Do National Values of Culture and Sustainability Influence Direct Employee PDM Levels and Scope? The Search for a European Answer

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Abstract: The dynamic development of the global economy has led to the creation of agile and innovative organizations that need to adapt rapidly to new challenges. For that reason, organizations need to make decisions that help them face uncertain situations and be successful. Research has demonstrated that employee participative decision making (PDM) promotes more innovative, flexible, and sustainable organizations. The present paper examines organizational, cultural, and sustainable factors to discover how these variables affect PDM in the European context. For this purpose, this study focuses on two main objectives: (1) analyzing the impact of a country’s cultural and institutional values (macro level), beyond individual and organizational characteristics (micro and meso levels), on the adoption of PDM in the European context and (2) differentiating among the types of decisions for which employee participation is considered (operational or organizational). To attain these goals, three hierarchical fitted regression models were fitted using data based on the Sixth European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) and complemented with information from Hofstede’s dimensions, whose scores are obtained from 2010 Hofstede database, and institutional values from the 2015 World Competitive Yearbook (WCY). Results demonstrate that some cultural values are significant for PDM and that sustainability is related to employee participation at the general and operational levels. This allows the conclusion that organizations located in countries with greater sustainability awareness are also those that promote employee participation the most.

Keywords: direct employee participation; PDM; sustainability; culture values; operational decisions; organizational decisions; Europe

1. Introduction

Constant changes in the environment require organizations to be prepared to make the right decisions to ensure their success. To accomplish this goal, organizations must adopt a structure of flexibility and innovation that allows them to adapt to the new circumstances of their business environment. In this regard, this context should be based on a knowledge economy, where employees’ skills and ideas are considered a competitive advantage for organizations to deal with such a competitive environment [1] and to be more innovative. According to Rima’a [2], a participatory organization that encourages employees to be involved in decision-making processes can build innovative organizations. It means that employees’ knowledge, developed through their contact with the productive process or customers, is valuable for business activity. Nevertheless, organizations have been historically structured in a hierarchical way, in which the power of decision is distributed unequally, which affects the decision-making process. Therefore, top managers and directors have had the definite answer. Although this is still a reality in some organizations,
in recent years, an increasing number of organizations have evolved into new flatter and decentralized organizational forms, where employees are allowed to share their knowledge. This is called “participative decision making” (PDM) and represents all the forms where employees express their views and ideas. Different meanings are given to such human resource practices. For example, Noah [3] defines it as a practice of delegation in which employees gain power in making decisions. Talib and Rahman [4] consider that PDM is concerned with how employers allow their employees to be involved in organizational decision making. Previous studies have focused on a type of PDM, such as consultative or delegative [5], direct or indirect [6,7], or active or passive [8], but only a few are based on the matter of decision making [9–11]. This paper aims to shed light on this issue, analyzing PDM from two different perspectives: operational, when employees decide on direct tasks (i.e., how to organize their work, time, and speed and how to set their own schedules and goals) [12], and organizational, in which they have a decision on organizational matters (i.e., vision, mission, organizational goals) [13]. This is, therefore, one of the first contributions of this research. However, why should organizations promote PDM? In daily activities, employees generate ideas and knowledge that benefit business, which makes employee participation a useful tool for strategy and business decision making [13]. Different benefits are attributed to employee participation. Miller [14] states that the most widely studied attitudinal outcome of employee participation is job satisfaction. Additionally, other outcomes that previous studies have found to be associated with employee participation are job performance, organizational commitment, job involvement, and productivity [9,15–17].

Given the positive outcomes related to employee participation, it is relevant to study and have a deep understanding of the factors that support this human resource practice across European organizations. For this purpose, the present paper provides a multilevel analysis of the relationship between the above factors and PDM, centered on three steps: the micro, meso, and macro. This implies a deeper analysis at the employee, organization, and country levels. This multilevel analysis represents the second contribution of this paper.

At a micro level, the paper analyzes variables related to employees. In addition to employees’ characteristics that have traditionally been studied as predictors of PDM (such as age, education, etc.), this research has added the impact of perceived supervisor support (PSS) on employee participation, which has been previously demonstrated to influence PDM [18]. Perceived supervisor support (PSS) indicates that managers value contributions from employees [19,20], which is the basis for promoting innovative workplaces. Some studies have identified supervisor attitudes as key to the development of participative practices [21]. Employee participation is based on a relationship of trust between managers and employees, which enhances efficiency and productivity. This approach allows employees to share knowledge and develop skills that enable them to make decisions. Therefore, the current study extends previous studies that elucidate perceived supervisor support (PSS) as a promoter of employee participation.

At the meso level, organizational variables such as the ownership and size of the company are taken into consideration. Previous studies have found differences between the decision-making process in terms of ownership, differentiated by private and public sectors [22,23]. The decision-making process in private organizations is more free-flowing, which means that the organizational structure allows its own rules to inform decisions, while public organizations have more turbulence and interruptions because many stakeholders believe they have a right to participate in the decision-making process [24]. This mainly occurs due to the high political weight in this type of organization. In addition to ownership, Dhir and Shukla [25] postulate that HR practices are dependent on the size of the organizations. Although the relationship is unclear, most authors support that large organizations promote more HR practices [26,27].

In addition to previous individual and organizational features, organizations need to adopt flexible forms in response to the cultural and institutional conditions of the country where they are located. For this reason, this paper explores how culture and institutional values promote PDM in organizations, which represent the macro level. A
A wide range of literature supports that organizational practices need to be aligned with cultural features [28,29]. An important contribution to the literature in this regard is that of Sagie and Aycan [30], who provide a theoretical framework detailing how cultural attitudes influence PDM. However, they only consider two of the six cultural variables identified by Hofstede (which are later defined in Section 2.4). Therefore, this research aims to complete the abovementioned study, analyzing the six Hofstede (2010) value dimensions in the sin of PDM. Consequently, this 360° view of culture is another of the main contributions of this research.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that organizations have suffered drastic changes in the last two decades due to the emergence of the awareness of sustainability [31,32]. The concept of sustainable development is focused on analyzing the impact of human activity on the environment with the main purpose of developing practices that mitigate their effects [33]. Consequently, organizations have shown an increased interest in achieving sustainability. In this respect, the role of human resources in developing sustainable organizations by contributing to the achievement of corporate sustainability goals has evolved into the concept of sustainable human resources management (SHRM), which is defined 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 the organization and over a long-term time horizon while controlling for unintended side effects and negative feedback” [34]. HRM is considered the central point for the achievement of environmental performance [35]. This means that human resource strategies should be aligned with sustainable organizational goals to create practices to achieve sustainable development. Some examples of HR sustainable practices are related to training, recruitment, development, leadership, diversity, and employee engagement [36]. These HR practices become sustainable when they are in line with company sustainability goals. For example, when recruitment activities include sustainable commitment, HR looks for potential candidates with sustainable awareness or volunteering initiatives. The literature linking sustainability and HRM has attracted the attention of HR researchers and practitioners and has increased in recent years [37,38]. Based on previous research [39], multiple positive results are given to SHRM at different levels. In terms of organization, SHRM helps to promote efficiency and innovation. At the society level, it helps to create social inclusion and employment. Additionally, it contributes to the individual level by improving work-life balance and job performance [40]. Previous studies have demonstrated that employee participation is a common practice in the field of SHRM and is considered a competitive advantage for sustainability success [32,41,42]. However, in the literature, little is known about whether the sustainable approach of organizations enhances a participatory environment in issues in addition to the environment. Therefore, more research seems necessary to determine whether sustainable awareness in organizations generally promotes participative practices for employees, which is intended to be the third contribution of this paper. The search for this association is important for two main reasons. First, part of the human resource management literature calls for bringing humanity back into HRM, and by giving voice to an employee, organizations are humanized [43]. Second, employee participation as an HR practice enables organizations to survive and remain consistent over the long term [44]. The active participation of employees strengthens the organization in the achievement of continuous improvement [45].

