

ENHANCING PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION: INSIGHTS FROM CIVIL SERVICE PRACTICES IN GORONTALO CITY, INDONESIA

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Abstract

This study investigates Public Service Motivation (PSM) among civil servants in Gorontalo City, Indonesia, focusing on its dimensions, organizational influences, and implications for public service delivery. The research aims to explore how PSM affects service quality in key institutions, including the Investment and Integrated One-Stop Service Office (DPM-PTSP), the Civil Registry Office (DUKCAPIL), and the One-Stop Administration System (SAMSAT). Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, providing comprehensive insights into the motivations and challenges faced by public servants. The findings reveal strong intrinsic motivations among civil servants, driven by their commitment to public interest, empathy, and self-sacrifice. However, these motivations are constrained by hierarchical bureaucratic structures, resource limitations, and inconsistent service protocols. Cultural and religious values significantly shape PSM, highlighting the potential for alignment between institutional frameworks and local socio-cultural contexts. Organizational factors such as inadequate staffing, limited decision-making autonomy, and outdated infrastructure were identified as barriers to optimal performance. This study underscores the need for targeted interventions to enhance PSM, including capacity-building programs, participatory governance practices, and technological upgrades. By addressing these challenges, public institutions can foster a motivated workforce, ultimately improving service quality and citizen satisfaction. These findings contribute to the growing discourse on PSM in developing countries and provide actionable insights for public administration reform.

Keywords: Public Service Motivation (PSM), Civil Service Reform, Public Administration in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Public administration plays a pivotal role in the functioning of governments worldwide, including Indonesia, where its primary responsibility is to ensure the welfare of its citizens. The concept of public welfare encompasses both material and non-material dimensions, making it a multifaceted goal. Effective public service delivery is central to achieving this goal, as it involves fulfilling basic needs and enhancing citizens' quality of life. However, the standards and efficiency of public service delivery vary widely, often becoming a critical point of evaluation for governmental performance. The United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) has been a platform to recognize innovations in public service aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), underlining the importance of efficient and innovative public administration globally. In 2022, countries such as Thailand, the Philippines, and Brazil received accolades for innovative approaches, underscoring the necessity for governments worldwide to adopt sustainable and citizen-focused practices (Erwin & Yosef, 2016).

Despite such global advancements, public service delivery in developing nations like Indonesia often faces systemic challenges. Studies from developed countries such as Japan highlight how intrinsic motivations among bureaucrats significantly enhance their commitment to public service, fostering work behaviors consistent with public interest (Brewer et al., 2000). Similarly, research in Morocco's healthcare sector revealed that compassion and self-sacrifice are integral to public service motivation (PSM), directly influencing job satisfaction and service quality. However, in Indonesia, public service motivation tends to be influenced by extrinsic factors, posing distinct challenges to the implementation of high-quality public services (Rainey, 2015).

The Indonesian government, constitutionally mandated to provide equitable services to all citizens, faces significant hurdles in realizing these aspirations. Challenges include bureaucratic inertia, low responsiveness, and a lack of professionalism, as highlighted by the Ombudsman of Indonesia in 2022. According to the Ombudsman, a considerable portion of public services fall into moderate compliance categories, signaling inefficiencies and unmet citizen expectations. In Gorontalo City, for example, public service performance has been rated as "adequate" due to inconsistent standards in service delivery. While certain aspects, such as timeliness and cost, meet standards, others, like infrastructure adequacy, fall short. These findings reveal a critical need for improvement in the motivation and capability of public service personnel (Ombudsman Indonesia, 2022).

The challenges surrounding public service delivery in Gorontalo City stem primarily from low levels of public service motivation among civil servants. Several institutions, including the Investment and Integrated One-Stop Service Office (DPM-PTSP), the Civil Registry Office (DUKCAPIL), and the One-Stop Administration System (SAMSAT), exhibit patterns of inefficiency characterized by bureaucratic rigidity, unresponsiveness, and lack of empathy. Scholars like Sutopo and Suryanto (2016) argue that such inefficiencies are rooted in a classical bureaucratic mindset that prioritizes hierarchy over service orientation, leaving citizens underserved and dissatisfied. Reforming this mindset requires an in-depth understanding of PSM, particularly its dimensions of public policy interest, empathy, and self-sacrifice (Perry & Wise, 1990).

