

The Effects of Public Service Motivation on Job Performance: Myth or Reality?

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Abstract

Today, performance of government employee is very important as its concerns of the government image and the efficiency on government management. Based on the previous studies, it revealed that public service motivation has significant relationship with the job performance of employees in public sector. But, there are some arguments about PSM measurement scale among previous scholars such as did not use Perry's four dimensional measurements (1996) on their studies. However, they have their own justification for the measurement scale. Further discussions about the review of public service motivation on job performance are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Job performance, Public Sector, Public Service Motivation (PSM)

1. Introduction

Today, performance of government employee is very important as its concerns of the government image and the efficiency on government management. Higher performance will lead to greater citizen trust in government (Kaifeng & Marc, 2006). Good performance is also related with achieving the quality, quantity, cooperation, dependability and creativity while completing the task given. The quality of employees is the important aspect which influence on job performance. Hence, the people who possess a high skill level will success; for example, an employee with high skill in job knowledge (unique skills, intelligence and task method) will success in his/her task/job. Employees' job performance among public sector is very important since it will reflect the government performance in each country. Hence, job performance becomes the most important focus research area among administrators and academicians due to the reason performance level will effect if the level of skill of employee drops (Salleh, Yaakub & Dzulkipli, 2011).

The important of this paper is about discussing the conceptual aspect of public service motivation on job performance in the public sector. It will also review the evolution of public service motivation, measurement of public service motivation and previous studies about public service motivation on job performance. In this review, it also shows that the value as workers with such a motivation; public service motivation (PSM) are more committed to the organization, more willing to extra effort and have higher perception about their job performance.

2. Conceptualization of Public Service Motivation

The concepts and theory of public service motivation has been developed in the early 80s from the underlining assumption that there is a form of motivation defined more altruistic than self-serving motives and more common and prevalent in the public than the private sector (Yanti, 2012; Horton, 2008; Perry, 2000). Public service motivation, like other motivation theories, based on a broad motivation concept defined by Perry and Porter (1982) as “the forces that energize, direct and sustain behavior”. Meanwhile, Robbins (2004) defined motivation as “the process that accounts for an individual’s intensity, direction and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal.

Perry and Wise (1990, 2004) mentioned that motivation of public service should be understood as a psychological deficiencies or needs; whereby individual contribute to the public good to satisfy their personal needs.

Perry and Wise (1990) described public service motivation as a person’s susceptibility to motives oriented mainly to the public institutions. Later, it has been revised by Wise (2000) the definition to“needs to perform acts of public service and to contribute to the advancement of the quality of life in society”.

The theory of PSM has defined public service motivation as that some individuals have a “predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (Perry & Wise, 1990; 386) that induces them “to perform meaningful... public, community and social service” (Brewer & Selden, 1998; 417). As a result, the theory generally is used to suggest that individuals with greater PSM are more likely (1) to be found working in government because of the opportunities it offers to provide meaningful public service, and (2) to perform better in-and feel more satisfied with- the public sector jobs because they find this type of work intrinsically rewarding. Even a growing body of research provides support for these claims, researcher understands of and confidence still has been limited by a reliance on cross-sectional research design (Wright, 2008).

3.0 Evolution of Public Service Motivation

Perry has developed a PSM scale based on statements chosen carefully through extensive theoretical review. He operationalized the theoretical rational, normative and affective into a measurement scale. His scale initially consisted 40 items associated with six dimensions: self-sacrifice; attraction to policy-making; compassion; commitment to the public interest; social justice and civic duty (Perry, 1996). The Attraction to Policy-Making dimension contained the rational motive, commitment to public interest, social justice and civic justice fell into normative category and compassion fell into the affective category (Yanti, 2012; Perry, 1996; Kim & Vandenabeele, 2010). The self-sacrifice dimension fit within none of the motive types but was retained due to the public service requires an individual’s self-sacrifice and making this dimension important to the PSM construct (Yanti, 2012; Perry, 1996; Kim & Vandenabeele, 2010).

