

The impact of public service motivation in an international organization : job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the European Commission

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Paper presented at the International Public Service Motivation Conference, Bloomington, 7-9

June 2009

Work in progress, please contact authors for consent before citing (we may have a more recent version)

1. Introduction

Public service motivation has increasingly been accepted as a central construct in public personnel management and public HRM research. In recent years, research on public service motivation has grown substantially (Perry and Hondeghem, 2008) and has now reached a point where it finally lives up to its status of being ‘one of the big questions of public management’ (Behn 1995). In the existing body of literature, public service motivation has been linked to various HRM outcomes (Vandenabeele 2008), such as performance, employer attractiveness, ethical behavior and turnover. Often, these relationships are mediated by means of concepts such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Park and Rainey 2007 & 2008; Vandenabeele 2009).

However, to date, this body of research has focused primarily on national or lower level government, whereas no study (to our knowledge), has examined such effects in an international organization environment, for example the European Commission (EC). Indeed, the field of public management has generally ignored the international organizations, and so little is known about motivation of staff. Nevertheless, while the specific concept of public service motivation has not previously been applied to the European Commission, some scholars have applied closely-related concepts. For example, Hooghe (2001) describes the process of self-selection, sometimes based on a strong personal attraction to “European integration as a momentous and positive development” (p. 52). She also recognizes the tension between more idealistic and instrumental motives of senior Commission officials. Further, interviews conducted by one of the authors with over 100 staff of the Commission, at all levels, make it clear that many are motivated to join the Commission by a commitment to its overall mission or to making a difference in a specific policy area. Therefore, we think public service motivation may play an important role in the motivational framework of European Commission employees and the HRM outcomes associated with their motivation.

The research question we address in this paper will therefore be as follows : ‘does public service motivation play a role in the European Commission by influencing crucial HRM mediators such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment’ ? If so, much of the research done on public service motivation in other environments will be relevant to an understanding of motivation of EC staff. If not, the matter of motivation will need to be addressed differently in such an international environment. Our paper will try to contribute to this discussion by first developing a theoretical framework in which the question can be analyzed. In a next section, the method and data for analyzing this matter will be further discussed, after which the analysis will be presented. We will conclude by discussing these results and formulating some conclusions.

2. Theoretical framework

This section will address a theoretical review of motivational issues in the European Commission. It will in particular focus on public service motivation and other types of self-regulation and their relationship with work outcomes as job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

2.1 Public service motivation

The idea of public servants who have a drive to contribute to the general interest has been around for ages. It can be traced back to Aristotle and Plato and other historic writers who have dealt with it in their works (Horton 2008). But also more contemporary authors have found this concept appealing when describing (at least some of) the motivations of present-day civil servants (Downs 1967; Mosher 1968; Chapman 1988), albeit in a general or even anecdotal fashion. It was not until Perry and Wise (1990) defined public service motivation as ‘an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions (p. 368)’, that it became a more formally established concept in

its own right. Following on this work, some authors have developed their own definitions. Brewer and Selden (1998 : 417) describe public service motivation as ‘the motivational force that induces individuals to perform meaningful public service’. Rainey and Steinbauer (1999 : 23) define it as ‘a general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation or humankind’, contrasted to task motivation and mission motivation.

However, apart from these formal definitions, similar concepts exist which do not use PSM terminology at all. Some, mostly non-American, authors do not use the term when studying public service motivated behavior (Chanlat 2003; Pratchett and Wingfield 1996; Woodhouse 1997). In order to overcome these differences and to develop an encompassing definition, Vandenaebale (2007b) has defined PSM as ‘the belief, values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity and that motivate individuals to act accordingly whenever appropriate (p. 547)’.

Public service motivation is considered to be a multidimensional concept. Perry (1996) found it to consist of four dimensions : ‘politics and policy-making’, ‘public interest’, ‘compassion’ and self-sacrifice’. This factorial structure has been corroborated by other scholars (Camilleri 2006 & 2007; Bright 2007), although some issues have arisen about the exact factorial structure, in particular concerning the relationship between ‘public interest’ and ‘self-sacrifice’, which is rather high. Perry (1996) found a correlation of .89, which is on the verge of redundancy, and Vandenaebale (2008a) found that a model of three dimensions performed better than a four dimension model of public service motivation (with ‘public interest’ and ‘self-sacrifice’ collapsed into one dimension).

