Article

Prosocial Behavior and Workplace Safety: Analysis of the Role of Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Organizational Support in Two UK and US Samples

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Abstract: Prosocial safety behavior (PSB) is a critical element of workforce participation in the promotion of safety in the workplace. This study aims to examine the influence of various antecedents on PSB. Based on an analysis of the existing literature on prosocial behaviors, we investigate whether emotional intelligence (EI) and perceived organizational support (POS) significantly influence PSB. Furthermore, we analyze the mediating role of employees' intrinsic motivation (IM) and affective commitment (AC) in these relationships. The research was conducted by administering an online questionnaire to a large sample of 488 workers employed in safety-critical industries based in the United States and the United Kingdom with the support of an online platform (N = 346; N = 142). Statistical analyses, conducted using a multi-group approach, revealed that EI had a direct effect on PSB in the two samples analyzed. In the US sample, we found that IM mediated the influence of EI and POS on PSB. In the UK sample, none of the mediation hypotheses were supported. The study provides insights into the individual and organizational factors that promote the development of a prosocial orientation in managing workplace safety issues, revealing the importance of recognizing the role of EI as a significant person-related antecedent supporting PSB. The statistical evidence from the study suggests that organizations that desire to facilitate the expression of PSB in their workforce may consider investing in training programs to enhance the EI of their employees and designing work conditions that facilitate high levels of intrinsic motivation.

Keywords: prosocial safety behavior; emotional intelligence; perceived organizational support; affective commitment; intrinsic motivation

1. Introduction

Sustainable development is universally defined as a strategic approach designed to fulfill the needs of the present global population while avoiding adverse effects on health and the environment. This approach ensures the preservation and security of global resources, thereby not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [1]. Traditionally, sustainable development has been conceptualized as the integration of three core foundations: economic development, social development, and environmental protection [2,3]. In particular, social sustainability pertains to the capacity to ensure an equitable distribution of quality of life and human well-being across different social strata and genders [4]. Safety and well-being are critical pillars of social sustainability, essential for sustainable organizational development. Ensuring safe and healthy working conditions in the workplace enhances employee performance, boosts motivation and efficiency, increases

organizational productivity, and consequently improves product quality, reduces costs, and leads to higher sales and long-term profitability [5].

Nevertheless, an organization's sustainable development strategy should not solely be assessed based on the enhanced value of its production. It must also be evaluated in terms of economic efficiency, resource utilization, occupational health and safety, and environmental protection [4,6]. Organizational practices that improve health and safety standards are likely to achieve comparable or greater success in meeting Sustainable Development Goals [7]. Specifically, in the field of organizational safety, analyzing a class of positive behaviors such as prosocial safety behaviors can promote acceptance and integration in the workplace, while also fostering sustainable economic growth [8].

In the last decade, researchers have started to give growing attention to the importance of prosocial actions in the management of workplace safety, in the double effort to contribute to the prevention of accidents and support the treatment of the negative consequences of accidents on employees' health and well-being [9,10]. Given the existing evidence of the role of safety-specific prosocial behavior in reducing accident and injury occurrence [11–16], more recent studies have started to investigate the contextual conditions that facilitate (or inhibit) the expression of prosocial behavior aimed at supporting safe work conditions [12,17–21]. These studies show the positive influence of organizational culture, transformational leadership, servant leadership, and supervisors' listening, and the negative influence of aspects such as role ambiguities concerning safety responsibilities and lack of autonomy in managing safety-related issues. These recent studies highlight some of the contextual antecedents that may support or inhibit individuals' propensity to engage in prosocial behavior that supports and protects themselves and other people's safety during the fulfillment of their work activities. However, less attention has been dedicated to the analysis of the psychological drivers that may lead workers to engage in this kind of behavior, like the perception of personal image risks [22]. Furthermore, even less attention has been dedicated to the analysis of the role of individual differences factors that may make some individuals keener to engage in prosocial efforts supporting the prevention of accidents and the promotion of safety [23]. Given that in the field of workplace safety, prosocial behavior is considered a discretionary action that cannot be imposed by management [20,21], identifying and understanding the person-related dimensions that support individuals' propensity to engage in this kind of discretionary action is of pivotal importance for both researchers and organizations. The present study aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge on the individual antecedents of prosocial behavior in workplace safety by investigating the role of emotional intelligence in stimulating individuals' engagement in this kind of behavior. While the link between emotional intelligence and prosociality has been investigated in other areas of psychological science [24–26], in the field of workplace safety, the current mainstream research trends tend to focus on the role of contextual-related variables, such as organizational safety climate and safety leadership to motivate employees' safe work conduct [27,28], overlooking the influence of individual differences, including emotional intelligence. In our study, we propose that emotional intelligence may positively affect prosocial behavior in the field of workplace safety, mediated by intrinsic motivation for the job and affective commitment to the organization. Existing studies on these two constructs suggest that these psychological variables can stimulate individuals' engagement in discretionary actions that may benefit other people and the good functioning of the organization, such as preventing accident occurrence, avoiding physical harm to others, and reducing damage to the organizational business [29–31]. Furthermore, to understand the relative importance of a person-related factor, such as emotional intelligence, on the expression of safety-specific forms of prosocial behavior, we include in our study the analysis of a context-related variable, perceived organizational support, which has consistently been found to be a significant antecedent of discretionary work conduct in organizational settings [32]. In this way we aim to compare the relative influence of emotional intelligence with another well-established construct in the organizational behavior literature.

In the next sections, we will first illustrate the state of the research on prosocial behavior in the field of workplace safety. We will then discuss a set of antecedents and mediating variables found in previous research to be significantly related to prosocial behavior before advancing a specific set of research hypotheses and presenting an empirical study that involved the participation of safety-critical workers from two different countries (United States and United Kingdom). Finally, the general discussion will present the implications of the findings for research advancement on prosocial behavior in the field of workplace safety.

