Sustainable Development Goals in India: Performance Insights and Awareness n Rajasthan

Nikita Maheshwari
Research Scholar, Department of E.A.F.M.,
University of Rajasthan, Jaipur
nikita.maheshwari218@gmail.com

Abstract: *The statement of former Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban-Ki-Moon, "We don't have plan B because there is no planet B!" speaks in volume of significance of Sustainable Development Goals. The achievement of SDGs can go a long way in ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic growth for India. With just few years remaining to the 2030 deadline, this paper is an attempt to understand the extent of progress made in India with special focus on Rajasthan towards achieving the sustainable development goals. The analysis of the progress made on the various SDG goals is done at two levels: National Level and State level. This analysis is done to understand overall progress and performance of Rajasthan on goals in which it is doing good in terms of goal achievement and in which it is lagging behind. The analysis carried out based on the Sustainable Development Report prepared by NITI Aayog, and Rajasthan Sustainable Development Goals Index. The study also delves into the level of awareness regarding SDGs among students in Higher Educational Institutions.*

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, Performance, Awareness.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals and their related 169 targets, which addresses global key issues such as poverty, hunger, peace, gender equality, etc. These goals were adopted in the year 2015 and are to be achieved by 2030. These goals are universal and interdependent in such a way that key to success on a goal will require solving issues more commonly linked with another goal. The following table depicts 17 SDGs along with their major objectives:

Goal No.	Name of Goal	Objective
1.	**No Poverty**	End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2.	**Zero Hunger**	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3.	**Good Health and Well Being**	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
4.	**Quality Education**	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5.	**Gender Equality**	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6.	**Clean Water and Sanitation**	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7.	**Affordable & Clean Energy**	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

8.	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
9.	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10.	Reduced Inequalities	Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11.	Sustainable Cities and Communities	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12.	Responsible Consumption and Production	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13.	Climate Action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14.	Life Below Water	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15.	Life on Land	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16.	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17.	Partnerships for the Goals	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

As second most populated country in the world, India plays a crucial role in the achievement of SDGs. The world cannot achieve the SDG without India achieving them. Due to federalism in the country, the states/Union Territories also play a significant role in advancing these goals. The SDGs Indexes prepared at both national and state level acts as a powerful tool to measure the progress towards these goals. NITI Aayog prepares this report at the national level. In Rajasthan, SDGs Index and Report is prepared by Center for SDGs Implementation, Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Government of Rajasthan. Based on performance and results, SDG India Index classifies states and union territories as Achiever (highest rank, score=100), Front Runner (score between 65 and 99), Performer (score between 50 and 64) and Aspirant (lowest rank, score below 50). Similarly, Rajasthan's SDG Index measures the performance of districts and classifies them into above-mentioned categories. The performance insights provided in this study will help in measuring the progress and formulating plans and actions for timely achievement of SDGs, along with creating awareness for the same.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Shankar, (2024) examined the goal of Decent Work & Economic Growth in theoretical context. The paper begins with the concept and evolution of Sustainable Development Goals, followed by an explanation on the concepts of the decent work and economic growth. It further discusses the factors, which promotes decent work and economic growth. The paper concludes by analyzing India's experience on SDG 8. Sood et al. (2022) highlighted the challenges and implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in India, using secondary data. They briefly reviewed implementation of SDGs on the parameters of communication, awareness generation and advocacy in Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and

