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## **Building a Social Network Theory of Perceived Public Service Motivation and Organizational Citizenship Behavior among Public Sector Employees**

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### **Abstract**

Public Service Motivation (PSM) states that individuals are not only driven by their own interests but also by a unit contributing to society and helping others and this motivation is particularly high among public servants. The extant literature reveals that people at high levels of public service management are inclined towards Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) (Christensen & Wright, 2011). Built upon the theory of social network and considering the importance of PSM in public organizational life, social networking is integrated with PSM to verify its relationship and impact on OCB. This paper presents the conceptual argument that the perception of social networking provides an intuitive vision for content visualization and both the quality and value of relationships can be evaluated according to the levels of commitment towards public service management. These propositions have been developed to outline the relationship between PSM and OCB based on the deep-down concept of social networking. This paper concludes with the argument that in social network theory, advice and networking have a positive exchange relationship in which employees share resources like guidance, information, direction and support associated with their task; while adversarial networks represent negative exchange relationships that lead to behaviors such as interference, pressure, interruption and negative response. Therefore, it is very important to evaluate the types of social networks to determine the relationship between PSM and its behavioral outcomes.

**Keywords:** social network theory, public service motivation (PSM), organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), public sector.

## **Introduction**

The motive for this research is to discover if employees have a great desire to help and improve the wellbeing of others. If so, then they are likely to perform tasks other than the ones required by their job description. Public sector is considered as a very important part of any country. It is responsible for providing services and benefits to citizens and is also committed to the implementation of policies. Public sector is an important employer of any country. There has been a steady progress in research in the field of public administration that emphasizes the purposes and actions of the public sector that are meant to do good for others and contribute for the good of society (Perry & Hondeghem, [2008](#)). Theories about motivation and behavior of public servants have different assumptions about the nature of human behavior. An earlier study assumed that individuals are rational actors who mainly think about their own interests and represented public servants as individuals who most likely try to boost their own careers, mostly in developing countries and do as little work as possible and try to get the most out of them from the budget of the organization or department (Downs, [1967](#); Niskanen, [1971](#)). Other studies however explained that such a limited approach describes very little about what happens in public organizations (Perry & Wise, [1990](#); Dilulio, [1994](#)).

Individuals persuaded to serve public can even renounce their own interests for the good of society, for example, when they risk their own security to help others (Dilulio, [1994](#), Perry & Wise, [1990](#)). People who have high levels of PSM are inclined towards Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) (Perry & Wise, [1990](#); Christensen & Wright, [2011](#)). Research on OCB has gained great importance during the last decade (Bateman & Organ, [1983](#)). OCB are flexible attitudes that are not directed or rewarded by the institution. These behaviors consist of attitudes that play an important role in maintaining the social system of an institution and indirectly facilitate both the work team and the institution (Smith, Organ & Near, [1983](#)).

PSM can be used to explain why some people volunteer to meet their need to participate in public service. Theories about the motivation of volunteering and public service could be used to answer research questions. The functionalist perspective explains the motivation of volunteers and employees of the public sector. The functionalist theories of voluntary motivation suggest a model of need adjustment in which

individuals join an organization with values like their own. The literature on PSM suggests that people involved in public sector work because they have beliefs, values and attitudes that are best met through public service. Currently, much attention has been paid to the quality of public services. The behavior of public servants is very important to improve the value of public service. They must have professional skills to perform their duties. Therefore, the "spirit of service" must become a norm in the workplace in order to promote the motivation of the public servants.

Relative to the approach of social network, organizations see themselves in a society as a system of objects (for example, people, groups and organizations) united by a diversity of relationships. All objects are not linked directly and some of them are linked by multiple relationships. Social network theory emphasizes the structure and pattern of these relationships and seek out both their causes and effects. The applicability of the network approach advocates that information in several content areas can be improved in terms of employee behavior and attitude. In defining social networks, Mitchell (1969) considered that "a specific set of links between a defined set of people, with the additional property of voluntary behavior and the characteristics of these links can be used to interpret the social behavior of the people involved." In this research, the social network theory is applied to discover the association between the motivation of public servants and their Organizational Citizenship Behavior in the light of their commitment.

