

Public Service Motivation Measurement: A Test for Perry's Proposed Scale in China

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Abstract

This article proposes and tests a shortened instrument for public service motivation based on Perry's (1996) exploratory 24-item scale according to the investigation of Chinese civil servant in Kunming city. Results show good support for the shortened scale compared to Perry's original work through investigating the PSM of Chinese civil servant in Kunming city. We got a 14-item scale for three factors, but the CIP dimension has not been emerged in the present study. At the same time, the results show that the total level of PSM for Chinese civil servant who was drew from the basic level of city government in Kunming, Yunnan is higher. Of three dimensions, the Mean of compassion is highest with a M=4.0871, the Mean of self-sacrifice is relatively low with a M=3.7328.

Keywords: public service motivation, Perry; confirmatory factor analysis, Chinese civil servant

1. Introduction

Government employee motivation is one of the most important issues in the theory and practice of public administration. Traditionally, many scholars asserted that government employees should be and are strongly motivated by the desire to help the general public, especially in comparison to private sector employees (Houston, 2005; Mosher, 1982). The previous research has generally supported such claims, especially in comparison to extrinsic rewards and with the results sometimes varying by such factors as level of management (Crewson, 1995) and employee age. Whether called public service ethic (Brewer & Selden, 1998) or motivation, the concept of PSM is typically considered by Perry and Wise who defined the PSM as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations".

Many scholars view that the public employees are motivated by a sense of service which has not found among private employees (Houston, 2000; Perry & Wise, 1990). Individuals who are strongly motivated to do public service are supposed to work for public organizations, to perform better on the job, and to be more sensitive to intrinsic rewards (Perry & Wise, 1990). Perry (1996) constructed a measure scale to study public service motivation

(PSM), which includes four dimensions: attraction to policy making (APM), commitment to public interest (CPI), compassion (COM), and self-sacrifice (SS). Basing the dimensions of Perry's (1996) scale, a lot of researchers have tested the antecedents and effects of PSM over the past ten years (Camilleri, 2006; Castaing, 2006; Choi, 2004; DeHart- Davis, Marlowe, & Pandey, 2006). Kim has tested whether the structure of PSM observed in the United States by Perry (1996) can be generalized to Korea. It was found that although the four-factor structure of PSM can be generalized to the Korean context, it is doubtful whether APM in the second-order model is indeed a valid dimension of PSM in Korea because its standardized factor loadings are too low. So in order to test the Perry's scale further, the author of this paper would like to discuss and test the scale in the Chinese context through investigate the PSM of civil servants in Kunming.

2. Perry's PSM Measures: A Proposed Shortened Scale

A lot of scholars have researched whether there are special motivation for public service which is different from those for the private sector. What motivates people to work for public service? Perry and other scholars view that civil servants are characterized by an motivation to serve the

public interests. They are committed to the public interest and have a strong desire to serve the society and others (Houston, 2006). PSM provides a useful basis for understanding public employee motivation (Perry, 2000). According to Perry and Wise (1990), PSM is defined as “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations”. Brewer and Selden (1998) describe it as “the motivational force that induces individuals to perform meaningful public service”. Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) define it as “a general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation or mankind” (p. 23). Recently, Vandenabeele,

Scheepers, and Hondeghem (2006) defined it as “the belief, values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest or organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity and that induce, through public interaction, motivation for targeted action”. Even though the definitions of PSM itself vary slightly by author, a commitment to the public interest, service to others, and self-sacrifice underlie an understanding of PSM (Houston, 2006).

Perry’s (1996) scale of PSM provided support for a four-dimension PSM construct. See table 1. In order to develop a shortened scale based on Perry’s construction, the paper aims to eliminate the self-sacrifice dimension.

Perry (1996) Designation
Attraction to policy making PSM1: I am interested in making public programs that are beneficial for my country or the community I belong to. PSM2: Sharing my views on public policies with others is attractive to me. PSM3: Seeing people get benefits from the public program I have been deeply involved in brings me a great deal of satisfaction.
Commitment to the public interest PSM4: I consider public service my civic duty. PSM5: Meaningful public service is very important to me. PSM6: I would prefer seeing public officials do what is best for the whole community even if it harmed my interests.
Compassion PSM7: It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress. PSM8: I am often reminded by daily events how dependent we are on one another. PSM9: I feel sympathetic to the plight of the underprivileged. PSM10: To me, patriotism includes seeing to the welfare of others.
Self-sacrifice PSM11: Serving other citizens would give me a good feeling even if no one paid me for it. PSM12: Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements. PSM13: I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of society. PSM14: I believe in putting duty before self.

Table 1 Public Service Motivation (PSM) Items by Dimensions

However, it is important to note that the dimension of self-sacrifice has been included as part of related PSM research and theory. Brewer and Selden (1998), Brewer et al. (2000), and Houston (2000) have tested its viability. Toward the goal of a shorter scale, the paper chose to use 14 items. For each dimension, we needed at least three indicators for reliable testing, which meant all the original items from Perry’s “attraction to public policymaking” dimension were preserved with 3 items. “Commitment to public interest/civic duty” has five items and “compassion” eight items in the original scale. There are 3 from the first dimension and 4 from “compassion which is selected by us for the research aim.” The standard for item selection was a mix of the original validity and reliability results reported by Perry and a subjective assessment of the face validity, distinctiveness, and clarity of the items. These judgments were

peer-reviewed on request by several prominent public management researchers familiar with the PSM literature. Table 1 lists the chosen indicators along with Perry’s (1996) original item designations, which we use here to be the scale of this paper. The three policy dimension items and one compassion indicator are reverse worded; that is, higher values indicate lower PSM. These items were reversed coded to aid comparison to the other indicators.

