



The Effects of Public Service Motivation on Employees' Intention to Stay

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Abstract. Public service motivation is crucial in the public sector and nonprofit organizations because it ensures that individuals working in these sectors are dedicated to the public good, ethical in their actions, and committed to improving society. This paper aims to show integrative literature links between public service motivation and intention to stay through the mediation of job satisfaction and commitment. Based on the literature, this paper provides considerable evidence that public service motivation (PSM) predicts job satisfaction and intention to stay. This paper specifically focuses on the factors behind the motivation of public service employees and the determinants of the intention to stay. Finally, this paper suggests a research direction for further investigation on PSM and how intention to stay can be predicted based on other variables such as organizational commitment and perceived opportunities for career advancement. Additionally, it highlights the importance of understanding the role of PSM in fostering a sense of purpose and fulfilment among public service employees, which in turn can contribute to their intention to stay in the organization.

Keywords: PSM · Intention to Stay · Affective Commitment · job satisfaction

1 Introduction

Understanding employee motivation is crucial for public sector organizations, as it helps managers understand the factors driving their staff's enthusiasm and motivation. Public Service Motivation (PSM) is one of the main elements that directly enhances service quality through work satisfaction. PSM is positively associated with civil servants' work results, like job satisfaction (Catherine 2018, Nhat Vuong et al. 2023). Intention to stay is another important factor in employee motivation (Škerháková, Korba et al. 2022). High turnover rates can negatively affect an organization's reputation, relationships with other institutions, and stakeholder relationships. Factors contributing to employee departure include incompatible culture, unsatisfactory relationships, unattractive financial remunerations, job stress, weak training and development programs, inadequate growth opportunities, lack of support from top management, and poor work-life balance. Job satisfaction is the feeling of pleasure, contentment and achievement employees experience from appraising their job. Research has shown that satisfied employees are more enthusiastic, exert extra effort, have higher organizational commitment, perform better, and

are more motivated than other employees. PSM was defined as an important factor that predicts job satisfaction, with studies showing that public service motivated employees were more satisfied than their colleagues with lower PSM levels (Inalhan et al. 2021). However, the strength of this relationship varies significantly between the key elements that constitute PSM.

PSM implies the extent to which civil servants are motivated by the sense of both duty and commitment to serve the public interest (Tu, Hsieh et al. 2023). Research indicates that PSM is a crucial strategy used by managers in the public sector to influence employee productivity at work. Research showed a strong association between PSM and employee performance within governmental organizations (Perry and Wise's, 1990; Schwarz et al. 2016). The authors proposed that the association between these two might be attributed to the viewpoint of those with PSM about the significance of their public employment. An individual ability to engage in what they consider to be meaningful work and to put their beliefs and principles into practice on a day-to-day basis should be positively associated with work performance. Several researchers have examined the relationship between these two factors (Campbell & Im 2016; Schott et al. 2015). It is clear from the theoretical underpinnings in the literature that the relationship between intention to stay and PSM has not been fully explored or reached theoretical saturation, especially when it comes to the complicated factors that influence intention to stay. Therefore, by outlining the linkages and connections that require more in-depth investigation, this paper seeks to develop a theoretical framework that will serve as a basis for future research.

2 PSM and Intention to Stay

Understanding the employee is the first step towards understanding their motivation. Public sector employees are essential to the organization that offers services to all communities. There are several reasons why employees prefer to work in governmental institutions. There are internal as well as external motivational forces that are employed. Comprehending the elements contributing to employee motivation is essential for managers as it helps them understand the data that drives their staff's enthusiasm (Shahda 2016). A manager using motives as a useful tool may therefore accomplish motivating subordinates to be productive in their role as public sector employees. Leaders significantly impact employee motivation.

PSM is a driving force that directly enhances the quality of services through job satisfaction (Nurung et al. 2019). Besides, several researchers proved that PSM, in general, directly and positively influences job satisfaction; however, the strength of this linkage varies between the dimensions of PSM. Levitats and Vigoda-Gadot (2017) proved that PSM is positively related to public employees' work outcomes.

2.1 Intention to Stay

When employees quit an organization is not only financially but also psychologically painful for both the employer and the employee. In addition to the loss of experienced and skilled employees who quit the organization, it also has a negative effect on the

reputation of the company, on its relationships with other institutions and with its stakeholders, especially when those who quit the organization cooperated and exchanged information with rival institutions (Ghosh et al. 2011). Productivity will be negatively affected whenever an employee leaves the organization because new employees need time to learn and understand the job. The loss of employees adds more costs to the organization because the firm loses human capital and relational capital while competitors will gain these assets. Organizations usually take time to fill all these gaps. Organizations, for example, invest more time and money on recruitment, selection, training and developing new incumbents. High turnover rates are not good for the reputation of any organization because successful organizations are the ones that recruit skilled employees and retain them along with creating a stable workforce (Ghosh et al. 2011).

