



Pay Dissatisfaction among Municipal Employees: Empirical Evidence from Russia's Stavropol Region

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Abstract

Dissatisfied public employees put at risk the quality of service delivery. This study investigates *pay dissatisfaction* among a sample (N=501) of municipal employees in Russia's Stavropol region. We find that *pay dissatisfaction* results from negative perceptions of public employment compensation, low levels of risk aversion, unethical professional attitudes, and more than 4 years of working experience. Our findings suggest that municipal employees are sensitive to multiple wage gaps within the public sector, and that upward pay comparisons are a relevant predictor of *dissatisfaction with pay*. We conclude that widespread *pay dissatisfaction* poses a serious threat to the implementation of federal programs and sustainable rural development in Russia.

Keywords:

pay dissatisfaction; Russia; workplace attitudes and behavior; local government

Introduction

Happy civil servants display higher levels of altruism (Homberg et al. 2015; Park and Rainey 2008), are more productive, creative, and more likely to remain with their employer (Moynihan and Pandey 2008; Vandenabeele and Van Loon 2015). In contrast, public employees facing confusion and conflict about their role in the workplace, frustration over red tape, a lack of variety in the workplace (Wright and Davis 2003), or poor management (Bertelli 2007) are likely to become self-focused, aggressive and antisocial (Ellickson and Logsdon 2002) – all of which puts at risk the quality of service delivery and public trust in government. Hence, job satisfac-

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tion is the most popular job attitude studied in public management research (Day and Schleicher 2012; Homberg et al. 2015; Vandenabeele and Van Loon 2015).

Pay satisfaction is a major facet of liking one's job (Cantarelli et al. 2016; Ellickson and Logsdon 2002; Llorens 2015; Ting 1997) but varies widely across countries. While federal employees in the US are quite satisfied with their pay scales (Pitts et al. 2011), Russian federal employees continuously express *dissatisfaction* with pay (Huskey and Obolonsky 2003; Rogozin et al. 2013). Especially middle- and lower-level officials perceive their wages as low and insufficient (Atnashev 2017). Little research exists about *pay dissatisfaction* among Russia's 306,500 municipal employees. Russia has a two-tier local government system with some 24,000 municipalities. Some 1,700 upper-tier municipal districts deliver public health care and primary education. Some 19,000 lower-tier authorities are responsible for services such as road construction, land use planning, garbage collection, and electric power supply (Ermasova and Mokeev 2016; Leksin 2016). 560 city districts deliver those services as a bulk.

This study uses an original data set of municipal employees in the Stavropol region to investigate the correlates of *pay dissatisfaction* in Russian local government. The Stavropol region is an agricultural region in the Caucasian part of European Russia, serving the interests of some 2.8 million inhabitants (Federal State Statistics Service 2017, 55). Local government in the Stavropol region operates under a two-tier system. As of 2018, the region is divided into 201 municipalities, 17 one-tier city districts and 16 upper-tier municipal districts encompassing 168 lower-tier urban and rural settlements (Federal State Statistics Service 2018). The research questions are:

1. How *dissatisfied* are municipal employees in Russia's Stavropol region with their pay?
2. What factors correlate with reported levels of *pay dissatisfaction*?

This study addresses the overarching research question how work-related attitudes and motives of public employees impact the performance of public organizations. Understanding pay dissatisfaction is the first step to attract talent into the civil service and to continuously motivate a diverse public sector workforce. We attempt to build an understanding of work satisfaction in Russia, and how it is affected by different attitudinal factors. Although local officials in Russia play a pivotal role in peoples' well-being, they are the "agents of regional and federal governments rather than independent professionals serving their local communities" (Leksin 2016, 8). Local budgets heavily rely on federal and regional grants. Increasing living standards of a growing middle class and the Putin consensus ("social benefits in return for electoral support") created a relatively stable hybrid regime but never translated into a positive perception of public agencies and their employees. There is little belief among citizens that public officials are capable of serving community members

effectively (Jakobson 2001; Jakobson et al. 2018). Dissatisfied employees tend to leave the bureaucracy (Lee and Whitford 2008; Moynihan and Pandey 2008).