However, as the original model (Perry 1996) is based primarily on research in the US, research in other countries has led to identification of other potential dimensions of public service motivation, such as equality, service delivery and bureaucratic governance (Vandenaebale et al 2006; Hondegheem and Vandenaebale 2005). When testing a factor

analytic model of an adapted measurement instrument, Vandenabeele (2008b) both corroborated the original four dimensions found by Perry and also identified a fifth dimension: 'democratic governance'. This dimension refers to the value basis for a democratic regime and the rule of law (in French, this is called 'les lois Rolland', or laws of the administrative state).

2.2 Other motivations : self-determination theory

However, it is important to acknowledge that public service is not the only type of motivation. In a public sector environment, be it the European Commission or a national or a decentralised type of government, other motivators play a role (Vandenabeele 2008; Vandenabeele et al 2004; Buelens and Van Den Broeck 2007; Lewis and Frank 2002). This amalgam of various motives, of which public service motivation is only one, is defined as public sector motivation and often includes such motives as pay, job security or a balance between work and family life.

One particularly interesting approach to motivation, in which many of these motives can be framed, is self-determination theory. This theory (Deci and Ryan, 2004) distinguishes itself from other motivational theories by analyzing motivation in terms of a continuum, rather than thinking in terms of a dichotomy (e.g. Bandura 1997). This results in what Deci and Ryan (2004) describe as the self determination continuum. On this continuum, motivation is graded from non-autonomous or controlled motivation, which originates from external sources, on the one end, to autonomous motivation, stemming from the person oneself, on the other end. More specifically, they distinguish between five types of motivation, ranked from controlled to autonomous motivation.

Intrinsic motivation is experienced in behaviour when 'people engage in the activity for its own sake, that is, because they experience the activity as inherently enjoyable and satisfying' (Vansteenkiste 2005 : 22). In contrast to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation

involves doing an activity to attain an outcome that is separable from the activity itself (Ryan and Deci 2000). Contrary to other researchers, Ryan and Deci (2004) discern no less than four types of extrinsic motivation, leaving the traditional dichotomy. These four types of extrinsic motivation range from external regulation on the one end, over introjection and identification to integration on the other end. External regulation is the type of motivation people have whenever they engage in an activity to obtain a reward or to avoid a negative sanction or punishment. In this case, the motivation is not at all internalized, and, if the sanction is removed, the motivation disappears. In the case of introjection or introjected regulation, people intrapsychically apply what happens in the case of external regulation. In this case, the motivation is still not internalized, as it is not part of the self. Instead, what is internalized are the contingencies associated with this kind of behavior. The concept of guilt is closely related to this kind of motivation. In the case of identification or identified regulation, people identify with the value of an activity. This value has become an element of the self, or of a constituting identity, and therefore it is considered to be internalized. In this case people engage in an activity because they feel personally committed to do so, disregarding possible external pressures. The final and most internalized variant of extrinsic motivation is integration or integrated regulation. In this case, people have not only identified themselves with a value, but this value is congruent to the other values they have internalized. In such a case people have succeeded in aligning the various identities they possess.

2.3 Job satisfaction, organizational commitment and motivation

Both PSM and autonomous regulation have been linked to various outcome variables (Vandenabeele 2008a; Gange and Deci 2005). However, two outcomes are of particular interest : job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Locke has provided a general definition of job satisfaction (cited in Gruneberg 1979 : 3), as ‘a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences’. Organizational

commitment has been defined as ‘the strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization ... characterized by (a) a strong belief in and acceptance of an organization’s goals and values; (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; (c) a definite desire to maintain organizational membership’ (Porter et al. 1974 : 604). These three dimensions refer to what has been described as normative, affective and continuance commitment (Allen and Meyer 1990; Meyer and Allen 1997). These components also correspond to the dimensions Balfour and Weschler (1996) have found for the public sector. Contrary to job satisfaction, organizational commitment has been demonstrated to be better conceptualized as a set of different, more or less independent components instead of using a single construct (Angle and Perry 1981; Benkhoff 1997).