Based on the above discussion, this research aims to propose a framework that provides answers to three main questions: (i) What role does a country’s cultural values play (beyond individual and organizational factors) in the adoption of practices that promote European companies’ PDM? (ii) To what extent do organizations located in more sustainable countries influence direct participation by employees at the European level? (iii) To what extent is the relationship found between the above variables modified according to the type of decision in which the employee is involved?

The answer to these questions can be summarized in the twofold objective of this study: (1) to analyze the impact of the country’s cultural and sustainable values (macro...
level), beyond individual and organizational characteristics (micro and meso levels), on the adoption of practices that promote employee participation in European organizations and (2) to deeply analyze the relationship between the abovementioned variables, differentiating among the types of decisions for which employee participation is considered (operational or organizational).

The achievement of these objectives may contribute to the existing literature by illustrating new ways to demonstrate how European organizations can implement participative practices through organizational, cultural, and sustainable features. In addition, in a practical way, it could help multinational organizations in decision making processes to consider the diversity and multicultural profile of their employees overall when businesses expand daily and have a presence in different countries. In other words, when an organization searches for an expansion to another country or recruits people from different cultures, this study could set the basis to understand how these new employees would encourage decision making in the immediate work or in organizational issues. Furthermore, this study reinforces the relationship between manager and subordinate to obtain a participative environment, so organizations would benefit from this idea and implement free-flowing communication channels (suggestions schemes, one-to-one meetings) to encourage employees about their knowledge communication.

With this purpose in mind and considering the European approach of the current study, a hierarchical fitted regression will be applied in three different databases: (a) the Sixth EWCS, to analyze individual answers from employees of 35 countries and extract information for micro and meso analysis, and the Hofstede 2010 database, to obtain cultural dimension scores and the World Competitive Yearbook developed in 2015. Both surveys were used in the macro field.

The paper is structured as follows. After the introduction, the Section 2 defines the concepts of PDM, culture, and sustainability. Additionally, it offers a theoretical background about PDM and each of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and sustainability, defining the hypotheses by the variable interaction outcome. The data and the definition of the dependent and independent variables of the hierarchical fitted regression model to explain PDM are included in the Section 3. Next, the discussion of the analysis and the main conclusions are presented in Section 4. Finally, the Section 5 includes the limitations and implications of the study.

2. Theoretical Background and Research Hypotheses

2.1. Participative Decision Making (PDM)

As commented in the introduction, the variable to be explained is the direct participation of the employee, at a general level, as well as distinguishing the scope of the decisions in which employees participate (operational and organizational) based on a range of variables at the micro (employee), meso (organization), and macro (cultural and sustainability indexes) levels. This structure per level could be visualized in Figure 1, which appears at the end of this section. The content of each of these variables is detailed below. Participative decision making (PDM) is the opportunity for an employee to provide input into the decision-making process related to work matters [46] (i.e., work organization, task priority) or organizational issues, for example, when they have a say on promoting new strategy ideas. Elele and Fields [47] state that PDM is a management initiative based on the “theory Y”, which suggests that employees are interested in being committed and performing well if managers value their contributions in making decisions that affect the nature of work. The diverse opportunities to participate in the decision-making process can provide mutual benefits for employees and employers. Some writers have proposed that PDM enhances motivation [48,49], organizational commitment, and job satisfaction [50,51]. The literature frames employee participation in different contexts, depending on the political, social, and legal environment of the countries [52]. That is why other terms coexist with “employee participation” and are used similarly at the heart of PDM. These other terms include employee “voice”, “engagement”, “involvement”, or “empowerment”. Although there
are some differences among these concepts [53–55], all share a common central point—to describe an environment in which employees can decide and act on what impacts their work and organizational decisions. According to [56], PDM is the same thing as employee involvement in decision making.

![Research model](image)

Figure 1. Research model.

Previous researchers identify a fourfold framework to classify participative practices [57] in terms of degree, form, level, and scope. First, the degree indicates whether employees are simply informed, consulted, or involved about news or changes in the business. In other words, the degree is the extent to which employees can influence decisions. Second, the form represents whether participation is promoted by company initiatives or workers’ union representation. In the first scenario, it takes the form of direct employee participation (suggestion schemes, staff surveys, informal or formal meetings, and quality circles are some examples of direct participation) and evolves all the activities driven by managers and organizations to allow employees to have a say in decision making. On the other hand, when trade unions act as intermediaries and give voice to employees through their representation, the form of participation is categorized as indirect [7]. Third, previous researchers differentiate whether participation takes place at the individual, group, or department level [57]. Fourth, the scope, which is about the subject decision, distinguishes a wide range of issues related to operational concerns, such as how to improve practices on the manufacturing line [58] and strategic matters, when they are related to organizational decision-making processes such as mergers or mission and organizational goals [59]. Precisely, the scope is the approach used in this article to differentiate kinds of PDM.

Regarding the scope of employee participation, it can be said that it has been transformed with the evolution of industrial relations. At the beginning of the decade of the 1980s, employees could take part in decisions that affected their immediate work. This was called task discretion, which according to the definition of Kalleberg et al. [12] is “to participate in making decisions about their jobs and working conditions”. In this line, many organizations tried to give autonomy to employees to develop their skills and make decisions regarding their tasks, time, and work conditions. This is also known as job autonomy and involves the different ways in which an employee can develop their tasks with freedom. These concepts are related to operational PDM, which occurs when employees
have a voice in their immediate job. As Sia et al. [60] point out, when an organization provides enough freedom for employees in their task, it positively influences their creativity and performance. Although task discretion currently exists, workplaces suffered a management transformation during the 1990s with the transition to a knowledge-based economy that allows employee views in decision making related to strategic issues, which are those related to business goals. It is precisely this direct consultation that has become the central theme where managers allow employees to influence organizational issues. In the literature, the extent to which employees can decide on organizational or strategic matters is referred to as organizational participation [10,61].

From the human resources perspective, the current paper focuses on PDM as direct employee participation, which is referred to as an employer-leading tool that allows employees to take part in decision-related operational and organizational matters. This definition is supported by [14,15], who indicate that employee participation refers to the extent to which employees are allowed or encouraged to share their views and ideas about organizational activities or provide their input in organizational decision making. The present study intends to explore whether there are noticeable differences among all the determinant variables and the scope of the decision.

