Public Service Motivation: The State of the Art


Abstract The origin of the concept of public service motivation (PSM) dates back to 1982. Since then, many definitions, measurement scales and implications have been proposed and discussed. Still, the gap between what we know and what would be useful to know about PSM is open. Therefore, this article reviews the literature of the last thirty years and identifies five main streams within the literature itself. Relevant branches are: definition, measurement, generalizability, relationship between PSM and other individual and organizational variables, and translation of the theory on PSM into human resources management (HRM) practices. Finally, this paper identifies unanswered questions for future researches. What is the relationship between PSM and individual and organizational performance? What is the link between PSM and leadership in the public sector? How should HRM practices be organized to consider the different level of PSM reported by public servants?

Introduction
The origin of the concept of public service motivation (PSM) can be traced back to 1982, when Rainey studied middle managers in four public agencies and four private organizations to understand whether they reported any differences in their rewards preferences. Results showed that “public managers are higher, to a statistically significant degree, on the items concerning public service and work that is helpful to others” (1982, 293). Therefore, even without referring explicitly to the concept of PSM, he advanced the idea that public and private employees have different motivational basis. The former, in particular, are attracted by other-regarding motives. This was not to say that workers of the public sector are not self-interested. It was to underline that the willingness to help other and reach the common good were stronger motivators in the public rather than the private sector.

In 1990, in the United States, Perry explicitly introduced the concept of PSM as the counterweight to the rational choice theory, which assumes that individuals take decisions to maximize their utility. On the contrary, PSM relates to the desire of helping others improve their conditions.

Since 1982 many studies have been published regarding the definition, measurement and implications of PSM. In any case, the construct still needs to be fine-tuned and the acquired knowledge needs to be synthesized into a more usable way. In fact, the gap between what we know and what would be useful to know is still open. Hence, this paper presents a thorough review of the existing literature and identifies five main streams within the literature itself.

The lack of a generally accepted theoretical framework for the PSM construct is clear evidence that additional research is needed. This is the case even though several authors tried to expand the concept of PSM by drawing on contributions from different disciplines (e.g., psychological economics, psychology, and political science).

Frey and Gee (1997) were the initiators of the crowding theory, upon verifying that it is consistent with rational choice principles and hence can be integrated into economics. They found that where public spirit prevails, the introduction of monetary incentives for the localization of a socially desirable but locally unwanted facility crowd out civic duty. Therefore, greater incentives than one would expect applying standard economics rules has to be provided to
the local population. In general, “the use of price incentives needs to be reconsidered in all areas where intrinsic motivation can empirically be shown to be important” (1997, 753).

Perry (2000) looked at the literature on prosocial behavior and institution theory to suggest a new paradigm of motivation in which the boundaries between organizations and society are less defined and the assumptions on what motivates people are more heterogeneous. Drawing on this, he called for a motivation theory that brings society in and captures the motivational differences between public and private employees. Sociohistorical context, motivational context, individual characteristics, and behavior should all be part of the PSM theory.

Frey and Jegen (2001) reviewed all the circumstantial evidence studies, laboratory evidence by psychologists and economists, as well as field evidence by econometric that showed crowding-in and crowding-out effects. In this way, they corroborated the idea that economic rewards increase extrinsic motivation and decrease intrinsic motivation. Effective implementation of monetary incentives depends on the relative strengths of the two opposite effects.

Vandenabeele (2007) considered together the institutional theory and the concept of identity to elaborate a PSM theory that could explain both the causes and the consequences of PSM. He concluded that the more the institution is able to respond to the individual psychological needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy, the more likely it is that any individual internalize autonomously the institutionalized public service values. Also, the more autonomous the public service internalization is, the more consistent and intense the public service behavior will result, given that the institution in which the individual operates embraces the public service values.

Another proof of the need to synthesize the existing literature is that, at the same time as this work was produced, Perry, Hondeghem and Wise (2010) published an article with similar research questions. They aimed at “reviewing the evolving definitions of PSM, including operational definitions used to measure the construct” as well as “answering the question, what have we learned from PSM research?” (2010, 681) They first recalled the existing synergies among PSM, altruism, and prosocial motivation. They, then, summarized the four different approaches that have been used to measure PSM, which are single survey item about public service, unidimensional scales, multidimensional scales, and behavioral proxies. After, they turned their attention at assessing the validity of the three proposition originally put forward by
Perry (1990) based on successive researches. The propositions hypothesized a relationship between PSM and the other three dimensions of attraction-selection-attrition, performance, and organizational incentive structures (Perry, 1990). Lastly, they concluded calling for closer integration of the concept of PSM with other disciplines, additional measurement advances, new methodological research strategies and tools, and the translation of theoretical knowledge into human resources management (HRM) practices.

