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A Job Demands–Resources Approach Theory to Practice to Public Service Motivation

Abstract: *This article uses job demands–resources theory to build a model of public service motivation (PSM). Public service motivation determines how employees in the public sector deal with their daily job demands and resources. Highly motivated public servants are able to deal with their job demands and prevent exhaustion. Additionally, because of their sense of calling, they are motivated to mobilize their job resources to stay engaged and perform well. However, if job demands are consistently high and job resources are consistently low, highly motivated public servants will lose their psychological resources, resulting in lower PSM. Reduced PSM, as a consequence, may strengthen the loss cycle of job demands and exhaustion and weaken the gain cycle of job resources and engagement. Public service managers and employees may use this model to optimize their work environment on a day-to-day basis.*

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Practitioner Points

- Public service motivation offers the motive to use all the available energy and dedication for the public good on a daily basis.
- Public servants with a high (versus low) level of public service motivation are better able to deal with organizational stressors because they know that dealing with those stressors serves the higher goal of helping others.
- Because of their sense of calling, public servants are motivated to mobilize their own daily job resources in order to stay engaged and perform well.
- Public service managers should pay attention to daily levels of job demands and resources because, at this daily level, organizations can lay the foundation for persistent public service motivation.

People who want to make the world a better place often turn to careers in public service. Firefighters, public health workers, police officers, and teachers—they all are public servants who work for towns, counties, cities, or national governments. Public service motivation (PSM) has been defined as a “general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation or humanity” (Rainey and Steinbauer 1999, 23). Individuals with high PSM have prosocial motives—they want to do good for other people and society through the delivery of public services (Perry et al. 2008). Research over the past two decades has shown that PSM is positively related to organizational commitment (Crewson 1997) and job satisfaction (Wright and Pandey 2008). Moreover, those with high PSM show higher levels of job performance, and they are more likely to engage in whistle-blowing to protect the public interest (Brewer and Selden 2000). This suggests that PSM is important for public servants’ well-being and performance.

Although PSM theory has generated considerable research attention, we still know little about the

mechanisms that make PSM work. How does PSM help deliver high-quality services? When do public servants manage to sustain their PSM? What factors may undermine PSM? The present article integrates the PSM literature with job demands–resources theory and the work engagement literature to develop a model of PSM that may guide future research. As Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise (2010) have argued, we need to investigate other motives and human needs besides public service motives in order to improve our knowledge of PSM. As work engagement has been linked to similar organizational outcomes (e.g., organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors) but the literatures have developed independently, an important question is how these knowledge domains can inform each other. Do PSM and work engagement act in concert to influence public servants’ performance?

Employee Work Engagement

Employee work engagement has been defined as “a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al. 2002, 74). Engaged workers

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experience high levels of energy and are enthusiastic about their work. They often feel as if time flies when they are working—they are absorbed in their work activities. This definition of employee work engagement is consistent with the work of Kahn (1990), who proposed that people who are engaged in their work activities make considerable investments in their work. Accordingly, engaged workers bring in their physical, cognitive, and emotional resources to perform their roles as well as possible.

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Because of their positive state of mind, engaged workers often show excellent performance. They outperform their colleagues who are less engaged, and they are more creative in their work. Moreover, engaged employees are often willing to help their colleagues when needed—they exhibit organizational citizenship behaviors. The past decade has witnessed a sharp increase in the number of scientific studies on employee work engagement, and the phenomenon has been studied among all types of occupational groups—in the private as well as the public sector. These studies generally show that work engagement has important positive consequences for organizational behavior and performance (Bakker, Demerouti, and Sanz-Vergel 2014; Lavigna 2013).

Employee work engagement is different from other work-related constructs such as job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, and workaholism. In contrast to these alternative work-related states, work engagement includes a clear energetic component: vigor. Also, whereas work engagement is characterized by high-arousal positive states, such as excitement, energy, and enthusiasm, job satisfaction is a low-arousal positive experience indicated by happiness, contentment, and pleasure. Work engagement is a more robust predictor of performance than job satisfaction (Christian, Garza, and Slaughter 2011) because engaged workers are able and willing to invest a lot of effort in their work. Furthermore, job involvement and organizational commitment refer to psychological identification with work and emotional attachment to the organization. Employees who are highly involved and committed are also likely dedicated to their work, but they may lack the energetic resources (vigor) and concentration (absorption) that are characteristic of engaged workers. Hence, job involvement, organizational commitment, and work engagement are constructs that can be theoretically and empirically distinguished.

