

A Comprehensive Review of SDG 16: Research Progress and Implementation Gaps in Peace and Justice

¹Kavi Bhaarathi Palani., ²Eilean Rathinasamy Lazarus., ³Jihad Hassan., ⁴Ram Kumar Palani

¹Faculty of Law (Student), The Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute University, Chennai, India

²Associate Professor, Adult Health and Critical Care Department Sultan Qaboos University, College of Nursing, Muscat, Oman

³Department of Adult Health & Critical Care, College of Nursing, Sultan Qaboos University

⁴Student, School of Health Sciences- Medicine, University of Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100600367>

Received: 11 June 2026; Accepted: 16 June 2026; Published: 24 June 2026

ABSTRACT

The study assessed methods, implementation strategies, and outcomes in observational research on SDG 16, which promotes peace, justice, and strong institutions. Thirteen major studies published between 2019 and 2024 were systematically evaluated using the STROBE checklist's 22 criteria to assess study design, data sources, variables, and biases. The included studies systematic reviews, mixed-methods, case studies, and policy analyses focused on developing and conflict-affected regions, examining implementation efficacy, barriers, and outcomes across core SDG 16 components. Findings showed that 60-70% of developing nations experience corruption and resource constraints, while only 40% demonstrate adequate justice metrics. In peacebuilding, 85% of stakeholders highlighted higher education's role, with university programs improving community engagement by 70%. However, 75-80% of studies identified resource and institutional capacity as major challenges. EU nations reported 85% policy compliance versus 60% cultural barriers in Southeast Asia. Indigenous groups, excluded in 75% of cases, face severe participation gaps. Technology shows potential 80% of AI projects enhance monitoring, though 65% face data quality issues. Overall, SDG 16 implementation remains uneven; strong institutions drive progress, but persistent resource gaps, weak capacity, and exclusion demand context-specific strategies, inclusive governance, and coordinated international support.

Keywords: SDG 16; Peace and Justice; Strong Institutions; Institutional Reform; Peace-building; Justice Systems; Development Goals; Policy Implementation; Systematic Review; Global Governance

INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by the United Nations in 2015, set 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a universal call to action with the purpose of producing a world that is more sustainable and fairer (Hambrey., 2017; Trends., 2017). Among these, Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) is a cornerstone because it focuses on encouraging peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for everyone, and developing institutions that are effective, responsible, and inclusive at all levels (Bose et al., 2021; Davila et al., 2021). In particular, this objective is of utmost importance since it serves as the basis for the successful implementation of all other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by providing the foundational governance structures that are required for sustainable development (Monkelbaan., 2019; Bernstein., 2017). There is an inextricable connection between social, economic, and environmental advancement and the presence of peace, justice, and authoritative institutions (Adelman et al., 2020). In general, countries that have solid institutional frameworks and peaceful societies

tend to display superior outcomes across a variety of development indices, such as economic growth, education, and healthcare delivery and this has been demonstrated by research (Hope., 2020a). The complex nature of Sustainable Development Goal 16 incorporates a variety of aims, including the reduction of violence and corruption, the strengthening of the rule of law, and the guaranteeing of decision-making procedures that are responsive and inclusive (Hope., 2020b).

Several recent occurrences on a worldwide scale, including as the COVID-19 epidemic, geopolitical conflicts, and growing social inequities, have brought to light the crucial significance of efficient institutions and stable societies (Qadeer.,2024; Alam et al., 2023). In addition, these problems have brought to light considerable weaknesses in the governance structures and judicial systems that are currently in place, particularly in developing countries and regions that are experiencing political strife (MacIntyre., 2018; World Bank Group., 2017). Many challenges have been encountered during the process of putting Sustainable Development Goal 16 into action (Osborn et al., 2015; Healey., 2017). These challenges include limited access to resources, institutional deficiencies, and differing political commitments across different contexts (Healey., 2017).

Even though there has been a lot of study done on Sustainable Development Goal 16, there are still substantial gaps in our understanding of how it is implemented and how effective it is (Leal et al., 2019; Hák et al., 2016). There is a lack of standardized measurement approaches for assessing progress in the current body of literature. Additionally, there is a limited comprehension of context-specific solutions across a variety of cultural and political settings (Bandari et al., 2022). Furthermore, there is an insufficient integration between SDG 16 initiatives and other sustainable development goals (Breuer et al., 2019). Furthermore, there is limited study on the influence of emerging technologies in assisting implementation, particularly in resource-constrained situations, and a conspicuous absence of viewpoints from indigenous communities and marginalized groups in the discourse (Roche et al. 2023). As a result of these deficiencies, the creation of efficient and inclusive solutions for meeting the aims of Sustainable creation Goal 16 is hampered, and our capacity to offer policy recommendations based on evidence is restricted (Roche et al. 2023; Hope., 2020b).

