

Green Human Resource Management Practices and the Just Transition: Advancing SDG 8 and SDG 13 – A Qualitative Content Analysis of Schneider Electric

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Abstract

Although organisations are promoting Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), research based on employee-generated public accounts on how climate action (SDG 13) and decent work (SDG 8) are connected is still lacking. This exploratory qualitative study examines how GHRM practices promote SDGs 8 and 13 through the lens of a just transition and the AMO model. An intersubjective, qualitative single-case content analysis of publicly available online content was conducted. Thirty-one publicly available items, such as employee reviews, discussion-board posts and corporate disclosures on ten online platforms (2019–2026), were collected and verified with their original sources, and subsequently analysed using reflexive thematic analysis in combination with document analysis of sustainability reports (2021–2025). The four themes are: development of green ability through sustainability training; green motivation by sustainability-linked incentives; green opportunity structures shown by the 50-40-30 gender commitment; and tensions and synergies at the SDG 8-SDG 13 intersection, including contested experiences of restructuring. The results tentatively propose a preliminary extension of the AMO framework into a dual-outcome model, whereby GHRM practices simultaneously generate environmental and social SDG outcomes, and provide a reference for sustainability-linked HR architecture.

1. Introduction

The research in this paper is a qualitative single-case study entitled: "Green Human Resource Management Practices and the Just Transition: Advancing SDG 8 and SDG 13 — A Qualitative Content Analysis of Schneider Electric". This paper aims to investigate how the GHRM practices at Schneider Electric SE can help achieve both Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action) simultaneously, and what the experiences of employees are in pursuing these two goals in their daily work life.

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Schneider Electric SE is a French multinational company and a world-class enterprise in energy management and industrial automation, so it has been selected as the case study subject. First, Schneider Electric was named the World's Most Sustainable Company by TIME Magazine and Statista [1] and has ranked first in Corporate Knights' Global 100 index [2], while maintaining its position on the Dow

Jones Sustainability Index for fourteen consecutive years [1]; it is therefore considered a theoretically informative extreme case [3] for studying GHRM-SDG integration at an advanced level. Secondly, the company has established the Schneider Sustainability Impact (SSI) 2021–2025 programme to link HR indicators, such as targets for gender balance, training hours and green skills development, with measurable sustainability KPIs and thus enable empirical verification of the HRM-SDG link [4]. Thirdly, Schneider Electric's strategic transformation from an energy-management company to a "digital partner for sustainability and efficiency" provides a real-life case study of Just Transition, and workforce capabilities and HRM practices mediate between decarbonisation goals (SDG 13) and employment quality outcomes (SDG 8).

SDGs 8 and 13 were selected as the focus of this study to explore the relationship between climate action and decent work. SDG 8, specifically Target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all), and SDG 13, specifically Target 13.3 (education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation), are two main pillars of the 2030 Agenda that are frequently addressed in organisational silos despite their close connection [5]. Therefore, GHRM practices can be used to address the problem of fragmentation and provide a holistic solution.

1.1 Problem Statement

In recent years, many scholars have studied the connection between green human resource management and the Sustainable Development Goals, but three problems have yet to be solved. First, most of the existing research on GHRM is quantitative in nature and based on surveys, focusing on exploring the statistical relationships between GHRM practices and organisational or individual environmental outcomes [6, 7, 8]. Although the above studies have provided empirical support for the effects of GHRM practices, they have not investigated how employees perceive, interpret and experience these practices in their own organisations. Benevene and Buonomo [9] found in their systematic review of 56 empirical GHRM papers that "qualitative studies are scarce" and explicitly proposed a phenomenological approach to explore the subjective experience of employees in green HR practices.

Second, research on HRM-SDG integration is still relatively theoretical and fragmented. Campos-García et al. [10] conducted a bibliometric analysis and reported in Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management that although SDG 8 has been frequently mentioned in research on human resource management, SDG 13 is still "underrepresented", and studies that consider multiple SDGs simultaneously are relatively scarce. Brewster and Brookes [5] wrote in the German Journal of Human Resource Management that HRM specialists will be unable to achieve the SDGs with the current approach due to a fundamental lack of construct clarity on what the SDGs mean in HRM practice; this gap can only be addressed by in-depth qualitative research on how employees actually experience SDG-aligned HRM.

Third, the Just Transition framework stipulates that the transition to a low-carbon economy should create decent work and social inclusion [11], but this has been almost entirely overlooked by scholars of

GHRM. Roscoe et al. [12] have linked GHRM with a green organisational culture for sustainable development; however, no previous studies have examined the possible conflicts between climate-driven changes in the organisation and the quality of life for employees. Schneider Electric's simultaneous pursuit of carbon neutrality by 2025 (SDG 13) and gender-balanced, inclusive employment (SDG 8) presents an empirical and theoretical research problem of tension. Based on the research deficiencies mentioned above, this paper aims to answer the following question: How do employees of a sustainability-leading organisation experience GHRM practices that support climate action and decent work under a Just Transition framework?

1.2 Research Questions

The three research objectives and their corresponding research questions have been established to guide the systematic deepening of research in this study, moving from a descriptive map of GHRM practices to a critical analysis of the SDG 8-SDG 13 nexus.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of Schneider Electric employees on the role of Green HRM in promoting environmentally responsible behaviour among staff and supporting SDG 13 (Climate Action)?

