

Review Article

Governance Mechanisms in Philippine Sustainable Development Policy Implementation: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

The persistence of a policy-to-practice gap in Philippine sustainable development governance where comprehensive legislation fails to produce consistent environmental outcomes across sectors and governance levels constitutes a critical accountability challenge that remains insufficiently examined through an integrated governance lens. This systematic literature review aims to synthesize evidence on how regulatory enforcement, institutional coordination, and participatory engagement collectively shape the implementation of green policies in the Philippines from 2010 to 2025. Using a qualitative evidence synthesis approach, peer-reviewed studies, policy analyses, credible grey literature, and government or intergovernmental reports were retrieved through Google Scholar and ProQuest and screened against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria emphasizing Philippine relevance, governance-mechanism focus, full-text accessibility, English-language availability, and policy implementation outcomes. From 950 identified records, 749 were excluded during screening, 201 reports were sought for retrieval, 57 were not retrieved, 144 were assessed for eligibility, 87 were excluded after full-text assessment, and 57 studies were retained for synthesis. Findings reveal that governance mechanisms condition implementation outcomes only when operationally supported: regulatory enforcement is associated with fewer reported violations when monitoring, sanctioning, and administrative authority are consistently applied;

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institutional coordination is associated with greater reported policy coherence when inter-agency mandates are clearly defined, funded, and sustained; and participatory governance advances implementation when stakeholder engagement moves beyond ceremonial consultation toward substantive co-production. Across climate adaptation, renewable energy, solid waste, coastal resources, biodiversity, and urban governance, a persistent implementation gap is driven by fragmented mandates, weak enforcement capacity, political discontinuity, resource constraints, and tokenistic participation. Philippine green policy reform must therefore move beyond legislation toward integrated accountability systems linking enforcement, coordination, participation, and measurable sustainability outcomes. Specifically, national agencies should institutionalize joint inter-agency monitoring protocols with clear sanctioning authority over environmental violations, while local government units should formalize participatory review mechanisms that translate community input into binding implementation decisions rather than advisory feedback.

Keywords: green governance mechanisms; inter-agency coordination; policy implementation gap; regulatory enforcement; sustainable development Philippines

1. Introduction

Climate change, environmental degradation, and socioeconomic inequality have increasingly compelled governments to integrate sustainability principles into public policy, planning, and governance. Across the world, sustainable development is no longer treated only as an environmental concern but as a broader governance challenge involving economic resilience, social equity, institutional accountability, and ecological protection. The quality of governance institutions is now recognized as a direct predictor of sustainability outcomes: Sadiq et al. (2023), using panel data across ASEAN-5 nations including the Philippines, demonstrate empirically that the governance dimension of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks has a significant positive effect on SDG achievement, with stronger institutional governance consistently associated with lower ecological footprints and greater progress toward the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, the transition to sustainable development requires integrated policy mechanisms that link waste reduction,

renewable resource use, and multi-stakeholder governance; Khajuria et al. (2022) illustrate this through an international analysis of circular economy pathways, showing that public-private partnerships anchored by clear governmental policies and institutional coordination are essential for translating sustainability commitments into measurable environmental outcomes. For countries that are highly exposed to climate-related hazards, these governance conditions are especially consequential because they determine how national governments manage natural resources, reduce environmental risks, protect vulnerable communities, and promote long-term development.

The Philippines is a critical case in sustainable development governance because it combines high ecological vulnerability with ambitious policy commitments. As an archipelagic country located in the Pacific typhoon belt and the Pacific Ring of Fire, the Philippines is frequently exposed to typhoons, flooding, droughts, sea-level rise, coastal erosion, earthquakes, and other disaster risks. These environmental pressures are intensified by rapid urbanization, population growth, land-use conversion, deforestation, biodiversity loss, pollution, and unequal access to basic services. At the same time, the country has pursued a broad policy agenda on climate action, renewable energy, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity conservation, environmental protection, and sustainable development. Reyes et al. (2019), in the Philippines' Voluntary National Review on the SDGs, document how the country has institutionalized multi-stakeholder governance through the Climate Change Act of 2009 and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010, while identifying persistent data gaps and localization deficits that limit the translation of national commitments into subnational environmental outcomes. At the regional level, Marx et al. (2021) observe that ASEAN's role in SDG implementation remains constrained by voluntary compliance mechanisms and the absence of binding multilateral environmental standards, a structural limitation that directly affects how Philippine green policies align with international sustainability frameworks. These conditions make the Philippines an important and instructive setting for examining how green policies are created, implemented, monitored, and sustained.

