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# Linking Perceived Organizational Support, Affective Commitment, and Knowledge Sharing with Prosocial Organizational Behavior of Altruism and Civic Virtue

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**Abstract:** The study of prosocial organizational behaviors has been receiving increasing attention, due to their relevant contribution to sustainable organizational and personal development. This research proposes and tests a model that tackles the factors that drive two unrewarding extra-role behaviors of individual or organizational citizenship, altruism, and civic virtue, and assesses multiple mediation relationships. The sample data are derived from a questionnaire survey of 1350 Spanish workers and were analyzed using partial least squares structural equations modelling. Research findings reflect the mediating role of knowledge sharing behavior in the relationship between affective commitment and altruism. Moreover, a significant relationship was found between affective commitment and civic virtue, which is stronger under the mediating role of knowledge sharing behavior. Finally, affective commitment plays a mediating role in the relationship between perceived organizational support and knowledge sharing behavior. Implications for sustainable human resource management, practical interventions, and future research recommendations are provided.

**Keywords:** prosocial organizational behavior; organizational citizenship behavior; altruism; civic virtue; knowledge sharing; affective organizational commitment; perceived organizational support

## 1. Introduction

A sustainability approach to management implies rethinking traditional insights through different lenses and emphasizes collaborative-based views, instead of the competition-based ones [1]. It has become a prominent subject in research due to its major implications for both the employees and the organization in the current business scenario [2–5]. This concept implies guiding the company not only towards maximizing economic benefits, but also towards social welfare and environmental protection, reconciling economic, environmental, and social objectives [6].

A new organizational sensitivity is required to manage, promote, and guarantee sustainable development in current organizations contextualized in turbulent and constantly changing environments [1]. A managerial approach and new leadership styles that show awareness of the importance of relationships, cooperation, and building positive narratives in organizational contexts is the key to mobilizing energy, facing challenges, and promoting the sustainable development and well-being of people in organizations.

From this perspective, the company is visualized as a system of cooperative relationships in which stakeholders encourage the organization to behave in an ethically, environmentally, and socially responsible manner, and this interdependence enhances organizational sustainability and resilience [7]. Corporate social responsibility strategies and initiatives together with the promotion of an organizational culture and values consistent with the sustainability model constitute the cornerstone

of sustainable organizational development. Along with the sustainable approach, organizations should achieve performance through human resource management policies and practices that emphasize justice, development, well-being, and respect for the environment, through satisfied and committed employees [8]. Thus, prosocial behaviors, commitment, and employee well-being are central dimensions of sustainable human resources management.

Researchers distinguish between explicit and implicit attitudes towards sustainable development [9]. Unlike explicit assumptions and models regarding sustainability, the implicit cognitive dimension captures mental constructs such as attitudes that influence perception, judgment, and action, and that occur without individual awareness or conscious control [10]. Prosocial organizational behaviors are conceived as implicit towards sustainability and comprise voluntary behaviors carried out by members of an organization during the performance of their functions, that are intended to provide benefits to the person, group, or organization to which they are addressed [11–13]. They include acts such as helping, comforting, sharing, donating, cooperating, or volunteering [14], as well as actions involving proactive assistance, responding to requests for assistance, or defending the organization [15]. The study of prosocial behavior in organizations has garnered increasing relevance in the field of organizational behavior due to its valuable contribution to personal and organizational development [16]. It has been shown that these extra-role behaviors improve reciprocity, cooperation, and solidarity in interpersonal social relationships [17], favor employees' well-being [15–18] and contribute to the growth and sustainable advantage of the organization [19–21].

Among the wide variety of forms of prosocial behaviors, much of the research has focused on the study of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), which have been considered the prototypical prosocial actions [15,16]. OCBs are defined as discretionary behaviors that exceed job requirements [22–24] and are not directly rewarded by the organization but nonetheless promote its effectiveness [25–27]. Organizational citizenship behavior has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that includes job behaviors that benefit co-workers, as well as the organization [28].

There have been various proposals on how to assess this type of behavior [29]. However, most of the research has operationalized the construct using the original five categories or a subset of them [25,27]: altruism (i.e., voluntarily helping or assisting other employees with their job or with other tasks), courtesy (i.e., being polite and considerate of others to avoid conflict), civic virtue (i.e., representing well and supporting the organization), conscientiousness (i.e., planning ahead to avoid co-workers and oneself feeling overwhelmed with work), and sportsmanship (i.e., not complaining about work or workloads). Subsequently, other taxonomies have been proposed [30], but most of them are highly correlated and overlap with each other [31,32]. For this reason, various researchers have suggested differentiating two dimensions of OCB according to their objective [23,28,33]: individual OCB and organizational OCB. Individual OCB refers to job-related behaviors that benefit co-workers. Altruism fits into this category, as it refers to discretionary behaviors aimed at helping a specific other person with a relevant problem or task [25]. Organizational OCB encompasses those behaviors that benefit the organization in general [34]. Among them, civic virtue, refers to the behaviors that entail getting involved in the governance of the organization, responsibly participating, and looking out for its best interests even at high personal cost [35]. This type of civic behavior contributes to achieving sustainable competitive advantage [19,36].