RQ2: How do Schneider Electric's GHRM practices affect employees' sense of decent work, career fairness and skill development, and consequently promote SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)?

RQ3: What tensions and synergies do employees perceive between Schneider Electric's commitment to climate action (SDG 13) and its employment and workforce development practices (SDG 8), and how do these factors shape their perception of a Just Transition?

1.3 Research Objectives

RO1: To explore the experience and perception of Schneider Electric employees regarding Green HRM in the context of organisational sustainability transformation.

RO2: To investigate the effect of Schneider Electric's GHRM practices on employees' sense of career development and fairness in the workplace in terms of SDG 8.

RO3: To explore the tensions, synergies and publicly narrated experiences of employees in the process of climate-oriented organisational transformation (SDG 13) and employment outcomes (SDG 8).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Green HRM Practices: Definitions, Dimensions and Current Evidence

Green Human Resource Management refers to the organisation of all HRM functions, such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management and reward systems, to promote corporate environmental sustainability [6]. Renwick, Redman and Maguire [6] published a first-

author review in the International Journal of Management Reviews, listed over 4,400 citations, established the field of GHRM, mapped the HR components of environmental management, and proposed a process model connecting green HR practices to organisational environmental performance. Dumont, Shen and Deng [7] built on this foundation to empirically demonstrate in a study published in Human Resource Management that GHRM practices, specifically green recruitment, green training, green performance appraisal and green rewards, positively affect employees' workplace green behaviour through the mediating mechanism of psychological green climate. Based on a survey of 372 employees of Chinese manufacturing enterprises, they believe that GHRM practices have created a perception system in the organisation that supports the norm of environmental responsibility.

Later, more studies have gathered data in many environments by various means. Renwick et al. [13] published a special issue review of the field in the International Journal of Human Resource Management to indicate that, given the demand for more environmental responsibility from organisations, interdisciplinary studies combining HRM and sustainability have been launched. Benevene and Buonomo [9] have studied 56 empirical papers published in Sustainability to find that global human resource management positively affects environmental performance in many areas, such as hospitality [14] and manufacturing [15]. However, they also pointed out a long-standing methodological defect: the near-exclusive application of quantitative cross-sectional studies. Miah, Szabó-Szentgróti and Walter [16] have recently carried out a systematic review in Cogent Business and Management to find that the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework is the leading theoretical system in GHRM research; however, studies that connect GHRM with specific SDG targets are still "extremely scarce".

2.2 GHRM and the Sustainable Development Goals: An Emerging Research Frontier

The integration of the SDG system in HRM research is a relatively new development, but it has been progressing rapidly. Chams and García-Blandón [17] wrote in Resources, Conservation and Recycling to provide one of the first all-encompassing analyses connecting sustainable HRM with SDG achievement. Based on a cross-national study by these scholars, organisations have generally added the SDG system to their human resources management through training programs and recruitment practices, but the "depth of implementation varies significantly among organisations and SDGs" (p. 117). However, they believe that although the business case for environmental SDGs is relatively strong, their application in HRM practices under social SDGs is still lacking.

Campos-García et al. [10] conducted a systematic bibliometric analysis of the HRM-sustainability interface and published it in Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management. Based on the analysis of 1,255 documents, SDG 8 (Decent Work) has been the focus of most research in Human Resource Management, followed by SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Notably, SDG 13 (Climate Action) appeared in only 4.7% of HRM-SDG publications, which the authors

referred to as a "significant thematic gap" in the literature. Based on the above results, further research will investigate how HRM practices promote the achievement of climate-related SDGs.

Brewster and Brookes [5] put forward an objection in the German Journal of Human Resource Management, pointing out that the current Human Resource Management system for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is vague; thus, "SDG" has been used merely as a term without actual implementation in relation to the 169 targets and 232 indicators of the 2030 Agenda. They have carried out qualitative, context-based research to explore how HR managers and employees perceive the commitments of the SDGs in practice, and the present study pursues a similar aim.

2.3 Just Transition: The Missing Link Between SDG 8 and SDG 13

The concept of Just Transition was formally introduced by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in its 2015 Guidelines for a Just Transition in Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All, and later included in the Preamble to the Paris Agreement; it calls for a low-carbon economy that still creates decent work, promotes social inclusion and poverty reduction. The four foundations of the ILO system for policy-making—social dialogue, social protection, rights at work and employment—should be included in climate action to prevent a decline in the living standards of workers as a result of environmental improvement. Although it is a policy feature, the concept of Just Transition has not been incorporated into most HRM research. Roscoe et al. [12] published in Business Strategy and the Environment that GHRM practices promote a green organisational culture, and thus can enhance environmental performance for sustainable development. However, their research only focused on the environmental results and did not examine employment quality at the same time.

No research has been conducted on this issue so far; although many studies on GHRM have focused on environmental outcomes (related to SDG 13) and employment results (related to SDG 8) separately, none have explored the combined experience of these two factors by employees in a single organisation through qualitative research. The division is thus insufficient in theory, as the purpose of a Just Transition is to promote climate action and high-quality employment concurrently. HRM practices that promote climate goals without protecting employment quality may create a "green sacrifice zone" for workers, and employment-oriented HRM that fails to consider environmental requirements cannot meet the current demands of enterprises [18].

