The Public Service Motivation of Mayors and High-Ranking Public Managers in Danish Local Government

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Abstract:
Public service motivation (PSM) has been a very successful concept within Public Administration research in recent decades in terms of being utilized and analyzed in a number of papers in an increasingly international and sophisticated literature – both in terms of empirical and theoretical sophistication. In spite of its initial formulations by Perry & Wise in 1990 intending to cover the entire public sector, it has however primarily been examined at the level of public sector street-level bureaucrats and rarely at the top of the hierarchy of the public sector.

This paper provides a comparative analysis of the PSM of mayors and high-ranking public managers in local government. In this paper, we explore if the PSM concept and dimensions are applicable to administrative and political elites in local government and how hierarchy and the long but different career paths of top politicians and top civil servants may influence their PSM. Our findings suggest that the PSM dimensions are applicable to political and administrative local government elites, that the level, nature and antecedents of PSM do not differ significantly between these two groups. On the contrary, we find a high degree of consensus among the political and administrative elites in local government in regards to what motivates them.

Keywords: public service motivation, hierarchical position, local government, difference in PSM between political and administrative elites, public service motivation dimensions
Introduction

PSM has been a very successful concept within Public Administration research in recent decades in terms of being utilized and analyzed in a number of papers in an increasingly international and sophisticated literature – both in terms of empirical and theoretical sophistication (Perry et al., 2010). In spite of its initial formulations (Perry & Wise, 1990) intending to cover the entire public sector, it has however primarily been examined at the level of public sector street-level bureaucrats (Ritz, 2015) such as teachers, physiotherapists, dentist, etc. and rarely analyzed at the top of the hierarchy of the public sector.

In this paper, we seek to add to this limited empirical research on PSM among political and administrative elites by providing a comparative analysis of the PSM of mayors and high-ranking public managers in local government and, thus, extending and nuancing the understanding of PSM by exploring PSM in a new empirical context and focusing on different dimensions of PSM rather than PSM as an overall measure. We ask if the concept and measurement of PSM is applicable to politicians and top civil servants, and how PSM differ between politicians and public managers – i.e. among the persons working at the apex of public organizations. Mayors and high-ranking public managers in local government are the political and administrative leaders of public organizations and their motivation is crucial for good public service (Ritz, 2015).

We analyze the antecedents of PSM of mayors and high-ranking managers in Danish local government by means of survey data from 2016 (Bertelsen & Hansen, 2016a, 2016b), descriptive statistics and multivariate statistical approaches.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we visit the theory of PSM, review the sparse literature on both the link between PSM and hierarchical position and the PSM of high-ranking political and administrative officials in the public sector, and present a few hypotheses that seems plausible and render themselves testable by means of the data of the current study. Next, the context of Danish mayors and top civil servants, research design, data and methods are described. Then, the findings are presented. Finally, we discuss our findings and possible conclusions from the analysis, including limitations.

Theory and previous research

Scholars elaborating and examining work motivation theoretically and empirically has in recent decades increasingly pointed to the importance of context and mediating factors (Latham & Pinder, 2005)
for understanding work motivation. The concept of PSM fits nicely into this general trend of theory development, since it explicitly relates motivation to the specific context of public institutions and organizations (Perry, 2000; Perry & Wise, 1990). Building on earlier work by Rainey (1982), Perry and Wise defined PSM as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations" (1990 p. 368). Distinguishing broadly between rational, norm-based and affective motivations they suggested eight types of PSM and argued a) that people motivated by these factors were more likely to apply for jobs in the public sector, b) that these public service motives would be positively related to performance in public organizations and c) that organizations with employees with high degree of PSM would be less dependent on utilitarian incentives to manage individual performance effectively. Since then an increasing number of studies in PSM has been conducted and the research has in recent years increasingly been transnational. Later approaches has adjusted the PSM definition somewhat, but consensus seems to have emerged about a formulation of PSM as “the motivation people have to contribute to society” (Perry and Hondeghem 2008; Vandenabeele, Brewer, and Ritz 2014:779). The general literature on PSM has been thoroughly reviewed elsewhere (Perry, 2000; Perry & Hondeghem, 2008; Perry, Mesch, & Paarlberg, 2006; Ritz, Brewer, & Neumann, 2016; Vandenabeele et al., 2014) and we refer to that literature for a more extensive examination of the PSM literature, but a few interesting characteristics and research issues from this literature should be noted here.

