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**The impact of training and development on social  
sustainability in multinational corporations**

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**ABSTRACT :**

As society's demands on businesses grow, more multinational corporations are providing their employees with training and development to contribute to social sustainability. These programs support employee learning, motivate staff and encourage them to work together, creating a more lasting and competitive group. Even though training and development are important, there is not much research on how it helps multinational corporations focus on social sustainability.

The qualitative study examines how training and development programs help multinational corporations achieve social sustainability, guided by the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity model and Human Capital Theory. Data was gathered by conducting semi-structured interviews with 11 employees from four MNCs in Finland: Wärtsilä, Danfoss, ISS Palvelut Oy, and ABB. The results point out six important themes that describe how training and development programs help employees become more aware, motivated, and able to participate in socially sustainable activities. Participants showed an increased feeling of importance, belonging and responsibility at their workplace after training. It was found that using what was learned and having strong leadership support were key to maintaining these outcomes.

The study contributes to the area of sustainable human resource management by linking employee advancement with social responsibilities. It provides useful suggestions for HR and business leaders to ensure learning initiatives are in harmony with fair and inclusive workplace values.

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**KEYWORDS:** training and development, social sustainability, multinational corporations

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### **Abbreviations**

MNC/MNE = Multinational corporation/Multinational enterprise

T&D Training and development

SS= Social Sustainability

AMO Model= Ability, motivation, opportunity model

HCT=Human capital theory

KSA= Knowledge, skills, and abilities

HRM= Human resource management

CSR= Corporate social responsibility

GRI= Global reporting initiative

ESG= Environment, social, and governance

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the study

Nowadays, as the global economy changes rapidly, multinational corporations (MNCs) are required to include social sustainability in their main goals. As a result, Human Resource Management (HRM) now plays a key part in making sure businesses are responsible and sustainable. Social sustainability means having practices and structures that focus on the well-being, equality, and inclusion of people both within and outside the organization (Papademetriou et al., 2025). Being part of many different cultures and legal systems, MNCs can be at the forefront of promoting social sustainability. The importance given to fairness at work, diversity in the workplace, harmed employees, and active involvement in the community highlights the need for companies to act responsibly as society requires (Bos-Nehles et al., 2023b).

Through Training and Development (T&D), HRM helps ensure that employees gain the skills, knowledge, and values needed for being socially sustainable at work. Training and development that works effectively leads to ethical leadership, open communication, cultural awareness, finding a balance between work and family, and respect for human rights (Seemiller, 2018; Ardichvili, 2013). They support better individual results and lead to ethical cultures in the organization that help it deliver social value in the long term. Although some studies suggest a connection between sustainable HRM and social sustainability (Jiang et al., 2012), researchers have not clearly explained how T&D supports achieving those outcomes in multinational companies. Also, there is a lack of knowledge on how employees memorize and use social sustainability guidelines from training in their regular tasks (Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2021). The majority of research examines sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) at an organization's level; less has been done on employee experiences and small changes in behavior.

Therefore, the study uses two theoretical frameworks, such as Human Capital Theory (HCT) and the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) model. According to HCT, investing in employees contributes to the long-term growth of productivity as well as to social equity, diversity, and employee well-being (Awu, Darius, & Chimele, 2025; Jabbour,

2015). AMO also suggests that helping employees get training, ensuring their values are similar to the organization's, and giving them development opportunities will result in them contributing to goals related to social sustainability (Bos-Nehles et al., 2023b). Society's expectations of organizations have grown, especially from investors, consumers, governments, and employees. As a result, organizations are expected to work on social sustainability in both their main business and long-term strategies (Carroll, 2016). To achieve this, MNCs should have policies that can be applied consistently across all jurisdictions and a team that acts respectfully and ethically, regardless of their location.

The goal of this study is to investigate how T&D programs affect employees' awareness, determine their motivation, and guide their behavior regarding social sustainability in MNCs. By exploring employee experiences, it shows how social sustainability is shared in different jobs and provides valuable directions to HRM in achieving wider goals. The investigation of how employee development and social responsibility interact guides this study in supporting sustainable HRM and suggests effective ways to train workers in following inclusive, ethical, and sustainable policies.

## **1.2 Research question, objectives and delimitations**

The main research question that is addressed by this thesis is as follows:

- “What are the impacts of training and development programs on the adoption and implementation of social sustainability practices in the MNCs”?

In order to answer this question, the following sub-questions are created.

1. How do training and development programs support employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) to embrace and implement the social sustainability practices in MNCs?
2. What motivational factors influenced by training and development programs will lead employees to perform social sustainability practices in MNCs?
3. How do training and development programs allow workers to take social sustainability practices to MNCs?

This question arises out of the appreciation that Training and development (T&D) are significant when it comes to capacity building among employees to enhance awareness of social sustainability. The gaps to be filled by the study include the lack of information concerning the processes by which T&D programs result in the achievement of social sustainability goals within MNCs, especially whilst operating in environments that are characterized by different regulatory systems and different cultures of different countries in operations.

The research is guided by the following main objectives to find out the impact of T&D on the implementation of social sustainability in MNCs.

- To assess how T&D programs change employees' views, knowledge, and actions concerning social sustainability. This requires checking how organized learning experiences improve people's knowledge of sustainability, encourage ethical work conditions, support workers' mental health, and help create a more equal and inclusive workplace. These programs are also studied to determine how employees understand and carry out the organization's plans for social sustainability.
- To assess the role of T&D programs in influencing the social aspect of the organization's performance. The goal is to see if such interventions are in line with wider strategies such as CSR and how well MNCs use them to meet their stakeholders' expectations of responsible behaviour. It involves analysing the training content, ways in which it is delivered, and how sustainability is addressed in learning schemes.
- To investigate how leaders and workplace culture can enhance the results generated by social sustainability training. The research investigates how leaders' behaviour and decisions help or hinder employees' interest in sustainability, as well as how an inclusive culture helps put newly learned knowledge, skills, and abilities into practice.

This work belongs to the wider field of Sustainable HRM, and its purpose is to spotlight how Training and Development can be a main approach to social sustainability in multinationals. To get comprehensive insights and detailed information, the study uses a qualitative exploratory design and interviews employees involved in T&D programs. It makes it easier to investigate people's real-life experiences and the personal understandings they have about sustainability at work. Because of how much impact MNCs have globally, move across international borders, and can set new standards of working around the world, the study only includes them. As stakeholders and the international community evaluate MNCs, they have the necessary information for examining the effects of training on social responsibility. Geographically, the scope of the research is Europe and North America as far as MNCs are concerned. These regions were picked due to their strict rules, effective pressure from institutions for environment, social, and governance (ESG), and wide use of CSR by companies. These results are only relevant to MNCs in this region and may not fit the needs of similar businesses in global areas without strong sustainability rules. The researcher also examines the social part of sustainability, which includes diversity, employee well-being, inclusion, and good ethical standards, instead of focusing on environmental or economic issues. Limitations in this study allow researchers to see how T&D positively contributes to social sustainability in multinational companies.

### **1.3 Structure of the study**

The structure of the thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 is a background of the study where the author provides the background, justification, and importance of the study, and the role of training and development programs in the promotion of social sustainability activities. This chapter also includes research questions, objectives, and the scope or limitations of the study. Chapter 2 reviews existing literature on training and development in MNCs and their connection to social sustainability. It also gives theoretical insight based on Human Capital Theory and AMO Model. The methodology used in this study is explained in Chapter Three, where data collection and analysis methods are

highlighted. Chapter 4 presents the research findings. In the last chapter, Chapter 5, results are presented, conclusions made, and recommendations for further research given.

## **2. Literature Review and Theoretical Background**

### **2.1 Social Sustainability in Multinational Corporations (MNCs)**

Social sustainability has become a key consideration in the operations of organizations around the world. MNCs must use socially responsible and sustainable business practices to manage their operations across the world. Social sustainability requires organizations to adhere to higher ethical and social responsibilities. It involves an organization's efforts to provide fair employment opportunities, encourage diversity, uphold the well-being of its employees, and contribute positively to the surrounding neighbourhoods (Colantonio, 2019). Corporate organizations are now tasked with taking a leadership position to help solve some of the world's most pressing social challenges.

Achieving social sustainability is now fundamental to the success of businesses around the world. The size and reach of MNCs allow them to exert considerable influence on the social well-being of the communities where they're located. Taking social responsibility is known to build a positive image for a company within its key markets and help foster stronger commitment from employees. Many firms are making social sustainability a priority because it can lead to increased long-term business success and greater profitability. Companies can achieve a sustainable competitive edge by addressing social issues and generating value that serves both society and the organization at the same time, according to scholars Chaplin-Kramer et al. (2019).

A fundamental aspect of social sustainability is corporate social responsibility. An organization shows commitment to CSR when it takes steps to advance social welfare independently and above legal obligations. Typical CSR programs involve making charitable donations, safeguarding the environment, promoting the improvement of surrounding communities, and ensuring just treatment of employees. MNCs must include CSR activities because they operate in several nations where the socio-economic and regulatory conditions vary widely. Running successful CSR initiatives helps MNCs gain the confidence of local communities, strengthen their public image, and shield themselves from potential damage to their reputation caused by unethical practices.

Promoting diversity and inclusion within a company plays a vital role in achieving social sustainability. MNCs need to make their workplaces diverse and inclusive because this approach is both right and necessary for their future. Having a diverse workforce allows companies to access a variety of viewpoints, encouraging imagination, inventiveness, and improved decision-making (Shore et al., 2018). Workplaces that promote inclusivity for marginalized workers have higher levels of employee satisfaction and retention, ultimately strengthening the organization itself. Examples of MNCs that have successfully implemented diversity and inclusion policies and seen benefits such as enhanced innovation and financial success are Microsoft, Unilever, and Google (Roberson, 2019).

The well-being of employees plays a crucial role in the achievement of social sustainability. Employees' well-being encompasses not only their physical health but also the state of their psychological, emotional, and social well-being (Grawitch et al., 2015). Paying more attention to the well-being of employees can lead to better employee engagement, commitment, and productivity throughout the company. Multinational companies must overcome difficulties that arise due to diverse health and safety policies at each of their subsidiaries. Companies that provide options for flexible work times, support mental well-being, and offer solid financial perks often have reduced employee turnover and higher profits (Guest, 2017).

Achieving social sustainability within MNCs is made difficult by numerous obstacles. A key challenge is overcoming cultural diversity within the operations of various countries. Differences in values, labour policies, and ethics challenge efforts to establish a single set of social sustainability standards across all corporate operations (Hofstede, 2001). One example is when global initiatives for gender equality can face conflicts with cultural traditions in individual countries. As a result, many companies adapt their worldwide programs to match the needs of each individual market. As an example, championing gender equality in countries with a more traditionally patriarchal culture can meet opposition, so MNCs must approach this issue with consideration for different cultural contexts (Budhwar & Debrah, 2010). The result is that global sustainability approaches are frequently modified to suit particular local contexts, demonstrating the phenomenon of "glocalization" (Meyer, 2020).

Governance remains a crucial obstacle for MNCs seeking to retain and improve their social sustainability (Aguilera et al., 2016). A dependable framework for managing and monitoring social sustainability initiatives should be in place in each subsidiary of a multinational corporation. As a result, the implementation of adequate standards of social sustainability can be challenged by underdeveloped regulatory systems in host nations (Lee et al., 2021). MNCs in sectors characterized by conflicting demands are required to simultaneously ensure adherence to differing regulatory and ethical guidelines.

Ethical concerns form one of the most significant obstacles to promoting social sustainability. Holding multiple stakeholder interests while simultaneously responding to investors seeking immediate returns poses many problems for MNCs (Freeman et al., 2007). Solving such problems requires ethical leadership and consideration for all the stakeholders involved within a business (Donaldson & Preston, 2020). Many industries with complex supply chains in the fashion and electronics sectors are faced with difficult challenges such as child labor, unfair working conditions, and excessive damage to the environment (Crane et al., 2019).