2.4 Theoretical Foundation: The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) Theory

The AMO framework identifies three determinants of performance: ability, motivation and opportunity [19]. Appelbaum et al. [19] were the first to put forward the AMO model in the context of high-performance work systems; they believe that an individual's performance is the result of three simultaneous factors: Ability (the knowledge, skills and abilities employees possess), Motivation (incentives, recognition and intrinsic drives that motivate behaviour), and Opportunity (institutional

conditions that enable performance, such as participation channels and autonomy). Bos-Nehles et al. [20] first used AMO theory to explain why line managers' HRM implementations were effective and extended its application beyond the traditional scope of HRM in GHRM. Al-Shammari et al. [15] recently conducted a study and published it in *Frontiers in Environmental Science* to show that GHRM practices promote sustainable performance through the mediation effect of green innovation, and used the AMO framework to explain how green ability, green motivation and green opportunity jointly lead to environmental outcomes.

Shah et al. [21] conducted a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the 198 GHRM articles published in *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management* and found that the AMO framework is the most frequently used theoretical basis in GHRM research, appearing in 24.7% of theory-driven studies. The three reasons for selecting the AMO framework in this study are as follows: (1) The tripartite structure of AMO aligns with the dimensions of GHRM identified in the literature: green training and recruitment develop Ability, green rewards and performance management provide Motivation, and green participation structures and inclusive organisational culture create Opportunity; (2) The multiplicative logic of AMO ($A \times M \times O$) considers the interdependence of HRM practices, and a deficiency in any one of the dimensions will reduce the overall effectiveness of the system—a feature consistent with the Just Transition framework's emphasis on the indivisibility of environmental and social outcomes; and (3) A large body of empirical research on GHRM under the AMO framework exists to support the theoretical extension proposed here—that is, applying AMO to explore how GHRM jointly promotes environmental (SDG 13) and social (SDG 8) goals.

To integrate the two frameworks, the four ILO Just Transition pillars translate into the AMO dimensions as follows. The employment pillar corresponds to Ability: transferable green skills let workers stay employed through the low-carbon transition. The social protection pillar corresponds to Motivation: fair compensation and benefits signal that workers do not carry the cost of the transition. The social dialogue and rights-at-work pillars correspond to Opportunity: participatory structures and inclusive cultures give workers a say in how the transition unfolds. This mapping ties the AMO framework to the normative commitments of a Just Transition, so the dual-outcome model advanced here is a fairness argument as much as an efficiency one.

2.5 Identification of Research Gap

The combination of the four above-mentioned thematic streams—GHRM practices, HRM-SDG integration, Just Transition, and AMO theory—points to a specific research gap. Although GHRM practices have been widely studied in terms of their environmental results, and SDGs are gradually being incorporated into HRM research, no qualitative studies have explored how employees of a sustainability-leading multinational enterprise experience GHRM practices that simultaneously advance climate action (SDG 13) and decent work (SDG 8) within a Just Transition framework. Although the AMO model has achieved considerable success in the study of GHRM, it has not been applied to investigate the dual effect of GHRM on environmental and social SDGs simultaneously. Both deficiencies are addressed in this study by an in-depth single-case content analysis of Schneider Electric. By giving a voice to the life

experience of employees, this study adds empirical depth to a body of research dominated by quantitative abstraction, proposes a preliminary extension of AMO to a dual-outcome model to advance theory, and examines a world-class sustainable organisation from the inside for practical application.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

As shown in Fig. 1, the conceptual framework of this paper is used to guide the interpretation. In accordance with the AMO framework and the Just Transition theory, the three types of Schneider Electric's GHRM practices can be divided into the following categories: ability-enhancing measures (e.g., green recruitment and selection, sustainability training programmes, green skills development); motivation-enhancing measures (e.g., green performance appraisal with SSI indicators, green rewards and recognition, sustainability-linked compensation); and opportunity-enhancing measures (e.g., green employee involvement programmes, sustainability innovation platforms, inclusive participation structures such as the 50-40-30 gender commitment).

Together, and in cooperation, these GHRM practices are expected to shape employees' publicly narrated experiences and perceptions and thus form the interpretive subjects of this study. Through the mediating effect of these perceptual processes, GHRM practices are theorised to have a dual outcome: SDG 13 results, such as pro-environmental behaviour at work, carbon literacy, green innovation behaviour and climate engagement; and SDG 8 results, such as green job quality, career development equity, inclusive skills access and employee well-being. The framework also proposes that the connection between SDG 13 and SDG 8 outcomes serves as the operational path for a Just Transition at the organisational level, and thus climate action can be achieved without sacrificing decent work. The two-way arrow between the outcomes of SDG 13 and SDG 8 indicates that there may be both conflicts (e.g., restructuring driven by decarbonisation can harm employment security) and cooperation (e.g., green skills development promotes both carbon literacy and career mobility). The above tensions and synergies are examined in RQ3.

The idea of the study aims to help the researcher think more effectively, not necessarily to present a strict cause-and-effect relationship; therefore, an interpretivist approach is used. It was used to collect and analyse data, but other themes may also emerge in the course of this research [22].

