

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a Developing Nation: The Case of South Gondar Zone, Ethiopia

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Abstract

This study investigated the challenges in implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in South Gondar, Ethiopia, utilizing a concurrent mixed methods design. Data collection involved closed-ended questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis with 176 participants. Quantitative analysis employed one-sample t-test, Pearson correlation, and hierarchical linear regression, while thematic analysis was used for qualitative data. Findings revealed a 'moderate' implementation of SDGs policies, with variations among institutions. Major challenges identified included unrealistic goal setting, lack of political commitment, insufficient participation, absence of clear policy guidance, lack of synergy, limited capability, and an imbalanced focus on one development pillar. Correlation tests highlighted significant positive relationships between institutional challenges and SDGs implementation. Hierarchical linear regression indicated the significant positive impact of goal difficulty on SDGs implementation, with goal participative, goal specificity, and goal commitment also influencing implementation. The study recommends the government to establish realistic and participatory policy goals for effective implementation.

Key words: sustainable, development, policy, goal setting

Introduction

In recent years, Africa has reached a critical juncture marked by economic stagnation, political upheavals, crime, inequality, and governance challenges, leading to national instability and poverty (Ajulor, 2018). The imperative to address Africa's multifaceted problems has never been more crucial, prompting a collective effort to implement Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a means of envisioning a better world that leaves no one behind. SDGs aim to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own (Ajulor, 2018).

Despite Africa's abundant human and natural resources, experiencing economic recessions is paradoxical and unusual (Ajulor, 2018). The tendency to adopt foreign-made solutions has been a recurrent pattern, with the international community introducing policies such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, more recently, the SDGs to developing nations. Ethiopia, despite its economic downturns, did not significantly impact the MDGs, and the introduction of the SDGs has brought heightened attention to Africa's challenges (Maduabum, 2016).

In Ethiopia, the implementation of SDGs aligns with national and departmental policies, focusing on poverty eradication and development interventions with equitable returns and inter-generational considerations (FDRE, 2017). However, Ethiopia faces considerable difficulties in executing long-term growth policies, including issues with stakeholder participation and policy reform management (Mulugeta, 2005).

Participation challenges are identified as a key hindrance, with previous studies emphasizing the importance of involving stakeholders to avoid implementation delays (Dereje, 2012). Additionally, the dimensions of goal setting theory, as proposed by Locke and Latham (1990), contribute to challenges in SDG implementation. These dimensions include goal difficulty, goal specificity, goal participative, and goal commitment, with their impacts on behavior and performance within institutions (Locke & Latham, 2006).

This study aims to investigate the implementation status and associated challenges of SDGs in Ethiopia, focusing on the South Gondar Zone Administration. It examines the challenges' extent in study institutions and explores the relationships between these challenges and the implementation of SDGs in signatory public institutions of South Gondar Zone. By doing so, this research seeks to contribute valuable insights to existing studies on the subject matter.

Rationale of the Study

Ethiopia has embraced international policies, incorporating them into its public policy framework to combat underdevelopment. The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and subsequent implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) signify the nation's commitment to addressing multifaceted challenges. Policy implementation is a crucial process that translates policy into practice, testing the government's capability to deliver on promises and transform plans into tangible actions (Bhola, 2004, cited in Dereje, 2012).

Numerous empirical studies, including those by Ali (2006), Ajulor (2018), Walshaw & Anthony (2007), Mulugeta (2005), Biruk (2014), and Dereje (2012), have explored public policy implementation, emphasizing its roots and challenges. These challenges are categorized into conventional and neurocognitive factors. Conventional factors include uncertain priorities, lack of political responsibilities, centralization, and financial constraints. Additionally, cognitive factors, such as the interpretation of policy provisions by executing agents, significantly impact implementation (Reiser and Reimer, 2002, cited in Dereje, 2012).

Ethiopia, like many other nations, faces bottlenecks in policy implementation, leading to a gap between intentions and actual outcomes. Cognitive components, personal perceptions, and design flaws contribute to this implementation deficit. Policymakers' reluctance to revisit implemented policies hampers accountability and the ability to

address flaws, perpetuating the cycle of ineffective implementation (Sabatier, 1999, cited in Dereje, 2012).

