

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Does sustainable recruitment enhance motivation? A cross-country analysis on the role of person-organization fit

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Abstract

This paper analyses the extent to which implementing sustainable recruitment practices (SRP) relates to person-organization (P-O) fit and motivation. We also examined the extent to which the collectivism and masculinity dimensions of national culture moderate the relationship between SRP and P-O fit. Drawing on the attraction-selection-attrition framework, social identity theory and stakeholder theory, the proposed hypotheses were tested in a sample of 534 prospective employees from four countries with different cultural contexts. An experimental design was used to test the proposed relationships. The obtained findings highlight the mediating role of P-O fit in the relationship between SRP and motivation. Collectivism and masculinity moderate the relationship between SRP and P-O fit. We contribute to prior research by demonstrating a link between perceptions of environmental and social sustainability and motivation, and the consideration of different countries allowed us to underline the role of national context when examining the impact of SRP.

KEYWORDS

motivation, person-organization fit, recruitment, social identity, sustainable development, sustainable human resource management

1 | INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development can be conceptualized at different levels of analysis, including, for instance, global, national, regional, and organizational (Piwosar-Sulej, 2021). At the organizational level, the Elkington Triple Bottom Line approach (Elkington, 1994) suggests that, to be sustainable, companies need to meet goals that do not compromise the economic, social, and environmental aspects of living in the present and also in the future. This vision notes that organizations should focus not only on economic value, but also on the social and environmental value they add or destroy (Henriques & Richardson, 2013).

Alongside sustainability and sustainable development, sustainable human resource management (HRM) is a complex term that can also be defined at different levels of analysis and understood from different perspectives (Aust et al., 2020). At a minimum, sustainable HRM can be related to, first, the development and implementation of sustainable work and HRM systems and, second, it can play a supporting role in the implementation of corporate sustainability strategies (Ehnert et al., 2013).

From this perspective, Ehnert, Parsa, Roper, Wagner, & Muller-Camen (2016, p. 90) defined sustainable HRM as “the adoption of HRM strategies and practices that enable the achievement of financial, social, and ecological goals, with an impact inside and outside of

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the organization and over a long-term time horizon while controlling for unintended side effects and negative feedback.” Sustainable HRM practices can be understood as those HRM practices congruent with firms' financial/economic, social, and ecological goals (Jepsen & Grob, 2015). Traditional HRM practices are commonly related to financial or economic issues, so sustainable HRM practices should be oriented to meet firms' environmental and social objectives, in addition to the economic ones. Research on social objectives is notably scarce in many developing countries (Awan, 2018).

Sustainable HRM practices are usually classified according to common categorizations of HRM practices, including HR planning, job design, recruitment and selection, training, performance appraisal or rewards (Guest et al., 2004). Some examples of sustainable HRM practices include considering environmental issues when designing job descriptions (e.g., green skills) or allowing for paid and unpaid leaves for maternity, paternity or career breaks (Jepsen & Grob, 2015).

Prior research has noted that sustainable recruitment and selection practices within HRM can contribute to a firm's sustainability by incorporating employees with a sustainability-oriented culture, who are willing to participate and initiate organizational sustainability activities, while also promoting sustainable behaviors among their colleagues (Carballo-Penela, Ruzo-Sanmartín, Álvarez-González, & Paillé, 2023).

In particular, sustainable recruitment practices (SRP) could be oriented towards designing recruitment messages which show firms' commitment to sustainability to achieve good person-organization (P-O) fit, which can ensure a strong culture of sustainability that fits with employees' values. SRP can help organizations to be more sustainable, reduce their environmental impact and improve the quality of life of their employees, which can result in positive outcomes such as satisfaction and organizational commitment (Jepsen & Grob, 2015; Tang et al., 2018). The implementation of SRP can also promote green innovation, which is a useful tool for improving performance in the circular economy (Khan et al., 2023).

Researchers from the field of green human resource management (GHRM) have paid attention to several effects of SRP, understood from the environmental side (e.g., Carballo-Penela, Ruzo-Sanmartín, Álvarez-González, & Paillé, 2023; Islam et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2023; Paillé et al., 2020; Pham et al., 2020; Zaid et al., 2018), without taking into account the social bottom line. One stream of research interested in SRP may be found in works from the recruitment literature that examine how employees or prospective employees react to corporate sustainability. These studies have mainly focused on the effects of SRP on organizational outcomes such as organizational attractiveness (e.g., Jones et al., 2014; Waples & Brachle, 2020) or job pursuit intentions (e.g., Aiman-Smith et al., 2001), while largely ignoring employee's related outcomes as motivation.

Furthermore, prior research has noted that country-specific factors such as national culture can affect employees' and future employees' perceptions because social behavior can be influenced by the dominant national culture (Wang et al., 2020). Employee and stakeholder behaviors are not only determined by objective assessments of the organizations but also by subjective perceptions that

depend on national culture. However, as most of the studies on this topic have used samples from just one country, the role of national culture in the relations around SRP have largely been ignored.

There is thus a need for further research examining the effects of SRP on employees' motivation, considering how SRP contribute to P-O fit and taking into account the role of national culture (Gallego-Álvarez & Ortas, 2017).

Taking these considerations into account and drawing on both the Attraction-Selection-Attrition framework and Social Identity theory, the main objective of this study is to shed light on the relationship between SRP and motivation. We consider the role of P-O fit when SRP are implemented and the moderating role of national culture, while examining the existence of cross country-level differences. Because stakeholder pressure regarding sustainability issues can vary by country, stakeholder theory is used to examine the moderating role of national culture. With this objective in mind, the following research questions are proposed:

1. Does SRP increase motivation?
2. Do P-O fit mediate the relationship between SRP and motivation?
3. Do the collectivism/individualism and masculinity/femininity dimensions of national moderate the relationship between SRP and P-O fit?

By answering these questions, we broaden the empirical scope of previous studies, which have primarily engaged in piecemeal analysis of single countries and fill some important research gaps.

Motivation “represents the psychological process that determines the willingness to exert a high level of effort, arousal, direction and persistence to reach goals through voluntary actions in order to satisfy needs” (Mozes et al., 2011, p. 314). Motivation activates human behavior and drives employees to achieve remarkable results (Shapiro & Stiglitz, 1984). It plays a key role in increasing employee efficiency and performance and, as a consequence, contributes to the success of organizations in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world (van Tuin et al., 2020).

Many dominant motivational schemes—such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943); the motivator-hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1959); McClelland's need theory (McClelland, 1965), Vroom's expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), equity theory (Adams, 1965) or the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1975)—are grounded in research from the first 75 years of the 20th century.