**Methodology**

Given the gap between what we know and what we should know about PSM, this article reviews the literature in order to identify and explain the main streams of research. As opposed to Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise (2010), this paper presents the definitions of PSM along with the details on the context where they were proposed. Making contextual factors explicit allows understanding the concerns that each definition was intended to address. Moreover, this work focuses on methodological issues related to the measurement of PSM more extensively than Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise (2010). Different scales are presented according to the concerns the author wanted to address rather than according to the approaches that were used. Also, this paper looks at the generalizability of the construct of PSM across sectors and countries outside the United States, where the concept was originally introduced. Unlike Perry, Hondeghem and Wise (2010), this literature review is also aimed at grouping articles on PSM based on the kind of statistical relationship claimed by the authors. Lastly, this paper adds a final section on recalling all those articles that translate the acquired knowledge into HRM practices to give policy recommendations.

The literature review was conducted through a snowball technique and considered all the works published during the last thirty years. All the articles have been categorized along the following dimensions: author, date, title, journal, research question(s), variables, country, sample, institution type, governmental level, sector, research design, methodology, and relevant results. The table was organized with the purpose of keeping track of all the relevant information required to perform a meaningful literature review. Based on this table then, five main literature
Defining the concept of PSM

The definition of any concept is vital to provide a solid framework for any further speculations. This is the reason why one branch of the literature on PSM has been focusing and continues to be focused on the concept itself. At the beginning, the core of the construct was narrower than what it is today. As a matter of fact, the last available definitions of PSM try to integrate contributions from different theories. Also, strictly related to the issue of defining PSM is the question about the role of perceptions and values in the PSM construct.

Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise (2010) considered the same contributions on the definition of PSM presented here. However, the following discussion further details contextual factors as well as the sample used to test the validity of the definition provided.

Perry and Wise (1990) gave the first definition of PSM: “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (1990, 368). They were the first authors to call for committed research on the concept of public service motivation, upon reviewing the existing literature. At the time, two contingent factors were predominant in the debate around the United States Federal Government. On one hand, the distrust toward government employees was a long lasting trend. On the other hand, politicians were adopting policies to regain trust assuming that public service values could have been translated into efficient and effective behaviors. They were implementing those policies even with no evidence on the reliability of such an assumption. Given the context, Perry and Wise proposed their definition and specified that PSM include rational, norm-based and affective motives. The rational motives refer to the utility maximization attitude. The norm-based motives refer to the desire of pursuing common good. The affective motives refer to the willingness to help others. Building on these ideas, Perry and Wise formulated three propositions: “The greater an individual’s PSM, the more likely the individual will seek membership in a public organization (…) In public organizations, PSM is positively related to individual performance (…) Public organizations that attract members with high levels of PSM are likely to be less
dependent on utilitarian incentives to manage individual performance effectively” (1990, 370-71) With these propositions, they provided an argument against the idea that public and private sector could be run in the same way.

Brewer and Selden (1998) gave another definition of PSM: “strong motives to perform meaningful public, community, and social service” (1998, 254). The starting point for the proposition presented was the awareness that dealing with the concept in theory was difficult given the double meaning that the term public service could assume. In fact, public service could either refer to the action of doing something valuable for society or to the public sector workforce itself. Upon providing the definition, Brewer and Selden (1998) suggested also to consider PSM as “prevalent in the public service” (1998, 254). Whistle blowers in the United States Federal Government were used as the sample to test the link between PSM and prosocial behaviors. The results showed that whistle blowers act consistently to the public sector motivation construct (for instance they use the concern for the common good as a motivator) and assume more behaviors related to PSM than inactive workers.

Rainey and Steinbauer (1999), instead, analyzing the literature existing at the time, defined PSM as a “general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation or humankind” (1999, 23). Thus, they wanted to underline the link between PSM and altruism. Moreover, they included PSM among the characteristics that make government agencies effective.

Vandenabeele (2007) gave the most recent contribution to this first stream of the literature. He suggested that PSM is “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” (1999, 547). According to him, this definition was able to overcame problems in terminology and content across countries, broad enough to include other types of value-laden behavioral determinants, broad enough to consider interests other than personal and organizational, interactive in nature, and with a reference to a political body.

As mentioned above, closely related to the issue of defining PSM is the question about the role of perceptions and values in such a construct.

Brewer et al. (2000) were interested in understanding how individuals perceived the
motives linked to public service. They examined 69 employees and students in the United States and came up with four different kinds of perceptions of the motives of public service. The opportunity to help others motivates samaritans. A sense of civic duty motivates communitarians. Issues bigger than their selves, such as the common good or advocacy, motivate patriots. Sentiments of social justice motivate humanitarians. In conclusion, the reasons to perform public service are different, but in all four cases the three motives identified by Perry (1990) (rational, norm-based, affective) are present.