Later, after testing the scale with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), Perry (1996) has revised his public service motivation measurement scale of 24 items comprising only four dimensions: attraction to public policy-making, compassion, self-sacrifice and commitment to public interest. Further, these constructs have been acceptable internal consistency (Perry, 1997). The coefficient alpha values were 0.77 for Attraction to Public Policy, 0.69 for Public Interest, 0.72 for Compassion and 0.74 for Self-Sacrifice.

4. Challenges of Public Service Motivation Measurement Scale

Many studies of public service motivation have been done using this measurement scale. Brewer and Selden (1998) argue that public service motivation is a complicated and multi-faceted concept since it is required development of a precise measurement scale. They do not construct their own measure but measure public service motivation through the observable behavior of whistle blowing.

Some research studies done by previous scholars only use three of Perry's (1996) four dimensions (Dehart-Davis et al., 2006; Moynihan and Pandey, 2007a; Naff and Crum, 1999; Scott and Pandey, 2005). While studies by Alonso and Lewis (2001), Brewer and Selden (2000), Choi (2004), Karl and Peat (2004) and Kim (2005; 2006) used two dimensions, followed by Castaing (2006) used only one and Camilleri (2006, 2007) and Perry (1997) used all four dimensions.

Several reasons have been revealed why some studies did not use Perry's four dimensional measurement (1996), including and difficulty administering the instrument in the field due to the long questionnaires and questions unrelated to work (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008b). Another issue is about "its psychometric properties" because of redundancy and overlap between dimensions (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008a p.84). Then, Camilleri's research (2006, 2007) found out that the internal reliability of the "attraction to policy-making" measure is below .70 whereby it is questionable by Norusis (2009) in his research. The small value of Cronbach's alpha may indicate that a "scale measures several dimensions". Furthermore, another studies using short form of Perry's (1996) questionnaire face difficulties among respondents to understand its sentences. As mentioned by example, one item in "self-sacrifice and commitment to public interest" needs to be reclassified as part of another dimension suggesting that one dimension overlaps another (Choi, 2001).

5. Four-dimensional Measurement of Public Service Motivation

The application of multiple approaches and measurement techniques in previous public service motivation studies has empirically enriched the public service motivation theory literature. However, the backward of multiple approaches is that a diversity of techniques and measure limit confidence in the findings and interpretation of any single study (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008b). Therefore, Wright, Manigault and Black (2004) mentioned that each operational definition of public service motivation suggests important differences in the meaning and/or number of public service motivation dimensions. Variety of operational measure may have serious impacts on research findings and the interpretation.

Basically, previous researches on public service motivation found that Perry's measurement to be the most methodologically developed and advanced (Brewer & Selden, 1998; Houston, 2000). According to Alonso and Lewis, 2001; Crewson, 1997; Gabris and Simo, 1995; Mann, 2006; Posner and Schmidt, 1996; Rainey, 1982 and Wittmer, 1991, Perry's (1996) four-dimensional construct is specially designed to capture the diverse phenomena that influence public service motivation including intrinsic rewards such as public interest, helping others and community service, found to be consistent in the reward preference approach used in previous studies. Meanwhile, Kim et al. (2011) in their recent studies in 12 countries confirmed that the revised four-dimensional measure of public service motivation is significantly better than other designs.

6. Relationship between Public Service Motivation and Job Performance

Job performance is a term used to depict how well an employee performs his or her work-related duties. Performance is important to workers and employers because it inevitably influences decisions regarding promotions, terminations, merit increases and bonuses (Caillier, 2010). Because so much is riding on this aspect of organizations, individual job performance has been studied extensively by

administrative theorist. It has begun in the early 1900s with Frederick Taylor's study about his argument that organizations could increase worker productivity by identifying and standardizing the most efficient movements needed to perform a task. But this study has been criticized because it focused on "mechanization" rather than on the human side of the organization (March & Simon, 1958).

