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Article

Towards a Holistic Just Transition: Integrating UN SDG 8, Laudato Si', and Sociological Principles for Ethical, Environmental, and Socio-economic Transformation

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Abstract

The current pace of environmental change, technological advancement, and economic discrimination necessitates an effective, holistic implementation of Just Transition. This study examines the existing gap in moral grounding across current policies. It thus proposes a holistic Just Transition framework that synergizes the UN's SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, and Pope Francis's Laudato Si', where integral ecology links human dignity, labor vocation, and ecological stewardship. This study posits that Just Transition requires a fair shift from fossil fuels to sustainable alternatives that genuinely protect workers, communities, and creation while coupling policy efficiency with moral depth. This also draws on Durkheim's concept of social solidarity, Weber's theory of social action, and Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, which frame labor transitions as both structural and relational processes within society. This study finds that while SDG 8 emphasizes technical economic metrics, its implementation risks perpetuating social exclusion and ecological harm. As Laudato Si's ecological conversion reframes labor as relational participation in God's creation, it thus enhances SDG 8's labor rights and social protection with solidarity, common good, and care for the poor. Through an interdisciplinary textual analysis of the theological hermeneutics of Laudato Si', alongside the review of UN and ILO policy documents, this research cultivates the necessary synergy between SDG 8 targets and integral ecology ethics. This study, therefore, recommends a practical policy framework, ethical criteria, and a multi-actor paradigm for national and community implementation to harmonize economic feasibility, social equity, and moral integrity. This study is significant for advancing interdisciplinary discourse among international policy, Catholic social teachings, and ecological ethics, providing policymakers with values-based tools to foster labor well-being and informing faith-based curricula on sustainable transitions grounded in human dignity.

Keywords: *Integral Ecology, Just Transition, Laudato Si, SDG 8, Sociological Principles*

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Introduction

In an era marked by environmental crisis, economic inequality, and technological acceleration, the challenge of building a sustainable world of work has become central to both global policy and moral reflection. Originating in labor movements and later elevated through climate policy charters, Just Transition, the fair and inclusive shift from fossil-fuel economies to sustainable alternatives that protect workers, communities, and vulnerable populations while respecting human dignity and ecological limits has become an urgent agenda for policy and advocacy. Through clear guidelines, participatory mechanisms, and multi-actor partnerships, Just Transition requires a framework for effective, integral implementation. International charters often reference the UN's SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth as an operational framework when designing Just Transition policies because it bridges economic growth, labor rights, and social equity, all of which are essential for a green transition that is "just" in both social and ecological sense. However, integration challenges persist as to whether the UN's SDG 8 is sufficiently grounded in a vision of the human person and labor that can sustain such a transition, as it raises a tension between economic metrics and deeper ethical concerns (economic growth versus human dignity). This tension is sociologically evident in Marx's critique of capitalist reproduction, where economic growth often perpetuates inequality, and in Durkheim's view that collective conscience must anchor transitions to preserve social cohesion. Enter Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si' (2015), which articulates a theology of integral ecology, an approach that integrates concern for the poor, the environment, and the meaning of human life and work. The encyclical's critique of technocratic and economic paradigms and call for ecological conversion embodies a moral foundation for ecological justice, human dignity, and ethical labor. This study explores the need for a multidimensional Just Transition framework that combines policy efficacy (SDG 8) with ethical depth (Laudato Si). It argues that an operational framework that conveys sociological implications to labor markets, community resilience, and institutional reforms (SDG 8), integrated with theological imperatives that emphasize human vocation, dignity of work, and ecological stewardship, could render Transition integral and holistic.

Statement of the Problem

Despite growing policy momentum around Just Transition within the global framework of SDG 8, such implementation efforts remain primarily technical, economic, and growth-oriented, lacking deeper ethical foundations that ensure human dignity, ecological stewardship, and community resilience due to an overemphasis on technical and economic metrics. The current SDG 8 framework's limited capacity to articulate deeper socio-ethical dimensions of labor without an integrated framework that includes adequate attention to human dignity, vocational meaning of work, and ecological stewardship (as articulated in Laudato Si') risks perpetuating social inequalities and ecological harm, undermining both labor justice and environmental

sustainability. From a sociological perspective, these risks mirror Weber's concern with rationalization, in which technical efficiency eclipses value-rational action, and Bourdieu's notion of symbolic exclusion, in which vulnerable groups lack access to cultural and economic capital in transition policies.

