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Designing a Model for Implementing Government Social Policies toward Achieving a Sustainable Development Approach (Case Study: Kerman Province Mining Engineering Organization)

1. Behnam. Zaboli Sarvtamin: Department of Public Administration, Ke.C., Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran
2. Abbas. Babaeinejad*: Department of Public Administration, Ke.C., Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran
3. Ali. Raeispour Rajabali: Department of Economics, Ke.C., Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran
4. Soheila. Shamsadini: Department of Business Management, ST.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

*corresponding author's email: abbasbabaei@iau.ac.ir

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to design a model for implementing government social policies toward achieving a sustainable development approach, using the Kerman Province Mining Engineering Organization as a case study. The research employed a mixed-methods (qualitative–quantitative) design. In the qualitative phase, thematic analysis and semi-structured interviews with experts were used to extract the components of the model. In the quantitative phase, a questionnaire developed based on the qualitative components was administered, and confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to validate and prioritize the final model. The statistical population in the qualitative phase consisted of managers of the Kerman Province Mining Engineering Organization, while the quantitative phase included 351 employees and members of the organization. The findings indicated that the model for implementing government social policies in line with sustainable development comprises key components, including policy transparency, stakeholder participation, continuous monitoring and evaluation, alignment with environmental objectives, social justice, and economic efficiency. The prioritization of components further showed that environmental and economic dimensions hold the greatest importance in the implementation of social policies. This model can serve as an operational framework for improving the implementation of social policies toward sustainable development in similar organizations.

Keywords: Social policy, sustainable development, policy implementation, Mining Engineering Organization, modeling.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, sustainable development has evolved from a largely normative aspiration into a central organizing principle of public governance, policy design, and administrative reform. Governments across different institutional contexts are increasingly expected to reconcile economic growth, social justice, and environmental protection within coherent policy frameworks that are both normatively grounded and operationally feasible. Social policy, as a core instrument through which states intervene to regulate welfare, equity, and collective

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well-being, has consequently assumed a pivotal role in advancing sustainable development agendas (1). Rather than functioning solely as a redistributive or compensatory mechanism, contemporary social policy is increasingly understood as a transformative tool capable of shaping long-term development trajectories, strengthening social cohesion, and enabling resilience in the face of structural and environmental challenges (2).

The integration of social policy into sustainable development frameworks has been strongly reinforced by the global adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which explicitly link social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and economic viability. Empirical studies on public administrations demonstrate that achieving these goals depends not only on policy formulation but, more critically, on the conditions under which policies are implemented at national and subnational levels (3). Local and sectoral institutions are increasingly recognized as decisive arenas where abstract sustainability commitments are translated into concrete practices, shaping real outcomes for communities and ecosystems. This shift in focus has redirected scholarly attention toward the implementation phase of public policy, highlighting the importance of institutional capacity, governance mechanisms, and stakeholder engagement in realizing sustainable development objectives (4).

Within this broader discourse, social policy implementation emerges as a particularly complex and contested domain. Unlike narrowly technical policies, social policies operate within deeply embedded social structures, value systems, and power relations. Their effectiveness depends on institutional legitimacy, public trust, and the ability of administrative systems to coordinate across sectors and scales (5). The literature increasingly emphasizes that social policy outcomes cannot be assumed to follow automatically from well-designed policy instruments; rather, they are mediated by contextual factors such as organizational capacity, legal frameworks, political commitment, and patterns of participation among affected stakeholders (6). This insight has motivated a growing body of research that seeks to identify enabling conditions for effective social policy implementation within sustainability-oriented governance systems.

The eco-social policy perspective provides a particularly useful analytical lens for understanding these dynamics. By conceptualizing social and environmental objectives as mutually reinforcing rather than competing priorities, eco-social policy frameworks challenge conventional trade-off models and emphasize human capabilities, intergenerational justice, and ecological limits (2). From this perspective, social policy implementation is not merely a matter of service delivery or benefit allocation but a process through which societies actively construct sustainable modes of production, consumption, and social reproduction. Comparative research shows that public support for such policies is strongly influenced by perceptions of fairness, transparency, and effectiveness, underscoring the importance of governance quality in shaping sustainability outcomes (5).