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Philosophy: Interpretivism

This study is grounded in interpretivism. According to interpretivism, the social world does not exist independently but is created by people through the meanings they give to their lives [23]. Given that the research questions focus on employees' perceptions, experiences and interpretations of GHRM practices and their connection with SDGs, objective variable measurement alone cannot answer these questions; therefore, this philosophical position is suitable for the present study. Interpretivism does not seek law-like generalisations through hypothesis testing; instead, it studies the "lifeworld" (Lebenswelt)

of the participants to understand their subjective meanings of organisational reality [24]. In the context of Schneider Electric's sustainable development, the experience of employees in GHRM practices cannot be reduced to survey scores on a Likert scale; instead, it is integrated into the organisation's unique culture and history, as well as one's own career story, and interpretivism seeks to explore this.

3.2 Research Approach: Qualitative

Based on the Interpretivist philosophy and the nature of the research questions, a qualitative study was conducted. As the research questions are "how" and "in what ways" rather than "how much" or "to what extent", qualitative research is a more suitable type of study [25]. Research on GHRM has also proposed a qualitative way. Paulet et al. [26] conducted a meta-analysis of the past ten years of GHRM research published in the Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources and found that quantitative methods have been dominant; therefore, they recommended "qualitative in-depth case studies" to advance the study of this field. Ren et al. [27] also believe in the Asia Pacific Journal of Management that qualitative research is needed to obtain rich context for the application of GHRM, which cannot be systematically collected through quantitative surveys.

3.3 Research Design: Single Instrumental Case Study

A single instrumental case study design [28] is used, Schneider Electric is the case, and qualitative content analysis of publicly available online content is the main method. This approach involves the systematic analysis of publicly available digital traces and is suitable for observing how GHRM practices are experienced, narrated and contested by employees in naturalistic settings. Although phenomenological interview designs have been proposed [29, 30], the content-analytic method was used instead for two reasons: to preserve the employee's original expressions in an unstructured way and to cross-verify with the official sustainability reports. This instrumental design is appropriate because the case serves to illuminate GHRM–SDG integration rather than being an object of interest in itself [28, 3].

3.4 Data Collection Methods and Sampling

3.4.1 Primary Method: Qualitative Content Analysis of Publicly Available Online Content

The first type of data was obtained through qualitative content analysis of publicly available online content, following the principles of Kozinets [31] for studying online communities, in three steps: (1) Entry and immersion - identify the platforms where Schneider Electric employees discuss their work (AmbitionBox, Comparably, Indeed, Glassdoor, Reddit and TheLayoff.com); (2) Data collection - collect public employee reviews and posts published from 2019 to 2026 on GHRM practices, sustainability and employment outcomes; and (3) Verification - cross-check each item with its original source and save dated screenshots. Thirty-one items were retained (see Section 3.4.3 and Table 1), comprising 17 employee-generated items (12 review-site posts, four layoff-board posts and one social-media post) and 14 official corporate items (nine corporate-channel items and five press-wire items). Official corporate

channels (company blog, YouTube, press releases) were added to serve as a counterpoint to employee-generated content, and the official narrative could be compared with the voice of the employees.

3.4.2 Secondary Method: Document Analysis

Document analysis can provide additional data and organisational background for the results of the online content analysis and other documentation, thus achieving methodological triangulation [32]. Documents for analysis include: Schneider Electric's Schneider Sustainability Impact (SSI) quarterly reports (2021–2025), the 2023 Human Resources Report, the Schneider Integrated Annual Reports (2022, 2023, 2024), ESG and DEI policy documents, and Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index submissions. Document analysis employed a directed content analysis method [33] to code text sections according to the AMO dimensions and SDG targets, construct the organisational narrative of GHRM-SDG integration, and then compare it with employee-generated online accounts to identify convergences and divergences between organisational rhetoric and publicly narrated employee experience.

3.4.3 Sampling Strategy

Purposive and Maximum Variation Strategies for Corpus Selection. In line with the objectives, all items need to have GHRM practices, SDG 8/13 or Just Transition themes, and be publicly accessible via a stable URL. Expand the scope of platforms and areas, functions, and sentiments (positive, neutral, and negative accounts). Items without substantial content (e.g., salary-only posts), marketing materials and duplicates were excluded. Data sufficiency was considered achieved when no new codes appeared after adding more items; the final corpus of 31 items is shown in Table 1, and the search and inclusion log is provided in the Appendix.

3.5 Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke [34] six-phase reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, drawing on principles of online content analysis [31]. Phase 1 (Familiarisation): Repeatedly read the corpus with documentary evidence; Phase 2: Generated 18 initial codes that captured GHRM-related meanings (e.g., "sustainability-linked bonus", "layoff frequency", "gender pay equity"); Phase 3: Consolidated these codes into candidate themes; Phases 4 and 5: Reviewed and refined the themes based on the coded extracts and the entire corpus; Phase 6: Produced the analytical narrative shown in Section 4. In addition, theoretical saturation was monitored throughout [35]: every theme rested on items from several independent platforms, and once the corpus reached its final size, later items added to existing codes instead of producing new themes—taken as the point of sufficiency.

The corpus was coded in several passes, with the mapping of each coded segment to a candidate theme logged in an audit trail. Coding began with the research questions rather than with predefined theoretical categories, so that the AMO framework was applied only at the interpretation stage rather than being imposed on the data; this reflexive ordering follows the approach Braun and Clarke [34] recommend. Throughout the analysis, the first author kept a reflexive journal recording how prior

familiarity with the GHRM and Just Transition literatures might shape the reading of the data, and discrepant cases (e.g., negative employee reviews) were kept and analysed instead of being set aside.

