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MOTIVATION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Adrian Ritz, Oliver Neumann and Wouter Vandenabeele

Introduction

The provision of public services is heavily dependent on human resources. First and foremost, this consists of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and motives of public employees. Public organizations are more than mere production units; they are highly specialized groupings of expertise and services. Given this observation, it is unsurprising that people are the main asset of most public organizations and that the actions of those people are significant drivers of organizational outcomes. In this context, motivation becomes a crucial factor in both the provision of public service and the quality of public sector work.

There are several reasons why employee motivation is a pivotal concept in the field of Public Administration and Public Policy. First, in the future, demographic change will result in a dwindling labor supply and significantly increased competition among employers. These changes will affect public organizations in a dramatic way, due to the fact that in the labor market, as opposed to in the service sector, public administration faces direct competition from private sector employers. Therefore, public personnel policies need to strengthen the management of motivation as a decisive means of attracting, retaining, and rewarding employees. Second, more than ever before, public organizations are under pressure to enhance their performance, whereby employee motivation has been identified as one of the key variables in advancing both the performance of individuals and the performance of the organization as a whole. Thus, the main challenge facing human resources managers and line managers in the public sector is creating working conditions that give due consideration to the human factor, allowing for the enhancement of individuals’ motivation in order to influence organizational performance.

Third, whereas society as a whole and policy-makers in particular put efficiency goals to the fore, performance in the public sphere goes beyond the simple level of efficiency. The creation of societal outcomes, formulation of public policies, guaranteeing citizens’ rights, or adherence to the rule of law are some examples of the complex set of goals and principles that guide public task fulfillment. Institutional and societal values are, therefore, the main foundation of both motivation in the public sector and of the associated performance outcomes. Fourth, accountability within the public sector has been extended during the period of New Public
Management by complementing the input perspective with an output orientation (Ritz and Sager 2010). Here, the motivation to act appropriately for the benefit of society and various stakeholders can compensate for more complex, diminished or distorted accountability processes. Thus, the motivation of individuals is essential in keeping a balance between outcome and process values, such as equity and quality, regardless of whether or not these aspects are monitored (Vandenabeele and Van Loon 2015).

Against the backdrop of the arguments outlined above relating to the relevance of motivation of public employees, this chapter will be structured as follows: In the next section, the role of motivating employees in public sector organizations will be presented from a classical motivation theory perspective. This allows us, in the next step, to illustrate how research on motivation in the public sector has developed its own peculiarities and concepts. The research stream on public service motivation in particular has produced an original concept, stimulating new research within and beyond the boundaries of the discipline. Furthermore, it is one of the few scholarly developments in the field of Public Administration. Therefore, the third and fourth sections of this chapter focus mainly on public service motivation. In doing so, we adopt an institutional perspective on motivation, drawing a distinction between public sector motivation and public service motivation. Finally, we develop a conceptual model to provide an overview of the antecedents and outcomes of public service motivation that have been investigated to date.

**Classic foundations of employee motivation in the public sector**

Motivation describes processes by which certain motives are activated and transferred into actions. From this results a state of goal-oriented behavior that is characterized by direction, intensity, and persistence. The motivation to pursue a goal depends on situational incentives, personal preferences, and their interdependency. Motivation at the workplace is a central driver of success for any organization, regardless of sector, which is why numerous attempts have been made in various disciplines to theoretically explain the emergence, persistence, and decline of individual motivation levels. Motivation acts as a predictor of individuals’ behaviors and performance, all of which in turn contribute to organizational performance. More specifically, motivation determines the direction, intensity, and the power of endurance of behaviors (Heckhausen 1989).

However, motivation alone is not sufficient to explain performance. Acting as a catalyst, volition stimulates individuals to transfer motivations into behavior. In other words, motivation needs to be accompanied by the will to act in accordance with that motivation in order to produce behavioral outcomes. Such volition is based on concentrated attention, management of emotions, self-efficacy, goal-oriented self-discipline, and seeing the meaning in a task. The latter is of crucial significance in the public sector. The will to act in accordance with the motivation to attain an outcome depends greatly on a deeper understanding of why public institutions exist and what role they play in society. For instance, at the interface between politics and administration, public managers often face situations in which the motivation to engage in policy formulation needs to be accompanied by high levels of volition in a rather difficult and politically infused environment.