Research Objectives

The General Objective of this study is to create a unified conceptual and operational framework for Just Transition that aligns the policy tools of SDG 8 with the integral ecology of Laudato Si, fostering ethical, social, and ecological foundations for sustainable labor transitions. Specifically, this study endeavors to: (a) critically evaluate Critically evaluate SDG 8's ability to facilitate Just Transition principles, (b) Examine how Laudato Si' offers an ethical framework that enhances existing Just Transition paradigms, (c) Explore the synergies between the targets of SDG 8, the integral ecology of Laudato Si and sociological principles such as solidarity, social reproduction, and cultural capital, to create a coherent framework for a Just Transition and, (d) Propose moral standards for implementing Just Transition at the national and community levels.

Significance of The Study

This study contributes to interdisciplinary discourse between global policy, Catholic social thought, and ecological ethics by situating the SDG framework within an ethical and theological paradigm. This will offer policymakers a values-based framework for designing Just Transition strategies that balance economic, social, and ecological imperatives and go beyond economic metrics. It will enhance labor institutions' approaches to retraining, reskilling, and social protections in transition policies by providing tools for equitable participation. It also highlights the necessity of grounding sustainability not merely in technical frameworks but in a robust vision of the human person and creation. Sociologically, this vision requires addressing inequality (Marx), strengthening collective identity (Durkheim), and ensuring participatory action (Weber), thereby embedding social justice into ecological transitions. By bringing Laudato Si' into dialogue with SDG 8, this study contributes an ethical lens to international development goals, potentially enriching policy approaches to work, sustainability, and human dignity. This study also assists faith-based organizations in integrating ecological justice with the social teachings. It informs curricula in ethics, environmental studies, sustainability, and social sciences, promoting ecological conversion and labor dignity, and cultivating ecological consciousness and ethical awareness among students and practitioners.

Methodology

By design, this research employs a qualitative, interdisciplinary, normative-analytic framework that integrates theological reflection, philosophical inquiry, and sociological interpretation. This research study carries out a theological and ethical

analysis through a hermeneutical analysis of Laudato Si'. It inquires into the Philosophical notions of justice, dignity, and rights. It also involves a Sociological examination of labor market structures, inequality, and social discourse. This includes applying Durkheim's solidarity to community resilience, Weber's social action to labor participation, and Bourdieu's cultural capital to retraining and reskilling programs. Lastly, this research engages in policy analysis by reviewing and assessing the SDG 8 targets, international frameworks, and national transition policies. The data sources for this study include the Primary Texts, like the UN official documents (SDG 8, ILO, UNFCCC, UNEP, UNDP related texts) and Laudato Si'. Secondary literature includes academic texts, journal articles, policy reports, and case studies concerning Just Transition, labor policy, social sciences, sustainable development, and Catholic Social Teaching. This research study will attempt to analyze the contents of the said policies and ethical texts. It will also explore and analyze the links between SDG 8 and Laudato Si themes and interpret them to derive normative principles and practical implications. As for ethical considerations, this study demonstrates respect for diverse social and cultural perspectives. The study ensures a transparent interpretation of theological texts in dialogue with secular frameworks.

Scope and Delimitations

This study is limited to textual analysis and does not engage in empirical, statistical, or field research. It focuses primarily on SDG 8 and selected related UN documents (e.g., ILO, UNEP reports on decent work and sustainability). This study does not cover other SDGs related to the environment and equity, as this would require further analysis on how different SDGs and their corresponding targets intervene or overlap with SDG 8. It also excludes detailed quantitative modeling of labor market or employment impacts. The ethical framework is drawn principally from Pope Francis's "Laudato Si'. The philosophical and sociological analysis is limited to concerns related to labor, ecology, and human dignity. This study focuses on the conceptual integration of SDG 8 and Laudato Si' within the context of Just Transition, across labor, environmental, and ethical domains. This study does not evaluate specific national Just Transition policies in exhaustive empirical detail (a possibility for future research).