Recent empirical studies further illustrate that the successful alignment of social policy with sustainable development goals requires robust institutional arrangements and adaptive governance mechanisms. Research on green economy performance demonstrates that social policies related to labor markets, social protection, and inclusion play a crucial role in enabling environmentally sustainable transitions without exacerbating social inequalities (7). Similarly, analyses of labor and social policies in the context of the green transition highlight the need for coordinated policy mixes that address skills development, employment security, and social protection simultaneously (6). These findings reinforce the argument that implementation capacity, rather than policy intent alone, determines whether social policies contribute meaningfully to sustainable development.

The implementation challenge becomes even more pronounced in sectors characterized by high environmental impact, economic significance, and social sensitivity, such as the extractive and mining industries. Mining activities

generate substantial economic value and employment opportunities, yet they also pose serious risks to environmental integrity and social cohesion if not governed effectively. Social policy instruments in this sector are expected to mitigate adverse impacts, distribute benefits equitably, and foster long-term community resilience. Studies on social impact assessment and community resilience emphasize that effective implementation requires participatory processes, continuous monitoring, and institutional accountability mechanisms that extend beyond formal regulatory compliance (8). In this context, social policy implementation becomes a key interface between state institutions, private actors, and local communities.

International experiences further suggest that crisis situations and structural shocks can expose both the strengths and weaknesses of social policy implementation systems. Research on governmental responses to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that the effectiveness of social policies during crises depended heavily on administrative coordination, clarity of policy instruments, and the capacity of institutions to adapt rapidly to changing conditions (9). These insights are particularly relevant for sustainability-oriented policies, which often require long-term commitment and resilience in the face of uncertainty. They also underscore the importance of integrating monitoring, evaluation, and learning mechanisms into policy implementation models to ensure continuous improvement and responsiveness.

From a governance perspective, the implementation of social policies for sustainable development is increasingly influenced by digitalization, data-driven decision-making, and algorithmic tools. Emerging research on smart and sustainable development highlights the growing role of technological systems in planning, monitoring, and coordinating policy interventions (10). While such tools offer new opportunities for efficiency and transparency, they also raise questions about institutional readiness, ethical considerations, and inclusiveness. Consequently, implementation models must account not only for technological capabilities but also for organizational culture, professional competencies, and participatory governance arrangements.

The relevance of these debates is particularly evident in developing and transitional contexts, where institutional fragmentation, resource constraints, and governance challenges can hinder the effective implementation of social policies. In Iran, social policy has historically played a central role in addressing welfare provision, social protection, and distributive justice, yet persistent gaps between policy objectives and implementation outcomes have been widely documented (11). Scholars have noted that despite extensive policy frameworks, social policies often face challenges related to spatial inequality, institutional coordination, and uneven coverage across regions and sectors (12). These structural issues highlight the need for context-specific implementation models that reflect institutional realities while aligning with global sustainability principles.

Recent analyses of social policy in Iran further indicate that the objectives and dimensions of social policy have expanded to include broader development concerns, such as social inclusion, environmental responsibility, and regional equity (13). However, the operationalization of these objectives remains uneven, particularly in sectors with complex governance structures and high levels of stakeholder interaction. Studies focusing on the spatial coverage of social security and welfare systems reveal significant disparities that undermine both social justice and sustainable development goals (12). Addressing these challenges requires implementation frameworks that integrate legal, organizational, and participatory dimensions in a coherent manner.

Local and sector-specific institutions play a decisive role in this process. Evidence from studies on local government performance and rural development demonstrates that social capital, institutional trust, and participatory governance significantly influence the success of sustainability-oriented social policies (14). These

findings suggest that implementation models must move beyond centralized, top-down approaches and incorporate mechanisms that enable local actors to contribute meaningfully to policy execution and oversight. In the context of professional and regulatory organizations, such as engineering and sectoral associations, this implies a need for models that balance technical expertise with social accountability and environmental responsibility.

