

## **Sustainability and ease of doing business in India : Challenges and influencing factors**

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### **Abstract**

A positive business environment is crucial for national development, and India's rapid growth positions it as a potential leader among global corporations. Recent reforms in India, aimed at improving the business landscape, are central to initiatives such as "Make in India." This research investigates the Ease of Doing Business (EODB) in India by examining the

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factors influencing it and the obstacles hindering its progress. The study employs a descriptive approach, integrating both primary and secondary data through an exploratory research design. A mixed-method approach is utilised, including a one-sample t-test to compare sample means to hypothesised values. Findings reveal a consensus on the need for improved global EODB rankings, with research highlighting the roles of policymakers, management, public education, and trust. Despite identifying certain grey areas in rankings, the necessity for continued improvement remains clear. The study underscores the importance of reforms such as the application of GST, the decommissioning of public sector undertakings, labour law reforms, and bureaucratic changes. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for economic self-sufficiency and shifted focus from consumption-based growth. Government initiatives are crucial for revitalising the economy and countering challenges posed by economic competition, particularly in healthcare research and development.

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**Subject Classification:** 62F12, 91B74.

**Keywords:** *Ease of doing business, Economic reforms, Government initiatives, Make in India, Self-sufficiency, Economic growth.*

## 1. Introduction

A positive business ambiance is decisive for nation's development. India, as one of the fastest-growing countries, has the potential to surpass global corporate leaders<sup>1</sup>. Through initiatives like "Make in India", "Housing for All", and "Smart Cities", India aims to transform its economy, empower its people, and create employment opportunities. In recent years, India has made progress in the World Bank's EODB rankings, but there is still room for improvement. The regulatory environment and the implementation of business-friendly policies are crucial for the growth of entrepreneurship and the overall progress of the country. Factors such as "starting a business, obtaining electricity, dealing with permits, land registration, credit accessibility, investor protection, tax payment, trade facilitation, contract enforcement, insolvency resolution, and labor regulations" play a significant role in shaping the business landscape in India [32] [23] [24] [16] [13] [1].

India, the second-most populous country in the world, is now well established as an entrepreneurial hub. The development of businesses relies heavily on policies, processes, and laws that facilitate doing business. The progress and development of a state are conditional on a business-friendly environment [6]. This research thus chose these variables to

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<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister has emphasized the importance of EODB as part of administration's success [19]

evaluate the difficulties and influential factors in the EODB [37] [34] [30] [14] [12] [15] [29] [3].

In addition to improving the regulatory environment and simplifying business processes, sustainability has emerged as a crucial aspect of a positive business environment. Sustainable development is important for long-term economic development and societal well-being. It encompasses not only environmental protection but also social equity and economic viability. India's approach to EODB must integrate sustainable practices to ensure that growth does not derive at the cost of degradation of the environment or social disparity [16] [4] [11] [35].

The Indian government has recognized the importance of sustainability through various initiatives. The "National Action Plan on Climate Change-NAPCC" outlines measures to encourage sustainable development and address environment modification. Furthermore, the Smart Cities initiative includes a focus on green infrastructure and sustainable urban planning. These efforts align with universal sustainability objectives like UN<sup>2</sup> "Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs", underlined the need for inclusive and sustainable economic growth [9] [5].

Businesses in India are increasingly adopting sustainable practices, recognizing that sustainability can be a driver of innovation and competitiveness. For instance, renewable energy projects, waste management systems, and sustainable supply chains are becoming more prevalent. These practices reduce environmental impact and enhance corporate reputation and compliance with international standards [25].

Indian administration [18] has prioritized EODB as a measure of success. The "Make in India" initiative, launched in September 2014, aims to stand-in revolution, increase skill development, guard intellectual property - IP, and build the finest manufacturing infrastructure [37]. Similarly, the Housing for All initiative targets providing affordable housing to all urban poor by 2022, while the Smart Cities initiative focuses on sustainable and inclusive urban development.

