

## Article

# Purpose Implementation: Conceptualization and Measurement

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**Abstract:** Understanding what drives effective purpose implementation is the key to making more sustainable organizations. Most studies on the subject of purpose focus on two of its dimensions: formulation (knowledge) and practical application (contribution). However, for it to be effectively implemented in the organization, purpose also involves motivating and exciting people. In this article, we propose a three-dimensional formative second-order construct of purpose implementation based on the knowledge, internalization and contribution of purpose. In this conceptualization of purpose, for effective purpose implementation to occur, its three dimensions must be implemented intensively and consistently in a balanced way. Two separate studies were combined to develop a validated scale for measuring the intensity of purpose implementation and for demonstrating that the more intensely and consistently purpose is implemented within a company, the greater its impact on organizational citizenship behaviors.

**Keywords:** corporate purpose; purpose implementation; scale validation; purpose-driven organization; sustainability



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## 1. Introduction

There is a growing interest in the nature and role of purpose in organizations [1–4]. A shared sense of purpose can help companies to meet certain challenges, such as the need for flexibility and adaptability, attract and retain talent [5], enhance employee motivation [6], foster collaboration and create collaborative relations with the different stakeholders helping the organization to behave in a more sustainable manner [7–9].

Different definitions of purpose have been proposed and described in the literature [1,10–14]. Several studies have described purpose implementation as a process of “alignment” between the formal definition of purpose by the company and what people actually do [11,15–18]. Frequently, purpose implementation is understood as a process of converting the understanding of purpose into action, i.e., practical contributions, with an emphasis on two dimensions of purpose: knowledge and contribution [4,19–22]. Others, however, point out that, for purpose to be implemented successfully, it also needs to be internalized by the employees and connect with their beliefs and values for them to engage and identify with the organization [14,23,24]. In fact, in addition to the knowledge and the operationalization, the internalization of purpose seems decisive to the ultimate success or failure of purpose implementation [25]. Practical experience and research have shown that the two-dimensional knowledge-action approach fails to adequately explain the dynamics involved in developing purpose within an organization [26]. There is a call for a shift from the linear, “old doctrine” approach to a softer, more organic model [5,27,28], as developing a common purpose involves developing motivations that are shared by the members of the organization [26,29–31]. A move toward a three-dimensional model would therefore seem necessary.

To the best of our knowledge, there is no example in the literature that presents purpose implementation as an integration of its three dimensions (knowledge, contribution

and internalization) at the same time. Moreover, in this three-dimensional approach, the knowledge, contribution and internalization of purpose need to be carefully balanced for its implementation to be successful. In this study, we developed a validated scale for evaluating the intensity of each of the three dimensions by using a focus group of experts on purpose-driven companies, a panel of academics with experience in scales development and an empirical study involving 672 employees from eight Spanish companies. Furthermore, the consistency, i.e., the equilibrium among the three dimensions, was also evaluated and a second empirical study was carried out to cross-validate the first scale. The second study involved 2491 employees from 14 companies in the USA, Italy, Lithuania and Israel, and proved that a more intense, consistent model of purpose implementation has a greater impact on the development of employee behavior than less intense, inconsistent ones.

This article reviews the current state of purpose implementation and presents a novel three-dimensional formative second-order construct. It then highlights the importance of evaluating both intensity and consistency when measuring the three dimensions of purpose implementation and presents a hypothesis. It explains how the measuring instrument was developed including a description of the two empirical studies used to validate it and prove that highly intensive and consistent purpose implementation is more effective. Finally, the practical implications of the study and future lines of research are discussed.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. Purpose Implementation: The Three Dimensions of Purpose

Some authors stated that there is no precise and accepted definition of purpose and its metrics [11]. Bartlett and Ghoshal described purpose as the statement of a company's moral response to its broadly defined responsibilities [10]. Damon and colleagues proposed a definition of purpose as "a generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful and leads to productive engagement with the world" [32]. Thakor and Quinn similarly defined it as "something that is perceived as producing a social benefit over and above the tangible pecuniary payoff that is shared by the principal and the agent" [22]. Purpose has been also defined as a "concrete goal or objective for the firm that reaches beyond profit maximization" or as "the meaning of a firm's work beyond quantitative measures of financial performance" [12]. More recently, Hsieh et al. defined corporate purpose as the overarching management objectives of a corporation that go beyond narrow financial metrics and stated that a corporation that is exclusively managed to maximize profits does not have a corporate purpose in our usage of the term [33].

Moreover, a close relationship exists between corporate purpose and sustainability, both in logical terms and in practice [34]. Research results show that the development of a shared purpose among team members leads to increased sustainable behavior [8]. There are many examples of companies that have redefined their purpose in order to incorporate practical sustainability into their strategy and their practices in order to create a shared meaning among all the members who contribute to achieving social, environmental and economic organizational goals [35–37]. Furthermore, there is also a logical connection between sustainability and purpose. Purpose can be understood as the people's needs that an organization meets or intends to meet [38], and sustainability, according to the Brundtland Report and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [39]. Therefore, both purpose and sustainability refer to meeting the needs of others, and sustainability can be understood as a way of fulfilling the corporate purpose while preserving the potential of the stakeholders (present and future) to meet their needs.

At the heart of the research on purpose is the question of its implementation and how to develop it by creating a shared cause that is embraced by the members of the organization [1]. Identifying the key aspects of effective purpose implementation should allow the level of a company's purpose-driven organization to be evaluated and improved

on. In the following section, the main contributions to the literature on the subject are summarized, and a more holistic concept of purpose is proposed.