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are not only general outcome variables, but they also are, in one way or another, associated with many other HRM outcomes, such as retention and turnover, performance, organizational citizenship behavior and general psychological well-being (Spector 2007; Meyer et al. 2002). As job satisfaction and organizational commitment are also correlated with public service motivation, they thus may act as mediators in the relationship between public service motivation and the outcome variables mentioned above, as has already been demonstrated for the relationship public service motivation – performance (Park and Rainey 2007 & 2008; Vandenabeele 2009). This justifies putting the main focus on the relationship between public service motivation on the one hand and job satisfaction and organizational commitment on the other hand.

Several studies have found a relationship between job satisfaction and public service motivation, albeit with different effect size. Park and Rainey (2007 & 2008) have found a moderate to strong correlation between public service motivation and job satisfaction, whereas others (Vandenabeele 2009; Taylor 2007 & 2008; Castaing 2006) have found smaller correlations. For organizational commitment, similar relationships are found in the literature,

although the effect sizes are generally small to moderate for normative and affective commitment (Vandenabeele 2009; Park and Rainey 2007; Castaing 2006), as they are for general commitment measures (Taylor 2007 & 2008). However, in previous research, when Vandenabeele (2009) controlled for other dimensions of commitment, no independent relationship appeared between public service motivation and continuance commitment, whereas other scholars (Castaing 2006; Park and Rainey 2007) did find a positive relationship.

As autonomous motivation results in positive work outcomes, we can expect that it also will correlate with job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Gagné and Deci, 2005). However, as self-determination research is relatively recent and stems from general motivational psychology rather than organizational behavior or research on work motivation, less research is available to support this thesis.

2.4 Applicability in an international environment

International organizations in general pose a challenge for public management scholars. In some ways, including their formal HR systems, they resemble national governments, but the composition of the staff is complex, as employment needs to be open to citizens of all member states. Management, then, faces the challenge of supervising staff from very different backgrounds and of building a common culture in an environment where there may not even be a common language. Further, the mission and role of international organizations differs markedly from that of national governments, and indeed, there is significant variation among the growing number of international organizations in terms of size, method of selection of staff, mission, financing, and organizational culture (Davies 2002).

The European Union (EU) is unique among the international organizations, in that it has some resemblance to a federal government, including the ability to impose policy in some areas, and it administers a quite large budget that is used for redistributive programs.

Within the complex institutional framework of the EU, the role of the European Commission is also uniquely political. New policies originate within the Commission before being considered by the Parliament and European Council, so its role in a number of policy areas is more that of a policy think-tank than an administrative organization. Further, in most policy areas, implementation is actually the responsibility of member states' governments, with the EC staff responsible for coordinating and prodding to ensure what is termed "harmonization" of national policies and programs with EU directives. Finally, the EC's role includes protecting the treaties and speaking as the "supranational" voice of the EU, so staff must commit to supporting the EU and are expressly forbidden to serve as direct representatives of their national governments' policies or interests (Nugent 2001).

When the EC was first established, the decision, therefore, was to create a separate European public service, as a career service with tenure and a clear career ladder, rather than to depend primarily on staff on loan for short assignments from the individual national governments, although a small number of such people, termed Detached National Experts, do serve within the EC (Stevens and Stevens 2001). The majority of staff, then, enter when quite young and spend their whole careers within the EC. In this sense, the system resembles that in many European national governments (Bekke and Van der Meer 2000)

Employment in the EC differs in one significant way from that in national governments: the level of pay and benefits is quite high, higher than in many European national governments, a policy that was expressly set to make service attractive to top people both from government and from the private sector. Thus, one might expect EC staff to show higher levels of motivation based on extrinsic rewards, especially financial ones, than in most national governments.