Over the past two decades, the Philippine government has enacted several national instruments that provide a legal and policy foundation for green governance. These include the Renewable Energy Act of 2008, which promotes the development and utilization of renewable energy resources; the Climate Change Act of 2009, which institutionalizes climate change policy coordination; the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010, which strengthens disaster risk governance; and the Philippine Development Plan, which aligns national development priorities with sustainability goals. In the energy sector specifically, Ghazali et al. (2024) provide a comparative legal analysis of the Philippines and Thailand, confirming that while the Renewable Energy Act of 2008 is among the most robust legislative frameworks in Southeast Asia, implementation is hampered by high administrative costs, grid integration challenges, and weak inter-agency coordination—revealing that legal comprehensiveness does not automatically produce governance effectiveness. Across the broader ASEAN business environment, Topple et al. (2017) show that the

adoption of international sustainability standards by multinational enterprises operating in the region, including the Philippines, is driven primarily by headquarters-level institutional commitments rather than host-country regulatory enforcement, underscoring the importance of aligning external governance pressures with robust domestic policy mechanisms. These instruments reflect the country's formal commitment to sustainable development and establish the mandates through which public institutions are expected to translate environmental and development goals into concrete programs.

Despite this policy momentum, the presence of laws and plans does not automatically result in effective implementation. A persistent problem in Philippine sustainable development governance is the gap between policy adoption and actual environmental improvement. National green policies may be well-designed on paper, but their outcomes often depend on the capacity, coordination, and accountability of the institutions responsible for carrying them out. In many cases, implementation is weakened by limited financial resources, insufficient technical capacity, inconsistent enforcement, overlapping agency mandates, weak monitoring systems, and political changes that disrupt long-term programs. Marquardt (2017) captures this dynamic precisely in his multi-level governance analysis of the Renewable Energy Act of 2008, demonstrating that technically sound green legislation routinely fails during implementation because decentralized resistance, vested interests, and misaligned power relations across national and subnational levels allow structural barriers to override policy intent.

This same tension between formal legal design and operational reality is not confined to the energy sector: comparable disconnects between policy intent and on-the-ground practice recur in solid waste governance, as the COVID-19 experience illustrates below.

More recently, Apostol et al. (2022) document how the COVID-19 pandemic further exposed these pre-existing governance failures in solid waste management, finding that despite RA 9003's comprehensive legislative design, a lack of unified pandemic-specific guidelines created confusion among local government units, weakened enforcement, and ultimately increased plastic pollution—illustrating how governance mechanisms that function under normal conditions can collapse when institutional coordination and regulatory adaptability are insufficient.

Studies on climate adaptation, coastal resource management, solid waste management, renewable energy, forest governance, mining, and local development planning have repeatedly identified similar governance barriers. Weak regulatory enforcement can allow environmental violations to continue despite the existence of compliance rules. Limited financing can prevent agencies and local government units from carrying out mandated programs. Overlapping mandates among national agencies can create confusion about responsibility and accountability. Uneven local government capacity can produce different levels of implementation across provinces, cities, and municipalities. Political discontinuity can interrupt programs that require long-term commitment. Shallow or tokenistic participation can exclude communities,

civil society organizations, indigenous peoples, and other stakeholders from meaningful involvement in decision-making. Tupas and Cacho (2020) demonstrate these patterns at the municipal level in Northern Iloilo, where local government units showed high effectiveness in solid waste policy formulation under RA 9003 but consistently underperformed in coastal resource management under RA 8550, with limited financial resources and the absence of dedicated environmental personnel identified as primary barriers to integrated green governance. In contrast, Manalo (2017) documents a successful local governance model in Puerto Princesa City, where strict regulatory enforcement of environmental ordinances, combined with community-led cleanliness programs and institutionally coherent leadership, transformed the city into a globally recognized ecotourism destination—demonstrating that when enforcement is consistent, institutions are coordinated, and communities are meaningfully involved, local green policies can yield tangible and sustained sustainability outcomes.

This review focuses on governance mechanisms, which are defined in this study as the regulatory, institutional, and participatory arrangements through which policies are translated into implementation. Regulatory mechanisms refer to the formal rules and enforcement tools that require individuals, organizations, agencies, and industries to comply with environmental standards. Institutional mechanisms refer to the organizational arrangements that determine how government agencies, local government units, inter-agency bodies, and other public institutions coordinate their actions. Participatory mechanisms refer to the processes through which citizens, communities, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples, private actors, and other stakeholders are involved in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, and accountability. The central research problem addressed in this review is the persistent gap between the Philippines' formal adoption of green policies and their effective implementation. Although the country has a strong legal and policy foundation for sustainable development, outcomes remain uneven across sectors and governance levels. A systematic review is necessary to consolidate evidence on governance mechanisms in Philippine green policy implementation. Covering English-language studies and credible reports published from 2010 to 2025, this review aims to synthesize existing evidence, classify regulatory, institutional, and participatory mechanisms, assess effectiveness, identify recurring governance gaps, and analyze patterns across sectors and policy types.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a systematic literature review design to synthesize evidence on governance mechanisms in national sustainable development policies and green policy implementation in the Philippines. The review focused on regulatory, institutional, and participatory governance mechanisms, similar to the governance

approach discussed by Olsen and Zusman (2014). The study area was limited to the Philippine context, including national, regional, and local policy implementation studies.