Advocating a somewhat different notion of the interplay between motivation and behavior, McClelland (1985) pointed out that behavior may be understood as a function of motivation, ability, and situational factors such as resources and interpersonal support. Either way, individuals’ behaviors and performance are crucially dependent on the existence of some form of motivation, which is why we will proceed to review some general theories of work motivation before
turning to the specifics of motivation in public sector settings. The general theories mainly include, first, process-based theories, and second, content-based theories, as will be discussed below.

**Process-based theories**

Regarding the process-based theories, *expectancy theory*, as developed by Vroom (1964), attempts to explain why individuals rationally choose to perform or not to perform specific behaviors based on the expectancy of either pleasure or pain resulting as a consequence of this decision. More specifically, the theory is that individuals are motivated if they believe that effort and performance are positively associated, that performance will enable them to attain rewards which satisfy a given need, and that the desire to satisfy said need is so pronounced that the effort is deemed appropriate. This theory is based on three concepts: valence, expectancy, and instrumentality – sometimes referred to as the VIE model. Valence describes the personal emotions and value-attributions regarding extrinsic (pay, benefits, promotions, etc.) and intrinsic (enjoyment, satisfaction) rewards. Instrumentality pertains to an individual’s prospects of actually receiving the desired reward upon task completion. Expectancy refers to the beliefs of what one is capable of doing and could also be described as self-confidence. These three factors taken together lead to motivation, which, in turn, is associated with other desired work-related concepts such as job satisfaction and tenure. From a public sector perspective, the VIE model leads us to the question of how instrumental an individual’s effort is in regard to satisfying his needs. Today, extrinsic rewards such as performance-related pay, promotion, and life-long tenure are the subject of considerable dispute in public organizations (Perry et al. 2009). Thus, the valence of intrinsic public service motives and their role within the VIE process is becoming increasingly important.

Another process-based approach is adopted by *goal-setting theory* (Locke and Latham 1991). Goal-setting theory, as a motivation theory, suggests that goals are immediate regulators of human behavior (Latham and Locke 2007). The main claim of this theory is that people differ in their levels of motivation and the outcomes thereof, in the same way that they also differ regarding the goals they pursue. Accordingly, goals to be set out by management should be considered carefully. Nowadays, management by objectives exemplifies goal-setting theory in most public organizations in Western countries, although the five relevant principles of goal setting according to Locke and Latham are not always met in practice. Those five principles of goal setting, designed to improve success at the workplace through better motivated employees, are as follows: First, goals need to be precise, avoiding vagueness and ambiguity so that individuals know exactly what it is they should be trying to achieve. Second, goals need to be challenging so they are able to arouse an individual’s interest. Third, stimulating the commitment to work towards a goal is vital and can best be achieved by letting the individual participate in the process of formulating the goal. Fourth, acknowledging feedback is crucial to ensure that expectations can be clarified and that goals can be adapted should difficulties arise.

Lastly, task complexity needs to be taken into account in order for goals not to be overly ambitious, meaning they cannot be achieved within the given time frame. Jung and Ritz (2014) point out that goal-setting theory has been researched in a variety of public sector settings, clearly suggesting that government organizations tend to have multiple, often competing, contradictory, and ambiguous goals (e.g. Allison 1983; Downs 1967; Moynihan 2008). Quite frequently, this is due to lack of profit indicators (Rainey 2010), conflicts among values (e.g. preservation and development of natural resources) (Wildavsky 1979), political intervention, or competing demands by multiple interest groups (Rainey 2010). Thus, such goal characteristics
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in the public sector may be a source of difficulties, both as regards motivating employees and in terms of measuring performance (Chun and Rainey 2006; Jung 2011).

*Equity theory*, as postulated by Adams (1965), is a third process-based theory which focuses on the interpersonal fairness aspect of reward allocations. It assumes that employees strive for equity regarding the efforts they exert for an employer and the rewards they receive in return, and that this equity assessment is based on comparisons with other individuals either within or outside the same organization. This theory postulates that people view equity or fairness as an important commodity which, when present, contributes to their motivation to work. If there is a perceived imbalance in equity from the individual’s perspective, there are four strategies to reinstate equity. First, inputs or efforts may be reduced. Second, individuals may press for outcomes or rewards to be increased. Third, one may overrate or underrate one’s own or others’ efforts to psychologically justify imbalances, and fourth, individuals may choose to quit. Equity-theory calls for procedural and distributive justice in the realms of motivation management (Osterloh et al. 2001). Fundamental public sector principles such as equal treatment, uniformity in the application of law and policies, and the requirement to justify decisions illustrate the institutional values, which are extremely relevant from a motivational perspective in order to enhance employee performance. Equity theory has significant practical implications. For instance, criticism of inflexible public pay structures (e.g. executive salaries below market average, lack of room for maneuver concerning bonuses) should not simply be refused on the basis of institutional arguments, but should also be tested by sound empirical comparisons of reference groups and pay systems within and outside the public organization.