Uttarakhand. Policies and various steps taken by Indian government are also summarized in the paper. The paper concludes by highlighting a very crucial aspect that SDGs are given less importance in countries with high global development indices than countries with lower global development indices; and calls for active involvement of such countries. Taunk & Nimbalkar, (2021) reviewed the framework for Decent Work and Economic Growth thoroughly, along with sub-goals, metrics and targets. The paper also points out the challenges faced by country in achieving SDG 8 and concludes by listing out government measures towards the same. Chatterjee, (2021) analyzes the progress made by India towards achieving the various Sustainable Development Goals at Global level and State level. With the objective to comprehend whether wealthier nations are faring better in the achievement of SDGs, the author compared progress of SDGs in India with other developed and developing economies respectively. The findings highlight that the countries with highest per capita income do not necessarily have the highest rankings. The state level analysis sheds light on best practices that are in practice and which can be adapted by other lagging states. Choudhuri, (2019) conducted a systematic review of forty articles related to sustainable development in India and observed that there is only a handful of literature available on sustainable development initiatives in India. The author wraps up by identifying the SDGs of gender equality, reduction in inequality, peace and justice, and responsible consumption and production as the most promising niches for future research in the area of sustainable development initiatives in India. Panda et al. (2018) assesses the status of SDGs across different states of India and provides state-wise comparison of the same. They assigned a variable to each SDG that represents the current status of that particular goal. Their analysis depicts slow and uneven progress with wide disparities between states and suggests that policy and framework appropriate on a national basis might not be adequate at state level. They also shed light on the key areas where attention of policy makers is urgently required to achieve uniform success across states. Jain & Singh, exhibits case studies of women from four different districts of Rajasthan to analyze the role of self-help groups in achieving Sustainable Development Goals. The study reveals that SHGs have demonstrated some success in attaining various SDGs, namely, SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 5, SDG 8, and SDG 10. Therefore, the SHG program needs to be re-energized so that better access to financial services can be made available to women.

After reviewing the existing literature, the author found out that, so far, there are only a few studies related to SDGs and a handful with reference to Sustainable Development Goals in Rajasthan. Furthermore, there is dearth of researches regarding awareness level of SDGs among all of its stakeholders, leading to a significant gap in understanding the performance and awareness of these goals. Thus, the present study is an attempt to fill this gap by highlighting the progress and performance of Rajasthan in achievement of SDGs. Assessing the awareness level among students of higher educational institutes regarding these goals will be the unique feature of the study.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

With just handful of years remaining to the deadline of 2030 for achieving SDGs, this study measures the overall and goal-wise performance and progress made by Rajasthan towards achievement of SDGs. No stakeholders can significantly contribute in achievement of SDGs unless they are aware. Keeping this in mind, this study aims to raise and assess the level of awareness, among a crucial stakeholder, i.e. higher educational institutes. The findings from the study will help the policymakers and other stakeholders in SDGs to frame suitable policies, raise awareness and take corrective actions for timely achievement of SDGs.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the overall and goal-wise performance of Rajasthan based on SDG India Indexes and Rajasthan SDG Indexes.
- To gauge the level of awareness regarding SDGs among students enrolled in Higher Educational Institutions.

V. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- Rajasthan has made no significant progress in achievement of SDGs.
- There is no awareness among students of Higher Educational Institutions regarding SDGs.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive and analytical research design is used for the present study. The chosen research design will help in analyzing the overall and goal-wise performance of state on various SDGs. It will also help in describing the level of awareness among students of Higher Educational Institutions regarding SDGs.

Duration of the study: SDGs came into existence in the 2015. NITI Aayog published first report/index regarding SDGs in the year 2018. The latest SDG Index of India and Rajasthan were released in the year 2024. Therefore, the present study takes time frame of five years, i.e. from 2018 to 2024 to analyze the performance and progress of SDGs.

Sources of Data: Both Primary and Secondary sources of data are used for the study. Primary data is collected with the help of structured disguised questionnaire to measure the actual awareness level. Secondary data is collected through various SDG Index and Report published by NITI Aayog in India and (Centre for SDGs Implementation) Directorate of Economics & Statistics in Rajasthan.

Universe: The universe of the study is all the students enrolled in Higher Educational Institutions.

Sampling Design: Convenience Sampling Design is applied in the present study.

Sample Size: Sample size for the study is 50 students studying across various disciplines in Higher Educational Institutions located in Rajasthan.

Data Analysis Tools: Data is analyzed with the help of MS-Excel and presented in the form of tables, diagrams, graphs, and pie charts for easier understanding.

