



Pakistan Journal of Economic Studies

ISSN (E) 2708-1486 (P) 2708-1478

Volume 8: Issue 1 January-March 2025

Journal homepage: <https://journals.iub.edu.pk/index.php/pjes/index>

Women's Odyssey for Economic and Sustainable Development as Non-Academic Communities: A Photovoice Approach

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ARTICLE DETAILS

History:

Accepted: 20 March 2025

Available Online: 21 March 2025

Keywords:

ECONOMIC

SUSTAINABILITY

PHOTOVOICE

WOMEN

NON-ACADEMICS

JEL Codes:

3-5 JEL Codes as per Keywords

JEL Code 1

JEL Code 2

JEL Code 3

ABSTRACT

Objective: This research explores the perspectives and experiences of women in promoting economic sustainability within non-academic communities.**Research Gap:** Employing the photovoice methodology, the study aims to empower women to share their unique insights and identify potential challenges and opportunities. By focusing on non-academic populations, this research challenges the prevailing narrative that sustainability is primarily driven by the educated elite. It highlights the critical role of women in fostering economic resilience and sustainable development among non-educated.**Design/Methodology/Approach:** This qualitative research is based on the unique methodology of Art Based Research (ABR), named as photovoice. The objective is to showcase selected photography as a form of art and beauty found in nearby community in all its colors to bridge gaps, connect minds and build consciousness.**The Main Findings:** The study's findings, based on women's photographic narratives, reveal a range of challenges and prospects for promoting economic sustainability in non-academic settings. Reflexive Thematic Analysis helped categorize major themes named as Sustainability Challenges in Non-Academic Communities and also Potential Sustainability Achievements in Non-Academic Communities, both further comprises of several categories and codes, providing clearer insights.**Theoretical / Practical Implications of the Findings:** These insights can inform targeted interventions and policies aimed at empowering women and fostering economic growth in underserved communities. Findings are worth communicating and considerable for stakeholders and government officials both at national and international level because the community that is educated needs to connect those, where it is really deficient.**Originality/Value:** All content is original and intended for research, educational, and non-commercial purposes. Also allowing the scenes to speak for themselves and inviting viewers to find their own connections, narratives and practices.

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Recommended Citation:

Irshad, R., Sarwar, N. & Naeem, M. A. (2025). Women's Odyssey for Economic and Sustainable Development as Non Academic Communities: A Photovoice Approach. *Pakistan Journal of Economic Studies*, 8(1), 56-71. Available at: <https://journals.iub.edu.pk/index.php/pjes/article/view/3380>Corresponding Author's email address: najia.sarwar@gscwu.edu.pk

1. Introduction

Sustained development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Therefore, there should be the active participation of all sectors of society in this concept. Women's empowerment is necessary in sustainable development since through them, some voice will be

provided to air their concerns and be part of the decision-making processes (Komuhiimbo 2015). Involving the illiterate population, especially women, demonstrates greater insight into most issues related to their local environments.

Consciously, women's voices are essential in building habits that may benefit sustainable practices, as women are usually the ones facing degradation. In Pakistan, for instance, where most main household roles fall on women, bringing women's thought on board in the provision of environmental education can significantly boost sustainability efforts (Imran et al. 2021). Addressing economic dependencies and inequalities empowers women to be productive and perform more of their part in sustainable community development initiatives (Kimor, 2013).

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This research aligns well with Social Capital Theory and Self-Determination theory, both theories provide a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how women in non-academic communities navigate economic challenges and explains motivation towards sustainable economic and social development.

1.1.1 Social Capital Theory and Women's Economic Empowerment

Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000) argues that economic and social well-being are strengthened through relationships, networks, and community engagement. Women in non-academic communities often rely on social networks, mutual support systems, and collective action to achieve financial stability and sustainability. These networks enhance women's economic resilience and foster sustainable practices such as cooperative farming, ethical trade, and local sustainability initiatives.

1.1.2 Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) explains how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations drive human behavior. According to SDT, individuals strive for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are essential psychological needs for personal growth and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Women in non-academic communities strive for autonomy by seeking financial independence and gaining decision-making power within their households and communities. Their engagement in small businesses, community work, or entrepreneurship enhances their competence, allowing them to develop essential skills, build confidence, and contribute meaningfully to economic growth. Additionally, relatedness, as explained by Social Capital Theory, plays a crucial role in their journey, as social connections enable women to collaborate, support each other, and create opportunities for collective success. These three psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—drive women's economic empowerment and sustainable development, fostering resilience and long-term financial stability.

