The Meaning of Public Service Motivation: Human Resource Management Practices in the Public Sector

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ABSTRACT

Public service motivation (PSM) and civil servant job performance are primary concerns in government. As a result, utilizing the PSM Model, this study was undertaken to analyze employee motivation in the public sector. Commitment to the public interest is one of the model's components. This study aims to look into the link among PSM, organizational commitment, work performance, and the impact of empowerment and job characteristics. The study analyzed a data collection of 499 public servants in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, where public sector organizations are characterized by a culture of high-power distance, collectivism, and a high level of bureaucracy. The findings show that PSM is positively affected by empowerment and job characteristics, which in turn can enhance the organizational commitment and job performance among public servants. At the same time, the skill variety, task significance, task identity, feedback, and autonomy do not affect the job performance among public servants.

Keywords: Public service motivation; empowerment; organizational commitment; job characteristics; job performance, public sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

The essential sector in the national administration is a public organization, which must be relevant and approved by society. Government agencies are constantly working to enhance the quality of public services, yet the general public has the impression that government personnel is less productive than private enterprises (Frank & Lewis, 2004; Liu & Chen, 2021). It indicates that private-sector owners will pressure management agents to focus on productive efficiency and profitability, given that profit maximization is important to them. They require the highest potential productivity to achieve it (Aguilera et al., 2021). Public service motivation (PSM) is vital for community life and organizational management. It is a

noble virtue for creating quality living at all levels and systems (Ritz et al., 2016). As a result, whether for business or non-profit enterprises, organizational commitment to PSM activities is essential to enhance organizational performance and attain competitiveness (Clerkin & Fotheringham, 2017). Furthermore, PSM predicts public employees' job satisfaction, ethical behaviors, and performance (Chen et al., 2021).

Much research has investigated employee work motivation in the previous few decades (Islam & Ismail, 2008). Since PSM was first defined as an individual's predisposition to react to incentives mainly anchored or exclusively in public institutions and organizations (Perry & Wise, 1990), the field has evolved significantly. However, scholars have found similar conceptual and practical disagreements and a lack of clarity in the knowledge base when periodically assessing this proliferation of studies, including various definitions associated with PSM (Bozeman & Su, 2015; Esteve & Schuster, 2019). The use of different measurement scales (Coursey & Pandey, 2007; Kim et al., 2013; Perry, 1996; Vandenabeele, 2008; Wright et al., 2013), a debate over the fundamental nature of the concept (e.g., is PSM a stable state of being or a trait that can be developed over time or reduced through poor management) (Giauque et al., 2013; Holt, 2019; Van Witteloostuijn et al., 2017; Vogel & Kroll, 2016), a dispute about the relationship between PSM and other organizational behavior ideas like altruism and prosocial behavior (Boyd & Nowell, 2020; Breaugh et al., 2018; Nowell et al., 2016; Piatak & Holt, 2020). PSM is an area with comparable consensus in terms of relevance and ongoing conceptual and measuring issues (Piatak et al., 2020). Based on established theories, PSM can yield beneficial outcomes (Huang, 2019), mainly when government workers' prosocial incentives are bolstered, whereas there is no link discovered between PSM and public organizations by some scholars (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007a, 2007b). In other words, the outcomes are ambiguous, which might be attributable to the influence of other factors.

Trying to uncover whether people who work in the public sector (broadly defined) are motivated by specific public service-oriented reasons and what this entails for public service organizations and policies. PSM has developed as one of the most important and popular topics in public administration research over the last two decades, with hundreds of studies studying what PSM is, how to quantify it, how organizational processes influence PSM, and how PSM influences both personal and organizational outcomes (Christensen et al., 2017). More study on how PSM relates to the practice of public administration—what practical lessons can be gleaned from this vast body of knowledge to guide the employment experience on the ground—has been requested by academics (Christensen et al., 2017; Ingrams, 2020; Jensen, Andersen, & Holten, 2019; Jensen & Vestergaard, 2017; Miao et al., 2018; James L. Perry & Vandenabeele, 2015; Piatak & Holt, 2020; Ripoll, 2019; Ritz et al., 2016; Vandenabeele et al., 2014; Wright et al., 2013). Despite the current increase in study interest, primary theoretical problems concerning the relationship between PSM and job performance in the public sector remain to be addressed. Particularly in the Vietnamese public industry with strong effects of Confucianism, cultures of harmony, collectivism and face-saving as well as cultural patterns of obedience, paternalism, and fatalism, which make employees passive and reluctant to take the initiative and responsibility. Therefore, unlike developed countries, public sector organizations are characterized by collectivism, high bureaucracy, and a high power distance culture (Nguyen et al., 2020). It has generated a poor work ethic, opportunism, carelessness, wastefulness, and arbitrary decision-making.

Vietnam shares many issues in common with other emerging and transitional nations, including low productivity, widespread corruption, inefficiency, "red tape," and power abuse. We reply to the requests to investigate causality concerns and the boundaries of PSM by discovering factors that may be related to PSM. How highly public service motivated civil servants to perform in public organizations; and whether PSM positively impacts

organizational commitment, which leads to better job performance in the public sector. Then the findings suggest management recommendations and practices for boosting employee efforts in public organizations, especially in Vietnam and countries with the same cultural factors and patterns.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Public service motivation

Two significant ideas in the debate on individual and organizational performance in public sector organizations are performance-related pay and PSM (Papenfuß & Keppeler, 2020). Early research on PSM grapples with whether people who work in the public sector (broadly defined) are motivated by specific public service-oriented incentives and what this means for public service organizations and legislation (Piatak et al., 2020). An individual's orientation to providing service to others to do good for others and society is how PSM is described an individual's predisposition to respond to reasons rooted chiefly or exclusively in public institutions and organizations (Asseburg & Homberg, 2020; Jensen, Andersen, & Holten, 2019; Leisink et al., 2021; Potipiroon et al., 2019). Employees in the public sector are so altruistic and do not demand return from those who receive their services (Bao et al., 2018; Li & Bao, 2020). PSM is a significant idea in public administration because it explains why people want to help others and undertake meaningful public service (Davis et al., 2020; Desmidt & Prinzie, 2019; Tran et al., 2020; Ugaddan & Park, 2019). PSM is characterized as "a broad altruistic motive" or "a specific form of altruism" or "the desire to exert effort for the benefit of others." (Schott et al., 2019).

