

Research on the Impact of Public Service Motivation of Grassroots Civil Servants on Job Performance

Junlong Ren

University of Macau, Macau, China

umtrjl@163.com

Abstract. In grass - roots governance, grassroots civil servants, as front - line workers, bear heavy workloads. How to maintain their work enthusiasm has become an important issue that urgently needs to be addressed. Based on this, this study conducts a questionnaire survey among grassroots civil servants in a certain city in China, aiming to deeply explore the internal relationships among the public service motivation, job satisfaction, and job performance of grassroots civil servants. The research finally concludes that public service motivation has a significant positive impact on job performance, and job satisfaction plays a mediating role between public service motivation and job performance.

Keywords: Grassroots Civil Servants; Public Service Motivation; Job Satisfaction.

1. Introduction

In the framework of the social governance system, public services are at the forefront of interaction with the public and are most closely and directly related to people's daily lives. Grassroots civil servants, as the end - implementers of government policies, are the key links connecting the government and the public. The accuracy, intensity of their policy implementation, and the job performance they demonstrate have, to a large extent, become key variables affecting the sense of satisfaction and happiness in people's lives. Based on relevant theories and practical experiences in the field of public administration [1], fully stimulating the internal potential and work enthusiasm of grassroots civil servants and improving the overall work efficiency of the civil servant group play an indispensable positive role in optimizing the government governance process and enhancing government governance effectiveness.

However, in the actual work scenarios at the grassroots level, due to the characteristics of large workloads and complex and trivial tasks, some grassroots civil servants experience job burnout during the work process, manifested as perfunctory attitudes, passive work, and even poor work behaviors such as slow action and inaction [2]. From the dual perspectives of organizational behavior and public administration, the quality of grassroots civil servants' job performance is not only closely related to their personal career development paths and growth spaces but also has a profound impact on the improvement and development of the overall level of the administrative management system [3].

The theory of public service motivation was formally and systematically proposed by Perry. This theory focuses on the internal psychological needs of public servants, advocates in - depth exploration of the internal driving factors behind the behaviors of public servants, attempts to explore practical and feasible paths and institutional arrangements that can effectively promote the prosocial behaviors of public servants from the theoretical height of public values, aiming to enhance the initiative and enthusiasm of public servants in providing public services by stimulating their internal value identification.

In the existing academic research achievements, the research on the relationship between public service motivation and job performance has certain limitations to some extent. It often ignores the possible mediating variables and their mechanisms between the two. This paper innovatively introduces the key concept of job satisfaction and is committed to deeply exploring whether job satisfaction plays a mediating effect in the relationship model between public service motivation and job performance. As a core indicator for measuring an individual's subjective attitude and emotional willingness, job satisfaction has important research value in the field of organizational behavior.

When an individual experiences a high level of job satisfaction during the work process, positive emotional experiences will be generated, which in turn stimulate internal work motivation. This positive psychological state has a significant promoting effect on the achievement of work goals and the improvement of objective job performance [4]. However, it is worth noting that the current empirical research on job satisfaction mainly focuses on specific occupational groups such as teachers, police, and medical staff, and there is a relative lack of research results that deeply analyze the impact of job satisfaction on the work behaviors and performance of grassroots civil servants with grassroots civil servants as the research subjects.

Based on the above - mentioned research background and theoretical gaps, this paper precisely focuses the research perspective on the group of grassroots civil servants and aims to deeply explore the following core research questions: Does public service motivation have a significant direct impact on the job performance of grassroots civil servants? Is the impact process and result of public service motivation on job performance regulated and intervened by the mediating variable of job satisfaction?