Theory and Hypotheses

Pay dissatisfaction

Research in the US administrative context established four dimensions of pay satisfaction: satisfaction with pay level, pay rise, pay administration, and benefits (Heneman and Schwab 1985; Scarpello et al. 1988). Cross-cultural research shows that the dimensions of pay satisfaction might vary across different cultural contexts (Lievens et al. 2007). To minimize the risk of “breaking responses into a number of dimensions that are not differentially distinguishable by a target population” (Carraher and Buckley 1996, 106) this study uses and measures overall *pay dissatisfaction*. *Pay dissatisfaction* in this study is defined as a situation in which an individual is dissatisfied with her salary from public-sector employment. We understand and conceptualized *pay dissatisfaction* as an attitude, encompassing an affective, a cognitive, and a behavioral component. Municipal employees may perceive their salary gained from public employment as too low or unfair for a variety of reasons, and this perception may induce different types of behavior. The affective component of an attitude captures a person’s *emotion* or *feeling* about an object or event, in our case, pay dissatisfaction. For example, some researchers view pay satisfaction “as a discrepancy between how much one feels one should receive and how much one feels is actually received” (Heneman and Schwab 1985, 129–130). The cognitive component captures an employee’s *belief* or perceived knowledge about pay dissatisfaction, e.g. the belief that there are unjustified pay gaps within one’s organization. The behavioral component of pay dissatisfaction captures an employee’s *reactions* to the feeling of being underpaid, including decreasing productivity, voicing complaints, or leaving the organization.

Perception of public-sector compensation

Expectancy value theory states that people choose jobs from which they expect rewards that they value (Ryan and Deci 2017, 349). Stable income is a main job motivator among public employees in Russia (Atnashev 2017) and predicts sector choices of graduates around the globe (Braunstein and Haines 1968; Jäkel and Borshchevskiy 2019; Ko and Jun 2015; Lewis and Frank 2002; McGinnis and Ng 2016). “Those who place great value on job security and service to the public should be more likely to choose government jobs, while those who place a higher priority on pay should prefer whichever sector they think will pay them the most” (Lewis and Frank 2002). Public sector compensation schemes historically prioritize internal wage equity, modest pay rates, strong nonwage benefit packages, and relative job security (Llorens 2015). Individuals who value social benefits as a part of modest,

but stable and relatively secure income including social benefits, are likely to report low levels of *pay dissatisfaction*.

Hypothesis 1: a municipal employee who perceives public employment as a source of stable and secure income is likely to report a *low* level of *pay dissatisfaction*.

Perception of social impact

Altruism is a key variable of interest in the job satisfaction literature (Homberg et al. 2015; Ritz et al. 2016). Altruism, or prosocial motivation “reflects one’s desire to expend effort to benefit other people” (Liu et al. 2016), and closely links to the concept of public service motivation (PSM) (Perry 1996; Perry et al. 2010; Perry and Vandenabeele 2015; Perry and Wise 1990). Empirical evidence robustly confirms the notion that there is a positive relationship between PSM and job satisfaction (Homberg et al. 2015; Ritz et al. 2016; Vandenabeele and Van Loon 2015, 375). Public-sector employees self-report a higher level of altruism, public service-oriented motives, and a stronger perception of the social impact of their job compared to their counterparts in the business sector, in a wide range of countries, including Russia (Bullock et al. 2015). Following person-job-fit theories (Holland 1959; Parson 1909; Schneider 1987) and PSM theory we posit that people who are willing “to engage in sacrificial behaviors for the good of others without reciprocal benefits for themselves” (Perry and Vandenabeele 2015) experience satisfaction from public-sector employment. This is likely to induce pay satisfaction despite non-competitive pay.

Hypothesis 3a: A municipal employee who perceives public employment as a chance to help others is likely to report a *low* level of *pay dissatisfaction*.

