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The State of Knowledge on Sustainable Development Goal 16: An Overview and Trend Reflection of Academic Writings Published in Thai Journals Online (Thai-JO) between 2015 and 2025

Peerawat Tanseesaeng^{1*} and Suphakarn Sophaporn²

¹Bachelor's degree of Political Science Program, Udon Thani Education Center, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

²Udon Thani Education Center, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

E-Mail: ¹*S67123501005@ssru.ac.th, ²Suphakarn.so@ssru.ac.th

Abstract

This study aims to examine the state of knowledge concerning Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) through academic writings published in Thai Journals Online (Thai-JO) between 2015 and 2025. It employs a descriptive survey approach within a qualitative research design. The study primarily adopts documentary research to analyze academic writings related to SDG 16, combined with descriptive statistical analysis to capture overall patterns and emerging trends.

The findings reveal a total of 566 academic writings related to SDG 16, with the year 2024 recording the highest number of academic writings. When categorized by dimension, writings focusing on the Strong Institutions were the most prevalent, followed by those on the Justice, while the Peace received the least scholarly attention. At sub-goal level, SDG 16.b—promoting and enforcing non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development—was the most frequently addressed, whereas SDG 16.8—broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance—was the least discussed. Across specific issues, institutional transparency appeared most frequently, while child exploitation was the least examined topic.

Overall, this study not only illustrates the landscape of academic engagement with SDG 16 in Thailand but also highlights key research trends and knowledge gaps. The findings provide an empirical foundation to inform public policy design and guide future research directions for scholars, government agencies, and policymakers in advancing Thailand's sustainable development agenda.

Keywords: Strong Institutions, Justice, Peace

1. Introduction

The twenty-first century has brought about complex and interrelated challenges that transcend traditional boundaries. In response to these multidimensional dynamics, the United Nations (UN) established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the ambition of balancing economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability within the 2015–2030 timeframe (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

Thailand has integrated the SDGs into its development planning at all levels since 2015—ranging from the 20-Year National Strategy (2018–2037), master plans under the national strategy, and the National Economic and Social Development Plans, to ministerial and local development plans. Moreover, Thai academia has produced a substantial body of literature on public administration and public policy (Sophaorn & Akkasaeng, 2019; Sophaorn et al., 2022), including a growing number of studies related to SDG 16. Yet, the country continues to face persistent structural inequalities across multiple dimensions and recurrent political instability over successive decades.

Despite this extensive policy and academic engagement, there remains a lack of systematic review and meta-analytical understanding that captures the trajectories, directions, and intensity of academic knowledge concerning SDG 16 (Wong, 2021; Phongpaichit & Baker, 2022). This gap raises a crucial question: Why does Thailand continue to experience such enduring structural and political challenges despite the widespread adoption of the SDGs across its planning and academic frameworks?

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the state of knowledge on SDG 16—*Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions*—through an overview and trend analysis of academic writings published between 2015 and 2025. SDG 16 serves as a foundational goal that underpins the achievement of all other SDGs, particularly in addressing the structural inequalities and political instability that remain central to Thailand’s development trajectory.

2. Research Objective

To examine the state of knowledge on SDG 16 through academic writings published in Thai Journals Online (Thai-JO) between 2015 and 2025.

3. Literature Review and Framework of Analysis

This study adopts Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) as its analytical foundation. The **Peace** dimension is examined through Johan Galtung’s (1969) conceptualization of peace, which distinguishes between two interrelated forms. *Negative peace* refers to the mere absence of direct violence or temporary cessation of conflict, while structural injustice remains embedded in society. *Positive peace*, in contrast, denotes a genuine state of social harmony characterized by justice, equity, and the absence of structural violence.

The **Justice** dimension is interpreted in light of Amartya Sen’s (2009) *The Idea of Justice*, which broadens the understanding of justice beyond legal formalism. Sen’s *capability approach* links justice with substantive freedoms, equality, access to information, and the rule of law—emphasizing the reduction of injustice rather than the attainment of a perfect social order.

The **Strong Institutions** dimension is analyzed through the theoretical perspectives of Robert Putnam (1993) and Francis Fukuyama (2014). Putnam’s theory of *social capital* posits that institutional performance depends on the level of civic trust, participation, and shared norms within society. Fukuyama, meanwhile, argues that the strength of political institutions arises from a balanced development of three core elements: (1) state capacity, (2) the rule of law, and (3) accountability mechanisms. These notions are further reinforced by the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP, 1997) eight principles of *Good Governance*—

participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability.

