretical framework

Research Propositions

A proposition is similar to a hypothesis, but its main purpose is to suggest a link between two concepts in a situation where the link cannot be verified by experiment (Clay, 2018). It is also defined as the unclear nature of the causal relationship between two variables. 3 propositions were developed for the research as follows:

Proposition 1: There are issues in the effectiveness of control module in immigration system in managing the border between Malaysia and Thailand.

Proposition 2: Implementation gaps do exist in control module in immigration system in managing the border between Malaysia and Thailand.

Proposition 3: Countermeasures are needed to reduce the implementation gaps in managing border between Malaysia and Thailand.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a qualitative research approach was conducted using semi-structured interviews involving 9 selected immigration officers in Bukit Kayu Hitam and 10 selected immigration officers in Padang Besar. The selected 19 immigration officers are sampled simply because of their position, age, and academic qualification based on the researcher's judgment due to the nature of the research design and aims and objectives (purposive sampling method). The interview session was held face-to-face as the sample population is pre-determined and identified. The interview sessions were conducted on May 15, 2022, at Bukit Kayu Hitam and May 16, 2022, at Padang Besar. Every interview session takes 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the respondents' capability to answer the questions. This study used 15 questions based on observation and the current situation in both ICQS Bukit Kayu Hitam and Padang Besar to capture respondents' opinions and viewpoints to meet the background of this research.

The questions were:

RQ1: How effective is the current border crossing management system in managing the border between Malaysia and Thailand?

(1) How satisfied you are the existing practices in border crossing in Bukit Kayu Hitam and Padang besar? (2) Are there any loopholes in the system that open rooms for irregular practice or corruption? (3) Where are the overlaps between authorizatron of different agencies in the ICQH? (4) What do you think about multiple agencies and multiple authorization in one checkpoint? (5) How can centralization of power or reducing number of agencies can smoothen border crossing management?

RQ2: What are the implementation gaps in the border crossing management system in managing the border between Malaysia and Thailand?

(6) How capable is the Control Module to cope with border crossing management needs? (7) Does the Department adopt new technologies in the last 5 years? (8) What do you understand about security threat towards the system and its relation to national security? (9) How convenient it is to operate the border crossing examination using new technology? (10) What is the level of readiness among Immigration Officer towards implementation of new software or technology?

RQ3: What are the countermeasures to reduce the implementation gap in border crossing management between Malaysia and Thailand?

(11) How can strong leadership bring continuous improvements in border crossing management? (12) What do you understand about your role in securing a safe border crossing management? (13) What is the importance of having a secured border and its relation to economic and social stability between the borders? (14) Why strong bilateral cooperation between Malaysia and Thailand is important? and (15) What makes strong and secured cross border crossing management in ICQS Bukit Kayu Hitam and ICQS Padang Besar is achievable?

The researcher then transcribed all answers from the interview session into text and analyzed the data using ATLAS.ti 22 software. ATLAS.ti 22 helps the researcher in collecting and gathering research materials acquired from the qualitative study. Furthermore, the software also helps in analyzing photos, audio, and video recordings. ATLAS.ti 22 allows network diagrams to be created to simplify the data analysis process. It allows the researcher to understand the facts and figures conveyed by the respondents. The thematic analysis approach was used, with themes or patterns described as the final products of data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Meanwhile, themes and their subdivisions, including subcategories and subthemes, are the analytical products of data analysis using Qualitative Content Analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

DATA COLLECTION

Table 1 displays the respondents' demographic characteristics. Most respondents were males (79%), with females at 21%. In addition, most of the respondents' ranks or positions are operators at 68%, followed by supervisor and senior officer at 21% and 11%, respectively. Moreover, the age of respondents ranged from 27 to 54 years old, with 1 to 5 years of working experience at the border. The sample population also mostly served at the border for an average period of three years. This is because, according to the departmental policy, officers serving in "hot spot" offices should be limited to three years only. The responses are slightly similar as the issues are common to every officer. However, some responses are quite different from a few officers' as they differ accordingly due to experience and confidence in responding to questions. Rank and position do affect the quality of responses as the authorization for handling border crossings differ at every level of rank and position.

Table 1. Respondents' demographic characteristics

Unit of Analysis	Respondent	Station / ICQS	Age / Gender	Rank / Position
Bukit Kayu Hitam (Total = 9)	BKH#1	Bukit Kayu Hitam	32 / Female	Senior Officer
	BKH#2	Bukit Kayu Hitam	48 / Male	Supervisor
	BKH#3	Bukit Kayu Hitam	43 / Female	Supervisor
	BKH#4	Bukit Kayu Hitam	38 / Male	Administrator
	BKH#5	Bukit Kayu Hitam	35 / Male	Administrator
	BKH#6	Bukit Kayu Hitam	42 / Male	Administrator
	BKH#7	Bukit Kayu Hitam	35 / Male	Administrator
	BKH#8	Bukit Kayu Hitam	37 / Female	Administrator
	BKH#9	Bukit Kayu Hitam	43 / Female	Administrator
Padang Besar (Total =10)	PB#1	Padang Besar	39 / Male	Senior Officer
	PB#2	Padang Besar	52 / Male	Supervisor
	PB#3	Padang Besar	54 / Male	Supervisor
	PB#4	Padang Besar	28 / Male	Administrator
	PB#5	Padang Besar	27 / Male	Administrator
	PB#6	Padang Besar	27 / Male	Administrator
	PB#7	Padang Besar	36 / Male	Administrator
	PB#8	Padang Besar	32 / Male	Administrator
	PB#9	Padang Besar	36 / Male	Administrator
	PB#10	Padang Besar	38 / Male	Administrator
Total = 19				

