

Developing Cross-Cultural Framework for Public Service Motivation

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Abstract

The concept of Public Service Motivation (PSM) originally developed in the United States by Perry and Wise (1990) has attracted attention of public management scholars all over the world. However, studying PSM at the level of individual countries did not advance our understanding the role of national culture in the formation of public service motives. Existing international research on PSM looked only at the regional differences of public service motives across the world without studying the effect of national culture as the background or independent variable that have impact on the variation of PSM patterns.

The present study outlines cross-cultural framework for PSM using the elements of cultural dimension frameworks developed by Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars. Using various cultural dimensions such as individualism/collectivism, femininity/masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and affectivity/neutrality, I suggest several hypotheses or propositions for testing in future research by linking cultural dimensions to rational, norm-based and affective motives of PSM model.

Introduction

Since the very beginning of formation of Public Administration field, public administration scholars have been concerned with the motives that drive individuals to work in public administration institutions. Different researchers try to explain the reasons of joining public

organizations (G. A. Brewer, 1998, p. 9; Perry, 1996; Perry & Wise, 1990; H. G. Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999) and argue that the public servants and civil servants are less motivated by material incentives and career progress than employees and managers in business organizations (Hal G. Rainey, 2003). On the contrary, they tend to be motivated by more intrinsic motives such as civic duty, attraction to public policy (Perry, 1996; Perry & Wise, 1990), serving for the public interest, patriotism of benevolence (Frederickson & Hart, 1985), compassion (Perry, 1996), self-fellness (G. A. Brewer, 1998) and self-sacrifice (Perry, 1996; Perry & Wise, 1990). A set of the above-mentioned motives has been conceptualized as Public Service Motivation (PSM) by Perry and Wise (1990) and special research instrument measuring Public Service Motivation was developed by Perry (1996) that has been in use of public administration researchers since then.

The entire history of PSM research demonstrates the complexity of this organizational social phenomenon and poses many questions for the scientists trying to determine individual and societal antecedents and consequences of PSM (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Gene A. Brewer, Selden, & Facer li, 2000; E. Camilleri, 2007a; Houston, 2000; Perry, 1997; Vandenabeele, 2006). The different studies have been carried out that attempt to assess the relationship between individual work motivation and productivity of the public service employees (Crewson, 1995; Hal G. Rainey, 1982.).

Only recently, the concept of PSM has attracted attention of public administration scholars outside of the United States and found its validation in different countries such as Australia (Taylor, 2008), Belgium (Vandenabeele, Scheepers, & Hondeghem, 2006), France (Castaing, 2006; Hondeghem & Vandenabeele, 2005), the Netherlands (Steijn, 2006;

Vandenabeele, 2005), Germany (Vandenabeele et al., 2006), Malta (Emanuel Camilleri, 2006; E. Camilleri, 2007b), Italy (Cerese & Farinella, 2006), South Korea (Choi, 2004; Kim, 2006), Latin America (Snyder, Osland, & Hunter, 1996) and United Kingdom (Horton, 2006; Vandenabeele et al., 2006). However, studying PSM at the level of individual countries did not advance our understanding the role of national culture in the formation of public service motives. Existing international research on PSM (Norris, 2003; Vandenabeele & Walle, in press) looked only at the regional differences of public service motives across the world without studying the effect of national culture as the background or independent variable that have impact on the variation of PSM patterns.

The present study is aimed at sketching cross-cultural model for PSM using the elements of famous cultural dimension frameworks by Geert Hofstede (1991, 1997; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) and Fons Trompenaars (1994). First, I will define PSM using original definitions of founders of the PSM concept (Perry & Wise, 1990). Second, I will discuss main elements of original version of Public Service Motivation model (Perry & Wise, 1990) and instrumentalised version of model built on the tested questionnaire (Perry, 1996). Finally, I will offer testable propositions linking rational, norm-based and affective motives to selected cultural dimensions by Geert Hofstede (1991, 1997; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) and Fons Trompenaars (1994).

Defining and conceptualizing Public Service Motivation

PSM definitions vary depending on the prominence of a particular dimension used by the different researchers. Brewer & Selden (1998) emphasize selflessness or predisposition of individuals joining civil service to altruistic behaviour and demonstration of Good Samaritan behaviour. Other researchers such as Rainey & Steinbauer (1999) highlight ethical background of PSM and define it as “general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation, or humankind” (p. 23). More acknowledged definitions of Public Service Motivation in the academic environment stress its public character (Perry & Wise, 1990).

