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## Correlating Affective Commitment with Prosocial Behavior: Does Perceived Meaningfulness at Work Matter?

Correlacionando el Compromiso Afectivo con el Comportamiento Prosocial: ¿Importa Percibir que el Trabajo tiene Significado?

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### Abstract

The present work studies the engagement of prosocial behavior as an antecedent of affective commitment within for-profit organizations. In order to accomplish this, the work focuses on the role of positive feelings. It tests a partial least square-structural equation model using a cross-sectional survey of 144 professional employees from several Colombian industries. Results obtained show that prosocial behavior is associated with affective commitment, but only with the intervention of meaningfulness at work. These associations provide insight into professional employees' attitudes towards the search for intrinsic motivation and engagement in for-profit organizational environments. Further implications revolve around the justification for working on practices that not only found and foster prosocial behavior in the workplace but also promote skill variety, task identity, and task meaningfulness to obtain adequate levels of engagement and commitment. Finally, since most studies have been conducted in developed countries, this study also contributes to a better understanding of the topic in previously unexplored contexts. In this case, a Latin American emerging economy, like Colombia.

**Keywords:** Prosocial behavior, Affective commitment, Meaningfulness at work, Colombia.

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## Resumen

El presente trabajo estudia el comportamiento prosocial como un antecedente, tanto del trabajo significativo como del compromiso afectivo en el contexto de las organizaciones con fines de lucro. Para ello, el trabajo se enfoca en el papel de los sentimientos positivos y prueba un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales basado en mínimos cuadrados parciales, a partir de la aplicación transversal de un instrumento a 144 empleados profesionales de varias industrias en Colombia. Los resultados obtenidos muestran que el comportamiento prosocial está asociado con el compromiso afectivo, pero solo gracias a la intervención de la experiencia de tener un trabajo significativo. Estas asociaciones proporcionan conocimiento sobre las actitudes de los empleados profesionales hacia la búsqueda de la motivación intrínseca y la participación en entornos organizacionales con fines de lucro. Las implicaciones giran en torno a la justificación para trabajar en prácticas gerenciales que no solo encuentran y fomentan el comportamiento prosocial en el lugar de trabajo, sino que también promuevan la variedad de habilidades, la identidad de la tarea y la significancia de la tarea para obtener niveles adecuados de responsabilidad y compromiso. Finalmente, dado que la mayoría de los estudios se han realizado en países desarrollados, este estudio también contribuye a una mejor comprensión del tema en contextos previamente inexplorados; en este caso, una economía en vías de desarrollo, como la colombiana.

**Palabras clave:** Comportamiento prosocial, Compromiso afectivo, Trabajo significativo, Colombia.

## 1. Introduction

Contemporary organizational literature assumes that any organization is more likely to be effective when its members act with the deliberate intention of helping it and helping others systemically. The fact of engaging in prosocial behavior (PB, hereinafter) is meant to lead to positive feelings, which have the potential to translate to better performance (Aknin, Van de Vondervoort, and Hamlin, 2018). For instance, literature presumes PB to be one of the main components of corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is primordial for improving and enhancing collective welfare while simultaneously helping to shape a competitive advantage that is crucial for long-term survival (Keller, 2019). In this way, purpose-driven organizations assure that doing “well” implies doing “good” from both the individual and the organizational perspectives (Cassar and Meier, 2018; Chernev and Blair, 2015). Nevertheless, in

for-profit environments, a PB organizational culture is not easily built primarily because it is an affective struggle, which is somehow inconsistent with such settings’ instrumental nature (Zischka, 2016). Thus, the role of professional employees’ PB in for-profit organizations and their potential outcomes (in terms of organizational attitudes) have been relatively unexplored, resulting in a clear research gap (Christensen, Paarlberg, and Perry, 2017). This study addresses this specific research gap by drawing on Aknin *et al.’s* (2018) approach based on functional accounts of positive emotion.