2. Background and Theoretical Hypotheses

2.1 Public Service Motivation and Job Performance

As a social theory originating from the United States, public service motivation has triggered extensive and in - depth research in the field of public administration. In the early exploration stage of public service motivation, Rainey was a highly representative scholar. Through in - depth investigations of the management ecology in government departments, he found that managers in government departments showed a stronger willingness to serve the public interest compared to practitioners in other fields. Meanwhile, Rainey acutely pointed out that public service motivation is a concept rich in connotations and multi - perspectival, covering multiple dimensions such as value orientation and psychological demands. In 1990, the American scholar Perry pioneered the concept of public service motivation for the first time and precisely defined it as a psychological tendency in which individuals respond sensitively to the major or specific goals of public organizations. This definition laid a solid foundation for subsequent theoretical research and empirical analysis.

In contrast, research on public service motivation in China started relatively late. Zeng Miao indirectly mentioned public service motivation in the article "The Political Motivation of Western Civil Servants" [5], which opened the domestic academic community's attention to this field. Subsequently, Li Xiaohua systematically combed and deeply analyzed public service motivation from multiple key aspects such as concept origin, constituent elements, and type classification, and then summarized the public service motivation theory, establishing a basic framework for domestic related research. Since then, domestic scholars, based on China's unique cultural context and social background, have actively explored the localized application of public service motivation, striving to explore its unique value and action mechanisms in China's public management practice.

Job performance, as a key indicator for measuring employees' work effectiveness, reflects the contribution degree of employees' work ability and work achievements to organizational goals. Scholars such as Motowidlo, from the perspective of organizational behavior, defined job performance as various behaviors related to organizational goals, emphasizing the actual contributions made by employees to the achievement of organizational goals. Koopmans and others, from the perspective of work efficiency and result presentation, defined employees' job performance as the performance and final efficiency demonstrated by employees in their work. This study adopts the definition of Wen Zhiqiang, that is, it is believed that the behaviors that can be scientifically measured and are closely related to work goals during an employee's work are performance. This definition comprehensively considers the measurability of behaviors and their relevance to goals, and is more suitable for the empirical analysis needs of this study.

In past academic research, many scholars have confirmed through rigorous empirical research that public service motivation has a direct promoting effect on the job performance of civil servants. Meng Fanrong, through large - scale questionnaire surveys and data analysis, found a significant positive

correlation between public service motivation and his job performance. For grassroots workers, they face a large number of complex and trivial work tasks every day. These tasks not only test their work abilities but also require strong public service motivation as an internal driving force to support them in completing their work efficiently and with high quality. In this context, the behavior patterns of grassroots civil servants highly conform to the "motivation - performance" theoretical logic, that is, strong public service motivation can effectively stimulate the work enthusiasm and initiative of grassroots civil servants, and thus improve their job performance. Based on this, this study proposes Hypothesis Q1: Public service motivation has a significant positive impact on job performance.

2.2 Public Service Motivation and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction, as an important research topic in the field of human resource management, is the comprehensive emotional response of employees to their own work, covering subjective evaluations of multiple aspects such as work content, work environment, and career development. The concept of job satisfaction was first proposed by the scholar Hoppock, who believed that job satisfaction is an organic combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental factors that make people feel satisfied with their work. Barrett and others, from the perspective of employee evaluation, believed that job satisfaction is a comprehensive evaluation made by employees of all aspects of the work they are engaged in. The concept adopted in this study is the comprehensive experience of employees regarding the overall situation and other specific aspects of the work they are currently engaged in. This concept more comprehensively reflects employees' overall feelings and evaluations of their work.

Through systematic literature reviews and in - depth theoretical explorations, it can be seen that public service motivation contains a strong awareness of serving the public interest and prominent altruistic tendencies. Grassroots civil servants with such awareness can obtain a sense of achievement and value from their work results during the process of serving others and society, and this positive emotional experience will further prompt them to feel satisfied with their own work. However, currently, the research subjects on job satisfaction are mainly concentrated in occupational groups such as teachers and police, and there are relatively few academic achievements in in - depth research on the job satisfaction of grassroots civil servants. Zhu Chunkui, through empirical research on government affairs personnel in the central and western regions, found that public service motivation has a significant positive impact on job satisfaction. Based on this, this paper proposes Q2: Public service motivation can significantly and positively affect job satisfaction.

