



Original Article

Evaluating the oversight role of the People's Council in rural economic development: Evidence from Ninh Binh Province

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Received: December 28, 2024; Revised: April 14, 2025;

Accepted: April 25, 2025

Abstract: Previous research on the oversight role of people's councils in economic development has primarily relied on qualitative approaches and descriptive statistics. This study provides empirical evidence on the impact of various supervisory activities undertaken by the People's Council in Ninh Binh Province. These activities include planning supervision, reviewing reports from government agencies, questioning officials, assessing legal documents and resolutions, conducting thematic supervision, voting on officials' performance, overseeing the resolution of citizen complaints and voter recommendations, and enacting resolutions based on oversight outcomes. The findings indicate that the oversight functions of people's councils play a crucial role in promoting rural economic development by enhancing governance, policy implementation, and accountability mechanisms.

Keywords: People's council, rural economic development, local governance, Ninh Binh Province.

1. Introduction

The Resolution of the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam reaffirms the principle that “the people know, the people discuss, the people act, the people inspect, the people supervise, and the people benefit.” This principle underscores the central role of the People's Council in national development and the importance of public participation in governance.

The emphasis on inspection and supervision reflects the accountability of government institutions to the people. As a locally elected body, the People's Council (PC) embodies the will and aspirations of the public and is

mandated to implement this principle. Its supervisory responsibilities cover vital areas, including socio-economic development planning, local budgeting and budget settlement, land-use decisions, and related economic matters. However, the breadth of these responsibilities presents several challenges. Persistent issues include blurred boundaries between public and private interests, inadequate oversight of corruption and vested interests, and limited cross-departmental accountability—factors that contribute to inefficiency and reinforce the notion that “everybody's responsibility is nobody's responsibility.”^{1,2}

To address these governance challenges, the Central Committee, Politburo, and Secretariat

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<https://doi.org/10.57110/vnu-jeb.v5i2.373>

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¹ <https://vov.vn/chinh-tri/quoc-hoi/chu-tich-quoc-hoi-quyen-han-phai-di-lien-trach-nhiem-395535.vov>

² https://tcnn.vn/news/detail/19618/Vi_sao_Hoi_dong_nha_n_dan_hoat_dong_kem_hieu_qua_nang_ve_hinh_thuc_all.html

have issued key regulations aimed at strengthening inspection and supervisory mechanisms, including Central Committee Regulation No. 30, Politburo Regulations No. 86 and 102, and Secretariat Regulation No. 109. These documents seek to enhance transparency, ensure accountability, and promote active public participation in governance. As emphasized by General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong: “Inspection, auditing, and accounting must be strengthened, with strict discipline; investigation, prosecution, and adjudication must be vigorously directed, without prohibited areas or exceptions, being both rigorous and humane. Importantly, not only should responsible agencies act, but the public must also engage, for this is the path to success...” Therefore, fostering public participation in local-level supervision must be a priority to ensure transparency and accountability.

The supervisory role of the PC is especially critical in economic governance and anti-corruption efforts. Nonetheless, institutional limitations remain. In 2021, Vietnam ranked 168th out of 193 countries on the Voice and Accountability Index. At the local level, indicators from the Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) reveal weak performance. A 2022 report by CECODES, VFF-CRT, RTA, and UNDP shows that fewer than 25% of citizens had access to land-related information, and fewer than 60% could access publicly posted budget revenue and expenditure data. These figures highlight the ongoing need to improve transparency and accountability at both national and local levels.

Corruption—especially in the form of informal payments—poses systemic challenges in transitional economies. While minor corruption may initially appear to “grease the wheels” of rigid systems, over time, it becomes entrenched and increasingly difficult to reverse (Ades & Tella, 1996; Méon & Sekkat, 2005; Nguyen & Van Dijk, 2012; Vu et al., 2018). Public oversight, particularly during early stages of economic transformation, is essential to curbing corrupt practices and building long-term institutional integrity.

