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CHALLENGES AND SUCCESS FACTORS IN IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN PAKISTAN'S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The construction business in Pakistan is vital for the economy, contributing approximately 2.5% to the GDP, although it faces difficulties in implementing sustainable project management methods. These issues encompass inadequate policies, absence of pertinent climate-friendly expertise, and restricted funding. Sustainable project management is essential in Pakistan's development goal for enhancing production, social outcomes, and environmental expenses. Sustainable project management integrates conventional project management with contemporary sustainability principles, addressing environmental, social, and economic impacts over the long term. Key success criteria are management commitment, stakeholder engagement, and technological innovation. Qualitative approaches encompassed scholarly publications and reports, employing thematic analysis. This study examines ethical considerations regarding the careful treatment of data and its integrity and legitimacy. The criteria for inclusion encompassed geographic location, pertinent subject matter, comparative framework, sustainable dimensions, data sources, language, and publication date. The results reveal financial limitations, governance structure issues, a lack of pertinent technical expertise, and cultural opposition to change. The success elements correspond with the strategic leadership and commitment characteristics of a business, as well as innovation in technology. Pakistan's distinct sustainability issues arise from inadequate legislation, insufficient oversight, and a lackluster manufacturing sector. Financial obstacles hinder the implementation of sustainable practices for companies. It is imperative that governments provide financial support to enterprises migrating to sustainable practices, especially the implementation of Green Lean Sustainable Systems. Governments must address political stability and the implementation of stringent regulatory systems. Businesses must incorporate sustainability with economic objectives at all stages of project planning.

Keywords: Sustainable Project Management, Construction Industry, Challenges and Success, Green Practices

Introduction:

Across South Asia, simultaneous escalations in urbanization rates, demographic expansion, and environmental degradation challenge policy and practice. In response, Indian and Bangladeshi decision-making increasingly embeds construction-sector sustainability, motivated by energy shortfalls, rising pollution, and intensifying climate change (Jalaei et al., 2020). Realizing sustainable project management, however, confronts pervasive obstacles: persistent capital shortages, prevailing technical ignorance, and entrenched aversion to innovative practices. In Pakistan, the construction sector remains a pillar of economic growth, registering a contribution of approximately 2.5% to national gross domestic product. Yet, the sector's strategic advance to embed sustainability confronts a suite of persistent limitations (Iqbal et al., 2021; Sayyam. S, 2021). Principal constraints include inadequate policy framework, insufficient exposure to best climate-responsive technologies, and meager capital mobilization by both public and private agents. Furthermore, recurrent project delivery deficiencies compound the difficulties, retarding systematic progress towards broader sustainable development. To reconcile the industry with relevant global commitments—particularly Sustainable Development Goal Nine, which espouses resilient industrialization,

technological upgrades, and sustainable infrastructure, as well as Sustainable Development Goal Eleven, centered on resilient communities—the State of Pakistan must direct a decisive and coordinated policy program that strengthens governance, fosters technological capacity, and mobilizes sustainable financing.

Integrating sustainability principles into project management is capable of increasing organizational productivity, mitigating environmental expenditure, and strengthening beneficial social outcomes, qualifying it as a strategic priority within Pakistan's national development agenda (Kineber et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2025). The intersection of constraints and advantageous variables in the administration of this field possesses the potential to significantly advance the country's broader sustainability objectives.

Literature review

2.1. Conceptual Framework of Sustainable Project Management

This section provides a foundational overview of sustainable project management (SPM) as a purposeful integration of conventional project management frameworks with sustainability-oriented principles. Emphasis is placed on a repertoire of methodologies, tools, competencies, and empirical knowledge designed to advance project objectives while concurrently addressing, over a multi-scale temporal horizon, the economic, social, and ecological dimensions of sustainability. SPM pursues a set of explicit objectives that, in manner of progressive alignment, reference the established tenets of sustainability. In contrast, conventional project management paradigms remain predominantly focused on the triadic constraints of time, cost, and scope, privileging: a) the systematic minimization of adverse impacts on the social fabric, the natural environment, and the economic system, and, in tandem, b) the systematic amplification of beneficial outcomes in the same domains throughout the project lifecycle.

