

Integrated Sustainability Management and Equality Practices in Universities: A Case Study of Jaume I University

Esra Bayhantopçu

Asst. Prof., Faculty of Communication, Istinye University, Istanbul, Türkiye
esra.bayhantopcu@istinye.edu.tr

Ignacio Aymerich Ojea

Professor, Philosophy of Law Department, Jaume I University, Castellón, Spain
ignacio.aymerich@uji.es

Submitted Date: 16-Feb-2023

Revised Date: 14-Aug-2023

Abstract: Today, governments, private sector companies and NGOs focus on sustainability, reviewing their strategies and management structures and implementing many projects with reference to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Academic institutions have a high potential to generate a wave of positive change by implementing sustainable development initiatives within their institutions. This paper presents a case study to examine the sustainability systems within universities. The study aims to analyze the current sustainability practices in universities and make a holistic assessment of university sustainability systems by specifically focusing on gender and equality practices. For this purpose, Jaume I University in Spain was selected as a case study. According to the data, sustainability systems can be classified under the following headings: (1) ‘Sustainability in Teaching System’; (2) ‘Sustainability in Research, Development and Innovation (R&D&I) Activities’; (3) Sustainability in Management Structure’, (3.1) ‘Governance’, (3.2) ‘Ethics’, (3.3) ‘Equality’, (3.4) ‘Social Responsibility and Sustainability Management’, (3.5.) ‘Networks and Collaborations’; (4) ‘Sustainability Communication’ and (5) ‘Community Development’. This study can inform the planning and development of university sustainability systems and the integration of United Nations (UN) SDGs into their structures.

Keywords: Sustainable Universities; Equality; Gender Equality; Sustainability Communication; Organizational Communication

1. Introduction

Sustainable development is a critical and crucial topic in our contemporary world. Under the UN’s leadership, governments, private sector companies and NGOs are placing a strong emphasis on addressing this issue by implementing sustainability standards within their institutions as they try to fulfill their environmental, economic, and social responsibilities. Universities have also started to contribute to SDGs and raise awareness as they have a significant role in education, research, policy formation, community engagement and information exchange. Higher education institutions (HEIs) contribute to innovation and development as well as the cultivation of professionals and citizens with the necessary skills and awareness to implement the SDGs (Wit, Rumbley and Ramírez 2017, 64). Today, HEIs are seen as one of the most productive institutions that would enable development in this field (De Filippo et al. 2019, 18). In this regard, universities have expanded their efforts to make

campuses greener, while making education and research more sustainable in recent years: (Busquets et al. 2021, 2).

According to UNESCO's latest report, 80% of its member states support the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) initiative. It was reported by the member states that: 66% of member states have a national ESD strategy or plan; 50% of them have a national ESD/DESD coordinating body; 50% of them have integrated ESD into relevant policies; 29% of them have integrated ESD into legal or regulatory documents (UNESCO 2014, 37). According to the EDINSOST project, although most university departments emphasize the importance of sustainability in HEIs, they still focus mainly on the environmental dimension and do not take into account the social or economic dimensions (Busquets et al. 2021, 11). Therefore, social issues and particularly relevant equality practices should be highlighted. Governance and strategies for managing sustainability, forming networks for partnerships and sustainability communication become important factors in tackling these issues.

Academic institutions have the power to generate positive change by implementing sustainable development initiatives. This study aims to make a holistic assessment of the universities' sustainability practices by explicitly focusing on equality and communication, and by providing a general model for a university sustainability structure.

In this context, the following questions were taken as references:

- How are the sustainability management mechanisms of universities?
- What are universities' practices regarding 'gender equality and equal opportunities'?
- How do universities integrate education, training, R&D and community development activities into their systems to be sustainable and how do they manage sustainability communication?

This study aims to present an exemplary model for universities planning to develop a sustainability system and integrate the SDGs into their ordinary work structures. It draws an exhaustive picture of what a sustainable structure and equality practices for universities look like by providing data about basic development areas regarding sustainability and social development.

2. Sustainability Initiatives of Universities

UNESCO's latest report summarizes the efforts of HEIs towards sustainable development in the last decade as follows: New specialist courses in sustainability, tests for institution-wide reorganization of the curriculum, examples of good practice in learning and teaching processes, advances in sustainability research, campus operations such as forming green campuses, and developments in related community engagement and stakeholder relations (2014, 31). Some of the other tasks of universities in this context include environmental management, descriptive case studies, best practice examples, integration of sustainability into specific courses, theoretical development in teaching and learning focusing on sustainability, and analysis of university policies in terms of sustainability (Solís -Espallargas et al. 2019, 2).

Sustainability issues are complex and differ locally and globally to varying degrees. To ensure a more sustainable future, higher education will have to provide graduates with skills, background, knowledge, and mental habits that would prepare them to meet challenges in the future (Gamage, Ekanayake, and Dehideniya 2022, 6).

According to UN Sustainable University Framework (UNEP 2021), universities should establish their sustainability structure under four core areas and each of these areas are comprised of number of aspects. These are: Teaching & Research (Teaching, Research, Student Engagement); Administration & Governance (Leadership, Ethics, HR, Business links, Governance, Finance); Environment & Climate (Water, Waste, Biodiversity, Climate Mitigation and Adaptation, Travel, Construction, Energy); People & Society (Diversity, Equality, Engagement, Participation, Access, Community, Health & Wellbeing). Universities

should also make sustainability a central priority, by inspiring and empowering students, faculties and staff to act on these issues.

Forming sustainability centers and strategies are crucial first steps in implementing sustainability processes. For instance, Harvard University (2023) has established President's Committee on Sustainability to advise the administration on its sustainability vision, goals, strategy, and partnerships. The committee addresses all sustainability issues such as environment, equity, and health in an integrated way, rather than as separate issues. The university regularly reports quantitative data to analyze and inspire improvements. Students, faculty, and staff have access to a variety of robust sustainability-related datasets. Besides, university publishes sustainability reports annually since 2015.

