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## The Motives Underlying Public Service Motivation in Nepal

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### Abstract

In Nepal, it is evident that there is a good craze for government jobs with visibly overwhelming applications for every other vacancy announcement. However, the real curiosity lies behind peoples' motive for this association. Are they choosing it to grab the perks and benefits all at personal level or do they really have a drive to devote themselves for public welfare and social interests. This article attempts to reveal the actual rationale behind the subject matter. The findings are an outcome of extensive literature review, observational learnings and survey conducted among the government employees of Nepal working in various Ministries. It was discovered that on top of the drive chart lies the hidden personal motives like job stability, social prestige and authority. Keeping aside these ulterior drives, from among the four dimensions of PSM namely attraction to policymaking, commitment to public interest, compassion and self-sacrifice; it was reflected that mostly people joined civil service out of their commitment to work for public interest whereas least are driven by compassion. The government of Nepal has handful of tasks to make people realize the essence of public service motivation hence certain policy level changes can be made to channelize the potential crowd into the platform for real purposes.

**Keywords:** Motivation; Public Service; Policy Making; Public Interest.

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## **1. Background**

### **The Concept of Motivation in General**

Motivation involves the biological, emotional, social, and cognitive forces that activate behavior. In everyday usage, the term "motivation" is frequently used to describe *why* a person does something. It is the driving force behind human actions. Motivation is an internal process. Whether we define it as a drive or a need, motivation is a condition inside either the environment or us that desires a change, in the self. When we tap into this well of energy, motivation endows the person with the drive and direction needed to engage with the environment in an adaptive, open-ended, and problem-solving sort of way [1].

Psychologists have proposed different theories of motivation, including drive theory, instinct theory, arousal theory, humanistic theory (such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs) and incentive theory. According to the drive theory of motivation, people are motivated to take certain actions in order to reduce the internal tension that is caused by unmet needs [2]. The drive theory is based on the concept of homeostasis, or the idea that the body actively works to maintain a certain state of balance or equilibrium. This theory is useful in explaining behaviors that have a strong biological or physiological component, such as hunger or thirst. According to instinct theories, people are motivated to behave in certain ways because they are evolutionarily programmed to do so [3]. An example of this in the animal world is seasonal migration.

Next, the arousal theory of motivation suggests that people take certain actions to either decrease or increase levels of arousal. When arousal levels get too low, for example, a person might watch an exciting movie or go for a jog. When arousal levels get too high, on the other hand, a person would probably look for ways to relax, such as meditating or reading a book. Humanistic theories of motivation are based on the idea that people also have strong cognitive reasons to perform various actions. This is famously illustrated in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which describes various levels of needs and motivations. Maslow's hierarchy suggests that people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to other, more advanced needs [4] For example, people are first motivated to fulfill basic biological needs for food and shelter, then to progress through higher needs like safety, love, and esteem. Once these needs have been met, the primary motivator becomes the need for self-actualization, or the desire to fulfill one's individual potential.

Lastly, the incentive theory suggests that people are motivated to do things because of external rewards. Behavioral learning concepts such as association and reinforcement play an important role in this theory of motivation. Employees might behave differently in similar situations depending on the incentives available. For example, an employee might work harder on a project to earn a good review or to avoid a poor review than if they do not receive a review at all. Their motivation is their desire to receive a reward or avoid punishment via a performance review at the end of the project. The value of the same incentive may change depending on the time and circumstance.

In context of a workplace setting, it is often believed that employee motivation has a positive impact on higher productivity and increased efficiency. In addition, it is advocated that a motivated employee can deliver better

result. A motivated employee feels the sense of ownership towards his/her allocated share of work, also a belongingness towards the organization. Not only will he/she produce more, motivated employee is also more likely to make the offering even better. He/She will reflect strong customer service etiquette and will go an extra mile to execute the duty with honesty. One can also expect low absenteeism from such staff as well as low turnover prevails in an organization that has highly motivated employees.

## **2. Introduction: Defining Public Service Motivation**

Public Service Motivation (PSM) is an attribute of government and non-governmental organization (NGO) employment that explains why individuals have a desire to serve the public and link their personal actions with the overall public interest. The term 'public service' has been variously defined as: (1) government employed people who work in the public administration; (2) a government-funded service; and (3) the motivation of people to contribute to the common good of society [5].

The term public service motivation first emerged in the 1980s as a way of explaining differing reward preferences among public and private sector managers [6]. However, Perry and Wise [7] were the first to explicitly define the concept. In an article examining motivational alternatives to merit pay in the US federal government, they defined public service motivation as 'an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations.