First, the broad definition of PSM “to contribute to society” is given a few – usually four or five – sub-dimensions which refers to different types or motives for contributing to society based on Perry and Wise’s groundbreaking work (Perry, 1996; Perry & Wise, 1990). In this paper, we use four sub-dimensions: A) Commitment to the public interest (CPI) is about the motivation to deliver public services to serve society, based on values and duty. B) Compassion (COM) is about empathically based motivation to do good for others by improving public services. C) Attraction to Policy-Making (ATP) is about to improve decision-making concerning public services to help others and society. D) Commitment to the Welfare State (CWS) is about a dedication to the services of the universal welfare state (Vandenabeele, 2008) and is not included in the initial formulations of PSM. The specific measurement of these PSM dimensions will be elaborated in the method section.

Second, the PSM concept is an example of a concept that transcends distinctions between individual, organizational and societal perspectives on motivation, but there is a delicate tension in the PSM literature between approaches emphasizing individual or institutional perspectives the most and attempts at unifying those approaches into more comprehensive models (Vandenabeele, 2007). In this
paper, we focus on how the context in the form of institutionalized hierarchical positions in local representative democracy (mayors, city-managers and other senior managers in local government) may have an impact on variations in PSM. Thus, our concept of motivation is primarily sociological and a classical formulation by C. Wright Mills seems appropriate (Meyer et al. 2014; Mills 1940:904): “… rather than fixed elements ‘in’ an individual, motives are the terms with which interpretation of conduct by social actors proceeds.” This formulation points towards a logic of appropriateness and thus builds a bridge between PSM research and the new institutionalism as formulated in the writings of James G. March and Johan P. Olsen (March & Olsen, 1984, 1989, 1995) and of John W. Meyer and W. Richard Scott (J. W. Meyer, Boli, Thomas, & Ramirez, 1997; J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 2014).

Third, according to a recent review Denmark is the country with the second-most published PSM studies in the world (30 publications) only surpassed by USA (123 publications), while very few PSM studies has been published from Africa (11 publications) and South America (10 publications) (Ritz, Brewer, and Neumann 2016:Table 2, page 419). Thus, one may ask why we need another study from the Danish context. The reason is that country bias is not the only bias in the PSM literature and this study confronts another gap in the PSM literature – the lack of studies focusing on politicians and top civil servants. PSM research has so far focused almost exclusively on public employees, often street-level bureaucrats, and neglected politicians (Ritz, 2015; van der Wal, 2013). Furthermore studies that compare the motivation of senior politicians and administrators – i.e. the government “elite” – are almost completely absent (van der Wal, 2013).

We proceed to provide a review of the sparse literature on the relationship between hierarchical position and PSM and the few studies, which focus on the PSM of senior politicians and administrators in representative democracy.

**PSM and hierarchical position**

The public sector is characterized by heterogeneity (i.e. different public service missions, policy tasks, organizational context, and working conditions) (Anderfuhrren-Biget, Varone, & Giauque, 2014). Hence, several scholars have questioned if PSM is evenly distributed in public organizations and whether the concept is applicable on all categories of public employees (Desmarais & Gamassou, 2014; Gabris & Simo, 1995). Thus, the link between organizational hierarchical positions as an aspect and antecedent of PSM is a relevant research object. However, in spite of its relevance this link has
been widely neglected in the literature (Desmarais & Gamassou, 2014). The few studies that have examined PSM and hierarchical position affirm an existing and positive relationship between hierarchical position and PSM indicating that high hierarchical levels are associated with high PSM and vice versa lower hierarchical levels to lower levels of PSM (Desmarais and Gamassou 2014): Bright (2005) analyzes the relationship between location of the public employee in the public organization (in regards to managerial responsibility: public employees being mangers or non-managers) and level of PSM (using Perry’s (1996) 24-item PSM scale) among public employees (N=349) from a large county government in the state of Oregon, U.S. He finds that managers have significantly higher levels of PSM than non-managers, while controlling for various competing explanations (age, education level, gender and minority status). Management level was even found to be a stronger predictor of PSM than personal characteristics. Managers having higher levels of PSM can according to Bright (2005) be either because managers’ tangible needs are satisfied by their greater levels of salary or because managers are socialized through their years of public sector experience to highly value public service work.

Also, Camilleri (2007) finds – when examining antecedents affecting PSM among 2,135 public employees at Maltese government ministries – that job grade as an personal attribute has a moderate positive correlation with the PSM dimensions (using Perry’s (1996) 24-item PSM scale), suggesting that as an individual moves up the organizational hierarchy his/her needs to serve within the public sector are strengthened (Camilleri, 2007).