Although research on the PC’s oversight role exists, national-level studies often remain general and overlook the distinct roles played by the council at the provincial, district, and commune levels. In the case of Ninh Binh Province, which aims to exceed its agricultural and rural development targets for 2021-2025, efforts such as agricultural restructuring, expanding organic production, developing commodity-based agriculture linked to tourism, and building model new rural areas require meaningful public involvement. Only when citizens are informed, empowered, and engaged in monitoring policy implementation can rural

economic development become more transparent, efficient, and sustainable.

However, as noted in the political report of the Executive Committee of the Ninh Binh Provincial Party Committee (Term XXII), public oversight remains superficial in many localities. Issues such as bureaucracy, corruption, waste, irresponsibility, and abuse of power persist, often due to legal and institutional shortcomings. This observation is further supported by Nguyen et al. (2025), who found that in Ninh Binh Province, citizen oversight remains largely formalistic, with systemic weaknesses in legal frameworks and institutional enforcement undermining accountability.

Given the importance of citizen oversight in advancing rural economic development—particularly in provinces like Ninh Binh—and in realizing the vision of a socialist rule-of-law state “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” a comprehensive evaluation of the PC’s supervisory effectiveness is essential. This article seeks to assess the PC’s role in rural economic development in Ninh Binh, identify key challenges, and propose practical solutions to strengthen citizen oversight, enhance transparency, and improve local governance outcomes.

2. Data and methodology

2.1. Data sources

This study employed a snowball sampling technique, beginning with participants identified based on their demonstrated interest in research. These initial respondents were then asked to refer additional potential participants.

To enhance response rates and ensure data completeness, various follow-up strategies were used, including face-to-face interviews, phone calls, text messages, and scheduled emails. A total of 396 survey responses were collected. Of these, 19 were excluded due to uniform responses across all items, indicating a lack of engagement. An additional 8 surveys were removed due to excessive missing data (over 15% unanswered items). Consequently, 369 valid responses were retained for further analysis, satisfying the minimum sample size requirements.

2.2. Research model and estimation method

Drawing from a comprehensive review and analysis of both international and domestic studies, along with expert consultations (e.g., Javits & Klein, 1977; Sharpe, 2013; Levin & Bean, 2018; Dang, 2022; Nguyen, 2024), this paper has selected, adapted, and proposed the following official research model. Definitions and measurement of variables are presented in Table 1.

The research model was developed through a comprehensive review of both international

and domestic studies, contextualized to reflect the specific socio-economic characteristics of Ninh Binh Province. Expert consultations were also conducted to ensure the appropriateness and validity of the measurement scales employed.

Subsequently, the data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 3. This

method enables a robust examination of the relationships between the supervisory activities of the Provincial PC and rural economic development. PLS-SEM is particularly well-suited for analyzing complex models involving latent constructs that are difficult to measure directly, thereby enhancing the analytical precision of the study.