Based on these and other theories, motivational research has considered different drivers of motivation, including sociological, psychological, generational, work, and cultural factors. Those drivers are primarily related to three organizational areas, which are useful to summarize the infinite antecedents of motivation: the job, outcomes from the job and the organizational system (Amar, 2004).

The job area includes job characteristics that provide employees with satisfaction when executing tasks (e.g., job content and design, meaningfulness of the work, broader work assignments, and visibility of job achievements). The outcomes from the job refer to all intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, including wages and other monetary and

non-monetary rewards such as work–life benefits, recognition, training, and promotion opportunities. The organizational system comprises antecedents related to the organization's work environment, culture, policies, practices, organizational reputation and other related aspects that increase the organizational attractiveness for employees, including sharing information and empathy between colleagues and supervisors, reducing unnecessary controls and tactfulness or job security (Amar, 2004; Lindner, 1998).

The dynamic nature of motivation content makes it difficult to build a detailed summary of the antecedents of motivation. Understanding the motivation process requires continuous adjustments to the existing motivators to understand what effectively motivates employees. For instance, climbing the corporate ladder or decent wages were key motivators for employees in the past but are not for new generations (Amar, 2004; Casey & Sieber, 2016). Because present-day society is quite concerned about sustainability, many employees search for organizations that care for environmental and social issues and demonstrate this through their commitment to the environment or promoting women and minorities (Greening & Turban, 2000).

Some researchers (e.g., Casey & Sieber, 2016; Huber & Hirsch, 2017) have suggested that SRP could enhance motivation, but there is a lack of empirical evidence to demonstrate that link. A positive relationship between SRP and prospective employees' motivation would show that, besides being better for an organization's environmental and social performance, SRP could also play a key role in the organization's success and positively influence its economic performance.

Understanding the relationship between SRP and motivation involves shedding light on the underlying mechanisms between both variables. It would be particularly interesting to examine whether SRP showing commitment to social and environmental issues increase the perceptions of organization fit among prospective employees and how that fit can contribute to improve employee motivation. As society becomes more concerned about sustainability issues—and particularly environmental and social issues (Carballo-Penela et al., 2020; Carballo-Penela, Ruza-Sanmartín, & Sousa, 2023; López Pérez, Turnes Abelenda, & Vence Deza, 2023)—than it was some decades ago, this concern could result in greater perceptions of fit with those companies that show commitment to these issues through SRP.

Finally, national culture refers to the set of values, beliefs and norms that distinguish the members of a particular culture from different human groups (Hofstede, 1980). Shared values and behaviors can influence social practices and processes and, consequently, social behavior (Gallego-Álvarez & Ortas, 2017). National culture can shape employees' perceptions and behaviors regarding HRM practices and, because societal concern about sustainability issues varies depending on the national culture (*US News Best Country Report*, 2023), sustainable HRM practices in particular. National culture could thus be relevant for understanding the relationship between SRP and P-O fit, as it can play a role in how individuals understand and perceive SRP, which then results in higher or lower fit with the values of organizations that implement SRP.

Specifically, the collectivism/individualism and masculinity/femininity dimensions of national culture are relevant when examining employee perceptions of SRP, as Hofstede derived these dimensions from employees' answers to questions related to job characteristics which can be included in SRP. For instance, employees were asked about how important having enough time for family life or the availability of training opportunities is for them (Gelade et al., 2008). The job characteristics used by Hofstede to define collectivism/individualism and masculinity/femininity clearly match the description of SRP made in the present research. They were not, however, used when defining the other dimensions of national culture.

In this vein, prior research has noted that both dimensions are of particular relevance for research focused on sustainability (Hofman & Newman, 2014). In particular, some studies have remarked the influence of collectivism/individualism on individuals' subjective norms, which can explain differences in perceptions regarding sustainability issues (Han & Kim, 2019; Saracevic et al., 2022). The masculinity/femininity dichotomy is considered interesting when examining employees' perceptions of sustainability from the perspective of ethics and respect, particularly considering that commitment to sustainability adds instrumental value to the organizations, as we later describe when formulating Hypothesis 4.

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Stakeholder theory, the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework and social identity theory (SIT) (Turner & Tajfel, 1986) can be used for understanding how SRP may influence employees' motivation while considering cross-cultural differences among countries.

2.1 | Stakeholder theory

Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) examines how organizations deal with their stakeholders' demands in order to improve their competitive position. The theory suggests that, beyond creating value for the shareholders, companies have responsibilities to different stakeholders (e.g., employees, customers, suppliers or communities), including ethical responsibilities (Freeman et al., 2010). The consideration of ethical issues means stakeholder theory has been widely used for examining how organizations address sustainability issues (Waheed & Zhang, 2022).

More specifically, prior research has noted that, in international contexts, stakeholder behaviors and expectations regarding corporations are partially explained by their divergent cultural backgrounds (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Different national cultures involve different values and norms, which then form social practices. Social practices shape the behavior of national members, because individual behavior is understood within the view of the prevailing culture (Gallego-Álvarez & Ortas, 2017). Differences in national cultures are particularly relevant when addressing sustainability issues, because questions

such as national regulations or institutional contexts influence the importance given and ethical sensitivity to environmental and social issues (Álvarez-Pérez et al., 2020).

2.2 | The ASA framework

The ASA framework suggests that organizations depend on the types of people they contain, and that people are a function on the ASA circle. From a situationist position, Schneider (1987) has pointed out that situations produce behavior. Firms are characterized as situations that contain patterned behaviors, including people whose behaviors make organizations what they are. Individuals engage in particular behaviors because they were previously attracted to a particular environment, were selected by that environment and then remained in it. From the ASA framework view, attraction depends on people's own interests and personality. Employees are thus attracted to organizations that are similar to the individuals who join them. Organizational goals also influence the type of employees attracted, as companies recruit, select and hire people with the kind of competencies needed to meet organizational goals (selection). Once people join an organization, they assess its fit and, if they do not fit, they leave (attrition) (Schneider, 1987). In this process, the similarity among the people who stay increases, which homogenizes their behaviors.

2.3 | Social identity theory

From the SIT perspective, organizational identification depends on the individuals' perceptions of the image of the firm. Organizational identification occurs when a firm is perceived in a positive light. Social identification influences the perceptions of individuals' self-concept and the ideal self in particular. To maintaining the ideal self, individuals try to meet organizational expectations, which enhances employee motivation.

Organizational identification refers to “a cognitive linking between the definition of the organization and the definition of the self” (Dutton et al., 1994, p. 242). The organizational identity literature has underlined that employee perceptions of the organization's image influence identification with the company, and as the perceptions of organizational attractiveness and exclusivity increase, organizational identification also becomes stronger (Dutton et al., 1994; Glavas & Godwin, 2013).