### **1.1. Significance of the Study**

Public employees are driven by PSM which directs them to improve their work attitudes and behaviors, that is, their OCB (Zhao, Peng & Chen, 2014). Motivation is an important factor in understanding OCB (Gregory, Osmonbekov, Gregory, Albritton & Carr, 2013). It is essential to describe OCB in motivational perspective as it has been little explored (Yung & Pearson, 2012). PSM is an important issue in public organizations and it has become a challenge for the management to motivate employees. Keeping in view the importance of PSM in public organizational life, social network theory is used to investigate its relationship and impact on OCB.

### **1.2. Research Objectives**

1. To discover the perceived effect of PSM on OCB.

2. To explore the types of social networks that influence the relationship between PSM and OCB.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

1. Does any relationship exist between PSM and OCB?
2. What types of social networks determine the relationship between PSM and its behavioral outcomes?

## **2. Literature Review**

PSM is a motivational impulse that promotes an individual to serve the society in a disinterested way and with the desire to help others. Serving in the public sector is mostly taken as a duty rather than a job. Perry and Wise (1990) were the first to clearly describe the concept and formalize it. The term PSM is defined as "the disposition of a person to act on a substantial bases mainly or exclusively in public institutions and public organizations." It also explains public service or the service financed by the authorized government, while its motivation is the need or desire that forces a person to act. Therefore, putting these two words together means serving the public or the motivation to serve.

The motivation of public service can be established as the tendency of a person to act in response to motives incorporated mainly or exclusively in the public sector. PSM is not limited to the rational basis of cost and benefits, but the three bases (rational, normative and affective) can motivate individuals according to the circumstances. It has been clarified that reasons based on rationality involve actions that maximize the utility of people, while reasons based on norms involve activities to confirm standards / norms, and the affective reasons are related to the triggers of behavior that depend on emotions in different social contexts (Perry & Wise, 1990). Additionally, PSM "is a set of attitudes towards the realization of public service" (Brewer & Selden, 1998). While Vandenamele (2007) extend the original definition to add that "the motivation of the public service incorporates the beliefs, values and attitudes that go beyond self-interests and organizational interests, and also concerned with the interests of larger political entity as well as motivates people to act accordingly when needed".

The theory of PSM states that individuals are not only ambitious about their well-being but also want to serve the community, contribute to humanity and serve the public, and this desire is very strong among public

employees. People even neglect their benefits for the good of society (Perry & Wise, [1990](#); Dilulio, [1994](#)). Public employees are more prone to intrinsic rewards and are valued highly for serving others and society and doing jobs that are beneficial to society (Crewson, [1997](#); Houston, [2000](#); Rainey, [1982](#)). Wright ([2001](#)) recommended that the work motivation of public employees is based on two reasons including the characteristics of the employees (what employees demand of their work and what they receive) and the organizational environment (organizational environment and characteristics of the task performed).

The emergence of the New Public Management (NPM) has had a tremendous impact on the perception of motivation on the part of employees and public managers (Vandenabeele, [2007](#)). PSM concept claims that public employees are "unique" individuals, since they perform differently from private sector employees and are not motivated solely by extrinsic motives. PSM assumes that public servants are driven by orders given to them by the higher authorities and have a passion to serve the public good in general. Additionally, it is perceived that the work context of public employees is fundamentally different from the private sector employees, that is, the provision of services without any profit.

The work environment related issues are found in the immediate and extended situation of the employee (Wright, [2001](#)). These issues are related to the employee's peer group and/or supervisor. The desire to work in a friendly and respectful environment is also another reason. The other elements included are job security and stability.