## **2.2 Manifestations of Social Sustainability in MNCs**

Social sustainability in the MNC setting is expressed through numerous practices and projects that focus on the encouragement of ethical labor standards, well-being of the employees, multiculturalism, inclusion, and community engagement (Rahman et al., 2023). CSR programs are some of the most widespread manifestations of it that are aimed at the positive social impact of MNC presence in communities they operate (Lin & Efranto, 2023). Some of the CSR activities consist of volunteerism, charitable contributions, and social development programs aimed at education, health, and poverty eradication (Biasutti et al., 2019).

Ethical leadership is another essential manifestation in which organizations promote leadership qualities that promote fairness, transparency, and accountability (Nogueira et al. 2024). Ethical leaders provide examples of responsible behaviour and encourage employees to maintain ethical standards and create a positive organizational culture (Holtbrügge & Mohr, 2011). Employee diversity programs, anti-discrimination

policies, as well as gender equity initiatives, are also decisive cases of SS in MNCs (Sajjad & Shahbaz, 2020).

The community engagement initiatives are essential in promoting social sustainability. The MNCs take the initiative in local developmental programs, support marginalized groups, and campaign for environmental and social justice in the host countries (Hansson & Polk, 2018). Companies such as Nestlé have put in place programs aimed at promoting education and rural development to ensure sustainable communities, which directly align with the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) (UNGC 2020). Moreover, employee well-being programs dedicated to mental health, work-life balance, and occupational safety are the key aspects of social sustainability (Biasutti et al., 2019). These programs help in alleviating stress at the workplace, increasing job satisfaction, and improving productivity at large.

One more arising aspect of social sustainability in MNCs is the adoption of various supply chain strategies that emphasize ethical sourcing and acceptable working conditions. In this regard, firms such as Patagonia and H&M have put in place supplier codes of conduct that regulate human rights and prohibit predatory labour practices in their international supply chains (Nogueira et al., 2024). These are examples of the transition from compliance to proactive sustainability management outside the realm of direct operations (Reyna-Castillo et al., 2023). Also, the use of social sustainability certifications has increased in prominence, like SA8000 and Fair Trade, which have helped organisations state their commitment towards ethical practice and benefit from socially conscious consumers (Ferreira et al., 2023). In addition, MNCs are also becoming more aware of mental health and wellness programs that should form part of their development agendas. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the necessity of organizations to address the challenges of mental health issues in the global workforce (Hilton Segel, 2024). Progressive companies have responded by offering virtual counselling services, flexible working, and resilience programs that aim at eliminating workplace stress and enhancing psychological well-being (Nogueira et al., 2024). Such moves not only help to achieve social sustainability but also enhance the productivity of workers, thereby reducing turnover rates. Lastly, gender equality initiatives have emerged as the cornerstone of social

sustainability initiatives in MNCs. Some companies like Microsoft and IBM have adopted wide-ranging diversity and inclusion programs to make it easy for women to be promoted into leadership positions and regulate gender disparities in the workplace (Holtbrügge & Mohr, 2011). These include mentorship programs, unconscious biases training, and recruitment policies that are targeted to level out career growth opportunities.

It is no longer only an idea; rather, social sustainability in MNCs is seen in their actual working methods and practices. Usually, this shows that the company genuinely supports fairness, equality, and responsibility. As social governance gains more attention from stakeholders, social sustainability must be practiced for companies to maintain their legitimacy and edge over competitors worldwide (Jamali et al., 2021). The inclusion of social factors in company reporting has expanded the role of multinational enterprises when working in other countries (Baumgartner & Ebner, 2010b). It explores the main ways MNCs carry out social sustainability, including CSR, engaging with communities, ethical leadership, programs for employees, and including them in HR practices. It also introduces examples of when the approach was successfully applied outside the classroom.

### **2.3 The Role of Training and Development to Foster Social Sustainability in MNCs**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a well-known way in which MNCs promote social sustainability. It means that companies are accountable to carry out activities guided by social, ethical, and environmental concerns, rather than only sticking to the rules in an inactive manner (Carroll, 2016). An example of social sustainability in CSR is when companies introduce projects that help the underprivileged, build up neighborhoods, and achieve equal treatment for all employees around the world. According to Rego et al. (2021), corporate social responsibility in MNCs helps address the global scope of their operations with local rules, protecting their reputation and earning trust from stakeholders. As an example, Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan demonstrates that the explicit social objectives of CSR may be to improve health and hygiene for one billion individuals

and raise the quality of life for millions. Similarly, Nestlé's "Creating Shared Value" includes social sustainability in its business by assisting farmers and supporting youth jobs in several regions. These instances highlight that CSR takes on a new role as a vital component of managing sustainability (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2009). In addition, studies indicate that having positive views about CSR encourages employees to remain committed and loyal, mostly in settings with a diverse workforce (Glavas & Piderit, 2009). MNCs which carry out activities in different countries use CSR programs to gain respect and ensure their actions are ethical in all places.

Training and development (T&D) play important roles in facilitating social sustainability, whereby the employees are prepared with the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required for engaging in responsible business (Seemiller, 2018). T&D programs that are effective will ensure that employees learn social responsibility, ethical conduct as well as inclusive practices, and this will contribute to the creation of a socially sustainable organizational culture (Ardichvili, 2013).

### **Community Engagement and Social Value Creation**

Taking part in community activities helps MNCs achieve social sustainability, including in growing areas where they have a major influence. Merely appearing involved is different from actively collaborating to help build social value (Porter & Kramer, 2011). An organization adds social value through providing work, developing important community resources and training local workers and entrepreneurs. Companies such as IKEA have designed projects to boost the skills and employment of women as well as marginalized individuals in the communities they operate in. IKEA and its Bangladeshi partners make sure that women handicraft makers are treated justly and have more chances to independently manage their finances (IKEA Sustainability Report, 2023). As another example, Coca-Cola launched "5by20" to give five million female entrepreneurs along its value chain skills, funds, and guidance by 2020. They assist with bringing together various groups in the community, which in turn strengthens the MNC's presence and helps with

running its activities in the host country. Crane and Matten (2020) explain that involvement by MNCs in community development generally brings about collaboration, avoids severe disruptions, and increases loyalty among their customers. Additionally, by understanding cultural traditions and inviting local leaders to share ideas, such engagement makes it easier for major businesses to adapt to different cultures.

### **Ethical Leadership and Corporate Governance**

Ethics in leadership is critical to social sustainability for MNCs. It relates to those who act with integrity, fairness, and transparency to set ethical standards for their team members (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Ethical leadership is crucial for MNCs because they have to deal with many rules and cultures around the world. Marques & Miska (2021b) highlight that it is important for a global firm's leader to maintain consistency with basic values and deal with various ethical rules from different locations. To back ethical leadership, an organization can establish ethics committees, create codes of conduct, protect whistleblowers' identities, and ensure that every decision is clear to all. For instance, Johnson & Johnson's Credo tells both leaders and employees what they should do for others, giving guidance for all decisions. An example like Patagonia ensures its governance process includes sharing details about labour and the environment with its stakeholders.

Studies have shown that ethical leadership encourages a socially sustainable culture. According to recent studies, it was discovered that when an individual is an ethical leader, they help create an inclusive environment, detect various groups within the workplace, and inspire employees to talk about their ideas. This is crucial for multicultural teams since they may encounter issues that result from team members' different values. As a result of ethical leadership, individuals become aware of what the organization values, which boosts its social sustainability.

### **Employee-Focused Initiatives: Well-being and Work-Life Balance**

Social sustainability in MNCs places great importance on employees' health and ensuring their personal and work lives are well managed. Some of these actions are focused on employee health and safety, job flexibility, parental leave, opportunities for career growth, and making sure everyone feels comfortable at work. As global roles can be demanding, companies in the international arena should provide the necessary systems to protect their workers (Tlaiss et al., 2017). There is evidence that well-designed policies at companies allow employees to feel happier, remain longer, and perform better (Saks, 2019). Google dominates in global employer ratings mainly because it offers on-site health services, teaches meditation skills, and supports ample time off for employees with children. Microsoft also offers stress training, virtual therapy, and steps to avoid stress in its "Global Mental Health Strategy," particularly for employees who are working from home or blending their hours between offices and home. Since MNCs operate in various parts of the world and under many legal systems, designing the policies for equal participation in these programs is not easy. As indicated by Orgambidez & Almeida (2020) job and life problems tend to happen when employees are unclear about their duties and cannot access assistance from HR personally. Therefore, leading multinational corporations now have regional officials for well-being and custom strategies in each country. Addressing the needs of each individual at work brings about many steps forward in social sustainability for the organization itself.

### **Integration of Social Sustainability in Global HRM Strategies**

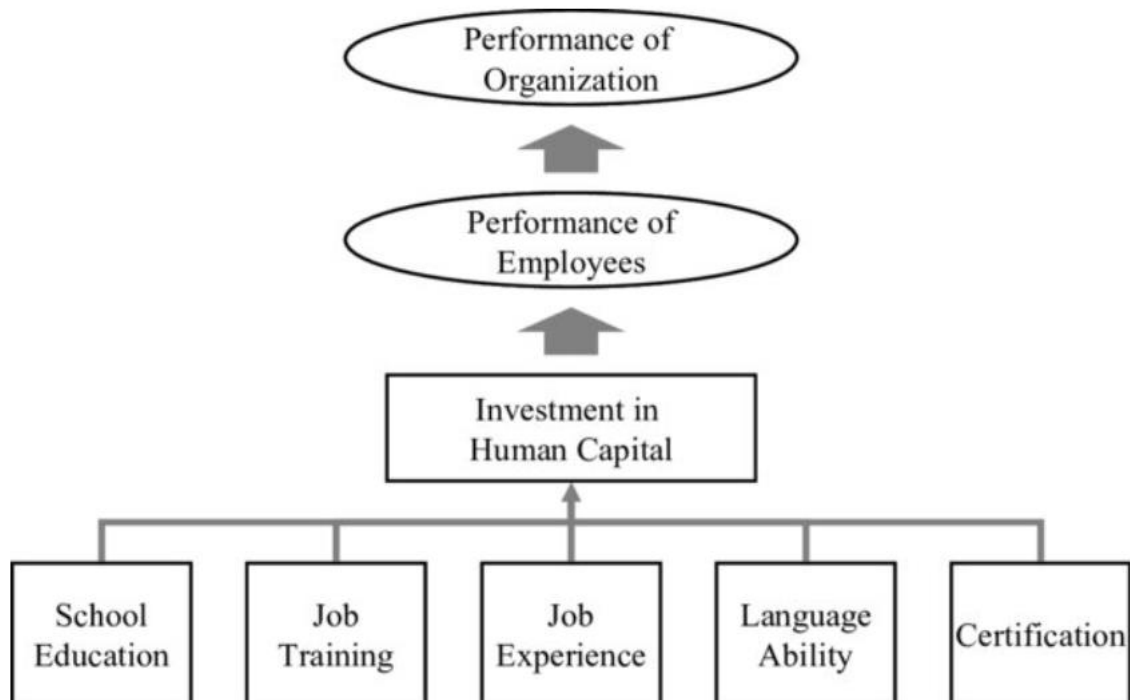
To be effectively socially sustainable, a company must join its worldwide HRM processes. It requires ensuring that recruitment, onboarding, performance management, and training plans are directed towards societal sustainability. Over the last decade, HRM has changed from mainly performing routine jobs to influencing how a company is run and what its future outlook is (De Prins et al., 2014). Promoting inclusion at work, establish-

ing goals for a diverse HR pool, offering equal chances for promotion, and linking incentives to conducting oneself ethically are contributions HRM makes to social sustainability. Thus, Accenture's goal to achieve gender equality by 2025 is transparent in its recruitment and leadership efforts for women. The Future of Work initiative at Unilever teaches employees new skills, promotes the ability to work remotely, and helps secure career advancement for those from poorer regions. More and more, companies are using sustainability metrics as part of their HR reviews. Many companies, for example, Salesforce and SAP, now include social impact scores when reviewing a manager's leadership. As a result, the company is held responsible, and social sustainability is viewed as an important requirement for success.

