

STARTUPS AND SUSTAINABILITY: EXPLORING PUBLIC AWARENESS IN COIMBATORE REGARDING THE ROLE OF STARTUPS IN ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

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Abstract

Sustainable development has emerged as a central global priority with the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Startups have become significant drivers of innovation and sustainability by providing technology-driven solutions to economic, social, and environmental challenges. In India, the startup ecosystem has grown rapidly and increasingly focuses on sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship. This study explores the level of public awareness in Coimbatore regarding the role of startups in achieving the SDGs. Using a descriptive research design, the study examines perceptions of citizens regarding sustainable startups, their awareness of SDGs, and their views on the contribution of startups toward environmental protection, social inclusion, and economic development. The findings suggest that while awareness about startups is relatively high, knowledge about their connection to the SDGs is moderate. The study highlights the importance of public awareness programs, government initiatives, and academic engagement to strengthen sustainable entrepreneurship and support the achievement of the SDGs.

Keywords: Startups, Sustainability, Sustainable Development Goals, Public Awareness, Coimbatore, Sustainable Entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

Sustainability has become a major concern in the modern global economy. Governments, businesses, and civil society organizations are working together to address critical challenges such as climate change, poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. The United Nations introduced the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to achieve balanced economic, social, and environmental development. Startups are increasingly recognized as powerful agents of change in achieving these goals. Unlike traditional businesses, startups often leverage innovation, technology, and new business models to solve complex societal challenges. Sustainable startups focus on solutions such as renewable energy, waste management, circular economy practices, and eco-friendly products, thereby contributing to environmental sustainability and social well-being.

India has emerged as one of the largest startup ecosystems in the world, with strong government support through initiatives such as the Startup India Scheme. These initiatives aim to promote entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic growth while addressing sustainability challenges. Cities like Coimbatore have developed vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystems due to their strong industrial base, educational institutions, and technology startups. Understanding public awareness about sustainable startups is essential because consumer behavior and social support play a crucial role in the success of sustainable business models.

Therefore, this study investigates the awareness level of the public in Coimbatore regarding the role of startups in achieving the SDGs.

2. Review of Literature

Startups and Sustainable Development

Several studies highlight the growing role of startups in promoting sustainable development. Research indicates that startups contribute significantly to sustainable innovation by developing technologies that address environmental and social challenges. Sustainable startups promote green products, renewable energy solutions, and sustainable consumption patterns.

Startup Ecosystem and SDGs

The startup ecosystem is closely linked to sustainable development as it fosters entrepreneurship, innovation, and inclusive economic growth. Studies on startups in Tamil Nadu emphasize that sustainable entrepreneurship can strengthen the socio-economic development of regions while contributing to the SDGs.

Green Startups and Environmental Impact

Green startups focus on reducing environmental impacts through innovative products and services. For example, waste management platforms such as Recykal use digital technology to connect waste collectors and recyclers, preventing millions of tons of waste from reaching landfills. Similarly, sustainable product startups like Bamboo India produce eco-friendly alternatives to plastic products, helping reduce environmental pollution and promote sustainable consumption. These examples demonstrate how startups can actively contribute to SDGs such as responsible consumption, climate action, and sustainable communities.

3. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:

- ✧ To examine public awareness about startups in Coimbatore.
- ✧ To analyze public awareness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- ✧ To evaluate public perception regarding the role of startups in achieving sustainability.
- ✧ To identify the relationship between startup awareness and sustainability awareness.
- ✧ To provide suggestions to improve public engagement with sustainable startups.

4. Hypothesis of the Study

H1: There is a significant relationship between startup awareness and SDG awareness.

H2: Public perception of startups significantly influences the perceived contribution of startups

to SDGs.

H3: Awareness of sustainability positively influences support for sustainable startups.

5. Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design to examine public awareness and perceptions regarding startups and sustainability.

Area of Study

The research is conducted in Coimbatore city, Tamil Nadu, which is known for its entrepreneurial culture and industrial growth.

Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were used.

Primary

Data

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to residents of Coimbatore.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from:

- ❖ Research journals
- ❖ Government reports
- ❖ Startup ecosystem reports
- ❖ Academic publications related to SDGs and sustainability.

Sample Size

A sample of 100 respondents from Coimbatore city was selected using convenience sampling.

Tools for Analysis

The following statistical tools were used:

- Percentage analysis
- Chi-square test
- Descriptive statistics

6. Role of Startups in Achieving SDGs

Startups play a critical role in addressing multiple SDGs through innovative solutions.

Environmental Sustainability

Many startups focus on renewable energy, waste management, and sustainable materials to reduce environmental damage.

