

RESEARCH

Sustainability Development: Social Implications in a Transitive Economy

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: The purpose of this paper is to examine Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) readiness and priorities consensus from society's perspective in relation to announcing governmental priorities, emphasising the importance of understanding community sentiments and awareness regarding SDGs.

DESIGN: The objectives of the research were achieved through a qualitative approach involving a survey conducted in Kuwait with 218 participants. A 19-item questionnaire was utilised to gauge SDG awareness, subjective sentiments, personal interests, and local consensus on priorities compared to government plans.

FINDINGS: The findings underscore the pivotal roles of government and private sectors as key stakeholders in sustainable development awareness, action and planning. They further conclude that there is substantial awareness of SDGs among the local population, with high civic engagement noted, particularly during elections. However, a significant gap was found between national priorities identified by the general public and those outlined in the New Kuwait Vision 2035 plan, with SDG 4 – Quality Education emerging as the top priority for local society.

IMPLICATIONS: This research contributes to understanding societal readiness for SDGs by unravelling the complex interplay between awareness, sentiments, and interests. It highlights the importance of key stakeholders and their roles, offering insights for policy-makers aiming to implement evidence-based regulations and understand factors influencing sustainable actions and development.

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LIMITATIONS: Limitations of the research include the geographical focus on Kuwait and the sample size. Further research could explore SDG readiness in other regions and involve larger sample sizes for a more comprehensive understanding.

KEYWORDS: *SDGs; Sustainability; Community Readiness; Sustainable Innovation; Social Behaviour; Kuwait.*

INTRODUCTION

Investigating societal readiness towards sustainable actions is imperative for designing effective policies and practices that ensure the long-term health of our planet. Sustainable actions involve a commitment to reducing environmental impact and making sure that our actions are socially responsible. By understanding if and how people are willing to take part in sustainable actions, governments and organisations can tailor their policies and practices to meet the needs of the public. Such investigations can also help to uncover areas of resistance or apathy towards sustainable practices. Knowing the reasons for these can help create appropriate strategies for convincing people to make the shift towards sustainability (Chin *et al.*, 2021). In addition, understanding how different social groups and demographics are responding to the idea of sustainable actions can allow for the development of better-targeted campaigns and initiatives. It is therefore essential to investigate societal readiness towards sustainable actions in order to identify any potential issues and find the best solutions. This kind of research can help create policies and initiatives that are not only effective but also sustainable in the long run.

Sustainability is an important concept for countries in the 21st century. Being ready for sustainability ensures that a country is well-prepared to face the challenges of climate change and other environmental crises. When countries are ready for sustainability, they can reduce their consumption of natural resources and energy, adopt renewable energy resources, and take other steps to reduce their environmental footprint (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, readiness for sustainability can also help countries improve their national indices. Countries that are better prepared for sustainability can improve their economic standing, as they can attract more foreign investment, stimulate job growth, and create a more stable economic environment (Diab-Bahman and Al-Enzi, 2021). They also often score higher on international assessments of environmental protection, health and safety, and other indicators of well-being. Ultimately, the more a country can prepare for sustainability, the more likely it will be to achieve success in the long-term (Huang *et al.*, 2022).

Much has been written about the readiness of nations to take on and/or implement sustainability plans, including green initiatives and economic reforms (Nhamo *et al.*, 2020; Al Rashidi *et al.*, 2021). Researchers have gathered some data on societal readiness from low income countries, particularly in the healthcare and IT fields (Nabukalu *et al.*, 2020; Martinez *et al.*, 2021). However, there is a dearth of information from a primary point of view – the people (Diab-Bahman, 2021b; Saner *et al.*, 2020). Oftentimes, the implications associated with societal matters are overlooked, leaving seemingly able countries frustrated with their lack of development.

In this research, we argue that societal ‘readiness’ to take on the involuntary task of implementing the SDGs, as set forth by government policies, may be found at the heart of an interplay between three main constructs – subject awareness, subjective sentiments, and personal interests. A research gap has been identified that highlights the potential of a conflict of interest between the priorities of the local government, as highlighted in their New Kuwait Vision 2035 (NKV2035) plan, and its people due to countless reports emphasising disastrous regress in multiple aspects of the society, including education and healthcare (Diab-Bahman and Marafie, 2023). The research findings are integral to policy making, as all stakeholders play a vital role in implementing the government’s vision and reaching specified goals. Therefore, investigating this gap is essential, as it will help align public policy with identified priorities considered from the society side – an often overlooked element.