James L. Perry and Lois R. Wise (1990) describe PSM as “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (368). Using model of Knoke and Wright-Isak’s model, they propose three main theoretical bases of PSM: rational, norm-based and affective. Rational motives drive the individuals’ actions ‘grounded in individual utility maximization’ (Perry 1990:368) and become activated when civil servants want to advocate for a special interest or identify themselves with a public program, which subsequently results into the commitment to a public program. Norm-based motives force the public sector employees to comply with such norms as serving the public interest, being loyal to duty and to the government as a whole (Downs, 1967). Affective motives trigger pro-social behaviours based on the emotional responses to the different social situations. Patriotism of benevolence, compassion, self-sacrifice can be good examples of these motives.

These three main theoretical bases of PSM have been tested during process of developing a reliable and valid instrument for measuring PSM by Perry (1996). Using confirmatory factor analysis, Perry (1996) has narrowed original six dimensional model of PSM: attraction to public policy making, commitment to the public interest, civic duty, social justice, self-sacrifice and compassion to four dimensional model of PSM that includes attraction to public policy making, commitment to the public interest, self-sacrifice and compassion. The reduction of dimensions in the original model is explained by the fact that U.S. respondents could not discriminate among all constructs of norm-based motives: civil duty, social justice and commitment to public interest. Needless to say that this conclusion goes against the whole discourse of public interest, civil duty and social justice that has been active in the public administration literature (Perry, 1996), political science (Putnam, Leonardi, Nanetti, & ebrary Inc., 1993; Wilson, 1993), sociology (Etzioni, 1988) and political economy (Hirschman, 2002).

The previous research on antecedents of PSM initially was focused on individual patterns (Gene A. Brewer et al., 2000). However, when the concept of PSM is applied in the cross-cultural settings, institutional and societal differences that define the variation of patterns in public service motivation in different nations become salient. Having compared national administrative values in France, The Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom, Hondeghem & Vandenabeele (2005) and Vandenabeele et al (2006) find that each of the countries in their study has the distinctive pattern of values. For example, impartiality and neutrality is more emphasized in the United Kingdom, where as French civil servants emphasized more the public provision of services. In terms of individual/collective

compassion, French civil servants emphasized individual compassion, whereas Dutch civil servants put more emphasis on collective compassion.

When the public administration researchers attempt to explain regional differences in PSM, they resort to the effect of dominant religion, (Vandenabeele & Walle, in press), effect of recent public sector reforms (Norris, 2003; Pratchett, 1996) and differences among developing, underdeveloped and developed. Vandenabeele & Walle, (in press) to explain high scores of PSM in Latin-American and Southern European countries by the strong Roman-Catholic heritage that led to the internalization of moral values in the communities. At the same time, lower scores of Public Service Motivation in Western European countries are usually explained by New Public Management reforms that reduced perks and status of public servants and demoralized existing public sector staff (Norris, 2003; Vandenabeele & Walle, in press). Another explanation for regional differences in PSM is provided by Norris (2003) who argues that cross-national differences in PSM are caused by historical patterns in the labor force in developing, post-Communist, and capitalist economies. In another words, PSM will be stronger in agricultural and industrial economies with lack of lack of white collar jobs for middle class managers and experts (Norris, 2003). At the same time, PSM is lower in post-Communist countries where people avoid engagement with government in various forms including working for government due to recent experience with totalitarian regimes (Norris, 2003).

It can be clearly seen from the literature review that public administration and public management scholars ignored the effect of national culture on patterns in public service motivation for various reasons. However, findings of researchers studying regional

differences in public service motivation (Norris, 2003; Vandenaabeele & Walle, in press) suggest that particular countries can be grouped in the clusters according scores of particular public service motives. For example, civil and public servants from Southern European and Latin American countries tend to be high on compassion, whereas civil and public servants from Northern European countries tend to score low on the same PSM dimension (Vandenaabeele & Walle, in press). From national culture perspective, it can be explained by the degree of expressing emotions in the various situations. According to Trompenaars (1994), representatives from Southern European and Latin American countries belong to the affective cultures where people openly display their feelings and find the immediate ways out for their feelings. At the same time, representatives of Northern European countries belong to neutral cultures, where expression of emotions is moderated as the result of convention and emotions do not interfere with the judgment. Therefore, civil servants and public servants in the affective countries are expected to be high on compassion, while civil servants and public servants in neutral countries tend to be low on compassion. In the following sections, I will apply the cultural dimensions framework of Geert Hofstede (1991) and Fons Trompenaars (1994). Geert Hofstede, a Dutch researcher completed a study on differences in work-related values in 40 countries in 1984 and identified the following dimensional scales of national culture: individualism versus collectivism, high versus low power distance, high versus low uncertainty avoidance and masculinity versus femininity. Fons Trompenaar, a Dutch Economist and consultant also completed a study on differences in work-related values in 47 countries in 1994 and identified seven dimensions representing how societies approach dealing with difficult situations and handling problems: universalism versus particularism, individualism versus collectivism, neutral versus affective, special versus diffuse,

achievement versus ascription, past versus present versus future and internal versus external oriented (toward nature).

