

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Media – Lessons and Suggestions for Policy Prescriptions

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Paper Nomenclature: View Point (VP)

Paper Code: GJEISV13I4OD2021VP4

Submission at Portal (www.gjeis.com): 04-Oct-2021

Manuscript Acknowledged: 10-Oct-2021

Originality Check: 11-Oct-2021

Originality Test (Plag) Ratio (Original): 05%

Author Revert with Rectified Copy: 19-Oct-2021

Peer Reviewers Comment (Open): 29-Oct-2021

Single Blind Reviewers Explanation: 07-Nov-2021

Double Blind Reviewers Interpretation: 10-Nov-2021

Triple Blind Reviewers Annotations: 18-Nov-2021

Author Update (w.r.t. correction, suggestion & observation): 05-Dec-2021

Camera-Ready-Copy: 20-Dec-2021

Editorial Board Excerpt & Citation: 28-Dec-2021

Published Online First: 31-Dec-2021

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came into force in 2015 with defined objectives and targets. SDGs are considered as the extension of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There are eight MDGs and targets. Countries could improve people's lives in specific development areas during the MDGs period. To take development further with sustainability in approach, Countries agreed to bring SDGs in UN meeting in 2015. Countries have committed to achieve SDGs by 2030. Media is a significant institution for taking development further at various levels and contributing to policymaking. The present paper is specifically designed to know the role of media in successfully implementing SDGs' goals at various levels, and goals are targeted to achieve by 2030.

Research Design and Methodology: The present paper explicitly presents India's policymaking process and how far India can achieve SDGs with public policies. Media is a significant institution for formulating public policies to reach SDG successfully. The paper has conceived to know how far India could reach SDG with the media facilitation and the media's role in reaching India's SDGs targets. To address the above two questions, the researcher traced the policymaking process in India and brought a few data to know the current status. Researchers have provided the significance of media's role after analyzing SDGs and their targets. The researchers used secondary data to put forth their argument. The limitation of the paper is the lack of field-based data.

Findings: The authors found that the media role is essential to the policymaking process and the implementation of policies. The media need to provide necessary field-based data to formulate policies. The media need to constantly assess the success and failure of policies by reporting regularly. They must collect data regularly to provide government to bring necessary changes during the implementation process. The present paper further discussed the lessons learnt so far to bring desirable results in SDGs. It also insisted that the media can play a proactive role in bringing positive societal changes to sustainable development in people's approaches.

Originality/Value: The paper emerged after realizing the importance of media in the development process. SDGs are a significant path to sustainable development to address climate change and sustainably improve people's lives. The media could sensitize people on sustainable living and restoring our ecosystem to make the world liveable. Digital innovation and the role of information communication technologies will be critical for achieving the SDGs.

Paper Type: View Point

KEYWORDS Sustainable Development | SDGs | Media and Policy Formulation

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- Present Volume & Issue (Cycle): Volume 13 | Issue-4 | Oct-Dec 2021
- International Standard Serial Number: Online ISSN: 0975-1432 | Print ISSN: 0975-153X
- DOI (Crossref, USA) <https://doi.org/10.18311/gjeis/2021>
- Bibliographic database: OCLC Number (WorldCat): 988732114
- Impact Factor: 3.57 (2019-2020) & 1.0 (2020-2021) [CiteFactor]
- Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Subodh Kesharwani
- Frequency: Quarterly
- Published Since: 2009
- Research database: EBSCO <https://www.ebsco.com>
- Review Pedagogy: Single Blind Review/ Double Blind Review/ Triple Blind Review/ Open Review
- Copyright: ©2021 GJEIS and its heirs
- Publishers: Scholastic Seed Inc. and KARAM Society
- Place: New Delhi, India.
- Repository (figshare): 704442/13

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Introduction (linkages of SDGs, Public policies and Media)

Development took momentum immediately after the second world war. Even though countries have divided based on ideological differences and took various paths for developing the countries, every Country, irrespective of their location, speeded up development in various ways. Rapid development with the exploitation of natural resources and unmindful consumption patterns destroyed natural resources, bringing wide-ranging climatic conditions. Market-led neoliberal economic policies contributed to the large-scale production of goods and services and distribution and consumption, which led to unsustainable development throughout the world (see A/CONF.216/PC/7).