2.5. Hypotheses

The theoretical framework described above sketches an encompassing set of relations between various types of motivation and work outcomes. This framework can be formalized in a set of hypotheses:

H1A : Public service motivation will lead to a higher degree of job satisfaction in an international organization

H1B : Autonomous motivation will lead to a higher degree of job satisfaction in an international organization

H2A : Public service motivation will lead to a higher degree of normative organizational commitment

H2B : Autonomous motivation will lead to a higher degree of normative organizational commitment

H3A : Public service motivation will lead to a higher degree of affective organizational commitment

H3B Autonomous motivation will lead to a higher degree of affective organizational commitment

H4A : Public service motivation will lead to a higher degree of continuance organizational commitment

H4B Autonomous motivation will lead to a higher degree of continuance organizational commitment

3. Methods

In this section, the data collection and the measurement instruments are described and discussed. Next, some elements of the statistical analysis are highlighted.

3.1 Data collection

The data used for this paper were gathered by means of a web-based survey, distributed to all employees of the European Commission by DG Personnel and Administration as part of their annual satisfaction survey. The response rate was 28 percent, resulting in 6950 usable forms. The authors of this paper provided some of the questions on motivation for this survey. The socio-demographic distribution, as well as other control variable scores, are provided in table 1.

TABLE 1 : Demographic characteristics of the sample

Gender			Directorate-general grouping	
	Male	3351	Internally oriented	1078
	Female	3425	Policy-coordinating	297
			Other	4843
Age group			Status	
	Up to 29	409	Permanent civil servant	5193
	30 to 39	2037	Contract agent	1034
	40 to 49	2572	Temporary	324
	50 to 59	1438	Seconded national expert	175
	60 and older	197	Trainee	50
Region			Function group	
	North	3284	AD	2877
	South	2099	AST	2580
	CEE1	517	CA FG I	92
	CEE2	102	CA FG II	281
	CEE3	149	CA FG III	230
Management position			CA FG IV	353
	Non-management position	6081	Other	124
	Management position	695		

3.2 Measurement instruments

The main dependent variables of this study are job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Job satisfaction, being a one-dimensional concept, is measured by means of a simple four-item Likert-scale. Like all the other items measured in this study, it is measured on a five-point response scale (see table 2), ranging from ‘Very dissatisfied ‘ (1) to ‘Very satisfied’ (5). The mean score on this instrument is above the mid-point of the scale but is not

particularly high. Research in national and subnational governments (Vandenabeele et al 2009) has found a broad range in job satisfaction.

Organizational commitment, unlike job satisfaction, is not a one-dimensional measurement instrument. Instead, it is better conceived as a multi-dimensional concept (Perry and Angle 1981). Based upon the OCQ (Organizational Commitment Questionnaire), by Allen and Meier (1990), Benkhoff (1997) has developed a skeletal version of the original OCQ instrument, including only six items. This has been cross-validated by Vandenabeele (2009), who also applied this measure successfully in public service motivation research. Again, a five-point response scale was used, but the response options were different compared to job satisfaction ('Disagree', 'Slightly disagree', 'Neutral', 'Slightly agree' and 'Agree'). For normative commitment, the score was above the mid-point of the scale (3,81), but not particularly high. For continuance commitment (4,01) and especially for affective commitment (4,35), the scores were high, even in absolute terms.

Public service motivation is one of the main independent variables of this study. A number of measurement instruments (Coursey and Pandey 2007; Coursey et al 2008; Vandenabeele 2008a) have been derived from the original 24-item measurement instrument developed by Perry (1996). The measure we have used has been operationalized by means of a set of items derived from the instrument developed by Vandenabeele (2008a), as it is more fit to a European environment. However, due to space constraints as well as the need to tailor the questions to the work environment of the European Commission, only eight questions could be selected from the 18-item instrument originally developed. Thus, rather than a questionnaire exploring in detail all of the five dimensions developed by Vandenabeele (2008a), we have constructed a composite public service motivation scale by averaging the score on a select set of public service motivation items in the dataset. Such an approach has been frequently applied in public service motivation research.. Brewer and Selden (2000),

Naff and Crum (1999) and Kim (2005) used similar instruments, with one item representing each dimension of public service motivation, apart from the dimension ‘politics and policies’ (only measured in Naff and Crum 1999). Lewis and Frank (2002) averaged the score of two items (‘A job that allows to help other people’ and ‘A job that is useful to society’) to construct a measure of public service motivation.