SRP can contain information about the organization that is recruiting in addition to information about the announced job position. That information can be used by prospective employees to form an image of the employer (Waples & Brachle, 2020). Because sustainability issues have become relevant and are socially regarded as positive, organizations often provide information about their strategies and commitment to environmental and social causes. Firms that are recognized for making efforts to preserve the environment or for demonstrating concern for the welfare of their workers are often considered distinctive, prestigious and attractive by people outside and

inside the organization (Jones et al., 2014). As a consequence, organizational identification with companies committed to environmental and social issues is likely to be strong.

Strong social identification influences perceptions of the ideal self. From an external perspective, the ideal self is formed based on expectations from reference groups (e.g., employers), whose role expectations individuals try to meet to achieve acceptance and gain status to reach the desired ideal self (Leonard et al., 1999). Because individuals need to maintain or enhance the phenomenal self (Leonard et al., 1995; Snyder & Williams, 1982), their behavior tends to be consistent with existing self-perceptions; people tend to maintain and improve the internalized self-view (Leonard et al., 1995).

Maintaining and improving the internalized self-view produces intrinsic/extrinsic motivation. Dissonance occurs when there are differences between social feedback and an individual's self-perceptions. Because dissonance means distance with the reference groups, individuals try to reduce dissonance by using different adaptive strategies to meet the expectations of the reference groups. These strategies include greater effort and persistence to reach goals to satisfy the reference group and changing the feedback in the future—that is, motivation (Leonard et al., 1999).

As a consequence, individuals can develop a sense of identity with organizations that use SRP to communicate commitment to sustainability issues. Social identification then influences the perceptions of their ideal self, and motivation arises due to individuals' efforts to maintain their self-concepts. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1. SRP are positively related to motivation.

P-O fit refers to the compatibility between people and organizations (Kristof, 1996). Business research has used the ASA framework (Schneider, 1987) to examine the antecedents and consequences of P-O fit. The ASA framework notes that people look for situations that attract them (Schneider, 1987); when applied to organizations, firms can be seen as one particular situation in which good fit determines attractiveness, selection, retention, and attrition, which clearly influence both prospective employees' behavior and the hiring decisions of the business (Sekiguchi, 2004).

Good fit is understood based on the characteristics of people and organizations. P-O fit has been measured in terms of congruence between the values of the individuals and the organization (Judge & Bretz, 1992). Perceptions of fit arise because individuals perceive that they possess values that are similar to those of the organization. Because recruitment practices can demonstrate organizational values, SRP are a key antecedent of P-O fit (Cable & Judge, 1994).

When there is a fit between employee and organizational values, employees fit well with their organizations (Parks & Guay, 2009). They feel in harmony with their firms and experience positive feelings (Chatman, 1989). The positive feelings from a good fit can be perceived as an emotional compensation that exists as a kind of social exchange (Blau, 1964) or social contract between employees and their organization. Because employees receive emotional compensation,

they want to reciprocate in kind because they are interested in contributing to organizational success. This results in a greater willingness to exert a high level of effort or motivation (Mozes et al., 2011).

SRP can demonstrate organizations' environmental and social concerns, including, for instance, their worries about not damaging the environment, desire to promote minorities or to achieve a better work-life balance. Because awareness of environmental and social issues has increased in recent decades (Awan et al., 2023; Glavas & Godwin, 2013; Napathorn, 2022), we propose that concern about environmental and social issues increases P-O fit, and in turn, employee motivation. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2. The relationship between SRP and motivation is positively mediated by perceptions of P-O fit.

The interest in how national culture shapes employees' attitudes towards their working environment has grown rapidly in the recent years (Hofman & Newman, 2014). According to stakeholder theory, national culture provides stakeholders a general rationality which drives their behavior. Stakeholders' perceptions and actions regarding the information reported by organizations are related to their cultural conditions, values, and beliefs (Gallego-Álvarez & Ortas, 2017). In this vein, prior research has underlined the relevance of national culture for influencing business decisions (Su, 2006). As an internal stakeholder, employees' perceptions and reactions regarding organizational information are shaped by their cultural background.

Academic research examining how national culture influences employees behavior has mainly used the cultural dimensions theory developed by Hofstede (Hofstede, 1980, 2023; Hofstede & Bond, 1984), which provides scores for different cultural dimensions for a wide range of countries all over the world. Collectivism/individualism indicates "the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members" (Hofstede, 2023). In collectivistic societies, people's self-image is defined in terms of "we" instead of "I," and individuals are supposed to prioritize group needs even before their own needs (Yu et al., 2022).

Collectivistic societies are more focused on the group than on the individual, and values such as cohesion and consensus are dominant (Gallego-Álvarez & Ortas, 2017). People from individualist countries, meanwhile, are expected to only take care of themselves and the members of their immediate family (Hofstede, 2023; Hofstede & Bond, 1984).

Companies implementing SRP showing commitment to environmental and social issues demonstrate that the needs of other groups are relevant for them. For instance, organizations concerned about the environment could show that they care about not damaging the planet and the lives of future generations whose survival depends on the Earth's resources and services. SRP related to employees' work-life balance and their health and safety show interest in other groups, apart from shareholders, as employees.

Considering that individuals from collectivistic societies tend to put group interests ahead of their own, prior research has suggested that individuals from collectivistic countries would be more likely to

be oriented towards prioritizing group needs (e.g., Saleem et al., 2018; Saracevic et al., 2022). Because sustainability involves caring about the needs of groups different from the individual (e.g., the lives of future generations or the rights of minorities), the dominant values of people from collectivistic societies are more in line with the values embedded in SRP than are the dominant values among people from individualistic countries (Han, 2018; Han & Kim, 2019).

For instance, in a study of 907 consumers, Laroche et al. (2001) found that people from collectivistic societies tend to be more environmentally friendly than people from individualistic societies. More recently, Saracevic et al. (2022) also found that collectivism reinforces the positive effect of individuals' subjective perceptions in producing pro-environmental behavioral intentions. Because perceptions of fit arise when individuals perceive they share values with organizations, and collectivistic values are more aligned with sustainability values than individualistic values, collectivistic values could reinforce the positive effect of SRP on P-O fit:

Hypothesis 3. The positive relationship of SRP with P-O fit is stronger in collectivistic than in individualistic societies.

In cultural terms, masculinity/femininity refers to the extent to which people value achievement and economic success. Masculine societies are moved by competition and accomplishments. Individuals from highly masculine countries are characterized as competitive, assertive and focused on value and material rewards. In contrast, quality of life, caring for the weak and social relationships are highly valued in feminine societies (Gallego-Álvarez & Ortas, 2017; Hofstede, 2023).