2.2 Literature Search and Study Selection

The literature search and screening process were guided by the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram to ensure a transparent selection of studies. A total of 950 records were identified from databases and screened, of which 749 were excluded during title-and-abstract screening. The remaining 201 reports were sought for retrieval; 57 reports could not be retrieved, leaving 144 reports assessed for eligibility. After full-text eligibility assessment, 87 reports were excluded and 57 full-text studies were included in the final review. Included studies were published from 2010 to 2025 and focused on Philippine sustainable development governance, regulatory enforcement, institutional coordination, stakeholder participation, and green policy implementation outcomes, including works such as Reyes et al. (2019) and Lapiz (2024).

The search was conducted across Google Scholar and ProQuest Central using Boolean search strings that combined governance-related terms (e.g., “governance mechanism*” OR “policy implementation” OR “regulatory enforcement” OR “institutional coordination” OR “participatory governance”) with sustainability and country terms (e.g., “sustainable development” OR “green policic*” AND “Philippines”). Searches were limited to records published between January 2010 and December 2025 and were last conducted in March 2025.

Of the 201 reports sought for retrieval, 57 could not be retrieved in full text because of inaccessible institutional repositories, broken or expired links, or subscription-restricted database records; these were excluded prior to eligibility screening, leaving 144 reports formally assessed for eligibility.

Of the 144 reports assessed for eligibility, 87 were excluded because they lacked a direct and substantive focus on governance mechanisms, were situated outside the Philippine context, were published before 2010 or after 2025, were not written in English, or did not address policy-implementation outcomes. The available screening record did not disaggregate the 87 exclusions by individual reason; therefore, the verified total and the predefined exclusion categories are reported without unsupported reason-specific counts.

Duplicate records retrieved across the two databases were removed using reference-manager deduplication supplemented by manual title-and-abstract comparison. Screening of titles, abstracts, and full texts was conducted against the criteria in Section 2.4, with uncertain cases resolved through discussion among the three authors.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

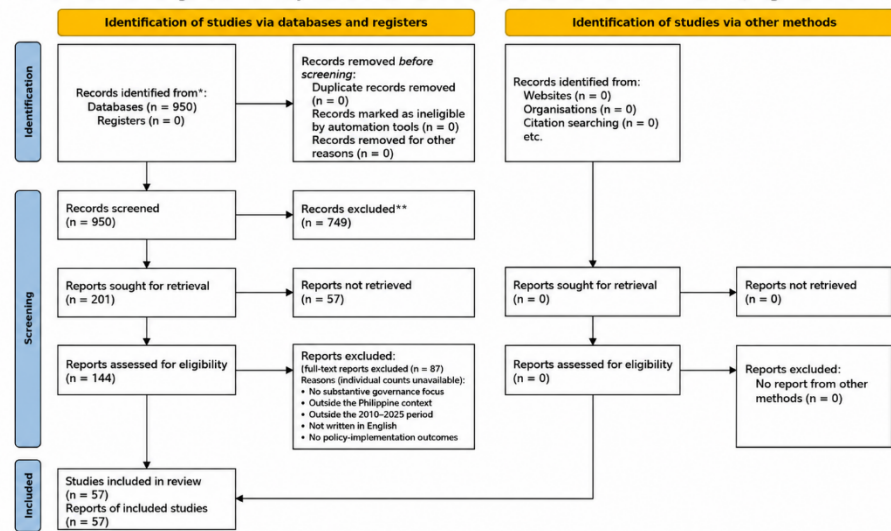
Data were collected through document review rather than surveys, interviews, or focus group discussions. The included studies were organized using a screening and extraction table, where each article was assessed based on relevance, governance variables, theoretical framework, key findings, and inclusion decision. The extracted data were analyzed through qualitative thematic synthesis to identify recurring governance mechanisms, implementation gaps, and patterns across policy sectors. Microsoft Excel was used to organize the screening table and support the data extraction process.

To appraise the credibility of included sources, peer-reviewed journal articles were evaluated using a simplified adaptation of the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT, 2018) criteria for study clarity, relevance, and methodological transparency, while grey literature and institutional or government reports were assessed against the Authority, Accuracy, Coverage, Objectivity, Date, and Significance (AACODS) checklist. Sources that could not demonstrate a clear methodology, verifiable authorship, or institutional accountability were excluded from the final synthesis.

2.4 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Figure 1 presents the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram illustrating the literature search and screening process. Studies included in the review met the following criteria: published from 2010 to 2025; focused on the Philippine context; addressed governance mechanisms in sustainable development or green policy implementation; available in full text; written in English; and provided evidence on policy implementation outcomes. Studies were excluded if they were outside the Philippine context, lacked a governance-mechanism focus, were not accessible in full text, were written in a language other than English, or did not address policy implementation outcomes.