Data Analysis Network

Analysis of the interview and the information shared by the respondents is followed by highlighting and grouping according to the similarities of the answers. Three major themes emerged from Research Questions (RQ) 1, Research Questions 2, and Research Questions 3: (1) Policy (2) Current Technology Adoption, and (3) Border Crossing Management to meet the main objective as planned in Research Objectives (RO) 1, Research Objectives 2, and Research Objectives 3. In the interview sessions, it is found that glitches in the system used in document examination are repeatedly mentioned. It was also stated that system flaws resulted in incompetence in the quality or standard of examinations performed by the Immigration Department, which had a direct impact on the officers manning the system at times. Respondents also expressed their concern about inter-agency authorization, which sometimes creates hassle in handling cases that happen at the checkpoints, while some of the respondents look at the inter-agency authorization issues as manageable. In addition, respondents also expressed their concern about the leadership quality, as quick decisions are

crucial to avoid traffic congestion at the checkpoints. Another issue of concern is the quality of the decisions made by senior officers, as the examination is very related to national security and may affect the bilateral situation between Malaysia and Thailand. Of all the information shared by the respondents, the system plays a major role in every aspect of cross-border management.

To summarise the network diagrams, respondents frequently stressed the importance of having a trusted system in managing document examinations, which are conducted by the Immigration Department. Other than the system, respondents frequently mention the importance of having strong leadership, political stability, and the integrity of officers in managing border crossing activity. The network diagrams below will explain the findings and further explain the benefits gained from this research in border crossing management between Malaysia and Thailand, particularly in ICQS Bukit Kayu Hitam and ICQS Padang Besar.

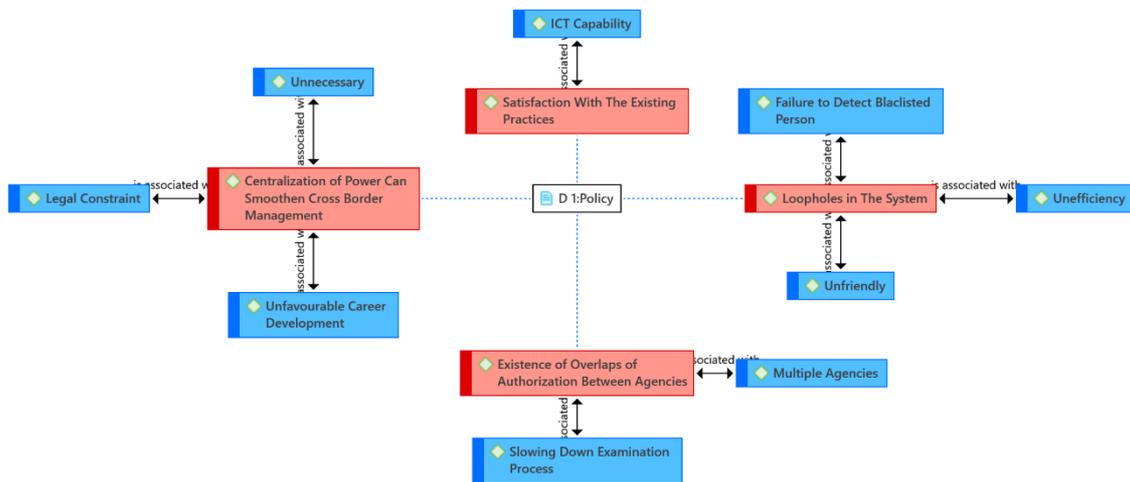


Figure 3. Diagram of policy networks influencing cross-border management

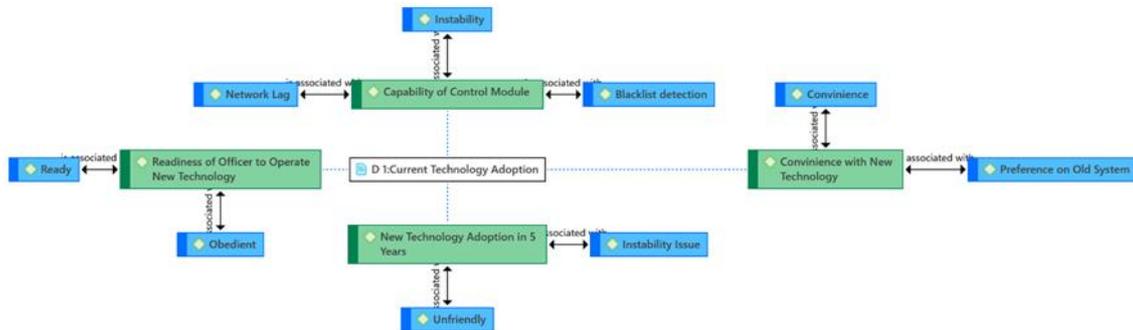


Figure 4. Diagram of current technology adoption networks influencing cross-border management

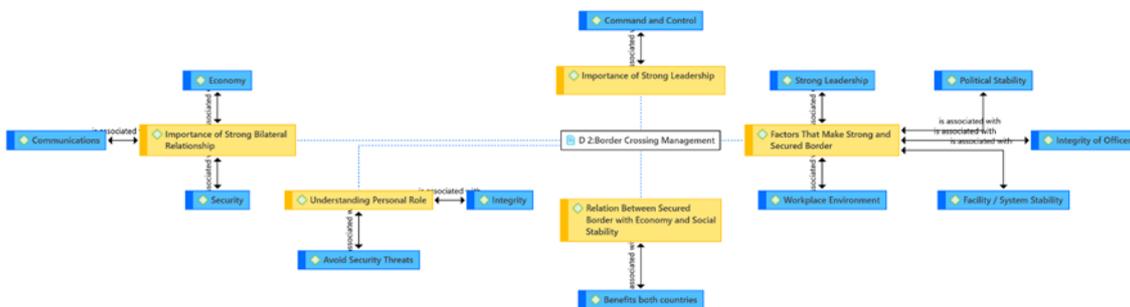


Figure 5. Diagram of border crossing management networks influencing cross-border management

Significant Statements

Significant statements are essential in order to understand the message portrayed by the interviewees. The researcher compiled an imperative meaning of the statements as some of the statements are quite brief and unclear to understand the whole view.