To summarize, while emphasizing specific elements within the development of motivation, process-based theories elucidate the relevance of the institutional environment for enhancing employee outcomes. The magnitude of certain needs and the instrumentality of one’s effort in the process leading from motivation to behavior are strongly influenced by the public-sector-specific incentive regime and the links between individual effort and performance, which are rudimentary at best. One major reason for this is the type of goal characteristics typical in public sector organizations, which make it difficult to measure performance. Thus, output-oriented efficiency is only one of multiple rationales in initiating effort within such an institutional environment. Institutional values such as equal treatment, uniformity in the application of law and policies, and the required justification of decisions or democratic and constitutional principles are equally important motivational drivers.

**Content-based theories**

Moving on to the content-based theories, an early but consistently prominent approach is Maslow’s *hierarchy of needs* (1943), which distinguishes between five basic needs that are ranked based on their importance for human survival. In this theory, the emergence of motivation to pursue a need which is less crucial for survival, placed near the top of the hierarchy, is unlikely unless all of the more basic needs classified below have been met. Instead, motivation is predominantly focused on the lowest-ranking need that is still unfulfilled. *ERG theory* (Alderfer 1969) utilizes a needs categorization similar to Maslow’s approach, the basic category being “existence needs” such as hunger, thirst, safety, and sex; the second category being relatedness needs such as social involvement, family, and social recognition; and the third category being growth needs, such as the desire for self-fulfillment, the need to be creative and to work on meaningful tasks. In either one of these hierarchy-based theories, individuals’ motivation is directed at moving up in the hierarchy to achieve satisfaction, while the motivation to fulfill an unmet need becomes stronger as time passes (e.g. hunger gradually increases). Public
organizations in highly developed societies find themselves increasingly confronted with personnel aspiring for higher order needs and, thus, need to use their opportunities to emphasize social involvement, social recognition, autonomy, and meaningful tasks when motivating employees. From an organizational viewpoint, public management reforms implementing performance contracts and lump sum budgeting may help to create such opportunities. A central result of these reforms is increased autonomy at the workplace, provided changes are designed to truly enhance room for maneuver within a public office.

There is another group of content-based theories that was crucially influenced by Herzberg’s (1968) two-factor theory, or motivation-hygiene theory. In this approach, a distinction is drawn between motivators (such as challenging work, responsibility, and success), and hygiene factors (such as salary, status, relations to managers and colleagues, and security). Whereas the existence of motivators is theorized to cause job satisfaction, as opposed to non-job-satisfaction, hygiene factors are believed to reduce job dissatisfaction, leading to non-job-dissatisfaction. Thus, job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are treated as two independent concepts, resulting in four ideal-type states of work motivation depending on the low-to-high values of either one of the two dimensions. Herzberg’s dichotomy is largely in line with the popular extrinsic–intrinsic motivation framework. Here, extrinsic motivation is described as the prospect of satisfying one’s needs indirectly either through material rewards (e.g. monetary such as salary and bonuses, or non-monetary such as a public transportation pass) or immaterial rewards (e.g. social status and prestige, opportunities for personal development, workplace location) in exchange for work efforts. In contrast, intrinsic motivation is characterized as pertaining to valuing an activity per se which means that needs are satisfied directly (Osterloh et al. 2001). Intrinsic motivation is sometimes further sub-divided into a hedonic facet that emphasizes enjoyment and pleasure (e.g. satisfaction drawn from the flow of an activity, working on a challenging task) as the basis of motivation, and an eudaemonic component that focuses on the role of meaning and purpose (e.g. help clients, coworkers, society) in motivating humans (Grant 2008a; Houston 2011).