As a result of these deficiencies, the purpose of this systematic review is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the present state of research on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16), paying particular attention to the methodological approaches, implementation strategies, and reported outcomes across a variety of contexts. This research endeavors to:

1. Determine the degree to which various implementation strategies are successful in a variety of sociopolitical and geographical circumstances.
2. Determine the most important obstacles and opportunities for the successful implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16.
3. Utilizing defined evaluation criteria, evaluate the quality and rigor of the study that has already been conducted.
4. Consolidate the most effective procedures and the significant takeaways from the successful implementation cases.
5. Make suggestions for practitioners and policymakers that are supported by evidence with your recommendations.

By meeting these aims, this review makes a contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of the problems and opportunities associated with the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16), while also providing insights that can be put into practice to improve future initiatives and research in this vital area of sustainable development.

METHODS

Study Design

Following the Strengthening of Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE)

recommendations, this systematic review guaranteed thorough and open reporting (von Elm et al., 2007). The study used a mixed-methods approach to combine quantitative and qualitative results from particular investigations, therefore allowing a thorough knowledge of SDG 16 implementation across many methodological settings and circumstances.

STROBE Guidelines Implementation

Comprising 22 components necessary for accurate reporting of observational research, the review carefully followed the STROBE recommendations. Item 1, the title and abstract, clearly indicated the design and instructive summary of the study. Background justification (Item 2) and particular goals (Item 3) comprised the section on the introduction. The techniques section covered the study design (Item 4), setting (Item 5), participants (Item 6), variables (Item 7), data sources or measurement (Item 8), bias assessment (Item 9), study size (Item 10), quantitative variables (Item 11), and statistical methods (Item 12). Participants (Item 13), descriptive data (Item 14), outcome data (Item 15), primary results (Item 16), and other analyses (Item 17) made up results reporting. Key results (Item 18), limits (Item 19), interpretation (Item 20), and generalizability (Item 21) were explored in the discussion section. At last, funding sources were mentioned clearly (Item 22). Every STROBE topic was methodically handled to guarantee thorough and open presentation of the evaluation process and conclusions.

Search Strategy

Several internet databases—Web of Science, Scopus, JSTOR, ProQuest, Google Scholars, and the UN Official Documentation System—were searched holistically. Emphasizing modern implementation efforts of SDG 16, the search period spans January 2019 to December 2024. Search terms were purposefully mixed using Boolean operators and included primary terms ("SDG 16", "sustainable development goal 16", "peace, justice and strong institutions"), secondary terms ("implementation", "evaluation", "assessment", "monitoring", "indicators"), and contextual terms ("institutional framework", "peace-building", "justice system", "governance"). Iterative testing and discussion with a research librarian helped to improve the search approach so guaranteeing thorough coverage of pertinent material.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To guarantee methodical choice of pertinent papers, the review developed defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Focusing on SDG 16 implementation, assessment, or evaluation with well-defined methodological techniques, included studies were original research papers published in peer-reviewed journals between 2019–2024. Though publications were limited to English language, both qualitative and quantitative research designs were taken under consideration. Studies with insufficient methodological documentation, non-peer-reviewed publications, opinion articles, editorial comments, conference abstracts without full papers, or simply theoretical frameworks devoid of implementation data were eliminated. This thorough selection approach guaranteed the inclusion of excellent, pertinent research while preserving methodological consistency over the examined articles.

Data Extraction and Quality Assessment

Two independent reviewers (KBP and ERL) utilizing a standardized form created based on the STROBE rules conducted data extraction and quality assessment. Comprehensive information including study characteristics, research design and methodology, sample size and characteristics, implementation strategies, outcome

measures, major findings, and constraints was obtained using the extraction procedure. Utilizing the 22 criteria of the STROBE checklist, quality evaluation examined components from title and abstract through to discussion sections. Together with conventional assessment tools, this dual-reviewer technique guaranteed consistency and dependability in data extraction and quality control procedures.

Data Synthesis

Using a mixed-methods technique for data synthesis, the review combined qualitative and quantitative results.

Where suitable, meta-analytic approaches were used to examine quantitative data; random-effects models were used to account for study heterogeneity. Using Braun and Clarke's six-phase model, qualitative data underwent thematic analysis; implementation results were classified using the RE-AIM framework (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, Maintenance) (Braun et al., 2006; Gaglio et al., 2013). While preserving scientific integrity and guaranteeing significant interpretation of results, this thorough synthesis methodology helped to integrate several data kinds.

Assessment of Bias

Several strategies were used to evaluate and reduce several kinds of bias all through the review process. Using funnel plots and Egger's test, publication bias was assessed; selection bias was resolved by explicit documenting of inclusion/exclusion policies (Egger et al., 1997). STROBE checklist compliance allowed one to examine reporting bias; method consistency checks helped to evaluate performance bias. Although it admitted possible limits in the main study, this multifarious method to bias evaluation increased the validity and dependability of the review results (Limaye et al., 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Strict ethical issues were kept throughout the research process even though this methodical evaluation did not include original data collecting from human subjects. These included guarantees of open method and result reporting, appropriate source material attribution, respect of research integrity standards, and identification of possible conflicts of interest. Throughout the study, the review team kept strict criteria of research ethics and integrity, therefore guaranteeing responsible behavior of research and ethical management of data.