Research Objectives

A review of the extant literature indicates that there is a lack of research on socio-economic factors of the local population on their readiness and intention to implement sustainable actions against topics of sustainable development. It is speculated that the Middle East will be one of the areas of the world most impacted by sustainability-related topics, such as climate change and gender equality, in the coming years. However, much of the conventional research on the topic seemingly focuses on technical rather than economic aspects (Wehrey *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, this study is the first to contribute to this gap in knowledge by addressing societal dimensions of readiness and willingness within the Kuwaiti population, a country plagued with the reputation of lacking an integrated/comprehensive effort towards sustainability. Although considered a high gross domestic product (GDP) country, an indication typically correlated to highly proactive approaches towards SDG planning, the country is accused of continuously being absent from global debates around sustainable development, particularly in the realm of social indices; the same is true of the rest of the Middle Eastern region (Diab-

Bahman, 2023). However, because Kuwait is a large oil producer, they owe it to the stakeholders ethically, both locally and internationally, to take a proactive stand on the topic. This research will address the topic by investigating the implications that stand in the way of a full-fledged trajectory towards sustainable actions – both in theory and in practice. The findings are important to policy-makers eager to implement fact-based regulations and understand the dynamics at play that could hinder or propel the move towards sustainable actions.

Research Questions

A quantitative survey will be implemented to answer the following questions:

- Who do people perceive as responsible stakeholders to achieving the SDGs?
- How aware are they of the SDGs and their own social responsibilities?
- How interested are they in sustainability matters?
- Are government priorities (as per the NKV2035 plan) in alignment with the priorities of the people?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2015, the UN General Assembly embraced the SDGs, marking a pivotal moment in the global commitment to address pressing societal and environmental challenges. However, while the international community rallied behind these goals, a critical aspect remains largely unexplored, the consensus of the general public in specific regions, particularly in countries where governments do not actively endorse them. This research explores the perceptions of the Kuwaiti population concerning the SDGs, probing into their awareness of social responsibilities and investigating the motivating factors that drive their commitment to sustainability. This investigation is imperative as Kuwait is daunted by a reputation for slow sustainable development, both economically and socially (Al Reshaid *et al.*, 2024). By examining these questions, which revolve around main constructs of awareness, interest, and sentiment that explore community readiness (and a fourth that compares the priorities of the people against those of the government), the study aims to contribute valuable insights that can inform tailored strategies for enhancing sustainable development awareness and engagement at the local level in Kuwait. The research is depicted in Figure 1:

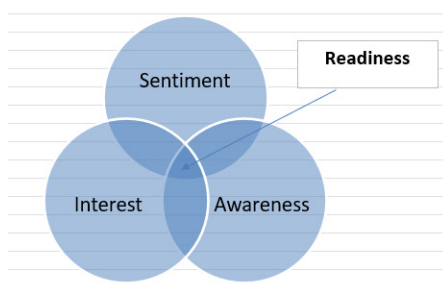


Figure 1 Constructs of 'Readiness'

Source: Constructed by author

Vision vs Public Consensus

In Kuwait, the New Kuwait Vision 2035 (NKV2035) stands as a formidable governmental initiative, delineating a comprehensive roadmap for socio-economic development, rooted in seven pillars mirroring the SDGs (New Kuwait, 2024). These priorities are depicted as pillars in the national strategy, and encompass human capital, effective governance, global positioning, economic diversification, sustainable living, infrastructure, and living environment; they reflect the government's commitment to enhancing long-term growth and prosperity. Kuwait's government continuously voices its support of the UN's SDGs and reiterates their commitment to working with local communities, the private sector, academia and civil society through co-operation and international partnerships to achieve the expected results. The pillars are mapped, in prioritised sequence according to NKV2035, to the UN SDGs in Table 1.

