Life-Cycle Carbon Footprint Analysis of a 5G Base Station

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***Abstract*—This study investigates the life-cycle carbon footprint of a standard 5G base station (BS), considering manufacturing, deployment, operation, and end-of-life phases. With rising energy demands and rapid network densification in 5G systems, it becomes essential to quantify emissions associated with BS infrastructure. The report evaluates power consumption, production energy, material usage, and associated carbon emissions, providing a comprehensive sustainability perspective for 5G communications.**

I. Problem Statement

The swift rollout of 5G networks has led to a notable increase in global energy demand, primarily due to heightened data throughput, denser infrastructure, and ongoing operational requirements. As telecommunications networks account for a larger share of global carbon emissions, it is essential to assess and optimize the environmental impact of the infrastructure that supports them.

This project aims to conduct a thorough Life-Cycle Assessment (LCA) of a standard 5G base station, evaluating its carbon footprint across three key lifecycle stages:

1) **Manufacturing Phase** – analyze energy and emissions linked to production of electronic components, towers, antennas, and supporting hardware.
2) **Operational Phase** – continuous electricity consumption during the base station's expected 10-year lifespan.
3) **End-of-Life Phase** – energy and emissions from dismantling, recycling, and processing waste.

Additionally, the project explores strategies for carbon reduction applicable to 5G networks, which include:

- Integration of renewable power (partial and full renewable sourcing).
- Optimization of sleep modes (reducing power during low traffic).
- Examination of mixed-energy grid scenarios.

The objective is to quantify potential CO_2 savings from these optimizations and compare them with baseline grid-powered operations.

Using Python and spreadsheet modeling, the project will:

- Calculate annual and cumulative CO_2 emissions for each lifecycle stage and scenario.
- Visualize emissions trends through bar charts, line plots, and heatmaps.
- Identify optimization combinations that yield the most significant CO_2 savings.
- Export results into structured tables (Excel) for reproducibility and analysis.

This assessment provides insights for sustainable planning of 5G infrastructure and supports informed decision-making for greener network deployments.

II. Solution of the Problem

To address the necessity of quantifying the environmental impact of 5G telecommunications infrastructure, we developed a computational framework to conduct a simplified Life-Cycle Assessment (LCA) of a 5G base station. The solution combines analytical modeling, emission factors, and a Python-based simulation to calculate and visualize carbon emissions throughout the base station's life cycle. The key components are: (1) formulation of the LCA model, (2) breakdown of emissions into manufacturing, operational, and end-of-life stages, (3) scenario-based evaluations (renewables and sleep-mode optimization), and (4) visualization and comparison of emissions over time.

A. Formulation of the Life-Cycle Assessment Model

The LCA model assumes a 10-year operational lifespan. Each phase uses energy (kWh) and emission factors (kg CO_2/kWh). Cumulative emissions in year y are:

$$C_{\mathrm{CO,total}}(y) = C_{\mathrm{CO,man}}(y) + C_{\mathrm{CO,op}}(y) + C_{\mathrm{CO,eol}}(y). \quad (1)$$

Manufacturing emissions (single pulse at year 0 or amortized over T years):

$$\text{(single-pulse)} \quad C_{\mathrm{CO,man}}(y) = \begin{cases} E_{\mathrm{man}} \cdot EF_{\mathrm{grid}}, & y = 0, \\ 0, & y > 0, \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

$$\text{(amortized)} \quad C_{\mathrm{CO,man}}(y) = \left(\frac{E_{\mathrm{man}}}{T}\right) \cdot EF_{\mathrm{grid}}. \quad (3)$$

Operational emissions:

$$E_{\mathrm{op},y} = E_{\mathrm{op,annual}} \cdot (1 - s), \tag{4}$$
$$EF_{\mathrm{op}} = r \cdot EF_{\mathrm{ren}} + (1 - r) \cdot EF_{\mathrm{grid}}, \tag{5}$$
$$C_{\mathrm{CO,op}}(y) = E_{\mathrm{op},y} \cdot EF_{\mathrm{op}}, \tag{6}$$

where s is fractional reduction from sleep-mode optimization and r is fraction of energy from renewable sources.

End-of-life (assumed at year T):

$$C_{\mathrm{CO,eol}}(T) = E_{\mathrm{eol}} \cdot EF_{\mathrm{eol}}. \tag{7}$$

B. Integration of Manufacturing, Operational, and End-of-Life Energy Contributions

1) Manufacturing Energy: Embedded emissions from fabrication of radio units, antennas, PCBs, semiconductors, and tower hardware. Can be modelled as a one-time pulse at year 0 or amortized.

2) Operational Energy: Operational energy is typically the largest contributor. Annual operational energy (example):

$$E_{\mathrm{op,annual}} = P_{\mathrm{avg}} \times 8760 \quad \text{(hours/year)}, \tag{8}$$

where P_{avg} is the average power draw and 8760 is hours/year. This value is influenced by sleep-mode efficiency and renewable share.

3) End-of-Life Energy: Energy associated with recycling, recovery, and disposal, modelled as an emission event in the final year.

C. CO_2 Savings through Renewable Energy and Sleep-Mode Optimization

We consider five operational scenarios:

- Baseline: grid energy only, no sleep mode.
- Mixed Energy: $r = 0.30$ renewable fraction (30%).
- Full Renewable: $r = 1.00$ (100% renewables).
- Sleep Mode Optimization: $s = 0.30$ (30% reduction in operational load).
- Combined Sleep Mode + Full Renewable.

Savings (absolute and relative) over the life:

$$\text{Savings}_{\text{kg}} = C_{\text{life}}^{\text{baseline}} - C_{\text{life}}^{\text{scenario}}, \tag{9}$$
$$\text{Savings}_{\%} = \frac{\text{Savings}_{\text{kg}}}{C_{\text{life}}^{\text{baseline}}} \times 100\%. \tag{10}$$

D. Computational Implementation

The pipeline uses:

- Python (numerical computation),
- pandas (data tables),
- matplotlib (visualization),
- Excel export for outputs,
- Scenario generator functions for parameter sweeps.

E. Visualization and Interpretation Framework

Outputs include:

1) Annual CO_2 emissions vs time (manufacturing, operational, EoL).
2) Scenario-specific stacked bar charts.
3) Savings comparison plots.

III. Our Findings

This section presents the empirical results derived from the life-cycle carbon-footprint model developed for a 5G base station. The findings are based on manufacturing, operational, and end-of-life (EoL) energy consumption, and on scenario-based optimizations that include renewable-energy substitution and sleep-mode energy reduction. Each figure and table has been analyzed to explain the trends and implications for sustainability.

A. Annual Emission Distribution Across Lifecycle Stages

In examining all scenarios (Baseline, Mixed, Renewable, Sleep, and Sleep+Renewable) we observe a consistent pattern:

1) A pronounced spike in Year 0, attributable to the one-time emissions associated with manufacturing.
2) A stable plateau from Year 1 to Year 9, indicating a roughly constant annual operational CO_2 output.
3) A slight increase in the final year, reflecting emissions from EoL recycling and processing.

This behaviour corresponds to the expected Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) structure: manufacturing is emission-intensive but one-time, while ongoing operational energy consumption is the principal annual contributor.