This research approach aligns with the principles of participatory research, allowing women to reclaim their narratives and drive the discussions towards the economic and societal changes they seek.

1.2 Research Objective

To examine the perceptions and experiences of women of Bahawalpur, regarding challenges and potential prospects of sustainability, particularly in context of non-academic community.

1.3 Research Question

What are the visual and narrative perspectives of young women of Bahawalpur region on raising awareness of sustainability among non-academic populations?

2. Literature Review

Gupta et al. (2020) further indicate that enhancing the mobility and leadership of women enhances health improvement, most importantly, strengthens the capabilities in communities, thereby improving sustainable development. The above finding is supported by similar conclusions; through collective action, women's collectives engage in sustainable practices and thus address their social realities to embrace grassroots

sustainability (Dhal et al., 2020). Cultural setting further will be supported by literature in relation to availability of resources to women and their role during the undertaking of economic activities.

Moreover, this is further reiterated that what essentially constitutes the role of women in business as an accelerator for better economic activity by pointing out what obstacles are encountered and what strategies need to be devised in order to craft effective ecosystems to facilitate the women entrepreneur (Bhuvaneswari, 2024). The use of mobile technology in women's entrepreneurship enables avenues for enhancing gender equality and long-term economic stability (Karyotaki et al., 2022). Involvement of women in economic development cooperatives has been shown to enhance their agency while also having a positive effect on their economic outcomes.

Raniga (2016), in research on women's experience in economic development cooperatives, shows that this is the same platform that gives women power because of power equalization and creates an amenable space for economic engagement. Also, literature suggests that women entrepreneurs are the ones who play an essential role in promoting sustainable practices. In this respect, Barrachina et al. (2021) contend that female-owned enterprises are even more focused on sustainability-for instance, they reflect their contribution to economic development besides the socio-economic activity.

This statement is even more relevant to the Pakistani context in which women entrepreneurs are increasingly becoming the most important drivers of economic growth. Such engagement in sustainable entrepreneurship may not only meet local economic needs but also contribute to global sustainability aims while perhaps working towards improving the socio-economic fabrics in their communities. Furthermore, Naveed et al. (2023) show that direct relationships exist between women's economic rights and economic growth; therefore, improvements in those rights may be indirectly regarded as having positive effects on the economy. It will, thereby, help promote the policy interventions capable of improving women's economic rights in Pakistan and of facilitating their participation in the different economic sectors, thus becoming a pathway towards sustainable development. Literature also states that involving illiterate ladies of Pakistan is highly essential in sustaining with environmental education and that it is relevant to all the human beings (Imran et al., 2021).

To put it in short words, Sharma et al (2023) also highlights that rural women of Pakistan be integrated in development programs like sustainable development so that the development plan can be made more inclusive and gender-sensitive: Involving both educated as well as uneducated populations. The literature shows that photovoice is an important method in empowering women by allowing them to share their experiences and opinions that contribute to social involvement and activism (Budig et al., 2018; Coemans et al., 2017; Huma et al., 2020). Various researchers found that it is beyond comprehension and understanding through participation, providing an opportunity for those participating to voice their requirements and expectations (Mtuy et al., 2021; Mwalabu et al., 2021, Röger-Offergeld, 2023).

It's an important study because there is a need for increased awareness of sustainable development among the end non-academic populations. A large number of our country belongs to that group, which is not aware of the SDGs. The need lies in taking steps at every level, rather than limiting it only to academics. This article, above all, talks about women's perception regarding raising and nurturing that needs sustainability to every level, from slum to elite.

Findings of studies reveal that photovoice in community-based participatory research strengthens the women's agency and influence over decision-making in sustainable development (Filho et al., 2019; Payne, 2023). Literature depicts the idea that women are empowered through participatory research and it contributes more towards the better understanding of difficulties and solutions concerning sustainable development (Ardrey et al., 2021; Khanal, 2023).

