The relationship between public service motivation, work enjoyment, and task performance: a preliminary study of healthcare workers in Vietnam

Nguyen Nghi, Thanh; Thu Hang, Tran; Dinh Thao, Tran

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION, WORK ENJOYMENT, AND TASK PERFORMANCE: A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN VIETNAM

Nguyen Nghi Thanh[1*], Tran Thu Hang[2], Tran Dinh Thao[3]

[1]Hanoi University of Home Affairs, Vietnam https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0791-8063 ✉ thanhnn7899@gmail.com

[2]Hanoi University of Home Affairs, Vietnam https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1597-1470 ✉ tranthuhang11@gmail.com

[3]Hanoi University of Home Affairs, Vietnam https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0131-5157 ✉ thaotd62@gmail.com

Abstract: *This study aimed to examine the impact of health workers' public service motivation during their participation in response to the Covid-19 pandemic at a time of the highest number of infections and deaths in Vietnam. This study was conducted through a cross-sectional survey using an intentional sampling technique (n=200). In addition, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to illustrate the proposed hypotheses. We found that compassion in the workplace, self-sacrifice, and attraction to policy-making impacted work enjoyment positively and significantly. In particular, there was a positive and significant relationship between work enjoyment and task performance but no evidence of the relationship between Commitment to the public interest and work enjoyment. This study further demonstrates the importance of public service motivation of health workers in pandemic response, as previous studies have found. This finding suggests that the government and policymakers in Vietnam should develop policies to promote health workers' public service motivation during their engagement in response to the health crisis.*

Keywords: *Work Enjoyment; Task Performance; Public Service Motivation; Medical Staff; Vietnam*

INTRODUCTION

In dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic in Vietnam, all medical forces have made tremendous sacrifices and extraordinary efforts. Numerous doctors and nurses volunteer to assist in Covid-19 hotspots. In the prolonged fierce battle with Covid-19, their enthusiasm and Commitment to pandemic hotspots and willingness to confront obstacles, disadvantages, and self-sacrifice are always praised. Their silent sacrifices should be honored across Vietnam as the fight against Covid-19 reaches its pinnacle (Phong Thu 2021). There is increasing interest in applying public service motivation in managing the public sector workforce (O'Leary 2019). Public service motivation is a concept that seems natural to healthcare workers, providing them with work enjoyment, attraction to public policy-making, and Commitment to public service

values. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it is necessary to test the validity of the public service motivation in the healthcare sector. Many qualitative studies have discovered that during the epidemics, they get compelled to sacrifice their happiness, rest, and family time to take care of their patients' health and bring good health to their patients. Mastering healthcare workers' motivation is crucial since they require incentives to keep them motivated to satisfy their patients and improve their effectiveness (Huber and Schubert 2019).

According to many studies, to improve the quality of public services, it is necessary to have a high public service motivation (Nurung *et al.* 2019). Individuals who value public services are more interested in providing them and the social consequences of collective inaction, seeing themselves as crucial in preserving public goods (Heine *et al.* 2021). Therefore, further empirical studies are needed to assess whether their public service motivation directly affects health care quality during the Covid-19. Healthcare workers in Vietnam have been undergoing the most challenging time due to the increasing number of infections and deaths caused by Covid-19. The dread and anxiety among them about the Covid-19 pandemic's repercussions are palpable. Therefore, this study looks into the relationship between public service motivation, work enjoyment, and task performance. The new findings of this study will fill the theoretical gap on public service motivation while providing the basis for the government to timely implement policies to promote health workers to improve their task performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Service Motivation

Public service motivation is defined as a desire by employees to contribute to society. It refers to an emotional response and empathy for others as self-sacrifice that reflects a shared desire to put the benefit of the community above personal interests (Vandenabeele 2013). It manifests in an individual's willingness to engage in and contribute to improving public services and the common good, exhibiting a sense of personal responsibility, dedication to society, and self-sacrifice (Anderfuhren-Biget 2012). Public service motivation can be seen as an incentive for individuals to contribute to society and help others. The factors constituting the public service motivation include attraction to policy-making, Commitment to the public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice (Vandenabeele 2013).