The purpose of this work is to examine PB among for-profit organizations’ professional employees (PEs, hereinafter) as a possible source of positive individual attitudes, such as meaningfulness at work (MW) and affective commitment (AC). To do so, this work uses a cross-sectional survey of 144 Colombian PEs. Understanding PB among these individuals would contribute to the human resource management (HRM) literature by highlighting PB’s role in searching for motivation and commitment in the workplace. The present work also contends that the setting for professional employees’ examination will develop an understanding of PB among for-profit organizations. The results obtained show that engaging in PB is associated with high levels of AC towards an organization. However, this association is only possible with the involvement of having the sense of performing a meaningful job in the organization at issue.

The work suggests the achievement of the following contributions: First, it proposes that engaging in PB is a process that can influence employees to be more intrinsically motivated to perform their jobs, and ultimately can create a sense of belonging in the organization. Second, it is presumed that the time-frame is propitious to encourage this behavior, as current narratives highlight the importance for professionals of adopting a PB for the sake of having both a purpose and a sense of engagement in every aspect of their life. Third, considering the above, an integrated model that links PB, MW, and AC is tested and validated. Previous studies have often examined linkages between PB and individual attitudes in social contexts. However, to the best of the authors’

knowledge, none has integrated these constructs, especially within the context previously described.

In sum, the present study has theoretical and practical implications. It contributes to understanding issues related to an individual's PB in organizations and their effects on motivation and engagement.

## 2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

### 2.1. Prosocial Behavior

The concept of PB has a background deeply rooted in social science, specifically in social psychology. It is alleged that the term "was created by social scientists as an antonym for antisocial" (Batson and Powell, 2003, p. 463). Therefore, its study is often associated with developing desirable traits in people within any kind of social context (e.g., schools, universities, churches, and neighbor communities, among others). In that order of ideas, PB includes voluntary actions intended to benefit or help an individual or group of individuals (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989). Therefore, it is a comprehensive notion used to describe acts undertaken to protect or enhance others' welfare and includes helpful interventions, volunteer work, empathy, and donating resources, among other examples (Weinstein and Ryan, 2010).

Due to cultural beliefs that people should behave prosocially because it is socially desirable or "right" in a certain sense, the concept of PB in organizations is broadly connected with the conception of employees adopting socially desirable behaviors (Baruch, O'Creedy, Hind, and Vigoda-Gadot, 2004).

More precisely, PB in the workplace has been determined to affect employees' helping behaviors and task performance positively. There are several reflections like the one proposed by Aknin *et al.* (2018), that positive emotional states can boost employees to experience positive perceptions and encourage similar action in the future. This latter idea represents a strong endorsement of the existence and potential application of the link between prosocial organizational

actions and positive organizational behaviors in the workplace.

For instance, currently, an individual's PB is becoming a constructive attitude among employees for integrating CSR practices within firms' HRM systems (Cassar and Meier, 2018). In fact, some scholars have recently proposed that CSR efforts are often positively associated with employees' organizational PB and have invoked the job characteristic model (Hackman, and Oldham, 1976) as a partial mechanism to explain this relationship (Ong, Mayer, Tost, and Wellman, 2018). The present work is aligned with authors like Tao, Song, Ferguson, and Kochhar (2018). They suggest that PB implies long-lasting behavioral change among employees and is particularly meaningful for nurturing an ethical and socially responsible organizational culture, even in for-profit circumstances. The latter idea helps Ong *et al.*'s (2018) work conclude that high levels of employee PB have, in the long run, the capability to improve performance within for-profit organizations.

### 2.2. Affective Commitment

Various studies conducted by Gallup, Ipsos, and Allensbach Institute demonstrate that employees are more itinerant, more independent, and less reliant on their organizations than ever before (Yeung and Ulrich, 2019). Because of this reality, and in line with Meyer and Allen (1991), HR managers are progressively seeking to reinforce employees' psychological attachments by cultivating feelings of emotional dedication to their organizations. Such feelings are undoubtedly connected with what has been labeled as AC. In that order of ideas, AC captures how employees experience a sense of belonging within an organization. Employees' AC represents a concept that emerged from the field of Organizational Behavior at the individual level. It can be defined as an emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Nevertheless, AC is a work attitude, which sometimes is overlooked or confused with the construct of employee's organizational identification (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000; Lam and Yan, 2014; Lee, Park, and Koo, 2015; Stinglhamber, Marique,

Caesens, Desmette, Hansez, Hanin, and Bertrand (2015).

