



**Unraveling the Link between Public Service Motivation and
Job Performance: An Empirical Investigation in the Nigerian Public Service**

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Abstract

Given the endemic challenges of low productivity, corruption and weak service delivery facing public sector organizations in Nigeria, investigating drivers of performance is crucial for improving governmental effectiveness. This study explores the impact of Public Service Motivation (PSM) on the job performance of Nigerian federal civil servants, with job satisfaction and Person-Organization Fit (POF) as mediators. Using a questionnaire and data analysis with PLS-SEM, the study finds that PSM has a significant effect on job performance, partially mediated by job satisfaction and POF. The study also reveals that high levels of PSM and POF are necessary conditions for high job performance among public servants in Nigeria. The findings highlight the importance of increasing public servants' PSM levels and promoting better alignment with their organizations to enhance job satisfaction, motivation, and performance.

Keywords: *Job Performances, Public Service Motivation, Job Satisfaction, Person-Organization Fit, Public Sector*

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Introduction

Public service motivation (PSM) has been recognized as an important research topic in public administration, especially in understanding public service performance. PSM refers to the inclination to work for the public interest and serve the public, even in the face of challenges and low rewards (Christensen et al., 2017). It is an important factor that influences public servants' performance. In Nigeria, the public sector faces numerous challenges, including a lack of adequate resources, low salaries, and insufficient opportunities for career advancement (Oyedele, 2015). These challenges could have a negative effect on motivation and performance among public service employees (Omisore & Adeleke, 2015).

The Nigerian public sector is one of the country's largest employers, with the federal government alone employing over 80,000 workers. Despite the significant number of workers, the Nigerian public sector is plagued with several issues, including low productivity, corruption, and inefficient service delivery. Over time, the Nigerian public service has been criticized for lacking professionalism, inefficiency, and being unresponsive to citizens' needs, leading to decreased public trust and confidence in the public sector (Oyedele, 2015). Low productivity is a significant challenge in the Nigerian public sector. Studies have shown that the productivity of public servants in Nigeria is relatively low compared to other countries in the region

(Mustapha et al., 2018; Omisore & Adeleke, 2015). Corruption has been identified as one of the fundamental factors affecting the Nigerian public sector, which reduces its contributory rate to economic development and growth (Abdulkareem et al., 2021). The combination of low productivity and corruption has resulted in an inefficient public service that cannot deliver quality services to citizens (Omisore & Adeleke, 2015).

These challenges have significantly affected the public's perception of the Nigerian public sector, decreasing public trust and confidence (Abdulkareem et al., 2016). The lack of trust is a significant concern because it affects the acceptability of the government and its ability to govern effectively. Therefore, there is a need to address the challenges facing the Nigerian public sector and improve the performance of public servants in the country.

Previous studies have established that PSM positively impacts public service performance in various contexts, especially in the Western world (Kim & Vandenabeele, 2010; Schwarz et al., 2020). However, studies linking PSM to job performance in the Nigerian public sector are limited. More so, the Nigerian public sector faces unique challenges compared to Western government agencies, including significant resource constraints, low wages and lack of infrastructure, high levels of corruption, and weak organizational cultures. These distinct environmental factors are likely to moderate how public service motivation translates into actual job performance. Thus,

while findings on public service motivation may generalize across some cultural contexts, the unusual stresses endemic in African public bureaucracies like Nigeria's suggest there could be crucial differences that existing research has not accounted for.

Therefore, it is crucial to investigate this relationship in Nigeria to gain insights into enhancing public servants' performance in the country. Consequently, a growing need exists to explore factors that could enhance public servants' performance in Nigeria. In this regard, public service motivation has been identified as a critical factor that could promote public servants' performance in different contexts. However, its impact on job performance in the Nigerian public sector has not been adequately examined. Given the unique challenges of the Nigerian public sector, it is important to explore how PSM relates to job performance in this context.

This study, therefore, aims to investigate the nexus between motivation in public service and job performance among public servants in Nigeria while examining job satisfaction and POF (POF) as mediators.

