

## Vocational Education and Women's Empowerment in Jordan: A Sociological Perspective on Opportunities and Challenges

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**Abstract: Objective:** This study aims to assess the role of vocational education and training in the economic and social empowerment of Jordanian women. In particular, it seeks to identify the opportunities offered by such education and to analyse the complex interplay between cultural, family and structural barriers that limit women's participation and integration into the labour market. **Methodology:** The research adopted a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the life experiences of the participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of 75 women, including current trainees and graduates of various vocational programmes in different governorates of the Kingdom. **Key findings:** The results showed that vocational education contributes significantly to enhancing women's economic independence and self-confidence, especially when family support is available. Economic necessity was the main motivation for enrolment among 64% of the participants. However, 55% reported facing social stigma or family opposition. The main challenges were persistent gender stereotypes, lack of post-graduation support (73% reported a lack of guidance), and structural barriers such as lack of equipment and transportation. Only 21% of participants in non-traditional fields (such as renewable energy) achieved high employment rates, highlighting the importance of partnerships with employers. **Conclusions:** Vocational education has significant transformative potential, but its success depends on addressing entrenched cultural norms and institutional fragmentation. Sustainable empowerment requires a continuous supply chain model that integrates training with employment, financing and career guidance. **Recommendations:** The study recommends developing comprehensive policies to bridge the gap between training and labour market needs. This includes expanding microfinance for small businesses, launching national awareness campaigns to dismantle gender stereotypes, and strengthening formal public-private partnerships to ensure structured training and employment opportunities for women.

**Keywords:** Vocational Education, Women's empowerment, Economic Development, Social Barriers, Gender Equality.

### التعليم المهني وتمكين المرأة في الأردن: منظور اجتماعي للفرص والتحديات

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**الملخص: الهدف:** تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم دور التعليم والتدريب المهني في التمكين الاقتصادي والاجتماعي للمرأة الأردنية. وتسعى بشكل خاص إلى تحديد الفرص التي يوفرها هذا التعليم، وتحليل التداخل المعقد بين الحواجز الثقافية، والأسرية، والهيكلية التي تحد من مشاركة النساء واندماجهن في سوق العمل. **المنهجية:** اعتمد البحث المنهج النوعي الظاهراتي لاستكشاف التجارب الحياتية للمشاركة. تم إجراء مقابلات شبه منظمة مع عينة قصدية مكونة من 75 امرأة، شملت متدرجات حاليات وخريجات من برامج مهنية متنوعة في مختلف محافظات المملكة. **النتائج:** أظهرت النتائج أن التعليم المهني يساهم بشكل كبير في تعزيز الاستقلال الاقتصادي والثقة بالنفس لدى النساء، خاصة عند توفر دعم أسري. كانت الضرورة الاقتصادية الدافع الرئيسي للانخراط لدى 64% من المشاركات. ومع ذلك، أفادت 55% منهن بمواجهة وصمة اجتماعية أو معارضة أسرية. وتمثلت التحديات الرئيسية في الصور النمطية الجندرية المستمرة، ونقص الدعم بعد التخرج (حيث أشار 73% إلى غياب الإرشاد)، والعوائق الهيكلية مثل نقص المعدات والمواصلات. كما تبين أن 21% فقط من المشاركات في المجالات غير التقليدية (مثل الطاقة المتجددة) حققن معدلات توظيف عالية، مما يبرز أهمية الشراكات مع أصحاب العمل. **الاستنتاجات:** يتمتع التعليم المهني بإمكانات تحويلية كبيرة، إلا أن نجاحه مرهون بمعالجة الأعراف الثقافية المتجذرة والتجزؤ المؤسسي. يتطلب التمكين المستدام نموذج خط إمداد مستمر يدمج التدريب مع التوظيف والتمويل والتوجيه المهني. **التوصيات:** توصي الدراسة بتطوير سياسات شاملة لسد الفجوة بين التدريب واحتياجات سوق العمل. ويشمل ذلك توسيع نطاق التمويل الأصغر للمشاريع الصغيرة، وإطلاق حملات توعية وطنية لتفكيك الصور النمطية الجندرية، وتعزيز الشراكات الرسمية بين القطاعين العام والخاص لضمان توفير فرص تدريب وتوظيف منظمة للنساء.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التعليم المهني، تمكين المرأة، الفرص الاقتصادية، الحواجز الاجتماعية، الأدوار الجندرية.