### **Case Studies of MNCs Successfully Implementing SS**

Showcases from the real arena illustrate how MNCs practice social sustainability. This idea has also been put into practice by Danone with its 'One Planet.' One Health supports responsibility towards both people and the planet by helping to include all workers, offering community nutrition services, and sourcing local ingredients. Danone's B Corp status means it monitors social factors to ensure all business units meet social goals without compromising financial results. For instance, Cisco has a worldwide plan called "Inclusive Future" focused on digital fairness, education, and promoting inclusive ideas. Cisco works with local schools in different communities to offer IT education and reduce the digital divide. They also base their reporting on the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) to show their commitment to honesty and dedication. In addition, Philips created a "Human Capital Strategy" that ensures employees learn, progress in their leadership, and have their views heard, all while contributing to sustainable goals. The firm relies on pulse surveys and turnover analytics, both kinds of data, to help improve its approach all the time. It is shown that integrating social sustainability is important for business morals and financial strategies today.

### 2.3.1 Human Capital as a Foundation for Training and Development



**Figure 1 : Understanding the different components of human capital, and performance of individuals and an organization (Bae & Patterson, 2014)**

Human Capital Theory (HCT) states that when one invests in employee knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), it results in enhanced performance for the organization and benefits to society (Awu, Darius, & Chimele, 2025). In MNCs, HCT highlights the importance of developing the workforce in fulfillment of both economic and social targets (Wuttaphan, 2017). When organizations invest in T&D programs, which create a more competent, ethical, and socially responsible workforce by increasing employees' KSAs, the organizations invest in a more competent, ethical, and socially responsible workforce (Nafukho et al., 2004). T&D programs that bring into play human capital development covered areas like ethical leadership, intercultural communication, diversity management, and corporate citizenship (Fugar et al., 2013). These efforts assist employees with functional operation in challenging international settings, ethical labor practices observation and creation of diverse workplace settings. Such is the case with programs such as Unilever's

“Future Leaders Program,” wherein MNCs act in investing into global leaders ready to tackle social sustainability issues (UNGC, 2020). In addition, organizations that are focused on the development of human capital have high retention of employees, high workplace involvement, and high organizational commitment (Cox & Warner, 2013). By integrating the T&D with social sustainability goals, MNCs can, at the same time, support the development of talent and meet broader goals of society.

The success and sustainability of a multinational corporation depend greatly on its human resources and skills. Employees’ KSAs should be developed using the Human Capital Theory since it plays an essential role in encouraging better social sustainability outcomes in today’s global business markets (Frijat & Elamer, 2024b). HCT states that training and educating employees can improve their productivity and lead to better performance for the organization (Pujianto, 2024). Given that MNCs work in many different countries, developing strong human resources is extremely important for MNCs to maintain steady business practices (Jiang et al., 2012).

### **Human Capital Theory (HCT) and Its Application in MNCs**

In Pujianto’s (2024) view, HCT appeared when people realized that an organization’s and an economy’s success depends on what individuals offer with their capabilities. Being trained by HCT, MNCs realize that improving their staff members’ skills helps them accomplish their sustainability objectives (Carballo-Penela et al., 2020). Since conditions in global markets vary over time, human skills must be improved to face issues including inequality, diversity, and inclusion. A company can use high-commitment training to train its leaders in ethics, value its diverse staff, and participate in CSR programs (Nogueira et al., 2024). Leadership and diversity programs are created by Unilever and Microsoft to provide equal employment opportunities for people all over the world. Furthermore, MNCs in emerging markets focus on training the workforce to contribute to its advancement. It allows organizations to succeed better and addresses issues of inequality and fewer opportunities for people in need.

### **Building Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) for Sustainable Practices**

Practices to develop KSAs are essential in a successful strategy to support social sustainability. A good knowledge base involves concepts and skills about supporting companies, their sustainability, and following international rules and trends in human rights and social responsibility strategies (De La Torre et al., 2022). Sustainable efforts can be achieved if a person knows how to relate to others from various backgrounds, act with integrity, and effectively communicate. The use of knowledge and skills in the workplace is enabled by the abilities of employees (Brewster et al., 2016). Multinational companies increase KSAs in their workers by arranging courses, providing mentoring, and giving staff the chance to gain experience in multiple jobs and outside the company's headquarters (Javidan & Teagarden, 2011). For example, IBM operates the Global Citizen Program that encourages its employees to join hands with others in developing countries to help solve major social issues (IBM Sustainability Report, 2023). When employees gain useful skills, the organization's presence also improves in the communities where it is active. Because of the popularity of ESG reporting frameworks, MNC employees are now required to focus on skills in sustainability reporting, obtaining ethical goods, and being involved with communities (Carballo-Penela et al., 2020). This is leading organizations to teach sustainability to all their employees through training and onboarding to help them support the company's social sustainability aims (Kang et al., 2022).

### **Role of Lifelong Learning and Upskilling in Social Sustainability**

Gaining new knowledge all your life is important for developing human capital sustainably. It refers to gaining new skills and knowledge constantly on the job, helping people keep up with the ever-changing business environment (Marsick & Watkins, 2018). When it comes to social sustainability, employees who continue with learning can meet the expectations of social change, such as those related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, ethical leadership, and community support. MNCs value that encouraging everyone to learn new things adds value to the company and supports its purpose in society. As part

of their efforts to support the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Nestlé runs the “Nestlé Needs Youth” scheme, giving young people more opportunities in work and career growth (Nestlé Sustainability Report, 2023). When MNCs invest in youth development, they ensure there are workers with the necessary skills needed for future success in business. Since we are in the age of online change and sustainability innovation, improving employees’ current skills or upskilling is especially essential (Avni, 2025). Businesses are relying on the internet and digital platforms for e-learning to provide social sustainability training to their employees (Kang et al., 2022). By using technology, staff members can access and use these training resources anywhere in the world. Companies generally include lifelong learning as part of their performance systems, encouraging workers to improve skills involved in sustainability (Seemiller, 2018). As a result of this, organizations build a workforce that values both expertise and social responsibility; these people help drive sustainability plans in all areas of the company (Brewster et al., 2016). All in all, Human Capital Theory outlines why developing employees is important for a company’s social sustainability. If MNCs offer learning opportunities to their workers, they can help staff deal with international problems. Therefore, the organization demonstrates its care for the environment, is respected by others, and can maintain its position in the international business market.

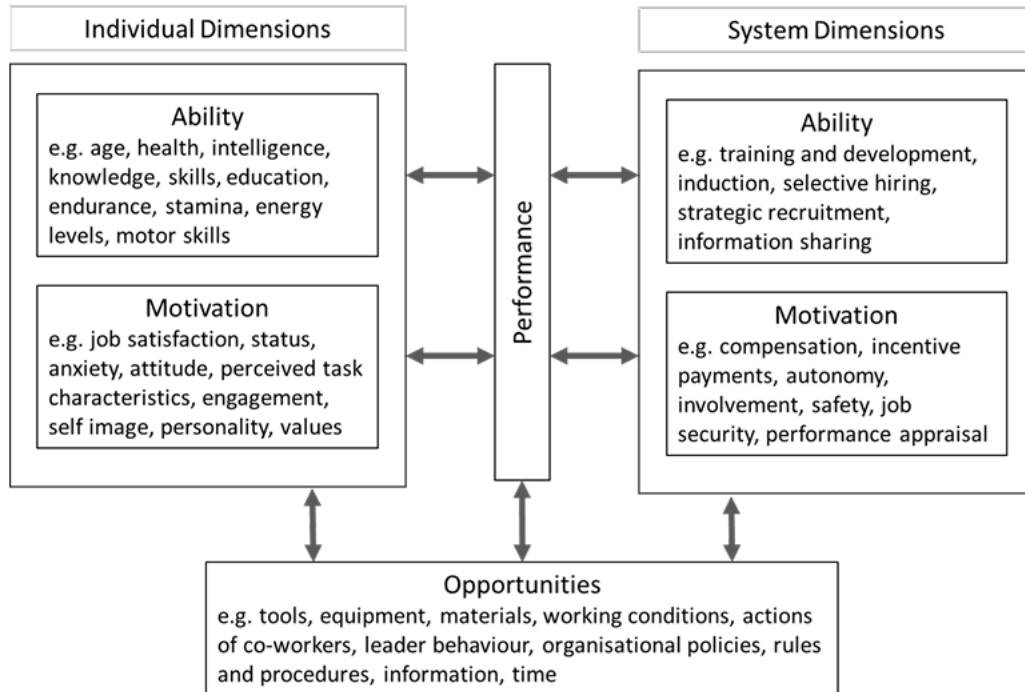
### **Challenges Influencing T&D for Social Sustainability in MNCs**

It is not that implementing effective T&D programs for social sustainability lacks challenges. MNCs are usually the subject of cultural opposition, regulatory variability, and a lack of money when they try to implement such initiatives in other countries (McCarthy, 2016). Middle management resistance is also a major obstacle, since the operational priorities tend to drown long-term sustainability goals (Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2022). Moreover, the immunity state of affairs, where there exists no clear appraisal initiative to gauge the effect of social sustainability training, is a significant challenge. Organizations have a hard time overcoming behavioral changes and long-term outcomes of T&D programs, which hinders them from proceeding with funding (Sitzmann & Weinhardt,

2017). In order to address these challenges, there is a need for strategic alignment of T&D with organizational values, commitment by the leaders, and the incorporation of social sustainability metrics into performance checks.

Another severe problem that highly impacts the efficiency of T&D programs is the digital gap between the developed and the developing markets. Although e-learning platforms and virtual training approaches are spreading fast, a significant number of subsidiaries in low-income areas do not have the technological setup necessary for meaningful engagement in the digital learning environment (McCarthy, 2016). Therefore, MNCs have difficulties in ensuring the seamless roll-out of T&D programs on their global operations. This aspect is very important, especially in the aspect of social sustainability training that may often require interactive sessions and continued mentorship in the pursuit of behavioural change (Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2022). Moreover, there is also the variation of cultural learning preferences, which makes it difficult to design standardized training modules. Workers of collectivist cultures might like group-oriented experiential learning, while those from individualist cultures tend to prefer self-paced digital learning platforms (Li et al, 2012). Meeting these challenges calls for MNCs to design blended learning models that incorporate digital tools and face-to-face mentoring, as well as be culturally compatible with the training materials (Kang et al., 2022).

### 2.3.2 Ability-Motivation-Opportunity Model as a Foundation for Training and Development



**Figure 2: A dynamic model of AMO for HRM research (Kellner et al., 2019)**

After Appelbaum et al. (2000) presented the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity model, managers and researchers now use it to analyse the influence of employee practices on people and organizations. The approach suggests that organizations need their workers to be competent (A), inspired (M), and given opportunities (O) to contribute their best. The AMO model gives multinational companies a solid base for shaping and instilling training programs that promote social sustainability.

The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) model provides a complete structure of T&D programs in fostering social sustainability in MNCs (Appelbaum et al., 2000). In accordance with the AMO model, the abilities, motivation of an employee, and opportunities to express the learned competencies are the factors influencing the employee performance and socially responsible behaviour. Ability entails the development of KSAs that can lead to the practice of ethical and inclusive work-related behaviours. Through

the training programs, employees are equipped with technical and interpersonal skills such as knowledge of CSR principles, diversity management, and ethical decision making, among others (Holtbrügge & Mohr, 2011). By way of example, intercultural training programs improve employees' cultural awareness; they eliminate unconscious bias, which allows employees to create inclusive work spaces (Biasutti et al, 2019). Motivation involves a number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that trigger employees to conduct socially responsible actions (Gagné & Deci, 2005). T&D programs can stimulate intrinsic motivation by making an ethical appeal regarding sustainable practices and their favourable implications on society (Aragão & Jabbour, 2017). Extrinsic motivation can be stimulated by such forms as recognition programs, rewards for ethical actions, and performance evaluations, which include metrics of sustainability (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000). Opportunity implies the formation of such organizational environments that can create the circumstances for the possibility of applying social sustainability knowledge. MNCs need to ensure that their structure, policy, and leadership promote responsible behaviours (Rogers & Wright, 1998). CSR initiatives and ethical councils involving the staff as well as community involvement schemes are essential to allow the employees to apply their training (Holtbrügge & Mohr, 2011). The integration of the KSA model to the AMO model further improves understanding of the way that T&D impacts social sustainability outcomes. Training programs that develop knowledge, skills, and abilities help the "Ability" part of the AMO model (Seemiller, 2018). Through the development of these competencies, the organizations enable the employees to become agents of social change.