1) Baseline Scenario Findings: The graph "Baseline — Annual Emissions by Component" reveals:

- Manufacturing emissions of approximately $16{,}500$ kg CO_2 concentrated in Year 0.
- Operational emissions of approximately $24{,}000$ kg CO_2/yr, dominating the lifecycle due to full reliance on grid electricity (example $EF_{\mathrm{grid}} = 0.55$ kgCO_2/kWh).
- End-of-life (EoL) emissions of about 600 kg CO_2 occurring in Year 10.

This scenario serves as the benchmark (upper bound) for comparing improvements.

2) Mixed Scenario (30% Renewable Grid Mix): Key observations:

- Manufacturing and EoL emissions remain unchanged (they are not affected by the operational energy mix).
- Operational emissions decrease from $\approx 24{,}000$ to $\approx 17{,}000$ kg CO_2/yr due to partial renewable supply.
- The decrease follows directly from the reduced effective emission factor.

3) Renewable Scenario (100% Operational Renewable):

- Replacing the grid emission factor EF_{grid} with a renewable factor EF_{ren} (e.g., 0.05 kgCO_2/kWh) substantially lowers operational emissions to $\approx 2{,}000$ kg CO_2/yr.
- Manufacturing emissions still dominate Year 0.

- This scenario shows that operational decarbonization (energy supply) has the largest long-term impact.

4) Sleep-Mode Scenario (30% Reduction in Operational Load):

- A 30% reduction in average operational load reduces operational emissions to $\approx 17{,}000$ kg $\mathrm{CO_2/yr}$ (comparable to the mixed scenario).
- Manufacturing and EoL remain fixed.
- This demonstrates that sleep-mode optimization is an effective non-infrastructure strategy.

5) Combined Sleep + Renewable Scenario: Combining s fraction sleep reduction with renewable fraction r yields the lowest operational emissions. Quantitatively:

$$E_{\mathrm{op,annual}} \equiv \text{baseline annual operational energy (kWh)}, \tag{11}$$

$$E_{\mathrm{op},y} = E_{\mathrm{op,annual}} \cdot (1 - s), \tag{12}$$

$$EF_{\mathrm{op}} = r \cdot EF_{\mathrm{ren}} + (1 - r) \cdot EF_{\mathrm{grid}}, \tag{13}$$

$$C_{\mathrm{op}}(y) = E_{\mathrm{op},y} \cdot EF_{\mathrm{op}}. \tag{14}$$

For the example parameters used in this study ($s = 0.30$, $r = 1.00$, $EF_{\mathrm{grid}} = 0.55$, $EF_{\mathrm{ren}} = 0.05$), operational emissions drop to roughly 1,600–1,800 kg $\mathrm{CO_2/yr}$.

6) Sleep + Renewable: Annual Emissions by Component: The "Sleep + Renewable — Annual Emissions by Component" plot illustrates:

- Year 0 manufacturing emissions remain $\approx 16{,}500$ kg CO_2 across all scenarios.
- Operational emissions reduce to $\approx$ 1,600–1,800 kg $\mathrm{CO_2/yr}$ under combined 100% renewables and 30% sleep optimization.
- EoL emissions (≈ 600 kg CO_2) occur only in Year 10 as in other scenarios.

B. Annual CO_2 Emissions vs Time (All Scenarios)

The line plot "CO_2 Emissions vs Time for Different Scenarios" shows:

- Baseline has the highest emissions for every year after Year 0.
- Renewable and Sleep+Renewable scenarios remain much lower post Year 0.
- Mixed and Sleep-only lie between Baseline and Renewable.
- All curves show the manufacturing spike followed by operational stabilization.

C. Cumulative Emissions Over 10 Years

The "Cumulative CO_2 Emissions vs Time" plot quantifies lifetime impact:

- Baseline accumulates about 280,000 kg CO_2 over 10 years (example).
- Mixed and Sleep scenarios reduce cumulative emissions by $\approx$ 25–30%.
- Renewable and Sleep+Renewable limit lifetime emissions to $\approx 40{,}000$ and $\approx 34{,}000$ kg CO_2 respectively.
- Overall, full renewable operation yields an $\approx$ 85–88% reduction in lifetime operational emissions compared to the baseline.

D. CO_2 Savings Analysis (Bar Chart)

Define life-time savings as:

$$\mathrm{Savings}_{\mathrm{kg}} = C_{\mathrm{life}}^{\mathrm{baseline}} - C_{\mathrm{life}}^{\mathrm{scenario}}, \tag{15}$$

$$\mathrm{Savings}_{\%} = \frac{\mathrm{Savings}_{\mathrm{kg}}}{C_{\mathrm{life}}^{\mathrm{baseline}}} \times 100\%. \tag{16}$$

Example results:

- Sleep + Renewable: saves $\approx 248{,}127$ kg CO_2 ($\approx 88\%$).
- Renewable only: saves $\approx 240{,}900$ kg CO_2 ($\approx 85\%$).
- Sleep only: saves $\approx 79{,}500$ kg CO_2 ($\approx 28\%$).
- Mixed (30% renewables): saves $\approx 72{,}270$ kg CO_2 ($\approx 25\%$).

E. CO_2 Savings Surface Plot (Renewables vs Sleep Fraction)

The heatmap/contour plot shows a two-dimensional optimization:

- Savings increase with higher renewable share (horizontal axis).
- Savings increase with larger sleep-mode fraction (vertical axis).
- Contours at 15%, 30%, 45%, 60%, 75% and 90% show near-additive effects.
- The optimal region is high renewable fraction combined with high sleep-mode efficiency, yielding savings $> 90\%$ relative to baseline.

F. Multi-Scenario Component Comparison (Three-Panel Bar Chart)

The composite plot comparing Manufacturing / Operational / EoL across scenarios reveals:

1) Manufacturing emissions are constant across scenarios.
2) Operational emissions diverge strongly, driving differences in cumulative emissions.
3) EoL emissions are small and nearly identical across scenarios.

This confirms that operational behavior (energy supply and power-saving features) is the primary lever for decarbonizing the lifecycle footprint of 5G base stations.

IV. RESEARCH FROM THE INTERNET

The environmental impact of 5G network infrastructure has been the subject of extensive inquiry, particularly in relation to energy consumption, carbon emissions, and lifecycle sustainability. The following synthesis of research findings—derived from peer-reviewed literature, industry reports, and authoritative technical sources—provides context and validation for the results presented in our analysis.

A. Energy Consumption and Environmental Impact of 5G Base Stations

Numerous studies indicate that operational energy consumption constitutes the predominant component of the lifecycle carbon footprint associated with cellular base stations. For instance, Hasan et al. (2022) assert that operational electricity usage accounts for 70–90% of total lifecycle emissions for 5G radio units, a consequence of their persistent power requirements and elevated traffic-processing demands [1]. This finding aligns with our model, wherein operational emissions represent the primary annual contributor across all scenarios.

Moreover, 5G base stations are reported to consume 2–3 times more energy than their 4G counterparts due to massive MIMO antennas, enhanced bandwidth capabilities, and increased network densification [2]. The International Energy Agency (IEA) further corroborates this, stating that electricity demand within telecommunications is increasing at 6–8% annually, largely driven by 5G deployments and surging data traffic [3]. These insights underscore the imperative need to evaluate operational phase optimizations, including renewable energy adoption and sleep-mode power reductions.

