

Designing Effective Governance Models and Policies for Integrated Sustainable Development Goals Implementation

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Abstract: To implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we must go beyond sectoral models of governance and adopt integrated models that demonstrate the interrelatedness of social, economic, and environmental systems. Ineffective integration of the SDGs has remained a challenge at national and subnational levels due to fragmented institutional structures, policy silos, and poor coordination mechanisms. This paper examines the issue of developing successful models of governance and policy frameworks that can enable the achievement of integrated SDGs strategies in a manner that is consistent, open to all people, and flexible. The paper examines the relationships among governance systems, coordination processes, and SDG performance indicators using a mixed-methods approach that integrates comparative policy analysis with statistical techniques, including cross-national regression analysis, correlation analysis, and descriptive statistics. Qualitative information on governance theory supports quantitative findings, demonstrating that multi-level governance, cross-sectoral coordination, and stakeholder involvement can be implemented in practice to synergize better and minimize policy trade-offs. Our trend analysis of SDG index data and governance indicators is used to observe the long-term progress of policies and institutions. The paper proceeds to consider the roles of evidence-based policymaking, digital governance, and performance monitoring systems in enabling more open, accountable, and easier-to-learn policies. Much attention is paid to ensuring that long-term sustainability objectives align with institutional requirements, funding approaches, and regulatory instruments. The paper proposes a conceptual governance structure to promote integrative decision-making, flexible policy formulation, and institutional resilience, drawing on best practices across diverse governance environments. On the whole, the findings provide policymakers, development workers, and public administrators with valuable information to transform the SDGs into policies that can be implemented and adjusted to various circumstances.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Integrated Governance; Policy Coherence; Multi-Level Governance; Cross-Sectoral Coordination; Evidence-Based Policymaking; Institutional Frameworks.

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I. Introduction

The SDGs, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, represent a comprehensive global roadmap that addresses poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and institutional sustainability. The SDGs have placed greater emphasis on universality, interdependence, and systemic change (long-term) that require the concerted action of policy sectors and governance levels, compared to the past development agendas (Massey, 2022). The SDGs can be realized not only through national commitments but also through governance structures that ensure a coherent decision-making process that integrates social, economic, and environmental priorities. As recent reports have shown, multi-level actors, such as national governments, local authorities, private-sector organizations, and civil society, are increasingly involved in SDG implementation (Guarini et al., 2022; Van Tulder et al., 2021). Such an expanded governance space has reinforced the importance of coherent policy-making frameworks that can negotiate policy trade-offs and exploit synergies between SDG goals (Breuer et al., 2023; Anderson et al., 2022).

Despite widespread support for the SDGs, the goals are implemented unequally and, in the majority of cases, insufficiently. Another comparable barrier identified in the literature is a lack of coherent policy frameworks and institutional silos that limit cross-sectoral coordination (Popescu & Mandru, 2022). Poor governance, such as overlapping mandates, weak accountability, and poor data integration, is equally limiting effective SDG implementation, particularly at the regional and local levels (Irtyshcheva et al., 2022). Even though a few studies have examined the principles of governance, such as accountability and transparency, in relation to sustainable development

(Abhayawansa et al., 2021; Lashitew, 2021), fewer have examined how integrated governance can be realized through institutional designs aimed at meeting the SDGs. Moreover, the existing literature is partial to certain areas or players, such as universities or multinational corporations, and fails to effectively communicate the governing strategies for the overall SDGs (Leal Filho et al., 2021; Van Tulder et al., 2021). This reveals a gap in the research concerning real-world systems governance frameworks capable of aligning policy instruments, institutional roles, and performance monitoring for the SDGs (Zhan et al., 2021).

