

Citizen Satisfaction with Public Policy from Good Governance Theory

Phan Nhan Trung¹

¹ Inspection Division, Thu Dau Mot University, Binh Duong, Vietnam.

ARTICLE INFO

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: February 21, 2024

Accepted: March 20, 2024

Published: March 28, 2024

KEYWORDS

Public policy;

Citizen-centered policy process;

Citizen-satisfaction

ABSTRACT

The relationship between people and policy is not a new issue in previous public policy research. However, few authors mention serious research on people's satisfaction with current policies. Studies on good state governance with progressive criteria, emphasizing participatory, consensus-oriented, transparent and accountable, responsive and effective, efficient, equitable, inclusive, and following the rule of law have created a positive evaluation system for each country's state management activities, especially in public policy evaluation. Assessing people's satisfaction lies in the content of policy evaluation. People have the right to know and be aware of the problems of the policy, the reasons for its creation, and the benefits that the policy brings to the majority of the people, ensuring the nation's political guidelines and policies. Satisfaction assessment based on good governance theory contributes to the author's assessments and analysis to discuss factors affecting people's satisfaction with the policy process, expanding the issue of people-centered policy processes, thereby suggesting some implications for countries.

Corresponding Author: Phan Nhan Trung (Email: trungpn@tdmu.edu.vn)

INTRODUCTION

In today's diverse and complex society, ensuring citizen satisfaction with public policy is a goal and a significant challenge for administrators and politicians. Citizen satisfaction not only reflects acceptance and support for the government but also affects their level of participation in political and social decisions, as well as creating an environment of stability and development for the country.

Since the late 1980s, the quality of government and its performance has become an issue of both academic and policy importance. The concept of "good governance" has attracted interest from the development community and received financial support from a variety of sources in general with criteria such as: people's awareness of the policy (Houston et al., 2016; Rahn & Rudolph, 2005), Policy representation regime (Miller and Stokes, 1963; Soroka & Wlezien, 2010; Achen & Bartels, 2017; Huber and Powell's, 1994; Parsons and Weber, 2011; Rovny, 2012), Citizen participation in the policy process (Adams, 1997; Heinrich & Fioramonti, 2007). Organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, United Nations (especially UNDP), OECD, and other donor organizations have played essential roles in shaping and promoting policy concepts related to good governance. According to the United Nations, "governance" can be defined as "the decision-making process and the process by which decisions are taken (or not taken)". This definition is one of the examples of the development community's understanding of governance, which is reflected in the World Bank's six-dimensional definition of good governance. Factors such as voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, rule of law, and control of corruption are all considered.

While such efforts by international organizations to improve governance in developing countries are admirable, the reality is that they are often heavily criticized. The central issue is usually the measurement of governance quality, with measurements often criticized as ineffective and not reflective of reality. In addition, imposing conditions on aid and accusations of politicization of aid projects are also common challenges. In today's diverse and complex society, ensuring citizen satisfaction with public policy is not only a goal but also a significant challenge for administrators and politicians. Citizen satisfaction not only reflects acceptance and support for the government but also affects their level of participation in political and social decisions, as well as creating an environment of stability and development for the country.

Good governance can be understood as a set of criteria for social management aimed at promoting and ensuring a country's harmonious and sustainable development. Good governance comprises requirements: rule of law, protection of human rights, transparency, accountability, and public participation. According to the good governance theory, this research will focus on assessing citizen satisfaction and thoroughly analyze the factors that influence this satisfaction. It includes assessing the transparency and fairness of decision-making processes, the effectiveness and efficiency of policies, and the quality of public services the government provides.

The author hopes this research will provide theoretical foundations and policy implications by capturing community opinions and reflecting people's needs in political and policy decisions. Appropriately, it contributes to perfecting the policy process and a citizen-centered policy process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public policy is a set of related decisions to "select" goals, policy solutions, and tools to solve policy problems according to the overall goals determined by the ruling political party rights (Hai, 2017). From the perspective of a policy approach from the policy process, public policy can be understood as the response of organizations to the internal and external environment through a series of actions from identifying policy issues, considering and selecting options, put the options into practice, evaluate the results and adjust the response to a better response (Son, 2022).

