

UNDERSTANDING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS CONCEPT: MALAYSIA REPORT AND TREND

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ABSTRACT – The desire to go even further in eradicating poverty in all aspects, dealing with climate change and eliminating inequalities has established the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015. The world leader adopted it at the historic UN summit. Malaysia has long sought to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The satisfaction degree of accomplishment of sustainable development the still low. Thus, this paper aims to shed light on the trend of sustainable development goals in Malaysia, which provides the community with information on a council's sustainable development goals. This has concluded Malaysia's three main SDG patterns, including reducing inequalities, climate action, and zero hunger. This study has concluded that the SDGs are crucial for achieving a better quality of life and sustainability. The SDGs' achievement does not solely depend on the government and its responsibility to all stakeholders. It is suggested that the better improvement of SDGs and better achievement, this study argue that government, industry, community and civil society organisations to work together to achieve shared and sustainable prosperity.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, climate change has become a severe issue that can threaten the planet, people, prosperity, peace, and partnership. Frequent severe droughts, storms, heat waves, melting glaciers, escalating sea levels, and warmer seas directly harm the animals, destroy their territories, and disrupt the well-being and societies of people. According to The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), 2021 was ranked sixth as the warmest year on record compared to the year 1880 until now. As a result, researchers, academic experts, climate activists, and government officials have paid close attention to this issue (Yang et al., 2022). The desire to go even further in eradicating poverty in all aspects, dealing with climate change, and fighting for inequalities has resulted in establishing the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015. Before the establishment of the new global agenda (SDGs), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) strategy is considered the global agenda in the years range 2000 to 2015 (Muff et al., 2017). Khaled et al. (2021) stated that 17 sustainable goals had been established under this agenda to deal with the growing global climate change, environmental degradation, and social inequality. The first objective is eradicating and ending poverty by 2030 in every form and dimension. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the SDGs seek to zero hunger and malnutrition, which has become a tremendous impediment to growth in many nations. Most 821 million people are expected to be chronically undernourished since 2017, and more than 90 million children under five years old are perilously underweight. Next, the 2030 Agenda admits the complexity and interdependence to achieve health and sustainable development. The found promotes of the SDG are achieving inclusive and good-quality education for all promotes the idea that education is one of the most effective and well-tested vehicles for long-term development. Further, ending all types of discrimination against women and girls, and promoting gender equality, is not only a fundamental human right. Yet, it is necessary for a sustainable future where it has been proved that empowering women and girls boosts the growth and development of the economy

More and more nations are experiencing water scarcity, rising drought, and desertification are escalating the problem. Thus, by 2030, the SDGs objective is to seek clean water and sanitation, and water scarcity is expected to affect at least one in every four persons by 2050 (UNDP, n.d). To meet the objective of SDG 7, Affordable and Clean Energy, the investment in thermal, solar, and wind boosts energy production and ensures energy for everyone. The following five objectives are i) achieve decent work and promote economic growth, ii) Encourage inclusive and long-term industrialisation as well as develop reliable, quality, sustainable as well as sturdy infrastructure and innovation, iii) reduced inequalities, iv) promote sustainable cities and communities, and v) lessen our environmental impact by altering how we create and use products and resources. The SDGs aim to protect the environment based on SDG 13, Climate Action, SDG 14, Life Below Water, and SDG 15, Life on Land. The SDG 16 Peace, Justice and A potent institution seek to eradicate all forms of violence with the collaboration between the government and society to end the conflict and insecurity and promote the rule of law and human rights. Finally, based on the SDGs 17 Partnership for the Goals, the

SDGs can only be achieved via solid global partnerships and collaboration. According to Giannetti et al. (2020), the statement by United Nations regarding the SDGs consists of crucial elements that are connected to a solid sustainability vision which are (i) acknowledging the significance of both people and the earth; (ii) acknowledging that time is a significant factor and that short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions and policies should be taken into account strategically; and (iii) acknowledge that the economy, the environment, and society served as significant sources of capital for sustainability. His finding indicates that the SDGs only partially discourse the environment as a resource provider and its biophysical boundaries.