The focus in the Perry and Wise definition on motives and actions in the public domain that are intended to do good for others, encompasses thinking around a number of related concepts, especially altruism and prosocial behavior. The former refers to an act that is or appears to be motivated mainly out of a consideration for another's needs rather than one's own, while pro-social behavior has been described as 'a broad category of other regarding behavior' or 'the desire to expend effort to benefit other people [5].

Based on norms, affective commitment and instrumental reasons for performing pro-social acts, motivation to do something good for others and society through public service delivery can theoretically be expressed as (at least) (1) loyalty and duty towards the public interest, (2) compassion for people and societal groups in need of help, (3) attraction to participate in policy processes, and (4) willingness to sacrifice personal needs. Together these dimensions can make up different public service motivational profiles among individuals [8].

In 1996, Perry developed a scale to measure PSM of an individual. After the development of this scale, several scholars have empirically examined the relationships between PSM and employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and individual performance. However, the results of these studies do not provide consistent relationships between PSM and these outcomes.

## **3. Observed Public Service Motivation in Nepal**

Civil service ordinarily encompasses those branches of public service on all governmental administrative functions excluding the armed services. A rigorous system of appointing employees based on merit makes this service impartial and trustworthy in Nepal. The Public Service Commission, established on 15 June 1951 A.D is

involved in selecting meritorious candidates required by Government of Nepal for various vacant posts of the civil service.

Although younger generation has least interest in public service, still there is a large crowd who is aspiring for it. In the case of Nepal, there is a general tendency among the graduates to fight for government jobs. Career in the Nepalese Government sector is one of the most sought after career paths in Nepal. Every year, thousands of prospects compete for government jobs to secure their living.

Thereby, the means to acquiring a government job is getting tougher and tougher and people are shifting to the corporate world, in search of a means of livelihood. Aspiration for government jobs are mainly evident in lower middle class and middle class [9]. The government of Nepal regularly opens seats for many government employees yearly, and the excessive number of applicants are willing to work for the country. Not just the job applications, the institutions who runs Public service courses are also in a huge profit as large numbers of applications are received.

Having said that, however, a mass of talented young people is still reluctant to join government service. Even though they are aware about the benefits of a government job, they do not consider it a career option. Despite the fact that a government job provides an opportunity to directly contribute to nation-building and socio-economic transformation, the charm seems to be fading especially among the urban youths [9].

While young people are looking for opportunities to contribute to national prosperity through volunteerism, they are unwilling to join hands with the public agencies for the purpose. While it is crucial for a nation to attract creative young minds into this service, it is equally important to create an environment of credibility and trust among the young people to motivate them to be an integral part of the public system.

#### **4. The Prospects of Government Jobs in Nepal**

Nepal is majorly populated by youths. Employment to population ratio, ages 15-24, alone, was reported at 74.37 % in 2019, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators, compiled from officially recognized sources. In addition, as a developing nation, Nepal has greater possibilities for avenues of employment opportunities for its citizens in different sectors of the government.

With the aim of ensuring inclusion of minorities and underprivileged groups i.e. women, Janajati, Madhesi, Dalit, differently able persons and people belonging to remote areas, the second amendment of the Civil Service Act 1991 allocated 45% reservation quota in government service. Reservation system was introduced in Nepal to create a favorable environment for the less included and marginalized. Therefore, it can be said that the quota system is for people whose representation in public services is very low but if it were not for the reservation, they would not be able to compete with the majority and supposed upper caste people.

Also, considering the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the expected increase in cases of unemployment as its immediate impact, The Nepal government announced an ambitious plan of creating more than 700,000 jobs through various programs during the presentation of the budget in MAY 2020 for the fiscal year 2020-2021.

Although, such policy level changes have been made by the Government, the ultimate choice to tap the opportunity lies on the hands of the people. The role of public service motivation hence comes into play. Since individual motivation is much of a subjective issue, it requires more interrogation and findings to conclude what really drives the majority of people for such act of social welfare and service.

## **5. Literature Review**

Perry and Wise (1990) found three different objectives underlying public service motivation, namely norm-based motive, affective motive and rational motive. First two motives represent altruistic purposes. Norm based motive includes a desire to serve the public interest, a sense of loyalty or duty to government, a belief in social equity. Affective motive on other hand comprises of a commitment to a specific program out of a personal conviction. The rational motive on other hand represents the thoughtful considerations such as a desire to participate in the policy process, commitment to public programs based on identification, and/or advocacy for a special interest may also be a motivating factor. Since PSM is a behavioral concept, no one rationale can suffice complex human behavior. These motives can be different for different individuals in different context.

