

## Public service motivation and public sector employment preference: Comparing Italian and British students

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### Abstract

Research hypothesized that an individuals' public service motivation (PSM) has a positive connection with preference for public sector employment. We explore this link using a sample of British and Italian students. Adding a comparative dimension, our results provide support for a positive relationship between PSM and public sector job preferences amongst Italian students only. Implications for recruitment are discussed.

Keywords: Public Service Motivation, PSM, Sector Attraction, Recruitment, Public Sector employment

## **Introduction**

For more than 20 years the public sector has been under a reform agenda. These reform initiatives were mainly inspired by ideas from new public management (NPM) which transfer management tools designed for the private sector and profit-seeking firms to public sector organizations (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011; Frey, Homberg, and Osterloh, 2013; Vandenabeele & Skelcher, 2015). They modified, however, not only the organizational models of public sector organizations (Brunetto 2005: Hood 1991), but also their specific character (Bozeman, 2002; Haque, 2001), as well as altering some cultural assumptions and basic values (Meyer and Hammerschmid, 2006).

The reforms' intentions have been focused on achieving results and increasing performance. However, a common finding across Europe is that the reforms did not achieve their intended benefits and many countries are still under pressure to reduce public sector budgets and increase efficiency. For example, there is evidence for a "worsening of performance" when assessing NPM reforms across Europe (see e.g. Pollitt and Dan, 2013). Similarly, Verbeeten and Speklé (2015, p. 969) in their analysis of Dutch NPM reforms conclude "we find that the assumed benefits of internal deregulation ('letting the managers manage') are illusory".

For people already employed in the public sector, the NPM reforms have led to a substantial change in their organizational roles determining an increasingly competitive (internal and external) relationship context (Hood 1995). This led to consequences with regards to work intensification (Omari and Paull, 2015) leading to increases in job-related stress (Noblet, Rodwell, and McWilliams; 2006). Furthermore perceived job insecurity (Pink 2011) rose, followed by a reduction of the individual engagement (Brunetto, 2014), intrinsic motivation (Perry and Hondegheem 2008) and job satisfaction in the workplace (Brunetto, 2005).

Simultaneously, however, the NPM reforms have offered new opportunities for work flexibility, have given new responsibilities to public sector managers (Fernandez and Pitts. 2007), have required a change in the exercise of leadership (Kellis and Ran, 2013), and increased the

differentiation and complexity of the day-to-day work tasks (Farrell and Morris 2013). Nonetheless, being in a continuous state of reform and constantly struggling with the implementation makes public sector employment highly unattractive for potential job market candidates. Hence, these developments led to greater attention to the internal development of personnel policies, modifying the traditional career service model and internal training systems of public sector personnel management (O'Donnell, Allan and Peetz, 1999), and ultimately increasing the need to attract qualified applicants (Chetkovich 2003).

In this last regard, many scholars of public administration converge on the belief that some individuals are predisposed to perform public service (Neumann and Ritz, 2015). It has been argued that Public Service Motivation (PSM; Perry and Wise 1990; Perry 2014) defined as “*an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations*” (Perry, 1990, p. 368) is closely associated with a preference for public sector employment.

Tschirhart et al.'s (2008) work supports the idea that individuals having a preference for helping others (which is an integral part of PSM) will self-select into the public sector. Another strand of research investigates the issue of person-organization fit in relation to public service motivation (Christensen and Wright, 2011; Lewis and Frank, 2002) arguing for improved fit levels between highly public service motivated individuals and the public sector. One of the “big questions” of public management is the relation of sector attractiveness with respect to PSM (Wright, 2001). For example, Lewis and Frank (2002) were unable to establish that high levels of PSM would predict public sector employment. Thus, a better understanding of PSM as a possible antecedent for the intention to enter public sector employment is required and this paper addresses this issue using a comparative approach.

The present study explores the link between PSM and the perceived attractiveness of public sector employment. In this context, this paper makes two contributions: first, we investigate the employment sector preferences of students enrolled in a variety of programmes such as management,

economics, health, media, and others. Second, we compare how British and Italian students differ in their sector preference bringing in a comparative dimension. Such a comparative analysis allows us also to generate insights related to institutional differences (Meyer et al. 2014) and answers the recent call for an analysis of PSM in a comparative setting (Belle and Ongaro 2014). The comparison between the UK and Italy is particularly suitable due to their different administrative traditions and NPM trajectories. We analyse a dataset of 670 usable responses collected in Italy and Great Britain in Spring 2014. Our results provide support for a positive relationship between PSM and public sector job preferences for the Italian students. In contrast, our analyses do not support the idea that previous public sector work experience strengthens the association between PSM and sector preferences.