Previous research has pointed out that perceived organizational support (POS) can exert motivational effects that drive prosocial behaviors [35]. Organizational support theory (OST) allows integrating the literature on POS [28], which has been conceptualized as the degree to which individuals perceive that the organization cares about their well-being and overall work satisfaction and values their contributions [28]. The perception of feeling supported and valued by the organization and identified with it, connects with additional role behaviors of a prosocial nature [37,38]. Nevertheless, negative effects such as work pressure, fatigue, or loss of effectiveness can occur when employees show prosocial behavior without adequate organizational support [39,40]. Some components of organizational

commitment understood as the psychological link between an employee and the organization [41], also indicate inclination towards prosocial behavior [11,30]. Among these components, affective commitment (AC) is characterized by a strong belief in and acceptance of objectives and values, and a strong desire to belong to the organization [42,43]. The mediation of POS-related outcomes, such as affective engagement, contributes to creating POS associations with various outcomes such as better extra-role performance [44].

The existing literature has already noted that perceived organizational support enhances affective commitment [44,45] and that employees' emotional attachment towards the organization exerts a mediating role in the interplay between perceived organizational support and knowledge sharing behavior (KSB). KSB involves providing information and know-how, and collaborating with others to facilitate problem-solving, creativity, innovation, or change [46,47]. It implies an exchange process that depicts the individuals' action of transferring their knowledge (knowledge donating) and getting others to share it (knowledge collecting) [48]. It requires an effort on the part of the person who shares it and contains an element of reciprocity [49,50]. KSB has also been identified a key prosocial behavior [15,51,52]. However, it may not necessarily be spontaneous; it can be driven by managers and be recognized by the organizational reward system [14,53]. That type of leadership can inspire knowledge sharing through empowering employees and providing resources [54] so that if employees perceive organizational support, they are more committed [44,45] and willing to participate in knowledge sharing [53].

The purpose of this research is to link perceived organizational support, affective commitment, and knowledge sharing behavior with prosocial and unrewarding extra-role organizational behaviors such as altruism and civic virtue, that are spontaneously and voluntarily performed. The mediating role of knowledge exchanges and their combined effects has been infrequently considered. In addition, the literature has analyzed OCB as a joint construct, and specific research on its different dimensions is also scarce [55,56]. The choice of altruism and civic virtue is rooted in previous evidence that has already suggested that the antecedents of prosocial behaviors aimed at the benefit of specific individuals (altruism) or the entire organization (civic virtue) are distinct or have a different magnitude and direction [57].

Hence, based on OST which emphasizes social exchange, attribution, and self-enhancement, we raise the following research question: Does the perception of organizational support influence the adoption of prosocial behaviors of altruism and civic virtue through affective commitment and knowledge sharing behavior? The identification of these predictors will allow us to present a scenario of the factors that drive unrewarding extra-role behaviors of individual or organizational citizenship.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we will explain the model and develop the specific hypotheses. Next, we will describe the sample and the method. Subsequently, we will present the results of the empirical analysis carried out. Finally, we will elaborate a discussion on the possible research and managerial implications of the results obtained.

## 2. Conceptual Framework and Research Hypotheses Development

### 2.1. Perceived Organizational Support, Affective Commitment, and Knowledge Sharing

POS is a construct used to capture employee evaluations of the support received from their organization [28]. According to OST, POS is favored by employees' personification of the organization. If they believe that the rewards and favorable working conditions are the result of voluntary actions of their employing organization, they will contribute more to a positive evaluation of POS [58]. Based on reciprocity, high levels of perceived organizational support create obligations within individuals to repay the organization [54] and employees expect their effort and dedication to pay off in the future [50,58]. In this sense, POS establishes strong associations with different attitude outcomes, such as affective organizational commitment [44].

Social exchange theorists argue that organizational support fosters employees' engagement with the objectives and the well-being of the organization, in a way that they tend to reciprocally return the attention received in the form of identification or affective commitment [49,59]. When workers perceive that their employing organization appreciates their contribution and protects their wellbeing, they emphasize self-enhancement processes that lead to the fulfillment of socioemotional needs, thus resulting in greater affective commitment to the organizations [45]. Thus, we expect that:

**Hypothesis 1.** *Perceived organizational support is positively related to affective commitment.*

AC has also been shown to have important implications for additional behaviors of a voluntary and discretionary nature [41], including those related to willingness to donate and receive knowledge [60], and to create and share knowledge [61,62]. In this sense, several authors have found that AC is a predictor of KSB [8,63]. Employees' identification with organizational values and the creation of emotional bonds with the organization and co-workers enhance social interaction [64], which in turn facilitates KSB. In this sense, we expect:

**Hypothesis 2.** *Affective commitment is positively related to knowledge sharing behavior.*

In addition to the direct influence of commitment on the intention to exchange knowledge on a continuous basis, it has also been identified as a mediator, playing a key role in maintaining positive behavior with the rest of the members of the organization [30] and in the relationship between the different KSB predictors [65]. For example, research has shown that organizational support in the workplace is positively related to knowledge sharing [49,66]. It has also been suggested that other interactions with mediating and moderating variables intervene in this relationship [8,67]. POS has been reported to be positively associated with AC, which in turn was found to exert a positive effect on KSB [37,38]. Under more reliable leadership, employees are likely to enhance their emotional attachment to the organization, and to adopt collaborative behaviors, being more inclined to share knowledge with co-workers [15,52]. Thus, we propose that:

**Hypothesis 3.** *Affective commitment plays a mediating role between perceived organizational support and knowledge sharing behavior.*

## 2.2. *Affective Commitment and Altruism via Knowledge Sharing Behavior*

The mediation of POS-related outcomes, such as affective engagement, is a mechanism that contributes to creating associations of perceived organizational support with various positive behavioral outcomes such as better extra-role performance [44]. Research has postulated that AC is strongly related to extra-role or prosocial behaviors, due to its roots in the identification with and internalization of organizational values [41,68]. When employees feel valued, they have a predisposition to reciprocate with greater commitment, through attitudes that exceed job requirements [69,70]. In this way, positive and prosocial behaviors materialize, and employees become good organizational citizens [71].

