

Article

Influence of Business Commitment to Sustainability, Perceived Value Fit, and Gender in Job Seekers' Pursuit Intentions: A Cross-Country Moderated Mediation Analysis

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Abstract: Recruitment messages can help organizations to attract talent by influencing job seekers perceived fit with the company. As sustainability issues have become more relevant for 21st century citizens, messages communicating companies' commitment to sustainability can send information that could influence young job seekers perceived fit with their future organizations. This between-subjects study analyses the influence of six messages showing business commitment to sustainability on job seekers pursuit intentions, considering a sample of 265 job applicants from three countries (Spain, Kazakhstan, and Germany). We are particularly interested in studying the role of perceived value fit as a mediating mechanism, as well as the moderating role of gender. Results obtained from a between-subjects factorial design confirm that different actions showing business commitment to sustainability positively affect job seekers' job pursuit intentions. Our findings also show that the importance of every message is different depending on the studied country. The obtained results confirm that recruitment messages showing business commitment to sustainability influence job seekers' pursuit intentions by increasing the perceived fit between job seekers' and business values. Finally, results show the moderating role of prospective employees' gender in the proposed model.

Keywords: corporate sustainability; recruitment messages; job seekers; job pursuit intentions; gender; between-subjects; experimental design; environmental sustainability; social sustainability

1. Introduction

The younger generation of job seekers seems to be more aware than previous generations of the importance of sustainability issues for organizations. Many candidates are looking for companies that share these sustainability values [1,2]. Recruitment messages can play a key role to attract talent by communicating companies' commitment to sustainability (e.g., [2–4]). Messages communicating companies' commitment to sustainability would send information that could be interpreted as signals of job seekers perceived fit with the organization.

Hence, recruitment messages showing commitment to sustainability could help organizations to incorporate young talent [5], also contributing to more sustainable organizations and increasing the quality of life of employees [6]. The incorporation of employees committed to sustainability can also help organizations to improve their sustainability performance which can be showed in new recruitment messages. For instance, existing employers may learn some pro-environmental behaviors

from newcomers [7], which could enhance the environmental performance of the organization, increasing the attraction of prospective employees committed to the environment.

Research on this topic is still in its initial stage. Researchers have mostly focused on analyzing the effects of different actions related to business sustainability on developing positive attitudes towards organizations, such as organizational attractiveness. More recently, some studies have paid attention to the mechanisms that explain how different recruitment messages including information on business sustainability affect prospective employees' attitudes (e.g., [1,6,8]).

Nevertheless, researchers have also highlighted that intentions can predict behaviors better than general attitudes [9]. While attitudes usually reflect passive reactions and effects, intentions are more active and action-oriented [10,11].

Job pursuit intentions refer to the intention to take action to find out additional information about a company, trying to secure an interview with the organization [10]. Job pursuit intentions are a more active construct than attractiveness, showing the intention: (i) to get more information about the organization, (ii) to contact the organization, and (iii) to secure an interview with it [10,12–14].

Following this line of research, this article draws upon signaling and person–organization fit theories to examine the link between business commitment to sustainability and job pursuit intentions considering a sample of job seekers from three different countries.

Specifically, the main objectives are: (i) to analyze the direct effect of communicating sustainability on job seekers job pursuit intentions; (ii) to investigate the mechanisms which explain this relationship by examining the mediating effects of perceived value fit; and (iii) to examine the moderating role of gender in the relationship between communicating business commitment to sustainability and perceived-value fit.

By doing so, the contributions of this article to the literature on business sustainability are as follows. First, while some studies have examined the influence of showing commitment to sustainability on general attitudes (e.g., organizational attractiveness (e.g., [1,3])), the link between commitment to sustainability and intentions (i.e., job pursuit intentions) have been largely ignored.

Second, there is also a need to understand the mechanisms that link commitment to sustainability on job pursuit intentions. Jones et al., [5] and Jones et al., [15] underline that by showing commitment to sustainability, a business sends signals to job seekers about the organization's values. Some of these signals inform a psychological mechanism called perceived value fit in relation to the business values demonstrated by sustainability commitment. Perceived value fit reflects things that employees value positively. In the context of this study, it suggests that employers showing commitment to sustainability are considered an attractive option for job seekers [16]. Nevertheless, there is a lack of empirical evidence confirming the role of perceived value fit. Researchers have also omitted potential variables that could moderate the relationship between business commitment to sustainability and job seekers perceptions of fit. Hence, we present a moderated mediation model positioning perceived value fit as a mediator of business commitment to sustainability on job pursuit intentions, and gender as a moderator of such effects.

Third, although some studies have analyzed the influence of showing commitment to sustainability and some organizational outcomes, they usually focus on a limited and heterogeneous list of aspects related to sustainability, such as work-life benefits [17], employee relations and products [3], environment, diversity, economic performance, legal performance, and ethical performance [18,19] or community relations and environmental sustainability [13].

By using job offers including six different messages related to different actions showing business commitment to sustainability, our research considers a broad measure of sustainability.

Finally, this article addresses a call to analyze job seeker reactions to information on corporate sustainability across different cultures [20]. Job seekers perceptions about sustainable development can be shaped by socioeconomic conditions, public policies or, for instance, cultural beliefs [6]. However, prior research has not paid attention to these issues. Scholars have underlined that a first stage to consider job seekers diversity when analyzing their perceptions of recruiting messages showing

commitment to sustainability is to analyze if prospective employees from different countries and cultures have similar or different responses to companies' information on business sustainability [5,15]. As most existing studies in this area have focused on a single country, we contribute by testing our model with a sample comprised of job seekers from three countries (Germany, Kazakhstan, and Spain). The selection of Kazakhstan is particularly interesting as human resources and management research has paid very little attention to Central Asia countries. Thus, the consideration of new countries can contribute to increase the generalizability of previous findings.

