Wanting to Work or Working for Wants: Intrinsic Work Preference among Educated Female Public Servants in Pakistan

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Abstract

Constructive job attitude among female public servants is a pre-requisite for success of programs for gender mainstreaming in the public sector. In this paper empirical evidence is presented regarding the extent and nature of autonomous work preference among female public servants in Pakistan. After a thorough review of relevant literature the Work Motivation and Commitment Index (WMCI) was developed. It is shown that WMCI is a valid and reliable measure of productive work attitude among female public servants which considers the social realities of Pakistani women. Descriptive statistics of WMCI reveal that the two most important sources of intrinsic motivation for female public servants are need for self actualization and psychological satisfaction from performing productive activities. Although many women face difficulty in being equally dedicated to their family and work responsibilities, work commitment and public service motivation levels were found to be quite satisfactory.

Key Words: Work Preference, Public Service Motivation, Gender Mainstreaming, Public Sector Organizations.

1. Introduction

There exists a positive connection between intrinsic motivation to work and worker productivity (Benabou and Tirole,2003). For female workers their motivation and commitment to work is also an important factor in their decision to join and stay within the workforce (Bielby and Bielby, 1984). Public servants, in particular, need to be self directed and derive satisfaction from their work irrespective of material incentives, due to non-commercial and pro-social nature of their jobs. Besides, in many of the bureaucratic public sector organizations of Pakistan, very often rewards and punishments are not given on actual performance but on political affiliation of the worker [Shafqat(1999); Cheema and Asad (2006); Iqbal (2006)]. This means that non-serious workers can under perform with impunity as long as they are serving the political ends of their patrons. However, under performance of female workers is noticed more than under performance of male workers for two reasons. First, women workers are in minority in the workforce so their behavior is more closely observed. Second, under performance of females on the job gives credence to the general opinion that women use family responsibilities as an excuse to avoid work. In these circumstances, female public servants must demonstrate constructive job attitude if they are to be considered as serious workers capable of contributing towards attainment of organizational goals.

In this paper empirical evidence is presented regarding the extent and nature of autonomous work preference among female public servants. The assumption is that, if women are pursuing a job only to earn money or to avail other benefits then they would not be interested in demanding opportunities to excel at their jobs. On the contrary a preference for work would give female public servants the capacity to challenge socio-cultural and structural hurdles in their advancement.

2. Review of Literature

It is well-established that policies for women's advancement[1] and public sector reforms[2] in developing countries often fail to yield desirable results due to lack of involvement of the target population.

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[1] See for example, Jahan,(1995); Commonwealth Secretariat, (1999); March et al, 1999;Sen, (1999).

Women's participation and empowerment are important ingredients for success of gender mainstreaming programs. Of the three dimensions of empowerment: agency, resources and achievements (Kabeer,2003), the first is by far the most relevant in professional work situations (Malhotra,2003). An individual's agency to excel at her or his job is a concept closely related to work motivation and commitment. The later constructs are part of the work preference attitude which has been demonstrated to lead to productive behavior in organizational settings [Chughtai and Zafar,(2006); Laka-Mathebula, (2004)]. For public sector workers, "Public Service Motivation" is a concept widely used by scholars in the field of Public Administration to refer to preference for public service.

Many definitions of intrinsic work motivation can be found in existing literature in the fields of psychology and organizational behavior. For example, according to Amabile et al. (1994): "(Intrinsic motivation) is the motivation to engage in work primarily for its own sake, because the work itself is interesting, engaging, or in some way satisfying." In the words of Reinholt (2009), "intrinsically motivated behavior… is behavior freely engaged in; which the individual finds interesting; from which the individual experiences a feeling of autonomy, competence, and social relatedness and from which the individual derives spontaneous satisfaction and enjoyment." Several scales for measuring intrinsic motivation have been used for psychological and organizational research.[3]Recently behavioral economists have also started questioning the omission of intrinsic motivation from conventional economic models. The Motivation Crowding Theory by Frey and Jegen (2001) postulates that monetary incentives and punishments can "crowd out' intrinsic motivation.

Another important concept related to work preference is work commitment. According to Bielby and Bielby (1984), female work commitment can be defined as : "the centrality of the work role as a source of intrinsic satisfaction . . . (It includes) plans, expectations, preference, or aspirations for a particular combination of work and family roles . . . Female work commitment reflects a complex lifestyle choice in which both, occupation and family involvement are embedded." After an extensive review of related literature DeKlerk (2001) finds that four facts are usually used to describe work commitment: work values, job involvement, career commitment and organizational commitment. DeKlerk (2001) explains that values are normative standards about what is desirable and enable an individual to choose among alternative modes of behavior. Career commitment is one's motivation to work in a chosen vocation, to set career goals and to resist career disruptions in the face of adversity (Carson and Bedeian, 1994). Job involvement is an individual's psychological identification with a job. Job-involved persons see their job as an important part of their self-concept (Zatz, 1995). Finally in the words of Meyer and Allen (1991) organizational commitment: "is an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organization." Separate scales to measure all four factes of work commitement have been developed[4].