This notion of public service motivation is not new, indeed this issue has been discussed throughout the history. For example, Plato argued in 'The Republic' that people who work for society leave their personal interests aside and fulfill their obligations to society (Horton, [2008](#)). According to Vandenabeele ([2007](#)), the motivation of public service is an idea, standard and behavior that is above self-interest and above the interest of the organization. Rainey and Steinbauer ([1999](#)) define it as a common disinterested motivation to serve the society and also for the country or humanity.

According to (Perry, [1996](#); [1997](#); Perry & Wise, [1990](#)), PSM has the following four dimensions,

- (i) Attraction for public policy

- (ii) Commitment to the public interest / Civic virtue
- (iii) Compassion
- (iv) Self-sacrifice

Perry ([1996](#)) states that these dimensions are based on three foundations and theoretical bases classified as follows:-

- (i) Rational motives / reasons
- (ii) Based on norms
- (iii) Affective motives

Rational reasons include the desire to gain influence and participate in the formation of public policies. This reason explains why a person involved in the formulation of public policies can satisfy his/her personal needs while fulfilling the interests of the society. People believe that their own well-being overlaps with others in the society in general. Reasons based on norm are influenced by the desire to be disinterested and work for the well-being of the society. Public servants commit themselves to reason and want to work for the public welfare. Therefore, they wish to seek the general good and concern of the public and to show a sense of responsibility and reliability to the public sector organizations (Brewer, Selden, Facer & Rex, [2000](#); Perry & Wise, [1990](#)). Affective motive is to respond in a considerate and compassionate manner to individuals. This motive is described by the desire to facilitate others and comprises disinterest, compassion and other pro-social desires (Brewer et al., [2000](#)).

OCB has been widely studied during the last few years (Lo & Ramayah, [2009](#)). According to the term OCB, good citizens are those who behave well and perform such behaviors that are necessary in the organization to socialize with their co-workers (Bateman & Organ, [1983](#)). Many investigations have been conducted on the extra behavior of employees that is becoming a focus of research and is generally recognized as OCB. Such research will obviously provide evidence to managers that if their subordinates exhibit a strong and healthy behavior, then what will be the future of their employees working in their organization?

OCB is a non-mandatory and direct behavior that is completely expressive in nature and promotes the effectiveness of an employee. It is not formally known and rewarded (Organ, [1997](#)). Budiyanto and Oetomo ([2011](#)) define OCB as a set of work behaviors that are practiced to

improve the overall excellence of an organization. These behaviors are not punished if they are not followed at work and mostly depict the goodwill of an employee. OCB is also identified as the additional role and behavior that is performed beyond the job description without incentives or rewards. "Individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and that together promotes the effective functioning of the organization" (Organ, [1988](#)). Such behaviors "directly benefit people within the organization and benefit the organization indirectly."

Cohen and Avrahami ([2006](#)) describe OCB as an unofficial participation / behavior in which employees can act independently of incentives and rewards. Specifically, OCB is the action in which employees act in addition to their required job responsibilities (Sharma, Bajpai & Holani, [2011](#)).

According to Turnipseed and Rassuli ([2005](#)), there is a strong relationship between OCB and employee performance. In addition, Yen and Neihoff ([2004](#)) stated that the greater the number of employees who practice OCB, the greater the success of an organization. OCB has been widely used in previous research that develops its overall impact on the effectiveness of an organization. Those who practice OCB will possibly be more socially accepted and attracted to others.

Organ ([1988](#)) segregates OCB into five facets. They are labelled as follows:-

- (1) Altruism
- (2) Conscientiousness
- (3) Sportsman
- (4) Courtesy
- (5) Civic virtue

According to Podsakoff, Ahearne & Mackenzie ([1997](#)), the behavior that help others in any task or problem within an organization is called altruism. Additionally, helping less skilled employees to carry out their task willingly is also known as altruism. Conscientiousness is the behavior that is above and beyond the minimum duties required within an organization, including compliance with rules and regulations,



maintenance of assistance, and long hours of work. (Organ, [1988](#)). Awareness classifies an employee as a dedicated worker, who is a well thought out and responsible person (Lo & Ramayah, [2009](#)).