Malaysia has long sought to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The satisfaction degree of accomplishment of sustainable development the still low. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), Malaysia performed well on the Sustainable Development Goals indicator, with 52% of relevant indicators in 2019 compared to 41% in 2018 (TheStar, 2021). Datuk Seri Maimunah Mohd Sharif, the executive director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), argued that after five years of implementing the SDGs, the progress has been uneven due to Covid-19. In Malaysia, Fernando et al. (2022a) argued that adopting circular economy practices based on agro-waste can support the SDGs' achievement that involves social and economic concerns. Moreover, the Ukraine-Russian war and other military conflicts have affected the prosperity and social outcome globally (Sachs et al., 2022). It worsens poverty, food insecurity, energy accessibility, health, and climate and biodiversity crises. According to Joseph (2013), establishing and enhancing awareness regarding the sustainable development concept is an approach to the commitment to sustainability in society. Thus, this paper aims to shed light on the trend of sustainable development goals in Malaysia, which provided the community with information on a council's sustainable development goals. This study also will provided suggestion for the future studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Sustainable Development Goals Embracement in Malaysia

Similar to other evolving countries, Malaysia is dealing with the conflict between economic growth and ecological preservation. Despite the struggle, Michael and Salleh (2021) argued that this nation has acknowledged the SDGs' agenda and has embedded it in National Plan. For instance, Malaysia has launched the New Economic Model (NEM), indicating its commitment to sustainable development goals. It is based on three pillars, including high income, inclusivity and sustainability, representing the three principles of SDGs; economy, social and natural ecologies. According to Saadatian et al. (2011), Malaysia is actively involved in international sustainability activities, as evidenced by its attendance at the 13th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in New York in 2005. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), it is argued that Malaysia's involvement in development of SDGs globally began in the late of 2014. The continuous toward SDG adaption into National Planning can be viewed in Malaysia's 11th National Plan and 12th National Plan (Michael & Salleh, 2021).

It integrated the national development plan's action plans, initiatives, and outcomes into the SDGs' goals, targets, and indicators. According to the previous study, Hezri and Nordin Hasan (2006) postulated that two factors prompted Malaysia to include sustainable development due to the rise of diplomatic influences and the charge of wanton desertification expressed by the international community. Fernando et al. (2022b) argued that the firms that had put efforts on social focus in the supply chain have contributed to achieving the SDGs in various domains such as reducing inequality, good health, and promoting responsible consumption and production. Therefore, the national development priorities will remain aligned and integrated with the SDGs as we approach 2030. According to Malaysia's Voluntary National Review (VNR) submitted in 2021, the SDG Roadmap Phase 2 (2021-2025) will be developed to improve the SDG agenda by determining key areas, enablers, and critical 'accelerator points' for lagging SDGs. It ensured policy coherence within all government levels, suggested strategies and action plans, and bolstered the initiatives to localise SDGs.

Sustainable development report 2022 in Figure 1 shows that Malaysia's current assessment only accomplished SDG 1: No Poverty. As for SDG indicator trends, SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy. SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure have not yet been achieved and remain challenges that require more observation and contribution from the authority. Further, five SDGs displayed a moderately improving trend with major and significant challenges remaining, respectively – SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, and SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institution. Further, 4 SDGs, known as SDG 2: Zero Hunger, SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG 13: Climate Action and SDG 14: Life below water, indicate a lack of activity, growth as well as development. Meanwhile, SDG 15: Life on Land revealed a stagnation trend with major challenges remaining to achieve the assessment's target.



