

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## Identifying Factors Affecting the Implementation of Sustainable Development Policies with a Focus on Small Wins in Iran

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### Abstract

The present study aimed to identify the factors influencing the implementation of sustainable development policies, with a specific focus on small wins in Iran. This applied and descriptive-survey study utilized a qualitative approach and employed the grounded theory method. Data collection involved interviews and the codification was conducted using the emerging (Glaserian) grounded-theory classical approach. The interview questions were meticulously developed based on a comprehensive review of the literature, and the collected data were coded using Strauss and Corbin's (1998) paradigm model. The research population comprised specialists and experts who held influential roles in policy implementation, and they were selected using purposive and theoretical sampling. The sampling process continued until the data were theoretically saturated, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The results of the study revealed the significant impact of various factors on the implementation of sustainable development policies. Notably, in line with the new concept of small wins and the principles of sustainable development, the study identified 36 indicators, which were categorized into drivers and inhibitors. Each main indicator encompassed six economic, social, cultural, strategic, environmental, and organizational factors, along with 18 sub-indicators. These findings underscore the importance of considering these indicators for formulating sustainable development policies and goals, particularly for developing countries like Iran, in order to achieve sustainable development on a global scale.

**Keywords:** *Effective Indicators, Policy, Sustainable Development, Small Wins, Iran*

### Introduction

At the current stage of human evolution, all societies seek to develop significantly and surpass others. Development is a multidimensional process involving various economic, social, cultural, and other aspects. Every country possesses different social, human, economic, and natural capitals whose accumulation is required to achieve sustainable development. Thus, sustainable development as a comprehensive variable involves all aspects of growth that every

society seeks to achieve in line with its facilities and position. However, there is no single model of development for all societies. To this end, many researchers have sought to develop a specific model that fits the requirements of every society. Moreover, to achieve sustainable development, the model requires the adoption of some policies for executive organizations.

The term policy refers to a set of strategies, orientations, and decisions that are adopted by various authorities in the public sector,

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such as the government, the parliament, and the judiciary to serve public interests (Alwani, 2013). Most public policy scholars and experts and public policy scientific texts consider that the three stages of public policymaking involve policy development, implementation, and evaluation. They have also divided the first stage, i.e. policy development, into three stages including recognizing the problem, agenda setting, and formulating a policy or solution (Birkland, 2015). Policymaking thinkers have always paid special attention to the implementation phase compared to other public policymaking processes (Subroto, 2011). A policy does not give an exact answer as to how it should be implemented. Rather, it depends on the context and local arrangements necessary to implement that policy. Thus, a policy is implemented only when the intentions are met, both in spirit (what to achieve) and in practice (how to achieve it). Often, the goal of a policy implementation project is to change the mindset of actors in the host organization in a bottom-up process, rather than to implement a policy by command in a top-down process. In the bottom-up process, co-creating project goals and clarifying and communicating policymakers' goals is very important. These strategies support the bottom-up process and enable the project to promote strategic execution (Soderberg & Liff, 2023).

The small wins framework is rooted in theories related to continuous changes and studies on organization science and policymaking science. Small wins are defined as concrete, completed, and profound changes. They can accumulate in transformative changes through various non-linear driving mechanisms. Small wins are identified and evaluated based on four characteristics and indicators proposed by Termeer and Dewulf (2018). According to Termeer and Dewulf (2018), small wins can be difficult to achieve because most of them appear in the public spotlight. Hence, it is important not to ignore any small win, but to value all of them. These four characteristics

are concrete results, in-depth changes, reasonable importance, and positive judgment (Termeer & Metzke, 2019). Weick also describes small wins as “concrete, completed, and implemented outcomes of moderate importance” and focuses on incremental changes to achieve sustainable outcomes for major social challenges (Rejinders, 2021).

The research gap in the subject of sustainable development policies with a focus on small wins in Iran lies in the limited attention paid to small wins and the development of policies to achieve them. This has resulted in less development, transformation, and innovation, an unstable economy, closure of industries, irreparable damage to the environment, and other unfavorable consequences in Iran. The gap is further highlighted by the success stories of countries such as the United States and Finland, which have achieved transformation and innovation by paying attention to small wins and formulating policy implementation in various fields.

