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DOMESTIC SUSTAINABILITY AND EVERYDAY ENVIRONMENTALISM: A CASE STUDY ON PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES AMONG HOUSEWIVES

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ABSTRACT
The household represents a crucial site for understanding the intersection between sustainability and everyday life. This study explores how housewives engage in pro-environmental practices within the domestic sphere, contributing to what is termed "everyday environmentalism." The research focuses on understanding the motivations, attitudes, and behaviors that shape sustainable household management among women. Employing a case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observation among selected households, emphasizing practices related to waste management, energy and water conservation, recycling, and sustainable consumption. The findings reveal that many housewives integrate environmental consciousness into their daily routines—often rooted in traditional values of thrift, care, and responsibility rather than formal environmental education. However, constraints such as lack of institutional support, time limitations, and socio-economic pressures hinder the adoption of more systematic sustainable practices. The study highlights the critical yet undervalued role of women in promoting domestic sustainability and argues that recognizing and strengthening these informal environmental actions can significantly contribute to broader sustainability goals. This paper calls for policy interventions and awareness programs that empower women as agents of change within their households and communities.

KEYWORDS: *Domestic Sustainability, Everyday Environmentalism, Pro-Environmental Practices, Housewives, Sustainable Behavior, Sociology*

INTRODUCTION
As the world faces escalating environmental challenges, the role of households in promoting sustainability has gained increasing attention in academic and policy discourse. Within this domestic sphere, housewives—who often serve as primary decision-makers in household consumption, waste management, and resource use—emerge as key agents of change. Their day-to-day choices significantly impact environmental outcomes, making it imperative to understand the factors that shape their environmental behavior (Sarpong & Amankwaa, 2022; Gamtessa & Guliani, 2019). In developing nations, where formal waste management systems may be underdeveloped, the actions of housewives become even more critical to advancing sustainability goals at the grassroots level.

Pro-environmental behavior refers to actions that protect and preserve the environment, such as recycling, reducing energy and water consumption, and minimizing plastic use. A growing body of literature highlights that such behaviors are not only driven by structural availability of resources but are deeply influenced by individual values, motivations, and knowledge (Eslami et al., 2024). Among housewives, educational attainment has consistently emerged as a strong predictor of eco-friendly behavior. Educated housewives are more likely to understand the long-term environmental implications of their actions, show concern for ecological well-being, and actively seek sustainable alternatives in their daily routines (Lye et al., 2024).

Beyond general education, **specific environmental knowledge**—such as understanding how to segregate waste, compost organic material, or conserve energy—plays an even more vital role in shaping sustainable practices at home. Tailored educational programs and community-level training initiatives have proven effective in enhancing housewives' capacity to engage in meaningful environmental actions (Lye et al., 2024). Such targeted interventions not only improve knowledge but also foster self-efficacy and motivation, which are essential for consistent behavior change.

In addition to knowledge and education, deeply held **environmental values**—including concern for nature, future generations, and the health of one's family—are powerful motivators of pro-environmental behavior. Studies have shown that housewives with strong environmental values are more likely to adopt energy-conservation, water-saving, and sustainable cleaning practices (Gamtessa & Guliani, 2019; Eslami et al., 2024). These behaviors are not only expressions of personal responsibility but often stem from a desire to maintain cleanliness, health, and well-being within the household, which culturally aligns with women's traditional roles in many societies.

The intersection of **gender and environmentalism** further adds complexity to the discussion. Research from various cultural contexts indicates that women—particularly housewives—are more actively involved in sustainability-related household activities than men (Reese, 2021; Arezina et al., 2024). This is not necessarily due solely to greater environmental concern, but also to traditional gender roles that assign women primary responsibility for household management. While these patterns may reflect existing inequalities, they also present an opportunity: by recognizing and supporting women's environmental efforts, especially in the domestic sphere, sustainable practices can be strengthened from the ground up (Farida & Ismail, 2021).