Attraction to Policy-making

Attraction to policy-making is a fundamental component of public service motivation because individuals work in public institutions in political settings (Coursey *et al.* 2008). It involves political power and participation in the public administration process. It depends on individual emotions rather than rational motives, manifesting as extraversion and openness to new experiences (Jang 2012).

Commitment to the Public Interest

Commitment to the public interest is so complex and diverse that it is difficult to define and use the concept (Dadashpoor and Sheydayi 2021). It is geared towards doing good in the public interest. It is associated with working time and political influence and is significant for democracy. It is also associated with a reduction in the rate of employees in a stressful and demanding work environment. It benefits public organizations in situations that require employees' considerable efforts, resilience, and self-sacrifice (Gustavo *et al.* 2021).

Compassion in the Workplace

Compassion in the workplace is defined as showing affection, concern, and tenderness toward subordinates or colleagues without expecting any organizational benefits (Eldor and Shoshani 2016). It incorporates emotional aspects such as emotional labor, including sensitivity, responsiveness, and service orientation exist in the workplace and positively impacts employee performance. It is an emotional coping mechanism that is particularly prominent in public places of work, where employees frequently encounter stressful situations involving civic demands and administrative workloads (Tummers *et al.* 2015).

Self-Sacrifice

According to public service motivation theory, some individuals have a strong desire to make their sacrifices to serve the public interests (Perry and Wise 1990), to motivate themselves to volunteer, and do not evade by taking on an outcome-oriented concern for public welfare (Francois 2000), to feel pity for the others, and make a commitment to the public interests to motivate to make personal sacrifices and serve the public interests (Kim and Vandenabeele 2010). Self-sacrifice promotes beliefs and attitudes related to public service, commits to providing a public service that no one else is willing to provide despite its benefits to society, and takes risks (Piatak and Holt 2020).

Task Performance

Task performance is the output of a process. It is affected by four factors: ability, task knowledge, environment, and individual motivation (Brewer and Walker 2013), related to employees being under pressure to perform effectively. It results from personal contribution to the public organization's mission (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007).

Work Enjoyment

Work enjoyment is a happy or positive emotional state due to a job appraisal or experience. It is related to the emotional dedication offered, the characteristics that constitute the work environment and the work itself (Churchil *et al.*1974), and individuals' evaluations of their duties on matters crucial (Sempane *et al.* 2002).

Relationship between Public Service Motivation and Task Performance

Individuals with high public service motivation do better and harder, exert more effort, and deliver better quality. They score higher on work performance and get more satisfied with their job position and organization (Andersen *et al.* 2014). Public service motivation is favorably associated with individual performance in the public sector. It motivates them to work harder as they accept joint work with high task significance (Perry *et al.* 2010).

Relationship between Public Service Motivation and Work Enjoyment

Work enjoyment is related to public service motivation since it positively affects an individual's behavior in the workplace. It explains their overall perception and attitude towards work, originates from within, and causes them to get internally stimulated (Walker *et al.* 2011). It also increases task performance and is linked to the ability to finish desired activities. There is a link between public service motivation and the quality and happiness of one's employment, and organizations are no exception (Walker *et al.* 2011). Allowing public servants to recognize the societal consequences of their work can boost their motivation (Grant 2008). The authors have developed a research model based on the literature review, as illustrated in Figure 1.
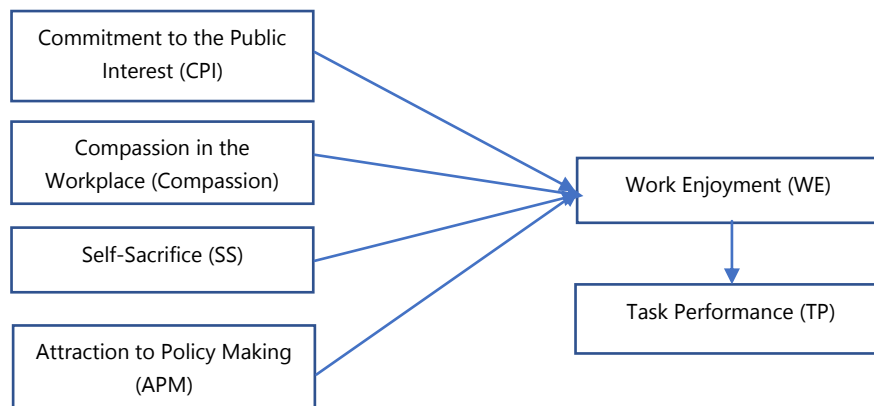
Figure 1: The Research Model (Source: Authors' depiction)