### **Application of AMO Model in MNCs**

MNCs operate within environments that are rich in cultural diversity, have rapidly shifting markets, and numerous rules and regulations. Along with making a profit, these organizations should also focus on social activities such as supporting diversity, helping their employees, and contributing to the growth of their community (Boon et al., 2018). In this case, the AMO model stands out since it gives clear directions for using human resources in ways that support sustainability within an organization (Jiang et al., 2012).

In AMO, the value placed on ability is shown by ensuring staff members have the required knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Therefore, students in SS are encouraged to gain skills in ethical judgment, work with people from diverse cultures, be mindful of the environment, and consider their social role (Kaufman, 2020). Enterprises should design work programs that highlight the significance of CSR, green business activities, and ethical guidance for supervisors. Staff members have been trained in sustainability and issues related to sourcing and nature at Unilever. They allow workers to learn necessary skills and also support the company in being more sustainable. Besides, MNC employees who collaborate with people from different cultures should receive appropriate cross-cultural training. Having cultural intelligence allows staff to recognize and welcome cultural diversity at work (Ang et al., 2007).

In the 'Motivation' component, leaders ensure employees have reasons to participate in behaviours required to support the organization and its development. Both rewards and purpose at work are considered motivational strategies, despite being quite different (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Microsoft and Google both set up incentives to thank employees for their work on improving the community and inventing innovative, environmentally friendly products (check references for the year of reports). It is shown that using reward systems related to sustainability makes employees more willing to join SS efforts. Moreover, the quality of leadership affects how motivated people are. Leaders' ethical actions and concern for the environment motivate people in the company to copy them. According to Bass & Riggio (2006), engaging SS activities among employees is positively influenced by transformational leadership.

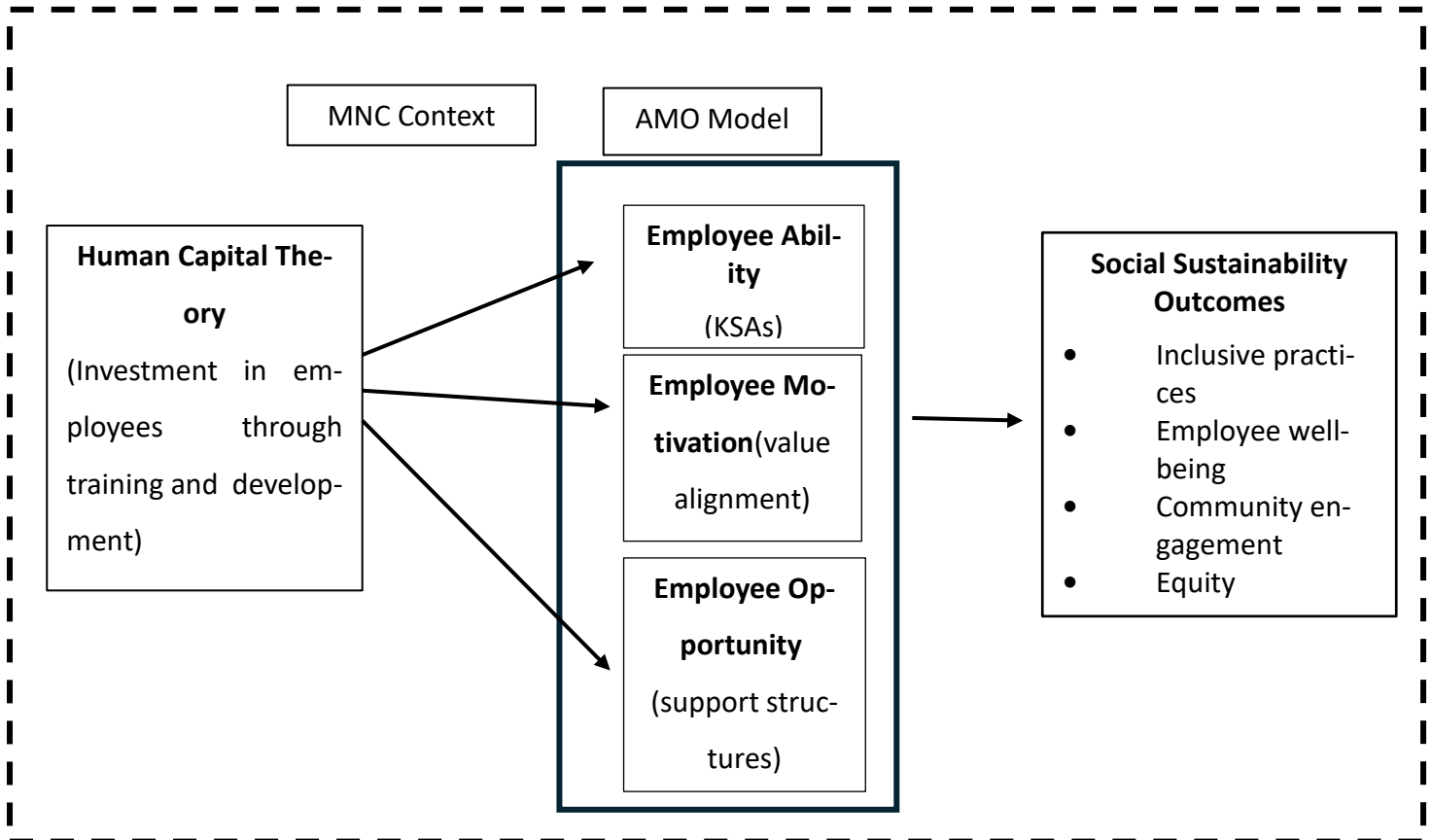
The "opportunity" dimension of the AMO model outlines that organizations should give their employees ways to get involved in SS activities. It means forming groups and setting up a culture that supports employees working together, sharing ideas, and finding new ways to be sustainable (Guest, 2011). For example, via the Corporate Service Corps from IBM, employees can take part in projects aimed at supporting development in different regions by applying their expert knowledge (IBM CSR Report, 2023). Such programs give employees a chance to study and participate in supporting SS. Besides, setting up teams responsible for sustainability and innovation can help bring employees

together to find innovative ways to create sustainable solutions and ideas. When employees have a sense of control and feel important, it keeps them interested in contributing to SS actions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

### **Challenges in Applying AMO Model in Diverse Cultural Settings**

The use of the AMO model to support SS through T&D presents several problems in cultures that differ from the ones it was developed. Values in a culture guide employees in their opinions of employees' skills, level of motivation, and available opportunities (Hofstede, 2001). In collectivist societies, people are likely to be motivated by helping their group rather than by personal accomplishments, so motivating activities should reflect these beliefs (House et al., 2004). Getting everyone involved in school social tasks can be hard when a few individuals make most of the (business) decisions. Multi-national companies should find ways to involve their staff that take local customs and traditions into consideration (Meyer, 2015). To address these problems, MNCs can use HR practices that are easy to adjust. It involves learning about local communities, including leaders in the community planning process and using sustainability plans that are important to them (Stahl et al., 2012). AMO suggests that SS should be applied to HRM through appropriate education initiatives. Developing employees' skills, boosting their motivation, and helping them take part can help a company move toward sustainable business practices. At the same time, the AMO model can be used successfully in international contexts if a person is flexible and aware of different cultures. If a multinational corporation uses the AMO model effectively, it will have a good chance of being environmentally and socially sustainable, resilient and leading the market on a long-term basis.

## 2.4 Summary of Theoretical Framework



**Figure 3: Theoretical framework of the thesis**

This work provides a blended theoretical rationale on the basis of a fusion between the Human Capital Theory (HCT) and AMO model so as to explain how T&D helps to promote social sustainability in MNCs. HCT considers workforce skills important, since they benefit both the success of the business and society as a whole (Awu, Darius, & Chimele, 2025). The AMO model fills in the gap of explaining the manner in which employee capabilities, motivation, and organizational opportunities impact the effectiveness of T&D programs (Appelbaum et al., 2000). Integrating the two frameworks provides a thorough understanding of ways in which MNCs could use T&D to promote social sustainability. By making the investments in employee development (HCT), motivation and opportunity structures (AMO), and meeting the implementation challenges, MNCs can promote a workforce of a socially responsible nature that is able to achieve sustainable results.

These frameworks are combined to provide a wide perspective of how organizations may strive to promote and maintain socially responsible business practices by means of strategic human interventions. Human Capital Theory is the basis for the understanding that it is essential to invest in employees' knowledge, skills, and capabilities for the improvement of an organization's performance and also society's outcomes. From the perspective of social sustainability, HCT highlights the role of T&D in developing ethical leadership, diversity and inclusion, and preparing employees to address complicated worldwide sustainability issues. This theoretical view supports the idea that the development of human capital is a very important catalyst for the creation of long-term social value. Based on such a foundation, the AMO model explains how T&D initiatives lead to socially responsible behaviours by enhancing the capabilities of the employees, generating motivation, and creating a climate for sustainable practices in the organizations. This framework is especially helpful in pointing out the ways in which MNCs can support social sustainability by not only building competencies but also by creating the relevant incentives and structural frameworks that permit employees to implement their learning in a constructive and beneficial fashion. By integrating these frameworks, the study provides a strong relationship between individual employee development and overall organizational sustainability outcomes.

### **Integrating HCT and AMO Models in the Context of SS**

According to Human Capital Theory, individuals' knowledge, skills, and abilities are essential and impact how well the organization does (Awu, Darius, & Chimele, 2025). HCT used in SS in multinational companies recommends that organizations support sustainable actions by focusing on their human capital. These special development programs help workers apply and practice the principles of sustainability (Jiang et al., 2012). Moreover, AMO suggests that an individual's job performance and its link to SS stems from the mix of Ability (A), Motivation (M), and Opportunity (O) (Appelbaum et al., 2000). AMO explains precisely how HRM strategies like T&D shape the behavior of employees. Specifically, running workshops about sustainability and attaining green certificates

teaches employees how to be environmentally responsible (Shaik Rehana Banu, 2023). If individuals are praised and leaders lead ethically, this encourages them to make decisions that help society (Rahman et al., 2023). Taking part in decisions and using engagement tools allows workers to use their abilities and passion to uphold SS objectives (Iqbal et al., 2018).

Using both HCT and AMO ideas, we can understand more ways in which international firms use their HR practices to achieve SS. HCT promotes the importance of human capital, noting that the AMO model explains how to put these qualifications into practice with planned actions. Overall, HCT and AMO help establish a basis for exploring the ways MNCs can expand to SS. A lasting company culture and increased value for everyone in the company happen when strategic HRM, leaders, and employees are on the same page.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This chapter outlines the research method and framework and how it was utilized in the study. It explains the philosophical beliefs, study design, sampling, data gathering methods, and analysis approaches focused on the effects of T&D on social sustainability in MNCs in Finland. The purpose is for the research objectives and methodology to fit well with one another.

#### **3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach**

For this study, the interpretivist research philosophy was chosen, since it believes that people construct social reality by interacting and discussing it with each other (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The research is designed to study how employees view the impact of T&D programs on social sustainability in their workplace. It supports the capture of what employees in an MNC may think and feel based on their life experiences.

On a fundamental level, this research holds that different people experience different realities, and their accounts reflect those perspectives. It is also considered to be situated in subjectivism, since knowledge comes from how social actors interpret experiences within research. From an axiological perspective, it is recognized that the researcher can influence the research process and its findings.