Hypothesis 3b: A municipal employee for whom public employment is an opportunity to serve her country is likely to report a *low* level of *pay dissatisfaction*.

Hypothesis 3c: A municipal employee for whom public employment is an opportunity to change something in society is likely to report a *low* level of *pay dissatisfaction*.

Security motivation

Public organizations traditionally have been risk-averse “because of the public accountability and protection of vulnerable people imperatives” (Osborne and Brown 2008, 172, 178). Given this incentive structure, individuals who value the status quo and stability over risky changes are expected to accept non-competitive wages in the public sector.

Hypothesis 4: A municipal employee who values security is likely to report a *low* level of pay *dissatisfaction*.

Attitudes to unethical behavior

Negative self-selection theory posits that corrupt people self-select the public sector (Hanna and Wang 2017). Russia ranks 131st (out of 176) in Transparency International's perceived corruption index, far behind the other BRIC countries. The ideological turn in the 1990s nullified old ethical norms but failed to establish new moral standards (Nezhina and Barabashev 2017). There is a widespread perception of top-level (Public Opinion 2013; Rimskii 2013) and everyday street-level corruption (Reisinger et al. 2017).

Public anti-corruption campaigns seek to win public support as a source of political legitimacy (Zhu et al. 2017) by signaling a zero-tolerance policy regarding non-ethical behavior in the civil service. We argue that these signals have changed the incentive structure for civil servants: Municipal officials who deviate from organizational norms, for reasons such as convenience, or favoring friends, may experience less valued rewards from public employment. We thus hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 5: A municipal employee who states a positive attitude towards unethical behavior, such as bribery and rule-bending, is likely to report a *high* level of pay *dissatisfaction*.

Method

The binary logistic regression model was used to test our hypotheses empirically. In late autumn 2016 all about 7,400 municipal employees in Russia's Stavropol region were invited to participate in the study by answering an online questionnaire over the course of a two-week period. A particular sampling strategy was not applied. Recipients were informed that their participation was fully voluntary and anonymous, and that they could skip any question in the questionnaire. Recipients who agreed to partake were redirected to a webpage of a commercial company that hosted the survey interface. We received 501 finished questionnaires, and 486 persons responded to every question, which effectively is a 7 percent response rate. Observations with incomplete responses were not included in the empirical analysis. While not a random sample the demographic makeup of our sample of convenience is representative of all municipal employees in the Stavropol region in terms of sex (Table 1). However, we cannot reject the possibility that respondents differ from non-respondents in terms of non-demographic characteristics, such as personality.

Table 1
Demographic makeup of the sample

Variable	All 7,451 municipal employees in Stavropol region, in 2016	Sample (486 completed responses)
Female (in percent)	78.82 %	78.64 %

Measurement

To our knowledge, the dimensionality and validity of several constructs used in this study so far has not been assessed in the Russian administrative context. Therefore, the questions asked in the survey conducted for this study were not selected from existing validated scales. Nonetheless, the items in this study have a high degree of face validity as they closely match with known dimensions from previous research.

Dependent variable – The well-established pay satisfaction questionnaire (PSQ) measures satisfaction with pay level, pay rise, pay administration, and benefits (Heneman and Schwab 1985; Scarpello et al. 1988). Similar to alternative constructs, such as the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, this study focuses on (dis)satisfaction with pay scale. The survey asked respondents to state to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “I am not satisfied with my pay” (reverse), and provided five options: 1=strongly disagree, 2=rather disagree, 3=neutral, 4=rather agree, 5=strongly agree. Options 4 and 5 were indicative of respondents who are dissatisfied with pay, responses were recoded as 1=pay dissatisfaction; whereas options 1, 2, 3 were indicative of satisfaction with pay, responses were recoded 0=no pay dissatisfaction.

Independent variables – This study measures *perception of social impact* with three different survey items that closely reflect the dimensions of the public service motivation (PSM) construct (Perry 1996). *Perception of compensation and benefits* are each measured with a single survey item. *Security motivation* is measured with four survey items (Cronbach’s alpha=0.79) that capture four counterfactual incidents relevant to Russian public employees (downgrading of job position, verbal warning about underperformance, written warning before dismissal, and no financial bonus). Four separate survey items are used to measure *attitudes on unethical behavior*. Survey items for all variables are reported in the appendix.