Job satisfaction and POF are theorized as mediators in the relationship between PSM and job performance because highly motivated public servants are likely to feel greater satisfaction and purpose in their roles, thus enhancing performance. Likewise, individuals with higher PSM may perceive greater alignment

between their own values and their organization's mission. This value-fit could translate into higher engagement and effort exerted. Explicitly testing the indirect effects of PSM on performance can reveal these underlying mechanisms by which employee attitudes shape workplace behaviors.

Job satisfaction reflects the degree of satisfaction employees experience in their job and work environment (Goetz & Wald, 2022; Spector, 1997). POF is the compatibility between employees and their organisation (Kristof, 1996). Previous research has established the relevance of job satisfaction and POF as mediators in the public sector (Ahmad & Jasimuddin, 2021; Ellis et al., 2017; Mostafa, 2016; Rostiana, 2017).

Therefore, understanding the mediating effect of job satisfaction and POF is crucial in comprehending the link of PSM to job performance. Public servants with high PSM levels may experience increased job satisfaction, boosting motivation and greater efficiency in performing their duties. Moreover, POF may promote a suitable alignment of employees to their organizations, and enhances job satisfaction and motivation.

Theoretical Review

The underpinning theories for this study are the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Person-Environment (PEF) theory. The SDT is a widely accepted theory in psychology that explains how people are motivated and how their motivation influences their behavior

(Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to the SDT, autonomy, competence, and relatedness are the three common basic individuals' psychological needs. Satisfaction with these needs' increases individuals' motivation and engagement.

Besides, the PE Fit theory explains how the compatibility between an individual and their work environment can influence job satisfaction and performance. The theory posits that when there is a good alignment between an individual and their work environment, there is a greater likelihood of job satisfaction and performance (Kristof-Brown et al., 2023). The proposed model for this study suggests that PSM directly and positively affects public servants' performance in Nigeria. Additionally, the study proposes that job satisfaction and POF mediate the link of PSM to job performance. As shown in Figure 1, the model proposes that PSM directly influences job satisfaction and POF, influencing job performance. The mediating effect of job satisfaction and POF suggests that public servants recognized as having a

degree of PSM are likelier to experience job satisfaction and feel a better fit with their organization which, in turn, could lead to higher levels of job performance.

The SDT provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the interchangeable link among PSM, job satisfaction, and performance. PSM is an intrinsic motivation linked to the psychological needs that constitute autonomy, competence, and relatedness. So, there is every tendency for public servants who attain greater levels of PSM would feel a sense of autonomy and competence in their work, promoting increased levels of job performance and satisfaction. The PE Fit theory offers a theoretical basis for understanding the mediating effect of POF in the link between PSM and job performance. POF measures the match between an individual and their work environment. There is a tendency for public servants to experience job satisfaction when they are found suitable for their organizations, which could lead to greater levels of job performance.

(2010) found that PSM is positively associated with job performance in the public sector. Previous studies have reported that PSM is an important predictor of job performance among public servants in different contexts (Kim & Vandenberg, 2010; Wang & Kim, 2013). Similarly, Awan and Azhar (2014) noted that PSM was positively correlated related to job performance among Pakistani public servants. Westover and Taylor (2010) also found PSM connected to job satisfaction in public service. These findings suggest that PSM is a vital

Hypothesis Formation

Public Service Motivation (PSM)

The motivation of public service has become an integral part of research in public administration. Perry and Hondeghem (2008) view PSM as the inclination to work for the public interest and serve the public, even in the face of challenges and low rewards. PSM is an important factor that influences the job performance of public servants. Kim and Vandenberg

determinant of job performance and satisfaction among public servants. Therefore, we hypothesise thus:

H1: PSM influences job satisfaction among civil servants in Nigeria.

H2: PSM influences the job performance of civil servants in Nigeria.

H3: PSM influences POF among civil servants in Nigeria.