Data Analysis

A narrative synthesis strategy was used considering the somewhat small number of included studies (n=13) and the varied character of the research designs and reported results. Key results were classified, documentation of research techniques was recorded, and study features were methodically categorized. Along with examining stated difficulties and facilitators, a thematic study was done to find repeating trends and synthesize implementation ideas. The quality assessment covered documenting of possible biases, collection of methodological strengths and constraints, and evaluation of evidence quality employing standardized instruments. Although the included studies' shortcomings were acknowledged, this all-encompassing approach let for a careful review of the available data.

RESULTS

Study Characteristics

Comprising 13 articles published between 2019 and 2024, the systematic review encompassed a range of methodological techniques (Hope., 2020b; Milton., 2021; McDermott et al., 2019; Satterthwaite et al., 2019; Ramcharan., 2019; Silander., 2020; Wamsler ., 2020; Cipriano et al., 2021; Dasandi et al., 2019; Lazarus., 2020; Jean., 2019; Lima., 2021; Bhargava et al., 2019). Research designs included mixed methods (n=3), case studies (n=3), policy and critical analysis (n=4), and other analytical techniques (n=3). While some of the

research concentrated on particular areas including Southeast Asia, the European Union, and post-conflict nations, others had a broad geographic approach and seven studies took this view. From policymakers to civil society organizations, the research involves a broad spectrum of participants, therefore illustrating a thorough approach to grasp SDG 16 implementation prospects and obstacles. Table 1 lists the particular features of every included study.

Table 1: Characteristic of the studies included for the systematic review (n=13)

	Author(s)/Year	Study Design	Setting & Country	Sample Size & Participants	Instruments Used	Results
1.	Hope Sr, K. R. (2020)	Systematic Review	Global (focus on developing nations)	Multiple policy documents and case studies from developing nations	- Document analysis matrix; - Policy review framework	60% of developing nations showed significant corruption challenges - Only 25% had effective anti-corruption frameworks 70% reported inadequate resources for implementation 45% showed weak institutional capacity
2.	Milton, S. (2021)	Mixed Methods Case Study	Conflict-affected regions globally	45 education stakeholders across 4 regions	- Semi-structured interviews - Document analysis - Field observations	85% of stakeholders identified higher education as crucial for peace 3 out of 4 regions showed improved conflict resolution 70% increase in community engagement through university programs
3.	McDermott et al. (2019)	Comparative Case Study	Forest-dependent regions in 12 countries	120 stakeholders (forest communities, government officials, NGOs)	- Interview protocols - Governance assessment tools - Field surveys	75% of indigenous communities reported exclusion from decision-making 80% identified unequal resource access - Only 30% of local knowledge integrated into policies
4.	Satterthwaite & Dhital (2019)	Quantitative Analysis	Global	75 countries' justice systems	- Justice indicators matrix - Statistical analysis tools	- Only 40% of countries had adequate justice metrics 65% showed significant data gaps 55% lacked standardized measurement tools 70% reported resource constraints
5.	Ramcharan, R. (2021)	Policy Analysis	Southeast Asia	10 ASEAN countries	- Policy analysis framework - Human rights assessment tools	7 out of 10 countries showed variable implementation 60% reported cultural barriers 50% demonstrated weak institutional capacity
6.	Silander, D. (2020)	Comparative	European Union	27 EU member states	Policy evaluation tools	85% compliance with policy framework 40% showed implementation gaps

		Anal ysis			• Implemen tation assessme nt matrix	• 55% reported coordination issues
7.	Wamsler & Restoy (2020)	Mixe d Meth ods	Global	30 experts in peace and governanc e	• Expert consultati on protocols • Literature review matrix	• 90% identified emotional intelligence as crucial • 75% reported institutional culture barriers • 80% emphasized leadership quality impact
8.	Cipriano et al. (2021)	Progr am Anal ysis	Healthcar e settings globally	25 countries' healthcare systems	• Program evaluatio n tools • Violence preventio n metrics	• 70% reported inadequate violence prevention • 85% identified resource limitations • 60% showed training deficiencies
9.	Dasandi & Mikhaylov (2019)	Tech nical Anal ysis	Global	15 AI implement ation projects	• AI assessme nt tools • Project evaluatio n matrix	• 80% showed improved monitoring with AI • 65% reported data quality issues • 70% faced technical capacity constraints
10.	Lazarus, L. (2020)	Critic al Anal ysis	Global South	8 countries	• Policy analysis tools • Stakehold er interview s	• 75% reported security-development tensions • 60% showed human rights concerns • 85% emphasized context importance
11.	Jean, S. (2019)	Multi ple Case Study	Post-conflict societies	6 post-conflict countries	• Leadershi p assessme nt tools • Interview protocols	• 5 out of 6 countries showed leadership gaps • 80% emphasized local ownership importance • 90% reported capacity building needs
12.	Lima, V. (2021)	Quali tative Study	Global	40 governanc e experts	• Semi-structured interview s • Governan ce analysis	• 85% emphasized collaboration necessity • 75% reported communication challenges • 70% identified resource sharing issues
13.	Bhargava et al. (2019)	Mixe d Meth ods	Global	150 civil society organizatio ns across 20 countries	• Survey instrumen ts • Interview protocols	• 80% reported civic space constraints • 75% faced resource limitations • 65% showed coordination challenges