VII. RESULTS

State's performance on SDG India Indexes

The composite score of Rajasthan has improved from 59 in 2018 to 67 in 2023-24, elevating the state from the Performer category to the Front Runner category.
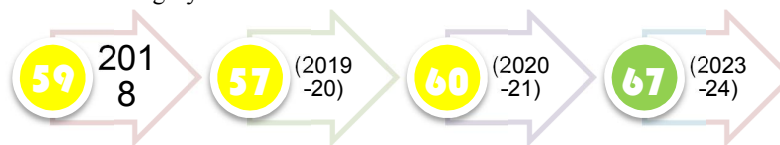

Figure 1: Composite score of Rajasthan in various editions of SDG India Index

The 2023-24 goal-wise scores for the state range from 49 to 100, reflecting an improvement over the 2018 scores, which ranged from 37 to 81.

Rajasthan has demonstrated exceptional performance on Goal 7, maintaining a perfect score of 100 from 2020-21 to 2023-24, thus emerging as an Achiever and in among top-performing states in goal 7. Goal 7 has made the longest jump from performer to achiever.

The performance across five goals—Goal 4, Goal 9, Goal 10, Goal 15, and Goal 16—has shown a decrease in scores from 2018 to 2023-24. Goal 10 requires special attention, as it has experienced the largest decline during this period, causing the state to shift from Front Runner to Aspirant.

Conversely, Goal 12 has seen the most significant improvement from 2019-20 to 2023-24, elevating the state from Aspirant to Front Runner.

	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6	Goal 7	Goal 8	Goal 9	Goal 10	Goal 11	Goal 12	Goal 13	Goal 14	Goal 15	Goal 16
2023-24	82	64	73	63	52	60	100	65	53	49	75	89	62	N.A.	54	70
2020-21	63	53	70	60	39	54	100	57	45	45	81	74	49	N.A.	43	73
2019-20	56	35	58	51	39	76	61	65	38	70	61	30	60	N.A.	75	76
2018	59	45	49	73	37	43	63	57	62	79	45	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	68	81

Figure 2: Goal-wise score of Rajasthan in various editions of SDG India Index

The following table shows categorization of goal-wise scores for the state:

CATEGORY	SDG INDIA INDEX (2018)	SDG INDIA INDEX (2023-24)
ACHIEVER	**NIL**	**1** (Goal 7)
FRONT RUNNER	**4** (Goal 4, Goal 10, Goal 15, Goal 16)	**6** (Goal 1, Goal 3, Goal 8, Goal 11, Goal 12, Goal 16)
PERFORMER	**4** (Goal 1, Goal 7, Goal 8, Goal 9)	**7** (Goal 2, Goal 4, Goal 5, Goal 6, Goal 9, Goal 13, Goal 15)
ASPIRANT	**5** (Goal 2, Goal 3, Goal 5, Goal 6, Goal 11)	**1** (Goal 10)

Figure 3: Categorization of goal-wise scores for the state in SDG India Index 2018 and 2023-24

The performance of state on SDG India Index has improved in latest edition of 2024 in comparison to SDG India Index 2018. With no goal in Achiever category in 2018 index, Goal 7 finds a place in Achiever category in the current index. There has also been a decrease in number of goals in the lowest category, i.e., Aspirant. Only a single goal, Goal 10 falls in this category in the SDG India Index 2023-24.

State's performance on Rajasthan's India Indexes

The first edition of Rajasthan's SDG Index, published in 2020, was based on 31 indicators across 12 goals. In contrast, the fifth and latest edition, released in 2024, incorporates 95 indicators across 14 goals. This expanded coverage of indicators and goals with each edition reflects the state's commitment to continuously strengthening its monitoring systems.

Figure 4: No. of goals and indicators in various editions of Rajasthan's SDG Index

The composite score of the state according to its SDG Index has risen from 56.53 in 2020 to 59.11 in 2024, placing it in the Performer category. However, this increase has not been steady, as the score has declined since the fourth edition published in 2023.
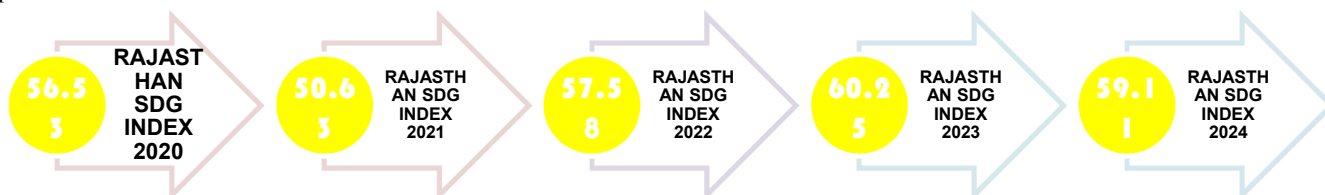