Several measures were used to establish trustworthiness [36]. Credibility came from triangulating employee-generated content against official corporate documents across ten independent platforms, so claims resting on promotional corporate channels were checked against independent employee accounts, and the reverse. Dependability rested on a dated screenshot audit trail that links each quotation to its original source, and confirmability on the reflexive journal described above. Because the corpus is publicly accessible, all quotations can be traced to the source list in the Appendix.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Only public archival data were used in the study, and no contact or recruitment of human subjects was made; thus, institutional ethics approval was not required. In accordance with Kozinets' [31] ethical recommendations for online research, all usernames and poster identities have been anonymised, only content posted in public areas has been quoted, and all quotations have been reproduced verbatim from their original sources; these are listed in the reference list and archived as dated screenshot audit trails.

4. Results

The main results are based on a corpus of 31 publicly available online items (2019–2026) that have been collected and verified with their original sources; Sections 4.1–4.4 are derived from document analysis of HR reports, SSI dashboards, integrated reports and corporate sustainability disclosures (2021–2025).

Braun and Clarke [34] six-stage reflexive thematic analysis and principles of online content analysis [31] were used to code the corpus into 18 initial codes, which were then grouped into the four themes shown in Table 1.

Across the four themes, the central analytical claim is that GHRM practices produce dual SDG 8–SDG 13 outcomes only when employees perceive them as credible. Where credibility holds—as with reliably delivered bonuses and transferable green skills—the same practices advance climate capability and decent work simultaneously. Where it fails—as in the gap between the 40% frontline-management gender target and the 30% achieved, or between decarbonisation rhetoric and recurring site-level layoffs—the practices reproduce the very tensions a Just Transition is meant to resolve. The four themes are organised around the AMO dimensions, with Theme 4 synthesising the SDG 8–SDG 13 tensions and synergies that cut across them.

Table 1
Composition of the Online Content Corpus

Platform / channel	Items	Content focus
Employee review sites (AmbitionBox, Comparably, Indeed, Glassdoor)	12	Training, compensation, diversity, restructuring
Layoff discussion board (TheLayoff.com)	4	Site-level redundancies, exit process
Social media (Reddit)	1	Compensation and work-life balance
Corporate channels (blog.se.com, YouTube, se.com)	9	Official employee stories, SSI disclosures
Press wires and media (PR Newswire, Businesswire, 3BL, UNLEASH, PublicNow)	5	SSI results, pay equity commitments

4.1 Theme 1 (RQ1): Green Ability Development as the Foundation for Contributing to SDG 13

Schneider Electric has established a large-scale green-ability system to support SDG 13, based on the "Act for a Climate-Positive World" commitment of the SSI program. The 2023 HR report reports over 2.1 million training hours delivered around the world, and sustainability modules have been added to the mandatory new-hire induction and specialised green-skills courses for engineers and operators. The free Schneider Electric Energy University has extended this capacity-building beyond the company to train more than 400,000 people [37].

This result supports and extends the previous GHRM research. Renwick and others (2013) proposed a model of GHRM practice called green training, and Dumont and others (2017) empirically demonstrated that green training promotes employees' green behaviour. Schneider Electric's approach is not the typical training-to-behaviour model presented in the above studies; instead, it has linked the development of green ability with specific climate goals to help employees learn technical skills that directly support the company's goal of carbon neutrality. Therefore, the "Ability" part of the AMO framework in the context of the SDGs should not be seen as a general way to build abilities, but rather as a specific tool for translating climate goals into workforce capabilities.

Employee reviews frequently identified sustainability-linked learning as a valued GHRM feature. Employees reported "a very good work culture and supportive management" and "learning opportunities and career growth are really great here" [38]. A senior HR business partner tracked the changes in their own work and said that "my role has evolved and changed substantially over that time"; they mentioned "the opportunity to learn, develop and continue to challenge myself" [39], and an employee video stated that "learning everyday is one of the core values of Schneider" [43]. The above data indicate that the cultivation of green ability is not viewed as an extra training measure, but rather as an innate

characteristic of the employment relationship; therefore, employees perceive continuous learning opportunities as a significant investment by the company in them and, in turn, provide support for the climate goals that need to be achieved. This interpretation extends the 'Ability' dimension of the AMO framework and is no longer regarded as a skill-providing mechanism; instead, it is viewed as a resource for value creation that links individual development with corporate climate commitments. A dissenting voice reported "Good learning experience in core work" but also mentioned "Poor work culture, lack of proper management and planning, high work pressure, and inadequate basic facilities" [38], indicating a conflict in Theme 4.

4.2 Theme 2 (RQ1): Green Motivation Through Sustainability-linked Incentives

Schneider Electric has added sustainability to the remuneration and performance systems. According to the 2023 Integrated Report, 20% of the long-term incentives for senior executives are linked to SSI performance; sustainability indicators have been added to the annual evaluation system, and the "Impact Maker" program acknowledges employees whose work creates positive environmental and social benefits [37].

In line with AMO theory, the above practices can be regarded as a motivator for behaviour; thus, employees are motivated to act in an environmentally responsible manner through rewards and intrinsic incentives. This is consistent with the research by Al-Shammari et al. [15] on green motivation and GHRM-sustainable performance. However, the Schneider Electric case adds a new element: quarterly releases of SSI data have introduced a time-series feature to the green motivation that was not available in cross-sectional quantitative studies before. The company periodically reports its sustainability performance every three months, offering ongoing support for accountability and providing long-term green motivation that extends beyond the cycle of periodic interventions in other GHRM studies.