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## Background

A qualitative, phenomenological approach was adopted, involving semi-structured interviews with 75 women who were either currently enrolled in, or had graduated from, vocational training programmes in different governorates across Jordan. The data were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-step framework to examine the participants' lived experiences, motivations and challenges. These reflect entrenched socioeconomic inequalities and a pressing need for comprehensive national interventions. In this context, vocational and technical education (VET) is one of the most effective ways to promote women's economic inclusion and help them overcome the social and cultural barriers that prevent them from participating in productive sectors.

VET provides practical, market-oriented training that enables women to acquire transferable skills in various sectors, such as healthcare, tourism, technical industries, and renewable energy. UNESCO's 2021 report on technical education in the Arab region highlights how gender-sensitive vocational programmes can narrow the gender gap and encourage women's participation in emerging industries. In Jordan, the Ministry of Labour has launched initiatives such as the Enhancing Employment Opportunities for Women and Youth project (2020), in collaboration with international partners like the German GIZ. This project trained over 3,000 women in technical and entrepreneurial skills (GIZ, 2020).

However, women in Jordan still face entrenched cultural norms and structural barriers that restrict their access to vocational education and employment opportunities. Deep-seated stereotypes linking technical professions to men, coupled with family resistance and a lack of supportive

infrastructure such as safe transport and childcare, remain significant challenges. A 2022 study by the Voice of Women Association revealed that nearly 60% of young women from rural areas drop out of vocational training prematurely due to family pressures or early marriage. These obstacles impede the transition of policy initiatives into tangible empowerment outcomes.

For vocational education to genuinely empower women, comprehensive policy measures must be reinforced. Recommended approaches include legislative reforms such as the Flexible Work Law, gender-sensitive outreach campaigns and fostering public-private sector partnerships. International agencies such as UN Women (2020) and USAID continue to play a pivotal role in broadening training opportunities and encouraging inclusive economic participation.

However, despite the increasing availability of vocational training programmes in Jordan, female participation and employment outcomes remain disproportionately low. The discrepancy between policy ambitions and real-world achievements raises concerns about the effectiveness of these programmes in addressing socio-cultural and institutional limitations. Closing this gap is essential to ensure that vocational education fulfils its role in empowering women, rather than remaining a mere symbolic initiative.

While numerous international studies have addressed women's empowerment through vocational training, few have specifically examined this issue within Jordan's unique socio-cultural context. This study takes a sociological approach, grounded in local realities. It explores the opportunities offered by vocational education, as well as the complex interplay of cultural, familial and institutional challenges that shape women's experiences. The study aims to provide new empirical

insights to inform policies and practices that promote gender equity within Arab and Middle Eastern contexts.

In light of this, the study aims to answer the following key questions:

1. How can vocational education promote the economic and social empowerment of women in Jordan?
2. What social, cultural and structural challenges limit women's participation in vocational and technical education?
3. Under what conditions can vocational education produce sustainable empowerment outcomes for Jordanian women?

In recent years, notable growth has been seen in Jordanian, Arab, regional and global research examining the impact of vocational education and training (VET) on women's economic and social empowerment, as well as its role in advancing gender equality. The Jordanian Ministry of Labour published a report for 2025 focusing on vocational training as a key driver in the economic and social empowerment of Jordanian women. The report analysed the Ministry's programmes and initiatives that incorporate gender perspectives into employment strategies, taking a descriptive–analytical approach. It highlighted projects aimed at enhancing women's skills and increasing their active participation in the labour market. The findings emphasised that investment in vocational training is essential for women's empowerment policies as it fosters technical competency development and supports women's ability to engage effectively and independently in professional environments.

Similarly, the 2024 report from the Jordanian National Commission for Women emphasised that investments in education and vocational training strengthen women's abilities by equipping them with the technical

and entrepreneurial skills necessary for integration into the workforce and participation in decision-making processes. Using a descriptive–analytical methodology, the report examined legislative advances and national policies that promote women's participation, such as flexible working regulations, childcare provisions and self-employment training programmes implemented across various governorates. The analysis revealed that such efforts contribute to women's greater economic independence, expand their role in production and community activities, and enhance Jordan's performance in global gender equality and decent work benchmarks.

