

Motivation to Choose a Public Service Career in Developing Countries: Focused on Philippines, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Indonesia

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Abstract

The current case study has examined five public officials from five different developing countries in Asia to find motivation factors to choose public service careers. Based on the case analysis, social recognition of the job, strong bureaucratic power and network, and family-oriented culture are significant drivers for individuals when they choose their career. Public service motivation factors, such as social contribution or serving to public, however, were not the prior reason to choose public service career in this study.

Keywords: Motivation, Public Service Career, Public Sector Motivation, Developing Countries, Case Study

Introduction

Scholars in public management have already found various motivation factors for why people choose public service careers rather than going into the private sector. Public service motivation (PSM), job security, salary, patriotism, altruism, prosocial behavior, job opportunities, opportunities for advancements, and working environment (chance to learn new things, freedom from pressure, freedom from supervision) could all be important findings from previous literature (Perry & Porter, 1982; Rainey, 1982; Wittmer, 1991; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Jurkiewicz, 2000; Perry, 1997; Carpenter, Doverspike, & Miguel, 2012; Vandenabeele, 2008; Van de Walle, Steijn, & Gilke, 2015). These motivation factors help to develop work motivation, reduce turnover rates in the public sector, and provide more employee friendly policies. Most studies, however, are based on the experience and context of the USA or other western developed countries (Houston, 2011; Buelens & Broeck, 2007). Even though few studies have tried to find motivational drivers of public officials in developing countries or Asian countries, most of them are researched using a deductive approach to test or confirm theories previously developed, such as public service motivation

theory, mostly using a survey method (Kim, 2006; Lee & Choi, 2013; Liu, Hui, Hu, Yang, & Yu, 2011).

As a faculty member and former faculty member of the International University of Japan, one of most internationalized universities in Japan, where most students are public officials from developing countries, the authors have found quite varied reasons of the students to choose public service careers, and the most important reasons have not been regarded as important motivation factors in the previous literature. This means public officials in developing countries might have different motives to choose their public service careers from that of public officials in developed countries. Researchers should find the uniqueness of motivation factors in developing countries to give appropriate policy recommendations. Therefore, as a first step of this research project, this study focuses on 5 public officials from the developing countries, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Bangladesh to find motivational drivers to why individuals choose public service careers, considering their political, economic, social, cultural, or administrative environment as well as individual history and characteristics.

Literature Review: Motivation for Public Service

Based on previous literature, many diverse reasons to choose public service careers have been examined. As basic needs, job security and pay are crucial factors many scholars have studied. Public officials usually enjoy strong job security based on public service laws. Public officials in some countries could work until their retirement age. Because of this strong protection, they can keep their position without political intervention and the public could receive consistent public service. This strong job security makes more people want to work in the public sector (Baldwin, 1990). Even in the USA, people who think job security is important prefer working for the government (Lewis & Frank, 2002). Lewis & Frank (2002) suggest that many scholars in public administration suggest that financial rewards and incentives are less important for people who choose public service careers; non-financial benefits are more attractive to them. However, there are growing numbers of studies that have

found that many public officials still value financial rewards or incentives as well as public service motivation (Christensen & Wright, 2011).

There are many other factors previous studies have examined other than job security and financial reward. For example, political beliefs, job opportunities, and demographic factors could be reasons to work for the public sector (Lewis & Frank, 2002). People who perceived special values such as democratic government, social equity, and civil service neutrality might be more motivated to work as public officials (Gabris & Simo, 1995). Gabris & Simo (1995) found that persons who choose public service think security, variety, helping people, and responsibility are important needs for them. Lewis & Frank (2002) found that opportunity to help others and be useful to society, job security, and high income (pay) were main reasons to be public officials in the USA.