1.1. Prosociality and Safety Citizenship in Organizations

In the general field of social psychology, Batson and Powell [33] define prosociality as a "broad range of actions intended to benefit one or more people other than oneself" (p. 463). In safety research literature, prosocial safety behavior (PSB) is often investigated as part of the broader concept of safety citizenship behavior (SCB), which refers to a broad set of employees' discretionary actions that support the maintenance and improvement of safety. SCBs, originally conceptualized by Hofmann et al. [34], are behaviors that involve a range of discretionary actions, such as supporting coworkers with their safety responsibilities, protecting people from being victims of accidents in the workplace, suggesting ways to refine the safety standards of the organization, and expressing personal concerns about how workplace safety is managed during daily work activities. PSB covers only a part of the broader construct of SCB [30], specifically those discretionary actions aimed at supporting colleagues' safety with affiliative forms of employees' activities, like helping and stewardship actions. On the one hand, helping refers to affiliative initiatives aimed at supporting safety standards in teamwork activities, while stewardship refers to discretionary initiatives aimed at protecting colleagues from immediate risks and hazards to their health and well-being. Specific research on PSB has been limited, with a tendency to treat this construct as a component of the broader construct of safety citizenship [10]. Curcuruto et al. [14] introduced the distinction between affiliative versus change-oriented forms of safety citizenship, reflecting a similar distinction in the general literature on citizenship [35]. Safety citizenship behaviors can be categorized as either prosocial (affiliative) or proactive (change-oriented), both of which are differentially related to individual and organizational processes, with the former focused on helping colleagues and looking after their well-being. In contrast, the latter is about enacting challenging behaviors that seek to result in positive changes to workplace practices like safety procedures. Proactive behaviors carry greater risk when performed due to the possibility that they can be seen as a criticism of existing safety management systems [14]. Affiliative behaviors are cooperative and people-oriented, fostering stronger relationships. Change-oriented behaviors emphasize innovation and problem-solving, which can sometimes strain relationships, while affiliative behaviors are actions that tend to support a positive atmosphere in the workgroup [36]. Similarly, Van Dyne and LePine developed a theory that considers extra-role behaviors, i.e., prohibitive behaviors on the one hand, and promotional behaviors on the other. Promotional behaviors are proactive and encouraging, while prohibitive behaviors are protective and preventive, including speaking out against unethical actions. When we apply this distinction to prosocial safety behavior, we can see helping as an example of promotional affiliate behavior, while stewardship can be considered an example of prohibitive affiliate behavior [37]. The helping dimension, where employees assist colleagues, supervisors, and the organization, enhances cooperation and organizational performance, particularly in care work. Stewardship, as present-oriented compliance ("anything goes"), contrasts with ethical stewardship, which ensures a safe workplace by addressing safety needs and investing in safety resources [34].

Several predictors and mediators may influence the emergence of PSB in workgroups. Proximal antecedents include individual psychological processes (e.g., perceived control; affective commitment), while distal antecedents involve perceptions of psychosocial elements in the organizational context (e.g., managerial support; participation programs) [30].

1.2. Antecedents of Prosocial Behavior in Organizations

In this section, we will review some of the most frequently discussed antecedents in the literature on prosocial behavior in organizations. We will use reflections on the existing literature to advance a specific set of research hypotheses about the determinants of prosocial behavior, with relevance for workplace safety and accident prevention. We will focus our attention first on two distal antecedents, namely emotional intelligence and perceived organizational support. Then, we will introduce two psychological constructs, namely affective commitment to the organization and intrinsic motivation for the work, as two potential mediation variables in the relationship between distal antecedents and safety-specific forms of prosocial behavior in the workplace.

1.2.1. Distal Antecedents

Emotional Intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence is a multifaceted concept that can be explained through various theoretical models. This research adopts Salovey and Mayer's [38] model, defining it as the ability to understand and manage one's own and others' emotions, guiding thoughts and actions. They developed the "ability model", which encompasses four key emotion-related abilities: the perception of emotions, the integration of emotions through thought processes, the understanding of relations between emotions and circumstances, and the regulation of emotions, also called emotion management [39]. These skills are organized hierarchically, with emotion perception at the base and emotion management at the top. Emotion perception and integration form the experiential aspect of emotional intelligence (EI), while emotion understanding and management represent the strategic aspect [40]. This initial conception included the cognitive and affective spheres of emotion, but also treated emotional intelligence separately as a higher cognitive skill. The emotional component of this intelligence involves skills essential for self-efficacy in emotion-eliciting social interactions and enables positive relationships, altruism, effective communication, problem-solving, and prosocial behaviors—the core outcome in our study [24,41]. Eisenberg's theory of prosocial behavior outlines a three-stage process: first, recognizing others' needs; then forming an intention to help; and finally translating that intention into action. Vorbach [42] explored the relationship between emotional factors (such as identifying others' emotions and emotional regulation) and social factors (such as relationship quality). Their findings indicate that the ability to recognize others' emotions is positively associated with prosocial behavior and inversely related to aggressive behavior.

In the initial stage of need-awareness, individuals assess whether others require help, which involves emotional perception and expression abilities as part of EI. Once the need is identified, individuals must decide whether to offer assistance. At this point, the understanding and management aspects of EI become essential, enabling individuals to process available information and determine if their intent to help aligns with the situation [43].

The capacity to accurately perceive and evaluate others' emotions is crucial in informing prosocial behavior. Research consistently shows a strong positive correlation between EI and prosociality [24,41], revealing that individuals with higher EI tend to exhibit more positive social behaviors. For example, individuals who can accurately detect fear in others are more likely to exhibit prosocial behavior in social situations [44]. Additionally, Charbonneau and Nicol [45] revealed a significant link between EI, strong social relationships, and prosocial behavior. People with high EI not only display more prosocial behaviors but also show greater empathy and fewer negative behaviors in peer interactions [46,47].

There has been less attention paid to the role of emotional intelligence in workplace safety; however, a limited number of studies suggest it could play a significant role. Specifically, employees experiencing cognitive and emotional failure are more prone to job-related accidents [48], underscoring the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in influencing their safety behaviors [49]. Given the existing evidence for the important role of EI in general prosocial behavior and the limited research in the context of safety, we propose EI as a potential predictor of safety-specific forms of prosocial behavior in the workplace.

Furthermore, we aim to explore the potential mediation mechanisms in the relationship between EI and prosocial behavior, with particular attention paid to affective commitment and intrinsic motivation. Given that people with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to develop emotional attachments with other people in the workplace, we expect that they are also keener to engage in safety-specific forms of prosocial behaviors that serve to protect others' well-being through the mediation of affective commitment. Furthermore, people with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to perceive others' needs and express empathy. For this reason, we expect intrinsic motivation may mediate the relationship between EI and prosocial behavior. In other words, people presenting high levels of EI will also experience intrinsic motivation to help others in the workplace, engaging in safety-specific forms of prosocial behaviors, such as supporting and protecting others' safety and well-being during work activities.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS). Thibaut and Kelly [50] suggest that individuals engage with organizations based on a system of rewards and punishments set by organizational rules. Their theory posits that groups and individuals influence each other, experiencing changes over time through ongoing evaluations of relationship gratification. Commitment levels fluctuate, leading to role transitions when criteria are met. These transitions mark different phases of group membership: enquiry, socialization, retention, resocialization, and recollection, separated by four role transitions: entry, acceptance, divergence, and exit [51]. Following this perspective, Eisenberger et al. [52] developed the concept of POS, suggesting that employees form beliefs about their organization's concern for their well-being. POS indicates the organization's willingness to reward commitment, assist with tasks, and help manage stress and work-life balance. It reflects employees' views on the organization's support and commitment to them, fostering mutual dedication [53]. POS is seen as the organization's contribution to a positive reciprocity dynamic, where employees perform better in response to rewards and favorable treatment. Even though the number of studies specifically focusing on POS in safety research is quite limited [32], we expect that people who perceive a high level of organizational support from their company will be more motivated to reciprocate the attention they receive by engaging in work conduct that benefits others, such as engaging in prosocial behaviors that support colleagues' safety and well-being. Among the few existing studies in the safety research literature, evidence suggests that managerial support for employees' expression of personal concerns about workplace safety facilitates the expression of discretionary safety voice behaviors and the creation of a positive safety climate [30,54–56]. From a social exchange perspective, we suggest that people who perceive a high level of organizational support from their organization, enhancing the quality of their work experience, will be more committed to reciprocate this attention with prosocial behavior aimed at supporting organizational activities. This includes safety-specific forms of prosocial behavior aimed at supporting safety and reducing negative events such as work accidents that can harm the organization.