Findings and Discussion

Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations of Just Transition

Historical Origins and Definitions

The notion of Just Transition was derived from the North American labor movements of the 1970s-1980s, when members of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union advocated for workers' protection amid shifts away from polluting industries. This was epitomized by Tony Mazzocchi's "Superfund for Workers" proposal to retrain and compensate those displaced by hazardous job closures, paralleling the 1980 U.S. Superfund Act for environmental cleanup (SMEA, 2022). It

spread in the 1990s-2000s through the Just Transition Alliance (1997). Eventually, it entered global climate discourse through the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP15 (2009). It was referenced in the Cancún Agreements (COP16, 2010), linking it to workforce shifts toward low-carbon jobs aligned with national priorities. Its inclusion in the Paris Agreement preamble (2015) steered its formalization, developing from a labor-centric campaign to embedding equity and responsive measures within climate regulations after which COP26/27 decisions expanded it to vulnerable groups, social protection, and international support establishing a dedicated UNFCCC work agenda linking it to Paris goals under equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) principles (Johansson, 2023). The current understanding of Just Transition encompasses principles, processes, and practices that ensure no workers, communities, or regions are left behind in the transition to low-carbon economies, in line with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) directives. Durkheim's solidarity explains why collective protections are vital, while Marx's reproduction theory highlights how transitions risk perpetuating systemic inequalities unless equity is prioritized. Its key ideologies involve labor protections (retraining, decent jobs); distributional justice (targeted support for the poor/vulnerable); procedural justice (stakeholder participation, social dialogue); and integration with sustainable development, poverty eradication, and national priorities (Wang, 2021). In climate treatises, it is linked to SDG 8 through decent work, green jobs, and inclusive growth, which are collectively addressed in UNFCCC schemes such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS). In general, Just Transition centers on labor within an ecological framework, aiming to make environmental action politically viable by protecting workers through skills training, social dialogue, and decent green jobs.

Conceptualizing Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8)

The UN's Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection explicitly ties SDG 8 progress to just transitions addressing climate change and informality. SDG 8 conceptualizes "decent work" and "economic growth" as unified grounds for sustainable development, emphasizing labor rights, such as fair remuneration, non-discrimination, and social protection, alongside economic inclusion for vulnerable groups, including women, youth, and informal workers. Key targets include achieving full and productive employment by 2030 (target 8.5), protecting labor rights and ensuring safe environments (target 8.8), reducing the number of youths not in employment, education, or training (target 8.6), and eradicating forced labor (target 8.7). SDG 8 defines decent work as productive employment that enables dignity, rights, security, and fair income, rooted in ILO principles from 1999, and expanded in 2019 to include gender equality and sustainability. It promotes economic growth by linking job quality to productivity gains, if economic growth (measured via GDP) inherently fosters decent work through market mechanisms, productivity, and

formalization, utilizing labor as a resource for accumulation (Global Goals, n.d.). This shows that SDG 8 can truly provide a framework that links labor, economic development, and human dignity, aligning with Just Transition's goals of shifting economies toward sustainability while safeguarding workers' rights. SDG 8 offers measurable targets, policy guidance, and international legitimacy that align with just transition goals, particularly in employment, labor rights, and economic inclusion. However, as this view of economic growth advances, it treats labor primarily as a tool, prioritizing capital over rights amid imbalances in control between capital and workers. Its linear and growth-led perception of development may overlook structural inequalities, vulnerabilities in the informal sector, and the environmental costs of unrestricted expansion. This reflects Marx's critique of alienation, in which workers are reduced to mere instruments of production, thereby undermining their dignity and agency.