Consequently, the concept of AC could also be understood as “the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization” (Jones and Volpe, 2011, p. 839). In other words, AC is what defines an individual regarding his/her perception of the organization he/she joins. This conception is considered relevant, as the literature has shown that higher levels of AC can initiate other positive organizational attitudes such as job satisfaction, lower turnover intention, and others like creativeness, innovativeness, and productivity (Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005; Gao-Urhahn, Biemann, and Jaros, 2016). As a result, and in line with Dick, Knippenberg, Kerschreiter, Hertel, and Wieseke (2008), AC can be seen as an attitude that has a great propensity to lead employees to assume the interests and objectives of their organization as their own. Thus, its obtention is highly desirable in a business environment.

Early related studies, like Shore and Wayne’s (1993), concluded that AC could perform as a predictor of positive citizenship behaviors in employees. This finding insinuated that the association between AC and constructs like PB could be plausible. From a broader perspective, Aknin *et al.* (2018) suggest that such a phenomenon responds to a cyclical relationship in which prosocial actions can lead to positive perceptions among employees and vice versa.

The present work considers that behaving prosocially in the workplace seems to be a profoundly comprehensive human state. It also supports several experts who sustain that PB is predominately inherent to certain personal traits instead of external stimuli (Batson and Powell, 2003; Dovidio, Pillavin, Schroeder, and Penner, 2017). For instance, in the healthcare sector, PB has been proved to be a cogent antecedent of both calculative and moral commitment (Hornung, 2010). Likewise, Grant, Dutton, and Rosso (2008) suggested that employee support programs cultivate organizational commitment by enabling employees to receive and give support (i.e., engaging in PB).

This work argues that a PE who engages in PB tends to identify more with their organizations, adopt organizational goals as

their individual goals, and pursue various activities to contribute to organizational success. Hence, the present work hypothesizes that:

**H1:** PB significantly influences AC.

### 2.3. Meaningfulness at Work

The concept of MW (meaningfulness at work, or meaningful work) was initially introduced by Hackman and Oldham (1976). They presented it as a psychological state created by the interaction of individual factors, such as skill variety, task identity, and task meaningfulness. Simultaneously, they proposed that MW, together with other states like responsibility for outcomes and knowledge of results, are a powerful determinant of intrinsic work motivation and other desirable outcomes. Against this background, MW was defined as “the degree to which the individual experiences the job as one which is generally meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile” (He and Brown, 2013, p. 256). Later, the concept of MW was further developed by Kahn (1990), who under the term psychological meaningfulness, described it as “a feeling that one is receiving a return on investments of one’s self in a currency of physical, cognitive or emotional energy” (p. 703-704).

Subsequently, other scholars contributed to the concept and developed alternative definitions, taking into account a more contemporary organizational reality perspective. This was the case of May, Gilson, and Harter (2004), whose approach integrates a comparison between the individual appreciation of their work environment with their value system. For them, MW is the perceived “value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual’s own ideals or standards” (p. 14). In line with Aknin *et al.’s* (2018) approach, this latter conjecture guides the present study.