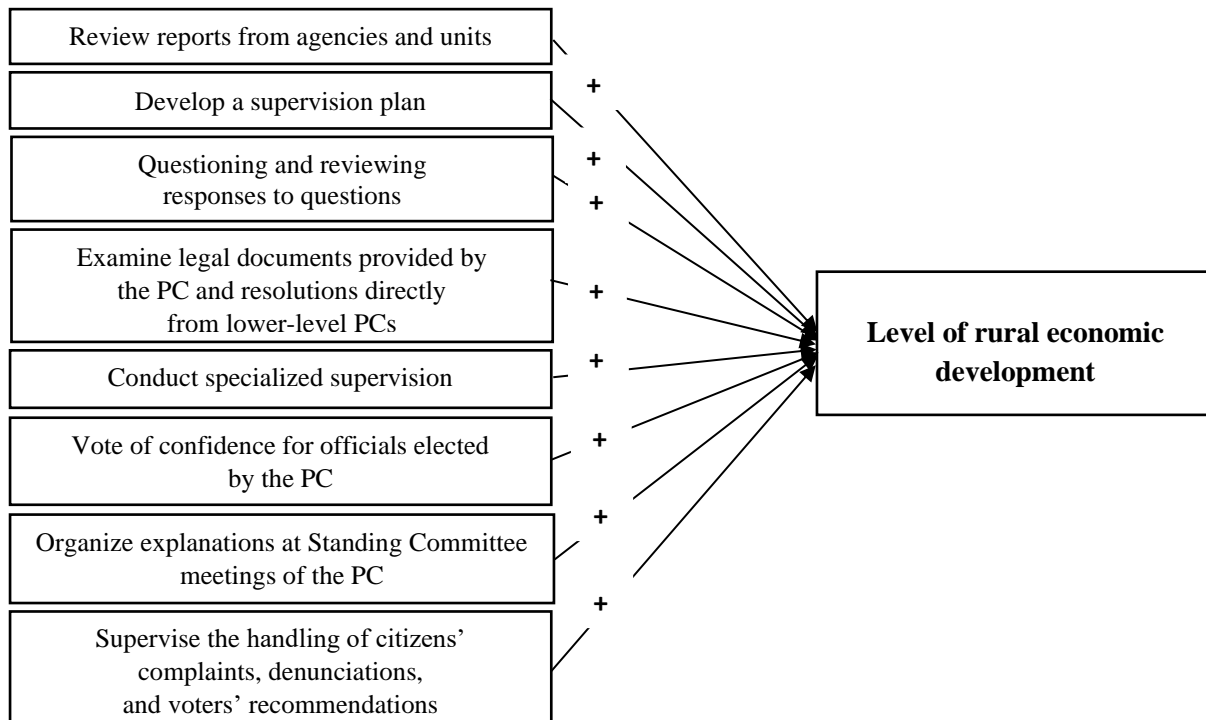


Figure 1: Supervisory activities of the PC

Source: Author's research and proposal.

Table 1: The definitions and measurement of variables

Order	Symbol	Content	References
<i>Develop a supervision plan</i>			
1	LKHGS1	The Provincial PC determines clear monitoring goals and directions when making a monitoring plan.	Nguyen (2016), Zhang and Yuan (2023)
2	LKHGS 2	The Provincial PC clearly defines the scope and objects of supervision when making a supervision plan.	
3	LKHGS 3	The Provincial PC clearly defines the monitoring time when making the monitoring plan.	
4	LKHGS 4	The Provincial PC selects appropriate forms and methods of supervision when making a supervision plan.	
<i>Review reports of agencies and units</i>			
5	XXBC1	The process of the Provincial PC reviewing and evaluating reports from agencies and units is carried out in a transparent and public manner.	Vu and Nguyen (2021), Nguyen (2021), Dang (2022)
6	XXBC2	The review and evaluation of reports by the Provincial PC of agencies and units is carried out periodically at appropriate frequency.	
7	XXBC3	The Provincial PC's review of reports from agencies and units has brought about measures to improve or adjust the management and operation of agencies and units.	
8	XXBC4	Agencies and units whose reports are reviewed by the Provincial PC have the opportunity to interact and provide feedback during the report review process.	
<i>Questioning and reviewing responses to questions</i>			
9	CVXX1	The Provincial PC always raises important, accurate and relevant questions on important issues during the questioning process and considers the answers to the questions.	