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews which included searches of databases, registers and



*Consider, if feasible to do so, reporting the number of records identified from each database or register searched (rather than the total number across all databases/registers).

**If automation tools were used, indicate how many records were excluded by a human and how many were excluded by automation tools.

Source: Page MJ, et al. BMJ 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71.

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Figure 1. Flow diagram of the literature search using PRISMA protocol.

2.5 Thematic Synthesis Framework

The first major theme is regulatory enforcement and compliance. National laws provide formal authority, but implementation depends on monitoring capacity, consistent enforcement, sanctioning procedures, and administrative willingness to apply rules. Evidence from waste management, renewable energy, environmental compliance, and mining shows that formal requirements can produce compliance only when agencies have resources, authority, and accountability systems. Where enforcement is weak or selective, policies remain symbolic (Premakumara et al., 2015; Magno, 2015; Coracero et al., 2021; Apostol et al., 2022; Ghazali et al., 2024).

The second theme is institutional coordination. Philippine green policy implementation requires coordination among agencies such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Energy, National Economic and Development Authority, Department of the Interior and Local Government, and local government units. The evidence shows that overlapping mandates, unclear responsibility, weak inter-agency reporting, political discontinuity, and uneven local capacity frequently weaken implementation coherence. Coordination mechanisms work best when mandates, funding, reporting, and accountability relationships are

formalized (Olsen & Zusman, 2014; Reyes et al., 2019; Oosterhof, 2018; Lapiz, 2024; Perez et al., 2022).

The third theme is participatory governance. Philippine law and policy frequently require consultation and stakeholder involvement, yet the evidence shows that participation is often procedural rather than substantive. Community participation strengthens implementation when local knowledge, civil society input, indigenous peoples' rights, and stakeholder feedback influence actual decisions (Kusters et al., 2020; Buenavista, 2021; Premakumara et al., 2015; Perez et al., 2022).

The fourth theme is the policy-implementation gap. Across sectors, the Philippines often demonstrates strong policy adoption but weaker implementation outcomes. This pattern appears in climate adaptation, renewable energy integration, biodiversity protection, coastal resource management, waste management, and local green legislation (Lapiz, 2024; Reyes et al., 2019; Ghazali et al., 2024; Coracero et al., 2021; Tupas & Cacho, 2020).

The fifth theme is contextual governance challenges. Decentralization places significant implementation responsibility on local government units, but LGUs vary widely in funding, technical expertise, staffing, political priorities, and enforcement capacity (Oosterhof, 2018; Pirmana et al., 2019; Reyes et al., 2019; Tupas & Cacho, 2020; Lapiz, 2024).

3. Results

The thematic synthesis of the 57 included studies showed that green policy implementation in the Philippines is shaped by five major governance themes: regulatory enforcement, institutional coordination, participatory governance, policy-implementation gaps, and contextual governance challenges. Stronger outcomes were observed when laws were supported by consistent monitoring, clear accountability, inter-agency coordination, and meaningful community participation (Premakumara et al., 2015; Olsen & Zusman, 2014; Kusters et al., 2020).

The results also showed that many Philippine green policies are formally adopted but unevenly implemented across sectors and localities. Weak enforcement, overlapping mandates, limited LGU capacity, insufficient resources, and procedural participation often prevent policies from producing measurable environmental improvements. These findings suggest that effective green policy implementation requires not only strong legal frameworks but also coordinated institutions, active stakeholder involvement, and context-sensitive local governance (Lapiz, 2024; Coracero et al., 2021; Tupas & Cacho, 2020).

Table 2 disaggregates these findings by theme. Of the 57 included studies, 14 primarily evidenced regulatory enforcement and compliance mechanisms (e.g., Premakumara et al., 2015; Magno, 2015; Apostol et al., 2022; Ghazali et al., 2024; Atilano-Tang & Laudin, 2023), 14 centered on institutional coordination (e.g., Olsen & Zusman, 2014; Oosterhof, 2018; Lapiz, 2024; Perez et al., 2022; Pirmana et al., 2019; Florini & Pauli, 2018), 11 centered on participatory governance (e.g., Kusters

et al., 2020; Buenavista, 2021; Baleos et al., 2017; Roberts & Hernandez, 2017; Mantaring et al., 2019), 10 documented a policy-implementation gap without a single dominant mechanism (e.g., Reyes et al., 2019; Coracero et al., 2021; Tupas & Cacho, 2020; Marquardt, 2017), and 8 centered on contextual governance challenges tied to decentralization and LGU capacity (e.g., Tupas & Cacho, 2020; Lapiz, 2024; Banderlipe et al., 2014; Manalo, 2017). Sectorally, regulatory enforcement evidence was concentrated in solid waste and mining governance, institutional coordination evidence was concentrated in national SDG and energy policy, and participatory governance evidence was concentrated in landscape, indigenous, and digital-governance settings, indicating that the strength of each mechanism is not uniform across sectors but is conditioned by sector-specific institutional arrangements.