The priority of the subject is high due to the global attention given to sustainable development in recent decades. Given the significance of sustainable development for developing countries and the adverse effects of neglecting small wins and policy development in Iran, there is a critical need to understand the indicators affecting the implementation of sustainable development policies with a focus on small wins in Iran. This understanding can pave the way for more effective policies and strategies to promote sustainable development in the country. Hence, the main question addressed in this study is stated as follows: What are the indicators affecting the implementation of sustainable development policies with a focus on small wins in Iran?

## **Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

Organizations should develop sustainably by taking into account economic, social, and ecological issues. Sustainable development in organizations including businesses and

public sector organizations reflects all forms of innovation, especially innovations and changes in organization and management practices and technological and environmental innovations (Kozioł-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021). In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was a major milestone in the transformation of our world. This agenda addresses the major challenges facing humanity, including ending poverty and other deprivations, improving health and education, reducing inequality, and stimulating economic growth, while tackling climate change and working to preserve aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. The agenda is an ambitious and urgent call to action, agreed upon by all 193 UN member states, and translated into 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Cristóbal et al., 2021).

The concept of small wins, which is defined as “specific, completed, implemented results of moderate importance”, was first introduced by the organizational psychology theorist, Karl

Weick, in his seminal article entitled “Small wins: Redefining the scale of social problems”. Many small wins may go unrecognized, or overlooked, and may never even be institutionalized. Ditching small wins is a significant risk for evaluators who tend to observe only processes and outcomes and what they think is happening concerning formal programs and activities. Therefore, the first step is to identify and value these emerging small steps. Identifying small wins is not an easy task, because they usually appear under the radar of public attention and are difficult to find (Termeer & Dewulf, 2018). One of the strengths of small wins is their ability to react to the constantly changing and dynamic conditions around them and deepen trust, commitment, and understanding among people (Weick, 1984; Ansell & Gash, 2007). According to Termeer and Dewulf (2018), small wins are characterized by concrete results, in-depth changes, moderate importance, and positive judgment (Reijnders, 2021).

Table 1.

*The characteristics and indicators of small wins (Termeer & Dewulf, 2018)*

Characteristics	Indicators	Contra-indicators
Concrete results	Observable results	Only promises and ideas
In-depth changes	Changing new radical practices for the second and third times	Beyond similar quick events and easy access
Moderate importance	Low or moderate local levels	At larger scales, best practices
Positive judgment	Improvement and a step forward associated with shared ambitions	Small losses for many actors

The first characteristic is that small wins refer to concrete results reflecting lived experiences that go beyond creative ideas or promises. This characteristic can be determined by the observable results from other initiatives. Second, small wins must be accompanied by changes in practices, beliefs, or values through radical new practices such as in-depth changes (Termeer & Dewulf, 2018).

The small wins strategy focuses on emerging practices and innovations that occur on a small scale and appear organically in different fields. Such incremental innovations, through their accumulation, can

bring transformative changes to problems. The idea behind small wins is that these wins are driven by a larger vision for change. However, instead of targeting "big wins" through radical innovation in science and industry, the governance strategy of small wins follows the logic of stimulating distributed innovative efforts to create gradual yet profound changes in the desired direction. Small wins can be technological, social, or institutional in nature and appear in the private and public sectors, civil society, or local society. The small wins perspective enables the analysis of local sustainability transitions beyond single niches, or niche-

regime interactions, thereby involving more actors and more diverse actions (Bours et al., 2022). Following the small-wins perspective, change processes are driven by various stakeholders, including users, interest groups, civil society, and the public sector (Termeer & Metze, 2019).

In other words, the concept of small wins, which is taken from the literature on public management and environmental governance, helps to address multidimensional social problems. Small wins constitute profound changes that are transformative through bottom-up and top-down mechanisms. Thus, small wins require small-scale innovations that are found in different fields and are incremental in nature. These incremental innovations, through the accumulation of many small aspects, can drive transition processes to solve complex and multidimensional social problems. Just like radical transformations or “big wins,” the accumulation of small wins leads to deep transformative changes away from the status quo of society, driven by a larger vision of change (Friedrich & Feser, 2023).