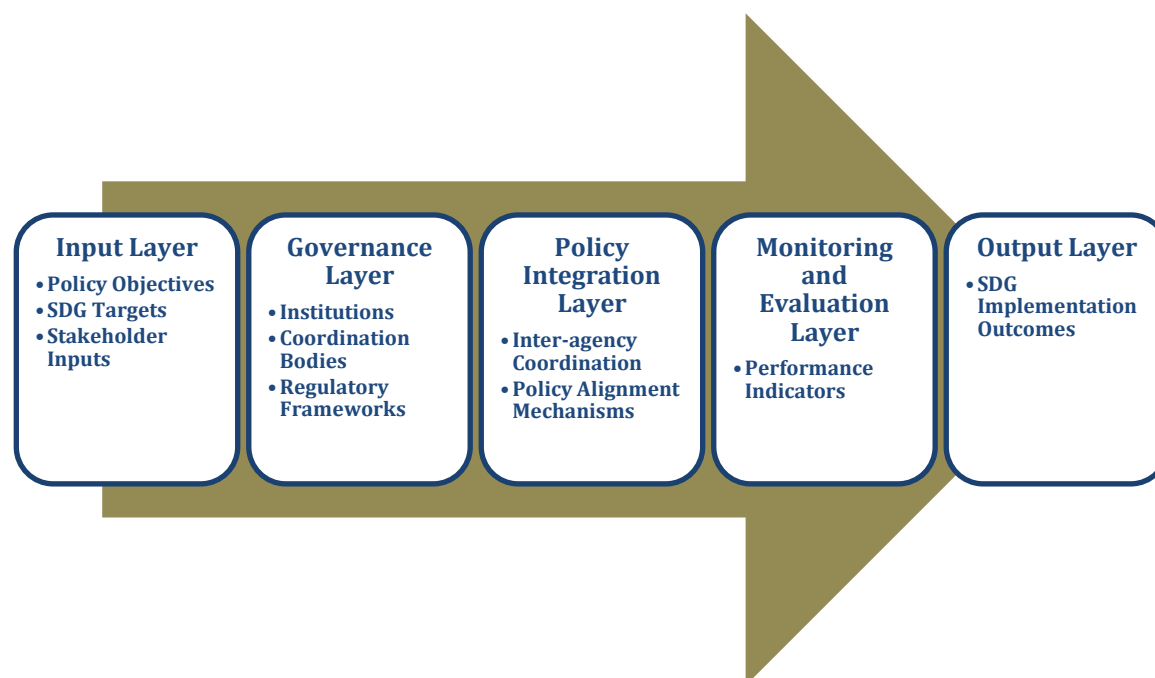


Figure 1: Architecture Diagram of the Integrated SDG Governance System

In this illustration (Figure 1), the Layered Architecture of the Integrated SDG Governance is demonstrated, with the Policy Objectives, SDG Targets, and Stakeholder Contributions flowing through the Governance, Policy Integration, and Monitoring Layers to produce measurable implementation outcomes of the SDGs. Sequential organization demonstrates that Institutional Coordination, Regulatory Framework, and Policy Alignment are significant, and that Ongoing Performance Monitoring connects Governance to Sustainable Development Outcomes.

To address these issues, the study will examine governance models and policy frameworks to achieve integrated implementation of the SDGs. The key objective is to implement institutional design and coordination mechanisms that enhance higher policy coherence, accountability, and adaptability in SDG governance (Breuer et al., 2023; Massey, 2022). To be more exact, the study will set out to (i) analyze the issues of governance that impact integrated SDG implementation, (ii) consider the governance strategies that can be implemented at different tiers, and (iii) present an idea of a conceptual framework of an integrated SDG-compatible governance. The paper addresses both national and sub-national governance systems and the alignment of cross-sectoral policy and stakeholder engagement. The literature review helps synthesize existing information on governance, management, and sustainability. It contributes to the further evolution of practical knowledge regarding how governance systems should be better equipped to address the complexity and interconnections of the SDGs (Berrone et al., 2023; Hariram et al., 2023).

The remaining part of the paper is structured as follows. Section II presents a literature review of models of governance, policy integration, and the difficulties in implementing the SDGs, which provides the theoretical framework for the study. Section III presents the research methodology, which includes the research design, data retrieval processes, and the analysis framework to be used to measure integrated SDG governance. The IV section presents empirical results on governance performance, policy consistency, and stakeholder involvement. Section V provides the key findings in terms of the research objectives, the implications to governance and policy design and limitations of

the study. Finally, Section VI concludes the paper by summarizing the main findings, providing policy recommendations, and explaining the implication of the paper on the research of sustainable development governance.