2.2. Micro Level: Perceived Supervisor Support

Previous researchers support that consensual and participative decision making are proper in modern companies that need to effectively respond to change [62,63]. Given that direct employee participation is an employer-driven initiative, managers gain special attention as promoters (or detractors) of employee participation. According to Blau [64,65], social exchange theory (PDM) states the basis for a social exchange that goes beyond the standard economic contract. Previous studies on decision making have focused on superior–subordinate communication [66,67]. Analyzing this combination, Torka et al. [68] pointed out that a good relationship between managers and employees will increase employee involvement. A recent study developed by Wohlgemuth et al. [69] finds that managers can facilitate employee participation through both trust in and informal control of subordinates. Regarding operational decision making, a study by Humphrey and colleagues showed consistent positive relationships between social support and interdependence [70]. In line with these approaches, a manager will determine if an employee is only informed of or involved in the decision-making process. Although this positive relationship was studied previously [18], the current study explored whether this link occurs in terms of the scope. This leads to the proposition that there exists a positive relationship between PSS and employee participation at all its levels:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). PSS relates positively to direct employee participation.

Hypothesis 1a (H1a). PSS relates positively to organizational direct employee participation.

Hypothesis 1b (H1b). PSS relates positively to operational direct employee participation.

2.3. Meso Level: Ownership and Size

The decision-making process is different under public or private ownership and depends on the roles that those kinds of organizations play in our society. According to Nutt [71], private sector organizations sell products or services to consumers in markets to create wealth for shareholders. In contrast, public organizations are governmental agencies that deliver contracts for services and collect information about the needs of a society [72]. The decision-making processes in these types of organizations are different. Specifically, these differences were studied by Nutt, who concluded they were related to political influence, data availability, ownership, and goals. Each of these statements is also supported by more studies in the literature.

In terms of political influence, a study by Shaed et al. [5] reveals that the decision making of public organizations gives the power to decide to political forces, placing political
concerns above economic issues. In addition, it states that wide levels of decision and bureaucracy exist, which makes it a slower and more time-consuming process. Another distinction between the sectors is related to data collection [71]. The private sector has the chance to buy more information from the market, which gives it more autonomy and flexibility in the decision-making process, while access to data is difficult for the public sector. Brown et al. [23] support that employee participation and practices implemented to increase productivity and profitability may be particularly strong in the private sector. Nutt and Backoff [73] analyzed differences in goal setting. In this sense, goals in the private sector are often clear and follow efficiency; however, those in the public sector are complex and conflict-ridden, increasing the time required to make decisions. Specifically, the complexities of the public sector make the promotion of strategic decision making difficult, because legislation prohibits political leaders from collecting information from the market. However, regarding the large autonomy that public employees have [74], operational decision-making is expected to be promoted by the public sector. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** The public sector tends to promote PDM less than the private sector.

**Hypothesis 2a (H2a).** The public sector tends to promote organizational PDM less than the private sector.

**Hypothesis 2b (H2b).** The public sector tends to promote operational PDM more than the private sector.

Organizational size is another meso variable and distinguishes between small, medium, and large organizations according to business activity. Human resource practices vary depending on the size of the company. Kersley et al. [75] consider that forms of direct employee participation are more common in large companies. This rationale is in line with previous authors who state that larger organizations are more participative than smaller organizations [76]. Considering these antecedents, it seems clear that organizational size could have significance for PDM. In terms of scope, it is precise to differentiate between business orientation and organizational size. This may be because larger companies have a strategic orientation. A study assessed by McEvoy and Buller in 2013 found that HR in larger firms was more strategic and less operational than HR in small and mid-sized firms [77]. Under this premise and considering that PDM is an HR practice, it is expected that large companies promote organizational decisions. Research into organizational size also supports that larger structures decrease employee autonomy in the workplace [78]. Thus, it is expected that:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** Organization size is positively related to PDM.

**Hypothesis 3a (H3a).** Organization size is positively related to organizational PDM.

**Hypothesis 3b (H3b).** Organization size is negatively related to operational PDM.

### 2.4. Macro Level: Cultural Values and Sustainability

The literature focused on strategy highlights that the macro environment is made up of all the social, legal, political, economic, and cultural factors that affect organizations [79–81]. In other words, the environment sets guidelines for the exercise of business activity. Coyle-Shapiro and Shore [82] postulated that major external environmental changes accelerate the evolution of sociocultural values by altering the relationship between the organization and its employees and affecting employee responses to an organization’s policies and practices. The need to incorporate a cross-cultural approach to the reality of companies is explained by [83]: “Each country has unique institutional and cultural characteristics that provide sources of competitive advantage that are only reliable when there are changes in the environment. Managers, therefore, need to assess the extent of the national culture that may interfere with their company efforts to respond with the appropriate strategy.
now and in the future” (p9). In other words, national culture theory could be used as a framework for researching many areas such as business management, and it also conditions the decision-making process [84]. Furthermore, culture determines values and behaviors that individuals reflect in the organizations [85]. To expand this approach, Hofstede scores have been considered for the analysis since they represent the most valuable reference for cross-cultural studies [86]. In addition to culture, and considering the increase for caring the environment and how employees are involved in green activities at organizations [87], sustainability has been added as another macro variable. In the following sections, all the macro variables (cultural and sustainability) are analyzed.

2.4.1. Power Distance

This dimension refers to the power distribution among the members of institutions and organizations within a country [88]. In organizations, power distance (PD) is represented by strong hierarchical structures where power is mainly developed by managers and leaders, while employees feel comfortable in a bureaucratic atmosphere. In contrast, in low power distance cultures, managers tend to delegate the decision-making process [89], so employees feel that the power to make decisions is shared at the same level among all people integrated into the organization [90]. In a scenario of high power distance cultures, managers are not willing to share goal setting with employees [91], and employees are fearful of expressing their views and seek to avoid conflict [92]. This leads us to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). The higher the level of power distance, the lower the level of employee participation in that country.

Hypothesis 4a (H4a). The higher the level of power distance, the lower the level of employee organizational participation in that country.

Hypothesis 4b (H4b). The higher the level of power distance, the lower the level of employee operational participation in that country.

2.4.2. Individualism–Collectivism

This Hofstede dimension is related to the differentiation of group versus individual interests. Individualistic cultures focus on self-concept, freedom, and individual rights. In contrast, collectivistic countries are characterized by a spirit of membership, where values, goals, and interests are respected by all the members of a country. Adopting this approach to work organizations, two main structures can be distinguished in the way people work. Therefore, when work is developed from an autonomous perspective, employees act as individuals. Previous research has found that individualistic cultures promote more autonomy at work than collectivistic cultures [93,94]. In contrast, teamwork and collaboration between members is a common practice for collectivist organizations [95]. Regarding the decision-making process, this paper expects that individualistic countries promote greater autonomy in the daily tasks of an organization, which indicates a positive relationship between individualism and operational decision making. On the other hand, collectivistic cultures help promote teamwork and knowledge sharing [96], which are positively related to organizational decision making. In line with these affirmations, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 5 (H5). The higher the level of individualism, the lower the level of employee participation in that country.

Hypothesis 5a (H5a). The higher the level of individualism, the lower the level of organizational employee participation in that country.