Theological and Ethical Lenses

Laudato Si exhibits an all-embracing framework that links human dignity, work, and care for creation through its notion of integral ecology, promoting ethical transformations grounded in the Catholic social teachings, which altogether reject technocratic paradigms that debase both nature and labor *(Laudato Si' Movement, 2015).* Just Transition's esteem for human dignity, extensively perceived from the theological doctrine of the Imago Dei, conveys the absolute decree that every human person holds an inherent value and worth. Using the same lens, work's significance lies not merely in employment but in its deeper vocation, as a calling to be co-creators with God and stewards of creation. Sociologically, Weber's social action theory complements this by framing labor as value-rational, oriented toward meaning and vocation rather than mere utility. Laudato Si' brings these doctrines together (LS 137-162) by calling for holistic responses that prioritize the poor and future generations, grounded in the assertion that the social, economic, cultural, and environmental crises are interconnected. Pope Francis clarifies that authentic human development through meaningful labor, while offsetting exploitations in environmental transitions, restores dignity (LS 124-128). This aligns with SDG 8, ensuring decent work while protecting the environment without compromising labor rights. Laudato Si's integral ecology discards dualism between human-social and environmental matters, asserting that "there is one crisis, not two" *(Laudato Si' Movement, 2015).* Human dignity requires a system of justice that combines labor's worth and care for creation in the name of solidarity and the common good. Reframing sustainability through Catholic Social Teachings highlights how *Laudato Si* broadens SDG frameworks by advocating ethical labor that emphasizes the vocational nature of work amid the current climate crisis (Beltran, 2020). Laudato Si's principle of Integral Ecology links human dignity with creation by stressing that work is the fulfillment of our vocation to cultivate and protect the earth, rather than to exploit it. This yields a vibrant model of justice, demanding policies that advance poverty alleviation, dignified employment, and the safeguarding

of biodiversity, which inform the ethical core of Just Transition. Therefore, it embodies a moral compass for SDG 8, ensuring a humane and ecologically sound transition by promoting a simpler lifestyle and technological progress that enhance rather than replace human labor (LS 128).

Just Transition as a Multidimensional Framework

Just transition is globally renowned through the ILO's 2015 guidelines and UNFCCC policies as a decisive framework that integrates climate action, labor rights, and social equity by providing international standards across nine policy areas, including social dialogue and skills development, influencing global climate plans. UNFCCC and ILO partnerships promote their integration into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), with 38% of NDCs and 56% of long-term strategies referencing it *(Martinez, 2023).* Themes such as labor-oriented concepts, justice frameworks, and governance strategies applicable beyond national borders highlight the need for an expanded geographical scope, including developing countries *(Wang & Lo, 2021).* For this reason, Just Transition involves regular, participatory review and consultation to ensure equity. UNDP guidelines (2025) and CCSI global guidance further assert that co-creation with unions through democratic consultations should be the standard for policy revision to minimize transition impacts (*Climate Policy Initiative, n.d.).* Key global just transition policies often incorporate review mechanisms, such as periodic stocktakes, multi-stakeholder commissions, and adaptive governance, to ensure ongoing relevance and equity. These were drawn from frameworks such as the ILO Guidelines and Paris Agreement (*World Resources Institute, n.d.).* This comes to show that Just Transition functions as a multidimensional agenda which integrates an economic (stresses job creation, retraining, and income security by promoting green investments and sustainable enterprises) social (enhancing social dialogue and participatory governance thru inclusion, equity, and community participation to mitigate impacts on vulnerable groups like indigenous peoples and low-income workers) ecological (focus on biodiversity protection, pollution reduction, and climate mitigation requiring restorative practices that sustain ecosystems) and moral dimension (drawing from paradigms of justice that reveres human rights and intergenerational equity which defies power imbalances while calling for solidarity) to ensure equitable shifts from fossil fuel economies to sustainable alternatives. Adding a sociological dimension clarifies how inequality, informality, and exclusion shape transition outcomes, requiring solidarity and participatory governance to ensure justice. Just Transition policy making emphasizes inclusive stakeholder participation to ensure equitable outcomes in the shift to low-carbon economies. Stakeholder participation is core to transition policymaking, enhancing legitimacy, addressing inequities, and building trust *(Fernández Intriago et al., 2025).* A Just Transition policy then requires a complex framework that coordinates and harmonizes action across diverse stakeholders through clear guidelines, participatory mechanisms, and multi-actor partnerships, to avoid fragmented efforts and ensure

equitable outcomes. It should incorporate capacity building, monitoring, science-based targets, and financing strategies to avoid exacerbating inequalities, overcome political resistance, and deliver sustainable results.