Results

The average municipal employee in our sample is female (79 percent), and has between seven and 15 years of working experience. 72 percent of respondents reported that they were dissatisfied with pay (Table 2). Each independent variable was regressed on all other independent variables to obtain VIF scores and detect eventually high multicollinearity. VIF scores ranged from 1.77 to 1.04, well below a

commonly accepted threshold of 2.5 or higher. None of the independent variables are significantly correlated beyond 0.51; which also indicates that multicollinearity is not a concern in our dataset. Table 2 displays descriptions and a correlation matrix for all variables. Table 3 in the Appendix displays estimation results.

Compensation perception

Hypothesis 1 states that municipal employees who perceive their job as a source of stable and secure income and benefits are likely to report a *low* level of pay *dissatisfaction*. The odds ratios indicate that as income perception increases respondents become less likely to report pay *dissatisfaction*, supporting Hypothesis 1. For a municipal employee who strongly perceives public employment as a source of stable income the odds of reporting pay *dissatisfaction* is about 4–5 times less likely (odds ratio=0.235, $p<0.01$, Table 3 in the Appendix) than the odds for a municipal employee who totally disagrees with this perception. For a municipal employee who perceives public employment as a source of social benefits, the odds of stating pay *dissatisfaction* is 2.6 times smaller (odds ratio=0.452, $p<0.1$) than the odds for a municipal employee who absolutely disagrees with this view. For all other response categories we found no significant differences in pay *dissatisfaction* compared to the base category.

Perception of social impact

The perception of the social impact of public employment is found to be no meaningful predictor of pay *dissatisfaction* among municipal employees. Estimation results provide no support for Hypotheses 3a–3c.

Risk-awareness

Hypothesis 4 states that a municipal employee who values security is likely to report a low level of pay *dissatisfaction*. Hypothesis 4 is partly supported. For a municipal employee who reports a moderate level of security motivation the odds of expressing dissatisfaction is twice as large (response category 2, odds ratio=2.441, $p<0.05$) than for a municipal employee who reports a low level of security motivation (for details on the measurement, please see the Appendix).

Attitudes on bribery and rule-bending

Hypothesis 5 states that a municipal employee who tolerates rule-bending or bribery under certain conditions is more likely to express dissatisfaction with pay. We find only partial support for Hypothesis 5. We found no significant differences in pay dissatisfaction across attitudes towards rule-bending in order to support friends. A municipal employee who tends to tolerate bribery in return for handling complex documents is three times more likely (odds ratio=3.078, $p<0.05$) to express dissatisfaction with pay compared to a municipal employee who does not tolerate bribery.

Table 2
Description and correlation matrix for all variables

	MEAN	SD	MIN	MAX	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Pay dissatisfaction	0.72	0.45	0	1	-										
Public administration to me means stable, increasing income (from 1=strongly disagree, to 5=strongly agree)	2.74	1.30	1	5	0.25	-									
Public administration offers an opportunity to receive social benefits (from 1=strongly disagree, to 5=strongly agree)	2.67	1.34	1	5	0.17	0.44	-								
Impact of public employment: Public employment is a chance to help others	0.40	0.49	0	1	0.15	0.21	0.20	-							
Public employment is a chance to serve the country	0.31	0.46	0	1	0.16	0.25	0.17	0.49	-						
Public employment is an opportunity to change something in society	3.13	1.29	1	5	0.15	0.29	0.23	0.37	0.51	-					
Risk-awareness	1.86	1.53	0	4	0.12	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.15	0.11	-				
Victimless rule-bending	2.34	1.17	1	5	0.15	0.15	0.16	0.08	0.17	0.11	0.09	-			
Rule-bending for friends	2.14	1.19	1	5	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.19	0.23	0.14	0.09	0.38	-		
Complex documents justify extra money	2.12	1.35	1	5	0.11	0.12	0.10	0.07	0.18	0.14	0.08	0.22	0.27	-	
Low salary justifies additional income	1.56	1.01	1	5	0.10	0.13	0.14	0.17	0.17	0.12	0.09	0.24	0.31	0.39	-