Goal setting theory, proposed by Locke & Latham (1990), identifies goal content and goal intensity as crucial facets influencing goal performance. Most studies have focused on goal specificity, goal difficulty, and goal commitment's effects on performance. The importance of politically sound, economically supported, and institutionally aligned policies for effective implementation has been underscored in the literature (Dejene et al., 2019).

Despite existing literature on policy implementation in Ethiopia, there is a notable gap in addressing foreign-adopted policies, emphasizing domestic policy implementation and challenges. Additionally, inconsistencies in research results on the relationships between goal-setting characteristics and goal implementation, as well as the lack of a comprehensive examination of these characteristics collectively, highlight a theoretical gap. The influence of key identified institutional challenges and goal-setting characteristics on policy implementation has not been adequately explored in a single study, underscoring the need for further research in this area.

This study aims to fill these gaps by examining the implementation and challenges of key institutional variables and goal-setting facets in the context of Sustainable Development Goal practices in South Gondar at the zonal administration level. By adopting a distinct public policy perspective, this research seeks to contribute to a better understanding of SDG implementation, challenges, and the intricate relationship between challenges and SDGs. The following research questions guide this study.

- How is the implementation of SDGs in selected organizations of South Gondar Zone?
- What are the major institutional challenges to achieving SDGs in the target area?
- Is there a significant relationship between identified challenges and SDG implementation?

- What is the effect of goal-setting variables (goal difficulty, goal specificity, goal participative, and goal commitment) on SDG implementation?

Theoretical Framework

The Essence of Policy Implementation: Policy implementation is a critical phase in which government commitments are translated into action. Implementation involves carrying out, achieving, fulfilling, creating, or completing policies, requiring a combination of individuals, resources, technology, and capital (Ajulor, 2004). The implementation environment is complex due to multi-stakeholder relationships and diverse interests, especially in developing nations.

Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) identified three key factors influencing policy goal attainment: the manageability of addressed problems, the statute's ability to structure implementation positively, and the net impact of various political factors. Dye (2005) asserted that implementation is a continuation of politics through other means, emphasizing that policymaking extends into bureaucracy after legislative action.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) and Its Implementation: The United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on September 25, 2015, replacing the Millennium Development Goals. Spanning from January 1, 2016, to December 31, 2030, the SDGs consist of 17 goals, reflecting a global commitment to addressing various challenges.

In Ethiopia, the national policies and strategies focus on poverty eradication and development interventions to meet nationwide demands with inter-generational equity. Implementation progress varies across goals and nations, with some African countries making strides, while challenges persist.

Challenges of Sustainable Development Goals Implementation: Challenges in SDG implementation include intentional policy imposition, modification of agendas for implementers' benefit, insufficient planning, political unrest, and bureaucratic

bottlenecks (Ajulor, 2016). Issues also arise from the adoption of foreign-made solutions, undermining local intellectual capabilities and exacerbating talent underdevelopment. Inadequate participation of target beneficiaries further complicates policy processes.

Theoretical Model of the Study to Assess the Implementations and Challenges of

SDGs: This study employs Goal Setting Theory, as proposed by Locke and Latham (1990), drawing inspiration from Aristotle. The theory posits a strong connection between well-defined, challenging goals and performance. Specific and challenging goals enhance success by stimulating intense thought and increased productivity. However, goals must not be overly difficult to avoid frustration and policy failure.

Policy development and implementation involve a complex process of goal-setting, and in developing nations, the tendency to set too many unrealistic goals hinders progress. The study uses performance indicators, such as goal accomplishment, service quality, time efficiency, employee productivity, and organizational learning, to measure SDG implementation status (Radu, 2010).



Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

Research Methodology

The research adopted a pragmatic model, blending quantitative and qualitative methods within a parallel concurrent research design (QUAN + QUAL) guided by a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2014). Primary data was collected through a survey questionnaire distributed to 176 participants in the South Gondar Administrative zone. The questionnaire, structured with a 5-point Likert scale, yielded 158 (89.77%) usable responses. Statistical analyses, including one sample t-test, Pearson correlation, and hierarchical linear regression, were employed for quantitative data. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with 8 key individuals provided qualitative insights. Thematic analysis was applied to the interview responses, offering a nuanced understanding of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation challenges. Complementing primary data, secondary sources such as documents and reports from selected institutions enriched the qualitative context.

