Relationship Between Grass-roots Civil Servants’ Internal Motivation and Public Service Motivation

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Abstract: For the relationship between grass-roots civil servants’ internal motivation and public service motivation, this paper chooses 186 grassroots civil servants from the sub-district offices of Chaoyang District, Beijing to carry out the test with internal motivation scale (IMS) and public service motivation scale (PSMS). The results show that: (1) There are significant differences in the internal motivation of grass-roots civil servants in terms of age, seniority, position and rank. (2) There are significant differences in the public service motivation of grass-roots civil servants in terms of seniority, position and rank. (3) Internal motivation has the significant positive effect on public service motivation.

Keywords: Grass-roots civil servant, Internal motivation, Public service motivation.

1. Introduction

Grass-roots civil servants bear the important responsibility of managing the grass-roots social affairs and serving the grass-roots public, whose public service consciousness and ability directly affect the effectiveness of grass-roots governance. In recent years, the enthusiasm of civil servants at the grassroots level has gradually weakened, to a great extent affecting the internal atmosphere and overall stability of the grass-roots civil servants, and then reduce the quality and efficiency of grass-roots government work. However, in the current management practice and theoretical research, the motivation of grass-roots civil servants tends to be attributed from external factors to external motivation, but rarely from the internal needs of grass-roots civil servants themselves. Therefore, it is a difficult problem that must be solved to effectively motivate the civil servants at the basic level. A scientific and reasonable internal motivation mechanism is conducive to better long-term mobilization of grass-roots civil servants’ work enthusiasm and stimulate work enthusiasm. The public service motivation theory is based on the hypothesis of complex man, and advocates the construction and improvement of the corresponding internal motivation mechanism. As an internal motivation, public service motivation is widespread in the public sector, and is related to internal remuneration and work performance, which is of great significance for the long-term incentive of civil servants. Therefore, to explore the relationship between internal motivation and public service motivation, and to provide internal motivation strategies based on public service motivation, provide new ideas for improving the incentive effect of grass-roots civil servants.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Internal Motivation

In 1959, Internal motivation was first proposed by the famous psychologist White[1]. Since then, the connotation of internal motivation is gradually classified into two categories. First, starting from the psychological process, internal motivation is defined as an internal psychological process or behavioral reinforcement process for an individual to realize their own advanced needs. For example, Deci (1971) believes that internal motivation is the process of engaging in an activity to pursue the satisfaction and accomplishment that it brings[2]. Second, starting from the characteristics of work, internal motivation is regarded as happiness and sense of achievement from the work itself. Two ideas also exist on the dimensions of internal excitation and its measurement. First, Perspective based on working characteristics. For example, Hackman (1975) divided the internal motivation into five dimensions based on the work characteristic model, namely, the importance of work task, the diversity of work skills, the employee autonomy, the integrity of work task, and the feedback of task[3]. Second, Comprehensive view based on work characteristics, psychological process, interpersonal interaction and other aspects. For example, from the perspective of intellectual employees, Zhang Ling and Zhang Zhengtang (2008) divided the internal motivation into four dimensions, namely, promotion opportunity, superior support, work autonomy, and human and organization matching, and designed the corresponding internal motivation scale[4]. The study of internal motivation-related variables mainly involves the ex-dependent variable and consequence variables. In the ex-dependent variable of internal motivation, personality characteristics were one of the most studied the ex-dependent variables, but there were differences in the study conclusions. Studies on internal motivation outcome variables, mainly involving work performance, organizational commitment, and prosocial behavior, among which work performance is the most studied outcome variable. For example, Koestner and Losier (2002) research found that employees can generate higher performance if the job content is aligned with their interest[5].

2.2 Public Service Motivation

Perry and Wise (1990) first proposed the concept of public service motivation, and defined the public service motivation as the tendency of the individual to be driven mainly or entirely based on the motivation of the public system and the organizations[6]. Later, many scholars have explained the connotation of public service motivation from different perspectives. First, from the definition of psychological
process. For example, Rainy and Steinbauer (1999) argue that public service motivation is an altruistic motivation for serving society[7]. Second, we define it in terms of content or structure. For example, Simeone (2004) describes public service motivation as approximate the concept of love, including such as sense of public service mission, strong sense of goal and commitment[8]. Third, the comprehensive definition. For example, Vandenabeele (2007) gives a more inclusive definition based on the integration of multiple perspectives, arguing that public service motivation is a belief, values and attitude beyond individual and departmental interests, focuses on the interests of broader political organizations, and inspires individuals to act as appropriate accordingly[9]. After the concept of public service motivation was formally mentioned, Perry determined the four dimensions of public service motivation, namely, participation in policy making, commitment to public interest, compassion, self-sacrifice, and thus designed the public service motivation scale containing 24 projects. Subsequently, Kim (2009) has designed a public service motivation measurement scale containing 18 projects, which has been validated in twelve countries and has good cross-cultural applicability[10]. Public service motivation is regarded as a psychological process or behavioral tendency, so the study of its related variables mainly involves the ex-dependent variable and the consequence variables. Ex-dependent variables mainly involve personal characteristics, socialization, occupation and other factors. For example, Li Feng (2016) found that the public service motivation structure of Chinese grassroots civil servants is different from that in the West. Factors such as clear rights and responsibilities in organizational environment and good trust relationship with higher departments can significantly improve the public service motivation, and the education level and leadership positions also affect public service motivation to varying degrees[11]. Consequential variables are hot research topics in recent years. A large number of studies have proved that public service motivation can affect many attitude and behavior variables related to work, such as work satisfaction, work performance, etc.