PSM, according to (Broekema et al., 2019), is defined as the motivating factor that encourages people to engage in meaningful public service (i.e., public, community, and social service) to help others and influence their well-being (Guterresa et al., 2020; Ripoll & Breaugh, 2019). Compassion, self-sacrifice, attraction to public service, and commitment to public values are the four elements of PSM (Asseburg & Homberg, 2020; Liu & Chen, 2021; Parola et al., 2019; Potipiroon et al., 2019). PSM represents an individual's inclination to engage in altruistic or prosocial acts (Rafique et al., 2021; Sułkowski et al., 2020) and is portrayed as a motivation to volunteer, assist, or generally act in the best interests of others (Boyd & Nowell, 2020; Cooke et al., 2019; Schwarz et al., 2020), particularly the community, state, nation, and humanity (Luu, 2019; Schott et al., 2019).

Additionally, PSM is defined as a set of ideas, values, and attitudes (Ugaddan & Park, 2019) that go beyond one self-interest and organizational interest to concern the interests of a broader political body and urge individuals to behave in accordance with those interests whenever possible (Tuan, 2019). PSM predicted desirable citizen behaviors such as political participation, prosocial activities (charitable giving), and civic rights appreciation (Ingrams, 2020). PSM is a trait shared by people who are drawn to meaningful work and capable of dealing with the environmental pressures that come with working in the public sector (Bright, 2021). It is a personality attribute that describes those who are prepared to sacrifice themselves for the well-being of others without expecting anything in return (Borst et al., 2020). This current study adopted the definition of PSM as individuals' preferences for motivating factors that are "mainly or exclusively founded in public institutions and organizations" (Belrhiti et al., 2020). After obtaining valuable comments from the group discussion, this study only focused on the commitment to public values among those four elements of PSM based on the public sector in Vietnam.

Empowerment

Empowerment is a term that characterizes working situations in which the empowered is emotionally involved (Echebiri et al., 2020). It is argued that empowerment is achieved by decentralization, flattening the hierarchy, and more employee engagement. Empowering employees entails giving them decision-making authority, discretionary power, autonomy, and flexibility (Norbu & Wetprasit, 2021). Employee empowerment is described as creating drive and self-efficacy in employees to remove their helplessness (Jung et al., 2020). Empowerment as a "feeling of authorization to act" may be viewed as a form of power (Smith et al., 2019). Empowerment is concerned with one's sense of power and allows one to participate. On the one hand, the majority of the concept studies included looked at empowerment from three perspectives: 1) antecedents, 2) qualities, and 3) outcomes (Halvorsen et al., 2020).

On the other hand, previous literature on empowerment showed that two significant ideas of empowerment have steadily formed through time. These are social-structural and psychological approaches (Echebiri et al., 2020). The structural approach focuses on the conduct of leaders who empower others. Empowering leadership is defined as leading by example, participatory decision making, guiding, informing, and demonstrating care. Another aspect is psychological empowerment, which is concerned with how empowered employees feel (Rafique et al., 2021; Wang & Yang, 2021). Furthermore, social–structural empowerment is concerned with workplace social structures and environmental elements on a broad scale, while psychological empowerment stresses a psychological standpoint or micro-level cognition.

Empowering leadership may be antecedents of psychological empowerment, for instance, individual-level psychological and group-level psychological empowerment (Cheong et al., 2019). Empowering leadership is conceptualized as how leaders distribute power from themselves to their subordinates (Echebiri et al., 2020; Thun & Bakker, 2018). Empowering leadership entails five major actions: leading by example, participatory decision-making, coaching, educating, and expressing concern/interacting with the team (Kim, 2019). It implies a growing idea of sharing increasingly extended responsibilities and essential leadership specialists over work and assets and the assistance needed to handle the added assignment (Alameri et al., 2019). In the current study, empowering leadership involves (1) power sharing, (2) motivation support, and (3) growth support (Kim & Beehr, 2020). This research defined empowerment as a motivating idea that focuses on empowering individuals and promoting personal growth. Empowerment attempts to instill in followers a proactive, self-confident attitude and a sense of personal strength and give employees decision-making participation, coaching, and information (Kim, 2019; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

Organizational commitment

The proportional strength of an individual's identification with and engagement in a specific organization is how organizational commitment is described (Murray & Holmes, 2021; Park, 2020). Traditionally, an organizational commitment was defined as the degree to which an employee identified with the organization's goals (Ruiz-Palomo et al., 2020). Also, an emotional connection to an organization is also defined by organizational commitment (Borst et al., 2020). The organizational commitment of employees can be shown in three ways: affective commitment, continued commitment, and normative commitment (Pratono et al., 2019).

On the other hand, organizational commitment is a stage in which an employee identifies a specific group with specific aims and wants to remain a part of that group according to (Eliyana et al., 2019). Moreover, they demonstrate employees' commitment to the organization and the next stage in which organizational members exhibit concern for the

company's success and future development. Work engagement is concerned with job performance, whereas commitment is concerned with the psychological link that exists between the person and the organization (Meijerink et al., 2020), which is created as a result of the employee's relationship with the organization when the organization treats its employees with respect (Miao et al., 2019). Of interest, this study refers to organizational commitment to a person's emotional attachment to, identification with, and participation in a company (Battistelli et al., 2019).