Table 2. Thematic distribution of evidence.

Governance Theme	No. of Studies (of 57)	Representative Studies	Predominant Sector(s)
Regulatory Enforcement and Compliance	14	Premakumara et al. (2015); Magno (2015); Apostol et al. (2022); Ghazali et al. (2024); Atilano-Tang and Laudin (2023)	Solid waste management; mining; renewable energy
Institutional Coordination	14	Olsen and Zusman (2014); Oosterhof (2018); Lapiz (2024); Perez et al. (2022); Pirmana et al. (2019); Florini and Pauli (2018)	National SDG policy; energy; local transportation planning
Participatory Governance	11	Kusters et al. (2020); Buenavista (2021); Baleos et al. (2017); Roberts and Hernandez (2017); Mantaring et al. (2019)	Landscape and community governance; indigenous knowledge; digital governance
Policy-Implementation Gap	10	Reyes et al. (2019); Coracero et al. (2021); Tupas and Cacho (2020); Marquardt (2017)	Climate adaptation; coastal resources; renewable energy
Contextual Governance Challenges (Decentralization/LGU Capacity)	8	Tupas and Cacho (2020); Lapiz (2024); Banderlipe et al. (2014); Manalo (2017)	Barangay and LGU planning; local tourism governance

Table 3 synthesizes, for each governance mechanism, the specific enabling condition documented in the reviewed studies and contrasts the sectors in which the mechanism produced stronger outcomes with sectors in which it underperformed. This mechanism-based synthesis shows that no single governance mechanism was uniformly effective: regulatory enforcement yielded stronger outcomes where monitoring and sanctioning authority were paired with adequate administrative resources (e.g., local ecotourism ordinances in Puerto Princesa; Manalo, 2017) but underperformed where administrative capacity was limited despite a robust legal

instrument (e.g., mining fiscal regulation; Magno, 2015). Similarly, participatory mechanisms strengthened implementation where community input was translated into binding decisions (e.g., indigenous co-production; Buenavista, 2021) but had limited effect where digital participation platforms were adopted without addressing structural barriers to citizen access (Roberts & Hernandez, 2017).

Table 3. Mechanism-based synthesis of governance accountability.

Governance Mechanism	Enabling Condition Observed	Sector(s) Where the Mechanism Strengthened Implementation	Sector(s) Where the Mechanism Underperformed
Regulatory Enforcement	Consistent monitoring, sanctioning authority, and adequate administrative resources	Local ecotourism ordinances in Puerto Princesa City (Manalo, 2017); solid waste segregation under RA 9003 (Premakumara et al., 2015)	Mining fiscal governance with limited monitoring capacity (Magno, 2015); pandemic-period waste management (Apostol et al., 2022)
Institutional Coordination	Clearly defined, funded, and jointly reported inter-agency mandates	National SDG localization (Oosterhof, 2018); local government planning (Lapiz, 2024)	Renewable energy grid integration across agencies with overlapping mandates (Ghazali et al., 2024)
Participatory Governance	Stakeholder input translated into binding decisions rather than consultation alone	Indigenous co-production of knowledge (Buenavista, 2021); inclusive landscape governance (Kusters et al., 2020)	Digital citizen-participation platforms with persistent barriers to access (Roberts & Hernandez, 2017)

Full study-level characteristics for the 57 included studies are presented in Appendix A (Table A1) to keep the main text focused on synthesized findings, consistent with the suggestion that a lengthy characteristics table be relocated out of the main narrative.

4. Discussion

The findings of this review indicate that the effectiveness of green policy implementation in the Philippines depends not only on policy adoption but also on the strength of governance mechanisms that support implementation. Across the included studies, regulatory enforcement, institutional coordination, and participatory governance consistently appeared as important conditions for translating sustainable development policies into actual outcomes (Olsen & Zusman, 2014; Reyes et al., 2019).

4.1 Governance Mechanisms as Enabling Conditions

Governance mechanisms function as enabling conditions rather than automatic guarantees of sustainable development outcomes. The presence of a law, agency

mandate, consultation process, or monitoring system does not automatically ensure effective implementation. Instead, implementation improves when regulatory, institutional, and participatory mechanisms are supported by adequate resources, clear authority, continuity, and feedback systems. Olsen and Zusman (2014) emphasized that leadership, institutional coordination, stakeholder engagement, and progress review are necessary for strengthening sustainable development governance in the Philippine context.