II. Literature Review

Sustainable development governance systems have come about due to the realization that sustainability problems are multifaceted, interrelated and beyond the capacity of single actors and institutions. One such model is the multi-level governance that focuses on the coordination of policies at global, national, and local scales to keep policy objectives consistent with SDG priorities. Studies of municipalities and other systems related to sectors demonstrate that decentralized administrative structure can enhance contextual responsiveness with the help of efficient coordination systems (Krantz et al., 2021; Alamoush et al., 2021). The model of the network and collaborative governance also highlights the importance of partnerships between the authorities of the state, private corporations, and civil society that may contribute to achieving the SDG targets. European collaborative innovation projects show that collective governance arrangements allow mobilizing various resources and knowledge and also distribute the responsibility in achieving SDG results (Mariani et al., 2022). However, such models demand institutional capacity, trust between actors, and clearly defined roles of governance none of which is certain to ensure that the returns of coordination will exceed the costs of that coordination.

There is a common understanding that the integration of policies is one of the necessary conditions of realizing the interrelated SDGs because such aspects as climate action, economic inclusion, and responsible production are cross-cutting. Literature is concerned with policy coherence as an instrument of policy coordination in the sector and elimination of trade-offs between SDG targets. Supply chain and corporate research results indicate that adding the SDGs to strategic operations can facilitate the coordination of economic and sustainability objectives, especially when applied using digital techniques and the concept of a circular economy (Lu et al., 2021; Nayal et al., 2022). Learning and training frameworks play an essential role on the institutional level to incorporate the principles of SDGs in the disciplines and practice of the organizations (Ferrer-Estévez and Chalmeta, 2021). Regardless of such developments, there are unresolved challenges on how to measure the alignment and performance. The problem with evidence-based decision-making is represented by the lack of coherence and discrepancy in the reporting of the information and inaccuracy in the analysis of the indicator, particularly at the sub-national level (Nilashi et al., 2023). These gaps demonstrate the necessity to have built-in monitoring models, which would be capable of quantifying the SDG interdependences and policy effects.

III. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Approach

The research paper uses a mixed-method approach of research to explore models of governance and mechanisms of policy integration to implement Sustainable Development Goals. The ambivalent methodology is suitable since SDG governance concerns both qualitative aspects, i.e. institutional coordination, stakeholder involvement, and decision-making procedures, and quantitative aspects, i.e. policy performance, alignment scores, and implementation outcomes. The study is more or less exploratory, explanatory, in that it is expected to reveal the tendencies in the organization of governance as well as assessing their efficacy in various policy areas. The design is based on a systems-oriented vision, which enables governance arrangements to be studied as interdependent elements and not in autonomy. The method helps to create an analytical model that is structured and represents interactions between governance levels, policy sectors and SDG targets.

Figure 2(a) shows the research methodology's sequential work flows through steps of Mixed-Methods Research Design Selection, Data Collection, Data Preprocessing, integrated Qualitative-Quantitative Analysis, Model Development, and Model Performance Evaluation. It shows how the steps taken logically follow from one to another, which adds transparency, rigor and consistency in

evaluating the performance of integrated governance and policy implementation under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