Table 1 New Kuwait Vision 2035 vs SDGs

Pillar	SDG Mapping
1	SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth)
2	SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure)
3	SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities)
4	SDG 4 (Quality Education)
5	SDG 3 (Good Health & Wellbeing)
6	SDG 5 (Gender Equality)
7	SDG 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy)
8	SDG 13 (Climate Action)

Source: Constructed by author

However, a critical assessment reveals a potential gap between these governmental priorities and the aspirations of society at large, as countless reports have indicated a downgrade in most of the priorities mentioned in the NKV2035 plan (Othman, 2023). While the NKV2035 aims to address pressing socio-economic challenges and promote sustainability, societal perceptions may diverge, highlighting disparities between governmental agendas and citizen expectations. These discrepancies manifest in various domains, such as economic diversification versus employment generation, infrastructure development versus environmental sustainability, human capital development versus social welfare, and global positioning versus national identity (Diab-Bahman, 2024).

Societal Implications

From recent research, Henfrey *et al.* (2023) concluded that exploring the actual and potential contributions of community-led initiatives (CLIs) to the SDGs is essential as they have demonstrated notable contributions at the local level across nearly all SDGs. However, it is imperative to recognise that these accomplishments are rooted in ethical considerations and organisational approaches that diverge significantly from the policies often laid out by governments. Therefore, it is suggested that such implications are explored, particularly due to the fact that there exists a gap between those cementing SDG policies and those who are expected to deliver them. Jaafar *et al.* (2021) argue that community perceptions are important to consider when it comes to sustainability projects, as they are a major stakeholder in achieving these goals.

Community's willingness or level of readiness to participate in a sustainable development programme has been proven to have a link with the society, economy and environment as opined by Goodman and Hastak (2015). The Yale Report (2022) explored the gap between goals put forward by policy-makers, and the general consensus of the people. In their report, they claimed that, although the concept and significance of sustainability are currently comprehensible, the same cannot be said for the SDGs; they have found that only a small minority of respondents are acquainted with the SDGs and comprehend their significance. Globally, they found that the average awareness level regarding the SDGs hovers just below 50% (European Union: 56%; Germany: 46%). Nevertheless, they speculate that the true awareness score is likely considerably lower than the mentioned averages, particularly in parts of the world where governments are not as active in their efforts to promote the SDGs. Their study highlights the gap in understanding public perceptions and motivations concerning sustainability in the context of SDGs.



Community Readiness Theory

Previous research has been employed that explores the Community Readiness Theory, initially conceptualised by Mary Ann Pentz and introduced at the Kentucky Conference for Prevention Research in 1991. This theory underwent further refinement by the Tri-ethnic Center for Prevention Research at Colorado State University, evolving into the Community Readiness Model based on their practical experiences (Edwards and Usher, 2001). Given the dynamic and evolving nature of communities, characterised by constant change, adaptability, growth, and other dynamic factors, it is crucial to underscore the significance of the initiation, subsequent success, and sustainability of any programme. This theory is conceptualised as a symbol that signifies the commitment towards sustainability through community readiness to engage (Edwards and Usher, 2001). The dimensions within the community readiness model include elements of awareness, interest, and preparation (Edwards and Usher, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

Overview

In this quantitative research study, a 19-item questionnaire serves as the primary tool for data collection. This questionnaire has been designed with precision to elicit quantifiable responses from participants, allowing for a systematic and statistical analysis of the gathered data. Adapting questions from established methodologies in survey design (Edwards *et al.*, (2000); Yale Center, 2022), the questionnaire comprises a mix of closed-ended questions with Likert-scale responses, enabling a quantitative measurement of participants' attitudes and perceptions. The research used a combination of random sampling and snowball type of sampling techniques to meet the needs of this research (n=218).

Instrument Development

The study contends that societal 'readiness' for SDG implementation, as mandated by government policies, involves an intricate interplay between three primary constructs – SDG awareness, subjective sentiments, and personal interests. In addition, the questionnaire included a fourth construct that identified the eight main pillars of the NKV2035 plan in sequential order or priority, and asked the general public to re-arrange these priorities according to their personal preferences. This basic practice aids in identifying potential gaps between the governmental plans and the general consensus. The questions mapped to their constructs, together with their validated alpha scores that are considered appropriate for the purpose of this research, are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2 Questionnaire Constructs