Among these motivation factors to work in the public sector, public service motivation (PSM) theory has been most popular over the past decade in public administration and management literature without any suspicion (Bozeman & Su, 2015), since Perry and Wise (1990) suggested public service motives with three dimensions: rational, norm-based, and affective. Public service motivation could be defined as “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (Perry & Wise 1990, p. 368). According to Perry and Wise (1990), individuals who have more public service motivation more likely to work for the public sector, PSM will influence positively on individual’s job performance in public organizations and public organizations should hire people who have the high level of PSM rather than people who more focus on utilitarian incentives. During last 15 years, many scholars have expanded the concept of PSM, developed more sophisticated measurements, and applied in many countries (e.g., Brewer & Selden 1998; Rainey & Steinbauer 1999; Talyor 2008; Wight & Pandey 2008; Kim & Vandenaabeele 2010; Kim et al. 2013). PSM has been often considered as a panacea to cure many management problems in public organizations. The level of PSM strongly and positively relates to job performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, person-job fit, person-organizational fit, and organization citizenship behavior (Brewer 2008; Meyer et

al., 2002; Kim 2005; Wright & Pandey, 2008). Based on these studies, persons who have a high level of PSM might be more satisfied with working in the government, perform better, and present more commitment to the organization, and show more organization citizenship behavior. PSM influences the decision of public service career choice as well. Vandenaabee et al. (2015, p.1) found that “public service motivation (helping other people, being useful to society) and extrinsic motives (job security, high income, opportunities for advancement) play an important role” to selecting a public sector job. Vandenaabee (2008) also found that “public service motivation positively correlates with the preference for prospective public employers” (p. 1089). However, PSM might not always be important to choose public service careers. Lee and Choi (2013) found that public service motivation and pro-social behavior are not related to public career choice and only job security is an important factor to be a civil servants in South Korea. In extreme case, Gabris & Simo (1995) proposed that “public sector motivation does exist, but like certain subatomic particles, it is virtually impossible to isolate and visualized” (p. 49). They suggested that to make public jobs more challenging, monetarily attractive, secure, autonomous, and well supervised is much better to recruit competent and devoted public officials rather than focusing on public sector motivation in the public sector.

Based on the previous studies, we find that there are various reasons to choose public sector jobs and these factors could help to develop human resource management policies to attract young and talented people to the public sector. However, as we mentioned earlier, most studies are based on the context of the USA or western developing countries. Moreover, current studies relating to work motivation in the public sector mostly focus on public service motivation theory based on a survey research method. This study, therefore, examines motivation factors to choose a public sector career in developing countries in Asia through an inductive approach that “seek to promote a greater understanding of the meanings that humans attach to events or phenomenon” (Riccucci, 2010, p. 45).

Data & Method

To understand motivation drivers to choose public service careers in developing countries, this study adopts a case study method, especially multiple case studies. A case study is defined as “the detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena” (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1984, p. 34: cited in Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 220). Using a case study method is appropriate when researchers want to examine and deeply understand a real-life phenomenon that is apparently connected with context, and “how” and “why” questions are explored (Ying, 2009). Moreover, a case study method is useful in the early stages of exploring a research topic (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1984: cited in Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 220). In the current study, motivation drivers for career choice are influenced by various environmental factors where the person is located. Public administrative, social, cultural, and individual contexts could directly affect career decision-making. Also, two main research questions, *how* to be a public official and *why* they want to be a civil servant, will be examined. Even though motivation theories have been fully developed, finding motivation drivers to choose a public service career in developing countries is quite a nascent topic in the public management field. Because of these reasons, the case study method could be appropriate to conduct this research.

The unit of analysis in this study is individual public officials from the Philippines, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Indonesia. The civil servants are not chosen by a randomized sampling method. The authors found public officials from each country and selected a public official who works for a central government agency in their country¹ and works for general public administrative works. For example, public officials who work in research institutions as a researcher or airplane pilots for the military were eliminated from the interviewee list. All of them voluntarily participated in this study. A primary source of data in this study is from interviews with the public officials. As Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007) mentioned, the interviews were very efficient to collect rich and correct information

¹ Authors choose a public official in Danang City government, Vietnam because there is no public official who works in central government agencies and available for the interview.

from the respondents. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in April 2016 with unstructured questionnaires.

Cases: 5 Public Officials

1. Case 1: Juan from the Philippines

Juan, 29 years old and male, from the Philippines, had worked in the Policy Development and Planning Bureau of Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) for 7 years from August 2007 to September 2014 as a Social Welfare Officer in a Grade 3 position² before he joined the International University of Japan as a student in the mater's program in October 2014. His main job responsibilities were policy development, welfare standard setting, research, data gathering, assessment of programs, and development of laws to protect children in conflict. He entered with a Grade 3 position and is still a Grade 3. If he wants to be promoted, he needs to apply for a vacancy of Grade 4.