It is important to note that engaged workers enjoy doing things outside of work—they enjoy leisure activities such as sports, exercise, reading, and dining. Whereas workaholics feel a strong inner drive to work excessively hard, even in the evening, work-engaged individuals know when to stop in order to recover from their work-related efforts. Workaholics are less effective than engaged workers (Gorgievski, Bakker, and Schaufeli 2010) because they let their work interfere with their private life and do not take the time to detach psychologically from their work. This increases their risk of burnout—they do not recover and so become overly exhausted and cynical about the meaning of their work. Moreover, workaholics are often self-centered and do not know how to collaborate well with their colleagues. In contrast, engaged workers are often prosocial, and they are good at conserving their energetic resources so that they prevent burnout and can continue to be engaged.

Job Demands–Resources Theory

Job demands–resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker and Demerouti 2014; Demerouti and Bakker 2011) is an organizational theory that grew out of job stress research. A main starting question was, why do some employees lose their enthusiasm for their work and become burned out? Over the past 15 years, JD-R theory has become very popular, and the theory has been expanded to enable the prediction of work engagement and performance as well. Moreover, the current version

of the theory is able to map employee behaviors (such as self-undermining and job crafting, which will be discussed later) that fuel the experiences of burnout and engagement over time. The theory can be summarized using six crucial building blocks.

First, JD-R theory proposes that although every organization is unique, all work environments can be characterized in terms of job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to aspects of the work context that cost energy, including work pressure, task complexity, and role ambiguity. In contrast, job resources refer to aspects of the work context that help employees deal with job demands, satisfy basic psychological needs, and achieve organizational goals (Bakker and Demerouti 2014; Demerouti et al. 2001). Examples of job resources are social support, autonomy, and task significance (i.e., the extent to which an identifiable piece of work affects or is important to others within or outside the organization; Hackman and Oldham 1980).

A second building block of JD-R theory is that job demands and resources have unique impacts on employee well-being. More specifically, the two categories of working conditions are proposed to initiate two different processes. Job demands initiate a health impairment process and may lead to fatigue and health problems. If job demands such as high work pressure and severe conflicts persist over time, health problems may become chronic and undermine job performance. In contrast, job resources are the initiators of a motivational process, and they are the most important predictors of employee work engagement and organizational commitment. Job resources such as support and skill variety (i.e., the extent to which the job requires a person to use multiple skills in various activities; Hackman and Oldham 1980) make a positive contribution to job performance by satisfying basic needs, such as the need for competence and relatedness, and therefore foster employee vigor, dedication, and absorption.

Third, JD-R theory proposes that job demands and resources interact in predicting employee well-being. On the one hand, job resources can buffer the undesirable, negative impact of job demands on strain. Thus, social support, autonomy, and performance feedback can help employees deal with high job demands to prevent burnout and health problems. On the other hand, job demands—particularly in the form of job challenges—may strengthen the positive impact of job resources on engagement. This means that when there is a lot of work to do, and when work tasks are complex, job resources can boost work engagement. Under such working conditions, employees take up their job challenges with a high level of energy. In a similar vein, when job tasks are complex and require the maximum possible energy and dedication, job resources can be used optimally to get the work done and to reach difficult goals.

For example, many state and local government employees—including middle school teachers, janitors, bus drivers, and building cleaners—hold physically demanding jobs and are confronted with difficult working conditions. Job resources can operate in two ways when it comes to dealing with these demands. Resources such as social support, opportunities for development, and skill variety can act as buffers against the negative impact of high-hindrance job demands. Job resources can also boost the positive impact of high-challenge job demands. In either way, job resources help get the work done—they alleviate the strain when the demands are highly stressful, and they increase work engagement when the demands are seen as a positive challenge (Tadić, Bakker, and Oerlemans 2014).

A fourth proposition put forward by JD-R theory (Bakker and Demerouti 2014) is that in addition to job resources, employees have personal resources that they can use to deal with their job demands. Personal resources are positive self-beliefs that are linked to resiliency and refer to individuals' sense of their ability to control and impact on their environment successfully (Hobfoll et al. 2003). Research has indicated that personal resources such as optimism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem make an independent contribution to explaining work engagement, over and above job demands and resources (Xanthopoulou et al. 2009). The present analysis of PSM focuses mainly on job demands and job resources, although personal resources most likely also play a role in PSM.