In order to achieve the proposed goals, two different studies were developed. Study 1 includes a moderated mediation analysis to test Hypothesis 1, 2 and 3. Study 2 provides a different way to test Hypothesis 1, showing additional information on the differences among the studied countries. In addition, Study 2 allows us to check the relevance of every considered action showing commitment to sustainability.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Human Resource Function and Business Sustainability

The scarcity of highly skilled employees is one of the most relevant problems that companies are confronting with regard to human resource management [3]. Demographic changes such as low birth rates and an ageing population lead to a reduction in the availability of suitable candidates. Coupled with an increasing demand in some occupations, a labor shortage is expected in the next decade, making fiercer the war for talent [14,18]. In this context, organizations need to find new formulas to attract and retain valuable human resources [4,21].

Many firms realize the importance of corporate sustainability [4,21]. Hiring and retaining highly skilled employees can be an efficient way to achieve sustainable competitive advantages, noting that a quality workforce may be a necessary condition for business success [22–24].

The human resource (HR) function and HR strategies can be relevant for achieving more sustainable organizations. Previous research has noted that the HR function could play a key role to improve the financial performance of companies by different ways, including the alignment of HR practices with organization's strategic objectives [25–27]. In particular, researchers underline that recruiting quality human resources could help to provide organizations with a sustained competitive advantage [28,29].

In addition, HR strategies with regard to the recruitment process, measuring performance, training and development, reward and compensation systems could contribute to create an organizational culture which supports the development of greener organizations [30,31]. From the social point of view, HR strategies could help to achieve more sustainable organizations increasing the quality of life of employees by improving the work conditions, promoting a better balance between the work and family spheres or, for instance, offering training and development opportunities to employees.

Prior research has underlined the importance of recruitment strategies to incorporate young talent committed to sustainability, noting that showing commitment to sustainability in recruitment messages could help in this task [2,3].

2.2. Hypotheses Development

Signaling theory [25,32] has been widely used for explaining how organizations commitment to sustainability may influence job seekers' perceptions about organizations (e.g., [1,4,9]). The core premise derived from this theory is that organizational attributes provide prospective employees with information about what it would be like to work for an organization [33,34]. These signs would influence perceptions of job seekers about the future organization [8].

At the beginning of the recruitment process, job seekers rarely possess complete information about potential employers. They interpret limited information they receive as signals of what the organization is like as an employer [11,34]. Job offers provide job seekers with relevant information about firms, particularly when the organization is not well known [3,11]. This information included

in recruitment messages could influence the initial perceptions of job seekers about their potential employers, being interpreted as a signal of organizations values [6,35].

Prior research has showed that business commitment to corporate sustainability positively influences the perceptions of organizational reputation [36] which can help organizations to attract talent. In particular, researchers underline that information regarding organizations commitment to sustainability may signal certain organizational values and social norms to prospective employees [5]. For instance, commitment to manage employees' diversity sends signals about attracting women and minorities and treating them fairly [8]. An organization's community involvement sends signals about the firm's intentions to contribute to the community. Implementing pro-environmental practices informs of a commitment to preserving the natural environment [15].

These signals influence a candidate's perceptions of future working conditions and, in turn, the perceptions about the employer [2]. Considering that the younger generation of job seekers seem to be more engaged with sustainability issues than previous generations, it is expected that companies committed to sustainability make them more desirable employers than those which do not show this commitment.

Taking these considerations into account, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: *Business commitment to sustainability positively affects job pursuit intentions.*

Although signaling theory has been frequently used to analyze the direct effects of showing commitment to sustainability on organizational outcomes such as organizational attractiveness, additional theories are needed to understand the underlying mechanisms that links signals with outcomes [5,15]. Person-organization fit theory [37,38] can add light in this purpose.

Person-organization (P-O) fit theory analyses the fit between individual values and firms' norms and values [37], highlighting that individual values influence people's perceptions of organizational features [11]. According to this theory, the similarity between individuals' and firms' values and characteristics (supplementary fit) predicts different organizational outcomes, such as employee commitment and performance, job satisfaction or intention to leave [39,40]. Particularly, prior research has showed the importance of person-organization fit for job seekers' pursuit intentions [41].

Scholars have underlined that recruiting messages including information on organizations commitment to sustainability may signal certain organizational values and social norms, such as concern for the environment or value and respect for diversity to prospective employees [6,8,11,15]. This information would be useful for those job seekers who share sustainability values and who self-select if P-O fit is high [18]. As a high compatibility with the recruiting company increases, pursuit intentions also do. Hence, recruiting messages including information on organizations commitment to sustainability would increase job seekers' pursuit intentions by showing organizational values that increase P-O fit.

According to these observations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: *The relationship between business commitment to sustainability and job pursuit intentions is positively mediated by job seekers perceptions of perceived value fit.*

Gender could influence the job seekers' perceptions of fit in those business showing commitment to sustainability. Researchers have noted that some psychological characteristics and traits of women suggest that women's values could be more in line with sustainable development values than men's values. They note that women (i) are more sensitive to different stakeholders' claims than men [42]; (ii) possess more communal traits than men (e.g., concern about others' welfare, helpful, altruism, and interpersonally sensitive) [43,44]; and (iii) are more prone than men to respond the needs of others, to assume responsibilities for not causing harm and to identify situations requiring ethical behaviors [45].