### **Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses**

Studies on the impact of NPM reforms have long highlighted the importance of devoting special attention to human resources policies, both to mitigate their unintended effects of reforms and to support the reform processes themselves (Michie and West, 2004). Recent studies dedicated to the processes of change in the public sector (Kellis & Ran, 2015), have observed how the NPM reforms are destined to remain incomplete if not able to actively involve workers in them by responding to their needs (Omari and Paull, 2015), their ethical standards and their public service motivation (Vandenabeele et al., 2006).

Additionally, it has been argued that NPM inspired reforms shift the institutional logic traditionally embedded in an administrative regime towards private sector dominant logics replacing the traditional public service driven public manager with an efficiency orientated market manager (Meyer, Egger-Peitler, Höllerer, & Hammerschmid, 2014). As institutional logics shape the behaviour of actors who have been socialized in a specific logic, a shift in institutional logics can trigger a significant change in micro-level attitudes and behaviours (Jepperson 1991). As stated by Powell and Colyvas (2008, p.278): “Macro-framings or values can be ‘pulled down’ to the everyday

level of practice, as varied activities can be pursued under a common interpretation or account or diverse practices can be pursued in search of a common goal.” Hence the students in our sample can be conceived of as representing individual micro-level actors that have been socialised under two different public sector institutional logics which enables us to exploit this variance. While they have not experienced public sector logics as employees they have experienced the dominant institutional logic of their administrative regime through their interaction with public sector organizations as citizens in day to day life. These experiences will also partly influence the perceived attractiveness of public sector employment. Hence, they are a suitable sample for this particular study that focuses on individual level attitudes to sector attraction.

The research on PSM has grown exponentially since 2000 (for a systematic narrative review see Neumann et al. 2013, for a meta-analysis on PSM and job satisfaction see Homberg et al. 2015). In our context, PSM is considered as a predictor for sector attraction and we review the associated evidence in the next section.

#### *PSM as antecedent of sector preference*

We focus on PSM’s influence on sector preferences as it has been proposed early on (Perry and Wise 1990; Vandenabeele 2008, Steijn 2008; Perry, Hondegheem and Wise 2010) that individuals with high levels of public service motivation are characterized by their desire to seek employment in the public sector because it would generate a fit with their ingrained public service values. Perry and Wise’s (1990) original proposition that public service motivated individuals will self-select into public sector occupations aligns well with the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) paradigm (Schneider, 1987). According to DeCooman et al. (2009, p.103) the ASA paradigm stipulates that “people are attracted to organizations, that have values similar to their own (attraction), and organizations select people who share their values (selection)”. Additionally, the signals organisations send to potential applicants in order to solicit applications are important factors in the attraction process (Asseburg et al. 2017). As Coursey et al (2011, p. 49) argue in the context of volunteering organisations “[A]n organization’s work domain and mission are key signals to a

potential employee (...)"'. Similarly, this applies to public sector employers and it should even be more powerful regarding PSM as by definition public sector employers will offer opportunities to contribute to society. Nonetheless, the latter aspect may be diluted if as a consequence of NPM public sector organisations become more similar to private sector employers and lose their power of sending strong signals responding to public service motivated needs.

In line with the above arguments, some recent studies (Leisink and Steijn 2008; Vandenabeele 2008; Wright and Christensen 2010) argue that individuals with higher PSM are expected to have a higher probability to select public sector employment because the missions of public sector organizations are more congruent with their public service values. However, empirical support for this idea has been mixed. Some research regarding the PSM's effect on occupational choice was unable to support the sector preference hypothesis (Tschirhart et al. 2008; Wright and Christensen 2010). Recent work by Lee and Choi (2016) identified only job security as a major driver of public sector preference in a sample of Korean college students. Additionally, some studies are limited by their use of samples consisting exclusively of public sector employees or students of public administration related subjects (Bright & Graham 2015). Other works offer support for the PSM sector attraction link. Lewis and Frank's (2002) analysis of U.S. General Social Survey data from 1989 to 1998 found a positive relationship between PSM and preferences for some public sector service jobs. This effect is particularly strong amongst younger employees and college students. They found that individuals who prefer a public sector job rate being useful to society and helping others as important attributes in their jobs contrary to those preferring private sector employment. Likewise, Steijn (2008), Vandenabeele (2008) and Asseburg and Homberg (2018) confirmed a positive association between PSM and public sector attraction.