Sampling, Ethical Considerations, and Limitations

The survey targeted leaders and employees of signatory institutions, ensuring a diverse perspective. Ethical principles, including informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality, were upheld throughout the research process. The study acknowledges limitations, such as its context-specific findings applicable to the South Gondar Administrative zone. The accuracy of responses relies on participants' openness, and external factors may influence outcomes. Despite limitations, the mixed methods approach offers a comprehensive understanding of SDG implementation, combining statistical rigor with qualitative depth.

Table 1 Total sample size and sampling design profile

<i>No</i>	<i>Signatory Organization</i>	<i>Population/ employee/</i>	<i>Proportional allocation of Sample size to each organization</i>	<i>No. of interviewee</i>
1	<i>Water development, hygiene & sanitation Office</i>	26	15	1
2	<i>Urban development Office</i>	42	23	1
3	<i>Rural agriculture development Office</i>	51	29	1
4	<i>Land administration & environmental protection Office</i>	36	20	1
5	<i>Health Office</i>	33	18	1
6	<i>Education Office</i>	41	23	1
7	<i>Finance and economic development Office</i>	55	31	1
8	<i>Women, children & youth affair Office</i>	31	17	1
<i>Total</i>		315	176	8

Both probability and non-probability sampling procedures were utilized to ensure a diverse and representative sample, enhancing external validity and transferability (Greene, 2007). Purposive sampling was initially employed to select public organizations, ensuring relevance to the study objectives. Subsequently, a combination of lottery method simple random sampling and standardized sample determination formulas ensured the fair representation of respondents from each organization, enhancing the study's generalizability. The use of both probability and non-probability sampling techniques contributes to the methodological robustness of the research design. Additionally, purposive sampling was employed to identify participants for interviews, allowing for a deeper exploration of qualitative insights.

In the analysis phase, quantitative data underwent rigorous statistical examination. One sample t-test, Pearson correlation, and hierarchical linear regression were applied to

derive meaningful insights from the numerical data. Concurrently, thematic analysis was employed for qualitative data obtained from interviews, providing a comprehensive understanding of the contextual nuances surrounding Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation. This methodological triangulation enhances the overall validity and reliability of the research findings.

Participants Demographic Characteristics

Table 2 Respondents Background Characteristics

Participant	Demographic variable																	
	Sex			Age				Education			Experience in the institution							
Employee		M	F	Total	20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Total	diplo	Bachel	Maste	Total	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	Total
	Freq.	102	47	149	9	81	45	14	149	3	99	47	149	36	66	43	4	149
	%	68.5	31.5	100	6	54.4	30.2	9.4	100	2	66.4	31.5	100	24.2	44.3	28.9	2.7	100

Results of the Study

I. The Extent of Sustainable Development Goals Implementation in the Study Area

The study focused on evaluating the implementation status of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the selected public institutions within the study area, which have been integrated into the Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II). A comprehensive approach was employed, utilizing a standardized questionnaire, interviews, and document analysis to gather data. The one-sample t-test, a statistical method for assessing whether a sample comes from a population with a specific mean value, was utilized to analyze the survey data and determine the extent of SDGs implementation. This

quantitative analysis was complemented and enriched by insights obtained through interviews and document review, providing a robust and multi-faceted assessment of the implementation status.

II. Institutional Challenges Hindering SDG Implementation

The research also delved into identifying and understanding the institutional challenges that impede the effective implementation of SDGs in the study area. Through qualitative analysis, thematic patterns emerged from interviews and document sources, shedding light on the complex factors influencing SDG implementation. The study aimed to uncover the nuances of challenges such as unrealistic goal setting, political commitment, participation issues, policy guidance clarity, synergy gaps, and organizational capability constraints. By combining qualitative and quantitative data, the research strived to offer a holistic view of the challenges faced by institutions in their pursuit of sustainable development, contributing valuable insights for policy refinement and strategic planning.