In 2024, the International Labour Organization conducted a study assessing the impact of vocational training programmes on the economic and social empowerment of Jordanian women between 2022 and 2023. This study was in line with broader national and international efforts to promote gender equality and increase women's labour market engagement. Focusing on collaborative initiatives between the ILO, the Jordanian Ministry of Labour and civil society organisations, the study reviewed programmes offering vocational training, career guidance, entrepreneurship support and technical skills tailored to market needs. Using a descriptive–analytical approach based on field data, national statistics, programme evaluations and gendered labour market analysis, the study found that targeted vocational programmes under the Decent Work for Women Programme significantly improved women's access to quality employment opportunities, particularly in unconventional sectors. Additionally, these programmes bolstered participants' self-confidence, enhanced entrepreneurial skills, and facilitated access to microfinance resources.

In 2017, the Jordanian Economic and Social Council conducted a study to assess the state of

technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Jordan. The report examined various aspects of the TVET sector — its inputs, processes and outputs — and evaluated its alignment with the needs of the national labour market. It also explored the strengths and challenges of vocational education providers. Using a descriptive–analytical approach based on national and international reports, as well as focus group discussions and consultations with experts and stakeholders from the public and private sectors, the study identified several critical issues. These included institutional fragmentation, overlapping mandates, limited coordination among stakeholders, inadequate funding, weak industry partnerships and a notable discrepancy between training outcomes and actual labour market demands.

Raj's 2024 study, conducted in India, highlighted the transformative role of vocational education in minimising gender disparities. By enabling women to overcome social and cultural barriers, vocational education was found to significantly improve access to quality employment and increased income. Using a descriptive–analytical approach, the study recommended expanding vocational training programmes in rural areas and ensuring they are tailored to local labour market demands.

Similarly, Deepti *et al.*'s 2023 research explored the impact of vocational training on women's empowerment in Delhi. Using data from 120 women enrolled in vocational training centres, the study demonstrated significant progress in terms of self-confidence, skills acquisition and economic stability. The authors emphasised the importance of policy-level interventions to promote gender-sensitive vocational initiatives.

Ismail and Ab Halim (2023) conducted a systematic review using a mixed-methods approach guided by PRISMA to examine the

support that technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes provide for women's leadership development. Their review of 20 peer-reviewed articles from databases such as Scopus, DOAJ and Google Scholar identified areas such as change management, mentorship and conflict resolution as pivotal for developing leadership competencies among women.

The 2022 PACT report analysed women's participation in TVET programmes in six African countries — Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Niger, Rwanda and Uganda — and its impact on poverty reduction. While these programmes enhanced job opportunities for women, the report noted persistent challenges such as gender stereotypes, limited access to resources and socio-cultural barriers. The report advocated for gender-transformative strategies, including financial support mechanisms and community awareness efforts.

In Ghana, Boahene's 2021 qualitative study evaluated the influence of vocational training on gender equity and poverty alleviation. Using purposive and snowball sampling, semi-structured interviews with 15 women revealed significant improvements in economic empowerment. However, structural barriers such as early motherhood and inadequate familial support hindered full participation.

In Pakistan's Sindh Province, Abid *et al.* (2020) examined the experiences of women who had participated in TVET programmes. Of the 128 female graduates surveyed, only 35% had secured employment or started a small business. The study emphasised the need for context-specific training programmes and enhanced market linkages, noting that socio-economic background and training type were critical factors influencing outcomes.

Ahmad *et al.* (2016) used a mixed-methods approach to examine the effect of vocational training on employment opportunities for



women from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Their findings revealed significant improvements in participants' ability to generate income and achieve financial independence, supporting the case for scaling up vocational initiatives.

At a regional level, Nader and Al-Hasani (2011) investigated the alignment of vocational education with labour market needs within Saudi Arabia's garment industry. Their quasi-experimental study, which included 122 students and three instructors, demonstrated statistically significant improvements in post-training performance. The study emphasised the importance of skill-targeted training programmes to enhance women's employment opportunities in technical sectors.

### **Critique of Previous Studies**

Previous research has offered valuable insights into the impact of vocational education on women's empowerment, although much of this work has focused on non-Arab regions such as South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. These studies consistently demonstrate how vocational training can enhance women's economic independence, self-confidence and opportunities for social advancement. However, they also point to persistent challenges, including gender biases, insufficient institutional support and familial restrictions, which impede full participation in vocational fields. Despite the importance of these findings, there is a notable lack of literature addressing the Arab region, particularly Jordan. The distinct socio-cultural context and policy environment influencing women's involvement in Jordan's labour market demand analysis tailored to these specific conditions. This study therefore aims to address this gap by examining the role of vocational education in empowering Jordanian women, while also identifying the social and

institutional barriers that limit their access to and success in vocational opportunities.