How to Get the Position & Why You Choose a Public Sector Career

After he had graduated from the social welfare program at the University of the Philippines in April 2007, he was preparing a social work license exam and applied to several organizations to get a job, including international non-profit organizations, the DSWD, and a government hospital. He, however, could not get any position without a license. During this time, he did not have any preference or firm intention to go to the government sector.

In June 2007, he passed the social work license examination. After he had passed the exam in first place, the DSWD offered him a position of Social Welfare Officer Grade 3 in the Policy Development & Planning Bureau, a contract base position, not permanent. In the Philippines, there are two ways to become a public official. First, a person should take the Career Service Examination, a paper and pencil test, which is held once a year and is administered by the Civil Service Commission. Once a person passes the examination, he/she

² Social Welfare officers have 5 grades: Grade 1-3, Grade 4 (Assistant of Division Chief), & Grade 5 (Division Chief)

gets a qualification to apply to job vacancies in agencies. Each agency will hire their employees through their hiring system – which includes special exams and interview processes. Second, a person who has a professional license, like Juan, can apply to the agency's position directly without taking the Career Service Examination. Additionally, if, like Juan, the individual receives the highest score in the license examinations, they could be invited from agencies with a special offer.

After for a while, Juan got another job offer from the non-profit organization where he had worked for a practicum for six months to finish his bachelor's degree. He finally decided to join the DSWD, not the non-profit. There were two major reasons to choose the DSWD. First, he thought the DSWD had wider service coverage. The DSWD has various divisions and bureaus relating to social work, including Risk Reduction and Management Program Division, Alternative Parental Care Program Division, Social Technology, Capacity Building, Standards Bureau, Protective Service, and so on.³ He thought he could move to each bureau and division, experience various works relating to social welfare, and develop his career. The possibility of career development was the main reason to choose the DSWD. Even though the salary level in the public sector was higher than that of the non-profit organization, salary was not the primary reason to go to the DSWD. The salary degree in the Philippines government was notoriously lower than the private sector's and his position at the beginning was contract-based without benefits. His first salary was PHP 20,000.00 (Salary Grade 18, USD 412.60).

Second, integrity and less corruption are another reason to choose the DSWD. According to an international corruption index, such as TI - Corruption Perception Index, Governance Indicator – Control of Corruption, corruption is a serious problem in the Philippines government (Quah, 2013). In 2007, corruption perception index score of the Philippines was 2.5 out of 10 and 131st ranked among 179 countries (Transparency International, 2007). Usually, people think government officials are equal to corruption in the

³ <http://www.dswd.gov.ph/about-us/organization-and-functions/>, Lastly visited on February 11, 2016.

Philippine. For him, the bad reputation of civil servants was one reason he was hesitant to be a public official. The DSWD, however, had the best reputation for integrity and less corruption.

The department was usually rated the “least corrupt” government agency based on the Ulat ng Bayan national survey. This organization emphasizes engagement of civil organizations to oversee their program implementation and increase transparency.⁴ Overall, the opportunities for career development and integrity reputation of the DSWD were the most reasons he chose the public sector career.

Why Social Work?

In his case, relating to public service motivation, why Juan chose to be a social worker could be more important than choosing the DSWD. The main reason to be a social worker was based on his family’s religious life. His family members are devout Catholic believers. When he was young, he went to church every weekend and provided mass service. He joined various outreach programs in the church as well. These experiences made him care for and help other people. When he helps people, he achieves self-fulfillment. While working at the DSWD, he voluntarily worked at a non-profit organization as a facilitator and trainer helping students from low-income families. He also occasionally taught “Community Service” at De LaSalle College in Manila, teaching about connecting students and poor communities. His religious life and self-fulfillment needs could have led him to the social worker life.