SDG 8, Just Transition, and Socio-Economic Justice

SDG 8 in Global Development Discourse

SDG 8 provides an inadequate basis for a just transition, as it fragments environmental sustainability from dynamic social protections, which are essential for holistic labor transformations. SDG 8's growth-oriented focus prioritizes GDP expansion over ecological protections and worker safeguards in low-carbon shifts. While it advocates for social protections indirectly through poverty reduction and resource access (correlated with SDG 1 and 10), it falls short of explicit methods and procedures for climate-vulnerable workers because its market-oriented structure often ignores informal sectors and operational discrimination. Through the decent work pillars (fair wages, safe conditions, and social security), SDG 8 was linked to the Just Transition agenda, which requires rights-based shifts to low-carbon economies, incorporating labor placement, skills training, and social dialogue among workers, communities, and governments *(Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2023).* Likewise, shortfalls in confronting environmental degradation caused by growth-focused policies, gender disparities, and the precarity of informal work remain evident. SDG 8 may advance formal safeguards, but it does not sufficiently include protections for workers who are often excluded from green-shift reskilling programs. Furthermore, while SDG 8 (target 8.2) focuses on greater productivity, it hardly integrates Just Transition's demand to dissociate growth from emissions and to achieve significant reductions in resource use. SDG 8 may emerge as a promising program, yet implementing climate-displaced labor policies requires bolder eco-social policies *(United Nations, 2019)*. This shows that SDG 8 may provide a socio-economic platform for inclusion (equal pay, skills for vulnerable groups), and yet it can't afford to be an independent Just Transition agenda. For these reasons, it requires ethical reinforcement, complemented by the principles of *Laudato Si'*, to prioritize the common good over mere capital growth.

Labor–Environment Nexus

By causing job losses, skill mismatches, and economic displacement, climate mitigation and adaptation policies affect workers while worsening poverty and health risks for low-income or indigenous groups. These climate adaptation measures often unsettle employment in fossil fuel-dependent regions, a problem exacerbated by the slow reabsorption of labor into emerging green jobs. Workers face wage decreases and hazardous jobs in renewables, while infrastructure shifts, such as flood defenses, can displace informal laborers in agriculture. Additionally, carbon taxes hasten plant closures while vulnerable groups suffer heightened consequences from sea-level rise and policy-driven transitions, which inopportunely expand food insecurity and force migration (Wang & Lo, 2021). Policies like the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS)

and the US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) create short-term shocks. Still, they can enable long-term gains if joined with just transition funds for reskilling and robust social protections (Filipović et al., 2022). However, without integrating SDG 8 (decent work) and Laudato Si's ecological justice, these transition risks violate labor rights, as seen in litigation over occupational safety during the clean energy transition.

Evaluating Strengths and Limitations of SDG 8

SDG 8 is performing effectively in establishing labor rights by creating productive jobs while supporting environmental transition or green shifts, particularly in renewable energy sectors, where safe working conditions and youth inclusion are assured. This renders SDG 8 commendable for its concurrent pursuit of full employment, decent work, and social protection. However, its overemphasis on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the primary, and often sole indicator of national success, progress, and well-being, overlooks unpaid social reproduction labor, generally those performed by women, which, in so doing, intensifies gender disparities. While other SDGs may target environmental sustainability and equity, SDG 8 in particular fails to integrate environmental sustainability, allowing market-driven growth to cause ecological destruction without addressing exploitative practices or informal-sector vulnerabilities, both of which are vital to just transitions. Durkheim's solidarity underscores the need for collective responsibility, while Bourdieu's capital theory explains why marginalized groups remain excluded from reskilling opportunities. Deprived of moral depth, it focuses largely on market growth at the expense of human dignity and earthly care and runs the risk of exploitative informal work. (Chigbu, 2023). Specific examples include Germany's and South Africa's coal phase-outs, which reveal SDG 8's limits in tackling job losses, inequality (SDG 10 links), and resource nexuses, as policies overlook social burdens despite energy justice efforts (Hägele et al., 2022). Reliance only on policy metrics like GDP and technology that fall short of a spiritual and cultural shift for true integral development can perpetuate inequality, exploitation, and environmental harm, resulting in market inequalities and failure to prioritize the poor or biodiversity loss. In short, as SDG 8 advocates decent work and economic growth, its economic priorities often conflict with profound ethical exigencies. While it depicts a clear edge in labor perspectives, it seems meager when analyzed from ethical, theological, and sociological lenses.