### **Research methodology**

The study examined the role of vocational education in promoting the economic and social empowerment of Jordanian women, investigating how economic opportunities and societal challenges influence their participation in the labour market. To achieve these goals, the research employed a qualitative phenomenological approach, which is well-suited to exploring participants' lived experiences and understanding the meanings they assign to their social realities. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary method of data collection to allow for flexibility and in-depth responses.

The research focused on Jordanian women who had engaged in vocational and technical education programmes across various regions of Jordan, encompassing both urban and rural settings. The target group included graduates, as well as current participants enrolled in programmes conducted by public institutions, particularly the Jordanian Vocational Training Corporation (VTC), as well as non-governmental organisations delivering specialised training courses. The study also included women working across different sectors.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure rich, information-dense case studies. Participants were selected according to the following criteria: (1) completion or enrolment in an accredited vocational programme, (2) willingness to share personal experiences, (3) geographical diversity across governorates and (4) variation in specialisation fields. Within this framework, stratification ensured balanced representation by age group (18–45 years), residential location (urban or rural) and training status (enrolled or

graduated). In total, 75 women participated in the study.

To improve transparency, participant demographics were summarised based on key attributes: 46% lived in urban areas and 54% lived in rural areas. Of these, 41% were current trainees and 59% were graduates. The most commonly reported vocational fields included beauty services (27%), tailoring and design (18%), healthcare assistance (15%), technical maintenance (14%), tourism and hospitality (13%), and renewable energy (13%).

The interview guide was designed following a thorough review of prior research, particularly the studies by Deepti *et al.* (2023) and Ismail & Ab Halim (2023). The guide focused on four thematic areas: the opportunities provided by vocational education for economic empowerment; the social, cultural and structural barriers that limit women's participation; institutional and policy-level support systems; and women's perspectives on strategies to change societal attitudes towards vocational careers. Each thematic area featured open-ended questions encouraging participants to share detailed accounts of their experiences.

The data were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-step framework. This process included familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing those themes, defining them and finalising the interpretations.

A coding book was constructed to organise emerging themes and sub-themes systematically, ensuring conceptual consistency and analytical rigour.

**Coding book:** Thematic Analysis of Women's Empowerment through Vocational Education in Jordan

This coding book was developed to ensure a systematic and consistent thematic analysis of the qualitative data. It outlines the main themes

(codes) and sub-themes (sub-codes) that emerged from the data, along with their definitions and illustrative examples from participants' responses.

### Findings presentation

This section examines the socio-economic and cultural context that shapes the vocational trajectories of Jordanian women, the policy environment that governs their participation in vocational education and training (VET), and the role of public-private partnerships in creating gender-responsive pathways. The section then presents findings organised by theme, drawn from semi-structured interviews with 75 women enrolled in or graduated from VET programmes across multiple governorates. The women represent a range of ages, educational levels, specialisations and locales. This improves readability and analytic coherence.

### Motivations for enrolment

A significant proportion of participants (64%, or 48 out of 75) indicated that socio-economic pressures had a strong influence on their decision to enrol in vocational education and training (VET). These pressures primarily stemmed from the need for rapid entry into the workforce and to contribute to household income. One participant, identified as M. Kh., shared that challenging living conditions had motivated them to choose a path offering faster employment opportunities. Others cited responsibilities as breadwinners following unexpected family hardships (R.M.), while some expressed a preference for acquiring practical, in-demand skills over pursuing traditional academic routes (S.A.). Additionally, some individuals from semi-rural areas noted how increasing community acceptance, driven by modest earnings from fields such as beauty services, has begun to challenge long-standing stigmas (N.D.).

**Interpretation:** Economic necessity remains the dominant motivator for enrolment, though the pursuit of marketable skills is also significant. Furthermore, the growing local recognition of VET-based incomes appears to be gradually reducing stigma in certain contexts.