So far, few studies have addressed barriers to achieving small wins. For instance, Termeer and Metze (2019) focused on the integration of obstacles in the literature on small wins. They adopted the four characteristics of small wins proposed by Termeer and Dewulf (2018) and added the characteristic of “overcoming resistance and obstacles” to them. Termeer and Metze (2019) used their empirical cases on the technical, financial, and regulatory barriers that must be overcome. Barriers that hinder the transfer of sustainability are further researched. Kirchherr et al. (2018) recently developed a framework of barriers that derail or slow sustainability transitions, particularly the transition to a circular economy, distinguishing between cultural, regulatory, market, and technological barriers (Kirchherr et al., 2018).

Problems exist in all societies. To address these problems and to achieve the goals of growth, national development, and citizens’ welfare, governments formulate policies that

are assumed to be effective in line with the government's efforts for governance. However, following public policymaking challenges, the policymaking process and structure have caused the output of the public policy formulation stage to lead to weak content in the policy. Incoherence and internal inconsistency in the existing policies, the lack of clear implementation tools or the use of ineffective and inconsistent implementation tools, the inadequate definition of goals, vague and ambitious goals, and the lack of an effective theoretical framework lead to the poor content of public policy (Baum, 2019).

Furthermore, sustainable development means combining economic, social, and environmental goals to maximize the current human welfare without harming the abilities of future generations and to meet their needs. The World Commission on Environment and Development Commission for the first time presented the term sustainable development that meets the present needs, without jeopardizing the needs of the future. Sustainable development is one of the few concepts that have both special attractions for politicians and decision-makers and are compatible with the ideals of the community. Sustainable development also emphasizes the importance of long-term perspectives on the outcomes of current activities and global cooperation among countries to reach effective solutions. These issues have made sustainable development a key goal for domestic, regional, and international policy formulation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Soltanipour & Demari, 2016).

The concept and criteria of sustainable development have wide dimensions, and are used in various research areas such as information technology (Ghahremani & Saleh Ardestani, 2019), new technologies (Ardehi et al., 2023), as well as financial and human development (Shafiei et al., 2023) to model and examine the concepts in that field.

Sustainable development is often associated with long time intervals and great transformations, making its interpretation, prediction, and achievement a very

challenging issue. Addressing big issues like sustainable development can create unrealistic expectations of quick, radical, and comprehensive solutions. A small win can provide a useful tool for tangible, actionable, and often incremental change that can be accumulated, become larger, expanded, or deepened, creating a movement for change on larger scales. Small wins are smaller events that are more attainable and associated with fewer exchanges than larger-scale changes. They are “only” seen as small steps, without the need to postpone a decision in an area or with a thorough analysis available in that area, because it is inherently impossible to have such completely conscious conditions for big problems (Salo et al., 2022).

Some studies have addressed small wins. For instance, Salo et al. (2022) investigated small wins enhancing sustainability transformations with a focus on sustainable development policy in Finland. They concluded that while a sustainable development approach based solely on small wins can be too slow and incremental to tackle the main sustainability challenges of our time, it paves the way for more transformative reforms. Reijnders (2021) examined the impact of small wins on the sustainability transition of the Dutch construction industry and concluded that small wins must operate on a local and small scale to develop radical innovations. By doing so, these wins will experience less resistance from the market. Koziol-Nadolna and Beyer (2021) also examined barriers to innovative activity in the sustainable development of public sector organizations. The findings indicated that barriers to innovative activity identified by managers were divided into external and internal barriers. Internal barriers were organizational, human resources, communication, management, and financial barriers. Only one barrier was identified as an external barrier - the lack of government policy on innovation support in public institutions. There is little scientific (theoretical and empirical) output on barriers

to innovative activity in the sustainable development of public sector organizations.