Finally, given that we focus on students in this paper, it is important to recognize the needs and preferences of the younger generation. A large scale study showed that members of the millennial generation "prioritize balancing personal life and career, pursuing further education, and contributing to society as their top career goals." (Ng and Gosset 2013, p.337). These results are

important because in order to attract new applicants and prevent people from shifting, public organizations should emphasize the tasks connected to the end users. Given that millennials are individuals currently attending university courses and entering the job market, it is important to note that their preferences are well-aligned with the basic tenets of PSM. Based on this stream of arguments our first hypothesis is:

***Hypothesis 1:** Students' PSM has a positive effect on the intention to seek public sector employment.*

### ***PSM, work experience and sector preferences***

Interfering with the idea that PSM is associated with the desire of a student to work in a public sector organization are a couple of studies highlighting the negative effects of organizational characteristics on PSM. For example, investigating organizational antecedents of PSM showed that PSM is likely to decline with the length of job tenure (Moynihan and Pandey, 2007). One explanation for this effect states that initially high baseline PSM levels of young idealistic graduates suffer over time due to little direct citizen contact, overwhelming bureaucratic procedures, and limited autonomy. Such explanations are supported by empirical studies showing a negative correlation of PSM with the perception of organizational red tape and procedural constraints (Moynihan and Pandey, 2007). In line with early PSM studies on reward preferences, Hansen (2014) finds that people move to the private sector because they consider the higher level of wages, the need for flexible and flat organizations, and the attention on creating value for clients more important. Instead, employees remain in the public sector when they prefer job security and are focused on serving the community.

Looking at the dynamic nature of PSM, Georgellis and Tabvuma (2010) have shown that individuals transferring to public sector employment experience an increase in both PSM and job satisfaction that lasts for at least five years. Additionally, such increase is preceded by a strong decline shortly before switching sectors. This is in line with work by Wright and Christensen (2010) using

data to measure the PSM of U.S. lawyers in 1984 and 1990. They showed that PSM does not predict the employment sector of an individual's first job, but it increases the likelihood that individuals' subsequent jobs are in the public sector. In particular, they found a positive association between "interest in social service/helping others" and attraction to public sector employment. Considered together, these results imply that if highly public service motivated individuals self-select initially into the private sector they will soon realize that this is not an environment in which they will thrive. Therefore we argue that if students have previous work experience, they will be in a better position to judge whether public or private sector contexts are aligned with their motivational dispositions. In line with the results of Georgellis and Tabvuma (2010) described above, we expect strongly public service motivated students to experience a boost in PSM when gaining public sector work experience thus generating a desire to return to this sector. As a result they will have a higher preference to seek public sector jobs after graduation.

Additionally, we argue that work experience for students is an episode in which they are subject to sectoral socialization. As values and norms vary between the public and private sector, we follow Kjeldsen (2014, p.104) in her judgment that "Public organizations therefore work for to sow public values in the identity of public employees which can cause them to develop PSM" or as we would add *to boost existing PSM levels*. Finally, work experience also induces feelings of work competence in that sector (Tschirhart et al., 2008). Thus, hypothesis two links previous job experience to employment preferences:

***Hypothesis 2:** Work experience in the public sector moderates the relationship between PSM and sector preference.*

## **Method**

### *Sample and data collection*



The dataset set consists of two matched surveys that have been distributed in Italy and the UK in Spring 2014 generating N=670 usable responses. Both universities are large, mid-ranked universities in their respective countries allowing for meaningful comparisons. The questionnaire has been translated from English to Italian and back to English by native Italian and English speakers. Amongst the Italian students the survey is handed out via paper, while in United Kingdom the data are collected both via paper and web-based survey. The use of two matched surveys in different countries is particularly suitable for our study because the two samples allow us to study individuals who have been socialized in either one of two different administrative regimes. This in turn may shape their attitudes towards public sector employment.