Job Satisfaction

Satisfaction with a job is a fundamental factor that influences job performance. Spector (1997) conceptualized job satisfaction as the extent employees are content with their jobs and the work environment. Research has demonstrated that job satisfaction can significantly impact an employee's work behaviour and performance (Iis & Yunus, 2016; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000; Wright et al., 2007). Employees who report higher levels of job satisfaction are likelier to display punctuality, remain present at work, and exhibit greater focus, accuracy, and effort (Yuen et al., 2018). In a study by Mount et al. (2006) involving employees in customer service positions across ten fast-food restaurants, job satisfaction directly impacted job performance. These findings suggest that job satisfaction is significant in shaping employees' work behaviour and performance and could be a significant factor in enhancing the overall productivity of organizations.

H4: Job satisfaction influences job performance among civil servants' in Nigeria

H5: Job satisfaction influences POF among civil servants in Nigeria.

H6: Relationship between public service motivation and performance is mediated by job satisfaction among civil servants in Nigeria.

Person-Organization Fit (POF)

POF is a fit between employees and their organisation (Kristof, 1996). POF has been observed to have a positive relationship with job satisfaction and performance in different sectors, including the public sector (Hassan & Yusuf, 2016). POF is an important factor influencing job performance because it could lead to a suitable alignment of employees to their organizations, enhancing job satisfaction and motivation. Almalki et al. (2017) found that POF facilitates the link between PSM and job performance among public servants in Saudi Arabia.

H7: POF influences job performance among civil servants in Nigeria.

H8: There is a mediating effect of POF on the connection between job satisfaction and performance among civil servants in Nigeria.

Methods

A 10-item indicators of three dimensions developed by Coursey and Pandy (2007) was used in measuring PSM. The scale measures individuals' motivation to serve the public and contribute to the common good. Sample items include "I would rather work for the government than for a private company" and "It is important to me to do work that benefits society." Job satisfaction will be measured using 5-items developed by (Spector, 1985). The scale measures the extent to which individuals are satisfied with various aspects of their job, including pay, work conditions, and co-workers.

Sample items include “I am satisfied with my job” and “I feel that I am paid fairly for my work.” POF was measured using 7-item indicators developed by (Kristof, 1996). The scale measures the extent to which individuals perceive a fit between their values and those of their organization. Sample items include “The values of my organization are similar to my own” and “I feel that I fit in well with the culture of my organization.” Job Performance was measured using Williams and Anderson (1991)’s task-performance 7-item indicators. The scale measures the extent to which individuals effectively perform their job duties and responsibilities. Sample items include “I can complete my work on time” and “I can meet the goals and objectives set for me by my supervisor.”

The population for this study is Federal civil servants in selected ministries and agencies in Nigeria. The G*power software was used to determine the sample size to be 110. The sample for the study was purposively selected to include executive officers and senior officers who are more likely to understand the constructs under investigation better. Three hundred fifty questionnaires were distributed, and 194 were collected, giving a response rate of 46.4%. Of the 194, 46 were incomplete, hence discarded, while 148 were used for further analysis.

The questionnaire used in this study consists of four sections. The first section collects demographic information such as age, gender, educational qualification, and job position. The second section measures PSM, the third section measures Job Satisfaction, the fourth section measures POF, and Job Performance is

measured using a 5-item scale.

Data for the study were collected between the month of May to August 2022. The questionnaires were administered in paper format, and participants were given two weeks to complete and return the questionnaire. The questionnaires were collected from the participants’ offices. Reminders were sent to the participants after two weeks to increase the response rate. A response bias test was done to check the differences between the early (88) and late submissions (60). The t-test result showed that there are no differences between the two.

The data collected were analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was chosen because it is a suitable method for analyzing complex models with multiple latent variables and predicting the behaviour of a dependent variable based on its relationship with other independent variables. Also, a Fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (FsQCA) was conducted to determine the necessary and sufficient conditions that lead to high job performance among public servants in Nigeria using FsQCA 4.0.

A marker variable approach was used to test for common method bias, including a marker variable in the questionnaire to assess the extent to which respondents may have given socially desirable responses. The marker variable used in this study was “I always do what is expected of me by my supervisor,” which was included in the section measuring job performance. The results of the marker variable test showed that common method bias was not a significant problem in this study.