Fifth, employees who are engaged in their work are motivated to stay engaged (see the gain cycle on the right in figure 1). This means that when their job demands become too high or when job resources are lacking, engaged employees use personal initiative to modify their work environment. This behavior is called “job crafting,” referring to the proactive behaviors that employees engage

in to change the content of their tasks and relational boundaries (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001). For example, employees may proactively ask for feedback about their performance, volunteer to participate in a new project, or intensify their collaboration with others in their work environment. By crafting their jobs, and by improving their job demands and resources, employees can optimize their work environment and create a better person–environment fit. For example, as seen in figure 1, the increase in job resources as a consequence of job crafting is new input for engagement (and indirectly for high-quality performance), which completes the resource gain cycle.

The sixth and final proposition is that employees who are exposed to high job demands may burn out and enter a loss cycle, in which their accumulated fatigue leads to self-undermining behaviors and increased job demands (see the left part of figure 1). Self-undermining refers to behavior that creates obstacles that may harm performance, including making mistakes, avoidance, and conflicts with clients or colleagues. Employees with higher levels of strain or burnout are more likely to make mistakes, which then need to be corrected, adding to their already high job demands, and so on. Thus, self-undermining behaviors that are the consequence of high levels of burnout may increase job demands, which, over time, increase levels of burnout (Bakker and Costa 2014).

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There is considerable evidence supporting each of the propositions in JD-R theory, in the public sector as well (see meta-analyses by Alarcon 2011; Crawford, LePine, and Rich 2010). Most of this evidence has been found using cross-sectional and longitudinal survey studies. In these studies, scholars typically investigate differences between individuals in terms of work engagement or burnout as a consequence of differences in job demands and (job and personal)

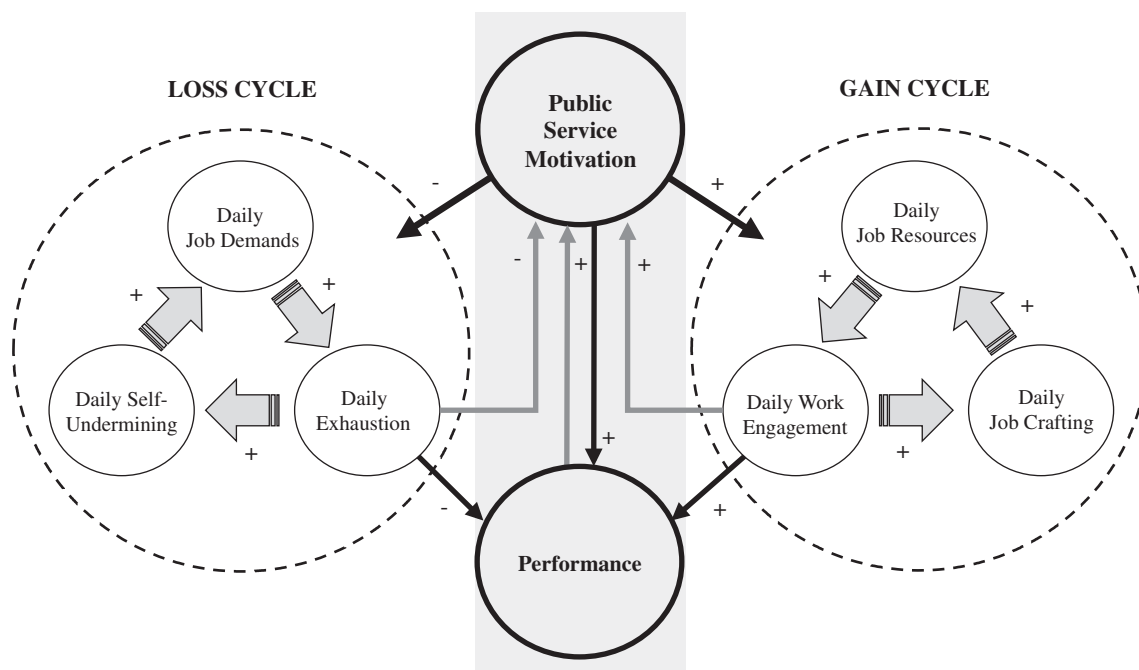


Figure 1 A Job Demands–Resources Approach to Public Service Motivation

resources. More recently, employee behaviors have been included in JD-R theory. Specifically, scholars have started to investigate differences in work-related well-being and performance as a function of differences between employees in job crafting and self-undermining behaviors. A recent review of JD-R research (Bakker, Demerouti, and Sanz-Vergel 2014) shows that the research evidence is accumulating, with an increasing number of studies using longitudinal and experimental designs. However, important for the JD-R analysis of PSM, evidence is also accumulating at the within-person, daily level (Bakker 2014a), to which I turn now.