The following theories have been made based on the above research documents:

H1: Healthcare workers' Commitment to the public interest has a positive and significant relationship with their work enjoyment.

H2: Healthcare workers' compassion has a positive and significant relationship with their work enjoyment.

H3: Healthcare workers' self-sacrifice positively and significantly relates to their work enjoyment.

H4: Attraction to policy-making positively and significantly relates to work enjoyment.

H5: Healthcare workers' work enjoyment positively and significantly relates to their task performance.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research team used a qualitative method by in-depth interviews with psychology and medical researchers to adjust the scale and improve the questionnaire to suit the characteristics of the survey area. The questionnaire was built on the overview results and experts' opinions, including two parts.

Part 1 collects information about the research participants' demographics, such as age, gender, education level, and occupation.

Part 2 collects data on public service motivation, work enjoyment, and task performance. Public service motivation data was collected by using Perry's Public Service Motivation Scale edited by Kim (2009), consisting of 14 items, work enjoyment data by using part of the scale which was built by Johri, Misra, and Bhattacharjee (2016) that consists of 5 items, and task performance data by using part of the scale was built by Ramos, Pedro, Juan Ramón, Elena, and Linda (2019) consisting of 4 items.

Two professional translators translated the English questionnaire was translate into Vietnamese. The translation was done under specific rules to adapt to various Vietnamese cultures. A bilingual professional education expert contributed his ideas to this version to generate a final one. Then, it was pre-tested on 40 participants, and following that, minor tweaks were made to perfect the questions and make them easier to understand. Finally, it was used for the official survey. Participating in the study is a selection of adults living in Hochiminh city, Binh Duong, and Bac Ninh provinces. The questionnaire was directly sent to them by the non-random sampling method. The survey team received 200 valid answer sheets, achieving a response rate of 100%. Table 1 below shows their demographic statistics (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants (Source: Authors' calculation)

		Occupation					
		Consulting Doctor	Epidemi ologist	General Practitioner	Laboratory Technician	Nurse	Physician
		Row N %	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %
Gender	Female	20.7%	15.3%	20.7%	15.3%	13.5%	14.4%
	Male	16.9%	21.3%	14.6%	18.0%	9.0%	20.2%
Age	25-30 years	21.9%	18.8%	6.2%	25.0%	12.5%	15.6%
	31-35 years	15.6%	18.8%	9.4%	21.9%	9.4%	25.0%
	36-40 years	14.3%	22.9%	25.7%	20.0%	5.7%	11.4%
	41-45 years	23.5%	2.9%	32.4%	11.8%	11.8%	17.6%
	46-50 years	20.0%	25.7%	14.3%	8.6%	14.3%	17.1%
	Above 50 years	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	12.5%	15.6%	15.6%
Education	Ambulance technicians	25.8%	12.9%	16.1%	12.9%	6.5%	25.8%

	Bachelor of Medicine	6.1%	15.2%	15.2%	18.2%	21.2%	24.2%
	Bachelor of Public Health	23.3%	26.7%	6.7%	20.0%	10.0%	13.3%
	Bachelor of Surgery	17.9%	10.7%	21.4%	17.9%	17.9%	14.3%
	Doctor of Medicine	18.9%	24.3%	24.3%	13.5%	5.4%	13.5%
	Master of Medicine	22.0%	17.1%	22.0%	17.1%	9.8%	12.2%

RESEARCH RESULTS

The software SPSS 20 and AMOS are used to analyze the reliability of the scales, the exploratory factors, and structural equation modeling (SEM).