Figure 1. 2022 Assessment for Malaysia - SDG Dashboard and Trends

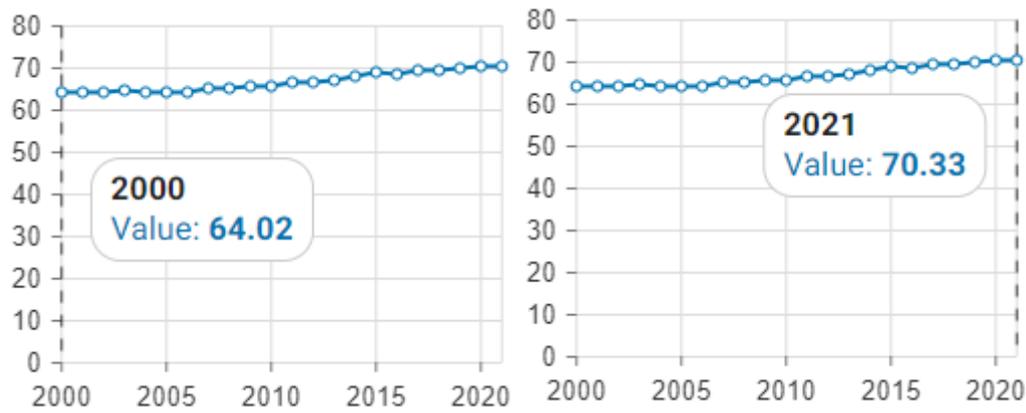


Figure 2. Malaysia SDG Index Score Trend from 2000 to 2021 (Sources by: Sachs et al., 2022)

Recently, Malaysia's SDG index has been ranked 72 over 163 countries, with the index and spillover scores being 70.4% and 79.2%, respectively. The scores are measured based on the overall achievement of 17 SDGs and interpreted as a percentage. Malaysia's SDG index score indicates a positive trend from 64.02% in 2000 to 70.33% in 2021. Yet, only a score of 100% signifies that the overall objective is attained. Thus, Malaysia has a long way to achieve the SDGs objectives fully.

Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022: Malaysia

Generally, SDG linked with 5Ps recognised as people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership (Khaled & Mohamed, 2021). Figure 2.1, which was adapted from Puertas and Marti (2022), indicates the relationship between the 5 Ps and the 17 goals of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals.

Goal 1: No Poverty

According to Mhlanga (2021), lack of income is not the only factor of poverty, nor are other productive resources included. Generally, poverty is linked with basic human needs such as food, health, clean drinking water, education, shelter, sanitation facilities and information. Thus, these goals aim to end poverty in all aspects. Malaysia has achieved this goal's target and maintained the achievement with a 0.0 poverty headcount ratio, both at \$1.90/day and \$3.20/day.

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

This goal seems to guarantee the end of undernourishment by 2030 and ensure that all populations, particularly children, have access to adequate and nutritious food in the years ahead (Herrera-Calderon et al., 2021). It is as well aims to boost sustainable agriculture. However, the SDG report by Malaysia indicates that this goal score is constant or increases at less than half the required rate with major challenges, especially in undernourishment prevalence in children under the age of five and the export of the hazardous pesticide wherein the trend information is inaccessible.