Social Inclusion

Startups promote inclusive growth by generating employment opportunities and supporting marginalized communities.

For example, Eco Femme produces reusable cloth pads and promotes menstrual health education while reducing plastic waste from disposable sanitary products.

Economic Growth

Startups contribute to economic development by creating jobs, increasing productivity, and fostering technological innovation.

Circular Economy

Several startups promote recycling and circular economy models that reduce waste and encourage resource efficiency.

7. Public Awareness in Coimbatore

The study indicates several trends in public awareness:

- ✓ Most respondents are familiar with the concept of startups due to media coverage and government initiatives.
- ✓ Awareness about sustainability is moderate but growing among urban populations.
- ✓ Knowledge about SDGs is relatively limited among the general public.
- ✓ Many respondents believe startups play an important role in solving environmental and social issues.
- ✓ Younger respondents and students show higher awareness levels compared to older respondents.
- ✓ Public awareness is influenced by factors such as education level, media exposure, and participation in sustainability initiatives.

7. Challenges Faced by Sustainable Startups

Despite their potential, sustainable startups face several challenges:

- ◆ Limited access to funding
- ◆ Lack of public awareness about sustainable products
- ◆ Regulatory and policy barriers
- ◆ Market competition from conventional products
- ◆ Difficulty in scaling sustainable business models
- ◆ Increasing consumer awareness and policy support can help overcome these challenges.