These characteristics and traits of women are in line with some values embedded in sustainable development such as respect for diversity, commitment to social justice, and equity and respect for

others [46]. Some studies support this view, showing that women are more concerned about preserving the environment and its protection than men [47,48].

Taking these considerations into account, we believe that gender could moderate the relationship between business commitment to sustainability and perceptions of perceived value fit. We expect that the perceived similarity between values of firms showing commitment to sustainability and women's values will be higher than for men. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3: *The gender of job seekers moderates the positive relationship between business commitment to sustainability and perceived value fit, so that this relationship will be higher for women than for men.*

Finally, as gender is expected to moderate the relationship between business commitment to sustainability and perceived value fit (Hypothesis 3), the mediating effect of perceived value fit on job pursuit intentions (Hypothesis 2) will be moderated. Thus, the pattern of effects described in this article fit with the moderated mediation model suggested by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes [49].

This conceptual model is graphically depicted in Figure 1.

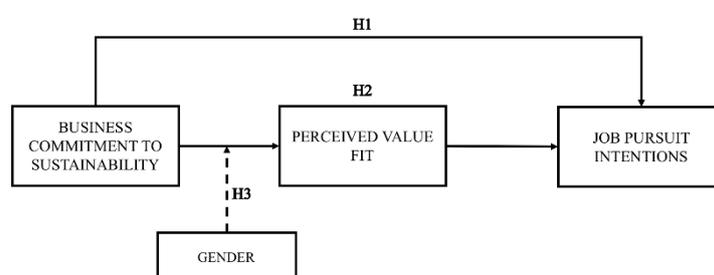


Figure 1. Conceptual model: graphical description.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Data

Data were collected during the months of December 2018 and January 2019 from 277 undergraduate business students in the final years of their degree. The sample includes students from three countries (Kazakhstan, Spain, and Germany).

The selection of the countries was done with the aim to include countries from different socioeconomic contexts and cultures. Differences in, for instance, the form of government, federal parliamentary republic (Germany), unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy (Spain), unitary presidential constitutional republic (Kazakhstan); dominant religion (Protestantism, Catholicism, Islam, respectively) or GDP p.c. (47,603\$; 30,371\$; 9813\$, respectively in 2018) are relevant among the studied countries and they could shape the cultural values of their citizens.

Cultural differences among the selected countries can be seen in terms of Hofstede's classification of national cultures [50,51]. According to this classification, Spain is an uncertainty avoidant and hierarchical society which accepts that people has a place in the society. Regarding individualism and masculinity, Spanish society is not clearly positioned: it is a collectivistic society in the European context but individualistic in a more global context and balanced society in terms of masculinity and femininity [51,52].

German national culture is quite different from Spanish culture. It is considered a masculine, individualistic society, being among the uncertainty avoidant countries. As a highly decentralized country, German society is among the lower power distance societies.

Kazakhstan is one of the most hierarchical societies of the World, being also an uncertainty avoidant society. Kazhaks are, without doubt, a collectivistic society, being a balanced country in terms of masculinity and feminity, but a slightly less masculine society than Spain.

The use of students in the final years of their undergraduate degree or postgraduate students is accepted in experimental studies to examine behavioral effects on young job seekers. Researchers have noted that these students: i) have often work experience and are more likely to be seeking a job at the time of study [5] ii) are a main focus of organizational recruiting efforts, since many companies hire from pools of graduating university students [1,10]; iii) reflect an important demographic group that represents a large proportion of new labor market entrants [15]; iv) possess the essential characteristics of entry-level job seekers [18].

Twelve participants were dropped because they did not complete the questionnaire, which resulted in 265 participants in the sample. Data were collected through written questionnaires delivered and collected in participants' classrooms during a regularly scheduled class period.

Respondents were an average of 22.00 years old ($SD = 3.42$), 60.38% of them were female, 45.66% were Spanish, 42.64% were Kazakhstani, and 11.70% were German. Most of them (61.50%) had previously worked. They had an average of 12.95 months of work experience ($SD = 28.61$). The three samples were similar in terms of age, work experience and gender. With a mean age of 24.80 years old ($SD = 4.38$), Germans were the oldest participants, while Kazakh participants were the youngest (mean age = 20.31 years old; $SD = 2.80$). The Spanish sample had a mean age of 22.86 years old ($SD = 2.87$). With an average of 41.70 months of work experience ($SD = 54.84$), Germans were also the most experienced group in this study, while Kazakhs were the least experienced participants (average work experience = 9.61 months; $SD = 22.55$). Spanish participants had an average of 8.71 months of work experience ($SD = 18.241$). Women are the majority in the three selected countries: 74.19% in German, 63.70% in Kazakhstan, and 53.07% in Spain. Women represented 60.38% of the total sample.

3.2. Design

A manipulation check is used to determine the effectiveness of manipulation in an experimental design used to test participant's reactions to scenarios including information on business commitment to sustainability. There were two levels of six messages coded as different binary variables with regard to organizations' commitment to sustainability: concern for the environment, promoting women and minorities, supporting employees' work-life balance, investing in the skills of the workforce, maintaining employees' health and safety, and commitment to economic welfare of employees. Every scenario modified the level of every variable considering high and low levels for each one. High level scenario, coded as "1", showed organizations commitment to corporate sustainability, whereas low level scenarios, coded as "0", showed information that did not show that commitment.

