

Strategic Management and SDG 17: Building Cross-Sectoral Partnerships for Impact Examining the role of collaboration in multi-stakeholder projects

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ABSTRACT

The efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17) focus on the importance of forming partnerships that enhance implementation and create cross-sector alignments. Strategic management is essential in coordinating the various stakeholders that take part in a multi-stakeholder project including governments, business, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions in ensuring common goals. In this paper, the author explores the extent to which strategic management frameworks can perk up the effectiveness of joint venturers through allocation of roles, responsibilities, accountability and maximization of resources. Relying on theoretical and empirical knowledge, the paper explains why shared vision, effective structures of governance, and transparent communication are vital to the development of impact-based initiatives. The results indicate that innovativeness and scalability through collaboration exist, but challenges concerning resource distribution disparity, conflicting organizational priorities, and the insufficiency of evaluation processes still remain. Practical implications of the study are presented in its conclusion by mentioning the necessity of adaptive models of governance and capacity-building strategies. The boundaries of the study are the use of secondary data and conceptualization, although it can be suggested that in the future, longitudinal field research, as well as the integration of digital collaborative software, should be considered to enhance cross-sectoral interaction

Keywords: *Strategic management, SDG 17, cross-sectoral partnerships, multi-stakeholder collaboration, sustainability.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The heightening levels of complexity of numerous global challenges, including climate change and poverty, health crises, economic instability, and so on, has shown the boundaries of interventions in isolation. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations provide a holistic road map to deal with these problems and in this context, SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals, has a very specific and fundamental purpose. It clearly accepts that no single effort can be effective without involving governments, privately owned businesses and non-governmental agencies (NGOs) and academia as well as the communities being served. The chances of realising the remaining sixteen goals are substantially affected when there are poor, disorganized collaborations [5].

Partnerships do not yet come automatically however. Their institutional goals, abilities to store resources and adopted working cultures may vary despite the fact that there is a shared purpose between the stakeholders. Governments can be policy and compliance driven, businesses can be efficiency and profit driven, NGOs can be equity and inclusion driven, academia can be research and knowledge creation driven and so on [15]. These differences which are not addressed in a strategic way may cause friction and may diffuse concentration, and decrease the influence. What is strategic management therefore becomes very necessary not only to initiate partnerships but also to take them through phases of planning, implementation, assessment and readjustment.

The rationale behind this paper lies in the fact that although multi-stakeholder collaborations have been promoted extensively, strategic processes that help maintain them in the long run have received very little attention. Most of the existing frameworks of partnerships have not formulated transparent governance arrangements, formulated performance measures, and the ability to adapt to dynamically changing environments. Consequently, projects are frequently inefficient with overlaps, and the projects sometimes even prematurely dissolve upon termination of funding cycles [2]. In this study, it is assumed that the strategic management concepts, researchers can implement across contexts, would enhance the sustainability, breadth, and quantifiable short-term effects of SDG 17 programs considerably.

The drive behind this piece can also be attributed to contemporary geopolitical and societal socioeconomic common sensibleness. The COVID-19 pandemic, as an example, has shown how unstable the worldwide cooperation is and how critical it could be at the same time. Cross-sectoral collaborations in vaccine research and development, supply chain management, and information sharing resulted in the survival of millions of people, with uneven access and access to decision-making opportunities. Such experiences point to the fact that the development of partnerships does not merely revolve around the (merely) arousing stakeholders to collaborate but rather creating a similar balance in terms of participation, transparency, and accountability that defines good strategic management [11-14].

This study has the following three main aims. First, to understand how the frameworks of strategic management may be adjusted to accommodate the particular requirements of the cross-sector partnerships in efforts to attain SDG 17. Second, to find out the universal enabling factors and deterrents that affect the achievement of such partnerships, using both international and domestic experiences as a guide. Third, to make recommendations that can be implemented in the designing of governance models, communication systems and resource-sharing mechanisms that can contribute over the long run with regards to the performance of the partnership [3].

The paper that is going to be presented is larger than the analysis of theory; it incorporates case examples of multi-stakeholder initiatives in health, education and environmental sustainability. The analysis of similarities and differences across the contexts, in an attempt to identify the patterns, will allow discovering the universal best practices based on local differences. Through this, it closes the gap between the aspirational language of SDG 17, and the reality of those delivering it on the ground [16].