Together these findings suggest that public employees who have high levels of PSM are those working at the highest levels within public organizations. However, research on the preponderant dimensions of PSM according to hierarchical positions is particularly limited (Desmarais and Gamassou, 2014).

In an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative differences between different categories of public employees in terms of PSM, Desmarais and Gamassou (2014) do not – unlike the studies above – find differences in overall levels of PSM distinguishing between different categories of public employees according to hierarchical position (in terms of level of education and whether or not they supervise public employees). Rather they point to the complexity and the diversity of the motivations of public sector employees: Their results show differences in motivation according to hierarchical position indicating that public employees working as blue-collar workers or direct supervisors are
more motivated by compassion than middle managers, who seem to be more motivated by commitment to public interest. According to Desmarais and Gamassou (2014) this can be explained by the fact that “workers and direct supervisors are more exposed to the users and their problems” (Desmarais and Gamassou 2014:144) than middle managers are.

In a study by Anderfuhren-Biget, Varone and Giauque (2014), the relationship between the policy environment of civil servants, i.e. policy domain and stages of the policy cycle (tasks related to either policy formulation, policy implementation or internal services), and four dimensions of PSM is analyzed. It is hypothesized that civil servants working in different policy domains and stages of the policy cycle are diversely motivated by the four sub-dimensions of PSM: E.g. that civil servants in charge of policy formulation have a higher level of “attraction to policy-making” and “commitment to the public interest”, whereas civil servants in charge of policy implementation have a higher level of “compassion” and “commitment to the public interest”. In accordance with their expectation, Anderfuhren-Biget, Varone and Giauque (2014) find that civil servants who mainly perform tasks in relation to the formulation of public policies are those who are most attracted by politics (attraction to policy-making), whereas civil servants working in the welfare sector implementing public policies into practice show the greatest level of “compassion” compared to civil servants working in other policy domains.

Summing up, the literature suggests a link and a positive relationship between PSM and hierarchical position in an organization. Firstly suggesting that overall level of PSM is higher for those public employees working at the apex of public organizations. Secondly suggesting a diversity of forms and dimensions of PSM according to hierarchical position – where “attraction to policy making” and “commitment to the public interest” seem to be preponderant dimensions of PSM among civil servants performing tasks in relation to public policy formulation.

Based on these findings, what does then characterize PSM of the persons at the highest echelons of public organizations? Moreover, do we see any differences when we compare political and administrative elites in public sector organizations?
PSM of high-ranking politicians and civil servants

So far, based on preliminary search, we have found only one paper that focus on and explicitly compare the PSM of political and administrative elites (van der Wal, 2013). Besides that we found two papers focusing on the PSM of local councilors: one in Denmark (Pedersen, 2014) and one in Switzerland (Ritz, 2015).

Van der Wal’s study (2013) of PSM differences between administrative and political elites is based on 94 qualitative interviews with senior politicians and administrators in the Netherlands, EU and USA, and elicits, ranks and compare initial and current sector motivation among politicians and public managers. In terms of current job motivation both the political (39 interviews) and administrative (55 interviews) elite has as their two top priorities “to contribute to, improve or “serve” society” and “the functions complexity, challenges, and relevance (“interesting work”)” (Table 3 page 754). The first of these resembles the Commitment to the Public Interest (CPI) dimension in PSM (see above). However, the study also suggest motivational differences across the two elite groups: While political elites are motivated by being in power and in the spotlight, administrative elites are motivated by being close to power and operating behind the scenes. Furthermore, motivation of the administrative elites seems slightly more extrinsic compared to political elites (van der Wal, 2013).

Pedersen’s study (2014) of Danish local government councilors is based on a survey of 1,336 local council members (excl. mayors) in Denmark and analyzes the relationship between two pro-social dimensions (Commitment to Public Interest (CPI) and User Orientation (UO)) – and behavioral outcomes (hours spent on working in the political councils and political influence). Both dimensions of pro-social motivation are focused on doing good but differ in regards to whom the pro-social motivation (doing good) is directed towards: CPI is directed towards the public at large, whereas UO is directed towards specific individual others (Pedersen, 2014). Pedersen finds that the two different dimensions of pro-social motivation have different behavioral outcomes. CPI is stronger associated with behavioral outcomes than UO: Councillors with high CPI tend to spend more time on work related to the local council and have more influence in the councils than councillors with high UO. Furthermore, according to Pedersen this association is moderated by the fit between the characteristics and attitudes of the councillors and the working environment (Person-Environment fit) (Pedersen, 2014).
Ritz’s study (2015) of Swiss local government is based on a survey of 8,111 local government councillors in Switzerland. The study analyzes whether self-interested motives (Attraction to Policy-Making and career orientation) play a distinct role concerning behavioral outcomes (working hours spent per week on executive work, for party activities and for volunteering activities, and politicians intention to run for re-election) of politicians when compared to other-interested motives (Commitment to the public interest). Generally, the study finds that various motives guide politicians and have implication for behavioral outcome of politicians – both self-interested and other-interested motives.