Moreover, empowering housewives through hands-on, skill-based initiatives—such as composting kitchen waste, cultivating ornamental plants, or managing plastic segregation—has shown promising results in several community-based interventions (Putri et al., 2023). These activities not only reduce household waste and increase environmental awareness but also provide a sense of purpose, community leadership, and, in some cases, small-scale economic benefits. However, housewives often face **barriers** in adopting consistent eco-friendly practices. These include a lack of infrastructural support, time constraints, limited access to reliable information, and insufficient encouragement from other household members (Lestari et al., 2022; Das & Kaur, 2024).

To address these gaps and promote inclusive environmental action, it is essential to examine how housewives perceive sustainability, what drives their behavior, and what obstacles they face in adopting eco-conscious lifestyles. Understanding their lived experiences and motivations can inform the design of more effective educational strategies, gender-responsive policies, and community-level interventions.

This study therefore seeks to explore perceptions, values, motivations, and barriers to pro-environmental practices among housewives. By focusing on their roles, knowledge, and everyday behaviors, the research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on domestic sustainability and highlight the untapped potential of housewives as grassroots environmental stewards.

Research Methodology

This study used a case study approach to explore everyday practices of domestic sustainability and environmentalism among housewives **(21 to 50 years)** in an urban neighborhood in Dehradun, India. The key objective of the study was to understand housewives' attitudes and beliefs regarding pro-environmental practices, as well as their roles in managing domestic tasks and influencing environmentally friendly practices. The study recruited thirty women involved in household management, and data were collected using a nonprobability purposive sampling technique with a snowball approach. Observations and in-person interviews were used to gather data and obtain comprehensive qualitative insights.

Research Objectives

1. To understand how housewives perceive environmental responsibility in their daily lives.
2. To explore common pro-environmental practices adopted by housewives at home.
3. To examine the motivations and values that drive sustainable behavior among housewives.
4. To identify the challenges and barriers housewives face in maintaining eco-friendly practices.

Research Questions

1. What does being environmentally responsible mean to housewives, and how do they view their household practices?

2. What eco-friendly habits and activities are commonly practiced by housewives in their homes?
3. What motivates housewives to engage in sustainable practices, and what beliefs influence their actions?
4. What obstacles do housewives encounter in trying to live sustainably, such as time, cost, or household responsibilities?

Research Design

This study used a case study approach to explore domestic sustainability and everyday environmentalism among housewives in an urban neighborhood. It focused on understanding housewives' attitudes and behaviors regarding pro-environmental practices, such as waste management and energy conservation.

Target Sample

The target sample included housewives from a diverse urban neighborhood, selected for their role in managing household activities and influencing environmental behaviors.

Sample Design

A non-probability purposive sampling method was employed, and 30 housewives involved in household management participated in the study. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, and observations to gain both qualitative and quantitative insights.

KEY FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Understanding Environmental Responsibility

Participants view environmental responsibility as a combination of practical actions and broader efforts to protect resources. For example, one respondent said, "To keep your house and area clean," highlighting the importance of local cleanliness. Others emphasized conservation, like "If we should save water, electricity, forest animals," showing concern for resource preservation. Sustainable practices such as "Reduce, reuse then recycle" and "acting in ways that protect the Earth" were common, reflecting awareness of eco-friendly behaviors. Many participants also expressed a long-term perspective, with one stating, "Protecting environment and resources and reducing pollution." Additionally, some responses focused on the need for environmental awareness, such as "Being aware of our environment," indicating the role of knowledge in environmental responsibility. Overall, the findings suggest that housewives associate environmental responsibility with both daily actions and long-term sustainability.

Household Practices and Environmental Friendliness

The responses suggest that most participants consider their household practices to be environmentally friendly, highlighting specific actions and habits they follow to minimize their environmental impact. For instance, one respondent noted, "We focus on keeping our area clean," indicating a general commitment to cleanliness and sustainability. Several participants mentioned reducing plastic use, such as "minimum use of plastics and plastic bags," and efficient water usage, with one respondent saying, "water is used judiciously."

Energy efficiency also emerged as a significant factor in respondents' practices, with one participant stating, "solar panels are used instead of electricity," and another mentioning the use of "energy-efficient lighting." Waste management practices were another common theme, with respondents indicating they "segregate waste" and "segregate bio & non-biodegradable wastes." One participant even mentioned using "eco-cleaning products, biodegradable household products, renewable energy for electricity," which demonstrates a comprehensive approach to sustainability.