One of the most salient theories based on the extrinsic–intrinsic motivation framework is self-determination theory (SDT) as postulated by Deci and Ryan (2002), who put the basic human needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness at the forefront of their approach. In fact, SDT is a set of six associated theories, the most popular of which, Organismic Integration Theory, focuses on the autonomy aspect and distinguishes between amotivation, four types of extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation. These types of motivation can be ranked according to the degree to which a behavior is self-determined, as manifested in six types of regulation. Activities that are entirely non-self-determined, for instance, are theorized to lead to a lack of motivation to behave in situations in which no regulation is present, as described by the term amotivation. The least self-determined type of extrinsic motivation, characterized by external regulation, is typical in situations in which tasks grant very little autonomy and where people attempt to attain contingent external rewards or avoid punishment through their work on said tasks.

Moving up the hierarchy of self-determination, introjected regulation is the next type of extrinsic motivation. Here, people partially internalize the previously external regulation, anticipating and avoiding the shame or guilt associated with the failure to comply with contingent consequences. The following state of extrinsic motivation is characterized by identified regulation, which is when the individual starts to recognize and accept a behavior’s underlying value and internalizes it more, an example being identifying that exercising regularly contributes to good health and acting accordingly to maintain one’s well-being. The most self-determined type of extrinsic motivation is based on integrated regulation, meaning that beyond the identification of the importance of a behavior, people will fully accept that behavior and integrate it into their personal values and identity. Finally, intrinsic motivation is characterized
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by entirely intrinsic regulation and behaviors are fully self-determined as they are in line with the individual’s values. This means that the activity is pursued since it is deemed interesting and free from external pressures, rendering it fully volitional and often making intrinsic motivation the most desirable and powerful form of motivation. However, intrinsic motivation is difficult to achieve and it is not uncommon that individuals at the workplace have to move through various types of extrinsic motivation before becoming intrinsically motivated. In the following, we will explain why SDT is of great relevance in regard to motivation of public employees.

Against the backdrop of motivation-hygiene theory and self-determination theory, the eudaemonic component which focuses on the role of meaning and purpose exemplifies why public sector work tasks have the potential to promote employees’ identification with underlying values of work (e.g. incorruptibility) and to integrate them with their personal values. Such values at the individual, organizational, or societal level are called public values (Jorgensen and Bozeman 2007). They have been defined as “the ideals, coined as principles, to be followed when producing a public service or regulating citizens’ behavior, thus providing direction to the behavior of public servants” (Andersen et al. 2013: 294). Therefore, we argue that it is key when seeking to understand motivation in the public sector to also consider public-value-focused approaches of explaining motivation, since a large portion of jobs and tasks in public sector settings are concerned with providing support and help to citizens. Spitzmueller and Van Dyne (2013), for instance, distinguish between two types of helping behavior: proactive helping in which individuals are motivated by self-interest and seek out opportunities to help others, in order to meet their own personal needs; and reactive helping, where individuals behave altruistically and help others in response to their (others’) observed need, which primarily benefits others (see also Spector 2013). The concept of prosocial motivation, often defined as the desire to exert effort to benefit others (Batson 1987), is geared more towards reactive helping behaviors and, consequently, is understood to be more altruistic in nature.

The concept of public service motivation (PSM), which also pertains more to the notion of reactive helping behavior (Koehler and Rainey 2008), is of particular relevance in public sector settings (Ritz et al. 2016). Both prosocial motivation and public service motivation are often subsumed under types of intrinsic motivation, and, more specifically, of the eudaemonic component thereof (Houston 2011; Grant 2008a). However, as discussed above, SDT postulates that extrinsic motivation may exhibit intrinsic qualities as autonomy increases (Koehler and Rainey 2008). According to SDT, public service motivation reflects a highly self-determined type of extrinsic motivation, which is based on integrated regulation, since the reference object of public service motives is external. For instance, certain public service motives are directed towards society and those individuals who profit from public service delivery. Thus, people motivated by public service fully accept the institutional public values and integrate these with their personal values and identity.

Specific types of motivation in the public sector

Motivation in the public sector is strongly linked to the institutional setting, as has been discussed above. From a theoretical viewpoint, institutional theory may provide further insights into the origins of employee motivation in the public sector. Values, norms, and rules – as the defining parts of institutions – infuse social structures with values and promote stability and persistence over time (Peters 2000; Selznick 1984). Viewed as organizations, institutions are shaped in response to their external environment and transcend to the individual level of an employee’s identity, influencing his/her values and motives, which, in turn, define a range of permissible and prohibited behavior (Ritz and Brewer 2013; Perry 2000; Scott 1987). Thus,
employee motivation in the public sector is a function of the degree to which an organization shares the individual’s values or provides opportunities for the employee to satisfy these values (Christensen and Wright 2009). In addition, it is not the sector that is the decisive element in the development of motivation. Instead, employees’ values are influenced by the organization’s degree of “publicness”. This characteristic defines organizations not only in the public sector, but also in the private and non-profit sectors (Bozeman 1987). However, in the following we simply distinguish between two major types of employee motivation in the public sector: public sector motivation and public service motivation. In doing so, we disentangle the various roles public sector organizations play both in public servants’ motivation and in their internalization of different types of values (Christensen and Wright 2009; Brewer and Selden 1998).