Human beings became a significant constituent on earth to drive the development in a specific direction, which contributed to the overexploitation of natural resources, the loss of critical habitats and biodiversity, and the increase of land, seas, and the atmosphere already proved through scientific studies. Scientific studies further stated that biodiversity loss and exploitation of natural resources and habitats led to climate change. Climate change is often due to existing exploitation contributing to natural disasters. It also contributes to massive economic loss in society and poses environmental challenges and threats to humanity (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2013; Rockström and others, 2009). The overexploitation of nature has already been felt through the tsunami, unseasonal heavy rain, flooding, drought, shocks and stresses. Flooding in urban areas affects the lives and livelihoods of poor and informal sector employees in developing countries. The developed nations like the United States (US) and Germany also faced climatic accidents recently. The heavy floods and loss of landscapes in rural areas affect farmers and livelihoods. Unseasonal floods and drought forced male farmers to leave farming activities and migrate to urban areas to seek livelihoods. They end up joining the informal sector without social security. This phenomenon led to the feminization of agriculture activities. The climate and change environmental hazards bring Poverty, inequality, loss of lives and livelihoods (Unmüßig, Sachs and Fatheuer, 2012).

Sustainable Development came into the broader discussion after the Brundtland report called “Our Common Future” in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). After the report’s publication, countries took immediate action to address environmental degradation and climate change. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the General Assembly meeting held in New York in 2015 with lots of hope and expectations from the leaders to bring tangible changes to address environmental degradation and climate change. The 17 SDGs, with 169 specific targets, are now becoming the road map for governments and the international development community for the next 15 years (<https://sdgs.un.org/goal>). Countries have themselves

committed to implementing these agendas through appropriate policies by 2030. SDGs have been formulated to address three significant dimensions: economic, social, and environmental, to balance all three aspects for sustainable development. Countries including India have further committed to ending poverty and hunger. They have decided to promote gender equality and have committed to protecting the environment. They committed to inclusive, sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work by taking all existing conditions and status (sdgs.un.org/2030agenda). These goals are related to ending Poverty, addressing hunger by ensuring food security, accessing and controlling health facilities by all to ensure well-being of human being, providing equitable, accessible and quality education to all, bringing gender equality and equity among all, giving portable clean drinking water and ensuring sanitation to all, providing affordable clean energy to all, enhancing working environment as well as providing social security measures, ensuring more innovation at various levels to create sustainable solution for the problems faced by the Country, reducing inequality among people, making our cities liveable, encouraging responsible consumption and production, action to bring changes in the existing climatic condition, taking action to bring conducive environment for the creatures living in water especially sea, ensuring safety of every species on earth, bringing peace justice and ensuring international partnership among institutions (<https://sdgs.un.org/goal>). The agreement of SDGs by the countries showed the path for them to formulate policies to address sustainable development goals.

Methodology and Rationale of the paper

The present paper explicitly presents India’s policymaking process and how far India can achieve SDGs with public policies. Media is a significant institution for formulating public policies to reach SDG goals. The paper has conceived to know how far India could reach SDG goals with appropriate policies and how far media can proactively provide necessary information for policymaking and address SDGs at the field levels in reaching India’s SDGs targets? To address the above two questions, the researcher traced existing policies of the Indian government and brought a few data to know the current status. The present paper can provide the media’s role after analyzing SDGs and their targets. The researchers used secondary data to put forth their argument. The limitation of the paper is the lack of field-based data.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Policies in India

Various Institutions in India play a significant role in policy formulation and implementation. The media expect to be proactive by providing necessary data, field reality and public opinion to formulate public policies. The policy is a broad statement reflecting future goals and aspirations and providing guidelines for carrying out those goals. Hill (1993:



p.47) defines 'policy' as 'the product of political influence, determining and setting limits to what the state does. When a government decides or chooses a course of action to solve a social problem and adopts a specific strategy for its planning and implementation, it is known as public policy (Anderson 1975). Political scientists argue that policy formulation is best explained by describing it as a process rather than a 'one-time affair'. Public policies also do not evolve with the activities of top-level executives alone. It also involves the active participation of non-political groups, private players, civil society organizations, etc. There are debates about top-down and bottom-up approaches. In the bottom-up approach, all stakeholder involves in the policymaking process, unlike top-down approaches where experts decide the policies and implementation strategies. Thus, policy formulation involves research, data collection, current status analysis, fixing targets, identifying stakeholders, negotiating with stakeholders, bargaining, and accommodating different interests, eventually legitimizing a policy.