The study applies an abductive reasoning approach, where researchers keep switching between theory and real-life observations (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Even though the study starts with concepts from AMO and Human Capital Theory, it is able to discover new themes from the actual data. The approach supports exploring concepts and also making them more detailed.

### **3.2 Research Design**

A qualitative case study was chosen for this research. Yin (2018) believes that case studies are especially valuable for closely analyzing current issues happening in the world, as the researcher has less ability to control these situations. This approach allows researchers to observe the impact of T&D on employees and its connections with social sustainability in multinational companies.

This work combines exploration and description. It is exploratory since it looks to reveal what employees experience and think, which are not widely covered in existing literature. It clearly explains the relationship between certain training and employees' capacity to engage in sustainable practices that benefit society.

The research used a cross-sectional time horizon, as all data were gathered in May 2025. Mono-method qualitative work is used to get quality insights that are associated with contexts.

### **3.3 Research Sample, Data Collection and Analysis**

Eleven (11) individuals representing four multinational companies operating in Finland were selected for the study: Wärtsilä Finland, Danfoss Company, ISS Palvelut Oy, and ABB Company. The research used purposive sampling, and the organizations chosen for this report have demonstrated their involvement in sustainability and training for employees. Only those with experience in T&D programs were chosen. There were times when snowball sampling was applied to recruit additional participants.

To achieve diversity, there were participants from different roles and departments. The staff comprised engineers, specialists in HR, sustainability, and anyone handling facilities services. Six months to seventeen years of experience in the company was reported by the surveyed participants.

A series of semi-structured interviews was conducted over Zoom to collect the required data. Because this platform is easy to use for all locations and provides convenience, it was chosen. The interviews took 45 to 60 minutes and were in English. The in-

terviews were recorded with permission, and then auto-generated transcripts were considered. The transcriptions were validated by cross-checking recorded interviews against the transcripts generated for accuracy, and all participants were given anonymous IDs. The researcher used the following three key sections for the interview: (1) General background information, (2) Training and development for social sustainability, and (3) Final reflection. The questions were not restrictive to allow participants to share more information.

The researcher used thematic analysis as described in Braun and Clarke (2006). To begin, the researcher examined the data several times and created the first set of code. Then, built up the six broader themes based on recurring patterns and ideas. The process included both inductive reasoning, which found themes in the data, and deductive reasoning, which was guided by the study's conceptual framework.

**Table 1 : Overview of Interview Participants**

<b>Participant Code</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Years in Company</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Interviewed Date</b>
P1	Wärtsilä Finland	Technology and Power Solutions	0.5 Years	On-call trainee	12.05.2025
P2	Wärtsilä Finland	Technology and Power Solutions	1	Project Quality Engineer	13.05.2025
P3	Wärtsilä Finland	Technology and Power Solutions	2	PCM Coordinator	09.05.2025
P4	Wärtsilä Finland	Technology and Power Solutions	4	Application engineer	12.05.2025

P5	Wärtsilä Finland	Technology and Power Solutions	17.5 years	Postconsult	09.05.2025
P6	Danfoss Company	Energy and Climate Solutions	2	Electrical Assembler	13.05.2025
P7	Danfoss Company	Energy and Climate Solutions	1.5 year	Electrical Assembler	10.05.2025
P8	ISS Palvelut Oy	Facility Services	1.5	Cleaner	11.05.2025
P9	ISS Palvelut Oy	Facility Services	2	Cleaner	14.05.2025
P10	ISS Palvelut Oy	Facility Services	2	Cleaner	10.05.2025
P11	ABB Company	Technology and Power Solutions	1	Project Engineer	09.05.2025

### 3.4 Quality of the Data

Qualitative research should be conducted with honesty and openness to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. While methods such as reliability and validity are often understood in quantitative research, qualitative research usually approaches these concepts through the ideas of credibility, consistency, and transparency in developing and conducting studies (Saunders et al., 2019; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016).

This study dealt with quality by considering reliability and validity concerning qualitative research and applying them in semi-structured interviews. While conducting qualitative research, reliability shows that the process is consistent and transparent, rather than if the same results happen every time. The research was conducted to carefully

explain the process, describe the methods of coding, and show how reliable each step was for achieving the results.

The researcher made sure the tone was neutral and did not prompt the interviewees with fixed questions. Everyone felt respected during the interviews, therefore, they could speak honestly. It was made clear that everyone could either participate or decide to leave at any moment. People's identities were never revealed, the information was kept secure, and respect for different cultures was ensured due to the variety of companies. Although the team was not all Finnish, sharing knowledge of the work culture made it easier for one another.

In qualitative research, validity relates to making sure that the collected data is reliable and true. For this reason, the researcher asked participants to investigate their own transcripts and gave them a chance to feed back on the interview findings. Moreover, people were told ahead of time what questions would be asked, therefore that they could think about their responses and provide more useful information.

Eleven employees from four multinational companies were interviewed to use triangulation. The companies included in the study came from different industries—technology, energy, and facility services, therefore, they could be compared in different settings. This approach made the results more detailed and strong and helped avoid narrow understandings. The research gained more contextual validity by looking at several different organizational settings.

The findings could be used in other situations because the authors described the research process, who the participants were, and the settings in detail. Even though the results cannot be generalized, they provide useful information about the impact of T&D on social sustainability in Finnish MNCs. Yin (2018) points out that qualitative research should do analytical generalization, examining findings in light of theory and not through analysis of extensive populations.

To ensure dependability, the researcher prepared a complete record of each decision taken, from when samples were drawn to when the analysis was carried out. The researcher made notes on the themes, the reasons for the code assignments, and the researcher's thoughts on the interpretations that were forming. Analysis was done using

both inductive and deductive approaches, which enabled us to match existing theories while still being open to new discoveries.

The findings were also made confirmable by making sure that what participants said was more important than what the researcher believed. It was done with consistent documentation, exchanges of ideas with the supervisor, and regular journaling about reflections during the research. They guaranteed the research was done fairly and all participants could witness the process, which supported the reliability of the study.

In summary, the data in this study were consistent through the use of detailed and reflective qualitative methods. Some things they made sure to have were clear steps, ethical methods, information from a range of sources, and active methods of checking their findings. Because of these actions, the conclusions are trustworthy, apply to other cases, are reliable, and subject to validation qualities that fit with the research's interpretivist and inductive style.

## 4. Research Findings

This chapter shares the results from eleven interviews conducted with employees from four MNCs in Finland, such as Wärtsilä, Danfoss, ISS Palvelut Oy, and ABB. Various industries have these organizations that provide insights into how training and development (T&D) affects employee involvement in social sustainability. The study's findings are arranged according to the three sub-research questions, focusing on how T&D improves knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs); increases motivation; and provides chances to use social sustainability at work. The study utilized a thematic approach by combining what the participants shared with theories about the topic. With the use of the AMO model and Human Capital Theory, the themes show how employees respond to sustainability values after training. To ensure the results are credible, employee quotes from P1 to P11 are included in each theme. In addition, it paves the way for the section where the results are reviewed with other studies and practical advice is provided.

### 4.1 Theme 1: Enhancing Knowledge and Awareness of Social Sustainability

The main result of T&D programs in the four companies (Wärtsilä, Danfoss, ISS Palvelut Oy and ABB) is a clearer understanding of social sustainability (SS) among employees. Most participants agreed that before receiving training, they only thought of sustainability in terms of waste and energy. Nevertheless, after their training, they began to focus on issues like equity, diversity, wellbeing at work, ethics, and inclusion.

“I did not really understand what sustainability meant before the training. I thought it was just about recycling and saving energy. However, during my training, I learned that it's important to ensure everyone is safe, respected, and treated the same. I now realize that it also affects employee wellbeing, equal opportunities, and inclusion. It helped me see my position and the way I interact with others differently.” (P2)

It was clear in the case of workers in technical or early jobs, as they had very little experience with sustainability beforehand. A lot of these individuals stated that before, they focused on their tasks and outcomes related to production, without paying attention to how their work affected society as a whole. As a result of the training, they started to view the issue differently. For example,

“I would concentrate only on my job before training. I learned from the sessions that technical positions can influence inclusion, safety, and how a team operates. I am more aware of how we communicate and the results of our actions, not just about what we do at work, but how we relate to each other.” (P6)

As a result of the training, non-HR or leadership staff understood how their work is important to the company’s mission of social sustainability. It points out that T&D is particularly effective when shaped with inclusive, accessible, and real-life learning strategies. A number of respondents mentioned a moment during their training when the main concepts of social sustainability (SS) suddenly made sense and could be put into practice in their work. These moments happened when the training focused on real-life situations in the workplace or when employees were asked to consider their duties. Those learning experiences helped employees apply the company’s main values in their daily jobs.

As an example, P7 mentioned:

“I concentrated on handling my job tasks and achieving deadlines before I got the training. I hadn’t considered social sustainability in my regular work. Still, I watched sessions that illustrated that technical workplace support inclusion, safety, and the type of culture teams form. Now I pay more attention to how I talk to others and how my actions affect them. Being a team means caring for each other as well as completing tasks.” (P7)

This shows that by training employees to see themselves as helping the company reach a common goal, they play an important role in sustainability. P7’s story demonstrates

why it's important to use local examples and stories to promote sustainability in a company.

Training made employees feel more connected to their jobs by helping them understand important concepts and terminologies they had not come across before. People found "unconscious bias," "inclusive language," and "psychological safety" to be both eye-opening and meaningful. Before the training, many workers admitted they had not been exposed to these ideas, especially those who were not part of HR. With the help of the training tools, it was simpler for employees to grasp these ideas and notice some major areas of how employees connect at their workplace. P9 explained that a session on inclusive communication made a difference in the way the team interacted.

"After the workshop on inclusive language, we started paying more attention to our emails and tried to be more polite. It didn't require a big change, but every little thing counts."(P9)

This proves that slight changes in how individuals communicate at work can positively influence the overall workplace atmosphere. The training led participants to pay attention to their words and the way they communicate, as well as to respect the views of others in their groups. As a result, our workplace was built on empathy, respect, and equity, meeting the objectives of social sustainability.

Most HR and leadership participants were familiar with social sustainability (SS) due to their roles in policy-making, hiring, employee care, and company culture. Even so, the training for these individuals was not just a matter of repeating the same things. Rather, it provided useful tips, new resources, and effective strategies to improve and expand what is already being done. With the training, HR professionals were able to shift from theory to practical steps for including SS values in onboarding, performance reviews, how they communicate within the company, and team building. P3, who is part of the HR department, said:

“We were aware of these issues in HR, but the sessions offered us more approaches and ideas for social sustainability.”

It shows that training helps to strengthen current knowledge, mainly by aiding the creation of inclusive programs, dealing with unconscious bias, and introducing fairness in the workplace. As an example, some HR leaders have started using feedback from the training to guide their department’s action plans and to initiate forums where peers can discuss issues of inclusion and equity.

This meant that for HR and leadership teams, the main advantage of training was to take the company’s values and turn them into systems and processes that could be tracked and improved, helping the organization implement social sustainability more systematically and strategically.