In our instrument, six items were used to measure public service motivation. Again, a five-point response scale (same options as with organizational commitment) was used. Based upon the score, one can conclude that on average, European Commission employees have a substantial degree of public service motivation, similar or even higher than that found in national governments.

TABLE 2 : Measurement instruments of PSM, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

	Mean
Public service motivation	3,91
Serving the European public interest is an important drive in my daily life (at work or outside work) [Public interest]	
What I do should contribute to the welfare of European citizens [Public interest]	
To me, serving the European public interest is more important than helping individual persons [Public interest]	
I am prepared to make important sacrifices for the good of the European Union [Self-sacrifice]	
Making a difference in European society means more to me than personal achievements [Self-sacrifice]	
It is important that officials account for the resources that are used [Democratic governance]	
Job satisfaction	3,72
Your general sense of job satisfaction	
The relation between the content of your current job and your expectations at the time you applied for or started in the job.	
I think my current job is interesting	
I would like to get another job because I am not satisfied (invert).	
Normative commitment	3,81
I find that my values and the Commission's values are very similar	
I am proud to tell others that I am employed by the Commission	
Affective commitment	4,35
I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond what is normally expected me from in order to help the Commission to be successful	
Continous commitment	4,01
Deciding to work for the Commission was definitely a mistake on my part (invert)	
It would not take much to cause me to leave the Commission (invert)	
There is not much to be gained by staying with the Commission indefinitely (invert)	
Relative autonomy index	3,13
At work, I always do my best because :	
Otherwise, I might create problems for myself [External regulation]	
Otherwise, I risk receiving a negative staff appraisal (CDR) [External regulation]	

otherwise, I will feel guilty [Introjection]
 otherwise, I will feel bad about it [Introjection]
 I consider it my duty [Identification]
 I would like to be a good official or member of staff [Identification]
 I enjoy it [Intrinsic]
 I think my job is interesting [Intrinsic]

Financial rewards

4,43

At work, I always do my best because I am paid to do so

Another main independent variable is autonomous motivation. The measurement scale was based upon the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (Grolnick and Ryan 1989). However, it had to be adapted because of a substantially different context. Eight items measuring the type of identity regulation (two items measuring external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation and intrinsic regulation; integrated regulation was not included, due to measurement difficulties) were assessed in the work situation (Vandenabeele 2008c). Respondents had to score these items on a five-point scale. This instrument was validated using factor-analysis, using a Diagonally Weighted Least Squares estimation, which accounted for the ordinal nature of the data (RMSEA .048; CFI. 99; GFI 1.00).

Based upon the scores of these items, the Relative Autonomy Index is the construct that will be analyzed (Grolnick and Ryan 1989). This is a summarizing index of self-regulation which illustrates a respondent's feeling of autonomous regulation. It is calculated by multiplying the external regulation score with -2, the introjection scores with -1, the identification scores with 1 and the intrinsic scores with 2 (the extremes of the scale have the strongest impact). In this particular study, the minimum score is -8 and the maximum is 12. The mean score of 4,43 indicates that employees of the European Commission are rather autonomously motivated.

Another independent variable that is included measures motivation because of the monetary rewards associated with the job. This is a type of motivation that empirically cannot clearly be attributed to a given type of motivation (see also Vandenabeele 2008c). Herzberg (1957 and 2003) found that salary demonstrated characteristics of both intrinsic and extrinsic

motivation (although conceptually, it is clearly extrinsic). Therefore, it has been entered as a single motivator. The mean for this item is rather high (4,43), but this should not come as a surprise, given the high salaries and benefits provided to employees of the European institutions.