Table 2. Significant statements and imperative meaning for policy

Significant Statement	Imperative Meaning
Policy	
Satisfaction with the existing practices	
Satisfied	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Throughout my tenure here, with the system we have, I am satisfied. There may only be a few improvements in terms of the system that can make us satisfied. This is because system problems will turn to system users, i.e., officers like me.” “For the time I am working now, I am satisfied in terms of control and the latest directives from superiors. There are only a few minor flaws in the system, such as a lost line connection and other minor problems. The old system has some advantages compared to the latest, in that it is quite fast because the speed of accessing the new system is very satisfactory compared to the new system, which experiences lag and is slow. New system, but its performance is a bit slow compared to the old system.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The interviewees explain on how they are satisfied with the current practices with regards to the system and the process. However, they also stressed on how improvement can take place by simplifying the process between many agencies.
Unsatisfied	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “For me, the management system is organized, but the cooperation between the agencies is not very close, and each of them does their own thing. Therefore, coordination and communication between agencies are a bit problematic. For example, when a senior inter-agency meeting is held, the other officers cannot get clear information about the output of the meeting.” “So far, I have been on duty for 3 years and the situation looks very good, and the control module used in Padang Besar is good for me. If possible, the facilities provided should provide more comfort to our officers. While working at the Penang airport in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The interviewees explain on how they are unsatisfied with the process done between agencies and the problematic communication between agencies. Improper examination may lead to release of unwanted travellers. Interviewee also highlight about the design failure referring to the inconvenience design of working place.

Significant Statement	Imperative Meaning
<p><i>the 1990s, we had counters that were higher compared to the height of the public, but here, we had counters that were low and exposed to the public.”</i></p>	
Loopholes in The System	
Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The risk of corruption is there, but the problem is that it is organised in a wider area. We have to have many officers on duty as well. Like the Auxiliary Police (PB), keep close to the motorcycle space and usually the enforcement unit will monitor all the places until the truck arrives. It will take a long time, and sometimes near the bus, there are pedestrians as well. So, safety wise, it is a little less for me.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewee shared about corruption risk as the ICQS is wide and there are needs for thorough checking to ensure no travellers can skip inspection. • Interviewee also share the concern on failure of the system to detect and record blacklisted person properly • Interviewee also question about the status of ICT vendors as their staff have the access to the system used by Immigration Department
No	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Yes, I am satisfied. Many who follow the SOP and officers are placed in their respective zones as well as orderly. So far, the system is okay, although sometimes there are issues, but they are quickly managed by the IT officer on duty.”</i> • <i>“For this loophole, in my view during my work here and being here, I do not see any loophole, and if there is, the control system can detect it again. In terms of corrupt activities, I feel and believe that nothing is happening here because the frequent system problems only involve the system or server down.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interviewee explain how they are satisfied with the system and strongly believe that loopholes does not exist.
Existence of overlaps of authorization between agencies	
Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“In most agencies, the ones that overlap with immigration are often the police. This is because the upper part (police post) is for the police to make a checkpoint and check there, but if you follow the proper, the first party to make the inspection is immigration (police make a check before the immigration counter). Other agencies, I don't see much overlap, if any at all.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewee stress about the legal issue as any traveller should report to Immigration before going through any other process • The interviewee also explains his concern about congestion that happened due to overlaps between different agencies. The overlap

Significant Statement	Imperative Meaning
<p style="text-align: center;">No</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“As the group leader here at ICQS Padang BESAR, it can be said that the lead agency here is immigration, so agencies such as customs, JPJ, KKM, and MAKIS are each aware of or know their respective areas of responsibility and roles. So, I think there is no overlap of powers because everyone knows their respective jurisdictions and there is no issue in this matter.”</i> • <i>“There is no significant overlap of powers because, in terms of immigration itself, the scope of our work is to involve the visitor only and other inspections require other jurisdictions, such as customs with the inspection of goods.”</i> • <i>“In my opinion, for the time being, as long as I work, there is no longer any visible duplication of power taking place. Their respective jurisdictions and expertise are clearly visible. For example, customs are responsible for goods, immigration is for passports and documents, and MAQIS is the animal section.”</i> 	<p>unfortunately affects Immigration Department.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interviewees show how confident they are about clearly visible of authorization and no issue of overlapping
Centralization of power can smoothen cross border management	
<p style="text-align: center;">Agree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“For me, every plan we have to implement first before we see its effectiveness, because the planning does not look different when we have implemented it. For me, if it is implemented, it may be okay because we can have a minimum of many departments in the complex and one department can know all the work; it may not be okay because there may be a reduction in knowledge. For example, immigration needs to understand the scope of customs work and vice versa.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewees agree with the idea of centralization and believe that it is implementable with proper planning and coordination. • Interviewee also agree as centralization may reduce bureaucracy and smoothen the examination process.

Significant Statement	Imperative Meaning
Disagree	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I have been serving since 2001. The scope of immigration work does start from the main door, or in other words, we are the first line and have just met with other agencies. So, when all these agencies are combined, the power of authorization for immigration is lost. “I think there will be problems going on. I do not agree because every agency already has a specific act and there will be an overlap of opinions between officers, and this will cause problems compared to improvements in border management.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewee shows her sense of belonging by taking centralization as loss of power. Interviewee also show his concern about career development opportunity if centralization take place. He also shows concern as workload and responsibility will be a burden as so much authorization is in one place.