Job performance
Job performance is a variable at the individual level or something that a single person does in an organization (Qureshi et al., 2019). Reviewing employees' job quality and productivity can help organizations manage their in-role performance and contribution or whether the personnel are capable of performing their job responsibilities (Lin & Huang, 2020). Similarly, performance (in-role behavior) is defined as what is demanded or anticipated as part of the workers' formally allocated duties and obligations (López-Cabarcos et al., 2020). According to (Marzec et al., 2020), job performance is defined as an individual's overall expected value to the organization of discrete behavioral episodes performed over a set period. Job performance is a level of achievement in which a person from the company completes a task (Eliyana et al., 2019), referring to scalable activities, behaviors, and results that employees interact with or contribute to within businesses (Davidescu et al., 2020). Performance is a result or degree of the overall success of a person in carrying out a task over a specific period when compared to other alternatives, such as standard work outcomes, targets, or target criteria that have been set and agreed upon in advance (Pratono et al., 2019). In the current research, job performance refers to employee behaviors critical to the organization's success (Talukder et al., 2018).

Empowerment and PSM
Recent research has focused on the potential benefits of servant leadership, finding that it positively impacts government employees' behaviors and attitudes such as justice perception, trust, PSM, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and performance appraisal acceptance (Shim & Park, 2019). According to self-determination theory, empowering leaders may be conceived of as contextual support that ignites workers' autonomous motivation, inspiring them to speak up (Gao & Jiang, 2019).

The personnel is given sufficient room and discretion by their empowering-style supervisors, prompting them to take on projects on their own initiative. In today's industry, empowered leadership has lately been proven to drive proactive behaviors (Wang & Yang, 2021). Recognizing the significant differences between the public and private sectors, it is argued that public administration scholars should focus on collective approaches to leadership, which share a common tradition of concern for the goals of leaders and followers. They concentrate on leader-follower relationships and strategies that emphasize inclusivity and empowerment, as these theories fit well with the study of prosocial attitudes like public service (Hameduddin & Engbers, 2022). Empowering leadership increases their autonomy and motivation at work by providing feedback and opportunity for workers to enhance their skills and expertise (Gao & Jiang, 2019; Han et al., 2020; Wang & Yang, 2021).

Workers' empowerment might boost job enrichment and their duties and motivation (Ruiz-Palomo et al., 2020). Because it increases the purpose and meaning of work by giving employees authority and freedom to make decisions during service delivery, empowered leadership is the most relevant and effective way to influence service-oriented civic behaviors (Lin et al., 2019). When frontline service employees affect the service encounter, it results in customer-focused behaviors such as the capacity and willingness to improve service

performance, leading to higher customer satisfaction (van Esch et al., 2020). Employees are expected to meet their autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Therefore, empowering leadership emphasizes autonomy and encouragement. It may help to boost intrinsic motivation (AlKahtani et al., 2021; Cheong et al., 2019; Kim, 2019; Mutonyi et al., 2020). It enables employees to respond to customer service requests more rapidly, deal with complaints more swiftly, and engage more in service encounters (Echebiri et al., 2020). It supposes that administrative reforms such as empowerment, decentralization, and the reduction of red tape boost PSM (Liu & Chen, 2021).

Empowerment and Job Characteristics
Job Characteristics

Job characteristics were grouped into diversity, autonomy, operational interaction, knowledge and skill, and responsibility early in the job characteristics theory, which has drawn attention since 1965 (Yoon et al., 2020). Job characteristics are the elements of core duty qualities that convey perceptions about the importance, responsibility, and outcome felt when executing the job independently. Employees think about the meaning and significance of the job because of skill variety, task identity, and task significance; autonomy gives them a sense of responsibility for the job; and feedback gives them a psychological state to perceive the actual result of business activities (Hwang & Jang, 2020).

Job characteristic model is defined with five core job characteristics of one's position, including skill variety (the degree to which a job requires the use of multiple skills), task identity (the degree to which a job requires completion of a whole, from start to finish), task significance (the degree to which one's job has a significant impact and meaning on other people's lives or work), task autonomy (the degree to which one's job provides substantial independence and freedom), and feedback (the degree to which the job provides direct and clear assessment on how effectively one has performed) (Cai et al., 2019; Garg, 2019; Han et al., 2021; Howard & Cogswell, 2019; Hwang & Jang, 2020; Issahaka & Lines, 2021; Othman & Nasurdin, 2019; Wang, 2020).

Job autonomy, task diversity, and skill variety are essential motivating job characteristics (Zhang & Parker, 2019). Job routineness (predictability), job specificity (the degree to which job tasks and importance are defined), human resource development, and feedback are all characterized as job characteristics of public employees (Park, 2020). On the other hand, job demands and resources are considered two major categories of job characteristics that may explain employee energy depletion and motivation, respectively (Amor et al., 2021; Parola et al., 2019). Job demands are elements that need energy to address, whereas job resources assist employees in meeting these demands (Borst et al., 2020). However, it is stated that job characteristics should include job autonomy, job security, and pay (Kim et al., 2021).

Additionally, hours worked, job demands, job control, workplace support, and role overload are all components of the job characteristics (Creed et al., 2020). Regardless of the variety, the current study adopts five job characteristics of skills variety, task significance, task identity, task autonomy, and feedback. The degree of experienced meaningfulness of the job is determined by the first three characteristics (i.e., skill diversity, task identity, and task importance). Of the remaining two dimensions, autonomy relates to the degree to which an individual recognizes how effectively he or she is doing the task, and feedback mentions the degree to which an individual realizes how effectively he or she is executing the work (Hwang & Jang, 2020).