2. Case 2: Kamal from Bangladesh⁵

Kamal is a 35-year-old male and worked in the Ministry of Public Administration in Bangladesh for seven years from 2008 to 2014. He was a Senior Assistant Secretary, in the

⁴ <http://www.gov.ph/2011/04/01/dswd-is-the-‘least-corrupt’-government-agency-pulse-asia/>, Last visit on February 11, 2016.

⁵ The interview was conducted on February 18, 2016.

Grade 6 position and a field officer of the district administration office.⁶ When Kamel became a public official, he was in the Grade 9 position, the highest position that people enter the government by examinations administered by Public Service Commission. He was a cadre official.⁷ The cadre officials, also called Class I Officers, are “key decision makers and roughly 8% of all civil servants” (Jahan, 2006, p. 9). He started his career as Assistant Commissioner in a District Administration Office as all new cadre officers usually do. The commissioner typically has two primary responsibilities as a executive administrative officer and executive magistrate. As an executive administrative officer, he mainly deals with legal matters and revenue issues. He worked for protocol and accommodation as well when higher public officials visited his area. He also conducted mobile court judge, a particular court where the executive magistrate gives sentences of imprisonment up to 2 years or fines in the place where the crime happened.

The public service career in the Ministry of Public Administration was not Kamal’s first job. His first job was a negotiation officer in the biggest telecommunication company in his country. He had worked in the private firm for three years from 2005-2008 with a 3-year contract. In Bangladesh, job opportunity was not abundant in both public and private sector. When he graduated his university, getting a job was the most important priority for him to support his family. He could not wait for the long recruitment process of public officials. The public official exam is held only once a year, and the yearly exam was sometimes canceled depending on job vacancies. It meant that he might need to wait for one or two years or more than two years to get a position in government.

Because his major was economics and his university was one of the tops in his nation, it was not very difficult to get a position in the private company. Because Internet and cell

⁶ In Bangladesh, public official’s grades range from 1 to 20. Grade 1 is a secretary of ministry position as the highest grade.

⁷ “Cadres distinguish particular occupational groups to which a civil servant might belong, either at the time of recruitment or subsequently through lateral mobility. Cadres constitute a relatively small but distinctly elite subset of the civil service” (Mukherjee, Gokcekus, Manning, & Landell-Mills, 2001, p. 11).

phone industries were booming, he received a quite high salary and the work environment was very decent. He, however, wanted to change his career to the public sector.

Why a Public Service Career is Important for Him

In Bangladesh, a public service career is a prestigious and stable job. Public officials have very high social recognition and respect. Because of British colonial heritage, people believe that civil servants have a great power (Jahan, 2006). According to Alavi (1972), the bureaucracy in the colonial periods was a simple implementer of the colonial order. The colonial powers made the bureaucracy a bright elite and organized power group, which was completely separated from society. Even after receiving independence, the bureaucracy has remained a strong power group in Bangladesh (cited in Jahan, 2006, p. 8-9).

If a person becomes a public official in one's family, it means that his/her family's social status upgrades as well. It also means the public official gets into a power network zone. Using the network among civil servants, they, including their family and relatives, could enjoy immunities for minor misdemeanors and have access to faster government services. For example, even though a public official is in a less powerful agency, they could use the network to release a family member who commits a misdemeanor, such as drunken driving, or to make a passport in few days. Using their network, they could make illegal things become legal things. Overall, once a person becomes a public official, the public official and his/her full family could be guaranteed a prestigious and secure life in Bangladesh. For Kamal, this social respect and safe family life were compelling reasons to move to the public sector.

Although there was no public official in his father's family, his mother side's uncle was a high-ranked public official in the Department of Public Administration. From when Kamal was young, he witnessed the mighty power of a high-ranked public official. For example, whenever he visited his uncle's house, a chauffeur came to the bus stop where he got off, and there were policemen to guard him for his security. Again, this episode shows that even a cousin could enjoy safe travel because of his uncle's power as a public official.

From the second year of working for a private company, he prepared for the civil servants exam for Grade 8. In Bangladesh, there are three kinds of public official exams: Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination for 27 different Cadres; Non Cadre Examination – Class I; Non Cadre Examination – Class II. He took the BCS examination for Administration cadre. The BCS examination has three stages: preliminary test; written examination; and Viva Voce Examination.⁸ He passed all the tests and started working at the Department of Public Administration, the most powerful agency, which has both administrative and judicial power.