1.4 Research Gap

As discussed earlier, photovoice eventually enables participants to describe and detail their stories and knowledge. By engaging women in the process of capture and storying of their experiences, photovoice can

foster a sense of agency and ownership to the storyline (Lorente-Echeverría et al., 2023), thus identified as methodologic gap in the given area of research. An initiative such as photovoice has been used to positive effect in bringing the contributions of women in environmental stewardship and community resilience to the policy and practice attention of local and national levels (Lorente-Echeverría et al., 2023; Samad & Alharthi, 2022).

3. Methods

3.1 Justification for Unique Methodology

In exploring the unique methodology of photovoice for this research idea, it is essential to articulate the benefits of employing an art-based research methodology. Photovoice, fundamentally rooted in participatory action research (PAR), serves to empower marginalized groups, promoting social change through visual representation, dialogue, and community engagement. Using photovoice as a methodology for studying women's journeys towards economic and sustainable development not only enables participants to express their lived experiences visually but also fosters community dialogue and empowerment.

The methodology is particularly effective due to its participatory nature, allowing participants to actively engage as co-researchers in the process of data collection and analysis. Foster-Fishman et al. (2005) highlight that photovoice facilitates participant empowerment by fostering personal reflection, dialogue, and shared experiences among community members, which is critical for social development. Similarly, Strack et al. (2004) find that engaging youth through photovoice encourages meaningful participation, enabling participants to share their perspectives on issues affecting their communities. The visual aspect of photovoice encourages participants to articulate their experiences and narratives, making their voices visible and influential to stakeholders and policymakers (Breny & Lombardi, 2017).

The ethical framework within which photovoice operates also supports its relevance to the proposed research. Röger-Offergeld et al. (2023) discuss the importance of ethical considerations in community-based participatory research that involves vulnerable populations—something that photovoice addresses through informed consent and co-ownership of the data produced. Furthermore, the flexibility of photovoice allows for adaptations to specific community contexts, ensuring culturally relevant and inclusive research outcomes (Bennett et al., 2019).

3.2 Participants

This study is a form of art based research which is actually a community research. Hence considering the requirement of the particular research, population is taken as community members. Volunteer community members were considered the participants. The entire study includes young women only, a total of eight active participants. Out of these, six were community participants and additional two participants were the travelers and researchers, residing in cities of Bahawalpur region, Pakistan.

3.3 Research Design

This cross-sectional study is qualitative in nature, based on the unique methodology of Art Based Research (ABR) because of interest in photovoice as a community approach, best suitable to raise voices of women of the community.

3.4 Data Collection

Collected data is in the form of photographs and narrations. Sight photographs were selected for analysis, and were taken by researchers and other participants of the study.

3.5 Procedure

This study was actually planned considering a particular theme of the conference of Bahawalpur region. Theme and methodology of the study was finalized considering the conference areas, interests and expertise of the researchers and willingness of the participants. Many participants were requested as per their interest in the research. Almost 80 % of the participants found the idea and methodology unique and attractive so they readily provided their willingness. The plan was finalized through review of literature, which was initiated by clicking photos first.

Multiple narrations are attached with each photograph as shown by figures; which will be mentioned in next chapter. First narration is original, provided by the one who have taken photograph and also part of narration is provided by another participant, and with a purpose to achieve triangulation. A total of 14 photographs were collected, 11 of which were selected for current study. Three photographs were discarded because of less relevance and mutual concern among all the participants. Out of 11, 8 photographs were selected to be rich in content for further analysis. While three photographs were included in the chapter of discussion for further exploration.

Ethical standards regarding snapping were followed. The participants were properly instructed by a visual art practitioner and guided by taking pictures and narrating well, fulfilling the ethical requirement of photography. Participants were also given trials of photography before photographing for actual study.

Careful dealing with data, made researchers able to title the photographs, and to identify underlying themes from the narrations of the participants. Resulted ideas from the narrations and photographs were thematically analyzed and classified into useful categories of information.

4. Findings of the Study

Research participants received clear instructions on photography and related ethical guidelines. They not only captured images but also wrote accompanying narratives that aligned with the research objectives.

Figure 1: World beyond the Written Words



The picture was taken near Darbar Hazrat Mehboob Subhani R.A (cultural & community engagement center). For those who are unable to read the written messages, we should conduct campaigns that visually explain how to create a healthy environment. Simple language speeches, workshops, videos, and activities can guide and involve this community in practical skills. Engaging the leaders and elderly of this community is crucial for driving positive change.