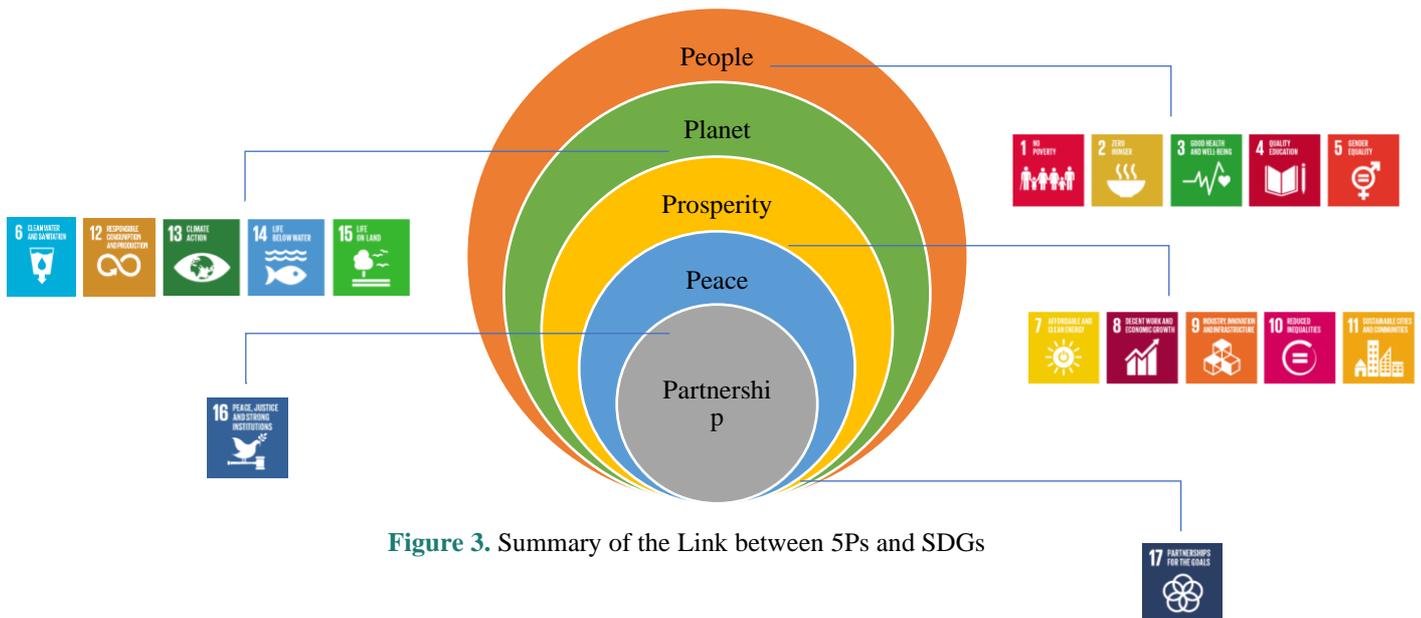


Figure 3. Summary of the Link between 5Ps and SDGs

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being

Goal 3 of SDG is to promote good health and well-being among all ages. Malaysia has mostly achieved the indicator of goal 3. It is included maternal mortality rate, neonatal mortality rate, and mortality rate of an infant under age 5. Besides that, it is included the number of people newly infected with HIV, the adolescent fertility rate between 15-19, births attended by personnel trained, surviving infants receiving 2 WHO-recommended vaccines and subjective well-being. Yet, major challenges remain, especially related to tuberculosis disease and traffic death.

Goal 4: Quality Education

Quality education is important for long-term sustainability and is a noteworthy issue. Kumar (2020) stated that education could develop individuals to become more aware, responsible, and capable of bringing about necessary and meaningful change in society. Nearly all of the goal 4 indicators, including participation rate in organised learning one year before the official primary entry age, net primary enrollment rate, and literacy rate, have been achieved by Malaysia. Yet, the completion rate of lower secondary (Form 1 to Form 3) is still challenging. Inadequacy of interest, negative impression toward the difficult subject, role of the educator, teaching method and the interest of the new generation could be (Ziad et al., 2021) could be why this indicator remains challenging to be attained.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

More women are in public office today compared to before. The World Bank data reported that the latest average female labour force participation value was 50.14 percent in 2021. Acevedo-Duque et al. (2021) postulated that encouraging more women becoming leaders will contribute to greater gender equality. However, according to Aslan (2022), Malaysia's target representation of 30.0% female political representation is not achieved yet, even though the population of women accounts for 48.5% of the overall population. Moreover, Malaysian involvement in the usage of modern methods of contraception is still low (Thanenthiran, 2019). Thus, this goal remains a major challenge in women's demand for family planning satisfied by modern methods and seats held by women in the national parliament.

Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

This goal's objective is to ensure accessibility and sustainable water management and sanitation for all communities. Pereira and Marques (2021) stated that water and sanitation services are essential to public health and living standards. Despite the significant challenges Malaysia faces, the trend of the population using at least basic sanitation services and freshwater withdrawal is achieved. Yet, the trend information is absent.

Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

This goal aims to provide clean and more efficient energy globally. It encourages growth and is environmentally beneficial. According to UNDP, investing in renewable resources, boosting energy production, and ensuring energy for all are important to achieve SDG 7 by 2030. Malaysia has access to clean fuels and technology for cooking and electricity. Yet, the share of renewable energy in the total primary energy supply and CO2 emissions of fuel combustion by electricity output remains a significant challenge. Thus, Malaysia is still facing major issues to realise goal 7.

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Goal 8 aimed to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work. As per SDG reported by Malaysia, this goal is still on track and currently retain the achievement in term of fatal work-related accidents associated with imported goods, an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider among the adults, and unemployment. Nonetheless, adjusting the GDP growth, modern slavery victims, and the effective enforcement of fundamental labour rights are still becoming an issue to achieve this goal.

Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

Infrastructure and innovation investment has thus become critical for economic growth and global development. UNDP clearly emphasises this Goal 9 of SDG. It highlights technological advances in tackling economic and environmental concerns (Hustad & Olsen, 2021), for example, boosting energy efficiency and enabling the creation of new industries with green supply chains. In addition, it seeks to develop robust infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and nurture innovation. Despite one problem remaining, Malaysia has been doing well in most of the objectives of the Goal 9 indicator. Thereby, the trend is moderately improving.

Goal 10: Reduced inequalities

According to UNDP, there are a few goals and ten targets to be accomplished by 2030. Yet, Malaysia faces a significant challenge in reducing inequality within and between countries. According to the SDG report trend in Malaysia, Palma ratio and Gini coefficient trend information is unavailable, indicating that this goal remains unsolved and becomes a major challenge.

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

UN explained completely Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities as the cities where all citizens live a decent quality of life and form a part of the city's productive dynamic, creating shared prosperity and social stability without harming the environment. For this goal, Malaysia has met one of the targets and is on track to improve piped water access. However, public transport satisfaction and annual mean concentrations of particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM_{2.5}) remained unsolved with the trend declining and doing well, respectively. Therefore, the achievement of meeting goal 11 is still pending.

Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

SDG number 12 concerns responsible consumption and production (De Visser-Amundson, 2022). To achieve both sustainable development and economic growth, we must immediately lower our environmental footprint by modifying our production and consumption patterns. Unfortunately, Malaysia has a moderately improved trend where issues involving municipal solid waste, CO₂ and nitrogen emissions embodied in imports, and so on still exist.

Goal 13: Climate Action

Global warming caused long-term climate change with potentially disastrous consequences. As stated by UNDP, greenhouse gas emissions were over 50 percent higher compared to 1990. Goal 13 of the 2030 Agenda called for the prompt to fight climate change and its consequences. According to Alahmad et al. (2020), Linares et al. (2020), and Hrabok, Delorme, and Agyapong (2020), Climate change is well known to endanger human health and exacerbate existing inequalities, making the most marginalised people more exposed to the health due to climate changing. In terms of this goal, Malaysia's issues are still unresolved, especially concerning CO₂ emissions.

Goal 14: Life Below Water

Goal 14 aims to sustainably preserve and utilise the seas, oceans, and marine resources for long-term development. According to the SDG report by Malaysia, the mean percentage area of protected marine Key Biodiversity Areas and Ocean Health Index: Clean Waters score that chemicals have infected, eutrophication, human pathogens, and trash is a major challenge.

Goal 15: Life on Land

encouraging the sustainable utilisation of terrestrial ecosystems, fighting desertification and halting and managing forests sustainably or reversing land degradation. Biodiversity loss is the purpose of Goal 15 of the 2030 Agenda. This goal remains a big challenge for Malaysia to achieve the target. The major challenges of these indicators are the mean area protected in terrestrial locations vital to biodiversity, the Red List Index of species survival, and permanent deforestation.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

This goal pursues to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for long-term growth, inclusive communities for long-term growth, ensure equivalent access to justice, and build accountable, effective and included all institutions at all levels. However, as Malaysia's performance is only moderately improving, this goal remains a critical problem. Among the challenges are homicides, the Corruption Perception Index, access to and affordability of justice, and other issues.

Goal 17: Goal 17: Partnerships for The Goals

The ultimate goal of SDG is to strengthen the adoption of tools and re-energise global cooperation for sustainable development. However, Malaysia will face challenges in meeting this target due to government spending on health and education and government revenue excluding grants.

METHODS

This paper has conducted a literature review to identify the issues and trends. Therefore, it can provide a deeper understanding of the current trend of the SDGs. This report utilises the SDG Index and Dashboard data, a worldwide evaluation of countries' progress towards reaching Sustainable Development Goals. Each selected Malaysian company's sustainability report has this information. Included in the assessments were corporations from the oil and gas, automobile, services, and food and beverage industries. This study constructs the analysis based on Thematic A (Reduce Inequalities), Thematic B (Climate Action), and Thematic C (No Hunger). This study examined the sustainability reports of various companies, including Petronas Chemicals Group Berhad, DRB-Hicom Company, Malaysia Aviation Group, and Malayan Flour Mill Berhad. On the basis of the review, the authors anticipated discovering the current centre of the SDG indicator. The research process shows in Figure 4.