Integrating sustainability into curricula is another important step. Currently, many universities aim to incorporate sustainability into their courses, and some have introduced master's and doctoral programs related to sustainability. A large body of academic research focus on integrating sustainability into the higher education system (Gamage et al. 2022; Solís-Espallargas et al. 2019; UNESCO 2018). For instance, Yale University (2023) Sustainability Office assessed its 6000+ courses to identify which ones were focused on sustainability or had sustainability-related elements. The analysis found that Yale offers over 350 courses that incorporate sustainability across a total of 44 academic departments as well as master programs. Moreover, the university conducts a sustainability awareness survey with both the staff and the students to develop its practices. Harvard University also offers bachelor's and master's programs about sustainability, as well as open-enrollment courses in nearly 60 fields.

On the other hand, research universities, institutes, corporate and government research laboratories have discovered many technologies and strategies for more sustainable energy and resource use (Moomaw 2011, 105). The EU Code of Practice, launched in 2008, advocates the creation of Intellectual Property (IP) portfolios and if necessary, patent/IP pools, including IP by universities and research centers (Martín-Rubio and Andina 2016, 11). Therefore, integrating sustainability into academic research is another important contribution of universities. It is also important in terms of spreading innovations and perspectives on sustainability. For instance, Cambridge University (2023) Living Lab brings together students, academics, and staff to test new ideas, apply research to practice and develop new solutions for enhancing sustainability across the University. They formed a 'Communication and Engagement Strategy' for sustainability communication. They use e-marketing to promote events, encourage positive environmental actions, showcase stories, disseminate resources, and promote information on their website.

Sorbonne University (2023) is committed to integrating basic sustainable development into its curriculum, promoting research and innovation in sustainable development, and raising citizens' awareness of environmental issues. It aims to reduce its waste and greenhouse gas emissions. For example, its efforts include sustainable development in the weighting of its bid analyses as they integrate energy performance criteria in the specifications of all its actions related to buildings. Besides, a minor program on the environment is available to all students.

Higher education cannot be enriched without active links with its locality. Community-university engagement is a reciprocal process which strengthens each other (Jadhav and Suhalka 2016, 1). For instance, Hokkaido University (2023) in Japan organized 'Sustainability Weeks' since 2007. During this event, several thousands of researchers, educators, students, and citizens from Japan and beyond gather at the university to share and discuss the latest knowledge concerning sustainability and to identify the next actions to take towards a better future.

Human rights and equality are crucial topics in this framework. These issues are at least as necessary as universities' educational and research activities. For instance, in Spain, many universities publish equality action plans and carry out various activities to promote equality

and spread awareness and they also have equality units to manage related activities. For instance, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona's Observatory for Equality Unit (2023) monitors inequalities and organizes events and develop projects for enhancing equality, while Madrid Complutense University (2023) have courses for teaching with a gender perspective for both the teaching and the research staff.

The examples presented in this section provide a general framework of best practices from various universities in their core sustainability areas. The upcoming section will present a comprehensive map of all sustainability efforts that can be undertaken at a university.

3. Materials and Methods

This paper examines universities' general sustainability system from a holistic standpoint to illustrate the implementation of sustainability practices within the universities' plans and structure. In this qualitative research, descriptive case study method is used. For this purpose, purposive sampling method is used where Jaume I University (Universitat Jaume I - UJI) is selected as the sample due to its higher rankings despite its young age and its commitment to sustainability and equality. UJI is a public higher education and research university established in 1991 and is located in Castellón de la Plana in Valencia region of Spain. Its vision is to be a leading institution contributing to the social, cultural and economic aspects of sustainable development and to promote innovation, entrepreneurship, internationalization and social responsibility. It also has a NGO working on equality (UJI, 2022a).

Three main data collection methods of descriptive research are used:

(1) analysis of academic literature on sustainability in HEIs;

(2) document review: This review includes the systematic analysis of the case study university's documents such as strategic plans, work flow charts, procedures and protocols¹ of the related units such as 'Governing Council,' 'The Health, Safety and Environmental Management Office,' 'Quality Unit,' 'The Ethics and University Social Responsibility Committee,' 'Equality Unit,' 'Isonomia Foundation;' all program contents, social responsibility projects, communication contents published on the University's website and social media accounts, as well as related national laws. These documents were analyzed in a multidimensional way and all related reports such as 'Social Responsibility Report', 'Governance Action Plan (Strategic Plan)', 'Equality Plan' and 'Ethics Code' were examined comparatively.

(3) observation and semi-structured interview notes: The interviews were conducted with nine unit managers and some academics working on this issue including 'Equality Unit', 'Social Responsibility, Inclusive Policies and Equality', 'Infrastructures and Sustainability', 'Isonomía', 'Gender Equality Doctoral Program', 'Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability Master's Program' and 'Related Research Groups' to obtain details surrounding the collected data. With this method, it became possible to obtain detailed data about the strategy and practices of the institution and identify the relationship between them.

The research was conducted between April-September 2022.

4. Findings: The Case Study - Jaume I University

According to the data; University's sustainability structure can be classified under the following headings: (1) Sustainability in Teaching System: Programs & Curricula & Courses; (2) Sustainability in R&D&I Activities; (3) Sustainability Management Structure – (3.1) Governance, (3.2.) Ethics: Ethics Code and the Ethics Line, (3.3.) Equality: Equality Unit and Equality Plan, (3.4.) Social Responsibility and Sustainability Management, (3.5.) Networks and Collaborations, (4) Sustainability Communication and (5) 'Community Development'. Since

¹ Only the public reports and documents available on the UJI's official website were used.

all indicators contribute to community development, this topic is not analyzed under a specific heading.

4.1. Sustainability in Teaching System: Programs & Curricula & Courses

HEIs play a key role in fostering social transformations critical to transitioning to a sustainable future. Changes in educational policies, curricula, and practices are needed to meet the global sustainability agenda in education (Gamage, Ekanayake, and Dehideniya 2022, 4). UJI’s sustainability performance in teaching system is mapped and detailed below.

Table 1. Sustainability Practices in the Teaching System.