On the one hand, this study recognizes that PB has mainly been identified as a social phenomenon that influences numerous citizens within a society (Batson and Powell, 2003), and in agreement with Grant *et al.* (2008) and Klein (2017). They posited that PB is an essential source of benefits not only for recipients but for prosocial actors. On



the other hand, the present work follows scholars like Christensen *et al.* (2017) and Martela and Ryan (2016). They respectively suggested that attracting and retaining employees with high PB is a reliable way to enhance employee performance and agency mission accomplishment and that, in general terms, “benevolent acts lead to increased positive affect and meaningfulness of the experience” (p. 355). Consequently, this study acknowledges that irrespective of their characteristics, individuals linked to an organization are susceptible to perceiving an increased level of meaningfulness towards their job. They do it, depending on their tendency to behave prosocially, even in for-profit organizational environments. In other words, the more an employee engages in PB, the more he/she perceives his/her job as meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile. In sum, PB will be salient in intrinsically motivating professional PEs to reach MW. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

**H2:** PB significantly influences MW.

#### 2.4. Correspondence between MW and AC

Using the proxy of organizational identification, Pratt and Ashforth (2003) focused on the MW-AC dyad. They followed the positive organizational framework, clarified the many dimensions of MW, and posited some valuable insights about this association.

It is worthwhile noting that they defended a

proposition that suggests that MW is strongly connected with AC. “One finds meaning not in what one does, but in whom one surrounds oneself with as part of the organizational membership and/or in the goals, values and beliefs that the organization espouses” (Pratt and Ashforth, 2003). Later, several theoretical and empirical studies backed this specific thesis (e.g., Baumeister, 1991; Cohen-Meitar, Carmeli, and Waldman, 2009; Vignoles, Gollidge, Regalia, Manzi, and Scabini, 2006). The present study also supports this notion by arguing that MW implies that PEs obtain an understanding of the nature and expectations of the characteristics of their tasks (i.e., goals, purpose, and values), perceive fit with, and consequently comprehend how their roles contribute to the purpose of the organization. Consequently, the study hypothesizes that:

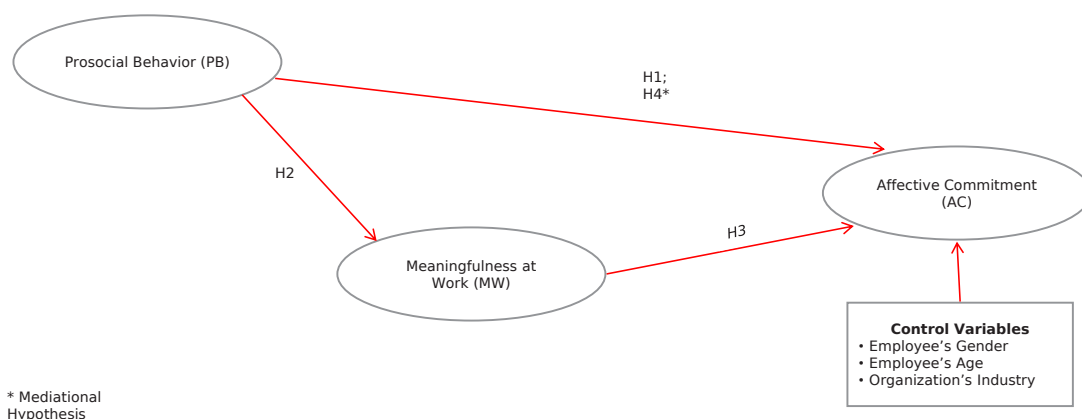
**H3:** MW significantly influences AC.

Finally, since only direct effects are proposed to being tested with the previous hypotheses, it is pertinent to understand better the mechanisms that intervene in the relationship between PB and AC. Therefore, the potential indirect effect of MW on the other constructs are of interest to the present work, and hence the last hypothesis is the following:

**H4:** MW significantly mediates the relationship between PB and AC.

The research model is displayed in Figure 1. It represents the various paths that link PB, MW, and AC.

**Figure 1. Research Model**



### 3. Research Design

#### 3.1. Sample and Data Collection

This study's data collection was based on a paper-based survey addressed to 144 executive graduate degree programs in one of the most traditional Colombian universities. All respondents were professionals with strong foundations in management. Since the study was focused on PEs, individuals with such characteristics were explicitly selected. One of the authors was physically present during the entire exercise in order to address any potential questions or contingency and to ensure the effectiveness of the process. The sample was diverse in terms of age, gender, and sector (Table 1). Respondents were from different sectors, such as manufacturing and services. The average work experience of respondents was about 5.3 years. According to Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, and Ringle (2019), a sample size of 144 is exceedingly valid for this particular model. The preceding occurs whenever this figure is larger than ten times the scale with the largest number of observable variables, which would be any of the constructs examined. Each of them is measured through six items, revealing a minimum acceptable sample of 60 respondents.