Literature on public service motivation provides several frameworks to address these issues. Perry and Wise (1990) identified three primary motives in PSM: rational, normative, and affective. Rational motives involve the pursuit of self-interest through public service roles; normative motives relate to ethical principles like equity and justice; and affective motives stem from an emotional commitment to public welfare. High levels of PSM have been linked to improved job performance, satisfaction, and a commitment to social justice, suggesting its critical role in achieving effective public administration. Comparative studies also highlight that employee with high PSM exhibit a stronger preference for public sector roles and demonstrate higher levels of engagement and accountability (Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000).

In Indonesia, a limited body of research focuses specifically on PSM within local government settings. Studies by Oktavianus (2020) and Anwar et al. (2018) explored motivational typologies among public servants, while Hakim and Hamid (2021) examined the correlation

between PSM, job satisfaction, and performance. These studies underscore the importance of intrinsic motivation in fostering efficient public service but often overlook the operationalization of PSM in achieving excellent service delivery. As a result, the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications remains largely unaddressed, particularly in cities like Gorontalo where systemic inefficiencies persist.

This study contributes to the ongoing discourse by examining the dimensions of PSM among civil servants in Gorontalo City, focusing on key attributes such as interest in public policy, commitment to public interests, empathy, and self-sacrifice. By contextualizing these dimensions within the challenges faced by local government institutions, this research seeks to bridge the gap between motivational theories and their practical implications in Indonesia. Moreover, it builds on prior findings to offer actionable recommendations tailored to the unique socio-cultural and institutional landscape of Gorontalo.

The novelty of this study lies in its emphasis on linking PSM to the realization of “excellent service” as defined by modern public administration frameworks. While prior studies have largely emphasized the theoretical underpinnings of PSM, this research adopts a pragmatic approach, analyzing how motivational factors translate into measurable improvements in service delivery. By integrating insights from global best practices and local empirical data, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing PSM and their implications for public service reform in Indonesia.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing a descriptive approach to analyze the Public Service Motivation (PSM) among civil servants in Gorontalo City. A qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing PSM, focusing on individual and organizational dimensions. The descriptive nature of this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena by exploring participants’ experiences and perceptions in real-life contexts (Creswell, 2014).

The research was conducted in Gorontalo City, specifically targeting three key public service institutions: the Investment and Integrated One-Stop Service Office (DPM-PTSP), the Civil Registry Office (DUKCAPIL), and the One-Stop Administration System (SAMSAT). These institutions were chosen due to their direct engagement with public service delivery, which provides an ideal setting to examine PSM. The study was carried out over a period of six months, allowing sufficient time for data collection, analysis, and verification.

The participants of this study were civil servants working in the aforementioned institutions. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select individuals who met specific criteria: (1) employees directly involved in public service delivery, (2) individuals with at least two years of experience in their current roles, and (3) those willing to participate and provide informed consent. This selection ensured that participants possessed sufficient knowledge and experience to contribute meaningful insights.

To gather comprehensive and reliable data, this study utilized three primary data collection methods:

1. Observations

Direct observations were conducted in the selected institutions to examine the daily interactions, behaviors, and practices of civil servants. This method provided firsthand insights into the practical aspects of PSM and its manifestation in public service delivery.

2. Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to explore their perceptions, motivations, and experiences. The interview guide was developed based on the dimensions of PSM outlined by Perry and Wise (1990), including interest in public policy, commitment to public interest, empathy, and self-sacrifice. This method allowed for flexibility while ensuring the consistency of core questions.

3. Document Analysis

Relevant documents, including performance reports, institutional policies, and citizen satisfaction surveys, were analyzed to triangulate findings from observations and interviews. This approach ensured a robust understanding of the organizational and systemic factors influencing PSM. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data collected from observations, interviews, and document reviews. The analysis followed a structured process: (1) data familiarization through repeated readings, (2) generation of initial codes based on recurring patterns, (3) identification of overarching themes, and (4) refinement and definition of themes to address the research objectives. Thematic analysis enabled the integration of individual and organizational perspectives, facilitating a holistic understanding of PSM (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the following strategies were adopted:

1. Triangulation

Multiple data sources (observations, interviews, and document analysis) were utilized to cross-verify the findings and minimize bias.