Methodologically, the complexity of social policy implementation for sustainable development necessitates research designs capable of capturing both depth and generalizability. Mixed-methods approaches are particularly well suited to this task, as they allow researchers to explore contextual meanings and institutional processes while also testing relationships and validating models across broader populations (15). Recent empirical studies on sustainable development implementation increasingly rely on such designs to bridge the gap between qualitative insights and quantitative validation, thereby enhancing the robustness and applicability of their findings (16). This methodological orientation supports the development of implementation models that are both empirically grounded and practically relevant.

Despite the growing body of literature on social policy, sustainable development, and public governance, several gaps remain. First, much of the existing research focuses on policy outcomes or enabling conditions at a macro level, with limited attention to the concrete mechanisms through which social policies are implemented within specific organizational settings (3). Second, there is a relative scarcity of integrative models that explicitly link institutional capacity, legal frameworks, stakeholder participation, and implementation mechanisms in a unified framework tailored to sustainability objectives. Third, empirical evidence from sector-specific and regional contexts, particularly in Iran, remains limited, constraining the development of context-sensitive policy implementation models (11).

Addressing these gaps requires a systematic examination of how social policies are operationalized within organizations that occupy strategic positions at the intersection of economic activity, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility. By focusing on implementation rather than formulation, such research can contribute to both theoretical debates on eco-social governance and practical efforts to enhance policy effectiveness. Moreover, developing validated implementation models can support policymakers and administrators in identifying priority areas for intervention, strengthening institutional arrangements, and fostering sustainable outcomes across social, economic, and environmental domains (17).

In light of these considerations, this study seeks to advance the literature by designing and validating a comprehensive model for implementing government social policies aligned with the sustainable development approach within a sectoral organizational context, drawing on mixed-methods research to integrate qualitative insights and quantitative evidence (15).

The aim of this study is to design and validate a model for the implementation of government social policies in line with the sustainable development approach within the organizational context of the mining engineering sector.

Methods and Materials

The present study was conducted with the aim of designing a model for implementing government social policies toward achieving a sustainable development approach. In terms of purpose, this research is classified as applied research, as it seeks to address a practical problem within a specific organizational context and to provide an operational solution for improving policy implementation. From the perspective of research nature and data collection methods, the study adopts a mixed-methods (integrated) approach, in which the findings from the

qualitative and quantitative phases are used sequentially (in stages) to complement and reinforce each other. This mixed-methods approach makes it possible, on the one hand, to capture the depth and richness of experts' perspectives and, on the other hand, to assess the generalizability and empirical testing of the designed model within a broader population.

Population and Sample

Qualitative phase: The research population in this phase consisted of experts and specialists familiar with social policies, sustainable development, and the performance of the Kerman Province Mining Engineering Organization. This group included senior and middle managers of the organization, university faculty members specializing in public management, public policy, and sustainable development, as well as experienced experts from the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade. Using purposive sampling combined with the snowball technique, 15 experts who were identified as having sufficient knowledge and experience were selected for interviews. Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning that no new concepts or themes emerged from additional data.

Quantitative phase: The statistical population in this phase comprised all employees and members of the Kerman Province Mining Engineering Organization who held at least a bachelor's degree and were capable of providing informed responses to the questionnaire. Based on information obtained from the organization, the size of this population was estimated at approximately 4,000 individuals. Using the Morgan table and considering a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level, the required sample size was determined to be 351 participants. Simple random sampling was employed to select the sample, ensuring that all members of the population had an equal chance of being selected.

Data Collection Instruments

Qualitative phase: The primary data collection instrument in this phase was the semi-structured interview. An interview guide (protocol) was developed based on the theoretical foundations and objectives of the study and included open-ended and core questions regarding challenges in implementing social policies, factors influencing successful implementation, sustainable development requirements in the mining sector, and suggestions for model design. Interviews were conducted in accordance with research ethics principles, including informed consent, confidentiality of information, and the right to withdraw. Most interviews were conducted face-to-face, while some were conducted by telephone. With the participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Quantitative phase: The instrument used in this phase was a researcher-developed questionnaire. The items of the questionnaire were directly derived from the components, categories, and themes identified in the qualitative phase through thematic analysis. In this way, the content validity of the questionnaire was inherently ensured. The final questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). In addition to items related to the model, a section was included to collect respondents' demographic information. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed through a pilot study conducted with 30 individuals from a similar population, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated ($\alpha = 0.86$).