Sociological Perspectives

Sociological views on just transition expose how inequality, informality, and social marginalization insignificantly challenge equitable outcomes in economic and climate shifts. These dynamics intensify helplessness among informal and marginalized workers by reducing access to retraining and safeguards. Labor-centric views claim that a just transition is a justice issue, as it scrutinizes inequality and exclusion during the green transition, which can lead to uneven benefits due to conditions such as the deprivation of union representation and the lack of social

protection for informal workers. SDG 8 often overlooks structural barriers, such as gender inequalities and unstable work, leading to persistent exclusion by concentrating transition jobs among skilled, formal workers while excluding vulnerable groups like women, youth, and minorities, the absence of targeted reskilling for informal sectors, and preventing workers' dialogue in transition planning (non-unionized groups) (Chigbu,2023). If the goal is to extend protection to informal economies and integrate labor rights with environmental goals, vulnerability assessment and inclusive governance are necessary preconditions. These approaches address the issues of informality and inequality, ensuring satisfactory transitions.

Integrating *Laudato Si'* with Just Transition and SDG 8

Ethical Deepening through Integral Ecology: Beyond Economics

A holistic, integral just transition requires more than economic or technical fixes; it should be guided by an ethical and social foundation grounded in human dignity, social justice, and ecological stewardship. Laudato Si' offers a complementary ethical and holistic framework that can deepen the interpretation of SDG 8 through integral ecology, providing a moral and ecological grounding. Pope Francis's principle of Integral Ecology promotes sustainable development by emphasizing the interconnectedness among the human, social, and environmental dimensions. This principle criticizes the technocratic models of development that are more centric on economic efficiency and growth to the point of discounting the ethical concerns. It duly condemns the reductionist view that resolves ecological issues with practical, fragmented solutions rather than digging deeper to uncover the roots of issues of respect for human dignity and care for creation (Laudato Si' Action Platform, 2024). It calls for a paradigm shift toward a sustainable and equitable development model that does not allow unscrutinized economic growth, in line with norms of respect for human dignity and care for creation; otherwise, it will aggravate incidents of discrimination and environmental destruction. Theological concepts of stewardship and responsibility entail ethical demands always to consider the vulnerable and the common good. This combination of faith-based ethics and policy generates a participatory paradigm for a just transition aligned with SDG 8. SDG 8's emphasis on growth and the lack of ecological depth can be addressed through the encyclical's call for integral human development. The gaps in SDG 8's transition support were filled by Laudato Si's ethical framework, which includes calls for interdisciplinary policy, such as faith-labor dialogues. Laudato Si's reconceptualization of sustainability across multiple ecologies (economic and social) could counter unjust systems with structural justice relevant to decent work (Imanaka et al., 2017). A just transition program informed by integral ecology is founded on Laudato Si's advocacy for right-based justice and on sociological approaches to community empowerment, thereby weaving together a philosophical, theological, and sociological perspective on a just transition. During ecological crises, the notions of distributive justice, human rights, and dignity are most needed to gauge the effects of labor transitions on workers' well-being.

Sociological concepts of community, participation, and structural inequality provide a framework for policies that promote grassroots involvement to mitigate the adverse impacts of fossil fuels on marginalized groups. Integral Ecology's principles of sufficiency, solidarity, and intergenerational equity accordingly counter capitalism's expansionism, which ignores ecological limits and planetary boundaries. Laudato Si's push to protect vulnerable workers through rights-based energy shifts certainly aligns with SDG 8 and anti-predatory economies (Laudato Si' Action Platform, 2024).