Policy formulation is quite a critical phase of the policy process. The success or failure depends mainly upon the policy designs and policy formulation processes. Policy formulation involves the process of identifying and crafting a set of policy alternatives to address a problem and narrow down the alternatives to arrive at a final policy decision. According to Cochran and Malone, policy formulation takes up the "what" questions: "What is the plan for dealing with the problem? What are the goals and priorities? What options are available to achieve those goals? What are the costs and benefits of each of the options? What externalities, positive or negative, are associated with each alternative?" The media can question the government's ideas and strategies to deal with a particular problem to look at all the above questions. The media can ask government priorities and goals to address SDGs. Media can give the option to deal with certain issues based on field reality as well as it can ask option from the government and the same can be popularised among people through media. The media can also conduct mass surveys to ask people to provide suggestions to the government to address SDGs. As Dye puts it, policy formulation occurs in government bureaucracies, interest group offices, legislative committee rooms, special commissions meetings, and think tanks with details often formulated by staff.

Policy formulation usually occurs in government bureaucracy, interest groups' offices, special commissions' meetings, and policy planning organizations. Formulating policies that promote social justice and gender justice will encourage all participants to involve actively through various formal and informal institutions. The formal institutions include the government's legislative, executive, and political wings. The informal institutions include political parties, civil society organizations, community-based groups, private-for-profit firms, trade unions, media, etc. It is difficult for any policy formulator to make policy in isolation. Hence, for effective formulation of policies, cooperation of various players is essential, and interaction between the formal and

informal channels provides the basis for more informed policy dialogue. Various agencies are involved in the formulation and development of a policy. In India, the agencies that play the role of public policymaking are Cabinet; legislature; opposition political parties; pressure groups and NGOs; bureaucrats; and citizens and media.

The role of media in the policy formulation process is an essential factor. The media bridge the information gap between the citizen and the government. They communicate information to the citizens about the governments' decisions. Thereby media help shape their reactions to each other's decisions. At the same time, it is also essential to determine whether they are politically biased in their presentation of information related to policy issues. If they are biased, they are said to distort the very concept of democracy. If a citizen makes rational decisions about a public policy, the media should have a high-reliability standard. It should be unbiased in bringing issues of concern to the attention of the public and the concerned authorities. Thus, public opinion expressed through the mass media is central to policy formulation.

As far as India is concerned, various agencies in the administrative system are responsible for implementing these policies. With to SDGs, Different Central Ministries formulated Policies which include Namami Gange Mission, National Clean Air Programmes, National Policy on Resource Efficiency, Empowered and Resilient India (*Sashakt Bharat - Sabal Bharat*), Clean and Healthy India (*Swachh Bharat*), Health Coverage to all (*Ayushman Bharat*), Inclusive and Entrepreneurial India (*Samagra Bharat - Saksham Bharat*). These policies were implemented through Programmes. The Programme includes *Swachh Bharat Mission, Beti Bacho Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Smart Cities, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana*, among others. For Example, Namami Gange Mission addresses SDG 6 to improve and Conserve River Ganges. The ecosystem of the river Ganges is expected to improve by treating sewage close to river Ganga, efficient usage of water, and treating industrial effluents. The National Clean Air Programme was launched in 2019 to prevent and control air pollution in the entire Country.

(<https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1577014>).

The first and foremost significant goal of SDGs is to Reduce Poverty. India was able to improve the lives and livelihoods of 271 million people, and they came out from Poverty through its Programme "Empowered and Resilient India". It has been able to provide nutrition to the people affected in Poverty. It was able to address child health. The Country could improve school education through the Programme *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Universal Elementary Education). The Clean and Healthy India policies provided sanitation and protected drinking water among vulnerable sections of the population. The Country could dispose of the wastage thoroughly scientifically through Clean and Healthy India. Local Body

institutions can collect the waste from each household and segregate biodegradable and degradable waste for better waste management. Improvement in providing protected water and sanitation facilities has positively impacted the children's health. The Country could reduce stunning child improvement in Maternal Mortality rate and Child Mortality rate (<https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1577014> and <https://www.niti.gov.in/verticals/sustainable-dev-goals>)