Cause and effect between the attitudes on unethical behavior and pay dissatisfaction might be reversed. One might argue that municipal employees engage in behavior that violates ethical norms of the profession, such as taking bribes, because they perceive their income as too low or unfair (Van Rijckeghem and Weder 2001). Though “the literature provides important theoretical arguments linking pay levels with corruption, evidence [is] mixed with regard to their validity” (Meyer-Sahling et al. 2018).

Tenure

We find that a municipal employee with 4–6 years of working experience is 4 times more likely to state pay dissatisfaction than a job entrant in the first year of public employment. For a municipal employee with more than seven years of working experience the odds of stating pay *dissatisfaction* are two times larger than the odds for a first-year job entrant.

Discussion

Russian culture and voice

Why do municipal employees in Russia display such a remarkable level of *pay dissatisfaction*? A first interpretation centers on the peculiarities of Russian (work) culture. Voicing and displaying complaints is a common behavior both in work-related and daily-life contexts. The logic is that people who do not voice dissatisfaction will get nothing at all. Empirical studies conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s found that Russian employees “ascribe a lower status to work” than people in other parts of the world, suggesting that most people never really accepted “the official Soviet ideology, which proclaimed work a universal obligation and the most important sphere of life” (Magun 1998, 27). Research on cultural differences regarding individualism and collectivism (Triandis 2001) highlighted that “[i]n a collectivist culture work for the individual is not so much an act of self-fulfillment or self-expression, but is primarily a means to support a family” (Vadi and Vereshagin 2006). Russian employees have been reported to strongly agree with the statement “the better they [the employer] pay, the more I do”, indicating an “orientation toward an equivalent, fair exchange between their labor contribution and their expected material reward” (Magun 1998, 28). This suggests that in situations with the decision whether to speak up (i.e. employee voice behavior) or to remain silent (Morrison 2011), Russian employees tend to voice their dissatisfaction with pay, which can be understood as a legitimate, though indirect attempt to ask for a pay increase.

Wage gaps

Our second interpretation centers on multiple wage gaps and a perception of lagging behind. Prior research shows that social comparisons predict pay dissatisfaction

tion above and beyond actual pay (Sweeney and McFarlin 2004; Taylor and Vest 1992). While external comparisons may induce pay dissatisfaction, personal comparisons among peers tend to increase satisfaction with pay (Taylor and Vest 1992). For example, Russian municipal employees in a large-scale study by Rogozin et al. (2013) explicitly stated that the level of wages in comparison with alternatives in a small town was the main reason for taking a position in municipal services.

Our findings suggest that municipal employees are sensitive to multiple public-public wage gaps: the gap between pay in different regions, the gap between pay *increases* in different regions, and the gap between federal and municipal employment. *Regional wage gap*: On average, municipal employees in the Stavropol region earn less than the national average (37,338 Rubles per month, about 500 Euros), especially less than in industrialized regions around, for example, St. Petersburg (41,682 Rubles per month, about 550 Euros). *Pay increase gap*: Across all 85 regions of Russia, average monthly salaries of municipal employees in 2016 increased by 1.5 percent compared to 2015. In the Stavropol region the average monthly salary of municipal employees has virtually not changed, while municipal employees in neighboring regions saw increases between 1.6 and 15.1 percent. *Federal-local wage gap*: The gap between salaries of regionally employed federal and local municipal officials is larger in the Stavropol region than in other parts of Russia. On average, a municipal employee in the Stavropol region earns 87 percent of what a regionally employed federal official (e.g. in a regional branch of the federal ministry of the interior) gets per month. This is more compared to neighboring regions, such as Chechnya (55.6 percent), but less than the national average (89.5 percent). The federal-local wage gap in those less developed regions contrasts with Moscow and St. Petersburg, where municipal employees earn 40 and 21 percent more than federal employees, respectively. This implies that *pay dissatisfaction* results from upward pay comparison (Brewer and Weber 1994; Lockwood and Kunda 1997). Municipal employees make external comparisons with seemingly better-off federal and municipal employees in distant regions when forming their expectations.