Labor as Vocation and Moral Participation

Laudato Si deepens the meaning of work by accentuating its vocational nature as participation in God's creative act and advances its moral character by linking it to principles of human dignity and solidarity, effectively subduing the shallow treatment of it as a mere economic activity. This relational, spiritual, and ecological vision of labor that Laudato Si discloses aligns fittingly with Just Transition and SDG 8's advocacy for decent work coupled with environmental care. In uncovering the socio-ethical nature of work (nurturing relationships with God, others, and nature), its functional connotation was avoided. As the notion of integral ecology (connecting human labor with care for the earth) asserts a more relational character of work, it awakens a spirit of solidarity, which, in turn, counters individualism and heals social and environmental ruptures *(Imanaka et al., 2017).* This profound spiritual and ecological aspect of work advocates a more proactive stance in caring for our common home, being itself the result of promoting human dignity and the common good. Just Transition essentially needs to be grounded on human dignity, solidarity, and the common good: (1) to be able to recognize the innate value of workers and so avoid being exploited, (2) raise an intra- and intergenerational connection to safeguard the vulnerable workers, and (3) enforce intergenerational and social justice in ecological developments *(Segafredo, 2025).* Integration of *Laudato Si's* principle of Integral Ecology with SDG 8 into the Just Transition framework provides a deeper moral grounding for SDG 8's focus on full employment, given Integral Ecology's vocation-centered nuance of labor. Such a program that merges socio-economic equity and ecological conversion refutes technocratic perceptions that prioritize economic metrics over ethical involvement.

Policy Implications of an Ethical Just Transition

The integration of *Laudato Si* with SDG 8 in the Just Transition agenda proposes a policy that prioritizes human dignity amid economic and ecological transitions. Such an agenda emphasizes ethical policy propositions, such as social protections, ecological stewardship, and community participation. *Laudato Si*'s principle of Integral Ecology, which combines social justice with ecological care, utterly aligns with SDG 8's target for decent work in a just transition. This ideal integration concretizes policies that "respond to the cry of the earth and the poor" by promoting the labor force and budgeting for ecological conservation and rehabilitation projects (Council for Inclusive

Capitalism, 2024). For instance, such policies are supposed to avert cases of inequality by fostering procedural justice through social dialogue. The fusion of SDG 8 and *Laudato Si* (principle of Integral Ecology) directs the metrics beyond GDP and, accordingly, sets program ideals such as job quality, labor rights, and biodiversity preservation. These are specifically evident in decent wages, access to retraining, and asset retirement strategies, thereby addressing potential social problems. Therefore, a policy can be truly "just" if it is embedded in time-bound plans for net-zero energy, with explicit verification of its effects on the community. Social dialogue, as mandated by ILO guidelines, is indispensable in eco-social agendas to ensure stakeholder involvement from policy design to implementation *(Council for Inclusive Capitalism, 2024).* This was reinforced by *Laudato Si*, which advocated collaborative transparency across all involved and affected sectors; this undertaking can foster co-determination, collective agreements, and upskilling to regulate fossil fuel phase-outs. As a supplement to economic indicators, we can draw essential moral pointers from *Laudato Si*, such as community resilience, the adoption of ecological spirituality, and equity in job creation. This implies a multidimensional assessment of programs according to social justice sharing, inequality reduction, and procedural inclusivity. Laudato Si's principle of Integral Ecology implies a multi-actor policy model in which ethical transitions are achieved through cross-sector collaborations: religious institutes setting values through platforms promoting just energy shifts, labor associations directing dialogue and upskilling, and civil society fostering participation and divestment *(Laudato Si' Movement, 2023).*

Model Framework for Implementation

The principle of Integral Ecology, as articulated in Laudato Si', integrated with SDG 8's aim for decent work and economic progress, confers an ethical value to the Just Transition's framework. Such a framework exhibit the following tenets: (1) Participatory Governance through multi-stakeholder dialogues for comprehensive policymaking (call for solidarity); (2) Ethical Standards that give precedence to social and ecological justice over band-aid solutions (common good, intergenerational justice, labor dignity, ecological conversion); (3) Assessing Schemes (e.g. impact assessments) and; (4) SDG 8 decent work metrics. This means that, to achieve operational viability, adaptable building blocks, such as time-bound plans aligned with Climate Action 100+ indicators, and policy-relevance measures, will help address pragmatic concerns (Council for Inclusive Capitalism, 2024). Its moral extent, on the other hand, is warranted by setting in the principles of Laudato Si to prevent constant exploitative transitions that prioritize profit over the person. Therefore, within a framework policy that advocates Ecological stewardship (through SDG 8's biodiversity-integrated approach and resource stewardship) and Social Equity (Laudato Si's justice paradigm that protects vulnerable workers in green transitions), meaningful work would develop from local advancements and skills retooling.