Hypothesis 5b (H5b). The higher the level of individualism, the higher the level of operational employee participation in that country.
2.4.3. Masculinity–Femininity

This cultural value is defined according to the gender dimension. Historically, human behavior has been analyzed by gender, distinguishing between values more pronounced in women than in men. According to Wu [97], empathy, family, participation, and care are values that have been especially attributed to women. In contrast, monitorization, autocratic leadership, and pursuit of material goals are standards more commonly followed by countries characterized by male values. In line with the gender approach, this study considers that female values will promote employee participation the most because women promote interpersonal relationships [98]. In the case of operational participation, [99] indicates that male managers are more likely to apply a task-oriented style, which means that they define the time and goals of the tasks. According to this appreciation, male managers are expected to not promote task discretion due to their tendency to monitor work. Additionally, in terms of leadership, women tend to adopt a democratic style, which promotes employee participation in decision making. From a strategic point of view, it is expected that women encourage employees to participate in the decision-making process related to organizational matters:

Hypothesis 6 (H6). The higher the level of male values in the country where the organization is located, the lower the level of employee participation.

Hypothesis 6a (H6a). The higher the level of male values in the country where the organization is located, the lower the level of operational employee participation.

Hypothesis 6b (H6b). The higher the level of male values in the country where the organization is located, the lower the level of organizational employee participation.

2.4.4. Time Orientation

The cultural literature mainly recognizes time in terms of the length of short- or long-term planning. This cultural dimension accounts for how countries focus on the future. Countries with a long-term orientation are aware of the future, so members of these countries believe in perseverance, resource maintenance, and thrift. Luria et al. pointed out that “in societies with a long term orientation, people expect to have more interaction with others in the future and are consequently more willing to help others” [100] (p. 7). According to this rationale, employees will be encouraged to participate in decision making in organizations located in countries with a long-term orientation. Based on the nature of decisions, previous researchers have aligned long-term orientation with the strategic decision-making process [101,102]. Moreover, Qian et al. [103] explain that employees with a future orientation are engaged in goal setting. For that reason, it is expected that employee participation in organizational decisions is positively related. In contrast, a short-term approach emphasizes proximate returns and planning in the moment [104,105], which seems to be related to operational involvement. Following this logic, it is expected that:

Hypothesis 7 (H7). The higher the level of long-term orientation in the country where the organization is located, the greater the employee participation in that organization.

Hypothesis 7a (H7a). The higher the level of long-term orientation in the country where the organization is located, the lower the operational employee participation in that organization.

Hypothesis 7b (H7b). The higher the level of long-term orientation in the country where the organization is located, the greater the organizational employee participation in that organization.

2.4.5. Uncertainty Avoidance

This cultural dimension reflects a society’s tolerance for dealing with ambiguous and risky situations. In countries with high uncertainty avoidance, organizations create rules
that control the rights and duties of employees. In contrast, countries with low uncertainty avoidance prefer fewer rules and feel comfortable in risky situations [106]. In practice, employees who work with low uncertainty avoidance are not afraid of changes. However, under high uncertainty avoidance situations, employees prefer obligations and rules defined by management [107]. In countries with a high uncertainty level, employees need routines that reduce uncertainty regarding task-related matters [108]. Therefore, employees avoid making their own decisions about their tasks. Regarding organizational decision making, Hood and Logsdon 2002 [109] point out that employees will participate less in contexts of high uncertainty. Previous arguments confirm that uncertainty avoidance will decrease employees’ opportunities to participate in decision making, either operational or strategic. Consequently, it is hypothesized that:

**Hypothesis 8 (H8).** The higher the level of uncertainty avoidance, the lower the level of employee participation in that country.

**Hypothesis 8a (H8a).** The higher the level of uncertainty avoidance, the lower the level of organizational employee participation in that country.

**Hypothesis 8b (H8b).** The higher the level of uncertainty avoidance, the lower the level of operational employee participation in that country.

2.4.6. Indulgence

Indulgence versus restraint is the latest dimension included by Hofstede. The cultural value of indulgence is defined by the level of happiness and enjoyment in life exhibited by a society, while high levels of restraint are featured by behavioral discipline [110]. Regarding decision making, people from restraint-oriented cultures tend to be moderate [111]. Although previous research found a significant and positive relationship between PDM and indulgence [112], this dimension has been particularly unexplored. This study expects a positive and direct relationship between indulgence and all forms of PDM:

**Hypothesis 9 (H9).** The higher the level of indulgence, the higher the level of employee participation in that country.

**Hypothesis 9a (H9a).** The higher the level of indulgence, the higher the level of organizational employee participation in that country.

**Hypothesis 9b (H9b).** The higher the level of indulgence, the higher the level of operational employee participation in that country.

2.4.7. Sustainability

In addition to culture, organizations receive external pressure from different regulatory and social drivers that influence change in organizations. Institutional theory helps to analyze the factors that encourage organizations to adapt to the social norms of the business environment [113,114]. The way that organizations adapt their business to the external environment is called an isomorphism.

Institutional theory defines three forms of drivers that are conducive to isomorphism in an organization [115]: normative, coercive, and mimetic isomorphic drivers. Normative isomorphism occurs when organizations follow similar practices promoted by professionals of the sector [116]. Coercive isomorphism compiles all norms, rules, and regulative pressure that influence change. Mimetic influence takes place when organizations imitate the actions of successful competitors to achieve similar environmental standards. According to DiMaggio and Powell [115], three forces within organizations and the environment promote convergent business practices, which affect organizational decision making [117] and explain the sustainable initiatives of organizations. According to Renukappa et al. [118], the literature on institutional theory facilitates an understanding of how changes in govern-
ment regulation, technology, competitors, and stakeholders affect the way organizations innovate their business model to be more sustainable [119–121]. This approach is supported by Campbell [122], who states that the existence of regulations tends to affect the organization’s social responsibility initiatives.

This idea affirms that countries’ institutional factors and regulations condition the reality and development of organizations. As occurs with cultural values, organizations’ sustainable activities reflect the level of sustainability of the country. At the country level, sustainability is part of a competitiveness index that measures how countries behave in terms of sustainable development (WCY, 2015) [123]; that is, how a country is committed to the environment and the development of its infrastructure without compromising its resources. This construct extrapolates to organizations through social responsibility and the different initiatives that promote sustainable behavior. Social responsibility in companies has gained relevance in recent years as society has increased its awareness of sustainable matters. This means that organizations have to reach long-term development to achieve their goals while pursuing a balance between all the invested resources [124]. Sustainable organizations extend their sustainable values to all their structures. When human resources management adopts a sustainable approach in all its practices (recruitment, training, onboarding, etc.), it is referred to as sustainable human resources management (SHRM) or green human resources management (GHRM).

According to [33], employee empowerment is one type of green human resources management (GHRM) practice, such as training and selection. Additionally, sharing knowledge about environmental initiatives or joint consultation are other examples of HR green practices. According to this rationale, previous research has shown that employee participation is a key element for sustainable initiatives [125,126]. In this sense, it is useful for organizations to count on employee activity for volunteering or ecologic practices. However, there is a lack of empirical research about whether sustainable practices promote employee participation for any kind of issue. For that reason, it is expected that sustainable organizations also promote participative initiatives related to all types of issues (organizational and operational) based on the level of sustainability of the country. In this study, since we do not have a sustainability indicator at the company level, we will use as an approximation the value of the sustainability indicator of the country in which the organizations are located, so:

**Hypothesis 10 (H10).** The sustainability levels of the country where organizations are located are positively related to employee participation in PDM.