According to Jean-Pierre et al. (2008), citizen satisfaction lies in the content of policy evaluation. Citizen satisfaction with government performance is essential to enhance the performance of a government agency (Sumaryati et al., 2020). People are the most critical actors in any country, and their perception of the government is significant (Andoko, 2020). The government is responsible for providing citizens with policy-related services (Nurdin, 2021). When people are satisfied with government performance, they will create positive attitudes, and their responses and behavior will be approved (Napitupulu et al., 2018). In fact, Basri (2019) correctly noted that people in any country will only be satisfied if the role of government is expanded to ensure sustainable development and public satisfaction. Additionally, government services must be of high quality because those who want to improve the adequate performance of the government sector will benefit from better government services (Lanin & Hermanto, 2019).

Additionally, policy implementation with government support can be achieved when newly enacted policies reflect public needs (Sarnoto & Hayatina, 2021). The government must provide citizens with reliable guidance to increase their satisfaction with the government (Refly & Esti, 2020).

Another noteworthy point is that citizen satisfaction with public policy is entirely consistent with criteria from good governance theory. Good governance originated in the West and was popular among businesses, then expanded globally through cooperative relationships between countries and international organizations and countries. There are many criteria for good governance, specifically:

- Concept of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP): ensuring participation; the justice of the law; transparency; responsiveness to all stakeholders towards consensus; equality; effectiveness and efficiency; accountability; strategic vision.
- World Bank concept: public and predictable policy-making process; professional public administration; accountable executive apparatus; people's active participation in public activities; fair law.
- Concept of the Asian Development Bank (ADB): accountability; ensure participation (of stakeholders in the policy-making process); predictable; transparent.

In short, good governance is the effective implementation of state affairs with the participation of many subjects in society, satisfying the needs and ensuring the rights of citizens and organizations. From the above concept, the essential characteristics of good state governance can be drawn as follows:

Firstly, mobilize and ensure the participation of social actors, especially people, in state governance. The most typical feature of this model is the increased participation of people and social organizations in the activities of the administrative system from central to local levels. Individuals and organizations in society can participate in government activities (specifically, participate in issuing administrative decisions, policies, and action measures) directly or indirectly communicated through representatives or legal organizations.

Second, governance is in the spirit of the rule of law: good governance requires complete legal regulations that ensure objectivity and fairness. Laws must create a safe, legal framework to protect human rights, especially protecting the rights of ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups. It requires an independent, strict, fair, and objective court system to judge violations of the law without excluding any cases.

Third, fairness and transparency: a government with good governance is a government that serves fairly and equally to all different subjects in society, regardless of class, ethnicity, religion, or gender. Transparency in good state governance is reflected in the fact that government activities must be continuously and accurately informed to all individuals and organizations in society in a complete, easy-to-access, timely manner, and easy to understand. The right to information is a legitimate right of the people.

Fourth, flexibly adapt to changes in the governance environment: a well-governed government can face and handle all changes well. Those changes can take place within the government system of each country. They can also be due to the impact of the international environment in the face of internationalization and globalization trends. The

government's adaptation is reflected in the timeliness and correctness of legal regulations and clearly in its creativity and flexibility in making management decisions to meet the requirements of changes and people's expectations.

Fifth, direction and consensus: Good governance must show how to find social consensus for the government through activities to harmonize the interests of citizens and organizations and the state, establish a consensus society, and ensure the benefits of the entire community. At the same time, the government needs to pay attention to strategic policies to aim for sustainable development while achieving social stability and economic growth and preserving a clean environment for future generations. It requires administrators to clearly understand the characteristics of a society or community's history, culture, people, and resources.

Sixth, reporting and accountability are essential requirements for good governance. The entities that promulgate and implement laws and policies are accountable not only to superior agencies and elected bodies but also to the private sector and other stakeholders, such as social organizations and the public and relevant parties, regarding the provisions of policies and laws. However, accountability must ensure transparency, clarity, and a complete and accurate system of legal regulations and guidelines.