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

This study clarified the theoretical foundations, socio-economic analyses, and ethical integration of SDG 8 with Just Transition. While SDG 8 advocates labor rights, it overlooks crucial issues such as environmental crises, informal vulnerabilities, gender disparities, and technocratic growth biases, and it lacks deep ethical anchoring. Integrating Laudato Si's principle of integral ecology reframes labor by highlighting its vocational nature and addressing the market-oriented limits of SDG 8. This integration incorporates the values of solidarity, the common good, and intergenerational justice, thereby overcoming the polarity between social and environmental concerns. Such a framework that combines SDG 8's provision of a systematic scheme for decent work and sustainable growth with Laudato Si's offer of a moral and holistic grounding for deeper ethical and ecological integrity renders the transition truly just, inclusive, humane, and ecologically integral.

Chronologically, Durkheim's concept of solidarity emphasizes communal resilience; Weber's theory of social action highlights meaningful participation; Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital explains access to symbolic resources; and Marx's theory of social reproduction warns against perpetuating inequality. Together, these sociological principles reinforce the ethical, ecological, and labor dimensions of Just Transition, ensuring it is both holistic and just.

A genuine Just Transition requires policy coherence, ethical depth, and community solidarity, as it evolves from labor movements and emerges as a multidimensional framework that encompasses economic retraining, social equity, ecological restoration, and moral imperatives rooted in human dignity and stewardship.

This study reaffirms that merging SDG 8's target-setting with Laudato Si's spiritual and moral ideals enables an economically viable, socially just, and ecologically sustainable transition. It furthers an interdisciplinary conception of labor justice and sustainability, which offers a moral directive for policymakers, educators, and faith-based actors. Stakeholder participation lies at the core of just transition policymaking, amplifying the voices of those affected by its implementation. Like other policies, Just Transition requires regular participatory review and consultation to ensure equity. The ILO guidelines and Paris Agreement incorporate review mechanisms to maintain ongoing relevance and equity.

A holistic Just Transition must be anchored not only in policy efficiency and theological ethics but also in sociological principles that illuminate the lived realities of labor and community. Durkheim's solidarity underscores the collective resilience required to sustain transitions, ensuring that workers and communities remain bound by shared responsibility. Weber's social action highlights the necessity of meaningful participation, in which labor is not reduced to technical utility but is expressed as vocation and value-rational engagement. Bourdieu's cultural capital explains unequal access to retraining, reskilling, and symbolic resources, reminding policymakers to address exclusion across both the formal and informal sectors. Finally, Marx's

reproduction theory warns against perpetuating systemic inequalities when economic growth is privileged over human dignity and ecological stewardship. Together, these sociological insights reinforce the ethical depth of Laudato Si' and the operational clarity of SDG 8, cultivating a Just Transition that is structurally equitable, morally grounded, and socially cohesive.

As the Just Transition policy continues to evolve, this study's recommendations can still be incorporated into our policymakers' awareness of just transition outcomes. This study urges policymakers to integrate ethical frameworks into national transition policies such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS). This integration should occur through participatory planning and governance, supported by ILO-aligned multi-stakeholder social dialogue, targeted reskilling for vulnerable groups, and cross-sector collaborations involving religious institutions, labor unions, and civil society. This scheme guarantees an unbiased, low-carbon transition that honors the cry of the earth and the poor, and, in turn, advocates for ecological education and spirituality as a crucial component of a Just Transition. This suggests future research directions toward empirical validation, curriculum development, and faith-community partnerships in response to climate shifts.

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