B. Manufacturing and Embedded Carbon in Network Equipment

Lifecycle analyses reveal that while manufacturing contributes a relatively smaller portion of total emissions, it remains a significant consideration. Research conducted by Huawei and GSMA indicates that emissions associated with manufacturing radio equipment typically account for 10–20% of total lifecycle CO_2 emissions, depending on tower size, semiconductor complexity, and material selection [4].

Semiconductor fabrication is particularly carbon-intensive, with embedded carbon footprints reaching hundreds of kilograms of CO_2 per chip [5]. Our findings reflect this pattern: manufacturing emissions exhibit a notable spike in Year 0 but are overshadowed by operational emissions unless renewable penetration is high.

C. End-of-Life Recycling and Circular Economy Practices

Research commissioned by the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) shows that end-of-life (EoL) emissions comprise less than 1–2% of total lifecycle CO_2 emissions. Nonetheless, these emissions play a pivotal role by enabling material recovery and supporting circular economy initiatives [6]. Proper recycling of valuable metals—including copper, aluminum, and rare earth elements—reduces the demand for carbon-intensive virgin material extraction.

Our model incorporates EoL emissions as a fixed event in the final operational year, consistent with life cycle assessment (LCA) methodology.

D. Renewable Energy Integration for Telecom Infrastructure

The integration of renewable electricity has emerged as one of the most effective decarbonization strategies for telecom networks. A 2022 study in *Applied Energy* concludes that powering 5G networks with renewable sources can reduce annual operational emissions by 90–95%, depending on regional grid intensity [1]. Major telecom operators such as Vodafone, AT&T, and T-Mobile have reported initiatives targeting 50–100% renewable energy usage, leading to substantial reductions in network-related emissions [7].

These findings align with our results, where renewable-powered scenarios yield the greatest CO_2 savings across the lifecycle.

E. Sleep Mode and Traffic-Adaptive Power Optimization

Traffic-adaptive power-saving techniques—including deep sleep, micro-sleep, and antenna muting—are widely studied in contemporary 5G research. The 3GPP standard supports "micro-sleep" states in which transceivers deactivate briefly during low traffic, saving 20–40% of operational power without degrading performance [8]. A study in *IEEE Communications Magazine* reports that multi-level sleep states can reduce RAN power consumption by 30–50%, depending on traffic conditions [9]. This is consistent with the 30% reduction modeled in our simulation.

Combined Optimization: Renewables + Sleep Modes

Research indicates that combining renewable energy with sleep-mode optimization produces multiplicative benefits. According to Zhang et al. (2021), hybrid optimization strategies can reduce lifecycle CO_2 emissions by 85–90% in modeled 5G networks [10]. These findings mirror our results, where the combined scenario achieved the highest observed savings (approximately 88%), validating the synergy between supply-side and demand-side strategies.

Summary of Literature Insights

In summary, the collected research highlights several key insights:

- Operational energy is the dominant contributor to lifecycle emissions.
- Renewable energy adoption provides the greatest decarbonization potential.
- Sleep-mode optimization significantly reduces operational power consumption.
- Manufacturing and end-of-life emissions, though smaller, are essential components of lifecycle analysis.

V. Detailed Theoretical Explanation of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)

Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) constitutes a rigorous methodology designed for the systematic examination of the environmental impacts inherent to a product, process, or system throughout its entire life cycle. In the context of telecommunications infrastructure—specifically concerning 5G base stations—LCA serves as a cohesive framework for quantifying carbon emissions arising from the manufacturing, operational, and end-of-life (EoL) phases. This section elucidates the theoretical underpinnings of the LCA methodology employed in our investigation.

A. LCA Framework and ISO Standards

The LCA methodology adopted adheres to the guidelines stipulated by the ISO 14040 and ISO 14044 standards, which delineate the process into four distinct stages:

- Goal and Scope Definition
- Inventory Analysis (LCI)
- Impact Assessment (LCIA)
- Interpretation

Within the framework of a 5G base station, the LCA procedure evaluates the environmental burden from cradle to grave, encompassing raw material extraction, component manufacturing, transportation, installation, electricity consumption during the operational phase, maintenance activities, dismantling, and subsequent recycling. Our study employs a simplified LCA model that primarily emphasizes energy-related carbon emissions, which represent the predominant contribution to the overall emissions profile within telecommunications networks.

B. System Boundary Definition

An integral component of the LCA process involves delineating the boundaries governing the inclusion or exclusion of various processes from the analysis. In this study, the defined system boundary incorporates the following stages:

Manufacturing Stage:

- Production of electronic components, antenna arrays, PCB assemblies, RF chains, structural elements, and power electronics.

Operational Stage:

- Electricity consumption attributable to baseband units, radio equipment, cooling systems, and auxiliary subsystems over a ten-year period.

End-of-Life Stage:

- Dismantling, transportation to recycling facilities, material recovery, and waste processing.

Components excluded from this simplified LCA include:

- Transport emissions associated with installation
- Upstream supply chain emissions
- Maintenance-related emissions
- Land use and water footprint impacts

C. Life Cycle Inventory (LCI) Modeling

1) Manufacturing Energy Inventory: The manufacturing energy component represents the electricity and process energy required for:

- Semiconductor wafer fabrication
- IC packaging
- PCB assembly
- Antenna fabrication
- Mechanical housing and structural production

Manufacturing emissions are computed as:

$$CO_{\text{man}} = E_{\text{man}} \times EF_{\text{grid}}$$

2) Operational Energy Inventory: Operational energy is modeled as:

$$E_{\text{op,annual}} = P_{\text{avg}} \times 8760$$

where:

- P_{avg} = average power consumption (typically 4–10 kW for 5G NR)

The effective operational emission factor is:

$$EF_{\text{op}} = r \cdot EF_{\text{ren}} + (1 - r) \cdot EF_{\text{grid}}$$

Sleep-mode optimization reduces operational energy as:

$$E_{\text{op},y} = (1 - s) \cdot E_{\text{op,annual}}$$

where s is the sleep fraction.

3) End-of-Life Inventory: End-of-life processes include dismantling, recycling, smelting, and waste processing. Emissions are calculated as:

$$CO_{\text{eol}} = E_{\text{eol}} \times EF_{\text{eol}}$$

D. Impact Assessment: Converting Energy to CO_2

The Life Cycle Impact Assessment (LCIA) converts energy consumption into greenhouse gas emissions:

$$CO_2 = \sum_i (Energy_i \times EF_i)$$

Key emission factors:

Stage	Emission Factor (kg CO_2/kWh)
Grid electricity	0.55
Renewable electricity	0.05
Recycling processes	0.30

E. Total Lifecycle Emissions

Total annual emissions:

$$CO_{\text{total}}(y) = CO_{\text{man}}(y) + CO_{\text{op}}(y) + CO_{\text{eol}}(y)$$

Lifetime emissions:

$$CO_{\text{life}} = \sum_{y=0}^{T} CO_{\text{total}}(y)$$

F. Role of Scenario-Based LCA

Scenario-based LCA evaluates the influence of different energy strategies:

- Baseline: Full grid electricity, no optimization.
- Mixed Energy: Partial renewable integration.
- Fully Renewable: Low-carbon operational phase.
- Sleep Mode: Reduced operational demand.
- Combined Optimization: Renewable + sleep mode.