I - TEACHING	
A. Strategic Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General goals related to sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Identify and integrate SDGs in undergraduate and postgraduate programs 1.2. Making sustainability a compulsory content in all degrees 2. Goals about equality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. Integrate gender and equality perspectives into courses 2.2. Develop teaching methods for integration of sustainability/equality into courses
B. Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce master’s programs specifically on sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Master’s programs on sustainability, equality/gender and democracy 2. Introduce doctoral programs on sustainability, gender equality and human rights
C. Curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curricula including courses specifically addressing sustainability and related topics
D. Trainings/Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Courses specifically addressing gender and equality
E. Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze course content and structure in terms of equality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Integrate gender equality perspective into some courses 1.2. Develop teaching methods for integrating gender equality perspective into other courses

During the research conducted it has been found that even though the university does not have specific sustainability courses in its undergraduate programs, each department has related courses focusing on issues such as human rights, gender equality, environment. Subsequently, with the decision of the Governing Council 4/2023 UJI approved to make sustainability a compulsory content in all degrees. Accordingly, the curriculum must be based on democratic principles and values, equality/gender equity, climate change, and the goals of sustainable development. These values and objectives are incorporated as cross-cutting content or competencies in different formats agreed by the center and the university, as deemed appropriate and in accordance with the specific academic structure and the educational objectives of the respective degree. Managers of UJI have made the decision to integrate sustainability to all related curricula. A master’s program entitled ‘Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)’ provides an in-depth understanding of the underlying concepts. Courses such as ‘Introduction to Sustainability and CSR’, ‘Relationships with Society’, ‘Information and Communication’, ‘Environment’, ‘Sustainable Finances’, ‘Social Corporate Responsibility Management’ and ‘Human Rights and Sustainable Management of the People’ are offered within master’s program. According to its coordinator such programs thus focus on raising awareness about sustainability issues. Another master’s program on ‘Applied Research in Feminist, Gender and Citizenship Studies’ focuses on three central areas: gender studies, feminism and citizenship, all of which are essential to ethical values, human rights and sustainability. Other master’s programs such as ‘Ethics and Democracy’, ‘Energy Efficiency and Sustainability’, ‘Sustainable Chemistry’, ‘Development Cooperation’, ‘Equality and Gender in the Public and Private Spheres’ and ‘International Peace, Conflict and Development Studies’ are among the programs addressing sustainability topics.

Doctoral programs in ‘International Studies in Peace, Conflict and Development’, ‘Local Development and International Cooperation’, ‘Ethics and Democracy’, ‘Design, Management and Evaluation of Public Social Welfare Policies’, and ‘Sustainable Chemistry’ (UJI 2022a) directly relate to sustainability topics. Among these programs, the ‘Interdisciplinary Gender Studies’ program, established in 2011, relates to equality. Through the program students develop specialized knowledge of gender and equality and an awareness of the impact of equality on their lives. They apply their developing understanding of gender and equality to many areas including but not limited to psychology, history, mathematics, linguistics. The coordinators of the programs note that with the help of such higher programs, society is being shaped by gender education and research.

To integrate equality into teaching, ‘UJI Feminist Institute’ has conducted research on gender issues since 1991. In 2012, UJI developed a teaching group entitled PEPI – ‘Educational Practices for Equality’– which links gender equality issues in teaching methods. They have gathered and shared their teaching experiences in a book. The university also integrates the gender equality perspective into some of its courses, analyzes some of the contexts according to gender equality perspectives and shares the results in its equality plan.

4.2. Sustainability in R&D&I Activities

One of the most important missions of universities is research and development. The role of research in enhancing growth and development of any system or organization is considerably significant (Fayomi, Okokpujie, and Udo 2018, 7). UJI’s sustainability performance in R&D&I is mapped and detailed below.

Table 2. Sustainability Practices in R&D&I.

II – R&D&I	
F. Strategic Goals	<p>1. Research Promotion Plan: Strategic goals for developing R&D&I activities such as strengthening the human resources devoted to research; making research staff’s activities easier; promoting entrepreneurship, knowledge transfers and innovation among research staff</p> <p>1.1. Human Resources Excellence in Research (HRS4R) strategy</p> <p>2. R&D&I Services: A portal to promote innovation and sustainability</p>
G. Research Groups	<p>1. Research Groups on Sustainability Related Issues: ‘Energy’, ‘Environment’, ‘SOGRES - Organizational Sustainability and Management of Social Responsibility - Financial Markets’, ‘Quality of Life and Sustainable Development from Music and the Arts’, ‘Social Development and Peace’, ‘Human Rights and Fundamental Rights’, ‘Inequalities and Resistance’, ‘Feminist and Gender Studies’</p> <p>1.1. Support for research on gender equality</p>
H. Partnerships	<p>1. Partnership with business life</p> <p>1.1. Technology Transfer Office</p>

UJI developed a ‘*Research Promotion Plan*’ to respond to strategic objectives included in the Governance Action Plan (UJI, 2022b). In the field of R&D, the strategic objectives of UJI focuses on promoting quality research; strengthening the human resources devoted to research; making research staff’s activities easier; promoting entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer and innovation among research staff; and bringing knowledge generated at the university closer to society. In addition, UJI has Human Resources Excellence in Research (HRS4R) strategy, including fifteen different actions, to support the continuous improvement of processes and procedures in this field. This strategy addresses the need to bring research results closer to society by reinforcing structures in the field of innovation and knowledge transfer and reviewing recruitment policies to attract and retain talented researchers. On 12 August 2020, the European Commission granted the UJI the HRS4R quality award (UJI, 2021a).

Education must be changed to transfer knowledge of the technologies, motivations, and incentives necessary to meet sustainability goals and, with it, communication must be improved among the multiple producers and conveyors of knowledge (Moomaw 2011, 106). UTTO (University Technology Transfer Offices) has a critical role at this point, as it supports research, manages IP and provides links with commercial partners. According to Unico, the UK's leading technology transfer association, universities should focus on measuring the knowledge transfer activities they undertake in areas such as networking and professional development, consulting, collaborative research, licensing, teaching, publications (Martín-Rubio and Andina 2016, 1- 2). In this way, universities contribute to the socio-economic development of their countries while creating solutions to challenges that the business world faces.