Conclusion

This study investigates how compensation perceptions, perception of the social impact of public employment, risk-awareness, attitudes towards unethical behavior, and working experience affect *pay dissatisfaction* among municipal employees in Russia's Stavropol region. Our survey data display a remarkably high level of *pay dissatisfaction*. We find that *pay dissatisfaction* results from negative perceptions of public employment compensation, relatively low levels of risk-aversion, unethical professional attitudes, and more than 4 years of working experience.

Practical relevance

We argue that pay *dissatisfaction* poses a serious threat to sustainable rural development in Russia, and in the Stavropol region in particular. The Stavropol region ranked 67th (out of 80) among Russian regions in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2010. In 2013 the per capita gross regional product (GRP) of the Stavropol region was 50 percent of the national average (Zubarevich 2013, 130). The Stavropol region's economy is dominated by agriculture. Below-national-average education levels and workforce productivity, underdevelopment of non-agricultural activities, and an aging population pose serious threats to the region's required sustainable rural development (Erokhin et al. 2014). Federal government launched a target program to establish umbrella conditions to spur the diversification of rural economics. The successful practical implementation, such as development of rural infrastructure, selection and co-production with local stakeholders and society requires bold efforts by regional and municipal administration.

Limitations

Our study has several limitations. One limitation is that we use single, self-reported survey items to measure both the dependent variable and the independent variables, while the use of multi-item measures from multiple sources (Podsakoff et al. 2012) would be preferable. Hence, estimated effects may suffer from a common source bias (Jakobsen and Jensen 2015). The use of different sources, conduction of a panel study (Jakobsen and Jensen 2015) or experimental studies with municipal employees in Russia still faces various practical obstacles, as most "bureaucratic organizations prefer to remain closed to outside observers" (Gimpelson et al. 2009). Another limitation is the relatively small response rate. Despite these limitations this study contributes to the knowledge and better understanding of Russia's public administration from a behavioral perspective.

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Appendix

A1. Table 3
Binary logistic regression results

Binary dependent variable: respondent reports pay dissatisfaction (1=yes, 0 otherwise) <i>Independent variables</i>	Odds ratio	Std. error	p	Level of significance
Public administration to me means stable, increasing income (factor variable, from 1=strongly disagree [base category], to 5=strongly agree)				
2	0.384	0.151	0.015	**
3	0.197	0.082	0.000	***
4	0.242	0.108	0.001	***
5	0.235	0.112	0.002	***
Public administration offers an opportunity to receive social benefits (factor variable, from 1=strongly disagree [base category], to 5=strongly agree)				
2	1.192	0.409	0.610	
3	0.836	0.300	0.617	
4	0.919	0.336	0.817	
5	0.452	0.196	0.067	*
Public employment is a chance to help others (binary variable; 1=yes, 0 otherwise)†	1.367	0.396	0.280	
Public employment is a chance to serve the country (binary variable; 1=yes, 0 otherwise) †	1.199	0.376	0.563	
Public employment is an opportunity to change something in society (factor variable)	0.848	0.088	0.114	
Risk-awareness (factor variable) †				
1	1.802	0.617	0.085	*
2	2.441	0.853	0.011	**
3	1.784	0.654	0.114	
4	1.521	0.481	0.185	
Victimless rule-bending (factor variable)	1.135	0.132	0.275	
Rule-bending for friends (factor variable)	0.878	0.111	0.304	