Figure 2: Invading Sustainability



The picture was taken at *Rainbow Lake, Domel, GB* (public tourist spot). Sustainability is crucial in preserving the beautiful environment depicted in this picture. Plastic waste is one of the biggest threats to our environment, as it takes hundreds of years to decompose. This waste often ends up in oceans, lakes, and rivers, harming wildlife and disrupting ecosystems. By reducing plastic use, and encouraging visitors to respect nature, Sustainable tourism ensures that future generations can enjoy such breathtaking landscapes. It's all about finding a balance between enjoying nature and protecting it!

Figure 3: In the Heart of Desert



The picture was taken in Cholistan Desert (community living settlement). In the heart of the desert, a child stands next to their loyal animal companion, both taking in the breathtaking landscape. The desert ecosystem is also very delicate. The plants and animals living there depend on each other. If we leave plastic waste like cans and bottles behind, it can lead to pollution, which harms the living creatures there and degrades their habitat.

Figure 4: Roadsides



This photo was collected from Chanan Pir Mela, Rohi, Cholistan desert (community engagement event). In the photo, a person stands next to a vibrant pile of sweets and treats. In this picture, a laborer is selling sweet candies and toffees on the roadside. While this is indeed a good source of income for him, it is not beneficial for our environment and health. Open food items on the roadside are exposed to dust and germs, which can be harmful. Additionally, the use of plastic bags contributes significantly to environmental damage. Both of these

practices are detrimental to our environment.

Figure 5: Sweetness to Meet Ends



This photo was collected from Chanan Pir Mela, Cholistan Desert (cultural community engagement event). A significant portion of the population, often unaware of the environmental consequences, overlooks the impact of their daily actions. Excessive use of plastic and low-quality products contributes significantly to a lack of sustainability. These individuals should not only be informed about sustainable development but also provided with alternative methods to promote sustainability.

Figure 6: Perfect Imbalance



The picture was collected from Sadda Bahar plants Narsury near The Islamia University of Bahawalpur. Placing plants in Plastic has more disadvantages than advantages as plastic itself is not safe. For the flowers to grow, it's better to expose them to sunlight as much as you can and remove them from plastic bags for proper ventilation and growth! As this green life is very significant, so using plastic bags is a great contradiction that we face. This picture depicts contradiction, promoting life at the same time limiting life. Plants in the pot shows life whereas plastic around the pots is reducing life at larger end of sustainability. This message needs to be realized by every member of the community as sustainability can never be achieved by efforts of the leaders unless it is conveyed to root level individuals.

Figure 7: Contradiction



The picture was taken near *Tomb of Javindi Bibi, Uch Sharif* (shop near market place) .This portrays the unhygienic conditions of rural areas. Everything is scattered, the same utensils are used, open plastic bottles are everywhere, and people are not wearing gloves, all of which increase the risk of unsanitary conditions and negatively impact individual health after consuming such food.

Figure 8: Global Issue



This picture was taken near Kargun Tyube, Bokhtar in southwestern Tajikistan (Sunday Bazar activity) depicts an active Central Asian women’s community representation that relies on selling food products or snacks for their livelihood in a Sunday market. However, she may not be aware of the environmental impact their display practices have on both present and future generations. It's the responsibility of the educated community to raise awareness about the disadvantages of plastic and promote the use of eco-friendly products. Canvas or woven bags are readily available, practical alternatives to plastic. Additionally, guidance on plastic bag recycling should be provided.

Given below is the table that is generated by the researchers based on all the narratives provided by the participants. The given table is another form of qualitative research; that relates content analyses. Based on interpretative thematic analyses, major themes of the ideas from narrations were classified into meaningful groups. These groups were then classified into major themes “Problems” and “Solutions”.