Following a between-subjects factorial design, all values of each variable were fully crossed with the values of each of the others, resulting in 64 scenarios ($2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$). Considering the information contained in every scenario, 64 different separate job offers about a company (H&G Company) were written to be randomly distributed among participants. Participants were asked to see themselves as job seekers and to read a job advertisement about H&G Company which was recruiting new employees. Then, they were asked to respond to questions about their perceptions of (1) value fit and (2) job pursuit intentions.

To test whether the manipulation of business commitment to sustainability was effective, we conducted a pilot study among 57 participants. Thus, t tests of the mean level of job pursuit intentions were developed; the mean levels were significantly different between low and high level scenarios of business commitment to sustainability (low commitment to sustainability: mean = 2.61, $SD = 1.21$; high commitment to sustainability: mean = 4.81, $SD = 1.09$, $t = -7.25$, $p < 0.01$).

3.3. Measures

The selection of variables related to business sustainability was developed considering researchers calls to examine job seekers' reactions to organizations' messages including information on the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development (e.g., [16,31]). Taking this consideration

into account, our selection is based on previous research, as we are interested in comparing results from this study with results from other studies carried out in different countries.

Descriptions and manipulations of business sustainability were developed based on previous research as well. Concern for the environment refers to whether the organization takes precautions to minimize any potential negative influence of its activities on the environment [13]. Promoting women and minorities reflects organizational concerns to hire women and minorities [8]. Supporting employees work-life balance refers to whether the organization adopts flexible working hours and work-family balance programs [53]. Investing in the skills of the workforce refers to whether the firm provides adequate training and development opportunities to employees [53]. Maintaining employees' health and safety concerns whether the company avoids work-related accidents [53]. Finally, commitment to economic welfare of employees refers to whether the firm pay salaries higher than competitors in the same industry [13].

An index summarizing business' commitment to sustainability was created for being used in Study 1. As every binary variable was manipulated with a value of "1" or "0", a six digit code was assigned to every job offer (e.g., 001011). The new index is created by adding the binary values of every job offer (e.g., 0 + 0 + 1 + 0 + 1 + 1 = 3). "0" is the lowest value of the index (000000) and "6" is the highest value (111111).

Job pursuit intentions were measured using four items of the Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar [9] seven-point Likert-type scale. The perceived value fit construct was measured through the two-item seven-point Likert-type scale of Cable and Judge [54].

4. Analysis and Results

4.1. Study 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Moderated Mediation Analysis

First, a confirmatory factor analysis was carried out to analyze the psychometric properties of the scales, and then, a moderated mediation analysis was conducted, using the procedure of Hayes [55].

4.1.1. Reliability and Validity: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Content validity was established through a comprehensive literature review and by means of expert academics in the field, ensuring that the measures satisfied the requirements for content validity. Discriminant validity, convergent validity, and scale reliability were assessed with confirmatory factor analysis, following Gerbing and Anderson's guidelines [56]. The results from the estimation of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) (Table 1) show that the overall chi-square for this model was 27.893 with 12 degrees of freedom.

Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis: summary measurement results, validity and reliability.

	SFL
P-V FIT (CR = 0.884; AVE = 0.793; CA = 0.881)	
<i>My values "match" or fit in this organization</i>	0.910
<i>My values match those of current employees in organization</i>	0.870
JPI (CR = 0.866; AVE = 0.617; CA = 0.863)	
<i>I would accept a job offer from this company</i>	0.771
<i>I would make this company one of my first choices as an employer</i>	0.837
<i>I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this company</i>	0.798
<i>I would recommend this company to a friend looking for a job</i>	0.733
MODEL FIT SUMMARY	
Chi-square = 27.893, df = 12 (CMIN/DF = 2.324)	
CFI = 0.984; IFI = 0.984; TLI = 0.972	
RMSEA = 0.071	

Notation: P-V FIT: Perceived Value Fit; JPI: Job Pursuit Intentions. **Note:** SFL: Standardized Factor Loadings; CR: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted; CA: Cronbach Alpha.

We examined four measures of fit, comparative fit index (CFI = 0.984), incremental fit index (IFI = 0.984), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI = 0.972), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.071), which are inside conventional cut-off values [57], so we deemed the model acceptable.

To assess convergent validity we observed individual loadings, and the results show that all items load on their specified latent variables and that each loading is large and significant, thus indicating convergent validity. To assess discriminant validity, we observed construct intercorrelations, and the results show that they were significantly different from 1, and that the shared variance between any two constructs (square of their intercorrelations) was less than the average variance explained in the items by the construct [58]. Table 2 shows that intercorrelations are inferior to the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE), indicating that discriminant validity is adequate for all latent variables. Finally, regarding reliability all constructs presented acceptable levels of composite reliability (CR), considerably exceeding the level of 0.60 recommended by Bagozzi and Yi [59]: perceived value fit (CR = 0.884), and job pursuit intentions (CR = 0.866). On the other side, all latent variables exceeded the recommended level of the average variance extracted (0.50), suggesting convergent validity [60]. Therefore, results show that the indicators were sufficient and adequate in terms of how the measurement model was specified for all latent variables.

Table 2. Correlations between constructs and average variance extracted (AVE).

CONSTRUCT	1	2	3
1. SUSTAIN	1.000		
2. P-V FIT	0.410	0.890	
3. JPI	0.495	0.782	0.786

Notation: SUSTAIN: Business Commitment to Sustainability; P-V FIT: Perceived Value Fit; JPI: Job Pursuit Intentions.
Note: Diagonal is the square root of the AVE.