**Hypothesis 10a (H10a).** The sustainability levels of the country where organizations are located are positively related to organizational employee participation.

**Hypothesis 10b (H10b).** The sustainability levels of the country where organizations are located are positively related to operational employee participation.

Through the combination of the above hypotheses, the research model of this paper is shown in Figure 1.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Sample Selection

As the current research aims to link variables from different levels (employee: age, gender, education, PSS and PD; organization: ownership and size; and nation: cultural and sustainability indicators), data from multiple sources were used. Concretely, three databases were used:

(i) The 2015 6th European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) [127] includes the information used to analyze employee participation in European countries. The EWCS is a survey commissioned by Eurofound to assess and quantify the working conditions of employees as well as job and workplace attributes and analyze relationships between
different aspects of working for an organization and well-being. A total of 43,850 employees were interviewed in 35 countries: the 28 member states of the European Union, the five candidate countries for EU membership (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey), and Norway and Switzerland. The sample used in this European survey is representative of 15-year-olds who live in private households and have a job. A random sampling design was stratified by stages in each country. In the first stage, the primary sampling units (PSU) were randomly selected with probability proportional to size (according to regions). Subsequently, the households within each PSU were sampled. Finally, a selection procedure was applied to select the eligible respondent within each household. Face-to-face interviews with an average duration of 45 min were the method applied to take data from the chosen sample.

(ii) Cultural values are taken from Hofstede’s national culture 2010 database, which offers individual scores by country and cultural dimension.

(iii) Sustainability indexes by country are obtained from the competitiveness index of nations, which includes all policies in a country that make up blueprints to increase prosperity (WCY, 2015) [123]. As occur with cultural values, indexes of sustainable development by country were selected from the database.

From the initial database, those cases corresponding to employees who were not in managerial positions were selected (as it is understood that participation in decision making is inherent to managerial positions). Therefore, employees who developed a managerial role according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations, ISCO-08 were removed. This left a total of 26,363 observations. Then, the observations of companies located in countries for which there is a lack of information on either their cultural values (Cyprus, North Macedonia, Latvia, and Montenegro) or the sustainability indicator (Malta, Albania, and Serbia) were discarded from the analysis. After removing these five countries, the final sample comprises data of companies located in 28 European countries, with a total of 18,195 cases (employees) with information on all variables included in the subsequent regression analysis.

3.2. Measurement

3.2.1. Dependent Variable

Participation in Decision Making (PDM): The items selected as measures of employees’ direct participation consist of eight questions designed to assess how much personal influence employees thought they had over specific aspects of their work or organizational issues. As the eight items had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.814, good internal consistency was ratified. Additionally, factor analysis was carried out for this variable, revealing two distinct components that explained 63% of the variance. The first component, associated with the involvement of workers in important decisions such as the choice of their coworkers or the setting of objectives, explains 37% of the variance. The second component, directly associated with the ability of workers to organize their own work (e.g., methods, speed of work, order of task), explains the remaining 27% of the variance. Therefore, it seems that while the first component has a higher strategic implication, the second component is more operative [18]. Therefore, these two measures could represent organizational and operational employee participation. As previously explained, this distinction is theoretically supported by previous research [10]. Questions from the survey dealt with issues related to the speed and organization of work and involvement in organizational goals. All the answers were coded using a Likert scale with five categories: always (5); most of the time (4); sometimes (3); rarely (2); never (1).

3.2.2. Independent Variables

Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS): This variable is constructed from six questionnaire items that form a derived indicator of perceived supervisor support [18]. Questions were related to respect, encouragement, support, help, etc., received from the boss. In this case, only one component explained 63% of the variance. According to previous authors’
definitions, perceived supervisor support reflects employees’ perspectives of how supervisors care about their well-being and value their contributions [128,129]. Answers were coded using a Likert scale with five categories: strongly agree (5); tend to agree (4); neither agree nor disagree (3); tend to disagree (2); strongly disagree (1).

Cultural Values: At the macro level, the six indicators defined by Hofstede (1984) were used to represent national cultural values: power distance, masculinity, collectivism, long-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance, and indulgence. The scores for each dimension per country were obtained from the database developed by Hofstede in 2010.

Sustainability: Country-level data were obtained from the 2015 IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook (WCY) [123], which uses statistical data obtained from national and international sources. This report offered data from 61 economies (including 31 European countries) using 342 criteria to provide a multifaceted view of the competitiveness of nations. Competitiveness factors included in the WCY are economic performance, government efficiency, business efficiency, and infrastructure. This last factor extends to which basic, technological, scientific, and human resources meet the needs of the business. Because sustainable development is a specific infrastructure variable, sustainability in the current study is measured taking this variable into consideration.

Some descriptions of these quantitative variables are shown in Table 1.

### Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

| Variable                  | Mean  | SD   |
|---------------------------|-------|------|
| PDM                       | 0.01  | 0.44 |
| Supervisor support        | -0.05 | 1.02 |
| Power_distance            | 54.71 | 20.25|
| Masculinity               | 48.56 | 21.93|
| Individualism             | 57.10 | 18.13|
| Uncertainty_Avoidance     | 73.29 | 19.78|
| Long term orientation     | 57.11 | 16.45|
| Indulgence                | 44.76 | 16.88|
| Sustainability            | 5.89  | 1.07 |

3.2.3. Control Variables

The present study included two groups of control variables: demographic and organizational. Consistent with prior research, gender, age, and educational level were analyzed as demographic variables [130,131]: gender (0: male (50.3%); 1: female (49.7%)), age (measured by the age of the interviewee, with a mean of 41.9 years old and a standard deviation of 12), and level of education (which has been grouped into six categories, as shown in Figure 2, from 0: primary or early childhood education, to 6: Master’s degree and doctorate education, with upper-secondary being the most frequent category at 50.9%). Six dummy variables were created to represent each category of education level, taking the first level (primary and early childhood) as a reference.
Similar to PDM, the sustainability index correlates significantly with most cultural values. At the organizational level, this paper uses both ownership and size features. For sector (ownership), differentiation between private and public sector is used (0: private sector, reference category 72%; and 1: public sector 27%). Additionally, the size variable, which is related to employee participation according to previous research (Cabrera, 2003; Halldén, 2015), is measured using the number of employees (small, up to 10 workers: 27%; medium, more than 10, up to 250: 42%; and large, more than 250: 31%).

4. Results

Prior to the regression analysis, the relationship between the dependent variable (PDM) and the independent variables was studied to justify their inclusion as predictors in the regression model.