Constructs	Literature Adaptation	Questions
Awareness Alpha = 0.76	Edwards <i>et al.</i> (2000)	Did you know what the SDG's are before answering this survey?
		Are you aware of the importance of the SDGs in achieving sustainable development?
		Are you aware that the New Kuwait 2035 vision is primarily based upon the SDG's set by the United Nations?
		To what degree do you believe that, on a local level, SDG's can lead to a better future both economically & socially?
		Please rate the importance of the following SDG's according to your knowledge/opinion of your country's current situation.
Sentiments Alpha = 0.81	Yale Report (2022)	How important is it to you that action is taken towards reaching the local SDG goals in order to better our society, economy, and politics?
		Do you feel that your parliamentary representatives should take SDG's and sustainability into account when creating their agendas?
		Who do you expect to lead the implementation of SDGs in your country?
		Who, from the segments mentioned below, do you feel is currently supporting the SDG's?
		How confident are you that your parliament representatives, present or past, are working towards the SDG's or have it somewhere on their agenda?
Interest Alpha = 0.73	Edwards <i>et al.</i> (2000)	Did you vote in the last election? (2023)
		When considering voting for a candidate, do you consider the candidates' SDG's and sustainability goals into account?
		When considering voting for a candidate, which media source do you primarily rely on for information about their SDG agendas?

Source: Constructed by author

Choice of Methodology

The methodology employed in this study uses a combination of random and snowball sampling; the study ensures a broader reach and increased participation, contributing to statistically generalisable findings (Summers, 2001). The Likert-scale responses allow for a nuanced measurement of attitudes and perceptions that enhance the validity of the results and align with best practices in social science research (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, incorporating Arabic translations ensures accessibility, making the study

more inclusive and representative of Kuwait's demographic landscape. However, the methodology also presents limitations, particularly concerning potential biases introduced through snowball sampling; these may result in non-random patterns of response and limit the diversity of perspectives (Heckathorn, 2011). While quantitative methods provide decent statistical rigour that meets the research objectives, they may not necessarily capture the complete complexities of subjective experiences related to personal opinions and perceptions (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). Also, self-reported data can also cause respondents to provide answers they perceive as favourable rather than reflective of their true beliefs, which can further implicate the findings (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Overall, the quantitative questionnaire method used in this preliminary research and validated by adopting questions from previous research, proves to be sufficient in scoping the topic of sentiments vs reality as this is an untouched subject that has never been explored in Kuwait.

FINDINGS

Demographic Overview

The survey captures a diverse age group, with significant representation from individuals aged 26-55, showcasing a broad spectrum of perspectives across different life stages. The majority of respondents identify as female, indicating a strong representation of women in the survey sample; this can be explained as a natural phenomenon since both researchers conducting this research had a significant female network. A substantial proportion of respondents hold a university degree or higher, suggesting a well-educated and potentially informed participant base.

Awareness

The results from this part of the survey provide valuable insights into the respondents' awareness and perspectives on SDGs in general. Initially, it is noteworthy that 36.20% of participants were already acquainted with the SDGs before engaging in the survey, indicating a foundational understanding within the surveyed population; this was not surprising as most respondents held a higher degree of some sort. Regarding the understanding of the importance of SDGs in achieving sustainable development, 39.51% of respondents demonstrated a clear awareness of the pivotal role these goals play on a global scale. This finding underscores a substantial level of consciousness among participants regarding the significance of SDGs in steering the world towards a more sustainable future. The survey also explored awareness of Kuwait's national vision, revealing that 39.51% of respondents are aware that the NKV2035 vision is primarily based on the SDGs.

In assessing the local impact of SDGs, an overwhelming majority of 71.23% of respondents expressed the belief that SDGs can significantly contribute to a better future both economically and socially at the local level. This optimistic response reflects a prevailing sentiment among respondents that SDGs can be transformative, developing economic growth and social development within their community. Furthermore, when rating the importance of specific SDGs to the country's current situation, respondents offered nuanced perspectives. SDG 4 (Quality Education) received the highest rating at 37.82%, suggesting a perceived significance of educational advancements in the country. The varying ratings for other SDGs, such as SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), reveal a diversity of priorities within the surveyed population. This nuanced understanding emphasises the multifaceted nature of sustainable development, with respondents prioritising specific goals based on their perception of the country's current needs and challenges.

Sentiments

The survey results highlight a significant emphasis on the importance of taking action towards achieving local SDGs. The average rating, reaching 81.66%, reflects a strong consensus among respondents regarding the urgency of addressing SDGs to enhance society, economy, and politics. This suggests that the surveyed population recognises the interconnectedness of sustainable actions with broader societal well-being and political stability. Furthermore, a resounding 88.27% of respondents believe that parliamentary representatives should consider SDGs and sustainability when crafting their agendas. This overwhelming support underscores the expectation for political leaders to align their policies with global sustainability objectives. The findings indicate a desire for a more conscientious and sustainable approach in governance.