In this regard, UJI has been active in the transfer of knowledge to companies and agencies. Through R&D&I services' collaborative portal, research groups exchange technological discoveries and innovations to promote sustainability (UJI 2021b). UJI has more than 180 academic research working groups in all academic fields and 14 research institutes which focus on sustainability, presented in the table 2. One of these groups conducts research on women leaders and entrepreneurs to support empowerment of women within the university and in the region and publishes academic reports on gender and equality. The university underlines the importance of gender perspective and awareness in R&D.

4.3. Sustainability Management Structure

The four recognized principles of corporate governance include transparency, accountability, responsibility, and fairness; these principles are important in that they relate to CSR (Aras and Crowther 2008, 440). The structure of the UJI was analyzed from this viewpoint and its sustainability management structure is mapped and detailed as follows:

Table 3. Sustainability Management Structure.

III – MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE	
I. Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Governance Board: Senate, Governing Council, Board of Directors, Social Council, as well as Student Council 1.1. Governance action plan (Strategic plan) 1.2. Analysis of current and socioeconomic environment situation 1.3. Stakeholder engagement 2. Health, Safety and Environmental Management Office 3. Quality policy
J. Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethics and transparency: Ethics and University Social Responsibility Committee 1.1. Ethics code 1.2. Ethics line 1.3. Regular reports 1.4. Transparency portal 1.5. Suggestion box
K. Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equality plan 1.1. Protocols surrounding equality, violence 1.2. Awareness trainings surrounding protocols and equality 1.3. Awareness programs and campaigns 1.4. Trainings for incorporation of gender perspective in teaching 1.5. Analysis of equality perspective in course content 2. Isonomia Foundation 3. Voluntary programs
L. Social Responsibility and Sustainability Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainability Management Structure 1.1. Social responsibility, inclusion and equality 1.2. Infrastructures and sustainability 1.3. Social responsibility plan 1.4. Social responsibility report 2. Office for Development Cooperation and Solidarity 3. Sustainability research projects and community development campaigns/projects

	<p>4. Steering Committee</p> <p>5. Awareness surveys</p> <p>6. Networks and collaborations</p>
--	--

Governance

Managing institutional sustainability (and determining strategy and policies for doing so) is a first and important step to reach sustainability goals and coordinate activities. To provide long-term value, sustainability efforts must be integrated into corporate strategy in a way that complements the corporation’s goals and overall mission (Galpin and Hebard 2018, 14). UJI’s governing body consists of Senate, Governing Council, Board of Directors, Social Council and Student Council. UJI’s latest Governance Action Plan reflects the strategies that the institution will follow in the next few years. To create the governance action or strategic plan, the university conducts a qualitative and quantitative review of UJI’s current situation. The Plan is organized into six strategic areas: ‘Education’ which includes improving and updating the range of official degree courses and promoting educational innovation; ‘Knowledge generation, transfer and innovation’ which includes strengthening human resources dedicated to research, promoting entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer and innovation among research staff; ‘People’; ‘Local and Global Outlook’ which includes promoting international mobility, promoting the international dimension of courses and the internationalization of research; ‘Social and Cultural Commitment’ which includes consolidating the student volunteering and participation program, designing and implementing socially responsible policies and actions, encouraging respect for diversity, transversally and gender equality; and ‘Governance and Sustainability’ which includes consolidating community participation, promoting transparency and institutional communication, ensuring economic sustainability and improving the sustainability and habitability of the campus. One of the most important issues for sustainability within the institution is providing opportunities for professional growth and intellectual and creative exploration. The university aims to increase recognition of the work of the lecturers; recruit the young talent and develop the careers of its staff; improve the working conditions of administrative and service personnel; and encourage student participation and learning opportunities (UJI 2019). All of these strategies can be seen in the practices mentioned above. Apart from the governance plan, the quality unit of the university also aims to prevent both intolerance and discrimination among the staff (PAS, PDI) and students. It works to establish mechanisms to prevent academic fraud and to guarantee ethical behavior.

Ethics: Ethics Code and the Ethics Line

‘Ethics and University Social Responsibility Committee’ is an advisory body of the university. The committee is responsible for monitoring and checking the university’s social responsibility system, as well as fostering ethics awareness and compliance. It consists of a chairperson, or rector, a secretary, and ex-officio members and ordinary members (UJI 2022c).

For transparent management, regular notifications are made to the staff and reports are published. Information regarding management elections is given in the same way to all related parties. Since October 2015, the University has operated a portal of transparency for the public to access information which contains economic, budget related and statistical information; legal compliance information; and institutional, organizational and planning information. The university has been ranked among the most transparent in Spain; according to the 2015 Transparency Examination report of Spanish universities conducted by the Fundació Compromís y Transparència (FCyT) as it met 23 of the 26 established transparency indicators.

Ethics, accountability, and transparency are important at UJI for staff and students as well as governance bodies. This is especially important when it comes to equality and

harassment issues. At this point, ethics codes and ethics lines can serve to embed the ethical practices and behaviors within the organization which is important for sustainability.

UJI is the first university to have a code of ethics since 2017 that incorporates a system to guarantee compliance through participation, monitoring, control, and accountability mechanisms. The university establishes ethical norms and implements the code according to institutional values, which include information about the values of the university and the rules to be followed. It also includes the university's equality, gender equality and social responsibility approach. However, the code of ethics does not contain case studies that staff or students may encounter (UJI 2017a, 23).

There is also an Ethics Line, a confidential communication channel created to convey suggestions, concerns, and warnings regarding ethical violations. UJI staff and students can report any unethical behavior to the authorities through the Ethics Line. The Ethics Line guarantees the confidentiality of all notifications. Staff and students can also convey their complaints, queries, suggestions and proposals for updating and improving the ethics code to the Ethics and University Social Responsibility Committee by using a suggestion box system.