Similarly to the discussion of the mechanisms of emotional intelligence in the previous section, we propose investigating the potential mediation role of affective commitment and intrinsic motivation in the relationship between perceived organizational support and safety-specific forms of prosocial behavior. On the one hand, people who perceive high levels of organizational support are more likely to develop higher levels of affective commitment to their organization [55]. We suggest that this enhanced affective commitment may mediate the relationship between POS and safety-specific forms of prosocial behavior, as these behaviors may represent a way for employees to reciprocate their affective relationship with the organization. On the other hand, when people perceive a higher level of organizational support, they are more likely to develop a pleasant experience in their job, developing intrinsic motivation to maintain the current positive work conditions. In this case, safety-specific forms of prosocial behavior may represent a way to defend the quality of the organizational experience by avoiding negative consequences, such as accidents with negative outcomes for the quality of the organizational daily experience and the health of coworkers and supervisors.

1.2.2. Psychological Mediators

Affective Commitment (AC). Meyer and Allen's [57] three-component model of commitment posits that commitment to an organization involves three distinct psychological states: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment reflects emotional attachment and involvement with the organization, where employees stay because they want to [57,58]. The construct of affective commitment appears to be at the core of organizational commitment [59]. Research suggests that affective commitment better predicts critical organizational outcomes like turnover, absenteeism, and supportive behaviors compared to normative or transactional forms of commitment [60]. Previous studies have also found an influence of affective commitment on safety compliance [61]; therefore, we expect a potential positive influence of this construct on the expression of prosocial behaviors relevant to workplace safety. People who feel a stronger affective commitment to the organization will be more likely to engage in actions that promote and defend the well-being of other members of the organization, as they perceive the organization as a central part of their professional experience.

Intrinsic Motivation (IM). In the 1970s, research into Self-Determination Theory (SDT) began, focusing on intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation and recognizing the significant role of intrinsic motivation in shaping individual behavior. SDT is a framework for understanding human motivation and personality, emphasizing innate internal resources that drive personality development and self-regulation [62]. It explores growth tendencies and fundamental psychological needs—competence [63], relatedness [64,65], and autonomy [66]—that support self-motivation, personality integration, and positive development. These needs are crucial for fostering natural growth, social development, and personal well-being.

The construct of intrinsic motivation describes a natural inclination toward assimilation, mastery, spontaneous interest, and exploration, which are crucial for cognitive and social development, and a primary source of lifelong enjoyment and vitality [62,67]. In accordance with Deci and Ryan [68], we consider intrinsic motivation a motivational driver to perform a task simply because it is found interesting and enjoyable. While research on the role of motivation is not new in safety research [15], we expect that intrinsic motivation is particularly relevant to the enactment of prosocial behavior given the discretionary nature of this kind of behavior, which in most cases cannot be mandated by job descriptions and organizational norms. People with higher levels of intrinsic motivation for their job will be more likely to engage in prosocial safety behavior that facilitates the maintenance of workflow, preventing unpleasant events (such as accidents) that could damage the organization and its members.

1.3. Relationship Between PSB and EI, POS, IM, and AC

The aim of the current study is to test whether prosocial safety behavior (PSB) is influenced by the antecedents identified in this section. Turnipseed's [69] study underscores a correlation between prosocial behavior and Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso's [70] EI, as well as locus of control, particularly emphasizing a stronger link with individual-directed citizenship rather than organization-directed citizenship. Similar findings by Alfonso et al. [71] and Haider and Nadeem [72] highlight significant relationships between EI and prosocial behavior in the form of individual-directed citizenship.

POS, in line with social exchange theory, fosters a sense of obligation among employees to reciprocate this support through citizenship behavior. According to Thompson, Bergeron, and Bolino [73], people engage in prosocial behavior and acts of altruism in the workplace when they experience high levels of POS, indicating that they become dependent on POS to feel obligated to reciprocate the benefits received from the organization with discretionary actions that support the organization and its members.

The present study seeks to evaluate the relationships between EI and POS with PSB, through the mediation of the psychological mechanisms of intrinsic motivation and affective commitment. The impact of supportive organizations has been shown to be mediated by

employees' commitment to the organization, supervisors, and coworkers [74,75]. Korsgaard et al. [76] introduce a people-centered theory that explores two mechanisms grounded in the reciprocity norm: the obligation to return benefits already received from others and the expectation that one's actions will lead to future rewards from others. According to this theory, individuals with a stronger people-oriented focus are more driven by the duty to reciprocate than by the anticipation of future rewards in their prosocial behavior [76].

1.4. Research Hypotheses

We aim to investigate how antecedents like emotional intelligence and perception of organizational support influence prosocial safety behaviors (PSB), and how affective commitment and intrinsic motivation mediate this relationship. According to Curcuruto et al. [14], PSB consists of two elements: *helping-oriented* behaviors, which involve supporting colleagues in managing workplace safety, and *stewardship* behaviors, which involve taking personal initiative to protect colleagues from immediate safety risks.

Our research model, grounded in general studies on prosocial behavior in organizations, identifies two main antecedent factors: emotional intelligence [38] and POS [52]. Additionally, we will consider two psychological factors that potentially mediate the influence of the distal antecedents and the occurrence of PSBs: affective commitment to the organization [77] and intrinsic work motivation [68].

Firstly, we expect that emotional intelligence (EI) has a significant effect on PSB. This relationship has been supported by recent studies, such as Afolabi's [78] and Gallitto and Leth-Steensenb [79], which confirm EI's impact on fostering prosocial behavior. Individuals with high EI are more prosocial than those with low EI because they delay immediate gratification and exercise self-control to optimize their overall enjoyment, leading them to engage in behaviors that benefit others [78]. Based on the theoretical reasons and empirical findings reviewed above, we expect:

Hypothesis 1: *Emotional intelligence (EI) directly affects prosocial safety behavior (PSB) in the workplace.*

EI plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' emotional experiences, and we hypothesize that its influence on prosocial safety behavior (PSB) is mediated by two key factors: affective commitment (AC) and intrinsic motivation (IM).

AC describes the intention to channel efforts and resources towards achieving organizational goals with a heightened sense of loyalty toward the work context [58]. Some studies highlight individual differences in emotional patterns as antecedents of AC. These differences are related to the way in which people reason and solve problems in their daily lives [38], commonly referred to as emotional intelligence (EI). This form of intelligence shapes how employees interpret and respond to various aspects of their work environment, enabling them to reason about the emotions arising from their immediate surroundings [80]. Indeed, the construct has demonstrated a strong relationship with the commitment component [81–84], indicating significant positive relationships between levels of EI and levels of organizational commitment [80]. Self-perception theory [85] offers a useful lens to interpret this relationship, suggesting that AC levels are influenced by team members' awareness of each other's emotional states. Elevated EI fosters more positive emotional experiences within work teams, driven by better adaptation to the environment and an enhanced ability to navigate social situations in the workplace [86]. This, in turn, leads to a more positive perception of the work context, which can further strengthen AC [87].