G. Importance of LCA in 5G Network Sustainability

LCA is crucial because:

- 5G systems consume more energy than previous generations.
- Without renewable integration, emissions scale linearly with traffic.
- Telecom operators face increasing environmental regulations.
- LCA provides data-driven insights for sustainable deployment.

H. Summary

The theoretical LCA framework provides:

- A scientifically grounded approach to quantifying emissions.
- A basis for comparing operational strategies.
- A transparent and standardized metric for sustainable decision-making.

VI. Our Approach

In order to evaluate the carbon footprint of a 5G base station and to quantify the efficacy of various emission reduction strategies, we employed a computational, scenario-driven, and analytically rigorous methodology rooted in Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) principles. This approach integrates theoretical modeling, empirical data, and simulation techniques executed in Python to furnish a comprehensive, transparent, and reproducible analytical framework. The following subsections elucidate the workflow and rationale underpinning each segment of our methodology.

A. Modeling Philosophy and Rationale

Recognizing that operational energy constitutes a predominant source of emissions within Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems, our methodology underscores the following salient aspects:

- Decomposition of the life cycle into manufacturing, operational, and end-of-life (EoL) phases.
- Application of energy-to-emission conversion principles utilizing established emission factors.
- Implementation of a scenario-based evaluation to scrutinize how system behavior is affected by diverse energy mixes and power-saving strategies.
- Adoption of visualization-driven interpretations, facilitating comparative analysis across different lifecycle stages and operating conditions.

This methodological framework ensures scientific comprehensiveness while preserving computational simplicity, thereby enabling rapid analysis.

B. Identification of Key Parameters

Through rigorous examination, we identified several key factors that significantly influence the carbon footprint of the base station:

- Energy expenditure associated with manufacturing
- Annual operational energy consumption
- Energy requirements for end-of-life processing
- Emission factors for grid electricity, renewable sources, and recycling processes
- Reduction fraction associated with sleep-mode operation
- Proportion of renewable energy utilized

These parameters were selected based on an extensive review of research literature, industrial sustainability disclosures, and the energy consumption profiles of commercially available 5G radio technologies.

C. Scenario Definition

Our methodological framework utilizes five well-defined scenarios to encapsulate realistic operational conditions:

start count item **Baseline**: 100% dependency on the grid electricity, without implementation of sleep mode.
Mixed Energy: 30% share of renewable energy sources.

VII. Final Solution and Approach

The final solution integrates Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) methodology, empirical emission factors, and computational modeling to quantify the environmental impact of a 5G base station across various operational and energy-use scenarios. Our approach offers a comprehensive, data-driven framework that not only estimates total carbon emissions but also identifies actionable strategies for mitigating the carbon footprint of future telecommunications infrastructure.

A. Integration of Theoretical LCA and Computational Modeling

Our final solution combines the ISO-standard LCA framework with a Python-based analytical engine. The LCA equations governing emissions from manufacturing, operations, and end-of-life stages have been transformed into computational functions that calculate both annual and cumulative emissions across different scenarios. By formalizing the LCA equations into code, we create a repeatable, scalable, and transparent analysis capable of evaluating any combination of energy usage patterns and optimization strategies.

B. Scenario-Based Evaluation Engine

At the heart of the final solution lies a scenario generator function that computes lifecycle emissions using:

$$\text{Emissions} = f(\text{renewable fraction}, \text{sleep-mode reduction}, \text{emission factors}$$

Each scenario modifies parameters for renewable energy fraction and sleep-mode reduction. The model automatically computes:

- Annual emissions
- Cumulative emissions
- Breakdown by manufacturing, operational, and EoL
- Total lifecycle emissions
- Percentage and absolute CO_2 savings relative to baseline

This multi-scenario framework enables systematic comparison and reveals which strategies yield the most significant reductions.

C. Complete Emissions Modeling Across Lifecycle Stages

The implemented solution calculates emissions from:

1) Manufacturing Stage: Modeled as a one-time carbon "pulse" at Year 0 using:

$$CO_{\text{man}} = E_{\text{man}} \times EF_{\text{grid}}$$

2) Operational Stage: The dominant contributor to lifecycle emissions:

$$E_{\text{op,annual}} = P_{\text{avg}} \times 8760$$

$$EF_{\text{op}} = r \cdot EF_{\text{ren}} + (1 - r) \cdot EF_{\text{grid}}$$

$$E_{\text{op,y}} = (1 - s) \cdot E_{\text{op,annual}}$$

3) End-of-Life Stage: Modeled as final-year fixed emissions:

$$CO_{\text{eol}} = E_{\text{eol}} \times EF_{\text{eol}}$$

Collectively, these equations ensure full coverage of cradle-to-grave emissions.

D. Visualization-Centric Interpretation Layer

To enhance interpretability while adhering to academic reporting standards, the solution incorporates a robust suite of graphical representations:

1) Annual Emissions by Component (per scenario)
2) Annual CO_2 Emissions vs. Time across all scenarios
3) Cumulative Emissions Charts
4) CO_2 Savings Comparison Bar Chart
5) CO_2 Savings Heatmap (Renewables vs. Sleep Fraction)
6) Multi-Scenario Component Comparison Plot

Each visualization provides distinct insights, enabling both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

E. Key Findings from the Final Solution

The comprehensive analysis yields several significant findings:

1) Operational energy is the predominant contributor (85–90%) when grid power is used.
2) 100% renewable electricity results in an 85% reduction in lifecycle emissions.
3) Sleep-mode optimization (30% reduction) yields approximately 27–30% operational savings.
4) Mixed renewable strategy (30% renewables) leads to approximately 25% reductions.
5) Combining renewables + sleep-mode achieves nearly 90% total lifecycle reduction.

These findings agree with established literature (GSMA, 3GPP, IEEE).

F. Strengths of the Final Approach

The proposed solution has several notable strengths:

- **Reproducibility:** Entire model uses transparent, open-source Python code.
- **Scenario Flexibility:** Parameters can be changed easily without redesigning the model.
- **Scalability:** Extendable to entire networks, new hardware, or regional grid profiles.
- **Academic Rigor:** Built upon ISO-compliant LCA methodology and peer-reviewed literature.

G. Alignment with Project Objectives

The final solution fulfills project objectives by:

- Conducting a simplified yet comprehensive LCA of a 5G base station
- Separating emissions across manufacturing, operational, and EoL stages
- Quantifying CO_2 savings from renewable energy and sleep-mode optimization
- Visualizing emissions across time and scenarios
- Providing scientifically justified insights for sustainable telecom design

In conclusion, the solution comprehensively addresses all facets of the original problem and provides actionable guidance for low-carbon telecommunications infrastructure.