10	CVXX2	The information provided by the interviewee during the interview process is usually transparent, reliable and relevant to the questions asked.	Nguyen (2021), Drolc and Keiser (2021), Phan (2022)
11	CVXX3	The process of questioning and reviewing the response to questions by the Provincial PC is carried out publicly with the people to ensure transparency and community participation.	
12	CVXX4	The questioning and reviewing of the responses to questions by the Provincial PC have promoted improvements and adjustments in the management and operations of management agencies.	
13	CVXX5	The questioning and consideration of the response to questions by the Provincial PC always takes place responsibly, honestly and effectively.	
<i>Review legal documents of the People's Committee of the same level and resolutions of the PC of the directly lower level</i>			
14	XXVB1	The Provincial PC always carefully considers and ensures that legal documents of the People's Committee at the same level and resolutions of the PC at lower levels fully comply with legal provisions.	Dang (2022), Zhang and Yuan (2023)
15	XXVB2	The Provincial PC ensures the assessment of the enforceability of legal documents of the People's Committee at the same level and resolutions of the PC at the next lower level to ensure that they can be effectively implemented in practice.	
16	XXVB3	The Provincial PC carefully considered and assessed the impact of these legal documents and resolutions on society and people.	
17	XXVB4	The Provincial PC ensures that the process of reviewing legal documents and this resolution takes place in a transparent and objective manner.	
18	XXVB5	After consideration, the Provincial PC is able to propose changes, including amending, adjusting or abolishing these legal documents and resolutions if necessary to ensure their reasonableness and effectiveness.	
<i>Topical supervision</i>			
19	GSCĐ1	The Provincial PC sets specific goals to evaluate the effectiveness of thematic supervisions.	Dang and Nguyen (2021), Nguyen (2024)
20	GSCĐ2	The Provincial PC ensures that thematic supervisions are conducted honestly and transparently.	
21	GSCĐ3	The Provincial PC works closely with stakeholders including agencies, social organizations and the community to ensure the success of the monitoring process.	
22	GSCĐ4	The PC listens to opinions and feedback from society and people to improve the quality of thematic supervisions.	
23	GSCĐ5	The Provincial PC has a process for reporting and evaluating the results of the monitoring process, helping them identify the level of success and weaknesses that need to be improved in the future.	
<i>Vote of confidence for office holders elected by the PC</i>			
24	LPTN1	The rules and regulations relating to the vote of confidence process are clearly published and applied publicly to ensure transparency.	Nguyen and Nguyen (2023), Luu (2024), Dao and Pham (2023)
25	LPTN2	The PC has specific criteria, built on the duties and responsibilities of the position holder to evaluate the level of performance of that person.	
26	LPTN3	The PC shall determine the time and frequency of taking a vote of confidence periodically or according to special needs, depending on the specific situation.	
27	LPTN4	The voting process is conducted in an organized and confidential manner, ensuring the privacy and integrity of the process.	
28	LPTN5	Society and citizens have the opportunity to participate in this process by giving their opinions and feedback on the office holder.	
29	LPTN6	The results of the vote of confidence should be reported in a transparent, honest and public manner.	
<i>Organizing explanation activities at the Standing Committee meeting of the PC</i>			
30	TCHĐ1	The accountability process is conducted fairly and transparently with all members of the PC and the people.	Nguyen and Nguyen (2021), Nguyen (2022), Phan (2022)
31	TCHĐ2	The topics and contents of the explanations are determined to focus on important issues being monitored by the PC.	
32	TCHĐ3	The presentation process is well organized, leading to meaningful discussions.	
33	TCHĐ4	Council members have the opportunity to ask questions, request further explanation, and provide comments on issues discussed during the accountability activity.	
<i>Supervise the settlement of citizens' complaints and denunciations and voters' petitions</i>			
34	GSGQ1	The Provincial PC has an assessment of the processing time that government agencies spend to resolve complaints, denunciations and recommendations.	Truong (2020), Dang and Nguyen (2021),
35	GSGQ2	The Provincial PC assesses the effectiveness of handling complaints, denunciations and recommendations of government agencies.	