In our study, we propose that a high level of AC can, in turn, promote safety prosocial behaviors. Organizational commitment has been identified as a key antecedent of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) [88]. Research has revealed that strong commitment to an organization—characterized by high identification with its values and goals—has been closely associated with the fair and supportive treatment of employees [89,90]. Conse-

quently, employees who perceive this supportive environment are more likely to reciprocate with behaviors that benefit the workplace, including safety-oriented prosocial actions [90].

In the context of our study, we propose that individuals with strong AC are more motivated to engage in PSB [25]. Their emotional attachment to the organization fosters a genuine concern for the well-being of others, which can be expressed through the maintenance of safe working conditions. Furthermore, supporting our hypothesis on the mediating role of AC in the relationship between EI and PSB, Clarke and Mahadi [84] demonstrated that AC mediates the association between EI and mutual respect, with both managers' and subordinates' EI contributing to a high level of mutual recognition. This finding suggests that personality-related factors, such as EI, significantly influence the sustainability of prosocial behaviors within organizations.

The second proposed mediator is intrinsic motivation (IM). As described by self-determination theory (SDT), motivation arises from the fulfillment of three fundamental psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. These needs are crucial for an individual's social development and can be influenced by the emotional and social aspects of EI. Specifically, the ability to manage one's emotions can satisfy the need for autonomy, as individuals with higher EI often feel more in control of their actions. In addition, the ability to manage emotions can reinforce a sense of competence, further promoting intrinsic motivation. Moreover, as discussed earlier, EI enhances relational and communication skills, fulfilling the need for relatedness and positively influencing motivation.

In line with this, Conde-Pipó et al. [40] found that individuals with high emotional intelligence (EI) are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial actions when they are intrinsically motivated, suggesting that EI can drive discretionary behavior. This study highlights the role of intrinsic motivation in strengthening the relationship between EI and personal initiative.

Our research aims to explore how the intrinsic motivation derived from EI influences PSB. According to broaden-and-build theory [91], positive emotions such as joy and interest—often triggered by intrinsically motivating work—can expand individuals' awareness and strengthen their cognitive and social connections. This positive emotion increases the tendency to see outgroup members as like "us", reducing the gap between ingroup and outgroup [92]. Therefore, it seems that being intrinsically motivated by one's work facilitates an empathetic approach and increases the likelihood of prosocial safety behaviors.

Applying this to the field of workplace safety management, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypotheses 2a and 2b: *The effect of EI on prosocial safety behavior is mediated by affective commitment (2a) and intrinsic motivation (2b).*

An additional aim of the present study is to investigate whether there is a direct effect of organizational support on employees' engagement in workplace safety management. In accordance with social exchange theory, employees should be motivated to benefit the organization to the same extent that they feel they receive benefits from it [41]. Previous studies have shown that POS leads to positive employee attitudes and behaviors [42,43], including those related to occupational safety. When employees feel their well-being is supported, they are more motivated to reciprocate by engaging in prosocial safety behaviors, such as stewardship and helping [10,30].

Hypothesis 3: *Perceived organizational support (POS) directly affects employees' prosocial safety behaviors in the workplace.*

The present research also seeks to explore the influence of perceived organizational support in terms of the mediating mechanisms of affective commitment (AC) and intrinsic motivation (IM). According to social exchange theory, high POS creates a sense of obligation to others, leading to organizational citizenship behaviors focused on altruism and civic

virtues. Riggle et al. [44], in their meta-analysis, indicated that POS has a strong and positive effect on organizational commitment and job satisfaction; suggesting that organizations perceived as supportive have more satisfied and committed employees. Other studies have linked POS with AC, showing that positive affective events enhance the alignment of personal goals and values [45]. As POS is more appreciated by employees with high social-emotional needs, they would feel more obligated to reciprocate with higher AC. Furthermore, the satisfaction of social-emotional needs should facilitate the incorporation of employees' organizational commitment and role status into their social identity, with positive effects on their AC.

From a social exchange perspective, prosocial safety behavior can be a way to reciprocate positive relationships with the organization and supervisors who show they care for their employees [43]. In line with findings from the work performance and organizational citizenship literature [46], it is proposed that affective commitment can influence safety-specific forms of prosocial behavior [25], such as helping and stewardship. Thus, AC mediates the effect of distal contextual antecedents like organizational support [30].

Furthermore, prosocial safety behavior, being a voluntary action, requires internal regulation, such as intrinsic motivation. Research in non-safety fields has demonstrated a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and various citizenship behaviors, such as helping others, fostering creativity, and driving innovation [47]. The extent to which autonomous motivations play a role in the influence of perceived organizational support is likely to vary based on the nature of the work behavior to which it is related [48]. In the field of occupational safety, we believe that intrinsic motivation is likely to mediate the influence of organizational support on prosocial safety behavior because this kind of work-related conduct has the potential to stimulate personal initiative and allow an employee to act autonomously.

According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), employees who perceive organizational support in fulfilling their psychological needs are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation toward their work and, consequently, will be more inclined to engage in extra-role behaviors directed both toward individuals and the organization. Additionally, Curcuruto, Parker and Griffin [10] argued that OCBs can exemplify the intrinsic motivation of employees within an organization. These behaviors extend beyond formal job responsibilities and are not formally acknowledged by the reward system, indicating that they are likely to be demonstrated by individuals who possess a strong sense of self-determination Prosocial safety behavior requires initiative (e.g., identifying ways in which colleagues can be helped with aspects of their job related to safety), allows choice (e.g., to approach or not approach a colleague), and may provide some elements of personal gratification (e.g., knowing a problem or an accident has been prevented). In accordance with these conceptual reflections, we advance the second set of mediation hypotheses:

Hypotheses 4a and 4b: *The effect of perceived organizational support (POS) on prosocial safety behavior is mediated by affective commitment (4a) and intrinsic motivation (4b).*

Finally, in addition to the principal research variables described above, and in accordance with recent studies in the field [10], a measure of the dispositional trait of conscientiousness is included in the study to control for the influence of stable personal traits on the individual propensity to engage in safety behavior. This is because research findings in the literature [93] consistently identify this personal trait construct as frequently associated with safety behavior. This construct was included as a control variable in the current study and therefore was not explicitly included in any of the hypotheses.

Presented below is Figure 1, illustrating the research model and the research hypotheses under investigation in our study. In the following section of the article, methodological aspects of our empirical study will be presented, including details about participants' recruitment, sample description, and survey composition.
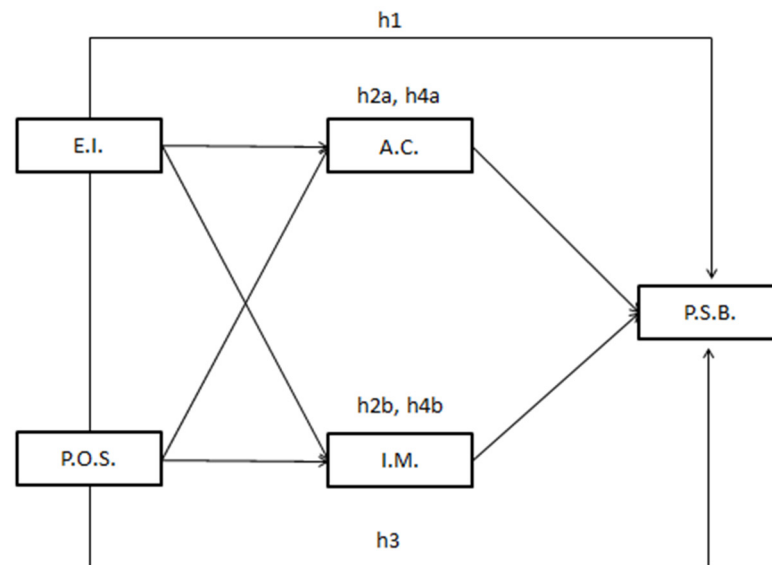
Figure 1. Research model and hypotheses. Legend: EI = Emotional Intelligence; AC = Affective Commitment; IM = Intrinsic Motivation; POS = Perceived Organizational Support; PSB = Prosocial Safety Behavior.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