Data Analysis

Demographic Profile

Respondents' demographic profile in this study showed that most respondents were male (62%), while 38% were female, suggesting that more male civil servants participated in the study than female civil servants. The respondents' age distribution indicates that most respondents (56%) were between the ages of 30-45, while 23% were between 46-55, and 21% were above 55 years old, which implies that most of the civil servants who participated in the study were in the mid-career stage. This is also an interesting finding as it suggests that younger civil servants are more likely to participate in surveys than their older counterparts. The respondents' service length result shows that 39% of the participants have served between 10-20 years, while 30% have served for less than ten years. The remaining 31% have served for more than 20 years, indicating that a significant number of the respondents have been in service for a considerable length of time. Also, this suggests that the sample included a mix of civil servants at different levels of the hierarchy. The educational qualification of the respondents reveals that 46% of the participants have a bachelor's degree, while 39% have postgraduate qualifications, which implies that most respondents have tertiary education, and a significant proportion has higher education qualifications. The cadre of the respondents reveals that the majority of the participants were senior administrative officers (44%), followed by deputy directors (19%) and directors (8%), which indicates that most respondents were mid-level to senior civil servants.

Measurement Model

All indicator variables were reflective measures. The measurement model tested the constructs validity and reliability in the study. The results indicated that all constructs had acceptable internal consistency reliability measures, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.70 to 0.80 as shown in Table 1. The composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating good reliability. Furthermore, the construct's convergent validity was established by examining the values of average variance extracted (AVE), which ranged from 0.50 to 0.59, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50. The results also showed that all indicators significantly loaded according to their respective constructs, with all factor loadings exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. The Heterotrait and Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was calculated for each pair of latent variables to test discriminant validity. HTMT is associated with the ratio of correlation between two (2) latent variables to each variable's square root of the product of AVE. If the HTMT ratio is less than 0.85, then discriminant validity is considered to be established between the two latent variables. In this study, the HTMT ratios for all pairs of latent variables were below 0.85, indicating that discriminant validity was established as shown in Table 2.

Structural Model

The results of the PLS-SEM analysis are presented in Table 3. The results show that Public Service Motivation has a significant positive effect on Job Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.58$, $t\text{-value} = 12.31$, $p < 0.001$) and POF ($\beta = 0.33$, $t\text{-value} = 6.42$, $p < 0.001$). Job Satisfaction has a

positive and significant effect on Job Performance ($\beta = 0.15$, $t\text{-value} = 2.39$, $p < 0.05$), while POF maintains a positive and significant effect on Job Performance ($\beta = 0.27$, $t\text{-value} = 4.69$, $p < 0.001$). PSM's indirect effect on job performance through Job Satisfaction was also significant ($\beta = 0.09$, $t\text{-value} = 2.16$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that Job Satisfaction partially mediates the link of PSM to job performance. Similarly, the indirect effect of PSM on job performance through POF was also significant ($\beta = 0.09$, $t\text{-value} = 3.10$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that POF partially facilitates the connection between PSM and Job Performance. As examined based on the R^2 values, the model's coefficient of determination showed that PSM, POF and job satisfaction explained 41% ($R^2 = 0.411$) of the total variance for Job Performance. Also, PSM and job satisfaction explain 49% ($R^2 = 0.493$) of POF, and finally, PSM explains 34% ($R^2 = 0.339$) of Job Satisfaction.

FsQCA Result

The results of the FSQCA analysis revealed that the combination of high levels of PSM and POF are necessary conditions for high job performance among public servants in Nigeria. Specifically, when PSM and POF are both high, then high job performance is achieved. However, when PSM is low, high job performance can still be achieved if POF is high. On the other hand, when POF is low, high job performance can still be achieved if PSM is high. The results of the FSQCA analysis suggest that PSM and POF are critical predictors of job performance among public servants in Nigeria. The finding supports previous research highlighting the importance of PSM and POF in predicting job performance in the public sector.