Seventh, effectiveness and efficiency: good governance means that the result of the process of promulgating and implementing legal regulations and policies must ensure compliance for regulated subjects. At the same time, the results achieved must meet the needs of society in terms of the reasonable and economical use of resources, the sustainable use of natural resources, and the protection of the ecological environment. Effective and efficient governance means creating competitive advantages for the country's sustainable development.

With the above characteristics, it can be affirmed that good governance is an ideal model, but it is difficult for any government to ensure absolute implementation. However, to achieve sustainable development, researching and applying this model is a requirement for most countries today.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The article focuses on synthesizing, collecting, and researching foreign documents on the research object of people's satisfaction with policies based on the theory of good state governance on criteria such as participatory, consensus-oriented, transparent and accountable, responsive and effective, efficient, equitable, inclusive and follow the rule of law (World Bank, 1992; ADB, 2000), thereby building a comprehensive and selective theoretical data system, suitable for the practice of public policy assessment with countries in the current context. Information sources are collected from various articles in highly reliable scientific journals at home and abroad, specifically listed in the references section according to Alphabet. From there, it shows that the theoretical research is appropriate, ensuring reliability, and that the research results and discussion of some contents are practical objectives, providing a certain scientific content. From the theoretical basis, the author conducts analysis and discussion based on the collected case studies and divides them into discussion topics, precisely people's awareness of the policy (Houston et al., 2016; Rahn & Rudolph, 2005), Policy representation regime (Miller and Stokes, 1963; Soroka & Wlezien, 2010; Achen & Bartels, 2017; Huber and Powell's, 1994; Parsons and Weber, 2011; Rovny, 2012), Citizen participation in the policy process (Adams, 1997; Heinrich & Fioramonti, 2007) thereby proposing recommendations and policy implications based on analysis, evaluation, and case studies based on collected documents.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

People's awareness of the policy

The barrier between people and policy can be understood as a complex issue, including factors about the effectiveness of policy measures and people's perceptions and beliefs. In this context, policy quality plays a key role, as it is a quantitative and qualitative criterion of how citizens evaluate and interact with the government. The way governments implement policies and manage public administrative processes is not only a matter for themselves but also affects how people consider them. When a government operates effectively with high-quality policies, this can create a positive impression on the people. They may feel that the government is operating fairly, professionally, and honestly, increasing their trust and support.

Research has shown that people's perceptions of government performance often reflect complex relationships between different factors. Research by Houston et al. (2016) and Rahn & Rudolph (2005) has shown that trust in government can be enhanced through fairness, professionalism, and honesty in administrative processes. It shows that the outcomes of policies and how they are implemented affect citizen satisfaction and trust. However, not all countries have the same level of quality of policies and how they are implemented. There are countries characterized by high-quality public systems, while others face challenges in terms of policy quality and effectiveness of implementation measures. It leads to a gap in people's perception of government activities. For example, citizens may

have high trust and positive perceptions of government effectiveness in countries with high-quality policies and fair, professional policy implementation.