Recent studies have suggested that the relationship between masculinity/femininity and sustainability is complex, and it has been noted that masculine values can be aligned with social and environmental issues (Carballo-Penela, Ruzo-Sanmartín, & Sousa, 2023; Hofman & Newman, 2014). Individuals from masculine societies tend to perform instrumental evaluations of sustainability issues and pay attention to the instrumental value that sustainability brings to the firm (Williams & Zinkin, 2008). They are aware that good social and environmental performance can enhance organizational economic performance by improving, for instance, corporate reputation and image.

Some topics related to sustainability, such as taking care of the environment, are socially esteemed at present. Many companies have implemented environmental strategies that have contributed not only to improving business environmental performance, but also their economic performance by saving energy and water, reducing waste or improving corporate reputation and attractiveness (González-Benito & González-Benito, 2005).

Different studies have also noted that questions such as treating minorities fairly, organizations' involvement with their community, improving employees' work-life balance or maintaining the health and safety of employees can result in positive organizational outcomes, including improved organizational performance and costs savings

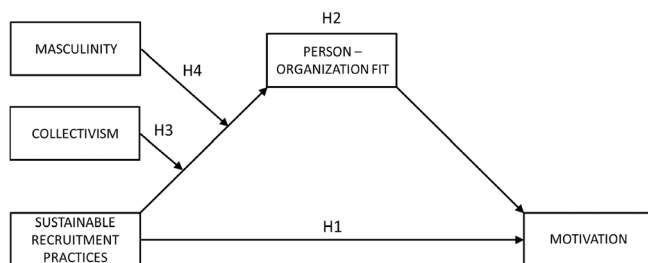


FIGURE 1 Conceptual model.

(Loeppke et al., 2015; López-Ibor et al., 2010; Thevanes & Harikaran, 2020). Hence, it is possible for individuals from masculine societies to perceive that improving organizational environmental and social sustainability has an instrumental value that can result in better competition, in addition to its ethical value. From this perspective, values embedded in SRP are aligned with the values of individuals from masculine societies, which would result in better P-O fit. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4. The positive relationship of SRP with P-O fit is stronger in masculine than in feminine societies.

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed conceptual model.

3 | METHOD

3.1 | Research design

An experimental between-subjects manipulation with 524 participants was designed to examine prospective employees' reactions to SRP. To promote strong sustainability in the organizational culture by recruiting employees whose personal values fit with the values of sustainability, different job offers were designed that included messages to show different degrees of commitment to environmental and social sustainability issues. This experimental design is in line with other experimental designs on this topic (e.g., Beaudoin et al., 2019; Behrend et al., 2009; Carballo-Penela, Ruzo-Sanmartín, & Sousa, 2023; Waples & Brachle, 2020) using similar sample sizes (112, 172, 412, and 194, respectively).

The job offers showing information about the firms' commitment to sustainability were designed considering prior research suggestions (e.g., Ehnert et al., 2013; Jones & Rupp, 2018). Every offer included five messages related to five different aspects of business environmental and social sustainability: (a) commitment to the environment, (b) employees' work-life balance, (c) maintaining the health and safety of employees, (d) promoting women and minorities, and (e) investing in employees' skills. Two different levels were considered for every studied aspect.

One level, coded with the value "1," showed a high commitment to sustainability (e.g., "this organization takes precautions to minimize

any potential negative influence of its activities on the environment"). The second level, coded with the value "0," showed low commitment to sustainability (e.g., "this organization recently paid significant fines because of damage to the environment").

High and low commitment to sustainability values for every aspect were fully crossed with the values of the other, following a $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial design, which yielded 32 different job offers. Each job offer included a five-digit binary code (e.g., 00011). The participants in the study were randomly assigned to a specific scenario (job offer), and they were asked to imagine that they were in search of a fictitious company (LEIRA&MOR) that was recruiting new personnel. After reading the offer, participants responded to questions related to their P-O fit and motivation as if they would be working at that company.

To test the effectiveness of the proposed SRP manipulation, a pilot study among 32 participants was performed to examine differences in the mean level of employee motivation. *T*-tests showed statistically significant differences in the means for employee motivation when considering high and low levels of SRP (low SRP: mean = 3.44, SD = 1.79; high SRP: mean = 5.56, SD = 0.85, $t = -4.278, p < .001$).

3.2 | Measures

To summarize the values related to the five aspects of sustainability, an index based on the five-digit binary code attached to every job offer was created to measure SRP. This index reflected the high and low values for the five sustainability aspects included in every job offer (e.g., 00011) and adding those values together (e.g., $0 + 0 + 0 + 1 + 1 = 2$). Index values thus ranged from "0" to "5."

P-O fit was measured adapting the Likert-type scale developed by Cable and Judge (1996). Employee motivation was measured adapting the Likert-type scale developed by Wright (2004). Finally, collectivism and masculinity were assessed based on Hofstede's classification of natural cultures and the scores provided from Hofstede (2023). See Appendix A for further information about the used measures.

3.3 | Data collection

A convenience sampling method was used to guarantee cultural variance in the selection of sub-samples from different countries. Because prior research has noted that country culture could influence individuals' perceptions of both HRM practices and sustainability issues (Jiang et al., 2012; Ren et al., 2020), cultural variance constitutes a strength of this research.

A total of 524 prospective employees taking part in the last courses of management and marketing programmes in Argentina, Ecuador, Kazakhstan, and Spain participated in this study. Data were collected in classrooms from written questionnaires during regular classes.

Countries were selected with an eye to diversity in both economic and cultural contexts, with more attention on Latin American countries where research on SRP is still very scarce. Differences in, for example, the form of government—republic (Argentina and Ecuador), unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy (Spain), unitary presidential constitutional republic (Kazakhstan)—or per capita GDP—(\$45,825) in Spain Kazakhstan (\$30,810), Argentina (\$26,505), and Ecuador (\$12,822)—were also relevant. The resulting cultural differences are also remarkable in terms of Hofstede dimensions, including collectivistic and individualistic countries (e.g., Ecuador and Spain), masculine and feminine (Argentina and Spain), high and low power distance (e.g., Kazakhstan and Argentina) or normative and pragmatic countries (e.g., Ecuador and Kazakhstan).

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the measures for the total sample and the four country sub-samples. There appear to be statistically significant differences among respondents from the different countries in terms of the key variables of the research model, P-O fit and motivation, which provides evidence of the cultural differences among the selected countries.

Respondents were, on average, 21.99 years of age ($SD = 2.45$); 53.2% of them were female; 28.0% were Ecuadorians, 27.3% Argentinians, 23.1% Spanish, and 21.6% were Kazakhstani. Most (64.9%) had previously worked, with an average of 10.76 months of work experience ($SD = 18.33$). The four samples were similar in terms of age, work experience, and gender.