2.2 Importance of Sustainability in Construction

Existing literature underscores that the building sector remains a major driver of environmental harm, thereby necessitating the adoption of sustainable practices designed to curtail carbon footprints, waste streams, and consumption of natural resources (Debrah et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2020). Such empirical findings reinforce the imperative of integrating sustainability throughout the lifecycle of a project, rather than treating it as an ancillary concern. Ahram and Zakaria (2023) further assert that a sustainable construction methodology aspires to fulfill objectives that transcend the conventional project-delivery horizon. By embodying principles of environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic viability, the approach not only ensures the physical completion of the facility, but also enhances the resilience of the built infrastructure, fosters the well-being of surrounding communities, and advances the attainment of globally endorsed Sustainable Development Goals.

2.3. Challenges in Implementing Sustainable Practices

Weak Governance and Policies: Sustainable building outcomes continue to be undermined by regulations and institutional arrangements that lack the requisite rigor and breadth. Policies that fail to align with established criteria for sustainability generate ambiguity that, in turn, invites selective compliance. When governance is further characterized by weak norms, the absence of monitoring, and the absence of meaningful sanctions, disparities in implementation emerge, perpetuating environmental and social inequities within the sector (Dulaimi, 2023; Rahman et al., 2025).

Insufficient Technical Capacity: A palpable deficiency of expertise and infrastructure constrains the application of sustainable methodologies throughout the construction value chain. Many industry participants remain unable to generate or scale innovative techniques due

to the chronic absence of technically adept personnel familiar with advanced sustainability frameworks, rendering the sector resistant to the transfer of contemporary practices (Kineber et al., 2023).

Financial Constraints: Scarcity of upfront capital for sustainable systems constitutes a pervasive impediment to implementation. Project risk assessments frequently foreground initial expenditures, overshadowing lifecycle analyses that would demonstrate longer-term savings. Consequently, capital providers remain skeptical of sustainable interventions, perpetuating a cycle in which technically viable measures are postponed or indefinitely shelved (Abas et al., 2022; Hossain et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2025).

Organizational Inertia: Institutional cultures and entrenched operational formulae present formidable barriers to innovation. Stakeholders—including senior executives, project managers, and labor crews—tend to favour familiar routines, resulting in an attitudinal and procedural inertia that not only fortifies existing practices but also tacitly assigns low priority to emerging sustainable alternatives (Chen et al., 2024; Mubarak et al., 2025; Tufail et al., 2020).

Success Factors for Sustainable Project Management

Leadership and Organizational Commitment: In construction enterprises, demonstrable commitment by leaders to sustainability iteratively instills comparable organizational orientation and galvanizes subordinate adherence. Prakash et al. (2024) empirically substantiate that sustained executive involvement inculcates a normative sustainability culture, inducing dominancy of pro-environmental behavioral practices within the firm.

Persistent interaction with key stakeholders—including clients, proximate communities, and regulatory bodies—remains a prerequisite for adequately discerning and addressing pertinent expectations and apprehensions. Active coalitional engagement, therefore, optimizes project execution timelines and ensures that strategic determinations embody plural viewpoints, a dynamic that, in turn, amplifies project sustainability (Curea, 2017; Zaman et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2020).

Achievement of sustainability endpoints further necessitates the purposeful amalgamation of emergent technologies and paradigmatic innovation. The deliberate application of sophisticated design heuristics, holistically energy-conserving methodologies, and cutting-edge construction materials collectively heighten project procurement efficiency, while simultaneously reinforcing environmental performance metrics (Duckworth et al., 2022).