Even after Perry and Wise's (1990) conceptualization of PSM, it was not possible to empirically examine the influence of PSM on employee outcomes in the absence of an acceptable instrument to measure employees' level of PSM. To address this difficulty, Perry (1996) developed a measurement scale comprising six dimensions, namely, self-sacrifice, compassion, commitment to public interest, civic duty, social justice and attraction to public policymaking, which measures PSM in individuals. The measurement theory for these scale was tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Various scholars in different countries have empirically tested on some or all of these scales then after. The ultimate motive for developing these measurement scale was to bridge the gap between assertion and empirical research. As such, most of the research works on the subject matter that followed the concept have had a very scientific structuring and procedure for their results.

Yet another study conducted by G. A. Brewer, S. C. Selden and R.L Facer II classified motives for public service into different 'helping orientations': Samaritans, Communitarians, Patriots and Humanitarians [10]. The Samaritans are those willing to serve individuals in need, Communitarians are the community activists, the Patriots value serving to one's own country and Humanitarians work for the broader interest of humanity at large. The primary motives common to all these are serving the public, making a difference in society, and ensuring individual and social equity. This study suggests that PSM can have important implication beyond the field of public administration too. Many people outside the government do have strong motives to perform meaningful public, community and social service making significant impact in the society.

It is also believed that private and public sector workers differ in their intrinsic desire to serve. The amount of effort that workers exert at work depends on factors such as personality traits and the different types of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that those personality traits are attracted to [11]. Workers in the public service sector are regarded as being more altruistic than their private sector counterparts are. However, public sector employees are often stereotyped as being lazy and drawn to a sector, which some people consider "safe havens for the lazy" where the workload is lower [12]. Three distinct public-private sector differences were identified to have

produced different level of work effort in the two sector. Public- and private-sector workers differ in the value they place on extrinsic and intrinsic motivators, in the rewards their jobs offer, and in some personal characteristics. Government jobs offering interesting work and opportunities to help others, combined with the greater age of public employees, explain most of the sectoral differences in self-reported work effort.

An individual's PSM level influences their job choice and work performance: those with greater PSM are drawn to government service [13]. In a British study of longitudinal data, it was found that employees working in the public sector are attracted because of the intrinsic rewards and so, are more likely to be committed to their organization [14]. However, it is wise not to assume that all public service workers are motivated by the greater good. In fact, public sector workers are motivated by both extrinsic and intrinsic factors [15].

## **6. Methodology**

The population of this study included employees working in Nepali civil service. Government of Nepal has 21 ministries that can be broadly classified into five different categories based on their roles and responsibilities. These five categories include the ministries related to (i) development sector, (ii) social sector, (iii) finance and economic sector, (iv) energy sector, (v) science and technology sector. For this study, two ministries from each sector were randomly selected. From each ministry, 10 employees were selected to create a diverse sample of participants who represent a broad range of governmental occupations. As such, 100 employees responded to the survey questionnaire sent from online portal called google forms.

## **7. PSM variables under consideration**

In this study the variable so tested are generic factors clustered and covered in a bracket in first phase and further specific Perry's dimensions extracted from the aforementioned literature review has also been tested for further clarity. The following generic factors has been considered in the study to conclude on the motivational drive for public service:

- 1) Financial Motives
- 2) Non-Financial Motives
- 3) Service Motives

Here the financial motives refer to the compensation and benefits so provided by the Government for being in the service. Government Job in Nepal is a stable and secure job in terms of financial gains. Next, the non-financial motives refers to the intrinsic values like social prestige, authority, permanent job, leaves, etc. Lastly, the service motives refer to the pure interest to serve the people and the nation for welfare.

Apart from the above factors under consideration, based on the reviewed literature, the four dimensions among six dimensions so developed by Perry (1996) namely, attraction to policymaking (APM), commitment to public interest (CPI), compassion (COM), and self-sacrifice (SS), has also been taken into consideration as independent variables in this study. The other two variables namely civic duty and social justice has not been tested explicitly tested as it is assumed that these aspects are covered from the generic cluster categories as well.