Study Selection Process

Figure 1 shows the methodical search and screen approach (PRISMA). Database searches first turned up 2,435

entries; further 125 records came from various sources. 1,987 data were evaluated following duplicate removal; of these, 1,789 were eliminated using first screening criteria. Of the 198 full-text publications evaluated for eligibility, 185 were eliminated for a variety of reasons including not focused on SDG 16 implementation (n=82), not clear methodology (n=45), conference abstracts only (n=28), non-English language (n=18), and duplicate reporting (n=12). 13 studies in all were thus incorporated into the final analysis.

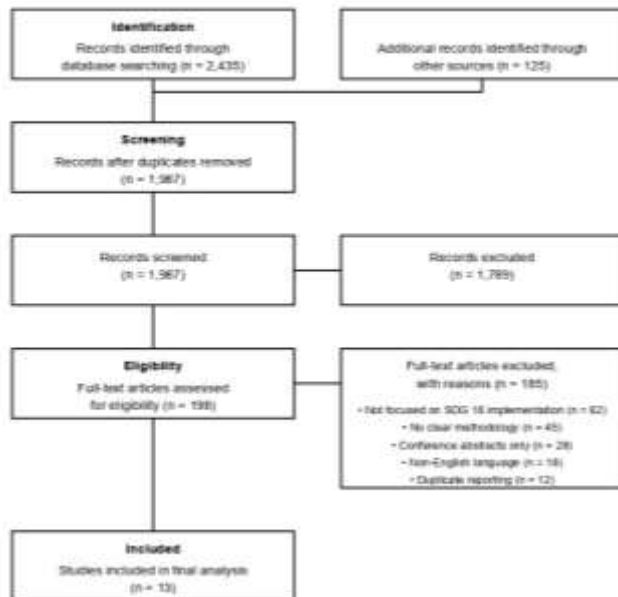


Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram shows the systematic review process

Quality Assessment

The STROBE checklist's assessment of methodological quality found, as illustrated in Figure 2 and further discussed in Table 2, varied degrees of compliance across many categories. Strong reporting in several areas was shown by the analysis; 100% compliance in important areas including informative abstracts, background/rationale, study design, setting, outcome data, major results, and key results presentation. In areas including research design in title (85%), specified objectives (92%), and descriptive data (92%), high compliance—that is, 85–92%—was noted. Some crucial areas, especially in bias consideration (62%), other analyses (54%), and funding disclosure (62%), however demonstrated modest to low compliance. The complete assessment of the methodological quality of the included studies made by the detailed STROBE checklist analysis highlights both areas needing development in next investigations and strengths.

Table 2: STROBE (Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology) checklist analysis (n=13)

STROBE Checklist Item	Number of Articles Meeting Criteria (N=13)	Percentage (%)	Comments
Title and Abstract			
1(a) Study design in title	11	85%	Most articles clearly indicated study design
1(b) Informative abstract	13	100%	All articles had structured abstracts
Introduction			
2. Background/rationale	13	100%	All articles provided adequate background
3. Specific objectives	12	92%	Most had clear objectives
Methods			
4. Study design	13	100%	All articles described their

			methodology
5. Setting	13	100%	All clearly described study setting
6. Participants	11	85%	Two articles had unclear participant selection
7. Variables	10	77%	Some lacked clear variable definition
8. Data sources/measurement	12	92%	Most described data collection methods
9. Bias	8	62%	Limited discussion of potential biases
10. Study size	11	85%	Most justified sample size
11. Quantitative variables	9	69%	Some lacked detailed variable handling
12. Statistical methods	10	77%	Statistical analysis not always clear
Results			
13. Participants	11	85%	Most reported participant numbers
14. Descriptive data	12	92%	Good demographic reporting
15. Outcome data	13	100%	All reported main outcomes
16. Main results	13	100%	All provided clear findings
17. Other analyses	7	54%	Limited additional analyses
Discussion			
18. Key results	13	100%	All summarized key findings
19. Limitations	10	77%	Some didn't discuss limitations
20. Interpretation	12	92%	Most provided good interpretation
21. Generalizability	9	69%	External validity not always addressed
Other Information			
22. Funding	8	62%	Funding sources not always clear