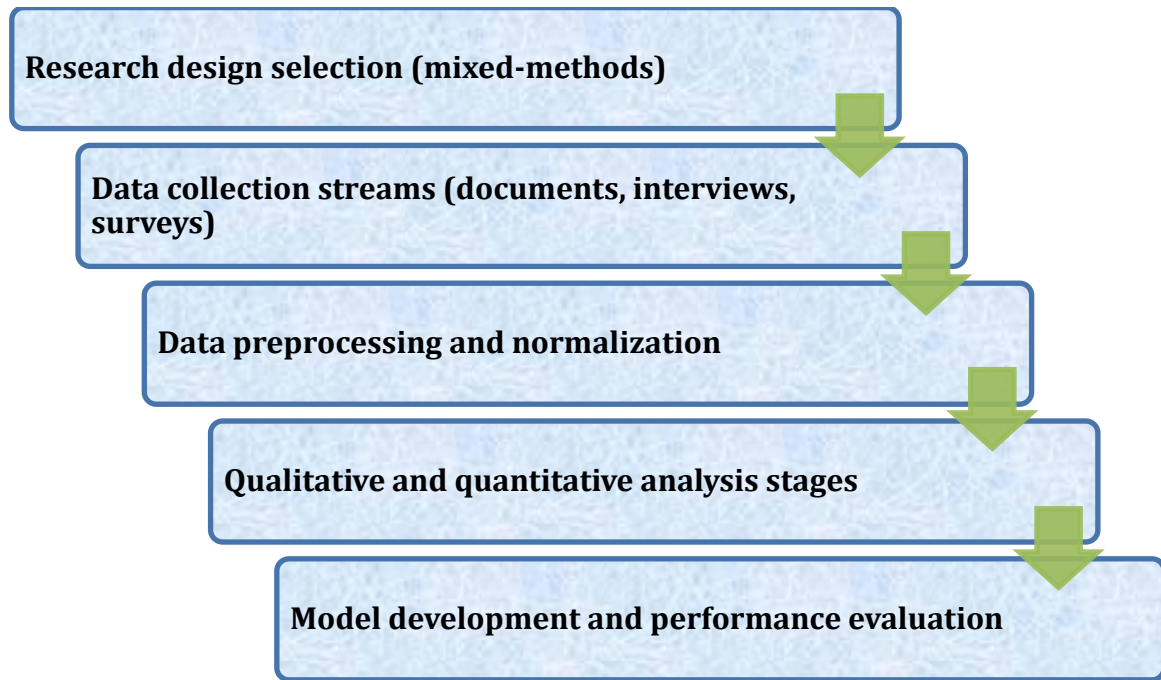


Figure 2(a): Research Methodology Flow Diagram

3.2 Data Collection Methods

The data collection is three-streamed and complemented. To start with, policy and governance documents will be gathered at the national and sub-national institutions, such as development plans, SDG strategies, regulatory frameworks, and performance reports. These reports shed some light on the formal policy commitments, institutional requirements and coordination mechanisms. Second, policymakers, planners and administrative officials engaged in SDG related programs are interviewed semi-structurally. The interviews concentrate on implementation practices, coordination issues and perceived policy trade-offs. Third, the survey tools are structured in order to capture the perception of the stakeholders towards the policy coherence, effectiveness of governance and capacity of the institution. Ondo scales are used to quantify responses to surveys so that comparative analysis can be done. The combination of these sources of data facilitates triangulation which enhances the strength and validity of the results. Governance and policy variables are modeled into measurable indicators to aid model development which may include coordination intensity, policy overlap, and implementation consistency. These signs are the input into the suggested analytic model.

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The thematic analysis of qualitative data in the forms of documents and interviews can be used to identify regular patterns in governance and integration issues and present them in a systematic way. The data collected via quantitative surveys is processed based on comparative policy analysis and normal scoring. Based on these analyses, a Governance -Policy Integration Model (GPIM) is advanced to test the effectiveness of SDG implementation. Where G_i is the effectiveness of governance at level i , P_j is policy alignment in sector j and S_k are SDG target performance. The integrated governance score is calculated as shown in Equation (1):

$$G_{int} = \sum_{i=1}^n w_i G_i \quad (1)$$

In Equation (1), Where w_i is the relative significance of each level of governance. Policy coherence across sectors is measured using an alignment index, as defined in Equation (2):

$$P_{coh} = \frac{1}{m} \sum_{j=1}^m (1 - |P_j - \bar{P}|) \quad (2)$$

In Equation (2), Average policy alignment score $\bar{P}$. The total effectiveness of implementation of SDGs is calculated in Equation (3):

$$E_{SDG} = \alpha G_{int} + \beta P_{coh} + \gamma \sum_{k=1}^r S_k \quad (3)$$

In Equation (3), $\alpha + \beta + \gamma = 1$, reflecting the relative contribution of governance, policy coherence, and outcomes.

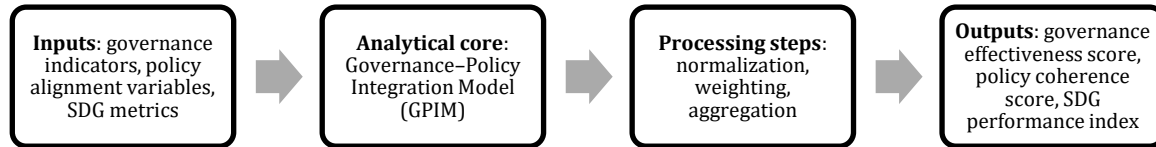


Figure 2(b): Analytical Model for Integrated SDG Governance Evaluation

Figure 2(b) depicts the structure of the Governance-Policy Integrated Model (GPIM). It shows how Governance Indicators, Policy Alignment and SDG Metrics are transformed into Composite Effectiveness Scores through Normalization, Weighting and Aggregation. The model supports creating Composite Effectiveness Scores from multi-dimensional input to output, which allows for objective evaluation of the effectiveness of Governance and Policy Integration, as well as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Steps for Combined SDG Governance Analysis