4.1.2. Testing of Hypothesis: Moderated Mediation Analysis

To test the three proposed hypotheses, a moderated mediation analysis was conducted, using the PROCESS macro for SPSS of Hayes [55]. This procedure is appropriate when it is important to analyze the mechanisms through which one variable influences another variable, as well as to know the conditions in which this relationship may happen. In addition, this method allows us to use bootstrap, a procedure recommended to avoid problems arising from the non-normal distribution of data and, particularly, those related to small samples, by using bootstrap confidence intervals for hypothesis testing [49]. To facilitate the interpretability of the coefficients, the variables involved in the interaction term were mean-centered [55].

Thus, Table 3 shows the non-standardized regression estimates for the moderated mediation model (model 7 of Hayes [55]):

First, the above results show that business commitment to sustainability is positively related to job pursuit intentions (Model 1: 0.282, $p = 0.000$), finding support for a positive direct effect (Hypothesis 1).

Second, the presence of a mediating effects requires the fulfilment of two conditions [61]: the independent variable (business commitment to sustainability) must be significantly related to the mediating variable (perceived value fit), and this mediating variable must be significantly related to the dependent variable (job pursuit intentions). Therefore, on the one hand, business commitment to sustainability is positively related to perceived value fit (Model 2: 0.498, $p = 0.000$), and, on the other hand, perceived value fit is positively related to job pursuit intentions (Model 1: 0.544, $p = 0.000$), which gives initial support to the indirect effect of business commitment to sustainability on job pursuit intentions through perceived value fit (Hypothesis 2).

Table 3. Mediation model (model 1) and moderation model (model 2): coefficients and summary.

VARIABLES	Model 1. JPI					Model 2. P-V FIT				
	β	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI	β	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI
CONSTANT	1.894 ****	0.144	0.000	1.612	2.177	3.068 ****	0.088	0.000	2.895	3.242
SUSTAIN	0.282 ****	0.055	0.000	0.174	0.390	0.498 ****	0.073	0.000	0.354	0.643
P-V FIT	0.544 ****	0.043	0.000	0.460	0.628	-	-	-	-	-
GENDER						-0.211 ^{ns}	0.180	0.243	-0.566	0.144
SUSTAIN \times GENDER						-0.282 *	0.149	0.059	-0.575	0.012
MODEL SUMMARY	R ²	F	p			R ²	F	p		
	0.518	140.63	0.000			0.163	16.92	0.000		

Notation: SUSTAIN: Business Commitment to Sustainability; P-V FIT: Perceived Value Fit; JPI: Job Pursuit Intentions; GENDER (0: male; 1: female). β : Non-standardized coefficient. **Note:** * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$; **** $p < 0.001$; ^{ns} Not Significant.

Third, the above results also show that gender moderates the relationship between business commitment to sustainability and perceived value fit, since the coefficient of the interaction is significant (Model 2: -0.282 , $p = 0.059$). In addition, bootstrapping was used to compute confidence intervals for conditional effects of business commitment to sustainability on perceived value fit at different values of gender (see Table 4).

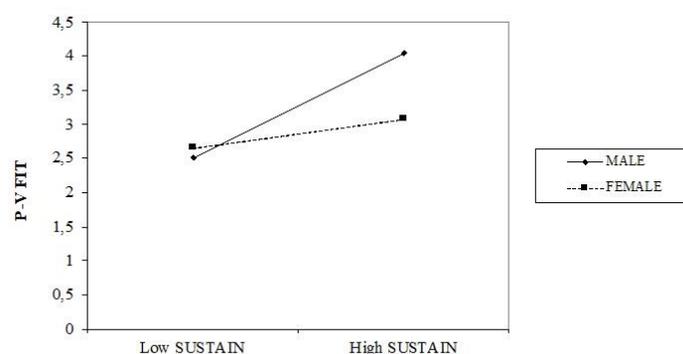
Table 4. Moderation model (model 2): conditional effects of business commitment to sustainability on perceived value fit at different values of gender, and test of unconditional interaction.

Moderator (Gender)	Effect	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI
0 (MALE)	0.669 ****	0.115	0.000	0.443	0.894
1 (FEMALE)	0.387 ****	0.095	0.000	0.199	0.574
TEST OF UNCONDITIONAL INTERACTION	ΔR^2	F	p		
INTERACTION	0.012	3.578	0.059		

Notation: SUSTAIN: Business Commitment to Sustainability; P-V FIT: Perceived Value Fit. **Note:** * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$; **** $p < 0.001$; ^{ns} Not Significant.

Additionally, the confidence intervals estimated for the conditional effects provides additional support for the moderating effect, since the test of unconditional interaction is also significant and negative ($F = 3.578$, $p = 0.059$). The confidence intervals estimated show that the conditional effects of business commitment to sustainability on perceived value fit at different values of gender are significant and positive both for men (0.669 , $p < 0.05$) and for women (0.387 , $p < 0.05$), in such a way that this conditional effect is larger for men than for women. Therefore, these results show that gender negatively moderates the relationship between business commitment to sustainability and perceived value fit, providing support for the existence of moderation but not for the expected direction of such moderation (Hypothesis 3).

To facilitate interpretation of the moderating effect, the interaction is plotted in Figure 2 using the process proposed by Dawson [62].

**Figure 2.** Moderation-only model: moderating effect of gender on the business commitment to sustainability–perceived value fit relationship.

Finally, to test jointly the moderated mediation effects, the next results show in more detail the conditional indirect effects of business commitment to sustainability through perceived value fit on job pursuit intentions at different values of gender and the index of moderated mediation (Table 5).