Table 3 descriptive statistics

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SDGs implementation	149	3.3893	1.03787	.08503

The analysis of the data, as presented in Table 3, highlights a mean value of 3.39 with a standard deviation of 1.03, signifying a relatively favorable implementation status of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across the surveyed institutions. The calculated mean surpasses the expected test mean value by 0.39, indicating a positive deviation and suggesting an overall commendable level of SDG implementation.

Moreover, Table 4 reveals crucial statistical insights, demonstrating a significant mean difference in implementation among the institutions. The calculated t-value of 4.578, with

a corresponding p-value of 0.000, emphasizes the statistical significance of the observed implementation disparities. This implies that the variation in SDG implementation among the surveyed institutions is not merely due to chance but bears significance at a highly confident level ($p < 0.0001$). These statistical findings underscore the need for a nuanced examination of the factors contributing to divergent implementation levels, paving the way for targeted interventions and improvements in the pursuit of sustainable development goals across diverse institutional settings.

Table 4 One sample t-test

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 3.00					
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
SDGs implementation	4.578	148	.000	.38926	.2212	.5573

The document review focused on six main themes of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation, specifically addressing Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere, Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation, and Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

The findings from the document analysis revealed a comprehensive and organized approach to the implementation of the Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II) and SDGs within the South Gondar Administrative Zone. The local government demonstrated concerted efforts to develop the agricultural sector, stimulate private

investments in manufacturing, expand small and medium enterprises, and conserve natural resources. Notably, the initiatives contributed to employment generation, particularly benefiting vulnerable segments of the society such as youth and women. Additionally, advancements were noted in achieving health-related goals, with improvements in maternal and child health, and a notable 96 percent health service coverage.

The document highlighted initiatives aimed at gender equality and women's empowerment, emphasizing support for rural women through employment opportunities and land ownership. Infrastructure development, inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and innovation were addressed through substantial resource allocation for all-weather roads, reduction in travel time, and expanding potable water supply services. Watershed development and soil conservation efforts were evident in the context of Goal 14, contributing to the sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources. Overall, the document review illustrated a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to SDGs implementation, showcasing progress in various developmental aspects within the South Gondar Zone.

The study uncovered various challenges encountered in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the South Gondar Administrative Zone, and these challenges were explored through interviews with participants. Several key themes emerged:

- A. Weak Political Commitment: Participants highlighted the issue of weak political commitment, with a mean value of 3.24 (SD = 0.93), indicating a moderate level of agreement that political commitment is a challenge in SDGs implementation.
- B. Inclination towards one Pillar of Development: The inclination towards one pillar of development over others received a mean value of 3.55 (SD = 0.89), indicating a moderate level of agreement that the government's commitment is skewed towards certain development projects at the expense of environmental protection.

- C. Lack of Synergy: Lack of synergy among institutions, with a mean value of 3.29 (SD = 0.94), suggests a moderate level of agreement that this is a significant challenge in the study area.
- D. Feeble Institutional Capacity: Challenges related to institutional capacity, including facilitators' capacity, regulatory weaknesses, and monitoring and evaluation systems, received a mean value of 3.41 (SD = 0.91), indicating a moderate level of agreement.
- E. Lack of Clear Policy Guide: The lack of clear guidance on policy changes or SDGs achievement, with a mean value of 3.38 (SD = 0.97), suggests a moderate level of agreement that this is a challenge.
- F. Unclear Goal: Challenges related to redesign, lack of participation, imprecise goals, and a lack of common consensus received a mean value of 3.46 (SD = 0.88), indicating a moderate level of agreement.
- G. Lack of Proper Administration and Adequate Resource: Challenges related to administration, resource availability, and issues of transparency and corruption received a mean value of 3.67 (SD = 0.92), indicating a relatively higher level of agreement.

Additionally, the study explored correlations between key institutional challenges and SDGs implementation. The findings indicated strong and positive relationships between SDGs implementation and variables such as resource availability ($r = .935^{**}$), policy framework ($r = .904^{**}$), facilitators' capacity ($r = .916^{**}$), teamwork ($r = .868^{**}$), and institutional synergy ($r = .765^{**}$). All these correlations were statistically significant at the 0.01 level, suggesting that addressing these challenges could lead to improved SDGs implementation.