Several control variables are included in the analysis. These included, first, a set of purely demographic variables, consisting of gender (male being the reference category), age (in ordinal categories) and nationality. This latter variable was recoded into five dummy variables, 'North', 'South', 'CEE1', 'CEE2' and 'CEE3', with the first two dummies referring to a geographical setting, and the last three referring to the different phases in the enlargement process¹. A second set of control variables referred to organizational variable, including whether or not one occupied a management position (non-management reference group), what function group² one belonged to (AD, AST, CA I, CAII, CAIII, CAIV; AD reference group), the status one occupied (permanent civil servant, temporary employee, contract agent, seconded national expert and trainee; permanent civil servant reference group) and what type of directorate-general (DG) one was employed for (policy-coordinating DG, internally oriented DG, other DG's; this latter was the reference group).

3.3 Statistical analysis

The model used in the analysis of this paper is a multiple regression model. To evaluate the differential effect of the various independent variables, it is developed in a hierarchical way, A hierarchical regression analysis enables one to assess the effect of the independent variables which are entered in each step of the analysis. In order to do so, the additional R² found above the R² of the previous step is statistically tested by means of an F-ratio (Cohen and Cohen

¹ Northern countries included the UK, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Belgian, Finland and Austria. Southern countries included France, Italy, Greece, Spain, Malta, and Portugal. CEE1 is the Baltic states, CEE2 includes Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia. CEE3 includes Romania and Bulgaria.

²AD: Administrator (professional level); AST: Assistant (technical or secretarial), CA: contract agent (IV is highest, doing work comparable to AD).

1983). However, only the last step will be presented in the results section, as this will be the basis of our discussion. The regression coefficient indicates the effect independent variables exert on the dependent variable. However, as these values are not standardized, it is difficult to compare these to one another. Therefore, also a standardized value (STB) will be reported. This will enable us to make comparisons between the effect size of the independent variables. (Nevertheless, caution is warranted, as these interpretations may be incorrect in rare circumstances [Hatcher and Stepanski 1994].)

4. Results

The analysis is carried out in multiple steps (table 3), but only the final model is reported here. The previous steps indicate that the control variables have only a very limited impact on the dependent variables. For job satisfaction, the R^2 of a model with all the controls is only .018, whereas the models for normative commitment, affective commitment and continuance commitment have an R^2 of respectively .040, .015 and .014. Despite these small effect sizes, the large sample size causes a number of these very small effects to be statistically significant. However, some effects, for example the effects of age, of management position and of status, are sufficiently interesting to warrant some discussion.

With regard to the more substantial independent variables of the analysis, one can observe that public service motivation, autonomous motivation, and financial rewards each exert a positive influence on each of the independent variables. However, their relative effect sizes differ substantially for the different outcome variables. Nevertheless, the total explained variances for job satisfaction and normative commitment are similar. Only for continuance commitment is the R^2 smaller, indicating that the model, despite being significant, is less explanatory.

TABLE 3 : Multiple regression of job satisfaction and organizational commitment dimensions

Variables	Job Satisfaction	Normative Commitment	Affective commitment	Continuance commitment
	β STB	β STB	β STB	B STB
Female	.043 .021	.021 .010	.020 .011	.117 *** .060
Age category	-.052 *** -.047	-.103 *** -.093	-.052 *** -.051	-.038 * -.036
Region south	-.143 *** -.066	.078 ** .035	-.040 -.020	-.098 *** -.047
Region cee1	.042 .011	.303 *** .080	.093 * .027	.032 .009
Region cee2	.153 .019	.309 ** .037	.092 .012	.107 .013
Region cee3	.065 .009	.521 *** .075	.125 .019	.121 .018
Management position	.142 *** .044	.102 * .031	.180 *** .059	.041 .013
Intern Dir. Gen.	.095 ** .034	-.039 -.014	-.046 -.018	.072 * .027
Coordin. Dir. Gen.	.124 * .026	-.006 -.001	.030 .007	.156 ** .033
Contract. empl.	.155 .055	.114 .040	.056 .021	.110 .040
Seconded expert	.196 * .031	.137 .021	.082 .014	-.119 -.019
Temporary empl.	.126 * .026	.225 *** .046	.071 .016	.015 .003
Trainee	.377 * .033	.344 * .029	-.221 -.020	.257 .023
AST	-.032 -.016	.008 .004	.063 * .032	.100 *** .049
CA_I	.130 .014	.188 .020	.005 .001	.088 .010
CA_II	-.091 -.018	.106 .020	.034 .007	-.070 -.014
CA_III	-.035 -.006	.176 .032	.099 .019	-.070 -.013
CA_IV	-.211 * -.048	-.027 -.006	-.084 -.020	-.296 ** -.069
FG_Other	-.058 -.009	.139 .022	.103 .017	-.138 -.022
PSM	.096 *** .064	.493 *** .323	.542 *** .379	.205 *** .140