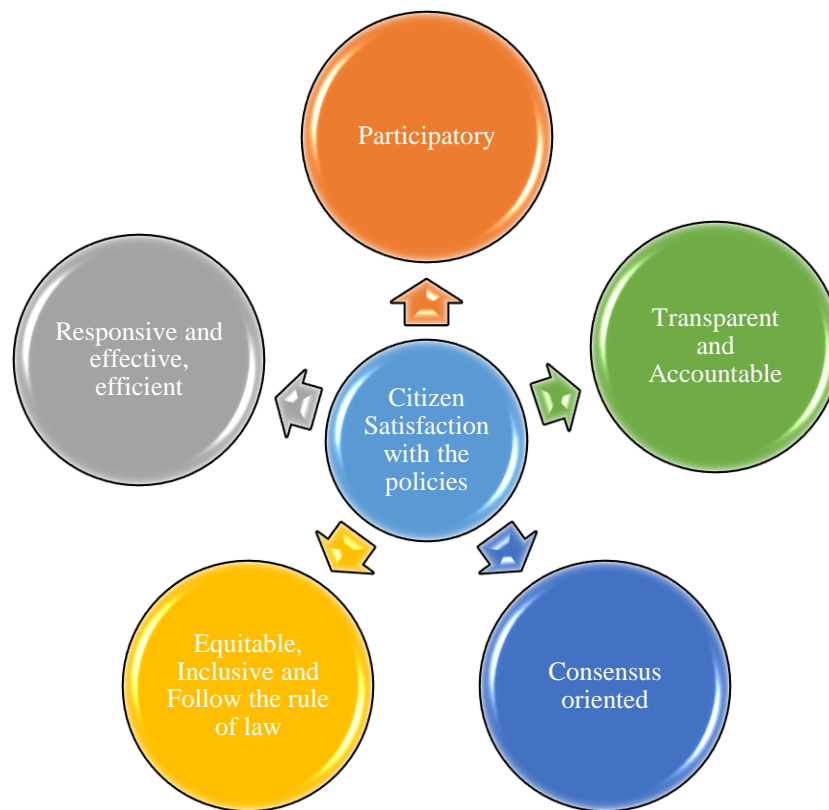


Figure 1: Citizen Satisfaction with Policies

Conversely, in places where public policy is of low quality and unfairly implemented, people may experience distrust and negative perceptions of government performance. It leads to imbalance and dissatisfaction in society. People in countries with high policy quality may have higher levels of satisfaction and trust in government. In contrast, people in countries with low policy quality may experience dissatisfaction and loss of trust.

Another critical factor is the correlation between the procedural efficiency of government and people's perception of government performance. If the government carries out administrative processes quickly, transparently, and effectively, people can have greater confidence in the government's abilities. On the contrary, if administrative processes are carried out in a non-transparent, slow, and ineffective manner, people may lose trust in the government. Barriers between people and policies reflect differences in the quality of policy measures and include factors such as people's awareness and trust in the government. The quality of policies and how they are implemented affect citizen satisfaction and confidence, and understanding and positive interactions between government and people are essential in building a society.

Policy representation regime

Citizen satisfaction with political policies is a complex and multidimensional topic, requiring a comprehensive and in-depth view. From diverse academic perspectives, we can better understand the factors influencing this satisfaction and how it reflects the relationship between citizens and leaders.

An important perspective is from the perspective of political representation. Miller and Stokes (1963) pointed out that the level of effective representation is often measured through the degree of "similarity" between the views of voters and representatives. However, Soroka & Wlezien (2010) pointed out that the complexity of this relationship cannot be simplified simply by comparing the fit between these two groups. Instead, representatives often have the freedom to interpret and implement their will, and citizen satisfaction with a policy can be influenced by how they fulfill their commitments and deliver their results-specific outcomes (Achen & Bartels, 2017).

From Huber and Powell's (1994) perspective, political institutions can also influence the adequacy of representation. Representatives may face pressure from institutional mechanisms and from the political context to meet the needs and expectations of their constituents. Therefore, citizen satisfaction with policies may also depend on how representatives deal with and adapt to these factors.

Additionally, as Parsons & Weber (2011) point out, politicians may try to avoid or blur the divide in voters' views to maintain party stability. It can lead to reduced citizen satisfaction with the policy if they feel that the representative does not accurately represent their views or does not focus on issues that are important to them (Rovny, 2012). In addition, understanding citizen satisfaction with policies must also consider social and cultural factors and economic and social status. It may include factors such as access to education, income distribution, and levels of trust in government and political institutions.

Citizen satisfaction with political policy cannot be understood and needs to be analyzed from many different perspectives, including representational, institutional, and contextual factors. It requires a comprehensive and multi-media approach to understand better the complex relationship between people and leaders and how their satisfaction is shaped and expressed in the political system.

Citizen participation in the policy process

Public participation in policy-making is seen as an essential factor in maintaining and developing democratic societies. In a situation where power is ultimately placed in the hands of the people, the government cannot impose decisions on its own but needs to seek to re-establish its authority through continuous public participation (Adams, 1997). It helps the government achieve transparency and accountability in decision-making and creates more transparent and trustworthy policies (Heinrich & Fioramonti, 2007). Studies also show that active citizen participation in the policy-making process produces more carefully considered decisions and generates consensus and support from the community. It increases policy effectiveness and transparency and helps strengthen trust between the government and the people.