Figure 5: Composite score of state in various editions of Rajasthan's SDG Index

The goal wise performance of state shows positive growth in 10 goals, whereas 3 goals shows decline in performance in 2024 from 2020.

Goal 15 shows maximum increase in its score (31.19 points) in 2024 since 2021, pushing the state in Performer category from Aspirant. Goal 7 shows maximum decline in its score (40.48 points) in 2024 since 2021, pulling the state into Performer category from Front Runner.

	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6	Goal 7	Goal 8	Goal 9	Goal 10	Goal 11	Goal 12	Goal 15	Goal 16
2024	67.95	52.14	47.87	71.75	38.6	60.72	57.89	62.22	68.94	77.69	64.59	58.39	45.87	52.89
2023	68.93	48.05	54.2	73.09	37.93	60.46	62.86	53.16	67.74	76.53	83.19	57.61	44.64	55.12
2022	67.25	46.63	52.84	68.82	36.67	53.09	62.86	61.14	61.07	63.3	80.2	52.72	43.87	55.69
2021	47.62	39.56	47.25	56.33	39.02	51.99	98.37	32.08	48.97	N.A.	51.19	64.03	13.96	67.78
2020	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

Figure 6: Goal-wise score of state in various editions of Rajasthan's SDG Index

In first edition published in 2020, district scores of state ranges from 51.57 to 69.66. However, in latest edition published in 2024, district score of state has decreased and ranges from 50.63 to 66.44.

Jhunjhunu district tops in all the districts by appearing twice in overall highest performing district and emerging as front runner. Performance of Jaisalmer district has been consistently lowest and falls in lowest performing district in four of five indexes published by state.

As per Rajasthan SDG Index 2020, no district falls under Aspirant category and number of districts in front runner and performer category is 6 and 27 respectively. In the fifth and latest edition published in 2024, no district falls under Aspirant category, only 1 district falls in front runner category and rest 32 districts are in performer category.

CATEGORY	RAJASTHAN SDG INDEX (2020)	RAJASTHAN SDG INDEX (2021)	RAJASTHAN SDG INDEX (2022)	RAJASTHAN SDG INDEX (2023)	RAJASTHAN SDG INDEX (2024)
ACHIEVER	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
FRONT RUNNER	6	NIL	NIL	2	1
PERFORMER	27	26	32	31	32
ASPIRANT	NIL	7	1	NIL	NIL

Figure 7: Categorization of Rajasthan's districts in various editions of Rajasthan's SDG Index

Following table shows goal-wise highest and lowest performing district on Rajasthan SDG Indexes (district appearing consistently in indexes atleast three times on a respective goal):

GOAL	TOP PERFORMING DISTRICT	LOWEST PERFORMING DISTRICT
1	Nagaur	Dungarpur
3		Jaipur
4	Jaipur	
6	Hanumangarh	Pratapgarh
7	Kota	Banswara
8	Jaipur	Rajsamand
9	Jaipur	Jaisalmer
10	Banswara	
11	Karauli	
12	Ganganagar	
15	Udaipur	
16	Jalore	

Figure 8: Goal-wise highest and lowest performing district on Rajasthan SDG Indexes

Awareness of SDGs among students enrolled in Higher Educational Institutions

Under demographic profile of respondents, author took gender, age, stream and level of study. Number of male and female was 24 and 26 respectively. 18 respondents were in the age group of 17-21 and 32 respondents in age group of 22-26. Stream of study of 26 respondents is Commerce & Management, Science of 12 respondents and Arts of 12 respondents. 19 respondents are enrolled in undergraduate courses, 26 are enrolled in postgraduate courses and rest 5 are pursuing doctoral program.