Besides intrinsic work motivation and work commitment, public servants who are dedicated to their jobs have public service motivation. Many definitions of this term can be found in literature, emanating predominantly from the field of Public Administration. For example Perry and Wise (1990) define public service motivation as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions." Vandenabeele et al. (2006) believe that attainment of social values for which the public sector has been constituted, is an important component of public service motivation. According to Rainey (1982) public servants and civil servants are less motivated by material incentives and career progress than employees and managers in private firms. On the contrary, they tend to be motivated by more intrinsic motives such as civic duty. Perry's (1996) scale for measuring public service motivation remains the most popular tool among researchers for measuring this concept.[5] Literature pertaining to conditions for female employment in Pakistan shows that discrimination against women abounds in the Pakistani labor market.

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[2]See for example, Haque, (1998); Schacter,(2000); and Therkildsen (2008)

[3] For example, the Work Preference Inventory (WPI) by Amabile et al. (1994), The General Causality Orientations Scale by Deci and Ryan (1985) and The Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) (University of Rochester, 2008).

[4] For example, the Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP) is a measure of work values (Miller et al., 2002); Kanungo's Job Involvement Questionnaire (JIQ) measures the perceptions that individuals have about the need satisfying potentialities of their jobs (Zatz, 1995); Career Commitment Measure (CCM) developed by Carson and Bedeian(1994) taps the directional, salience and persistence components of an individual's dedication to her profession; Allen and Meyer(1990) have developed the Ogranizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) to measure Affective, Normative Contiuance Commitment

[5] This measurement instrument consists of four dimensions: attraction to public policy, commitment to public interest, compassion and self-sacrifice.

There has been a plethora of studies proving existence of a gender wage gap in Pakistan [Ashraf and Ashraf, (1993); Siddique and Siddique, (1998); Nasir and Nazli, (2000); Aslam, (2006); Siddique et al., (2006); and Sabir and Aftab,(2007)]

Another form of gender discrimination rampant in Pakistani labor market is occupational segregation. According to Nasir (2005), occupational segregation in the formal sector of Pakistan, causes males to be sorted out in high-paying, production-related and administrative occupations, while females to be concentrated in low-paying service related occupations. Some studies show that highly educated women in Pakistan are more inclined to work in the public sector where there is less gender discrimination than in the private sector [Hyder and Reilly, (2005) ; Aslam and Kingdon, (2009) ; Ahmed and Hyder .2009]. However, evidence against the existence of a 'glass-ceiling'[6] in public sector organizations of Pakistan provided by these studies is not convincing. For example, in the study by Hyder and Reilly (2005) women constituted only 12% of public sector employees in the sample. Therefore their finding that at the 90th wage percentile women gain the advantage of receiving nearly as much pay as their male counterparts is meaningless because only a miniscule number of women reach that level. Moreover, by focusing mainly on wage inequality economic research investigating labor market gender discrimination in Pakistan remains incomplete. Particularly, the connection between women's ability to challenge gender discrimination and their intrinsic preference for work is an under studied area. What follows in this paper is an effort to, at least partially, fill this research gap.

3.1 Methodology: Index Development

To measure work preference, Work Motivation and Commitment Index (WMCI) was developed**.** WMCI consisted of 15 statements and three sub-dimensions which were namely: Intrinsic Work Motivation (IWM); Work and Organizational Commitment (WOC) and Public Service Motivation (PSM). IWM dimension measured the drive and preference of female public servants to undertake professional work for satisfaction of their self-actualization needs. IWM assessed enthusiastic work behavior which is not initiated due to extrinsic incentives like pay, perks or job security. It consisted of five items which measured:

- sense of accomplishment;
- passion for professional development;
- desire to engage in productive activities;
- need for self-actualization;
- intrinsic fulfillment from job performance.

In order to avoid social desirability bias, each item included comparison between the element of intrinsic motivation with an external incentive for work performance such as attractive pay, job security, economic compulsions, financial independence and monetary rewards.