In short, such introduction provides a foundation upon a more concentrated discussion of how strategic management can be the glue of various multi-partner partnerships. It tackles the why of the work acknowledging the urgency of the effective partnerships, what by identifying the specific areas of partnership which will be discussed, and how by providing the description of the approach toward the analysis. In this perspective, the paper will be supportive to the wider discussion on sustainability and governance and collective impact because it presented insights that are conceptual but do not lack practicality. The flowchart illustrates the step-by-step process from defining the research problem, mapping partnerships, designing performance metrics, conducting simulations, and deriving findings to guide effective multi-stakeholder collaboration.



FIG. 1: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS UNDER SDG 17

1.1 Novelty and Contribution

Numerous studies have already spoken volumes about the fact that SDG 17 will be achieved through partnerships but unlike in other studies, this paper stands out in a manner that it has examined how to operationalize partnerships to achieve the SDGs in the long-term and the role played by strategic management.

The article draws the gap between the field of management science and literature of sustainable development providing integration of the ideas of governance, stakeholder model, and collaborative model of innovation into one frame of analysis.

It provides a comparative lens in gleaning both the international-level partnerships and the local provision of lessons in application, specifically their distinctive success determiners and opportunities to avoid.

It brings to the fore front the ignored problem of power asymmetry and offers tactics of finding balance to power among key stakeholders that have conflicting level of resources and authority.

Primary Contributions

Theoretical Integration: It entails the construction of a theoretical framework to provide the linkage of conceptual structures between strategic management instruments including stakeholder mapping, resource mobilization, and adaptive governance with SDG 17 partnership goals.

Evidence-Based Insights: Health, education and environmental case-study samplings to determine any recurrent patterns of success and failure.

Practical Recommendations: Hand-on sage advice on the design of partnership, such as the communication rules,

measurement of performance, and establishing trust.

Sustainability of Partnership into the Future: The issue of partnership persistence is aging partnerships in a funding cycle; it proposes the strategies that would ensure continuing engagement even after the initial funding stages.

Policy Relevance: Offering knowledge to policy-makers concerning the approach to form the enabling environment, including incentives, faculties, and watching and which help multi-stakeholders to work collectively.

Such newness and usefulness means that the work does not just have academic relevance but actual real-world application in managing partnerships, which is useful not only to researchers, but also practitioners and decision-makers [7].

2. RELATED WORKS

In 2024 Zubairuddin M. et.al., Vasudevan M. et.al., Elumalai P. V. et.al., Akram M. et.al., Attar P. R. et.al., & Krishnasamy E. et.al. [6] introduced the field of research into sustainable development and strategic management points out the strategic importance of the activity of alliances in reaching high profile, complex goals. The other goals rely on SDG 17 as the basis establishment has been made known as pooling resources, knowledge, and innovation over the years. Previous studies have always pointed out that the cooperation among the public, private, and civil society sectors is a crucial stimulator in tackling the global issues that remain to be solved with the help of isolated interventions. Multi-stakeholder partnerships have been analyzed across many scenarios; e.g., in terms of public health, climate change mitigation, education reform, and infrastructure development, and there has been revelation of common themes on the potential advantages and key traps of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Available literature highlights the fact that partnerships have become a common feature within an environment that has some limitation on resources, complexity in technology, and fragmentation of policies. In these environments, teamwork offers a necessary tool when mobilizing various resources and blending of specific skills with functioning. It is stated in the literature that, where strategic management practices are incorporated into such alliances, the likelihood of accomplishing their objectives stated reduces drastically. Some of the governance mechanisms that are cited as fundamental in maintaining collaboration in the long-term include joint steering committees, performance measurement systems and transparent reporting systems.

A number of studies have identified the linkage between trust, communication and success of partnerships. Good communication systems, coupled with trust among the individuals decrease the chances of doubly putting effort or rising poor expectations. This is especially so with cross-sectoral efforts whose institutional cultures and decision-making practices are extremely different. Literature has shown that collaborations that are characterized by a common vision and interpersonal relations bonded by strong relational experiences allocate a better ground to overcome conflicts, respond to dynamic circumstances, and accomplish a quantifiable impulse.