GENDER		AGE		STREAM OF STUDY		LEVEL OF STUDY	
Male	24	*17-21*	18	*Commerce & Management*	26	*Undergraduate Course*	19
Female	26	*22-26*	32	*Science*	12	*Postgraduate Course*	26
		27-31	0	*Arts*	12	*Doctoral Program*	5

Figure 9: Demographic Profile of Respondents

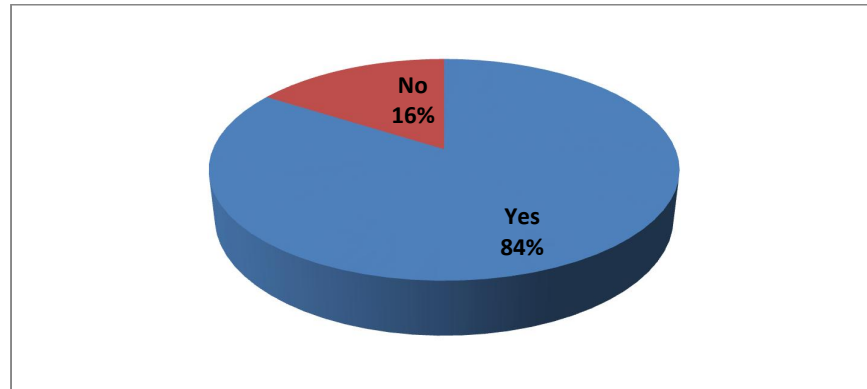84% of respondents have heard about Sustainable Development Goals, rest 16% never heard of SDGs.

Figure 10: Heard of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Primary source of respondents to learn about SDGs is University courses (41%). 29% of respondents heard about SDGs from news media, 18% from social media and 12% from friends and family.
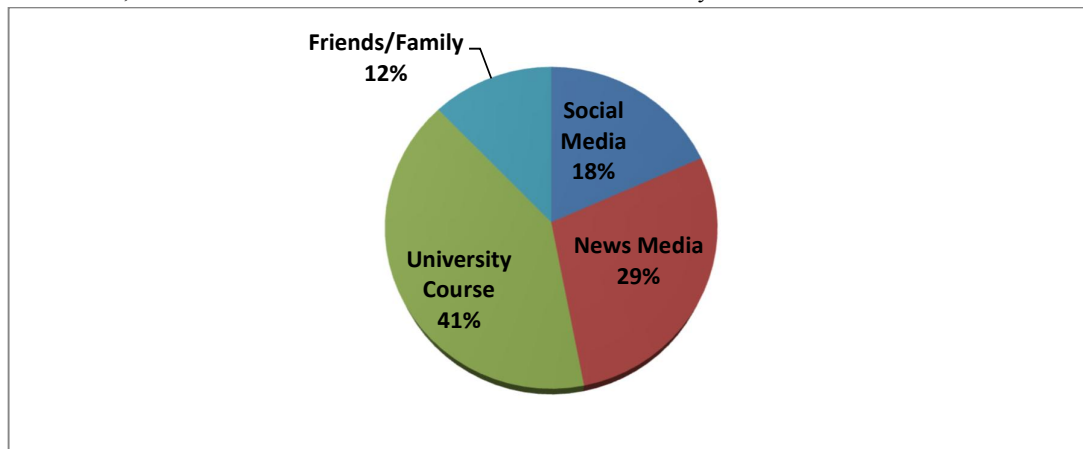
Figure 11: Primary source of learning about SDGs