India's progress in the World Bank's EODB rankings reflects these efforts. The country moved up 14 spots to the 63rd position in the 2020 rankings, a significant improvement from previous years [37]. However, challenges remain in stretch like imposing contracts, construction permits, and start new trade. Addressing these issues requires continuous policy reform and effective implementation [34] [30].

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<sup>2</sup> "United Nations"

In conclusion, a positive business environment is essential for India's development. By focusing on regulatory improvements, business-friendly policies, and sustainable practices, India can enhance its global competitiveness and ensure long-term prosperity. The integration of sustainability into the EODB framework will not only support economic growth but also promote environmental stewardship and social equity [28].

## 2. Literature Review

The literature on EODB in India highlights several critical aspects and suggests areas for improvement. The following review consolidates notable research findings on this topic.

Bhanushali [2] establishes an association between FDI<sup>3</sup> flows and various EODB parameters. The study suggests that focusing on construction permits, minority interest protection, contract enforcement, and insolvency resolution will attract more FDI, underlining the need for comprehensive policy reforms in these areas [2].

Raval [27] emphasizes on the "paying taxes" indicator of EODB in India and other South-Asian countries. The study highlights that India lags behind smaller economies or countries such as Maldives, Nepal, Afghanistan, and Bhutan, in terms of the paying tax indicator, suggesting the need for tax reforms to simplify compliance and reduce the tax burden on businesses [27].

Gujarati [7] challenges the notion that EODB rankings reflect the blimey of an economy. The author argues that the rankings promote efficient implementation of existing laws rather than deregulation, calling for a deeper understanding of the impact of these rankings on economic policy and business environments [7].

Gupta and Bhardwaj [8] investigate the influence of labor market regulations on business performance in India. The study suggests that flexible labor laws can lead to higher productivity and better compliance, advocating for labor reforms to enhance EODB [8].

Jain [10] explores the impact of digital infrastructure on EODB in India. The study finds that the adoption of digital technologies in government services significantly enhances business operations and recommends further investments in digital infrastructure to improve overall business conditions [10].

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<sup>3</sup> Foreign Direct Investment

Mukherjee [22] analyzes the parameters of EODB and suggests steps to improve India's ranking, aiming for a top 50 position within the next three years. The study highlights areas like "starting a business", "construction permits", and "enforcing contracts" as key focus areas for reform [22].

Rao [26] examine the role of legal and regulatory reforms in improving India's EODB ranking. The study concludes that substantial progress can be achieved by simplifying legal procedures and reducing bureaucratic red tape, thereby making India a more attractive destination for investors [26].

Singh [33] examines the relation between FDI and 6 variables related to EODB. The study concludes a deep association between FDI and considering variables, emphasizing importance of improving these variables to attract more FDI [33].

Sheth [31] examines the EODB reports from the past 3 years and emphasizes the importance of a single window mechanism to streamline processes and generate investor confidence. The study suggests that a single window system can meaningfully lessen cost as well as time associated to, opening and operating trade in India [31].

**Conclusion from ROL:** The literature review indicates that while India has made significant strides in improving its business environment, several areas still require attention. Key recommendations from the reviewed studies include tax reforms, improving digital infrastructure, simplifying legal and regulatory procedures, and enhancing labor market flexibility. These improvements are crucial for India to achieve a more favorable position in the EODB rankings and to foster a more robust business ecosystem.

### 3. Objectives and research methodology

The study aims to comprehensively analyze the factors influencing the EODB in India and identify primary challenges, with a focus on incorporating sustainable practices. By examining government initiatives, cost effectiveness, production capacity, and technology availability, the research seeks to understand their impact on the business environment. The inclusion of sustainability considerations in each hypothesis ensures that the study addresses modern business and economic development aspects, aligning with global trends towards sustainable growth.

**Government Initiatives:** This set of hypotheses will determine if government policies and programs, particularly those aimed at fostering

sustainable business practices, significantly impact the business environment [21] [36].

**Cost Effectiveness:** These hypotheses will evaluate whether the financial efficiency of business operations, including sustainable practices, influences the ease of doing business.

**Production Capacity:** This set of hypotheses will assess whether challenges related to production capacity, especially in adopting sustainable practices, affect business operations.