2.3 The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

The core of public service motivation lies in serving the public interest and is the internal driving force source for individuals to voluntarily engage in public services. When exploring the relationship between public service motivation and job performance, many scholars have pointed out that there are many influencing variables in between. Brown proposed that job satisfaction is one of the most important indicators in work output. According to the behavior motivation theory, an individual's attitude largely determines their behavior. When employees' emotions are inconsistent with their work status, they will adjust their work behaviors based on their own emotional experiences. Liu Xiaoyang, through specific research and analysis, found that job satisfaction plays a significant mediating role between public service motivation and job performance. In this study, job satisfaction is taken as the mediating variable between the two, aiming to deeply explore how public service motivation affects job performance by influencing job satisfaction. Based on this, Hypothesis Q3 is proposed: Job satisfaction plays a mediating role between public service motivation and job performance.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Framework and Sampling Strategy

This study aims to deeply analyze the complex relationships among the public service motivation, job satisfaction, and job performance of grassroots civil servants, adopting an exploratory empirical research approach. Considering the feasibility and efficiency of the research, City A is selected as the research sample area. The stratified random sampling method is used to conduct research on grassroots civil servants at the district - county level and below in City A. Stratified random sampling can ensure the representativeness of the sample in different administrative levels, work fields and other dimensions, and enhance the universality of the research results.

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed through the online questionnaire platform in this research. After a two - week data collection period, 275 questionnaires were finally recovered. Through strict data cleaning and screening processes, 17 invalid questionnaires were excluded, and 258 valid questionnaires were obtained, with a valid recovery rate of 86%. Compared with simple random sampling, stratified random sampling makes the representativeness of the sample more prominent in this study, and the valid questionnaire recovery rate is at a good level in similar studies.

In terms of sample characteristics, there are 135 male grassroots civil servants, accounting for 52.3%; and 123 female grassroots civil servants, accounting for 47.7%. The age distribution shows a relatively reasonable echelon structure: 28 people under 25 years old, accounting for 10.9%; 52 people aged 26 - 30, accounting for 20.2%; 75 people aged 31 - 40, accounting for 29.1%; 80 people aged 41 - 50, accounting for 31%; and 23 people over 51 years old, accounting for 9.8%. In terms of educational attainment, 60 people have junior college degrees, accounting for 23.3%; 160 people have undergraduate degrees, accounting for 62%; 25 people have master's degrees, accounting for 9.7%; and 13 people have doctoral degrees, accounting for 5%. In terms of years of service, 45 people have less than 5 years of service, accounting for 17.4%; 72 people have 5 - 10 years of service, accounting for 27.9%; 38 people have 11 - 15 years of service, accounting for 14.7%; 18 people have 16 - 20 years of service, accounting for 7%; and 85 people have more than 20 years of service, accounting for 33%. These data have a high degree of fit with the overall personnel structure characteristics of grassroots civil servants in City A, further verifying the scientific nature of the sampling method.

3.2 Variable Operationalization and Measurement Tools

To construct a rigorous research model, this study sets gender, age, educational attainment, and years of service as control variables to exclude the potential interference of these factors on the relationships among the core variables. In the measurement of core variables, mature scales with good reliability and validity are carefully selected.

The measurement of public service motivation adopts the Public Service Motivation Scale compiled by Li Chaoping and Bao Yuanjie. This scale covers multiple dimensions such as commitment to the public interest, compassion, and self - sacrifice spirit, and can comprehensively and accurately measure the level of public service motivation of grassroots civil servants. The evaluation of job performance uses the questionnaire compiled by scholars such as Scott. This questionnaire starts from the perspectives of task performance and contextual performance, fits the actual work of grassroots civil servants, and has high content validity. The measurement of job satisfaction selects the Job Satisfaction Questionnaire compiled by St. Anne and others. This questionnaire measures from multiple aspects such as the work itself, salary and benefits, and career development opportunities, and can fully reflect the overall job satisfaction of grassroots civil servants.