**Table 1. Profile of respondents %**

Demographic Characteristic	Frequency	%	
Gender	Male	82	56.94
	Female	62	43.06
Age	21-25	35	24.31
	26-30	44	30.56
	31-35	25	17.36
	36-40	17	11.81
	Over 40	17	11.81
	Missing	6	4.17
Industry Type	Services	44	30.56
	Manufacturing	35	24.31
	Oil & Gas	26	18.06
	Mining	15	10.42
	Agriculture	8	5.56
	Others	13	9.03
	Missing	3	2.08

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Besides demographic questions aimed at understanding respondents, the questionnaire included the items measuring four mentioned constructs, which were assessed on a five-point (1-5) Likert scale that ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

#### 3.2. Identification of Variables and Measurements

All items were derived from previously established scales. PB was measured using a six-item scale proposed by Smith, Organ, and Near (1983), but later adapted by George (1991). MW was measured through a six-item scale proposed by May *et al.* (2004). Finally, AC was measured with a six-item scale, initially proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991). All these scales were previously validated in previous studies and have been widely used (Table 2).

#### 3.3. Control Variables

The study also included some control variables to ensure proper model specification and account for possible alternative explanations for AC variations. In particular, it included an organization-level variable such as industry. It is plausible that specific industry characteristics would influence both MW and AC. Similarly, this dynamic between constructs could differ across organizations of different sizes. Additionally, because of the high level of heterogeneity in the sample, the study controlled for the respondents' age and gender, measured with corresponding dummy variables. Control variables were introduced on AC, which is the dependent variable of interest.

#### 3.4. Analysis

The proposed hypotheses (represented in the structural model - Figure 1) were examined by using partial least square-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The data were analyzed in two steps. First, a measurement model evaluation was performed to assess the validity and construct reliability. Then, the hypothesized structural model was tested. Both steps were performed using SmartPLS version 3.2.8.

**Table 2. Measurement model and construct reliability**

Survey Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	F.L.	$\alpha$	R2	Q2
<b>Prosocial Behavior (PB)</b>						
I help others who have been absent	4.004	0.684	0.729	0.763		
I volunteer for things that are not required	4.351	0.740	0.714			
I orient new people even though it is not required	4.113	0.769	0.658			
I help others who have heavy works loads	3.930	0.801	0.801			
I assist supervisors with their work	4.314	0.967	0.631*			
I make innovative suggestions to improve my department/functional area	3.774	0.751	0.790			
<b>Meaningfulness at Work (MW)</b>						
The work I do on this job is significant to me	4.341	0.780	0.913	0.901	0.589	0.157
My job activities are personally meaningful to me	4.430	0.581	0.707			
The work I do on this job is worthwhile	4.369	0.766	0.698			
My job activities are significant to me	4.357	0.824	0.955			
The work I do on this job is meaningful to me	4.157	0.792	0.955			
I feel that the work I do on my job is valuable	4.245	0.751	0.704			
<b>Affective Commitment (AC)</b>						
This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me	3.958	0.975	0.792	0.818	0.378	0.112
I feel emotionally attached to this organization	3.988	0.809	0.882			
I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own	4.107	1.052	0.701			
I feel part of a family in my organization	4.093	0.976	0.726			
I feel a strong sense of belongingness to this organization	4.075	0.881	0.857			
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization	3.690	1.058	0.534*			

\* Items with F.L.<0.65 were dropped.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

This statistical technique and software are appropriate in exploratory and confirmatory research (Chin, 2010).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Measurement Model Evaluation

Through this evaluation, the study analyzes the relationships between latent variables and their items, the items' reliability, and the scales' internal consistency and convergent validity. In the light of Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt's (2016) recommendations, fair values were obtained throughout this process. In the first instance, it could be verified that most items achieved adequate factor loadings (F.L.). In this sense, two items (with F.L.<0.65) were dropped. Finally, the Cronbach's Alphas ( $\alpha$ ) values for each construct were also considered satisfactory since all of them are over 0.70, indicating reliability and robustness of the empirical model (Table 2).