2.3 The Relationship Between Internal Motivation and Public Service Motivation

Most foreign studies explore the relationship between incentive and public service motivation through the comparative analysis of internal motivation and external motivation. First, it is generally believed that external motivation factors have a negative or no effect on public service motivation. Tongo’s study (2011) suggests that individuals with a higher level of public service motivation are based on a love for public utilities and are less dependent on substantial monetary incentives[12]. Secondly, the internal motivation dominated by the internal reward is more matched with the public service motivation. For example, Philip (1997) found that public service motivation is positively related to internal reward, and negatively related to external reward[13]. Young (2001) summarized the research on incentive and public service motivation and found that the public service motivation, as a kind of internal mental process, corresponds to the form of internal motivation, and the external motivation has little or even negative impact on it[14]. Domestic research mainly explores the logical relationship between incentive and public service motivation to improve the level of public service motivation or establish a long-term incentive mechanism. Among them, some studies also demonstrate that internal motivation is more compatible with public service motivation compared with external motivation. For example, Zhang Lin (2021), starting from the human nature hypothesis of complex man, believe that public service motivation, as an altruistic motivation, can better explain the altruistic behaviors and public welfare behaviors in the public sector. Therefore, the incentive based on public service motivation is a new idea to motivate civil servants[15].

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Object

In this study, snowball sampling was used to randomly investigate grass-roots civil servants in Chaoyang District, Beijing. A total of 203 questionnaires are recovered within the expected time period and 186 valid data are remained, with an effective rate of 91.6%.

3.2 Research Model

In order to explore the correlation between internal motivation and public service motivation, this study took internal motivation as independent variable and public service motivation as dependent variable, and introduced demographic variables as control variables to construct the corresponding theoretical model, as shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Research model](Image)

3.3 Research Tool

The questionnaire designed in this study includes three parts: basic situation survey, internal motivation scale and public service motivation scale. In the basic situation survey section, there are 8 single-selected items to obtain the data of 8 demographic variables, including gender, age, educational background, seniority, position, rank, etc. Internal motivation scale, compiled by Price, has 12 items with four dimensions: work autonomy, superior support, promotion opportunities and person-to-organization matching. Public Service Motivation Scale, designed by Bao Yuanjie and Li Chaoping, has 8 items with four dimensions: public participation, commitment to public values, compassion and self-sacrifice. Both scales use the five-point scale marking. the higher the score, the stronger the internal motivation or public service motivation. In this study, the reliability and validity of both
scales were tested using SPSS25.0 and AMOS26.0. The Cronbach's α of Internal motivation Scale and the Public Service Motivation Scale are 0.916 and 0.932, respectively, indicating a good reliability. Meanwhile, the standardized factor load values for all items of both scales are above 0.7, average extraction variance above 0.5 and combined reliability above 0.7, indicating high convergent validity of the scale.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Analysis on the Differences of Internal Motivation and Public Service Motivation in Demographic Variable

In this study, Independent-Sample T Test and Analysis of Variance were used to test whether internal motivation and public service motivation showed significant differences in demographic variables. As can be seen from the Table 1: (1) There are significant differences in the internal motivation of grassroots civil servants in terms of age (p<0.001), seniority (p<0.001), position (p<0.001) and rank (p<0.001). (2) There are significant differences in the public service motivation of grassroots civil servants in terms of seniority (p<0.01), position (p<0.001) and rank (p<0.01).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Internal Motivation</th>
<th>Public Service Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniority</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Correlation Analysis of Internal Motivation and Public Service Motivation

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to verify the correlation between internal motivation and public service motivation. As can be seen from Table 2, internal motivation has a completely significant positive relationship with public service motivation (r=0.698, p<0.01).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Internal Motivation</th>
<th>Public Service Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal Motivation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.698**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service Motivation</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: **P<0.01, ***P<0.001, the same below.

4.3 Regression Analysis of Internal Motivation and Public Service Motivation

The correlation of internal motivation and public service motivation was further verified by hierarchical regression analysis. First, internal motivation is set as the independent variable, public service motivation as the dependent variable. Second, in Model I, demographic variables, including age, seniority, position, and rank, were included as control variables. Finally, internal motivation is included in Model II and then compared the analysis results of the two regression models. As in Table 3, in model I, the control variable explained only 13.3% of the total variation (R²=0.133). After adding internal motivation in Model II, 51.8% of the total variation can be explained (R²=0.518). Meanwhile, the standardized regression coefficient for Model II is 0.788 (β=0.788, p<0.001). In summary, internal motivation has the significant positive effect on public service motivation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Public Service Motivation</th>
<th>Model I</th>
<th>Model II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>-0.049</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Seniority</td>
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<td>Position</td>
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<td>-0.047</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
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<td>0.069</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Motivation</td>
<td>0.788***</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.133</td>
<td>0.518</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>F-value</td>
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<td>38.701***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Conclusion

Through the analysis of the relationship between internal motivation and public service motivation of grassroots civil servants in Chaoyang District, Beijing, the results show that: (1) There are significant differences in the Internal motivation of grassroots civil servants in terms of age, seniority, position and rank. (2) There are significant differences in the public service motivation of grassroots civil servants in terms of seniority, position and rank. (3) Internal motivation has the significant positive effect on public service motivation. Therefore, the establishment and improvement of internal incentive mechanism based on public service motivation has a certain rationality and effectiveness, and it is also of great significance to the long-term incentive of civil servants.

References