Research continues to abundantly contrast the positive relationship between AC and extra-role behaviors [72–75]. Commitment can enhance employees' motivation to help others, improve trust and relationships between colleagues, and trigger behaviors that contribute to the common interests of the organization [76].

Diverse evidence connects AC and KSB [8,63]. It also has been reported that KSB is associated with OCB [77], and specifically, with behaviors of altruism and civic virtue, and knowledge sharing intention [78]. It has also been suggested that both AC and OCB are linked with willingness toward knowledge sharing [79]. However, there is a debate about the causality between KSB and OCB. Researchers have argued that OCB has a positive impact on knowledge sharing [78], but there are already studies that focus on the mediating role of knowledge sharing in the AC–OCB relationship that strongly support that KSB acts as a partial mediator in this interplay [80].

Experimental investigations on the antecedents of prosocial behavior have identified a whole set of work environment characteristics and behaviors that can facilitate or, on the contrary, slow down the development of this type of behavior [81,82]. For example, social interaction revealed a positive predictive effect on mutual cooperation [83]. Interactional continuity between individuals and a greater expectation regarding the contributions of others and future interaction, foster cooperation [84]. Moreover, altruistic acts become more frequent when there is greater mutual cooperation and knowledge sharing [85]. The latter enhances altruistic behavior when it is directed to help colleagues deal with job challenges or improve the efficiency of work processes [80].

Altruistic organizational citizenship behavior has been considered a substantive element of individual OCB. They are voluntary and discretionary behaviors that employees perform in the work context, and which involve helping others with work related problems or tasks [86]. Altruistic behaviors imply a motivational state that leads individuals to engage in acts that are intended to benefit others, by putting the needs of others before their own and involving more costs than benefits for oneself [87].

No support was initially found for the relationship between organizational commitment and each of the five dimensions of OCB [88]. Other studies confirmed this relationship with different dimensions of the construct, such as altruism [80,81]. Furthermore, more recent research indicated that commitment is directly related to prosocial acts that specifically benefit individuals [82,86]. However, it has also been reported that the different types of OCB may have different antecedents [89], as found in the case of the relationship between commitment, and altruism and civic virtue.

The exchange of knowledge requires the availability of the knowledge resource, and the will and energy to help on the part of the knowledge provider, in addition to the receptivity and willingness to acquire this knowledge on the part of the knowledge obtainer [90]. Consequently, reciprocity is a highly valued component in knowledge exchanges [91], so that when employees participate in prosocial behaviors, the accumulated social capital tends to be shared to a greater extent precisely because of this willingness to reciprocally respond to donors [92].

When focusing on the context, the generation of prosocial behaviors may also depend on the job characteristics. In this sense, it has been highlighted that employees are much more likely to be inclined towards altruistic attitudes in those jobs that are richer, involve a variety of tasks and a certain degree of decision-making autonomy [93,94]; that is, in jobs that are most intensive in the use and exchange of knowledge. In contrast, organizational citizenship behaviors seem much less frequent in jobs characterized by routine tasks, which are less knowledge intensive [30].

On this basis, we establish the fourth research hypothesis, postulating that knowledge exchanges mediate the relationship between affective commitment and the organizational citizen behavior of altruism. Since these exchanges also assume prosocial behavior, and knowledge defines the characteristics of jobs, we expect KSB to complement AC in its role as a predictor of altruism.

**Hypothesis 4.** *Knowledge sharing behavior plays a mediating role between affective commitment and altruism.*

### 2.3. Affective Commitment and Civic Virtue via Knowledge Sharing Behavior

Civic virtue is a discretionary behavior associated with employees' positive involvement and participation in organizational governance; it also encompasses defending the interests of the organization, sometimes with significant personal costs [35,95]. Research supported the mediating role of AC in the relationship between psychological contract breach and civic virtue [96,97]; and the influence of leaders on employees' prosocial behavior [15]. Under more reliable leadership, employees will display more civic behavior [30] and will be more inclined to share knowledge [15].

It has been reported that the different types of OCB may have different antecedents [89]. In contrast to the case of the relationship between commitment and altruism, the most recent research has also proposed that commitment would be related to prosocial behaviors that benefit the organization (e.g., civic virtue), but not directly related to prosocial acts that specifically benefit individuals [98,99].

In fact, it has been suggested that low levels of AC do not lead employees to individually engage in civic virtue behaviors [100].

On this basis, we establish the following research hypothesis: knowledge exchanges reinforce affective commitment as a driving factor for organizational citizen behavior of civic virtue. In other words, KSB mediates between AC and civic virtue. Despite the multiple evidence that connects the two parts of this relationship, that is, between AC and KSB, and between OCB and KSB, the mediating role of knowledge exchanges has rarely been considered. Since these exchanges also assume prosocial behavior, and knowledge defines the characteristics of jobs, we expect KSB to complement AC in its role as a predictor of civic virtue.