According to Murphy (1989), the job performance domain could be defined using the following four dimensions: (1) task behaviors, (2) interpersonal behaviors (communicating and cooperating with others), (3) downtime behaviors (work-avoidance behaviors) and (4) destructive/hazardous behaviors (behaviors that lead to a clear risk of productivity losses, damage or other setbacks). Additionally, Campbell (1990) categorized eight job performance dimensions: (1) job-specific task proficiency, (2) non-job specific task proficiency, (3) written and oral communications, (4) demonstrating effort, (5) maintaining personal discipline, (6) facilitating peer and team performance, (7) supervision and (8) management and administration.

Based on the conceptual grouping of 486 measures of job performance in the literature, Viswesvaran (1993) developed 10 dimensions of individual job performance. Besides a general factor of overall job performance, he identified the dimensions of productivity, quality of work, job knowledge, communication competence, effort, leadership, administrative competence, interpersonal competence and compliance with/acceptance of authority.

Meanwhile, Borman and Motowidlo (1993) argued that the entire job performance could be encompassed by the comprehensive dimensions of task performance and contextual performance. They describe task performance as behaviors that directly or indirectly contribute to the organization's technical core. Meanwhile, contextual performance as behaviors that support the organizational, social and psychological environment in which the technical core must function. For examples, contextual activities are volunteering, persisting, helping, cooperating and following rules. Task activities identified as vary between different jobs whereas contextual activities are common to many or all jobs.

Based on the research conducted by Naff and Crum (1999) on cross-sectional survey data from some 10,000 U.S. federal employees, they found a positive relationship between PSM and self-reported individual performance ratings. Furthermore, the result was partially confirmed by a subsequent study done by Alonso and Lewis (2001) with the 35,000 respondents of federal white-collar employees. The survey takes two stages; 1991 Survey of Federal Employees and the 1996 Merit Principles Survey. they found that a significant relationship between PSM and self-reported performance ratings in the 1996 data set but no significant relationship between valuing service to others and performance appraisals was evident in the 1991 data set.

Another recent study by Andersen and Serritzlew (2012) focused on the relationship between commitment to the public interest – one of the four dimensions of PSM with the sample of 556 Danish physiotherapists in private practice. The result showed that the stronger commitment to the public interest tended to have a higher percentage of disabled patients.

The next study investigated the association between PSM and job performance with the mediation other variables. With the total sample of 205 public health care employees which were randomly drawn from three public organizations in the three states at the three levels of government, Bright (2007) found a significant relationship between PSM and self-reported performance. In contradict; the relationship became insignificant when person-organization fit was slot in the model.

Research by Leisink and Stejin's (2008) found that person-organization fit did not mediates the association between PSM and three performance-related outcome variables (commitment, willingness to exert effort and perceived job performance). Choi (2001) found that PSM able to explained the most variance of job satisfaction variable.

Since that PSM is a predictor of individual performance in public organization as suggested by most literatures, how about other individual-level factors? According to Kim (2004) in his research, the results showed that significance relationship emerged between individual-level factors such as PSM, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior and organizational performance in government organizations. Commonly, we would predict that higher individual performance is the basis of higher organizational performance and it is suggested by researches, individual performance contributes to organizational performance (Brewer & Selden 1998, 2000; Perry & Wise, 1990; Brewer, Selden & Facer, 2000).

7. Conclusion

Our analyses of study regarding the application of PSM on job performance of public sector help us to conclude the following:

PSM has significant relationship with government employee's job performance and also has direct influence by other variables such as organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior and job satisfaction. However it is, there is some argument about the application of four dimensions of Perry and Wise (1996) measurement scale but each of the scholars has their own justification to solve it. Therefore, public service motivation can be an important predictor of individual job performance due to the statement "the employees with higher PSM will have higher performance and they contribute more to government organizations". In light of the beneficial effects of PSM on job performance, public managers should pay particular attention of implementing PSM and avoid practices which may depress employee's PSM. As a conclusion the effect of PSM on job performance is not a myth but proved to be a reality since previous studies has proved it with the significant relationship results between few variables.

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