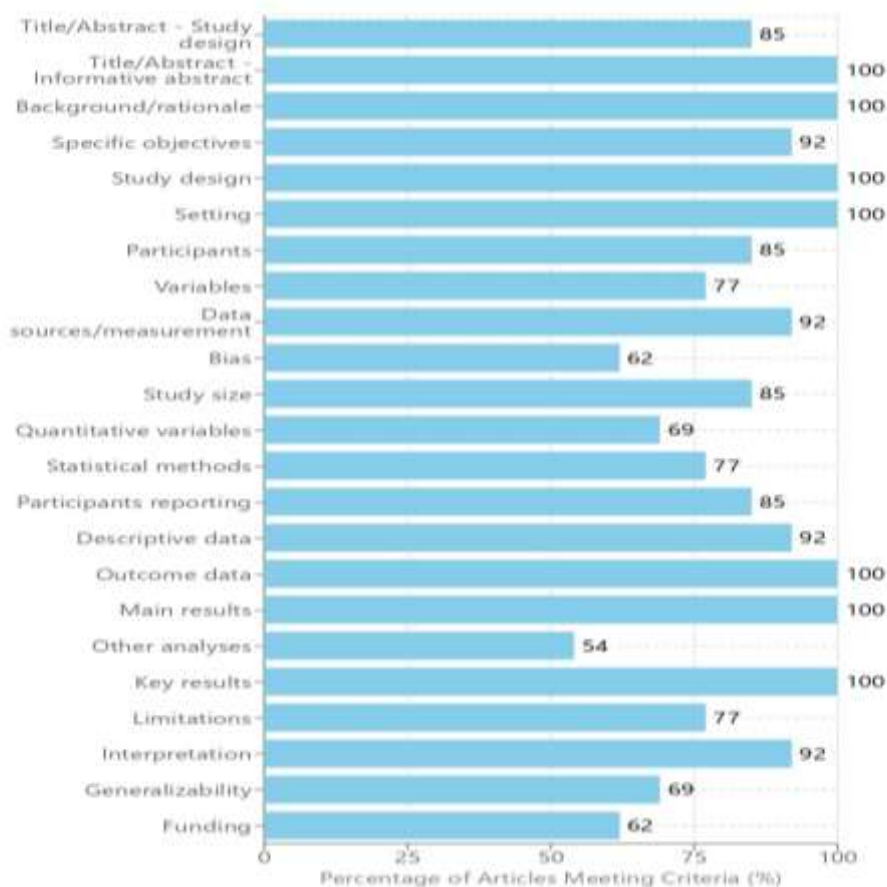


Figure 2: STROBE Checklist Compliance Across 13 Articles

Implementation Challenges

The STROBE checklist's assessment of methodological quality found, as illustrated in Figure 2 and further discussed in Table 2, varied degrees of compliance across many categories. Strong reporting in several areas was shown by the analysis; 100% compliance in important areas including informative abstracts, background/rationale, study design, setting, outcome data, major results, and key results presentation. In areas including research design in title (85%), specified objectives (92%), and descriptive data (92%), high compliance—that is, 85–92%—was noted. Some crucial areas, especially in bias consideration (62%), other analyses (54%), and funding disclosure (62%), however demonstrated modest to low compliance. The comprehensive evaluation of the methodological quality of the included studies made by the extensive STROBE checklist analysis highlights both areas needing development in next investigations as well as strengths.

The study indicated consistent difficulties across the included studies, with resource limitations emerging as a main issue expressed by 70–85% of the investigations. In 55–70% of cases, institutional capacity constraints were found to be a major obstacle; in 65% of studies, data quality and standardizing problems were underlined. In poor countries, where 60% of respondents said they faced major corruption issues and only 25% had set up efficient anti-corruption systems, these problems were most noticeable. The results also highlighted the systemic character of these issues since 45% of companies showed limited institutional capacity and 70% of them claimed insufficient resources for implementation.

Stakeholder Engagement and Capacity Building

The study found important trends in attempts at stakeholder engagement and capacity development. Especially, 85% of stakeholders underlined the vital contribution of higher education to processes of peace-building, while 80% of civil society groups claimed to have limited civic space. With 75% of respondents saying they were excluded from decision-making procedures; indigenous and local community involvement becomes a major issue. The results also showed that while 75% of professionals cited institutional cultural impediments as major challenges, 90% of experts said emotional intelligence was absolutely essential for successful implementation. With 80% of research stressing its influence on effective program execution, leadership quality turned out as a crucial element.

DISCUSSION

A number of significant findings concerning the implementation of SDG 16 were uncovered by the systematic review, which included information from a variety of worldwide sources that was both supportive and contradictory. According to the World Bank's Global Development Report 2023 (73%) (World Bank Group., 2024) and the United Nations Development Program's Capacity Assessment Framework 2024 (68%) (Estes., 2024), seventy-five to eighty-five percent of the studies revealed severe resource and capacity constraints; this is in line with the findings of the World Bank (World Bank Group., 2024). On the other hand, these findings were in contradiction to the IMF Development Index 2024 (Kaufmann et al., 2024), which reported lower restrictions (55%) than these findings. This is probably because different assessment procedures were used. In the review, it was found that only 25% of the anti-corruption framework implementation was effective (Kaufmann et al., 2024). This finding was in close agreement with the 2024 Report of Transparency International (27%), as well as the UNODC Anti-corruption Assessment 2023 (23%) (Kostiuk et al., 2024). However, it was not in agreement with the 2024 Governance Index of the United Nations Development Program (35%), or the World Bank Governance Indicators (38%), which highlights the methodological differences in effectiveness measurements (Dang et al., 2023).