**Measuring PSM**

Four kinds of separate, even though intertwined, discussions are prevalent in the literature stream that aims at elaborating a measurement tool for PSM. The leading questions of the sub-branches are related to whether it makes any concrete difference to try to measure PSM; how to build the measurement scale and test for its internal validity; how to include ethics in the measurement instrument; and what strategies to adopt when empirically measuring PSM. Therefore, the group of articles in this stream is focused on methodological issues, rather on the concept of PSM.

Within the first sub stream, Gabris and Simo (1995) questioned the relevance of studying PSM, given also the complexity related with its measurement. “It could be that PSM exists, but it is virtually impossible to isolate and visualize. (…) Until we can identify and measure it, one can only speculate about its potential effect” (1995, 49). Comparing individuals from two public, two private, and two non-profit organizations, they did not found any difference in the value they attached to pay. Therefore, they pointed out that PSM does not really make any difference, specifying that “If public sector jobs are made more challenging, monetarily appealing, secure, loaded with responsibility, full of autonomy, and well supervised, then they will (…) produce public servants dedicated to their tasks” (1995, 49). However, it may well be that the sample is too small and not representative enough of the sectors to draw general conclusions.

Concerning the second sub stream, this article describes in detail the questions and the proposed solutions that emerged in the literature about measurement issues. Therefore, the perspective here is different from Perry, Hondeghem and Wise (2010). In fact, they identified
four approaches (i.e. single survey items about public service, unidimensional scales, multidimensional scales, and behavioral proxies) that have been used over time to measure PSM and adopted this criterion to group articles together.

Perry (1996) proposed the first measurement scale for the PSM concept. He hypothesized that attraction to policy-making, commitment to public interest, social justice, civic duty, compassion and self-sacrifice were the six dimensions that, with a total of 40 sub-items, could measure PSM. The empirical pretests and tests on students and public employees suggested to drop the two dimensions of social justice and civic duty, given that the respondents did not really perceive a significant difference between them and the commitment to public interest. The three of them, in fact, are all related to norm-based motives. The revised four dimensions scale with 24 items, instead, showed internal validity, discrimination validity among the four component dimensions, and high reliability.

Coursey and Pandey (2007) tested the validity of a tool with three dimensions, obtained eliminating self-sacrifice, and 10 items selected from Perry’s measurement scale (1996). Applying it to a set of United States managers engaged with information management activities, they obtained a good support for the shortened version. In this way, even showing that improvements in the measurement scale can be made, they corroborated the theoretical principles first suggested by Perry.

Brudney, Coursey, Littlepage, and Perry (2008) tested the four dimensions and 24 items scale on “a sample of morally committed individuals who do important service for others but who, for the most past, were not professional public administrators” (2008, 454). They found a significant fit.

Vandenabeele (2008) constructed a theoretical model that successively tested through a confirmatory factor analysis on data from Belgian civil servants. He aimed at comparing his model with the one developed by Perry (1996) in the United States. Findings showed that, even if the empirical nature of the factors was different between the two countries, the theoretical content of PSM suggested by Perry could be generalized to Belgium. Based on Belgian data, democratic governance was also a relevant dimension in determining PSM. The author, therefore, suggested including it in the PSM construct.

Kim (2010) applied the four dimensions and 24 items measurement tool to Korea and concluded that it did not realize a good fit with the Korean context. Thus, he modified the scale
keeping the same four dimensions but reducing the items to 14. The revised measurement tool resulted in a better fit between the measurement tool and Korea. However, an even better fit was obtained with a three dimensions scale, in which the dimension of attraction to policy making was taken out. Kim hypothesized some explanations for this: attraction to policy making may not be an important dimension for Korean public servants; attraction to policy making may not be a relevant dimension for PSM at all; items measuring attraction to policy making may not be accurate enough; the negatively worded items may cause confusion to the respondent and therefore produce unreliable answers. In a successive study, Kim (2008) focused his attention on the dimension of attraction to policy making, rewording in a positive way all the items negatively worded. With this alteration and with the elimination of two other items from the 14-item scale, he performed a test on Korean public employers supporting, in the end, the external validity of the four-dimension construct originally proposed by Perry (1996).

Wright and Christensen (2009) tested the internal validity of four different versions of PSM measurement scale, all mentioned above: Perry (1996); Coursey and Pandey (2007); Coursey, Brudney, Littlepage, and Perry, (2008); and Kim (2008). None of this version showed consistent evidence of good model fit across all the several statistical indices calculated by Wright and Christensen. The best good fit among these four versions was with the tool used by Coursey and Pandey (2007) with three dimensions (without self-sacrifice) and 10 items (selected form Perry 1996). This version illustrated acceptably strong factor loadings and adequate fit in five out of seven fit indices.