The analysis regarding awareness of number of Sustainable Development Goals reveals that only 34 respondents out of 50 were aware that are 17 SDGs. Rest of the respondents were either not aware or not sure regarding number of SDGs.
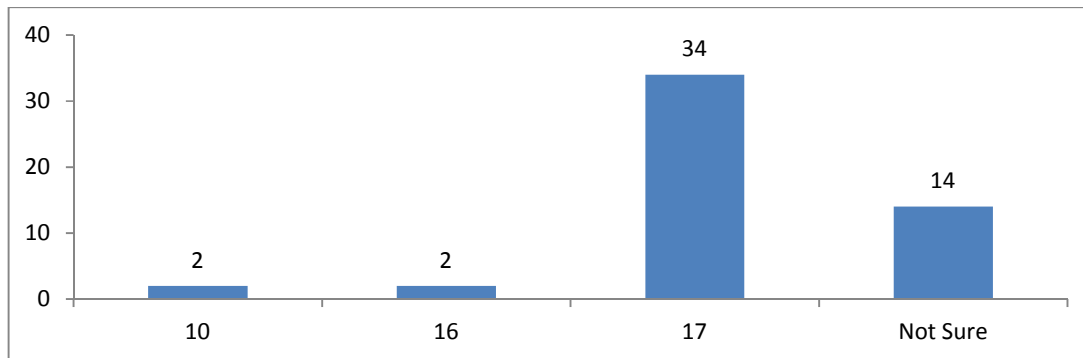
Figure 12: Awareness regarding number of SDGs

36 respondents were aware that SDGs are to be achieved by 2030. Rest of the respondents either did not know or were not sure regarding number of SDGs.
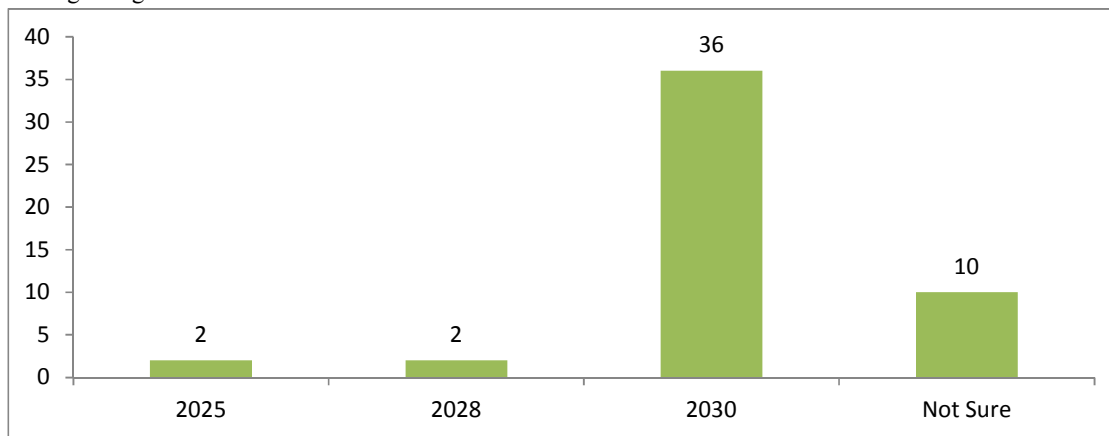

Figure 13: Awareness regarding SDGs deadline

64% of respondents think lack of awareness as the major barrier in achievement of SDGs. Lack of collaboration between countries or sectors (16%), resistance to change from society/institutions (12%) and insufficient funding or resources (8%) are some of the other major barriers, respondents think, in achievement of SDGs.
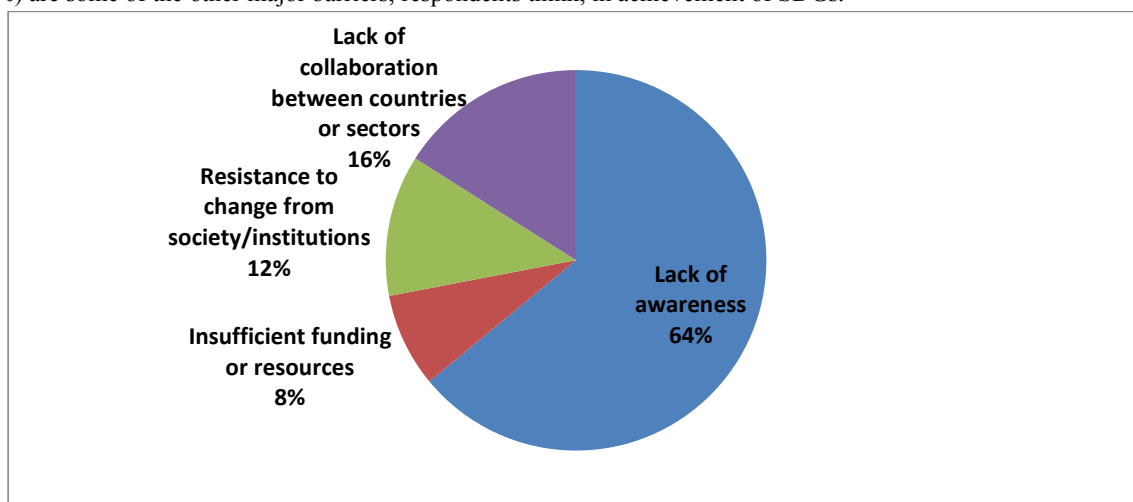