### 4.2. Structural Model Evaluation

Table 3 shows the correlation among different studied variables. The average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct was greater than the minimum threshold of 0.5. The square roots of AVEs for each construct were larger than its correlation with other constructs, thereby indicating sufficient divergent validity.

The proposed model's strength of linear associations between variables was evaluated using the PLS algorithm. However, in terms of PLS, the measures were not thoroughly developed, so these measures could only be

estimated based on aspects that represent significant individual measures that explain the structural model's capacity (Lowry and Gaskin, 2014). These measures were the value of determination coefficients (R<sup>2</sup> in table 2) and the value of predictive relevance through Blindfolding (Q<sup>2</sup> in Table 2). Both measures reported accepted values (Hair *et al.*, 2016; Lowry and Gaskin, 2014). Likewise, for the incorporation of the three control variables in the model, the path coefficient value obtained (>0.1) indicated that they did not exert a significant impact on AC.

Nevertheless, to explain more accurately this model's predictive power, four goodness-of-fit tests were manually performed: the goodness of fit index (GFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the normed fit index (NFI; which represents the chi-square value of the proposed model relative to the chi-square value of the null model). Since their values fall within acceptable ranges (Hair *et al.*, 2016; Hooper, Coughlan, and Mullen, 2008; Lowry and Gaskin, 2014), these tests indicate an overall acceptable fit (Table 4). Therefore, the present study can confirm that the proposed model has adequate predictive power, thereby demonstrating that this study's empirical results are congruent with the existing theory.

As for the hypotheses testing, a bootstrapping procedure with 5000 subsamples was performed (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The path coefficients corresponding to H2 and H3 were significant, whereas the path coefficient corresponding to H1 was not significant. Lastly, when testing H4, the indirect relationship between PB and AC through MW is validated (Table 5).

**Table 3. Average variances extracted (AVEs) and correlations**

Latent Variable	AVE	Latent Variable		
		PB	MW	AC
PB	0.646	<b>0.804</b>		
MW	0.522	0.592	<b>0.722</b>	
AC	0.699	0.550	0.272	<b>0.836</b>

Diagonal elements (in bold font) are the square roots of the AVEs.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.



**Table 4. Path analysis and reported values for the structural model**

Fit Index	Recommended Values	Model Values	Model Fit
GFI	> 0.85	0.882	Sufficient fit
CFI	> 0.95	0.953	Sufficient fit
RMSEA	< 0.06	0.047	Good fit
NFI	> 0.90	0.939	Good fit

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

**Table 5. Path analysis and reported values for the structural model**

Path	Model without mediation			Model with mediation		
	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	p-value	Link	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	p-value	Link
PB $\rightarrow$ AC				0.245	0.331	Does not exist
PB $\rightarrow$ MW				0.619	**	Exists
MW $\rightarrow$ AC				0.820	***	Exists
PB $\rightarrow$ MW $\rightarrow$ AC	0.276	0.091	Does not exist	0.601	*	Exists

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $0.01 < p < 0.025$ ; \*  $0.025 < p < 0.05$

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

**Table 6. Summary of hypothesis testing**

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Path	Results
H1	PB $\rightarrow$ AC	Not Supported
H2	PB $\rightarrow$ MW	Supported
H3	MW $\rightarrow$ AC	Supported
H4	PB $\rightarrow$ MW $\rightarrow$ AC	Supported (full mediation)

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Consequently, empirical findings support this study's hypothesis that PB is positively associated with MW (H2). There is also support for the positive relationship between MW and AC (H3). Notwithstanding, although there were no indications of a significant direct relationship between PB and AC (H1), H4's results confirm a full mediation effect of MW on PB and AC's relationship (Table 6)

Results obtained show that such relationships are more complex than envisioned before. It suggests that PB can be an antecedent of AC, but only with the intervening of MW.