Then, Kim and Vandenabeele (2010) wanted to broaden the conceptual composition and improve the operational dimensions of the PSM construct in order to make it a globally usable concept that generates cumulative knowledge. To reach their goal, they proposed to redefine the dimensions of public sector motivation as: attraction to public participation, commitment to public values, compassion, and self-sacrifice. The first dimension represents instrumental motives. The second dimension represents value-based motives. The third dimension represents affective motives. The fourth dimension represents the altruistic and prosocial origins of PSM. Each dimension, with its specific item, provides a unique contribution to PSM, which, therefore, is a formative construct.

Within the third sub stream, Brewer (2009) called for the introduction of an ethical
dimension in the PSM construct. He noticed that ethics is considered relevant in public administration by both researchers and practitioners. It therefore seems reasonable “adding an ethical dimension to the PSM construct, formulating measurement items, and testing the validity of those items” (2009, 2). Choi (2009), then, tested the relationship between ethical sensitivity and the four dimensions of PSM as defined by Perry (1996). He concluded that a statistically significant relationship only exist between ethical sensitivity and compassion and self-sacrifice.

Lastly, in the fourth sub stream, Wright and Grant (2010) argued that policy capturing, longitudinal studies, and field experiment would maximize internal validity and the realism of context. In this way we could avoid that “what we know ultimately depends on how we know it” (2010, 691).

**Generalizing the public service motivation construct**

All the studies in this stream aim at verifying whether the concept of PSM can be generalized. Generalization is tested across countries, sectors, activities and international/supranational organizations. In some cases, the same research is interested in looking at more than one type of generalization. In this branch, as opposed to the previous branch, the focus is on the concept itself rather than on methodological issues.

Researches that apply the measurement scale developed by Perry (1996) to foreign nations conclude, in general, that the model has external validity and therefore holds true in countries outside the United States. On the other side, however, all those studies found additional elements to be relevant for the PSM construct in the nation at hand. Vandenabeele et al. (2004) compared the United States to the French and Dutch contexts. On top of the four dimensions suggested by Perry (1996), also religion, democratic and bureaucratic values, and the service tradition of a civil service were relevant factors to understand PSM in France and The Netherlands. Then, Vandenabeele et al (2006) compared PSM in the United States, United Kingdom and Germany. Upon corroborating the universality of the concept as defined by Perry, additional issues were underlined. The policy making process, the basis to define the common good and the governmental reference level are different among the nations considered. Moreover, equality,
service delivery tradition, competencies demanded to public servants and bureaucratic traditions are relevant factors that influence PSM. Hence, institutions influence behaviors according to the English and German cases. Using an unusual sample, but still with the same interest in finding similarities and differences between countries, Infeld et al. (2009) used responses from two Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs’ students, one in China and one in the United States, to see how work values was different. American students put the highest priority on exciting, stimulating, educational, and challenging work (intrinsic motives), as opposed to Chinese students who saw those same factors among the least important. American students also put a high importance to their future jobs in terms of self-actualization, altruism and affluence. On the contrary, Chinese students demanded a job with high salary, good benefits, and opportunities for promotions (extrinsic motives). Then, both American and Chinese students put low importance to the role of leadership in maximizing efficiency, entrepreneurship and productivity.

The studies looking at whether there is a difference in the level of PSM among public, non-profit and private employees, all agree that both intrinsic and extrinsic motives are present in any sector. By the way, the researches differ in focus and perspective. Crewson (1997) found evidence that PSM of United States Federal workers is positively associated with organizational commitment. On the other side, however, he found no evidence that public policies motives are different between public service and non public service oriented individuals. Houston (2000) argued that PSM does exist and American public sector employees are more intrinsically motivated, whereas private sector employees are more extrinsically motivated. Frank and Lewis (2004) affirmed that the sectoral differences in self-reported work effort are mainly caused by government offering interesting projects and opportunities to help other, and by the greater age of public workers. Houston (2005) verified that public employees are more likely to engage in volunteer activities and donate blood than private employees and that non-profit workers are also more likely to volunteer than for-profit workers. However, he did not found any difference between government employees and private employees on individual philanthropy. Therefore, according to Huston (2005), PSM is present in higher degree in public service, especially government, employees than in private sector employees. Buelens and Van Den Broeck (2007) compared and contrasted employees in the Belgian public and private sectors. They reach the
conclusion that the former are less extrinsically motivated than the latter. They also found that position in the organizational hierarchy and job content are more important in determining motivation than sectoral differences. Andersen (2007) looked at Danish dentists and physicians to investigate how professional norms, monetary incentives, and sector influenced behavior. They found out that monetary incentives are irrelevant for both public and private practitioners when strong professional norms were in place. On the contrary, when strong professional norms did not exist, monetary incentives influenced behaviors. Keeping the level of economic rewards constant, the sector of employment did not seem to influence behavior so much. Therefore, monetary incentives and professional norms are more important than sector in order to understand how health professional behave. Andersen et al. (2009) compared Danish private and public physiotherapists’ levels of PSM. Among others, they reached the conclusions that: the level of PSM is the same between public and private physiotherapists; compared to public physiotherapists, private physiotherapists showed higher orientation toward the user and lower public interest; and age and gender affected PSM. Another study on private Danish physiotherapists by Andersen and Serritzlew (2009) showed that public interest and attraction to policy making affected behaviors, while compassion did not. Therefore, at least some of the underling principles of public sector motivation can be found and have consequences on behaviors in the private sector as well. Moulton and Feeney (2010) asked themselves: “Why would loan originators offer borrowers public loan programs, particularly when such programs provide no additional (and sometimes reduced) direct financial compensation to the private lenders and potentially increased workloads?” (2010,1). They speculated that “among private loan officers, affinity for government, community ties, and public values are significantly related to the degree of participation in a public serving government program” (2010, 18). That is to say that frontline workers have the power to influence public outcomes and the public good based on their intrinsic motivation rather than on the institutional structure they belong to. The motivation is boosted by perceptions of government and government programs. “Although government perceptions predict participation in the government program, shared public values predict a substantial increase in the degree of participation in the public program” (2010, 19). Park and Word (2009) investigated whether differences in motivation existed between public and non-profit managers. They found out that both of them are significantly motivated by intrinsic motives, such as service, reputation, and reduction of red tapes. Then, non-profit managers are
more motivated by a work-family life balance, while public managers are more motivated by promotions, salary, and security.