2. Member Checking

Preliminary findings were shared with participants to ensure accuracy and resonance with their experiences.

3. Audit Trail

A detailed record of the research process, including data collection and analysis procedures, was maintained to enhance transparency and replicability.

4. Peer Debriefing

Regular discussions with peers and supervisors were conducted to critically review the research process and interpretations.

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to protect participants' rights and ensure the integrity of the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they were fully aware of the research objectives, procedures, and their rights to withdraw at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study, with data stored securely and used solely for academic purposes. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board prior to commencing the research.

While this study provides valuable insights into PSM among civil servants in Gorontalo City, its findings are context-specific and may not be generalizable to other regions or institutions. Additionally, the reliance on qualitative methods, while rich in depth, may introduce subjective biases. Future research could adopt mixed-method approaches to address these limitations and enhance the generalizability of findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Context of the Study Area

The study was conducted in Gorontalo City, an urban region characterized by its developing administrative infrastructure and a socio-cultural context deeply rooted in collectivism and community engagement. Public service delivery in the city is predominantly managed by three key institutions: the Investment and Integrated One-Stop Service Office (DPM-PTSP), the Civil Registry Office (DUKCAPIL), and the One-Stop Administration System (SAMSAT). Despite their critical role in fulfilling citizens' needs, these institutions face persistent challenges, including inefficiency, lack of responsiveness, and suboptimal infrastructure. This section explores the findings related to the Public Service Motivation (PSM) dimensions among civil servants within these institutions and discusses their implications for public administration practices.

Dimensions of Public Service Motivation

Attraction to Public Policy Making

Civil servants in Gorontalo City exhibit varying levels of interest in public policy making, a critical dimension of PSM identified by Perry and Wise (1990). Interviews revealed that many employees are motivated by the potential to influence policies that directly impact their community. For instance, respondents from DPM-PTSP highlighted their role in shaping investment regulations that promote economic growth, while participants from DUKCAPIL emphasized their contributions to improving civil registration processes. However, this motivation is often hindered by limited opportunities for participation in higher-level policy discussions, reflecting hierarchical bureaucratic structures that centralize decision-making. Such constraints dampen employees' aspirations and reduce their engagement in policy-oriented tasks.

Commitment to Public Interest

The commitment to public interest, another dimension of PSM, was evident among the majority of respondents. Civil servants expressed a genuine desire to serve their community, driven by

ethical considerations and a sense of civic duty. This commitment is particularly pronounced in DUKCAPIL, where employees frequently assist marginalized populations in obtaining essential documents, such as birth certificates and identity cards. Nonetheless, observations revealed inconsistencies in service quality, often attributed to workload pressures and inadequate staffing. These findings align with Sutopo and Suryanto's (2016) assertion that organizational constraints can undermine employees' ability to fully realize their commitment to public service.

Empathy and Compassion

Empathy, defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, is a fundamental aspect of PSM. Civil servants in Gorontalo City demonstrated varying degrees of empathy in their interactions with the public. Employees at SAMSAT, for example, were observed providing detailed explanations and personalized assistance to citizens navigating complex administrative procedures. However, instances of indifference and transactional behavior were also noted, particularly during peak service hours. Such discrepancies suggest that while empathy is present, it is not consistently integrated into organizational culture or service protocols.

Self-Sacrifice and Altruism

Self-sacrifice, or the willingness to prioritize the needs of others over personal interests, emerged as a defining trait among high-performing civil servants. Respondents shared anecdotes of working overtime without additional compensation to ensure the timely delivery of services. This altruistic behavior is often driven by religious and cultural values that emphasize collective welfare. However, the sustainability of such practices is questionable, given the absence of institutional support mechanisms. For instance, employees reported feelings of burnout and dissatisfaction due to the lack of recognition or tangible rewards for their efforts. These findings highlight the need for systemic interventions to nurture and sustain self-sacrifice among public servants.