In sum, with the exception of the study of van der Wal (2013) studies explicitly comparing PSM of political and administrative elites are completely absent. In addition, existing studies have focused primarily on PSM at the level of public sector street-level bureaucrats (often in comparison with street-level bureaucrats employed in the private sector) and have rarely analyzed PSM at the top of the hierarchy of the public sector among top civil servants and even less among politicians.

**Aim and hypotheses**

Thus, the initial aim of this paper is to analyze the ability of the concept of PSM to describe the motivational orientations of public sector political and administrative elites. Is the concept of PSM – which primarily has been examined at the level of public sector street-level bureaucrats – applicable to administrative and political members of the top of the hierarchy of the public sector as well? Furthermore, if the concept shows to be applicable to the two governmental elites, we particularly want to analyze what motivate political and administrative elites. Furthermore, do we see some differences? E.g., do the administrative elite display a higher level of PSM than the political elite does? In addition, do these potential tendencies differ depending on antecedents such as gender, education and hierarchical position of the political and administrative elites?

Additionally, are some of the four PSM dimensions more widespread among political and administrative elites than other dimensions? (For example, are the CPI and ATP dimensions of PSM more widespread among political and administrative elites than COM and CWS cf. previous research?)

Since we have so little previous research on the importance of hierarchical position and of the differences between politicians and administrators in terms of PSM, our approach is exploratory. Nonetheless, a few hypotheses seems plausible and render themselves testable by means of the data of the current study.
Based on previous research we have an expectation that the PSM dimension Attraction to Policy Making (ATP) is positively linked to hierarchical position both when comparing managers on different management levels and comparing mayors and administrative managers.

H1: The higher in the administrative hierarchy, the higher degree of PSM related to attraction to policy-making (ATP). Thus, we expect;

H1a: city managers to have higher ATP motivation than sector-managers
H1b: sector-managers to have higher ATP motivation than lower ranking managers

H2: Mayors will have higher ATP motivation than any of the managers in the administration

Concerning the PSM dimension of Commitment to Public Interest (CPI) we have an expectation that CPI is high for both mayors and managers. However, we do not have any relevant arguments regarding as to why the level of commitment to public interest (CPI) should differ between these two groups. Thus, we expect that;

H3: Commitment to public interest (CPI) is high for both mayors and managers

We also expect that the PSM dimension of compassion (COM) is stronger related to the lower levels of the hierarchy working closer to the users of the welfare services of local government.

H4: The lower in the administrative hierarchy, the higher degree of PSM related to compassion (COM)

Finally, we find it plausible that commitment to the universal welfare state (CWS) will be somewhat stronger related to the public managers than to the mayors. While politicians may be motivated to work in politics for a number of reasons and some of them may be to reduce the size and importance of the welfare state, we suggest that administrative public managers on average are likely to be more dedicated to the services of the universal welfare state. Thus, we suggest that;
H5: Mayors’ PSM are less strongly related to commitment to the universal welfare state (CWS) than administrative public managers

The Context of Danish Mayors and High-Ranking Public Managers in Local Government

Denmark is divided into 98 municipalities (Danish: Kommuner) (populations of 1,800 – 613,000). Danish municipalities are multi-purpose organizations taking care of a number of services of which the three major public service areas are a) technical services (e.g. public roads and parks), b) education and culture (e.g. primary schools and libraries) and c) social services (e.g. senior care and care of physically and mentally disabled citizens).

Each municipality is led by a democratic elected council, which elects a chairperson among its members – the mayor (Danish: Borgmester). It is the responsibility of the mayor to prepare, convene and chair the meetings of the local council. Furthermore, the mayor chairs the Finance Committee and is the chief executive of the local administration. Normally, the administration is divided into several departments related to different service areas.

In our study, we focus on and include mayors and top civil servants in Danish local government – the latter comprising city managers and top managers in charge of the three major public service areas (see above). The city manager (Danish: Kommunaldirektør) work in close cooperation with the mayor and is by and large an equivalent to a CEO. Together with the mayor, these managers (level 1 and 2) form the administrative board of directors in most Danish municipalities.