In addition, the confidence interval estimated by bootstrap for the index of moderated mediation (Table 5) is significant and non-zero (95% CI: $-0.311, -0.003$), so the index of moderated mediation is significant and negative (-0.153), providing additional support for mediation effects (Hypothesis 2), jointly with moderation effects but contrary to expected results (Hypothesis 3), a moderated mediation exists, but it is negative regarding gender.

Table 5. Moderated mediation model (Models 1 and 2): conditional indirect effects of business commitment to sustainability on job pursuit intentions through perceived value fit at different values of gender, and index of moderated mediation.

Moderator (Gender)	Effect	BSE	LLCI	ULCI
0 (MALE)	0.364 *	0.057	0.252	0.481
1 (FEMALE)	0.210 *	0.058	0.100	0.325
INDEX OF MODERATED MEDIATION	Index	BSE	BLLCI	BULCI
P-V FIT (MEDIATOR)	-0.153 *	0.078	-0.311	-0.003

Notation: SUSTAIN: Business Commitment to Sustainability; P-V FIT: Perceived Value Fit; JPI: Job Pursuit Intentions.

Note: * Significant at $p < 0.05$ level. Bootstrap confidence intervals derived from 5000 samples (95% level of confidence).

This moderated mediation model also provides the estimation of the confidence intervals for the conditional indirect effects of business commitment to sustainability on job pursuit intentions through perceived value fit at different values of gender. These conditional indirect effects are significant and positive both for men ($0.363, p < 0.05$) and for women ($0.210, p < 0.05$), meaning that the mediating effect is also larger for men than for women, contrary to what was expected.

4.2. Study 2. Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Cross-Country Perspective of the Individual Effects of Business Commitment to Sustainability

Finally, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed to show the effects of each individual variable regarding business commitment to sustainability, first for total sample and then for separate country subsamples (Spain, Kazakhstan, and Germany).

We first entered the control variables (age and experience) in the first step. In the second step, we entered each individual variable (as dummy variables) regarding business commitment to sustainability of the organization, commitment to economic welfare of employees, concern for the environment, investing in the skills of the workforce, supporting employees work-life balance, promoting women and minorities, and, finally, maintaining employees' health and safety. Table 6 presents the results of hierarchical regressions.

Table 6. Hierarchical regression analysis: effects of business commitment to sustainability on job pursuit intentions (total sample, Spain subsample, Kazakhstan subsample, and Germany subsample).

Sample	Total (n = 265)		Spain (n = 121)		Kazakhstan (n = 113)		Germany (n = 31)	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
MODEL: STEP 1								
CONSTANT	6.197 ****	0.734	4.547 ***	1.422	6.879 ****	1.428	3.717 *	2.023
AGE	-0.125 ****	0.035	-0.060 ^{ns}	0.065	-0.146 **	0.064	-0.043 ^{ns}	0.090
EXPER	0.008 *	0.004	0.019 *	0.010	0.012 ^{ns}	0.008	0.002 ^{ns}	0.007
SUMMARY	R ²	F	R ²	F	R ²	F	R ²	F
	0.049 ****	6.757	0.030 ^{ns}	1.850	0.046 *	2.645	0.011 ^{ns}	0.149

Table 6. Cont.

Sample	Total (n = 265)		Spain (n = 121)		Kazakhstan (n = 113)		Germany (n = 31)	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
MODEL: STEP 2								
CONSTANT	3.930 ***	0.683	2.800 **	1.126	4.555 ****	1.173	2.594 <i>ns</i>	2.028
AGE	−0.092 ***	0.031	−0.065 <i>ns</i>	0.050	−0.091 <i>ns</i>	0.056	−0.058 <i>ns</i>	0.085
EXPER	0.004 <i>ns</i>	0.004	0.016 **	0.008	0.012 *	0.007	−0.001 <i>ns</i>	0.007
CEWE	1.081 ****	0.152	1.314 ****	0.204	1.281 ****	0.224	−0.181 <i>ns</i>	0.491
CFE	0.300 **	0.149	0.136 <i>ns</i>	0.191	0.243 <i>ns</i>	0.216	0.624 <i>ns</i>	0.459
ISW	0.569 ****	0.149	0.642 ****	0.190	0.459 **	0.217	0.634 <i>ns</i>	0.498
WLB	0.435 ***	0.150	0.884 ****	0.193	−0.098 <i>ns</i>	0.216	0.775 <i>ns</i>	0.456
WAM	0.331 **	0.149	0.449 **	0.188	−0.053 <i>ns</i>	0.217	0.880 *	0.467
HS	0.620 ****	0.149	0.841 ****	0.190	0.540 **	0.217	0.388 <i>ns</i>	0.493
SUMMARY	R ²	F	R ²	F	R ²	F	R ²	F
	0.304 ****	13.999	0.474 ****	12.657	0.327 ****	6.304	0.367 <i>ns</i>	1.598
	ΔR^2	ΔF	ΔR^2	ΔF	ΔR^2	ΔF	ΔR^2	ΔF
	0.255 ****	15.657	0.444 ****	15.743	0.281 ****	7.225	0.357 *	2.069

Notation: AG: Age; EXPER: Experience; CEWE: Commitment to Economic Welfare of Employees; CFE: Concern for the Environment; ISW: Investing in the Skills of the Workforce; WLB: Supporting Employees Work-Life Balance; WAM: Promoting Women and Minorities; HS: Maintaining Employees' Health and Safety. β : Non-standardized coefficient. Note: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$; **** $p < 0.001$; *ns* Not Significant.