**Technology Availability:** These hypotheses will explore if the availability and adoption of technology, crucial for sustainable business practices, are significant challenges to improving the business environment.

By testing these hypotheses, the study aims to provide actionable insights that can inform policy decisions and improve the EODB in India, while emphasizing the importance of sustainability in business operations.

The objectives are as follows:

- To identify factors influencing the EODB index in India, including integration of sustainable practices.
- To identify the challenges that hinder the improvement of the EODB index in India, focusing on incorporate sustainability into business policies and practices.

This research uses a mixed-method approach, using primary as well as secondary data.

### 3.1 *Primary Data*

**Questionnaire:** Questionnaire was floated to accumulate “primary data” from business professionals and entrepreneurs of Delhi/NCR. The questionnaire includes questions related to various aspects of the EODB in India incorporated.

**Sample Size and Selection:** This pilot study initially included 128 respondents selected through simple random sampling across various sectors and regions of Delhi/NCR. However, we were left with only 30 valid responses after data cleaning and removing incomplete responses. Due to the reduced sample size of 30, we employed the t-test for further analysis to ensure the robustness and accuracy of our statistical comparisons.

### 3.2 Secondary Data

**Sources:** Secondary data is gathered from various reputable sources, including academic journals, online articles, government reports, and official publications such as the World Bank's Doing Business reports.

**Literature Review:** A comprehensive review of existing literature provides context and supports the findings from the primary data.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

**Software:** Primary data is analyzed through<sup>4</sup> SPSS.

**Statistical Tests:** Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and t-tests are employed to inspect the relationship between variables to assess hypotheses.

### 3.4 Hypotheses

#### 1. Government Initiatives:

**Null Hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ):** Government initiatives do not influence the EODB in India, particularly integrating sustainable business practices.

**Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_{11}$ ):** Government initiatives influence the EODB in India, particularly integrating sustainable business practices.

#### 2. Cost Effectiveness:

**Null Hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ):** Cost effectiveness does not influence the EODB in India, especially when incorporating sustainable practices.

**Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_{12}$ ):** Cost effectiveness influences the EODB in India, especially when incorporating sustainable practices.

#### 3. Production Capacity:

**Null Hypothesis ( $H_{03}$ ):** Low production capacity is not a significant challenge to EODB in India, even adoption of sustainable practices.

**Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_{13}$ ):** Low production capacity is a significant challenge to EODB in India, especially with adoption of sustainable practices.

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<sup>4</sup> "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 19"

#### 4. Technology Availability:

**Null Hypothesis ( $H_{04}$ ):** The non-availability of advanced technology does not hinder EODB in India, including implementation of sustainable practices.

**Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_{14}$ ):** The non-availability of advanced technology hinders EODB in India, especially in implementation of sustainable practices.

#### 3.5 Testing of "Cronbach's Alpha"

To assess the internal consistency of our questionnaire, after collecting the data, we conducted "Cronbach's alpha" test on the 4 questions and calculated the value using the following formula:

$$\alpha = \frac{N}{N-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum \sigma_i^2}{\sigma_T^2} \right)$$

Where:

- N is the number of items
- $\sigma_i^2$  the variance of each item.
- $\sigma_T^2$  is the total variance of the sum of all items.

At 95 percent confidence interval the value obtained is 0.75, indicating an acceptable level of reliability and suggesting that the items in the questionnaire are reasonably consistent in measuring the intended construct.

#### 4. Analysis of data

One-sample test is applied in various research scenarios, such as testing the effectiveness of a new drug, evaluating the impact of an educational intervention, or assessing the quality of a manufacturing process. By comparing the sample data to a known or hypothesized population parameter, researchers can make inferences about the broader population.

In summary, a one-sample test is a powerful statistical method for comparing a sample to a known or hypothesized population value. One-sample statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, provide essential descriptive information about the sample, aiding in the interpretation of the test results. This methodology is fundamental in research for making



data-driven decisions and validating hypotheses about population parameters.

#### 4.1 Testing of Hypothesis

For testing hypothesis for all 4 aspect the “One-Sample Statistics” has been performed (Table 1) as well as “One-Sample Test” has been calculated (Table 2).