Research design, data and methods

The analysis carried out draws from data from two online surveys; one survey conducted among the mayors in Danish municipalities and another survey conducted among top managers in Danish municipalities. We conducted both surveys from May to June 2016 among all 98 Danish local governments. The respondents of our survey of Danish mayors included mayors of 97 Danish municipalities\(^1\). The respondents of our surveys of top managers included 1,097 top administrative managers in Denmark consists of 98 municipalities which, in principle, gives a population of 98 mayors. However, one mayor passed away in the days immediately after the questionnaire was administered. Thus, this gives a real population of 97 mayors in the period of relevance.
Danish local government including city managers (level 1), top administrative managers (level 2) in charge of the three most important service areas in terms of size and salience (technical services, social services, and education and culture) and managers at level 3 in the municipality as well as some other managerial positions.

The survey of top managers is a follow-up on previously conducted surveys (1980, 1992, 1995, 2006 and 2008) of top managers in Danish local government. The survey of Danish mayors is part of an international comparative research project *Political Leaders in European Cities*. A multi-item battery measuring PSM was added to the survey of Danish mayors allowing a comparative analysis of PSM of the mayors and top managers in Danish local government.

Both questionnaires were pretested by mayors and top managers, respectively. The questionnaires were administered electronically be means of SurveyXact (by Ramboll Management Consulting) and distributed by email informing respondents about the scientific investigation and providing them with a link to the online survey. The collected data from both surveys were transferred to the Statistical Software STATA in order to carry out the data processing.

Among the 97 mayors 53 % (n=51) have answered the questionnaire (Bertelsen & Hansen, 2016a). Among the 1,097 top managers 59 % (n=649) have answered the questionnaire (Bertelsen & Hansen, 2016b). Among these are 94 city managers. 66 out of the 94 city managers have answered the questionnaire, resulting in a response rate of 70 % for this specific group. The data does not contain systematic imbalance regarding gender, population size and geographical position, with the exception of a slight under-representation of the largest Danish municipalities (Bertelsen & Hansen, 2016a, 2016b). The number of responses to the measure of PSM included in the present analysis range from 569 to 590 respondents.

**Measures**

In this study we analyze four central sub-dimensions of PSM: Attraction to policymaking (ATP), Commitment to public interest/civic duty (CPI), Compassion (COM) and Commitment to the Welfare State (CWS) based on a 15 item measure of PSM. Apart from the Commitment to the Welfare State (CWS) dimension, the measurement of PSM is based on Coursey & Pandey’s (2007) shortened version of Perry’s (1996) survey based PSM measurement scale and previous Danish operationalization (Andersen, Pallesen, & Holm Pedersen, 2011). Perry’s measurement scale is widely used and has been tested and validated by previous research. To fully cover what PSM conceptually means in this local governmental context, the dimension of Commitment to the Welfare State (CWS) is added. This
dimension is based on Vandenabeele’s (2008) additional dimension of ‘democratic governance’, that refers to governance values considered typical for public services in democratic regimes, such as ‘accountability’, ‘equality’ and ‘permanence of the civil service’ (Vandenabeele, 2008). Table 1 presents an overview of the 15 questionnaire items and how these items are associated with the four different PSM dimensions in the study.

*** Around here Table 1 ****

The overall question was: “Senior civil servants/ politicians in the public sector might have different perceptions and are in their work motivated by different aspects of their job. Below are presented a number of claims which we ask you to indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with”. Responses to all PSM questionnaire items were in a 5-point Likert agreement scale in which 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree”\(^2\), thus higher values on each item imply greater PSM. Furthermore, the analysis includes a number of control variables: gender, position and education. Table 2 presents descriptive statistic for each of the 15 PSM items and the control variables.

*** Around here Table 2 ****

Each dimension of PSM is constructed as a latent variable using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Table 3 shows that all items (except three items: 7, 8 and 15) have sufficiently large factor loadings on the four dimensions. All four PSM dimensions can – to a different extent – be found among mayors and high-ranking public managers. Thus, generally our analysis suggest that all of the four PSM dimensions applied in this study can be applied on mayors and high-ranking public managers.

*** Around here Table 3 ****

The three items with insufficient factor loading are highlighted in table 3. We suppose that the insufficient factor loadings are due to the specific wording of the items, e.g. as ‘duty’ has a different

\(^2\) Response categories: 1=Strongly disagree; 2=partly disagree; 3=neutral; 4=partly agree; 5=strongly agree (+ don’t know).
connotation in a Danish context and these formulations in general are not fit for a Danish management context. A relatively high percentage of respondents answering “don’t know” in these specific items further confirms our supposition. As a result, these three items are excluded from succeeding analysis. Consequently, each of the four dimensions consists of three items.