Relative autonomy	.126 *** .423	.049 *** .163	.042 *** .150	.070 *** .240
Financial rewards	.117 *** .114	.086 *** .083	.080 *** .083	.102 *** .102
N	5825	5768	5672	5775
F	66.77 ***	59.43 ***	62.62 ***	29.68 ***
R ²	.202	.185	.196	.102
Adj. R ²	.199	.182	.193	.099

5. Discussion

The results demonstrate that the hypotheses formulated earlier all are corroborated. First, the findings show that public service motivation plays a significant role in explaining the dependent variables. European Commission employees who have high levels of public service motivation display higher degrees of job satisfaction, as well as normative commitment, affective commitment and continuance commitment. However, the relative effect sizes are different, as the regression coefficients are moderate for normative and affective commitment but substantially smaller for both job satisfaction and continuance commitment.

It is not a surprise that the effect sizes for normative and affective commitment are the largest. These variables refer to value-based or pro-social outcomes, which are conceptually closely related to public service motivation (Vandenabeele 2007; Vandenabeele 2008c).

Continuance commitment in the European Commission is generally high, with quite low levels of intent to leave (or of actual turnover). As a result, it shows a weaker link to public service motivation than one might find in national or subnational governments.

Second, the level of relative autonomy that individual European Commission employees experience also influences every one of the outcome variables. However, as was the case with public service motivation, the effect sizes differ between the outcome variables. In contrast to the effects of public service motivation, relative autonomy exhibits the strongest correlations with job satisfaction, and to a lesser extent, continuance commitment, whereas

substantially smaller effects are found for normative and affective commitment (although these effects are still significant and larger than the effect of the controls).

The importance of relative autonomy as a motivator is corroborated by interview data. As mentioned above, one of the authors of this paper has conducted extensive interviews with staff of the EC at all levels, during the period 2006 through 2008. One of the questions in the semi-structured interview schedule was “What parts of the job do you find most satisfying? What parts are least satisfying or most frustrating?” There is a marked difference in the patterns of positive and negative responses. Positive responses show considerable variation, but most focus on two elements, which differ in part by the rank of the respondent. The ability to participate directly in policy making is a major source of satisfaction. The following quote both shows the nature of work within the Commission and demonstrates this source of satisfaction, which is closely related to PSM:

The most satisfying part is the fact that, as an official in the Commission...you are in the forefront of European policy making. Even if it is a tiny little area that you are responsible for, still you have this feeling that you are able through your personal work to influence things, and to do this, you have to consult with member states, with stakeholders - in our case the industry or NGOs or whatever - so all this interaction. I think it is very rewarding and interesting. And then if you are supposed to make a synthesis of all this and come up with some policy options, to pass these policy options - if they can work or not? I think all this is the most exciting part of our work.

Those interviewed in DG Environment showed a particularly strong commitment to the organizational mission and satisfaction in shaping policy in this area, expressed often in terms very close to public service motivation:

What I like most about the job is the fact that we really in DG Environment and the nature bio-diversity you do feel you have a sense of vocation; it's more than a job. You do feel that at this time in the history of Europe, and Europe has global outreach as well in terms of the global agenda, that what we are doing here does have potential for very positive influence on the agendas for nature conservation in the different member states.