Reliability Analysis

Table 2 reveals that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for all items is higher than 0.7, qualifying it for further investigation. Good Composite Reliability for a defined structure with five to eight items meets the minimum threshold of 0.80 (Hair *et al.* 2010). The Attraction to Policy-making with Composite Reliability=0.833 is valid, as shown in Table 2. Composite Reliability=0.792, Compassion=0.786, Self-sacrifice=0.784, Work enjoyment=0.757 (closer to 0.80) is acceptable for the Commitment to the public interest. The acceptance threshold of Average Variance Extracted from Entries is higher than 0.50 (Hair *et al.* 2010). Table 2 shows the entries of the Average Variance Extracted with Attraction to policymaking=0.500 and Work enjoyment=0.510. The rest of the entries, Commitment to the public interest=0.489, Compassion=0.479, Self-sacrifice=0.476, and Task performance=0.478, are still acceptable for further analysis (Hair *et al.* 2010).

Table 2: Reliability Analysis (Source: Authors' calculation)

Factors	Cronbach's alpha	Average Variance Extracted	Composite Reliability
Commitment to the public interest	0.756	0.489	0.792
Attraction to policymaking	0.730	0.500	0.833
Compassion in the workplace	0.793	0.479	0.786
Self-sacrifice	0.783	0.476	0.784
Work enjoyment	0.834	0.510	0.757
Task performance	0.786	0.478	0.732

Factor Analysis

The condition for exploratory factor analysis is to satisfy the following requirements: the Factor loading > 0.5. $0.5 \leq$ KMO ≤ 1: the factor KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) is the index used to

consider the appropriateness of factor analysis (Hair 2010). Table 3 shows that the Bartlett test is of statistical significance (Sig.=0.00), the factor KMO=0.904 (>0.5). Bartlett testing is of statistical significance with Sig.=0.000 (< 0.05), the observed variables are correlated with each other in the population. Thus, the variables are valid for factor analysis (Snedecor *et al.* 1989). Factor loading is the criterion to ensure the practical significance of factor analysis: Factor loading > 0.3 is considered minimal; Factor loading > 0.4 is considered crucial; Factor loading > 0.5 is considered practically significant. Table 3 indicates that the factor loading of all variables is higher than 0.5, which means that the factor analysis is valid. It also proves the validity of Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings of 6 factors=63.638 % (>0.5 %). Initial Eigenvalues of 6 factors=1.080 (>1.00) are viable (Hair 2010).

Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix (Source: Authors' calculation)

Rotated Component Matrix[a]						
	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
WE4	.755					
WE2	.754					
WE1	.702					
WE3	.697					
WE5	.633					
TP3		.785				
TP2		.723				
TP4		.712				
TP1		.650				
SS3			.758			
SS1			.736			
SS4			.691			
SS2			.665			
Compassion4				.732		
Compassion3				.701		
Compassion1				.692		
Compassion2				.627		
CPI3					.777	
CPI1					.738	
CPI2					.735	
APM1						.773
APM3						.746
APM2						.682
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.						
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.						