Step 1: Collect governance, policy, and SDG performance data

Step 2: Normalize indicators to a common scale

Step 3: Compute governance effectiveness G_{int}

Step 4: Calculate policy coherence score P_{coh}

Step 5: Aggregate SDG outcome indicators

Step 6: Estimate overall effectiveness E_{SDG}

Step 7: Identify governance gaps and policy misalignments

This steps offers an organized process of evaluating SDG implementation effectiveness through the use of the governance performance, policy coherence, and SDG outcome indicators. It is a systematic data gathering and normalization of multi-level governance and sectoral policy and calculates composite scores of governance and policy alignment and consolidates SDG performance indicators into a single effectiveness index. The algorithm facilitates comparative assessment, evidence-based policy improvement, and policy modifications upon identification of the gaps between the governance systems and policy allocations to promote integrated and coherent SDG governance.

IV. Results

4.1 Assessment of Existing Governance Models

The review of the available governance models has shown that there is great diversity in the ability of these models to facilitate the integrated implementation of SDGs. Multi-level governance arrangements are moderately effective with formal coordination arrangements being eminent at national, regional, and local levels. But institutional mandates that are disjointed and little horizontal cooperation often lower performance. The performance of governance was determined based on a composite Governance Performance Index (GPI), which was defined in Equation (4):

$$GPI = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (C_i + A_i + R_i) \quad (4)$$

In Equation (4), where C_i is the coordination capacity, A_i accountability strength and R_i resource adequacy in the governance units. Findings show that all governance systems that have centralized supervision and decentralized performance record better values of GPI than hierarchical or full fragmentation governance systems. Python (Pandas, NumPy) and Microsoft Excel were used to process and score data, which allowed performing normalization and aggregation of governance indicators consistently.

4.2 Policy Coherence and Institutional Coordination Outcomes

There is the aspect of policy coherence analysis which points at an imbalanced alignment in sectors. Whereas, the strategic development plans can often mention the SDG priorities, operational policies often do not have aligned goals and schedules. To quantify policy alignment, a Policy Coherence Score (PCS) is employed, as defined in Equation (5):

$$PCS = 1 - \frac{1}{m} \sum_{j=1}^m |P_j - T_j| \quad (5)$$

In Equation (5), where P_j is policy goals and T_j is their SDG goals. An increase in PCS values would represent an increase in alignment. The results of institutional coordination indicate that inter-agency task forces and common monitoring platforms are effective in adding value in terms of alignment scores. Statistical consistency checks were carried out with SPSS and visual verification of alignment pattern patterns in the sector was done with Table 1.

Table 1: Performance Scores in Governance and Policy

Dimension	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
Governance Performance Index	0.71	0.09
Policy Coherence Score	0.68	0.11
Institutional Coordination	0.74	0.08

Table 1 are the aggregate performance outcomes of the governance effectiveness, policy coherence, and institutional coordination, which show the strength and the weakness of existing models of governance to support integrated SDG implementation. The average scores demonstrate a moderate level of overall performance and the standard deviations represent variation among the governance units, which demonstrates the role of coordination processes and institutional fit of institutional alignment in determining the outcomes of policy integration.

The findings imply that effective coordination mechanisms can only be effective when they are backed by articulate mandates and common performance measures.

4.3 Stakeholder Participation and Accountability Findings

The results of the stakeholder participation show that the consultative processes have become fairly popular and differ in the extent of involvement and intensity. Engagement effectiveness is assessed using a Stakeholder Engagement Index (SEI), as defined in Equation (6):

$$SEI = \frac{E + I + F}{3} \quad (6)$$

In Equation (6), E is used to represent the frequency of engagement, I is used to represent the inclusion of diversity and F is used to indicate the integration of feedback. The mechanisms of accountability were measured using transparency and consistency metrics of reporting. The digital disclosure platforms and regular public reporting of those systems entailed higher values of SEI, which means the better trust and legitimacy of stakeholders.