According to Organ ([1988](#)), sportsmanship is a behavior which tends to sacrifice personal interest for others, regardless of complaining about anything. Additionally, working in a difficult environment, enduring the frustration that prevails in any organization and being always optimistic in all difficult situations of an organization is sportsman spirit. To avoid complaining in the least ideal conditions and to show a positive attitude is sportsmanship. In other words, accepting a less ideal situation is sportsmanship. The behavior designed to prevent work-related problems from affecting others is known as courtesy. It is a part of the kind behavior of individuals with colleagues in an organization and its result can influence and help them to solve a problem (Organ, [1988](#)). Moreover, courteous behavior helps employees do their job competently and efficiently, create fewer conflicts and make the maximum use of resources in teamwork, while promotion encourages employees professionally. Civic virtue is the behavior of an individual that specifies the positive contribution, the interest and the concern about the affairs of the organization. It involves the participation of an employee in the social life of the company along with attending meetings / functions (which are not part of the job description) and keeps the employee aware of the changing environment of an organization (Organ, [1988](#)). It is the most commendable and worthy form of OCB.

In increasing the productivity of an organization, OCB plays a very important role and teamwork is a major factor in this type of behavior. Managers can analyze the performance of employees based on their OCB.

OCB is a type of behavior that all organizations or managers need to soften the communication process among employees that is necessary for best practices to be shared among them, as well as to coordinate work management properly between different groups of employees. OCB increases the efficiency of managers and employees, due to which operational use of resources that are rare and organizational flexibility are improved and a positive relationship develops between organizational performance and OCB (DeGroot & Brownlee, [2006](#)). This type of collaboration supports work efficiency within an organization. If OCB in an organization increases then the employees perform better which

automatically improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization (Asgari, Silong, Ahmad & Samah, [2008](#)).

Budiyanto and Oetomo ([2011](#)) determined that the role of OCB in improving the quality of service in an organization. Such activities are not included in their job description; employees perform these tasks voluntarily and no fine is applied in case an employee abandons this type of behavior (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman & Fetter, [2010](#)). Generally, the employees perform more of their assigned tasks and give good performance (Sharma et al., [2011](#)).

Furthermore, the social networking perspective provides an intuitive vision for content visualization and the quality of relationships (Brass, [2012](#)). The value of relationships can be measured according to the level of commitment which is a social capital and allows individuals to maintain relevant cooperation and to anticipate long-term expected benefits rather than short-term benefits (Morgan & Hunt, [1994](#)).

The two types of networks, that is, advisory and adversarial networks have been recognized in the literature. Advisory networks comprise relationships through which individuals share resources such as information, support and direction that are related to the performance of their work. Thus, advisory network is more oriented to instruments than the friendship network (which is more oriented towards society). When a task is performed, an individual can improve his/her work by obtaining help from the available advisory networks (Choi, [2016](#)). Therefore, this network reflects the participation of an individual in the exchange of resources in the process of performing the task (Sparrow, Liden, Wayen & Kraimer, [2001](#)). An employee who is central to his or her advisory network can accumulate information, knowledge and experiences, therefore, is likely to perform better in the work environment. Adversarial relationships refer to those relationships that may involve negative exchanges. These relationships cause emotional distress, stress or indifference. It has been shown empirically that they are detrimental to employee performance, therefore, are negatively related to their behavior. Adversarial relationships can impede the exchange of information and knowledge, therefore this relationship is negatively related to employee behavior. If an employee has an adversarial image, he / she is less likely to develop good relationships in the work environment, which undermines his / her ability to obtain information or knowledge from others which ultimately promot-

es negative behavior (Kadushin, [2004](#)).

