

The Practice of "SDG Washing" In Developing Countries

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Abstract

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which serve as guiding principles for businesses globally, strive to address global challenges such as ending poverty, protecting the environment, and increasing prosperity. Particularly, Sustainable Development Goals seek to achieve sustainable development in three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental. The Ethical Corporation Responsible Business Trend (2018) report reflects that 69 percent of global companies are integrating Sustainable Development Goals into their business strategies. However, Europe and North America have the highest participation rates, demonstrating a need for more participation among companies in developing countries. Furthermore, the study shows discrepancies in the SDG policies in developing nations. This circumstance, coupled with geopolitical instability, persistent inflation, the impending recession, and the worsening climate change, pose new challenges in achieving long-term sustainability and highlight the importance of uniform SDGs adoption on a global scale. Through in-depth interviews with key strategic personnel at multinationals operating in Turkey, we observed the varying degree of multinationals' SDGs adoption in this paper. Participants expressed that companies use SDGs as reporting metrics but lack adequate tools to assess the development towards transforming the company locally. This result corroborates with previous studies indicating uneven progress towards SDGs adoption. The varying global adoption of the SDGs is also a cause for concern since it may undermine positive progress toward sustainable transformation. In particular, following the global pandemic, the gaps in sustainability efforts should be carefully examined in order to create long-term value.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, SDG-washing, sustainable development, developing nation, global companies