Research design and strategy

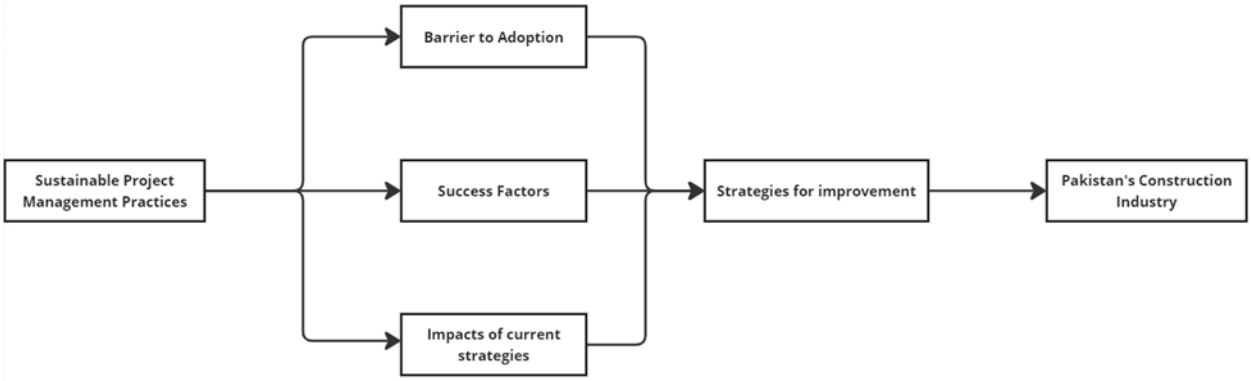
This research design delineates the deployment of a qualitative secondary methodology, purposefully directed at elucidating sustainable project management practices within the construction sector of Pakistan. The design is constructed to methodically interrogate the principal phenomena, enduring constraints, and exemplary interventions that shape the practical adoption of sustainability within the discipline.

The adopted strategy comprises the systematic assembly of data from an extensive array of secondary artifacts, including peer-reviewed journals, institutional reports, documented case studies, and publications originating from federal as well as representative professional bodies. Such a procedure delivers a concentrated appraisal of determinants that either foster or obstruct sustainability initiatives, thereby furnishing the corpus of evidence with decisive contextual dimensions. The analytical pathway is governed by thematic analytic methods, which guide the investigator toward the recognition of recurrent motifs, discrete themes, and analytical revelations, thus catalyzing the formulation of substantively constructive inferences that

advance environmentally-responsive project management frameworks.
The design accords central importance to research ethics, in which careful attention is directed to the provenance, integrity, and interpretable fidelity of the data. By adhering to explicitly articulated standards of qualitative rigor, the design aspires to enhance the ethical accountability of the research process, thereby securing credible scaffolding that underlies the formulation of recommendations intended to elevate the environmental performance of construction undertakings across Pakistan.
In summary, the research design and the complementary strategy adopt a qualitative approach founded on secondary data, thereby permitting an extensive interpretive excavation of the phenomena under scrutiny and yielding recommendations that are readily implementable by the constituents of the construction sector.

Conceptual framework
The conceptual framework articulated herein elucidates the fundamental constituents of sustainable project management as applicable to the construction sector of Pakistan. Within this paper, the criteria upon which success is to be calibrated, the impediments to the wide-scale adoption of present methodologies and the prevailing outcomes of those methodologies are detailed. The framework thus functions as an orienting device, steering the inquiry towards the formulation of pragmatic interventions that may elevate sectoral practices, whilst simultaneously drawing attention to the imperative for adjustable enhancement strategies that responsibly advance the sustainability agenda.

Figure 3.1 The conceptual framework for sustainable project management techniques in Pakistan's construction industry



Inclusion and Exclusion criteria:
This investigation incorporated only those studies that conformed to predetermined eligibility parameters organized under geographical emphasis, thematic orientation, comparative framework, and allied categories. The subsequent table succinctly delineates the inclusion and exclusion criteria utilized throughout the review process.

