



Peer-Review Report Form

Manuscript Title:	Governance Mechanisms in Philippine Sustainable Development Policy Implementation: A Systematic Review
Type of Article:	Review Article

FIRST ROUND

Editor

<u>General Comments and Recommendations</u>
The reviewers acknowledge the significance of your manuscript and recommend several revisions to further improve its clarity, coherence, organization, and overall scholarly quality. In addition, you are advised to thoroughly review and validate all references included in the manuscript. Please ensure that all cited sources are accurate, accessible, and retrievable through Google Scholar to uphold the credibility and reliability of the study. Additionally, make sure to include the DOI or website link for every reference to facilitate verification and accessibility of sources. Furthermore, only sources that are cited within the manuscript should appear in the References section, and all entries listed in the References section must also be cited in the text. For example, if 20 unique sources are cited in the manuscript, then only those 20 sources should be included in the References section. Please note that repeated citations of the same source within the text are counted as a single reference entry; therefore, the total number of references may be lower than the total number of in-text citations.

Reviewer 1

<u>General Comments and Recommendations</u>
The manuscript discusses an important topic because the gap between policy design and actual implementation remains a serious issue in Philippine sustainable development governance. The paper has clear relevance, but its main weakness is that it presents many broad governance claims without enough methodological detail and deeper synthesis to fully support them.

<u>Specific Comments and Recommendations</u>
The systematic review method needs to be more transparent. The manuscript states that 950 records were identified and 57 studies were included, but the search strings, exact search dates, database limits, duplicate removal process, and screening procedure are not clearly shown. This is important because readers need to see how the final studies were selected and whether the process can be replicated.
The inclusion of sources needs stronger justification. The review includes peer-reviewed studies, policy analyses, grey literature, and reports, but there is no clear quality appraisal or



credibility assessment. This matters because weak or non-peer-reviewed sources may affect the strength of the conclusions, especially when the paper makes claims about policy effectiveness.

The Results section is still too general and descriptive. It mostly repeats the main themes instead of showing what the 57 included studies actually contributed. The authors should present clearer evidence, such as how many studies supported each theme, which sectors showed stronger or weaker implementation, and where the findings were conflicting.

The link between governance mechanisms and sustainability outcomes needs to be clarified. The manuscript often states that enforcement, coordination, and participation improve implementation, but it does not always show what specific outcomes were measured or reported. This is important because policy implementation and environmental improvement are not the same thing.

Some parts of the paper make claims that sound causal, but the design is a qualitative evidence synthesis. Statements such as enforcement “reduces violations” or coordination “improves policy coherence” should be supported by direct evidence from the reviewed studies, or written more carefully as observed patterns rather than confirmed causal effects.

The PRISMA reporting is incomplete. The manuscript mentions a PRISMA flow diagram, Table 2, and Table 3, but these are still placeholders. These missing parts weaken the review because they are needed to show the screening process, thematic distribution, and basis of synthesis.

The discussion can be improved by reducing repetition and adding more critical comparison. The paper already identifies enforcement, coordination, and participation as key themes, but it should go further by explaining why some mechanisms work in certain sectors or localities and fail in others. This will make the review more analytical and less like a summary of common governance problems.

Please indicate your recommendation by checking the appropriate box below.

<u>Decision</u>	
☐	Accept the manuscript for publication.
☐	Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.
☐	Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.

Reviewer 2

<u>General Comments and Recommendations</u>
I appreciate the hard work the authors put into gathering and synthesizing the literature. The topic about the gap between policy making and actual policy implementation for sustainable development in the Philippines is very important and timely right now. Using a systematic literature review to show why green policies fail when governance mechanisms are weak is a good approach to address this problem. Overall, the paper has a good logical flow and the literature foundation is quite strong.



Specific Comments and Recommendations

Title and Abstract

The title is very clear and gives a good idea of what the paper is about. You summarized the problem well. But instead of only giving a general call for integrated accountability at the end, maybe you can include one or two specific actionable recommendations from your findings. This will make the abstract stronger.

Introduction

The background sets the scene very well. You clearly explain the Philippine vulnerabilities and the existing environmental laws. You talked about how the COVID-19 pandemic exposed governance failures in solid waste management. This is a very good point, but it feels a little disconnected from the previous paragraph about the Renewable Energy Act. Try to connect these ideas more smoothly so the flow of reading does not jump around too much.

Materials and Methods

You mention using the PRISMA 2020 protocol, which is excellent. But looking at your numbers, there is some confusion. You write that 201 reports were sought for retrieval, and then 144 reports were assessed for eligibility. What happened to the other 57 reports? Were they unable to be retrieved? You should explain this step clearly because PRISMA requires transparency on why records drop out. In your inclusion criteria, you strictly state that studies must be published from 2010 to 2025. But when I look at Table 1, there are many papers listed with n.d., which means no date. If these papers have no date, how did you verify they fit your 2010-2025 time limit? This is a major methodology flaw. You must fix these citations or remove the papers that do not fit your criteria.

Results

This section is very underdeveloped. It is only two short paragraphs long. You must describe the actual findings in the text before you move to the discussion. You place text brackets saying Table 2 and Table 3 to be inserted here. Because these tables are missing from the manuscript, it is impossible for me to review your actual thematic distribution and your mechanism-based synthesis. You must provide all your data tables for a proper review. Table 1 is present and gives good details, but it is extremely long. I suggest you put this huge table as an Appendix at the end of the document. Having it in the middle breaks the reading experience.

Discussion

The discussion is structured well into different clear themes. However, sometimes it feels like you are just repeating the literature review from the introduction instead of discussing your newly synthesized results. For example, sections 4.1 to 4.4 rely heavily on citing specific authors again, like Olsen and Zusman or Kusters. Try to focus more on the new insights your synthesis created. What new big picture do we see now that we put all 57 papers together? Section 4.5 introduces a very strong concept: moving from a legislation-first to a governance-first approach. Make this stand out more. This is your strongest original contribution in the paper.

Conclusion

The conclusion wraps up the main message nicely. However, every systematic review has limitations. You need to add a short paragraph here explaining the limitations of your own study. For example, did you miss some non-English local government reports because of your English-only criteria? Acknowledging limitations shows good academic rigor.



Please indicate your recommendation by checking the appropriate box below.

<u>Decision</u>	
	Accept the manuscript for publication.
/	Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.
	Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.

SECOND ROUND

<u>Decision</u>	<u>Editor</u>	<u>Reviewer 1</u>	<u>Reviewer 2</u>
Accept the manuscript for publication.	/	/	/
Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.			
Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.			