Equality: Equality Unit and Equality Plan

UJI's Equality Unit was established in 2010 by national law 4/2007 (in modification of Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December). The twelfth additional provision of the law states that "*Universities will have equality units among their organizational structures for the development of functions related to the principle of equality between women and men.*" The Equality Unit is a governing body of the university. The unit functions to promote equality between people, promote teaching and research on equality, create specific postgraduate courses and conduct specialized studies and researches on equality, all of which are important for social development (UJI 2022d). The unit consists of managerial and administrative staff. There is also an 'Equality Commission' consisting of 4 different department deans, professors from various disciplines, trade unit and student representatives. According to the data taken from the interviews, the commission convenes periodically every year, and the unit manager reports the developments of the year's activities and progress in achieving goals.

According to UJI's 2013-2022 Equality Unit Manager, the university has developed regulations, equality plans, training plans, personnel selection procedures, protocols against harassment and violence, a guide to avoid sexist language and other tools. The unit offers courses informing the staff about the protocols and training them to prevent harassment. The protocols are published on the university website, so that all university members know of it (UJI 2017c).

Every year, the unit organizes awareness programs, a congress, and seminars to raise awareness about equality. The unit supports and promotes teaching and research on gender equality and human rights by promoting the implementation of gender mainstreaming in all university policies. The unit analyzes the degree of integration of the gender perspective in teaching. It also organizes information/teaching programs for academics on incorporating gender perspective in their course objectives, activities, evaluation methodologies, learning outcomes and language.

According to Spanish law, companies with more than 50 employees are obliged to have an equality plan. UJI published its third equality plan for the period of 2021-2025. UJI offers a report identifying to what extent equality between women and men is integrated into the university's management and structure and into its priority areas of action and identifying possible discrimination, inequalities, or imbalances in the labor sphere. The report also identifies and assesses disadvantages, difficulties and obstacles that exist or that potentially may occur so that the university may proactively take measures to address and correct them (UJI 2021c).

There is also a non-profit association, affiliated to the university, called Isonomia Foundation which is also a part of Equality Unit. It was founded by UJI in 2002 and its main purpose is to promote equal opportunities as well as other social, economic, labor, and educational groups. UJI serves as a model in this regard, as nowhere else in the country is such an entity established in conjunction with a university. The foundation offers trainings and workshops for students, professors, public and private organizations, municipalities, and women in the region; organizes campaigns, seminars, and conferences; conducts research; creates forums; and consults with municipalities on matters related to equality, gender and anti-discrimination. It also maintains collaboration agreements with public and private entities to advance joint projects and create awareness on equality. It enters discussions with government to enact laws related to gender equality and sexist violence. It also organizes courses to empower female leaders and future leaders (students). In partnership with municipalities, this research group organizes other training programs and activities for women (UJI 2022e). The Foundation has two different branches, the Punt-Violeta-Rainbow, and the Rainbow, that offer information, guidance and counseling on sexual harassment, abuse and affective-sexual and gender diversity, with the purpose of visualizing and raising awareness of solutions to social problems like LGTBPhobia.

The university also has a volunteer program to raise awareness on inequality and prevent gender discrimination and violence. Students in the volunteer group participate in 'Equality' courses, taking part in institutional awareness activities such as International Women's Day.

Social Responsibility and Sustainability Management

'The Ethics and University Social Responsibility Committee' is responsible for social responsibility activities. There are two vice-rectors overseeing these issues. One is responsible for Social Responsibility, Inclusive Policies and Equality, the other is responsible for Infrastructures and Sustainability.

Social Responsibility Plan of the UJI (RSUJI), developed within Strategic Plan, proposes a system for managing and communicating university's economic, social, and environmental impacts. Examination of the university governance and strategic plan shows that all sub-headings of the plan relate to the sustainability criteria. Coordination among the plans is of importance and when examined, reports of the university generally parallel one another. The strategic plan of the university includes promoting equal opportunities and other factors. Apart from improving the teaching functions, research capabilities and social contributions of the university, the strategic plan also consists of other sustainability indicators, each aligned with the equality plan. To 'enhance and raise awareness of the University's social responsibility' is another important part of the plan.

UJI's Academic and Social Responsibility Report is written according to international GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) standards, however is without GRI approval. The report consists of the university's materiality issues, its stakeholders, its direct and indirect economic role in local and national development, its environmental effects, its health and safety systems, and its social contributions apart from teaching, research and community development activities (UJI 2017b). However, the report was published only once and there appears to be no commitment in the strategic plans to regularly publish sustainability reports. The university has also compiled a report in which Spanish universities explain the corporate responsibility or sustainability practices of their own institutions (Martínez, Barberá-Forcadell, and Pallarés-Domínguez 2017).

UJI has formulated strategic plans addressing health and safety and environmental issues. The Health, Safety and Environmental Management Office engages in protective measures for safety and health and develop related projects. The university also has a Healthy Habitat program, focusing on new actions aimed at Covid-19. Supporting the environmental

transformation of the campus and improving the energy efficiency renewal policies are among the university's projects. The managers have stated that the university is planning a project to reduce waste and promoting the provision of new garden areas. They also manage a sustainable tourism project and two other projects to assess the SDGs.

UJI identifies itself as a charitable institution – and emphasizes this aspect of itself within the university community to promote volunteerism and active cooperation. Therefore, it has the Office for Development Cooperation and Solidarity (OCDS). The office coordinates initiatives, actions and awareness-raising programs, training and research projects for the community development. For the success of sustainability practices and to achieve strategic goals, monitoring and measurement are important. The university has a Steering Committee to monitor the progress for each indicator. According to data obtained from the interviews, for the first time, in 2022, a sustainability awareness survey was conducted among academic and administrative staff.

Networks and Collaborations

Building and maintaining networks and engaging in collaboration is important in terms of sustainability. UJI and UBE entered into a cooperation agreement to establish a Chair of Sustainable Plastics at UJI to recycle materials. UJI organizes technical meetings with experts and specialists and sponsors corporate and industry seminars for knowledge and experience sharing; graduates and postgraduates are encouraged to attend (UBE 2022).