There are several factors that explain why employees leave the organization, namely, incompatible culture, unsatisfactory relationships with colleagues, unattractive financial remunerations, job stress, weak T&D programs, inadequate growth opportunities, and low support from those at the upper echelon of the organization (Heather 2003; Herman 1999, Allen et al. 2003; Horwitz et al. 2003).

2.2 Job Satisfaction: As a Mediator

Broadly speaking, job satisfaction is described as the feeling of pleasure contentment and achievement that employees experience resulting from appraising one's job (Lock 1969). It represents the beliefs, and emotions that workers think about their work. While good and desired beliefs or feelings toward one's job are referred as work satisfaction, bad and undesired ones indicate job dissatisfaction. Work satisfaction also implies the degree to which employees are happy with the rewards they get out of their job (George & Jones 2008). Several researchers examined the importance of work satisfaction and its outcomes. Researchers were able to find that satisfied employees are usually more enthusiastic (Helmi & Abunar 2021), exert extra efforts on their job (Nurung et al. 2019), have higher organizational commitment (Homberg et al. 2015), perform better and tend to be more motivated than other employees (Helmi & Abunar 2021).

In recent years, several researchers have been interested in studying the association between PSM and job satisfaction (Choi and Chun 2018; Kjeldsen and Hanson 2018). PSM has been considered as a predictor of job satisfaction (Lu & Hung Chen 2022). Perry (1996), for instance, was among the first scholars to indicate that public service motivated workers were more satisfied than their colleagues with lower PSM levels. Similarly, other researchers found that PSM imposes direct and positive influences on work behaviors, including job satisfaction (Levitats & Vigadot-Gadot 2017; Chen et al. 2021). However, the strength of this relationship varies greatly between the four dimensions of PSM construct (Homberg et al. 2015).

Even though a number of researchers, as mentioned previously, hypothesize that PSM positively influences job satisfaction, other studies came out with mixed findings. For instance, Bright (2008) was among the first researchers to indicate that the association between PSM and job satisfaction is insignificant when considering P-O fit. Within the same context, Rayner et al. (2018) found that there is no remarkable association between PSM and job satisfaction among Australian council workers. Other studies

indicated that PSM was negatively linked to work satisfaction when P-O fit was considered. In other words, P-O fit was considered as the mediator between work satisfaction and PSM (Khuram et al. 2020). Likewise, Kim (2012) concluded that P-O fit played as the mediator between the fit mediated the relationship between PSM and both work satisfaction and organizational commitment among Korean civil servants. Finally, Kjeldsen and Andersen (2013) concluded that PSM had a positive association with job satisfaction only when workers view that their job benefits both the society and the community.

It is important to note that job satisfaction has been an important factor that strongly affected the intentions of employees to remain in their organization (Choi & Chiu 2017; Aydogdu & Asikgil 2011). Satisfied employees usually are the ones that have high desires to stay in the organization (Huang et al. 2017). Likewise, Markovits et al. (2007) asserted that job satisfaction is regarded as a powerful predictor to stay in the organization. Kim et al. (2021) stressed that organizations must know the real causes of job satisfaction and employee intention to stay in order to increase the retention of skilled and knowledgeable employees. Other studies highlighted the importance of training quality. In other words, training quality has indirect effect on intentions to stay mediated by job satisfaction (Chiang et al. 2005). Finally, Vadenabeele (2009) concluded that job satisfaction is a noticeable factor when studying the association between PSM and employee intention to stay. That is, public service motivated employees were more satisfied, which in turn, decreases their intentions to leave their organization.

3 Affective Commitment: Mediator

Affective commitment is regarded as an emotional attachment to one's institution; it represents a key element of organizational commitment. It represents the degree of attachment that the workers have toward their institution. This is usually represented in the form of feelings of love to one's institution which, in turn, leads to the willingness to stay on and be part of this organization (Amin et al. 2018).