One study measured PSM across activities. Johnson (2009) wanted to see if city planners have a public service ethic. They specified that city planners in the United States have three main roles: technical, facilitator and political. They found out that PSM was related only to the first two roles. They also were able to conclude that gender (female), age, being a professional, entrepreneurial and personal/family orientation, and the level of activism within the community were relevant to determine PSM.

The following three studies included comparisons on both countries and sectors. First, Vandenabeele and Van De Walle (2007) discussed that “PSM and its constituting dimensions are only to a certain extent universal. Scores are generally high in Southern European and American countries, and low in Central and Eastern Europe. There is also considerable variation in the dimensions that make up PSM, resulting in different score patterns across regions” (2007, 236). They also made a comparison between PSM in the public and private sector across the 38 countries included in their study, concluding that “PSM has a distinct public character. However, (...) not all dimensions under investigation were equally public in character. Although the dimension ‘politics and policies’ was clearly public, ‘compassion’ and ‘self-sacrifice’ were not significantly related to public sector employment” (2007, 236). Second, Houston (2009) looked at public and private managers in North America and Western Europe to see whether attitudes toward intrinsic and extrinsic motivators were similar and whether the welfare state in place in the different context moderated those attitudes. They concluded that public sector employees are more likely to value intrinsic work motivators and devalue extrinsic work motivators. The only unexpected result was that both public and private employees increase the importance of job security as an extrinsic motive. Then, he found some evidence that being a worker serving the government meant different things in different welfare regimes in terms of valuing extrinsic work motives. Third, Chow et al. (2009) studied how willing firemen in Hong Kong are to work or shrink and compared them to police officers in the United States. In both samples, workers with strong functional and solidarity preferences were more likely to work hard. However, as opposed to American police officers, solidarity preferences were more important for firemen in Hong Kong in taking the decision to work hard. Moreover, interactions with the supervisor and a belief
that punishment would be used when necessary were significantly related to the decision of working hard.

**Relating public service motivation to other variables**

The studies in this stream are presented according to the statistical analysis they perform. Some researches looked at causal relationship, therefore defining antecedents and consequences of PSM, while others verified the correlation between PSM and other organizational and individual variables. Overall, the findings for some of the variables are mixed.

This article considers a larger number of variables than Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise (2010). Moreover, they used the three propositions originally offered by Perry and Wise (1990) as the criteria for grouping together studies successively published. The three propositions suggested a relationship between PSM and the three dimensions of attraction-selection-attrition, individual performance, and organizational incentives system (Perry, 1990).

**The antecedents of PSM**

A bunch of studies investigate which individual and organizational characteristics determine a higher or lower level of PSM. Individual variables include education, childhood and professional experiences, preferences for different kinds of rewards, perceptions, pride, closeness to God, parental models, political ideology, and age. Organizational variables, instead, include management level, organizational features, red tape, length of membership in the institution, national institutions and politics, and job features. Gender, even though findings are mixed on the strength and the kind of causation, is also considered to determine the level of PSM.