Figure 14: Barrier in achieving the SDGs

35% of the respondents feel encouraging sustainable practices on campus as the most effective way of contributing towards achievement of SDGs by Higher Educational Institutions. Integrating SDGs into the curriculum (28%), hosting awareness campaigns and events (16%), partnering with local communities and organizations (16%) and offering internships and research opportunities (5%) focused on SDGs are other effective ways through which Universities and colleges can contribute in timely achievement of SDGs.
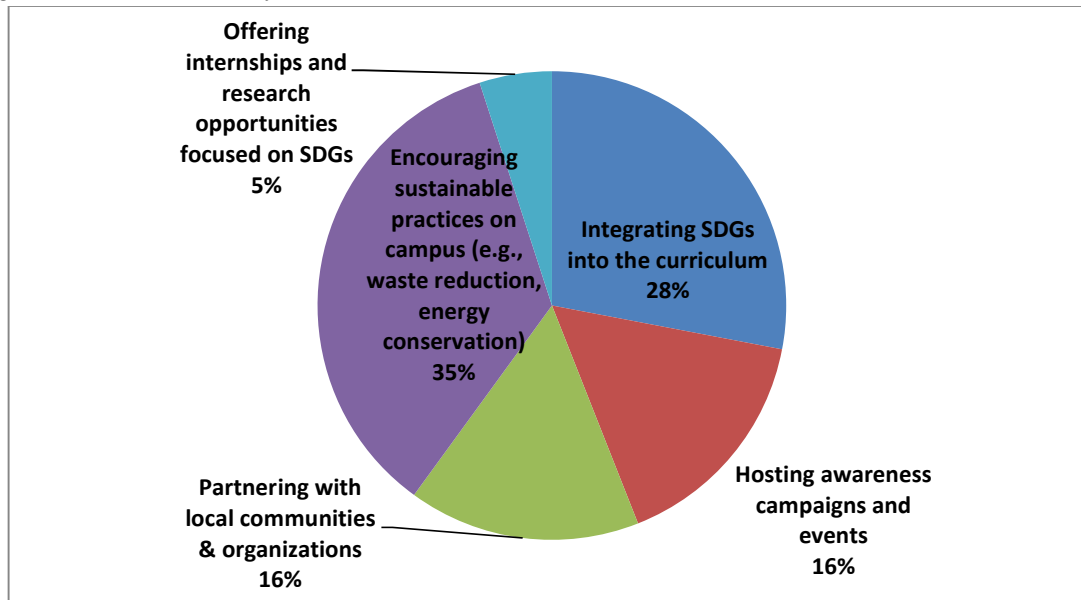
Figure 15: Most effective way of contributing to achieve SDGs by Universities/Colleges

VIII. CONCLUSION AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The above analysis clearly depicts uneven progress of Rajasthan on SDGs. With just few years remaining to the deadline, current performance and progress of state falls far short of what is required to achieve the SDGs. Additionally, it will also help in analyzing and deploying best practices from the model performing districts and high achieving goals. As seen in the above analysis, the biggest barrier in achieving the SDGs is lack of awareness among the stakeholders. Only the combined effort of government and various other stakeholders can lead to timely achievement of these goals. Through encouraging sustainable practices on campus and by integrating SDGs into the curriculum, the higher educational institutions can significantly and immensely contribute in the achievement of SDGs. Further researches can focus on analyzing each goal thoroughly, taking into consideration targets, indicators and related schemes.

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