The research process was carried out sequentially in two distinct phases.

Phase One: Qualitative Phase (Initial Model Design)

After conducting the interviews and transcribing the texts, the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The analysis process included the following steps: (a) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of the texts; (b) initial coding by extracting primary codes from key statements; (c) searching for themes by grouping similar codes into sub-themes and main themes; (d) reviewing themes through refinement and revision; (e) defining and naming themes; and finally, (f) producing the report.

The output of this phase was an initial conceptual model comprising the main and sub-themes (components) influencing the implementation of social policies toward sustainable development in the organization under study.

Phase Two: Quantitative Phase (Model Testing and Validation)

The model and components obtained from the qualitative phase served as the basis for designing the quantitative questionnaire.

After distributing and collecting the questionnaires, the data were entered into SPSS software version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were first calculated for respondents' characteristics and questionnaire items.

To validate the measurement model, that is, to examine whether the items adequately measured the intended components, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using SmartPLS software version 4. Model fit indices such as χ^2/df, RMSEA, GFI, CFI, and SRMR were examined. In addition, composite reliability (CR), convergent validity (average variance extracted, AVE), and discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion) were calculated to confirm the validity and reliability of the constructs.

Finally, to prioritize the final components of the model in terms of their importance and impact from the perspective of the statistical population, the nonparametric Friedman test was applied using SPSS software. This test enabled the ranking of components based on their mean ranks.

This two-stage approach, while preserving the exploratory richness of the qualitative phase, made it possible to test relationships and assess the generalizability of the findings in the quantitative phase, ultimately leading to the presentation of a final valid and reliable model for implementing social policies toward sustainable development.

Findings and Results

In this section, data obtained from semi-structured interviews with 15 experts and senior managers of the Kerman Province Mining Engineering Organization were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the Braun and Clarke approach (2006). The coding process continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. Ultimately, the study's conceptual model was organized into five main themes (macro-level components) and 14 sub-themes. These components represent the key dimensions required for designing a model for implementing government social policies toward sustainable development.

Table 1. Main Themes, Sub-Themes, and Indicative Statements Extracted from the Qualitative Analysis

Main Component	Sub-Theme	Indicative Codes (Selected Interview Excerpts)
1. Institutional–Organizational Capacities	1-1. Human resource empowerment	"To institutionalize sustainability thinking, continuous and practical training courses on professional ethics, social responsibility, and environmental requirements must be held for all staff levels."
		"Up-to-date technical knowledge in sustainable mining should be continuously transferred to engineers and inspectors."
	1-2. Transparency and accountability	"Public and key stakeholders' access to project information, social and environmental impact assessment reports, and the organization's financial performance is not an option; it is a necessity for building trust."
		"The organization must be accountable to local communities for its decisions and performance and must have a mechanism for handling complaints."