3. Method

3.1 Measures

Perry (1996) developed a list of 24 items measuring four subscales of PSM, and Kim reduced it to a 14-item scale and confirmed that the four-factor structure of PSM can be generalized to the Korean context. This study is

based on the 14-item PSM scale which was developed by Kim. According to Kim, the APM items in Perry's (1996) scale may not be appropriate to represent the rational base of PSM. The items are not asking whether the respondents are attracted to public policy making but whether they like or dislike politics, politicians, and political phenomena. All of the scales are responded to on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strong disagreement; 5 = strong agreement). To ensure equivalence of the measures in the Chinese versions, all the scales used in this study were translated into Chinese. To increase the accuracy of the response, each survey was distributed with a cover sheet guaranteeing anonymity.

3.2 Samples

The data for this study were collected through investing 465 civil servants who were working in the basic level government in Kunming. About 500 permanent full-time civil servants of Kunming City in Yunnan province were given surveys to complete during regular working hours; 471 surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 94.2%. Of the respondents, men were 37.4% and women were 62.6%. Turning to educational background, 34.4% had at least a bachelor's degree; 65.6% had a junior college diploma. The mean of age is 37.3; About 36.1.9% respondents had worked for more than 10 years and fewer (13.1%) than 20 years in the

civil service.

4. Result

The four-correlated-factor model was tested, which hypothesized a priori that (a) responses to the 14-item PSM scale could be explained by four factors; (b) each item would have a nonzero loading on the PSM factor it was designed to measure and zero loadings on all other factors; (c) the four factors, consistent with the theory, would be correlated; and (d) measurement error terms would be uncorrelated. However, the present study shows that only three factors are produced through data reduction, namely, Self-sacrifice, Attraction to policy making and Compassion. Compared to Perry's PSM Measures, the dimension of commitment to the public interest has not been emerged in the present study, which is a different result from Perry's. The Alpha of three factors are .666, .7525 and .7653 respectively (see table 2). So we can conclude that the PSM for Chinese civil servants maybe consist of three dimension including Self-sacrifice, Attraction to policy making and Compassion and the dimension of commitment to the public interest can be integrated into other three dimensions respectively.

Factors and Items	Component		
	1	2	3
Self-sacrifice (Alpha=.6660)			
PSM13: I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of society.	.759		
PSM14: I believe in putting duty before self.	.716		
PSM11: Serving other citizens would give me a good feeling even if no one paid me for it.	.664		
PSM6: I would prefer seeing public officials do what is best for the whole community even if it harmed my interests.	.604		
PSM10: To me, patriotism includes seeing to the welfare of others.	.471		
Attraction to policy making (Alpha=.7525)			
PSM2: Sharing my views on public policies with others is attractive to me.		.732	
PSM3: Seeing people get benefits from the public program I have been deeply involved in brings me a great deal of satisfaction.		.650	
PSM1: I am interested in making public programs that are beneficial for my country or the community I belong to.		.642	
PSM4: I consider public service my civic duty.		.590	
PSM5: Meaningful public service is very important to me.		.586	

Table 2 Rotated Component Matrix(a) for the 14-Item PSM Scale (n = 465)

Factors and Items	Component		
	1	2	3
Compassion (Alpha=.7653)			
PSM8: I am often reminded by daily events how dependent we are on one another.			.789
PSM9: I feel sympathetic to the plight of the underprivileged.			.724
PSM7: It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress.			.707
PSM12: Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements.			.527

Table 2 (Continued)

In order to analyze the score of three dimensions of PSM, the paper explores the Mean and Std. Deviation. Table 3 show that the total level of PSM for Chinese civil servant who was drew from the basic level of city

government in Kunming, Yunnan is higher. Of three dimensions, the Mean of compassion is highest with a M=4.0871, the Mean of self-sacrifice is relatively low with a M=3.7328.

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attraction to policy making	1.00	5.00	3.9964	.53805
Compassion	1.50	5.00	4.0871	.50902
Self-sacrifice	1.25	5.00	3.7328	.68207

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics (n = 465)

5. Conclusion

The paper aims to confirm whether the dimension of Perry's measurement scale is a valid measure for Chinese civil servant. In Kim's study, the initial model with Perry's (1996) 24 items was not a good fit to the data, so the 14-item scale of four factors was developed, but in the model the CPI (Commitment to the public interest) dimension was doubtful. In the present study a 14-items scale which is based on Perry's (1996) scale construction, were used. The results show that the four-factor structure of Perry's PSM can be generalized into three-factor structure in Chinese context. It provided the revised 14-item measurement scale of PSM.

There is an increasing interest in examining to what extent PSM is an international phenomenon or peculiar to the Chinese context. The concept of PSM may have significant implications in the field of public administration, and thus the scale to measure PSM needs to be more fully explored and examined. Further validation studies on the PSM scale should be done in different contexts and for different nationalities, especially the dimensions of PSM for Chinese civil servants maybe should revised according to some traditional structure such as

Perry's measurement scale as so to deeply explore the motivation of civil servants in China.

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