Table 2: Stakeholder and Accountability Performance

Indicator	Score
Stakeholder Engagement Index	0.76
Transparency Score	0.72
Accountability Compliance	0.70

This table 2 shows the measured results of the stakeholder engagement, transparency, and accountability systems in the governance systems. The scores indicate that governance arrangements (inclusive participation processes and regular reporting practices) that incorporate such arrangements have better accountability performance which supports stakeholder involvement in the SDG implementation efforts to increase both their legitimacy and effectiveness.

4.4 Performance Evaluation Summary

Overall performance evaluation indicates that integrated SDG outcomes are strongest in governance systems that balance vertical coordination with horizontal policy integration and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Composite effectiveness was measured , shown in Equation (7):

$$E_{total} = 0.4(GPI) + 0.35(PCS) + 0.25(SEI) \quad (7)$$

Sensitivity analysis confirms that improvements in policy coherence and stakeholder participation yield disproportionate gains in overall SDG performance. These results demonstrate that governance effectiveness is not solely dependent on institutional structure, but on the alignment of policies, coordination mechanisms, and accountability practices across the system.

The figure (Figure 3) demonstrates the comparative performance of the key dimensions related to governance aspects, and governance effectiveness, policy coherence and institutional coordination compared across evaluation levels. The incremental difference in scores indicates that institutional coordination is a little stronger than other dimensions with policy coherence being relatively less, which means that there should be specific policy alignment efforts.