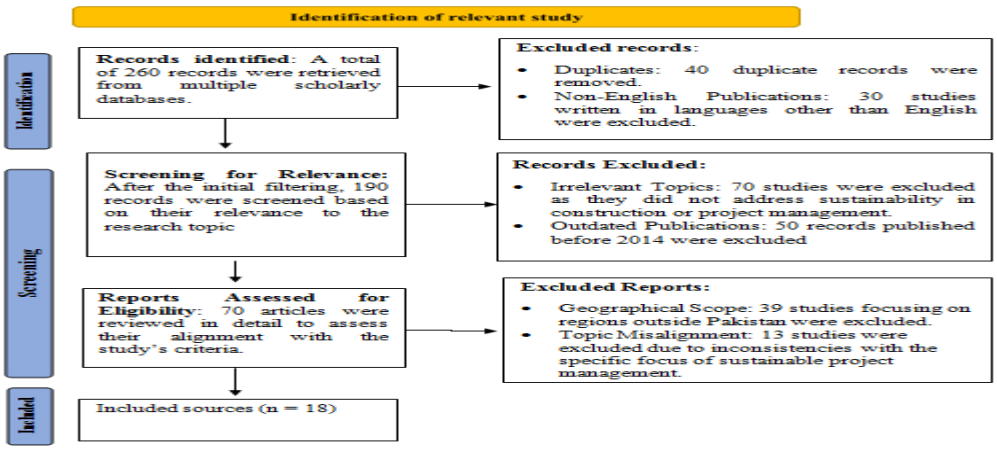
Table 3.1 Studies fit for inclusion/exclusion in this research

Category	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria

Geographical Focus	Research that concentrates on the construction industry of Pakistan or pertinent regional contexts.	Research that is not pertinent to Pakistan or lacks regional significance.
Subject Matter	Research on the success factors, challenges, and sustainable project management practices in the construction industry.	Articles that fail to address the issue of sustainability in project management.
Contextual Comparison	Research that compares the sustainability practices of different countries or regions.	Studies that are either limited to single-location analysis or do not include comparative analysis and are conducted outside of Pakistan.
Dimensions of Sustainability	Papers that discuss the environmental, economic, or social aspects of sustainability in the construction industry.	Research that concentrates on sustainability dimensions or industries that are not related.
Sources of Data	Official publications, reports, case studies, and peer-reviewed journal articles.	Opinion articles, blogs, or materials that have not been reviewed by a peer.
Publication (Language)	English publications.	Publications that are not in English.
Publication (Date)	Studies that were published between 2010 and 2025.	Studies that were published prior to 2010.

Every secondary source encountered in this inquiry was scrutinized according to the inclusion and exclusion protocols detailed earlier. To enhance retrieval efficacy and guide the identification of pertinent literature, the researcher adopted syntactic phrase combinations and systematically applied Boolean operators during the electronic searches. Subsequently, each publication was in an orderly progression of selection, appraisal, and synthesis, such that the derived evidence conformed to predetermined methodological parameters; compliance with the PRISMA reporting guidelines was observed, assuring that the overall approach remained both transparent and demonstrably credible.

Figure 3.2 Steps to identify the relevant study



Data analysis

Thematic analysis serves as the central analytical framework for the present dissertation,

directed towards discerning the barriers and facilitating variables implicating the adoption of sustainable project management practices within the construction sector of Pakistan. The procedure is partitioned into discrete, yet interdependent, phases; each stage is articulated to subject the corpus of secondary material—comprising peer-reviewed journal articles, sector-specific evaluations, and rigorously elaborated case studies—to a systematic and replicable interpretive scrutiny.

Data Familiarization:

A comprehensive examination of all secondary materials related to sustainability issues precedes any further activity. During this stage, all pertinent information that could support the analytical framework is systematically pinpointed and recorded for later examination.

Identifying Significant Themes:

After the systematization of the data, the researcher isolates recurrent codes, emergent trends, and salient concepts across the reviewed literature. The stage is strictly oriented toward delineating obstacles to sustainability and extracting factors that have frequently correlated with successful outcomes.

Categorization and Enhancement:

The emergent concepts are systematically grouped into categories that are consonant with the study's predetermined objectives. Where overlap is evident, themes are synthesized; redundant observations are, where warranted, set aside to streamline the analytic architecture of the study.

Interpreting Themes:

The final stage subjects the grouped themes to a critical interpretive lens in order to elucidate barriers to and facilitators of sustainable project management. The resultant insight is then concentrated into context-specific recommendations intended to optimize sustainability outcomes in the domain of construction project practice.