### **Social and Familial Barriers**

A little over half of the participants (55%; 41 out of 75) encountered opposition from their families or communities when deciding to enrol in VET. These objections were often rooted in concerns about social status, gender norms, and the pervasive belief that university is a more suitable pathway for women. Overcoming such resistance required sustained efforts, including persistent persuasion, demonstrating commitment and finding inspiration in role models, such as teachers or successful former students. While these approaches emphasise participant agency, they also highlight the emotional labour involved in challenging entrenched stigmas.

**Interpretation:** Although resistance stemming from social and familial expectations remains a barrier, it can be overcome when participants leverage alternative narratives and credible examples.

### **Cultural norms and structural constraints**

Participants identified three layers of constraints:

**Social:** The devaluation of women in technical and manual roles generates discomfort and leads to concealment (L. Kh.).

**Cultural:** Prevailing expectations continue to channel women towards 'feminine' occupations, while fields such as carpentry, electrical work and mechanics are still met with scepticism.

**Structural:** Constraints such as limited placements and internships, equipment shortages in certain centres and employers'

reluctance to host women hinder the development of skills (H. A., Tafileh).

**Interpretation:** Gender norms intersect with institutional shortcomings to produce cumulative disadvantages at critical transition points (training → practice → employment).

### **Economic and social outcomes**

Most interviewees reported tangible yet uneven improvements in income, self-confidence and social participation, depending on specialisation, training quality and post-training pathways. For example, home-based beauty services provided personal income and autonomy (A.D.), as well as opportunities for community engagement (F.S.). Conversely, a lack of start-up funding or essential equipment (e.g. a sewing machine) hindered labour market entry despite acquiring skills (M.B.).

**Interpretation:** Vocational education and training (VET) can foster empowerment when complemented by microfinance, logistical support and mentoring. Skills alone are insufficient.

### **Programme effectiveness and sectoral variation**

While programmes improved job-relevant skills, sustainable placement remained limited and uneven. Around 61% (46/75), particularly in female-dominated sectors such as beauty and childcare, struggled to secure formal, stable employment due to informality and low wages. Conversely, 21% (16/75) of those trained in non-traditional technical fields (e.g. renewable energy, healthcare assistance, industrial maintenance) reported higher placement and growth, particularly when programmes were linked to employers/NGOs. Nevertheless, stereotypes, workplace bias and weak post-training support undermined durability.

**Interpretation:** Sector choice and the strength of institutional linkages are decisive factors in achieving sustained employment.

## Family and community support

Roughly 68% (51/75) of participants identified family support (in the form of moral support, financial support, childcare and transport) as essential to enrolment and persistence. Conversely, 32% (24/75) reported receiving either partial or no support, which led to their withdrawal from the programme or them taking up informal/home-based work in order to avoid conflict.

**Interpretation:** Family and community act as gatekeepers. Support catalyses participation, whereas resistance can redirect trajectories into lower-visibility and often lower-return work.

## Gender Stereotypes and How to Address Them

Around 76% (57/75) perceived strong stereotypes that limit women's entry into technical fields such as mechanics, electrical work, industrial maintenance and IT. Nevertheless, 24% (18/75) were encouraged by visible success stories in the media and NGOs. Proposed remedies included national campaigns, gender-sensitive career counselling, family-inclusive guidance and proactive employer partnerships to recruit and retain women in non-traditional sectors.

**Interpretation:** Exposure to credible role models and institutionalised support can shift norms over time.

**Institutional support:** State and civil society Participants described inconsistent and limited support across geographical areas and target groups. While some received fee grants or psychosocial/life-skills training, most cited a lack of follow-up after graduation and weak links to employment or microfinance. The rural gap was emphasised repeatedly.

**Interpretation:** Current support is fragmented; a continuous pipeline (training → placement/finance → mentorship) is needed.

**Success cases: Conditions under which VET proves effective (deepened analysis):** evidence from the 21% of women employed in non-traditional fields highlights a set of enabling conditions:

- Structured employer partnerships, such as internships or apprenticeships with explicit hiring intentions.

Family endorsement, particularly from spouses or parents, reduces resistance at the point of job acceptance.

- Post-training support, including career counselling, job-matching services and micro-grants or loans for essential tools.
- Supportive supervisors and mentors who contribute to normalising women's presence in male-typed occupations.

Visibility of women's competence through publicised projects and certifications helps counter prevailing stereotypes.

When these elements converge, entry and retention rates improve and advancement opportunities become attainable.