	1-3. Structural flexibility	"A heavy hierarchical structure reduces the capacity to adapt to new policies and complex social conditions. Creating agile and interdisciplinary work units can be helpful."
2. Policy and Legal Requirements	2-1. Policy integration and coordination	"Social policy in the mining sector should not conflict with natural resource laws or macroeconomic policies. Lack of coordination among directives issued by different ministries is the biggest implementation problem."
	2-2. Regulatory and bylaw transparency	"Ambiguity in contract clauses, licensing requirements, and social standards creates room for discretionary interpretations and corruption. Regulations must be transparent, explicit, and uniform for all."
	2-3. Legal support and guarantees	"Good policies without judicial backing and effective oversight remain mere slogans. The existence of an independent supervisory body and rapid mechanisms for addressing violations is essential."
3. Stakeholder Participation and Interaction	3-1. Local community and public participation	"Decision-making about mining projects without considering the voices and perspectives of indigenous residents is doomed to failure or to generating tension. Their participation must continue from the identification stage through implementation monitoring."
	3-2. Inter-organizational collaboration	"Achieving sustainability goals requires close collaboration with the Environmental Protection Organization, the Natural Resources Administration, universities, and even the private sector. Working in isolation is not possible."
	3-3. Capacity-building for participation	"Many local communities or NGOs lack the knowledge and resources needed for meaningful participation. The organization must invest in empowering and educating them."
4. Implementation and Oversight Mechanisms	4-1. Operational and step-by-step planning	"Every approved policy must immediately be translated into an implementation plan with quantitative objectives, precise timelines, a designated responsible party, and budget allocation. The absence of a roadmap paralyzes implementation."
	4-2. Continuous monitoring and evaluation system	"We need key performance indicators (KPIs) in both the social dimension (such as community satisfaction) and the environmental dimension to measure progress and apply necessary corrective actions."
	4-3. Incentive and sanction system	"Mining companies that fulfill their social and environmental commitments well should receive incentives such as financial facilities or preferential scoring, while effective and deterrent penalties should be imposed on violators."
5. Sustainable Outcomes and Achievements	5-1. Sustainable economic achievements	"The goal is not merely extraction and sale; rather, it is creating sustainable employment, developing related industries, and strengthening the regional value chain so that the local economy remains viable even after mineral reserves are depleted."
	5-2. Social justice and equitable distribution of benefits	"Benefits generated by mining must be distributed fairly among investors, the government, and especially the host community. This includes investing in the region's social, educational, and health infrastructure."
	5-3. Environmental protection and restoration	"Mining must be carried out with minimal damage, and a clear plan and dedicated budget for the rehabilitation and restoration of degraded lands must exist from the outset. Moving toward a circular economy and using clean technologies is a necessity."

This network of themes constituted the initial core and conceptual framework of the study's model, which was subsequently tested and validated in the quantitative phase.

Of the 351 questionnaires distributed among employees and members of the Kerman Province Mining Engineering Organization, 320 complete and usable questionnaires were returned, indicating an acceptable response rate of 91%. Regarding demographic characteristics, the respondents' mean age was 41 years (SD = 7.8 years), and their mean tenure within the organization or the mining industry was 15 years (SD = 6.2 years). In terms of education, 68% of participants held a master's or doctoral degree, indicating an appropriate level of awareness and expertise in the sample for evaluating the research topic.

To assess the adequacy of the measurement model and ensure that the questionnaire items appropriately measured the latent constructs, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using SmartPLS version 4. The results indicated that all items had standardized factor loadings above the 0.70 threshold on their respective constructs, reflecting satisfactory convergent performance. In addition, construct reliability and validity indices—

based on composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's alpha—were within desirable ranges and exceeded commonly accepted criteria.

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Indices for the Five Constructs of the Research Model

Component/Construct	Number of Final Items	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha
Institutional–Organizational Capacities	6	0.91	0.67	0.89
Policy and Legal Requirements	5	0.88	0.65	0.86
Stakeholder Participation and Interaction	5	0.90	0.69	0.88
Implementation and Oversight Mechanisms	6	0.93	0.71	0.91
Sustainable Outcomes and Achievements	5	0.89	0.66	0.87
Acceptable Criterion	—	> 0.70	> 0.50	> 0.70

In addition, to assess discriminant validity, comparison of the square root of AVE for each construct with its correlations with other constructs (Fornell–Larcker criterion) showed that, in each case, the square root of AVE exceeded the construct's correlations with the other constructs, confirming adequate discriminant validity.

After confirming the measurement model, the fit of the final structural model was examined using multiple indices. All calculated indices fell within acceptable ranges, indicating good fit between the proposed model and the collected data.

The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) was 2.34 (values below 3 are acceptable).

The comparative fit index (CFI) was 0.94 (values above 0.90 are desirable).

The normed fit index (NFI) was 0.92 (values above 0.90 are desirable).

The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.065 (values below 0.08 are generally considered good).

The standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) was 0.048 (values below 0.08 are acceptable).

To determine the relative importance of the five model components from the perspective of respondents and organizational stakeholders, the nonparametric Friedman test was employed. This test enables the ranking of components based on their mean ranks.