4.2 Regulatory Enforcement and Compliance

Regulatory enforcement is necessary because it translates national green legislation into operational obligations. However, enforcement alone cannot address implementation problems when monitoring systems are weak, sanctions are delayed, local officials lack capacity, or regulated actors comply only in form. Evidence from waste management, renewable energy, and mining shows that regulatory tools must be linked to inspections, reporting systems, administrative consequences, and policy revision mechanisms. For example, Apostol et al. (2022) showed that waste management policies require stronger implementation systems, while Magno (2015) highlighted the importance of regulatory and fiscal accountability in the Philippine mining sector. Read comparatively, the reviewed evidence indicates that enforcement effectiveness tracks administrative capacity more closely than the sophistication of the legal instrument itself: Manalo (2017) shows sustained compliance gains in Puerto Princesa City where enforcement was paired with adequate local staffing and political continuity, whereas Magno (2015) documents that even a well-designed fiscal transparency mechanism (PH-EITI) produced limited compliance gains in mining governance where monitoring capacity remained thin, suggesting that similar regulatory designs can diverge sharply in outcome depending on local administrative context.

4.3 Institutional Coordination

Institutional coordination is equally important because green policy issues cut across sectors and levels of government. Climate adaptation, renewable energy, solid waste management, biodiversity protection, and local environmental governance require cooperation among national agencies, regulatory bodies, and local government units. Fragmentation occurs when agencies share environmental responsibilities but lack clear protocols for budgeting, implementation, reporting, and accountability. Oosterhof (2018) emphasized the importance of SDG localization, while Pirmana et al. (2019) showed that weak institutional coordination and limited technical capacity can hinder environmental monitoring and sustainable development implementation. This divergence recurs across sectors: Oosterhof (2018) finds that SDG localization improved where planning and budgeting instruments were formally linked, while Ghazali et al. (2024) show that renewable energy coordination remained fragmented

despite a comparably robust legal framework because inter-agency reporting lines were left informal rather than institutionalized. The contrast suggests that formal mandate design matters less than whether coordination is backed by enforceable reporting and budget-linkage mechanisms.

4.4 Participatory Governance

Participatory governance strengthens legitimacy, local knowledge, and accountability in policy implementation. However, participation must go beyond attendance in consultations. Stakeholders must have access to information, meaningful channels to express concerns, and evidence that their input influences decisions. In community-based resource management and local environmental governance, participation becomes more effective when communities help monitor, enforce, and adapt policy. Kusters et al. (2020) showed the importance of inclusive landscape governance, while Buenavista (2021) emphasized the value of Indigenous knowledge and co-production in supporting sustainable development goals.

The included studies diverge on this point in an instructive way: Buenavista (2021) documents substantive co-production with Indigenous communities that shaped conservation outcomes, while Roberts and Hernandez (2017) find that digital citizen-participation platforms produced little practical influence because structural barriers to technology access excluded the very residents the platforms were designed to include. Taken together, these cases suggest that the format of participation, whether in-person co-production or digital consultation, matters less than whether the channel reaches and is usable by the intended participants.

4.5 From Legislation-First to Governance-First Reform

This subsection presents the review's central original contribution: a reframing of Philippine green policy reform away from legislative accumulation and toward governance architecture.

The findings suggest that Philippine green policy reform should move from a legislation-first approach toward a governance-first approach. Additional laws may be useful, but the more urgent need is to strengthen implementation architecture. Enforcement, coordination, participation, financing, monitoring, and feedback should be designed as an integrated accountability system. Without this integration, policies may continue to be formally adopted but operationally weak. Premakumara et al. (2015) demonstrated this issue in the implementation of RA 9003, where solid waste management success depended not only on the law itself but also on local capacity, enforcement, and stakeholder participation.

4.6 Policy and Research Implications

For policy practice, national agencies should clarify implementation mandates, align reporting systems, and provide local government units with technical and fiscal support. Local governments should institutionalize monitoring, community participation, and regular policy review to improve implementation continuity. For future research, studies should examine the causal pathways between specific governance mechanisms and measurable sustainability outcomes through longitudinal and comparative local studies. Reyes et al. (2019) and Lapiz (2024) both indicate that stronger policy alignment, localization, and governance capacity are necessary for improving sustainable development implementation in the Philippines.

5. Conclusion

This systematic literature review synthesized evidence on how governance mechanisms shape the implementation and effectiveness of national sustainable development policies in the Philippines from 2010 to 2025. The findings show that regulatory enforcement, institutional coordination, and participatory engagement are important but not sufficient when implemented separately. Their effectiveness depends on adequate resources, clear authority, institutional continuity, accountability, and feedback systems that connect policy design with actual implementation (Olsen & Zusman, 2014).

The review concludes that Philippine green policies are often strong in legal and policy design but weaker in implementation. Across the reviewed evidence, compliance was observed to be stronger where enforcement was consistent, coordination tended to be more coherent where agency and local government roles were clearly defined, and participation was reported as more meaningful where stakeholders influenced decisions rather than merely attended consultations, patterns that should be read as recurring associations documented within a qualitative evidence synthesis rather than confirmed causal effects. The main implication is that sustainable development reform in the Philippines should prioritize implementation architecture, accountability systems, LGU capacity, and meaningful public participation alongside new legislation (Premakumara et al., 2015).