The second most frequent source of satisfaction was a general sense of achievement and of having faced a challenge and being able to see the positive results of one's actions. But there was also a wide range of other responses, including the opportunity to learn a lot on the job, to work in a multicultural environment, and to work with a good team.

In contrast, there is almost no variance in the sources of dissatisfaction: they stem from the nature of the bureaucracy itself. Although the EC is small compared to a national government (roughly 30,000 staff), it is a very traditional bureaucracy, very hierarchical and rule-bound. The main source of dissatisfaction/frustration, not surprisingly, is the extremely heavy bureaucratic procedures, which are seen as taking too much time, requiring too many levels of review, and slowing down the work. Not surprisingly, this was particularly the case in DG REGIO, which handles billions of euros in grants. Working in such a bureaucratic environment often leads to a sense of loss of autonomy and of frustration.

It is surprising that the influence of financial rewards, although significant, is rather small. Although money does play a significant role in determining job satisfaction and organizational commitment, the effect is limited compared to the effect of the two other types of motivation on the outcome variables. European officials are widely regarded as some of the best paid public employees in Europe, and the main focus of the Commission's motivational strategy lays with developing compensation and promotion systems which rely heavily on this motivation.³ But these findings reinforce previous research which has cast doubts on the effectiveness of these strategies in a public-sector environment. Most recently, for instance, Oh and Lewis (2009) found that, among U.S. federal government employees, performance appraisal systems linking extrinsic rewards to performance are less effective for staff who are intrinsically motivated.

³ We should point out, however, that in 2004, just prior to the hiring of thousands of new staff from the new member states (mainly in Central and Eastern Europe), entry-level grades and pay were reduced significantly, both for those entering at the usual entry level (AD 5) and for mid-level and senior managers.

Finally, the effect of control variables remains very weak. The only variable with a consistent significant effect is age. As people get older, they tend to score lower on each of the outcome variables, despite having higher levels of public service motivation. Another effect that is relatively consistent is the that of being in a management position. This correlates positively (although very weakly) with all outcome variables except continuance commitment, probably due to the fact that people in management positions have more power and see more coherence in their tasks. They therefore experience a strong task identity (Steers 1977). The other control variables show no consistent effect. Perhaps the most interesting of these findings is that permanent professional officials (the reference group with regard to status), are not more satisfied than other employees. On the contrary, with regard to job satisfaction, some groups are significantly more satisfied than the permanent AD-level officials, despite having a less protected job status. This may again raise questions about the effect current HRM strategies have on the desired work outcomes.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this paper show, first, that public service motivation and relative autonomy are both important motivators within an international environment. Although the organizational mission differs somewhat from that of a national government, many staff are inspired by the European ideal or deeply committed to creating policy in a specific field. The findings also support the argument that public service motivation plays a role in determining outcome variables such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment in supra-national organizations. Other types of motivation, including financial consideration, are relevant but less important influences with regard to these work outcomes. These observations strengthen the argument for a diversified motivational strategy, which considers various types of motivation (cf. public 'sector' motivation), while however not losing sight of the public value

these organizations deliver, and therefore valuing public service motivation as a specific and unique contribution to work outcomes.

However, this research has some limitations. First, as the authors had only a limited impact on the content of the survey, not all concepts are measured optimally. Ideally, fully developed and cross-validated measures could be used, but this is part of the reality of doing research in large-scale organizations where surveys serve multiple purposes. Nevertheless, given the constraints of this research, the measures deliver interesting findings. Second, the data here are cross-sectional, which prevents us from making full causal claims. However, this could be a first step in developing further research both to test the causal hypotheses with longitudinal data and to develop more elaborate measurement instruments that can shed more light on the various dimensions of public service motivation.

Despite these limitations, these results should encourage academics and practitioners to take into account the effects of a set of multiple motivators, and not to focus solely on a single motivation, given the differential effects for different types of motivators. A diverse approach could only prove beneficial for both the organization and the employees.

7. References

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