##### Hypothesis 1:

The findings from “one-sample t-test” (Table1) show that “mean score” of 3.7400 for government initiatives and schemes for businesses integrating sustainable practices is different significantly from 0, with “t-value” [23.209] and “p-value” [0.0007]. As “p-value” is < the “significance level” of 0.05 (Table2), we reject “null hypothesis” and accept “alternative hypothesis”. This indicates that government initiatives and schemes significantly influence the EODB in India, particularly in the integration of sustainable practices. Therefore, the research supports the notion that

**Table 1**  
**One-Sample Statistics**

| Test result for Hypothesis 1                                                                               |    |        |                |                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
|                                                                                                            | N  | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| Government initiatives and schemes for businesses integrating sustainable practices                        | 30 | 3.7400 | 1.13946        | .16114          |
| Test result for Hypothesis 2                                                                               |    |        |                |                 |
| Cost effectiveness in starting a business, including sustainable practices                                 | 30 | 3.4800 | 1.35887        | .19217          |
| Test result for Hypothesis 3                                                                               |    |        |                |                 |
| Limited resources (human and economic) leading to low production capacity, including sustainable practices | 30 | 3.5400 | 1.35842        | .19211          |
| Test result for Hypothesis 4                                                                               |    |        |                |                 |
| International level latest technology not available, including sustainable practices                       | 30 | 3.8200 | 1.15511        | .16336          |

Source: Compilation by author from primary data

government efforts, especially those promoting sustainability, positively impact the business environment in India.

### **Hypothesis 2**

The findings from “one-sample t-test” (Table1) show that “mean score” of 3.4800 for government initiatives and schemes for Cost effectiveness in starting a business is different significantly from 0, with “t-value” [18.109] and “p-value” [0.00002]. As “p-value” is < the “significance level” of 0.05 (Table 2), we reject “null hypothesis” and accept “alternative hypothesis”. This indicates that cost effectiveness, particularly when incorporating sustainable practices, significantly influences the EODB in India. Therefore, the research supports the notion that economic efficiency, especially in the context of sustainability, positively impacts business operations.

### **Hypothesis 3**

The findings from “one-sample t-test” (Table1) show that “mean score” of 3.5400 for low production capacity, including sustainable practices, with “t-value” [18.427] and “p-value” [0.00004]. As “p-value” is < the “significance level” of 0.05 (Table 2), we reject “null hypothesis” and accept “alternative hypothesis”. This indicates that low production capacity, particularly due to limited resources necessary for sustainable practices, significantly impacts the EODB in India. Consequently, the research supports the assertion that limited manufacturing capacity poses a substantial challenge to conducting business effectively, especially in the context of sustainability.

### **Hypothesis 4**

The findings from “one-sample t-test” (Table1) show that “mean score” of 3.8200 for the non-availability of international level latest technology, including sustainable practices, is significantly different from 0, with a “t-value” [23.384] and “p-value” [0.00001]. As “p-value” is < the “significance level” of 0.05 (Table2), we reject “null hypothesis” and accept “alternative hypothesis”. This indicates that the non-availability of advanced technology, particularly for implementing sustainable practices, significantly hinders the EODB in India. Therefore, the research supports the notion that the unavailability of cutting-edge technology is a significant barrier to conducting business easily, especially in the context of sustainability.