The Italian sample consists of 538 students of a large university in Rome. Respondents were undergraduates in the faculty of economics and 94% are Italian, following by Chinese (1.7%) and Romanian (1.5%). Other nationalities are negligible. 56% are male respondents. Most of the respondents are born after the 1983, and are less than 30 years old with 85.5% of the sample being between 20 and 22 years of age.

The British sample consists of 132 student responses from a midsize university in the southwest of England. Respondents were undergraduates. The British sample consisted of many diverse nationalities of which 66% are British. Also, the faculties in which students are enrolled are more heterogeneous: students come from Economics, Design Engineering and Computing, Tourism, Media, Health and Social Care, and Applied Sciences. The British sample consists of 80% female respondents. The bulk of the British sample (74.7%) is between 20 and 26 years of age.

Table 1 displays a comparison of both samples with respect to gender and age. Further analysis also shows that (i) the median age in both the UK and Italian sample is 21 and (ii) that in the Italian sample 10 students are older than 25 whereas in the British sample 15 students are older than 25. Hence, by and large both samples have a regular student distribution and are very comparable to one another. But also note that we did not explicitly record the study year of the respondents. However, further analyses of the age patterns do show that the majority of respondents are likely to be later

stage students who should be able to relate well to the problem of sector attraction, either because they are hunting placement opportunities or because they look for entry level jobs. However, we explicitly acknowledge the possibility of a small bias introduced by early stage students that might be present in the data.

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Overall, we consider the choice of student samples appropriate for the questions studied in this paper as this allows “to better investigate the influence of PSM on sector employment attraction in isolation from organizational influences on PSM” (Pedersen, 2013, p. 359). Similar arguments have been made by Clerkin and Cogburn (2012) and Wright et al. (2017) and we agree with this line of reasoning. Additionally, one needs to keep in mind that PSM is an individual level construct which exists in all sectors. Hence, consciously selecting students which are not enrolled in public administration programmes constitutes a conservative test of PSM’s relation to sector attraction because the sample is not biased towards public sector employment from the outset (which could be assumed for public administration students).

### *Measurement of Main Variables*

#### *Dependent variable*

The dependent variable is employer attractiveness as proposed by Vandenabeele (2008). Students answered the following question: “To what extent would you like to work for each of these employers?” using a Likert Scale (1-5) to indicate their preferences for working in: government organization, industrial corporation, government organization focused on management or economy, government organization focused on environmental affairs, government organization focused on other public goods. For the purposes of analysis we aggregated the information into a new variable

distinguishing between private and public sector job preferences. The first and the last three choices focused on the intention to work in the public sector are summarized in just one variable that measures the attractiveness to hold a position in a governmental organization, in other words sector attraction. Hence we use logistic regression in our estimations.

### *Independent variables*

The main independent variable is PSM. We measured all four dimensions of PSM (Perry, 1996), i.e. attraction to policy making (ATM), compassion (COMP), self-sacrifice (SS), and commitment to the public interest (CPI). For the purposes of data collection items that were reversed in the original Perry scale have been reworded positively. We ran a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for the PSM measures and generated the factor scores for each dimension. Additionally, we modelled aggregate PSM as a second order construct. Results indicate a good fit with the data (CFI = 0.95, SRMR = 0.04, RMSEA 0.04) applying usually recommended cut-off values (i.e. CFI ≥ 0.95; RMSEA < 0.05 and SRMR < 0.10). Detailed results including reliability indices are provided in Appendix 1. Additional control variables used are gender (0 = male; 1 = female), age, course level (1 = undergraduate; 2 = post-graduate; 3 = doctoral), and university of origin (0 = Italian university; 1 = British university) and public sector work experience (1 = yes, 0 = otherwise). Multicollinearity checks were applied with the mean VIF = 2.29 and the single highest VIF = 5.25 which raises no concern for multicollinearity as they fall below the cut-off value of 10 (Cohen et al., 2003).

## **Results**

In order to test the hypotheses we use logistic regressions. Coefficients in the results tables 1a and 1b are displayed as odds ratios. Hypothesis 1 stipulated that PSM is able to predict a students' intention to hold a position in the public sector. To assess hypothesis 1 we run separate models for the different subsamples, i.e. full sample, British sample and the Italian sample.