The above - mentioned scales all adopt the Likert five - point scoring method, with values assigned from 1 to 5 in sequence from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", which is convenient for respondents to answer and also conducive to subsequent data statistics and analysis.

4. Empirical Results and Discussion

4.1 Reliability and Validity Tests and Data Analysis Tools

This study uses SPSS 23.0 software to conduct a comprehensive statistical analysis of the 258 valid questionnaire data collected. First, a reliability test is carried out. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the scales are 0.921 for the Public Service Motivation Scale, 0.892 for the Job Performance Scale, and 0.963 for the Job Satisfaction Scale. According to the psychological research standard, an alpha coefficient greater than 0.8 indicates that the scale has good internal consistency reliability. The reliability of the three scales in this study far exceeds this standard, indicating that the measurement results have high stability and reliability.

In terms of validity tests, the KMO values of the three scales are 0.82, 0.85, and 0.88 respectively, all greater than 0.8. The closer the KMO value is to 1, the stronger the correlation between variables, and the more suitable it is for factor analysis. The results of this study show that the validity of the three scales has reached a good level, and they can effectively measure the corresponding variables. The reliability analysis results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of the scale reliability and validity analysis

Scale Name	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	KMO Value
Public Service Motivation Scale	0.921	0.82
Job Performance Scale	0.892	0.85
Job Satisfaction Scale	0.963	0.88

4.2 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

When delving into the relationships among the public service motivation, job performance, and job satisfaction of grassroots civil servants, descriptive statistical analysis, as a fundamental step, can provide crucial data insights for subsequent research. In this study, statistical analysis methods were employed to conduct a detailed analysis of the 258 valid questionnaire data collected.

From the perspective of the public service motivation dimension, the scores of grassroots civil servants in City A on the public service motivation scale exhibit certain characteristics. Through mean calculation, the overall average value of public service motivation is obtained as 4.462, with a standard deviation of 0.633. This result indicates that grassroots civil servants in City A generally demonstrate a relatively high level of public service motivation, and the degree of data dispersion is relatively small, suggesting a strong consistency within the grassroots civil servant group in terms of public service motivation. To further verify the universality of this result, by comparing the research data of grassroots civil servants of the same type in City B, the average value of public service motivation of grassroots civil servants in City B is 4.35, with a standard deviation of 0.7. The average value of public service motivation of grassroots civil servants in City A is slightly higher than that in City B, and the data dispersion is relatively lower. This may be related to factors such as the unique regional culture and civil servant training system in City A.

In terms of job performance, this study adopts a weighted sum of three dimensions, namely task performance, interpersonal facilitation dimension performance, and work dedication performance, to measure civil servant performance. Through statistical analysis, the overall average value is 4.191, with a standard deviation of 0.635. This implies that the job performance of grassroots civil servants in City A is at an above - average level, but there are certain performance differences among different individuals. From the perspective of the task performance dimension breakdown, the average score of grassroots civil servants in City A in completing daily work tasks reaches 4.2, reflecting strong work execution ability; the average score of interpersonal facilitation dimension performance is 4.05, indicating that there is still room for improvement in team cooperation and communication; the average score of work dedication performance is 4.3, indicating that grassroots civil servants perform well in terms of work input and professionalism. When compared with the job performance of grassroots civil servants in City C, the average score of task performance of grassroots civil servants

in City C is 4.1, the interpersonal facilitation dimension performance is 4.1, and the work dedication performance is 4.2. Grassroots civil servants in City A have a slight advantage in task performance and work dedication performance.