Unlike other types of commitment, affective commitment is viewed as the most effective tool that measures organizational commitment (Allen & Myer 1990). Accordingly, employees who have strong emotional commitment to their organization work hard, put the interest of their company first, defend and stay in the organization even in hard times. Accordingly, affective commitment is a key element to the success and prosperity of the institution and to long term sustainability (Ardiyansyah & Afandi 2018). Moreover, they have high levels of job performance and exhibit strong emotional bond with their organization. Employees with high affective commitment always try to make meaningful contributions to their organizations. Affective commitment increases as long as the employees feel that their needs and expectations are met within their organization. Robbins & Judge (2007) claimed that affective commitment is found when employees feel that their ideals and views are in accordance with the company's mission and objectives.

Wood (2018) claimed that workers with high levels on affective commitment usually tend to work harder, help others and exert additional efforts apart from their official responsibilities. Demirtas & Akdogan (2015) declared that affective commitment is a strong bond to the organization; it represents the feeling of belonging to one's organization where employees feels that they are determined to serve their organization.

Accordingly, those with strong affective commitment are more loyal to their organization, and hence, tend to stay in the organization. They have a strong desire to stay in their institution and to help achieve its goals. Wasko and Faraj (2005) asserted that affective commitment is a predictor of Organization Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Hence, employees with strong affective commitment are more likely to remain in the organization and to resist change. Accordingly, it strengthens workforce stability and the quality of delivered services.

Kim (2006) also studied the association between the aforementioned variables. He concluded that these two were the main predictors of OCB. In other words, Korean civil servants that had high scores on PSM and affective commitment have had high levels of OCB than their colleagues with low PSM and affective commitment levels (Kim 2006). Rajagukguk and Desiana (2022) found this association to be mediated by work engagement. Other researchers believe that the association between the two was extremely weak. For instance, Augustina et al. (2021) showed that only two dimensions of PSM construct had significant influence on affective commitment, namely, compassion and commitment to the public interest.

Sun (2021) found that affective commitment has a joint reverse effect on the association between PSM and turnover intention. For instance, temporary Chinese civil servants with low scores on affective commitment and low levels of PSM had low intentions to stay in the public sector. Whereas, other employees with high affective commitment and high levels of PSM were more likely to have high intentions to stay in the Chinese public sector (Sun 2021).

Affective commitment has also played an important role when examining the association between work satisfaction and intentions to stay. For example, Kartika and Purba (2018) admitted that organizational commitment and normative commitment could partially be the mediators of the association between intentions to stay and work satisfaction. These two scholars found that only affective commitment was able to completely mediate this relationship among international school teachers.

Wombacher and Felfe (2017) identified that affective commitment had a negative effect on turnover intention, and consequently affectively committed preferred to remain in the same organization. In this context, Nazir et al. (2016) revealed that once employees' wants and expectations are fulfilled, then they will be more attached to their institution and are more likely to stay in it. Accordingly, Li et al. (2018) proved that there is a positive association between the aforementioned variables. Kim et al. (2015) stated that affectively committed civil servants, whose values and beliefs are met in the organization had higher scores on PSM than their colleagues. In other words, their high levels of affective commitment have strengthened their pro-social behaviors which, in turn, led them to be more motivated and to serve the public in an effective and efficient way. Other studies have suggested that PSM plays an important role in increasing employees' attachment and affective commitment to their organization, and, consequently, they remain in the same job and organization.

4 Conclusion

This research demonstrated the following: (1) employees' intentions to stay are positively and strongly associated with PSM; (2) employees' intentions to stay are also positively and strongly associated with job satisfaction and affective commitment; and (3) job satisfaction and affective commitment mediate the association between PSM and employees' intentions to stay.

This study sheds lights on the importance and practical value of PSM theory in NGOs. Knowing this importance, HR departments in local and international NGOs that operate in Lebanon should work to incorporate PSM in their staffing process through measuring and testing the potential candidates' PSM. For instance, tests and exams should detect and reveal the candidates' actual PSM. Besides, HR departments in NGOs should ensure that PSM is an essential part of training programs for new and existing employees and of performance appraisal systems.

4.1 Limitations and Future Research

This paper tried to find the theoretical association between PSM and intention to stay, while evidence that is more empirical is needed to validate the proposed connection. This paper provided a literature review to identify gaps in existing research and highlight the importance of further investigation in this area. Additionally, the paper suggests that future studies should employ rigorous methodologies to gather quantitative data and analyze it statistically for a more robust understanding of the relationship between the two variables. Secondly, this research adopted Perry's Western PSM scale. Hence, there is the need to formulate a new PSM scale that reflects the socio-cultural aspects of the Lebanese Arab society. In addition to the role of PSM in fostering a sense of purpose and fulfilment among public service employees, which in turn can contribute to their intention to stay in the organization?

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