Some studies have also addressed sustainable development in Iran. For instance, Jafari et al. (2022) investigated the implementation of sustainable development strategies and the role of citizenship rights in Shiraz. The findings showed that a strategy to overcome the obstacles and challenges of sustainable development is to improve citizenship rights. Therefore, improving citizenship rights is one of the most important sustainable development strategies, and the incorporation of citizenship rights into urban planning can contribute to achieving sustainable development. Ansari-pour et al. (1400) investigated the factors affecting energy demand for sustainable development planning in Iran. They suggested that access to the future horizon of consumption can pave the way for planning sustainable development and implementing the required energy supply plan using renewable energy sources.

### Research Methodology

The present study aimed to identify the indicators affecting the implementation of sustainable development policies with a focus on small wins in Iran, utilizing a qualitative and classical (Glaserian) grounded theory approach. Grounded theory methodology, as developed by Barney Glaser, focuses on discovering behavioral patterns that are grounded in daily realities, providing information about practices and future research. This approach encourages the researcher to engage in open coding, selective coding, and theoretical (axial) coding to develop a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. In the context of the study, the data were collected through semi-structured interviews with specialists influential in policy implementation in the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade, as well as academic experts. The interview questions were developed based on a review of the literature and the feedback received from subject-matter experts. The participants were

selected using purposive and theoretical sampling, and the sampling process continued until the data were theoretically saturated, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

The emerging approach in the grounded theory methodology involves three stages: open coding, selective coding, and theoretical (axial) coding (Glaser, 2008). According to the Glaserian approach, open coding continues until the effects of the emergence of the core category appear. Subsequently, in the selective coding stage, codification is guided based on the core category (Glaser, 1987). Glaser (1987) emphasizes the importance of consciously looking for the core variable from the beginning of the researcher's engagement in

open coding. Theoretical coding then conceptualizes how the categories relate to each other, providing a deeper understanding of the data. This methodological approach allows for the discovery of key themes and patterns within the data, leading to a rich and nuanced understanding of the indicators affecting the implementation of sustainable development policies with a focus on small wins in Iran.

The participants in the present study were 10 subject-matter experts including 8 men and 2 women. Moreover, 8 participants had a Ph.D. degree and 2 participants had a master's degree. All of the participants had more than 15 years of work experience, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2.

*The participants' demographic characteristics*

Groups	Number	Average age	Average work experience	Education	
				Master's degree	Ph.D.
Staff managers of the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade	4	49.63	18.50	-	100%
Experts of the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade	4	44.18	16.33	50%	50%
Counselors of the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade	4	42.05	16.11	-	100%

The data in the qualitative phase of the study were collected through semi-structured interviews with the participants. The data were saturated after eight interviews. However, to ensure the adequacy of the data, 10 interviews were conducted with eligible people.

## Results

The excerpts from the interviews with the experts, key points, themes, and categories extracted from the data are presented in Tables 3 to 5. It should be noted that P represents Point, and letters A, B, C, etc. represent the experts interviewed.

Table 3.

*The excerpts from the interviews*

**Interview No. 1**

“Currently, one of the factors underlying sustainable development with a focus on small wins is the attention to environmental issues by organizations, which plays an important role in sustainable development. This responsibility has led to the adoption of coherent and regular laws and documents by the upstream institutions for the protection of the environment. Organizations should prepare environmental protection documents that can help the organization to move toward sustainable development, but there are also big environmental problems that can hinder sustainable development. Factors related to this area such as the inefficient energy consumption in the organization and the failure to pay attention to energy issues by the organizations themselves are among the problems that contribute to the decline of sustainable development procedures. The formulation of new laws or the development of current laws can lead to environmental protection and improvement and prevent any type of pollution and any destructive action that disrupts the environmental balance and harmony. The investigation of the