Empowerment increases employee motivation by increasing their feeling of meaning in their job. As a result, work performance increases (Yin et al., 2019). Positive job characteristics and proactive work behavior are influenced by empowering leadership.

Empowering leadership, in particular, provides employees with significant autonomy from bureaucratic constraints, encourages participation in decision-making, increases the meaning of work, and allows them to demonstrate confidence in a good performance (Wang & Yang, 2021).

The five fundamental job characteristics (skill variety, task variety, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) are essential factors to consider while creating empowering jobs (Lee et al., 2018). Similarly, it is stated that employees could work with confidence, respect their contributions, and make their job more meaningful when their leaders give them authority and autonomy (Jung et al., 2020). Employees get additional responsibility and enhance the variety of their skills thanks to the autonomy granted by empowered leaders (Kim & Beehr, 2020). Psychological empowerment is a result of structural empowerment, which satisfies core psychological requirements for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Amor et al., 2021): increasing meaningfulness through inspiring (e.g., enthusing them for goals and plans, making them feel like they contribute to a critical mission), increasing competences through strengthening (e.g., delegating tasks, encouraging them to use their strengths), increasing relatedness through connecting (e.g., encouraging collaboration, promoting a high team spirit), and finally growing autonomy through empowering (e.g., granting them authority) (Robijn et al., 2020).

Empowering leaders may persuade their subordinates that their jobs are vital and meaningful (Kim, 2019). Empowering leadership increases employee autonomy while motivating individuals to invest in their jobs. These actions include involving workers in decision-making, distributing responsibilities, showing trust in employee talents, and expanding the meaning of work (Han et al., 2019). Opportunities for challenge, accountability, and decision autonomy contribute to a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and influence under empowering situations (Aydogmus, 2019). Because empowering leaders act in ways that encourage followers' motivation and efficacy, as well as their participation in work processes, subordinates may feel more confident and have favorable feelings about their jobs (Kim & Beehr, 2020).

Job characteristics and PMS

Enhanced job characteristics conducive to employees' psychological states can produce better intrinsic motivation at the workplace, improved work performance quality, and increased job satisfaction (Garg, 2019; Han et al., 2020; Wang, 2020). Employees are more motivated to become more embedded in their jobs and demonstrate extra-role activities such as creative performance and innovative behavior when job characteristics such as perceived job security and perceived job flexibility are present, which is a company strategy to attract, motivate, and retain key talented employees (Rahimnia et al., 2019). Individuals with proactive and intrinsic ambitions or objectives (personal variables) and facilitative job characteristics may exhibit "autonomous motivation" (Matsuo, 2019).

One of the most generally held goals by which individuals assess and motivate themselves is having a meaningful career. Their objectives and talents draw into comparable personal interests and skills when they seek methods to make their job more meaningful and purposeful, making them feel enthusiastic and energized about what they accomplish (Hu et al., 2020). On the other hand, some forms of transactional leadership may boost employees' feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, giving them more energy to do good public service on their own terms (i.e., increase their PSM) (Jensen, Andersen, & Jacobsen, 2019). According to Matsuo (2019), five job aspects (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) contribute to three essential psychological states (meaningful work, responsibility, and awareness of results), which subsequently lead to

positive outcomes (internal work motivation, quality work performance, job satisfaction, and low absenteeism) (Allan et al., 2019).

Leaders may help people have a favorable perspective of their occupations, and this perception serves as a critical mediator for self-generating motivation and goal commitment, which leads to emotionally organizational outcomes and task performance outcomes (Han et al., 2020). Relational job design characteristics may impact PSM (Piatak et al., 2020). Intrinsic motivation is influenced by context, has a sizeable dispositional component, and can be linked to job characteristics (e.g., autonomy, feedback, skill variety, task identity, and task significance), with some jobs (frontline jobs) requiring more direct customer interaction and thus being more motivating than others (back-office jobs) (Ruiz-Palomino & Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2020). However, variables such as age and gender influence PSM levels between people, and variables such as job characteristics may impact PSM within people (Parola et al., 2019). Changes in relational job characteristics will be linked to prosocial motivation, defined as "the desire to help others or invest effort out of care for others." (van der Voet & Steijn, 2021). Job characteristics can boost work effort and task performance by activating prosocial motivation and keeping staff naturally engaged while doing assigned responsibilities (Garg, 2019). Employees and organizations may experience essential outcomes such as intrinsic motivation, job performance, job satisfaction, and work effectiveness as a result of job characteristics (i.e., experienced meaningfulness of the work, responsibility for work outcomes, and knowledge of results) (Hwang & Jang, 2020).

Job characteristics and job performance

Service employees need autonomy and flexibility to respond quickly to clients' unique, changing expectations (Lin et al., 2019). When the notion of job characteristics is highlighted, which outlines external activities that might influence employees' work opinions, it results in internal job satisfaction and improved work performance (Wang & Yang, 2021). The firm created a reciprocal climate by giving convenient employment features (e.g., job security and flexibility) in which workers repay an excellent work environment with higher retention and better job performance (Rahimnia et al., 2019). Also, employee performance is influenced by factors such as self-determination, job stability, authority, responsibility, and autonomy, comfortable workplace, advancement prospects, welfare packages, professional development, job attractiveness, remuneration, effective management-employee communication, early task distribution, a sense of recognition, and a competitive salary (Davidescu et al., 2020).