Discussion

This study examined the interconnectivity among Public Service Motivation (PSM), Job Satisfaction, POF, and Job Performance of public servants in Nigeria. The study's findings showed that the effect of PSM is positive and significant to Job Satisfaction and POF, while the effect of job satisfaction and POF have a significant and positive effect on Job Performance. Additionally, the study found that job satisfaction with and POF partially mediate the relationship between PSM and Job Performance. There is a consistency in the outcomes of this study compared to the previous research on the link of PSM to Job Satisfaction ((Breaugh et al., 2018; Kim, 2012; Kim & Vandenberg, 2010; Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999); Kim & Vandenberg, 2010) and PSM and POF (Kim, 2012; Wang & Brower, 2019). Public servants motivated to serve the public will likely find their work more meaningful and satisfying, leading to better performance (Perry and Wise, 1990; Kim et al., 2012). The finding that Job Satisfaction and POF partially mediate the relationship between PSM and Job Performance is consistent with previous research (Kim and Vandenberg, 2010; Kim et al., 2012). This finding suggests that public servants inspired by the willingness to serve the public are more likely to perform well if they are satisfied with their jobs and feel that their values align with their organizations'.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study have significant theoretical implications for public administration and management research. First, the study contributes to the growing body of existing literature on public service motivation by

examining its effect on job performance in the Nigerian public sector. This study confirms that PSM positively affects job performance, consistent with previous research in different contexts (Kim & Vandenabeele, 2010; Schwarz et al., 2020). The results suggest that PSM is a valuable concept that can enhance public sector performance in Nigeria.

Also, this study has contributed to literature recognizing the effects of job satisfaction and POF as mediators on the relationship between PSM and job performance. The study confirms that job satisfaction and POF mediate the relationship between PSM and job performance. These findings suggest that PSM is more likely to improve job performance when public servants experience higher levels of job satisfaction and a better fit with their organization. This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of these variables in public sector performance (Hassan & Yusuf, 2016; Wright et al., 2016).

The study provides insights into the Nigerian public sector context by examining the role of PSM, job satisfaction, and POF in job performance. The study confirms that these variables are relevant to public sector performance in Nigeria. The findings suggest that efforts to improve public sector performance should focus on enhancing PSM among public servants, improving job satisfaction, and ensuring a better fit between employees and their organizations. This finding is particularly relevant to the Nigerian context, where the public sector has been disapproved for low productivity and inefficient service delivery.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have several practical implications for the Nigerian public sector. The study found that public service motivation has a direct positive effect on job performance. Therefore, to improve the performance of public servants in Nigeria, it is important to recruit individuals with high levels of public service motivation. Recruitment processes should be designed to assess the level of PSM of job applicants.

The study found that job satisfaction and POF mediate the relationship between PSM and job performance. Thus, public sector organizations should create a work environment conducive to job satisfaction and a good fit between employees and the organization. This suggestion could be achieved by providing adequate training and development opportunities, fair remuneration, a safe working environment, and opportunities for career advancement.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of POF in enhancing job satisfaction and performance. Public sector organizations should, therefore, strive to create an organizational culture that promotes a good fit between employees and the organization. This could be achieved by ensuring that the organization's values and goals align with its employees' values and goals.

And finally, the study underscores the need for public sector organizations to develop and implement policies and practices that promote public service motivation, job satisfaction, and POF. Such policies and practices could include the provision of incentives to employees who demonstrate high levels of public service motivation, the

development of a career progression framework that aligns with the goals and values of the organization, and the creation of a performance management system that recognizes and rewards employees who demonstrate high levels of job performance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides evidence that PSM is an important factor in shaping the behaviour of public servants in Nigeria. Public servants motivated by a desire to serve the public are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and feel that their values align with those of their organization, which in turn leads to better performance. Public sector managers and policymakers should recognize the importance of PSM in shaping the behaviour of public servants and work to create a work environment that fosters public service values, improves Job Satisfaction and POF, and promotes a culture of public service within the public sector.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. Firstly, the study used a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to establish causality between the variables. Secondly, the study was conducted among federal civil servants in selected ministries and agencies in Nigeria. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings to other sectors and contexts may be limited. Future studies could investigate other sectors, such as state and local government, and compare the results with the findings of this study. Thirdly, the study used self-reported data, which could lead to common method bias. However, we conducted a marker variable test, which showed no significant common method bias. Finally, other variables could mediate the relationship between PSM and job performance, which were not included in this study. Future studies could investigate the mediating effect of other variables, such as organizational commitment, work engagement, and leadership behaviour.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