Table 2a displays results for the overall PSM measure whereas table 2b displays results at the dimensional level of PSM. Building these six models allows us to compare the different effects of PSM on sector preferences between Italian and British students. In model 1 of table 2a the odds ratio for PSM is above one and significant indicating a higher probability of PSM driven students to prefer public sector employment. This result, however, disappears for the British subsample (model 2) but holds for the Italian one (model 3). Only in Italy, high levels of PSM positively affect the intention to enter in the public sector.

Table 2b presenting the dimensional level results exhibits the same pattern, i.e. we do not find any significant coefficient in the British subsample (model 5). In contrast, we find significant coefficients for all PSM dimensions in the Italian subsample (model 6). The CPI and COMP dimensions are significantly associated with public sector preferences. Counterintuitively though, self-sacrifice and ATM show significant coefficients that are less than one. Hence individuals in our sample scoring high on these two PSM dimensions are less likely to prefer public sector employment. Therefore, considered jointly, these analyses lend partial support for hypothesis 1.

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Hypothesis 2 claimed that previous public sector work experience would lead to stronger public sector employment preferences. As we found significant relations of PSM and sector preference for the Italian subsample only, to assess hypothesis 2 we ran two models on this same subsample adding an interaction effect between PSM and the public sector experience dummy.

However, we do not find any meaningful association between the PSM aggregate or its dimensions on sector preference in this subsample. Hence we have to reject hypothesis 2 (for sake of brevity results are not displayed here).

## **Discussion**

After decades of application, the negative consequences of NPM on employees and the organization culture in public sector are well known (Brunetto, 2014, Diefenbach 2005). The literature has highlighted that the implementation of NPM reforms should not only limit any negative consequences on the people employed, but rather should enable them carrying out the expected changes (Buick et al., 2015). The fundamental role that employees can assume in the reforms' implementation has entailed a new focus on personnel management systems to support change processes (Molineux, 2013), particularly affecting the incentive and development system of people already employed in the organization (Rees and Jonari, 2010). Several studies provide support for the beneficial role PSM can play in such change processes (Christensen et al. 2013; Homberg et al. 2017).

Less mature instead is the literature relating to the ability of public organizations in attracting candidates who are not only qualified but also coherently motivated. Nonetheless, research shows recruiting based on PSM is an effective strategy to increase performance of public service (Christensen et al. 2017) and graduates react to PSM related recruitment signals (Asseburg et al. 2018). This study has tried to shed additional light on students' employment preferences by investigating the link between public service motivation and perceived sector attractiveness. While PSM increases the probability for being attracted to public sector employment, only the CPI and COMP dimensions appear to associate with this effect. We only find such relations in the Italian subsample whereas among British students PSM does not link to public sector employment preferences. Ultimately, previous work experience in the public sector according to our results has no implication for shaping sector attraction. Hence our results reveal a nuanced picture of the relation between PSM and sector preference.

These results have implications for human resource practices- specifically the ones concerning the attraction, selection, and retention of employees in the public sector (Leisink and Steijn, 2008; Wright and Grant, 2010). During times of public sector reforms, it is important to pay attention to the recruitment phases so that it is possible to hire people complementing the organization's characteristics. Students with high levels of PSM can be attracted by emphasizing the public value and the benefits for citizens that certain public sector occupations generate. According to our analyses, practitioners should focus on the CPI and COMP dimensions when trying to generate signals in order to attract employees.

On the practical level, our work supports calls to explicitly address individuals displaying high PSM in job announcements through PSM-linked recruitment messages (Ritz et al. 2016; Asseburg et al., 2018). As mentioned in a recent overview of the practical implications arising from the PSM literature, recruitment of high PSM individuals as one way to improve public service performance (Christensen et al. 2017). Exploiting the PSM – sector preference link provides one route for attracting individuals who are better suited to serve the public interest.

Our first hypothesis assumed a positive relationship between PSM and the intention to enter public organizations. Specifically, we presume that both Italian and British students' PSM has a positive association with the intention to enter into the public sector because these organisations are able to satisfy their altruistic and prosocial needs. However, according to our results this link was not present in the British subsample. Instead, it was much more pronounced in the Italian subsample.