Table 3. Significant statement and imperative meaning for current technology adoption

Significant Statement	Imperative Meaning
Current Technology Adoption	
Capability of Control Module	
Good	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “So far, I think it is good with no problems. Our system still has no problems with cross-border management.” “So far, the system is very good and has no grievances.” “In terms of the system, it is still good and fine. The system is user-friendly and there are no major problems during use. Minor issues such as a slow system at peak times are common, but, if possible, update the server or the performance of the system is good.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewee shows high confidence level towards the capability of the system Minor upgrade needed just to improve the speed of the system
Fair	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “If you check documents or passports, our current system is okay. It's just that I don't want to be okay with fingerprint taking because if we can, we should do facial recognition or take pictures. The system is okay, but there are some systems that need to be improved, like biometric retrieval so that the inspection is more detailed.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewee explain the need for the system to be expanded to additional biometric inspection for a better examination process. Interviewee agreed that the system is ok but at times, it failed to detect backlisted

Significant Statement	Imperative Meaning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Yes, it is effective, but the system, as I emphasised before, is old. Although it has been updated, the system performance and security are still the same. There have been cases where time key in comes in, okay, there is no problem, but when it comes out, there is BLI. This resulted in issues that should not have occurred, and officers who were blamed as a result of system failures were subject to disciplinary action. In conclusion, the system is okay. There are only certain situations where he cannot detect the proper information.” “As far as work experience goes, tracing a document still requires the manpower of skilled officers to check their pass documents. The existing system is still failing. In conclusion, the system is okay, but in terms of document authenticity, it still needs the expertise of officers because the system is still not able to implement it yet.” 	<p>person. This may lead to unfairly disciplinary action against officers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The system also require expansion to improve document authentication process done properly.
<p>Poor</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “So far, I feel it is still not enough because we are moving into the 22nd century with advanced technology, so supposedly our system must be parallel or in line with the current movement of technology. For example, the list of suspects, sometimes when the security department has checked in but not in real time, reaches us, sometimes it takes up to a month or two, sometimes it is blacklisted by the LHDN or PTPTN. When people make a passport, there is no problem, but when you want to go out, there are restrictions. Where it should be, the restriction occurs at an early stage when doing a passport, so the system fails to make an initial verification.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewee explain why he considers the existing system is poor and outdated. It fails to take certain action on certain cases at every level of process. This is considered as inefficiency in the process. The system occasionally fails to examine documents accordingly especially the Thais Passport.
<p>Departmental new technology adoption in the last 5 years</p>	
<p>Yes</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “To my knowledge, the new department introduced the new system, which Malaysia Automated Clearance System (MACS) has also upgraded but still seems to be the same as the old system with only a few minor updates. If it is better, I would like the system to be further upgraded because it has not yet reached a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is agreed that Immigration Department adopted new technologies in the last 5 years. However, it is doubtful that it does not meet the targeted purposes. Interviewees stressed

Significant Statement	Imperative Meaning
<p><i>satisfactory level. In my opinion, it's not just fingerprints like in Thailand itself. They use cameras when people come in front of officers; there is a camera, so we don't expect biometric alone. I see that things need to be improved."</i></p>	<p>that it failed to perform or improve the document examination process.</p>
<p>No</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="256 481 911 739">• <i>"Unsure if it is within the last few years, but for me, the old system is more effective. This is because the new system has a delay and is a little slow. While immigration matters should be fast and orderly, the system is slow. So, the new system has a not-so-good performance."</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="911 481 1337 784">• Interviewee was unsure if the new system implemented within the last 5 years. However, same goes with the above response, interviewee explain that the last system adopted was also a flop.
Convenience with new technology	
Convenience	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="256 896 911 974">• <i>"I was comfortable trying out the new system in hopes that it would be better than before."</i> <li data-bbox="256 985 911 1254">• <i>"For me, when a technology comes in, it's all officers. At first, they will struggle to use it, like understanding one by one technology or system that have many 'menus' and need to master first before being able to use the system. If possible, there should be a simple or user-friendly system for officers."</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="911 896 1337 1164">• Interviewees show their willingness to use new technology as long as it performs better than the existing. They are willing to adapt with new technology. <li data-bbox="911 1176 1337 1388">• The interviewees shared their concern about system failure during power breakdown that risk their capability to check visitor's background.
Inconvenience	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="256 1456 911 1668">• <i>"I feel normal, not too comfortable. This is because the exchange between the existing system now and the old one before still has some drawbacks even though the system has been upgraded, as the system does not help the officials very much."</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="911 1456 1337 1624">• The interviewee explain that the new technology or system does not provide any improvement in the process.
Prefer to Use Existing Technology	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="256 1769 911 2027">• <i>"The new one is comfortable, but in my own personal opinion, I am more comfortable with the old one. This is because I used to use these two systems and thought the new one was a lot of trouble compared to the old one. When the case is referred, at the counter there is BLI. When we enter or refer at the supervisor's</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="911 1769 1337 2027">• The interviewees explain about the uncertainty in document examination process caused by the system failure. As this happens, interviewees have to explore from a few different

Significant Statement	Imperative Meaning
<p><i>counter or senior assistant, we enter the passport information, there is no BLI. So, the question is, where does the hanging happen? In conclusion, the data at each counter is not stable, causing officers to be more comfortable with the old system.</i></p>	<p>modules to get certain information that may cause delay the process.</p>
Readiness of officers to operate new border crossing technology	
Ready	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Officials have no problem accepting technology as we ourselves have now upgraded to a new one in terms of smartphones where we have more sophisticated software. Our officers are already exposed to increasingly modern existing technology. For me, in terms of employees, there is no problem accepting new technology in the hope that the system does not burden them, is user-friendly, performs well and is better than before.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researcher found that readiness is not the issue in accepting new technology. But interviewees repeatedly express their concern about the capability of the new technology to perform its purpose and the technology must always be user friendly.