Daily Fluctuations in Job Demands and Job Resources

Research shows that employees react to job demands and resources on a daily basis. On the days that there are many job demands, strain and exhaustion increase, which may undermine performance unless there are enough resources available. On the days that employees have sufficient job resources, such as high autonomy and skill variety, they experience meaningfulness and are more engaged in their work, which facilitates performance. Furthermore, on the days that employees engage in job crafting behaviors and optimize their work environment, they have access to more job resources, are more engaged, and perform better (see figure 1). In contrast, on the days that employees feel exhausted and cynical, they accumulate job demands because they undermine the effectiveness of their own activities by making mistakes and starting conflicts.

The number of quantitative diary studies in organizational contexts is (slowly) increasing (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, and Ilies 2012),¹ and there is good reason for this. Kahn argued in his seminal article that “people are constantly bringing in and leaving out various depths of their selves during the course of their work days. They do so to respond to the momentary ebbs and flows of those days” (1990, 692–93). Thus, work engagement was originally conceptualized as a fluctuating experience (i.e., a state) that responds to daily events. In the past decade, an increasing number of quantitative diary studies and experience sampling studies have shown that daily engagement reflects a transient state of mind that varies from day to day (Sonnentag, Dormann, and Demerouti 2010). Whereas general or enduring work engagement refers to how engaged employees feel in relation to their work in general, daily work engagement scores can vary considerably within the same person from day to day (Bakker 2014a). This means that levels of work engagement vary within the same person from one day to another in response to contextual factors.

For example, in her diary study among Italian teachers, Simbula (2010) found that daily support from colleagues contributed positively to daily work engagement and indirectly contributed to daily job satisfaction and mental health, after general levels of work engagement and outcome variables had been controlled. This motivational process in which daily job resources predict daily work engagement and job satisfaction was independent from the health impairment process proposed by the JD-R model. On the days that teachers were exposed to more job demands and experienced more problems in balancing work and family life, they reported higher levels of daily exhaustion and health problems.

In another study, Breevaart and colleagues (2014) followed Norwegian naval cadets over the course of 34 days. As part of their

leadership training, the cadets traveled from Northern Europe to North America by sail ship. The researchers were interested in the daily impact of transformational leadership on follower work engagement. Transformational leadership is defined as leadership behavior that transforms the norms and values of the employees (through intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration), whereby the leader motivates employees to perform beyond their own expectations. The results show that transformational leaders had a positive influence on their followers’ daily work engagement because they created abundant job resources for them (daily social support and autonomy).

Two other diary studies have shown that public servants are most likely to be engaged on the days they craft their jobs (increase their job resources), thus sustaining the gain cycle of work engagement (see figure 1). Petrou et al. (2012) conducted a study among private and public sector employees (health and education sector) and found that job crafting behavior and work engagement were most likely on active days, when job demands and job control were both high. Tims, Bakker, and Derks (2014) found in their study among information and communications technology professionals that daily job crafting was positively related to work enjoyment and indirectly predicted job performance (task performance and organizational citizenship behaviors). On the days that employees mobilized their job resources (e.g., increased task variety), they enjoyed their work more and performed better.

As further evidence for the loss cycle, Van Gelderen et al. (2011) found that Dutch police officers (police call center service workers and criminal investigation officers) who were confronted with daily emotional job demands suppressed their negative emotions in order to make a professional appearance and reach organizational goals. This daily emotional labor, in turn, was predictive of daily exhaustion at the end of the work shift. In a similar vein, Bakker, Demerouti, and Van Mierlo (2015) found that employees who were confronted with higher weekly job demands reported more symptoms of burnout and were more likely to report self-undermining behaviors.

In sum, job demands and resources vary considerably from day to day. In response to these daily job characteristics, employees experience strain or engagement. These states, in turn, contribute to daily performance and function as fuel for loss and gain cycles of work-related well-being (see figure 1).