Data were collected from organizations with employees working in safety-critical industries in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US). The cross-sectional survey was distributed in 2022 through Amazon MTurk, an online recruitment platform, to reach a relevant sample of workers. The inclusion criteria were: being over 18 years of age, currently residing in the UK or US, being employed in safety-critical settings governed by current UK or US health and safety legislation, and being involved in teamwork situations for at least 80% of weekly working time. In accordance with the definition provided by Sanne [94], for the purpose of this study, safety-critical work activities are those in which an individual's poor health may impair their ability to work, thereby posing a significant risk to the health and safety of others.

2.2. Sample Description

The final sample consisted of 488 participants (males = 66.4%, females = 32.6%, other = 1%). The mean age of respondents was 37 years (SD = 10). Participants were 29% from the United Kingdom and 71% from the United States (this is due to the increased use of Amazon MTurk in the United States), with 346 participants from the United States and 142 participants from the United Kingdom. Among participants from the United States, 65.9% were male and 32.7% were female. The mean age of the respondents from the US was 38.1 years. In the UK sample, 67.6% of participants were male and 32.4% were female, with a mean age of 34.1 years. Most participants from the US indicated that they had obtained a bachelor's degree (73.7%), 23.7% had graduated from high school, and 2.6% had a postgraduate degree. Most participants in the UK sample indicated that they had obtained a bachelor's degree (54.2%), 26.7% had graduated from high school, and 19% had a postgraduate degree. Furthermore, respondents were invited to indicate their work sector and how long they had been employed in their current role within their organization. A total of 44.1% of participants had been working in the same role for at least 5 years, and 32.8% had been working in the same role for at least 2 years. Table 1 shows the job sectors in which participants were employed, split by the international sample. The most common work sector in the US sample was Information Technology (25%) followed by Finance and Banking sector (18%), Manufacturing (14%), and Healthcare (9%). In the UK sample,

most respondents worked in Healthcare (19%), followed by Logistics (13%), Information Technology (12%), and Management (10%).

Table 1. Work sectors.

US Sample (N = 346)	%	UK Sample (N = 142)	%
IT sector	25%	Healthcare	19%
Finance and Banking	18%	Logistics	13%
Manufacturing	14%	IT sector	12%
Healthcare	9%	Management	10%
Retail	8%	Engineering	7%
Education	5%	Construction	6%
Management	4%	Finance and Banking	4%
Construction	4%	Manufacturing	4%
Other sectors	13%	Other sectors	25%

Respondents were asked to report the degree of perceived risk to health and safety in their work activities. Half of the respondents (50%) indicated that they perceived a substantial level of risk, 26.4% perceived a low level, 15.8% perceived an important level of risk, and 7.8% reported an absence of risk. They were also asked how much they believed an adverse event (e.g., a work-related accident) would endanger the health and safety of workgroup members in the next 12 months. A total of 43% responded that it was highly likely, 41.4% responded that it was unlikely, and 3.7% responded that they were certain such an event could occur. In addition, they estimated the level of severity of the consequences of a workplace accident for the health and safety of workgroup members: 42.6% estimated significant harm, 27.13% estimated high harm, 26% estimated low harm, and 4.1% estimated that a harmful event in the organization could cost lives. Finally, participants reported how many injuries had occurred in the past 12 months in their department with negative implications for employee health and safety. Most reported that there had been no accidents (32.6%), followed by "one accident" (28.5%), "two/three accidents" (25.6%), "four or more accidents" (10.9%), and those who preferred to say nothing or could not estimate (2.5%).

2.3. Measures

Emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence was measured using the WLEIS scale [70], which consists of 16 items. This and all other scales used a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). An example item is "I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time". Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.90.

Perceived organizational support. A shorter, 8-item version of the original measurement scale developed by Eisenberger et al. [14] was used. An example item is "The organization really cares about my well-being". Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.71.

Prosocial safety behaviors. We used 10 items created by Hofmann et al. [8] to evaluate helping and stewardship. Following Curcuruto et al. [11], the 10 items were treated as a single-factor scale measuring the propensity to engage in prosocial safety behavior. An example item is "Assisting others to make sure they perform their work safely". Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.88.

Affective commitment. We used the 2004 version of the Three-Component Model (TCM) of commitment [51]. This scale assesses affective commitment with six items. An example item is "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own". Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.71.

Intrinsic motivation. In this study, we used three items from the Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS) [52]. An example item is "Because putting efforts in this job aligns with my personal values". Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.88.

Conscientiousness disposition. We used the 3-item scale from the BFI-2 questionnaire [53]. An example item is "I am trustworthy, consistent". Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.51. In accordance with recent studies in the field [10], this scale was included to

control for the influence of stable personal traits on the individual propensity to engage in prosocial safety behavior.

3. Results

3.1. Preliminary Analyses

Means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients for all study variables are reported in Table 2. Our measurement model was evaluated using traditional fit index cutoffs (i.e., CFI > 0.90, RMSEA < 0.08, SRMR < 0.08 [95]); however, these cutoffs should be interpreted as reasonable guidelines, as opposed to golden rules [96]. All analyses were performed using Mplus 8.11 with maximum likelihood estimation.

Table 2. Descriptive and correlation matrix (N = 488).

	M	**SD**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
1. Prosocial safety behavior	2.61	0.68	(0.88)					
2. Affective commitment	4.27	1.11	0.27 **	(0.71)				
3. Intrinsic motivation	5.13	1.18	0.54 **	0.54 **	(0.88)			
4. Emotional intelligence	5.42	0.78	0.53 **	0.28 **	0.52 **	(0.90)		
5. Organizational support	4.19	1.01	−0.01	0.58 **	0.19 **	0.16 **	(0.71)	
6. Conscientiousness	3.18	0.84	−0.10 *	0.24 **	−0.08	0.08	0.43 **	(0.51)

Note: N = 488; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$. Cronbach alpha values are reported in the diagonal.