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**Interview No. 1**


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causes of the environmental crisis has shown that the development of technology, social institutions, and attitudes towards the environment are closely related and these factors should not be considered separately from each other. Moreover, following Principle 50 of the Iranian Constitution, protecting the environment is considered a public duty, and all sections of society are responsible and committed to protecting our environment, and organizations should not consider themselves evading this responsibility. Another factor that plays a role in sustainable development is the social responsibility of organizations. It can be argued that social responsibility in each field has a specific definition based on the same field of activity. Organizational responsibility can be both facilitative and inhibitive. One of the procedures that prevent sustainable development by managing small wins is employees' failure to pay attention to the organization's culture. Just as needs are the cause of the behavior and the means to meet them and constitute the goal of human behavior, in the same way, organizational culture is the accepted behavioral patterns by the people in the organization to acquire facilities and means to meet individual needs in the organization. Misunderstanding the concept of culture makes all the activities that are carried out towards the sustainable development of the organization not very successful and the problems in our organizations continue. But if more attention is paid to the altruistic aspect of social responsibility, it can play an important role in advancing the goals of the organization. This means that philanthropy requires the actions of organizations to promote human well-being in response to society's expectations, that is, organizations must be good citizens. This level of social responsibility is at the highest level of responsibility".

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Table 4.  
*The key points and open codes extracted in the study*

Symbol	Key points	Open codes
PA1	Currently, one of the factors underlying sustainable development with a focus on small wins is the attention to environmental issues by organizations, which plays an important role in sustainable development.	Environmental factors
PA2	This responsibility has led to the adoption of coherent and regular laws and documents by the upstream institutions for the protection of the environment. Organizations should prepare environmental protection documents that can help the organization to move toward sustainable development.	Formulation of environmental protection rules for organizations
PA3	Factors related to this area such as the ineffective energy consumption in the organization and the failure to pay attention to energy issues by the organizations themselves are among the problems that contribute to the decline of sustainable development procedures.	Ineffective energy consumption in the organization
PA4	Factors related to this area such as the inefficient energy consumption in the organization and the failure to pay attention to energy issues by the organizations themselves are among the problems that contribute to the decline of sustainable development procedures.	The organization's failure to pay attention to energy issues
PA5	The formulation of new laws or the development of current laws can lead to environmental protection and improvement and prevent any type of pollution and any destructive action that disrupts the environmental balance and harmony.	Formulation of new laws and development of current laws to protect the environment for organizations
PA6	The investigation of the causes of the environmental crisis has shown that the development of technology, social institutions, and attitudes towards the environment are closely related and these factors should not be considered separately from each other.	Development of environmentally friendly technologies
PA7	The investigation of the causes of the environmental crisis has shown that the development of technology, social institutions, and attitudes towards the environment are closely related and these factors should not be considered separately from each other.	Development of environmental protection institutions
PA8	The investigation of the causes of the environmental crisis has shown that the development of technology, social institutions, and attitudes towards the environment are closely related and these factors should not be considered separately from each other.	Developing effective attitudes toward the environment

Symbol	Key points	Open codes
	attitudes towards the environment are closely related and these factors should not be considered separately from each other.	
PA9	Another factor that plays a role in sustainable development is the social responsibility of organizations.	Social responsibility of organizations
PA10	One of the procedures that prevent sustainable development by managing small wins is employees' failure to pay attention to the organization's culture.	Employees' failure to pay attention to the organization's culture
PA11	If more attention is paid to the altruistic aspect of social responsibility, it can play an important role in advancing the goals of the organization	Paying attention to altruism

Table 5.

*The themes extracted from interview No. 1*

Row	Subthemes	Themes	Factors	Type of factor	Symbol	
1	Formulating environmental protection rules for organizations	Developing and formulating environmental protection rules in upstream documents	Environmental factors	Driving factor	PA1, PA2, PA5	
2	Formulation of new laws and development of current laws to protect the environment for organizations					
3	Developing environmentally friendly technologies (driving factor)					PA6
4	Development of institutions to protect the environment (driving factor)					PA7
5	Development of effective attitudes towards the environment (driving factor)					PA8
6	Ineffective energy consumption in the organization	Ineffective energy consumption in the organization	Environmental factors	Inhibiting factor	PA3, PA4	
7	Inattention to energy issues by the organizations themselves					
8	Employees' failure to pay attention to the organization's culture	Employees' failure to pay attention to the organization's culture	Social responsibility	Inhibiting factor	PA9, PA10	
9	Paying attention to altruism	Developing altruism in social responsibility	Social responsibility	Driving factor	PA9, PA11	