## **2.1. Theoretical Framework**

The motive of this paper is to clarify the relationship between PSM and OCB by proposing a framework in which social networks provide a clear mechanism linking PSM to employees and their OCB. The theory of social networks is the study of how the social structure of relationships around a person, group or organization affects their beliefs or behaviors. In social networking theory, nodes characterize actors and ties show connections or relationships between actors. Social networks have two main characteristics, the first is 'homophily' which means that individuals who have common characteristics tend to be connected to each other and the second is 'influence', which determines a situation in which the connected individuals tend to influence each other (Fiore, Becker & Coppel, [1983](#); Kadushin, [2012](#)). In other words, individuals in the network can communicate with others based on their position or similarity in social relationships, including cognitive relationships, interactions, and information flows (Brass, [2012](#)).

Regarding PSM, employees with similar characteristics (high levels of PSM) interact with each other and influence the structure of the network (Mehra, Kilduff & Brass, [2001](#)) and types of relationships in the workplace (Zhou, Shin, Brass, Choi & Zhang, [2009](#)). In short, through a social network, actors exchange and share their resources, such as information and guidance about their work.

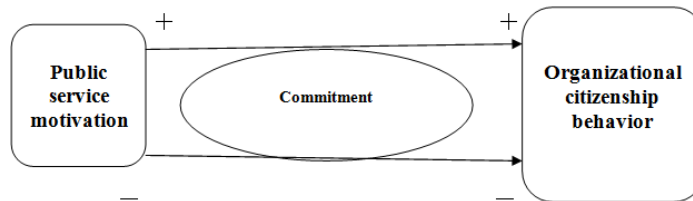
The theory of networks can generally be classified into two perspectives, structural and behavioral. In the structural perspective, an individual's position in the network can be an important indicator for calculating outcomes such as performance, beliefs and attitudes because their location can fully or partially determine the constraints and opportunities that the individual will encounter (Borgatti, Everett & Johnson, [2013](#); Brass, [2012](#)). Whereas, the emphasis of the behavioral perspective is on the attitude and values that employees can practice and use to influence others around them.

## **2.2. Conceptual Model**

Based on the analysis of the literature review about PSM, it is inferred that if public sector employees are committed to PSM, they are devoted to OCB and vice versa. Therefore, we define the conceptual model as follows

(see Figure 1).

Simple conceptual model:



*Figure 1.* Simple conceptual model

Basically, there are two types of relationship networks in the context of social networks, that is, the advisory network and the adversarial network. The first refers to positive exchange relationships in which network members share resources such as information, guidance and assistance related to their task, while the second represents negative exchange relationships that lead to behaviors such as interference, pressure, interruption and negative response (Pagel, Erdly & Becker, 1987). Therefore, it is very important to evaluate the types of social networks to determine the relationship between PSM and its behavioral outcomes.

In Figure 2, for PSM, individuals with similar characteristics (same levels of PSM) will collaborate with each other creating social networks that affect OCB and a negative relationship exists if different levels of PSM are present. The construct depends on the types of relationships in the workplace. If the level of PSM is the same among all employees, the built-in relationship is of an advisory nature. If PSM management is not homogenous among employees, it develops an adversarial relationship.

One of the important principles of social networking is the principle of similarity. Psychologists who study human behavior have observed that network relationships and connections tend to spontaneously develop between individuals with common backgrounds, values, motivations and interests.

The similarity network is composed of like-minded employees with the same value management of PSM. It makes more possible for an individual to depend on people with common interests to serve the public