The WOC dimension measured the importance which female workers attach to their professional work roles. It also examined the extent to which these workers feel commitment towards high-quality performance of their current and future organizational duties. The WOC dimension consisted of six items measuring:

- the priority female workers give to their organizational work against minor household engagements;
- their long range career plans;
- pride in their organization and their work;
- how well they can stay focused on their work in the office;
- whether they are quality-conscious regarding their work;
- their desire to continue working in the organization.

The PSM subscale measured the willingness of workers to engage in selfless behaviors for the good of others without seeking reciprocal benefits for themselves. It also examined the capacity of public servants to maintain their pro-social disposition in the face of opposition. The items in the final version of the PSM subscale measure:

- capacity to help bring about positive social change;
- prestige in being a public servant;
- ability to confront higher authorities if collective interest is threatened;
- sense of satisfaction in delivering public services.

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[6] Glass ceilings are the barriers in professional development of women . The measure of glass ceiling used by Hyder and Reilly (2005) as well as Ahmed and Hyder (2009) is the increase in gender wage gap throughout the wage distribution.

Reliability of this Index was checked using Cronbach Alpha Reliability scores, Item-total correlations and Inter-scale correlations. As can be seen from Table 1 alpha reliabilities of WMCI and its sub-scales are all within the 'good' to 'acceptable' range for social science research. Scores above mid-point of each scale represent positive work attitude, while scores below this level signify low work motivation and commitment. Item-total correlations shown in Table 2 verify that all items on the WMCI discriminate well between committed and motivated workers and workers not having such attitude toward their work. Alpha-reliability of WMCI would not increase above the 0.720 mark, if any item on the final version of this index is dropped. This means that all items are relevant.

As shown in Table 3, inter-scale correlations are all significant at $p < 0.01$. At the same time these correlations are not too high. This suggests that the different dimensions are distinct but can be fused to constitute a single coherent scale.

3.2 Methodology: Data Collection

The WMCI was part of a research instrument which was administered through face to face interviews with 300 women working in different public sector organizations. The survey was geographically restricted to the city of Islamabad. Being federal capital of Pakistan, this city is headquarter of most government ministries and administrative agencies. Public servants from all over Pakistan's four provinces have settled here and have given the city a culture which is representative of the norms and traditions of the entire nation. A total of 24 organizations were surveyed: 10 administrative units, 6 government hospitals and 8 public sector universities. Purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents belonging to different public sector organizations. Population was restricted to female public servants having at least 14 years of education because educated women have the requisite human capital to pioneer changes in their organizations for betterment of all female workers.

4. Analysis of Descriptive Statistics

Table 4 shows survey results related to WMCI in condensed form. It can be seen that most respondents (62%) gave more importance to sense of accomplishment instead of a lucrative salary package. Majority of female public servants (65%) considered professional growth comparatively more desirable than performance of the same tasks just to secure a regular income and 66% of survey respondents agreed that their motive to work outside the home was a desire to involve themselves in productive activities and they were not undertaking employment only to support themselves and their families. The two most important sources of intrinsic motivation are need for self actualization and psychological satisfaction from performing productive activities. A vast majority of female personnel (87%) agreed that confined to performing household chores only they would feel frustrated for having wasted their potential. Many women (83%) considered professional work to be psychologically rewarding even in the absence of special monetary rewards.

While work commitment levels among respondents, on the whole, were found to be quite satisfactory, two points of concern regarding commitment become obvious from Table 10-V. First, 38% women admitted to compromising on their work due to their involvement in domestic chores. Second, 48% women believed that the quality of their work depended on the rewards they stand to receive. The question arises, why would women, who state that their primary motive for undertaking employment is intrinsic fulfillment and not access to monetary benefits, believe that quality of their work is linked to extrinsic rewards? Several plausible explanations can be advanced to answer this question. First, quality consciousness in public sector setting is not perceived as being the outcome of intrinsic work motivation but rather it is understood as under-utilized capacity of workers to take on challenging tasks. As extrinsic rewards such as higher pay are often associated with performance of tasks at higher positions in the organizational hierarchy, women who state that the quality of their work will improve if they are given more rewards maybe actually referring to their ability to perform well on higher level posts. Second, it has been argued that sometimes intrinsic motivation to work may not reinforce organizational commitment (Reinhold, 2009).Thus, while most intrinsically motivated individuals are also committed to their work and organizations, anomalies in this relationship are expected. Third, quality of public services is not a well comprehended concept in Pakistan as most of the time public servants are expected only to follow rules and procedures and carry out orders of superiors. Therefore low levels of quality consciousness may actually be a sign of dull and uninspiring jobs in the public sector.