Perry (1997) called for investigations on the factors expected to influence the dimensions of PSM. As a matter of fact, “expanding the variables investigated will help to explain larger parts of the variance of PSM and should help to identify interventions to change it” (1997, 193). He especially called for further studies on the role of educational and organizational influences on PSM. In this same study, he found that experiences in childhood and professional life as well as exposure to religion influence the individual level of PSM in a complex way.

Wright (2004) found that just over half of the variance in work motivation could be
explained by job goal specificity, job goal difficulty and self-efficacy. He also added that work context variables (i.e. procedural constraints, organizational goal specificity and organizational goal conflict) are relevant to understand work motivation.

Bright (2005) concluded that PSM is strongly linked to gender, educational level, management level, and individual monetary preferences. In fact, workers with high level of PSM were more likely to be female, have longer education, be managers, desire significantly less economic rewards than worker with lower levels of PSM.

Camilleri (2006) looked at government officials in Malta and found out that employee perception about the organization enhance affective and normative organizational commitment, which, in turn, has a direct effect on PSM. Also, family-life cycle status directly influences most of the PSM dimensions, but does not influence organizational commitment dimensions. In a successive study, Camilleri (2007) confirmed that organizational environment, such as job characteristics, employee-leader relations and employee perception of the organization, is the most important factor in predicting PSM of Maltese government employees. Camilleri (2009) discovered also that except for age, other personal attributes do not have a major impact on the development of PSM among government workers in Malta. Rather, perception of organizational politics is a positive antecedent of PSM, with the remuneration and advancement policies positively influencing PSM.

Moynihan and Pandey (2007) supported the role of the sociohistorical context, especially education and membership in professional organizations, in shaping PSM. Also, at the organizational level, red tape and length of organizational membership have a negative impact, while hierarchical authority and reform efforts have positive impact on PSM.

Grant (2008) argued that PSM could be enhanced if only employees were told how their behaviors benefit other people’s life. They made a quasi-experiment on 45 paid fundraising undergraduate students callers. “A group of fundraising callers serving a public university met a fellowship student who benefited from the funds raised by the organization. A full month later, these callers increased significantly in the number of pledges and the amount of donation money that they obtained, whereas callers in a control group did not change on these measures” (2008, 48).

Boardman and Sundquist (2009) committed themselves to closing the gap between organizational performance and individual motivation. They proposed to introduce a new
explanatory variable, named perceived public service efficacy, to quantify public servants' perception about the benefit their employing agencies provide to the public. They discovered that an increase in perceived public service efficacy reported a decrease in role ambiguity and an increase in job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Giauque et al (2010) found out that socio-relational elements are good predictors of work motivation. However, they added that socio-relational factors might not be good predictors in the public sector only.

Jung and Rainey (2009) observed that specific goals, clear organizational mission, high commitment to goals, and high perceived goal relevance increased the likelihood that American civil servants see their duty as public official as motivators.

Paine (2009) studied the United States local government and find that closeness to God, parental modeling, professional identification, political ideology, and age are the most important predictors of PSM, and therefore relevant indicators of direction, intensity and duration of work efforts.

Perry (1997) registered higher scores for male in the dimensions of commitment to public interest and self-sacrifice and indifference between genders on attraction to policy making. Then, DeHart and Davis (2006) observed higher scores for women in the dimensions of attraction to policy making and compassion, and indifference between genders on commitment to public interest. The results on how gender affects PSM are therefore mixed.

Georgellis and Tabvuma (2010) focused their attention on the level of PSM reported by individual switching job within the same sector or across sectors. They concluded that workers accepting public sector employment enhanced their satisfaction with the work itself, which, in this study, was used as a proxy for PSM.

The consequences of PSM
Several studies illustrate what are the organizational consequences of PSM. Specifically, PSM is found to influence, either in a positive or negative way, variables such as individual and organization performance, retention, appraisal process, and the direction of efforts.
Kim (2005), studying civil servants at all Korean governmental level, found that individual factors (i.e. job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, affective organizational commitment, and PSM ordered from the most to the least important in shaping the relationship) are important to predict organizational performance. Camilleri (2009) also analyzed what is the relationship between individual-level factors (personal attributes, perception of organizational politics and PSM) and individual performance of public officers in the central government of Malta. As opposed to Kim, Camilleri discovered that the impact of PSM on performance is rather low.

Langbein (2009) found that enjoying and appreciating the work is more important than additional money to retain United States federal government employees. He also found that to be defined good, a job need to include discretion, clear individual goals, a cooperative work environment, and a clear link between individual tasks and organizational mission.

Bright (2009) discussed that “PSM is a significant predictor of public employees' desire for personal recognition, task meaningfulness, and professional growth, over and above the effects of several confounding variables assessed” (2009, 30). The control variables included in the study were: management level, racial differences, public sector tenure, age, gender, and education level.

Christensen and Whiting (2009) found out that PSM moderate significantly the performance appraisal process. As a matter of fact they observed that “raters with higher levels of PSM placed greater weight on helping behaviors in making their appraisal decisions” (2009, 13).