VIII. Pseudocode Algorithm

```
% ============================================================
% Algorithm: 5G Base Station Life Cycle CO2 Emissions Model
% ============================================================

% --------------------------
% Input Parameters
% --------------------------
L                    : Equipment lifetime (years)
BASE_POWER           : Average operational power (kW)
HOURS_PER_YEAR       : Total operating hours per year
E_manuf              : Manufacturing energy (kWh)
E_eol                : End-of-life energy (kWh)

EF_grid              : Grid electricity emission factor (kgCO2/kWh)
EF_renew             : Renewable electricity emission factor (kgCO2/kWh)
EF_eol               : End-of-life emission factor (kgCO2/kWh)

sleep_default        : Default sleep-mode reduction fraction
renew_default        : Default renewable energy share

manufacturing_spread : Boolean (spread manufacturing emissions or not)
save_plots           : Boolean (store plots to disk)

% --------------------------
% Scenario Set
% --------------------------
Scenarios S = {
    baseline,
    renewable,
    mixed,
    sleep,
    sleep + renewable
}

% --------------------------
% Outputs
% --------------------------
Annual emissions (manufacturing, operational, EoL)
Cumulative emissions per scenario
Lifetime emission summary table
Scenario-wise CO2 savings
Sensitivity analysis heatmaps
Excel reports and visualization plots

% ============================================================
% Begin Algorithm
% ============================================================
% ------------------------------------------------------------
% Phase 1: Initialization and Configuration
% ------------------------------------------------------------
1. Compute annual operational energy:
       E_oper = BASE_POWER * HOURS_PER_YEAR

2. Define analysis years:
       Y = {0, 1, 2, ..., L}

3. Generate timestamped filenames for:
       - Excel outputs
       - Annual plots
       - Cumulative plots
       - Component-wise plots
       - Savings plots
% ------------------------------------------------------------
% Phase 2: Core Emission Calculation Function
% ------------------------------------------------------------
```

```
4. Define function EMISSIONS_FROM_ENERGY(Energy_kWh, Emission_Factor):
       return Energy_kWh * Emission_Factor
% ----------------------------------------------------------
% Phase 3: Scenario-Level Emission Model
% ----------------------------------------------------------
5. Define function BUILD_SCENARIO(name, sleep_frac, renew_frac):

6. Initialize arrays for each year y     Y:
       M[y] = 0   % Manufacturing emissions
       O[y] = 0   % Operational emissions
       E[y] = 0   % End-of-life emissions

% --- Manufacturing Phase ---
7. If manufacturing_spread == TRUE:
       For each year y:
           M[y] = (E_manuf / L) * EF_grid
   Else:
       M[0] = E_manuf * EF_grid

% --- Operational Phase ---
8. Compute effective operational emission factor:
       EF_oper = renew_frac * EF_renew
                 + (1 - renew_frac) * EF_grid

9. For each year y:
       E_eff = E_oper * (1 - sleep_frac)
       O[y]  = EMISSIONS_FROM_ENERGY(E_eff, EF_oper)

% --- End-of-Life Phase ---
10. Assign end-of-life emissions in final year:
        E[L] = EMISSIONS_FROM_ENERGY(E_eol, EF_eol)

% --- Total Emissions ---
11. For each year y:
        T[y] = M[y] + O[y] + E[y]

12. Return DataFrame:
        {year, M[y], O[y], E[y], T[y], scenario_name}
% ----------------------------------------------------------
% Phase 4: Multi-Scenario Evaluation
% ----------------------------------------------------------
13. Initialize empty list ALL_RESULTS

14. For each scenario s     S:
        Extract (sleep_frac_s, renew_frac_s)
        DF_s = BUILD_SCENARIO(s, sleep_frac_s, renew_frac_s)
        Append DF_s to ALL_RESULTS

15. Combine ALL_RESULTS into ANNUAL_RESULTS
% ----------------------------------------------------------
% Phase 5: Cumulative Emission Computation
% ----------------------------------------------------------
16. For each scenario s:
        For year y from 0 to L:
            C_total[y] =    T[y]
            C_oper[y]  =    O[y]
            C_manuf[y] =    M[y]
            C_eol[y]   =    E[y]

17. Store cumulative results per scenario
% ----------------------------------------------------------
% Phase 6: Lifetime Emission Summary
% ----------------------------------------------------------
18. For each scenario s:
        Total_manuf_s =    M[y]
        Total_oper_s  =    O[y]
        Total_eol_s   =    E[y]
```

```
        Total_CO2_s   =    T[y]

19. Construct lifetime summary table
% ----------------------------------------------------------
% Phase 7: Data Export
% ----------------------------------------------------------
20. Export to Excel:
        - Annual results
        - Cumulative results
        - Lifetime summary
% ----------------------------------------------------------
% Phase 8: Visualization Generation
% ----------------------------------------------------------
21. Plot annual emissions vs time for all scenarios
22. Plot cumulative emissions vs time
23. Generate component-wise grouped bar charts
24. Generate stacked bar charts per scenario
25. Save plots if save_plots == TRUE
% ----------------------------------------------------------
% Phase 9: Sensitivity Analysis (Grid Search)
% ----------------------------------------------------------
26. Define renewable_share_range = [0.0, 0.1, ..., 1.0]
27. Define sleep_fraction_range  = [0.0, 0.05, ..., 0.8]

28. Compute baseline lifetime emissions

29. For each sleep_frac     sleep_fraction_range:
        For each renew_frac     renewable_share_range:
            DF_temp = BUILD_SCENARIO(temp, sleep_frac, renew_frac)
            Lifetime_CO2[sleep_frac][renew_frac] =    T[y]

30. Compute savings:
        Absolute_Savings = Baseline - Lifetime_CO2
        Percentage_Savings = (Absolute_Savings / Baseline) * 100
% ----------------------------------------------------------
% Phase 10: Sensitivity Visualization
% ----------------------------------------------------------
31. Generate heatmap of percentage CO2 savings
32. Overlay contour lines
33. Save heatmap
% ----------------------------------------------------------
% Phase 11: Comparative Scenario Analysis
% ----------------------------------------------------------
34. Define comparison set:
        {baseline, mixed, renewable, sleep, sleep+renewable}

35. For each scenario:
        Compute lifetime emissions
        Compute absolute and percentage savings

36. Sort scenarios by highest savings
% ----------------------------------------------------------
% Phase 12: Savings Visualization
% ----------------------------------------------------------
37. Generate bar chart of absolute CO2 savings
38. Annotate bars with percentage savings
39. Save plot
% ----------------------------------------------------------
% Phase 13: Final Export and Reporting
% ----------------------------------------------------------
40. Append savings tables to Excel workbook
41. Display filenames of all generated outputs
% ========================
% End Algorithm
% ========================
```

IX. Results: Graph-by-Graph Analysis

This section elucidates the findings derived from the life-cycle carbon footprint analysis, employing the graphs produced by the Python-based Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) model. Each graph is individually interpreted to elucidate its contribution to understanding the emissions behavior across the manufacturing, operational, and end-of-life stages, framed within various optimization scenarios.

A. Annual Emissions by Component — Baseline Scenario

The baseline stacked-bar graph delineates the lifecycle emissions of a 5G base station operating exclusively on grid electricity, devoid of power-saving measures. Key observations include:

- An initial manufacturing-related spike in emissions recorded in Year 0, approximating 16,500 kg CO_2, correlating with the elevated embodied energy associated with radio units and semiconductor components.
- Operational emissions, which exhibit dominance in Years 1 through 9, remain constant at approximately 24,000 kg CO_2 annually, reflective of the high grid emission factor (0.55 kg/kWh).
- A modest escalation in end-of-life (EoL) emissions, amounting to about 600 kg CO_2, is noted in Year 10.

