

Research on the Impact of Public Service Motivation on Job Satisfaction: Taking the Chinese Civil Servants for Example

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Abstract

Since American scholars Perry and Wise put forward the concept of public service motivation in 1990, the research on public service motivation have been concerned by a lot of scholars. Many Chinese scholars have promoted the study of public service motivation since the beginning of 21 century and a lot of writings have emerged. Through empirical investigation of Chinese civil servants in Lijiang city of Yunnan province, this paper draws some valuable conclusion. Based on the above research conclusion, the paper puts forward the following suggestions: (1) Strengthening the government civil servants public service awareness training and promoting the spirit of public service; (2) reforming existing incentive mechanism and enhancing the government's job satisfaction of civil servants; (3) strengthening the government civil servants occupation management and establishing the concept of occupation.

Key Words:Public Service Motivation; Civil Servant; Job Satisfaction

1. Introduction

As an important concept related to public service, public service motivation (PSM) which was put forward in 1990s has become a thriving area of research in public management(Perry & Wise, 1990). Over the past three decades, a lot of scholars have made great contribution in understanding the connotation of public service motivation (Alonso & Lewis,2001; Houston, 2000, 2006,2008; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). There are also a substantial amount of research has been focused on the measuring, explaining and identifying of the causes and consequences of public service motivation. In a words, public service motivation refers to a general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a

community of people, a state, a nation, or humankind. That is, individual motives are largely, but not exclusively, altruistic and grounded in public institutions (Perry & Wise, 1990).

Recently, the impact of public service motivation on job satisfaction has been emphasized by several authors. Some have focused on the significance of employee's attitudes and motivation (Mirvis,1992), others have stressed the presence and importance of no-monetary rewards (Almond & Kendall, 2000), extrinsic and intrinsic and so on. Generally, research has confirmed that job satisfaction in nonprofits is higher than in other organizational forms and employee in nonprofit organizations display stronger motivations and

higher satisfaction related to the significance of their job despite lower pay and excessive workloads (Benz,2005; Borzaga & Dpedri,2005).

Although substantial developments have been gained in U.S and in the West literature, several question still need pay attention. Up to now, few researchers have applied the concept of public service motivation into the public administration in other parts of the world (Kim,2009; Taylor,2007),especially in China. The spirits of public service can be traced back to Confucius's ideology of governance which is totally different from the western ideas and values.

In this article, we will use data from social service sector to describe the relationship between public service motivation and job satisfaction, especially the impact of public service motivation on job commitment.

2. Methods

2.1. Samples

The data were collected in a survey among civil servant at different government departments in Yunnan province in south of China. In September

2011, 500 civil servants received a survey which were finished during regular working hours. A total 370 responses were returned, yielding a response rate of 94.25%. Of these, 325 have been used in this study as cases with missing values have been deleted. The distribution of the sample such as sex, age, organizational rank was drawn (table 1).

2.2. Measure

On the basis of Perry's (1996) 24-item public service motivation scale, we develop the measure which is suitable to Chinese respondents. Some major demographic variables (gender, age, length of service and so on) were collected through survey. We also used a five-point scale (1 = strong disagreement; 5 = strong agreement). The measure which has four sub-dimensions (attraction to policy making, commitment to the public interest, compassion and self-sacrifice) was rational with a high Cronbach's alphas (Alpha=0.787). we also selected Bono and Judge's (2003) Job Satisfaction Scale which was revised according to Chinese culture. The Cronbach's alphas was 0.813.

Table 1 Background of respondents (n=325)

Variables	Characteristics	Respondents (%)	Variables	Characteristics	Respondents (%)
Sex	Male	57.69	Education	junior college diploma or under	23.8
	Female	42.4		Undergraduate degree	60.3
Age	Clerk	23.9		Graduate degree	14.5
				Doctor degree	1.4
			0~10	22.7	
Organization rank	Middle-level official	58.6	Length of service (year)	11~20	38.7
				21~30	21.7
	31~40	9.2%			
	41+	7.7			
	Department-level official	13.4		Political Affiliation	CPC Member
The rest	4.1	members of the democratic parties	6.3		
		person with no political affiliation	14.1		

3. Findings and Discussions

The mean score for PSM is 3.91 which the level of public service motivation of Chinese civil servants in Yunnan is relative high. At the same time, the mean scores for each dimension are

3.82 in attraction to policy making, 3.98 in commitment to the public interest, 4.26 in compassion and 3.47 in self-sacrifice. The mean score for job satisfaction is 3.74.

Table 2 Descriptive and measurement statistics (n=325)

Dimensions and items	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Public Service Motivation	1.37	4.73	3.91	.521
attraction to policy making	1.30	4.94	3.82	.546
commitment to the public interest	1.70	4.65	3.98	.731
compassion	1.60	4.10	4.26	.601
self-sacrifice	1.15	5.00	3.47	.514
Job Satisfaction	1.00	4.61	3.74	.797

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Adopting correlation analysis, we examined the relationship among public service motivation, job satisfaction and other factors. The results show that a positive correlation between public service motivation and job satisfaction was found ($r=.518, p<.01$). At the same time, public service motivation is positively correlated with

age ($r=.142, p<.01$) and length of service ($r=.142, p<.01$) and is negatively correlation with organization rank ($r=-.113, p<.01$). however, there is no correlation between public service motivation and sex ($r=.036, p>.05$) as well as education ($r=.022, p>.05$).