In the case of quantitative variables, a correlation study was carried out (see Table 2). First, between variables at the employee level (PDM, PSS, and AGE) and later among variables at the country level (average PDM by country and national cultural and sustainability indicators). Regarding the first group (employee level), PDM has a positive and significant correlation with PSS, as was already demonstrated in previous research [132]. The correlation between age and PDM seems weak, but it is also significant. Related to the second group (country level), correlations were moderate and did not indicate multicollinearity problems, as will be later demonstrated in the regression analysis. There is a significant correlation of PDM with all the variables, the strongest direct (positive) with indulgence and sustainability, and the inverse with power distance and uncertainty avoidance. Regarding the existing correlation among the cultural variables, the masculinity and long-term indexes are the only ones that do not present a correlation with the others. Similar to PDM, the sustainability index correlates significantly with most cultural values. Directly, it correlates with individualism and indulgence, but is negatively correlated with power distance and uncertainty avoidance. However, it has no significant relationship with long-term orientation or masculinity.
Table 2. Linear correlation coefficients among PDM and quantitative variables.

| Micro-Level Variables | PDM | PSS | Age |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 PDM                 | 1   |     |     |
| 2 PSS                 | 0.392 ** | 1   |     |
| 3 Age                 | 0.053 ** | −0.053 ** | 1  |

| Macro-Level variables | PDM | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   | 9   | 10  |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 4 Masculinity         | −0.389 * |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 5 Power_distance      | −0.516 ** | 0.187 | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |
| 6 Individualism       | 0.385 * | 0.132 | −0.588 ** | 1 |     |     |     |     |
| 7 Uncertainty_avoidance | −0.499 ** | 0.165 | 0.615 ** | −0.599 ** | 1 |     |     |     |
| 8 Long-term orientation | −0.438 * | 0.226 | 0.134 | 0.161 | 0.073 | 1 |     |     |
| 9 Indulgence          | 0.686 ** | −0.162 | −0.591 ** | 0.459 * | −0.53 ** | −0.329 | 1 |     |
| 10 Sustainability      | 0.448 * | −0.336 | −0.648 ** | 0.429 * | −0.539 ** | 0.078 | 0.486 ** | 1  |

Note: correlations at the employee level, white color (n = 18,195) and country level, gray color (n = 28). ** p < 0.01. * p < 0.05.

Regarding the relationship between PDM and qualitative variables (gender, ownership, size, and education level), several nonparametric tests were conducted (due to the non-normality of PDM, sig 0.000 of Kolmogorov–Smirnov test). Concretely, the Mann–Whitney U test for independent variables was carried out to analyze whether the PDM distribution was the same between gender, ownership, and size categories. In all cases, the null hypothesis was rejected (p-value 0.000) such that the distribution of PDM differs by employee gender, company ownership, or size. Related to education level, the Kruskal–Wallis test for independent variables was applied. The null hypothesis was also rejected in this case (p-value 0.000), which means that the PDM distribution varies according to the education level of the employee.

Once the relation between each regressor and general PDM (that is, without distinction between organizational and operational PDM) was demonstrated, three hierarchical fitted regression models were fitted with three different dependent variables: (1) PDM, (2) organizational PDM, and (3) operational PDM. The results are shown in Table 3 (the final sample size n = 18,195 observations).

Table 3. Hierarchical fitted regression model (standardized β-values).

| Variables                | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
|                          | General PDM | Organizational PDM | Operational PDM |
| **Step 1: Control**      |          |         |         |
| Gender                   | −0.04 *** | −0.067 *** | 0.018 * |
| Age                      | 0.067 *** | 0.045 *** | 0.051 *** |
| Secondary                | 0.082 ** | 0.053 ** | 0.065 *** |
| Post_secondary_non_terciary | 0.096 *** | 0.074 *** | 0.066 *** |
| Short_cycle_terciary     | 0.131 *** | 0.084 *** | 0.106 *** |
| Bachelor                 | 0.157 *** | 0.114 *** | 0.111 *** |
| Master_Doctorate         | 0.147 *** | 0.112 *** | 0.096 *** |
| **Step 2: Control + Main Effect** |          |         |         |
| Gender                   | −0.047 *** | −0.074 *** | 0.017 * |
| Age                      | 0.087 *** | 0.066 *** | 0.055 *** |
| Secondary                | 0.099 *** | 0.073 *** | 0.069 *** |
| Post_secondary_non_tertiary | 0.102 *** | 0.079 *** | 0.067 *** |
| Short_cycle_terciary     | 0.134 *** | 0.087 *** | 0.107 *** |
| Bachelor                 | 0.148 *** | 0.103 *** | 0.109 *** |
| Master_Doctorate         | 0.141 *** | 0.105 *** | 0.095 *** |
| PSS                      | 0.388 *** | 0.426 *** | 0.086 *** |
| **Step 3: Controls + Main Effect + Organizational Variables** |          |         |         |
| Gender                   | −0.052 *** | −0.075 *** | 0.012 *** |
| Age                      | 0.086 *** | 0.07 *** | 0.05 *** |
| Secondary                | 0.103 *** | 0.077 *** | 0.07 *** |
| Post_secondary_non_tertiary | 0.104 *** | 0.081 *** | 0.066 *** |
| Short_cycle_terciary     | 0.136 *** | 0.092 *** | 0.105 *** |
| Bachelor                 | 0.15 *** | 0.106 *** | 0.107 *** |
| Master_Doctorate         | 0.143 *** | 0.109 *** | 0.094 *** |
| Supervisor_support       | 0.385 *** | 0.426 *** | 0.083 *** |
| Medium                   | −0.037 *** | −0.025 * | −0.029 ** |
| Large                    | −0.053 *** | −0.04 *** | −0.035 *** |
| Public                   | 0.034 *** | 0.006 * | 0.049 *** |
Table 3. Cont.

| Variables                        | Model 1 General PDM | Model 2 Organizational PDM | Model 3 Operational PDM |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Gender                           | −0.052 ***          | −0.074 ***                | 0.009 *                 |
| Age                              | 0.086 ***           | 0.073 ***                 | 0.047 **                |
| Secondary                        | 0.1 ***             | 0.086 ***                 | 0.053 **                |
| Post_secondary_non_tertiary      | 0.099 ***           | 0.083 ***                 | 0.054 ***               |
| Short_cycle_terciary             | 0.12 ***            | 0.086 ***                 | 0.082 ***               |
| Bachelor                         | 0.144 ***           | 0.106 ***                 | 0.096 ***               |
| Master_Doctorate                 | 0.137 ***           | 0.111 ***                 | 0.081 ***               |
| Medium                           | −0.053 ***          | −0.034 ***                | −0.048 ***              |
| Large                            | −0.094 ***          | −0.057 ***                | −0.066 **               |
| Public                           | 0.028 ***           | 0.001                     | 0.045 *                 |
| Power_distance                   | −0.004              | 0.006                     | −0.014 **               |
| Masculinity                      | −0.096 ***          | −0.056 ***                | −0.084 ***              |
| Individualism                    | 0.095 ***           | 0.052 ***                 | 0.089 ***               |
| Uncert Av                        | −0.011 *            | 0.002                     | −0.019 *                |
| LTO                              | 0.003               | −0.038 ***                | 0.053 **                |
| Indulgence                       | 0.058 ***           | 0.027 **                  | 0.06 **                 |