Regarding leadership in the implementation of SDGs, respondents expressed varied expectations. The government and state media emerged as the most anticipated leaders, with 46.53% of respondents placing confidence in this segment. The private sector and research institutions in higher education followed, underlining a multifaceted approach with shared expectations for both governmental and non-governmental entities to spearhead SDG implementation. When evaluating current support for SDGs, respondents identified government and state media as the leading force, garnering 36.36% support. The private sector closely followed, with 19.58% support. This suggests that respondents perceive both government-led initiatives and private sector involvement as crucial contributors to current SDG support. Finally, in terms of confidence in parliamentary representatives, the survey indicates an average rating of 37.73%. This implies a moderate level of confidence among respondents

regarding the commitment of their representatives, past or present, to working towards SDGs. The findings suggest that there is room for improvement in communicating and showcasing parliamentary efforts towards sustainable development to bolster public confidence in their commitment to SDGs.

Interest

The survey reveals a substantial level of civic engagement, with 65.84% of respondents indicating that they participated in the last election held in 2023. This high voter turnout suggests an active and involved electorate. Moreover, when it comes to considering candidates for their votes, nearly half of the respondents (49.07%) take into account the candidates' SDGs and sustainability goals. This reflects a growing awareness and importance placed on candidates' alignment with global sustainability objectives in the eyes of the surveyed population. In terms of information sources influencing voting decisions, the survey explores the role of media in shaping perceptions. Instagram emerged as a leading platform, with 37.18% of respondents relying on it for information about candidates' SDG agendas. Twitter also played a significant role, being a primary source for 26.92% of respondents. This underscores the impact of social media in disseminating information about candidates' sustainability goals, suggesting that these platforms are pivotal in shaping voter opinions regarding SDGs and sustainability initiatives. The findings emphasise the need for candidates to strategically communicate their SDG agendas through these influential channels to effectively reach and resonate with the electorate.

Priorities

The comparison between the priorities outlined in NKV2035 and the priorities identified by the general public sheds light on the alignment and disparities between governmental agendas and societal aspirations. Analysing the findings from Tables 1 and 2 reveals intriguing insights into the divergence and convergence of national priorities and public preferences. First, SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) emerges as a top priority in both NKV2035 and the general public's list of priorities. This alignment underscores the shared recognition of the importance of encouraging economic growth and creating employment opportunities. However, while the government emphasises economic diversification and infrastructure development under SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), the public prioritises quality education (SDG 4). This discrepancy suggests a potential gap between governmental initiatives aimed at long-term economic sustainability and societal expectations for immediate socio-economic improvements through education and skill development.

Similarly, SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) features prominently in both lists, reflecting a shared commitment to improving healthcare accessibility and promoting well-being. However, while the government prioritises sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) to ensure environmental sustainability and urban resilience, the public places greater emphasis on industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9). This disparity highlights differing perceptions regarding the most pressing socio-economic challenges and underscores the importance of reconciling governmental priorities with public preferences to ensure inclusive development.

Furthermore, gender equality (SDG 5) emerges as a key priority for both the government and the public, indicating a shared recognition of the importance of promoting gender equity and empowering women. However, while the government emphasises affordable and clean energy (SDG 7) to address environmental sustainability and mitigate climate change, the public prioritises climate action (SDG 13). This disparity suggests varying degrees of urgency regarding environmental issues and underscores the need for comprehensive strategies that address both energy sustainability and climate resilience. The summary of these comparisons can be found in Table 3.

Table 3 Priorities Gap

Pillar	General Public Priorities
SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth)	SDG 4 (Quality Education)
SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure)	SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth)
SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities)	SDG 3 (Good Health & Wellbeing)
SDG 4 (Quality Education)	SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure)
SDG 3 (Good Health & Wellbeing)	SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities)
SDG 5 (Gender Equality)	SDG 5 (Gender Equality)
SDG 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy)	SDG 13 (Climate Action)
SDG 13 (Climate Action)	SDG 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy)