This review has several limitations. Because the search was restricted to English-language sources, subnational and local government reports published only in Filipino or in regional languages may have been excluded, potentially omitting locally significant governance practices that never reach English-language academic or institutional outlets. The reliance on secondary, published evidence also means that undocumented or informal governance practices at the barangay level could not be captured. Finally, because 57 of the 201 retrieved reports could not be obtained in full text (Section 2.2), some eligible studies may have been unintentionally excluded from the synthesis; future reviews with institutional database access may be able to close this gap.

Appendix A

Table A1. General study characteristics of the included studies on governance mechanisms in Philippine sustainable development policy implementation.

Author/s (Year)	Country	Governance Level	Technology/Mechanism	Framework/Approach
Agana (2024)	Philippines	Higher education	CHED/PH NATCOM coordination and ESD policy alignment	Multiple Streams Framework; ESD policy analysis
Anonas et al. (2023)	Philippines	National policy and energy sector level	Waste-to-energy technologies and lifecycle policy review	Policy consistency and lifecycle analysis
Apostol et al. (2022)	Philippines	National and local government level	Solid waste management systems and pandemic waste controls	Policy analysis framework
Arcenas et al. (2019)	Philippines	National policy and community level	Green public procurement and SCP systems	Sustainable Consumption and Production framework
Atilano-Tang and Laudin (2023)	Philippines	Local government and community level	Plastic-bag ban ordinance and enforcement tools	Outcome analysis of public policy implementation
Babia and Cotejo (2021)	Philippines	Community-based education level	ESD community-based project implementation	UNESCO ESD framework; transformational learning
Baleos, Garcia, and Pacis (2017)	Philippines	Citizen/community governance level	Open data portals and citizen engagement platforms	Open data and citizen engagement case study
Banderlipi II et al. (2014)	Philippines	Barangay/community planning level	Barangay development planning tools	Collaborative engagement; good governance
Bendijo et al. (2024)	Philippines	Farmer/community livelihood level	Agricultural production techniques and DA/LGU training support	Agricultural systems analysis
Buenavista (2021)	Philippines	Indigenous/community knowledge level	Indigenous Knowledge Systems and ethnobotanical documentation	Co-production of knowledge
Cabonegro (2025)	Philippines	Youth, indigenous, and MSME level	Green MSME enterprise models	Indigenous wisdom and green enterprise approach
Church and Crawford (2018)	Philippines	Extractive/mining sector level	Low-carbon mineral supply-chain governance	Fragility-conflict nexus; supply-chain governance
Coracero et al. (2021)	Philippines	National and local waste governance level	Solid waste management policy systems	Review-based policy analysis
Decena (2023)	Philippines	Small-scale mining community level	CLINN-CEM clean gold extraction technology	Qualitative single case study; co-production
Dizon and Noroña (2021)	Philippines	MSME/enterprise level	Green Economic Development interventions	Structural equation modeling; sustainability adoption
Domingo and Buenavista (2018)	Philippines	Conservation/community policy level	Cave conservation and biodiversity management tools	Conservation policy implementation analysis
Florini and Pauli (2018)	Philippines	Agriculture partnership sector level	Public-private partnerships and value-chain collaboration	Collaborative governance framework

Author/s (Year)	Country	Governance Level	Technology/Mechanism	Framework/Approach
Ghazali, Shukor, and Karim (2024)	Philippines	National energy policy level	Renewable-energy tools: feed-in tariffs, net metering, and the Renewable Energy Act	Legal and policy framework analysis
Gonzales (2024)	Philippines	Oil and gas industry management level	Environmental values, leadership, and stakeholder-engagement tools	Upper Echelons Theory; Stakeholder Theory
Government of the Philippines (2016)	Philippines	National legislation/farm tourism sector level	Farm-tourism accreditation and competency standards	Legislative/policy framework
Henderson (2011)	Philippines	Tourism industry policy level	Tourism governance and development-planning tools	Political economy of tourism
Huelgas and Arellano (2021)	Philippines	Public port management office level	Green HRM and green-innovation systems	Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory
Jarabo (2024)	Philippines	Corporate/private sector level	Sustainability reports and SDG-disclosure systems	Qualitative descriptive and exploratory design
Khajuria et al. (2022)	Philippines	Waste/circular-economy sector level	3R and circular-economy systems	Circular-economy pathway
Klemensits (2019)	Philippines	National environmental policy level	Mining audit and DENR regulatory mechanisms	Sustainable-development dilemma case study
Kusters et al. (2020)	Philippines	Landscape/community governance level	Landscape-governance assessment and CSO platforms	Inclusive landscape-governance framework
Labadi et al. (2021)	Philippines	Heritage and urban-development policy level	Pre-disaster recovery planning for heritage sites	Heritage-sustainability policy guidance
Lapiz (2024)	Philippines	Local government level	Local Government Code mandate mapping	Whole-of-government approach
Lota et al. (2025)	Philippines	Higher education/public health level	HEI-SDG integration and public-health curriculum platforms	HEI-SDG integration framework
Magno (2015)	Philippines	Mining-sector governance level	PH-EITI, mining fiscal tools, and revenue governance	Mining-for-development framework
Maimad, Dupa, and Villegas (2023)	Philippines	Basic education and family/community level	4Ps conditionalities and parental-involvement mechanisms	Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence
Manalo (2017)	Philippines	Local tourism governance level	Sustainable-tourism policy-implementation tools	Sustainable-tourism policy implementation
Mantaring, Espinoza, and Gabriel (2019)	Philippines	National agency/public-service level	8888 complaints, Facebook, walk-ins, and letters	Complaint-management feedback-loop framework
Marquardt (2017)	Philippines	National and subnational energy-governance level	Renewable Energy Act implementation tools	Multi-level governance and power framework
Marx et al. (2021)	Philippines	Regional-to-national SDG governance level	ASEAN SDG monitoring and benchmarking systems	Experimentalist governance
Mendoza (2014)	Philippines	Energy-sector reform level	Fossil-fuel subsidy reform and energy-policy tools	Energy-sector policy analysis