3.4 | Data analysis approach

Data analysis was performed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and conditional process analysis, which are widely used in this line of research (e.g., Chaudhary, 2021; Choi et al., 2021; Kao et al., 2019). First, we performed CFA to assess the convergent validity, discriminant validity and reliability of the proposed measurement model, following the guidelines of Gerbing and Anderson (1988), Hu and Bentler (1999), and Hair et al. (2019). Then, based on the complexity of the suggested model, which integrates direct, mediating and moderating relationships, we used conditional process analysis to test the offered hypotheses, simultaneously following the approach developed

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics by country sample.

	PO.FIT	MOTIV
Spain	2.51	4.10
Ecuador	3.79	4.80
Argentina	3.04	4.35
Kazakhstan	3.76	4.50
Total	3.28	4.45
ANOVA (<i>F</i> -stat., significance)	17.048***	5.008**

Abbreviations: MOTIV, employee's motivation; ns, not significant; PO.FIT, person-organization fit.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

by Hayes (2022) for mediation, moderation and moderated mediation analysis based on the use of bootstrapping.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Measurement reliability and validity

The measures proposed were based on a comprehensive literature review and on a previous revision by scholars with expertise in the field under study, which thus ensured content validity. We performed CFA using IBM SPSS AMOS (version 29) software to evaluate scale reliability as well as convergent and discriminant validity, following standard procedures (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988; Hair et al., 2019; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Returned fit indices were within the recommended cut-off thresholds (Table 2), so the model was considered acceptable (Kline, 2015).

Values for the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (CA), composite reliability coefficient (CRC) and average variance extracted (AVE) were larger than the recommended values (0.70, 0.60 and 0.50), so reliability was adequate (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). In addition, every observed variable was related to its specific latent variable, with individual loadings significant and high; convergent validity was thus acceptable (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Finally, the AVE for the latent variables was higher than the correlations among them, which indicated discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The measurement proposed was thus adequate in terms of scale reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity (Bollen, 1989; Hair et al., 2019).

4.2 | Direct and indirect effects

To test the direct and indirect relationships proposed in our model, we applied a mediation model (Model 4) using the PROCESS macro for SPSS developed by Hayes (2022) in IBM SPSS Statistics (version 29); this included a mediator (P-O fit) between the independent (SRP) and dependent variables (motivation). This framework is recommended to analyze mechanisms and conditions that may affect relationships between variables, as well as for using bootstrapping to test hypotheses (to avoid potential errors due to non-normal data). Table 3 shows the results of this mediation model.

First, the estimated coefficient between SRP and motivation was positive but not significant (0.084; $p > 0.05$; $CI = -0.032; 0.200$), so Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Second, a mediating effect requires a significant association between the independent and mediating variables as well as a significant association between the mediating and dependent variables (Kenny et al., 1998). The estimated coefficient between SRP and P-O fit was positive and significant (0.523; $p < 0.001$; $CI = 0.401; 0.645$), and the estimated coefficient between P-O fit and motivation was also positive and significant (0.302; $p < 0.001$; $CI = 0.228; 0.376$), which provided initial evidence for the indirect effect.

TABLE 2 Confirmatory factor analysis: reliability, validity, and correlations between constructs.

	CA	CRC	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
1. SRP	-	-	-	-				
2. PO.FIT	0.878	0.879	0.784	0.359	0.886			
3. MOTIV	0.798	0.890	0.592	0.183	0.416	0.769		
4. COLL	-	-	-	-0.007	0.259	0.128	-	
5. MASC	-	-	-	0.001	0.090	0.099	0.625	-

Model fit summary: Chi-square = 12.001; df = 13; CFI = 0.999; IFI = 0.999; TLI = 0.999; NFI = 0.992; RMSEA = 0.001.

Note: Bold is the square root of the AVE.

Abbreviations: AVE, average variance extracted; CA, Cronbach alpha; CFI, comparative fit index; COLL, national culture collectivism; CRC, composite reliability coefficient; IFI, incremental fit index; MASC, national culture masculinity; MOTIV, employee's motivation; NFI, normed fit index; PO.FIT, person-organization fit; RMSEA, root mean square error; SRP, sustainable recruitment practices; TLI, Tucker Lewis index.

	Coeff	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI	R ²	F	p
SRP → PO.FIT	0.523***	0.062	0.000	0.401	0.645	0.190	24.33	0.000
SRP → MOTIV	0.084^{ns}	0.059	0.157	-0.032	0.200			
PO.FIT → MOTIV	0.302***	0.038	0.000	0.228	0.376	0.137	41.23	0.000

	Coeff	BootSE	BLLCI	BULCI
SRP → PO.FIT → MOTIV	0.158*	0.028	0.107	0.216

Note: Bootstrap confidence intervals derived from 5000 samples (95% level of confidence).

Abbreviations: Coeff, non-standardized coefficient; MOTIV, employee's motivation; ns, not significant; PO.FIT, person-organization fit; SRP, sustainable recruitment practices.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

SRP → PO.FIT	Coeff	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI
INT1 (COLL) → PO.FIT	-0.413*	0.187	0.027	-0.780	-0.047
INT2 (MASC) → PO.FIT	0.455**	0.160	0.005	0.140	0.769

	ΔR^2	F	p
Test of unconditional interaction (INT1)	0.008*	4.901	0.027
Test of unconditional interaction (INT2)	0.013**	8.080	0.005

SRP → PO.FIT → MOTIV	Coeff	BootSE	BLLCI	BULCI
Index of partial moderated mediation (INT1)	-0.125*	0.059	-0.248	-0.017
Index of partial moderated mediation (INT2)	0.137*	0.052	0.041	0.244

Note: Bootstrap confidence intervals derived from 5000 samples (95% level of confidence).

Abbreviations: Coeff, non-standardized coefficient; COLL, national culture collectivism (0: individualism; 1: collectivism); INT1, SRP × INDIV; INT2, SRP × MASC; MASC, national culture masculinity/femininity (0: femininity; 1: masculinity); MOTIV, employee's motivation; ns, not significant; PO.FIT, person-organization fit; SRP, sustainable recruitment practices.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

The confidence intervals estimated by bootstrapping also showed that the indirect effect of SRP on motivation via P-O fit was positive and significant, because they did not contain zero (0.158; CI = 0.107; 0.216), thus providing support for the mediating hypothesis (Hypothesis 2). Considering that the direct effect was not significant, our results indicate that P-O fit fully mediates the relationship between SRP and motivation. This finding is interesting because it highlights the relevance of fit between individual and organizational values for increasing employee motivation.