Step 4: Controls + Main Effect + Organizational variables + Cultural values

| Variables                        | Model 1 General PDM | Model 2 Organizational PDM | Model 3 Operational PDM |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Gender                           | −0.053 ***          | −0.073 ***                | 0.008 *                 |
| Age                              | 0.085 ***           | 0.073 ***                 | 0.045 **                |
| Secondary                        | 0.097 ***           | 0.089 ***                 | 0.045 **                |
| Post_secondary_non_tertiary      | 0.097 ***           | 0.083 ***                 | 0.052 ***               |
| Short_cycle_terciary             | 0.118 ***           | 0.086 ***                 | 0.08 **                 |
| Bachelor                         | 0.144 ***           | 0.108 ***                 | 0.096 ***               |
| Master_Doctorate                 | 0.134 ***           | 0.111 ***                 | 0.076 ***               |
| Medium                           | −0.053 ***          | −0.034 ***                | −0.048 ***              |
| Large                            | −0.094 ***          | −0.057 ***                | −0.066 **               |
| Public                           | 0.03 ***            | 0.001                     | 0.047 ***               |
| Power_distance                   | 0.025 *             | 0.004                     | 0.035 **                |
| Masculinity                      | −0.084 ***          | −0.057 ***                | −0.064 **               |
| Individualism                    | 0.096 ***           | 0.052 ***                 | 0.089 ***               |
| Uncert Av                        | 0.001               | 0.001                     | 0.001                   |
| LTO                              | −0.017 *            | −0.037 ***                | 0.019 *                 |
| Indulgence                       | 0.049 ***           | 0.027 **                  | 0.046 ***               |
| Sustainability                   | 0.06 ***            | −0.003                    | 0.101 **                |

Step 5: Controls + Main Effect + Organizational + Cultural values + Institutional Factor

The standardized values of the coefficients suggest that most of the predictors are significant. Control variables are strongly related to PDM. In terms of education, when the educational level increases, the opportunities to participate are higher. For instance, employees with master’s, doctorate, or bachelor’s degrees have more opportunities to participate in decision making (general and organizational), while employees with short-cycle tertiary education are the most participative in operational matters. By gender, female employees tend to participate particularly in operational issues but less in general PDM and organizational decisions.

Regarding PSS, we can say that it is positively related to employee PDM. A higher impact is detected in Model 2 (organizational PDM, $\beta = 0.42 ***$). This means that Hypotheses 1, 1a, and 1b are fully supported. Meso variables are also significant. In terms of ownership, public organizations tend to promote employee participation at the general and operational levels, as can be seen in Model 1 ($\beta = 0.03 ***$) and Model 3 ($\beta = 0.047 ***$). It supports Hypothesis 2c and rejects 2 and 2b, because the public sector has no significance in terms of organizational PDM. Regarding size, the relationship is strong and inverse, so when organizations increase their size, participation tends to decrease. This means that Hypothesis 3 (general, a and b) is not supported.

At the macro level, most of the cultural dimensions have relationships with PDM and some of their variations. However, no significant relationship was found for uncertainty avoidance with PDM.
The relationship between power distance is significant only at the general and operational levels. Therefore, only H4 and H4b are supported while H4a does not reflect any significant relationship. Individualism also presents a positive, direct, and strong relationship with PDM in all its forms; however, the only hypothesis supported is Hypothesis 5b, which is related to participation at the operational level. Moreover, it is possible to observe the predominance of female values in the different levels of PDM, which demonstrates Hypothesis 6 (the regression coefficient for masculinity is negative in all estimated models).

The results found for term orientation are different for each of the three models. An inverse and strong relationship is proven between LTO (long-term orientation) and PDM at the general and organizational levels. In contrast, positive significance was found in terms of the operational dimension; thus, only Hypothesis 7a and b are rejected. Paying attention to the happiness of the country, Indulgence has a significant and positive relationship with all forms of PDM, so according to the regression analysis, Hypotheses 9, 9a, and 9b are supported empirically (Model 1: |β| = 0.049 ***, Model 2: |β| = 0.027 ** and Model 3: |β| = 0.046 ***).

Considering the values of sustainability of the country where organizations are located, a positive relationship is suggested for Model 1 and Model 3. The significance levels are low for total PDM (|β| = 0.006 *) and higher for operational decision making (|β| = 0.101 ***). Thus, Hypotheses 10 and 10b are confirmed by the results.

5. Discussion

This research seeks to expand knowledge of direct employee participation in Europe with two main objectives: to offer meso-, micro-, and macro-analysis of the relationship of individual, organizational, cultural, and sustainable variables in the adoption of practices that promote employee participation in European organizations and to deepen the understanding of the relationship between the abovementioned variables, differentiating among the scope of decisions for which employee participation is considered (operational or organizational). In the pursuit of the first objective, the findings indicate that the promotion of employee participation in organizations depends on micro, meso, and macro determinants. However, not all the variables interact in the same way. In this sense, the supervisor plays a vital role in the promotion of employee participation, because in an environment of trust, employees are willing to give the best of themselves, including working autonomously, making decisions over their immediate tasks, and participating in decision making regarding organizational matters. In light of this finding, this research indicates that the role of supervisors is likely to promote PDM in European organizations, which is consistent with previous studies [18]. At the meso level, the variables of ownership and size are also close to PDM. The current study concludes that the most participative organizations are those with public capital and are small in size. Finally, regarding the macro level, the results suggest that employee participation is promoted in European organizations according to the cultural and institutional values of the country where they are located. The main findings are related to a significant relationship among the PDM and all macro variables, with the unique exception of uncertainty avoidance, which is not related to employee participation. As expected, countries featuring high levels of indulgence and female values tend to positively influence employee participation. Therefore, it could be concluded that organizations that promote women in leadership positions [133] and provide incentives to live in the present will promote employee participation the most. In addition, the model presented considers sustainability as an independent variable in the relationship with PDM, which is one of the contributions of the study. The findings show that organizations with a sustainable orientation in some of their forms (economic, social, or environmental) are positively related to PDM. This suggests that sustainable organizations are most likely to create a participative environment that promotes employee participation. Overall, the results indicate a clear relationship between all levels of analysis and employee participation. However, it also offers a deeper understanding by differentiating the scope of decision making, which is another of the contributions of the paper and its second purpose.
This differentiation follows the approach of Robinson [134], who promotes the use of multi-item psychometric scales for HRM research and practices, and accounts for why different models are presented in terms of operational or organizational decision making. Our findings strongly suggest that all variables act differently when decisions are classified as operational or organizational.

In general terms, it was expected that all variables were related to the two forms of employee participation in the same direction. However, contrary to the prediction, the relationship is more significant in operational matters. For example, at the meso level, a negative and strong relationship was found between operational PDM and organizational size. This is similar to the analysis developed by Delbridge and Whitfield (2001) [135], who observe that employees in large establishments can be expected to have less influence over their work than those in smaller organizations. In addition, the results show that the operational PDM scores of the public sector were higher than those of the private sector, similar to Gallie et al. [136]. Regarding culture and institutional values, indulgence, individualism, and masculinity are related to all forms of employee participation, but the relationship is stronger for operational participation. Moreover, power distance and sustainability are significantly related to operations, indicating a relationship to decision making related to organizational matters.