#### 2.1.1. Knowledge—“Knowing” the Purpose

It is commonly accepted that for purpose to be implemented, people need to know about it first, and therefore it has to be defined explicitly and formally [11]. Knowledge here refers to the process of defining and communicating the company’s purpose to all its members until they can explain it in their own words. Having a clear definition of purpose illuminates and gives clarity to the organization. In this vein, purpose behaves as the star that guides the ship to the north [40]. In fact, knowledge or familiarity with the purpose has been highlighted in all the main contributions, research and methodologies on purpose implementation [5,10,41,42]. Some of the ways of ensuring employees know exactly what the company’s purpose is include defining and reflecting the organization’s purpose in a formal statement, aligning corporate strategy with the purpose and communicating it through different channels such as meetings and informal conversations about the “organization’s *raison d’être*” [1].

#### 2.1.2. Purpose Contribution

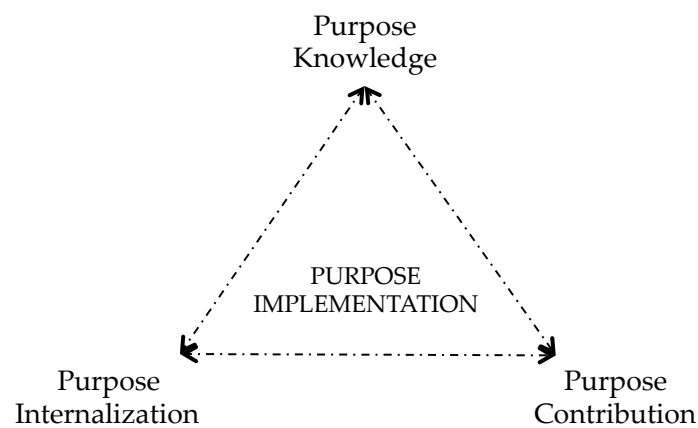
Purpose contribution refers to bringing the purpose to bear on the actions that guide the organization’s day-to-day activity. Some authors refer to this dimension as purpose pursuit [14], which expresses the extent to which purpose is “converted” into action. Purpose contribution ensures employees understand how their objectives and tasks contribute to the development of the purpose. Many authors state that for the purpose to be real, it must be noticed in the company’s day-to-day actions [4,5,12,14]. Thus, purpose contribution is the manifestation of the purpose in the company’s daily processes and operating systems [1]. To this end, organizations should revise the levels of purpose-driven content in their human resources policies and practices. Some of the ways companies can improve purpose contribution within their organizations include recruiting employees based on their fit with the purpose, designing purpose-centered training programs, assigning tasks and defining objectives geared toward developing the purpose, assessing individuals based on their contribution to developing the purpose and incentivizing purpose-related achievements.

#### 2.1.3. Purpose Internalization

Apart from purpose knowledge and purpose contribution, some researchers have identified the need for a third dimension, purpose internalization, to address the issue of employee motivation. Some authors explain internalization by describing purpose as a meaning-generating cause capable of motivating [11,32,42–44]. Stating and communicating the purpose successfully does not necessarily lead to employees making it their own. When the purpose is internalized, it is no longer merely a formal statement or something “known” but turns into something that motivates and drives people in the organization. Internalization expresses the extent to which the purpose of the company has been integrated into the personal beliefs and values of its members [1]. In fact, purpose motivates to the extent that it integrates and shares employee values [45]. These shared values are what motivate employees to identify with the organization and get excited about developing it [14,46]. Therefore, thinking and reflecting on values and the individual purpose of employees and working on meaningful leadership are some of the actions recognized in the literature as enhancing purpose internalization [40].

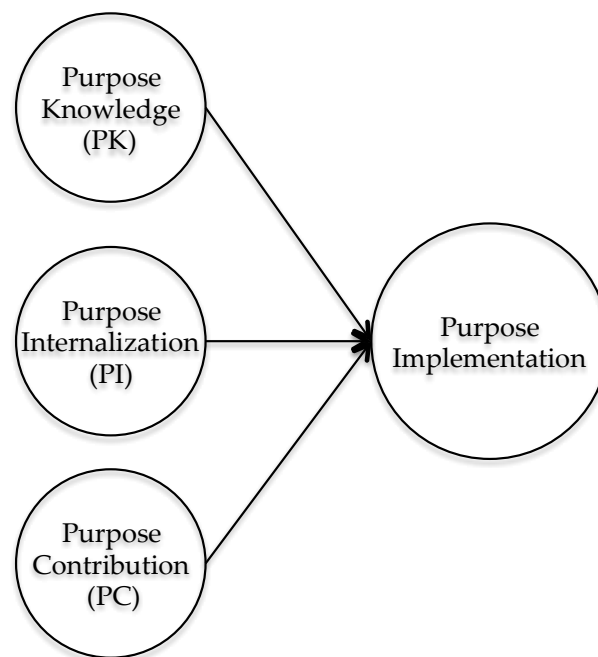
#### 2.1.4. Purpose Implementation as a Three-Dimensional Second-Order Formative Construct

The aforementioned aspects of purpose have all been reported in the literature. However, to the best of our knowledge, they have never been presented together as separate yet integrated dimensions of purpose implementation. Here, purpose implementation is proposed as a concept that integrates all three dimensions at the same time. Therefore, purpose implementation is defined by its three-dimensional components (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The three dimensions of purpose implementation. Source: own elaboration.

Since the three dimensions do not necessarily coincide at the same time (a purpose may be known but not motivate employees, or internalized but not materialized), we argue that purpose implementation should be conceived as a second-order formative construct built around three clearly defined dimensions: knowledge, internalization and contribution (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Purpose as a second-order tridimensional formative factor. Source: own elaboration.