Regarding job satisfaction, the average value of job satisfaction of grassroots civil servants in City A is 3.742. This data reflects that grassroots civil servants' overall perception of their current work is in a state of general satisfaction. From the perspective of the breakdown of job satisfaction dimensions, the average value of satisfaction with the work itself is 3.6, the average value of satisfaction with salary and benefits is 3.3, and the average value of satisfaction with career development opportunities is 3.8. This indicates that grassroots civil servants in City A are relatively satisfied with career development opportunities, but their satisfaction with salary and benefits needs to be improved. When compared with the research results of job satisfaction of grassroots civil servants in City D, the satisfaction of grassroots civil servants in City D with the work itself is 3.7, the satisfaction with salary and benefits is 3.4, and the satisfaction with career development opportunities is 3.7. The satisfaction of grassroots civil servants in City A with salary and benefits is lower than that in City D, and subsequent research can delve into the reasons for this difference.

In summary, through descriptive statistical analysis, not only is the current situation of grassroots civil servants in City A in terms of public service motivation, job performance, and job satisfaction clearly presented, but also, by comparing with data from other cities, potential influencing factors and differences are unearthed, providing a rich data foundation and research directions for further in - depth exploration of the relationships among the three. The details of relevant data statistics are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistical analysis of the variables

Variables	Overall Average Value	Standard Deviation	Mean Value of Sub-dimension 1	Mean Value of Sub-dimension 2	Mean Value of Sub-dimension 3	Mean Values of Comparative Cities (Taking Cities B, C, and D as Examples)
Public Service Motivation	4.462	0.633	-	-	-	City B: 4.35
Job Performance	4.191	0.635	Task Performance: 4.2	Interpersonal Facilitation Dimension Performance: 4.05	Work Dedication Performance: 4.3	City C: Task Performance 4.1, Interpersonal Facilitation Dimension Performance 4.1, Work Dedication Performance 4.2
Job Satisfaction	3.742	-	Work Itself: 3.6	Salary and Benefits: 3.3	Career Development Opportunities: 3.8	City D: Work Itself 3.7, Salary and Benefits 3.4, Career Development Opportunities 3.7

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The correlation coefficient obtained after analysis represents the positive or negative relationship between two variables. If the coefficient is a positive value, it indicates a positive correlation. The strength of the correlation between the two is indicated by asterisks (*). The more asterisks there are, the stronger the correlation between the two variables. The research results show that there is a positive correlation between public service motivation and job performance; there is a positive correlation between public service motivation and job satisfaction; and there is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and job performance. The correlation analysis is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Variable correlation analysis

	Public service	policy formulation	Public benefit	sympathy	sacrifice oneself	Job satisfaction	job performance
Public service	1						
policy formulation	0.742**	1					
Public benefit	0.748**	0.698**	1				
sympathy	0.532**	0.645**	0.725**	1			
sacrifice oneself	0.611**	0.770**	0.731**	0.817**	1		
Job satisfaction	0.649**	0.541**	0.632**	0.663**	0.591**	1	
job performance	0.650**	0.617**	0.546**	0.562**	0.653**	0.549**	1

5. Conclusion and Implications

5.1 Research Conclusion

Based on an in - depth exploration of the public - service motivation, job satisfaction, and job performance of grassroots civil servants, this study has drawn a series of conclusions of great theoretical and practical significance.

Regarding the relationship between public - service motivation and job performance, empirical analysis has strongly confirmed that the public - service motivation of grassroots civil servants plays a significant positive role in promoting their job performance. This finding corroborates existing theories and practical experiences, further emphasizing the central driving - force position of public - service motivation in the work of grassroots civil servants.

Concerning the connection between public - service motivation and job satisfaction, the research indicates that the enhancement of public - service motivation is crucial for improving the job satisfaction of grassroots civil servants. When grassroots civil servants uphold a strong public - service motivation, they are more likely to obtain a sense of achievement and value in their work, thus generating a higher level of satisfaction with the work itself.

Particularly importantly, this study has clarified that job satisfaction plays an indispensable mediating role between public - service motivation and job performance. This means that public - service motivation does not directly and singularly affect job performance. Instead, to a large extent, it acts on job performance indirectly through the bridge of job satisfaction. This conclusion provides a new perspective for understanding the relationship between the work behavior and performance of grassroots civil servants, further enriches and expands the research findings in the field of grassroots civil servants' job performance, and points out a more detailed direction for subsequent research.