Even though the pay level is lower than the private company's and he is too busy to have time with his family, he does not want to move back to the private sector. He enjoys the social recognition, family security, and power of the position. These reasons are not only for him. According to Mukherjee, Gokcekus, Manning and Landell-Mills (2001), public officials in Bangladesh expected to have 2.3 times more salary when they move to a job at private companies. They, however, do not want to move to the private sector. Jahan (2006) also mentions that social status and recognition are the underlying reasons to join the public service for younger and newly appointed civil servants in Bangladesh.

3. Case 3: Boong from Cambodia⁹

Boong is 24 years old and a public official in the General Department of Taxation under the Ministry of Economy and Finance. He became a civil servant in January 2012. His primary duty is determining the amount of tax for real estate. When he became a public official, his rank was Level B. In Cambodia, civil servants for the tax office have three levels of rank: Level A, B, & C. In recruitment and selection, Level A requires a bachelor's degree and Level B requires at least 3 years of university or an associate bachelor degree. Level C requires high school graduate.

⁸ Bangladesh Public Service Commission, Exam System, <http://www.bpsc.gov.bd/platform/node/61.bpsc2012.pml>, Lastly visited on February 3, 2016.

⁹ The interview was conducted on April 5, 2016.

How to Be a Public Official

The hiring process of public officials is decentralized in Cambodia. Each government agency recruits and selects their workforce by themselves anytime they have vacancies. Boong took the civil servant examination in 2011. The previous examination was held in 2008. The subjects of examination were Economics, Accounting, Taxation, Computer, and English. About 15,000 people applied, and 300 became public officials in all three levels in 2011. It was hard to pass the examination because of the many applicants, and the process was quite fair as compared to previous exams. Previously, job postings were not available for many people. Only a few individuals who are related to public officials in the agency knew about the vacancies. But social networking services (SNS) changed the situation. Facebook became popular in Cambodia and people used Facebook to share a job posting information. Therefore, there were 15,000 applicants for the examination in 2011. The Anti-Corruption Unit of Cambodia established in 2010 was strongly involved in the process of test as well. Each candidate had to provide their fingerprints and present photo IDs to take the examination. Previously, giving a bribe to become a public official was common. To eradicate the corruption practice, the Anti-Corruption Unit thoroughly monitored the hiring process. Boong was a senior in university; therefore, he applied to the Level B position, passed the examination, and became a public tax official. He started working at a provincial government in January 2012.

Why He Want to Be a Public Official

The first reason to be a public official for him was that public tax official is regarded as an excellent occupation and very popular in Cambodia. People think public tax officials could earn a lot of money. In general, civil servants receive very low salaries and could not afford their life with their wages in Cambodia (World Bank, 2013). Their pay level is lower than private companies' and even non-profit organizations'. The average salary of public officials

was \$75.5 in 2009 (Korm 2011).¹⁰ Usually, public officials have a second job even though having a second job is not quite acceptable. Many civil servants work as a lecturer or consultant to earn extra income when they are off-duty. However, public officials in Custom and Taxation departments and lawyers in government are different from the general public officials. In general, tax officials receive the same amount of salary as other public officials. However, they could receive more financial rewards based on the amount of tax income they collect. Especially, all tax officials receive monthly bonus based on tax revenue of the previous month. Because General Department of Taxation (GDT) does not receive the government budget, the GDT could use 1.5% of the tax revenue for its expenditure and the GDT could provide some amount of money to their tax officials as a general reward. The amount is decided by their position. Tax officials could get the other financial bonus based on their performance. For example, Tax Audit Department gives special bonus to individuals or groups of tax auditors depending on their performance. These policies were government reforms to reduce the level of corruption in the tax administration. As they collect more tax from citizens, they could have more bonuses.

The second reason was his major in his university. He majored in economy and business at the National University of Management. He was an excellent student in his high school and could get a government scholarship provided by the Ministry of Education for his University. He originally wanted to be a filmmaker, but there was no scholarship for filming major. Therefore, he majored economy and business. During his study in the university, he became interested in being a public tax official.