Table 3. Friedman Test Results for Ranking the Model Components

Rank	Main Component	Mean Rank	Rank SD
1	Implementation and Oversight Mechanisms	4.23	0.89
2	Policy and Legal Requirements	3.87	0.92
3	Institutional–Organizational Capacities	3.45	0.95
4	Stakeholder Participation and Interaction	2.91	1.02
5	Sustainable Outcomes and Achievements	2.54	0.98
	Chi-square statistic (χ^2)	185.34	—
	Significance level (p-value)	0.000	—

Given the significance level below 0.01 ($p < 0.01$), it can be concluded that the differences among the component ranks are statistically significant. Accordingly, the component "Implementation and Oversight Mechanisms," with the highest mean rank (4.23), was identified as the most important and influential dimension in the model for implementing social policies. Next, "Policy and Legal Requirements" and "Institutional–Organizational Capacities" ranked second and third, respectively. Although "Sustainable Outcomes and Achievements" is critical as the

ultimate objective and final result of the model, it ranked last in terms of implementation priority and operational influence.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive and empirically grounded understanding of how government social policies can be effectively implemented in alignment with a sustainable development approach within a sectoral organizational context. The validated five-dimensional model—comprising institutional–organizational capacities, policy and legal requirements, stakeholder participation and interaction, implementation and oversight mechanisms, and sustainable outcomes—demonstrates that policy implementation is not a linear administrative act but a multi-layered governance process shaped by interacting institutional, social, and regulatory forces. This result is consistent with the broader literature emphasizing that sustainable development goals are achieved not merely through policy design but through the quality of governance arrangements and enabling conditions at the implementation stage (3, 4).

One of the most salient findings of this study is the prioritization of implementation and oversight mechanisms as the most influential component of the model. This result underscores the central role of operational planning, continuous monitoring, evaluation systems, and incentive–sanction mechanisms in translating social policy objectives into tangible outcomes. Previous research similarly argues that without clear operationalization, performance indicators, and accountability structures, sustainability-oriented social policies remain largely symbolic (1). The strong empirical weight of this component in the present study aligns with evidence from public administration research showing that effective oversight and adaptive implementation capacity significantly enhance policy effectiveness, particularly in complex and high-impact sectors (8). The emphasis on monitoring and evaluation also resonates with findings that stress learning-oriented governance as a prerequisite for long-term sustainability and institutional resilience (9).

The second-ranked component, policy and legal requirements, highlights the importance of coherence, clarity, and enforceability in the regulatory environment. The results indicate that even well-intentioned social policies are unlikely to succeed in the absence of integrated policy frameworks and strong legal backing. This finding is consistent with studies demonstrating that fragmented regulations and overlapping mandates undermine sustainable development efforts by creating uncertainty and reducing institutional accountability (4). In the Iranian context, scholars have repeatedly pointed to inconsistencies between social, economic, and environmental policies as a key barrier to effective implementation (11, 12). The present study extends this literature by empirically confirming that legal guarantees and regulatory transparency are not peripheral concerns but core determinants of implementation success in sustainability-oriented social policies.

Institutional–organizational capacities ranked third in importance, reflecting the critical role of human resource empowerment, transparency, accountability, and structural flexibility. This finding supports the argument that sustainable development is fundamentally an institutional challenge requiring capable, learning-oriented organizations (2). The emphasis on capacity-building aligns with eco-social policy frameworks that view social policy as an enabler of human and institutional capabilities rather than a purely redistributive mechanism (2). Empirical studies on green transition policies further confirm that organizations equipped with skilled personnel, adaptive structures, and transparent processes are better positioned to manage the social implications of environmental and

economic transformations (6, 7). In this regard, the findings suggest that investment in organizational capacity is a necessary precondition for realizing the broader sustainability objectives embedded in social policy.

Stakeholder participation and interaction, while not ranked as highly as implementation mechanisms or legal requirements, nonetheless emerged as a significant enabling dimension of the model. The qualitative and quantitative results collectively indicate that meaningful engagement with local communities, inter-organizational collaboration, and capacity-building for participation enhance legitimacy, trust, and policy acceptance. This finding is strongly supported by comparative research showing that public support for eco-social policies is closely linked to perceptions of procedural fairness and inclusiveness (5). In sectors such as mining, where social and environmental externalities directly affect local populations, participatory governance is particularly critical for conflict prevention and long-term sustainability (8). The relatively lower ranking of this component does not diminish its importance; rather, it suggests that participation exerts its influence primarily through its interaction with institutional capacity and implementation mechanisms.