Employee accounts show that the incentive design has been implemented in practice: "You get your bonus (or variable) part for sure" and "I am earning what i deserve" [40]. A Reddit application engineer with four years at the company said that "they are at the top of the industry as far as compensation and benefits" and that "work life balance has been great (40 hours a week almost always)" [41]. Convergence of these perceptions and institutional design has led to about 76,000 eligible employees being linked to SSI performance since 2011, and the SSI weight in collective incentives has risen from 6% to 20% by 2019 [42]; thus, sustainability-linked pay is no longer merely an idea but a structural reality. These accounts suggest that the company's climate agenda is financially supported rather than merely rhetorical, which may underpin the credibility of green motivation.

4.3 Theme 3 (RQ2): Green Opportunity Structures and the 50-40-30 Gender Commitment

The "Create Equal Opportunities" part of the SSI program is in line with the Opportunity dimension of the AMO model and connects Schneider Electric's HR management practices directly to SDG 8. Under the

50-40-30 commitment of 50% female new hires, 40% female frontline managers, and 30% female senior management, the company reached 42% female new hires, 30% female frontline managers and 31% female senior managers against targets of 50%, 40% and 30%; the largest gap is at frontline management, while senior management has slightly exceeded its target [42].

This result is directly related to the HRM-SDG8 studies. Campos-García et al. [10] found that SDG 8 has been addressed most frequently in HRM studies; however, they pointed out a lack of research on the specific paths through which HR practices affect indicators of SDG 8. Schneider Electric has provided empirical data on this; the "Opportunity" dimension of the AMO framework is translated into specific targets for gender representation, and the organisation has established a system to promote GHRM practices in support of Target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all). However, the progress data also show an inconsistency: there is a gap between the 50% target and the 42% achieved for new hires, and a 10-percentage-point gap between the 40% target and the 30% achieved at the level of frontline management; therefore, it is reasonable to believe that green opportunity structures have different effects at various levels of the organisation - a tension that future interview-based research would be well suited to explore.

Employee discourse shows the 50-40-30 commitment functioning as a lived opportunity system. Schneider has been referred to as a "User friendly and Equivalent gender diversity company" in a review [40], and a corporate video has also celebrated three consecutive years of gender-pay equity at Schneider Electric India, stating that "for a particular job and a role, both a man and a woman gets the same salary and the same pay" [43]. However, the same discourse appears in the gap between promise and reality: the Chief Human Resources Officer said that "there's still a long way to go", and referred to DEIB as "a marker and a differentiator for Schneider Electric" rather than an achievement [44], and one reviewer pointed out that "the company advocates for and touts fair pay – they still have a long way to go as we're all still fighting to close the gender pay gap" [40]. There is a contradiction in the analysis: The 50-40-30 goals are seen as an achievable opportunity system by the staff, but they are also strictly bound by the published benchmarks and thus cannot be considered sincere dedication.

4.4 Theme 4 (RQ3): Tensions and Synergies at the SDG 8–SDG 13 Intersection

Analysis of the above materials shows that SDGs 8 and 13 have both cooperation and conflict at their intersection, as well as research questions. The first synergy is a green skills-development path that simultaneously promotes carbon literacy (SDG 13) and improves the employability of employees in the expanding green economy (SDG 8). The Schneider Electric Energy University provides free sustainability education and thus creates a positive-sum effect of simultaneous improvement in climate capability and career mobility. In line with the proposal of the Just Transition framework that climate action can create high-quality jobs under good skills policies [11], the two will work together.

There is also a problem with the data. Schneider Electric hopes to achieve carbon neutrality and will need to change its business model; this includes decarbonising the supply chain, restructuring product

portfolios and upgrading energy-efficient facilities; therefore, changes to the workforce may not be reflected in the SSI dashboard. According to the 2023 Integrated Report, the company has reduced its operational carbon emissions by 27% since 2017, but has not disclosed the employment impact of the specific measures that have achieved this reduction. Silence is also a form of speech, as Brewster and Brookes [5] have shown; if SDG-oriented HRM only focuses on positive indicators (training hours, gender balance) and neglects potential harm such as job loss or increased workload, it may be "SDG-washing" rather than true sustainability. The corpus of online content reveals whether employees are aware of and experience this tension in their daily work.

The company's official statements and the employees' assessments of job security differ. A Glassdoor review said, "Layoffs every six months, creating ongoing uncertainty" [45]. Posts on TheLayoff.com have recorded site-level layoffs, such as approximately 500 redundancies in Tlaxcala in June 2025 and over 600 software engineers laid off across the US in January 2026 [46]. A former engineer directly linked restructuring to the business model: "They buy companies and strip them down, closing factories, sending jobs out of the country... They have you train lower paid people to do your job and then eliminate you" [47]. Structural inequality for contract workers: "I feel undervalued as a contract staff because we are paid 10 times lesser than our colleague who are full staff" [40]. Together, these voices operationalise the tension between SDG 8 and SDG 13 in this theme: decarbonisation-driven restructuring coexists with formal commitments to decent work (98% of strategic suppliers meet the Group's Decent Work requirements) [42], resulting in a publicly narrated experience of just transition that is contested rather than settled.