Table 5 Correlations between Identified Institutional Challenges and SDGs Implementation

			Correlations						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. SDGs implementation	Pearson Correlation		1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)								
	N		149						
2. Availability of resource	Pearson Correlation		.893**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000						
	N		149	149					
3. Policy framework	Pearson Correlation		.928**	.912**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000					
	N		149	149	149				
4. Facilitators capability	Pearson Correlation		.935**	.930**	.947**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000				
	N		149	149	149	149			
5. Team work among employees	Pearson Correlation		.874**	.951**	.884**	.905**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000			
	N		149	149	149	149	149		
6. Leader support	Pearson Correlation		.844**	.940**	.864**	.882**	.964**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	N		149	149	149	149	149	149	
7. Institutional synergy	Pearson Correlation		.765**	.844**	.797**	.800**	.871**	.898**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N		149	149	149	149	149	149	149

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The hierarchical linear regression analysis underscored the significant impacts of goal setting variables on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation, providing valuable insights into the nuanced relationships. Goal difficulty emerged as a potent and statistically significant factor, revealing a positive effect on SDGs implementation with a robust coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.780$). This implies that 78% of the variation in SDGs implementation can be explained by the level of goal difficulty. The F-statistic, which gauges the overall significance of the regression model, was highly significant at $p < 0.0001$, affirming the model's appropriateness for estimating the relationship.

Upon introducing goal participative into the model, a significant improvement in prediction was observed, as evidenced by the ΔR^2 of 0.087 and a substantial F-statistic of 95.450 ($p \leq 0.01$). This suggests that the collaborative involvement of stakeholders in the goal-setting process significantly enhanced the overall prediction of SDGs implementation, explaining an additional 8.7% of the variance beyond goal difficulty alone. Subsequent control for goal specificity in Model 3 yielded a positive and significant influence on SDGs implementation, contributing an additional 3% of explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.030$, $\Delta F = 42.519$, $p \leq 0.01$). Finally, the inclusion of goal commitment in Model 4 revealed a positive impact on SDGs implementation, explaining an additional 5.4% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.054$, $\Delta F = 155.807$, $p \leq 0.01$). These results collectively emphasize the multifaceted contributions of well-defined, challenging goals, participative processes, specificity, and commitment in bolstering the successful implementation of SDGs. Policymakers and practitioners can leverage these findings to formulate more effective and targeted strategies for advancing sustainable development initiatives.

Table 6 hierarchical linear regression model summary

Model Summary^e

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.883 ^a	.780	.778	.48882	.780	520.189	1	147	.000
2	.931 ^b	.867	.865	.38141	.087	95.450	1	146	.000
3	.947 ^c	.897	.895	.33655	.030	42.519	1	145	.000
4	.975 ^d	.951	.949	.23405	.054	155.807	1	144	.000

Table 7 regression coefficient

		Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	-.295	.166		-1.775	.078	-.624	.033
	goal difficulty	.977	.043	.883	22.808	.000	.892	1.062
2	(Constant)	-.327	.130		-2.518	.013	-.584	-.070
	goal difficulty	.643	.048	.581	13.434	.000	.548	.737
	goal participative	.408	.042	.422	9.770	.000	.326	.491
3	(Constant)	-.621	.123		-5.042	.000	-.865	-.378
	goal difficulty	.314	.066	.283	4.768	.000	.184	.444
	goal participative	.374	.037	.387	10.032	.000	.300	.447
	goal specificity	.446	.068	.368	6.521	.000	.311	.581
4	(Constant)	-.177	.093		-1.909	.058	-.360	.006
	goal difficulty	.164	.047	.148	3.473	.001	.071	.258
	goal participative	-.004	.040	-.004	-.107	.915	-.083	.074
	goal specificity	.274	.050	.225	5.523	.000	.176	.372
	goal commitment	.600	.048	.655	12.482	.000	.505	.695

The qualitative analysis revealed valuable insights into the interconnections among key institutional challenges, goal-setting variables, and the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Participants emphasized that addressing these challenges is pivotal for fostering a conducive environment for enhanced SDGs implementation in the study area. From the inception of the Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II) integrated with SDGs, local government authorities have undertaken various measures to alleviate these challenges. Notable among these measures are improvements in resource allocation, capacity-building initiatives for facilitators, fostering teamwork, and establishing a conducive policy environment. The participants highlighted that these measures have collectively contributed to the gradual enhancement of SDGs implementation over time. This qualitative perspective adds depth to the understanding

of the dynamic and multifaceted strategies employed by local authorities to overcome challenges and promote sustainable development initiatives in the region.