Defining purpose implementation as a three-dimensional second-order construct should improve purpose implementation in a company to the extent that the purpose would clarify the north (purpose knowledge), excite and motivate the people (purpose internalization) and be operationalized in the daily life of the organization (purpose contribution). Our second-order construct offers a more holistic definition of the concept of purpose implementation and serves as the basis for defining a measuring instrument for evaluating purpose implementation.

## 2.2. Measuring Purpose Implementation

This three-dimensional, second-order formative concept considers purpose implementation as a holistic system that focuses on integrating its dimensions [21]. This three-

dimensional—yet single—approach to purpose implementation provides vital information for measuring the effectiveness of purpose implementation. In addition to measuring the intensity of purpose implementation, it also measures its consistency, i.e., the fit between the three dimensions of purpose: knowledge, internalization and contribution [1,47]. Some organizations focus on reflecting and defining their purpose and making the strategy fit. Others design training plans around a list of shared values in order to connect employees with the organization's purpose. The final group focuses their efforts on developing indicators and objectives to measure purpose development. For a purpose to be effectively implemented, all three approaches are necessary: the purpose must be made known to everyone, it must motivate and excite everyone, and it must be a concrete part of daily life for the whole organization. Gartenberg et al. [11] pointed out that employees who perceive their work as more meaningful exhibit higher outcomes such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and organizational commitment and identification. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** *Highly intense, balanced purpose implementation generates greater OCB in employees than low-intensity, balanced purpose implementation.*

The next section offers a description of how the purpose implementation evaluation metrics were developed in this study. Empirical studies for validating the scale and testing the hypothesis are also included.

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Measurement Development

For purpose internalization to be considered a second-order construct, its three dimensions (knowledge, internalization and contribution) must be measured [48]. All the dimensions are latent, and thus they cannot be measured directly. Therefore, they were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, using indicators ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The items used for measuring purpose knowledge and purpose internalization were adapted from Marimon et al. [24]. The scale for measuring purpose knowledge included: (i) I can explain the purpose of my organization in my own words, (ii) I could explain my company's purpose to people outside the organization, and (iii) I understand my company's purpose. In order to ensure that respondents have a real understanding of the concept of purpose, these questions follow the theoretical framework of sense-making, as discussed by Wang [49]. Thus, respondents are not simply asked about the extent to which they know the purpose but the extent they are able to explain it "in their own words" and "outside of the organization" if they were asked. According to Wang [49], in this way, respondents reflect in their answers specific representations of purpose linked to their "cognition and action" and not a general or vague representation of the concept.

The following items were used to measure purpose internalization: (i) I believe that the company's purpose is important to society, (ii) I accept my company's purpose because it is aligned with my individual values, and (iii) The company's purpose is important to me.

Regarding purpose contribution, to the best of our knowledge, there is no valid scale for evaluating this construct. Therefore, a series of meetings were held with companies interested in defining and implementing purpose where the aim of the study was explained. Five managers volunteered to help define the items for evaluating the purpose contribution construct. They worked with the researchers on a list of statements that addressed the question "how can we measure the extent to which operating systems are based on purpose?" The statements were then shown to a panel of academic experts with experience in developing scales. They were asked to assess the weight of each statement for measuring purpose contribution on a scale of 0 (not important) to 10 (very important) and made some suggestions regarding the clarity of the statements. Finally, a three-item reflective scale was designed to measure purpose contribution: (i) My work contributes to the company's

purpose, (ii) I see that my individual goals are aligned with the company's purpose, and (iii) Projects that I am involved in contribute to furthering the company's purpose.

In all, 9 items were proposed for measuring the second-order "purpose implementation" construct, and an empirical study and statistical analyses were carried out to confirm the reliability and validity of the measuring instrument. Moreover, as validating a measuring instrument requires an analysis of its predictive capacity, following Gartenberg et al. [11], we related purpose implementation as an antecedent of the organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) of employees and adapted Motowidlo's three-item scale [50] to evaluate the employees' perception of their own OCB: (i) I do tasks other than those required without being asked, (ii) I put extra effort into my job to finish tasks in a successful way when necessary, and (iii) I put extra effort into my job to make the business a success.

### 3.2. Data Gathering and Studies

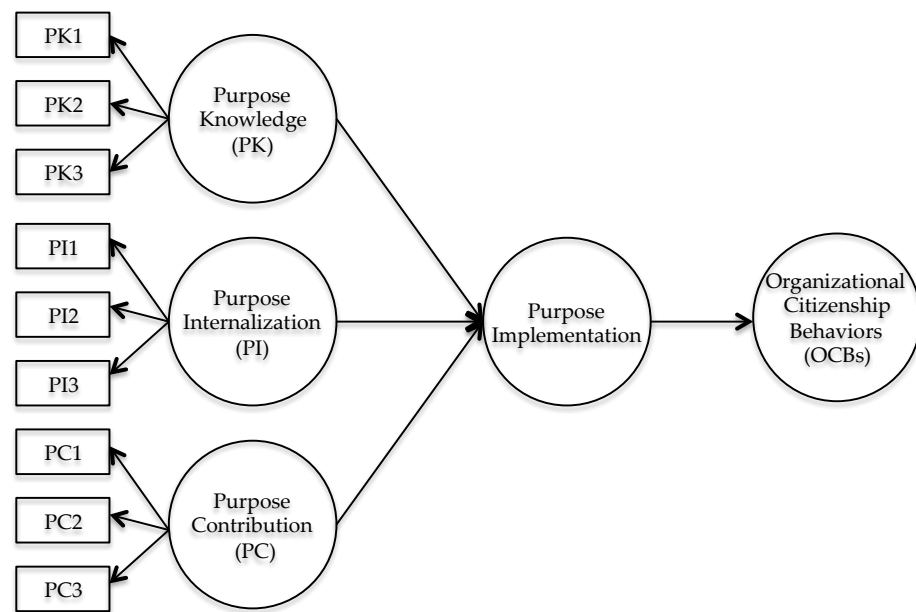
An empirical study was carried out to collect data and validate the measuring instrument. To this end, the authors designed a questionnaire and found companies willing to participate. Thanks to the Management by Missions and Corporate Purpose Chair at Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, which organizes a yearly international symposium, we were able to contact companies that had attended past symposia and were involved in defining and implementing purposes in their organizations. As these companies dedicated intensive efforts to purpose, communication and implementation, their managers and employees were very familiar with the concept of purpose. This facilitated the understanding of the questionnaire and meant that respondents had sufficient knowledge when they were asked questions about the implementation of the purpose of the company.