However, challenges and limitations exist despite the clear benefits of citizen participation. Some public officials may oppose citizen participation in policy decisions and have political conflicts of interest (Heinrich & Fioramonti, 2007). At the same time, there needs to be commitment and effort on the part of the government to create an environment conducive to public participation and ensure that everyone's opinions are heard and contribute to the decision-making process. Citizen participation in policy decisions is not only a fundamental element of democracy but also an essential element in creating effective and transparent policy while generating community support and trust.

While public engagement is important and beneficial, there are still challenges to overcome. One of those challenges is ensuring diversity and inclusion in gathering opinions from all segments of society. In a society with many diverse economic, cultural, and social characteristics, ensuring that all voices are heard and all perspectives are considered is a significant challenge. In addition, ensuring fair and equitable representation in the participation process is also an important issue. Ethnic minority groups, those with low incomes, and those in rural areas often have difficulty participating in decision-making processes. Creating an environment where people feel safe and confident to express their views is also essential to public engagement. It is especially important in a context where negative reactions or political or social pressures may reduce the will and ability of some people to participate. To respond to these challenges, governments need to create mechanisms and strategies that encourage and protect fair and equitable participation. In addition, building the capacity and knowledge of communities so they can participate actively and effectively is also an important goal. A community with high knowledge and awareness of political and social issues is often better able to participate in decisions and contribute to policies that suit their needs. Therefore, investing in public education and information is essential to build participation and enhance the capacity of communities.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNTRIES

First, to increase citizen satisfaction with representative government, applying a comprehensive and in-depth view is necessary. First, from the perspective of political representation, it is necessary to understand how effective representation is measured through the "similarity" between the views of voters and representatives. However, this relationship cannot be simplified simply by comparing the fit between these two groups. Instead, citizen satisfaction may be influenced by how representatives deliver on commitments and deliver specific results. Political institutions also affect the adequacy of representation. Representatives face pressure from institutional mechanisms and the political context to respond to the needs and expectations of their constituents. Citizen satisfaction with policies also depends on how representatives deal with and adapt to these factors.

Additionally, politicians may try to avoid or blur divisions in voter opinion to preserve party stability. It can lead to reduced citizen satisfaction with the policy if they feel that the representative does not accurately represent their views or does not focus on issues that are important to them. To understand citizen satisfaction, one must also consider social and cultural factors and economic and social status. It requires a comprehensive and multi-media approach to better understand the complex relationship between people and leaders, and how their satisfaction is shaped and expressed in the political system. It will help enhance understanding and build a harmonious and developed political environment.

Second, public participation in policy-making is extremely important and brings many benefits. The government cannot impose its own decisions but needs to seek to re-establish its authority through continuous public participation. It helps create more transparent and trustworthy policies, thereby increasing trust between the government and the people. Research has shown that active citizen participation in the policy-making process produces more considered decisions and generates community consensus and support. It increases policies' effectiveness and transparency, thereby creating community support and trust.

However, it is necessary to be aware of the challenges and limitations in implementing public participation. Some public officials may oppose citizen participation in policy decisions and have political conflicts of interest. At the same time, to facilitate public participation, there needs to be commitment and effort on the part of the government to ensure that people's opinions are heard and contribute to the decision-making process. To overcome these challenges, governments need to create mechanisms and strategies that encourage and protect fair and equitable participation. It is important to build the capacity and knowledge of communities so they can participate actively and effectively. Investment in education and public information is needed to build participation and capacity of communities, thereby creating policy decisions that are consistent with people's needs and desires.

Third, adopting a policy process that focuses on people is necessary, placing them at the center of the decision-making process. An effective policy process should start by listening to people's opinions and needs from the planning stage through to policy implementation and evaluation. During the planning stage, it is necessary to organize seminars, public opinion polls and policy exchanges to collect people's opinions. It helps the government better understand the needs and desires of the community, thereby developing policies that truly reflect their needs.

During the policy implementation process, it is necessary to establish monitoring and feedback mechanisms from the people to ensure the policy is implemented transparently and fairly. It helps create trust and support from the community, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the policy. Policy evaluation needs to be carried out comprehensively by measuring the target outcomes and the impact and feedback from citizens. It helps the government better understand the effectiveness and impact of policies on the community, thereby adjusting and improving policies continuously.