**Public sector motivation**

The first motivation concept with a key focus on public organizations is public sector motivation. According to institutional theory, public sector motivation implies a “logic of consequentiality” involving institutional rules and interpretations to be treated as alternatives in a rational choice problem (March and Olsen 1989). Rational choice theory characterizes administrators as generally rational individuals (constrained by certain informational and cognitive boundaries) who have a fixed set of preferences and who seek to maximize their utility (Brennan and Buchanan 1985). The assumption of rationality implies that an individual will choose the alternative that yields the greatest value for him and that is likely to occur (Neumann and Ritz 2015; Gordon 1972).

As far as the attractiveness of public sector employment is concerned, there are several institutional values and extrinsic incentives that allow for individual utility maximization. Public organizations, for instance, offer relatively high job security and protection against dismissal, good career perspectives, relatively high salaries in low- and mid-level ranks, stable salaries overall, as well as a robust salary development scale, all of which can be attractive to certain individuals motivated by such benefits (Buelens and Van den Broeck 2007; French and Emerson 2014; Karl and Sutton 1998; Lewis and Frank 2002; Perry and Hondeghem 2008). Furthermore, pension schemes for public employees generally guarantee security and independence, and the attractiveness of a civil service career is that it practically guarantees a certain standard of living in retirement (OECD 2013).

It should also be noted that public organizations often offer more favorable working hours and vacation schemes. Thus, we define public sector motivation as the desire to behave in accordance with motives grounded in an individual’s self-interest and directed at extrinsic incentives typically found in the public sector. This includes, for instance, job security, guaranteed salary and career development, and further privileges. That said, we may also conclude that certain incentives motivate individuals regardless of their employers’ sector (French and Emerson 2014). In this line of reasoning, the relationship between employee and employer reflects a form of psychological contract based on an exchange of loyalty and duty in return for salary and privileges. Such a relationship is different from an exchange of effort and performance in return for skill development and employability. Public sector motivation is based more on the former type of psychological contract, in which the attainment of output and outcome goals is of secondary interest to an employee. First and foremost, an employee performs certain actions based on the experience of individual needs being satisfied. Shirking behavior is a typical consequence if public organizations are unable to satisfy employees’ needs in regard to the incentives described above, since organizational outcomes are not to the fore for the individual (Francois 2000). Thus, public sector motivation is closely linked to the specific work
context and working conditions within government organizations. Nevertheless, such working conditions also exist in the private sector, although they are far more common in the public sector (Wright 2001).

**Public service motivation**

The second type of motivation, public service motivation, has been part of the scientific discourse in public administration literature for more than 25 years (Ritz et al. 2016), and is the first theory to specifically address the topic of employee motivation in the public sector, although it also applies to public service-related jobs in other sectors (Brewer and Selden 1998). Public service motivation fits very well into a “logic of appropriateness” as distinguished by institutional theory (March and Olsen 1989): employees act not only (but also) out of self-interest; instead, their actions are driven by rules of appropriate and exemplary behavior inherent to the institution. Such rules “are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate. Actors seek to fulfill the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions. Embedded in a social collectivity, they do what they see as appropriate for themselves in a specific type of situation” (March and Olsen 2009: 2). Viewing public service motivation within this context responds to a call for more contextualized and less individual-level-based types of motivations, distinguishing it from certain classical, and – above all – process-based types of employee motivation (Perry 2000).