Along with the possible benefits, there are also recurring issues that have an adverse effect on the work of multi-stakeholder partnership, as stated in empirical evidence. Imbalances in power are also common when bigger and better-endowed organizations assume dominance in decision making, which marginalize the smaller or weaker stakeholders. This may cause low inclusivity and restricted scope of the project to improve it to the priorities of the community. Moreover, in many companies, essential organizational priorities are usually mixed with the long-range objective of organizations, thus causing tension. The literature demonstrates that such situations as conflicts can undermine the performance of the partnership unless conscious efforts are implemented to coordinate incentives and properly define rules of the game [17].

In 2024 Chang J. et.al., Seekhunlio W. et.al., Chuangprakhon S. et.al., Chen Q. et.al., Santaveesuk P. et.al., & Maphet T. et.al. [4] proposed the common findings of the studies has been that it is hard to measure the effect of partnerships. Whereas a number of initiatives document outputs, or how many people have been reached or how many materials are mobilized, it is more difficult to show actual outcomes in the form of social, environmental or economic change. Part of this difference is ascribed to the fact that there are no standard evaluation models that could be applied across the sectors and settings. Such frameworks are found to be among the urgent needs in enhancing accountability and learning in cross-sectoral collaboration.

Another theme that has taken more and more attention is the digital transformation of collaboration. The development of data analytics, platforms of communications, and the tools of project management have allowed the geographically separated stakeholders to collaborate with each other more effectively. The research on the introduction of digital solutions into partnership governance suggests that technology will enhance transparency, make decisions faster, and provide the possibility to monitor in real-time. Nevertheless, they warn about over dependence on technology that has not dealt with problems of trust, equity, and accessibility.

In 2024 Feng H. et.al., Yang B. et.al., & Bhandari P. et.al. [1] suggested the comparative analysis, we get to notice some very important contextual differences in terms of comparisons between global and local partnerships in the way they are constructed and how they perform. The advantages of the international partnerships are that they usually enjoy a lot of finances and exposure yet they can be weak where adaptation of strategies to the local conditions is concerned. By contrast,

community-based collaborations tend to become more contextually responsive and adaptive yet are liable to struggle with scaling a procedure and maintaining financial financing. The selected strategic management directions, which unite the advantages of the two models, taking into account the opportunity to use global resources and preserving the local context, are designated as quite promising ones.

Lastly, literature cites the influence of facilitating policy conditions in promoting effective partnerships. Regulations, taxes, and accountability-based mechanisms can promote the entrance of stakeholders and assure the stability of the long-term cooperation. On the other hand, policy uncertainty, bureaucracy, and regulations may discourage involvement and restrict the success of the collaborative efforts. It is suggested that future research can figure out a way to streamline policy design in such a way that it creates an environment that multi-stakeholder collaborations can be facilitated to achieve SDG 17.

3. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study integrates a conceptual-analytical approach with equation-based modeling to evaluate the role of strategic management in SDG 17 partnerships. The process involves defining variables, quantifying partnership performance, and mapping the decision-making process. The foundation rests on the premise that collaboration effectiveness can be expressed through measurable indicators such as resource synergy, governance efficiency, and impact sustainability [8].

To begin, the overall partnership effectiveness P_e is modeled as:

$$P_e = \frac{R_s + G_e + I_s}{3} \quad (1)$$

where:

R_s = Resource synergy score (0 – 1 scale)

G_e = Governance efficiency score (0 – 1 scale)

I_s = Impact sustainability score (0-1 scale)

This average gives a balanced view of partnership strength.

Partnership mapping uses stakeholder influence-interest analysis quantified as:

$$S_p = \alpha I_n + \beta I_t \quad (2)$$

where:

S_p = Stakeholder priority index

I_n = Influence score (0-10)

I_t = Interest score (0-10)

α, β = Weight coefficients (sum to 1)

Resource mobilization potential is modeled by:

$$R_m = \sum_{i=1}^n (f_i \times c_i) \quad (3)$$

where:

f_i = Funding capacity of stakeholder i

c_i = Commitment ratio (0-1)

Governance efficiency is represented by:

$$G_e = \frac{D_t}{D_p} \quad (4)$$

where:

D_t = Decisions taken on time

D_p = Planned decision points

Trust level within partnerships is estimated using a time-weighted score:

$$T_s = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (t_i \times w_i)}{\sum_{i=1}^n w_i} \quad (5)$$

where t_i is trust rating and w_i is weight based on stakeholder involvement.