**Structural equation models**

To measure the relation between hierarchical positions of the political and administrative leaders and the four dimensions of PSM four simple and non-recursive structural equation models (SEM) have been constructed. The four models are overall all identical apart from the dependent variable, which changes in each model. The models test the relation between hierarchical position, gender and PSM in order to investigate to which degree hierarchical positions is correlated to each of the four PSM dimensions. As the PSM dimensions are latent variables which cannot be sufficiently measured using a single item SEM is chosen as the statistical method for of analysis as this models allows regressions with latent variables. SEM also makes it possible to construct models with mediating variables which is suitable here as we expect gender as well as education to have some direct effect on hierarchical position.

In each model hierarchical position and gender are explanatory variables and the respective PSM dimension of the model is the dependent variable. Gender is expected not only to affect PSM score also the hierarchical position. Hierarchical position consists of four categories: Mayors, city managers, administrations managers (e.g. the manager of the social administration in the municipality) and lower administration managers. As it is difficult to place mayors (the political leader of the municipality) in a clear hierarchical relation to city managers (the administrative of the municipality) the variable hierarchical position is used as a dummy variable using the category “lower administration managers” as category of reference.

**Findings**

We analyze what motivate political and administrative elites. Are some of the four PSM dimensions more widespread than others? To do so, we have constructed four indexes based on the factor analysis shown in table 3. As each index is based on three Likert scaled items ranging from 1 to 5, the minimum value of each index is 3 (very low degree of the particular motivation) and the maximum is 15 (very high degree of the particular motivation). Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution between the four PSM dimensions.
As figure 1 clearly shows, the PSM dimensions Commitment to Public Interest (CPI) and Attraction to Policy-making (ATP) are much more widespread among mayors and public managers than are Compassion (COM) and Commitment to the universal welfare state (CWS). In general, respondents report very high level of CPI and ATP and comparatively low levels of COM and CWS. This partly support our hypothesis 1, as in general the high-ranking public managers to a great extent are motivated by CPI and ATP.

Thirdly, we analyze if any of our explanatory variables (gender, education and hierarchical position) can explain the general differences in motivational dimensions. Figure 2-5 present the result of our analysis.

The four figures (2-5) show rather similar results. For all four models, there are little or no effects of position and gender on the PSM dimensions. In model 1 (figure 2) the relatively small effects are significant but do not support our hypothesis. In the remaining three models there are very little effects and they are insignificant. We can therefore not find support for our hypotheses in the models. When assessing the model fit of the four models, it is clear that the models do not fit the data sufficiently (see table 4). Even though all models are significant none of the four models meet the minimum criterions for good fit on Root Mean Squared Error of approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) or the Standardized Root Mean squared residual (SRMR). This means that the models and the hypotheses relating to the models needs further revision and adjustment and therefore cannot be used in the present form.

**Discussion and conclusion**

PSM refers to the motivation people have to contribute to society (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008) and is an increasingly researched and debated concept in public management and public administration research (Ritz et al., 2016; Vandenabeele, Ritz, & Neumann, 2018). Whereas previous research generally has focused on PSM among various public employees as firefighters, police officers, nurses,
social workers, teachers, physiotherapists etc., (i.e. public street-level bureaucrats), this present study contributes to the growing field of research on PSM by explicitly comparing and reporting the level, nature and antecedents of PSM among political and administrative local government elites (mayors and high-ranking public managers) – a group of persons working at the apex of public organizations that appears to have been relatively unexplored in the extant literature on PSM. Thus, this paper confronts a gap in the PSM literature – the lack of studies focusing on politicians and top civil servants. In this paper, we ask: is the concept and measurement of PSM applicable to local administrative and political elites. Do PSM differ between top politicians and public managers? In addition, can institutionalized hierarchical positions in local representative democracy (as mayors, city-managers and other senior managers in local government) have an impact on potential variations in PSM?