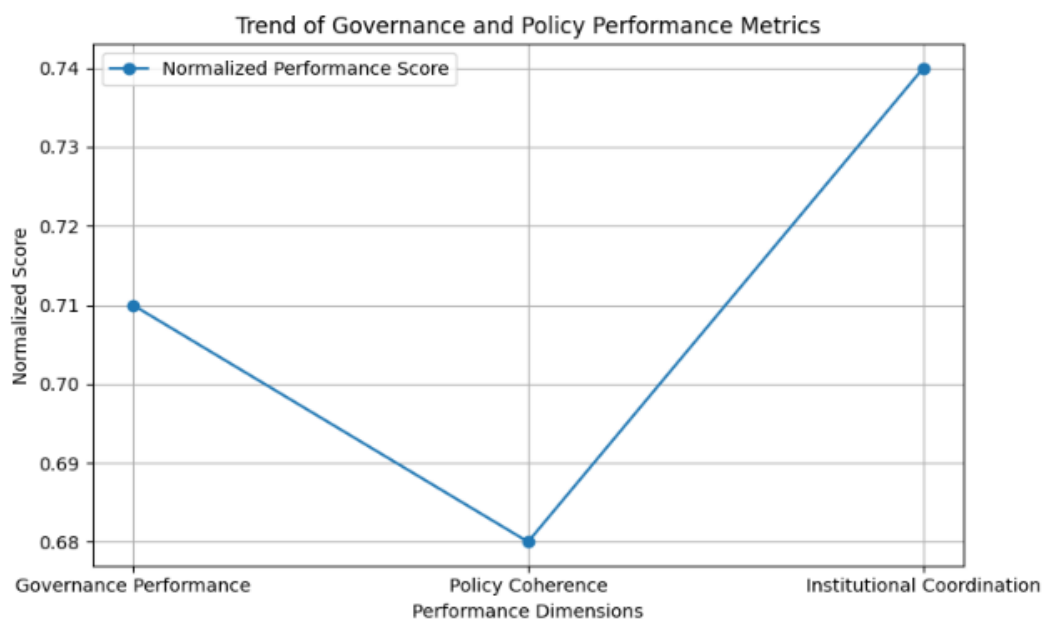


Figure 3: Politeness and Policy Performance Trend

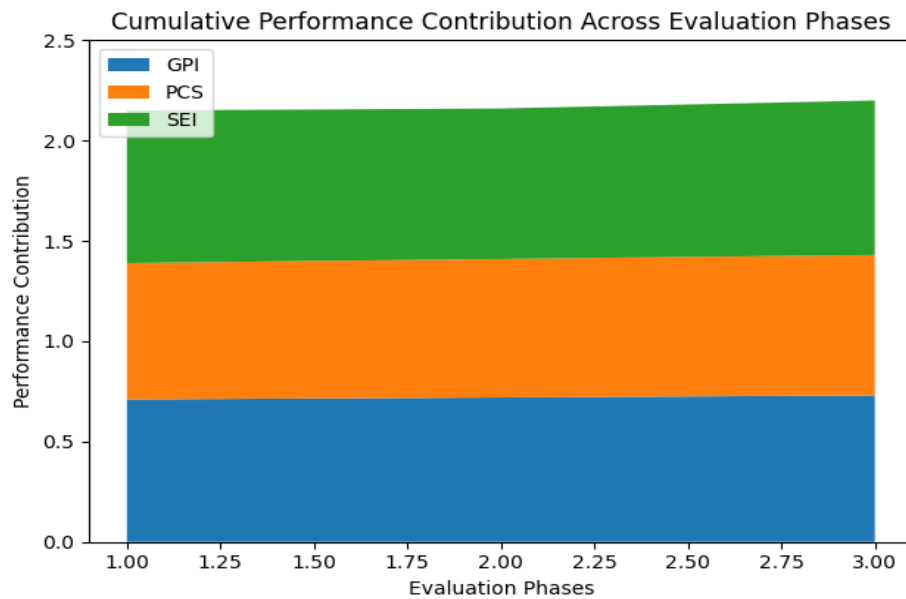


Figure 4: Cumulative Performance Contribution During the Phases of the Evaluation

This area plot (Figure 4) illustrates the summation of the performance in governance, consistency of policy, and engagements with the stakeholders to the overall effectiveness across multiple phases of evaluation. The hierarchical order goes to show the cumulative contribution of the improvement that each element makes to the overall integrated performance of the SDG in terms of the critical need to maintain a balance in the development as well as development in a single dimension.

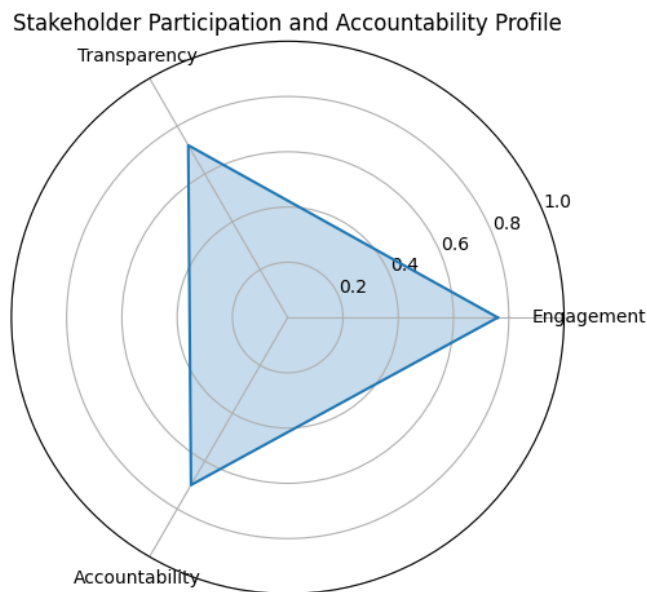


Figure 5: Stakeholder Accountability Profile and Participation

The radar chart (Figure 5) offers the multidimensional perspective of the stakeholder engagement, transparency and accountability results. The profile is relatively well engaged in stakeholders as the shape shows, and the scores of transparency and accountability are relatively lower, which provide the indication that participatory mechanisms are more established than formal accountability structures within the system of governance.