Once the managers accepted the invitation to participate in the study, they informed their employees about the online survey. After all the surveys had been submitted and evaluated, the participating companies were sent a report with the results and recommendations.

Following Mackenzie et al. [51], two studies were carried out. The first evaluated the scale and involved Spanish companies while the second cross-validated the scale, tested the proposed hypothesis and involved foreign companies.

Because of the appearance of a reflective-formative second-order construct, partial least squares path modeling (PLSPM) was used in this study to analyze the sample [52,53]. As PLSPM requires the structural part of the model to be estimated, we established a connection between the second-order purpose implementation construct and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) as reported by the employees. Figure 3 shows the model that was analyzed using PLSPM.

Because the study was cross-sectional and used self-reported measures, social desirability bias (SDB) and common method bias (CMB) are probable concerns. To mitigate these issues, Podsakoff et al.'s suggestions were followed [54]. To reduce SDB, a cover letter emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers; the survey itself also assured absolute anonymity, and participants were also assured that their responses would be returned directly to the researchers. To mitigate CMB, we also followed Podsakoff et al.'s procedural remedies [54]. First, a cover story introduced the study variables and helped generate a psychological separation. Second, contextual variables that had nothing to do with the study variables appeared in the questionnaire as distracters. Third, we assured the respondents' anonymity and confidentiality and asked them to answer the questions truthfully.



**Figure 3.** Formative second-order purpose implementation construct as a predictor of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). Source: own elaboration.

We also performed a full collinearity test and calculated the factor-level inner variance inflator factor (VIF) values for each construct in the model. The highest value of all the variables in Study 1 was the inner VIF of Purpose Contribution (2.25), and in Study 2, it was the inner VIF of Purpose Contribution (2.5). Both were below 3.3 [55]. Therefore, CMB was not a pervasive issue.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Study 1: Scale Validation

The aim of the first study was to assess the validity and reliability of the scale for measuring purpose implementation. Eight Spanish companies participated in the study (three technology providers, two industrial factories, a building company, an agricultural company and a medical equipment supplier); 672 completed questionnaires were collected from a total of 862 employees (77.95%). Table 1 provides a detailed account of the sample.

**Table 1.** Sample characterization of Study 1 (672 employees from 8 Spanish companies).

Company Size		Gender of the Participants		Age of the Participants		Seniority in the Company	
<50 workers	25%	Female	58%	<25 years	3%	<5 years	44%
50 < workers < 250	75%	Male	41%	25–35 years	31%	5–10 years	19%
Workers > 250	0%	No information	1%	36–50 years	51%	10–20 years	25%
				>50 years	14%	>20 years	10%
				No information	1%	No information	1%

The model illustrated in Figure 3 was analyzed with PLSPM using the SMART-PLS 3 software package [56]. The power of the test with the sample size of 672 is 100% [57]. In addition, a bootstrapping process using 5000 resamples of the same size as the study sample was used to generate standard errors and t-statistics, as recommended by Henseler et al. [58].

We followed the process described by Sarstedt et al. [59] and Hair et al. [60] to validate the scale of the second-order formative construct.

The first assessment was used to validate the reflective indicators [61]. To do so, we measured item reliability, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability index (CRI). The average variance extracted (AVE) was used to measure the convergent validity, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations criterion (HTMT) was used for the discriminant validity [52].

As Table 2 shows, all the loadings are significant ( $p$ -value < 0.001) with values over 0.708, attesting to the reliability of the items [52]. Moreover, both the Cronbach's alpha and CRI values were between 0.7 and 0.95 [62,63], proving the reliability of the scales. Finally, the convergent validity of the first-order variables was proven as all the AVE values exceeded 0.5 [64].

**Table 2.** Reliability, consistency and convergent validity of the first-order variables in Study 1.

Dimension	Item	Median	SD	Load	T-Value	Aver. Load	Cronbach's Alpha	CRI	AVE
PK	PK1	4	0.876	0.948 ***	143.725	0.924	0.914	0.946	0.854
	PK2	4	0.892	0.917 ***	63.615				
	PK3	4	0.862	0.906 ***	79.367				
PI	PI1	4	0.843	0.864 ***	58.076	0.886	0.864	0.917	0.786
	PI2	4	0.885	0.899 ***	75.752				
	PI3	4	0.894	0.896 ***	76.439				
PC	PC1	4	0.814	0.891 ***	76.648	0.876	0.849	0.909	0.768
	PC2	4	0.908	0.850 ***	50.212				
	PC3	4	0.824	0.887 ***	64.473				
OCB	OCB1	4	0.897	0.789 ***	30.077	0.830	0.774	0.869	0.689
	OCB2	5	0.650	0.830 ***	37.388				
	OCB3	4	0.764	0.870 ***	51.950				

Note: PK: purpose knowledge, PI: purpose internalization, PC: purpose contribution, OCB: organizational citizenship behavior. \*\*\*  $p$ -value < 0.001.