Overall, the responses reflect that the participants believe their household practices align with environmentally friendly behaviors, emphasizing resource conservation, waste management, and sustainable energy use.

Eco-Friendly Habits at Home

The responses indicate that participants engage in various eco-friendly activities and habits to minimize their environmental impact. A common practice mentioned was "saving water and electricity," with multiple respondents highlighting the importance of resource conservation. Many also emphasized reducing plastic use, such as "minimum use of plastics" and "avoiding disposable items," which reflects an awareness of the harm caused by single-use plastics.

Recycling is another key habit, with respondents noting they "recycle papers and glass every month" and "recycle properly." Some participants also mentioned reusing items, such as "reusing the stuff at home as well as our working place," and using "RO outlet water for washing clothes" as an eco-friendly way to repurpose resources.

Additionally, some respondents pointed out the use of renewable energy sources, such as "solar panels channelized home," and practices like "growing a sustainable garden" and "buying products with less packaging." The findings indicate that participants are adopting a diverse range of eco-friendly habits, with a strong emphasis on conservation, recycling, reuse, and waste reduction.

Areas of Focus for Waste Reduction and Resource Conservation

Participants highlighted several key areas where they consciously try to reduce waste and save resources, with a strong emphasis on both household and community actions. The most common areas of focus were electricity, water, and waste separation, with one respondent noting, "electricity and water, separating biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste." Others mentioned reducing plastic use and e-waste, such as "plastic and e-waste," indicating awareness of the harmful impact of these materials.

Several participants also expressed innovative ideas for waste reduction, like using "solid waste in new roads" and avoiding overindulgence in packaged goods or excessive online shopping. One response also included an approach described as the "Eyeball method," where individuals observe their surroundings for any waste or resource underutilization and take action to reduce or stop it. This respondent emphasized the importance of observation, planning, and community collaboration, even suggesting creating platforms for discussions on sustainability and organizing clean-up activities like "plogging" (jogging while picking up litter).

The findings reflect that while participants are aware of the need to reduce waste and conserve resources, some recognize the challenges in executing these practices consistently. Nonetheless, there is a strong desire to promote awareness and engage in collective actions, such as educating others and starting with simple steps at home.

Motivations for Environmental Practices

The motivations for following environmentally friendly practices among the respondents are diverse, encompassing personal, cultural, and religious beliefs. Several participants mentioned "personal beliefs" and "personal responsibility" as key drivers, with one stating, "It is personal," indicating a deep personal commitment to sustainability. A strong sense of moral responsibility also surfaced, with respondents feeling a duty to care for the environment, as expressed by one individual: "Personally, we should try to clean our environment."

Cultural and religious factors were also significant motivators. One respondent noted that their actions are influenced by "personal, cultural, and religious beliefs," suggesting that environmental stewardship is embedded within their cultural and spiritual values. For some, these beliefs were framed as an obligation, with one participant emphasizing that they "believe in protection and conservation of nature," linking their actions to a sense of survival.

Many respondents expressed concern over environmental degradation, which served as another powerful motivator. One noted, "Concern about the degradation of the environment over the years," reflecting a growing awareness of the urgency for action. Overall, the findings show that a combination of personal ethics, cultural reverence for nature, and religious principles shape respondents' commitment to environmentally friendly practices.

Influences on Sustainability Practices

The main influences on respondents' sustainability practices are education, family, and personal experiences. Several respondents highlighted education as a key factor, with multiple mentions of it as the primary inspiration, such as "Education" and "Education and family." This suggests that awareness and knowledge gained through formal or informal education play a crucial role in shaping environmentally responsible behaviors.

Family was also a significant influence, with responses indicating that family values and traditions encourage sustainable practices. For example, one respondent stated, "Family and education are important," underlining the combined role of upbringing and learning in fostering environmental responsibility.