Table 4. Significant statement and imperative meaning for border crossing management

Significant Statement	Imperative Meaning
Border Crossing Management	
Importance of strong leadership in bringing improvements	
Very Important	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “In my opinion, a leader who can make firm and bold decisions without any elemental elements in terms of other external jurisdictions or political interference is a leader who can improve management. In my observation, there is little political influence that has an impact on a leader’s decision. Maybe the top officials who are afraid to make decisions that affect those under the impression of being leaders are not strong regarding such decisions.” “A good leader needs to have a guide to make decisions instead of blaming subordinates when they are already making decisions.” “For me, this strong leadership must have no interference from other parties than, for example, the head of the agency must make certain decisions and they must be final without any outside influence like politics or other heads of agencies, and they must be firm in making decisions.” “It requires strong leadership as this involves national and international borders and foreign countries, so border 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewees repeatedly highlight about the importance of avoiding external influence especially political interference in border crossing management. Security and political interest should be separated. Border crossing management is a bilateral interest. Strong leadership is crucial in protecting national interest. Interviewee also stress about accountability in leadership. Political stability is also important in having strong leadership. Thus, political

Significant Statement	Imperative Meaning
<p><i>management needs to have strong leadership. This is because this is in the interest of the country and not just the border interest.”</i></p>	<p>interference can be minimized.</p>
<p>Not Necessarily</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“In decision-making firmness, because the discretion of party A is not uniform with the discretion of party B, in the end, it is not a uniform decision. In addition, there may be some outside influence that affects the decisions made by an officer.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewee explain disappointment on unclear decisions by different senior officer which end up with external interference.
<p>Understanding of personal role in securing national border</p>	
<p>Good</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“So far, I understand my role in creating secure border management. I will ensure that my officers are free from corruption, and there are no cross-border crossings, and I will ensure that the system is always at a safe and smooth level to start the work process.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewee manage to explain and understand that their role is beyond document examination but it is related to the interest of national security, social and economy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I understand as an immigration officer in charge of guarding the border. To create a safe border crossing is a task that is especially important for national security.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewee manage to explain that consequences of negligence affect not only themselves but also national interest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The role of the individual is crucial. We need to have a responsible nature, trust, and know what our responsibility is to the country as well as the consequences of our own actions. This is important to create a secure border.”</i> 	
<p>Relation between secured border with economy and social stability</p>	
<p>Important</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The importance of this safe border when we enter, the movement enters according to the rules and instructions that have been set, so it guarantees economic and political stability. When border control is unsafe, people can go in and out, so we don’t know the criminals who enter without any record. That can have a very bad impact on our country. In other words, unsafe border management can cause other social impacts. Usually, when Thais who escape enter Malaysia, they engage in immoral activities. In Malaysia, many immoral massage centres and karaoke centres are sprouting in the capital and the state capital, which can damage the morals of our people. So, a safe border is important to prevent these activities from happening anywhere else after the border.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewee explain about the importance of having a secured border in order to maintain economic and social activity, investment opportunity and securing interest of security. • Interviewee also explain about social affect caused by the immoral activity when border security in compromised.

Significant Statement	Imperative Meaning
Importance of strong bilateral relationship	
Important	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“In my opinion, it is more about economic and tourism opportunities than the two countries' good relations, because with good relations in place, all affairs can be done well.”</i> • <i>“Good relations between Malaysia and Thailand can ensure that there are cross-border activities that will contribute to the economies of both countries. Tourism activities can strengthen the economy.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of the interviewee agreed that strong bilateral relationship is important for both Malaysia and Thailand. • Basically, 3 main reason repeatedly mentioned which are security, economic and social connection between people at the border.
Factors that make strong and secured border	
Strong leadership	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The factor that I think is important in terms of total reform from the government is that in terms of management. They should be involved and go check, so they can know what problems are happening at the border and during auditing. From there, we can know when the audit goes down. This is a problem that can be solved. The second suggestion, in terms of systematic fencing, is that we can increase the height of the fence so that there is no individual escape and strengthen the existing infrastructure, such as weapons, technology, and spiritual fencing, for the spirituality of our officers.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong leadership was explained by outlining several criteria such as visionary, hands on, good management skills and familiar with diplomacy.
Political Stability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“For me, strong management can be achieved in terms of integrity and stable politics internally and between Malaysia and Thailand on the border. This integrity involves all things such as our work, association, and manners with customers, where we need to have a good sense of identity while carrying out our duties at the border. Stable politics needs to be achieved in both Malaysia and Thailand; politics in the department and politics in the ICQS building. Most importantly is the leadership in Kedah, such as from the director general to the deputy director general and to the directors at the headquarters.”</i> • <i>“Another factor is stable politics and the integrity of officials on both sides of the border. Unstable politics will bring the department into unnecessary changes.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewees gave multiple factors in order to have a secured border. Interestingly, political stability was also considered as crucial as interviewees' share their concern of unnecessary policy changes happens when internal politics was unstable.