Generally, the finding that PSM only plays a minor role in explaining a preference for public sector employment partly rather supports the results by Lewis and Frank (2002), Tschirhart et al. (2008), Steijn (2008), Kjeldsen (2014) and others who have shown that individuals with higher levels of PSM are not necessarily inclined to look for a public sector job. Pedersen (2013) highlights the importance of the PSM dimensions in relation to sector attraction. His study of Danish students in economics and political science suggests that the public interest dimension of PSM is a driver of public sector attraction, especially amongst students of law and political science (and less for

economics). Our results confirm this finding as the CPI dimension exhibits a positive significant effect, but deviate with respect to the COMP dimension which was not significant in Pedersen (2013). However, we find this result mainly in the Italian subsample which may point towards the importance of national differences (Harari et al. 2017), especially with regard to the characteristics of public sector employment in Italy and the UK.

These findings give support to arguments related to the different institutional context and public sector traditions (Meyer et al., 2014; Vandenabeele 2007; Belle and Ongaro 2014) which help to explain the results in a more nuanced manner. Our argument here is to consider the different administrative systems that characterize public sector employment in the two countries studied. While the UK for a long time has been characterized by NPM inspired reforms which emphasize market principles, Italy took a different trajectory due to its grounding in the Napoleonic administrative tradition (Peters 2008). The Napoleonic tradition dominates in southern European countries. In addition, a scepticism towards managerialist type reforms is ascribed to this tradition (Peters 2008). While acknowledging that Italy did move into the NPM direction, Kuhlmann (2010) attests a significant “implementation gap” and Bach and Bordogna (2011, p. 2282) ascribe Italy the “least good fit” with NPM among continental European countries. The fact that we find some association between PSM dimensions and public sector attraction in the Italian subsample suggests that the Napoleonic tradition appeals more to individuals displaying high levels of PSM, especially in relation to the CPI and compassion dimensions. In contrast, the continuing strong emphasis on NPM based reforms in Anglo-Saxon administrative systems may have led to a levelling of the sectors blurring the distinctive characteristics between the public and private sector. As a result, UK public sector organizations lost its uniqueness in responding to PSM related needs – at least in the perception of students in our sample.

With the UK being a ‘vanguard of NPM’ (Bach & Bodorgna 2011) one explanation may be that a situation of previously equally powerful competing institutional logics (i.e. the public and market logic) has been replaced by a situation in which the NPM promoted market logic becomes

stronger. Here it needs to be acknowledged that it is not uncommon for multiple logics to be at play (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Townley, 2002) in a struggle for dominance. As Meyer & Hammerschmidt (2006, p. 1001) state, “(...) together with major initiatives to restructure public administrations and to introduce managerial concepts, a new work role or social identity for public-sector employees and especially executives is being promoted, making new public management an ‘identity project’ (du Gay, 1996; see also Llewellyn, 2004; Thomas & Davies, 2005): from a ‘servant of the state, its interests and its people’ to a ‘manager of organizations and scarce resources.’ ”

The second hypothesis looks at the student’s past career decisions with the aim of understanding if it affects how PSM is linked to sector preferences. The analyses provide no support for the idea that previous public sector work experience strengthens the association between PSM and sector preferences. The public sector work environment is perceived as not responding to PSM related needs. Hence, over time, students may lose the identification with public sector values and probably feel they do not contribute to the end users’ satisfaction. However, the latter is usually one of the fundamental reasons to be a member of public organizations and public sector managers can actively shape such identification: “(...) innovative social exchanges and value alignment remain an option for building public service motivation among new staff.” (Christensen et al. 2017, p.536). It seems that for the individuals with public sector work experience in our sample such social exchanges building alignment were lacking. Hence practitioners should allocate more time for such activities that have long term benefits.

## **Limitations**

Several limitations should be taken into account. First, since our data is cross sectional we are not able to analyze career trajectories. However, future studies could pursue this idea. E.g. national household panels usually contain data on education, employment, and sector preferences. Thus, the analysis could be replicated with a longitudinal dataset. The downside, however, is that those longitudinal datasets are unlikely to contain detailed PSM measures. Since PSM was the main



construct of interest in this study, we opted for a self-designed survey and cross sectional data collection. Second, we have to underline that just a small percentage of respondents had previous job experience, both in the private or public area. Third, reward preferences were not included in the survey. However, according to Ritz and Waldner (2011) preferences may rather confound than isolate the effects. Finally, common method bias may be at play in cross sectional data which we tried to mitigate at the design stage following suggestions by Podsakoff et al. (2012) and Conway and Lance (2010).