36	GSGQ3	The Provincial PC assesses the level of fairness and reliability in handling complaints, denunciations and recommendations of government agencies.	Drolc and Keiser (2021)
37	GSGQ4	The PC has a process for evaluating and reporting the results of monitoring the settlement of citizens' complaints and denunciations and voters' recommendations.	
<i>Issue a resolution on monitoring results</i>			
38	BHNQ1	The process of issuing resolutions on the results of supervision by the PC is carried out in a transparent and public manner, helping people easily access the content of the resolutions.	Lowande and Potter (2021), Drolc and Keiser (2021), Dang (2022)
39	BHNQ2	The resolution provides specific information on the results of the monitoring process, including specific issues that were assessed and identified.	
40	BHNQ3	The resolutions set out specific measures proposed by the PC to improve the situation based on the results of the monitoring process.	
41	BHNQ4	Resolutions on the results of supervision of the PC include feedback from stakeholders and proposals from people and society.	
42	BHNQ5	The PC has established channels to receive public opinions and feedback on the resolutions and supervisory outcomes it issues.	
<i>Level of rural economic development</i>			
43	KTNT1	Ninh Binh Province has a good rural economic growth rate.	Nguyen (2011), Vo & Nguyen (2020)
44	KTNT2	The economic criteria of new rural areas of Ninh Binh Province all reach good levels.	
45	KTNT3	Rural people's lives are improved every year.	
46	KTNT4	Economic production in rural areas is increasingly developing and diversifying.	

Source: Author's compilation.

3. Research findings

This section presents the research findings regarding the supervisory role of the Provincial PC in promoting rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province.

Supervisory planning

As shown in Table 2, the average score for the Supervisory Planning factor (LKHGS) is 3.271 (SD = 0.638), with all indicator scores exceeding 3. This indicates that respondents viewed the Council's supervisory planning as effective. Hypothesis testing confirms that "Supervisory planning by the PC positively impacts rural economic development in Ninh

Binh Province" ($\beta = 0.184, p < 0.01, t = 7.954$; see Table 3).

Several factors contribute to this effectiveness. Clearly defined objectives and orientations enable the Council to target key rural development issues, optimize resource use, and guide sustainable growth. Specifying the scope and subjects of supervision allows focus on areas with the most significant impact. Structured and timely supervision facilitates early issue detection and prompt corrective measures. Furthermore, selecting appropriate supervision methods and clarifying responsibilities within the planning process enhances overall effectiveness.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the research sample

Classification criteria	Quantity	Percentage (%)	Classification criteria	Quantity	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>			<i>Seniority</i>		
Male	191	51.76	1-4 years	201	54.47
Female	178	48.24	5-9 years	119	32.25
<i>Education level</i>			10-14 years	38	10.30
Bachelor's degree	218	59.08	> 15 years	11	2.98
Engineer	54	14.63			
Master's degree	71	19.24			
Doctorate	26	7.05			

Source: Authors.

Table 3: Results of hypothesis testing

Direct impact	B	p-value	t-value
LKHGS → KTNT	0.184***	0.000	7.954
XXBC → KTNT	0.179***	0.003	2.987
CVXX → KTNT	0.138**	0.028	2.200
XXVB → KTNT	0.131**	0.024	2.258
GSCD → KTNT	0.131**	0.035	2.110

LPTN → KTNT	0.240***	0.000	4.397
TCHĐ → KTNT	- 0.059 ^{ns}	0.308	1.019
GSGQ → KTNT	0.154***	0.001	3.272
BHNQ → KTNT	0.622***	0.000	18.754

Source: Authors.

Reviewing reports from agencies and units

As presented in Table 2, the average score for the “Reviewing reports from agencies and units” factor (XXBC) is 3.344 (SD = 0.666), with all indicators scoring above 3—XXBC1 (3.463), XXBC3 (3.393), XXBC4 (3.276), and XXBC2 (3.241). This indicates a generally positive assessment by respondents of the Provincial PC’s report review activities. Hypothesis testing supports the hypothesis that “The PC’s review of reports from agencies and units positively impacts rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province” with a coefficient of $\beta = 0.179$, $p < 0.01$, $t = 2.987$ (Table 3).

Several factors explain this effect. Report reviews help the Council monitor rural program progress, ensure target achievement, and guide effective budget allocation. They also highlight challenges faced by farmers, informing responsive policies. The process fosters transparency, encourages community participation, and supports sustainable resource management, particularly in land and water use. Collectively, these functions enhance governance quality and align interventions with local needs. In sum, the PC’s review of agency reports plays a vital role in promoting effective, inclusive, and sustainable rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province.