Due to the somewhat limited size of our sample, we ran a confirmatory factor analysis model for each of the six main constructs of interest. Intrinsic motivation had only three items, resulting in a just-identified model (i.e., df = 0) defaulting to perfect fit, which does not provide evidence of fit, but standardized loadings were substantial and statistically significant (loadings ranged between 0.75 and 0.77). The measurement model for prosocial safety behaviors fit the data well ($\chi^2(35) = 125.32$, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.04) and showed substantial and statistically significant factor loadings ranging between 0.60 and 0.72. Our measurement model for perceived organizational support did not fit the data well ($\chi^2(9) = 549.76$, CFI = 0.61, RMSEA = 0.35, SRMR = 0.20), perhaps due to very small factor loadings. Hence, the model was respecified by deleting four items, resulting in a just-identified model. Factor loadings for the three remaining items (#3, 4, and 5) were substantial and statistically significant (ranging between 0.82 and 0.87). The model for perceived organizational support did not converge initially (standard errors could not be estimated), and several loadings seemed to be unacceptably low. We deleted these, and respecified a model with four items (#2, 3, 5, and 7), which fit the data well ($\chi^2(2) = 8.81$, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.01). The measurement model for emotional intelligence did not fit the data acceptably ($\chi^2(104) = 539.22$, CFI = 0.84, RMSEA = 0.09, SRMR = 0.06) and was respecified by deleting item #7, which showed a low factor loading. Additionally, several correlated residuals were added to account for nonrandom error variance (e.g., they were presented adjacently in the survey and measured the same subdimension). This model fit the data acceptably ($\chi^2(87) = 364.01$, CFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.05). Finally, the model for conscientiousness did not fit well ($\chi^2(2) = 64.52$, CFI = 0.74, RMSEA = 0.25, SRMR = 0.09), and two items showed low factor loadings, resulting in an under-identified model (i.e., df < 0), which cannot be estimated. However, due to the theoretical importance of controlling for conscientiousness, we retained items 2 and 4.

3.2. Mediation Analyses

We estimated our theoretical model separately in the US and UK samples. Parameter estimates, standard errors, and 95% confidence intervals are reported in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

Table 3. Parameter estimates (US sample).

Variables	Parameter	SE	95% CI	
			LL	UL
Outcome: Prosocial Safety Behaviors				
Affective Commitment	0.00	0.02	−0.04	0.03
Intrinsic Motivation	0.17 ***	0.02	0.12	0.21
Emotional Intelligence	0.38 ***	0.03	0.31	0.44
Perceived Organizational Support	0.00	0.02	−0.04	0.03
Conscientiousness	0.05 *	0.02	0.003	0.10
R^2	0.59			
Outcome: Affective Commitment				
Emotional Intelligence	0.07	0.08	−0.09	0.22
Perceived Organizational Support	0.56 ***	0.06	0.46	0.68
Conscientiousness	0.56 ***	0.07	0.42	0.69
R^2	0.42			
Outcome: Intrinsic Motivation				
Emotional Intelligence	0.79 ***	0.05	0.68	0.89
Perceived Organizational Support	0.12 **	0.04	0.04	0.20
Conscientiousness	0.16 ***	0.05	0.06	0.25
R^2	0.18			

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

Table 4. Parameter estimates (UK sample).

Variables	Parameter	SE	95% CI	
			LL	UL
Outcome: Prosocial Safety Behaviors				
Affective Commitment	0.05	0.05	−0.05	0.15
Intrinsic Motivation	0.10	0.05	−0.01	0.20
Emotional Intelligence	0.16 *	0.08	0.004	0.31
Perceived Organizational Support	0.17 ***	0.05	0.07	0.27
Conscientiousness	0.15 *	0.06	0.02	0.27
R^2	0.14			
Outcome: Affective Commitment				
Emotional Intelligence	0.36 **	0.13	0.10	0.63
Perceived Organizational Support	0.65 ***	0.07	0.50	0.80
Conscientiousness	0.01	0.11	−0.21	0.23
R^2	0.42			
Outcome: Intrinsic Motivation				
Emotional Intelligence	0.31 *	0.13	0.05	0.51
Perceived Organizational Support	0.33 ***	0.07	0.19	0.48
Conscientiousness	0.14	0.11	−0.36	0.08
R^2	0.18			

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

US Sample. We first tested our research hypotheses in the larger sample from the United States. As hypothesized (Hypothesis 1), emotional intelligence was significantly associated with prosocial safety behaviors (b = 0.38, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.31, 0.44]). Hypothesis 2a (i.e., the indirect effect of emotional intelligence on prosocial safety behaviors via affective commitment) was not supported (indirect effect: b = 0.00, $p = 0.88$, 95% CI [−0.01, 0.01]). Hypothesis 2b (i.e., the indirect effect of emotional intelligence on prosocial safety behaviors via intrinsic motivation) was supported (indirect effect: b = 0.13, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.17]).

The direct association between perceived organizational support and prosocial safety behaviors was not statistically significant (b = 0.00, $p = 0.89$, 95% CI [−0.04, 0.03]), so Hypothesis 3 was not supported. Hypothesis 4a (i.e., the indirect effect of perceived organizational support on prosocial safety behaviors via affective commitment; indirect effect:

b = 0.00, *p* = 0.88, 95% CI [−0.02, 0.02]) was also not supported. However, Hypothesis 4b (i.e., the indirect effect of perceived organizational support on prosocial safety behaviors via intrinsic motivation; indirect effect: b = 0.02, *p* = 0.006, 95% CI [0.006, 0.03]) was supported.

UK Sample. We ran the same analyses using data from the UK. As hypothesized (Hypothesis 1), emotional intelligence was significantly associated with prosocial safety behaviors (b = 0.16, *p* = 0.04, 95% CI [0.004, 0.31]). Hypothesis 2a (i.e., the indirect effect of emotional intelligence on prosocial safety behaviors via affective commitment) was not supported (indirect effect: b = 0.02, *p* = 0.37, 95% CI [−0.02, 0.06]). Hypothesis 2b (i.e., the indirect effect of emotional intelligence on prosocial safety behaviors via intrinsic motivation) was also not supported (indirect effect: b = 0.03, *p* = 0.15, 95% CI [−0.01, 0.07]).

The direct association between perceived organizational support and prosocial safety behaviors was statistically significant (b = 0.17, *p* < 0.001, 95% CI [0.07, 0.27]), in line with Hypothesis 3. However, neither Hypothesis 4a (i.e., the indirect effect of perceived organizational support on prosocial safety behaviors via affective commitment) nor Hypothesis 4b (i.e., the indirect effect of perceived organizational support on prosocial safety behaviors via intrinsic motivation) were supported (indirect effect: b = 0.03, *p* = 0.35, 95% CI [−0.04, 0.10]; and indirect effect: b = 0.03, *p* = 0.09, 95% CI [−0.01, 0.07], respectively).

3.3. Summary of the Results

Upon reviewer recommendation, we estimated our research model separately in the US and UK subsamples in a multigroup fashion. In the two samples, results were identical regarding Hypothesis 1 (i.e., the direct effect of emotional intelligence on prosocial safety behavior). Hypotheses 2b and 4b were supported using data only from the US sample. In this sample, intrinsic motivation acted as a mediator in the relationships between both emotional intelligence and prosocial safety behavior, and perceived organizational support and prosocial safety behavior. Finally, none of the other mediation hypotheses were supported using data only from the UK sample. In this sample, both emotional intelligence and perceived organizational support had a direct effect on prosocial safety behavior, not mediated by affective commitment or intrinsic motivation. Full multigroup results are available from the corresponding author. For clarity, Table 5 reports a summary of the hypotheses verified in each sample. The implications of our statistical findings for theory and practice are discussed in detail in the final section of the article.

Table 5. Summary of the verified hypotheses in the two samples.