In addition, personal actions and experiences were mentioned, such as one participant's commitment to "permaforesting our farm" and prioritizing wildlife needs. This participant emphasized sustainability in agriculture, including recycling, reusing, and favoring energy-efficient products. They also pointed out the balance required between sustainability practices and their household's financial constraints, which reflects how personal circumstances and values affect the adoption of eco-friendly habits.

Overall, education, family influence, and personal experiences, particularly in farming and resource management, are the main factors shaping respondents' sustainability practices

Challenges in Maintaining Environmentally Friendly Practices

Respondents highlighted several challenges they face in maintaining their environmentally friendly practices. A major barrier is the lack of awareness and cooperation from others. One participant noted, "Unawareness of people" and "People don't make efforts," pointing to a societal challenge where many individuals do not understand or prioritize sustainability. Additionally, family members and society at large were mentioned as hindrances: "Family members and society don't always cooperate."

Time, financial constraints, and limited access to eco-friendly options also pose significant challenges. A respondent expressed that maintaining green habits can be difficult due to "less time, less money, and less awareness." Another pointed out that "Green products or energy-saving tools can be more expensive at first," which can deter individuals from adopting sustainable practices.

Furthermore, the use of plastic in packaging was cited as a widespread issue, with one respondent mentioning, "Use of plastic in every packaged item." This reflects the difficulty in avoiding single-use plastics despite personal efforts to reduce waste.

Additionally, social pressure and the mentality of others can be discouraging. One participant shared that social circles often undermine individual efforts, stating, "Social circles like friends often say, 'what impact can you lay down by doing it individually?'" This mentality makes it harder for individuals to stay motivated and committed to their environmental goals.

Overall, while there is a strong desire to practice sustainability, challenges such as lack of awareness, financial constraints, societal pressures, and limited resources are significant barriers that respondents face.

Impact of Affordability, Time, and Household Responsibilities on Eco-Conscious Practices

Several respondents highlighted how affordability, time, and household responsibilities affect their ability to maintain eco-conscious practices. A common challenge mentioned was time constraints, with one participant noting, "Very little time," and another stating, "Lack of time and money hinders consistent green practices." For many, the demands of daily life, including household chores and other responsibilities, make it difficult to consistently engage in eco-friendly actions. As one respondent explained, "Time is the major factor," acknowledging that a busy schedule can sometimes lead to purchasing items that create more waste, which conflicts with eco-conscious goals.

Affordability was another key issue, as eco-friendly products and sustainable alternatives often come at a higher price. One response indicated, "High incomes can lead to buying good and sustainable products," implying that financial stability plays a crucial role in one's ability to adopt green practices. Another participant pointed out that, "Eco-friendly products... can cost more," which can make it harder for lower-income households to consistently purchase sustainable options.

Household responsibilities were also mentioned as a barrier, with some respondents noting that managing a household takes up a lot of time and energy, leaving little room for environmental concerns. One participant shared that, "Being eco-conscious can be harder when people don't have a lot of money, time, or have many things to do at home."

Overall, the findings suggest that affordability, time limitations, and household duties significantly affect individuals' ability to prioritize eco-friendly practices, even when they are aware of their importance.

Discussions on Environmental Issues with Family and Neighbours

Conversations about environmental issues with family and neighbors are common among respondents, with discussions ranging from recycling and waste management to sustainability. One participant noted, "I discuss with my family and neighboring children," highlighting that these discussions often extend beyond immediate family members to include neighbors, especially the younger generation. Another respondent shared, "I often educate my family regarding environmental issues," indicating a proactive approach to raising awareness within the household.

Many respondents mentioned that they align with their families in terms of environmental concerns, with one saying, "Yes, we plan it and discuss what way to dispose and how." This suggests a cooperative effort within families to implement eco-friendly practices such as waste segregation and sustainable disposal methods. In some cases, conversations were described as more collaborative, where experiences are shared and ideas exchanged. One respondent said, "They all understand it and agree with me," implying a sense of mutual understanding and shared responsibility.

However, there were also mentions of challenges in these discussions. One respondent expressed that their family does not take the environmental conversations seriously, stating, "Yes, but they don't take it seriously." This indicates that while there is an openness to discuss environmental issues, not all members may prioritize or act upon these concerns. Another respondent shared frustration about receiving little appreciation for their efforts: "Yes, I often discuss, but their responses are not much appreciated."