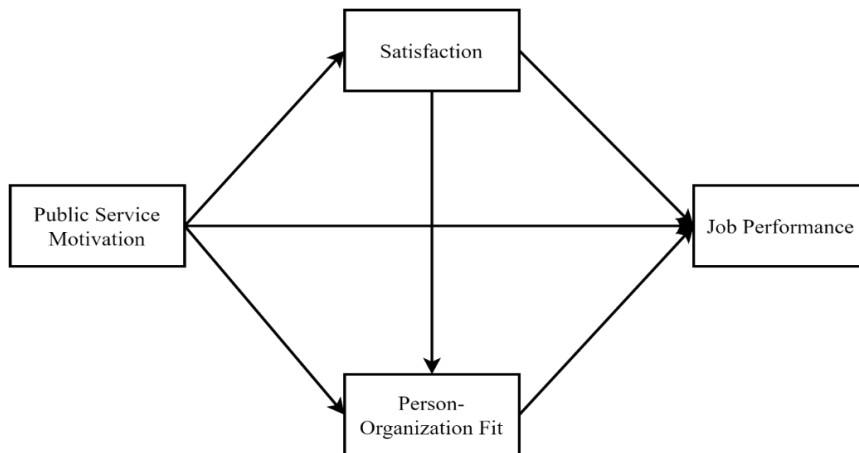


Table 1: Table of reliability and validity

	Items	Loadings	Cronbach Alpha	AVE
Job Performance	PERF1	0.82	0.80	0.51
	PERF2	0.78		
	PERF3	0.64		
	PERF4	0.83		
	PERF6	0.78		
Person-Organization Fit	POF2	0.71	0.80	0.59
	POF3	0.70		
	POF4	0.81		
	POF5	0.79		
	POF7	0.62		
Public Service Motivation	PSM1	0.69	0.70	0.58
	PSM10	0.71		
	PSM2	0.77		
	PSM3	0.69	0.80	0.50
	PSM4	0.83		
	PSM5	0.68		
	PSM6	0.75	0.80	0.57
	PSM7	0.71		
	PSM8	0.90		
Satisfaction	PSM9	0.70	0.76	0.51
	SAT2	0.79		
	SAT3	0.66		
	SAT4	0.80		

	SAT5	0.72		
	Marker Variable	MRK	1.00	

Source: Author generated (2022)

Table 2: Discriminant validity (HTMT criterion)

	PERF	POF	PSM	Satisfaction
PERM				
POF	0.51			
PSM	0.51	0.69		
Satisfaction	0.47	0.69	0.51	

Source: Author generated (2022)

Table 3: Results of pls-SEM analysis

	B	T-values	P-values <	5.00%	95.00%	F ²
PSM -> SAT	0.58	12.31	0.01	0.49	0.65	0.52
PSM -> PERF	0.40	6.42	0.01	0.30	0.50	0.19
PSM -> POF	0.33	5.02	0.01	0.23	0.44	0.14
SAT -> PERF	0.15	2.39	0.05	0.05	0.25	0.02
SAT -> POF	0.46	7.22	0.01	0.34	0.55	0.27
PSM -> SAT -> PERF	0.09	2.16	0.05	0.03	0.15	
POF -> PERF	0.27	4.69	0.05	0.17	0.36	0.07
PSM -> POF -> PERF	0.09	3.10	0.05	0.05	0.14	
R²: SAT = 0.339; Job Performance = 0.411; POF = 0.493						

Source: Author generated (2022)

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