Significant Statement	Imperative Meaning
<p style="text-align: center;">Facility / System Stability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The second suggestion, in terms of systematic fencing, is that we can increase the height of the fence so that there is no individual escape and strengthen the existing infrastructure, such as weapons, technology, and spiritual fencing, for the spirituality of our officers.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility and system stability were mentioned repeatedly by interviewees. Facility and system are considered as inter related in operating document examination activity.
<p style="text-align: center;">Integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Strengthen the integrity of the officer himself. This is because, with the integrity of the officers, we can curb the symptoms of the unpleasant symptoms that will occur around the border this ICQS.”</i> • <i>“Integrity and stable politics are important to me. Both are important to enable robust and safe cross-border activities to be achieved. Integrity is often an issue because, without integrity, it is easy for an officer to be bribed. Meanwhile, when politics is unstable, foreigners will be afraid to enter our country. Like the example of a country that is in turmoil, their country's economy is falling, and their currency is also falling.”</i> • <i>“The factors depend on the officers on duty themselves, such as discipline, integrity, and focus in conducting inspections of the public for the sake of themselves and the country.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity was the most frequently mentioned as the factor to have a secured border. This is due to the risk of corruption that could easily happen at the border. • Interviewee mention about unpleasant symptom referring to risk of corruption among officers.
<p style="text-align: center;">Workplace Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Safe environmental factors. When a good environment exists, our border system will also improve and be more secure. We need to maintain social relationships between agencies.”</i> • <i>“When we deal with the system, the system can work well without any problems, as long as the system that the government provides is able to be used 100 percent. This is because when there are too many visitors, the current system is not able to accommodate the number of visitors or data in the system. In addition, to achieve strong boundaries, it is necessary to have good and customer-friendly complex facilities and an environment for officers and visitors.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working environment as also highlighted by interviewees as comfort at work place may bring positive vibes to officers. • The environment mentioned refers to surrounding, infrastructure, inter officer relationship and strong communication between senior officer and subordinates.

Summary of Propositions

Table 5. Summary of propositions

No	Propositions	Key Issues	Findings
1.	There are issues in the effectiveness of cross border management in immigration system in managing the border between Malaysia and Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Satisfaction with current practices ii. Loopholes iii. Overlaps iv. Centralization of power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Infrastructures and other facility are related to satisfaction for the officers ii. Issues such as system stability does exist and positively related to effectiveness iii. Overlaps of authorizations influenced the effectiveness iv. Centralization of power is unlikely positive in improving cross border management
2.	Implementation gaps do exist in control module in immigration system in managing the border between Malaysia and Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Strong leadership ii. New technology adoption iii. Understanding about security threats iv. Readiness among officers towards new technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Strong leadership positively related to cross border management ii. New technology adoption related positively to cross border management. iii. Adoption of underperforming new technology related negatively to cross border management iv. Knowledge about security threats related positively to cross border management v. Readiness and willingness among officers towards the implementation of new technology related positively to cross border management.

No	Propositions	Key Issues	Findings
3.	Countermeasures are needed to reduce the implementation gaps in managing border between Malaysia and Thailand.	i. Strong leadership ii. Political stability iii. Facility / System stability iv. Integrity v. Workplace environment	i. Strong leadership related positively to cross border management ii. Political stability related positively to cross border management iii. Facility / system stability related positively to cross border management iv. Integrity related positively to cross border management v. Workplace environment related positively to cross border management

Factors that Influence Cross-Border Management

1. Policy

The findings from the interview conducted found that most of the respondents described policies currently implemented as satisfactory; loopholes existed; there were overlaps of authorization; and the idea of centralization of power is almost unnecessary. In terms of satisfaction, 72.2% of the respondents shared their satisfaction with the current implementation, while 27.8% expressed a few issues of satisfaction as stated below:

"...Overall, I am satisfied with the system and practises practised at this frontier so far" (PB2).

"...for me, the management system is organized, but the cooperation between the agencies is not very close, and each of them does their own thing. Therefore, coordination and communication between agencies are a bit problematic" (BK8).

Respondents shared a mixture of agreement and disagreement about the existence of the loophole in the current implementation. 52.6% agree that there are loopholes, while 47.4% see no loopholes and are satisfied with the current implementation. Below are parts of the statements:

"...For me, the problem with immigration so far is the system. The system is not very up to date. So, when our officer is on duty, he has a list of suspicions that never come up, even though they are keyed in in the security section" (BK2).

"...This one does exist if we look. The system we use now sometimes hangs a lot or the system gets stuck and cannot read the blacklist. This can invite danger or problems for the IO or our officers, and the role, status, or integrity of these vendors should be questioned" (PB3).

"...For this loophole, in my view during my work here and being here, I do not see any loophole, and if there is, the control system can detect it again. In terms of corrupt activities, I feel and believe that nothing is happening here because..." (PB1).

In addition, 76.4% of the respondents strongly agree that the existence of multiple agencies has no relation to overlaps of authorization as stated below:

"...In my view, the overlap of powers, in terms of the essential duties of the department, there is not much interference, customs with his act, immigration with his act, even the police with offences other than that. It's just management..." (BK2).

"...I don't see it anymore. In my opinion, so far, everything is okay, and everyone is doing their job" (BK4).

"...None. All have their own divisions of power, divisions of expertise, as well as their own areas of responsibility" (PB5).

Meanwhile, the idea of centralization was agreed upon by only 29.5% of the respondents, as the others oversee uncertainties in many areas if the idea is implemented. Below are the statements that support the findings:

"...In my opinion, having one specific department is a burden to other departments, and there is a possibility of duplication of power there. This is because, although already merged into one department, in jurisdictions that are outside the complex, there may be confusion." (BK5).

"...I disagree less with the centralization of power or minimising the number of agencies at the border because, if we look closely, when we centralise power under one roof, it will slow down or even reduce career opportunities for an officer there. Moreover, when all agencies are grouped under one roof, enforcement will also be a problem because the power is too much..." (PB1).