**Selective coding:** Selective coding aims to create an organized set of codes and primary themes through a detailed review of the statements in each interview in the open coding stage. Axial coding focuses mainly on codes and themes rather than data. Although new codes and themes may also appear at this stage, the main task is to review the primary codes and organize topics, themes, and

categories, and define the main themes in the analysis. Thus, the questions that will be addressed in the selective coding stage are whether it is possible to merge several related themes into a more general category and if the resulting categories can be organized into a sequence. The outputs of selective coding were presented in the tables displayed above. To answer the first question, the extracted



themes were compared and clustered repeatedly and finally a total of 36 themes were identified. The identified themes were

clustered into 18 inhibiting factors and 18 driving factors as shown in Table 6:

Table 6:

*The extracted themes*

Row	Themes	Factors
1	Inefficient energy consumption in the organization	Inhibiting factors
2	The disregard for the civil responsibility of organizations toward the environment	
3	Failure to use pollution reduction methods in organizations	
4	The disregard for the development management system in the organization	
5	Failure to strengthen and update human resources management	
6	Lack of cooperation strategies with other organizations	
7	Inattention to organizational culture	
8	The absence of consultation and understanding in the organization	
9	Ignoring the suggestions and opinions of experts	
10	Failure to finance new methods	
11	Failure to use the capacities of the digital economy	
12	Using traditional economic procedures	
13	Inattention to ethics and organizational commitment	
14	Lack of organizational transparency	
15	Lack of coordination between different parts of the organization	
16	Defects and lack of technical development	
17	Deviation in financing models	
18	Lack of motivation to create changes in the organization	
19	Development of self-regulation functions toward the environment	
20	Development of learning capacities for environmental purposes	
21	Development and formulation of environmental protection laws	
22	Development of innovation and creativity in the organization	
23	Institutionalization of collaborative strategies	
24	Requiring organizations to comply with organizational principles and standards	
25	Development of altruism aspect of social responsibility	
26	Development of employee relationship management in the organization	
27	Formulating laws to protect people in organizations	
28	Increasing organizational capabilities	
29	Improving organizational performance	
30	Attention to organizational communication	
31	Attention to local development thinking	
32	Reducing the use of natural resources for financing	
33	Applying green economy methods	
34	Connecting to problems or objectives of other policy areas	
35	Developing the capability of the organization's employees	
36	Using good governance practices in the organization	

**Theoretical coding:** The third coding stage is theoretical coding which involves choosing a category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating these relationships, and completing the categories that need further modification and development. In theoretical coding, categories are systematically improved and linked with subcategories. However, these are still not the core categories that are finally

integrated to form a larger theoretical arrangement to develop a theory. Selective coding is the process of integrating and improving the categories. The main categories are identified through interviews and open and axial coding, and the relationship between the categories is specified through selective coding. The extracted categories and concepts are displayed in Table 7 and Figure 1.

Table 7.  
*The extracted themes and categories*

Primary codes	Secondary codes	Axial codes
Inefficient energy consumption in the organization	Environmental factors	Inhibiting factors
The disregard for the civil responsibility of organizations toward the environment		
Failure to use pollution reduction methods in organizations		
The disregard for the development management system in the organization	Strategic factors	
The lack of focus on long-term outcomes		
Lack of cooperation strategies with other organizations		
Conflict of interests between social groups	Social factors	
Non-participation and inactivity of the local community		
Ignoring the suggestions and opinions of experts		
Failure to finance using new methods	Economic factors	
Failure to use the capacities of the digital economy		
Using traditional economic procedures		
Inattention to ethics and organizational commitment	Organizational factors	
Lack of organizational transparency		
Lack of coordination between different parts of the organization		
Defects and lack of technical development	Cultural factors	
Deviation in financing models		
Lack of motivation to create changes in the organization		
Development of self-regulation functions toward the environment	Environmental factors	Driving factors
Development of learning capacities for environmental purposes		
Development and formulation of environmental protection laws		
Development of innovation and creativity in the organization	Strategic factors	
Institutionalization of collaborative strategies		
Requiring organizations to comply with organizational principles and standards		
Development of altruism aspect of social responsibility	Social factors	
Development of employee relationship management in the organization		
Formulating laws to protect people in organizations		
Increasing organizational capabilities	Organizational factors	
Improving organizational performance		
Attention to organizational communication		
Attention to local development thinking	Economic factors	
Reducing the use of natural resources for financing		
Applying green economy methods		
Connecting to problems or objectives of other policy areas	Cultural factors	
Developing the capability of the organization's employees		
Using good governance practices in the organization		