Author/s (Year)	Country	Governance Level	Technology/Mechanism	Framework/Approach
Mores, Lee, and Bae (2019)	Philippines	Higher education/community-planning level	University-community planning partnerships	Co-production and partnership theory
Olsen and Zusman (2014)	Philippines	National policy/governance level	Philippine Agenda 21 and PCSD/NEDA planning mechanisms	Policy-implementation cycle
Ong and Gabriel (2018)	Philippines	Local legislative-governance level	Transparency and accountability monitoring tools	Good-governance framework
Oosterhof (2018)	Philippines	National-local SDG-localization level	SDG localization and PDP/RDP integration	SDG-localization framework
Ouano-Saguisag and Intac (2020)	Philippines	Culture/creative-hub community level	Creative hubs and cultural-management models	Creative economy and sustainable development
Perez, Ng, and Tiglao (2022)	Philippines	Local public-transportation policy level	Co-design tools and stakeholder workshops	Co-design and policy-capacity approach
Pirmana et al. (2019)	Philippines	National statistical/policy-monitoring level	SEEA accounts and SDG-indicator data systems	Institutional-capacity and implementation theory
Premakumara, Gilby, and Lee (2015)	Philippines	Local government/barangay waste-management level	RA 9003 implementation and waste-segregation systems	Policy-implementation success-factors framework
Promentilla et al. (2021)	Philippines	Mining and land-use management level	Eco-efficient mineral-extraction systems	Systems approach
Retuya (2020)	Philippines	Aquaculture production/community-enterprise level	Sustainable aquaculture-management practices	Sustainable-management review approach
Reyes et al. (2019)	Philippines	National SDG policy and planning level	SDG indicators, climate-budget tagging, and GHG inventory	SDG progress-review framework
Roberts and Hernandez (2017)	Philippines	Citizen/community participation level	Apps, websites, SMS, and geo-tagged evidence	Human-centric/power-aware framework
Roldan (2018)	Philippines	Higher education/community-partnership level	University-community SDG-localization tools	SDG localization and stakeholder theory
Sadiq et al. (2023)	Philippines	ASEAN/Philippine ESG-policy level	ESG indicators, SDG index, and ecological-footprint measures	Institutional and stakeholder theory
Salzer et al. (2017)	Philippines	Social-housing/construction-sector level	Life-cycle assessment and bamboo/coconut/soil building technologies	Life-cycle thinking
Somova (2024)	Philippines	SME/enterprise level	SME sustainability readiness and green-business-practice tools	Business-climate nexus
Topple et al. (2017)	Philippines	Multinational-enterprise/corporate level	GRI standards and materiality analysis	Corporate-sustainability assessment framework
Tupas and Cacho (2020)	Philippines	Local government unit level	LGU integrated green-governance programs	Integrated green-governance approach
Xuan (2024)	Philippines	National energy/economic-policy level	Renewable-energy indicators and VECM/Granger modeling	Econometric policy analysis
Wampler (2013)	Philippines	Participatory-governance/public-accountability level	Transparency, accountability, and participation innovations	Participatory-governance innovation approach

Author/s (Year)	Country	Governance Level	Technology/Mechanism	Framework/Approach
Yap, Tabuga, and Mina (2020)	Philippines	National employment and SDG-policy level	Employment diagnostics and labor-policy analysis tools	Econometric and employment-diagnostics analysis

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The researchers declare that they have no financial, personal, professional, or institutional conflicts of interest that could have influenced the conduct, analysis, interpretation, or presentation of this study.

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