## 5. Discussion

PB has a setting profoundly rooted in social psychology. Nevertheless, it has yet to be explored in the realm of management, and particularly of HRM. Accordingly, the present work intended to study PB among PEs and validate it as a potential source of positive individual attitudes, such as MW and AC. The work came to fruition by contending the idea that, in the same way as positive feelings promote PB, PB also has the capability to promote positive feelings and perceptions at the workplace (Aknin *et al.*, 2018). While the study was devoted to a

specific class of workers in a specific class of organizations, the focus on the source of intrinsic motivation (i.e., MW) as well as on psychological states, such as AC, helps this work to understand the underlying rationale that PB is able to generate. The quest to understand how AC is obtained among PEs leads this work to conclude that while engaging in PB can indeed imply a positive impact on AC; it is achieved only through the perception of having a clear purpose in the workplace. This idea means that for the sake of fostering AC, specifically in the context of PEs, high doses of PB alone are not sufficient. Thus, the study extended the literature by presenting a nuanced understanding of AC's development through both PB and MW in the context of PEs.

Results obtained are consistent with several past studies. In the first instance, the study helps to illustrate Aknin *et al.*'s (2018) approach insofar as demonstrating that engaging in PB is a behavior inherently rewarding within an organizational environment. It also supports the idea that MW corresponds to an internal judgment of how some personality traits (i.e., an employee's value system) can explain some working environment features (May *et al.*, 2004). Likewise, following Hackman and Oldham (1976), this work is in line with a growing body of evidence that insinuates that PB can be a source of intrinsic motivation. The reason for this behavior relies on its capabilities to generate benefits for prosocial employees (Grant *et al.*, 2008; Klein, 2017) and on the procurement of positive results for both organization (Christensen *et al.*, 2017) and the employees regarding their sense of affection and meaningfulness (Martela and Ryan, 2016). Finally, this study also supports Pratt and Ashforth's (2003) theoretical arguments that relate MW to AC.

This study's central premise is that PB is not part of a mere procedural problem that can directly generate an increment among PEs' level of commitment. Instead, the study supports the notion that obtaining results from engaging in PB is a matter of willingness on behalf of the employees involved. Thus, it needs to be approached from a behavioral perspective. Therefore, the study contends that the employees in for-profit organizations in dispositions toward PB can be willing to

contribute to the organization's success, but only if they feel that their jobs are worthwhile.

A plausible explanation for these results can be that the search for commitment (specifically AC) among prosocially engaged PEs does not only correspond to a personality-related issue. Instead, this empirical study suggests that such personality characteristics should be complemented with the perception of being intrinsically motivated (i.e., MW) for the sake of obtaining PEs' psychological attachments and emotional dedication to their organizations. In support of this idea, this study also implies that AC is achievable through motivation regardless of the employee's PB profile. The findings indicate that, even without PB's influence, when PEs perceive their work to be meaningful, they will see value in their activities that make them (affectively) committed to their organizations. Therefore, helping PEs find such a perception seems imperative to cultivate a sense of belonging toward the corresponding organization.

This work's findings highlight the need to consider contextual nuances, such as employees' education level, while investigating the PB. Given the distinct findings observed in this study vis-à-vis several other studies, there is a need to consider the significance of prosocial propensity for different educational levels and examine how it influences PB in organizations. Subsequently, PB could be approached from theoretical angles rooted in economic logic and human psychology. The support for the link between PB and MW and the lack of support for the link between PB and AC indicate that understanding PB comprehensively would require combining different theoretical viewpoints.