Five core motivational job characteristics include task identity, task significance, skill variety, job feedback, and autonomy. When they are combined, it creates a job's motivation potential, which determines positive outcomes such as internal work motivation, positive attitudes toward the job such as job satisfaction, organizational engagement, job participation, and performance quality and quantity (Kulikowski et al., 2022) or creativity, organizational citizenship behaviors, employee health and well-being (Naseer et al., 2020). Job characteristics influence psychological states, which shape personal and professional outcomes (Wang & Yang, 2021). As a result, job characteristics are essential environmental antecedents to proactive work behavior, and job autonomy gives employees flexible work control by allowing them to adjust in their workplace. Meaningful work is a significant psychological feature that contributes to increased job satisfaction, better work performance, and lower turnover (Rai & Maheshwari, 2021). Workers perceive a high level of meaningful work when their job qualities and duties coincide with their own beliefs and personal identities and are thus more inclined to participate at work (Allan et al., 2019). Job characteristics positively and significantly affect performance (Nugroho & Haryanto, 2019) by stimulating psychological processes to engender an appreciation of the meaning of work and take

responsibility for feedback about work results that lead to greater intrinsic motivation and improved job performance (Dong et al., 2020).

PMS and organizational commitment

Employees with a high level of PSM are more committed to their organizations and less likely to leave, exhibit more organizational citizenship and proactive, and innovative behavior, are more effective at reducing work-related stress and are more likely to demonstrate higher job performance, according to (Chen et al., 2021). Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, whistle blowing, citizenship behavior, and perceived internal efficiency are all positively related to PSM (Asseburg & Homberg, 2020). Individuals with a PSM predisposition have a variety of norm-based and emotive incentives, including a desire to serve the public interest and a commitment to government in general (Caillier, 2020). Furthermore, those that follow PSM have higher work satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Miao et al., 2019; Parola et al., 2019; White et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2019).

PSM is the antecedent of organizational commitment, implying that hiring people with PSM can improve organizational commitment (Liu & Chen, 2021). On the other hand, employees with a low degree of PSM have little internal incentive to design their employment to benefit people and society, despite their bosses giving them a lot of autonomy and control (Chen et al., 2021). In the same vein, it is found that employees who are driven to serve the public good have higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, job crafting, and organizational citizenship behaviors than those who are not (Parola et al., 2019). A link between three organizational commitment components and four PSM aspects (policy-making, public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice) has been discovered by Park (2020).

PMS and job performance

When public employees have a sense of competence, self-determination, personal values that are consistent with the demands of their work, and the belief that their work tasks impact organizational outcomes, they are more likely to increase their work efforts (Lim et al., 2021). High PSM employees are more likely to have higher job satisfaction and performance, are more likely to report misconduct, are less likely to perceive that red tape is an issue, are less likely to leave their job, and are more likely to be inventive employees (Bednarczuk, 2021). PSM is positively connected with job performance within public organizations (Suhartini & Nurlita, 2019), and public organizations with high numbers of workers with high PSM do not need to rely on extrinsic motivations and practical incentives to manage people, according to Stefurak, Morgan, and Johnson (2020).

PSM can potentially affect critical attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Because public servants can change their internal emotions and feelings by seeming honest to consumers, those with high PSM likely to have better customer service performance (Potipiroon et al., 2019). Employees with high PSM are more likely to work well when their occupations allow them to live out their values of compassion, self-sacrifice, civic responsibility, and policymaking (Gross et al., 2019). As previous research has demonstrated, PSM may boost performance and public sector integrity (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2019). PSM is an excellent indicator of performance. Employees motivated by public service perform better and contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives because PSM inspires them to be more engaged in public service and put more effort into their jobs (Lim et al., 2021). It is found that prosocial motivation is an essential antecedent of outcomes such as job satisfaction, intention to leave, effort, and performance (van der Voet & Steijn, 2021). They do indicate that prosocial motivations can temporarily be simulated to achieve higher levels of individual performance and effort. While the literature has provided mixed findings

concerning the PSM–job performance relationship, there is evidence that highly PSM employees put in more work effort because they value public work with meaningful tasks (Miao et al., 2019). Employees with a high PSM are enthusiastic about working in the public sector and perform better (Holt, 2019; Liu & Chen, 2021; Sułkowski et al., 2020). PSM demonstrates higher levels of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship (Parola et al., 2019), and it emphasizes the prosocial motivation that underpins public service motivated behavior - to "do good."

Organizational commitment and job performance

Employees' commitment is seen to be a major determinant of job performance (Marzec et al., 2020). The committed employees respond swiftly to clients' requests, avoid complaints, improve customer loyalty, and provide excellent service (Ruiz-Palomo et al., 2020). Strongly committed government servants are expected to stay in their jobs longer, have high job satisfaction, and provide high-quality work and performance (Park, 2020). Employees with high organizational commitment are more likely to perform on behalf of their company even when the resources required to do their duties are lacking (Park, 2020). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are regarded to be work attitudes that reflect important workplace outcomes and contribute to employee performance optimism (Qureshi et al., 2019). Because of enhanced performance, organizations with more substantial organizational commitment have higher work satisfaction, higher productivity, and lower turnover rates (Eliyana et al., 2019; Qureshi et al., 2019).

It is found that value commitment, effort commitment, and retention commitment are three hidden aspects of normative commitment (Donkor & Zhou, 2020). Affective commitment is based on emotional relationships with the organization (Masud et al., 2018), whereas continuation commitment is based on workers' decisions to stay with the company because of the consequences of quitting. When affective commitment is more than normative commitment and continuance commitment, job performance is better than vice versa; between normative commitment and continuance commitment, job performance should be higher when normative commitment is more remarkable than continuance commitment (Sungu et al., 2020).

Based on the above literature review, we propose the following hypotheses (as presented in Figure 1):

H1: Empowerment has a positive relationship with job characteristics.

H2: Job characteristics have a positive relationship with public service motivation.

H3: Empowerment has a positive relationship with public service motivation.

H4: Job characteristics have a positive relationship with job performance.

H5: Public service motivation has a positive relationship with job performance.

H6: Public service motivation has a positive relationship with organizational commitment.