The discriminant validity was verified using the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations criterion (HTMT). As Table 3 shows, all values are below 0.9, and thus there is discriminant validity [52,65].

**Table 3.** Discriminant validity with HTMT criterion in Study 1.

	OCB	PC	PI	PK
OCB				
PC	0.486			
PI	0.453	0.830		
PK	0.369	0.711	0.702	

Note: PK: purpose knowledge, PI: purpose internalization, PC: purpose contribution, OCB: organizational citizenship behavior.

Once the first-order variables have been assessed, Sarstedt et al. [59] suggest the formative relationships between the first-order and higher-order dimensions be analyzed in three stages: the convergent validity assessed, the collinearity tested and the significance and relevance of their respective weights evaluated.

The convergent validity was assessed by redundancy analysis [53]. Four questions were formulated in the questionnaire to set a reflective measure of purpose implementation ((i) I feel involved in the company's mission, vision, values, (ii) The company's mission and vision guide me in my daily work, (iii) The company's vision is internally known, and it raises people's hopes, and (iv) There is a high degree of commitment with the company's mission and goals) and analyze the correlation between purpose implementation conceived as a formative higher-order construct and purpose implementation conceived as a reflective



lower-order construct. The redundancy analysis yielded a point estimate of 0.698 ( $p$ -value < 0.001), which was very close to the 0.7 value put forward by Sarstedt et al. [59].

Regarding the collinearity of the formative items, the variance inflator factors (VIFs) were all below 3 (VIF of purpose knowledge = 1.84; VIF of purpose internalization = 2.23; VIF of purpose contribution = 2.25), and the criterion was met [61].

The significance and relevance of formative constructs were evaluated using the outer weight obtained by bootstrapping [66]. The outer weights—presented in Table 4—are significant except in the case of purpose knowledge. However, following Hair et al. [52], as the outer loading of purpose knowledge (0.742) is significant with a value over 0.50, the formative construct can be said to be significant and relevant, and, in turn, the measurement instrument used in this model can be deemed reliable and valid.

**Table 4.** Significance and relevance of formative constructs in Study 1.

	Outer Weights	Weight Significance (t Statistic)	Outer Loading	Loading Significance (t Statistic)
Purpose Knowledge	0.129	1.16	0.742 ***	10.86
Purpose Internalization	0.382 *	2.38	0.885 ***	16.09
Purpose Contribution	0.597 **	3.46	0.948 ***	22.09

Note: \*  $p$ -value < 0.05; \*\*  $p$ -value < 0.01; \*\*\*  $p$ -value < 0.001.

We were therefore able to prove that the scale for measuring purpose implementation is valid and reliable.

Finally, we examined the predictive relevance of the analysis and checked the goodness of fit of the structural model (Table 5). Besides looking at the  $R^2$  values, we supplemented the predictive relevance analysis using the blindfolding sample re-use technique proposed by Stone [67] and Geisser [68]. An omission distance of five was used, and  $Q^2$  values above zero were obtained [69], which, together with the fact that the  $R^2$  was 0.175, indicate good power and the predictive relevance of the relationship or path model. Thus, it can be concluded that the overall fit of the model is adequate.

**Table 5.** Structural relations between purpose implementation and OCB in Study 1.

Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-Value
<i>Purpose Implementation</i> → <i>Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)</i>	0.418 ***	10.3
$R^2$ (OCB) = 0.175; $Q^2$ (OCB) = 0.117		

Note: \*\*\*  $p$ -value < 0.001.

#### 4.2. Study 2: Scale Cross-Validation and Hypothesis Testing

Following Mackenzie et al. [51], we cross-validated the psychometric properties of the scale using a new sample. In addition, we used the sample of the new study to test the proposed hypothesis.

Fourteen companies from the USA, Lithuania, Italy and Israel took part in the second study (three industrial plants, one agricultural company, one medical supplier, four tech companies and five service sector companies (consultancies, legal firms, etc.)). Out of a total of 3460 employees, 2491 completed the questionnaires (71.99%). Table 6 provides a detailed account of the analyzed sample.

**Table 6.** Sample characterization of Study 2 (2491 employees from 14 international companies).

Company Size		Gender of the Participants		Age of the Participants		Seniority in the Company	
<50 workers	35.71%	Female	43%	<25 years	18%	<5 years	61%
50 < workers < 250	57.14%	Male	56%	25–35 years	43%	5–10 years	24%
Workers > 250	7.14%	No information	1%	36–50 years	29%	10–20 years	9%
				>50 years	10%	>20 years	4%
				No information	0%	No information	3%

As for Study 1, the model shown in Figure 3 was analyzed using PLSPM for the Study 2 sample. The power of the test with a sample size of 2491 was 100% [57]. A bootstrapping process using 5000 resamples of the same size as the study sample was used to generate standard errors and t-statistics following the same steps as in Study 1.

The results for item reliability, internal consistency and convergent validity of purpose knowledge (PK), purpose identification (PI), purpose contribution (PC) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Reliability, consistency and convergent validity of the first-order variables in Study 2.