The interviews revealed that the way training was delivered had a strong impact on learning. Those working in various departments agreed that group discussions, case studies, role-plays, and reflection exercises were much more effective than just being lectured. They allowed the participants to get involved with the subject, relate it to their jobs, and learn how to use SS principles in their daily activities. It is especially meaningful that abstract values could be applied in practical ways. P1 noted:

“The training helped employees see how their work supported the company’s goals. I could see how my actions help the company achieve its sustainability goals. ” (P1)

Monitoring conversations found that active dialogues about topics such as inclusion, fairness, and psychological safety allowed participants to reflect on themselves and share their thoughts. They thought these methods made the training more familiar, memorable, and gave them confidence. It shows how well-structured training in SS employees incorporates and uses the principles in their work. Moreover, employees appreciated when training included practical examples from their company and situations from their region. The sessions connected the ideas of social sustainability to the real-life experiences of the participants. With this approach, employees from all areas of the company

could see how sustainability related to their jobs. P8, who is employed in cleaning services, mentioned that the training focused on respecting and valuing workers with lower pay. She explained:

“They mentioned the importance of respecting and valuing workers who earn less. That part really touched me. It made me feel like I was important and valued.” (P8)

It points out that inclusive training has a strong emotional effect on people. Seeing themselves in the material encourages employees to feel that social sustainability matters to everyone, not just to those in management or office jobs. Some training participants mentioned that follow-up activities, such as quizzes or surveys, helped them remember the main ideas taught in the training. As a result of these efforts, social sustainability became part of the team’s regular activities and daily discussions. At the same time, participants pointed out that staying consistent and continuing training is key to sustaining the progress made during training. This point was made clear by P4.

“Just one session of training is not enough. We should regularly talk about these values to ensure they remain a part of our lives.” (P4)

It shows that, if training is not repeated, the results may not last. For social sustainability training to work, it should be part of the company’s culture, regularly reviewed and supported by management. The theme also showed that employees were becoming more responsible for social sustainability. Rather than treating sustainability as something only managed by HR or top management, people started to understand that it is everyone’s job. It became obvious in the way that social issues were now being discussed and considered in routine work situations. For example, P5 said that the training encouraged the team to focus on social sustainability in their daily work.

“We now discuss social sustainability in our team meetings. This situation was not present before.” (P5)

This statement shows that both individuals and teams have undergone significant changes. Because of the training, people on teams began to address inclusion, fairness, and the happiness of their colleagues in an open way. This further shows that employees thought they could make a difference by helping the groups they belonged to.

The programs encouraged people to work together, which set the stage for social sustainability to become a regular part of every interaction, not only in designated areas or projects. The outcome agrees with what the AMO model calls “Ability” and “Opportunity,” as discussing and partnering on issues supports the importance of awareness and training.

This information also points to how employees’ learning changed because of the multinational nature of the companies, even when they worked in Finland. People observed that, though the training happened where they live, the values and frameworks came from the global headquarters. While some employees liked learning about international practices, others found it hard to understand them. Participants explained to the researcher about their experiences.

“We looked at cases from abroad and some of them were interesting, but it was not always easy to transfer them to Finland.” (P3)

It demonstrates how the way training was given and used by employees depended on the global-local dynamics within the MNCs.

In conclusion, this theme demonstrates that clear, fair, and relevant training can help employees see their roles in improving social sustainability differently. The results show that T&D programs improve employees’ knowledge, which supports the “Ability” aspect of the AMO model.

## **4.2 Theme 2: Skills Development for Ethical Practice**

According to the study, relevant training helped employees gain the abilities needed to consider social sustainability in their day-to-day activities. For example, these skills in-

volve effective speech, resolving disagreements, showing leadership to all, understanding different cultures, and cooperative problem-solving. According to the interviewees, learning these skills improved how they handle matters related to do with fairness, diversity, and good conduct in the workplace. A participant mentioned that the connecting points in the training sessions allowed them to comfortably include topics of equity and inclusion when speaking in a team.

“I feel more able to discuss issues of fairness and inclusion after the training.” (P8)

Employees said that the training helped them notice how their daily communication influenced their colleagues. As a result of this awareness, many people began to think about their words when working with colleagues from different backgrounds. They realized that the way someone speaks, the words they use, or their assumptions can either bring people together or push them apart. For instance, P5 stated:

“I now pay attention to my speech with colleagues from various groups and try to ensure everyone feels welcomed.” (P5)

It demonstrates that the training inspired employees to use more inclusive ways of communicating. Rather than following routine steps, they tried to help everyone be heard and respected during interactions across different cultures or in teams consisting of various departments. This study reflects that T&D changes people’s actions, encouraging better relationships among employees and social responsibility in the workplace.

When the staff at Wärtsilä and ABB have cultural and professional differences, creating ethical and inclusive behaviour is a key point. People shared that as a result of the training, they became more aware of culture, were better able to settle arguments, make meetings fair to everyone, and value mutual respect with their teammates. Additionally, T&D programs made use of exercises, case studies, and group discussions to help employees apply their ethical thinking in simulated situations. In these methods, employees could learn about equity and inclusion and use them in their daily work. For

some, part of ethical practice was to identify and deal with unconscious bias. They explained that training helped them see the bigger picture and gave them the ability to address discrimination positively. It was considered vital to deal with such topics kindly to guarantee that employees felt safe at their workplace. Those employees who gained these abilities regularly modelled and shared them with other team members. Because of this, the company developed a more responsible culture.

The experiences also reflected that the organizations were made up of people from different cultures. Although everyone worked in Finland, they often worked with people from different teams or countries. Seeing how people act in different cultures showed that being responsible and using good communication skills is important. ABB and Wärtsilä employees emphasized that it was important to communicate respectfully and inclusively because their teams were spread all over the world. Some individuals said that MNCs encouraged values such as inclusion and fairness, but how these values were applied differed based on who was in the team and how leaders led. Therefore, training helped not only with learning ethics but also with applying them in a multicultural workplace, which made these skills very important for MNCs.

Finally, T&D helped employees become more ethical and social, which also had a positive impact on teams and the workplace. With these skills, employees could help their organization achieve its social sustainability goals.

### **4.3 Theme 3: Motivational Impact of T&D**

According to the findings, T&D programs offer knowledge and skills as well as encourage employees to act responsibly. Many folks commented that T&D made them appreciate their role in creating an ethical and environmentally friendly organization. Many participants pointed out that being chosen for training or getting access to organized learning was a major motivator. The organization highlighted how important employee growth was to them, and this made people feel closer to the company. Because they felt recognized, they were motivated to help the organization reach its social sustainability goals. P1 explained that:

“I was encouraged to see the company providing this type of training. It proves that they are concerned about us.” (P1)

This straightforward observation had a wide impact. The training opportunities given to employees were appreciated and made them feel their efforts were important. P4 made it clear that when people’s values are aligned, it encourages them to act.

“Lastly, the training I receive connects with my values of integrity, responsibility and being involved in the community. If what I value is in line with my company’s goals, I feel more satisfied and fulfilled at work. Because of this, it becomes simpler to remain committed and motivated in helping create a socially sustainable workplace.” (P4)

Because of this, he grew more connected to the company’s mission and priorities related to ethics and the environment. As a result, the ideas became real commitments that could be acted on. He continued:

“As a result, these training programs have made me more committed to my company’s social sustainability goals and more involved in helping with them.”

As a result, the team made improvements in their daily work. P4 mentioned that her team used the lessons from training when they reviewed a project.

“We found a common problem with communication gaps at one of our retrospective sessions, which harmed teamwork and the quality of the project. Because of our training, we chose to discuss this issue openly and honestly. We talked about the ethical issues caused by poor communication and decided to improve how we communicate.”

It explains that motivation from T&D encourages employees to act differently and cooperate, which improves teamwork and the results of the project. Based on this, it seems that strong and relevant training programs encourage people to feel passionate about

their jobs and act in ways that support social responsibility within the company. The impact of motivation was determined by how much the training matched employees' personal values and beliefs about what is right or wrong. Most participants noted that they felt more closely connected to the company's sustainability mission when training programs focused on fairness, caring for the environment, inclusion and respecting all individuals. Due to this, workers considered their work as something that had meaning and was beneficial both to others and the society around them.

This phenomenon was most evident in operational and service departments, where the nature of work assignments often limits involvement with overarching organizational objectives. For instance, P9 mentioned that the training made a big difference for them by highlighting the importance of little things.

"I learned from the programs that even small steps can make a difference. Because of them, I began to feel more responsible and wanted to participate in eco-friendly cleaning."

It clearly demonstrates why having material that connects sustainable ideas to daily tasks is important. P9 then explained how he used what he learned in real life.

"After learning about waste disposal, I began to recycle my waste properly. I urged my team to take part in the same activities. It assisted in controlling waste."

As a result of this, employees feel more motivated to act responsibly when they see their actions are aligned with what the company promotes in training. As a result of internalization, employees become more involved, start taking action, affect their colleagues and view themselves as helping the organization improve.

In the same way, they prove that sustainability training encourages participation among employees in all jobs and positions. Individuals are inspired by their conscience, what they consider to be right, and belief in making a difference, rather than by receiving

rewards. This idea is also supported by the Motivation in the AMO model and Self-Determination Theory, as both believe that acting self-directed, having a strong reason, and believing in your work are key.

This study also found that using case studies, success stories, and examples from workplaces in the training programs played a key role in motivating employees. Because of these elements, participants could relate more to the sessions and find them more genuine. Instead of relying on theories or unspecific ideas, the organization shared concrete examples of what life is like for employees at their company. By using this method, participants could picture how social sustainability might be used in their regular tasks. P11 explained that:

“Listening to their examples and stories made me want to consider what I could improve.”

This idea is shared by many of the interviewees: they were both informed and inspired by the information they received. The fact that the content related to their work made employees feel empowered to review their actions and find ways to improve. With this method, employees realized that taking care of the environment was not only a duty for those in charge; they could also start making a difference.

Furthermore, the training made employees aware of their place in the overall organization. Several participants said before the training, they felt their duties were separate from others. In particular, the sessions pointed out that what individuals do, how different departments operate, and the company's values play a role in shaping the organization's culture and the results it achieves. Seeing things from a systems perspective encouraged students to cooperate more actively with their peers. Some staff members mentioned that they began taking action after their training. They applied for different workplace committees, started talking in groups about being inclusive, or organized minor activities focused on being fair and promoting wellbeing. It seems that training encouraged employees to both participate and take charge in promoting social sustainability. Among those who felt they had little connection to their company's mission or goals,

the training played the biggest role in motivating them. Through the training, these people could identify their work as an opportunity to promote ethics and inclusion in the company. It was especially helpful in bringing together the feelings of those who worked on the frontlines and those who guided their actions from the top.

Furthermore, many individuals said that the training supported them in reflecting on themselves. The topics and materials made them reflect on their thoughts, beliefs, and daily activities. Many individuals gained a better understanding of themselves and learned new things about their responsibilities and how to act ethically in their jobs. Consequently, people in the company started making an effort to improve their communication, teamwork, and support for each other. How people were motivated by training depended on the context of the MNC. Several employees said they felt pride in working for a global company, especially when the company put emphasis on sustainability. Some people were not as encouraged to continue when there was no local aftercare. P6 participant mentioned:

“The training gave me a sense of pride in my global company, which cares about values. There are times when our local team doesn’t act as much, which makes us lose interest.”

It demonstrates that motivation came from training as well as the way global goals were promoted locally. In essence, the main impact of T&D was motivation, not just an unexpected bonus. Due to how connected the training felt, its value to employees and the company, and its use of real-life cases, employees became highly motivated. Employees at work were no longer getting information; they participated and made a difference. With time, developing this sense of motivation can shape the culture of multinational companies, ensuring that social sustainability is a regular part of everyday work. It relates to the Motivation aspect of the AMO model and confirms the Human Capital Theory approach, which holds that investing in employees’ growth leads to their commitment and benefits for the whole organization.

#### 4.4 Theme 4: Opportunity Creation through T&D

Besides making individuals more knowledgeable and motivated, participants saw T&D programs as useful for providing actual opportunities to help their organizations become more sustainable. The opportunities included taking part in sustainability projects, leading informally, and making decisions. After attending training, some participants were offered to join groups focused on diversity, wellbeing, and environmental issues. They understood these opportunities to signify approval of their education and allowed them to play a key role in making the company more sustainable. P10 shared:

“I was asked to join a diversity committee after finishing the training.”

They encouraged employees and allowed them to use their new skills at work. Participants felt they had the influence to lead positively and guide others in the workplace. Engaging in these activities after training helped everyone learn and understand the importance of social sustainability in the company. This complements the “Opportunity” area of AMO, since when employers give ways for employees to act, it increases their likelihood of supporting social sustainability.