Along with this, India has provided Universal Health Coverage to its population. It is the world's largest health protection scheme which provides an annual cover of USD 7000 to 100 million households. The world has suffered due to Covid 19 from 2020 and the Covid pandemic impacted every section of the population. Economically poor and weaker sections of the population lost livelihoods due to lockdown and medical emergencies. India took efforts at the policy level by creating Covid wards at public hospitals and providing accessible medical facilities. It has been involved in research in vaccines development and targeted to provide vaccines to all its citizens. It has also extended its hands to provide vaccines for many developing countries and has operationalized the SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund with an initial contribution of USD 10 million. Domestically, India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic includes an initial USD 22.5 billion economic stimulus package, comprehensive health coverage for front-line workers and direct cash transfers for the most vulnerable. Apart from the Programmes mentioned above, India addresses the financial inclusion of women and the poor through the National Financial Inclusion Scheme. National Financial Benefit Scheme extends the earlier Self Help Group (SHGs) scheme of Saving and Credit. The scheme is highly beneficial for women. They got financial security through the National Financial benefit Scheme (<https://www.niti.gov.in/verticals/sustainable-dev-goals>).

Farmers get benefit crop insurance. Farmers will receive financial benefits for their insured crops through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). The Country has envisioned becoming Sustainable India through clean and efficient energy systems, disaster-resilient infrastructure, and planned eco-restoration. The data further gave positive aspects to address climate change. India could provide electricity to all its villages. Electrification is 100 per cent in India. It reduced 38 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually through energy-efficient appliances. Women's health improved, and their Practical Gender Needs (PGNs) were addressed through the *Ujwala* scheme by providing clean cooking fuel to 80 million poor households. It has set a target to install 450GW of renewable energy and restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030. Globally, India stands third in renewable power, fourth in wind power, and fifth in solar power. India launched the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the International Solar Alliance to leverage global partnerships for climate action and disaster resilience. India is in the spirit of South-South Cooperation. For realizing the 2030 Agenda, India supports developing countries through the USD 150

million India-UN Development Partnership Fund. In this spirit of regional and global partnerships and the Country's commitment to 'leave no one behind, India steps into the Decade of Action, drawing confidence from its experience in addressing challenges.

(<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/india>). In the entire process of addressing SDGs and making policies in line with SDGs, Media is an important social institution. It can act proactively by constantly reporting the status of existing policies to improve the same.

Sustainable Development Goals and Media

Media is an important social institution in India. In the era of the 21st century, Media operates on various platforms. Various media trying to reach people through social media platforms and have created their websites. There is a distinction between Communication about Sustainability (CAS) and Communication of Sustainability (CoS). Cas is related to horizontal communication, whereas CoS relates to communication given to the particular population with objectives. Unlike cash and CoS, Communication for Sustainability (CFS) provides necessary information and facilitates the community to bring necessary changes. Thus, Media can adopt Communication for Sustainability (CFS) to make people realize the significance of changing their existing patterns of lifestyles. They should bring a more sustainable way of living to improve the planet's sustainability. In this regard, media can significantly change people's perception of life (Genc, Ruhet, 2017 & Janoušková, Svatava, 2019). Information Communication Technology (ICT) is an essential tool for media to reach the public. Mobile phone is part of the ICT tool. The expansion and access to mobile technology are phenomenal. Media can share the significance of sustainability through mobile phones (Rotondi, Valentina, 2020). Media takes information related to national and international issues to the commoner through print or online forms. Media works in two levels. It tries to provide international and national vital issues to the people. It also reports the crucial issues at the local level, especially village, small-town urban or peri-urban areas, to the broader discussion.

SDGs is timebound goals and targets. Public policies are made to achieve SDGs goals. Media roles provide information on SDGs to the public and contribute to policy formulation. Media can provide existing reality on various development indicators among the population. Various Institutions work to implement public policies. At the grassroots level, Village Panchayat is a constitutionally created institution to implement policies, and they also work to create a bottom-up plan to address development issues. Programmes related to SDGs are directly implemented at the local level. In this regard, Media can regularly report the success and failure of these programmes. It can also analyze reasons for success and failure, either replicated or improved.