Recognizing the importance of collaborations between private companies, NGOs and government authorities, the Conference of Spanish Universities (CCS) created an association in 2005 supporting the activity of social councils. Social councils connect universities with society, promoting relationships between universities and local communities through economic activities and services and supporting universities in accessing external funding for their activities (OECD 2021, 95). With the leadership of Equality Unit, UJI participates in many networks and initiatives such as guides for university teaching with a gender perspective and the RUIGEU (Network of Units for Equality Gender and University Excellence). The Network Isonomy unites people, associations, companies, and municipalities in the common purpose of promoting equal opportunities and equal treatment for women and men and preventing violence. A total of 92 municipalities are members of this network in the province of Castello.

4.4. Sustainability Communication

The Communication and Publication Service directs the communication activities of UJI. However, no specific contact center exists to carry out sustainability communication. Each unit carries out its own communication activities, but these are not coordinated or conducted based on a common understanding throughout the university.

For sustainability communication, awareness surveys are conducted and conferences on sustainability are organized. CSR report can be classified as a sustainability communication tool. The Equality Unit organizes gender and equality awareness campaigns to inform and advise the university's governing bodies, commissions, staff, and students on equality policies. The unit also informs academic staff and students about equality and related activities that take place during the year through the university's website and e-mails. Isonomia Foundation designs its own communication tools such as posters, brochures, YouTube videos and social media posts. Rainbow and Isonomia, another sub-branch of the NGO, also designs social media applications to create awareness on equality. Nonetheless, communications are not executed based on any coordinated strategy.

5. Conclusion

This paper attempts to holistically analyze the current sustainability practices and systems of the case study university. According to the data, the main topics within the sustainability structure can be classified as (1) 'Sustainability in Teaching System'; (2) 'Sustainability in Research, Development and Innovation Activities'; (3) Sustainability in Management Structure', (3.1) Governance, (3.2) Ethics, (3.3) Equality, (3.4) Social Responsibility and Sustainability Management, (3.5.) 'Networks and Collaborations'; (4) Sustainability Communication and (5) 'Community Development'.

As detailed in Table 1, in the framework of sustainability activities in teaching system; it can be asserted that the university's sustainability goals include identifying the SDGs and integrating them into all programs. Approval of making sustainability a compulsory content in all programs; aligning the curriculum with democratic principles, equality, climate change and SDGs and ensuring that each departmental curriculum covers relevant topics and courses; identifying all programs and curricula in terms of sustainability and equality; integration of gender and equality perspectives into courses; establishing working research groups to develop teaching methods; publishing related research findings; opening and promoting master's and doctoral programs on sustainability, equality and related fields; opening courses specifically addressing sustainability; organizing special training programs and courses on equality for students, academics and other stakeholders outside of the university are among the activities that are carried out.

In addition to these activities, publishing the lists of all sustainability-related courses for each department on the website after identifying all courses and curricula in terms of sustainability, providing trainings on the integration of sustainability into courses to academic staff and publishing relevant training kits open to other stakeholders; developing new related programs; organizing regular general sustainability trainings and seminars for academic and administrative staff and relevant external stakeholders; publishing and promoting these trainings' videos on social media can be suggested as some other additional practices that can be done in this context .

As detailed in Table 2, the university has an R&D&I research plan including activities such as promoting entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer, and strengthening research staff. Though sustainability research or funds are not included in the plan, its goals are all related to sustainable development. Many research groups such as energy, environment, finance, sustainable development from music and arts, social development and peace, human rights, gender studies have conducted research on sustainability issues, and publish academic articles and books. UJI has partnerships with members of the private sector to transfer knowledge to companies and agencies, and its R&D&I services offer a portal to promote innovation and sustainability. The university also emphasizes the importance of gender perspective in R&D activities.

All of these provide a framework for future work on sustainability in R&D&I. In addition, establishing new research groups to integrate not only equality but also sustainability into all courses for creating awareness, dedicating a separate budget for sustainability research, developing award systems, encouraging related research topics in master's and doctoral theses, and communicating and disseminating research results may be among the other recommended practices.

As detailed in Table 3, the university's governance structure and processes prioritize sustainability efforts. Including sustainability representatives such as academics, administrative staff and students in the governance board, which is important in terms of stakeholder participation; establishing sustainability management structure and sustainability office, HSE and Quality Office; leading these efforts at the rectorate level; analyzing the current situation in terms of sustainability and determining strategies accordingly; implementation of socially

responsible policies and actions as well as strengthening community engagement, transparency and institutional communication and putting these goal in the strategic plan; determining all goals in parallel with each other; preparing and publishing social responsibility plan and report; having a 'Development Cooperation and Solidarity Office' that manages the university's social responsibility projects and provides trainings; conducting awareness projects, especially related to equality; conducting volunteering projects; having an NGO related to equality inside the university and by this way conducting active work involving external stakeholders; publishing equality plans periodically and existence of well-established equality unit that manages these activities; developing procedures and protocols and organizing awareness trainings for equality; the existence of an ethics line and code; conducting sustainability awareness surveys; becoming a member of relevant networks and developing collaborations; and the existence of a sustainability steering monitoring committee are among the activities carried out by the university within the scope of general sustainability management. In particular, it can be claimed that the University's Equality Unit demonstrates high performance in the strategic and integrated management of gender and equality issues, which are of great importance in terms of social development.

In addition to these practices; publishing sustainability reports periodically; developing sustainable long term responsibility projects in line with strategic plans; regularly conducting sustainability awareness surveys and sharing the results; developing new partnerships; developing campus and other green operations in coordination with the other sustainability projects and making announcements of related activities and sharing the best practices with the other institutions can be suggested as practices that can increase the success of relevant performance.