Organizational and Systemic Influences on PSM

Bureaucratic Structures and Processes

The hierarchical nature of public administration in Gorontalo City significantly influences PSM. Centralized decision-making processes limit employees' autonomy, reducing their sense of ownership and motivation. This is particularly evident in policy-making roles, where frontline employees have little to no input despite their direct engagement with citizens. Such structures not only stifle innovation but also contribute to a culture of compliance rather than initiative.

Resource Constraints

Resource limitations, including inadequate staffing, outdated infrastructure, and insufficient training programs, were recurrent themes across the studied institutions. These constraints directly impact employees' ability to deliver high-quality services and maintain their motivation.

For example, respondents from DUKCAPIL reported frequent technical issues with digital registration systems, resulting in delays and public dissatisfaction. These challenges underscore the importance of investing in organizational capacity to enhance both employee performance and citizen satisfaction.

Cultural and Religious Factors

The socio-cultural context of Gorontalo City plays a significant role in shaping PSM. Religious values, in particular, were frequently cited as a source of motivation. Respondents described their work as a form of worship and a means of fulfilling moral obligations to their community. While such intrinsic motivations are commendable, they cannot compensate for systemic shortcomings. Institutional frameworks must align with these cultural values to create an environment that supports and amplifies employees' intrinsic motivations.

Implications for Public Administration

Enhancing PSM Through Training and Development

Findings from this study highlight the need for targeted training programs to enhance PSM among civil servants. Such programs should focus on building skills related to empathy, communication, and ethical decision-making. Additionally, leadership development initiatives can empower employees to take on policy-making roles, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement.

Creating Supportive Organizational Environments

To sustain high levels of PSM, organizations must prioritize employee well-being and professional growth. This includes addressing workload imbalances, providing opportunities for career advancement, and implementing recognition programs to reward exemplary performance. A supportive organizational culture can mitigate burnout and reinforce employees' commitment to public service.

Leveraging Technology for Service Efficiency

Investing in modern infrastructure and digital tools can significantly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery. Streamlined processes not only improve citizen satisfaction but also boost employees' confidence and motivation. For instance, upgrading digital systems at DUKCAPIL could reduce technical issues and enable employees to focus on their core responsibilities.

Promoting Participatory Governance

Encouraging participatory governance practices can enhance employees' sense of agency and align their efforts with broader organizational goals. This involves creating platforms for frontline employees to contribute to policy discussions and decision-making processes. Such initiatives can bridge the gap between hierarchical structures and employee aspirations, fostering a collaborative and inclusive work environment.

Addressing Research Gaps and Future Directions

This study contributes to the existing body of literature by examining PSM in the context of Gorontalo City, providing insights into its dimensions, challenges, and implications. However, further research is needed to explore the interplay between PSM and organizational performance, particularly in different cultural and institutional settings. Additionally, longitudinal studies could offer a deeper understanding of how PSM evolves over time and in response to systemic reforms.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical role of Public Service Motivation (PSM) in shaping the effectiveness and quality of public service delivery in Gorontalo City. The findings reveal that while civil servants demonstrate notable levels of commitment to public interest, empathy, and self-sacrifice, their motivation is often constrained by hierarchical bureaucratic structures, resource limitations, and inconsistent organizational practices. The cultural and religious context further amplifies intrinsic motivations, suggesting that aligning institutional frameworks with these values could foster higher engagement and satisfaction among public servants.

The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by examining PSM within a localized and culturally specific setting, emphasizing the interplay between individual motivations and systemic influences. The insights underscore the importance of investing in employee development, modernizing infrastructure, and promoting participatory governance to create an enabling environment for civil servants.

Implications for public administration include the need to design targeted interventions that address structural and resource-related challenges while nurturing intrinsic motivation. Future research should explore PSM across different regional contexts and adopt longitudinal approaches to assess its evolution and impact over time. This research offers a foundation for advancing public service practices in Indonesia and similar developing contexts, paving the way for more citizen-centered governance.

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