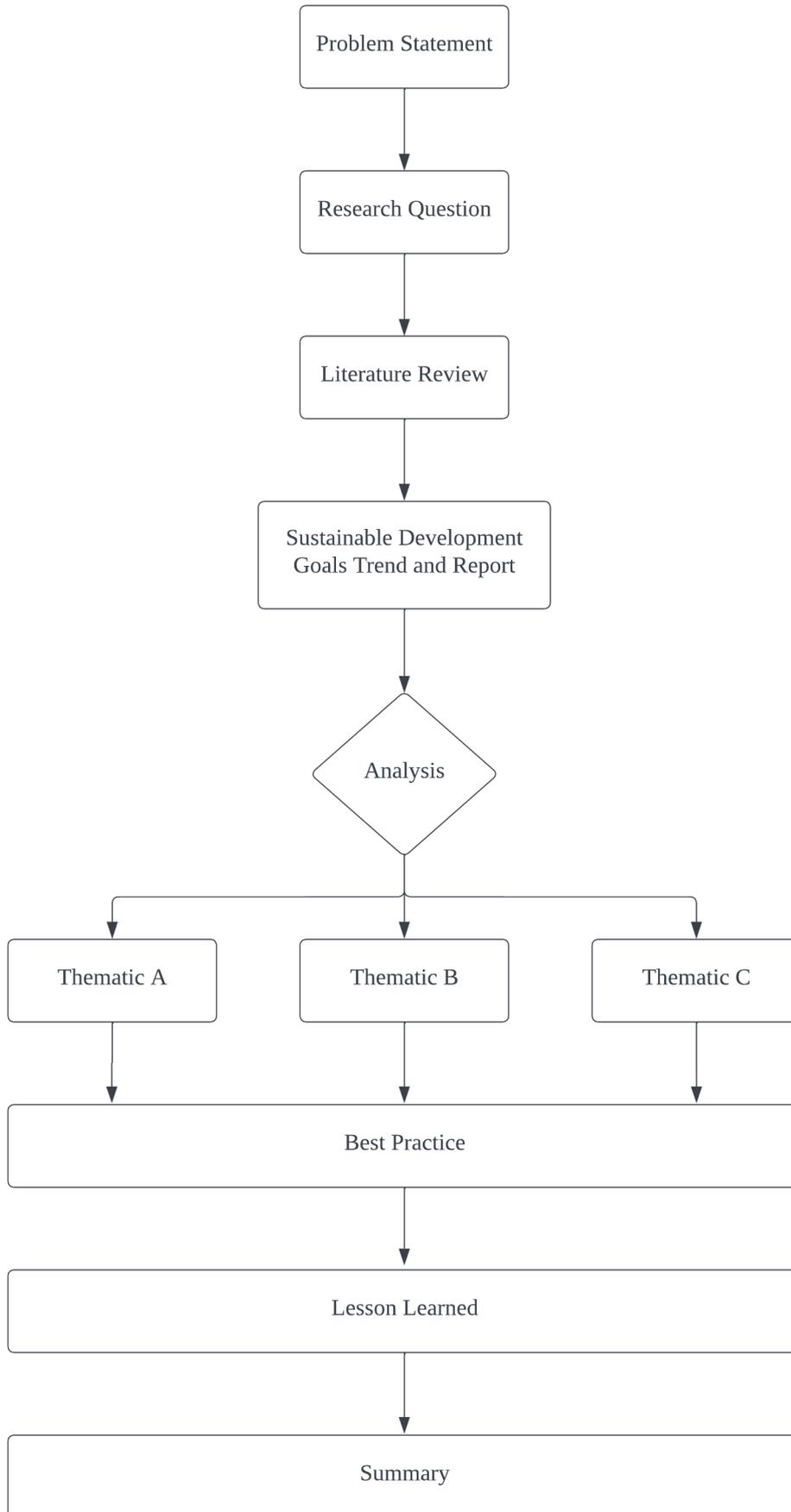


Figure 4. The Research Process

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Sustainability reporting can deliver information concerning triple-bottom-line performance and is important as a comprehensive response to continuous growth and sustainable development (Fong Woon, Lai, Shad, & Shah, 2021). Table 1 indicates the current focal point of Sustainable Development identified based on the sustainability reports of Malaysia company. The most highlighted current trend of Sustainable Development Goals is Theme B: Climate Action, followed by Theme C: No hunger and Theme A: Reduce Inequalities. Human activities significantly impact earth, contributing to climate change threats, environmental degradation and health crises (Tong et al., 2022). Based on Petronas Sustainability Report (2020), climate action in the aspect of effective emission management and less usage of resources can enhance the stakeholder trust and public reputation and contribute to less cost consumption and better performance, respectively. In addition, the conversion of waste into circular has the potential to generate value-added products. Thus, focusing on the climate action indicator give win-win situation to the corporate, environment and social. Table 1 illustrate that only Malayan Flour Mill Berhad contributing in reduce inequalities indicator. However, the latest of the Malayan Flour Mill Berhad sustainability report is in 2018.

Table 1. The Current Practice of Sustainable Development Goals Based on Sustainability Report

Company	Business Nature	Sustainability Report Date	Theme A	Theme B	Theme C
			Reduce Inequalities	Climate Action	Zero Hunger
Petronas Chemicals Group Berhad	Oil and gas	2020		/	/
DRB-Hicom	Automotive	2021		/	/
Malaysia Aviation Group	Services	2021		/	
Malayan Flour Mill Berhad	Food and Beverage	2018	/	/	/

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

Sustainable Development Goals has made great strides to tackle poverty, hunger, health crisis, environmental issues, and discrimination and enhance economic growth. To achieve the SDGs, each community must contribute its resources, including creativity, skill, and technology. The research regarding SDG has started since the Agenda 2030, yet not all groups or individuals are aware of the SDG existent. Moreover, the progress on SDG is getting slower wherein the SDG index slightly declined globally in 2021 (Sachs et al., 2022). The journey to achieve SDG by 2030 will be a marathon, and further research is essential, especially on 17 SDGs indicators that remained unsolved and inaccessible trend information. Following is the research that is required.