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**Table 1. Gender and Age distribution**

Gender	Age			Freq.
	max	min	med	
Male	35	19	21	355
Female	62	18	21	315
Total				670

**Table 2a.** PSM and Public Sector Preference

Sector Preference:	(1) Public	(2) Public	(3) Public
Gender	0.808 (0.128)	0.771 (0.493)	1.010 (0.180)
Age	0.941* (0.0337)	1.019 (0.0478)	0.968 (0.0545)
PSM	6.989*** (2.806)	0.573 (0.863)	3.809*** (1.725)
Constant	3.957* (3.071)	0.0636** (0.0740)	2.759 (3.315)
Observations	670	132	538
Pseudo R-squared	0.0348	0.00664	0.0125
Sample	Full	UK	Italy

Notes: Coefficients are Odds ratios. Standard errors in parentheses.

R-squared is McFadden R2.

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 2b.** PSM Dimensions and Public Sector Preference

Sector Preference	(4) Public	(5) Public	(6) Public
ATM	0.780 (0.167)	1.020 (0.845)	0.642* (0.159)
Compassion	1.360 (0.565)	0.400 (0.629)	2.402* (1.117)
Self Sacrifice	0.570** (0.159)	2.232 (2.499)	0.587* (0.184)
CPI	4.845*** (2.210)	0.555 (0.962)	2.504* (1.314)
Gender	0.779 (0.126)	0.835 (0.541)	0.942 (0.171)
Age	0.942* (0.0335)	1.021 (0.0503)	0.971 (0.0551)
Constant	3.851* (2.966)	0.0547** (0.0660)	2.698 (3.266)
Observations	670	132	538
Pseudo R-squared	0.0438	0.0180	0.0251
Sample	Full	UK	Italy

Notes: Coefficients are Odds ratios. Standard errors in parentheses.  
R-squared is McFadden R2. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

## Appendix 1. PSM CFA Results

	Factor Loading (standardized)
<b>Attraction to Policy Making (<math>\alpha=0.67</math>, CR=0.77)</b>	
Politics is a noble word	0.45
The give and take of public policy making does appeal to me	0.55
I care much for politicians	0.84
<b>Commitment to the Public Interest (<math>\alpha=0.65</math>, CR=0.66)</b>	
It is hard for me to get intensely interested in what is going on in my community	0.51
I unselfishly contribute to my community	0.53
Meaningful public service is very important to me	0.56
I consider public service my civic duty	0.70
<b>Self Sacrifice (<math>\alpha=0.77</math>, CR=0.74)</b>	
Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements	0.61
I believe in putting duty before self	0.66
Much of what I do is for a cause bigger than myself	0.59
Serving citizens would give me a good feeling even if no one paid me for it	0.53
I am one of those rare people who would risk personal loss to help someone else	0.52
I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of society	0.66
<b>Compassion (<math>\alpha=0.68</math>, CR=0.61)</b>	
Most social programs are too vital to do without	0.51
It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress	0.54
To me, patriotism includes seeing to the welfare of others	0.58
<b>Model Evaluation</b>	
TLI	0.94
CFI	0.95
RMSEA	0.04
SRMR	0.04

Notes:  $\alpha$ = Cronbach's alpha, CR= Composite reliability, TLI= Tucker-Lewis Index, CFI=Comparative Fit Index, RMSEA=Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, SRMR=Standardized Root Mean Residual

**Appendix 2.** Correlations of main variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 PSM	1.00							
2 APM	0.58 *	1.00						
3 CPI	0.99 *	0.55 *	1.00					
4 SS	0.88 *	0.41 *	0.82 *	1.00				
5 Compassion	0.86 *	0.42 *	0.81 *	0.72 *	1.00			
6 Gender	-0.06	-0.11 *	-0.05	-0.06	-0.02	1.00		
7 Age	-0.03	-0.02	-0.03	-0.02	-0.02	0.00	1.00	
8 Public Pref.	0.19 *	0.09 *	0.21 *	0.13 *	0.17 *	-0.06	-0.12 *	1.00

Notes: \* p<0.05; PSM: public service motivation, APM: attraction to policy making, CPI: commitment to the public interest, SS: self-sacrifice, Comp: compassion, Gender: 1= female, 0= male.