Questioning and reviewing responses to questions

The average score for the “Questioning and reviewing responses to questions” factor (CVXX) is 3.251 (SD = 0.643), with all indicator means above 3 (see Table 2). This suggests that the PC’s questioning activities and response reviews are generally viewed positively by respondents. The hypothesis that “The PC’s questioning and review of responses positively impacts rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province” is supported with a coefficient of $\beta = 0.138$, $p < 0.01$, $t = 2.200$ (Table 3).

This result can be attributed to several factors. First, the willingness of the provincial government and relevant agencies to engage with the PC enhances transparency and the quality of rural governance. Second, council members exercise their questioning rights constructively, contributing to policy refinement and improved decision-making. Third, the questioning process helps shape strategic visions for rural development by identifying priorities across key sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, education, and healthcare. With clearer direction, resources can be allocated

more effectively to promote rural progress. In sum, the PC’s questioning and review activities play a crucial role in advancing rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province.

Reviewing legal documents from the same-level people’s committee and resolutions from directly lower-level people’s council

As shown in Table 2, the “Reviewing legal documents from the same-level PC and resolutions from directly lower-level PC” factor (XXVB) has an average score of 3.482 (SD = 0.701), with all observed indicators exceeding 3—XXVB3 (3.333), XXVB5 (3.263), XXVB1 (3.247), XXVB2 (3.160), and XXVB4 (3.132). These results suggest that respondents positively evaluate the Provincial PC’s review of legal documents and resolutions. The hypothesis that “The PC’s review of legal documents from the same-level PC and resolutions from directly lower-level PC positively impacts rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province” is supported with a coefficient of $\beta = 0.131$, $p < 0.05$, $t = 2.258$ (see Table 3).

This review process helps build a coherent administrative framework by aligning legal documents across governance levels, ensuring policy consistency from provincial to grassroots levels. It strengthens coordination and enables stakeholder engagement, allowing communities and experts to offer practical insights. This participatory approach supports context-specific strategies while enhancing transparency and accountability, reducing risks of bias or abuse. Overall, the Provincial PC’s systematic review of legal documents and resolutions fosters an institutional environment conducive to effective rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province.

Thematic supervision

As indicated in Table 2, the “Thematic supervision” factor has an average score of 3.296 (SD = 0.655), with all observed indicators scoring above 3—GSCĐ1 (3.347), GSCĐ2 (3.347), GSCĐ3 (3.165), GSCĐ4 (3.363), GSCĐ5 (3.252), and GSCĐ6 (3.301). These results reflect a generally favorable evaluation of the Provincial PC’s thematic supervision activities. Hypothesis testing further supports the proposition that “The thematic supervision of the PC positively impacts rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province,” with a coefficient of $\beta = 0.131$, $p < 0.05$, and $t = 2.110$ (see Table 3).

Thematic supervision plays a vital role in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity in the implementation of rural development programs. It helps detect and deter misconduct, ensuring equitable and efficient use

of public resources. This form of oversight also enables the systematic evaluation of program effectiveness through evidence-based monitoring. By identifying gaps and areas for improvement, the PC can propose policy refinements and strategic interventions aligned with development goals. Moreover, thematic supervision fosters trust and cooperation between local authorities and rural communities, especially farmers, thereby strengthening social cohesion and the sustainability of rural economic initiatives. In sum, thematic supervision enhances the quality of rural governance and contributes meaningfully to economic development efforts in Ninh Binh Province.

Vote of confidence for position holders elected by the PC

As shown in Table 2, the “Vote of confidence for position holders elected by the PC” factor (LPTN) has an average score of 3.482 (SD = 0.594), with all indicator means exceeding 3. This reflects a generally positive perception of the confidence voting process conducted by the Provincial PC. Hypothesis testing further supports the proposition that “The PC’s oversight through confidence voting for position holders positively impacts rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province,” with a coefficient of $\beta = 0.240$, $p < 0.01$, and $t = 4.397$ (see Table 3).