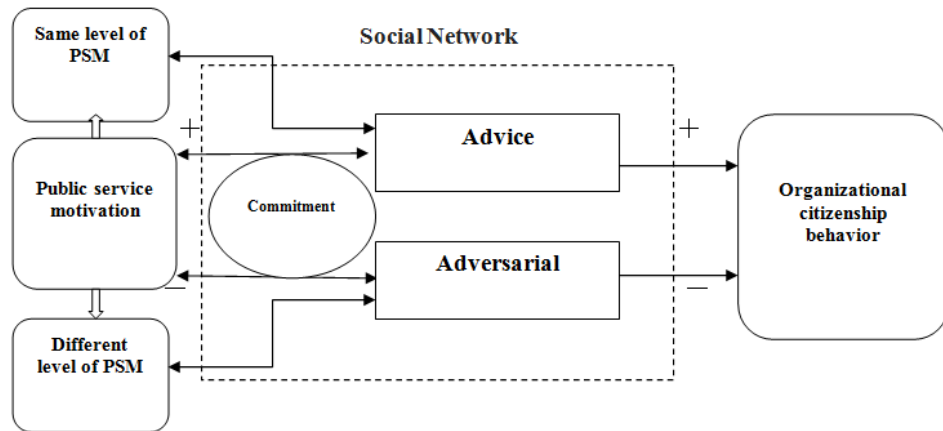


Figure 2. Social Network

selflessly, creating the relationship of advice and harmony between them.

All employees must build good working relationships with people who can help them do their jobs. The number and breadth of people involved may be impressive, such networks include peer-to-peer harmony within the work unit. The purpose of this type of network is to ensure coordination and cooperation between people who must know each other and trust each other in performing their immediate tasks and implementing them altruistically. Because of similarity, it is easier to build networks among those people who share multiple points of commonality between them. The similarity of networks means that they must do more to build solid exchange networks because their composition is not spontaneous. If the employee establishes links by presenting them to other colleagues, there are many possibilities that reflect their experience and perspective. Since the ideas generated within this type of network are spread among the same people who share common views, the potential winner can be weakened if no one in the group has what it takes to put this idea into practice. At the individual level, people are more likely to have a connection, friendship or association if they have common attributes and motives (Lazarsfeld & Robert, 1978). Common standards are promoted through common attributes that result in joint placement and commonly situated activities, such as serving the public.

### 2.3. Proposition 1

Individuals with similar characteristics (same levels of PSM) while working together create advisory social networks that affect OCB in the presence of commitment.

In Figure 3, employees who have the same level of PSM and are committed promote the advisory-type relationship and ultimately perform a high level of OCB.

### 2.4. Proposition 2

Individuals with different characteristics (different levels of PSM) while working together create adversarial social networks that affect OCB in the absence of commitment.

Psychologists who study human behavior have observed that relationships and network ties tend to create distractions among people with different backgrounds, values, motives and interests. Similarly, the extent to which the network is composed of employees of different mentality who have different value management of PSM leads to a type of adversarial relationship between employees that weakens their OCB.

Researchers often explain differences in behavioral strength with the concept of PSM and attribute its strength to higher motivation. Moreover, the concept of motivation is often used to indicate the persistence of behavior. It is suggested that the higher the level of motivation, the greater the strength and duration of the behavior and vice versa.

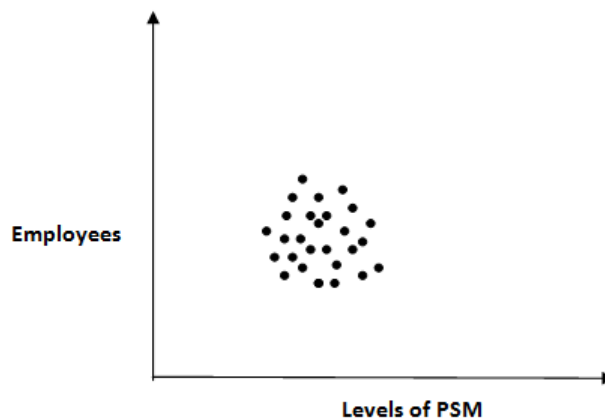


Figure 3

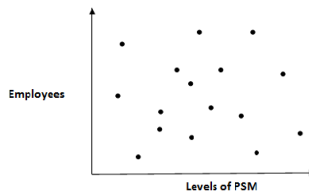


Figure 4

### 3. Conclusion

This paper theoretically explains the relationship between PSM and OCB by suggesting a framework in which various types of social networks among public sector employees provide a mechanism linking PSM with OCB and by proposing testable propositions. Initially, the social network relationships among employees depend upon the level of PSM (similarity / difference); however, employees with the same level of PSM are more likely to perform OCB in a network of advisory relationships and are less likely to perform OCB when they are in an adversarial network.

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