The measurement scales tabulated as under and extracted from the mentioned four scale dimensions has been considered to test the relevancy of these factors on public service motivation in Nepal:

**Table 1: Public Service Motivation (PSM) Items by Dimension.**

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

## 8. Result and Finding

From among the 100 participants of the survey, 86% were male and rest of the 14% were female with majority of the age group i.e. 40% lying between 26-30 years. Turning to the educational background, 70% of them had Master's Degree and remaining 30% had Bachelor's Degree. The 40% of them were Gazetted Third Class employees, 36% were from Non-Gazetted Class, 23% were Gazetted Second Class and only 1% was Gazetted First Class Employee. 74% of them had served as civil service from 1-10 years. In terms of income, 46% of the respondents earned between 21,000-30,000 rupees, 26% earned less than 20,000 rupees, 24% earned 31,000-40,000 rupees and remaining 4% earned between 41,000-50,000 rupees.

The aforementioned statistics of this study showed that, there are young and well-educated bunch of people in the civil service today who are pursuing their career even though their monthly income looks just enough to run a living with no luxury. Further, in the response to the primary motive for joining civil service, 48% mentioned that they were attracted by non- financial factors like permanent nature of job, social prestige, authority, education leave facility, etc. 39% of them mentioned that they joined for service motives like desire to serve public interest, sense of duty to nation, contribution to social equity. Only 13% chose financial rewards and

benefits as their primary motivation for government job.

Further, to analyze the significance of four dimensions of PSM, the paper explores the mean and standard deviation of each dimensions and compares for conclusion. Table 2 depicts that in Nepal, the beaureacrats seem to have decent commitment to public interest with highest mean value M=4.2067. The next preferred dimension was attraction to policy making with mean value M=4.0900. The mean of Compassion seems relatively low with the value 3.8825.

**Table 2:** Descriptive Statistic (n=100).

PSM Variables Under Consideration	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St Deviation
Attraction to Policy Making	100	1.00	5.00	4.0900	.89249
Commitment to the Public Interest	100	1.33	5.00	4.2067	.89991
Compassion	100	1.25	5.00	3.8825	.84720
Self-Sacrifice	100	1.00	5.00	3.9250	.96302

## 9. Conclusion

Motivation is a psychological concept that represents an individual’s drive to take a certain course of action. Besides personal dimensions, significant importance has been given to the concept of motivation for workplace productivity at both public and private sector. Similarly, there are considerable amount of writings and research on the public service motive of the people. The term ‘public service motivation’ refers to an individual’s psychological drive to work for public interest and social welfare at large. The platform to execute this interest is through various governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The literatures suggests that people can have both internal as well as external motivation to serve the public. Since public service motivation is about delivering value to people, in general most of the drive is supposed to come from an individual’s inbuilt inclination and beliefs. However, we cannot ignore the self-centered attributes as well. It has been observed that the motivating factors for private and public sector employees can be different and an individual’s drive can determine the career path he/she will be willing to choose.

Relying on the literatures so reviewed, secondary sources of information and primary data collected via digital survey among government employees, this article has reflected on the motives that lies behind public service motivation in a country like Nepal where the scope for public service and social welfare paramount with issues like unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, lack of infrastructure and caste discrimination. Nepal is a developing country with majority of young population. According to Statista 2021, about 64.65 percent of the Nepalese population fell into the 15-64 year category in the year 2019. On other hand, the unemployment rate of Nepal as per World Bank in the year 2019 was 1.41%.

As per the findings of this study, young bunch of people with strong academic background have shown interest



in public service in Nepal. The hidden motive of majority of government employees for joining civil service in Nepal were the non-financial perks like permanent nature of job, social recognition, authority, education leave facility, etc. Though service motive came second in comparison, the monetary benefits were not prioritized as much. In addition, the paper further revealed that majority of civil servants have strong commitment to serve the public interest. For them meaningful public service is very important and they see civil service as their duty. On other hand, they are not driven by emotions like compassion or sympathy.

While the paper emphasizes on motivation for joining public service organizations, there is a chunk of young mass in Nepal who are just not interested in government posts. The sheer disinterest in part of the millennials and talented chunk has come from the impression of the public institutions that is coated with under-table acts, favourism and dirty politics. The young people rather want an ethically administered setting over being generalized as one of the authoritative goon of the country with fear of misinterpretation of their public service ethos.

In order to build faith among the young mass and to further drive people towards public service, Nepal Government should introduce policies with lucrative financial packages to the civil servants thereby nullifying the scope for bribery and ulterior motives while exercising authority. Also, along with an inclusion via quota system, the government should delegate more authority and welcome innovative ideas through participatory approach.

## **10. Limitations**

The major difficulty for this study was the limited availability of past research in the subject matter in context of Nepal. In addition, due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the survey was conducted via online platform. Since physical entry at Government Offices were restricted unless required, the survey could reach to only 100 respondents.

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