Overall, the findings show that while environmental discussions are occurring in many households and communities, the level of engagement and seriousness of these discussions varies. While some families actively work together on sustainable practices, others face challenges in getting full cooperation or acknowledgment.

Participation in Local or Community Programs Supporting Sustainable Practices
Responses regarding participation in local or community programs that support sustainable practices were mixed. Several respondents mentioned that they were not aware of any such programs in their locality, with answers like, "No," "Not really," and "No as such programs in my locality." This suggests a lack of easily accessible or visible programs in some areas, possibly limiting community involvement in sustainability efforts.

Overall, while some respondents are actively engaged in sustainable programs, many others appear to have limited access or awareness of such initiatives in their local communities. This points to a potential gap in community-level environmental programs and highlights the importance of increasing awareness and accessibility of these opportunities for broader participation.

Engagement of Other Housewives in Environmental Practices
The responses regarding whether other housewives in the community engage in similar environmental practices were mixed. A few participants expressed certainty about the involvement of other housewives, with responses like "Yes," "Yes, many housewives are now adopting simple eco-friendly habits like reusing items and saving water," and "Yes, many housewives in communities are increasingly becoming active in environmental practices." These responses suggest that some housewives in the community are indeed adopting eco-friendly practices such as waste segregation, reusing containers, saving water and energy, and participating in local environmental initiatives like tree plantations and clean-up drives.

However, there were also some uncertain or less definitive responses, such as "Maybe not sure," "Some," and "Not really but some do." These indicate that while a portion of housewives engage in sustainable practices, it might not be widespread or consistent across the entire community. For example, some housewives are involved in practices like composting kitchen waste, reusing plastic items, or even selling recyclable materials, but these actions might be less common or not as organized.

In conclusion, while there is some level of participation in environmental practices among housewives, it is not universal. Some housewives are actively engaged in sustainability efforts, but others may not be as involved, possibly due to a lack of awareness, time, or resources. This highlights the potential for further outreach and education to encourage broader participation in eco-friendly practices.

Desired Changes for Better Environmental Practices
Respondents expressed a strong desire for increased environmental awareness and education, with many highlighting the need for more awareness programs. There was a notable interest in adopting sustainable technologies, such as maximizing solar energy use and implementing rainwater harvesting systems in households. Improved waste management, including better segregation and reducing single-use plastics, was also frequently mentioned. Participants emphasized the importance of resource conservation, particularly water and electricity, and preventing waste. Additionally, there was a desire for more greenery, with suggestions to grow more trees and plants for better air quality. These responses reflect a collective wish for greater sustainability efforts both at home and within the community.

Advice for Starting Sustainable Living

The advice provided by respondents for adopting sustainable practices centers around simple yet impactful actions. Common themes include reducing waste, conserving resources like water and energy, and focusing on reusing and recycling materials. Practical suggestions such as carrying reusable items, fixing leaky taps, and being mindful of unnecessary purchases were emphasized. Many also recommended starting small by incorporating one sustainable habit at a time, such as recycling or planting trees. Others suggested getting the whole family involved, especially children, and staying informed through local environmental programs. Overall, the advice encourages a conscious, gradual shift towards sustainable living with a strong emphasis on individual responsibility and respect for the environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the pro-environmental behaviors and attitudes of housewives, particularly in relation to domestic sustainability and everyday environmentalism. The participants in this study showcased a high level of awareness and engagement in environmentally friendly practices, with various factors such as personal beliefs, education, family influence, and cultural values playing significant roles in shaping their attitudes and actions. These findings align with the growing body of literature that suggests individual behavior, especially in household settings, is crucial in driving environmental change (Steg & Vlek, 2009).