As shown in Section 3.5, trustworthiness was ensured through the triangulation of the ten independent platforms and official documents; each item was verified with its original source, a dated screenshot audit trail was maintained, and a reflexive journal of the coding process was kept.

Table 2
Theme-Evidence Mapping

Theme	Research question	SDG link	AMO dimension	Representative sources	Representative codes
1. Green ability development	RQ1	SDG 13	Ability	AmbitionBox; Schneider blog (2019); YouTube; Indeed	sustainability training; green skills
2. Green motivation	RQ1	SDG 13	Motivation	Comparably; Reddit; Schneider ESG FAQ	sustainability-linked bonus; work-life balance
3. Green opportunity structures	RQ2	SDG 8	Opportunity	Comparably; YouTube; Schneider Australia (2026); UNLEASH; Schneider ESG FAQ	gender pay equity; 50-40-30 commitment
4. SDG 8–13 tensions and synergies	RQ3	SDG 8 & 13	Cross-cutting	Glassdoor; TheLayoff.com; Indeed; Comparably	layoff frequency; restructuring; contract-worker inequality

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussion of Findings: Extending AMO to a Dual-Outcome Model

Together, these themes extend the AMO framework from a single-outcome to a dual-outcome model. Most applications of AMO in GHRM have theorised one direction of effect toward one environmental outcome (for example, pro-environmental behaviour or environmental performance), and rarely both environmental and social outcomes at once. The Schneider Electric case suggests that when GHRM practices line up with the SDGs, each AMO dimension can serve environmental (SDG 13) and social (SDG 8) goals at the same time. Three testable propositions capture this extension. Proposition 1 (Ability): Green training yields dual outcomes through skill transferability. When sustainability training builds competencies that the external green labour market also values—carbon literacy alongside technical skills—it advances climate capability (SDG 13) and employee employability (SDG 8) together; the Schneider Electric Energy University, which has trained more than 400,000 people, evidences the firm’s investment in transferable skills; direct employee evidence of external employability gains was not available in the corpus, so this proposition awaits confirmation. Proposition 2 (Motivation): Whether sustainability-linked incentives shape green behaviour depends on employees’ perceived distributive fairness. Together, these themes extend the AMO framework from a single-outcome to a dual-outcome model. Most applications of AMO in GHRM have theorised one direction of effect toward one environmental outcome (for example, pro-environmental behaviour or environmental performance), and rarely both environmental and social outcomes at once. The Schneider Electric case suggests that when

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5.2 Practical Implications

For practitioners, the findings point to role-specific actions. For Chief Human Resources Officers, the priority is to narrow the gap between quantitative sustainability indicators and lived employee experience. The 50-40-30 data show that aggregate gender targets can conceal uneven progress across levels—42% at new-hire level versus 30% at frontline management—so the measurable action is adding a short, anonymous employee-experience pulse survey to the quarterly SSI dashboard, yielding a level-disaggregated "green experience index". The main barrier is that sustainability-linked metrics already compete for space in performance systems; this is overcome by folding the pulse into the existing SSI review instead of adding a new process. For plant and line managers, the actionable lever is green-skills transferability (Proposition 1). Because employees see green training as a durable career asset rather than a compliance exercise, managers should co-design green-skills curricula with employees and certify the transferable competencies so they hold external labour-market value. The measurable output is the share of trained employees who turn green training into certified, externally recognised credentials; the cost-and-time barrier is eased by using the free Schneider Electric Energy University instead of commissioning bespoke courses.

For policymakers, the findings support extending sustainability-reporting mandates (such as the EU CSRD) past aggregate environmental metrics to cover employment-outcome disclosure. The evidence here—formal decent-work commitments coexisting with site-level redundancies that are absent from the SSI dashboard—indicates that the risk of "SDG-washing" is highest when firms report climate progress without its employment consequences. A proportionate policy lever is requiring firms to disclose, next to decarbonisation data, how many roles restructuring affects and what steps are taken to redeploy or reskill those employees—making a Just Transition auditable rather than aspirational.

5.3 Future Research

For future research, the three propositions above should be tested through interview-based studies that can verify the themes derived from the online content analysis against employees' actual experiences, and through comparative case studies across several organisations to establish the generalisability of the dual-outcome AMO model. A longitudinal design that tracks GHRM-SDG integration over a full SSI programme cycle (2021–2025) would further reveal the time-varying dynamics that cross-sectional data cannot capture.

6. Conclusions

This qualitative single-case content analysis has investigated how Schneider Electric's green human resources management practices help achieve the goals of SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

and SDG 13 (Climate Action) simultaneously, based on the theoretical system of Ability-Motivation-Opportunity. Content and document analysis identified four main themes: green ability development through all-round sustainability training infrastructure; green motivation sustained by sustainability-linked performance incentives and continuous accountability mechanisms; green opportunity structure operationalisation via the 50-40-30 gender commitment; and the synergies and tensions of SDG 8–SDG 13.

This study makes three exploratory contributions to the GHRM literature. First, it is among the early qualitative studies on the integration of GHRM and SDGs at a world-class sustainability company, and it meets the repeated demand for qualitative research in a field dominated by quantitative surveys [9, 26]. Second, in theory, it puts forward a preliminary extension of the AMO framework into a dual-outcome model that can explain how GHRM practices simultaneously generate environmental and social SDG results, thus integrating the previous separate literatures on GHRM-environmental performance and HRM-decent work. Third, in practice, it has devised concrete organisational mechanisms—quarterly SSI disclosures, sustainability-linked pay and measurable gender targets—to turn SDG pledges into actual HR management practices and offered a template for other enterprises hoping to move from SDG talk to SDG action [5].