Original Research Hypotheses	Results in the US Sample (N = 346)	Results in the UK Sample (N = 142)
H1. EI direct effect on PSB	Supported	Supported
H2a. EI indirect effect on PSB mediated by AC	Not supported	Not supported
H2b. EI indirect effect on PSB mediated by IM	Supported	Not supported
H3. POS direct effect on PSB	Not supported	Supported
H4a. POS indirect effect on PSB mediated by AC	Not supported	Not supported
H4b. POS indirect effect on PSB mediated by IM	Supported	Not supported

Legend: EI = Emotional Intelligence; AC = Affective Commitment; IM = Intrinsic Motivation; POS = Perceived Organizational Support; PSB = Prosocial Safety Behavior.

4. General Discussion

This research aimed to enhance the understanding of the network of relationships that explain prosocial safety behavior (PSB), dedicating special attention to the role of emotional intelligence (EI) as an influential person-related distal antecedent of PSB [30]. In our research model, we hypothesized that EI and perceived organizational support (POS) both affect PSB, with affective commitment (AC) and intrinsic motivation (IM) acting as mediators of the relationships between PSB and EI, as well as POS. The overall results from the statistical analyses supported the hypotheses regarding the direct effect of EI on PSB,

which was verified in two samples from the US and UK. Furthermore, testing the mediation hypotheses with a multigroup analysis approach, our findings revealed that in the first sample from the United States, our research hypotheses h2b and h4b were supported: IM mediated the effect of both EI and POS on PSB. No mediation effect of AC was found in the relationship between EI and POS with PSB (hypotheses h2a and h4a). Finally, in this sample the hypothesis of a direct effect of POS on PSB (hypothesis 3) was not supported by the statistical findings, which showed that POS affected PSB only indirectly through the mediation of IM (hypothesis 4b).

Overall, these statistical results from the US sample seem to support the idea that the person-related antecedent EI has a stronger influence than POS (a context-related antecedent) in stimulating the individual propensity to engage in PSB. Furthermore, IM was found to be the only significant mediator of the influence of EI and POS on PSB. This finding supports the idea that experiencing intrinsic motivation in work activities mobilizes the beneficial influence of EI and POS toward the expression of PSB. This may be a way to express personal care and empathy toward other people in the organization (colleagues and supervisors), who become the target of prosocial actions aimed at supporting and protecting their safety and well-being at work. In parallel, our findings also suggest that experiencing feelings of intrinsic motivation in the fulfillment of work activities is a way in which the perception of organizational support stimulates individuals to engage in prosocial actions aimed at helping other members of the organization, preventing the occurrence of negative events (e.g., accidents that result in injury, or property damage) that could harm people and the organization.

Conversely, multigroup analyses conducted in the second sample from the United Kingdom, showed that none of the mediation hypotheses were supported. Furthermore, unlike in the US sample, in addition to the direct influence of EI on PSB, perceived organizational support was also found to have a direct effect on PSB, with statistical effects similar in magnitude. These differences between the two samples may be related to internal differences in sample composition from the two countries or the effect of moderating variables not included in our research model. It should also be noted that the participant sample from the United Kingdom was significantly smaller than the sample from the United States, which may have affected the results. In any case, the findings suggest that in certain cultural and organizational contexts, person-related vs. context-related antecedents can play distinct and significant roles in eliciting individual propensity to engage in prosocial actions aimed at supporting others' safety.

In the following sections, the implications of these findings for research advancement are discussed in detail. When discussing the findings from the mediation analyses, our reflections primarily refer to the evidence that emerged from the analysis of the US data. The differences in the results between the two samples are the subject of specific reflections contained in the sections on study limitations and future research avenues.

4.1. Study Contribution to the Scientific Literature

This study aimed to contribute research knowledge on the role of emotional intelligence in promoting safety-specific forms of prosocial behavior in the workplace. Within the field of safety research, the primary emphasis has been on exploring the influence of contextual factors, such as organizational safety climate and safety leadership, on safe work conduct. Less attention has been dedicated to the role of individual difference factors that may contribute to creating a safer workplace. By investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and prosocial safety behavior (PSB), we intended to extend knowledge on the *person-related* factors that can support this effort. To compare the relative importance of emotional intelligence on the expression of PSB, we also included in our research model the *context-related* variable of perceived organizational support (POS).

Curcuruto and Griffin [30] investigated the organizational antecedents and psychological drivers of safety citizenship behavior, identifying it as a discretionary, affiliative-oriented behavior supporting workplace safety [30]. The present study builds on the organizational

citizenship literature [35] and, more specifically, affiliative-oriented behavior [34], framing prosocial safety behavior as an affiliative form of safety citizenship behavior (SCB). Such behaviors require social skills and emotional regulation [55–58]. The current study hypothesized that high emotional intelligence (EI) would directly affect PSB, particularly in promoting workplace safety. The results confirmed that EI positively influences the likelihood of engaging in PSB, aligning with existing literature and supporting the research hypotheses. Effective PSBs necessitate recognizing and managing emotions, further validating the connection between EI and PSB [29,59]. Previous research has found similar effects, showing that individuals with high social self-efficacy are more confident in social interactions, effectively communicate with distressed individuals, regulate interpersonal emotions, and create suitable contexts for their prosocial intentions [60]. Individuals with high emotional intelligence can also more easily manifest prosocial attitudes than those with low emotional intelligence. Individuals with high emotional intelligence postpone immediate gratification and exercise self-control to optimize pleasure in their lives [78]. In doing so, they are more available to engage in behavior that benefits others [61].

The findings from the present study suggest that the influence of EI can be mediated by intrinsic motivation. Research on emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial behavior shows that intrinsic motivation, stimulated by emotional intelligence, influences the relationship between contextual predictors and entrepreneurial actions [63]. It has been shown that individuals engage in prosocial behavior based on their motivations, with voluntary prosocial actions enhancing behavior quality and the well-being of the helper [64].

Past research has reported that affective commitment to the organization is crucial for promoting workplace safety [22], as employees who feel a strong attachment to their organization are more likely to engage in PSBs [65]. In the field of workplace safety, prosocial behavior focuses on protecting coworkers' health and safety, preventing workplace accidents and injuries [11,12,30]. However, despite conceptual support for our hypothesis concerning the mediating role of affective commitment, our statistical findings from two different samples failed to provide empirical support for this assertion. Our study showed that, at least in one of our samples, when the influence of intrinsic motivation is taken into consideration in the research model, affective commitment does not exercise a significant mediating effect. This suggests that the motivational processes involved in one's own job experience might be more likely to elicit prosocial behavior relevant to workplace safety than personal affective states focused on the organization. However, future studies should consider whether this missing hypothesized effect might be related to other situational moderating variables that were not taken into account in our research model (e.g., team interdependence, risk perception, psychosocial safety). These factors could explain whether, in the presence of high levels of affective commitment toward their organization, employees become more willing to carry out a series of safety-specific prosocial behaviors beneficial to the organization's key players and the organization itself [97].