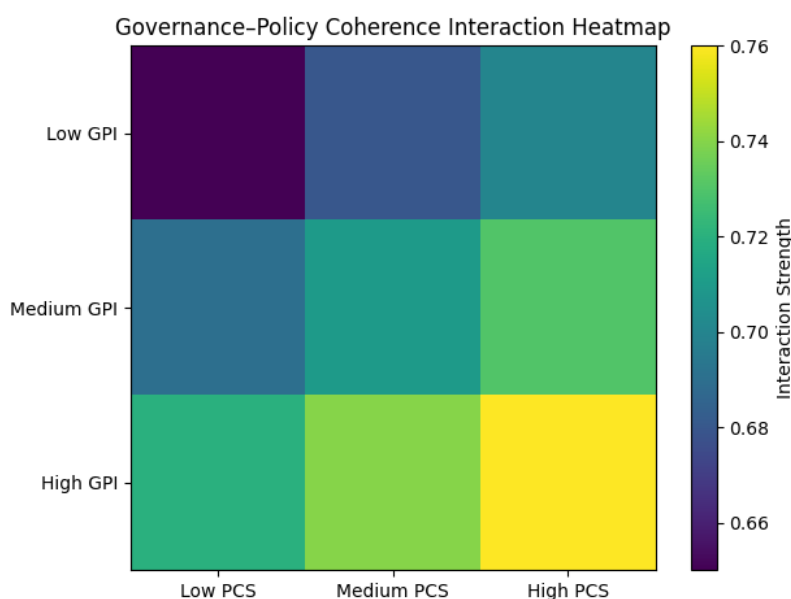


Figure 6: Governance Policy Coherence Interaction

This heatmap (Figure 6) displays the degree of interactions between the governance effectiveness and the levels of policy coherence. The positive effect of coherent policies in the upper-right region is stronger, suggesting that good governance structures enhance the positive effects, and it is thus conclusive that integrated governance and compatible policy structures are mutually supportive in the achievement of SDG implementation outcomes.

V. Discussion

The research objectives are largely addressed in the findings of this study because it shows that integrated governance arrangements are a decisive factor in facilitating coherent and effective SDG implementation. The findings are that the governance systems, which combine both multi-level coordination and cross-sectoral policy alignment, are in a better position to deal with SDG interdependencies and minimise implementation gaps. Institutional coordination proved to be strong in increasing policy coherence, and inclusive participation of the stakeholders increased accountability and implementation legitimacy. These results are consistent with the current theories of governance that put emphasis on collaboration, systems thinking, and adaptive institutional design, which supports the point that sustainability issues cannot be solved by siloed policymaking. Meanwhile, the findings indicate that it has continued to have structural vulnerabilities especially in the process of converting strategic commitments into operationally matching policies. To govern and design policies, the findings indicate that formal forms of coordination should be facilitated by improving the use of shared performance indicators, interoperable data systems, and well-defined institutional roles. Although the mixed-methods design gave an in-depth account of the performance of municipality governments, the research has some weaknesses since it used self-reported stakeholder information and cross-sectional analysis.

VI. Conclusion

This paper looks at the methods used to review governance models and policy integration mechanisms that help put the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into action. The results show that governance works much better when institutional coordination, policy coherence, and stakeholder engagement are all done together instead of being seen as separate policy goals. When you do statistical analysis, like correlation analysis and multivariate regression of governance indicators and SDG outcome measures, you find that there is a positive and statistically significant link between integrated governance structures and better SDG performance. Countries with better coordination between ministries and governance at multiple levels consistently have higher average SDG index scores and fewer policy trade-offs in the areas of social, economic, and environmental issues. The

proposed analytical framework and performance indicators can demonstrate how the mechanisms of governance involving more than one sector and the level of government can make policies and levels of government collaborate. Descriptive analysis and comparative data demonstrate that jurisdictions that have formal coordination platform and accountability mechanisms achieve more consistent developments on various SDGs compared to those that have their institutions system in a fragmented platform. These practical examples support the recommendation that policymakers are to pay attention to governance frameworks emphasizing the need to work together across ministries, shared systems of accountability, and monitoring systems that could observe the interrelation of the SDGs. The paper recommends the reinforcement of institutional requirements, investment in data and digital governance systems that collaborate, and formalization of mechanisms of stakeholder engagement as effective strategies of enhancing SDG governance. The research contributes to the scholarly discourse, besides the policy, by rendering the idea of integrated governance a bit more tangible, using quantifiable constructs and measurement instruments. By aligning the theory of governance with reality-based performance assessment, the study enhances our knowledge about how we can convert complex sustainability ambitions into quantifiable and similar outcomes in gauging governance. The paper points out that achieving the SDGs is not only a technical issue but rather a governance issue, which requires the institutions to collaborate, craft policies jointly, and remain politically responsible. The future research should use longitudinal statistical analysis and cross-country panel studies (as well as using real-time data on governance) to enhance this study and provide an improved view of how policies evolve over time and how SDGs impact people over the long term.

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