Table 1: Startup Awareness

Category	Respondents
High	63
Moderate	56
Low	31
TOTAL	150

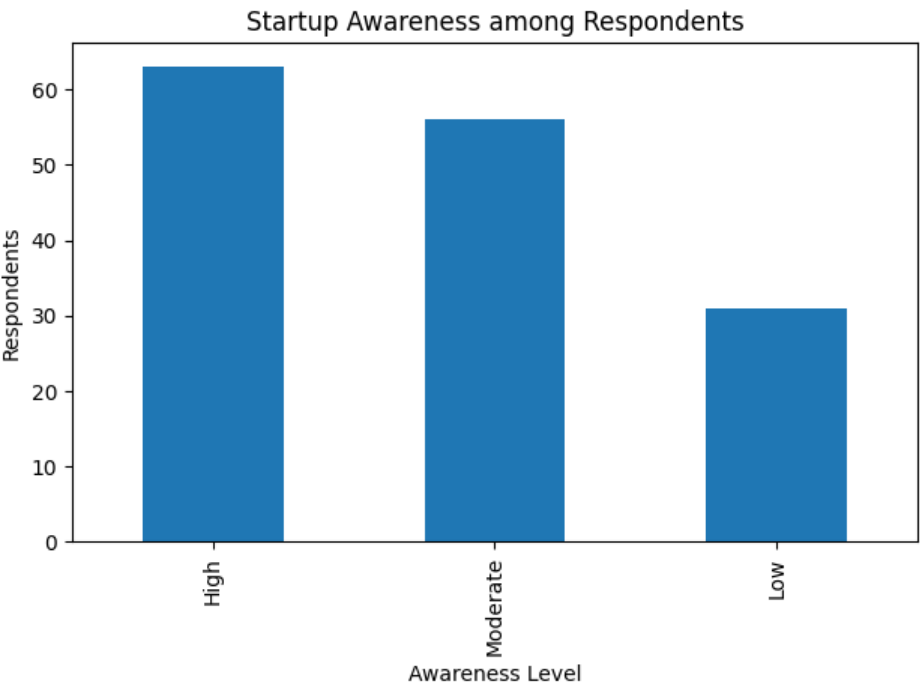


Table 2: SDG Awareness

Category	Respondents
Partially Aware	61
Aware	45
Not Aware	44
TOTAL	150

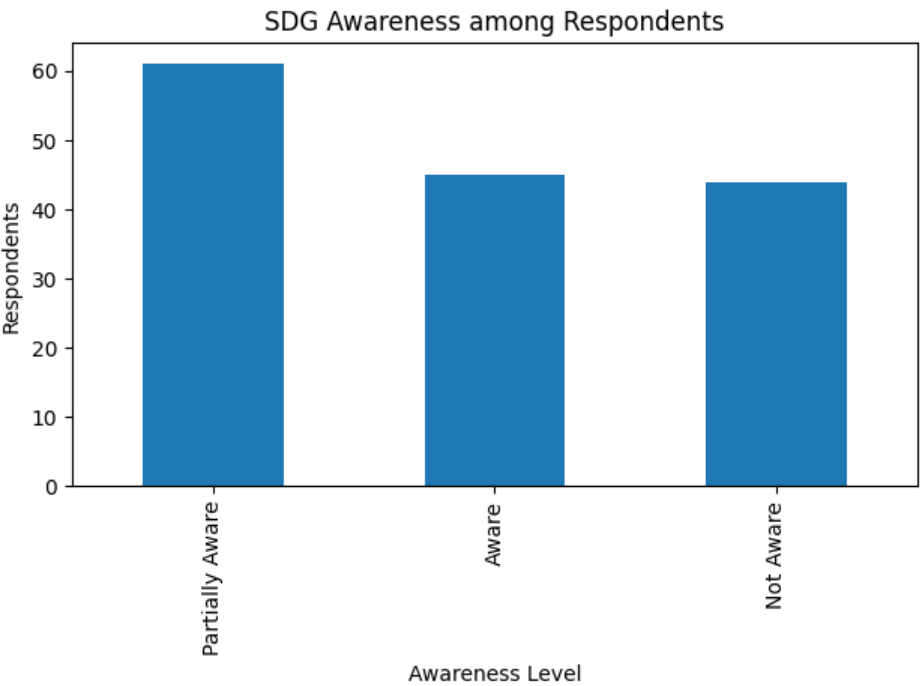


Table 3: Perception of Startups Contribution to SDGs

Response	Respondents
Strongly Agree	59
Agree	50
Neutral	27
Disagree	14
TOTAL	150

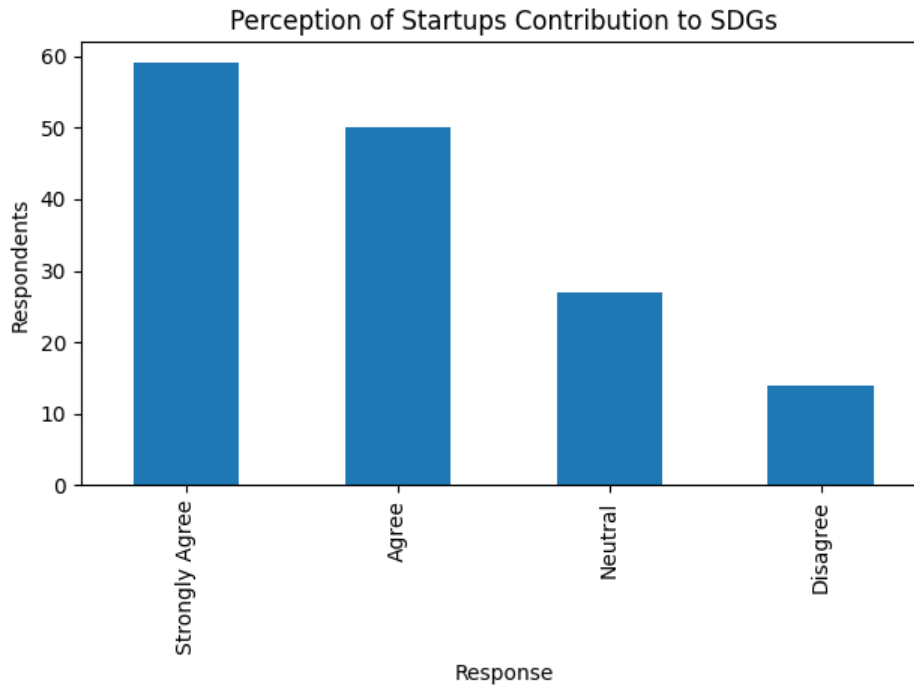


Table 4: Chi-Square Test

Chi-square value = 6.25

P-value = 0.044

Interpretation: Since $p < 0.05$, the relationship between startup awareness and SDG awareness is statistically significant.

8. Findings

- Startup awareness is relatively high among respondents.
- Awareness of SDGs is moderate.
- Respondents generally believe startups play an important role in sustainability.

9. Suggestions

The following measures can improve public awareness and support sustainable startups:

- Conduct awareness campaigns about SDGs and sustainability.
- Encourage universities and colleges to promote sustainable entrepreneurship.
- Provide financial incentives and subsidies for green startups.

- d) Organize startup exhibitions and sustainability fairs.
- e) Integrate sustainability education into school and college curricula.

10. Conclusion

Startups have emerged as key drivers of sustainable development by offering innovative solutions to environmental, economic, and social challenges. The study reveals that public awareness about startups in Coimbatore is relatively high, but awareness about the connection between startups and SDGs is still developing. Strengthening public awareness, policy support, and academic engagement can enhance the role of startups in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. With increasing public participation and sustainable entrepreneurship, cities like Coimbatore can become important contributors to India's sustainable development journey.

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