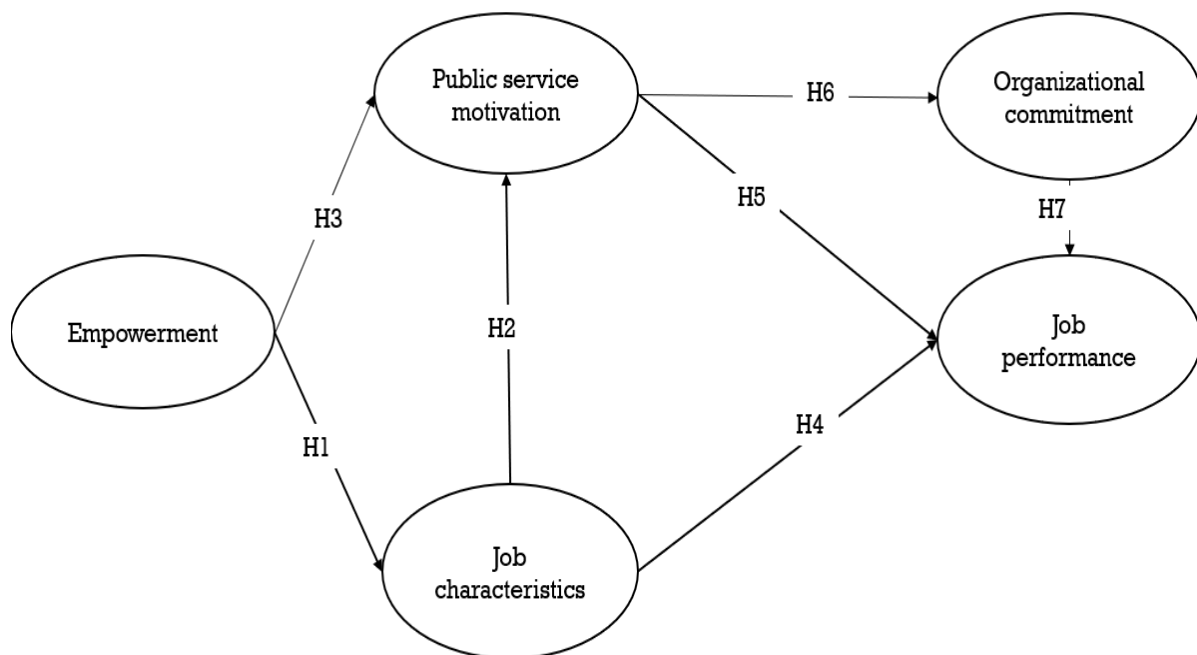H7: Organizational commitment has a positive relationship with job performance.

Figure 1. The conceptual model

3. METHODOLOGY

Data collection

The study was carried out in the local government, using questionnaires reflecting the five aspects, and public servants in Ho Chi Minh City were asked to fill out the surveys. Despite the fact that Covid-19 was difficult to collect data on, the survey received 499 answers due to our best effort. The sampling period was divided into two parts, with 42 samples collected for pilot testing and 499 collected for official data collection and analysis.

The pilot test was the initial stage of data collecting. The sample size was 42, and the questionnaires were evaluated to assure high validity before the official survey. The data for the pilot test was collected exclusively on an internet platform using a Google form on December 1, 2019. The official data collection began after completing the pilot test. The authors hoped to acquire a better valid response rate through a face-to-face survey approach. However, because of the COVID 19 issue, the authors decided to send both online and paper-based surveys from February 2020 to May 2021. A total of 700 forms were distributed. Finally, 499 correspondents participated in this study.

Of all the respondents, males account for 58 percent, while females account for 42 percent. 269 public servants (54 percent) hold a bachelor's degree, while 230 have completed a graduate degree (46 percent). According to the statistics gathered, official positions account for 92.4 percent of all jobs in public organizations. Table 1 below depicts the demographic characteristics of the target respondents.

Table 1. Demographic information of respondents

Characteristics	Number (N=499)	Proportion
Gender		
Male	289	57.9
Female	210	42.1
Age		
<25	49	9.8
26-35	134	26.9
36-45	225	45.1
46-55	91	18.2
Education		
Undergraduate	269	53.9
Graduate	230	46.1
Title		
Director	26	5.2
Deputy Director	12	2.4
Official	461	92.4

Measure

All of the measurement items of this paper were adopted from prior studies. First, we adopted four items to measure empowerment, such as "My manager gives me the information I need to do my work well" (EM1); ". My manager encourages me to use my talents" (EM2); "My manager helps me to further develop myself" (EM3); "My manager encourages his/her staff to come up with new ideas" (EM4) (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

Second, we adopted the assessment of public service motivation, such as "Meaningful public service is very important to me" (PSM1); "Seeing people get benefits from the public programme I have been deeply involved in brings me a great deal of satisfaction" (PSM2); "I would prefer seeing public servants do what is best for the whole community even if it harmed my interests" (PSM3); "It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress" (PSM4); "I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of society" (PSM5) (Battaglio & Gelgec, 2017; Coursey & Pandey, 2007).

Third, we adopted five items to reflect the variable of job characteristics. They included: "My job allows me to perform a variety of tasks that require a wide range of knowledge, skills, and abilities?" (JC1); "My job allows me to complete a single piece of work (rather than bits and pieces) from beginning to end" (JC2); "My job has a significant positive impact on others, either within the organization or the public in general" (JC3); and "I receive information about my job performance and the effectiveness of my efforts, either directly from the work itself or from others" (JC4) (Battaglio & Gelgec, 2017).

Fourth, we adopted four items to measure the variable of organizational commitment. They included: "Being a member of this organization is very captivating." (COM1); "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me" (COM2); "Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now" (COM3); and "This organization deserves my loyalty" (COM4) (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Battistelli et al., 2019).