Rational Motives in Cross-cultural Perspective

As it was already mentioned, rational motives drive the individuals' actions 'grounded in individual utility maximization' (Perry 1990:368). According to Perry and Wise (1990) they become activated when the individuals want to advocate for a special interest or identify themselves with a public program, which subsequently results into the commitment to a public program.

Among rational motives Perry and Wise (1990) distinguish *participation in the process of policy formulation*, *commitment to a public program* and *advocacy for a special interest*. *Participation in the process of policy formulation* reinforces image of self-importance, this satisfying personal needs while serving for society. Antony Downs (1967) studied different types of bureaucrats and came to conclusion that public and civil servants may be motivated by *committing themselves to particular public program* due the personal identification with the program. For example, Hyman Rickover stayed in his position beyond retirement age to finish the nuclearization of the U.S Navy even under pressing attacks of opposition to challenge his influence and power (Perry and Wise, (1990). Another reason for joining public or civil service is *advocacy for a special interest*. Individuals who decided to work for the government pursue particular course of action in order to promote the interests of the group they represent. For example, if an individual personally experienced the poverty as a

child, he/she may join Social Services to put an end to poverty. This is very similar to the concept of active representative bureaucracy (Mosher, 2003) which describes the situation when the bureaucrats advocate the interests of their clients and make decisions that eliminate discrimination imposed by one group on another with being clientele of one agency.

If the individualism/collectivism dimension of Hofstede model (1991) and Tropaar model (1994) is to be applied to the public service motivation, it is quite feasible to say that civil and public servants in the collectivistic cultures will score higher on rational motives compared to representatives of public sector in individualistic cultures. According to Hofstede (1991), individuals in collectivist cultures are born into extended families or other in-groups that protect them in exchange for loyalty. In terms of actualizing needs, interest and honour of the in-group is actualized by asking many of in-group members to self-enhance. This corresponds to the rational motives described above: advocacy for a special interest and participation in the process of policy formulation or appeal to public policy. The results of study by Vandenabeele & Walle (in press) on regional differences indicate that countries such as Philippines, Mexico, Portugal, Venezuela, Uruguay, Brasil, South Korea scored high on rational motives (appeal to public policy). From cross-cultural perspective, all these countries belong to collectivistic cultures, where people promote interests and honour of in-group. Therefore, based on the analysis of the previous research, the following proposition is suggested for testing in future studies on PSM in cross cultural perspective:

Proposition 1. Civil and public servants in collectivistic cultures will score higher in rational motives than civil and public servants in individualistic cultures

Degree to which civil and public servants are motivated by rational motives such as participation to policy making depends on uncertainty avoidance, a third dimension of culture identified by Geert Hofstede (1991). Uncertainty avoidance refers to the extent to which people tolerate ambiguity and avoid ambiguous situations by imposing formal rules and procedures. Geert Hofstede (1991) argues that the need for rules in strong uncertainty avoidance cultures is emotional since government officials, civil and public servants, employers and employees in private sector feel themselves very comfortable in structured environment since times of their childhood. Citizens in strong uncertainty avoidance cultures do not believe that they can influence decisions made by authorities (Hofstede, 1980). Moreover, they are not prone to participate in the extreme protest actions such as boycotts and sit-ins and believe that such actions should be strongly repressed by the government. In strong uncertainty avoidance cultures, civil and public servants are supposed to avoid political processes such as policy making and always have negative feelings toward politics and politicians. A totally opposite picture is found in weak uncertainty cultures where fewer formal rules and procedures are imposed and problems are solved without applying formal rules. The definitions of what is considered to be dangerous are wider and established norms are open to personal interpretations. Citizens in weak uncertainty avoidance cultures believe that they can influence political decisions at the lowest level, local level. Compared to citizens in strong uncertainty avoidance cultures, citizens in weak uncertainty avoidance cultures are ready to be engaged in the extreme protest actions such as boycotts and sit-ins and do not believe that such actions should be repressed by the government at all (Hofstede, 1980, 1984). As for civil and public servants, they have positive feelings toward politics and politicians and do not hesitate to be engaged in the process of policy making. The results of

study by Vandenabeele & Walle (in press) on regional differences indicate that countries such as Switzerland, Germany, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Finland, Czech Republic, Russia, scored very low on rational motives (appeal to public policy). From cross-cultural management perspective, all these countries belong to strong uncertainty avoidance cultures, where civil servants abhor politics and politicians. Therefore, based on the analysis of the previous research, the following proposition is suggested for testing in future studies on PSM in cross cultural perspective:

Proposition 2. Civil and public servants in weak uncertainty avoidance cultures will score higher in rational motives than civil and public servants in strong uncertainty avoidance cultures

Norm-based Motives in Cross-cultural Perspective

Perry and Wise (1990) argue that norm-based motives describe the actions of individuals conforming to particular norms. Among the different norm-based motives they distinguish *commitment to the public interest* (Downs, 1967), *loyalty to duty and to the government as a whole* and *social equity*. *Commitment to the public interest* is considered to be one of the known normative foundations for public service. Antony Downs (1967) argues that a desire to serve the public interest is altruistic in its nature even in the situations when it is perceived as opinion of individual. Some researchers disagree with the Down's definition of public interest, but all agree that desire to serve the public interest is integral to PSM.

Another norm-based motive comes from public service ethics and includes *loyalty to duty and to the government as a whole* (Buchanan, 1975; F. C. Mosher, 1968). Buchanan (1975) states that this particular norm stems from the sovereign power of the state and role of public and civil servants who share the portion of this power as non-elected trustees. *Social equity* constitutes another norm-based motive and includes actions aimed at improving the well-being of socially deprived groups, minorities in particular. Social equity is considered to be one of the threefold obligation of public administrators along with efficient and economic provision of resources and help to define political nature of public administration roles (Frederickson, 1971).

Individualism/collectivism cultural dimension may predict predisposition to be motivated by the norm-based motives such as commitment to the public interest and loyalty to duty and to the government. As it was mentioned earlier, individuals in collectivistic cultures enjoy protection from strong, cohesive groups by being loyal to them and tend to think of themselves as “we”, rather I. Collectivistic cultures expect individuals value in-group membership and put the interests of the group before the personal interests and needs (Hofstede, 1991). Relationships between employer and employees in collectivistic cultures are perceived more in the moral terms than in economic terms. To contrast, relationship between employers and employees in individualistic cultures are seen as transactions and based on the contract implying mutual advantage to each party. Reward systems in individualistic cultures such as pay for performance and management by objectives are designed on the basis of individual performance. Paine and Organ (2000) argue that concept of Organizational Citizen Behavior (OCB) defined as “individual behaviour that is

discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1988) has more meaning in the individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures where OCB is generally expected of every group member. The results of study by Kim (2006) suggest that Korean civil servants (that belong to collectivistic cultures) that scored high in norm-based motives such as commitment to public interest and loyalty to duty are more likely to be associated with performance of OCB than those who scored low in norm-based motives. Therefore, based on previous research I suggest the following proposition for testing in future studies on PSM in cross cultural perspective:

Proposition 3. Civil and public servants in collectivistic cultures will score higher in norm-based motives (commitment to the public interest and loyalty to duty) than civil and public servants in individualistic cultures.

Degree to which civil and public servants are motivated by social equity as a norm-based motive is influenced by orientation of society to success or quality of life known in the model of Geert Hofstede (1991) as masculinity and femininity. Masculine culture or achievement-oriented cultures emphasize attainment of higher salaries, opportunity to be recognized and promoted and various challenges in work assignments (Hofstede, 1991). Managers are supposed to be decisive and assertive while encouraging high performance and competition among employees. Masculine societies tend to focus on performance, encourage aggressive methods of conflict resolution and prioritize growth at expense of destruction of natural environment (Hofstede, 1980).

To contrast, feminine or quality of life oriented societies tend to be welfare economies, providing minimum quality of life to everybody (Hofstede, 1991). Employees in feminine societies enjoy a variety of work-life balance programs as well as conflict resolution mechanisms based on compromise and negotiations. Governments in feminine cultures take indicators of socioeconomic differences very seriously and approve public expenditures that promote socioeconomic equality and narrow the gaps between social groups.

In terms of dealing with workforce diversity, feminine countries tend to link workforce and inclusion of minorities to democratic processes, whereas masculine countries such as United States and Canada tend to treat workforce diversity strategically and employ approach of managing for diversity (Wise, 2002). Wise (2002) identifies alternative drivers of public administration reforms such as social equity, empowerment and humanization of the workplace in Norway, Sweden and the US and concludes that social equity driver of public administration reforms has been more active in the Scandinavian countries rather in the US which resulted to the advancement of interests of disadvantaged groups seeking employment and fair treatment in government organizations. Therefore, based on the analysis of the previous research, the following proposition is suggested for testing in future studies on PSM in cross cultural perspective:

Proposition 4. Civil and public servants in feminine cultures will score higher in norm-based motives (social equity) than civil and public servants in masculine cultures.