Public Service Motivation

Public service motivation or the altruistic motivation to serve other people and society through the delivery of public services (Perry et al. 2008; Rainey and Steinbauer 1999) is a relatively stable concept that does not change. PSM theory argues that some individuals have a “predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (Perry and Wise 1990, 368). Oberfield’s (2014) two-year follow-up study of police officers indeed confirms that PSM is rather stable over time. He found that police officers showed only modest change across a variety of motives over the course of the study. Specifically, police officers’ service-oriented motivations, including “protecting law-abiding citizens,” “keeping order in the streets,” and “to make sure that people are treated fairly and equitably,” remained very high

during the five waves of data collection, although there was a slight decline in PSM.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that PSM can change over time. Ward (2014) found that individuals in and outside public service careers who volunteered for intensive community service work (in the fields of education, public safety, health care, and environmental protection) with the aim of helping others showed an increase in PSM. Over time, and compared with a comparison group that did not do volunteer work, community service work had a significant positive impact on individuals' levels of commitment to the public interest and civic awareness. Further, the comparison group showed significant declines in PSM over the eight-year study period, suggesting that PSM may decline upon entry into a public service career. This finding supports previous research that found a negative relationship between organizational tenure and PSM (Moynihan and Pandey 2007). Taken together, these studies indicate that PSM is a relatively stable construct that is nevertheless subject to slow change.

Research of the past two decades has shown that public servants with higher levels of PSM generally perform better than those with low levels of PSM. For example, Bright (2007) found a positive relationship between PSM and performance appraisal ratings among public employees working at a public health care agency, a city government, and a county jurisdiction located in the United States. In the South Korean context, Kim (2006) found a positive relationship between public employees' PSM and organizational citizenship behaviors, such as volunteering for activities that are not required, orienting new people, and helping colleagues who have been absent from work. Moreover, in their study among a large group of Danish teachers and their students, Andersen, Heinesen and Pedersen (2014) found a positive link between teachers' PSM and students' objective academic performance on their final examinations. These findings indicate that PSM is an important driver of organizational performance (see also Brewer and Selden 2000).

More evidence comes from the related field of prosocial motivation—the desire to have a positive impact on other people or on social collectives (Grant 2007). Unlike those with a rational self-interest, prosocial individuals are driven by a concern for benefiting others. Like research on PSM, research on prosocial motivation has shown that it has an important influence on employee work behaviors and performance. Prosocial motivation has been related to persistence in meaningful tasks (Grant et al. 2007), personal initiative (De Dreu and Nauta 2009), and helping behaviors (Rioux and Penner 2001).

Despite the strong evidence for a positive impact of PSM on performance and positive organizational behavior, we still know little about the precise mechanisms that are responsible for this effect. Although it seems self-evident that individuals who are highly motivated toward public service will invest more effort in their work and hence perform better, it is unclear how exactly this works. In the present article, I argue that individuals with high (versus low) PSM deal differently with their daily job demands and daily job resources. In addition, it is proposed that high-PSM individuals are good at

dealing with job-related strain (see also Scott and Pandey 2005) and know how to use their daily work engagement to optimize their daily performance. In short, I propose that the impact of PSM on performance is contingent on the daily work environment, daily work-related well-being, and daily organizational behavior.

A Job Demands–Resources Approach to PSM

In my analysis, I assume that PSM is a relatively stable, higher-level individual difference variable that is nevertheless subject to slow change. Those high in PSM want to make a difference in society by helping people in need—they feel compassion for the underprivileged, and they are prepared to make sacrifices for the good of society (Perry 1996). Public servants enter their profession with a calling—they want to do good for other people and are committed to the public interest. This positive attitude toward public service is a basic attitude toward work, and it characterizes many of the people working in public organizations. I propose that this attitude shapes and is slowly shaped by the working environment. Thus, PSM has effects through the daily activities and processes that take place at work.

Technically speaking, figure 1 shows a multilevel model in which public servants' general level of PSM is perceived as a relatively stable individual characteristic situated at the highest level of analysis. This stable characteristic (PSM) moderates the processes that take place on the lower, day-to-day level. Using the latest formulations of JD-R theory (Bakker and Demerouti 2014; Bakker, Demerouti, and Sanz-Vergel 2014), I assume that every public servant is confronted with daily job demands and daily job resources and that those with higher levels of PSM respond differently to daily demands and resources than those with lower levels of PSM. More specifically, I first propose that PSM weakens the positive relationship between job demands and exhaustion and weakens the links between exhaustion and performance/self-undermining. Those who are prepared to make sacrifices for the good of society will be better able to deal with organizational stressors because they know that dealing with those stressors serves the higher goal of helping others. They will not be upset by daily hassles because they find their work important and meaningful.

Recent research is consistent with these ideas. For example, Hickey (2014) conducted a large study among Canadian disability service providers and tested the moderating role of prosocial motivation in the relationship between job demands (role stressors) and burnout. The results showed that prosocial motivation buffered the positive impact of role boundary stress on depersonalization and the negative impact of role ambiguity on personal accomplishment. Moreover, prosocial motivation weakened the relationship between emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (a cynical, negative attitude toward the recipients of one's services)—for those with high levels of PSM, exhaustion did not translate into depersonalization. Thus, employees engaged in direct service delivery who were strongly motivated to have a beneficial impact on others (i.e., high PSM) were less affected by environmental stressors and by their own levels of strain (i.e., exhaustion).