TABLE 3 Direct and indirect effects: parameter estimates, bootstrap confidence intervals, and model fit summary.**TABLE 4** Moderating effects (interactions): parameter estimates, bootstrap confidence intervals, test of unconditional interaction, and index of moderated mediation.

4.3 | Moderated-only and moderated mediation effects

Finally, to test the moderating effects included in our model, we applied a moderated mediation model (Model 9) using the PROCESS macro for SPSS developed by Hayes (2022) in IBM SPSS Statistics (version 29); this included a mediator (P-O fit) and two moderators (collectivism and masculinity). Table 4 shows the results of this moderated mediation model.

TABLE 5 Indirect effects by country: parameter estimates and bootstrap confidence intervals.

SRP → PO.FIT → MOTIV	Coeff	BootSE	BLLCI	BULCI
Spain	0.196*	0.077	0.064	0.366
Ecuador	0.171*	0.054	0.074	0.287
Argentina	0.123*	0.053	0.035	0.242
Kazakhstan	0.070^{ns}	0.055	-0.039	0.183

Note: Bootstrap confidence intervals derived from 5000 samples (95% level of confidence).

Abbreviations: Coeff, non-standardized coefficient; MOTIV, employee's motivation; ns, not significant; PO.FIT, person-organization fit; SRP, sustainable recruitment practices.

* $p < 0.05$.

The test of unconditional interaction was significant for both variables, and the confidence intervals estimated for interactions did not contain zero, being negative for collectivism (-0.413 ; $p < 0.05$; $CI = -0.780$; -0.047) and positive for masculinity (0.455 ; $p < 0.01$; $CI = 0.140$; 0.769). These results indicate that collectivism negatively and masculinity positively moderate the relationship between SRP and P-O fit, thus providing support for the Hypothesis 4. Although the sign of the moderation is different, the effect size is similar for both dimensions of national culture.

Finally, the confidence intervals estimated by bootstrapping for the index of partial moderated mediation excluded zero and were therefore significant; they were negative for collectivism (-0.125 ; $CI = -0.248$; -0.017) and positive for masculinity (0.137 ; $CI = 0.041$; 0.244). This indicated the presence of a moderated mediation effect for SRP on motivation via P-O fit, in this case conditioned by collectivism and masculinity.

To provide a detailed analysis of the influence of these moderators, Table 5 shows the indirect effects of SRP on motivation via P-O fit, estimated with bootstrapping, for each of the four countries included in the sample. Spain provided the largest indirect effect, which was positive and significant (0.196 ; $CI = 0.064$; 0.366), while Kazakhstan provided the smallest indirect effect, which was also positive but nonsignificant (0.070 ; $CI = -0.039$; 0.183). The other countries returned intermediate values for indirect effects, with both Ecuador (0.171 ; $CI = 0.074$; 0.287) and Argentina (0.123 ; $CI = 0.035$; 0.242) showing positive and significant indirect effects. This result shows that perceptions about sustainability issues can vary depending on the studied country. This variety in the results means that the potential fit between organizational sustainability values included in SRP and employees' values can be different.

5 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This research sought to contribute to the literature on sustainable HRM by shedding light on the relationship between SRP and employee motivation. Our results highlight that SRP are positively related to motivation through P-O fit and demonstrated the

moderating role of collectivism and masculinity in the relationship between SRP and P-O fit.

Because the dynamic nature of the motivation process, there is a need to examine the existing motivators constantly to find out what effectively motivates employees. Considering that sustainability has become a relevant concern for present-day society, it is interesting to examine the role of sustainability issues as motivators.

This study demonstrated that SRP influence prospective employees' motivation. This is not a direct influence, as we proposed in Hypothesis 1, but an indirect influence through P-O fit (Hypothesis 2). Our findings showed that P-O fit fully mediates the relationship between SRP and employee motivation. In line with ASA theory (Schneider, 1987) and the value congruence perspective (Chatman, 1989), we highlight that the relevance of environmental and social issues for today's society create a situation in which the values contained in SRP could increase individual perceptions of fit.

Prior research has noted that SRP are positively related to organizational outcomes such as attractiveness (e.g., Jones et al., 2014; Waples & Brachle, 2020). In line with Huber and Hirsch (2017), our results showed that in, the absence of fit, there is not a direct effect of SRP on motivation. This finding suggests the need for a refined analysis of the perceptions of employees regarding sustainability.

For those who have individual values in line with sustainability issues, P-O fit will mean that when companies engage in SRP, their motivation increases. However, demonstrating concern for sustainability may not be a sign of organizational prestige, which means that organizational identification is not strong and has no influence on the ideal self, as SIT proposes. That would mean that the relationship between SRP and motivation is not statistically significant. The fact that our sample consisted of prospective employees from different countries could involve different perceptions about SRP. SRP are not perceived as a sign of prestige in some countries, Hypothesis 1 would not be supported when considering the total sample, although the relationship would be significative for some particular country.

We also hypothesized that the positive relationship of SRP with P-O fit would be stronger in collectivistic than in individualistic societies (Hypothesis 3). However, the results showed that this relationship was weaker in collectivistic societies, which is an unexpected finding. Sustainability requires that individuals strive to be concerned about others (e.g., the environment or other groups) and not only concerned about themselves. As individuals from collectivistic societies tend to put the group's needs before individual interests (Middleton & Jones, 2000), we expected that collectivistic values would reinforce the relationship between SRP and P-O fit.

Prior research has underlined that within-culture heterogeneity can explain some unexpected findings related to the collectivism/individualism dimension of national culture (Rao et al., 2010). Although a country's culture can be characterized as collectivistic, many citizens can still display individualistic values regarding certain topics and situations due to other factors. For instance, Derné (1995) demonstrated that many men in a strongly collectivistic country had individualistic values regarding family, marriage and taking care of children. Hence, within-culture variance can mean that other

finer-grained variables need to be considered to understand the role of collectivism/individualism (Ho et al., 2012) in the relationship between SRP and perceptions of fit.

Country-level factors such as cultural values (concern for the environment, sexism) or institutional factors (economics, legal system, and governance) (Leat & El-Kot, 2007) could influence the perceptions of fit, thus leading people from some collectivistic countries to be less concerned about environmental and social issues than some people from individualistic countries. Furthermore, implementing SRP may not be a priority for companies in some collectivistic countries because SRP could involve implementation or organization costs that would affect businesses' economic performance.

In the studied sample, the individualistic country (Spain) clearly ranked higher than the collectivistic countries in different indicators related to environmental and social sustainability, such as the green living ranking¹ and the best countries for women ranking (*US News Best Country Report*, 2023). While Spain ranked 23 (green living) and 17 (best countries for women) out of 87 countries, Kazakhstan (81 and 87, respectively), Ecuador (74 and 66), and Argentina (40 and 37) ranked notably lower than Spain.