The third reason was his mother and uncle. After he passed the civil servant examination in 2011, he received another scholarship for a filming study in South Korea and needed to decide whether to be a public official or to study filming. His mother and uncle strongly encouraged him to become a public official instead of going to study abroad. It was his last chance to change his career, but he could not disregard his mother and uncle's opinion

¹⁰ In 2014, the Cambodian government announced that the government could increase the minimum salaries of public officials to \$250 by 2018 (Ponniah & Channyda, 2014).

because his father passed away when he was at university, and his father's company went bankrupt.

The last reason was that he felt honor and pride at being a public official in Cambodia. This is very common in Cambodia. Public officials enjoy high social standing and reputation, although they do not earn enough salary for living in general. Based on in-depth interview of eight public officials in Cambodia, Korm (2011) found that "social status/reputation/honor" was the second most important reason to choose a public service career and was to stay in the public sector after "long term job/lifelong employment" (p. 111, 113).

4. Case 4: Thu from Vietnam¹¹

Thu is 27 years old and a female public official in Danang City government, Vietnam. She worked in the Department of Home Affairs for four years from 2011 to 2015. During the four years, she worked in four divisions, including Division of Staff Size, Division of Youth, Division of Local Government Worker, and Division of Civil Service and Public Employee. Her path to be a civil servant was a bit different from other public officials in her department.

How and Why to Become a Public Official

When she was 16 years old, Thu went to a special high school, which was a gifted school, all free and managed by the Danang City government near her province – Quang Nam province. Her gift was literature. During her high school, she got the third prize in a national literature competition. After she had graduated the high school, she decided to apply for a scholarship program provided by Danang City government for her university. The city government has provided competitive scholarship programs for high school students who wanted to be public officials after they get their bachelor's degree in Vietnam or overseas.¹² It is a government policy to attract the talent to the public sector. According to Article 6 of the Law on Cadres and Civil Servants, the government should adopt and implement policies to find, attract, and

¹¹ The interview was conducted on March 24, 2016.

¹² Danang Center for Promotion of Human Resource Development. <http://www.cphud.danang.gov.vn/detail?articleId=17141>. Last visit: April 4, 2016.

recruit competitive and talented people to the public sector.¹³ If the individual who receives the scholarship graduates from the university, she/he needs to work for the city government for at least five years based on the contract. According to the Danang City government, 618 people had received the scholarship from 2004 to 2014, 393 of whom were for a bachelor's degree (163 in Vietnam and 230 in foreign countries).¹⁴

Even though her interest was in literature, she decided to apply to the program and become a public official. There were five reasons for this decision. First was her family's financial situation. She has two younger sisters, and the first younger sister is one year younger than her. She thought her parents could not provide two daughters' university tuition in the same years. It was better to get the scholarship for her to go to university. Considering her family's financial situation, she decided to be a public official. It was the most important reason for her career choice.

Second, she thought that if she got the government scholarship and performed well in the university, she would not have to worry about unemployment status after her graduation. She did not have a secure network to get a job and was worried about her financial situation after graduation. In case she could get the scholarship and graduate the school, she could become a government official immediately. Therefore, applying the scholarship was the best choice for her university graduation and future job.

The third reason was her parents. Both of her parents were public officials. Both of them worked for a provincial government. Even though they were not wealthy, their life was stable and peaceful. She respected the lifestyle of her parents. Fourth, in a similar vein, she thought public official was a stable and secure job for her life. Even though she could not receive a high salary,¹⁵ it was enough to live for her, and she could work until age 55.¹⁶ This reason is quite similar to other public officials in Vietnam. According to Poon, Hung, &

¹³ Law on Cadres and Civil Servants. <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/82230/93443/F1452908788/VNM82230.pdf>. Last visit: April 4, 2016.

¹⁴ From Danang Center for Promotion of Human Resource Development

¹⁵ A new public official with a graduate degree receives about VND 1.300.000 (US \$75) monthly (Poon, Hung, & Truong, 2009, p. 217).

¹⁶ In Vietnam, female public officials retire at 55 and male officials retire at 60.

Troung's research (2009), job security was the most important reason for being a public official in Vietnam.