Table 4.1 The thematic framework for generating codes and themes

First Codes	First Themes	Final Themes
Issues with money, cash flow, supplies, and the weather Not employing eco-friendly ways to manage the supply chain Limited implementation of lean building techniques and lack of understanding made it hard to buy goods quickly. Regulatory restrictions and other things that make it hard to use green building technology Problems with the supply chain, inefficiencies in logistics, and limits on imports Not enough government policies and incentives Unstable political climate, lack of support and commitment from senior management No funding options or plans Not enough knowledge and education on sustainability Not	• Problems with the supply chain and logistics in construction • Problems with green supply chain management in construction • Problems with adopting lean construction practices • Problems with adopting green building technology • Problems with policies and regulations • Political instability • Resistance within the organization • Financial problems • Gaps in knowledge and awareness • Cultural and behavioral barriers • problems with people • problems with technology	Problems with adopting sustainability in Pakistan's construction industry

wanting to change old ways of doing things Not enough skilled workers and knowledge Insufficient infrastructure for environmentally friendly technologies		
Incentives and support from the government Incorporating green supply chain management Using the ideas of a circular economy Training and schooling for people who have a stake Using technologies that save energy and renewable energy Partnerships between the public and commercial sectors for long-lasting initiatives Putting into place strategies to reduce waste and recycle Making standards and certifications for sustainable building	• Policy changes • Practices that are good for the environment • Using resources more efficiently • Building capacity • New technologies • Working together • Strategies for getting rid of waste • Making sure things are up to standard and certified	Strategies to Overcome Barriers and Enhance Sustainability
Inefficiency and resource depletion More greenhouse gases are being released Delays in projects and costs that go over budget Not many people are using green building technologies A lot of trash is made, and it's not handled well. High energy use and low energy efficiency Bad effects on the community and society Projects that aren't sustainable in the long term	Climate change, environmental degradation, economic inefficiency, technological lag, waste management problems, energy inefficiency, social challenges, and sustainability gaps	How current practices affect sustainability
Clearly defined project goals and objectives Strong backing from higher-ups Stakeholder participation and cooperation An accomplished and capable project team Effective stakeholder communication Using environmentally friendly supply chain methods Utilizing cutting-edge tools and technology Techniques for controlling and lowering risk	• Project Management Best Practices • Leadership Commitment • Collaborative Approaches • Human Resource Excellence • Communication Strategies • Sustainable Practices • Technological Integration • Risk Management	Things that make project management work well for the long term

Thematic analysis provides a compelling methodological advantage for the present inquiry by furnishing a rigorously structured protocol for the comparative examination of recurrent themes

dispersed throughout a large corpus of qualitative data, thereby reinforcing the validity and credibility of the findings. The intention is to generate substantive insights that not only advance academic knowledge but also inform actionable strategies within the domain of sustainable construction.

Findings

The following section synthesizes identified impediments that inhibit the systematic adoption of sustainability-oriented practices among firms operating within Pakistan's construction sector.

Financial Limitations:

Capital constraints remain pronounced across a broad spectrum of firms. Elevated upfront expenditure required for the integration of energy-efficient materials, waste-reduction technologies, and other sustainable interventions renders long-term payback summaries unpersuasive for decision-makers, thereby stalling investment.

Governance Flaws: A patchwork of fragmented, often contradictory, policies, together with sporadic enforcement, cultivates an environment of regulatory unpredictability. Such instability discourages sponsors from long-term commitments to sustainable programs, which typically manifest through graduated performance targets.

Lack of Technical Knowledge: A shortfall persists in concerted, sector-specific educational initiatives and hands-on training programs. Consequently, supervisors and tradespeople overlook optimal construction sequencing, and designers undervalue the potential of passive-energy solutions, severely undermining sustainability aspirations.

Cultural Resistance: Stakeholders operating within traditional hierarchies exhibit entrenched behavioral and cognitive frameworks that valorize established, empirical practices. Distrust of external expertise and a perception that performance incentives diminish through sustainable revisions collectively inhibit openness to material, formal, and procedural innovations.