Table 1: Voice of Women Derived from the Narrations of the Photographs

Problems	Frequency	Solutions	Frequency
Overuse of plastic	5 (Fig. 1, Fig. 2, Fig. 5, Fig. 6, Fig. 8)	Reduce plastic products	7 (Fig. 1, Fig. 2, Fig. 3, Fig. 5, Fig. 6, Fig. 7, Fig. 8)
Unhygienic selling	3 (Fig. 4, Fig. 7, Fig. 8)	Promote sustainability at ignored levels	7 (Fig. 1, Fig. 3, Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Fig. 6, Fig. 7, Fig. 8)
Unhygienic food	3 (Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Fig. 7)	Use recyclable packing materials	5 (Fig., 2, Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Fig. 6, Fig. 8)
Dusrupting ecosystem	3 (Fig. 3, Fig. 5, Fig. 6)	Incorportae sustaianble businesses practices	5 (Fig. 2, Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Fig. 7, Fig. 8)
People miss sustainability messages	2 (Fig. 1, Fig. 2)	Promote grassroots sustainability	5 (Fig., 3, Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Fig. 7, Fig. 8)
Contradictory life styles of humans	2 (Fig. 2, Fig. 6)	Employ multiple instructional approaches	4 (Fig. 1, Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Fig. 7)
Threatening future generations	2 (Fig. 2, Fig. 5)	Reduce Unhealthy food selling	3 (Fig. 4, Fig. 7, Fig. 8)
Damaging current generation	1 (Fig. 5)	Tae care of life, under water, over land	3 (Fig. 2, Fig.3, Fig. 6)
Selling healthy in unhealthy way	1 (Fig. 1)	Promote plantation	2 (Fig. 2, Fig. 6)
		Approach local community leaders	1 (Fig. 1)
		Promote sustainable tourism	1 (Fig 2)

Table represents the voice of women derived from the narrations of the photographs. Challenges identified from the narrations are sequenced according to the frequency of the theme reported by women. Similarly, prospects are stated as per frequently reported ideas. Moreover, reference of the figures is also given to indicate the said challenge and solution is reflected by the respective narration and photo.

Figure 9: Key Findings of the Study: Classified Sustainable Challenges and Potential Achievements in Sustainability



Source: Generated by AI

5. Discussion

This research aims to increase awareness of sustainable development among the non-academic population, which constitutes a significant portion of our country. By focusing on the perspectives of women, particularly about non-academic backgrounds, we can identify effective strategies for promoting sustainability at all levels of society. Findings of the study were further analyzed thematically and two patterns were generated from the photographs and narrations of the participants. Sustainability Challenges and Potential Sustainability Achievements were further classified into useful groups based upon the principle of similarity.

4.1 Sustainability Challenges in Non-Academic Communities

Here, sustainability challenges mean the issues or problems of non-academic community that our women participants perceived as major barrier in way to achieving sustainability. In other words, sustainability challenges in non-academic communities, particularly as perceived by women participants, encompass a range of barriers that hinder the achievement of sustainable practices. These challenges are further categorized as environmental impact, public health concerns, and societal issues.

4.1.1 Environmental Impact

Environmental impact as a category under the major theme sustainability challenges in non-academic communities is further based on the facts derived from the research participants. These facts are often termed as codes and are here named as overuse of plastic, disrupting ecosystem, and threatening future generations.

The environmental challenges faced by non-academic communities are multifaceted and often stem from a lack of awareness and engagement in sustainable practices. For instance, Plummer et al. (2021) highlight the importance of community engagement in sustainability science, emphasizing that bridging the gap between scientific knowledge and community action is crucial for addressing environmental issues effectively.

Furthermore, Lang et al. (2012) discuss the necessity of transdisciplinary research that includes non-academic stakeholders to tackle sustainability challenges, suggesting that collaborative efforts can lead to more effective solutions.

Previously, it was found that collaboration between universities and local communities can facilitate knowledge exchange and resource sharing, ultimately improving environmental conditions (Mosier & Ruxton, 2018). This aligns with the findings of Jones et al. (2019) who emphasize the importance of local community perceptions in sustainability measurements, indicating that understanding local environmental concerns is vital for effective sustainability initiatives.

4.1.2 Public Health Concerns

Under this category of sustainability challenge, there comes three more specifications, namely non-hygienic selling, non-hygienic food, and damaging current generation. Public health issues are closely linked to environmental challenges, and women in non-academic communities often perceive these as significant barriers to sustainability. Mccollum et al. (2015) illustrate how community health policies can impact sustainability, particularly when community members feel excluded from decision-making processes. This exclusion can lead to a lack of trust and engagement, further complicating efforts to address public health concerns.