Affective Motives in Cross-cultural Perspective

According to Perry and Wise (1990), affective motives trigger pro-social behaviours based on the emotional responses to the different social situations. Based on the previous research, the following affective motives can be distinguished from: *patriotism of benevolence or compassion and self-sacrifice*. *Patriotism of benevolence* is considered to be the central motive for civil and public servants and defined by Frederickson and Hart (1985) as “ an extensive love of people within political boundaries and the imperative that they must be protected in all of the basic rights granted to them by the enabling documents “ (page 549). Frederickson and Hart (1985) suggest that the concept of patriotism of benevolence combines love of regime values and love of others. Perry and Wise (1990) argue that patriotism of benevolence is not just a particular moral position (Frederickson & Hart, 1985), but also a emotional state, which results in the willingness to sacrifice for others. Another motive frequently associated with public service is *self-sacrifice*. Perry (1996) defines it as “the willingness to substitute service to other for tangible personal rewards” (p.7). The self-sacrifice is connected with public service norms such as commitment to public service in the moral sense and this connection has been shown in the study of Perry (1996) as inter-factor correlation between self-sacrifice and commitment to public service. Self-sacrifice as the affective motive has been found not only in the US, but also in other countries such as United Kingdom and Germany in the various degrees due to the fact that issue of overcoming personal interests has a special place in the history of many European countries (Vandenabeele et al., 2006).

Degree to which civil and public servants are motivated by affective motives depends on affectivity, a dimension of culture identified by Fons Trompenaars (1994). In affective cultures, individuals can express emotions naturally in various situations and holding expression of emotions is considered to be dishonest. For example, it is absolutely natural for Mexicans to express anger or happiness in business situations. Individuals in neutral cultures do not transmit their emotions and keep them under control thus making sure that their emotions do not interfere with the judgement. It does not necessarily mean that individuals in neutral culture are emotionally constipated or unfeeling; they just show emotions as the matter of convention. For example, Japanese, representing a neutral culture treat the expression of emotions in business situations as inappropriate or out of control.

As it was already mentioned, civil and public servants from Southern European and Latin American countries tend to be high on compassion, whereas civil and public servants from Northern European countries tend to be low on compassion (Vandenabeele & Walle, in press). This can be explained by the fact that Southern European and Latin American countries are considered to be affective cultures, whereas Northern European countries such as Sweden, Finland, Netherlands and Norway are by Trompenaars' definition neutral cultures. Similarly, Vandenabeele et al (2006) report that little compassion of civil servants is found on individual or the collective level in the United Kingdom, which is considered to be a neutral culture according to Trompenaars (1994). Therefore, I suggest the following proposition for testing in future studies on PSM in cross cultural perspective:

Proposition 5. Civil and public servants in affective cultures will score higher in affective based motives such as compassion than civil and public servants in neutral cultures.

Conclusion

The concept of PSM originally developed in the United States by Perry and Wise (1990) has attracted attention of public management scholars all over the world and has been validated in many countries such as Australia (Taylor, 2008), Belgium (Vandenabeele et al., 2006), France (E. Camilleri, 2007b; Castaing, 2006; Hondeghem & Vandenabeele, 2005), the Netherlands (Steijn, 2006; Vandenabeele, 2005), Germany (Vandenabeele et al., 2006), Malta (Emanuel Camilleri, 2006; E. Camilleri, 2007a), Italy (Cerase & Farinella, 2006), South Korea (Choi, 2004; Kim, 2006), Latin America (Snyder et al., 1996) and United Kingdom (Horton, 2006; Vandenabeele et al., 2006). However, studying PSM at the level of individual countries did not advance our understanding the role of national culture in the formation of public service motives. Existing international research on PSM (Norris, 2003; Vandenabeele & Walle, in press) looked only at the regional differences of public service motives across the world without studying the effect of national culture as the background or independent variable that have impact on the variation of PSM patterns.

The present study outlined the cross-cultural model for PSM using the elements of famous frameworks of cultural dimensions by Geert Hofstede (1991, 1997; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) and Fons Trompenaars (1994). Using various cultural dimensions such as individualism/collectivism, femininity/masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and affectivity/neutrality, I suggested several hypotheses or propositions for testing in future research investigating cross-cultural differences in PSM by linking above-mentioned cultural dimensions to rational, norm-based and affective motives of PSM model.

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