Dimension	Item	Median	SD	Load	T-Value	Aver. Load	Cronbach's Alpha	CRI	AVE
PK	PK1	4	0.882	0.928 ***	162.835	0.917	0.905	0.893	0.737
	PK2	4	0.897	0.922 ***	134.626				
	PK3	4	0.836	0.901 ***	119.598				
PI	PI1	4	0.912	0.848 ***	88.350	0.879	0.857	0.884	0.717
	PI2	4	0.855	0.889 ***	132.209				
	PI3	4	0.842	0.901 ***	166.032				
PC	PC1	4	0.758	0.834 ***	80.985	0.847	0.803	0.911	0.774
	PC2	4	0.893	0.853 ***	97.270				
	PC3	4	0.908	0.853 ***	100.241				
OCB	OCB1	4	0.812	0.796 ***	58.274	0.857	0.822	0.941	0.841
	OCB2	4	0.700	0.870 ***	91.043				
	OCB3	4	0.759	0.906 ***	198.389				

Note: PK: purpose knowledge, PI: purpose internalization, PC: purpose contribution, OCB: organizational citizenship behavior. \*\*\*  $p$ -value < 0.001.

As stated in Study 1, the fact that all Cronbach's alpha and CRI values are between 0.7 and 0.95 evidence that the first-order scale is reliable [62,63]. Moreover, all AVE values are above 0.5, and thus we can confirm the convergent validity [64]. Table 8 shows the values of the HTMT criterion were all below 0.9, thus proving the discriminant validity of the first-order scales [52,65].

**Table 8.** Discriminant validity with HTMT criterion in Study 2.

	OCB	PC	PI	PK
OCB				
PC	0.527			
PI	0.426	0.894		
PK	0.331	0.724	0.685	

Note: PK: purpose knowledge, PI: purpose internalization, PC: purpose contribution, OCB: organizational citizenship behavior.

In order to analyze the formative relationships between the first-order and higher-order (purpose implementation) dimensions, the three steps proposed by Sarstedt et al. [59]

were followed as for Study 1. The convergent validity was calculated through redundancy analysis, which yielded a point estimate of 0.719 ( $p$ -value < 0.001) between the higher-order construct and the reflective lower-order construct, thus exceeding the proposed value of 0.7 [59]. Regarding the collinearity of the formative items, the variance inflator factors (VIFs) were all below 3 (VIF of purpose knowledge = 1.741; VIF of purpose internalization = 2.438; VIF of purpose contribution = 2.505) [61]. Finally, the outer weights—presented in Table 9—were significant except for purpose knowledge. However, following Hair et al. [52] indications as the outer loading of purpose knowledge (0.653) was significant with a value of over 0.50, the formative construct can be deemed significant and relevant, and, in turn, the measuring instrument used in this model can be considered reliable and valid [59].

**Table 9.** Significance and relevance of formative constructs in Study 2.

	Outer Weights	Weight Significance (t Statistic)	Outer Loading	Loading Significance (t Statistic)
Purpose Knowledge	0.015	0.226	0.653 ***	16.118
Purpose Internalization	0.259 ***	3.598	0.852 ***	32.994
Purpose Contribution	0.782 ***	11.780	0.984 ***	112.874

Note: \*\*\*  $p$ -value < 0.001.

Finally, regarding predictive relevance, Table 10 shows the path coefficient between purpose implementation and OCB. It also shows the analysis of the goodness of fit of the structural model by combining the  $R^2$  values with the  $Q^2$  values after using the blindfolding sample re-use technique with an omission distance of five. The values concluded that the overall fit of the model is adequate.

**Table 10.** Structural relations between purpose implementation and OCB in Study 2.

Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-Value
<i>Purpose Implementation</i> → <i>Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)</i>	0.443 ***	22.064
$R^2$ (OCB) = 0.196; $Q^2$ (OCB) = 0.139		

Note: \*\*\*  $p$ -value < 0.001.

Regarding the possibility that control variables may have an impact, we took the characterization of the sample and reconverted them into numerical variables. With this, gender was converted into a dummy variable (0 = male; 1 = female), and the other three were converted into Likert scales by assigning numbers to the categories presented in Table 6. Thus, company size ranges from 1 to 3, and age and seniority range from 1 to 4.

Once this was done, we simulated three analyses similar to the study by Ruiz-Palomino and Linuesa-Langreo [70]. In the first analysis, we related all the control variables and purpose implementation to OCB; in the second, we related only those with significant relationships (gender, age and seniority) and purpose implementation to OCB; and thirdly, we used the model presented in Table 10. In comparison, there was no change in the confidence intervals, and there were almost imperceptible changes in the loadings. Therefore, following the advice of Bernerth and Aguinis [71], we can state that the control variables do not have a large enough impact on the dependent variable to be considered in the study.

#### Testing the Hypothesis

A method for calculating the consistency of purpose implementation was needed in order to test the hypothesis of the study.

Malbašić et al. [72] proposed a formula for calculating the degree of equilibrium in the organization's values. We adjusted this formula to calculate the degree of equilibrium between the three purpose implementation dimensions:

Equation (1): Purpose consistency formula

$$\text{Purpose Consistency} = M - (\text{ABS}(\text{PK} - \text{PI}) + \text{ABS}(\text{PI} - \text{PC}) + \text{ABS}(\text{PK} - \text{PC}))/2 \quad (1)$$

where  $M$  is the maximum value on the Likert scale used (5, in this case), and  $\text{PK}$ ,  $\text{PI}$  and  $\text{PC}$  are calculated as the average of their respective items.