Moreover, the role of community health workers (CHWs) is critical in promoting public health and sustainability. It is evident that CHWs can significantly reduce child morbidity and mortality, highlighting the importance of community involvement in health initiatives (Brenner et al., 2011). This suggests that empowering women and community members to take active roles in health and sustainability can lead to improved outcomes.

4.1.3 Societal Issues

Similarly, responses of the research participants like people miss sustainability messages, contradictory life styles of humans, and selling healthy in unhealthy way are the codes that best fits into the category of societal issues which again falls into the major theme sustainability challenges in non-academic communities.

Societal challenges, including gender inequality and lack of education, are perceived as major barriers to sustainability in non-academic communities. Researchers have emphasized the importance of social innovation in addressing systemic societal problems, arguing that engaging women in sustainable development initiatives can lead to more equitable outcomes (Aksoy et al., 2022). This is supported by Ernst et al. (2018) who note that involving women in community programs enhances gender equity and contributes to sustainable programming.

Additionally, the lack of awareness regarding sustainability roles within communities is a significant barrier. Aleksandrova (2024) discusses how cultural factors influence perceptions of sustainability, suggesting that understanding these cultural dynamics is essential for effective communication and engagement. This line up with the previous findings that sustainability should be viewed as an ongoing learning process, emphasizing the need for continuous education and awareness-raising within communities (Wallis et al., 2010). Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach that includes community engagement, education, and the empowerment of women.

It is obvious when there are challenges addressed, there comes solutions too. So did the participants. They not only shared pitfalls but also expressed the relevant resolution required to take at non-academic levels to maximize the sustainability.

4.2 Potential Sustainability Achievements in Non-Academic Communities

Potential Sustainability Achievements in Non-Academic Communities is the second major theme derived from the visual-narrative response of the participants. This theme is crucial for understanding how grassroots initiatives can contribute to broader sustainability goals. This theme can be categorized into four key areas: consumer choices, educational initiatives, business practices, and systemic change. Each category reflects the diverse strategies that non-academic communities can employ to promote sustainability.

4.2.1 Consumer Choices

The category Consumer Choice is one of the significant idea under the theme Potential Sustainability Achievements in Non-Academic Communities, reported by participants. Most frequently reported idea under this research is *reduce the plastic products*, including two other codes, *use recyclable packing materials*, and *reduce unhealthy food selling*.

Consumer choices play a pivotal role in driving sustainability within non-academic communities. Prothero et al. (2010) argue that sustainable consumption is increasingly viewed as a lifestyle choice, where consumers are motivated to make environmentally friendly decisions. This shift in consumer behavior can lead to significant

ecological benefits, as individuals collectively influence market trends towards sustainability. Furthermore, researches have emphasized the importance of transforming consumption patterns through behavior change and systemic initiatives, advocating for a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of unsustainable practices (O'Rourke & Lollo, 2015).

4.2.2 Educational Initiatives

Educational Initiatives is another worth attention category that consists of *employ multiple instructional approaches* and *approach local community leaders* as the basic codes.

Educational initiatives are fundamental for fostering awareness and engagement in sustainability practices. Lozano et al. (2016) highlight the role of sustainability reporting in organizational change management, suggesting that educational frameworks can enhance corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability awareness. This finding is consistent with latest findings of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) initiative, "The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development," which aimed to integrate sustainability values into educational curricula (Galleli et al., 2022). By embedding sustainability into educational programs, communities can cultivate a culture of sustainability that empowers individuals to take action.

Recently, Mokhtar (2023) further emphasizes the importance of incorporating sustainable education into undergraduate curricula, noting that such initiatives prepare students to become proactive agents of change in their communities. This educational foundation is essential for fostering a generation equipped to address sustainability challenges effectively.

4.2.3 Business Practices

Under the theme Potential Sustainability Achievements in Non-Academic Communities, Business Practices is the only category which is based single idea i.e. *Incorporate sustainable businesses practices*. Although the idea is single but the message and content it covers is the most diverse among all other pieces of information.

Business practices within non-academic communities can significantly influence sustainability outcomes. Lozano and Garcia (2020) discuss how institutional changes in organizations can lead to enhanced sustainability practices, particularly when management prioritizes sustainability in their strategies. Researchers of the past also advocated for the application of systemic methodologies to develop sustainability strategies in organizations, emphasizing the need for businesses to be responsible stewards of resources (Liboni & Cezarino, 2014).