## The Role of the Private Sector (Expanded)

Participants' narratives highlight the critical role of the private sector in placements, on-the-job learning and first contracts. Where firms co-design curricula, offer mixed-gender internships and commit to anti-bias practices, women reported smoother transitions and clearer career progression. Conversely, employer hesitation due to facilities, client preferences and stereotype spillovers reduced opportunities. Practical solutions include memoranda of understanding with VET centres, quota-based trainee intake, tooling support and shared financing for early employment periods.

## Synthesis

Overall, women's career paths are influenced by economic necessity, societal pressures, and institutional constraints.



Vocational education and training (VET) delivers empowerment when accompanied by family/community backing, purpose-built employer partnerships, and post-training support (career services, microfinance, mentorship). Without these, gains remain partial and fragile.

### **Conditions for success**

A comprehensive examination of the findings highlights the multifaceted role of vocational education in empowering Jordanian women, which depends on a combination of social, institutional and economic factors. Among the 21% of participants employed in unconventional technical sectors such as renewable energy, healthcare assistance, and industrial maintenance, a set of recurring enabling conditions was identified. Women who achieved success in these fields often had access to robust family support systems, guidance from non-governmental organisations in the form of mentorship, and collaborative initiatives with private-sector entities that provided apprenticeships and employment pathways. These elements collectively enhanced their self-efficacy, sustained their careers, and facilitated their integration into the labour market.

These outcomes are consistent with evidence presented by Boahene (2021), who highlighted comparable enabling frameworks in Ghana. There, women's progress in technical disciplines was driven by supportive networks and institutional partnerships. Similarly, Deepti *et al.* (2023) emphasised that vocational education only achieves its transformative potential when embedded within extensive support mechanisms, including financial assistance and mentoring programmes. In contrast, recent research from the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2024) revealed that the absence of post-training interventions and limited employer engagement in Jordan

critically undermines the long-term viability of vocational education programmes. Consequently, the empowerment of women through vocational education and training depends on three interconnected pillars:

Social reinforcement, characterised by family and community approval that validates women's choices in non-traditional work domains;

Institutional scaffolding, which encompasses mentorship opportunities, career counselling and access to micro-financial resources.

Integration within the private sector, facilitated through structured internship programmes and commitments to employability.

### **The Role of the Private Sector**

The private sector has emerged as an influential yet underutilised player in shaping women's vocational pathways. While collaborations with employers are essential for providing on-the-job training and placements, the limited involvement of private companies continues to hinder long-term progress. Many businesses are reluctant to hire female technicians, often citing concerns about workplace dynamics or customer preferences as the reason. This reflects global trends identified by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2024 and Abid *et al.* in 2020, where employer hesitance is one of the most significant barriers to women's economic empowerment.

To achieve more sustainable outcomes, public-private partnerships must move beyond sporadic training sponsorship and focus on implementing co-developed curricula, structured internship programmes and shared evaluation systems that align vocational training with labour market needs. Introducing corporate social responsibility (CSR) incentives and setting targeted recruitment

quotas could further solidify women's inclusion in technical fields.

### Recommendations

1. Enhance educational frameworks to better align vocational training programmes with labour market demands, focusing on high-quality instruction and access to modern tools and equipment.
2. Expand financial and institutional resources for women, including increasing access to microfinance opportunities to support small businesses and sustainable employment initiatives.
3. Launch awareness campaigns to dismantle gender stereotypes surrounding women's involvement in vocational industries by highlighting successful female role models in non-traditional professions.
4. Strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors to increase employment opportunities and introduce practical training options specifically designed for women.
5. Involve families and communities in educational campaigns that emphasise vocational pathways as viable, respected and empowering career opportunities for women.
6. Develop robust psychosocial and career support systems with a particular focus on rural and underserved regions to ensure women's long-term participation in the workforce.
7. Conduct comprehensive research to assess the effectiveness of vocational programmes in empowering women, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative metrics to ensure thorough evaluation of outcomes.

### Disclosure Statement

- **Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate:** This study adhered to established ethical principles. All 75

participants signed informed consent forms after fully understanding the purpose and nature of the study. They were informed that their identities and data would be kept strictly confidential, and that they could withdraw at any time without repercussions.

- **Availability of Data and Materials:** The primary data (interview transcripts) are not publicly available due to the inclusion of personal and sensitive information that could compromise participant privacy. However, an anonymized dataset may be provided by the corresponding author to qualified researchers upon reasonable request.
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