First of all, our analysis confirms that the measurement of PSM is applicable to administrative and political elites in the public sector, even though the concept primarily has been applied at the level of public sector street-level bureaucrats. However, most of our proposed hypotheses are not supported. We do find, however, a high degree of consensus among the political and administrative elites in public sector organizations in relation to PSM. Generally, both elite groups have high scores on the PSM dimensions CPI and ATP (thus, H3 is supported). This interestingly shows what motivates mayors and high-ranking public managers is ‘commitment to public interest’ and ‘attraction to policy-making’, when compared to the dimensions ‘compassion’ (COM) and ‘commitment to the universal welfare state’ (CWS). Even though PSM is perceived as a mix of affective, normative and rational motives (James L Perry & Wise, 1990), certain dimensions thus seem to be more predominant than others among political and administrative elites as one group taken together. Local government political and administrative elites seem to be motivated more by rational and norm-based motives (ATP and CPI) than affective motives (COM) and CWS. These findings confirm previous research (Anderfuhrren-Biget et al., 2014; Desmarais & Gamassou, 2014) that points to a link between different dimensions of PSM and organizational hierarchical position: “Attraction to policy making” and “commitment to the public interest” seem to be preponderant dimensions of PSM among persons at the upper echelons of public organizations. Likewise, COM and CWS dimensions appear to be less widespread opposed to street-level bureaucrats who often are most motivated by COM. Consequently, this implies a fundamental difference in type of PSM between individuals at upper and lower echelons of public organizations. This difference in PSM could, in turn, be the underlying reason for
a lack of communication and reciprocal distrust between street-level bureaucrats and executives in public sector organizations.

Moreover, no significant differences seem to appear in our analyses of PSM between mayors and high-ranking public managers in Danish local government. While we find differences in the PSM among our sample of mayors and high-ranking public managers, these differences are not significantly related to hierarchical position in the administration or to the position as mayor. Thus, political and administrative elites do not significantly differ regarding PSM but appear to be motivated by certain dimensions of PSM. What characterizes the respondents is that they all are leader of leaders, they are very highly positioned in the public organizations and are deeply involved with the management of public organizations. These common features might explain why differences in their hierarchical position are not significantly related to the observed differences in PSM. Moreover, research on the origins of PSM argues that PSM originates from the institutional environment to which an individual is exposed, for example organizational values. Thus, in public organizations public values are likely to influence the presence of PSM through processes of socialization, identification, culture or social learning (James L. Perry & Vandenabeele, 2008; Vandenabeele, 2008). Furthermore, PSM can be understood as both a dynamic attribute and as an individual stable predisposition (James L Perry & Wise, 1990): On the one hand, mayors and top administrative managers are both engaged in tasks linked to policy making and formulation. Thus, PSM among these individuals could be seen as a dynamic attribute that is created through processes of norm and value shaping socialization qua their similar work environment and hierarchical position at the apex of public organizations. In this perspective, the work has a potentially socializing effect on the individual’s PSM. Mayors and administrative managers adapt to the organizational and work environment and are thus expressing the same dimensions of PSM according to organizational socialization processes and a logic of appropriateness (March & Olsen, 1989). On the other hand, the high degree of consensus on PSM among the political and administrative elites in local government could also be a result of attraction and selection mechanisms. In this perspective, individuals who are oriented and attracted toward work on political decision-making seek and select employment in an institutional and work environment that corresponds with their orientations and because of their PSM. However, due to the research design in this study, data do not allow us to making conclusions on the direction of causality, i.e. if PSM is caused by attraction–selection or socialization. Although making a significant contribution to the literature
on PSM in terms of a comparative perspective on PSM among local government political and administrative elites, some limitations thus rest upon this study. In addition to limitations of cross-sectional data, the use of self-report measures is also a limitation. Similar to other studies, this study measure PSM using self-report data. However, these measures can be inaccurate as respondents may come up with post hoc explanations or justifications or answer in a more socially acceptable way, which could lead to social desirability bias (Kim & Kim, 2016) and thus threaten the validity of the measure.
References


Figures

Figure 1: Frequency distribution between the four PSM dimensions, scale from minimum 3 to maximum 15, N= 556.
Figure 2: Model 1, Attraction to public policy making
Figure 3: Model 2, commitment to public interest
Figure 4: Model 3, Compassion

-0.14**
-Mayor (dummy 4)

-0.18**
-City manager (dummy 3)

0.1*
-Gender

0.03***
-Sector manager (dummy 2)

-0.03=

0.75***

Difficulties containing my feelings when I see people in distress

0.5***

Reminded by daily events about how dependent we on each other are

0.3***

Compassion for people in distress even though they are not willing to help themselves.