The last reason was a contribution to society. From her time in high school, Thu thought she wanted to contribute to the province where she was born and raised, along with contributing back to Danang City that had provided her scholarship for high school.

Based on her academic grade and the literature competition award, she received the scholarship and entered the University of Culture in Hanoi. She majored in Cultural Management and Law. She had graduated with distinction (honor). After she graduated the University, she started working as an entry-level public official at the Department of Home Affairs in Danang City with a 5-year contract. She originally wanted to work at the Department of Culture; however, she could not find a position in the department. After the first year in the Division of Staff Size, she took and passed an examination to get permanent status. Because of her graduation with distinction (honor), she did not take the general test that other public officials needed to pass to be a public official. The exam was much simpler than the regular one.

Even though her financial situation and seeking for secure life were the main reasons to choose to be a public official, she enjoys her job very much. Especially, when she sees the development of Danang City every year, she feels proud of being a public official.

5. Case 5: Firman from Indonesia¹⁷

Firman is 31 years old and a male who worked at the Treasury Unit of Ministry of Finance from 2007 to 2015. When he became a public official, he was Grade II/c, which requires an associate degree from a 3-year special school. In Indonesia, civil servants' rank starts from Rank I and reaches to Rank IV. Each rank has four grades (a, b, c, d). It usually takes four years to move to one higher grade. High school graduates can apply for II-a positions. II-c grade requires an associate degree. III-a positions require a bachelor's degree and III-b positions require a master's degree. Firman is currently working as a front-line officer in the

¹⁷ The interview was conducted on March 24, 2016.

Disbursement of Fund Section of State Treasury Office of Palu. His job responsibility was to check and analyze documents and invoices of their stakeholders to apply government funds.

Why and How to Be a Public Official

Firman originally wanted to work for a private company and be an entrepreneur. He, however, had to be a public official because of his family's financial situation. Firman's father was a food seller in a market, but the business was not good, and the situation got worse after the Asian financial crisis in 1997. Even though his major was natural science in high school, because of the financial situation, he needed to decide to go to the State College of Accounting to be a public official. The State College of Accounting is a specialized school, a 3-year program and all free, administered by the Ministry of Finance. Many Indonesian governments provide many special schools to hire specialists for each department such as, Institute of Public Administration under Ministry of Internal Affairs, College of Mineral and Energy under Ministry of Mineral and Energy, Immigration Academy under Ministry of Human Rights, College of Fisheries under Marine and Fisheries Ministry, College of Statistics under Statistics Agency, etc. These schools are fully funded by the government. He was disappointed and proud of himself as well for going to the school. The college was not what he wanted and he needed to live far away from his family; however, the acceptance rate was quite low, and everyone said he would have a better future ahead because of the school. These things made him and his family proud.

The school provided six specialties: Accounting; Taxation; Budgeting; National Asset; Custom; Asset Value Estimation for Taxation. Entering the school was competitive. There were 17,000 applicants and 3,000 students who were accepted. He was one of them. He had the training in Jakarta and chose Budgeting for his major. To keep his status in the school, he needed a 2.75 GPA, no more than two absences, and no grade below a C in all subjects. Some of his classmates left the school because they could not meet the minimum requirements. After he had graduated the school, he became a public official in the Ministry of Finance. Because of his major, budgeting, he got an offer from 6 institutions: 5 institutions

under Ministry of Finance and one audit agency. He chose Directorate General of Treasury because he thought the position is most related his major.

His first job location was in Papua, Yapen province, the most eastern province in Indonesia, a very isolated island, where he needed to ride an airplane to the nearest airport in another island and change to ship to go to the island and the ship came to the island only once a week. It was huge disappoint for him to go there because he thought he could be placed in near his hometown, Bandung. There were not many things in Yapen province. Even he could not find a bookstore. In first three months, he had serious homesick, but he tried to overcome the sickness by joining local religious and sports community. After 20 months, he got another scholarship for a bachelor's degree. In Indonesia, educational background is required for recruitment and promotion. He needed a bachelor's degree for promotion and was also eager to move out from the Yapen city. He moved to Malang city in East Java for his study. He received the bachelor's degree in economics in two & half years and was promoted to a III/a grade.