This study's findings reveal that sustainability is related to each unit of the university and that every unit engages in practices for sustainability. However, for holistic sustainability management all practices should be coordinated and integrated according to a strategic goal. In addition to the practices identified above, the current situation and strategic goals related to sustainability should also be defined in line with the university's priority issues and stakeholders. Measurement is of importance at this point. Following Landman's (2004) work on the measurement of human rights (closely linked to the SDGs and gender equality), measurement should be established at three levels: rights in principle, rights in practice and rights in policy. The distinction into levels is relevant because the degree of commitment to given goals (and for this purpose the observation applies equally to the SDGs or to human rights) is not only shown by the formal proclamation of rights (rights in principle), but sufficient financial, human, material and procedural resources must also be provided to achieve them (rights in practice) and constant attention must be paid to the degree to which these two levels are translated into verifiable outputs (rights in policy). Otherwise, it may well be that the institutions formally declare their commitment but do not provide sufficient means (or these are poorly designed) and therefore there is no effective change in the reality in accordance with the given goals. This is precisely the diagnosis that has been made of the shortcomings in internationally compared public policies in relation to the SDGs, where "it is found that the political impact of the SDGs has been mostly discursive, for example, through their adoption as a reference point in international policy pronouncements and in a changed discourse within global institutions" but "actual reforms in the operations of this organizations since 2015 have been modest" (Biermann et al. 2022). In this regard, the existence of three units within the University's organizational chart dedicated to gender equality issues (Equality Unit, Isonomía Foundation and the Institute for Feminist and Gender Studies) may not be optimal in terms of efficiency. It may possibly involve a design that suffers from duplication of functions. Meanwhile, at the other extreme (that of output evaluation), the university could show a greater

accountability effort by showing the real impact of its equality and sustainability policies in terms of observable changes within specific verification timeframes.

Moreover, to achieve greater success and visibility, effective communication plays an important role. As such, alongside the conventional communication systems of academic units, it is crucial to establish a dedicated sustainability communication system as a distinct department. Regular sustainability communication through various platforms should be conducted to consistently inform relevant stakeholders. This proactive approach enhances awareness and fosters faster progress towards sustainability goals.

As research colleagues from the Universitat Pompeu Fabra suggest, it is believed that “universities have a central role not only in developing much needed research on the complex issues concerning planetary wellbeing but also in teaching and promoting the view that a new kind of science and approach to such issues is needed” (Antó et al. 2021). With the same conviction, it is intended to continue working along these lines.

In this study, the structure of UJI is analyzed as a case study and a table of what a university can do within the framework of sustainability is presented. Within this framework, suggestions are also provided for additional activities that can be done. However, since sustainability issues require more comprehensive analysis due to their scope, these data can be generalized with a more extensive synthesis. Expanding the scope of this study by examining actual changes achieved in both sustainability and gender equality would make it more interesting. This study addresses the initial levels of analysis, principles and practice, leaving the policy level for future research. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will be a valuable source for other academic studies.

References

- Antó, J. M., Martí, J. L. (et al.). 2021. “The Planetary Wellbeing Initiative: Pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals in Higher Education.” *Sustainability* 13(6): 3372. DOI: 10.3390/su13063372.
- Aras, G. and Crowther, D. 2008. “Governance and Sustainability: An Investigation into the Relationship between Corporate Governance and Corporate Sustainability.” *Management Decision* 46 (3): 433-448. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740810863870>.
- Biermann, F., Hickmann, T., Sénit, CA, et al. 2022. “Scientific Evidence on the Political Impact of the Sustainable Development Goals.” *Nature Sustainability* 5 (9): 795-800. DOI: 10.1038/s41893-022-00909-5.
- Busquets, P., Segalas, J., Gomera, A., Antúnez, M., Ruiz-Morales, J., Albareda-Tiana, S., and Miñano, R. 2021. “Sustainability Education in the Spanish Higher Education System: Faculty Practice, Concerns and Needs.” *Sustainability* 13: 8389. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13158389>.
- Cambridge University. 2023. *Communication and Engagement Strategy*. Accessed 02 July 2023. https://www.environment.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/uoc_comms_engagement_strategy_2020.pdf.
- De Filippo, D., Sandoval-Hamón, L. A., Casani, F., and Sanz-Casado, E. 2019. “Spanish Universities’ Sustainability Performance and Sustainability-Related R&D+I.” *Sustainability* 11: 5570. DOI:10.3390/su11205570.
- Fayomi, O.S.I., Okokpujie, I. P., and Udo, M. 2018. “The Role of Research in Attaining Sustainable Development Goals”. IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering 413. DOI:10.1088/1757-899X/413/1/012002.

Galpin, T.J., and Hebard, J. 2018. "Strategic Management and Sustainability." Pp. 165-178 in *Business Strategies for Sustainability: A Research Anthology*, edited by Borland, Lindgreen, Vanhamme, Maon, Ambrosini, and Palacios Florencio. New York: Routledge.

Gamage, K. A. A., Ekanayake, S. Y., and Dehideniya, S. C. P. 2022. "Embedding Sustainability in Learning and Teaching: Lessons Learned and Moving Forward - Approaches in STEM Higher Education Programmes". *Educ. Sci* 12: 225. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12030225>.

Harvard University. 2023. *Harvard Office for Sustainability*. Accessed 05 July 2023. <https://sustainable.harvard.edu>.

Hokkaido University. 2023. *Sustainability Weeks*. Accessed 12 July 2023. <https://www.global.hokudai.ac.jp/about/contribution-to-a-sustainable-society/sw/>.

Jadhav, J., and Suhalka, V. 2016. "University Community Engagement: Insights from Field Work Practices." *Indian Journal of Sustainable Development* 2(1). DOI: 10.21863/ijdsd/2016.2.1.017.

Landman, T. 2004. "Measuring Human Rights: Principle, Practice and Policy." *Human Rights Quarterly* 26(4): 906-931. Accessed 10 October 2022. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20069767>.

Martín-Rubio, I. and Andina, D. 2016. "University Knowledge Transfer Offices and Social Responsibility", *Administrative Science* 6(20). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci6040020>.

Martínez, A. A., Barberá-Forcadell, S., and Pallarés-Domínguez, D. 2017. *Nuevas Perspectivas en la Gestión de la Responsabilidad Social en las Universidades*. Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/Humanitats.2017.53>.