Table 3 Correlations of major variables (n=325)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sex	1					
Age	-.070	1				
Education	.018	-.062	1			
Length of service	-.118*	.539**	.042	1		
Organization rank	.188**	-.090	-.194**	-.507**	1	
Public Service Motivation	.036	.142**	.022	.142**	-.113*	1
Job Satisfaction	.066	.222**	-.020	.195**	-.073	.518*

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In order to examine the impact of public service motivation on job satisfaction, a multiple

regression analysis are carried out. Table 3 shows the results of a regression analysis.

Participants' demographic variables (sex, age, nationality, education, length of service, organization rank and income per month) were entered on step one as controls. In the regression model 1, the independent variables are sex, age, nationality, education, length of service, organization rank and income per month and the dependent variables is job satisfaction. In the regression model 2, the independent variables are PMS dimension (attraction to policy making, commitment to the public interest, compassion and self-sacrifice) and the dependent variables is job satisfaction.

The results of regression analysis show that all regression equation were significant ($p < .001$). In model 1, two variables which have significant predictable functions to job satisfaction could explain 50.99 percent change in R^2 for job satisfaction. Among demographic variables, both sex and age are nice predictors for job satisfaction. According to the standardized coefficients, the most influential variable is age ($\beta = .176$, $p < .01$), so the age is a powerful predictor of job satisfaction. In model 2, only two variable which have significant predictable functions to job satisfaction could explain 18.71 percent change in R^2 for job satisfaction. Among PMS dimensions, compassion and self-sacrifice are nice predictors for job satisfaction. According to the standardized coefficients, the

most influential variable is self-sacrifice ($\beta = .273$, $p < .001$) and next compassion ($\beta = .187$, $p < .01$), so self-sacrifice and compassion is a powerful predictor of job satisfaction.

The result shows that civil servants with higher public service motivation had significantly higher job satisfaction. For the perspective of PSM dimensions, Chinese civil servants have higher mean score in compassion and lower in self-sacrifice. At the same time, sex, age, compassion and self-sacrifice are nice predictors for job satisfaction. The present result indicates that public service motivation has direct influence on individual job satisfaction, so the most efficient way to improve civil servants' job satisfaction is to promote their level of public service motivation. On the contrary, the higher the civil servants' job satisfaction is, the stronger their public service motivation is. In a words, leaders should pay more attention on civil servants' job satisfaction, so as to improve their public service motivation and commitment to their organization.

Table 4 Results of regression analysis (n=325)

Variables	Job Satisfaction							
	Step one				Step two			
	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>
(Constant)	2.541	.336	-----	7.569***	.524	.355	-----	1.474
demographic								
Variables								
Sex	.129	.062	.097	2.1*	.084	.054	.063	1.561
Age	.013	.004	.176	3.167**	.008	.004	.104	2.151*
Nationality	.129	.062	.097	2.100	.057	.093	.024	.615
Education	-.013	.020	-.030	-.642	-.013	.017	-.031	-.760
Length of service	.032	.032	.068	1.000	.035	.028	.073	1.242
Organization rank	.032	.046	.051	.697	.026	.040	.042	.650
Income per month	.080	.051	.121	1.582	.026	.045	.039	.584
PMS dimensions								
attraction to policy making					.091	.068	.076	1.342
commitment to the public interest					.038	.035	.053	1.087
compassion					.237	.068	.187	3.496**
self-sacrifice					.259	.055	.273	4.712***
<i>F</i>			5.099***				1.871***	
<i>Adjust R²</i>			.058				.312	

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4. Conclusion

Since the concept of public service motivation was put forward in 1990S, substantial researchers have tried to explore and test the proposition suggested by Perry & Wise. This research aims to explore the relationship between public service motivation and job satisfaction by empirical data in Chinese government agencies.

The result shows that the whole level of public service motivation of Chinese civil servants is not very higher, especially in the dimension of self-sacrifice. There is a significant positive correlation between public service motivation and job satisfaction. As a nice predictors for job satisfaction, public service motivation is very important for Chinese government agencies to reform and innovation. In order to improve the job performance and reduce corruption, we hold that Chinese central

government must strengthen the training of civil servants' public service motivation, reform the present incentive mechanism, improve the civil servants' professional management, which eventually leads to the improvement of civil servants' spirit of public service motivation and job satisfaction.

Our cross-sectional data were collected from a small sample of professionals in the government agencies in Lijiang city of Yunnan province. All the participants are from the remote region of China where civil servants' pay is relative lower. The civil servants in other areas especially the southeast regions maybe will different. In the other hand, the public service motivation scale which Perry & Wise designed in 1990 according to American culture and values is not necessarily suitable to Chinese context. So the choose of sample and design of public service motivation will play an important role in our research. In the future, the diversity of different culture and values should be considered in the test of Chinese civil servants' public service motivation.

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