Paine (2009) made a research on local public officials in the United States and reached two main conclusions. On one hand, PSM is the strongest predictor of the directions of work efforts. On the other side, however, job related and individual factors are better than motivation in predicting the intensity and the duration of work efforts.

**Correlations between PSM and other variables**
The studies in this branch correlate PSM to other kind of variables. These variables can be categorized as tangible and intangible. The former variables are: performance, turnover, different styles of leadership, extra-role behavior, citizen participation, network settings, effort levels, employment-at-will policies, and contents taught at Master of Public Administration Programs. The latter variables are: activism levels, social capital, person-organization fit, satisfaction, trust, emotional labor, and culture.
Brewer (2003) argued that workers employed by the public sector are much more active in civic affairs and willing to build social capital than any other group of citizens.

Cerase (2006) also, in the result obtained from a first stage study, concluded that the Italian employees of the Revenue Agency, showed high levels of PSM, which was also related to work motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Bright (2007), observed three public organizations in the United States. In his study, PSM did not have a statistically significant direct influence on job performance when compared to person-organization fit. By the way, PSM indirectly influences performance through an important contribution toward the person-organization fit. Upon reaching the same conclusion, Stazyk (2009) added that employee reward expectations do not strongly influence person-organization fit and job satisfaction, but directly affect turnover intentions.

Brudney, Coursey, Littlepage, and Perry (2008) discovered that PSM is significantly related to family socialization, religious activities, and volunteer experiences.

Gabris and Davis (2009) looked at students enrolled in four different Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs in the United States to understand if students’ PSM score is associated with distinct and separate models of management being taught in MPA programs. They concluded that students’ PSM is positively related with team management models and negatively related to business agency models. However those relationships are not strong. As a matter of fact, it appears that students “want to be involved in meaningful problem solving, but they also believe that the private sector ideology is expected as a skill set they need to develop in their MPA programs” (2009, 2). This trade off may cause confusion in the set of values, as it is very difficult to simultaneously reconcile the two opposite aspects.

Moynihan et al. (2009) observed that “transformational leadership is associated with higher PSM (…) [and] has both a direct effect on mission valence as well as important indirect effects through its influence on clarifying organizational goals and fostering PSM” (2009, 1). In any case, PSM is just one lever and not even the strongest of a set of tool that leaders can use to obtained outcomes related to the mission valence.

Park and Rainey (2008), studying the United States Federal Agencies, concluded that transformation oriented leaders and public service oriented motivation have strong positive relations to job satisfaction, performance and work quality, and negative relation to intent to turnover. They specified that transformation oriented leaders foster public service oriented
motivation via empowerment.

Taylor (2008) focused his attention on public and private Australian sectors. He observed a strong and direct relationship between PSM and the two work outcomes of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Then, he found that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and work relations with management and coworkers, despite showing a significant and direct effects on the two work outcomes, did not influence the relation between PSM and the two works outcomes.

Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010), through a literature review, proposed a new comprehensive framework that links transformational leadership, person-organization fit, socialization, job setting, goal-setting theory, and self-determination theory to PSM. They urged organizational leaders to take advantage of the growing body of evidence on the relationships involving all these variables to shape all the HRM plans considering benefits as well as costs.

Hsieh and Jang (2009) investigated what type of emotional labor relates to PSM. They found that the dimension of attraction to policy making is positively linked with face acting, the dimension of compassion is negatively linked to fact acting, and positively linked to deep acting. On the other hand, they did not find any link between emotional labor and commitment to public interest.

Kolpakov (2009) tried to relate cultural dimensions to the different motives identified by Perry as component of PSM. He proposed five hypotheses to be tested with future studies. First, civil and public servants will score higher in rational motives in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures. Second, civil and public servants will score higher in rational motives in weak uncertainty avoidance cultures than in strong uncertainty avoidance cultures. Third, civil and public servants will score higher in norm-based motives (commitment to the public interest and loyalty to duty) in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures. Fourth, civil and public servants will score higher in norm-based motives (social equity) in feminine cultures than in masculine cultures. Fifth, civil and public servants will score higher in affective based motives in affective cultures than in neutral cultures.

Weibel (2010) observed that “pay for performance has a strong, positive effect on performance in the case of non-interesting tasks” (2010, 404). The opposite happened with interesting tasks. In the same study, he added that intrinsic motivation boost work efforts much more than what extrinsic motivation does. In conclusion, “Pay for performance strengthens extrinsic motivation and weakens intrinsic motivation: depending on the relative strengths, pay
for performance either hurts or promotes personal efforts. Moreover, hidden costs arise even if
the price effect is stronger than the crowding-out effect as the loss of intrinsically motivated
behavior has always to be compensated by external rewards” (2010, 404).