Structural Equation Modeling

SEM is an extension of the general linear model (GLM) that combines all techniques such as multivariate regression, factor analysis, and correlation analysis between factors to examine the complex relationship in the model. It calculates stable (recursive) and non-recursive relationships, direct and indirect effects, measurement error, and residual correlation, among other things. In addition, it gives the freedom to choose the best model from a list of options (Kline 2011). To evaluate the suitability of the SEM model, it requires the Chi-Square (χ2) testing, Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) procedure, along with the confidence interval standardized-root-mean square residual (SRMR), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI). It is suggested that a good fitting model should have values of CFI and TLI $\geq$ .90, RMSEA and SRMR $\leq$ .08 (Kline 2011).
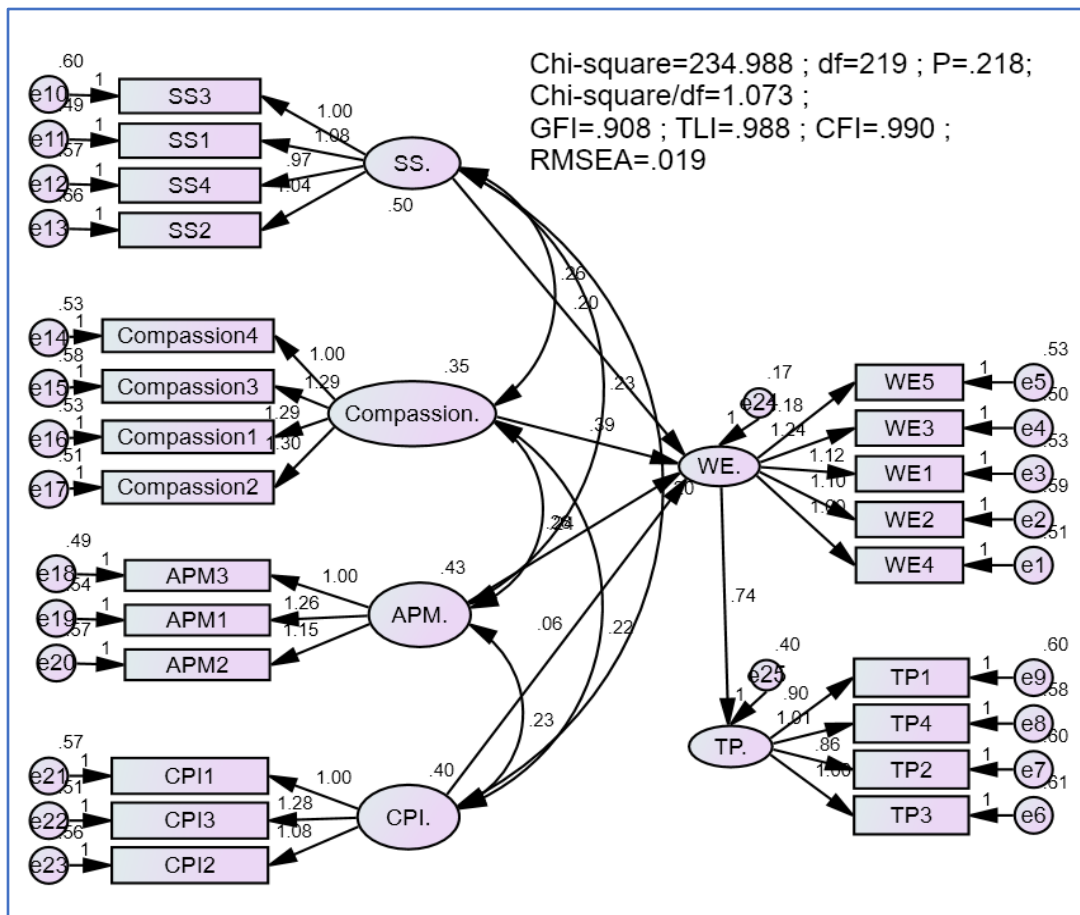

Figure 2: The Results of SEM Analysis (Source: Authors' calculation)

The analysis results (Figure 2) illustrate that the model test coefficients satisfy the standard requirements of the SEM model: Chi-square=234.988; Df=219; P-value=0.218 (P-value > 0.05); Chi-square/df=1.073; GIF=0.908 (GIF>0.9); TLF=0.988; RMSEA=0.019 (Kline 2011).