The overall analysis including respondents from the three studied countries indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between all messages showing employer commitment to sustainability and job seekers job pursuit intentions. Results highlight the importance of commitment with economic welfare of employees (1.081; $p < 0.001$), maintaining employees' health and safety (0.620; $p < 0.001$) and investing in the skills of the workforce (0.569; $p < 0.001$). The effect of actions showing concern for the environment is lesser than the effect of the other messages (0.300; $p < 0.05$).

The separate analysis for Spain and Kazakhstan shows some differences among respondents from these two countries. In Spain, all the messages showing commitment to business sustainability are positively and statistically significantly related to job seekers' intentions, with the exception of showing concern for the environment. Results from the Kazakhstani sample show that only three of six messages—those related to commitment to the economic welfare of employees, maintaining employees' health and safety and investing in the skills of the workforce—have a positively and statistically significant relationship with job pursuit intentions.

Showing commitment with economic welfare of employees is the aspect that has a stronger relationship with job pursuit intentions in both countries (Spain: 1.314, $p < 0.001$; Kazakhstan (1.281, $p < 0.001$). However, while supporting employees work-life balance has also a stronger relationship with job pursuit intentions for Spanish job seekers (0.884; $p < 0.001$), this relationship is not statically significant in the Kazakhstani sample.

The small size of the German sample does not allow us to develop a valid separate analysis for German job seekers, although the German sample was included in the overall analysis, being useful for this research. Recruitment messages including information on business concern for the environment do not influence job pursuit intentions in Spanish and Kazakhstan samples. Nevertheless, this message is relevant when considering the total sample. This result may suggest that concern for the environment is important for German job seekers.

4.3. Results Summary

Overall, the developed analysis shows that hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported (see Table 7). In line with assumptions of signaling theory, we found a positive and statistically significant relationship between recruiting messages showing commitment to sustainability and job seeker's pursuit intentions (Hypothesis 1).

Table 7. Summary of results.

Proposed Hypothesis	Result
Hypothesis 1: SUSTAIN → JPI	SUPPORTED
Hypothesis 2: SUSTAIN → P-V FIT → JPI	SUPPORTED
Hypothesis 3: SUSTAIN (x GENDER) → P-V FIT	NOT SUPPORTED

Notation: SUSTAIN: Business Commitment to Sustainability; P-V FIT: Perceived Value Fit; JPI: Job Pursuit Intentions.

Results also show that Hypothesis 2 is supported. This means that perceptions of perceived value fit positively mediates the relationship between business commitment to sustainability and job pursuit intentions. Finally, we also found that the gender of job seekers moderates the positive relationship between business commitment to sustainability and perceived value fit. Contrary to our predictions, results show that this relationship is higher for men than for women.

5. Discussion

The results of moderated mediation analysis (Study 1) provide support for Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2.

Results from Study 2 also confirm that Hypothesis 1 is supported. However, Study 2 provides us with additional information regarding the relationship between the considered messages related to sustainable development and job seekers job pursuit intentions, showing some interesting differences among the studied countries.

Results show that concerns about the environment do not influence job seekers pursuit intentions in Spain and Kazakhstan, but commitment with economic welfare of employees, investing in the skills of the workforce, maintaining employees' health and safety do influence those intentions. Nevertheless, supporting employees work-life balance and promoting women and minorities messages are positively related with job pursuit intentions in the Spanish sample, but these relationships are not statistically significant for Kazakh respondents.

Country cultural and socio-economic differences could explain differences between job seekers from different countries [6,63]. Society's sustainability awareness varies depending on the studied countries. It is expected that recruitment messages showing commitment to sustainability have a high impact on job applicants in those countries more concerned about sustainable development challenges. For example, Germany has a score of 58.4/100 points in the index which measures how much national citizen's care about the environment. That index only reaches 27.4/100 points in Spain [64].

As job seekers pursuit intentions could be influenced by their need of finding a job, socio-economic factors such as unemployment rates, evolution of country GDP or incomes per person could be also considered to understand divergent results among respondents from different countries.

Results also show that the perceptions of perceived value fit mediate the relationship between business commitment to sustainability and job pursuit intentions (Hypothesis 2). This result is in line with person-organization fit theory principles. It shows that prospective employees will develop intentions of pursuit towards those companies showing commitment to sustainability because they will feel a strong fit between the organizations' values and their own. If organizations are aware that current job seekers give importance to sustainability issues, they could reinforce their commitment to sustainability in order to attract talented candidates. This could also improve companies' sustainability performance and, as a consequence, the global performance.

With regard to Hypothesis 3, Study 1 also shows that gender of job seekers moderates the relationship between business commitment to sustainability and perceived-value fit, but in an opposite way from what was hypothesized. Considering that some women's psychological characteristics and traits are in line with sustainable development values, we expected that the perceived similarity between values of firms' showing commitment to sustainability and female job seekers values will be higher than for masculine applicants (Hypothesis 3). However, the results show that the perception of fit with those companies showing commitment to sustainability is higher for men than women.

This finding is interesting, and it can be understood considering within-gender differences. Researchers have noted that individual differences among people of the same gender can influence their attitudes and beliefs [65]. For instance, the traditionalist view of gender roles underlines that women tend to develop the family role more than men [66]. Although nowadays many men still share this view, many others can be critical of the traditionalist view of gender roles, accepting that men should assume roles usually associated to women.