Initially, the concept of public service motivation was defined as “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (Perry and Wise 1990), while more recent definitions, such as the one put forward by Perry and Hondeghem (2008), have adopted a broader perspective, describing it as a type of motivation which generally refers to “motives and action in the public domain that are intended to do good for others and shape the well-being of society” (Perry and Hondeghem 2008: 3). We simply define Public Service Motivation as the desire to behave in accordance with motives that are grounded in the public interest in order to serve society. The concept is deeply rooted in history (Vandenebeele and Van Loon 2015). The idea that public officials should be concerned with the public interest, leaving aside individual interests, can be traced as far back as to Aristotle and Plato. Throughout history, the idea regularly surfaces in various guises – in the works of philosophers such as Thomas of Aquinas, Rousseau, and John Rawls, for instance – and it became a consistent feature in the majority of dominant western public service systems (Horton 2008). Nevertheless, it was not until Rainey (1982) first mentioned public service motivation and Perry and Wise (1990) first formalized the definition and theory thereof, that this became a concept in its own right. Numerous concepts related to public service motivation such as altruism, prosocial motivation and public service ethos have been part of public administration and adjacent disciplines for a long time. However, we do not understand public service motivation as a purely altruistic concept. Instead, it reflects a mix of motives composed of enjoyment-based intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and prosocial intrinsic motivation (Neumann and Ritz 2015). Furthermore, all these motives can be understood as parts of an individual’s set of preferences and rationality (Akerlof and Kranton 2010).

Thus, research on public service motivation based the concept on a full range of behavioral motives, taking into account the fact that individuals’ motives are mixed (Bolino 1999; Brewer et al. 2000). Perry and Wise (1990) included rational, norm-based, and affective motives in their definition. Kim and Vandenebeele (2010) distinguish between instrumental motives,
value-based motives, and identification with beneficiaries as the main drivers of public service motivation. These different types of motives are reflected in the research on measurement of public service motivation. The first measurement scale developed by Perry (1996) comprised four dimensions. These were: attraction to public policy making, commitment to the public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice. An international team of 16 researchers further developed the so-called Perry scale into a four dimensional measure, designating its dimensions: attraction to public service, commitment to public values, compassion, and self-sacrifice (Kim et al. 2013). Other researchers added their own measurement dimensions, such as democratic governance (Vandenabeele 2008; see also Giauque et al. 2011) or shortened the original scale to create an abridged measurement instrument (Coursey and Pandey 2007).

Research on public service motivation has increased enormously and an increasingly global research community has responded to Perry and Wise’s (1990) call for the advancement of theory and measurement on public service motivation. While most of the empirical research on PSM has been conducted in Europe and North America, research in Asia has gained significant momentum in recent years and some first publications have appeared in Oceania, Africa, and South America (Ritz et al. 2016). For this reason, we will first provide an overview of the main lines of empirical research on the topic in the following section.

A model of antecedents and outcomes of public service motivation

Since PSM is an important facet in enhancing public sector organizations’ success, the question of how such motivation emerges and whether this emergence can, in fact, be facilitated from the outside at all are of key interest. Similarly, it is crucial to understand how exactly PSM contributes to which desirable (or adverse) individual and organizational outcomes. Unsurprisingly, extensive research efforts have been devoted to theorizing and empirically testing both potential antecedents and outcomes of the concept (Ritz et al. 2016).

Figure 30.1 depicts a conceptual model that schematically illustrates the theorized groups of antecedents and outcomes of PSM, many of which have been subject to more or less thorough empirical testing. It is important to note in regard to this model that in many cases, it is still subject to debate whether certain concepts are actually antecedents, correlates, or outcomes of PSM. This is due to the fact that research efforts on causality are still scarce in this field (two notable exceptions are Bellé 2013; Moynihan, 2013). Moreover, the model shown focuses on illustrating the breadth of the variable relationships surrounding PSM, neglecting the fact that many of the associations might be mediated or moderated (or both) by other variables, meaning that, in reality, relationships may be substantially more complex. There are several other models in PSM literature which focus more on the complexity of a smaller number of variable relationships, theorizing and testing moderations and mediations. Wright (2001), for instance, suggested a mediation-model of public sector work motivation including motives, work context, job attitudes, job characteristics, and work motivation, whereas Perry (2000) developed a process model of PSM including various socio-historical context variables, motivational context variables, individual characteristics, and certain behavioral variables. In addition, the relationships differ depending on which dimension of the public service motivation construct is associated with the antecedents and outcomes. For instance, empirical research showed that the dimension of compassion has stronger associations with females when compared to the other dimensions (Camilleri 2007; DeHart-Davis et al. 2006).