Although most dimensions are related to operational matters, it is important to highlight how LTO is related to both dimensions. In this regard, the relationship is inverse between each model and contrary to expectations. Table 4 shows how hypothesis testing is achieved:

| Hypotheses | Consecution |
|------------|-------------|
| Hypothesis 1 (H1). PSS relates positively to direct employee participation. | Accepted |
| Hypothesis 1a (H1a). PSS relates positively to organizational direct employee participation. | Accepted |
| Hypothesis 1b (H1b). PSS relates positively to operational direct employee participation. | Accepted |
| Hypothesis 2 (H2). The public sector tends to promote PDM less than private sector. | Rejected |
| Hypothesis 2a (H2a). The public sector tends to promote organizational PDM less than private sector. | No significant relation was found |
| Hypothesis 2b (H2b). The public sector tends to promote operational PDM more than private sector. | Accepted |
| Hypothesis 3 (H3). Organization size is positively related to PDM. | Rejected |
| Hypothesis 3a (H3a). Organization size is positively related to organizational PDM. | Rejected |
| Hypothesis 3b (H3b). Organization size is negatively related to operational PDM. | Rejected |
| Hypothesis 4 (H4). The higher the level of power distance, the lower the level of employee participation in that country. | Accepted |
| Hypothesis 4a (H4a). The higher the level of power distance, the lower the level of employee organizational participation in that country. | Accepted |
| Hypothesis 4b (H4b). The higher the level of power distance, the lower the level of employee operational participation in that country. | Accepted |
| Hypothesis 5 (H5). The higher the level of individualism, the lower the level of employee participation in that country. | Rejected |
| Hypothesis 5a (H5a). The higher the level of individualism, the lower the level of organizational employee participation in that country. | Rejected |
| Hypothesis 5b (H5b). The higher the level of individualism, the higher the level of operational employee participation in that country. | Accepted |
| Hypothesis 6 (H6). The higher the level of male values in the country where the organization is located, the lower the level of employee participation. | Accepted |
Table 4. Cont.

| Hypotheses                                                                 | Consecution               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| **Hypothesis 6a (H6a).** The higher the level of male values in the country where the organization is located, the lower the level of operational employee participation. | Accepted                  |
| **Hypothesis 6b (H6b).** The higher the level of male values in the country where the organization is located, the lower the level of organizational employee participation. | Accepted                  |
| **Hypothesis 7 (H7).** The higher the level of long-term orientation in the country where the organization is located, the greater the employee participation in that organization. | Rejected                  |
| **Hypothesis 7a (H7a).** The higher the level of long-term orientation in the country where the organization is located, the lower the operational employee participation in that organization. | Rejected                  |
| **Hypothesis 7b (H7b).** The higher the level of long-term orientation in the country where the organization is located, the greater the organizational employee participation in that organization. | Rejected                  |
| **Hypothesis 8 (H8).** The higher the level of uncertainty avoidance, the lower the level of employee participation in that country. | No significant relation was found |
| **Hypothesis 8a (H8a).** The higher the level of uncertainty avoidance, the lower the level of organizational employee participation in that country. | No significant relation was found |
| **Hypothesis 8b (H8b).** The higher the level of uncertainty avoidance, the lower the level of operational employee participation in that country. | No significant relation was found |
| **Hypothesis 9 (H9).** The higher the level of indulgence, the higher the level of employee participation in that country. | Accepted                  |
| **Hypothesis 9a (H9a).** The higher the level of indulgence, the higher the level of organizational employee participation in that country. | Accepted                  |
| **Hypothesis 9b (H9b).** The higher the level of indulgence, the higher the level of operational employee participation in that country. | Accepted                  |
| **Hypothesis 10 (H10).** The sustainability levels of the country where organizations are located are positively related to employee participation in PDM. | Accepted                  |
| **Hypothesis 10a (H10a).** The sustainability levels of the country where organizations are located are positively related to organizational employee participation. | Accepted                  |
| **Hypothesis 10b (H10b).** The sustainability levels of the country where organizations are located are positively related to operational employee participation. | Accepted                  |

6. Conclusions

After analyzing all the results, it is possible to answer the basic research question of this study: Do national values of culture and sustainability influence direct employee PDM levels and scope? The answer is affirmative; the cultural and sustainability values of the country where the organization is located have an influence over PDM and their different scope. The study suggests several conclusions:

- PDM is influenced by factors from different levels (micro, meso, and macro), which show a wider and deeper analysis of determinants for participation initiatives, overall taking into account that all these levels have an impact on business activity and employee relations.
- In particular, macro analysis offers a special contribution because it considers all the Hofstede variables, which enriches the study by defining a cultural profile for European organizations according to their location. In this sense, it is worth mentioning how the power distance dimension is positively more significant when the operational PDM is analyzed. For its part, the value of the national culture of masculinity is negatively significant for both general PDM, as well as organizational and operational PDM. Additionally, the value of individualism is positively significant in all cases, turning out to be very similar for both the general PDM and the operational PDM. It is especially interesting, as the result of uncertainty avoidance is not significant in any of the three models analyzed. Furthermore, LTO obtains the highest negative significance value for the organizational PDM case.
In addition, this perspective includes sustainability indexes, which have been gaining relevance in recent years due to the increase in awareness about environmental care. In this case, the coefficient obtained for the operational PDM model is significantly higher. This shows that European organizations, which are sensitive to sustainability, tend to promote autonomy at work.

Precisely, this paper contributes to the existing literature expanding the concept of PDM and making differentiation in terms of the scope. In this respect, our results indicate that organizations located in countries with high levels of power distance, sustainability, and respect for traditions (LTO) tend to promote the autonomy of their employee in decision making involving their immediate tasks.

Additionally, our study confirms that organizations located in countries focused on the short term will give the chance to employees to make decisions related to strategic issues.

Organizations play in a competitive and globalized world, where decision making has a very significant role in daily activity. These statements show that managers should pay attention to the different factors that affect their business in the implementation of decision-making tools. Culture is particularly significant in the case of multinational organizations; therefore, an HR professional could use this study to manage cultural diversity when they help managers to create team works with people from different cultures or decide to expand into other countries. This will facilitate processes of implementation of participation initiatives.

7. Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

This research has implications for theory as well as practice. Throughout, the current paper has highlighted the critical value of macro cultural–institutional, meso organizational, and micro individual factors in the relationship with employee participation. Considering the multiple benefits associated with PDM, such as employee satisfaction, engagement, or commitment and taking this as a starting point, this study helps managers and HR practitioners understand the multiple factors that are determinants for PDM promotion. The current global trends of high competitiveness, cultural diversity, and sustainable development affect the way organizations make decisions and create teamwork.

However, other variables may also be relevant. For example, at the micro level, the analysis does not consider those individual characteristics such as personality, attitudes, or interests that may be relevant for decision making. Every employee has his or her own unique characteristics created and developed from his or her own background, and these characteristics can create different perceptions in response to the same voice practices. Similarly, future studies might also focus on differentiating between the positions of employees.

At the meso level, the present study has explored ownership and size, but other factors may also shape PDM practices. For example, the sector could be differentiated beyond markets or activities. In this sense, it would be useful to know how PDM practices are promoted in organizations in terms of fields of activity (e.g., manufacturing, goods and services, hospitals, or finance). Additionally, regarding organizational structure and participation channels, employees may have different opportunities to be involved in decision making if other voice mechanisms such as trade unions exist [91]. These are fields for the future development of the proposed framework.

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