Comparable results were found in a Chinese public service context. In their study among police officers, Liu, Yang, and Yu (2014) found that

Public servants enter their profession with a calling—they want to do good for other people and are committed to the public interest.

PSM buffered the negative impact of work-related stressors on physical well-being and mental well-being. Thus, frontline police officers with low levels of PSM reported more exhaustion and nervousness after confrontation with stressors such as long work hours, conflicting job demands, work–family conflict, and negative comments from the public. In contrast, police officers with high levels of PSM were hardly affected by the same stressors, suggesting that their prosocial motivation helped them stay calm and cope with the job demands.

In an earlier study, Jex et al. (2003) found that organizational constraints were negatively related to prosocial behavior (altruism) when organizational commitment was low. In contrast, organizational constraints were positively related to prosocial behavior when organizational commitment was high. Although not explored in the original study, the interaction pattern found by Jex and colleagues can also be taken as evidence of an interaction effect between organizational constraints and prosocial behavior. Employees who were confronted with high levels of organizational constraints continued to feel strongly committed to their organization, but only when they scored high on prosocial behavior. Helping others results in positive psychological experiences (e.g., happiness), and this may help employees deal with organizational constraints. Thus, prosocial behavior may have functioned as the moderator and buffered the impact of organizational constraints on commitment. On the basis of these arguments and literature review, I propose the following:

Proposition 1: PSM moderates the positive relationship between daily job demands and exhaustion. This relationship is weaker for individuals with high (versus low) levels of PSM.

Proposition 2: PSM moderates (a) the negative relationship between daily exhaustion and performance, and (b) the positive relationship between daily exhaustion and self-undermining. These relationships are weaker for individuals with high (versus low) levels of PSM.

Second, I propose that PSM strengthens the positive relationship between job resources and work engagement and strengthens the links between work engagement and performance/job crafting. Employees who are high in PSM want to do good for other people and are committed to the public interest. This means that they are motivated to use their daily job resources, such as social support from colleagues, performance feedback, and autonomy. These resources help them do their work full of energy and dedication (high work engagement). Moreover, general PSM offers the motive to use all the available energy and dedication for the public good—this means that PSM interacts with daily work engagement in predicting performance. Daily work engagement is particularly positively related to daily performance for those high in PSM. Similarly, it can be hypothesized that engaged public servants with high PSM want to stay engaged—they are most likely to craft their jobs if needed. This means that they mobilize their job resources and optimize their job challenges. In this way, they sustain their work engagement and are able to offer the best service to citizens.

Consistent with these ideas, Grant and Sumanth (2009) found that prosocial motivation—a broader construct that is strongly related to PSM—interacted with fund-raising callers' job resources

(i.e., perceived task significance) in predicting job performance. Specifically, fund-raisers put more effort into their work (made more calls) when they were high in prosocial motivation and when their task significance was high. Grant and Sumanth argued that high-PSM employees raised their performance when they perceived their task to be significant because of the conviction that their job was more meaningful to the service recipients. In contrast, employees with lower levels of PSM were less concerned about doing work that benefited others and thus were not triggered by this job characteristic to perform better.

In a similar vein, Kroll and Vogel (2014) argued that managers of a public service organization would be more likely to use performance data and make better-informed decisions when they were high on PSM. They argued that the use of performance data demands extra effort from the manager that is not extrinsically rewarded. Moreover, they argued that transformational leadership (including individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspiration) would strengthen this effect. As predicted, PSM and transformational leadership showed a significant interaction effect on performance data use. Kroll and Vogel concluded that transformational leaders who are able to communicate that public service work is meaningful can stimulate managers' PSM orientation and intensify their use of performance data.

Bellé (2014) used an experimental design to investigate the impact of transformational leadership on nurses' performance. The nurses were asked to store surgical tools and pharmaceuticals inside a case (a surgical kit), and in one experimental condition, nurses were exposed to an inspiring director of nursing who explained why the project was meaningful to her. The results indicated that nurses who were exposed to a transformational leader showed better performance (i.e., correctly assembled more surgical kits) than those not exposed to a transformational leader, particularly when they also had contact with a beneficiary (a former patient who had benefited from the surgical kits), when they were asked to reflect on the importance of their work (self-persuasion), or when they were high on PSM (measured before the start of the experiment). These findings clearly indicate that awareness of prosocial impact and public service motivation strengthen the impact of a crucial job resource, namely, transformational leadership.