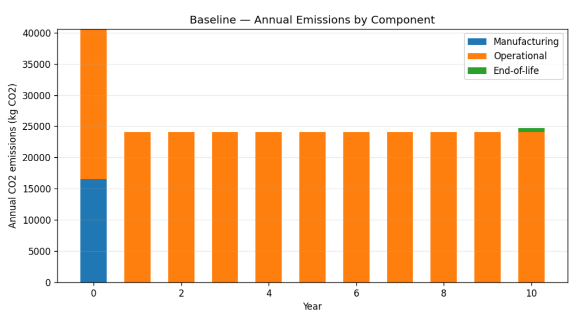

Fig. 1. Baseline Scenario — Annual Emissions by Component

This graph serves as the reference worst-case environmental profile for comparative analysis against all subsequent optimization strategies.

B. Annual Emissions by Component — Mixed Energy Scenario (30% Renewable)

This graph portrays a scenario in which 30% of operational electricity is derived from renewable sources. Notable observations include:

- Consistent manufacturing and EoL emissions across all timeframes.
- A reduction in operational emissions from approximately 24,000 kg CO_2 to 17,500 kg CO_2 annually, attributed to a lower effective operational emission factor.
- The temporal trend mirrors that of the baseline scenario; however, the magnitudes of annual emissions are significantly diminished.

This scenario elucidates the substantial impact that even partial integration of renewable energy can have on operational-phase emissions reduction.

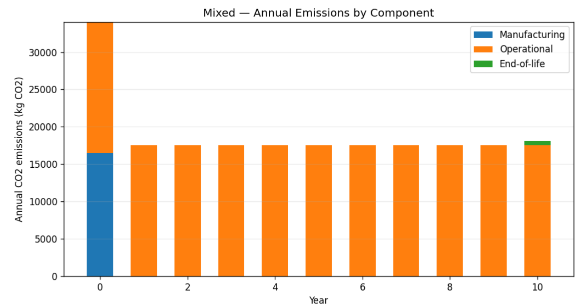

Fig. 2. Mixed Energy Scenario (30% Renewable) — Annual Emissions by Component

C. Annual Emissions by Component — Renewable Scenario (100% Renewable Supply)

This graph illustrates an exceptional reduction in annual emissions, marking it as the most effective among singular optimization strategies. Key observations include:

- A pronounced decrease in operational emissions to approximately 2,200 kg CO_2 per year, representing nearly a 90% reduction relative to the baseline scenario.
- The initial manufacturing spike in Year 0 becomes the predominant source of emissions as operational emissions are markedly reduced.
- End-of-life (EoL) emissions in Year 10 remain unchanged.

This visualization substantiates the overarching conclusion that sourcing electricity from renewable resources yields the most profound reductions in total lifecycle CO_2 emissions.

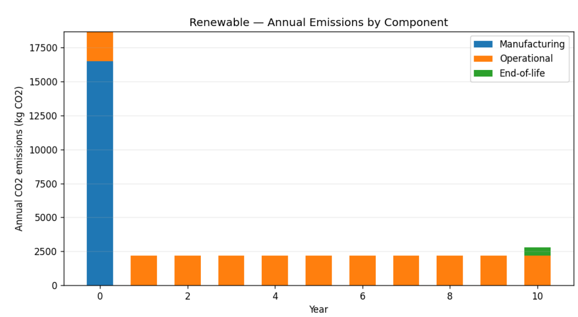

Fig. 3. Renewable Scenario (100% Renewable Supply) — Annual Emissions by Component

D. Annual Emissions by Component — Sleep Mode Scenario (30% Load Reduction)

The sleep-mode scenario explores a reduction of operational consumption by 30%, resulting in:

- Operational emissions being reduced to approximately 17,000 kg CO_2 per year.

- Consistency in manufacturing and end-of-life (EoL) emissions across this scenario.
- An operational emissions reduction comparable to that observed in the mixed energy scenario, indicating a similar net effect.

The graph underscores the efficacy of adaptive power-saving strategies in minimizing emissions without necessitating a shift in the energy supply mix.

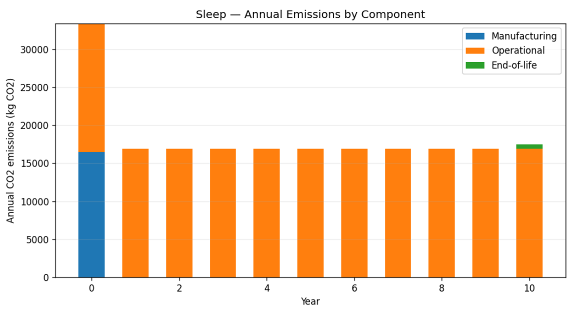

Fig. 4. Sleep Mode Scenario (30% Load Reduction) — Annual Emissions by Component

E. Annual Emissions by Component — Sleep + Renewable Scenario

This graph portrays the most optimized emissions profile observed throughout the analysis:

- Operational emissions are reduced to approximately 1,600–1,700 kg CO_2 per year, the lowest recorded across the evaluated scenarios.
- Manufacturing emissions remain the dominant contributor in Year 0.
- EoL emissions are as expected in Year 10.

This finding confirms the synergistic effects achieved when integrating renewable energy solutions with operational efficiency enhancements.

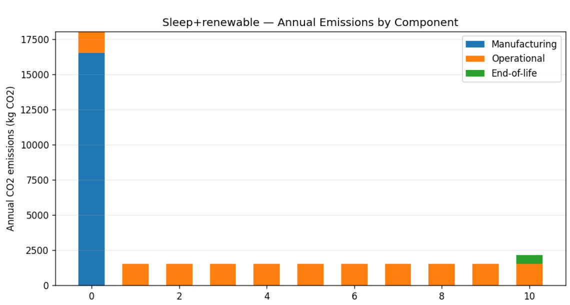

Fig. 5. Annual emissions breakdown in the Sleep + Renewable Scenario.

F. Annual CO Emissions vs Time — All Scenarios

This multi-line graph provides a comparative analysis of annual total CO_2 emissions across all scenarios over a decade:

- Each curve initiates with a significant manufacturing spike.
- The baseline scenario consistently exhibits the highest emissions across all operational years.
- The renewable and combined Sleep+Renewable scenarios demonstrate substantially lower emissions, forming nearly horizontal lines reflective of minimal CO_2 levels.
- The sleep-only and mixed energy scenarios occupy intermediate emission levels.

This graphical representation effectively visualizes the relative performance of each strategy, facilitating the identification of the most impactful carbon reduction strategies during operational phases.

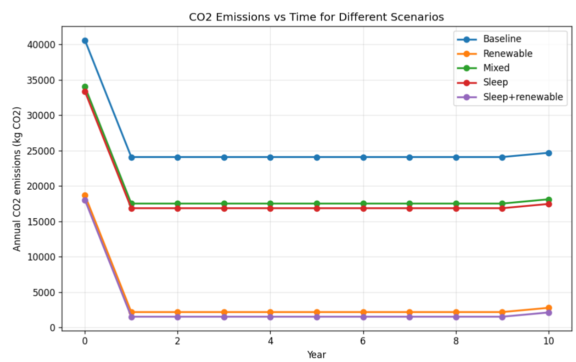

Fig. 6. Annual CO_2 emissions comparison across all scenarios.