As a consequence, different national-context features could mean that the organizational values shown by companies implementing SRP are not in line with the values of the population from some collectivistic societies, although people from collectivistic countries tend to put the group's needs before individual interests. This would result in reduced perceived fit, thus compensating for the proposed *collectivistic values effect*.

Finally, as expected, our findings supported the notion that the positive relationship of SRP with P-O fit would be stronger in masculine than in feminine societies (Hypothesis 4). This finding reinforces prior results suggesting that good management of social and environmental dimensions of sustainability can result in better competition and economic success, which is in line with the values from individuals from masculine societies.

5.1 | Theoretical contributions

This research contributes to the literature on sustainable HRM in different ways. Researchers have noted an excessive concentration on the environmental side of sustainable HRM (Anlesinya & Susomrith, 2020; Piwowar-Sulej, 2021), while very little research has paid attention to the social side or socially responsible sustainable HRM (Stahl et al., 2020). This work heeds the call to examine employees' perceptions regarding aspects such as support for work-life balance and, in general, organizations' responsibility towards employees when considering SRP. In addition, by conceptualizing SRP mainly from the social side but also considering environmental issues, we provide evidence that combining the social and environmental aspects of sustainable development has a positive effect on motivation through organization fit.

This research also expands the range of the studied outcomes of SRP and provides knowledge about non-environmental outcomes,

such as employees motivation, which prior research has largely ignored in the context of SRP (Anlesinya & Susomrith, 2020). As researchers have paid more attention to the environmental side of SRP, many studies have examined their effects on green outcomes at the micro and macro levels. By paying attention to employee motivation, we answer the call to examine the relationship between SRP and non-environmental outcomes, while also focusing on employee-level outcomes (Wang et al., 2020).

The obtained findings showed that SRP have an indirect effect on motivation through P-O fit. This finding is relevant as it demonstrates there is a link between environmental and social sustainability and employee motivation. Some studies have previously demonstrated that showing commitment to environmental and social issues can increase employees' and future employees' perceptions of fit with employers (e.g., Jones et al., 2014; Peterson, 2004). Nevertheless, this research goes beyond that premise and notes that P-O fit from SRP can result in employee motivation, thus enriching the motivation literature by highlighting the role of projecting the image of sustainability as a motivation factor. This finding contributes to the literature on corporate purpose, which has considered purpose as a tool to motivate the workforce (e.g., van Tuin et al., 2020). We demonstrate that a broad corporate purpose showing commitment to environmental and social sustainability can result in motivation.

HRM recruitment practices have also often been categorized as skill-enhancing practices but not motivating-enhancing practices, such as performance incentive and reward practices (Jiang et al., 2012). Our findings suggest that some recruitment practices (e.g., SRP) can have a positive effect on motivation by influencing perceptions of fit with the organization, thus underlining their role as motivating-enhancing practices as well.

Finally, we provide a detailed analysis of this indirect effect in the four studied countries, noting that it is confirmed in Argentina, Ecuador, and Spain and, but not when considering Kazakhstan. Although further research is needed, we suggest that country-level factors regarding sustainability could explain this result. *US News Best Country Report* (2023) includes results from 87 countries related to different topics. Kazakhstan ranks in the last position in the ranking of countries that were good for women, as well as being among the last six countries in terms of the green living ranking. The proposed SRP included recruiting messages related to employees' work-life balance, promoting women and minorities and commitment to the environment. The misalignment between the values included in the SRP and the national values of Kazakhstan thus could have produced a low fit between the SRP and respondents' values or it might indicate that the existing fit does not result in motivation.

This finding sheds light on how SRP works in less explored contexts and, particularly, in Latin American countries. Research on sustainable HRM has focused on Asian countries such as India, Malaysia, and China, with less attention being paid to Latin American countries. Studies in the Latin American context have mainly focused on Brazil, but not on the countries studied here (Anlesinya & Susomrith, 2020).

Studying the effects of SRP across four countries also allowed us to examine the role of contextual variables such as national culture

and, particularly, the dimensions of collectivism and masculinity. This is a notable contribution, because prior research has largely ignored how the national context influences the relationships surrounding SRP (Cooke et al., 2022). Our findings highlight the role of individualism and cultural masculinity in reinforcing the positive effect of SRP on employee perceptions of fit, clearly putting on the table the need to consider the national context when examining the impact of sustainable HRM practices and, particularly, SRP.

Researchers have noted that national contextual factors, including cultural values, can influence employees' perceptions of HRM practices and their consequences (Leat & El-Kot, 2007). The design of HRM practices should take into account the effect of contextual variables in depth (Carballo-Penela, Ruzo-Sanmartín, Álvarez-González, & Paillé, 2023). This is particularly relevant for sustainable HRM practices, including SRP. Poverty, dominant religion, cultural characteristics, societal attitudes or government policies regarding sustainable development can lead people from different countries to have different perceptions, beliefs and performance related to sustainability issues. For instance, although poorer nations are making outstanding efforts to advance in sustainable development, the *Sustainable Development Report 2023* showed that 24 out of first 25 countries with higher performance in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals are high income countries (UN, 2023).

Although the analysis of the collectivism dimension of national culture has successfully contributed to our understanding of the relationships involved in employees' perceptions and behaviors (Heine & Buchtel, 2008), our findings suggest that a more refined analysis is needed to understand the role of collectivism when examining relationships around sustainability (Wang et al., 2020) and SRP in particular.

5.2 | Practical implications

By demonstrating a positive relationship between SRP and employee motivation through P-O fit, this research helps companies to find ways to be more sustainable. Achieving environmental, social and economic organizational objectives simultaneously has been a complex challenge for businesses, as social and environmental improvements can involve economic costs (Hahn et al., 2015). Tensions among the different objectives frequently arise, and the economic dimension often becomes dominant when these tensions occur (Dyllick & Muff, 2015; Ehnert et al., 2013). Some companies are thus reluctant to commit on environmental and social issues.

Because a more motivated workforce could help to improve the economic performance of employees and businesses (Osabiya, 2015), implementing SRP could be useful to advance in environmental, social, and economic sustainability simultaneously. Besides, improving economic sustainability by motivating employees, SRP would contribute to social and environmental sustainability by providing businesses with employees sensitive to environmental and social issues, which would contribute to incorporating their environmental and social values into the organizational culture (Jepsen & Grob, 2015). SRP

could thus help companies to reduce tensions among environmental, social, and economic organizational objectives, while making a crucial contribution to business sustainability.

