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Findings

In this research titled “*Efficacy of the Existing Energy and Environmental Laws of India: Protection and Promotion of Sustainable Development*,” I have critically examined the capacity of India’s existing legal and policy framework to ensure environmental protection and energy security while aligning with the broader goals of sustainable development. The study is rooted in the understanding that sustainable development, as defined by the Brundtland Commission, requires meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. However, despite constitutional mandates, legislative enactments, policy initiatives, and judicial pronouncements, the Indian approach to sustainability remains fragmented and inconsistent.

The research begins by exploring the theoretical and jurisprudential foundations of sustainable development, highlighting its evolution from early environmental movements to its formal adoption in international declarations and national policies. Drawing on both doctrinal and empirical methods, I evaluated key legislations such as the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, Forest Conservation Act, 1980, Electricity Act, 2003, and various renewable energy policies, along with judicial interventions that have shaped India’s environmental and energy jurisprudence. While these laws and rulings lay a strong foundation, they often fall short in implementation, integration, and responsiveness to emerging challenges such as climate change, unsustainable consumption, and energy inequality.

To strengthen the analysis, I conducted an empirical study involving legal experts and educated members of the public through structured questionnaires. This exercise was intended to assess not just legal effectiveness but also public awareness, participation, and perceptions of India’s commitment to sustainability. The results confirm a growing disconnection between legal provisions and practical realities, pointing toward systemic gaps that require urgent attention.

From this comprehensive inquiry, I arrived at several key findings. First, the existing legal framework lacks coherence and fails to integrate energy and environmental concerns in a unified manner. Laws are often reactive rather than preventive, and while many provisions echo sustainability principles, their enforcement is weak. Second, the government’s development agenda still tends to prioritize short-term economic growth, often measured through GDP, over

long-term environmental health. This imbalance is visible in infrastructure and industrial projects that receive environmental clearances despite evident ecological consequences. Third, consumer behavior and resource overutilization receive minimal legal scrutiny. While laws regulate industries, they neglect the role of individual consumption in resource depletion and pollution. Fourth, judicial interventions have been progressive in principle, introducing concepts such as intergenerational equity and polluter pays, but their application remains case-specific and inconsistent. Fifth, public awareness and participation in environmental governance are critically low. Most respondents in the general category lacked adequate knowledge about the legal provisions affecting them, highlighting a significant awareness gap. Sixth, vulnerable communities continue to face environmental and energy injustice, receiving minimal benefits from sustainability initiatives. Lastly, renewable energy policies, though promising, are still under-implemented, and their integration with local needs and sustainability goals is insufficient.

Based on these findings, I propose a set of targeted suggestions. There is an urgent need to codify sustainability principles into binding statutory provisions that go beyond policy rhetoric. Environmental and energy laws must be revised to adopt an integrated approach that reflects the interconnectedness of ecological, economic, and social dimensions. Implementation mechanisms must be strengthened by enhancing institutional capacity, transparency, and accountability, particularly in the areas of environmental clearances, public consultations, and compliance monitoring. Legal instruments should also focus on regulating consumption patterns by incentivizing sustainable practices and discouraging wasteful use of finite resources.

Further, public awareness campaigns and environmental education must be institutionalized from school to university levels, and community involvement in environmental governance should be strengthened through legal provisions for citizen suits, environmental audits, and localized grievance redressal. Energy laws must be aligned with the goals of accessibility, affordability, and ecological responsibility, especially in rural and underdeveloped regions. Policy frameworks should actively promote decentralization of renewable energy, facilitate public-private partnerships, and provide legal incentives for innovation in clean technologies. Judicial consistency in applying sustainability doctrines must also be reinforced through dedicated environmental benches and specialized training.

In conclusion, I submit that while India's energy and environmental laws show strong potential; their efficacy in promoting sustainable development is significantly hampered by structural, behavioral, and implementation-related challenges. Achieving sustainability is not solely a legal challenge but a societal transformation that requires coordinated efforts from lawmakers, institutions, industries, and the public. Only through such inclusive and future-oriented legal reform can we hope to ensure a just and sustainable legacy for the generations to come.