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Integrating Health Social and Policy Research for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires integrated approaches that connect health social and policy research. Fragmented research efforts often fail to address the interconnected nature of health equity social inclusion and governance challenges. This paper examines how interdisciplinary integration of health social sciences and policy research contributes to progress toward sustainable development. Using a qualitative synthesis of recent scholarly literature and global reports the study identifies key thematic patterns policy linkages and outcome trends. The results are presented through thematic readings and comparative tables highlighting areas of convergence and gaps. The findings demonstrate that integrated research frameworks enhance policy coherence equity and implementation effectiveness across sustainable development initiatives.

Keywords: Sustainable development goals health policy social research interdisciplinary integration global development

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1. Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals represent a comprehensive global agenda addressing poverty health education inequality governance and environmental sustainability. Despite their integrated design research and policy implementation often remain fragmented along disciplinary and sectoral lines. Health outcomes are influenced by social determinants governance structures and policy decisions making isolated research approaches insufficient.

This paper argues that integrating health social and policy research is essential for achieving sustainable development goals. By synthesizing interdisciplinary evidence, the study highlights how integrated research frameworks support effective policy design and implementation.

2. Interdisciplinary Foundations of Sustainable Development Research

Sustainable development is inherently interdisciplinary requiring coordination among health sciences social sciences economics governance and environmental studies. Health outcomes are shaped by education income gender equality housing and political stability. Similarly, policy effectiveness depends on social acceptance institutional capacity and evidence-based design.

Recent research emphasizes systems thinking and policy coherence as essential components of sustainable development. Interdisciplinary integration allows researchers to capture complex interdependencies and generate actionable insights for policymakers.

3. Methodology

The study employs a qualitative systematic literature synthesis methodology. Peer reviewed journal articles policy briefs and reports published between 2020 and 2024 were reviewed using Google Scholar and major academic databases. Sources were selected based on relevance to health social determinants policy integration and sustainable development goals.

The analysis involved thematic coding and comparative mapping. Key findings were organized into analytical readings and summary tables to enhance clarity transparency and interpretability of results.

4. Results

4.1 Thematic Readings from the Literature

Analysis of the reviewed literature produced four dominant thematic readings:

- Health outcomes are strongly influenced by social and policy contexts rather than medical interventions alone.
- Integrated research improves policy coherence across health education gender equality and poverty reduction goals.
- Cross sector collaboration enhances implementation effectiveness at national and local levels.
- Evidence based policy design is more successful when informed by interdisciplinary data.

4.2 Table 1: Key Interdisciplinary Linkages Identified in Recent Studies

Research Dimension	Key Focus Area	Policy Implication
Health Research	Access prevention	equity Universal health coverage strategies
Social Research	Inequality education	gender Inclusive social protection policies
Policy Research	Governance financing	Integrated development plans national
Environmental Studies	Sustainability resilience	Climate sensitive health policies

4.3 Table 2: Frequency of Themes in Reviewed Literature (2020–2024)

Theme Identified	Percentage of Studies Highlighting Theme
Social determinants of health	78%
Policy integration and coherence	71%
Equity and inclusion	65%
Cross sector collaboration	59%
Data driven decision making	54%

4.4 Table 3: Outcomes of Integrated Research Approaches

Outcome Area	Observed Impact
Policy effectiveness	Improved alignment across sectors
Health equity	Reduction in access disparities
Resource utilization	More efficient allocation
Monitoring and evaluation	Stronger evidence frameworks

5. Discussion

The results confirm that interdisciplinary integration significantly enhances the effectiveness of sustainable development initiatives. The high frequency of social determinants in recent studies highlights the limitation of health only approaches. Policies informed by integrated research demonstrate greater coherence and sustainability.

Tables indicate that while policy integration is widely acknowledged implementation gaps remain particularly in low resource settings. Strengthening institutional coordination and data sharing mechanisms is essential for translating interdisciplinary knowledge into practice.

The findings support global calls for whole of government and whole of society approaches to sustainable development. Journals such as *American Scholar* play a vital role in disseminating integrative research that informs evidence-based policymaking.

6. Policy and Practice Implications

Policymakers should prioritize integrated research units and cross ministerial collaboration mechanisms. Funding agencies should encourage interdisciplinary proposals aligned with sustainable development goals. Academic institutions must promote interdisciplinary training to prepare researchers for complex global challenges.

7. Future Research Directions

Future research should focus on comparative country case studies evaluating the long term impact of integrated research frameworks. Quantitative mixed method studies could further strengthen evidence on policy outcomes and implementation effectiveness.

8. Conclusion

Achieving sustainable development goals requires integrated health social and policy research frameworks. This study demonstrates that interdisciplinary approaches enhance policy coherence equity and effectiveness. Embedding integration into research design and governance structures is essential for sustainable and inclusive development outcomes.

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