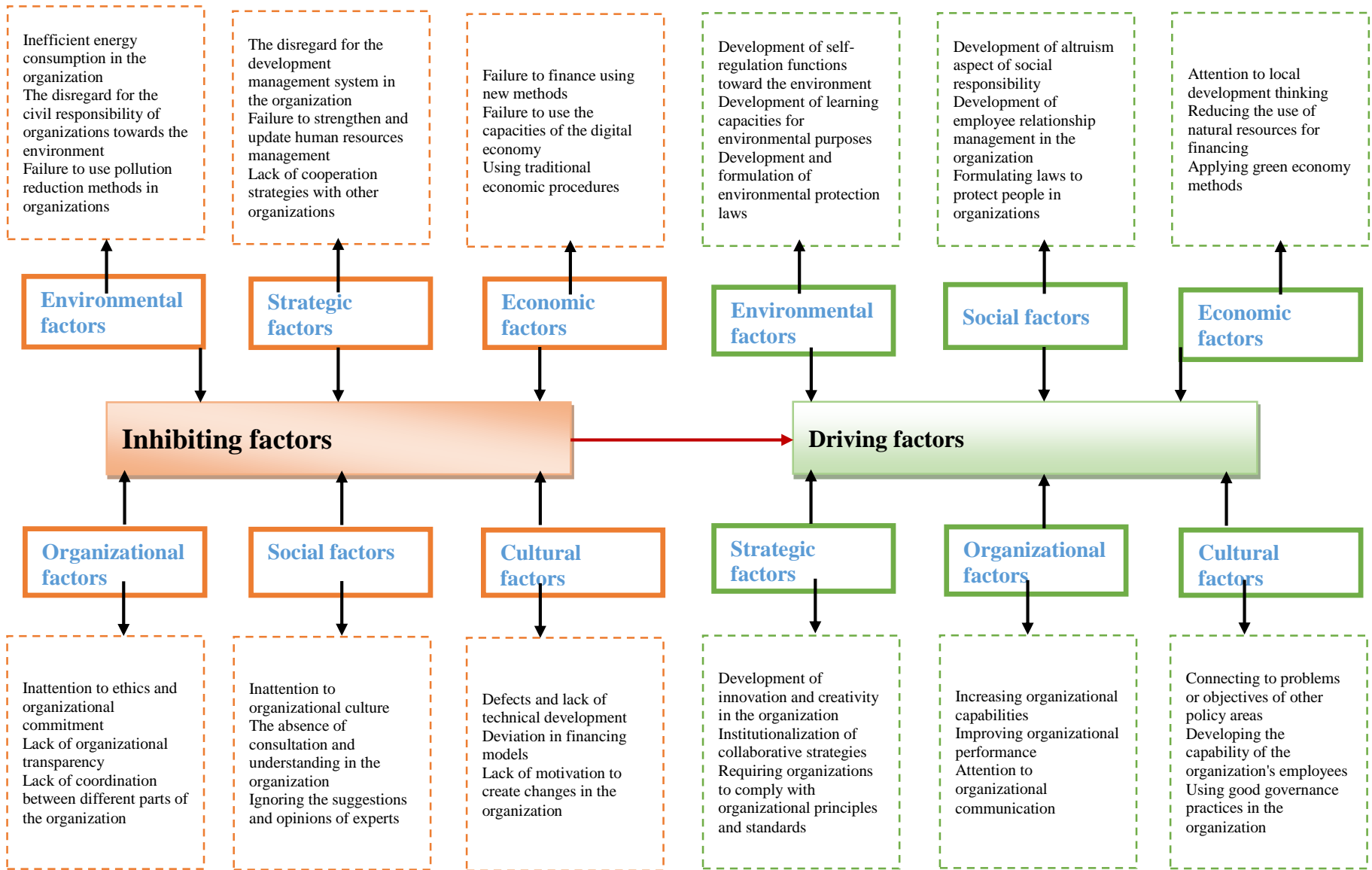


Figure 1. Factors affecting the implementation of sustainable development policies based on small wins in Iran