There was a clear relationship between training and opportunities in companies that set clear processes for following up on training. Both Wärttsilä and ABB representatives stated that their companies had introduced ways to ensure that the knowledge and skills learned during training were used regularly. After training, employees were asked to share their experiences, and supervisors watched how the new insights were put into practice. P4 explained:

“They often ask us how we are using the knowledge we gained. Being responsible for my actions makes things easier for me.”

Through this follow-up, the organization gave them confidence in their skills and proved that they intended to use training to improve the way we worked. The accountability system equipped many participants with a sense of motivation, which helped them carry

over the training into their daily work. Additionally, the system for reporting achievements gave employees a chance to look back on their progress, see how their efforts influenced the company, and keep learning. By doing this, employees were encouraged to work towards social sustainability in everything they did. Such actions highlight “Opportunity” in the AMO model, which points out that structures should allow team members to use their skills. With no structures in place, even the best training programs could turn out to be single learning sessions with limited results in the future.

Even so, some participants received more support from the structure than others. Some individuals said that they were disappointed that, despite gaining useful skills, they did not know how to use them. There were moments when the information learned through training was not fully implemented because the right strategies were not followed.

“At times, our motivation drops since we don’t know how to use what we have learned.”  
(P7)

It highlights that employees are ready, but the organization’s systems are not. Before starting on sessions, employees may lack simple ways or the motivation to use their new skills and knowledge. Certain participants pointed out that different roles or departments have different opportunities. Many employees in operational or similar positions were rarely chosen for projects, even when they showed interesting involvement in training. Therefore, some suggested having organizations plan for staff to follow up on their training by implementing sustainability action plans, joining rotational teams, or mentoring colleagues from various places in the organization. It would ensure that training benefits everyone and shows a stronger commitment to sustainability by the institution. The environment of MNCs influenced the creation of opportunities to use social sustainability training. The training material was adapted to global strategies, but some employees experienced that how much they could use what they learned depended on their local team or manager. For example, a participant said:

“We studied both inclusion and teamwork, but it’s up to our manager or supervisor if you can take part in further activities.” (P10)

It means that within a single country, MNCs can help or hinder the use of sustainability principles depending on how well their global HR strategies are converted into local participation and impact opportunities.

In conclusion, using T&D wisdom to solve real challenges helps staff transform new knowledge into actions. While a few MNCs have systems in place to support their employees, others do not have the right culture or tools to help employees take part in social sustainability. To ensure useful outcomes from T&D programs, an organization needs to be ready, leaders must be involved, and there needs to be a well-organized process for follow-up.

#### **4.5 Theme 5: Alignment with Organizational Values and Strategy**

Many of the participants mentioned that T&D played a key role in bringing employees’ values into line with their organization’s main goals. Participants said that through T&D, they realized their company was committed to social sustainability, which made them attach more importance and emotion to their workplace. For some employees, the training made them realize that their company cared about more than just making money and being efficient. They demonstrated the company’s commitment to ethics, diversity, inclusion, and looking after broader society. As a result, people began to view their employers as responsible for more than just business, but also for making a positive impact on society. P6 noted the change by saying:

“After the training, I felt proud of the company. The focus should be on people as well as profit.”

Many departments expressed similar feelings, mainly those who had not considered their roles in the company’s overall strategy. Before the training, most of these people did not see how their daily work contributed to the company’s sustainability goals. Once

they understood the values in the T&D content, they realized that their role was not only to work, but also to help build a better society over time. As a result of this change, people working at the company felt a strong connection and loyalty, since they believed the company truly valued its staff and their influence on society. Because of this, many people felt a new sense of pride in their jobs and even became more involved, proactive, and interested in supporting new social sustainability initiatives.

Besides, when colleagues' values matched the organization's, it made them feel passionate and encouraged them to create a positive and unified culture. With this, the training encouraged employees to combine what matters to them with their work duties, therefore, T&D helped promote ethics and social awareness in the workforce. Training for managers and strategists provided them with useful strategies they could put into practice. One group said that, as a result of T&D training, their department introduced diversity and inclusion performance indicators into their evaluation system.

“We have started looking at diversity data in our quarterly reports. That was a direct result of insights gained during training.” (P2)

They demonstrate that T&D helps translate an organization's strategy into daily actions by its employees. Employees are taught about the company's strategy and given the authority to apply it daily through their work, reports, and relationships. In addition, people reported being more likely to support company initiatives after realizing what the company is truly about. This change was most noticeable in campaigns for sustainability, volunteering, and projects involving different departments, since more individuals participated after being trained.

Because of the T&D programs, employees were more likely to accept changes in sustainability and social responsibility policies. Individuals who were involved in these training sessions were more aware of the reasons for the changes and became more helpful, cooperative, and willing to support them. Properly trained employees understood that

new expectations were needed for the whole team to move toward a mutual goal. P5 expressed this idea in the following way:

“We understand the value of these tasks and don’t view them as extra work.”

This insight changed the way employees viewed changes in the organization. As they adopted social sustainability, they realized that new initiatives were in line with what they believed and wanted to achieve. After this, employees became motivated to help change the company, rather than just follow orders from above. Because employees and the organization had similar values, teamwork within the organization improved. It led to teamwork, boosted team spirit, and brought together employees from different areas. People at work were motivated to unite and pursue common goals, since their mission went beyond simply earning money.

As a result, employee engagement, satisfaction with their jobs, and staying with the company all improved. If people’s values match those of the organization, they are likely to care more about their job and wish to stay for a long time. Being part of a group gives them a reason to be loyal, which contributes to the strong culture within the organization. As a result, T&D helped employees learn and form attitudes and habits that support lasting changes within the company. It explains why it is so important for training to be values-based for both employees and organizations.

Finally, the findings suggest that T&D links personal ethics to the sustainability strategy of a company. If organizations manage to bring together their purpose and employee values, they create a dedicated staff that can support the organization’s long-lasting success. Training that highlights common values improves the culture of the organization and provides everyone, both singly and as a group, with a strong direction.

#### **4.6 Theme 6: Barriers to Training Impact**

Many participants recognized how useful T&D programs are, but some also mentioned the main problems that kept these programs from being fully realized. All the barriers

that were identified differed from one organization to another and from one role to another, yet they typically related to not having enough time, not receiving constant support, and a lack of customized training materials. Often, it was mentioned that training did not always become part of regular work. Certain people emphasized that training in some instances was simply another duty on their checklist, not a memorable learning experience.

“Sometimes, it seems like something I have to do just to check it off my list. I come to class, but the lessons are not connected.” (P7)

It was most noticeable when there was no follow-up after the training session. According to them, the training’s results diminished quickly because they did not have regular reinforcement sessions or opportunities to practice the skills. The training content was also often made too general for everyone. Many participants pointed out that social sustainability matters, but in the training sessions, specific problems and priorities of different departments were largely ignored. Because the content lacked context, it seemed less relevant to many.

“The training should be customized to address the real challenges in each department.” (P3)

It was explained by those in professional, operational, or frontline positions that the training is more meaningful if it provides an example that fits the company’s field. A cleaner or assembler will likely learn more from real-life examples than from general policy discussions. Limited time was also identified as a problem. All four companies’ participants mentioned that it was hard to manage their training with their regular work duties. In some cases, it was considered difficult to take time off from work for training when it was not obvious how the training would help in the workplace. Also, it was noted that there is a lack of support from management. In certain situations, managers did not take part in training or did not motivate employees to use what they learned. Because

leaders did not participate, the training did not last long and was less noticeable in the workplace. In organizations that did not incorporate T&D into their strategy, workers were unsure about the goals and objectives of training. Because there were no clear directions, measures, or steps for progress, the sessions were viewed as unrelated to each other.

These barriers point out that achieving social sustainability through T&D is not only about sharing information. It requires the organization to be dedicated to designing, maintaining relevance, following up, and involving leaders. Employee training should support business aims and each employee's role, instead of remaining separate from them. Overall, dealing with these issues is necessary to get the most out of T&D initiatives. Enterprises should switch from common training methods and ensure employees are involved in continuous, well-planned programs that support social sustainability.

## **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter presents the main findings connected to the study's theories, AMO model, and Human Capital Theory, as well as literature on training and development (T&D) and social sustainability in multinational corporations (MNCs). The process begins by adjusting a framework to explain how T&D supports employees in being able, willing, and able to participate in socially sustainable activities.

Next, explains each of the six themes and how they help develop or support current theories and research. Subsequently, the paper presents both theoretical and practical contributions, highlighting how this research fills a gap in social sustainability in HRM and benefits leaders and HR professionals. The study's weaknesses are recognized, and ideas are then given for future work to compare or examine these topics on a larger scale. The final section of the chapter highlights the role of T&D in ensuring that organizations are inclusive, ethical, and sustainable.

### **5.1 Discussion of the Findings**

This study aimed to discover how T&D supports social sustainability (SS) in MNCs according to the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework. The results from eleven qualitative interviews held in four Finnish MNCs (Wärtsilä, Danfoss, ISS Palvelut Oy, and ABB) were reviewed to understand how T&D helps employees learn, feel motivated, and put their knowledge into action when it comes to social sustainability at work.

#### **Training and Development (T&D) and the Development of Ability**

The study showed that T&D helped employees understand and be aware of social sustainability. At the beginning, most participants thought about sustainability mainly in terms of the environment. As a result of training, their focus grew to include ethical actions, equity, psychological safety, and inclusion. This is in line with the Ability part of the AMO model, which shows that employees need to have the right knowledge, skills, and abilities to do their job well (Appelbaum et al., 2000). This result agrees with Seemiller

(2018), who points out how sustainability education can encourage people to act responsibly. In addition, awareness increased the most among those who were not HR specialists, which adds to previous studies by proving that inclusive training can benefit a wider range of workers, not only HR or leadership. Many workers mentioned they began using language that is more respectful and inclusive in daily activities. An example of this is when a participant said:

“I pay more attention to how I communicate with others, so that all members of different groups feel included.” (P5)

This shows how T&D influences daily actions that foster a socially sustainable workplace.

### **Training and Development and Encouraging Staff to Follow SS Values**

The second important point about Motivation in the AMO model. After taking part in the training, employees said they felt connected to their company’s values and purpose. Examples based on everyday life, group activities, and linking to personal values encouraged motivation. These findings also back the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which points to intrinsic motivation as a significant factor in encouraging individuals to be fully engaged at work. Employee experiences of motivation were strongly affected by the MNC setting. There were accounts of being proud of contributing to a multinational firm focused on ethics. However, the individuals became less motivated when there was not enough support afterwards. A participant shared the following:

“I developed a good understanding of what the company stands for when it comes to global values because of my training. Even so, the local team does not show the same motivation, and this can gradually lessen the effects of the training.” (P6)

This demonstrates that uniting the main vision with how it is realized locally helps keep people enthusiastic.

### **Training and Development (T&D) and Learning Placement**

Training and Development encouraged workers to participate in SS, such as sitting on diversity committees or strengthening their relationships within teams. This fits with AMO's main point that strong structures and job design are important. This was not the case for every department at all organizations. According to Guest (2011), the study finds that HR processes work best when supported by well-designed operational systems for encouraging employees' efforts in sustainability. They also pointed out that how supervisors act and the culture within the team played a big part in allowing opportunities to be reached. Participants mentioned:

"We studied inclusion and teamwork, though whether we took part in further activities depends on the supervisor." (P10)

Therefore, AMO approaches do not fully capture how organizational culture and leadership influence the role of T&D, as is now shown.

### **Combining concepts with Human Capital Theory**

Apart from the AMO model, the data backs up modern Human Capital Theory, which points out the importance of investing in employees' skills and wellness. Recent investigations reveal that such investment decisions improve productivity in organizations and largely promote their sustainability goals. For example, a study by Cai et al. (2024) suggests that investing in employee development, among other human capital practices, supports good ESG outcomes in companies. Besides, Elamer and Al-Hadi (2024) explain that human capital efficiency lies between business sustainability and performance in emerging market countries. This idea is supported by the claim that T&D enhances all staff's abilities to focus on continuing social sustainability.