Environmental Awareness and Responsibility

The majority of participants expressed a deep understanding of what being environmentally responsible entails. As highlighted in the responses, "caring for nature by using resources wisely" and "protecting the planet for future generations" were commonly cited reasons for practicing eco-friendly behaviors. This reflects the widespread recognition that environmental responsibility goes beyond individual actions and is tied to the long-term preservation of natural resources and ecosystems (Gifford, 2014). Moreover, several participants indicated that their environmental practices were influenced by personal, cultural, and religious beliefs. These findings resonate with existing research that demonstrates how cultural values and personal ethics often drive sustainable behaviors (Balmford et al., 2011). For instance, one respondent mentioned that environmental responsibility is "a personal and moral responsibility," which is supported by studies suggesting that pro-environmental attitudes are often deeply rooted in individuals' values and ethical beliefs (Dunlap & Jones, 2002).

Environmental Practices at Home

Regarding specific eco-friendly practices, the study found that water and electricity conservation, waste segregation, and the reduction of plastic use were among the most common behaviors. A majority of respondents indicated they actively engage in recycling, water-saving practices, and minimizing plastic consumption. For example, one respondent mentioned, "we segregate bio and non-biodegradable waste," highlighting the increasing awareness of proper waste management. These behaviors are consistent with global trends, where households are increasingly adopting green practices such as recycling and energy efficiency to reduce their environmental footprint (Duan et al., 2020). The use of solar panels, energy-efficient lighting, and composting of kitchen waste also featured prominently, supporting findings that suggest the growing integration of sustainable technologies and practices at the household level (Klein et al., 2018).

Challenges to Sustainable Practices

While many housewives exhibited strong commitment to sustainable practices, several challenges were identified in maintaining these behaviors. Limited time, financial constraints, and lack of awareness among others were commonly cited barriers. These barriers are consistent with existing literature, which suggests that despite a positive attitude toward sustainability, practical constraints such as high costs of eco-friendly products and the time required for sustainable behaviors can hinder widespread adoption (Abrahamse et al., 2005). One respondent highlighted that “eco-friendly items or services might not be easy to get everywhere,” which is a significant challenge, especially in rural or underserved areas where access to sustainable alternatives is limited (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002).

Influence of Family and Community

Family and community play an influential role in shaping sustainability practices. The findings indicate that family members, particularly children, are key agents in spreading environmental consciousness. Many respondents mentioned educating their families about waste segregation, saving water, and avoiding plastic. This aligns with research that highlights the importance of family in shaping environmental behavior, as households are often the first place where sustainable practices are learned and reinforced (Blake, 1999). However, some respondents also

expressed frustrations about the lack of cooperation from family members or neighbors, suggesting that societal attitudes toward environmental responsibility can sometimes impede collective action (Gifford, 2014). For example, one respondent noted, "Family members and society don't always cooperate," which points to the need for broader social and cultural shifts to encourage collective engagement in sustainable practices.

Recommendations for Change

Based on the findings, participants emphasized the need for greater awareness and participation in community programs to support sustainable practices. Several suggested initiatives, such as planting more trees, reducing plastic use in local markets, and installing rainwater harvesting systems in households. This reflects a desire for both personal and collective action to address environmental challenges. Moreover, many participants expressed a wish for the implementation of more community-level environmental programs that could facilitate the adoption of sustainable practices. As one participant stated, "Awareness programs are needed," underscoring the importance of education and community engagement in fostering pro-environmental behaviors (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011).

Furthermore, respondents stressed the importance of small individual actions, such as reducing waste, using less plastic, and conserving resources, as part of the solution. This aligns with the "small steps" approach advocated by environmental psychologists, which suggests that gradual and manageable changes in behavior can lead to significant environmental improvements (Steg & Vlek, 2009). By encouraging individuals to adopt small, sustainable actions, communities can build momentum for larger, more systemic changes.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role that housewives play in domestic sustainability and everyday environmentalism. While many face challenges related to time, resources, and societal norms, the findings indicate that pro-environmental behaviors are deeply rooted in personal, cultural, and religious beliefs. The study also emphasizes the importance of family influence, community support, and education in fostering environmentally friendly practices. Moving forward, greater emphasis should be placed on creating supportive community programs, reducing the barriers to adopting sustainable practices, and encouraging small individual actions that can collectively lead to a more sustainable future.

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