More evidence exists for a moderating effect of PSM on the gain cycle. In line with the idea that PSM interacts with daily work engagement to produce performance, Grant and Berry (2011) argued that individuals who are guided by prosocial motivation to take others' perspectives will channel their intrinsic motivation (a state akin to work engagement) toward prosocial behavior. This particular study focused on creativity, and the authors argued that intrinsically motivated individuals with high prosocial motivation produce ideas that are not only novel but also useful. The results of two field studies and a laboratory experiment offered support for the predicted interaction effect. Prosocial motivation modified the intrinsic motivation–creativity relationship such that this relationship was only positive when prosocial motivation was high. Security force officers and employees working at a water treatment plant with high levels of intrinsic motivation were more likely to receive higher supervisor ratings of creativity when they also had high levels of prosocial motivation. Similarly, the participants in

the experimental study who were asked to come up with creative ideas to help a music band produced more creative ideas when they were manipulated to be both high on intrinsic motivation and high on prosocial motivation (because of the high financial needs of the band members, which cultivated empathic concern and thus a desire to help the band). Thus, I propose the following:

Proposition 3: PSM moderates the positive relationship between daily job resources and work engagement. This relationship is stronger for individuals with high (versus low) levels of PSM.

Proposition 4: PSM moderates the positive relationship between daily work engagement and (a) performance and (b) job crafting. These relationships are stronger for individuals with high (versus low) levels of PSM.

So far, I have not discussed the role of personal resources in the JD-R approach to PSM. In short, it seems likely that daily personal resources interact with PSM in predicting work engagement and performance in the same way that daily job resources do. PSM may strengthen the positive relationship between personal resources (e.g., optimism and self-efficacy) and work engagement because public servants with high levels of enduring PSM find their work important and meaningful. Therefore, they are likely to invest their resources in public service work, be engaged in their work, and perform well. PSM could also be conceptualized as a “key psychological resource” (Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker 2012) that helps keep the daily gain cycle going.

On the whole, the available evidence suggests that PSM moderates the loss and gain cycles that are characteristic of daily working life. It should be noted that previous studies that examined interaction effects did *not* look at the cross-level interaction between stable or “enduring” PSM, on the one hand, and daily job demands and resources as well as daily work engagement and exhaustion, on the other hand. Instead, the studies used surveys and experiments to show meaningful differences between people high versus low on PSM. Nevertheless, the findings support the overall predictions in the proposed JD-R model of PSM (figure 1). Future research should test each of the propositions formulated in this article more precisely using a combination of (longitudinal) survey questionnaires about PSM and daily diary questionnaires regarding job demands, resources, employee well-being, and organizational behavior.

Feedback Loops

Ultimately, the JD-R model of PSM proposes that daily experiences of exhaustion and work engagement influence overall levels of PSM. Thus, I predict cross-level main effects in which daily experiences build up over time and influence enduring PSM. Because PSM is relatively stable, the effects of daily experiences on PSM likely need considerable time to become substantial. Furthermore, public servants are influenced by their own performance—if they perform well and deliver good service, they are likely to stay motivated. Good performance signals that things went well and may act as feedback that fuels motivation (Hackman and Oldham 1980). It is conceivable that this effect from performance to PSM is mediated by

self-efficacy—the belief in one’s capability, confidence, and capacity to succeed. Indeed, research shows that high performance builds self-efficacy. For example, a government official who performs a task effectively will feel more convinced of his or her capabilities, which increases or sustains PSM (Wright and Grant 2010).

The cross-level main effect of daily exhaustion on enduring PSM would be indicative of a constant drain of energy as a consequence of the loss cycle in the proposed model (figure 1). Thus, public servants may become more and more exhausted because of high daily job demands, and hence they may start to make mistakes and have concentration problems, which will further burden daily job demands (Demerouti, Bakker, and Bulters 2004). The resulting and repeating daily exhaustion will have a negative influence on long-term PSM, as psychological withdrawal is one of the possible options when levels of strain accumulate over time (Hopstaken et al. 2015; Leiter 1993).