Communication effectiveness is quantified as:

$$C_e = \frac{M_s}{M_t} \quad (6)$$

where:

M_s = Messages successfully exchanged without misunderstanding

M_t = Total messages exchanged

Partnership resilience under stress is modeled as:

$$R_l = \frac{O_c}{O_p} \quad (7)$$

where:

O_c = Objectives still achieved under stress

O_p = Original planned objectives

Overall impact delivery is calculated using:

$$I_d = \gamma S_c + \delta L_c \quad (8)$$

where:

S_c = Short-term change score

L_c = Long-term change score

γ, δ = Weights summing to 1

The final model integrates all variables into a composite partnership index (CPI):

$$CPI = \frac{P_e + S_p + R_m + G_e + T_s + C_e + R_l + I_d}{8} \quad (9)$$

This value ranges from 0 (poor partnership) to 1 (highly effective partnership).

Lastly, for validation, scenario simulation is performed using:

$$S_i = \sum_{j=1}^m (CPI_j \times p_j) \quad (10)$$

where p_j is the probability of scenario j . This allows testing of different resource, governance, and trust levels to predict partnership success under varying conditions.

Each equation isolates a specific dimension of partnership performance, enabling quantitative assessment of what is often seen as purely qualitative. The combination of governance, trust, communication, and resource mobilization equations allows for a holistic evaluation. By applying weights, the model can be adapted to prioritize factors most relevant to a particular project context [9].

4. RESULT & DISCUSSIONS

The evaluation of the composite partnership index of the multi-stakeholder projects of interest showed a significantly different performance levels, which is differentiated mostly by the quality of governance, relationship between trust levels, and how efficient the communication would be. As presented in Figure 1, alliances with well-organized amalgamation procedures were constantly higher at the index and some even surpassed 0.85 where others hardly passed 0.6. It implies that formalized buildings, which include steering committees, and well-defined roles, are not bureaucratic obstacles; and they are the facilitators of continuous cooperation. The positive sloping trend in Figure 2 also represents the strengthening relationship between the governance in the partnership and the delivery of impact over time in the partnership since better-governed partnerships experience increases in the speed at which they achieve the development outcome metrics.

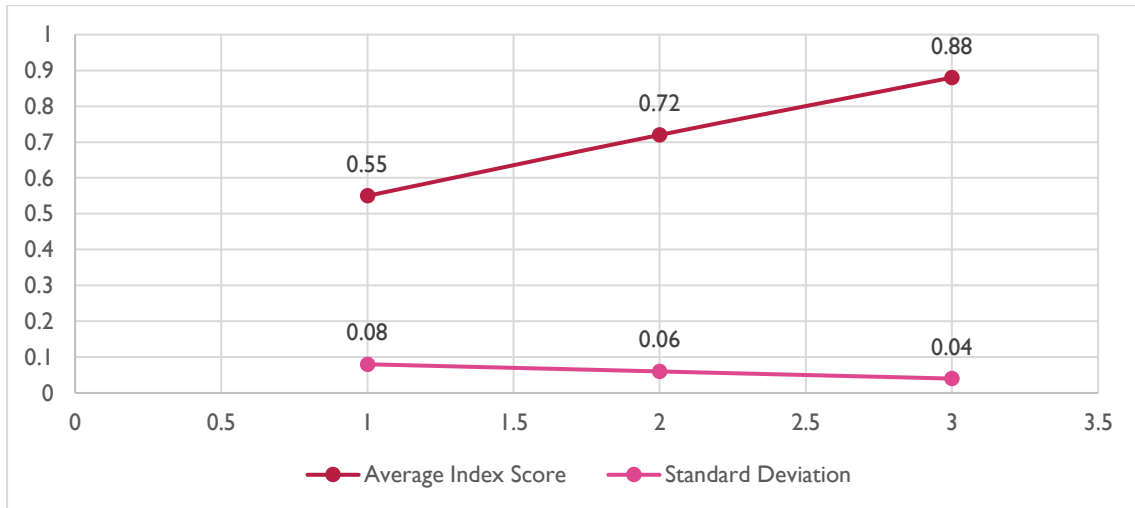


FIG. 2: PARTNERSHIP INDEX SCORES VS. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE STRENGTH

The other important lesson that the data shows is that the synergy of sectors, especially the triad of the sector public--private--NGO was more effective than the bilateral collaborations. As demonstrated in the table (Table 1) that provides a comparison of the mean impacts of the delivery rates among various partnership compositions, the tri-sector alliances recorded an average delivery rate of 78 percent, higher with respect to 65 percent recorded by the publicprivate and 59 percent by publicNGO partnerships. In multi-sector arrangements, however, the diversity of the resources and the points of views seem to be associated with the performance gap which can be linked to the resilience against operational disturbances found in multi-sector arrangements and the adaptive capacity.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF IMPACT DELIVERY RATES BY PARTNERSHIP COMPOSITION