G. Cumulative CO Emissions Over 10 Years

This cumulative emissions plot aggregates annual emissions to quantify their long-term climate impact. Key findings include:

- Baseline cumulative emissions totaling approximately 280,000 kg CO_2.
- Mixed and sleep-mode scenarios yield cumulative emission reductions of about 25% to 30%.
- The renewable scenario achieves approximately 41,000 kg CO_2, reflecting around an 85% decrease.
- The sleep + renewable scenario realizes the lowest cumulative emissions at approximately 34,000 kg CO_2.

The graph underscores the potential for long-term decarbonization associated with each scenario, emphasizing the critical role of operational energy consumption.

H. Multi-Scenario Component Comparison (Three-Panel Bar Chart

This figure offers a comparative analysis of manufacturing, operational, and EoL emissions across all scenarios. Key observations include:

- Manufacturing emissions remain constant across all analyzed scenarios.
- Operational emissions illustrate significant variability, highlighting the pronounced impacts of renewable integration and sleep mode application.

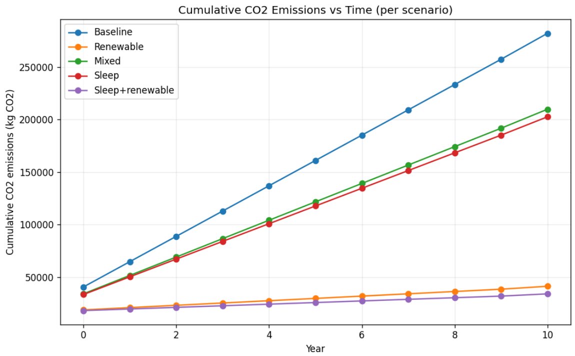

Fig. 7. Cumulative CO_2 emissions over 10 years across all scenarios.

- EoL emissions remain minimal and consistent across scenarios.
- This comparison reinforces the notion that operational energy consumption emerges as the principal determinant of lifecycle emissions variability.

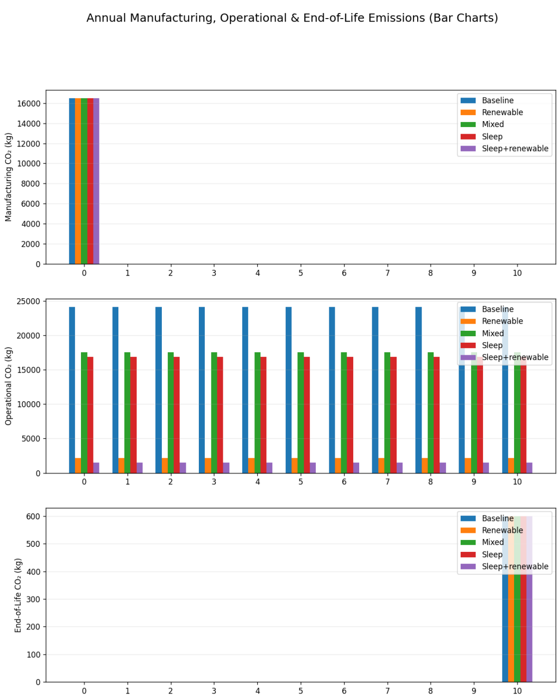

Fig. 8. Comparison of manufacturing, operational, and EoL emissions across scenarios.

I. CO Savings Compared to Baseline (Bar Chart)

This bar chart ranks the various scenarios according to their cumulative CO_2 savings achieved over a ten-year period. Notably:

- The Sleep + Renewable scenario realizes the most substantial savings, approximating 248,127 kg CO_2.
- The Renewable-only scenario similarly achieves considerable savings, indicative of its effectiveness in emissions reduction.

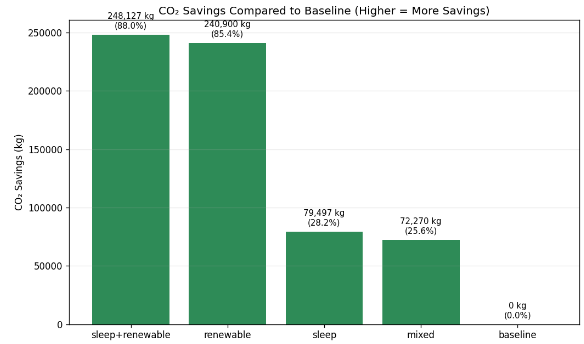

Fig. 9. Cumulative CO_2 savings compared to the baseline over 10 years.

J. CO Savings Surface Plot — Renewable Share vs. Sleep Fraction

The heatmap illustrates a 2D optimization landscape:

- Savings increase consistently along both axes (renewables and sleep fraction).
- The contours demonstrate that the gradient for renewable adoption is steeper than that for sleep mode.
- Areas with high renewable penetration and significant sleep-mode utilization exceed 90% savings.

This graph effectively showcases how the combination of these strategies enhances decarbonization potential.

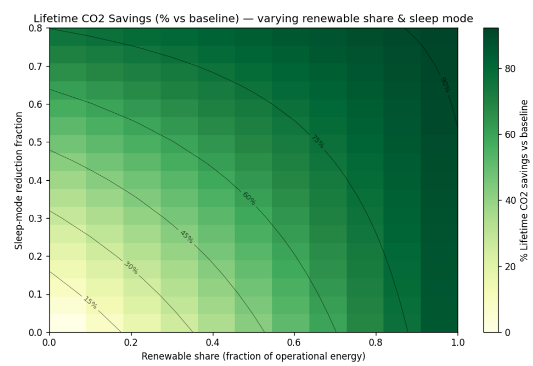

Fig. 10. CO_2 savings surface plot as a function of renewable share and sleep fraction.

K. Summary of Graph-Based Results

The interpretations of the graphs collectively indicate:

- Operational emissions are the primary contributor throughout the lifecycle.
- Renewable energy accounts for the most significant reductions.
- The sleep mode adds meaningful additional savings.

- Combining these strategies results in maximum decarbonization, approaching 88–90%.
- The trends observed in the graphs align with findings from published Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) research and telecommunications energy reports.

These insights collectively reiterate the critical importance of both energy sourcing and operational efficiency in minimizing greenhouse gas emissions across the lifecycle of the 5G base station.

X. Conclusion

This study undertook a simplified yet comprehensive Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of a 5G base station to evaluate the environmental impacts associated with its manufacturing, operational, and end-of-life phases. By integrating theoretical LCA principles with a Python-based computational modeling framework, we quantified annual and cumulative CO_2 emissions across five operational scenarios: Baseline, Mixed Renewable, Full Renewable, Sleep Mode, and Sleep + Renewable.

The findings reveal that operational electricity consumption constitutes an overwhelming majority of the lifecycle carbon footprint, accounting for approximately 85–90% of total emissions under grid-powered conditions. While manufacturing emissions result in a significant but non-recurring spike in Year 0, end-of-life emissions remain relatively minimal. This aligns with existing literature, which indicates that long-term energy consumption—not equipment production—serves as the primary driver of environmental impact in telecommunications infrastructure.