Source: Constructed by author

IMPLICATIONS

This research holds significant implications for both academia and policy-making, shedding light on the awareness, perceptions, and priorities of the surveyed population regarding SDGs in Kuwait. The findings reveal a noteworthy baseline awareness within the surveyed community, indicating a certain level of global consciousness

regarding sustainable development initiatives. The understanding of the importance of SDGs in achieving sustainable development, as well as the awareness that Kuwait's national vision aligns with these global goals, highlights the strategic integration of international sustainability standards into the country's developmental agenda (Diab-Bahman, 2021a). Moreover, the optimism expressed by a majority of respondents about the local impact of SDGs in cultivating a better future, both economically and socially, underscores the perceived potential for transformative change within the community.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The survey indicates a high level of importance attached to taking action towards reaching local SDG goals, emphasising the recognised impact on society, economy, and politics. Furthermore, the findings reflect a community with varying levels of awareness, engagement, and expectations concerning SDGs and sustainability. As such, the four main research questions are answered accordingly:

1) Responsible Stakeholders

The survey underscores that respondents view both the government and state media as crucial stakeholders in driving SDG implementation; this indicates an expectation for strong leadership from governmental bodies in aligning policies with global sustainability objectives. The government's leading role suggests that respondents believe in the power of policy and governance to influence sustainable development.

2) Awareness of SDGs

The survey highlights a commendable level of awareness among respondents, and a substantial portion demonstrated an understanding of the global importance of SDGs in achieving sustainable development. The optimistic belief of the respondents in the local impact of SDGs reflects a prevailing sentiment that these goals can indeed contribute to a better future both economically and socially.

3) Interest in Sustainability Matters

The findings indicate a high level of interest and civic engagement in sustainability matters. A considerable number of respondents participated in the last election, signifying an active and involved electorate. The consideration of SDGs and sustainability goals by nearly half the respondents when voting demonstrates a growing awareness and importance placed on candidates' alignment with global sustainability objectives.

4) Priorities

In summary, the comparison between the priorities outlined in NKV2035 and the priorities identified by the general public reveals a nuanced picture of alignment and

divergence (Table 3). While there is overlap in certain areas, such as economic growth, healthcare, and gender equality, disparities exist in other areas, such as education, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES/ALIGNMENT

The survey findings align closely with the research objectives; these sought to understand public perceptions regarding responsible stakeholders in achieving SDGs, the level of awareness individuals have about SDGs and their own social responsibilities, the extent of their interest in sustainability matters, and whether government priorities under NKV2035 plan align with those of the people. The results indicate that respondents primarily view the government and state media as the main drivers of SDG implementation, highlighting the expectation for strong leadership in policy-making and governance. The findings also reveal a considerable level of awareness about SDGs, with many recognising their global significance and local implications, suggesting a belief in the transformative potential of sustainability policies. In addition, the survey underscores a high degree of interest in sustainability issues, with respondents demonstrating civic engagement through electoral participation and considering sustainability agendas when voting. Finally, the findings reveal that there are indeed gaps in expectation and implementation of the SDGs from the point of view of society, and supports the notion that sustainability requires active and citizen-driven policy formulation to ensure inclusive development that reflects societal aspirations.

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BIOGRAPHY



Dr Diab-Bahman is a Senior Lecturer & Sustainability Specialist from Kuwait, with a research focus on SDG attainment and social policy. She has authored four books that explore differences amongst cultures and their impact on sustainability in various fields. She is also a newspaper columnist, with a dedicated column specialising in addressing the need for change towards sustainable development. She has recently received the prestigious ‘Sustainability Pioneer’ award from the WASD, has been recognised as a Forbes Middle East ‘Top Mentor’, and received the ‘Pandemic Hero’ award for her academic and social efforts in Kuwait. She is also a top female researcher in the realm of social sciences in Kuwait, leading with one of the country’s highest indexed scores. Dr Diab-Bahman has a proven track record as a proactive member of society, partaking in many volunteer projects and NGOs that aim at empowering women and youth.



Dalal Marafie has worked in the World Bank Group for seven years as a project analyst (private sector development consultant). She has developed an extensive network of professional contacts within the business and government circles. Her dedication to these venues has resulted in the state of Kuwait becoming one of the top 10 countries in reforms measured by the Doing Business Report 2020. Currently, Dalal is working in the World Bank as a consultant for enhancing the business environment in Kuwait and the GCC countries. Her work has had a great impact on Kuwait and supported the Ministry of Commerce and Kuwait Direct investment promotion authority.