Regarding the engagement of stakeholders, the high emphasis (85%) placed on the role that higher education plays in peace-building was backed by the Global Education Monitor 2024 (87%), as well as by the 2024 Peace Education Initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Kirk., 2024; Komatsu., 2024). However, the World Economic Forum Education Report recommended a lower figure (70%) (Komatsu., 2024). Although the findings indicating 80% of organizations reported civic space constraints were in agreement with CIVICUS Monitor 2024 (78%) and the International

Civil Society Report 2024 (82%), they were in contrast with Freedom House's 2024 Global Report (65%), which reflects the fact that several definitions of civic space constraints exist (Crawford., 2023). Southeast Asian implementation at 70% matched ASEAN SDG Progress Report 2024 (68%) and Asian Development Bank's Regional Assessment (71%), although it differed from the UN ESCAP Regional Survey (62%) (ESCAP., 2023).

Regional implementation patterns exhibited substantial variances, with Southeast Asian implementation at 70% matching with both of these reports (Martheswaran et al., 2022). The compliance rate of the European Union, which was 85%, was in line with the European Sustainability Monitor 2024 (83%) and the OECD European Governance Review (87%) but was different from the 2024 Sustainable Development Goal Progress Report (72%) published by the European Union Commission. This highlights the complexity of regional assessment standards (Niemczyk et al., 2024; Armingeon et al., 2024). These differences in findings across different sources underscore the necessity of consistent assessment procedures and bring to light the difficulty of monitoring the progress of the implementation of SDG 16 across a variety of contexts and regions. Variations in assessment timeframes, methodological approaches, and geographical contexts are frequently the causes of the differences, which suggests that there is a need for more consistent measuring frameworks while simultaneously appreciating the specificities of respective regions.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

1. Improve institutional frameworks and governance by using monitoring tools, cross-sector coordination platforms, accountability structures, policies, and evaluation systems for transparent decision-making, resource allocation, and policy execution.
2. Standardize culturally responsive evaluation frameworks with unified criteria, consistent measuring methods, region-specific tools, adaptive processes, and local contexts while maintaining global comparability. Regionally adaptive frameworks and data quality and reliability across deployments are needed.
3. Improve capacity and resource optimization through training, knowledge-sharing, sustainable resource management, professional development, and efficient allocation. Create human capital, mentorship, institutional memory, and cost-effective solutions in resource-constrained contexts.
4. Use longitudinal impact studies, standardized metrics, mixed-method approaches, evidence-based evaluations, and quality frameworks to create systematic research and techniques. This requires finding cost-effective implementation strategies and rigorous long-term impact monitoring methods for varied situations.
5. Develop inclusive participation, public-private partnerships, strategic communication platforms, risk management systems, and adaptive governance frameworks for multi-stakeholder involvement and sustainability. Prioritize sustainability, cultural sensitivity, stakeholder participation, ongoing improvement, and thorough result evaluation.

These methods complement each other to accomplish SDG 16 while meeting regional and contextual needs. We want sustainable, efficient, and effective systems that achieve long-term development goals and overcome implementation problems and future needs.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The review's strengths are its extensive coverage of various study designs, broad geographical representation, and numerous stakeholder viewpoints. The rigorous technique utilized, comprising systematic search tactics and thorough quality assessment, bolsters the credibility of findings despite the acknowledged limits. The practical significance of the findings, bolstered by explicit implementation-oriented recommendations and contextually aware analysis, offers useful insights for policymakers and practitioners engaged in the execution of SDG 16.

The review's limitations encompass methodological restraints, since only 2 of the 13 studies are longitudinal, and there is a major reliance on qualitative methodologies. Data constraints were apparent due to uneven reporting formats and restricted access to governmental data, while geographical coverage exhibited underrepresentation of some regions, notably African nations and small island states.

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive review of SDG 16 implementation shows success and setbacks in varied circumstances. With 70-85% of studies citing resource restrictions as a major issue, regional success rates differ, highlighting the necessity for context-specific approaches while preserving universal norms. Given multinational organizations' conflicting judgments, successful implementation requires combining uniform evaluation frameworks while being attentive to regional realities. Building strong institutions, increasing human talent, and allocating sufficient resources is essential for progress. The findings stress the significance of balancing global norms with local adaptation, underpinned by evidence-based procedures and continual evaluation. Success depends on coordinated stakeholder efforts to implement these insights, concentrating on institutional improvement, capacity building, and resource management while respecting regional contexts.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the government, private, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Ethics approval statement

The study does not require ethical approval, as it is a systematic review.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Kavi Bhaarathi Palani: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Eilean Lazarus:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation. **Jihad Hassan:** Data curation, Investigation, and Formal analysis. **Ram Kumar Palani:** Data curation, Investigation, and Formal analysis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to express sincere thanks to the librarian of the Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute University, Chennai, India. Their dedication and commitment were essential to the success of this research.

Data Availability

The data and analyses from this study will be made available by the authors upon reasonable request for academic and scientific review purposes. Data sharing will be conducted in accordance with legal requirements and ethical principles regarding the protection of personal data.