The idea that daily work engagement has an impact on enduring PSM over time can be argued as follows: Engaged workers are full of energy and dedicated to their work. They are motivated to conserve their resources and stay engaged, and thus they are likely to engage in job crafting (Bakker and Demerouti 2014). Job crafting, in turn, ensures that sufficient job resources are available to deal with the daily work demands. The work engagement that is the result of the gain cycle in figure 1 ultimately influences long-term PSM, as daily engagement coincides with excellent performance and keeps the PSM fire burning. The daily enthusiasm and absorption facets of daily work engagement have a positive impact on PSM because they reinforce the belief that work is pleasurable and meaningful and

inform public servants that they can have a prosocial impact. Hence,

Proposition 5: Daily exhaustion has a negative relationship with PSM.

Proposition 6: Daily work engagement has a positive relationship with PSM.

Proposition 7: Performance has a positive relationship with PSM.

Managerial Implications

Ritz, Brewer, and Neumann (2013) conducted a systematic literature review of PSM and concluded that PSM still needs to find its way into organizations’ human resource (HR) management strategies. The most frequently mentioned practical implications of PSM research were to consider PSM in the personnel selection process; to use attractive and fair reward systems, including nonmonetary elements (e.g., health care packages); and to use management practices that are supportive of PSM, such as participative leadership and treating employees fairly (see also Paarlberg, Perry, and Hondelghem 2008). The present theoretical analysis offers more specific recommendations for managers.

The JD-R analysis of PSM indicates that managers should pay attention to daily levels of job demands and resources because at this daily level, organizations can lay the foundation for persistent PSM. Whereas most public service organizations still think in terms

The available evidence suggests that PSM moderates the loss and gain cycles that are characteristic of daily working life.

of yearly overall scores on employee work engagement (and perhaps PSM), the present article indicates that daily job resources, including performance feedback, transformational leadership, and task significance, are crucial. Annual work engagement surveys may function as a yearly thermometer and could function as a performance goal for managers. However, what is much more informative is to know which daily job demands and daily job resources “fuel the prosocial fire” (Grant 2008, 48).

The practical implication of the present analysis is that managers should ask themselves which specific job resources they offer their employees on a daily basis (cf. Breevaart et al. 2014). Do employees receive feedback about their daily work activities? It may be a good idea to walk around regularly and ask employees how they are doing and whether they need support, task variety, feedback, or other job resources. Also, it may be a good option to provide employees with sufficient job control, so that they have the daily autonomy to craft their own jobs. Simultaneously, managers should have an eye for the daily job demands—is the work to be done interesting and challenging enough? Are there daily hassles that need to be taken care of? Although high PSM can help public servants take care of their own daily job demands, chronic job demands are likely to lead to stress and undermine PSM.

Public administrators and their organizations should, of course, consider PSM during personnel recruitment and selection. However, once motivated employees have been hired, HR staff should offer tools (e.g., smartphone apps) to monitor daily well-being. By tracking peaks and lows in exhaustion and work engagement, employees can learn to regulate their energetic and motivational resources. While most organizations have not implemented such tools in HR practice, there is an abundance of instruments available to track daily well-being. HR managers may consider using tailored instruments to monitor the organization’s daily job demands and resources. Elsewhere, I have outlined how managers and employees can use top-down and bottom-up strategies to optimize the job demands and resources that are unique to the organization (Bakker 2014b).

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that public servants are highly motivated when they enter their profession. This public service motivation then determines how public servants deal with their daily job demands and resources. Because of their persistence and productivity, they are able to deal well with their job demands and prevent exhaustion. In addition, because of their sense of calling, they are motivated to mobilize their job resources in order to stay engaged and perform well. However, if job demands are consistently high and job resources are consistently low, highly motivated public servants can lose their psychological resources, resulting in lower PSM. Reduced PSM, as a consequence, may strengthen the loss cycle of job demands, exhaustion, and self-undermining and weaken the gain cycle of job resources, engagement, and proactive behavior. Public service managers and employees should use this information to optimize their job demands and resources on a day-to-day basis.

Note

1. In a typical diary study, participants provide data over several days (5 to 10 days), allowing them to report events, affective states, cognitions, and behaviors

in close temporal proximity to their actual occurrence (Ohly et al. 2010). As a consequence, retrospection bias is reduced. Usually, the same questions are asked at the end of each workday. It is also possible to ask different sets of questions at various measurement occasions throughout a day and repeat this over several days. Diaries are often completed within participants’ everyday environment (e.g., at their workplace), increasing ecological validity. Diary studies collect multiple measures per person, allowing for a within-person analysis of change in study variables over time. Diary data can be collected using paper-and-pencil instruments or online diaries completed on computers or smartphones. Online diaries automatically record the time when the diary was completed, thereby providing information about study participants’ compliance.

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