Moomaw, W. R. 2011. "Transferring Knowledge of Sustainability" Pp.105-117 in *Quality of Human Resources: Education - Volume III*, edited by Natalia P. Tarasova. UK: Eolls Publishers.

OECD. 2021. *Improving Knowledge Transfer and Collaboration between Science and Business in Spain*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/4d787b35-en>.

Solís-Espallargas, C., Ruiz-Morales, J., Limón-Domínguez, D., and Valderrama-Hernández, R. 2019. "Sustainability in the University: A Study of Its Presence in Curricula, Teachers and Students of Education". *Sustainability* 11: 6620. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11236620>.

Sorbonne Université. 2023. *Sustainable Development*. Accessed 10 July 2023. <https://www.sorbonne-universite.fr/en/universite/about-us/sustainable-development>.

UBE. 2022. *Universitat Jaume I (UJI) and Ube Sign an Agreement to Establish a University Chair for Research and Dissemination on Sustainable Plastics*. Accessed 19 October 2022. <https://ube.es/universitat-jaume-i-uji-and-ube-sign-an-agreement-to-establish-a-university-chair-for-research-and-dissemination-on-sustainable-plastics/>.

UJI. 2022a. *Studies*. Accessed 10 June 2022. https://www.uji.es/estudis/?p_estudio=m.

UJI. 2022b. *Plan de Promoción de la Investigación 2022*. Accessed 22 June 2022. <https://www.uji.es/investigacio/base/pinv/>.

UJI 2022c. *The Ethics and University Social Responsibility Committe*. Accessed 10 May 2022. <https://www.uji.es/organs/ouag/rectorat/comissions/cersu/>.

UJI. 2022d. *Unidad de Igualdad*. Accessed 10 May 2022. <https://www.uji.es/serveis/ui/base/unitat-igualtat/info/qui-som/>.

UJI. 2022e. *Isonomia Foundation*. Accessed 10 Mas 2022. <http://isonomia.uji.es>.

UJI. 2021a. *Human Resources Strategy for Researchers*. Accessed 22 June 2022. <https://www.uji.es/investigacio/hrs4r>.

UJI. 2021b. *Actividad Investigadora*. Accessed 22 June 2022. <https://www.uji.es/investigacio/base/activitat/>.

UJI. 2021c. *III Plan de Igualdad de la Universitat Jaume I 2021-2025*. Accessed 10 June 2022. <https://ujiapps.uji.es/ade/rest/storage/5BNW2JLC74H4SEWTNEAZGIC3ZAMNTJPE>.

- UJI. 2019. *Universitat Jaume I Governance Action Plan 2019-2022*. Accessed 02 May 2022. <https://ujiapps.uji.es/ade/rest/storage/e8553ecb-7324-48c6-a536-10cabb917e14?guest=true>.
- UJI. 2017a. *Código Ético De La Universitat Jaume I*. Accessed 02 May 2022. <https://ujiapps.uji.es/ade/rest/storage/4cda12c5-5d2f-4f5d-8e50-58be43d01066?guest=true>.
- UJI. 2017b. *Memòria 2016/2017 Responsabilitat Social Universitària*. Accessed 10 June 2022. <https://ujiapps.uji.es/ade/rest/storage/4235413b-786d-416b-a6ce-0f8effe5ce64?guest=true>.
- UJI. 2017c. *Protocol for Detection, Prevention and Response in The Event of Workplace Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Gender-Based Harassment and Harassment Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression at The Universitat Jaume I of Castelló*. Accessed 12 May 2022. <https://ujiapps.uji.es/ade/rest/storage/d84037e4-45ab-439b-9da9-29e46604acc?guest=true>.
- UNEP. 2021. *The UNEP Sustainable University Framework*. Accessed 14 June 2022. <https://www.unep.org/resources/toolkits-manuals-and-guides/uneps-sustainable-university-framework>.
- UNESCO. 2018. *Issues and Trends in Education for Sustainable Development*. Edited by A. Leicht, J. Heiss and W. J. Byun. UNESCO Publishing. Accessed 18 June 2022. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261445>.
- UNESCO. 2014. *Shaping the Future, We Want. Monitoring and Evaluation UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) Final Report*. UNESCO: Luxemburg. Accessed 18 June 2022. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1682Shaping%20the%20future%20we%20want.pdf>.
- Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. 2023. *UAB's Observatory for Equality*. Accessed 28 June 2023. <https://www.uab.cat/web/research/responsible-research-and-innovation/uab-s-observatory-for-equality-1345703043357.html>.
- Universidad Complutense Madrid. 2023. Accessed 28 June 2023. <https://www.ucm.es/english/courses-and-workshops>.
- Yale University. 2023. *Yale Sustainability*. Accessed 08 July 2023. <https://sustainability.yale.edu/academics-research>.
- Wit, H.D., Rumbley, L.E., and Ramírez, J.V. 2017. "The Internationalisation of Spanish Higher Education in Global Perspective" in *The Internationalization of Higher Education in Spain*, edited by Adriana Perez-Encinas, Laura Howard, Laura E. Rumbley, Hans de Wit. Internationalization of Education: Madrid.

Ethical Statement

All the data are gotten from UJI's official website and interviews. Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, due to not involving personally identifiable nor sensitive data. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This research is funded by TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye) 2219-International Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Program for Turkish Citizens.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the TÜBİTAK for supporting this research. They also would like to thank the Jaume I University, and to the interviewed academics at Jaume I University for their valuable contribution.

About the Authors

Esra Bayhantopçu is an Asst. Prof. at Istinye University in Istanbul, Türkiye since 2018. She graduated from the joint international PhD program of Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne University (Political Science Department) and Galatasaray University (Media and Communication Studies Department) in 2017. She conducted her post doctoral research at Jaume I University in Spain (2022-2023) in the field of sustainability and gender/equality. Her academic expertise is in the fields of sustainability, gender and equality and communication.
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6680-8414

Ignacio Aymerich Ojea

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7818-4872