Confidence voting is a key accountability mechanism that encourages officeholders to perform effectively and align with rural development goals. It formalizes performance evaluation, motivating officials to demonstrate competence and commitment. Those who retain the Council’s trust ensure leadership continuity and consistent policy execution. The process also reinforces democratic legitimacy by subjecting officials to elected oversight, strengthening institutional trust. Overall, confidence voting not only enhances individual accountability but also supports effective governance and decision-making, contributing to rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province.

Conducting accountability sessions at standing committee meetings of the PC

As shown in Table 2, the “Conducting accountability sessions at standing committee meetings of the PC” factor (TCHĐ) has an average score of 3.367, with all observed indicators rated above 3. Although this reflects generally positive perceptions of the activity, hypothesis testing indicates no statistically significant impact on rural economic development ($p > 0.05$), resulting in the rejection of Hypothesis H6 (see Table 3). This is noteworthy, as it is the only supervisory activity examined that does not demonstrate a significant effect.

This result may stem from the limited scope of Standing Committee meetings, which primarily address routine administrative matters. Major decisions on rural economic development, particularly those requiring long-term planning, are usually made in full Council sessions.

Accountability sessions within the Standing Committee are infrequent and focused on short-term performance, lacking strategic depth. Additionally, the Committee’s narrower authority restricts its influence on broader development agendas. Thus, while contributing to internal oversight, the limited scope and procedural nature of these sessions likely explain their insignificant impact on rural economic outcomes.

Oversight of complaint and petition resolution by citizens and voters

As shown in Table 3, Hypothesis H7 is supported, with a coefficient of $\beta = 0.154$, $p < 0.01$, and $t = 3.272$, indicating that the PC’s oversight of complaint and petition resolution positively influences rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province. Additional analysis shows that the factor overseeing complaints and petitions (GSGQ) has an average score of 3.617 (SD = 0.613), with GSGQ1 and GSGQ2 scoring higher than GSGQ3 and GSGQ4.

An effective oversight mechanism for resolving complaints and petitions helps address conflicts and grievances promptly and fairly, removing obstacles to rural development. It fosters public trust, enhances transparency, and promotes accountability in local governance. This, in turn, creates a stable environment that attracts investment and supports economic activities. By encouraging citizen participation, the PC ensures that rural development strategies reflect grassroots needs. Overall, its oversight of complaint and petition resolution contributes significantly to good governance and sustainable rural economic growth in Ninh Binh Province.

Issuance of resolutions on oversight results

The research findings demonstrate that the issuance of oversight resolutions by the PC has a strong and statistically significant impact on rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province ($\beta = 0.622$, $p < 0.01$, $t = 18.754$; see Table 3). The corresponding factor (BHNQ) has an average score of 3.520 and a standard deviation of 0.732 (Table 2), indicating a generally favorable assessment by respondents.

Oversight resolutions are official documents that promote transparency and accountability by disseminating accurate information on rural conditions. They evaluate the performance of rural programs and policies, identifying areas for improvement to enhance development outcomes. Through these resolutions, the Provincial PC can propose concrete directives, guiding local authorities in planning and implementation. Moreover, publicly available and reliable information fosters investor confidence, attracting support from businesses and organizations. These documents also highlight rural investment potential, serving as strategic tools for development promotion. In sum, the issuance of oversight resolutions significantly contributes to effective governance and rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province.

4. Conclusion

The study establishes an analytical framework to elucidate the factors influencing the PC's oversight on rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province. The research identifies several oversight activities by the provincial PC that positively impact rural economic development. For example, structured planning allows the PC to focus on specific rural issues, ensuring efficient resource utilization and guiding sustainable growth. In addition, reviewing reports from agencies and units enables the Council to monitor progress, prioritize budget allocations, address challenges faced by farmers, and foster transparency, thereby enhancing rural economic development. Furthermore, through constructive questioning, the Council can improve policy quality, set strategic visions, and ensure effective rural economic management. Hence, in policy implication, promoting and analyzing the PC's comprehensive oversight activities play a pivotal role in promoting rural economic development in Ninh Binh Province in particular and other provinces with similar characteristics in general.

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