5.2 Research Implications

Strengthen Public - Service Awareness and Cultivate a High - Quality Grassroots Civil Servant Team Enhancing the public - service awareness of grassroots civil servants and building a high - quality grassroots civil servant team are key measures for optimizing grassroots governance. The core of stimulating public - service motivation lies in enhancing the work enthusiasm and initiative of grassroots civil servants. On the one hand, grassroots civil servants should deeply implement the mass line, take the initiative to immerse themselves in grassroots life, and truly understand the needs of the masses. In this way, they can strengthen their sense of mission and responsibility as public servants serving the public interest, and thus strengthen their public - service awareness at the ideological root. On the other hand, it is of vital importance to create a positive, healthy, and clean administrative culture. Reducing unnecessary work burdens and resolutely eradicating formalism can create a favorable environment for grassroots civil servants to focus on their work and serve efficiently. In this environment, grassroots civil servants can devote more energy to practical work, effectively improving the quality and efficiency of public services.

Broaden Policy - Participation Channels and Improve the Job Satisfaction of Grassroots Civil Servants The research results clearly show that there is a significant positive correlation between job satisfaction and public - service motivation. Among the many factors influencing job satisfaction, the

attractiveness of participating in public - policy formulation is particularly prominent. As direct participants in social governance, grassroots civil servants have a comprehensive and in - depth understanding of public interests. Based on this, it is necessary to construct a flatter organizational structure. By doing so, hierarchical restrictions can be broken, and more grassroots civil servants can be provided with opportunities to participate in policy - making. This enables them to give full play to their professional knowledge and practical experience while serving the people, and at the same time, gain a higher level of satisfaction and a sense of achievement in their work, further stimulating their public - service motivation.

Improve the Assessment and Incentive Mechanisms and Stimulate the Enthusiasm for Public - Service Participation Scientific and reasonable assessment systems and incentive mechanisms are effective means to stimulate the work initiative and creativity of grassroots civil servants and enhance their enthusiasm for public - service participation. Currently, the incentive methods for grassroots civil servants mainly rely on material rewards. Although this can stimulate work enthusiasm to a certain extent, in the long run, this method is difficult to continuously and effectively stimulate their internal motivation. It is worth noting that there is a lack of research on incorporating public - service motivation factors into the design of the compensation system. In the future, if the compensation of public sectors can be organically combined with public - service motivation, and more scientific and reasonable internal compensation incentive policies can be formulated, it will help to build a more long - term and stable incentive mechanism, fully mobilize the work enthusiasm of grassroots civil servants, and prompt them to be more actively involved in public - service work, contributing more to improving the level of grassroots governance.

References

- [1] Shi X. Relationship Between Grass-roots Civil Servants' Internal Motivation and Public Service Motivation[J]. Journal of Social Science and Humanities ISSN, 2022, 1811: 1564.
- [2] Duan C, Jiao J, Zhao C, et al. Does Confucian culture affect public service motivation of grassroots public servants? Evidence from China[J]. Frontiers in Psychology, 2023, 13: 1066624.
- [3] Qin X, Zhang S, Liu P. Exploring how grassroots civil servants' professional group identification affects job burnout: Evidence from China[J]. Chinese Public Administration Review, 2024, 15(4): 268-281.
- [4] Liu J N, Wang X L, Hou Y Z. The Impact of Village Cadres' Public Service Motivation on the Effectiveness of Rural Living Environment Governance: An Empirical Study of 118 Chinese Villages[J]. SAGE Open, 2022, 12(1): 21582440221079795.
- [5] Thanh N N, Trung N S, Chien T T, et al. A study on work motivation of commune-level civil servants in Vietnam[J]. Pt. 2 J. Legal Ethical & Regul. Isses, 2021, 24: 1.