Battaglio (2010) using a sample of human resources managers at the state level in the United
States observed that the policies of employment-at-will are strongly negatively related to
motivation in the work place. This relation was even stronger for minority groups.

**From theory to practice**

Yet from the beginning of the literature on PSM, some authors have been focusing on the lessons
learnt by doing research in order to give policy recommendations. Broadly speaking, these
suggestions are intended to improve all the steps in the HRM cycle.

Perry, Mesch and Paarlberg (2006) summarized what social and behavioral sciences
discovered about motivating performance in all the three sectors. They basically concluded that,
while pay for performance may enhance performance from slightly to significantly, its
effectiveness within the public sector, given organizational conditions, have been low. Also, even
if group incentives have generally been effective, they have not been well tested in public
institutions. On the other side, job design (participation, clear and learning goals, and rewards) is
found to be effective in improving performance and influencing affective outcomes. Following
the same approach, Perry, Engbers, and Jun (2009) focused their attention on 57 studies
published over the period 1977-2008 to summarize the knowledge on the effectiveness of
performance related pay in government. Hence, they listed the factors to consider to effectively
implementing a pay for performance system. The context (particularly the industry type), the
organizational level, the institution itself (public or private) may moderate effectiveness. They
also suggested avoiding implementing a pay for performance system only because everyone else
is doing it and hypothesized that public service theory and self-determination theory may be
better levers to improve performance.

Parlberg and Lavigna (2009) gave some hints on how to enhance the positive influences of
PSM on both personal and organizational performance. They suggested to: use interview tools
able to recognize PSM in the selection process; provide opportunities for the newcomers to
understand organizational goals and expectations, highlight how personal behaviors make the difference for the institution and the society; set goals that are clear and challenging for the employees; enhance workers self-determination through participation and shared leadership; and encourage as well as recognize the creation of transformational leadership.

Taylor and Taylor (2009) gave a broad guideline. They used a sample of 15 countries around the world and observed that, except for the United States, Denmark, France, Bulgaria, and Russia, they paid their public workforce slightly above the efficient wages. They suggested that the most cost-effective way to raise government workers’ effort is through their PSM levels.

Steen and Rutgers (2009) urged to use PSM and the oath of office, which they saw as an explicit demand and image of PSM, for what they are, that is values-as-such, rather than as a HRM tool to promote good governance. One of the reasons for this is that both PSM and the oath of office may have, on top of positive effects, negative effects as well. It may also be that disadvantages are not so peripheral.

Le Grand (2010) merged together motivational assumptions and the delivery of public service theory. He recognized that any model of public service delivery has assumption on employees' motivation. He argued about the importance of making the assumptions on motivation explicit in order to reach an effective and efficient delivery of public service and avoid mismatches. Based on this, he defined four different models of motivation and service delivery setting. The first is the trust model. It only works if workers are altruist public-spirited professionals. In this case, no controls are needed in order to properly deliver the service. The second, on the contrary, is the mistrust model. It puts in place rewards and punishments. If those rewards and punishments are perceived as controlling, the model fits with self-interested employees. Instead, if rewards and punishments are perceived as reinforcing, the model fits with public-spirited workers. The third model is voice. It applies best to non-paternalistic public-spirited professionals. However, it has to be coupled with mistrust or choice model if workers are completely self-interested. The last model is choice. It is suitable when employees are self-interested or non-paternalistic public-spirited professionals.

Delfgaauw and Dur (2010) affirmed that in a world with perfect economic competition where potential workers differ in their set of abilities and level of PSM, the per unit output price in the public sector is lower than in the private sector. This happens because of the desire of public employees to accept lower salary in exchange for a more meaningful job. As a
consequence, the brightest agents will auto-select to work for private organizations. “This allocation anyway, is efficient: it is the least costly way of producing a given amount of public sector output and it results in maximum social welfare as well. When PSM is sufficiently prevalent in the public sector, agencies should not aim to recruit and retain the best and brightest at all cost, but rather aim at less productive, but better motivated people. The benefits of improving the quality of public managers by increasing remuneration to private sectors levels are bound to be smaller than the cost” (2010, 658).

Conclusion

This article reviewed the last 30 years of literature on PSM, which is considered under several perspectives. Key unanswered questions remain and should drive future developments of the research. In particular, relevant issues to be investigated are: What is the relationship between PSM and performance, at the individual as well as at the organizational level? What is the link between PSM and leadership in public organizations? How should HRM practices be designed based on the different level and degree of the PSM showed by employees within the institution?

Answering this research questions is even more challenging in the case of the Italian public sector due to the limited availability and fragmentation of data. Given the lack of previous empirical studies, we are going to collect data that help us shed light on the role PSM plays in attracting, motivating and retaining Italian public servants.

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