**Hypothesis 5.** *Knowledge sharing behavior mediates the relationship between affective commitment and civic virtue.*

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Sample and Procedure

Data were collected from 1350 workers of 28 firms operating in Spain, using an online self-reported survey. The sample was embedded in both industrial and service sectors. We contacted the human resource (HR) managers of different multinational companies located in Spain, asking for their collaboration in the study. The purpose of the research and the survey characteristics were explained to them, and they were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the data obtained. In the organizations that agreed to participate, the questionnaires were sent using a web-based survey, emphasizing voluntary participation.

The mean age of the participants was 34.65 years ( $SD = 11.06$ ), distributed as follows: 42.3% 21–30 years, 32.0% 31–40 years, 14.3% 41–50 years, and 11.4% (50 years or more). 58.1% of the sample participants were women. Participants had a mean tenure within the organization of 7.3 years ( $SD = 8.20$ ), with an average job tenure of 6.3 years ( $SD = 7.17$ ). They did not receive any monetary rewards for participating in the study. No specific information about religion, ideology or beliefs, or any other protected data was collected.

The sample was obtained using non-probabilistic random accidental sampling [101]. A total of 1608 surveys were sent, and the response rate was 84%. Considering a statistical power of 0.8 and an alpha level of 0.05, the sample ( $n = 1350$ ) permitted the detection of small effect sizes [102]. The survey was conducted between December 2017 and February 2018. Crosstabs and ANOVA analyses comparing participants and non-participants did not indicate significant differences regarding main socio-demographic characteristics. Table S1 of Supplementary material presents the descriptive statistics of the sample.

#### 3.2. Measurements

The questionnaire included self-reported, previously validated measures, using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). The original measures were translated from English to Spanish by language experts using a back-translation procedure [103]. Perceived organizational support was assessed with an 8-item measure [58]. An example item is: “The organization really cares about my well-being”. The Cronbach alpha of this measure was 0.896. Affective commitment was measured with a 7-item scale developed by Allen and Meyer [104]. A sample item is: “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me”. The Cronbach alpha for this measure was 0.905. Knowledge sharing was assessed using a 7-item scale extracted from the social and advocacy participation factors of the organizational citizenship behavior scale [105], using the items that represent a sharing behavior within the organization, both through social participation and advocacy participation. These items capture both individual knowledge sharing and promotion of sharing behaviors among co-workers [8]. A sample item is: “I share ideas for new projects or

improvements". The Cronbach alpha of this scale was 0.879. Altruism and civic virtue were measured using the scale developed by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman and Fetter [106]. Altruism was assessed with 5 items (sample item: "I help orient new people even though it is not required"), obtaining an alpha of 0.833. Civic virtue was assessed with a 4-item scale (sample item: "I attend functions that are not required but help the company image"). The alpha was 0.794. Table S2 of Supplementary material shows the descriptive statistics of the scales used.

#### 4. Results

Data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), a variance-based structural equation modelling method. We used SmartPLS 3 software to assess the measurement model and estimate the structural model [107].

##### 4.1. Measurement Model

We evaluated the measurement model of the reflective indicators considering indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and divergent validity [108]. First, all standardized loadings were higher than 0.707 (see Table 1). Two items (AC6 and POS3) were removed in the initial analysis, as they did not meet the individual-item reliability criteria. Second, internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, Dijkstra-Henseler's ( $\rho A$ ) and composite reliability. Table 1 reflects that all Cronbach's alpha and Dijkstra-Henseler's ( $\rho A$ ) values were higher than 0.7 and lower than 0.95, while composite reliability was above 0.7 for all indicators. Third, all the constructs ed convergent validity, as their average extracted variance (AVE) was above 0.5 [109].

**Table 1.** Evaluation of the measurement model.

Construct/Indicators	Loadings	Cronbach's $\alpha$	$\rho A$	CR	AVE
Perceived organizational support (POS)		0.896	0.899	0.919	0.618
POS1	0.763				
POS2	0.749				
POS4	0.836				
POS5	0.774				
POS6	0.829				
POS7	0.803				
POS8	0.742				
Affective commitment (AC)		0.895	0.905	0.920	0.657
AC1	0.709				
AC2	0.755				
AC3	0.878				
AC4	0.796				
AC5	0.874				
AC7	0.839				
Knowledge sharing behavior (KSB)		0.879	0.883	0.906	0.579
KSB1	0.757				
KSB2	0.753				
KSB3	0.779				
KSB4	0.788				
KSB5	0.754				
KSB6	0.710				
KSB7	0.784				
Altruism		0.833	0.836	0.882	0.600
ALT1	0.772				
ALT2	0.822				
ALT3	0.704				
ALT4	0.813				
ALT5	0.757				
Civic virtue		0.794	0.795	0.866	0.619
CIVIR1	0.733				
CIVIR2	0.787				
CIVIR3	0.825				
CIVIR4	0.800				

Discriminant validity was assessed using the cross-loadings, Fornell–Larcker criterion and Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Cross-loadings displayed in Table 2 show that the constructs presented discriminant validity, as all the indicators load higher in its corresponding construct than the rest of the variables considered in the model. Moreover, as indicated in Table 3, the correlations between constructs located below the diagonal were smaller than the square root of each construct’s average variance extracted [110]. In addition, Table 3 shows that all the values displayed by the HTMT ratio are below 0.85 and the confidence intervals of the HTMT statistic for all combinations of constructs do not include 0 [109]. Thus, based on these results, discriminant validity was established.