Multi-group analysis (MGA) can be used to see whether there is a significant difference in the relationship between purpose implementation and OCB when highly intense and consistent purpose and low-intensity and consistent purpose are differentiated (H1).

To do this, we followed the three steps outlined by Matthews [73]. Firstly, a new variable (intensity  $\times$  consistency) was defined as the multiplication of purpose intensity by purpose consistency, as explained previously, for the entire sample. The sample was then divided into four quartiles from higher to lower values, and we tested the high purpose consistency versus the low purpose consistency. The high purpose consistency group consisted of 609 valid responses, and the low purpose consistency group gave 652 valid responses. Both responses include participants from all the surveyed companies and have similar characteristics to the one presented in Table 6.

The measurement invariance of the model was assessed to check the reliability of the metrics when tested under dissimilar conditions. This was carried out using the measurement invariance of composite models (MICOMs) approach, which involves three steps: configural invariance, compositional invariance and full measurement model invariance [74,75]. To achieve configural invariance, we made sure that the constructs were set with the same items per construct, and we treated the data identically with the same algorithm setting.

In addition, the compositional invariance was assessed based on the MICOMs procedure by running a two-tailed permutation test for the latent variables at a 5% significance setting with 5000 permutations to ensure that differences in the path coefficients were not due to differences in the way the constructs had been formed across the groups. Hair et al. [74] established that the correlation between the composite scores was computed, and the null hypothesis that the correlation was equal to 1 was tested. The resulting non-significant permutation  $p$ -values for each measurement model indicated the compositional invariance of the constructs.

With respect to the invariance assessment of the full measurement model, the equality of composite means and variances were examined [74,75]. The results of the MICOMs (Table 11) showed that the means and variances of composites across the two groups do not differ, and thus a full measurement invariance criterion could be established. Thus, meeting the three requisites, we can establish that the two groups are suitable for analysis using the MGA method [75,76].

Concerning the reliability of both models, the Cronbach's alpha and the CRI of the OCB variable when testing the high purpose implementation group were 0.841 and 0.904, respectively [62,63]. When testing the low purpose implementation group, these values were 0.804 and 0.879. The convergent validity was assured since the AVE values were higher than 0.5 for both high and low purpose consistency [64]. In addition, all OCB indicators in both models were above the proposed 0.7 value threshold [52].

**Table 11.** Results of the measurement invariance of composite models (MICOMs) analysis.

		OCB	Purpose Implementation
<b>Configural Invariance</b>		Yes	Yes
<b>Compositional invariance assessment</b>	c value	0.999	0.989
	Confidence interval	[0.997, 1.0]	[0.977, 1.0]
	Compositional invariance	Yes	Yes
<b>Mean and variance assessment</b>	Mean difference	0.603	1.577
	Confidence interval	[-0.113, 0.109]	[-0.113, 0.109]
	Equality of means	Yes	Yes
	Variance difference	-0.605	-0.804
	Confidence interval	[-0.226, 0.221]	[-0.159, 0.158]
	Equality of variances	Yes	Yes
<b>Full measurement invariance</b>		Yes	Yes

Note: The results are based on a two-tailed permutation test at a 5% confidence level [2.5%, 97.5%] for the latent variables.

Finally, we calculated the results of the pair-wise comparisons of the high-intensity, consistent purpose implementation group with the lower-intensity, consistent implementation group. The results of the permutation-based multi-group analysis are presented in Table 12. The magnitude of the path running from purpose implementation to OCB was statistically different between the two groups. The path coefficient for the highly intense, consistent purpose implementation was higher (path coefficient difference = 0.296,  $p < 0.001$ ). In other words, the influence of purpose implementation on OCB was considerably greater for the highly intense, consistent implementation group than for the low-intensity, consistent implementation group, thus confirming the proposed hypothesis.

**Table 12.** Multi-group analyses.

Relationship	Path Coeff.	CIs	Path Coeff. Difference	<i>p</i> -Value Henseler's MGA	Supported
<i>Purpose Implementation highly intense and consistent</i> → <i>Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)</i>	0.450 ***	(0.368, 0.525)	0.252	0.000	Yes
<i>Purpose Implementation lowly intense and consistent</i> → <i>Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)</i>	0.198 ***	(0.103, 0.274)			

Note: \*\*\* *p*-value < 0.001.

## 5. Discussion

The results of Study 1 evidence the validation of the scale on the implementation of the purpose by integrating three dimensions: knowledge, internalization and contribution. The convergent validity tests showed that the items defined actually measure knowledge, internalization and contribution to the purpose. At the same time, the discriminant validity test and the non-collinearity test (VIF) showed that the three dimensions are distinct from each other and refer to three different aspects of the implementation of the purpose: its knowledge by guiding and bringing clarity to the employees' day, its internalization by connecting with the employees' personal values and thus being a factor capable of motivating and exciting, and finally its contribution by connecting the purpose with the people's day-to-day life by seeing how it develops in the people's daily work.

Therefore, what we presented is a valid and reliable scale for measuring purpose implementation in its three dimensions.

Beyond this threefold measure, the study also showed that the consistency with which the three dimensions are developed impacts the results. This can be related to the

study by Gartenberg et al. [11], which states that it is better to have “clarity of purpose” than “camaraderie”. Here, we further developed this view, as clear knowledge must be accompanied by internalization and contribution in order to realize its full potential.

This research also sheds some more light on the Purpose at Work literature, as it has generally been the development of a personal purpose that benefits aspects such as job satisfaction or commitment [77]. It is true that both meaningful work and these aspects have been studied as predictors of OCB [78,79]. However, in this paper, we postulated as an antecedent the experience of a corporate purpose rather than the development of a personal purpose. With this result, therefore, we confirm the intuitions of other researchers that purpose has to be manifested in specific actions [4,80].