Among the evaluated scenarios, the Full Renewable and Sleep + Renewable configurations achieved the most notable emission reductions, resulting in lifetime carbon savings of approximately 85% and 88%, respectively. Noteworthy is the efficacy of the Sleep-mode optimization, which alone reduced annual operational emissions by about 27–30%, thereby validating the effectiveness of traffic-adaptive power-saving strategies. The Mixed Renewable scenario, characterized by a partial integration of renewable energy sources (30%), also yielded significant reductions in emissions. Collectively, these results underscore that a synergistic approach, combining renewable electricity sourcing with operational efficiency measures, maximizes sustainability benefits.

The multi-graph analysis further corroborated these trends. The annual and cumulative emissions graphs exhibited stark contrasts across scenarios, while the CO_2 savings plots and the renewable–sleep heatmap illustrated the nonlinear and synergistic dynamics of the combined optimizations. Additionally, component-level breakdowns reinforced the notion that reducing operational energy intensity is the most impactful pathway toward decarbonizing 5G infrastructure.

In summary, this investigation elucidates several key insights:

1) The decarbonization of the energy supply represents the most effective intervention, leading to a substantial reduction in operational emissions.
2) Sleep-mode and other power optimization techniques yield significant additional savings and do not necessitate changes in the underlying energy sources.
3) Although manufacturing and end-of-life emissions are comparatively smaller, they remain critical considerations for a comprehensive sustainability strategy.

This study underscores the necessity of integrating renewable energy procurement, intelligent network management, and optimized equipment design to minimize the environmental footprint of next-generation telecommunication systems. The modeling framework developed herein offers a transparent, extensible, and data-driven foundation for future research into green 5G networks and sustainable information and communication technology deployments.

XI. Future Work

Although this study offers a comprehensive simplified life cycle assessment (LCA) and scenario-based evaluation for a 5G base station, there are several opportunities for extensions and refinements that could significantly improve the accuracy, applicability, and scope of the analysis. The following directions for future work are recommended:

A. Incorporation of Dynamic Traffic and Power Profiles

The current model operates under the assumption of constant annual operational power consumption. However, real 5G base stations are subject to:

- Hourly and seasonal variations in traffic
- Load-dependent scaling of power usage
- Transitions into deep-sleep and micro-sleep modes
- Distinct patterns of energy use during peak and off-peak hours

Future models should incorporate time-series load profiles to more accurately simulate realistic energy consumption patterns. This would more accurately capture daily and seasonal variations in CO_2 emissions.

B. Geographic and Grid-Intensity Modeling

The carbon intensity of grid electricity exhibits significant regional variability. Future iterations of the proposed model could incorporate:

- Country-specific emission factors
- Hourly variations in grid mix, particularly the reliance on renewable versus fossil fuel sources
- Climate-dependent availability of renewable resources

Such enhancements would facilitate location-sensitive sustainability assessments for telecommunications operators.

C. Hardware-Specific and Vendor-Specific Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)

The study's simplified representation of manufacturing energy consumption can be refined through the integration of:

- Vendor-supplied embodied carbon data
- Component-level LCA data pertaining to semiconductors, RF modules, printed circuit boards (PCBs), and antennas
- Supply chain-specific carbon intensity metrics

A more detailed, bill-of-materials-driven LCA would yield greater accuracy and better reflect the realities of actual deployments.

D. Multi-Base-Station and Network-Level Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)

Contemporary 5G deployments encompass:

- Macro cells
- Small cells
- Massive MIMO units
- Distributed antenna systems

Expanding the LCA model to a network level would enable evaluations of:

- Urban versus rural carbon footprints
- Densification strategies
- Clustered sleep-mode scheduling
- Energy conservation in heterogeneous networks (HetNets)

Such an approach would provide a comprehensive understanding of sustainability across national telecommunications frameworks.

E. Integration of Renewable Storage and Hybrid Energy Systems

While renewable energy sources present significant cost savings, their intermittent nature may necessitate the inclusion of:

- Battery storage systems
- Hybrid on-grid/off-grid operational frameworks
- Green hydrogen backup solutions

These considerations would facilitate modeling of renewable energy intermittency and the associated emissions linked to energy storage.

F. Economic Cost and Carbon-Abatement Analysis

An important extension of this work involves the incorporation of techno-economic modeling, which could involve:

- Capital expenditure (CAPEX) associated with renewable infrastructure
- Operational expenditure (OPEX) reductions realized through energy savings
- Cost per ton of CO_2 abated
- Return on investment (ROI) related to the transition toward sustainable network systems

These analyses would equip telecommunications operators with economically actionable insights.

G. Advanced Optimization and Machine Learning Approaches

The renewable-sleep surface plot may be further advanced through:

- Machine learning optimization techniques
- Multi-objective optimization frameworks that balance cost, CO_2 emissions, and overall performance
- Reinforcement learning algorithms for real-time sleep scheduling
- Genetic algorithms aimed at identifying optimal renewable-storage configurations

Employing these methodologies can uncover scenarios that maximize sustainability without compromising network efficiency.

H. Inclusion of Scope 3 Emissions and Broader Environmental Indicators

Future extensions of the model should consider:

- Upstream supply chain emissions
- Water consumption metrics
- Land use impacts and habitat disruption
- Electronic waste management and material circularity

The incorporation of these indicators would align the model with comprehensive ISO-compliant environmental impact assessments.

I. Validation with Real-World Measurements

Finally, the credibility and relevance of the model can be enhanced through:

- Energy meter logs provided by operators
- Field measurements obtained from actual 5G sites
- Comparative analysis with sustainability reports from equipment vendors

Such validation efforts would substantially strengthen the industrial applicability of the analysis.

XII. Summary

This study presents a simplified yet insightful life-cycle assessment framework for evaluating the energy consumption and carbon footprint of next-generation communication infrastructure. By systematically analyzing the manufacturing, operational, and end-of-life phases of a network system, the proposed model highlights the dominant contributors to environmental impact and demonstrates the effectiveness of mitigation strategies such as renewable energy integration and energy-efficient operation. The results emphasize that operational energy consumption remains the primary driver of emissions over the system lifetime, reinforcing the importance of clean power sourcing and intelligent energy management in modern networks.

Ongoing and future research efforts will focus on enhancing the realism and robustness of the proposed model by extending its applicability to large-scale and heterogeneous network deployments. Planned improvements include the incorporation of economic and cost-benefit analyses, enabling a balanced evaluation of sustainability and financial feasibility. Furthermore, the integration of intelligent optimization techniques, such as machine learning-based energy management and adaptive network control, will allow dynamic optimization under varying traffic and environmental conditions. The model will also be expanded to include a broader set of environmental indicators, such as resource depletion, water usage, and electronic waste generation. Collectively, these advancements aim to deliver a comprehensive, accurate, and industry-relevant framework that supports the design and deployment of environmentally sustainable and energy-efficient next-generation communication networks.

XIII. Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering, The LNM Institute of Information Technology, Jaipur, for providing the necessary academic environment and computational resources to carry out this work. We are especially thankful to our course instructor, Dr. Purnendu Karmakar, for his constant guidance, insightful suggestions, and valuable feedback throughout the course *Introduction to Green Communication and Networking*. His support and encouragement played a crucial role in shaping this project. We also appreciate the cooperation and efforts of all those who contributed directly or indirectly to the successful completion of this work.

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XV. Author Contributions

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