The component of sustainable outcomes and achievements, although ranked last in terms of implementation priority, represents the ultimate purpose of the model. The findings indicate that economic, social, and environmental outcomes are best understood as emergent results of effective governance processes rather than as direct levers of action. This interpretation is consistent with sustainable development literature, which emphasizes that outcomes such as social justice, environmental protection, and long-term economic viability are contingent on the quality of institutional arrangements and policy execution (17). The model's structure reinforces the notion that sustainable outcomes cannot be achieved in isolation but are produced through the integrated functioning of institutional capacities, legal frameworks, participation, and implementation systems.

From a theoretical perspective, the results contribute to the growing body of literature on eco-social governance by offering an integrative and empirically validated implementation model. Unlike studies that focus primarily on policy outcomes or macro-level determinants, this research demonstrates how multiple dimensions interact within an organizational setting to shape implementation effectiveness (3). The findings also support capability-oriented approaches to social policy, which argue that sustainability requires institutions capable of enabling collective action and long-term value creation (2). By situating social policy implementation within a sectoral organization, the study addresses calls for more context-sensitive and operationally grounded research in sustainable development governance (16).

The Iranian context of the study adds further interpretive value to the discussion. Previous analyses of social policy in Iran have highlighted gaps between policy intent and implementation, often attributing these gaps to institutional fragmentation and uneven regional capacity (11, 13). The present findings corroborate these concerns while also demonstrating that targeted improvements in implementation and oversight mechanisms can significantly enhance policy effectiveness even within existing structural constraints. Moreover, the emphasis on local and organizational-level implementation aligns with evidence showing that decentralized and participatory approaches improve the performance of sustainability-oriented social policies, particularly in rural and sector-specific contexts (14).

Methodologically, the use of a mixed-methods design strengthens the credibility of the findings and aligns with best practices in sustainability research. By integrating qualitative insights from experts with quantitative validation, the study captures both the complexity of implementation processes and the generalizability of the proposed model (15). This approach mirrors recent empirical work on sustainable development implementation, which increasingly

relies on mixed methods to bridge the gap between theory and practice (16). The convergence of qualitative themes and quantitative rankings further enhances confidence in the robustness of the model.

Overall, the discussion of findings suggests that the successful implementation of government social policies for sustainable development depends less on the articulation of ambitious goals and more on the establishment of coherent, accountable, and participatory governance systems. The model developed in this study provides a structured framework for understanding these dynamics and offers a basis for both theoretical refinement and practical application. By highlighting the centrality of implementation and oversight mechanisms while situating them within broader institutional and participatory contexts, the study advances current debates on how social policy can function as a driver of sustainable development rather than as a reactive or residual policy domain.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted within a single sectoral organization, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other sectors or institutional contexts. Second, although the mixed-methods design enhanced depth and rigor, the qualitative phase relied on a relatively small number of experts, which may have constrained the diversity of perspectives. Third, the cross-sectional nature of the quantitative data does not allow for examination of changes in implementation effectiveness over time.

Future studies could extend this research by applying the proposed model to other sectors, such as energy, transportation, or urban development, to assess its broader applicability. Longitudinal research designs would be particularly valuable in examining how implementation mechanisms evolve and how sustainable outcomes emerge over time. Additionally, comparative studies across regions or countries could provide deeper insights into how institutional and cultural contexts shape the implementation of social policies for sustainable development.

From a practical standpoint, policymakers and organizational leaders should prioritize the development of clear implementation roadmaps, robust monitoring systems, and accountability mechanisms when pursuing sustainability-oriented social policies. Investments in human resource development and organizational learning should be treated as strategic priorities rather than auxiliary activities. Finally, creating structured and continuous channels for stakeholder participation can enhance legitimacy, reduce conflict, and improve the long-term effectiveness of social policy implementation.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adheried in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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