2. Current Technology Adoption

Current technology adoption is explained by respondents in a few areas, such as system capability, convenience with new technology, and readiness among officers in accepting new technology. 82% of the respondents oversee the system as good and fair, with a similar opinion of 41% good and 41% fair. This is explained below.

"...I am satisfied with the existing system of practice, and I believe practise only needs to be further enhanced with this existing practice" (BK1).

"...So far, the system is very good and has no grievances" (PB6).

"...So far, the system is okay, although sometimes there are issues, but they are quickly managed..." (BK9).

14 out of 19 respondents admitted that they are comfortable with new technology. However, there was a mixture of feelings as new technology sometimes is not friendly, fails to perform, and causes unnecessary questions for the officers. These are explained below:

"For me, new or old, I don't care. The important thing is that the system is easy, orderly, usable, and can help ensure national security and does not affect the country and the officials on duty" (BK8).

"...the new system, this new MACS, has benefits. But it is not much different from the old system, so in terms of effectiveness, there is not much difference, and I think it is easier to use the old system" (BK2).

The researcher found that 94% of officers are ready to accept new technology. However, one respondent (6% of those polled) expressed a preference to stick with existing technology due to the unfriendliness and poor performance of new technologies implemented within the Immigration Department. These are explained below:

"In my opinion, this is not a problem because we have been introduced to new things such as current technology, smartphone technology, home media, and everything. We have been exposed to sophisticated and new things" (BK2).

"...The readiness of the system itself is not comprehensive, so hopefully the new system introduced is ready for use" (BK5).

3. Border Crossing Management

Based on the interviews, the research found that respondents repeatedly stressed the importance of strong leadership and their interest in the factors that make a secure and strong border. Interviews found that strong leadership plays the biggest role in having a secured border. The below statements support the finding:

"In my opinion, strong and decisive leadership is indeed necessary to make the only decision in the border without any influence from outside, especially from politics... it has become common in Malaysia or in any other country that when an issue occurs, there will be political influence that comes in to help solve problems involving the public and government agencies..." (BK2).

“For me, this strong leadership must have no interference from other parties than, for example, the head of the agency must make certain decisions and they must be final without any outside influence like politics or other heads of agencies, and they must be firm in making decisions.” (BK8).

The findings on factors that contribute to a strong border essentially answer Research Question 3 and Research Objective 3, as they indirectly conclude the research objectives. This is explained below:

“Integrity and stable politics are important to me. Both are important to enable robust and safe cross-border activities to be achieved. Integrity is often an issue because, without integrity, it is easy for an officer to be bribed. Meanwhile, when politics is unstable, foreigners will be afraid to enter our country. Like the example of a country that is in turmoil, their country's economy is falling, and their currency is also falling.” (BK8).

“Safe environmental factors. When a good environment exists, our border system will also improve and be more secure. We need to maintain social relationships between agencies.” (BK9).

“...The factor that allows this strong border crossing to be achieved is first and foremost a stable political environment so that no laws are enacted. This is because every time there is a change of leadership, the policy also changes and is enacted. In addition, the integrity of the officers is important because when the integrity of the officer is high, he will do the job efficiently...” (PB4).

DISCUSSION

Facility / System Stability in Cross-Border Management

A facility or infrastructure plays a significant role in cross-border management. The new ICQS Bukit Kayu Hitam is a new complex developed by the government to replace its old complex, which was completed in the year 2018. The ICQS is basically completed with modernized counters, a wider inspection and queuing area, a more comfortable working space, and new ICT facilities. However, there is still room for improvement, such as the existence of a free-duty complex between the border of Malaysia and Thailand that may lead to improper document examination. The free-duty complex also caused heavy traffic during peak hours. However, ICQS Padang Besar continues to operate in the old complex, with minor renovations. There were also comments about the unsuitable design of counters that allowed travelers to take a look at the system and record the examination process. Similar to ICQS Bukit Kayu Hitam, respondents in ICQS Padang Besar also expressed their disagreement with the existence of a free duty complex between the border of Malaysia and Thailand.

System stability is one of the most discussed topics by respondents during the data collection process. It is described as the core of any issue in cross-border management. System stability is discussed in a mixture of views where some of the interviews describe the system as dependable, trustable, and stable. However, some described it as unstable, failing to perform important data checks and slowing down the examination process. Respondents expressed their concern about the system's unfriendliness compared with the old system used by the department. The new system is considered to be supposedly easier to use, more stable, and able to simplify the process. However, there are situations where the new system could be at par or even worse than the old one. This caused some of the respondents to prefer to operate with the old system. Another main concern with regards to system stability is the failure of the system to capture blacklisted data of travellers. This may cause disciplinary action against the officer as it is considered their negligence in conducting the examination on a blacklisted traveller. Respondents look at this matter as an unfairness that is caused by system instability.

Workplace Environment

Two (2) of the respondents interestingly shared their view on how workplace environment helps in the effort to have strong and secured border. Workplace is considered as the place to spend most of their life. Thus, feeling comfortable, happy and easy develop strong responsibility within the officer to recontribute towards national security. A good workplace environment was described in two different subjects. Firstly, the workplace environment was referred to as the good facilities provided by the government for the staff and travellers. Secondly, workplace environment refers to the social situation in the ICQS where communication between officers is in a proper manner, relations between agencies are good, and relations between top management and the lower level are in place.