Table 2. Items’ cross loadings.

Item	Affective Commitment (AC)	Altruism	Civic Virtue	Knowledge Sharing Behavior (KSB)	Perceived Organizational Support (POS)
ALT1	0.161	<b>0.772</b>	0.392	0.407	0.155
ALT2	0.202	<b>0.822</b>	0.420	0.418	0.178
ALT3	0.118	<b>0.704</b>	0.378	0.346	0.147
ALT4	0.150	<b>0.813</b>	0.363	0.396	0.207
ALT5	0.176	<b>0.757</b>	0.395	0.441	0.174
CIVIR1	0.350	0.438	<b>0.733</b>	0.536	0.321
CIVIR2	0.344	0.365	<b>0.787</b>	0.519	0.274
CIVIR3	0.412	0.366	<b>0.825</b>	0.552	0.366
CIVIR4	0.368	0.415	<b>0.800</b>	0.547	0.291
AC1	<b>0.709</b>	0.084	0.246	0.216	0.405
AC2	<b>0.755</b>	0.223	0.444	0.420	0.458
AC3	<b>0.878</b>	0.154	0.407	0.371	0.559
AC4	<b>0.796</b>	0.174	0.324	0.323	0.579
AC5	<b>0.874</b>	0.152	0.371	0.345	0.610
AC7	<b>0.839</b>	0.210	0.448	0.414	0.615
KSB1	0.352	0.445	0.538	<b>0.757</b>	0.339
KSB2	0.395	0.407	0.579	<b>0.753</b>	0.355
KSB3	0.287	0.447	0.470	<b>0.779</b>	0.269
KSB4	0.297	0.378	0.504	<b>0.788</b>	0.243
KSB5	0.293	0.333	0.470	<b>0.754</b>	0.226
KSB6	0.207	0.419	0.411	<b>0.710</b>	0.197
KSB7	0.454	0.351	0.629	<b>0.784</b>	0.390
POS1	0.532	0.297	0.442	0.430	<b>0.763</b>
POS2	0.476	−0.013	0.158	0.156	<b>0.749</b>
POS4	0.579	0.269	0.347	0.343	<b>0.836</b>
POS5	0.503	0.018	0.219	0.196	<b>0.774</b>
POS6	0.567	0.284	0.371	0.380	<b>0.829</b>
POS7	0.529	0.020	0.220	0.190	<b>0.803</b>
POS8	0.496	0.316	0.421	0.420	<b>0.742</b>

Table 3. Discriminant validity.

Fornell–Larcker Criterion	Affective Commitment (AC)	Altruism	Civic Virtue	Knowledge Sharing Behavior (KSB)	Perceived Organizational Support (POS)
Affective commitment (AC)	0.811				
Altruism	0.211	0.775			
Civic virtue	0.469	0.503	0.787		
Knowledge sharing behavior (KSB)	0.439	0.521	0.685	0.761	
Perceived organizational support (POS)	0.671	0.223	0.399	0.388	0.786

Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio	Affective Commitment (AC)	Altruism	Civic Virtue	Knowledge Sharing Behavior (KSB)	Perceived Organizational Support (POS)
Affective commitment (AC)	0.235				
Altruism	(0.182;0.289)	0.620			
Civic virtue	(0.497;0.591)	(0.565;0.669)	0.809		
Knowledge sharing behavior (KSB)	(0.428;0.519)	(0.556;0.654)	(0.777;0.836)	0.423	
Perceived organizational support (POS)	(0.710;0.767)	(0.210;0.284)	(0.422;0.513)	(0.378;0.464)	0.740

Note: The correlations between the constructs are located below the diagonal, and above the square root of the respective construct’s average extracted variance. Between brackets, 95% BC confidence interval, based on bootstrapping (5000 subsamples); BC: bias corrected.

4.2. Structural Model

Before evaluating the structural model (see Figure 1), we examined the VIF values to determine possible multicollinearity issues. All VIF values were much below 5, thus indicating the absence of collinearity among predictor constructs [107]. Next, we assessed the structural model by examining the R<sup>2</sup> values of the endogenous latent variables, the f<sup>2</sup> effect sizes for all the structural model relationships, the model’s predictive relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>), the standardized root-mean residual (SRMR), and the magnitude and statistical significance of path coefficients.