Discussion of Results

The current study provides a comprehensive examination of the implementation and challenges of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in zonal-level public institutions in South Gondar. By concurrently presenting survey and qualitative results, the study offers a nuanced understanding of the situation. Notably, the findings challenge previous African research conducted by Ajulor (2018) and Maduabum (2016), who argued that underdevelopment persisted despite SDG programs, with issues like poverty, hunger, and gender inequality remaining unaddressed. In contrast, Dialoke et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of involving beneficiaries in SDG awareness, aligning with the current study's indication of a relatively better SDG implementation status in South Gondar with a mean value of 3.39.

Consistent with prior research, including Ajulor (2018), Maduabum (2016), and Jaiyesimi (2016), the study identifies challenges such as resource scarcity, technological gaps, capacity limitations, policy inconsistencies, and the need for enhanced monitoring and accountability. The qualitative findings reinforce these challenges, providing a richer narrative. Additionally, the study investigates the relationships between key institutional challenges and SDGs implementation, mirroring Bozkurt et al.'s (2017) findings of a positive correlation between resource availability, capability, support, synergy, policy, teamwork, and policy implementation performance. The correlation coefficients in this study, ranging from .765 to .935, substantiate a strong positive relationship between the identified challenges and SDGs implementation.

Moreover, the hierarchical linear regression analysis reveals the significant predictive power of goal-setting characteristics on SDGs implementation. Goal difficulty emerges as a potent factor, explaining 78% of the variance in SDGs implementation. The subsequent inclusion of goal participative, goal specificity, and goal commitment significantly

enhances the prediction, underscoring their collective influence on SDGs implementation. To delve into the numerical specifics, the standardized beta coefficients (β) for goal difficulty, goal participative, goal specificity, and goal commitment are .883, .393, .199, and .258, respectively. The ΔR^2 values for these variables are .780, .087, .030, and .054, indicating the additional variance explained with their inclusion. Furthermore, the F statistics for the models are 348.606 ($p = 0.000$), 95.450 ($p \leq .01$), 42.519 ($p \leq .01$), and 155.807 ($p \leq .01$), confirming the overall significance of the regression models.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the study sheds light on the intricate landscape of implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in South Gondar at the zonal level. The identified challenges underscore the critical need for a strategic and collaborative approach to overcome obstacles hindering the successful realization of SDGs. One key takeaway is the significance of addressing institutional challenges, such as weak political commitment, capacity issues, and the lack of clear policy guidance. It is paramount for stakeholders to work in tandem to enhance political support, build institutional capacities, and establish transparent and effective policy frameworks.

Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of realistic and inclusive goal-setting characteristics. The findings suggest that adopting a more participatory and consultative approach can contribute to the success of SDGs implementation. Engaging local communities and fostering collaboration between policy implementers and beneficiaries can lead to more sustainable and impactful outcomes.

Moving forward, it is recommended that the local government takes proactive measures to narrow implementation gaps among institutions, considering the statistically significant differences revealed by the one-sample t-test. Moreover, addressing challenges like rent-seeking behaviors and governance issues is crucial to creating an environment conducive to sustainable development.

In light of the strong positive relationships found between identified institutional challenges and SDGs implementation, there is a clear indication that improvements in addressing these challenges will positively impact the overall success of SDGs in the region. The study calls for a shift from a top-down command structure to a more consultative and participatory approach, fostering transparency, accountability, and reducing political commitment issues.

Lastly, the study recommends redesigning SDGs to align with local environmental considerations and setting clear, participative, and achievable policy goals. This approach ensures that SDGs not only meet the needs of the target population but also contribute to the broader global agenda for sustainable development.

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