Although this study does not directly relate purpose implementation to corporate sustainability, it does shed some light on the relationship between them. Firstly, regarding the employee level, we are aligned with previous research, which postulated that focusing on employees led to an improvement in the environmental performance of the company if it is a shared vision [81]. In this study, we observed that shared purpose has an impact on behavior, which can lead to improved sustainability performance [82]. Other authors have studied how to develop organizational citizenship behaviors for the environment (OCBE) as a way to improve the sustainability of the company [83,84]. Our results could contribute to these results by proposing purpose implementation as a cause and antecedent of the behaviors that can lead to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the company. Moreover, purpose implementation will facilitate the development of intellectual capital which has been identified as one of the key Sustainable Development Goals for organizations because of its relationship with other objectives [39]. In fact, Zimon et al. already pointed out that one must start with the mission and values if one wants to develop a sustainable supply chain [85]. In short, shared purpose by employees may be the new path to sustainable development that previous studies have called for [86].

These theoretical contributions have clear practical implications. Firstly, the scale developed in this study enables the effectiveness of an organization’s purpose implementation to be evaluated using its three dimensions. Apart from measuring purpose implementation, this tool allows us to relate it to other variables, antecedents and consequents. It can detect the impact of certain variables on the implementation of the purpose as well as the effects of the purpose on other variables such as individual commitment, collective unity and organizational performance, etc.

Furthermore, the three dimensions of purpose implementation discussed in this article point to the importance of prioritizing actions such as disseminating the purpose effectively, developing specific actions to motivate employees and ensuring aims and tasks remain aligned with the purpose over time. Therefore, good communication plans are needed to communicate the purpose effectively [4,27], and workshops can be used for discussing personal values and developing shared ones [72]. Actions such as these will reveal to what extent the shared values are reflected in the purpose and how motivating the purpose is as a result. Leadership style can also be studied and revised to make sure it centers on purpose development [14,25,87]. Finally, to enhance purpose contribution, management systems and processes can be analyzed to ensure they are aligned with the development of the purpose [5,22]. These implications are crucial for enhancing more sustainable organizations. Purpose implementation and the creation of a shared meaning should be more effective as everything becomes more connected in the organization through purpose. Strategy, leadership, communication, systems, procedures and objectives should all be interconnected through purpose, thus enhancing organizational sustainability.

## 6. Conclusions

This paper aims to offer several theoretical contributions to the research on purpose implementation. Although there is no precise, accepted definition of the concept of purpose implementation, it seems clear that the aim of purpose implementation is to generate a sense of shared purpose among all the members of an organization [11,12,14] who contribute

to it being more sustainable. This paper argues that the more employees know about the purpose, identify with it and contribute to its development, the more successful its implementation will be. Therefore, the authors support a three-dimensional concept of purpose implementation.

Knowledge of the purpose means that the purpose has been successfully communicated and is “known” by employees to the extent that they can articulate it in their own words. Different authors have associated purpose with terms such as the “why” of the organization or the organization’s *raison d’être* [10,14]. The clearer the purpose, the clearer the guiding “north” will be.

Internalization of the purpose refers to the extent the purpose moves and motivates employees. Some authors define purpose internalization as a meaning-generating cause capable of motivating [11,32,42–44]. Others maintain that purpose motivates to the extent that it integrates and shares employee values [72]. Shared values are what drive employees to identify with the purpose and get excited about developing it [14,46]. Finally, contribution to the purpose refers to materializing the purpose in actions that guide the organization’s day-to-day work and show employees how their work contributes to developing the purpose. Authors who maintain that for purpose to be real, it must be palpable in the day-to-day actions have also made a worthwhile contribution [4,5,12,14]. While the three aspects of purpose implementation have been discussed in the literature, the novelty of our contribution lies in presenting a concept of purpose implementation that simultaneously integrates all three. Since the three dimensions may not necessarily coincide at the same time (a purpose may be well-known but not be capable of motivating employees), we argue that purpose implementation should be conceived as a second-order formative construct consisting of three dimensions: knowledge of the purpose, internalization of the purpose and contribution to the purpose.

This second-order construct allows the intensity of purpose implementation to be measured by using the metrics of the three dimensions. In addition, by analyzing the degree of equilibrium between the three dimensions, the consistency of purpose implementation can also be measured. The consistency metric enables different purposes to be compared and their implementation to be evaluated based on the extent to which they are capable of enlightening, motivating and guiding the actions of employees. Our analysis showed that the path coefficient between implementation and OCB is greater when the purpose is more intensively and consistently implemented. In other words, purpose implementation has a greater impact on OCB when purpose knowledge, internalization and contribution are evenly balanced.

Like all studies, this work has its limitations and implications for future studies. Firstly, given the distinction between purpose implementation and OCB, multilevel studies should be conducted to prove more consistently the validity of these relationships beyond employee perceptions. Therefore, as a line of future research, we would suggest analyzing employee opinions on purpose implementation and managerial perceptions of employee OCB. Moreover, longitudinal studies could clarify better how this relationship evolves over time. Secondly, the sample in this study includes small and medium-sized companies that have been investing in purpose implementation daily for at least one year. A future study could focus on larger companies with differing degrees of purpose implementation to compare and expand the data in this sample. Finally, the new evaluation scale could be used to test the relationship between different antecedents and consequences of purpose implementation with a view to shedding light on the most effective means of implementing purpose and on the advantages of developing purpose-driven organizations.

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