Limitations

This study has six limitations. First, a single-case design limits generalisability; Schneider Electric is a world-class sustainability leader, and GHRM dynamics in developing countries or smaller firms may differ. Second, the online content is self-selected: only employees who post publicly on review sites and discussion boards are represented, and voices from Asia-Pacific and site-based functions are under-represented next to North America and Europe. Third, public posts cannot be independently verified; employee identities and the accuracy of individual claims cannot be confirmed, and corporate-channel materials are promotional by design. These risks were eased—but not removed—by triangulating independent platforms against official documents and quoting sources verbatim with a dated audit trail. Fourth, the corpus is a cross-sectional window (2019–2026) that cannot track how individual employees' experiences evolve over time. Fifth, without interview data the interpretations rest on publicly observable expressions rather than participants' own retrospective accounts; the three propositions advanced here therefore await confirmation through primary research. Sixth, of the four Just Transition pillars mapped onto AMO, the social dialogue and social protection dimensions are only thinly evidenced here, because public online content rarely captures collective bargaining, grievance mechanisms or social-security arrangements; the empirical base is therefore strongest for the Ability and Opportunity dimensions and should be treated as preliminary for Motivation and Opportunity.

Abbreviations

GHRM

Green Human Resource Management

SDG
Sustainable Development Goal
AMO
Ability-Motivation-Opportunity
SSI
Schneider Sustainability Impact
DEI
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
ESG
Environmental, Social and Governance
CSRD
Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive
ILO
International Labour Organization

Declarations

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable. This study relied exclusively on publicly available archival data and did not involve human subjects or primary data collection.

Ethics declaration

not applicable.

Clinical trial number

not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable. No human subjects were directly involved in this study.

Supplementary Materials

The online content corpus source list and verification audit trail (Supplementary Material S1) is provided as a separate file. The corpus comprised 31 publicly available items, each verified against its original source.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Author Contribution

S.Y. and S.D.R. conceptualized the study and designed the methodology. S.Y. collected and curated the data, conducted the formal analysis, and wrote the main manuscript text. S.Y. prepared Figure 1. S.D.R. supervised and administered the project and provided the resources. R.K. and U.C. validated the analysis. All authors reviewed, edited, and approved the final manuscript.

Acknowledgments

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used DeepSeek for language polishing and editing. The authors have reviewed and edited the output and take full responsibility for the content of this publication.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are derived from publicly available online sources (company websites, employee review platforms, and public statements). All sources are cited in the text and listed in the Appendix.

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Figures

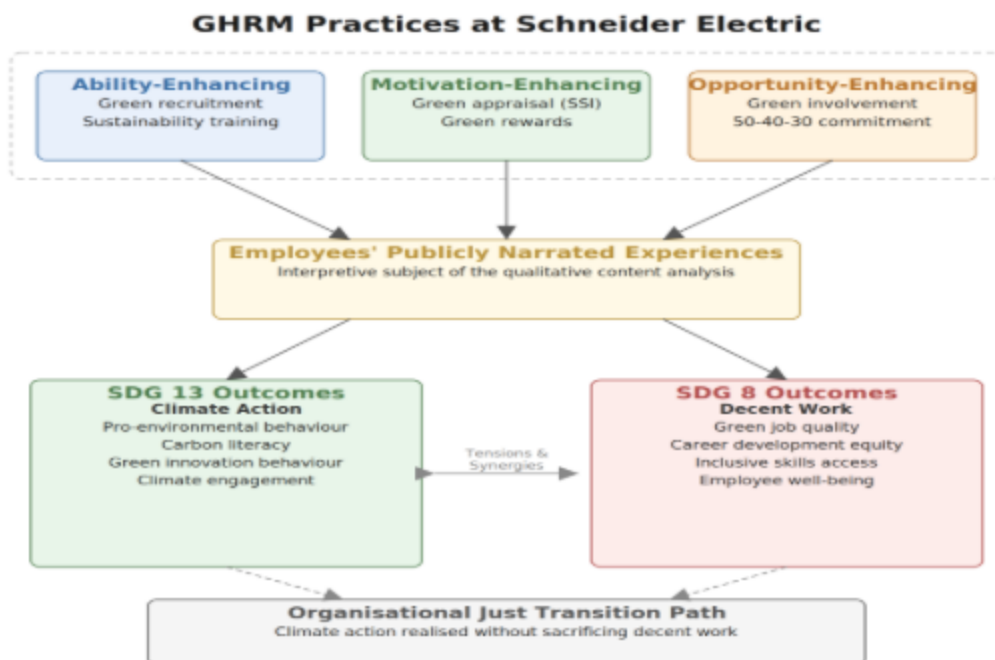


Figure 1

Conceptual framework: AMO-based GHRM practices shaping employees' publicly narrated experiences and perceptions, dual SDG 13 and SDG 8 outcomes, and the organisational Just Transition path.

Supplementary Files

This is a list of supplementary files associated with this preprint. Click to download.

- [S1Supplementarycompressed.docx](#)
- [Appendix.docx](#)