### **Connecting to the Updated Empirical Framework**

The diagram (Figure 4) was designed to summarize the principal results of the study guided by the AMO model. It discusses the effects of training and development on social sustainability within multinational companies (MNCs). The career ability now covers technical knowledge, thinking ethically, spotting unconscious bias, and using inclusive language, which was stressed by employees when they were being interviewed. Expressing norms, pride, and support from leaders where they work keeps things moving at any company, global or local. It covers planned programs (such as diversity groups) as well as ordinary everyday opportunities for people to work on SS, but also stresses the challenges of unequal access and different management involvement. The graph includes the international setting by showing how movements between local and global spaces shape all three aspects of AMO. Employees explained that most of the training materials were sent from headquarters, though how well employees learned depended on each location and personal attention. Consequently, Figure 4 shows how the AMO model is grounded in actual experiences and observations from participant interviews.

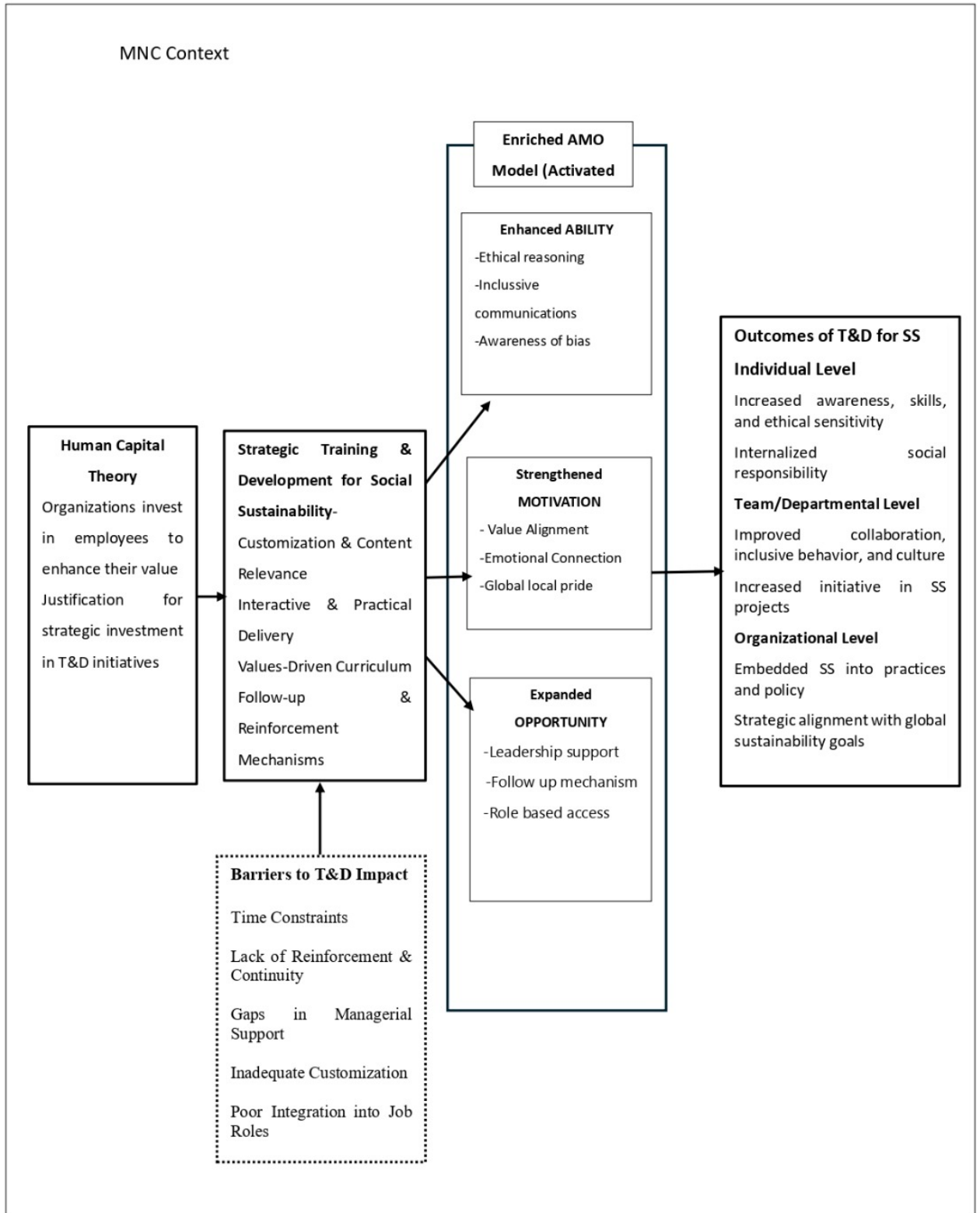


Figure 4 : Updated theoretical framework considering research findings

The framework explains how training and development assist people in acquiring the necessary Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity, which are all affected by the multinational setting. It takes learnings from employees in MNCs and views social sustainability as a result of all the elements working together.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The Researcher investigated the effects of training and development (T&D) programs on social sustainability (SS) practices within multinational corporations (MNCs). The analysis was based on the current views of the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework and Human Capital Theory, which together explain how multinational companies can help their employees achieve sustainability goals. There is growing evidence that improving employees' abilities through training supports individual success and positive influence on society (Elamer & Al-Hadi, 2024).

It was found that strong T&D programs in firms like Wärtsilä, Danfoss, ISS Palvelut Oy, and ABB raised employees' awareness of social matters, improved ethical communication, and boosted teamwork. They match the AMO model since T&D enhances employees' understanding, involvement, and resources at work. The updated diagram (Figure 4) made in this study outlined that support from the company, regular checks, and consistency between values and training are important for success. They support learning while also encouraging real cultural transformation in MNCs, showing that training plays an important role in achieving social sustainability.

### **5.2.1 Theoretical and Managerial Contributions**

The study helps advance how the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) model is applied by including social sustainability in its application to human resource management. Though the AMO model was originally created to explain performance outcomes, this study reveals that it applies to how training and development (T&D) influences ethical, inclusive, and responsible actions at work. This agrees with recent suggestions in HRM

literature to look at social aspects of sustainability as well as environmental ones (Aust et al., 2019). In addition, the study points out that T&D plays a key role in enhancing employee skills and securing the future of the organization. Modern research by Cai et al. (2024) and Elamer and Al-Hadi (2024) shows that investing in social and ethical skills is key to reaching ESG and sustainability targets in global firms.

In practice, the research gives HR and organizational leaders in multinational corporations advice they can follow. It underlines the importance of making T&D programs that fit local situations and support the company's global social sustainability goals. It is important for managers to be involved in training by both helping with the program and repeating important messages in later activities. It is evident that leaders should demonstrate inclusive actions and check how SS principles are being followed regularly. It is important for organizations to offer equal training opportunities to people from all departments and job positions. Scenario learning and case studies that relate to certain parts of the world were shown to be most beneficial. This information indicates that when SS values are effectively enforced by active, thoughtful, and well-supported training, both employee participation and a corporation's responsibility grow worldwide.

### **5.2.2 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research**

Despite the valuable understanding we have gained about social sustainability through T&D in MNCs, this study has a few limitations that should be noted. The first issue is that social sustainability and training outcomes are complex and depend on the situation. Since feelings of belonging depend on individual beliefs, customs, and life experiences, it is hard to describe and generalize them. Interviewees were given clear definitions and explanations about the terms being discussed during the interviews. Even so, it is possible that each participant has a different idea of what SS or impactful training involves.

The fact that the study is qualitative and explores new ground is another limitation. Even though qualitative interviews gather in-depth information about how individuals feel, they cannot be used to draw broader conclusions. Only eleven individuals from four multinational corporations in Finland were included in the study. So, the findings may not apply to MNCs operating in other nations, industries, or types of organizations. Each

person in the sample was working in a Finnish MNC, but they came from different cultural and religious backgrounds. However, the results might represent certain workplace practices in Finland, and a wider range of participants could reveal other factors that influence T&D programs supporting social sustainability.

The study focused mainly on what employees thought, but their findings did not include views from top management or HR developers of the T&D programs. Therefore, the findings generally represent what employees think of training, rather than what those who design and carry out the programs aim for. Considering more perspectives may help explain how training and sustainability fit together in an organization. There was a lack of consideration about the long-term impact of what was learned in training sessions. Although some individuals observed behavioural shifts and gained awareness, no long-term data were available to determine if these improvements were maintained and affected society. Future studies may examine the impact of T&D on employees' behaviour and the culture of an organization over a significant period.

Besides, although the study showed that engagement after training contributed to creating new job opportunities, it did not go into the specifics and ways these opportunities were created. It is vague which precise organizational tools are best for maintaining and encouraging Social Skills learning. Further study on how to apply the findings would make them more suitable for HR practitioners. Almost all the participants in the sample had more experience in their fields. This may have supported their responses be clear, but it might have prevented us from learning about new hires' views on T&D for social sustainability. It would be useful for future studies to examine how employees with different job roles, seniority, or age react to training programs.

As a result of these shortcomings, various areas can be explored in future research. First, research could be done in various parts of the world and with samples from diverse cultures to understand how cultural beliefs affect social sustainability. Alternatively, future research can apply one of these designs to follow the same group over a longer period and track changes in how the organization works. Alternatively, researchers may compare technical departments and HR units to see how training content for each impacts its usefulness for different roles. Lastly, future researchers could gather input from

HR people, T&D designers, and top managers to evaluate whether SS training is helping the company achieve its corporate objectives. Addressing these points and exploring these upcoming paths can allow researchers and practitioners to further understand the role of training and development in helping multinational organizations become socially sustainable.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Interview Guidelines

The interview guide has been made to support a Master's thesis that studies how training and development (T&D) programs affect employees in multinational corporations (MNCs) when it comes to social sustainability practices. The interview ought to be completed in about 45–60 minutes. Each question relates to one of the three research questions and is given to those employees participating in the study.

#### Section 1: General Background Information (for all participants)

##### A. Demographics

- Age
- Nationality
- Job title
- Department
- Number of years in the company

##### B. MNC Context

1. How do you see your work experience in a multinational organization?
2. What obstacles or possibilities do you notice about taking part in training and development activities in this MNC?

#### Section 2: Training and Development for Social Sustainability

*(Prepared to provide straight answers to all three sub-research questions.)*

##### Sub-question 1: Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs)

**How do such training and development processes increase workers' ability to support social sustainability efforts at multinational corporations?**

3. Which educational and training courses have you received to emphasize social sustainability?
4. From your experience, have these programs improved your knowledge of social sustainability in the workplace?

5. What unique knowledge, skills or talents do you have that let you take part in socially sustainable practices at work?
6. Could you describe a time when things you learned in training helped you support social or community causes at work?

### **Sub-question 2: Motivation**

**Which factors, based on training and development initiatives, make employees want to take part in social sustainability activities in MNCs?**

7. Have the training sessions encouraged you more to engage in social sustainability at work?
8. Why was the training motivating or not motivating for you, based on its subject, teaching style, and practical relevance?
9. Is there a moment when following instructions helped you or your team follow good social rules?
10. Do you think your company's social sustainability goals are clearer to you as a result of the training? Why is that happening or not?

### **Sub-question 3: Opportunities**

**How do companies give their workers opportunities to put into practice social sustainability policies within multinational enterprises?**

11. Do you get to use your knowledge of social sustainability often at your workplace?
12. Has any T&D initiative changed the role, responsibilities, or opportunities you have in sustainability?
13. What steps does the organization take to promote social sustainability when you are working after the training?
14. Does your company have support systems (feedback, employee recognition, or access to resources) to apply sustainable practices in your work?

### **Section 3: Final Reflection**

15. From your perspective, what could be improved in the way training and development support social sustainability in your organization?
16. Would you like to tell us about any other parts of your training and development, and what they mean for social sustainability?

**Thank you for your time!**