- i. **Challenge with the missing data.** Based on the Sustainable Development Report of Malaysia, the missing data index is 3%. According to Dang and Serajuddin (2020), missing data can gradually lead to incorrect interpretation of actual data and misconceptions of SDG achievement progress. If the issue remains unchecked and unsolved, it could undermine the achievement of SDG. Thus, this study suggests providing further research on acknowledging and addressing SDGs' missing data issues in Malaysia.
- ii. **Additional research on indicators for reducing inequality.** Malaysia remains a major challenge regarding this goal, and the trend information is unavailable. Gender inequality, labour market dynamics and the wage gap are required to be discussed in the aspect of economic structure, education and skill development and newly emergent forms of employment. According to Abd Rahman, Saari, Lenzen, and Malik (2022), a tripartite partnership between the government, industry, and academia seems to be a powerful tool for reducing wage inequalities. However, Malaysia is still lacking. Therefore, the pledge to address peculiar inequality in Malaysia is necessary and timely. It recommended executing the study in qualitative method to deeper understanding and identify this indicator's current awareness, knowledge, and practice.

CONCLUSION

Fernando et al. (2022c) postulated that firms able to incorporate sustainable development into a business strategy could escalate the firm position and competitiveness in the industry. The Sustainable Development Goals indicator has been implemented in Malaysia's sustainable policies since 2015. Within a generation, Malaysia successfully transformed its economy, elevated its standard of living, and transitioned from a low-income to an upper-middle-income economy (Malaysia's Voluntary National Review (VNR), 2021). According to (Michael & Salleh, 2021), the gross national income (GNI) per capita increased by 29 between 1970 and 2020, from \$347 to \$10,118. In addition, this country achieved goal 1 by reducing the poverty rate from 7.6% in 2016 to 5.6% in 2019. However, Malaysia's performance currently neither yet achieved the objective, nor can it obtain progress towards the sustainable performance of a developed country concisely. Even before COVID-19, the executive director of UN-Habitat declared that the world was not on track to reach the SDGs by 2030 (The Edge Market, 2021). Further, there remain missing data in the SDG index, which leads to the scarcity of accepted statistical models that could be used to impute country-level data (Sachs et al., 2022). Consequently, the government cannot assume that the SDGs' purpose can be reached independently. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) urge governments, corporations, and civil society organisations to work together to achieve shared and sustainable prosperity.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

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