**Table 2**  
**One-Sample Test**

| <b>Test result for Hypothesis 1</b>                                                                        |                       |           |                            |                            |                                                              |              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
|                                                                                                            | <b>Test Value = 0</b> |           |                            |                            |                                                              |              |
|                                                                                                            | <b>t</b>              | <b>df</b> | <b>Sig.<br/>(2-tailed)</b> | <b>Mean<br/>Difference</b> | <b>95%<br/>Confidence<br/>Interval of the<br/>Difference</b> |              |
|                                                                                                            |                       |           |                            |                            | <b>Lower</b>                                                 | <b>Upper</b> |
| Government initiatives and schemes for businesses integrating sustainable practices                        | 23.209                | 29        | .0007                      | 3.74000                    | 3.4162                                                       | 4.0638       |
| <b>Test result for Hypothesis 2</b>                                                                        |                       |           |                            |                            |                                                              |              |
| Cost-effectiveness in starting a business, including sustainable practices                                 | 18.109                | 29        | .00002                     | 3.48000                    | 3.0938                                                       | 3.8662       |
| <b>Test result for Hypothesis 3</b>                                                                        |                       |           |                            |                            |                                                              |              |
| Limited resources (human and economic) leading to low production capacity, including sustainable practices | 18.427                | 29        | .00004                     | 3.54000                    | 3.1539                                                       | 3.9261       |
| <b>Test result for Hypothesis 4</b>                                                                        |                       |           |                            |                            |                                                              |              |
| International level latest technology not available, including sustainable practices                       | 23.384                | 29        | .00001                     | 3.82000                    | 3.4917                                                       | 4.1483       |

*Source:* Compilation by author from primary data

## 5. Discussion

The analysis of factors influencing the EODB in India reveals several significant insights. The integration of sustainability into business practices and policies is a crucial consideration that impacts various aspects of the business environment. Our hypotheses focused on government initiatives,

cost effectiveness, production capacity, and technology availability, incorporating sustainability as a key component [20].

**Government Initiatives and Sustainability:** The results indicate that government initiatives and schemes significantly influence the EODB. The emphasis on sustainable practices within these initiatives shows a positive correlation with business facilitation. Government policies that promote green energy, waste management, and sustainable supply chains are perceived to ease business operations, suggesting that sustainability is becoming an integral part of the regulatory landscape.

**Cost Effectiveness and Sustainable Practices:** Cost effectiveness is another critical factor influencing EODB. The findings reveal that integrating sustainability does not necessarily increase costs; instead, it can lead to long-term savings and efficiencies. Businesses that adopt energy-efficient technologies, reduce waste, and optimize resource use tend to experience lower operational costs over time, which supports the hypothesis that cost-effective sustainable practices enhance business ease.

**Production Capacity and Sustainable Resources:** Low production capacity, particularly due to limited sustainable resources, is identified as a significant challenge. Companies that invest in sustainable production methods, such as renewable energy sources and sustainable raw materials, can enhance their production capacities. This approach not only addresses resource constraints but also aligns with global sustainability standards, thereby bettering EODB.

**Technology Availability and Sustainable Innovations:** The availability of advanced technology, especially those that support sustainable development, significantly impacts the ease of doing business. The adoption of cutting-edge technologies such as IoT for energy management, AI for optimizing supply chains, and blockchain for transparency in sourcing sustainable materials is crucial. The data supports the notion that businesses leveraging such technologies find it easier to comply with regulations and meet market demands.

## 6. Conclusion

The study concludes that sustainable practices are increasingly becoming a determinant of the EODB in India. Government initiatives promoting sustainability, cost-effective sustainable practices, enhanced production capacities through sustainable resources, and the availability of sustainable technologies all contribute positively to the business environment. The rejection of the null hypotheses across all factors

confirms the significant influence of these variables on the ease of doing business.

## 7. Future scope

Future research can build on this pilot study by expanding the sample size and utilizing a more extensive questionnaire. Detailed sector-specific analyses are needed to understand how sustainability impacts the ease of doing business in various industries, such as manufacturing, services, and agriculture. Longitudinal studies could track the long-term effects of sustainable practices on business operations and their contribution to economic growth. Comparative studies with other emerging economies would help identify best practices and areas for improvement in integrating sustainability. Additionally, investigating the influence of global sustainability policies and agreements<sup>5</sup> on India's business environment is crucial. Examining barriers to adopting advanced sustainable technologies and proposing solutions to enhance technology integration in Indian businesses could further drive progress. Comprehensive policy recommendations for government and industry stakeholders would also be beneficial in fostering a more sustainable and business-friendly environment in India. By addressing these areas in future research will provide deeper insights into the dynamics of sustainability and business facilitation, ultimately contributing to a more conducive environment for economic development in India.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, "Paris Agreement and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)"

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*Received April, 2024*