As regards the first point of concern about the difficulty faced by women in being equally committed to their family and work responsibilities , social pressures impinge on women's ability to carry out their official duties in keeping with their potential. It is up to the organizations to accommodate the special social needs of women so that they can contribute fully towards attainment of organizational goals.

Such measures would be fruitful considering that affective commitment levels among female public servants are already quite high as can be interpreted from the result showing 84% of respondents having sense of pride in their work and organizations. An encouraging finding is that the level of public service motivation among the female employees is satisfactory. Most respondents (87%) felt they were able to make significant positive contributions to welfare of fellow citizens. It was stated by 74% of respondents that they defended collective interests and 73% respondents were satisfied working in the public sector. The only gray area in public service motivation is the prestige of government jobs as compared to high level jobs in the private sector. Quite a few respondents (19%) were undecided regarding this item. This probably reflects the erosion in the status of public services in Pakistan over the years which has also been observed by Haque (1998), Shafqat(1999) and Cheema and Asad (2006).

5. Concluding Remarks

Women's professional and ethical behavior is a pre-requisite for success of programs for gender mainstreaming in the public sector. Women workers' job performance has to be a notch above their male colleagues if they are to be considered as assets and not liabilities for the organization, particularly when they are trying to make inroads into traditionally male professions. Positive behavior and effective job performance are outcomes of the right job attitude. It has been established in this paper that majority of female public servants possess high levels of intrinsic work motivation and public service motivation despite the fact that they find it difficult to achieve work-life balance. To better utilize women's talent in the country, career counseling of female graduates should be undertaken in public sector universities to help them overcome their apprehensions and fears in joining the workforce. Public sector employment should be presented as an attractive option to female students from conservative families, which would help them in overcoming family resistance to their jobs given the prestige associated with public services. Finally, facilities such as female rest rooms, day care for infants, transport and housing can go a long way in boosting the morale of the women personnel, reinforcing their work preference.

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Table:1 **Range, Midpoint and Cronbach Alpha Reliabilities of WMCI and its Subscales**

INDICIES	Number of items	Maximum and Minimum values of Index	Mid-point	Alpha Reliability
IWM	5	5 to 25	15	0.672
WOC	6	6 to 30	18	0.598
PSM	4	4 to 20	12	0.601
IWMC	15	15 to 75	45	0.720

Table:2 **Adjusted Item –Total Correlations of WMCI**

	Alpha if item deleted	Adjusted Item – Total Correlation		Alpha if item deleted	Adjusted Item – Total Correlation
Item 1	0. 711	0.481	Item 9	0.711	0.484
Item 2	0.710	0.481	Item 10	0.714	0.575
Item 3	0.692	0.590	Item 11	0.700	0.302
Item 4	0.714	0.432	Item 12	0.710	0.587
Item 5	0.711	0.518	Item 13	0.717	0.344
Item 6	0.718	0.339	Item 14	0.699	0.563
Item 7	0.716	0.412	Item 15	0.700	0.483
Item 8	0.709	0.467			

Table:3 **Pearson's Correlation between Different Dimensions of WMCI**

	IWM	WOC	PSM
IWM	1.00		
WOC	0.343	1.00	
PSM	0.344	0.393	1.00

Table: 4 **WMCI : Descriptive Statistics**

	Items of WMCI	% of respondents who disagreed	% of respondents who were unsure	% of respondents who agreed
Item 1	Working for sense of accomplishment and not just to earn a lucrative salary	32	6	62
Item 2	Having passion for professional growth and not just a regular income*	17	18	65
Item 3	Having desire to engage in productive activities outside the home*	33	1	66
Item 4	Need for self-actualization by undertaking professional work	11	2	87
Item 5	Having intrinsic fulfillment from job performance not monetary rewards	10	7	83
Item 6	Avoidance of conflict between household chores and work responsibility*	38	9	53
Item 7	Having long range career plans despite social constraints *	29	6	65
Item 8	Feel pride in organization and work	10	6	84
Item 9	Able to stay focused on work while in the office	16	4	80
Item 10	Being quality-conscious with respect to work regardless of rewards*	48	4	48
Item 11	Having desire to continue working in the organization to avoid disruptions in life	20	6	74
Item 12	Having capacity to help bring about positive social change.	8	5	87
Item 13	Feel more honor in being a public servant than working on high post in the public sector	20	19	61
Item 14	Having ability to confront higher authorities if collective interest is threatened	17	9	74
Item 15	Having sense of satisfaction in being part of the public sector, no intention to join private sector *	16	11	73

* Item was negatively worded in the research instrument. Before summation of items to obtain score on WMCI, this item was reverse coded. Wording has been changed in this table such that agreement with each item shown here reflects positive work attitude.