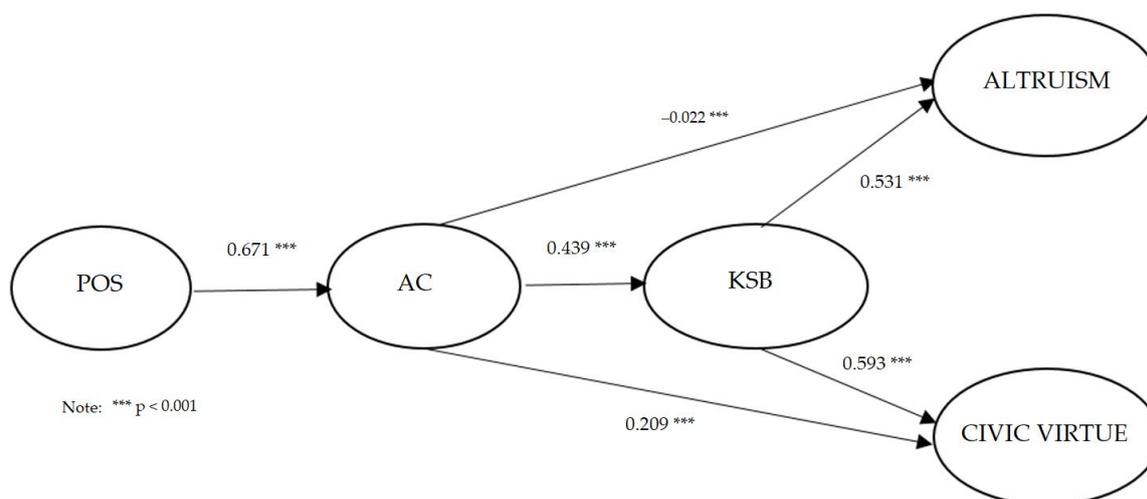


Figure 1. Structural model of prosocial organizational behaviors.

We observed that all the R<sup>2</sup> values exceed the minimum value of 0.10 [111], indicating that the model achieved an adequate in-sample predictive power. Civic virtue, followed by affective

commitment, achieved the highest explained variance (0.504 and 0.450, respectively). We examined the  $f^2$  effect sizes, and except for the affective commitment variable as a predictor of altruism and civic virtue, the rest of the constructs represented important predictors of their associated endogenous variables. Perceived organizational support was a key explanatory construct of affective commitment, and knowledge sharing behavior was an important predictor of altruism and civic virtue (Table 4). Moreover, considering Cohen's cut-off values [102], we found that POS had a large effect on AC, and the latter exerted a medium effect on KSB. The latter had a large effect on civic virtue and a medium effect on altruism. We applied the blindfolding procedure to assess the structural model's predictive relevance. The  $Q^2$  values [112,113] of the four endogenous variables were considerably above 0. This confirms the model's predictive relevance [114]. We additionally computed the SRMR of the structural model, which was 0.07. This value is below 0.08 [115], indicating the validity of the structural model.

**Table 4.** Summary of direct effect tests.

Endogenous Variable Structural Path	Direct Effect	t-Value	95% Confidence Interval	Explained Variance	$f^2$
Affective commitment (AC) POS → AC (H1) ( $R^2 = 0.450$ ; $Q^2 = 0.291$ )	0.671	40.248 ***	(0.643; 0.698) Sig.	45%	0.818
Knowledge sharing behavior (KSB) AC → KSB (H2) ( $R^2 = 0.192$ ; $Q^2 = 0.107$ )	0.439	17.79 ***	(0.398; 0.479) Sig.	19.2%	0.238
Altruism AC → Altruism KSB → Altruism ( $R^2 = 0.272$ ; $Q^2 = 0.160$ )	−0.022 0.531	0.685 14.328 ***	(−0.075; 0.033) N.S. (0.466; 0.589) Sig.	0% 27.2%	0.001 0.313
Civic virtue AC → Civic virtue KSB → Civic virtue ( $R^2 = 0.504$ ; $Q^2 = 0.309$ )	0.209 0.593	8.464 *** 24.371 ***	(0.168; 0.250) Sig. (0.553; 0.632) Sig.	9.8% 40.6%	0.071 0.573

Note: \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , one-tailed test.  $R^2$  coefficient of determination;  $Q^2$  predictive relevance;  $f^2$  effect size. N.S.: not significant.

Since PLS-SEM is a non-parametric method, we used the bootstrapping procedure (with 5000 bootstrap samples and 1350 cases) to test the statistical significance of the path coefficients. The direct effects were evaluated by applying a one-tailed test for Student's  $t$  distribution (95% confidence interval). As reflected in Table 4, POS had a significant direct effect on AC ( $\beta = 0.671$ ), (thus supporting H1), which in turn significantly affects KSB ( $\beta = 0.439$ ) (supporting H2) and civic virtue ( $\beta = 0.209$ ). The direct effect of AC on altruism was not significant. There was a significant direct effect between KSB and altruism ( $\beta = 0.531$ ). Moreover, the bootstrapping results reflected in Table 5 indicate that all the indirect effects proposed in the model were statistically significant. AC mediated the relationship between POS and KSB, supporting H3.

**Table 5.** Summary of indirect effects tests.

Relationship	Indirect Effects	Standard Deviation	t Statistics	p Values	Bootstrapping 95% CI	
POS → AC → Altruism	−0.015	0.022	0.684	0.247	(−0.050	0.022)
AC → KSB → Altruism (H4)	0.232	0.019	12.271	0.000	(0.202	0.264)
POS → AC → KSB → Altruism	0.156	0.014	11.337	0.000	(0.134	0.180)
POS → AC → Civic virtue	0.140	0.017	8.143	0.000	(0.112	0.169)
AC → KSB → Civic virtue (H5)	0.260	0.016	16.56	0.000	(0.235	0.286)
POS → AC → KSB → Civic virtue	0.175	0.012	14.453	0.000	(0.155	0.195)
POS → AC → KSB (H3)	0.295	0.019	15.089	0.000	(0.263	0.326)