Finally, the variable of job performance was adopted and included: "I adequately complete assigned duties" (JP1); "I meet formal performance requirements of the job" (JP2); "I can make constructive suggestions to the overall functioning of my work group" (JP3); and "I encourage others to try new and more effective ways of doing their jobs" (JP4) (Talukder et al., 2018).

All measures were translated into Vietnamese to receive further recommendations from the group discussion to reflect the Vietnamese context and culture in a government organization. All items were graded on a five-point Likert scale, with "1" indicating strongly disagree and "5" indicating strongly agree. Furthermore, the survey was done in Vietnamese, allowing respondents to comprehend and fill out their comments with ease completely. The English version of the questionnaire was adapted before being translated into Vietnamese.

Methodology

The hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM is a statistical method for examining cause-and-effect relationships involving multiple equations. Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is suitable for assessing a complicated model with several concurrent relationships. The PLS-SEM is being extensively developed in business research, marketing, economic management, and many other social sciences. Furthermore, this study mainly targets predicting employees' job performance affected by PSM, job characteristics, organizational commitment, and empowerment. Also, this is an appropriate condition for applying PLS-SEM as an SEM prediction method. PLS-SEM is a suitable choice given the complexity of the model and the scarcity of well-established literature (Gefen et al., 2000; Peng & Lai, 2012). Furthermore, since certain social science research lacks distributional assumptions, using PLS-SEM is clearly advantageous (Hair et al., 2019).

Data analysis

Reliability and validity

Various tests are used to examine the structural analysis. First, Cronbach's alpha of each construct is evaluated, and the results are all higher than 0.7, assuring the construct's reliability. Then all of the composite reliability of the factors are also above 0.7, which indicates a high internal consistency (Bagozzi, 1981; Gefen et al., 2000; Hair et al., 2010)

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) must be greater than 0.5 for convergent validity, which determines if the latent components are effectively represented by their observed variables. As one can see in Table 2, all AVEs are above the threshold, ensuring the convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010) and indicating that each construct explains 50 percent or more of the variance of the items that constitute the construct. Furthermore, for outer loadings, all variables have outer loadings higher than 0.7, meeting the theoretical requirement (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2012) and strengthening the scale's reliability.

The statistical difference between the two constructs is tested for discriminant validity by evaluating at cross-loadings. According to Hair et al. (2014), All components within a construct should have greater outer loadings than cross-loadings with another construct. All cross-loadings values meet the conditions for this criterion. As a result, the square root of the AVE of a factor must be greater than the highest correlation coefficient of the factor with other factors, according to the Fornell-Larcker requirement, or the AVE must be greater than the square of the highest coefficient correlation (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010). In the results from Table 3, all indicators satisfy this criterion. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratios (HTMT) were also used to assess discriminant validity, the mean value of all item correlations

across constructs compared to the mean of the average correlations for items measuring the same construct. It is advised that data be compared to a 0.85 threshold using the HTMT as a criterion (Clark & Watson, 1995; Kline & Rex, 2011). If the HTMT value is greater than this threshold, there is a lack of discriminant validity. The discriminant validity of this model is well-confirmed as all the indicators are less than 0.85 (Table 4).

Table 2: Summary results for model measurement

Latent variables	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Rho_A	Composite reliability	AVE
Thresholds			≥ 0.6	≥ 0.7	≥ 0.7	≥ 0.5
Employment	EM1	0.827	0.826	0.830	0.884	0.656
	EM2	0.819				
	EM3	0.799				
	EM4	0.793				
Job Characteristics	JC1	0.828	0.839	0.839	0.892	0.675
	JC2	0.811				
	JC3	0.834				
	JC4	0.811				
Job Performance	JP1	0.805	0.825	0.827	0.884	0.656
	JP2	0.836				
	JP3	0.800				
	JP4	0.797				
Organizational Commitment	OC1	0.803	0.835	0.837	0.890	0.669
	OC2	0.793				
	OC3	0.838				
	OC4	0.837				
Public Service Motivation	PSM1	0.809	0.863	0.866	0.901	0.646
	PSM2	0.771				
	PSM3	0.813				
	PSM4	0.806				
	PSM5	0.820				

Hypothesis testing Results
Hypotheses were tested to ascertain the significance of the relationship (Table 5). Six hypotheses are accepted as their p-values are less than 0.01, while only one is rejected with p-values over 0.05. H1 evaluates whether EM has a significant impact on JP. The result reveals that EM has a significant impact on JC ($\beta = 0.366$, t = 9.587, p = 0.000). Hence, H1 was accepted. Second, the findings also reveal that JC has positive and significant effect on PSM ($\beta = 0.246$, t = 6.663, p = 0.000). Hence, H2 was accepted. Likewise, EM shows a significantly positive impact on PSM ($\beta = 0.297$, t = 7.736, p = 0.000). Hence, H3 was accepted. However, JC has insignificant impact on JP ($\beta = 0.041$, t = 0.985, p = 0.163). therefore, H4 was rejected. The remaining hypotheses H5, H6, and H7 were accepted with PSM has significant impact on JP ($\beta = 0.139$, t = 2.934, p = 0.002), PSM shows positive and significant effect on OM ($\beta = 0.410$, t = 11.412, p = 0.000), and OM positively effect JP ($\beta = 0.309$, t = 7.462, p = 0.000).