For instance, prevailing narratives in HRM and organizational behavior management (i.e., practitioner's-oriented literature) tend to invite PEs to think in terms of the importance of engaging on PB for the sake of having a purpose in every aspect of life. Having a meaningful job is undoubtedly part of that purpose. Studies like the present one validate that possessing the perception of being part of 'something bigger than oneself' also has the capacity to enhance commitment within an organizational environment. Evidently, concepts such as CSR, sustainability, altruism,

and citizenship are deeply attached to the view of adopting an organizational purpose (e.g., a mission statement). Responses of any employee class to the latter phenomenon have been recently proved to rely on their attributions and behaviors (Aknin *et al.*, 2018). The present work suggests that the current time context is also propitious to locate and encourage PB among employees to generate positive outcomes at every single level in organizations.

The present work also has practical implications. It stresses PB's importance in HRM and argues for PB as a promoter of meaningfulness in organizations. The study validates the importance of hiring prosocially-driven professionals in order to obtain adequate levels of meaningfulness at their work among them. At the same time, it endorses both the creation and promotion of meaningful job places (formed by high levels of task variety, task identity, and task significance) in for-profit organizations. This indication is being proved here as an essential complement of PB in order to obtain employees' willingness to give their time and energy to their jobs. To do it, HR managers have to ensure that employees are provided with ample doses of purpose statements, both for the job places and for the organizations themselves. Prosocially-driven candidates and employees look for something that goes beyond financial stability and job satisfaction. Findings imply that they look for engaging in something that they believe in.

Concretely, these results will have significant contributions for those in charge of CSR affairs. Traditionally for-profit organizations have felt the impulse to contribute to society, but it is well known that their actions represented an extension of the spirit of individual prosociality. As this study has shown, prosocial employees would be more prone to experience meaningfulness in their day-to-day activities, and in turn, commit themselves to an organizational purpose. In the long run, this phenomenon could help develop more effort to assist communities and societies, mostly, if those individuals managed to be grouped with others that also behave prosocially. Therefore, the target should be fostering (and by definition, investing in) prosocial organizational environments to create a

sense of belonging to something worthwhile, to something 'bigger than the individuals themselves.' Previous evidence implies that such phenomenon generates individuals (and ergo organizations) to be more encouraged to devote their efforts toward the common good and achieve sustainable development.

Despite several interesting insights emerging from this study, it has several limitations. The most obvious limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the data. It does not permit to test beyond association relationships. However, given that the hypotheses do not hypothesize causality or changes over time, the authors believe it does not influence their interpretation. Nonetheless, future studies could collect panel data and test a causal model, which would lead to interesting insights. Secondly, the study's particular purpose focused on linear correlations. However, it is plausible that, through different analytical instruments, relationships between variables could exhibit different behaviors. Alternatively, other approaches, such as configurational analyses (e.g., qualitative comparative analyses through either crisp or fuzzy sets), could be performed for the sake of enhancing the topic's body of knowledge. Therefore, future research could examine these underlying factors from additional methodological avenues and perspectives.

Finally, there is a need to consider the context and profile of participants. For the former aspect, it is possible that having collected the data from an emerging country, like Colombia, would make results different from other cultural and economic contexts. This issue implies that this study's findings may not be generalizable. While this could be considered a limitation of this study, it nevertheless contributes to a better understanding of the mediation process (PB-MW-AC) in previously unexplored contexts, such as emerging economies. Future research can contrast and compare results with other contexts to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. For the latter aspect, the fact that participants were PEs with positions of responsibility while at the same time pursuing a graduate degree in management could also be salient in the manner they perceived AC in the function of PB and MW.

## 6. Conclusion

The present work contributes to the literature in organizational behavior at the individual level by developing a plausible path model that proposes existing links between PB to MW, and AC, specifically for PEs. By conducting a cross-sectional explorative study, it tests the relationship among them within for-profit organizations in Colombia. Empirical findings present several insights. While PB is positively related to MW, which is related to AC, PB is not significantly related to AC. Thus, PB is related to AC through MW, but not in isolation. The findings suggest that PB is a compelling phenomenon and a factor related to AC but only through other attitudes, like the senses of skill variety, task identity, and task meaningfulness. Future studies could focus on understanding other influences and outcomes that contribute to the PB fostering among professional employees in this or other contexts.

## 7. Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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