0.2***
Figure 5: Model 4, commitment to the welfare state

Commitment to the welfare state

- Gender
- Mayor (dummy 4)
- City manager (dummy 3)
- Sector manager (dummy 2)

Most welfare state programs and activities are indispensable
Everybody is entitled to good service
Even in the major crises, public service should be maintained

Path coefficients:
- Gender to Mayor: -0.13***
- Gender to City manager: -0.17***
- Gender to Sector manager: 0.03***
- Mayor to Commitment: -0.01*
- City manager to Commitment: 0.03*
- Sector manager to Commitment: 0.02*
- Commitment to Most welfare state: 0.51***
- Commitment to Everybody: 0.79***
- Commitment to Even in the major crises: 0.66***

Significance levels:
- * p < 0.1
- ** p < 0.05
- *** p < 0.01
### Tables

**Table 1. PSM dimensions and questionnaire items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSM dimension</th>
<th>Understanding of dimension</th>
<th>Questionnaire item (translated)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Attraction to Policy Making   | Motivation to improve decision-making concerning public services to help others and society | 1. I generally consider politics positive  
2. I find the political decision-making process interesting  
3. It motivates me to help improve public services                                                                                                                                 |
| Commitment to the Public Interest/civic duty | Motivation to deliver public services to serve the relevant society, based on values and duties | 4. I unselfishly contribute to the society  
5. Meaningful public service is very important to me  
6. I prefer that civil servants act for the benefit of the society even though this may harm my personal interest  
7. I consider public service my civic duty  
8. It is hard for me to get intensely interested in what is going on in my community (reversed) |
| Compassion                    | Emotionally (empathically) based motivation to do good for others by improving public services | 9. It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress  
10. I am often reminded by daily events about how dependent we are on one another  
11. I have little compassion for people in need who are unwilling to take the first step in helping themselves (reversed) |
| Commitment to the Welfare State | Dedication to the services of the universal welfare state | 12. Most welfare state programs and activities are indispensable  
13. Everyone is entitled to a good service even if it costs a lot of money  
14. Even in the case of major crisis, public service should be maintained  
15. It is important that public servants account for all the costs they make |

Note: Highlighted questionnaire items (7, 8 and 15) are excluded from the final analysis due to insufficient factor loadings
### Table 2. Descriptive statistics for variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I generally consider politics positive</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I find the political decision-making process interesting</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. It motivates me to help improve public services</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I unselfishly contribute to the society</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Meaningful public service is very important to me</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I prefer that civil servants act for the benefit of the society even though this may harm my personal interest</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I consider public service my civic duty</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. It is hard for me to get intensely interested in what is going on in my community (reversed)</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am often reminded by daily events about how dependent we are on one another</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I have little compassion for people in need who are unwilling to take the first step in helping themselves (reversed)</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Most welfare state programs and activities are indispensable</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Everyone is entitled to a good service even if it costs a lot of money</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Even in the case of major crisis, public service should be maintained</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. It is important that public servants account for all the costs they make</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1193</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical position</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26
| Education |   |   |   |   |
Table 3. Factor loadings for Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Policy Indicators:</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consider politics positive</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in political decision-making</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated to improve public services</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment Indicators</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unselfish contribution to society</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of meaningful public service</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil servants should act for the benefit of the society</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider working in the public sector a civil duty</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in local area</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compassion Indicators</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties containing my feelings when I see people in distress</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminded by daily events about how dependent we are on each other</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have compassion for people in distress even though they are not willing to help themselves.</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welfare indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most welfare state programs and activities are indispensable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everybody is entitled to good service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even in the major crises, public service should be maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important that politicians and civil servants are held responsible for their expenses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Fit statistics and adjusted R² values for the four models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit measure</th>
<th>Model 1, ATP</th>
<th>Model 2, CPI</th>
<th>Model 3, COM</th>
<th>Model 4, CWS</th>
<th>Criterion for good fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P&gt;Chi²</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>&lt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root Mean Squared Error of approximation (RMSEA)</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>&lt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Fit Index (CFI)</td>
<td>0.807</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td>&gt; 0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Root Mean squared residual (SRMR)</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>&lt; 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explained variance on dependent variable (adjusted R²)</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5: Hypotheses compared to findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Support from findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: The higher in the administrative hierarchy, the higher degree of PSM related to attraction to policy-making (ATP). Thus, we expect H1a: City-managers to have higher ATP + CPI and motivation than sector-managers H1b: Sector-managers to have higher ATP + CPI than lower ranking managers</td>
<td>H1: Partly supported H1a + H1b: Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: Mayors will have higher ATP motivation than any of the managers in the administration</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: Commitment to public interest (CPI) is high for both mayors and managers</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4: The lower in the administrative hierarchy, the higher degree of PSM related to compassion (COM)</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5: Mayors PSM are less strongly related to commitment to the universal welfare state (CWS) than administrative public managers</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>