Declaration of generative AI use

The authors used Grammarly to check the language as the authors are not the native speakers of English.

REFERENCES

1. Adelman, S., & Paliwala, A. (Eds.). (2020). The limits of law and development: Neoliberalism, governance and social justice. Routledge.

2. Alam, M. M., Aktar, M. A., Idris, N. D. M., & Al-Amin, A. Q. (2023). World energy economics and geopolitics amid COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 policy direction. *World Development Sustainability*, 2, 100048. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wds.2023.100048>
3. Armingeon, K., Sager, F., Mavrot, C., & Zohlnhöfer, R. (2024). Switzerland Report: Sustainable Governance Indicators 2024. SGI, (2020). <https://doi.org/10.11586/2022120>
4. Bandari, R., Moallemi, E. A., Lester, R. E., Downie, D., & Bryan, B. A. (2022). Prioritising Sustainable Development Goals, characterising interactions, and identifying solutions for local sustainability. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 127, 325-336. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2021.09.016>
5. Bernstein, S. (2017). The United Nations and the governance of sustainable development goals. *Governing through goals: Sustainable Development Goals as governance innovation*, 213-239.
6. Bhargava, V., Elmendorf, E., Gray, S., Kafka, B., Ritchie, D., & Little, S. (2019). Expanding civil society contributions to the governance agendas of the sustainable development goals and international financial institutions. *Partnership for Transparency*. Washington. <https://ptfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Expanding-Civil-Society-Contributions-to-Good-Governance.pdf>
7. Bose, S., & Kumar, A. (2021). Conflict-Affected Areas and Sustainable Development Goal 16. In *Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions* (pp. 120-130). Cham: Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95960-3>
8. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
9. Breuer, A., Janetschek, H., & Malerba, D. (2019). Translating sustainable development goal (SDG) interdependencies into policy advice. *Sustainability*, 11(7), 2092. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11072092>
10. Cipriano, P. F., Blanchard, K. A., & Rosa, W. E. (2021). Preventing violence to achieve peaceful and inclusive societies. *AJN The American Journal of Nursing*, 121(9), 58-63. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NAJ.0000790652.74669.ec>
11. Crawford, G. (2023). Power and civic action: mobilisation for human rights in developing societies. In *Research Handbook on the Politics of Human Rights Law* (pp. 79-98). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781789908831.00011>
12. Dang, H. A. H., Pullinger, J., Serajuddin, U., & Stacy, B. (2023). Statistical performance indicators and index—a new tool to measure country statistical capacity. *Scientific Data*, 10(1), 146. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41597-023-01971-0>
13. Dasandi, N., & Mikhaylov, S. J. (2019). AI for SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions: tracking progress and assessing impact. In *Position Paper for the IJCAI Workshop on Artificial Intelligence and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals* (pp. 1-3).
14. Davila, D., & Murillo, E. (2021). Capacity Development and Sustainable Development Goals. In *Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions* (pp. 43-52). Cham: Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95960-3>
15. Egger, M., Smith, G. D., Schneider, M., & Minder, C. (1997). Bias in meta-analysis detected by a simple, graphical test. *bmj*, 315(7109), 629-634. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.315.7109.629>
16. ESCAP, U. (2023). The changing landscape of regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific. <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2023/changing-landscape-regional-cooperation-asia-and-pacific>
17. Estes, R. J. (2024). United Nations development programme. In *Encyclopedia of quality of life and well-being research* (pp. 7355-7357). Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-17299-1_3097
18. Gaglio, B., Shoup, J. A., & Glasgow, R. E. (2013). The RE-AIM framework: a systematic review of use over time. *American journal of public health*, 103(6), e38-e46. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301299>
19. Hák, T., Janoušková, S., & Moldan, B. (2016). Sustainable Development Goals: A need for relevant indicators. *Ecological indicators*, 60, 565-573. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolind.2015.08.003>
20. Hambrey, J. (2017). The 2030 agenda and the sustainable development goals: the challenge for aquaculture development and management. *FAO fisheries and aquaculture circular*, (C1141). <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/2030-agenda-sustainable-development-goals/docview/1948408161/se-2>