In addition, this study employs the concept of **Locus and Focus** to complement the SDG 16 framework. In this context, *Locus* identifies the *sub-goal* under which each academic work—serving as a unit of analysis—is categorized, while *Focus* specifies the *Specific Issues* emphasized within that work. The locus–focus distinction was originally applied by Nicholas Henry (1975) in his seminal work *Paradigms of Public Administration* to classify the evolution of the field. In Thailand, Sophaporn (2019) similarly adopted this conceptual framework as a basis for analytical synthesis in his own research. Integrating this approach with SDG 16 enables a more nuanced understanding of how academic writings engage with peace, justice, and institutional development across sub-goals and specific issues.

4. Methodology

This research employs a **descriptive survey approach** within a **qualitative research design**. The study primarily utilizes documentary research to analyze academic writings related to Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16), while **descriptive statistical analysis** is applied to identify overall patterns and emerging trends. This approach enables both the interpretation of key conceptual themes and the identification of longitudinal trends across the dataset from 2015 to 2025.

4.1 Data Collection

Data were collected from academic writings—including research articles and academic articles—that are directly related to **Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16)**. All academic writings were sourced from the **Thai Journals Online (Thai-JO)** database and cover the period **between 2015 and 2025**. Each academic writing was treated as a unit of analysis in this study.

4.2 Data Management and Analysis

1) The identified academic writings were classified according to the **three core dimensions of SDG 16** using **content analysis** based on the following analytical framework:

- **The Peace Dimension:** Violence Reduction, Child Human Trafficking, Child Sexual Abuse, Child Exploitation, Violence Against Children, Money Laundering
- **The Justice Dimension:** Justice, Rule of Law, Legal Identity for All, Free Access to Information, Media Freedom, Law Enforcement
- **The Strong Institutions Dimension:** Institutional Corruption, Bribery, Institutional Transparency, Institutional Accountability, Institutional Civil Rights, Guarantees for Public Participation, Strengthening Developing Countries, Counter-Terrorism, Crime Prevention

2) **Descriptive statistical analysis**, including **frequency distributions** and **percentages**, was applied to illustrate the **overall landscape** and **emerging trends** across each **dimension, sub-goal, and specific issue**.

5. Results

The study identified a total of **566 academic writings** related to **Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16)** published in **Thai Journals Online (Thai-JO)** between **2015 and 2025**. These academic writings were categorized by year and dimension, as illustrated in the accompanying figure.

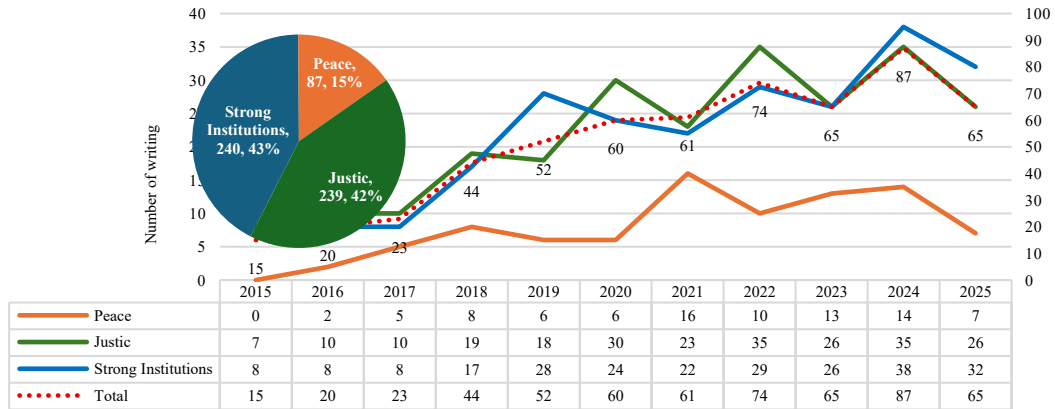


Figure illustrates the number of research articles and academic articles related to sustainable development goal 16, focusing on the themes of peace, justice, and strong institutions, categorized by year from 2015 to 2025.