4.2.4 Systemic Change

Finally, the last category suggesting potential sustainability achievements is the systemic change. This category is actually reflecting efforts needed to be taken by the system either at national or at international level. According to the findings of the current research, it included *support and promote sustainable practices at every level, take care of life, under water, over land, promote plantation, and promote grassroots sustainability*.

Systemic change is essential for achieving long-term sustainability goals. Fischer and Riechers (2019) propose a leverage points perspective as a tool for identifying effective interventions in complex systems. Similarly, researchers argued for the need to reconnect people to nature and restructure institutions to facilitate sustainability transformations (Abson et al., 2016).

Additionally, Franco et al. (2018) emphasize the role of higher education in promoting sustainable development through policy, curriculum, and practice. The potential sustainability achievements in non-academic communities are multifaceted, encompassing consumer choices, educational initiatives, business practices, and systemic change. By leveraging these categories, communities can enhance their sustainability efforts and contribute to broader environmental goals.

Figure 10



To achieve sustainability across all educational levels, we must develop organized strategies to promote sustainable development in our society. This image exemplifies the focused, determined, and discerning mindsets and efforts of individuals working together in a structured manner. The various handmade bracelets displayed showcase the exceptional skills acquired through multiple trials and eventual success.

Figure 11



This image showcases the enduring sustainability of our culture and traditions. Consider the intricate and beautiful craftsmanship of these handmade, multicolored boxes, which serve various purposes. Handmade strollers further demonstrate the persistence of our traditional culture and customs at different levels. The gathering of people here reflects our nation's continued appreciation and desire to engage with cultural traditions that embody simplicity, clarity, and intellectual depth.

Figure 12



These dolls represent cottage industry of central Asian artisans, showcasing the women, their attire, and their unique ethnic identities. This display promotes cultural exchange and engagement among people with diverse tastes and backgrounds. Admiring these beautiful dolls allows us to appreciate the sustainable cultures of provinces that are often overlooked.

Importantly, photovoice encourages self-reflection and group discussions that often lead to transformative insights among participants. Budig et al. (2018) emphasize the transformative potential of photovoice, wherein the act of sharing their photographs and engaging in collective storytelling enhances participants' empowerment and self-awareness. This reflective process also aids in identifying actionable solutions to community challenges, further aligning with the goals of economic and sustainable development (MacFarlane et al., 2015).

Moreover, photovoice has proven to enhance critical consciousness among participants, amplifying their

perspectives and needs regarding economic and sustainable development. Robinson and Lee (2022) assert that this methodology empowers participants to illustrate their thoughts and beliefs on social justice issues, facilitating a deeper understanding of community needs. Additionally, photovoice captures the lived experiences of participants and serves as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue about community issues, thus promoting actions for systemic change (Gaboardi et al., 2022).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, while women face significant challenges in participating in sustainable development, there are also substantial prospects for enhancing their involvement through targeted policies and innovative methodologies like photovoice. By addressing the barriers to women's participation and leveraging their unique perspectives, communities can foster more inclusive and effective sustainable development initiatives. The integration of women's voices in these processes is not only a matter of equity but also essential for achieving comprehensive and sustainable outcomes. These findings are valuable for stakeholders and governments at all levels. Educated communities must play a pivotal role in educating those who lack formal education.

5.1 Implications of the Research

Research findings have implications to inform the development of more inclusive and effective sustainability policies. Moreover, the identified sustainability challenges in non-academic communities highlight the need for targeted interventions to create a more equitable and sustainable environment. Finally, the recognized potential sustainability achievements provide a foundation for future efforts to promote sustainable practices among non-academic populations.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

It is recommended for other researchers to replicate this research in other regions and countries to assess the generalizability of the findings. It is also suggested to investigate how factors such as age, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity intersect with gender to influence women's experiences and perspectives on sustainability. Explore the use of additional participatory methods, such as focus groups or interviews, to complement the photovoice approach and gather more in-depth data can further increase the scope of the relevant studies.

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Acknowledgments

The authors strongly acknowledge the support provided by participants of the research in conducting the research work.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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