Free and socially conscious Media without biases will help the Country achieve SDGs. Secondly, the media can collect the field-based empirical data or evidence at the field level on policies that target to achieve SDGs, and changes can be made in implementing the process. Sustainable goals related to Poverty, water and sanitation, health, education, climate change, housing for all, rejuvenating ecosystems, identifying Common Property Resources (CPR) and maintaining documenting the involvement of communities for CPR and international cooperation and partnership. Let's take health as an indicator, reducing Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), Reducing Child Mortality Rate (CMR), Infant Mortality rate (IMR), making accessible and affordable health facilities, improving public health systems in rural and urban areas, vaccination, and reducing doctor-patient ratio is significant to address SDGs. Media can take each aspect and write stories about existing health infrastructure, stressing the importance of improving the public health system and making people aware that spending personal amount on health and education significantly reduces their expenditure on other areas, especially foods and nutritional security. The media can encourage all to access public health facilities to image the public health system positively. There are national and regional media in India, apart from online portals. Regional and national media can report the facts of health issues which government can achieve. SDGs is not about reporting only environmental issues. Specifically, print media runs exclusives for reporting environmental issues like Down to Earth, Quartz, The CSR Journal and India Development and Better India. Better India reports case studies on people working on sustainable agriculture, sustainable productions, and farmers bringing products (FAO, 2007 & Nishimura Yoichi, 2020).

Along with individuals, SDGs have allowed corporations to work on responsible business. CSR and Sustainable business and media role in promoting and encouraging all to get into responsible business (Fernandes, Kasmin,2021). Indian media can learn a lesson from Japanese media that sets the example in covering environmental topics and educating the public about the need for action on climate change. In Japan, it's not uncommon to see people wearing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lapel pins. The popularity of the pin may be because Japanese media covers the SDGs and the growing problem of climate change extensively (Nishimura Yoichi, 2020).

An analysis of the media coverage featuring the keywords "SDGs" and "developing countries" using the News plus database shows that more than 2,400 articles mentioned two keywords somewhere in the text of the articles over the period July- September. The UN meeting was held in September, and more than 600 articles talked about climate change during September. Analysis of the News Plus database further states that media covered extensively on SDGs in July before September UN meetings

(<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material/>).

Given the keywords used, "SDGs and developing countries", it is perhaps not a surprise that the most mentioned subject in the coverage is sustainable development, followed by Poverty and the environment. Amongst the top 10 subjects, we can also find climate change and development/humanitarian aid and famine-related stories. Domestic politics and international relations also are broader subject categories. However, the most mentioned industries present another picture, with the most mentioned renewable energy, development banking, and health care in the coverage. The top ten mentioned industries include financial investments, agriculture, waste management, and broadband infrastructure. In the era of the 21st century, Media is already digitalized with broadband coverage. Media can collect and analyze the data related to every field in development, and the same can be published for broader discussion. Digitalization further accelerates the share of information about best practices, and the progress will facilitate the government to improve its delivery mechanisms. They can also change the implementation strategies after looking at the field reality to bring changes in the Programme. As per the UN report, Media in Africa, especially Ethiopia and Kenya, cover SDG stories. Media in Asian Countries like India, China, and Bangladesh covers widely on SDGs. They are the top 10 countries to cover SDGs. A large percentage of regional media play a crucial role in bringing perspectives on issues. They need to be sensitized to SDGs. On the other hand, Media in the United States is played a critical role in covering SDGs. They have added advantage because of the UN location in New York

(<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material/>).

Conclusion

Development involves various actors and institutions bringing improvement among human beings. Institutions at the International and national level have theorized on the concept of development itself. Various frameworks and strategies played a crucial role in addressing significant development areas. The publication of the Brundtland report opened world leaders' eyes and strategized differently to achieve comprehensive sustainable development. In the entire development process, Media is a significant institution from conceptualization to implementation policies related to development. It can change the opinion of the people. In this, constant reporting of unsustainability and the need for sustainable living will contribute to achieving SDGs. SDGs are a significant path to sustainable development to address climate change and sustainably improve people's lives. The media could sensitize people on restoring our ecosystem to make the world liveable. Digital innovation and the role of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) will be critical for achieving the SDGs.