Regarding our third hypothesis, which posited a direct association between POS and PSB, our findings supported this relationship in the UK participant sample, where intrinsic motivation was not found to play any mediating role. Conversely, in the US sample, POS only had an indirect effect on PSB via intrinsic motivation. Comparing the findings from the two research samples, it is possible to conclude that in some organizational settings, the influence of a context-related variable (like POS) becomes more salient in affecting PSB, especially when the association between intrinsic motivation and PSB is weaker. Similar to our findings, in Adebayo's [66] study, POS served as a moderating variable with a positive effect on prosocial behavior. In other words, there was an inverse relationship observed between unethical attitudes and prosocial behavior among police officers who perceived high or medium levels of organizational support. A study by Afsar and Badir [67] also showed that POS reinforces the person–organization relationship, expressed through heightened prosocial behaviors, including assisting others with work-related challenges, sharing personal resources and information, being proud of the organization, and showing loyalty [64]. Workers are likely to support the organization and supervisors to the extent that they feel

supported by them. Encouraging prosocial behaviors, particularly those relevant to workplace safety, can be understood through social exchange theory: individuals are motivated to benefit others due to a sense of mutual obligation [98]. This is well explained in the research of Maurer et al. [41], who describe a relationship between POS, leader–member exchange [68,69], and prosocial behavior. This implies that organizations can elicit discretionary behaviors that greatly benefit the organization's goals by offering substantial support to employees and fostering positive relationships between managers and subordinates. If perceived support from supervisors or the organization is lacking, discretionary behaviors are likely to be motivated solely by personal benefits and individual work motivations, which may limit the types of activities in which employees will spontaneously engage [41]. Organizations and managers must grasp the diverse potential advantages of different types of discretionary participatory activities and how these are perceived by employees. In line with expectancy-value theory, individual motivation largely hinges on personal values, which can vary significantly among individuals and demographic groups (e.g., race, age) [70]. Understanding the specific personal benefits that resonate most with different individuals or groups is essential. Not surprisingly, the influence of individual factors, such as emotional intelligence, was found to be stronger than contextual factors like perceived organizational support in this study. These findings suggest that organizations might enhance employees' individual contributions more effectively by focusing on personal traits rather than solely on creating a supportive work environment.

Finally, hypotheses h4a and h4b, which examined the relationship between POS and PSB mediated by AC and IM, did not yield similar significant results, with only hypothesis h4b supported by our statistical analysis of the US sample data. Insights from previous studies can shed light on the reasons behind these findings. Even if a significant level of POS creates a feeling of obligation to others, rooted in social exchange theory, which increases the likelihood of engaging in prosocial behaviors such as altruism and civic virtues [71], affective commitment appears not to be crucial in the same way as intrinsic motivation in mediating the influence of POS on the propensity to engage in safety-specific forms of prosocial behavior [72]. Intrinsic motivation mediated the influence of POS on PSB in the US sample. Intrinsic motivation enhances individuals' alignment with organizational goals in the presence of high POS. Thus, the relationship between POS and employee behavior is stronger among those with higher levels of intrinsic motivation compared to those with lower levels [63]. This effect can also be understood through the lens of psychological empowerment, where organizational support stimulates intrinsic motivation and enhances individuals' perception of control over task execution (i.e., psychological empowerment), facilitating discretionary behaviors such as helping or stewardship [73].

4.2. Practical Implications

The current study provides empirical evidence related to the relationship between emotional intelligence and prosocial safety behavior. Intervention programs could be designed by organizations to improve prosociality in the context of occupational safety by increasing emotional intelligence. Similar programs have been recommended in various organizational contexts by other researchers [74]. Furthermore, our study reveals that within the realm of safety, emotional intelligence's influence on prosocial behavior is mediated by employees' intrinsic motivation for their work in the organization. Enhancing employees' emotional intelligence through education and training can boost their intrinsic motivation, thereby increasing their likelihood of engaging in safety-oriented prosocial behaviors. Other studies have found comparable results, supporting the notion that emotional intelligence can be considered a useful resource for improving interpersonal interactions and safety in the workplace, particularly when accompanied by efficient education and training programs [38,75,76].

The indirect pathway from organizational support to prosocial safety behavior, mediated by intrinsic motivation, highlights that cultivating a positive organizational climate through widespread perceived support can enhance employees' inclination to engage in

prosocial safety behaviors [77]. This underscores the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation among employees as a pathway to promoting such behaviors. Supportive supervisors can create environments where employees feel free to approach their coworkers to discuss safety aspects of their job, providing help when needed. Furthermore, a reinforcing relationship between perceived organizational or supervisor support and safety-specific forms of prosocial behavior can develop when employees see that their safety concerns are effectively considered and addressed, and their personal engagement for safety publicly recognized [30,99]. This positive association between these two variables underscores the importance of programs aimed at fostering prosocial safety behavior for both individual and organizational-level outcomes, including sustainability.

4.3. Limitations and Future Research

Despite the contributions of the current research, some limitations must be acknowledged. First, given the lack of a longitudinal research design and absence of an experimental setting (i.e., scenario studies), the present study did not allow us to test and evaluate the causality of relationships between the variables. Secondly, relying on self-report measures introduces potential biases, including inflated correlations among study variables and the possibility of results being influenced by social desirability biases. Third, the research sample consisted of a convenience sample collected online, which may not fully represent all jobs in safety-sensitive contexts. Fourthly, the online platform (Amazon M-Turk) used to recruit participants from the US and the UK is more widely adopted in the US, potentially influencing the geographical composition of the sample.

There are several ways in which future research could build on our results. Future studies should investigate which forms of organizational programs really trigger the individual perception of organizational support relevant to prosocial safety behavior (e.g., corporate welfare plans, work insurance schemes, etc.). Secondly, as previously mentioned, future studies should adopt experimental research and/or longitudinal designs to explore the causal relationships between the variables under investigation. Thirdly, while empirical evidence suggests that emotional intelligence influences prosocial safety behavior, this trait is generally considered stable over time. Future research should also assess the effectiveness of programs aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence using a multi-trait multi-method approach to promote prosocial behavior. Fourthly, replicating the present study in specific organizations within safety-critical industrial contexts may be necessary. Finally, future study replication will need to analyze the moderating conditions that affect the relationships between the research variables, to explain the different mediation results found in the two distinct international research samples. While in the US sample intrinsic motivation was found to be a significant mediator of the relationships between PSB and both EI and POS, these findings were not statistically verified in the sample from the United Kingdom. In future studies, researchers should focus on the situational factors (i.e., job design, occupational stress, group cohesion, psychological safety) that may facilitate, rather than hinder, the mediational effects found in our participant sample from the United States.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this research was to evaluate the relative impact of emotional intelligence (EI) and perceived organizational support (POS) on prosocial safety behavior (PSB), mediated by affective commitment (AC) and intrinsic motivation (IM). Findings indicate that both emotional intelligence and perceived organizational support may directly influence PSB. The mediating influence of IM was found to be significant in one of the two samples analyzed, and future study replication should focus on identifying and analyzing the effect of situational and contextual variables that may moderate the positive mediation role of IM in the relationships between EI and POS. The findings from the two international samples analyzed in the present study did not support a mediating role of AC in the relationships investigated in our research model. Overall, this study enriches the literature on prosocial behavior by outlining a nomological model that identifies emotional intelligence

and organizational support as key predictors within the context of occupational safety. Understanding the antecedents of prosocial safety behaviors allows us to better understand the levers in which to invest to promote a safe and sustainable organizational context.

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