Table 6: Regression Weights (Source: Authors' calculation)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
WE	<---	SS	0.203	0.090	2.243	0.025	Accepted
WE	<---	Compassion	0.388	0.138	2.809	0.005	Accepted
WE	<---	APM	0.255	0.104	2.451	0.014	Accepted
WE	<---	CPI	0.059	0.101	.584	0.559	Not Accepted
TP	<---	WE	0.737	0.124	5.936	***	Accepted

The results of SEM analysis (Table 6) show that hypothesis H1 (Health workers' Commitment to the public interest has a positive and significant relationship with their work enjoyment) is rejected as reliability is not of statistical significance (p=0.559). The remaining hypotheses are acceptable.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
Discussion

Firstly, the research results (Table 6) show that medical staff's work enjoyment factor has a positive and significant relationship to their Task performance with the largest regression weight (β=0.737) and the 95 percent confidence level (p=0.000). This outcome is consistent with prior findings from non-medical sector studies. It means that work enjoyment is related to completing desired tasks and boosting productivity (Walker *et al.* 2011).

Secondly, the research findings (Table 6) show that medical staff's compassion has a positive and significant relationship with their work enjoyment with regression weight (β = 0.388) and the 95 percent confidence level (p=0.005). This result is in line with previous findings from non-medical research (Tavares *et al.* 2019). This means that even if they lack the necessary facilities and equipment, their motivations are likely to assist them in overcoming these obstacles and providing the best possible treatment for their patients (Valdez and Nichols 2013).

Thirdly, the findings of the study (Table 6) reveal that the factor attraction to policy-making has a positive and substantial link with work enjoyment, as evidenced by the regression coefficient (β=0.255) and the 95 percent confidence level (p=0.014). Each healthcare worker can be more productive if a corresponding reward for their participation in the policy-making process increases their work enjoyment (Rubel *et al.* 2020).

Fourthly, the research findings (Table 6) indicate that healthcare workers' self-sacrifice has a positive and significant relationship with their work enjoyment with regression weight (β=0.203) and the 95 percent confidence level (p=0.025). The results of this study are similar to those of prior studies in other domains. Self-sacrifice motivates healthcare workers, as well as other employees in the public sector, to volunteer and not evade by introducing an outcome-oriented concern for public welfare (Francois 2000), feeling pity for the well-being of other people, and being committed to the public interest in general (Perry and Wise 1990).

CONCLUSION

The study findings reveal that public service motivation is linked to health workers' behavior and work performance. However, health workers in Vietnam lack the required conditions to commit to the public interest due to a lack of recognition, promotion, monitoring, openness, accountability, and the mechanism that motivates them. It is among the factors impeding the country's development, with negative consequences in various fields such as economy, culture, society, and politics (Thu Hang Cao 2020). It is linked to low public service quality (Nguyen *et al.* 2017).

According to the study findings, public service motivation has a favorable and significant impact on work enjoyment and performance. Therefore, it is of interest to policymakers in the health sector in Vietnam, as it is widely considered a significant determinant of the performance of medical staff. To improve workers' motivation in the health industry, the Vietnamese government must develop appropriate policies and mechanisms. Understanding what motivates people to carry out social responsibility and offer public services is crucial to public administration, and it is critical to design motivational policies for public sector workers (Heine *et al.* 2021).

Limitations

Like other experimental studies, this study has some limitations that need considering when discussing its findings. First and foremost, our survey approach reflects the respondents' subjective perception of the questions investigated. Like every survey, subjective data has some inherent flaws that are difficult to eliminate. In other words, our data are collected over a single period, so there are certain limitations in the analysis and evaluation of its findings. A combination of cross-sectional and long-term studies needs to be studied in the future.

The intentional sampling method also has certain limitations and does not fully reflect the population's characteristics. Our survey was conducted in a Vietnamese cultural context. More general statements should be put forward by applying more development research models and results from other countries and cultures. This study has yet to examine demographic variables. To have more comprehensive information about health workers ' public service motivation, further research needs to consider demographic factors such as ages, genders, occupations, and incomes.

COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Statement of human rights:
This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any authors.

Statement on the welfare of animals:
This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any authors.

Informed consent:
Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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