Other beliefs about some aspects related to sustainable development can be different within the same gender [65]. For instance, some women can agree with positive discrimination in companies, as a way to avoid inequalities between men and women. On the other hand, other women can feel capable of getting the same achievements than men by themselves. In this case, positive discrimination can be perceived as something negative, as they could feel that it is assumed they are not as capable as men of achieving some goals.

Some authors also note that although some women's traits could suggest that women are more concerned about protecting the environment than men, women's attitudes, beliefs and behaviors with regard to the environment have political, ideological, social and economic explanations more than gender-based explanations [67].

Hence, different perceptions within the same gender can influence individuals' values regarding aspects of sustainable development such as supporting employees work-life balance, promoting women and minorities or concern for the environment.

Overall, our results extend the previous findings by:

Providing a broad measure of sustainability which considers six different messages containing information on business commitment to different aspects of sustainability. Many of them are related to the social dimension of sustainable development, which is less studied. As the aim of this article is to examine if employers' commitment to sustainability influences job seekers intentions, using a more complete measure of sustainability than previous research contributes to increase the generalizability of the results. It also allows for finding the importance of different messages related to sustainability in the studied relationships.

Confirming the direct effect of business commitment to sustainability on job pursuit intentions. This study also confirms the role of perceived value fit as a mediating mechanism which explains how showing commitment to sustainability affects prospective employees' pursuit intentions. As previous research on this topic is still scarce, this article provides new experimental evidence using well-known research techniques.

Providing evidence that information on business sustainability has an influence on job seekers intentions in different countries than those considered in previous studies. An implication of this study is that different messages showing commitment to sustainability have a different effect in job applicants from different countries. This finding is relevant for businesses interested in adding talent to their staff. It underlines that, in order to influence job seekers pursuit intentions, the selected message with regard to sustainability could be different in every country.

Confirming that the gender of job seekers plays a role as a moderator in the relationship between business commitment to sustainability and perceived-value fit. According to our results, the perceived similarity between values of business' showing commitment to sustainability and males job seekers values is higher than for feminine applicants.

Taking into account that the mediating effect of perceived value fit on job pursuit intentions is moderated by gender. Hence, this study develops a moderated mediation model, which jointly examines perceived value fit as the mediating mechanism and gender as the moderator of this model. This model enhances the validity and precision of the obtained findings.

6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study analyses the impact on job pursuit intentions of several messages related to different dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, social, and economic dimensions).

The consideration of a broad measure of sustainability is positive in terms of showing complete information to potential job seekers, allowing businesses to distinguish which dimensions and messages have a higher effect on job pursuit intentions.

However, recent studies have highlighted that some compensatory psychological processes occur when job seekers are exposed to social, economic, and environmental information [16]. Namely, the fact that the designed job offers include just one message related to the environmental dimension of sustainable development and several messages related to the social dimension could influence participants' assessment of the message related to the environment. The inclusion of information on commitment to economic welfare of employees could also influence the results. Economic welfare could be considered a priority for job seekers. This could influence the assessment of the messages related to the environment which could be considered less relevant.

Future research should design different job offers including separate information on the environmental dimension of sustainable development. As environmental sustainability is a key dimension of sustainable development, it would be interesting to find out if commitment to environmental sustainability influences job pursuit intentions as the broad measure used in this study.

The use of students instead of active prospective employees seeking a job in scenario-based experiments could affect the external validity of the research, particularly when samples are comprised of students not seeking a full-time job [18]. Following recommendations to minimize this problem from prior similar studies (e.g., [1,2,5,8,10,11,15,18,68]), this research only considers students on the final years of their degree. Almost 2/3 of them have work experience (the average respondent has 12.95 months of job experience) and they have been previously exposed to recruitment messages and are familiarized with job offers. These precautions make the used sample reasonable to collect the relevant characteristics of young job seekers. Prior studies considering a similar experiment with samples of students and current job seekers support this assumption, noting that a student sample "is prototypic and possesses the essential characteristics of college-educated, entry-level job seekers" [18] (p.360). However, our findings may not generalize to a sample of a more veteran workforce. On the other hand, the use of students also allows us to compare the obtained results to previous studies.

Although experimental designs are commonly used to manipulate attribute levels, scenario-based experiments do not confront participants with real life situations. In real life, job seekers get information on organizations sustainability performance in different ways. Some of this information, for example, information published in the media, is not always controlled by the organization. Hence, experimental designs could not capture all the variables that affect job seekers' perceptions of organizations sustainability performance [10].

Instead of using ad hoc descriptions of organizations commitment to sustainability, future research could consider other ways of communicating their sustainability performance. Some researchers have suggested that information about sustainability could be showed on organizations web sites [5,15].

On the other hand, experimental manipulations using students provide high internal validity, involve a more real decision-making process than other designs and, by incorporating an indirect assessment of the importance of cues, they weaken the social desirability effects often associated in sustainability research based on self-reports [6]. These advantages explain why most relevant contributions in this field are built on student samples (e.g., [1,8,10,18,69]). Nevertheless, we admit that our results could not generalize to a real job seekers sample. Future research should replicate this study using samples of people which is more actively looking for a job.

Our findings regarding German job seekers must be tempered due to a small sample size. Future research should collect additional data on German job seekers in order to make a separated analysis of respondents from this country. Nevertheless, German respondents were included in the overall analysis of Study 1 and 2. That is the reason we have kept this sample in our research.

Finally, future research could analyze the role of gender in depth. The obtained findings confirm that job seekers' gender plays a role in the proposed model, but in a different way from what was

hypothesized. Although we believe within-gender differences could explain the obtained findings, future research is needed to confirm this point.

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