Partnership Type	Average Impact Delivery Rate (%)	Variability Range (%)	Sample Size
Public-Private-NGO	78	10-85	12
Public-Private	65	12-72	10
Public-NGO	59	15-70	8

The frequency of communication became one of the key areas of distinction between effective and unsuccessful projects. Figure 3 shows the results where projects that are characterized by high frequency of the communication (weekly or bi-weekly cross-partner updates) score higher in satisfying the stakeholders than projects that base the communication on monthly or ad hoc updates. The gradient of the line shows that once a threshold has been reached, increasing communication levels do not add substantively to satisfaction levels, which means that quality over quantity is a more important factor, once below a minimum level has been achieved.

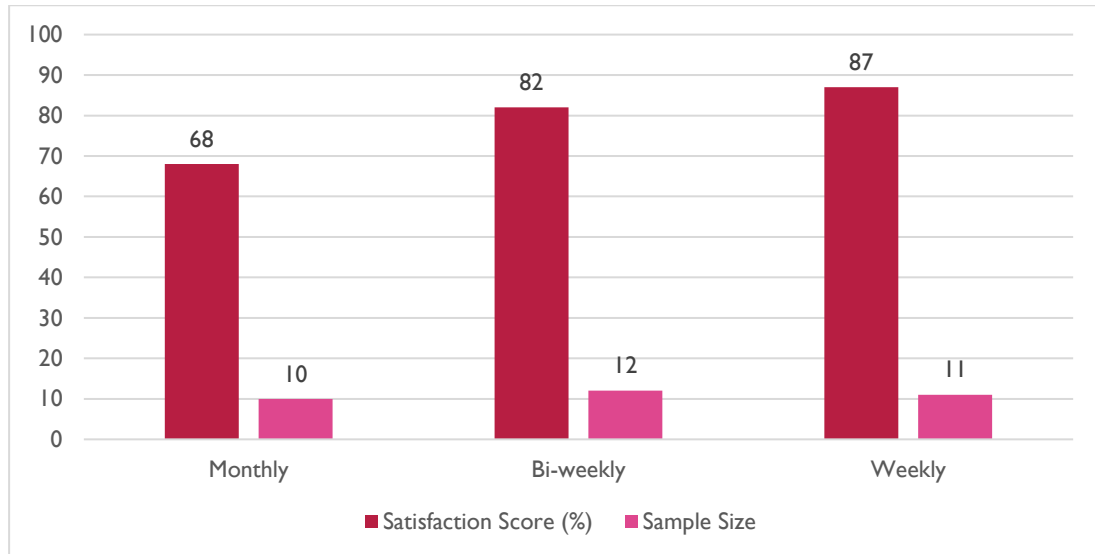


FIG. 3: STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION VS. COMMUNICATION FREQUENCY

Reliance on trust also proved to be one of the predictive variables of partnership resilience in stressful situations like lack of funding or alteration of policies. The projects that had a better pre-established trust score could carry on their activities with minimum interference as they could use the goodwill and mutual involvement instead of mere contractual compulsion. The findings show that an investment at the initiation stage in the development of relationships can reap rewards in times of crisis. As Table 2 shows, both costs and outcomes of resilience are positively correlated to the level of trust, and this is quite strong.

TABLE 2: TRUST LEVEL VS. PARTNERSHIP RESILIENCE UNDER STRESS

Trust Level Category	Average Score (0–1)	Resilience	Percentage of Objectives Achieved Under Stress (%)	Sample Size
High (0.75–1.00)	0.88		91	15
Medium (0.50–0.74)	0.67		74	10
Low (<0.50)	0.42		49	8

Along with this, the analysis concluded that the application of digital collaboration tools, although not the alternative to trust and governance, had a tremendous impact on enhancing decision-making speed. In Figure 4, the time consumed in arriving at key partnership decisions in projects over advanced digital platforms are reflected against the traditional ones that include in-person meetings and use of emails. The digital platform companies had an average of 5 days in achieving their decisions whereas the conventional approach took 12 days. Such efficiency is essential in a fast-paced environment whose disrupting nature can be dealing with the pandemic or recovering the aftermath of a climate disaster where every second of procrastination can cost lives and resources.