Table 3: Fornell Larcker criterion

	EM	JC	JP	OC	PSM
EM	**0.810**				
JC	0.366	**0.821**			
JP	0.159	0.127	**0.810**		
OC	0.082	0.119	0.371	**0.818**	
PSM	0.387	0.355	0.280	0.410	**0.804**

Note: Square root of AVE in bold on diagonal

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) ratio

	EM	JC	JP	OC	PSM
EM					
JC	0.437				
JP	0.190	0.153			
OC	0.098	0.141	0.446		
PSM	0.453	0.415	0.328	0.483	

Table 5: PLS-SEM path coefficients

	Estimated coefficient (β)	P Values	Result
H1: EM → JC	0.366	0.000	Accepted
H2: JC → PSM	0.246	0.000	Accepted
H3: EM → PSM	0.297	0.000	Accepted
H4: JC → JP	0.041	0.163	Rejected
H5: PSM → JP	0.139	0.002	Accepted
H6: PSM → OC	0.410	0.000	Accepted
H7: OC → JP	0.309	0.000	Accepted

Discussion

First, this paper reveals that there is a direct impact of empowerment on public service motivation and job characteristics, which are in line with previous studies (Gao & Jiang, 2019; Lin et al., 2019; Liu & Chen, 2021; Wang & Yang, 2021). Empowering leadership may improve job characteristics, encouraging people to stay longer in their jobs and their organizations. In this line, empowering initiatives balance bureaucratic restraints with increased job meaning, allowing people to work confidently and efficiently. The findings show that subordinates consider empowering leadership in terms of intrinsic motivation, encouragement, and good treatment. When subordinates believe that organizations are their own, they engage in the organization's service-oriented behaviors. Overall, these results could be correct for any public sector organization worldwide.

Second, although job characteristics is found to be an effective tool in PSM, which is consistent with prior findings (Han et al., 2020), this paper does not affirm the possible influence of job characteristics on enhancing job performance. This means that, unlike previous studies (Garg, 2019; Han et al., 2020), skill variety, task significance, task identity, feedback and autonomy could not lead to enhanced employee performance. A plausible explanation may attribute to this unexpected finding that a high level of skill variety can intensively increase employee job workload, work burden, and job pressure experienced by civil servants. In addition, feedback from supervisors may not or sometimes negatively link to job performance. It is also discovered that supervisors gave negative criticism faster and based on a smaller work sample than positive feedback (Fisher, 1979). Negative supervisor feedback was found to be a major predictor of job anxiety (Sparr & Sonnentag, 2008). It originated in high correlation among five types of job characteristics and that it led to multicollinearity, which caused the other job characteristics to be explained by the relationships between skill variety and job performance as well as feedback and job performance, resulting in a spurious path coefficient (Cohen et al., 1996).

However, the present research contributes to knowledge about the possible effects of organizational commitment on job performance, which is in line with previous findings (Eliyana et al., 2019; Kim & Beehr, 2020; Liu & Chen, 2021; Sungu et al., 2020). Increasing the organizational commitment of public employees can improve their job performance. This signifies that an official with a high level of organizational commitment attempts to demonstrate good performance (high level of work performance). On the other hand, an individual with a low degree of organizational commitment is more likely to display carelessness and irresponsibility in completing a job (low level of work performance). Notably, unlike in developed countries, public sector organizations in Vietnam are characterized by collectivism, a high level of bureaucracy high power distance (Nguyen et al., 2020). Therefore, if managers could not generate a sustainable working environment, public employees would be willing to leave the public sector to work in the private sector. Indeed, it has been happening in the public healthcare sector in Vietnam. Many nurses and doctors are leaving public hospitals to work for private ones.

Finally, the current findings found a positive impact of PSM on job performance, consistent with other findings (Miao et al., 2019; Park, 2020). Public employees with high PSM were extremely dedicated to their organization, as the objective of government organizations is to serve the public, which is similar to the goal of individuals with high PSM. Employees that closely identify with an organization are more driven to put more effort and contribute to the organization's success. Employees with high levels of PSM perform better in their jobs because the more individuals identify with the public sector organization they work for, the more the organization's beliefs and values are incorporated into their self-concept. This increases the individual's commitment to the organization's goals and motivation to work hard to attain them, resulting in improved job performance.

Moreover, research indicates a positive relationship between PSM and organizational commitment, which is in line with previous studies (Liu & Chen, 2021; Rafique et al., 2021). PSM is a positive transformation that raises commitment to the organization. PSM precedes organizational commitment. Civil servants' organizational commitment will rise if they can strengthen their interest in policymaking, engagement with the public interest, self-sacrifice, and compassion. PSM is a type of prosocial behavior that is thought to affect an organization positively. Civil employees' PSM can lead to more substantial organizational commitment if public organizations can deliver significantly meaningful public services.

4. CONCLUSION

This study enriches knowledge on public service motivation and its role in enhancing job performance. Administrative reform can help government agencies increase civil employees' PSM, boosting public services and organizational commitment. Furthermore, since empowering leadership favors public organizations, organizations should provide empowerment training and encourage managers to apply it. Autonomy, fair treatment, cooperative decision-making, and leading by example should all be part of the training. According to the current research findings, PSM is an antecedent of organizational commitment. Organizational commitment will rise if civil servants strengthen their appeal to public interest commitment. As we all know, transformational leadership, humanity management, decision-making participation, empowerment, and delegation may all help public employees increase their organizational commitment and, as a result, their work performance. Although this study attempted to investigate the public sector organizations in an emerging market characterized by collectivism, high level of bureaucracy and distance, the findings have provided strong evidence to support the research hypotheses developed from previous studies. Therefore, the managerial implications and recommendations could be applied to any public sector organization.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite the possibility of common method bias caused by self-reports, the statistical and methodological safeguards used in the current investigation provide reassurance that all variables exhibited discriminant validity. Because this study is based on cross-sectional data, it may only be valid for a limited time span. As a result, academics and researchers should perform longitudinal studies to track changes in behavior over time. Moreover, we just use one-dimension measurement of the PSM established in developed nations was employed and modified in this study, aiming for a tight focus. Future studies should consider including other dimensions to integrate national contextual circumstances in the research design to investigate the impact of cross-national variations behind the development of social support and unfavorable workplace behaviors.

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