## Discussion

Sustainable development is the common goal of every nation in the world. The consensus on the 2030 Agenda (2015) specified the goals that define what sustainable development means for each country. Following the three traditional principles of sustainable development (people, land, and welfare), this agenda calls for changing the world to achieve these goals (Salo et al., 2022). Policymakers may have difficulty addressing broad issues such as sustainable development or may be tempted to make promises beyond their means and overestimate their ability to solve problems. By definition, small wins are concrete, implemented, and often gradual changes that can accumulate, magnify, expand, and accelerate larger-scale changes. These wins alone may seem insignificant, but multiple small wins can create transformative changes toward unified goals. Small wins that deeply change routines, values, and beliefs can create transformative potential and lead to fundamental changes in the long term (Salo et al., 2022). Currently, an increasing number of authors refer to the concept of small wins with a focus on governance in their works. However, this concept has not yet been widely used for important problems, it is mainly not related to evaluation methods, and in general, it is not clear conceptually (Termeer & Dewulf, 2018). The present study aimed at identifying indicators affecting the implementation of sustainable development policies with a focus on small wins in Iran. The indicators were identified by surveying experts and using the grounded theory method. The results showed that various indicators are effective in the implementation of sustainable development policies. However, following the new concept of small wins and sustainable development, 36 indicators were identified, which were divided into two main driving and inhibiting factors. Economic, social, strategic, cultural, environmental, and organizational factors with 18 sub-indicators were considered as inhibiting factors that should be controlled to achieve sustainable

development. Moreover, the economic, social, strategic, organizational, environmental, and cultural factors that accounted for 18 sub-indicators were identified as driving factors that should be taken into account to advance and achieve sustainable development. Accordingly, developing countries, including Iran, should take into account these factors for formulating effective policies to achieve sustainable development goals as indicated in previous studies (Salo et al., 2022; Reijnders, 2021; Koziol-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021). Thus, following these findings, government officials in Iran should pay special attention to the different components of this model, including cultural and social factors, to achieve sustainable development and overcome existing crises and problems, because the basis for achieving development in any society is the existence of a culture of development and its components. Having a well-developed plan and an effective strategy makes it easier to achieve goals. Thus, taking into account the strategic factors is also very important in developing an efficient policy to achieve sustainable development. At the next level, environmental, economic, and organizational issues need to be considered when developing a well-defined policy in a top-down process. Thus, governments' attention to small wins will bring deep transformative changes away from the current state of society, with a larger perspective of change for society. Based on the result, here are some recommendations for achieving sustainable development in Iran:

-Focus on small wins: Policymakers should focus on implementing small, concrete changes that can accumulate and magnify over time, leading to larger-scale transformative changes. This approach can be more effective than making promises beyond their means. Identify driving and inhibiting factors: To achieve sustainable development, it is important to identify the factors that drive progress and those that inhibit it. In Iran, economic, social, strategic, cultural, environmental, and organizational

factors were identified as important drivers and inhibitors of sustainable development.

-Pay attention to cultural and social factors: The existence of a culture of development and its components is crucial for achieving development in any society. Therefore, policymakers in Iran should pay special attention to cultural and social factors when formulating policies for sustainable development. Develop a well-defined plan and strategy: Having a well-developed plan and an effective strategy can make it easier to achieve sustainable development goals. Policymakers should consider environmental, economic, and organizational issues when developing policies in a top-down process.

-Overall, adopting a small wins approach and paying attention to the driving and inhibiting factors of sustainable development can help policymakers in Iran develop effective policies to achieve sustainable development goals. Assess the impact of factors on sustainable development: Future studies should use new multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM) methods and structural equation modeling to assess the impact of various factors on sustainable development in Iran.

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