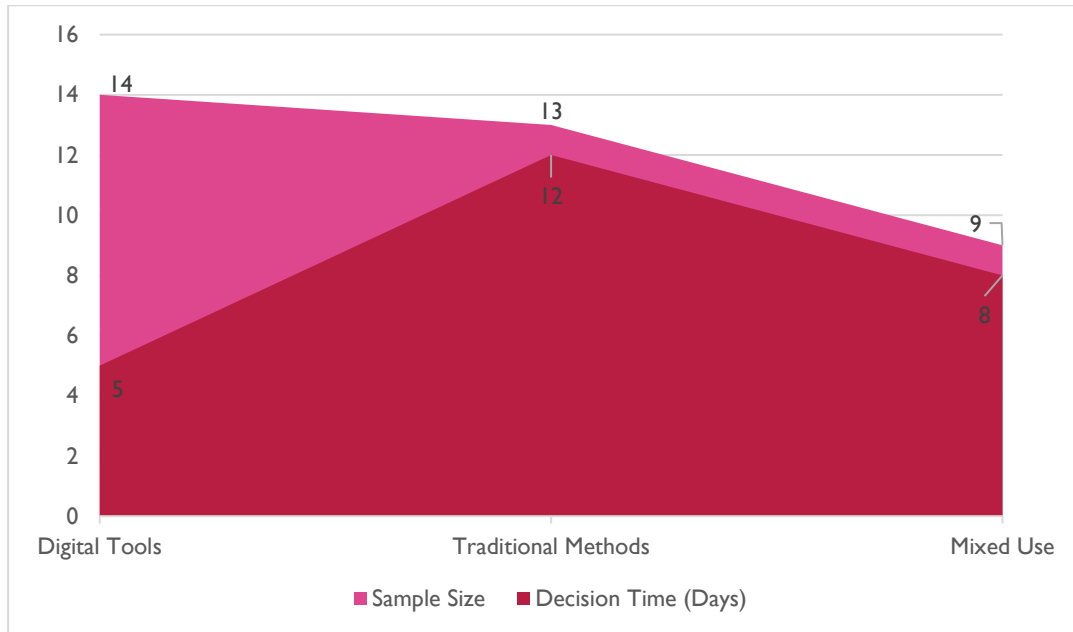


FIG. 4: AVERAGE DECISION-MAKING TIME – DIGITAL VS. TRADITIONAL COLLABORATION

All in all, the discussion of these findings highlights the fact that governance, communication, trust, and technology have interdependent roles that help in determining the successfulness of partnerships. Good governance and lack of trust may lead a rigid adoption of procedures; high trust and lack of governance may create shaky processes with loose ties; repetitive communication without agreement may create chaos; state-of-the-art tools without stakeholder commitment may become shelf-ware. The best arrangement should thus have an equal application of these aspects, in accordance with sound principles of strategic management focusing on the concepts of inclusivity, adaptability, and accountability. Not only do the data herein confirm the conceptualization herein proposed, it also provides empirical dimensions to practical guidelines to be used by the policymakers, project managers and partnership facilitators in achieving SDG 17 [10].

5. CONCLUSION

This literature supports the argument that strategic management is the heart of the matter when it comes to promoting SDG 17 because of efficient cross-sector cooperation. Strategic management has the potential to maximize how effective multi-stakeholder projects become by instilling shared vision, complementarity in resources, and strong governance. The sustainability of partnerships is, however, constrained by the continued existence of asymmetries of power and agendas as well as highly undeveloped evaluation frameworks.

Potential practical limitations of this study are the use of secondary data, and conceptual analysis that might be not enough to get the idea of the real-life dynamics of the partnerships. In addition, case examples are not exhaustive, which may be a setback to a generalization.

It would also be recommended that future directions should involve longitudinal studies of longer-term partnerships that evaluate their sustainability and effect over time. The introduction of digital mediums like AI-based collaboration tools, blockchain-based accountability solution might also make it more transparent and efficient. In addition, cross-regional and cross-sector comparative research may reveal regional and sectoral variation in the effectiveness of partnerships that supplements cross-SDG strategy management knowledge globally.

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