Success Factors for Sustainability:

Conversely, the investigation identifies enabling conditions that can enhance the operationalization of sustainable project management practices

Executive Sponsorship and Institutional Orientation: Inspirational and visible sponsorship is vital for embedding sustainability culture and, equally, the firm-wide allegiance of senior management ensures that sustainability resides at the apex of strategic agendas.

Collaborative Stakeholder Involvement: Systematic and meaningful participation of multi-level stakeholders—including clients, vendors, regulatory bodies, and the wider community—constitutes an indispensable dimension for the credibility and longevity of sustainability initiatives.

Technological Progress and Innovative Methodologies: Strategic endorsement of cutting-edge technologies and the deployment of methodological innovation are requisite for transcending prevailing operational obstacles and consequently for attaining demonstrably sustainable project outputs.

Discussion:

Pakistan confronts a constellation of contextual and institutional impediments that collectively undermine its pathways towards environmentally sustainable development. Waqar et al. (2023)

identify a principal triad of inadequacies—fragmentary regulatory mechanisms, insufficient monitoring architectures, and an industry culture conditioned by inertia, each of which synergistically constrains meaningful progress. Complementing that view, Abas et al. (2022) isolate finance as a structural bottleneck, arguing that credit-market and internal-resource limitations depress firms' inclination to internalize sustainable practices. Hossain et al. (2020) further elaborate that, where direct spending on sustainable technologies is perceived to exceed established benchmarks of conventional expenditure, private residential and commercial builders systematically discount sustainable options as commercially irrational.

When firms nevertheless initiate environmentally progressive programs, an absence of strategic vision and empowerment at the organizational level precipitates a recurrence of difficulties at the operational horizon. Meanwhile, state leadership, characterized by appeasement—shallow enforcement of retrospective compliance norms and reactive, incoherent policy—transforms what could be regulatory threat into a structural disincentive for the adoption of low-impact building technologies. Legal scaffolding, as characterized by obsolescence and widespread fragmentation, is therefore a further constraint to policy coherence, a conclusion affirmed by Prakash et al. (2024). The empirical inquiry and the concurrent literature jointly reveal that the resonance of protracted regulatory vacuum and volatility of the political cycle is not ancillary; rather, it constitutes an asynchronous source of policy execution risk.

Raja et al. (2022) observe that construction operatives persistently resort to legacy practices that inhibit the discovery and implementation of sustainable building solutions. Despite the accumulation of robust, research-anchored alternatives, the community of practice remains chiefly attached to established modalities, thus limiting the efficacy of evidence in precipitating meaningful change. Stakeholder engagement, by requiring decision-makers to contemplate the operational, financial, and reputational ramifications of their quotidian choices, fosters the formulation of judicious and temporally durable judgments in the execution of construction enterprises (Iqbal et al., 2021).

The present analysis suggests that policy-makers should extend targeted fiscal support to enterprises that commit to adopting Green Lean Six Sigma (GLSS) methodologies alongside other environmentally sound practices. Empirical observations by Hussain et al. (2023) substantiate the proposition that corporate uptake of GLSS technology is expedited when accompanied by public funding for R&D. Complementary evidence presented by Ahmed (2022) demonstrates that monetary inducements stimulate systemic reform across sector-wide dimensions. Collectively, the results affirm that the advancement of environmental sustainability is catalyzed by the diffusion of digital and physical innovation. Subsequent investigations conducted by Hussain et al. (2024) and by Shahzad et al. (2024) substantiate the assertion that the combined implementation of green building systems and circular-economy legislation quantifiably mitigates waste and enhances resource stewardship. Concurrent testimony, presented by Ahram and Zakaria (2023), reaffirms the centrality of Building Information Modelling (BIM) as a mechanism for realizing resource effectiveness and diminishing output-bound waste. The dataset further indicates that, for resource optimization and systemic alignment to be fully realized, multi-tier collaboration must be secured among contractors, suppliers, and end-user clients (Hussain et al. 2018; Sami, Ahmad, and Minhas 2024). The analysis also delineates a matrix of benefits and liabilities, across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, which presently attends established methodologies.