As for the antecedents, the scientific discourse has centered around seven broad categories. These include personal and socio-demographic attributes (which are included in many studies as control variables); organizational characteristics; socialization, political preference and
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Figure 30.1 Conceptual model illustrating groups of antecedents and outcomes of public service motivation

religiousness; volunteering; salary and reward preferences; job grade or management level, job attributes, employee relations with the leader and tenure; and sector of work (Ritz et al. 2016; Vandenabeele 2011; Perry et al. 2008; Camilleri 2007; Perry 1997). We would like now to briefly discuss a few examples of empirical research regarding three of these categories. First, with respect to socialization, Perry (1997) demonstrated that both parental and religious socialization were significant predictors of elevated levels of PSM, using a sample of diverse public-sector employees and MPA students. He argues that parental socialization is relevant in the process of developing altruistic motivations such as compassion and self-sacrifice, whereas religious socialization is particularly important in the US when it comes to learning how to get involved in the community. Second, with respect to volunteering, Anderfuhr-Biget (2012) demonstrated, based on a large dataset from the multicultural country of Switzerland, that engaging in benevolent activities and donating to charitable organizations are associated with the PSM-dimension self-sacrifice across cultural borders. Third, in regard to job attributes, Grant (2008b) demonstrated that the motivation of public service employees can be increased by enabling them to see the prosocial impact associated with their job.

Regarding the outcomes of PSM, six major groups can be identified. These are: performance, work effort and quality of work; commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors; job satisfaction; sectoral choice and person–environment fit; reduced turnover intentions; and, finally, a group of potentially harmful outcomes such as over-engagement, presenteeism, workaholism, and burnout, which can be seen as the “dark side” of PSM (Ritz et al. 2016; Bellé and Cantarelli 2012; Taylor 2007). Again, we will discuss examples of empirical research regarding three of the most frequently researched outcome categories. First, regarding performance, Bellé (2013) showed in a field experiment involving 138 nurses in Italy that
transformational leadership positively interacts with PSM to increase employee performance as measured in the number of surgical kits assembled in a shift. Second, regarding job satisfaction and using a public servant sample from Korea, Kim (2012) demonstrated that PSM is associated with satisfaction both directly, and indirectly through mediation by means of person–organization fit, which was measured using three value congruence items. Third, as regards sectoral choice, Christensen and Wright (2011) found that individuals featuring high levels of public service motivation prefer jobs emphasizing service to others regardless of organization type, meaning that no clear link was established between PSM and organization or sector choice.

Conclusion

This chapter addresses the longstanding and important issue of employee motivation in the public sector from a theoretical perspective, while also integrating empirical findings from Public Administration research. In today’s context of politico-administrative institutions, the task of motivating employees is becoming increasingly vital. Financial resources are scarce, competition in the labor market is increasing, while an aging society and workforce demand successful retention strategies, and complex accountability regimes characterize the modernized and managerialized government organization.

Motivation has the potential to make a difference regarding outcomes both on the individual and on the organizational level. Insights from classical process-based motivation, such as expectancy theory, goal-setting theory, and equity theory, stress three specific characteristics of the public sector for motivating employees. First, the instrumentality of one’s own effort towards receiving the desired reward upon task completion is not always clear-cut. Second, goal setting within a context that has multiple, often competing, contradictory, and ambiguous goals is a great challenge. Lastly, the important role of values and principles that call for procedural and distributive fairness concerning reward allocation shows that equity perception in public sector workplaces is strongly supported by the institutional context and the organizational culture.

Several content-based theories of motivation emphasize the eudaemonic facet of motivation, which focuses on the role of meaning and purpose in motivating humans. In the societal context of government organizations, public values have the potential to infuse organizations’ and individuals’ value structures, leading to forms of prosocial motivation focusing on providing support to the public interest and helping citizens. Public service motivation, in contrast to public sector motivation, explains why employees act upon a mix of motives in which prosocial, public-value-focused motives are at the fore as their environment and identity demands them to – the so-called logic of appropriateness. Research on public service motivation has developed into one of the few original streams of research in Public Administration. Theoretical development, supplemented by a great variety of empirical research, has also increased considerably. This is particularly true where the core components of such motivation are concerned; these relate to the attraction to public service and policy making, the commitment to public values, and affective components such as compassion and self-sacrifice. Public service motivation is not an entirely new concept and can be found in various historical texts and eras. Thus far, empirical research has generated a broad range of insights on the antecedents and outcomes of public service motivation. This is of particular relevance to Public Administration research since, for the first time, it marks the existence of a fully-fledged concept of motivation based on institutional theory and related to individuals’ needs, values and behavior, as well as to the wider context of public organizations and society.
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References


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