In short, applying a citizen-centered policy process is an important way to create policies that truly reflect the needs and desires of communities. It increases citizen satisfaction with the policy and creates trust and support from the community, thereby building a fair and developed society.

REFERENCES

- Achen, C., & Bartels, L. (2017). *Democracy for realists: Why elections do not produce responsive government*. Princeton University Press.
- Andoko, E. (2020). Analysis of Indonesia' Government Strategy for Rural Development through Agriculture. *FFTC Agricultural Policy Platform (FFTCAP): Taiwan*. <https://ap.ffc.org.tw/article/1612>
- Adams, J.; U.S. AID (1997). Public Administration Project in Albania. *Public Participation. A Guidebook for Local Governments and Non-Government Organizations*.
- ADB (2000). Promoting Good Governance: ADB's Medium Term Agenda and Action Plan. https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32845/promoting-good-governance_0.pdf
- Basri, H. (2019). Assessing determinants of dividend policy of the government-owned companies in Indonesia. *International Journal of Law and Management*, 61(5-6), 530-541. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLMA-09-2017-0215>
- Hai D., P., (2017). Public policy overview. *Truth National Political Publishing House, Vietnam*.
- Heinrich, V., & Fioramonti, L. (Eds.). (2007). *CIVICUS global survey of the state of civil society: Comparative perspectives* (Vol. 2). Kumarian Press.
- Jean-Pierre, C., Mireille, R., Francois, R. (2008). Assessing the impact of public policy: challenges, methods and results, p. 17-29.
- Houston, D. J., Aitalieva, N. R., Morelock, A. L., & Shults, C. A. (2016). Citizen trust in civil servants: A cross-national examination. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 39(14), 1203-1214.
- Huber, J. D., & Powell, G. B. (1994). Congruence between citizens and policymakers in two visions of liberal democracy. *World Politics*, 46(3), 291-326.
- Lanin, D., & Hermanto, N. (2019). The effect of service quality toward public satisfaction and public trust on local government in Indonesia. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 46(3), 377-392. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSE-04-2017-0151>
- Miller, W. E., & Stokes, D. E. (1963). Constituency influence in Congress. *American political science review*, 57(1), 45-56.
- Napitupulu, D., Syafrullah, M., Rahim, R., Amar, A., & Sucahyo, Y. (2018). Content validity of critical success factors for e-Government implementation in Indonesia. *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering*, 352(1), 012058. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1757-899X/352/1/012058>

- Nurdin, N. (2021). A Collective Action In Indonesia Local E-Government Implementation Success. *Available at SSRN 3821726*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3821726>
- Parsons, C., & Weber, T. (2011). Cross-cutting issues and party strategy in the European Union. *Comparative Political Studies*, 44(4), 383-411.
- Rahn, W. M., & Rudolph, T. J. (2005). A tale of political trust in American cities. *Public opinion quarterly*, 69(4), 530-560.
- Rovny, J. (2012). Who emphasizes and who blurs? Party strategies in multidimensional competition. *European Union Politics*, 13(2), 269-292.
- Refly, S., & Esti, M. (2020). Optimization of the Implementation of Village Government in Indonesia. *RUDN Journal of Public Administration*, 7(4), 352-360. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8313-2020-7-4-352-360>
- Son N., H., (2022). Public Policy. *Labor Publishing House, Vietnam*.
- Sarnoto, A. Z., & Hayatina, L. (2021). Polarization of the Muslim community towards government policies in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 5(S1), 642-652. <https://doi.org/10.21744/lingcure.v5nS1.1449>
- Soroka, S. N., & Wlezien, C. (2010). *Degrees of democracy: Politics, public opinion, and policy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sumaryati, A., Praptika Novitasari, E., & Machmuddah, Z. (2020). Accounting Information System, Internal Control System, Human Resource Competency and Quality of Local Government Financial Statements in Indonesia. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 7(10), 795-802. <https://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2020.vol7.n10.795>
- World Bank (1992). *Governance and Development*. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/604951468739447676/pdf/multi-page.pdf>