Complex documents justify extra money (factor variable; response option 1=base category)				
2	1.303	0.505	0.494	
3	1.807	0.657	0.103	
4	3.078	1.573	0.028	**
5	0.885	0.417	0.796	
Low salary justifies additional income (factor variable; response option 1=base category)				
2	0.849	0.324	0.667	
3	1.109	0.440	0.795	
4	1.373	1.080	0.687	
5	3.759	3.351	0.138	
Work experience (factor variable; <1 yr. =base category)				
1-3 yrs.	1.929	0.841	0.132	
4-6 yrs.	4.239	1.989	0.002	**
7-15 yrs.	2.608	1.036	0.016	**
>15 yrs.	2.699	1.186	0.024	**
Constant	2.652	1.687	0.125	
Pseudo-R ²	0.127			
Log pseudolikelihood	-251.1			
Prob > X ²	0.000			
Observations	482			

Notes. Odds ratios are indicative of effect sizes. An odds ratio > 1 (<1) indicates a positive (negative) impact of the variable under investigation on the dependent variable. P-values are indicative of the significance of the potential effect. P-values <0.10 (>0.10) indicate that it is likely (unlikely) that the variable under investigation has an impact on the dependent variable. *p≤0.1. **p≤0.05. ***p≤0.01. Estimates for each category of factor variables are displayed in case the variable has a significant impact. †Please see Appendix A2. for details on measurement.

A2. Measurement of independent variables

Perception of social impact – The survey asked respondents to state to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following three statements (from 1=*strongly disagree*, to 5=*strongly agree*) as indicative of their perception of the impact of public employment on society: (1) To me public employment offers an opportunity to help people (sample mean value=4.14), (2) public employment is a patriotic service to the motherland (mean value=3.79), (3) public employment is an opportunity to change something in society and the world (mean value=3.13). The most frequent outcome category for the first two statements is option (4), i.e. the average respondent self-reports a strong perception of being able to help others and serving one's country, which points to potential reflexive behavior of participants and a desired social response (DSR) bias. We reflect this potential issue by considering option 4 as the “default response”; option 5 was thus indicative of respondents who “truly” perceive public employment as an opportunity to help others and serve one's country. Responses were recoded as 1=*perceived opportunity to help others (serve one's country)*. Options 1 to 4 were indicative of either a low perception of the social impact of public employment or a socially desired response, responses were recoded as 0=*no perceived opportunity to help others (serve one's country)*.

Compensation perceptions – We asked respondents to judge the following two statements as indicative of their perception of public sector compensation (from 1=*strongly disagree*, to 5=*strongly agree*): (1) Public administration for me means stable, increasing income (mean value=2.74), (2) public administration offers an opportunity to receive social benefits (mean value=2.67).

Security motivation – The survey asked respondents to state how seriously the following four counterfactual incidences (Cronbach's alpha=0.79, sample mean value=4.22) posed a risk to them, and provided five options: from 1=*absolutely not important* to 5=*very important*. (1) Downgrading of job position (sample mean value=4.35), (2) a non-written warning, e.g. that the level of knowledge or performance is not sufficient (sample mean value=4.3), (3) written warning before dismissal (sample mean value=4.18), (4) no financial bonus (sample mean=4.05). All four counterfactual incidents are perceived as serious risks. *Option 5=very important risk*, was thus indicative of a respondent with a level of risk-awareness above sample average and was recoded as 1=*security motivation*, whereas options 1=*absolutely not important risk*, to 4=*rather important risk*, were indicative of relatively low risk-awareness and recoded as 0=*no security motivation*. The cumulative score of the four binary variables ({1, 2, 3, 4}) is included in the model.

Attitudes on unethical behavior – Respondents were asked to state to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following four statements (from 1=*strongly disagree*, to 5=*strongly agree*), as indicative of their attitudes towards behavior that may fall below ethical and professional standards: (1) deviating from the usual procedure

is alright, if nobody gets harmed (mean value=2.34), (2) if you can help a friend it is alright to deviate from the regular procedure (mean value=2.14), (3) if processing documents is really complicated, civil servants should receive some extra money from the customer (mean value=2.12), (4) if civil servants receive a low salary it is okay if they receive additional income from help or work (mean value=1.56).

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