From the figure, it can be interpreted that academic writings under the **Peace** dimension accounted for **87 academic writings (15%)**, those under the **Justice** dimension totaled **239 academic writings (42%)**, and those under the **Strong Institutions** dimension amounted to **240 academic writings (43%)**.

When analyzed by publication year, the year **2024** recorded the highest number of academic writings, with **87 academic writings**, while **2015** had the fewest, with only **15 academic writings**.

Furthermore, the volume of academic writings can be further examined across **specific issues** under each **sub-goal** and **dimension**, as summarized in the following table.

Table 1: Number of Academic Writings Categorized by Dimensions, Sub-goals, and Specific Issues

Dimensions	Sub-Goals	Specific Issues	Academic Writings
Peace (16.1, 16.2, 16.4) : 87 papers	16.1 (20 papers)	Violence Reduction	20
	16.2 (33 papers)	Child Human Trafficking	4
		Child Sexual Abuse	12
		Child Exploitation	2
		Violence Against Children	15
16.4 (34 papers)	Money Laundering	34	
Justice		Justice	31

Dimensions	Sub-Goals	Specific Issues	Academic Writings
(16.3, 16.9, 16.10, 16.b) : 239 papers	16.3 (61 papers)	Rule of Law	30
	16.9 (21 papers)	Legal Identity for All	21
	16.10 (13 papers)	Free Access to Information	9
		Media Freedom	4
	16.b (144 papers)	Law Enforcement	144
Strong Institutions (16.5, 16.6, 16.7, 16.8, 16.a) : 240 papers	16.5 (31 papers)	Institutional Corruption	20
		Bribery	11
	16.6 (104 papers)	Institutional Transparency	75
		Institutional Accountability	17
		Institutional Civil Rights	12
	16.7 (44 papers)	Guarantees for Public Participation	44
	16.8 (8 papers)	Strengthening Developing Countries	8
	16.a (53 papers)	Counter-Terrorism	11
Crime Prevention		42	
Total			566

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

A total of **566 academic writings** related to **Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16)** were published in **Thai Journals Online (Thai-JO)** between **2015 and 2025**. The year **2024** recorded the highest number of academic writings.

When categorized by dimension, academic writings on the **Strong Institutions** were the most prevalent, followed by those on the **Justice**, while works addressing the **Peace** were the least represented. At the sub-goal level, the most frequently discussed topic was **SDG 16.b**—promoting and enforcing non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development—with **144 academic writings**. In contrast, **SDG 16.8**, which focuses on enhancing the participation of developing countries in institutions of global governance, was the least studied, with only **8 academic writings**.

Regarding specific issues, **Law Enforcement** emerged as the most frequently addressed topic, appearing in **144 academic writings**, whereas **Child Exploitation** received the least attention, with only **2 academic writings**.

Overall, the findings reveal a clear pattern: Thai academic discourse on SDG 16 has placed greater emphasis on **institutional development and governance reform**, while research on **peacebuilding, child protection, and participatory justice** remains limited. This imbalance indicates key **knowledge gaps** that warrant further investigation.

The study therefore proposes the following recommendations.

Recent scholarly contributions from Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University also support these directions. For instance, *The Rights of Children and Women: An End to Injustice* (Aeknarajindawat et al., 2022) highlights the continuing challenges of protecting vulnerable groups and ensuring equitable justice, while *Factors Influencing Child Council Development for Strong Communities of Local Administrative Organizations in Chiang Mai Province* (Pankaew et al., 2024) demonstrates the role of participatory institutions in fostering civic engagement and community resilience. These studies exemplify how academic work at the local and institutional levels can inform national SDG 16 implementation.

1. Encourage research diversity — Promote a broader range of research on peacebuilding, justice for vulnerable groups, and human security to complement the existing institutional focus.
2. Foster cross-sector collaboration — Strengthen linkages between universities, government agencies, and civil society organizations to translate research evidence into actionable policy.
3. Develop national indicators for SDG 16 — Establish robust metrics to monitor progress on peace, justice, and institutional integrity at both national and local levels.
4. Enhance international academic partnerships — Support global cooperation and knowledge exchange to elevate Thailand's contribution to sustainable development and global governance.

By addressing these areas, Thailand can build a more coherent and evidence-based policy framework that not only advances SDG 16 but also strengthens the broader pursuit of sustainable and inclusive development.

Future studies should explore how academic insights can be operationalized through Thailand's SDG implementation mechanisms, bridging the gap between research and policy practice.

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