The results presented in Table 5 indicate that AC indirectly affected altruism ( $\beta = 0.232, p < 0.001$ ), and civic virtue ( $\beta = 0.260, p < 0.01$ ), through KSB. These results support Hypotheses 4 and 5. Thus, KSB fully mediated the relationship between AC and altruism, and partially mediated the relationship between AC and civic virtue. The results of the multiple mediating effects of AC and KSB are shown in Table 5.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Overview of Key Findings

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the study of employees' prosocial behavior [16]. In the current context, in which organizations emphasize behaviors based on collaboration between employees, initiative, and active participation in organizational governance [19,116], OCB dimensions, such as altruism and civic virtue, are critical for achieving organizational performance and sustainable competitive advantage. OCB has been related to various constructs and variables, but its analysis has been carried out mostly as a unidimensional construct or in an aggregate manner, so that its dimensions have been analyzed less frequently [56]. This research analyzes the antecedents of two types of prosocial behaviors aimed at helping other individuals (individual OCB) and the organization (organizational OCB): altruism and civic virtue.

In line with the evidence in the field [32,117], research results showed that AC is positively related to prosocial behaviors, that can be encouraged and fostered by leaders. However, the research that explores the direct and indirect effects of AC on all OCB dimensions is limited. Our results corroborate these differences. We observe that AC does not have a direct effect on altruism, but it does have a significant direct effect on civic virtue. Furthermore, research results reflect that KSB plays a mediating role between AC and both types of prosocial behaviors.

These results suggest the validity of introducing KSB mechanisms to promote prosocial behaviors, and, thus overcome the reluctance to share knowledge that widely dominates the organizational context [118,119]. Previous literature has already highlighted the relationship between both behaviors [77,78], as well as the importance of the job characteristics and the social relationships that materialize in employment as drivers of prosocial organizational behavior [93,120]. When a job is enriched, requires a variety of tasks and skills, there is autonomy in decision-making, and feedback about the work performed is generated, employees are more likely to embrace civic behavior [94]. Many of these characteristics that promote prosocial behaviors are linked with knowledge-based work [121].

Based on this result, it could be suggested that organizations should simply intensify the presence of knowledge in their employment flows and labor relations to promote knowledge sharing. Nevertheless, knowledge sharing implies an exchange of knowledge and, therefore, it is based on expectations of reciprocity that can be very different depending on the organizational characteristics. In fact, research on knowledge sharing in technology and knowledge-intensive organizations highlights that some of the organizational citizenship behaviors considered in more classical organizations, such as employee obedience or deference to authority, are no longer contemplated in knowledge organizations. In these organizations, constructive criticism, and rethinking authority with the goal of continuous improvement or workplace innovation are vital to achieving competitive advantage. Moreover, prosocial behaviors that enhance social interaction or organizational well-being are essential to the continuous innovation strategy [122]. In summary, to generate prosocial behaviors, such as altruism or civic virtue, organizations must combine strategies of intensity and knowledge exchange. As they generate or share more knowledge, specific behaviors of altruism or civic virtue—and especially those most linked to continuous innovation—are likely to arise and evolve.

On the other hand, research on OCB has also made important advances in the study of their motives. Three factors that would explain the inclination towards organizational citizenship behaviors have been identified: organizational concern (respect for the organization, sense of pride and commitment towards

it), prosocial values (desire to help others and be accepted by them), and impression management (desire to be positively perceived by others in order to obtain specific benefits) [22]. Depending on the final objective that drives a particular behavior, the literature in the field has indicated that the OCB motives can be exemplified through the figures of good soldiers and good actors [123]. Good soldiers are essentially organizational citizens, as they are motivated by organizational concern and prosocial values. Instead, good actors prioritize self-interest (impression management) over commitment to the organization and altruism toward others. Good actors are organizational citizens, but nonetheless characterized by self-interest motivations and goals. This differentiation between good soldiers and good actors is important because it can affect the quantity and quality of OCB [124]. This is especially true when the actors achieve their objectives or when their image or reputation is threatened, which would not happen in the case of good soldiers. By transferring the issue of good soldiers and good actors to our results, the AC motivation (identification with and internalization of the organizational values) can be associated with the organizational concern motivation (respect, pride, and commitment towards the organization) in a way that would contemplate the organizational motivation of good soldiers. However, this motivation would be insufficient to explain the altruism behavior, closely related to the individual motivation of altruistic values towards others. Instead, the organizational motivation of good soldiers would be enough to explain civic virtue behavior. In this context, the introduction of knowledge exchange behavior brings in new effects that modify the initial direct relationships. The research results associated with altruism highlight interesting consequences. By fully mediating the relationship between AC and altruism, KSB adds social value motivations to organizational ones to explain altruistic behavior towards other employees. In other words, KSB complements AC in the generation of good soldiers, altruistic organizational citizens with civic virtue. However, unlike discretionary and extra-role citizenship behaviors, knowledge exchanges can be incentivized and recognized as in-role tasks by the organizational reward system. This opens the door to the appearance of self-interest motives for impression management, namely to the appearance of good actors. Depending on the type of knowledge shared (explicit or tacit) and the in-role or extra-role nature of the knowledge exchange, the quantity and quality of altruism or civic virtue can vary considerably. Organizations should ensure that they promote motivations, types of knowledge, and forms of exchange that have a long-lasting relationship with their well-being [125].