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Online Resources

- <https://sdgs.un.org/goal>
- <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
- <https://sdgs.un.org/news/call-inputs-global-sustainable-development-report-2023-34347>
- <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>
- <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/>
- <A/CONF.216/PC/7-https://sdgs.un.org/documents/aconf216pc7-objective-and-themes-unit-19325>
- <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1577014>
- <https://www.niti.gov.in/verticals/sustainable-dev-goals>
- <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material/>
- https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/media_post_2015.pdf
- <https://en.unesco.org/sustainabledevelopmentgoals-forcommunicationinformation>
- http://crossasia-repository.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/358/1/Media_and_Sustainable_Society.pdf
- unesdoc.unesco.org/pdf

GJEIS Prevent Plagiarism in Publication

The Editorial Board had used the Ouriginal – a Swedish anti-plagiarism software tool which is a fully-automatic machine learning text-recognition system made for detecting, preventing and handling plagiarism and trusted by thousands of institutions across worldwide. Urkund is GDPR compliant with privacy by design and an uptime of 99.9% and have trust to be the partner in academic integrity. <https://www.orkund.com>] tool to check the originality and further affixed the similarity index which is {5%} in this case (See below Annexure-I). Thus, the reviewers and editors are of view to find it suitable to publish in this Volume-13, Issue-4, Oct-Dec 2021

Annexure 1

Submission Date	Submission Id	Word Count	Character Count
16-Oct-2021	D126958072 (Ouriginal)	3768	27267

Original

Document Information			
Analyzed document	Sustainable Development Goals,edited,edited.doc (D126958072)		
Submitted	2021-10-11T15:55:00.0000000		
Submitted by			
Submitter email	guma@ignou.ac.in		
Similarity	5%		
Analysis address	guma.ignou@analysis.orkund.com		
Sources included in the report			
W	URL: https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1577014 Fetched: 2022-02-03T15:56:00.0000000	1	
SA	Ram Kumar Article_Army Institute of Law.doc Document Ram Kumar Article_Army Institute of Law.doc (D112603844)	4	
W	URL: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/01/sdgs-sustainable-development-news-media-coverage/ Fetched: 2020-03-13T07:18:27.9170000	1	
W	URL: http://www.tezu.ernet.in/dmass/activity_details.php?e_id=12 Fetched: 2021-11-02T10:46:51.9470000	1	

**Reviewers
Memorandum**

Reviewer's Comment 1: The paper focuses on the role of media to achieve the sustainability goals. The paper is based on secondary data. The author has considered Indian policy making and how it can be achieved with the help of Media institutions.

Reviewer's Comment 2: The author presents his strong opinion in a structured manner about the importance of accelerating the addition of media institutions to achieve the SDGs in time. The author opines the media can be both a critic and an appreciator of the government policies without any bias. Overall a good comprehensive opinion of the author.

Reviewer's Comment 3: The author suggests that media institutions shall be involved in policy making to make SDGs achievable within the mentioned time limit. The use of ICT to further enhance the reachability of the SDGs. The author has mentioned an overall approach of media institutions in meeting the development goals.



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"Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Media –
Lessons and Suggestions for Policy Prescriptions"
Volume-13, Issue-4, Oct-Dec 2021. (www.gjeis.com)

<https://doi.org/10.18311/gjeis/2021>
Volume-13, Issue-4, Oct-Dec 2021

Online iSSN : 0975-1432, Print iSSN : 0975-153X
Frequency : Quarterly, Published Since : 2009

Google Citations: Since 2009
H-Index = 96
i10-Index: 964

Source: <https://scholar.google.co.in/citations?user=S47TtNkAAAAJ&hl=en>



Conflict of Interest: Author of a Paper
had no conflict neither financially nor academically.

**Editorial
Excerpt**

The article has 5% of plagiarism which is the accepted percentage as per the norms and standards of the journal for the publication. As per the editorial board's observations and blind reviewers' remarks the paper had some minor revisions which were communicated on a timely basis to the authors (Uma and Ramesh) and accordingly all the corrections had been incorporated as and when directed and required to do so. The comments related to this manuscript are noticeably related to the "**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Media – Lessons and Suggestions for Policy Prescriptions**" both subject-wise and research-wise. The present research article aims to study the learning concerns that affected the academic progress of the children with disabilities and is based on the perspective of the parent. It makes suggestions for an appropriate learning environment for children with disabilities studying through an online mode. Overall, the paper promises to provide a strong base for the further studies in the area. After comprehensive reviews and editorial board's remarks, the manuscript has been categorized and decided to publish under "**View Point**" category.

Acknowledgement

The acknowledgment section is an essential part of all academic research papers. It provides appropriate recognition to all contributors for their hard work and effort taken while writing a paper. The data presented and analyzed in this paper by (Uma and Ramesh) were collected first handily and wherever it has been taken the proper acknowledgment and endorsement depicts. The author is highly indebted to others who had facilitated in accomplishing the research. Last but not least endorse all reviewers and editors of GJEIS in publishing in a present issue.

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