The uneven uptake of health-care technologies—widely acknowledged as essential for promoting sustainable health systems—is largely attributable to prohibitive capital outlays and persistent budget constraints, as noted in the systematic review by Jalaei et al. (2020). In

parallel, the elongated timelines associated with infrastructure expansion in remote settings, exemplified by the case of Gilgit-Baltistan, further erode the projected benefits of sustainability interventions, a finding corroborated by Hussain et al. (2018). Protracted delays restrict patients' timely access to essential, often life-saving, interventions, thereby accentuating pre-existing inequities in health service utilization and undermining the distributive justice objectives that sustainability initiatives are designed to achieve.

To effectively advance sustainability within the Pakistani construction sector, a multi-faceted strategy is necessary. Recent work by Hussain et al. (2023) underscores that the realization of economic and environmental gains hinges on the rigorous application of governance and regulatory frameworks. The Federal Republic of Germany provides a pertinent exemplar—its comprehensive suite of environmental directives and targeted renewable-energy incentives has consistently enhanced sectoral sustainability outcomes (Ahmed, 2022). Pakistani authorities, therefore, ought to recalibrate similar instruments, embedding them within the country's distinctive social and economic architecture, and commencing with the adaptation of established international industrial standards. Sustained landscapes cannot emerge beneath the shadow of cyclical political maneuvering; rather, persistent, unapologetically stringent enforcement of existing legislation remains imperative. Financing remains a principal barrier epistemic ally and practically; several studies advocate targeted economic instruments that mitigate the capital burden of green retrofits (Jalaei et al., 2020; Kamal et. al., 2025). More systematically, detailed fiscal planning frameworks should furnish contractors with liquidity channels that accommodate upfront green capital with a compensatory cash-flow balance (Ali et al., 2020). Governance frameworks, therefore, ought to interlink both fiscal and environmental targets at the inception of project life-cycles. To reproduce these gains at scale, firms must institutionalize continuous, professional development. Early-stage training interventions—one which instruction is linked advanced topics such as lean thinking and green certifications—have emerged as a crucial determinant of uptake, enabling workforces to operationalize, rather than merely to perceive, progressive practices (Aslam et al., 2024; Hussain et al., 2024). Furthermore, Liu et al. (2018) highlights the indispensability of targeted workplace training in instilling project-specific technical competencies among diverse stakeholders. Consequently, any training initiative must be deliberately tailored to confront the peculiar challenges endemic to Pakistan's construction sector. Longevity and success demand that key stakeholders actively participate throughout the project life cycle, from conception to handover. Evidence supports that heightening cross-cultural consciousness, while simultaneously strengthening the triadic nexus between contractors, suppliers, and end-users, fosters superior project outcomes (Hussain et al., 2018; Iqbal et al., 2023). Chan and Chan (2022) cite empirical investigations that itemize the beneficial contributions of community engagement and judiciously structured public-private partnerships to the realization of enduring sustainability in construction projects. Advisory conclusions drawn from this body of work assign primary importance to explicit, continual dialogue and collaborative decision-making processes, which jointly sustain the advancement of Pakistan's built-environment manpower.

Conclusion and future directions

The study, constrained by temporal limitations and dependent on existing documentation, necessarily curtailed its examination of highly localized phenomena; nevertheless, it materially advanced the relevant literature. Through the process, the enduring value of critical analysis, adaptive reasoning, and measured perseverance was affirmed. The project, while it met its designated objectives, nevertheless underscored the imperative of a systematic scientific

framework and of broader stakeholder engagement. Such enhancements should foster the design of future initiatives that further amplify scientific and practical importance. The conducted reflective exercise additionally illuminated the inherently recursive character of scholarly discovery. Action Plan: For forthcoming inquiries, I shall employ structured surveys and semi-structured interviews to secure a breadth of primary accounts. Concurrently, I shall maintain heightened sensitivity to the situational particularities of the study region and shall cultivate, at every procedural juncture, the progressive consolidation of stakeholder association.

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