## 5.2. Practical Implications

Raising prosocial behavior to the organizational management level has important practical implications for human resource management (HRM) and requires considering the benefits and drawbacks of promoting them. Prosocial behaviors can lead to experiencing well-being and, in turn, well-being promotes prosocial behaviors. Altruism behaviors can enhance positive moods, triggered by the gratification of helping others [126] and encouraging helpful behaviors can be a means for employees to flourish [127]. Research has reported that the OCB directed at the organization has a stronger relationship with well-being indicators than the OCB directed at co-workers [125]. Civic behavior was found to have an impact on higher performance evaluations [128], promotions [129], and individual performance [130]. However, without adequate organizational support, these behaviors have been associated with fatigue and greater levels of anxiety due to role stressors [40,131] and can negatively affect workers' performance due to poor time management, overload, or distraction when ignoring their formal tasks [40]. In fact, research confirms that there is a curvilinear relationship between civic behavior and performance [132].

In addition to the impact at the individual level, prosocial behaviors lead to promoting organizational innovation, reducing employee turnover, and improving organizational effectiveness [16]. Nevertheless, contradictory results have been obtained. For example, teams with a prosocial orientation have been found to perform better in innovation [133], while other research has concluded that team members will tend to convergent thinking to reduce conflict and ultimately, hinder innovation [134]. Finally,

although prosocial behaviors bring benefits to some team members, they can also cause injustice to other members [15], mainly when the behavior is rooted in impression management.

In this context, organizations should provide adequate support through improvements in strategy and organizational design. The mission of the organization, defined by top management, is a key driver of prosocial behaviors [135]. Senior managers can promote organizational values that motivate supervisors and employees to adopt extra-role behaviors such as altruism and civic virtue. In this sense, an implicit “trickle-down” effect can be suggested in which top managers could shape the behavior of supervisors and then affect employees’ attitude and behavior [136,137]. Thus, managers and supervisors should implement training strategies and processes that foster a corporate culture of trust and a work design that encourages cooperative and collaborative behaviors, to create relationships of mutual assistance between co-workers. Organizations should establish precise evaluations to detect prosocial behaviors and avoid converting them into a flattery tool, as well as regulate behaviors of excessive participation so that they do not cause civic fatigue or hinder performance. Finally, prosocial behaviors can be stimulated through work remodeling to make it more meaningful.

Research results show that perceived organizational support can drive proactive behaviors through affective commitment and knowledge sharing behavior. POS can be effectively enhanced through promoting equity and fairness in the design, monitoring, and implementation of all organizational practices training employees to be supportive and collaborative and encouraging supervisors to foster POS in their subordinates [44,45,50].

### 5.3. Strengths and Limitations

This study proposes and tests a model that suggests future research avenues. It examines the relationship between different behaviors that encourage and emphasize contributing to helping others, but there is no doubt that its continued study will extend knowledge on the predictors and consequences of prosocial behaviors. In this sense, we will address some of the strengths and limitations of this research. The first limitation is associated with the cross-sectional approach, as longitudinal data were not available, although more data are expected to be collected in subsequent research waves. Secondly, the literature had not yet contemplated the role of knowledge sharing as an antecedent and as a mediator between work attitudes, such as affective commitment, and different types of prosocial behaviors, such as altruism and civic virtue. Future research that continues deepening these relationships, especially focused on the types of knowledge and the in-role or extra-role nature of their exchanges is encouraged. Third, we contribute to the exploration of the mechanisms that explain and mediate the relationship between organizational support and prosocial behaviors.

Future research could address other individual variables, as well as other organizational and environmental contexts, with potential moderating effects on this type of behavior. For example, the effects of individual motivations or dispositions (i.e., personality traits) or organizational variables (i.e., role perception, fairness perception, organizational justice, feedback, task characteristics) in this type of prosocial behaviors, and how these affect work-related outcomes (i.e., performance, turnover, innovation, burnout) constitute an interesting future research avenue. Finally, this study opens the door for other exploration possibilities. For example, future research could expand these results by examining the moderating effect of sociodemographic characteristics (education, gender, and organizational tenure), job enrichment dimensions (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback), organizational roles (e.g., manager vs. employee), or the type of organization or sector in which it operates. Finally, cross-cultural elements could also be considered in future research. The influencing factors and patterns of prosocial behavior may be different according to the countries or to the cultural characteristics of the members of an organization. This research is also relevant for implementing HRM interventions that promote continued prosocial behaviors.

## 6. Conclusions

The enhancement of workers' organizational commitment is one of the main goals of human resource management (HRM) and a key source for creating organizational competitive advantage. Committed employees who feel supported by superiors are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors. Our goal is to provide new elements to job design, which consider the mediation effect of prosocial mechanisms, such as knowledge-sharing behaviors, and which allow adjusting work processes and encouraging this type of behavior. The research results constitute a first step in generating and enhancing more sustainable HRM practices that enable the generation of prosocial behaviors, such as altruism and civic virtue. Emotional bonding with the organization and a greater sense of cooperation through knowledge sharing can become an important driver of OCB.

**Supplementary Materials:** The following are available online at <http://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/24/10289/s1>, Table S1: Demographic characteristics of the sample, Table S2: Descriptive statistics of the scales used.

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