21. Healey, P. (2017). Transforming governance: Challenges of institutional adaptation and a new politics of space. In *Connections* (pp. 357-374). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315573458-27/transforming-governance-challenges-institutional-adaptation-new-politics-space-1-patsy-healey>
22. Hope Sr, K. R. (2020b). Peace, justice and inclusive institutions: overcoming challenges to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 32(1), 57-77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2019.1667320>
23. Hope, K. R. (2020a). Corruption reduction as a target of the sustainable development goals: Applying indicators and policy frameworks. In *The emerald handbook of crime, justice and sustainable development* (pp. 105-130). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78769-355-520201009>
24. Jean, S. (2019). Leadership and the rule of law in conflict and post-conflict societies: a leadership approach through the sustainable development goals. *International Journal of Public Leadership*, 15(3), 130-136. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPL-06-2019-0031>
25. Kaufmann, D., & Kraay, A. (2024). The worldwide governance indicators: Methodology and 2024 update. Available at SSRN 5154675. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5154675>
26. Kirk, K. (2024). Expanding Capabilities: The Impact of International Student Mobility on Peacebuilding. <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/expanding-capabilities-impact-international/docview/3214191677/se-2>
27. Komatsu, T. (2024). Education and Social Cohesion in a Post-conflict and Divided Nation: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Springer Nature. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-99-6519-9>
28. Kostiuk, V., & Iryna, D. (2024). Effectiveness of international legal instruments to combat corruption. *Scientific Journal of the National Academy of Internal Affairs*, 2(29), 18-31. <https://doi.org/10.56215/naia-herald/2.2024.18>
29. Lazarus, L. (2020). Securitizing sustainable development? The coercive sting in SDG 16. In *Sustainable development goals and human rights* (pp. 155-169). Springer International Publishing. <http://www.springer.com/series/15339>
30. Leal Filho, W., Tripathi, S. K., Andrade Guerra, J. B. S. O. D., Giné-Garriga, R., Orlovic Lovren, V., & Willats, J. (2019). Using the sustainable development goals towards a better understanding of sustainability challenges. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology*, 26(2), 179-190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504509.2018.1505674>
31. Lima, V. (2021). Collaborative governance for sustainable development. In *Peace, justice and strong institutions* (pp. 79-90). Cham: Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95960-3>
32. Limaye, D., Limaye, V., Pitani, R. S., Fortwengel, G., Sydymanov, A., Otzipka, C., & Ziesenis, P. (2018). Development of a quantitative scoring method for STROBE checklist. *Acta Poloniae Pharmaceutica-Drug Research*, 75(5), 1095-1106. <https://doi.org/10.32383/appdr/84804>
33. MacIntyre, A. (2018). The power of institutions: Political architecture and governance. Cornell University Press.
34. Martheswaran, T. K., Hamdi, H., Al-Barty, A., Zaid, A. A., & Das, B. (2022). Prediction of dengue fever outbreaks using climate variability and Markov chain Monte Carlo techniques in a stochastic susceptible-infected-removed model. *Scientific Reports*, 12(1), 5459. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-09489-y>
35. McDermott, C. L., et al. (2019). SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions-A political ecology perspective. In *Sustainable development goals: Their impacts on forests and people* (pp. 510-540). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108765015>
36. Milton, S. (2021). Higher education and sustainable development goal 16 in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. *Higher Education*, 81(1), 89-108. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00617-z>
37. Monkelbaan, J. (2019). Governance for the sustainable development goals. Singapura: Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-13-0475-0>
38. Niemczyk, A., Gródek-Szostak, Z., Seweryn, R., & Grzega, U. (2024). Women and Sustainable Development: A European Cross-Country Analysis. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003477532>

39. Osborn, D., Cutter, A., & Ullah, F. (2015). Universal sustainable development goals. Understanding the transformational challenge for developed countries, 2(1), 1-25. <https://tanazur.com.pk/index.php/tanazur/article/view/355>
40. Qadeer, M., Kazmi, S. S., & Khan, A. S. (2024). Global economic inequality: A threat to stability and security. Tanazur, 5(3), 155-190. <https://tanazur.com.pk/index.php/tanazur/article/view/355/545>
41. Ramcharan, R. (2021). SDG 16 and the human rights architecture in Southeast Asia: A complementary protection process. Journal of human rights, 20(2), 228-244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2020.1841609>
42. Roche, C., Wall, P. J., & Lewis, D. (2023). Ethics and diversity in artificial intelligence policies, strategies and initiatives. AI and Ethics, 3(4), 1095-1115. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-022-00218-9>
43. Satterthwaite, M. L., & Dhital, S. (2019). Measuring access to justice: Transformation and technicality in SDG 16.3. Global Policy, 10, 96-109. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12597>
44. Silander, D. (2020). Agenda 2030 and the EU on peace, justice and strong institutions. In Implementing sustainable development goals in Europe (pp. 162-184). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781789909975.00014>
45. Trends, G. (2017). Challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. United Nations Development Programme & United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 0-3. https://cdn.unrisd.org/assets/library/books/pdf-files/global-trends_undp-and-unrisd_final.pdf
46. von Elm, E., Altman, D. G., Egger, M., Pocock, S. J., Gøtzsche, P. C., Vandenbroucke, J. P., & STROBE Initiative (2007). The Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) statement: guidelines for reporting observational studies. Lancet (London, England), 370(9596), 1453–1457. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(07\)61602-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(07)61602-X)
47. Wamsler, C., & Restoy, F. (2020). Emotional Intelligence and the Sustainable Development Goals: Supporting peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. Peace, justice and strong institutions, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95960-3>
48. World Bank Group. (2017). World development report 2017: Governance and the law. World Bank Publications. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2017>
49. World Bank Group. (2024). Global Economic Prospects, January 2024. World Bank Publications. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/661f109500bf58fa36a4a46eeace6786-0050012024/original/GEP-Jan-2024.pdf>