Demonstrating the path *SRP-P-O fit-motivation* also opens up new opportunities for managers to motivate their workforce. Because anticipating commitment to sustainability with SRP results in motivation, we highlight the importance of perceptions about corporate sustainability as a motivator. As previously noted, incorporating employees concerned about sustainability can help make the organizational culture itself more sustainable. Managers who recruit by projecting a sustainable corporate image also ensure a motivated workforce.

Sustainable concerns should be considered in the recruitment process and included in messages that show firms' commitment to sustainability. To build employer branding (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) and contribute to the formation of a positive image for prospective employees interested in sustainability, organizations should publish their names and their sustainable philosophies to attract recruits. Sustainability questions should also be included in selection interviews to determine fit with the organization. However, prior studies have noted the negative consequences of projecting a false image of corporate sustainability, and organizations should be aware of that (Torelli et al., 2020).

This finding contributes to an interesting line of research that highlights the role of perceptions of corporate sustainability in determining organizational identification and, as a result, employee behaviors. Glavas and Godwin (2013) noted that perceptions of organizations' sustainability can be more important than reality when producing social identification. Our finding confirms this point, thus extending this body of research by providing evidence for the consequences of social identification.

In addition, young employees may be motivated by different factors than employees from previous generations (Amar, 2004). To maintain a motivated workforce, managers need to be aware of how motivation changes. Some evidence suggests that Millennials and members of Generation Z are more concerned about sustainability issues than employees from previous generations (Versace & Absy, 2022), but more research is still needed. Our findings noted that commitment to social and environmental issues can successfully motivate young employees.

The obtained findings would also be useful to managers interested in improving their recruitment process. We demonstrated that values associated with SRP increase the perceptions of fit between employees and organizational values. Advancing environmental and sustainability issues should thus help organizations to attract young talent. This is a relevant implication, as companies need to refine their recruitment strategies to be able to secure their workforce, and SRP will help them in this task.

International managers should be aware, however, of some differences depending on the country considered. Our findings showed that implementing SRP increased perceptions of fit between employees and organizational values and in turn, their motivation, for respondents from Argentina, Ecuador and Spain. Although the indirect effect

was larger in Spain, the results from Argentina, and Ecuador were not far behind, although these countries ranked lower than Spain in some environmental and social rankings (*US News Best Country Report, 2023*). On the other hand, the situation in Kazakhstan was different, and managers should be aware that implementing SRP may not have a positive effect on employee motivation; they would thus need to find different ways to motivate their workforce.

5.3 | Limitations and future research directions

We must discuss some of the limitations of the present work, while also identifying some future lines for research. The analysis of cross country-level differences is a strength of this work, as prior research has mainly performed single-country analysis. Collecting data from four different, less explored countries also allowed us to examine the moderating role of the dimensions of collectivism and masculinity in national culture, thus highlighting the function of national contextual factors in relationships around SRP. Future research should, however, make a refined analysis of the relationship between SRP and motivation to search for differences among the studied countries. Because Hypothesis 2 was supported when considering the whole sample, country-specific analysis was performed to better understand the SRP → P-O fit → motivation path, which revealed differences among the studied countries. Collecting data in more countries would increase the robustness of our results, as well as their generalizability.

Future research should also further explore the role of national culture. The dimensions of collectivism and masculinity fit well with the proposed research model, but more national cultural dimensions could be used in future studies. As Gelade et al. (2008) suggest, power distance and uncertainty avoidance could also shape employees' views of some sustainability issues. Future research could also consider other national contextual factors apart from national culture, as they could be relevant when examining the relationships around SRP.

Many researchers have made relevant contributions in the field of business sustainability using samples comprised of prospective employees in experimental designs (e.g., Jones et al., 2014; Rupp et al., 2013; Waples & Brachle, 2020). However, we acknowledge that our findings cannot be generalized to a more veteran workforce. Using prospective employees instead of active current employees could also reduce the external validity of our findings.

To minimize these problems, all the participants in this study were finishing their programmes and entering the labor market within a short period of time. Most of them (64.9%) had previously worked (10.76 months of work experience, in average) and were familiar with job offers. They probably had different characteristics than more veteran workers, but they still represented the characteristics of entry-level employees reasonably well (Zhang & Gowan, 2012). However, increasing the generalizability of our results would require that future research collect data from more veteran workers.

Using samples of prospective employees could, however, help organizations to understand the feelings about sustainability among young employees. This is particularly relevant in a context when

concern about environmental and social sustainability is a growing factor among the younger generations (Versace & Absy, 2022). Many baby boomers are also retiring in large numbers and companies need to replace them with younger talent (Carlsen, 2023). Our findings provide organizations with useful information to recruit and motivate younger workers effectively. Experimental designs also contribute to increasing internal validity and are particularly helpful for reducing social desirability bias, which often arises in business sustainability research (Jones & Rupp, 2018).

Because we measured employees' perceptions of SRP, data were collected from a single source and the possibility of common method bias was present. Nevertheless, experimental designs indirectly assessing the relevance of cues included in job offers tend to reduce the social desirability bias associated with self-reports (Lis, 2012). Precautions were also taken when collecting data and designing the survey used, such as ensuring the anonymity of responses, avoiding complex scales, separating independent and dependent variables and checking the effectiveness of the proposed manipulation of SRP to guarantee the reliability of the used measures (Podsakoff et al., 2012), all of which contributed to reducing common method bias.

In summary, by highlighting the role of SRP in employee motivation, this research contributes to both achieving a more sustainable world and helping organizations to improve their performance.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None.

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ENDNOTE

¹ The green living ranking includes the countries considered the best at offering opportunities for a healthy environment.

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APPENDIX A: MEASURES

SUSTAINABLE RECRUITMENT PRACTICES (SRP). Based on prior research suggestions (e.g., Ehnert et al., 2013; Jones & Rupp, 2018).

An Example of a job offer:

LEIRA&MOR is a professional consulting company that provides business solutions across all segments of business all over the world. We are looking for passionate talented people to join to our team in different positions.

LEIRA&MOR pays salaries that tend to be 40% higher than the average for the same position in the industry. In addition, the number of work-related accidents happening in this company is clearly lower than the average of the industry.

However, questions such flexible working hours and work-life balance of employees and hiring women and minorities are not a priority for this company and it is not concerned about them. This firm does not provide adequate training and development opportunities to employees. It recently paid significant fines because of damage to the environment.

PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT (P-O FIT). Adapted from Cable and Judge (1996).

- My values “match” or fit in this organization.
- My values match those of current employees in organization.

EMPLOYEE'S MOTIVATION. Adapted from Wright (2004).

- If I would work for this company, I would put forth my best effort to get my job done regardless of the difficulties.
- If I would work for this company, I would be willing to start work early or stay late to finish a job.
- If I would work for this company, I would do extra work for my job that is not really expected of me.