Integrity in Cross-Border Management

Interestingly, integrity is the most highlighted part of factors that make strong and secured border. From the interview, it is understood that cross border management is one of the risky jobs with regards to irregular activity among officer especially corruption. Sapuan, Abdul Wahab, Sholihin, and Sawaluddin (2020) empathise that an organisation must strike a balance between the interests of all parties involved in the operation of the business, including the rights and preferences of its employees, shareholders, clients, and society at large, in order to achieve corporate success. The firm will shift its focus from profit-oriented to stakeholder-oriented through the use of human governance. Human governance will reduce the incidence of incidences of misbehaviour by people in positions of power. This was also explained briefly in para 1.3

of chapter 1 and proven in this research. Respondents briefly explained the risk of corruption among officers as their authorization in document examination attracted many parties with negative interest.

The lines between what is necessary and what is desirable, as well as between acts and principles, are becoming increasingly hazy nowadays. Many businesses, including those in the media industry, disregard ethical standards and basic values, and if this trend continues, more confusion and issues may develop (Azizul & Kamarudin, 2021). Meanwhile, Haron et al. (2022) highlighted that the degree of integrity of three different kinds of state-level, state-statutory, and federal statutory bodies in Malaysia. According to the report, there are between 66% and 71% of public employees who have integrity. It found that a Malaysian organization's integrity level ranges from 50% to 75%. Accordingly, the findings of earlier studies show that Malaysian businesses are currently working toward a plan for implementing ethics and integrity throughout the company. By examining six dimensions—corporate ethical principles, action to advance ethics, ethics committee, whistleblower policy, code of ethics, and sustainability practices—Hashim et al. (2020) rated ethical commitment. The situation may lead to compromise of national security.

Strong Leadership in Cross-Border Management

Respondents repeatedly spoke about the importance of strong leadership. The responses differentiate leaders at various levels from top management, managerial level, and the leadership of senior officers at the ICQS itself. Top management was portrayed as very important in ensuring there was no external influence in managing borders between Malaysia and Thailand. The main discussed external influence is the interference of political entities that affect the performance of the Immigration Department, especially in decision-making in some irregular situations. For example, an unwanted person may be given permission to enter the country as requested by an external entity through a higher-level officer within the department. Respondents also refer to leadership at the managerial level and senior officers at the ICQSSs. This is contingent on senior officers' ability to command and control daily operations. A strong leader is described as someone who is capable of making quick decisions based on their judgment of a situation without any hesitation or influence. This is explained as crucial as any delay in decision-making will delay the whole process of document examination by the Immigration Department.

Political Stability Influence in Cross-Border Management

Political stability affects the operation of ICQSSs as operating border checkpoints is very costly. According to the respondents, the cost includes system maintenance, system development, operation expenditure, and maintenance of the facility. Instability in national politics caused unnecessary changes in immigration policy that changed the examination process at the border unnecessarily. Respondents expressed their concern about certain situations like changes in blacklisting processes, exemptions from blacklists given immediately after changes of government and interference of political entities without legal capacity. The situations created unnecessary hassle in the examination process. Political instability also caused the cancellation of Immigration's new system development awarded to a developer previously. Respondents described the cancellation as a discrepancy that could jeopardise efforts to build a strong and secure border.

CONCLUSION

There is room for improvements in cross-border management, particularly at ICQS Bukit Kayu Hitam and ICQS Padang Besar. This study manages to identify the implementation gaps and propose countermeasures for reducing them. The findings also found contradiction between the idea of introducing a Single Border Agency by MOHA and the acceptance of the same idea among officers.

As a conclusion, this study can be enhanced further by focusing on smaller scales of gaps and countermeasures to give a clearer idea of how the gaps could be improved. Cross-border management is related to national security and requires a deep knowledge based on facts and figures that is achievable with academic research.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Firstly, location of researcher and studied location. Researcher is based in Kuantan, Pahang while both ICQS is away in the northern of Peninsular Malaysia. Second limitation is time constrain to complete the interview as officers selected with the cooperation of both Director of Immigration in Kedah and Perlis as the interviewees works on shift basis. The interviews have to be conducted within their free hours. Research aims to conduct interview and categorize the interviewees according to their years of experience. However, the department implement limitation to 3 years before job rotation take place for every officer working at border checkpoints. The internal regulation was design as checkpoints is considered as risky posting. This limit the choice of interviewee to get more data from a more experienced officer. Lastly, some interviewees seem to be secretive or careful in answering question as the researcher is an officer of the Department. Some shown insecurity in answering questions probably trying not to openly disagree with matter related to the Department capability.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study identified the implementation gaps and countermeasures suitable to reduce them. For future research, there are rooms to expand the same research and bring the higher level of officers into the study. Looking at the same issues from a different perspective could also be beneficial for the Department.

Secondly, future research could also deepen the study on the countermeasures as responded to by interviewees. For example, integrity is the most highlighted factor in having a strong and secure border. Researchers could further study the matter as integrity is something that needs to be developed internally, not simply by imposing rules and regulations. Uncertainty in an officer's integrity could be a question as to their standard of accountability.

Lastly, it is recommended for researchers to expand research on other subjects with regards to the Immigration Department. Currently, the amount of academic research on immigration matters such as enforcement, document security, management of foreign workers, and management of expatriates is very small or almost none.

This study has concluded 5 factors that makes strong and secure border based on the findings gathered from the interview sessions. It is recommended for the department to adopt the factors especially on the facility, system stability and integrity of officers. The recommendation is based on the researcher understanding that the factors are between the control of the department's management.

As the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) is currently on the move towards having a Single Border Agency to manage border checkpoints, respondents' responses contradicted the idea, which was described as the centralization of power in this research. Thus, it is recommended for the department to provide clearer information for immigration officers nationwide. Issues like authorization, career development, and coordination should be given priority before such an idea is implemented. Perhaps an academic study on the centralization of power should be conducted.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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