Another reason to be a public official was job security. Even though the salary level of the public sector is lower than that of the private sector, civil servants enjoy strong job security in Indonesia.¹⁸ Based on data from the World Bank, job security is the most important reason to be a public official and security of tenure is very strong in Indonesia.¹⁹ According to the Civil Servant Regulation, civil servants in Indonesia have different retirement ages, from 58 to 65 based on their job responsibility. For example, the retirement age of administrative office is 58, high-level manager officer is 60, and researchers and lecturers is 65.

The last reason was that public official is a prestigious occupation in Indonesia. Many people regard public official as a dream job, most likely because of its stable income, social

¹⁸ In his case, his first salary was Rp. 850,000 (USD 65). It was 80% of regular salary without benefit because he was on the job training. After the job training period, he could get full amount of salary and benefit.

¹⁹ Administrative and Civil Service Reform
[\\http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/civilservice/countries/indonesia/assertion1.htm](http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/civilservice/countries/indonesia/assertion1.htm)

status, or power. Many parents pressure their sons and daughters to become public officials (Minza, 2015).

Similar to Thu from Vietnam, family's financial situation was the main reason to be a public official for Firman. Job security and social status of the public official were the secondary reason to choose public service career for him.

Analysis & Implication

Table 1 provides a summary of interviewees' profiles and reasons to choose public service careers. Each interviewee has different reasons to be a public official that reflect their social, economic, cultural, and administrative environments as well as individual's conditions.

For Juan from the Philippines, opportunities of career development, agency's integrity reputation, and his religious life lead him to be a social worker and working in a publicoffice. In his case, it was interesting to see that his religious life influenced his career choice. The Philippines is a religiously devoted country where 86 percent of the population identifies as Roman Catholic.²⁰ From when he was young, he participated in various church services and might have developed his public service motivation from that experience. Based on the comparative study of public service motivation by Vandenabeele and Van de Walle (2008, p. 238), the Philippines is ranked as the second highest country of public service motivation (PSM) score. Overall, the PSM score was 5.56 (1-7 Likert Scale). All three dimensions of PSM were very high: Politics and Policy: 5.82; Compassion: 5.63; Self-sacrifice: 4.87. Even though there is no empirical study about the relationship between religion and public service motivation in the Philippines, as Perry (1997, p. 184) suggested, religious beliefs are strongly related to "commitment to the public interest/civil duty and compassion," and his religious devotion might powerfully have affected his career decision.

Table 1: Profiles and Motivation to Choose Public Service Career

²⁰ <http://asiasociety.org/education/religion-philippines>, Last visit on April 28, 2016.

Name	Juan	Kamal	Boong	Thu	Firman
Country	The Philippines	Bangladesh	Cambodia	Vietnam	Indonesia
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male
Age	29	35	24	27	31
Agency	Policy Development and Planning Bureau, Department of Social Welfare and Development	District Administration Office, Ministry of Public Administration	General Department of Taxation, Ministry of Economy and Finance	Department of Home Affairs, Danang City Government	Treasury Unit, Ministry of Finance
Entering Grade	Grade 3 (Social Welfare Officer)	Grade 6 (Senior Assistant Secretary)	Level B (Tax officer)	Officer (Entry Level)	Grade II/C
Years Employed	7 years	7 years	3 years	4 years	8 years
Motivation to Choose Public Service Career	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Possibility of career development 2. Agency's integrity 3. Family's religious life 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bureaucratic Power 2. Social recognition 3. Family security 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Popularity 2. University major 3. Mother and Uncle's recommendation 4. Social reputation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family's financial situation 2. Job security 3. Her parents contribution to society 4. Contribution to society 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family's financial situation 2. Job security 3. Social recognition

In the case of Kamal from Bangladesh, he chose the public service career because of the power of public officials, family security, and social recognition. In Bangladesh, based on the study of Zafarullha and Siddiquee (2001), the bureaucracy is corrupt. Citizens often need to pay a bribe to obtain public services, from getting a passport to getting jobs in government agencies. This kind of practice is culturally embedded in Bangladesh, and is known as “*tadbir (promoting one's case)*” (p. 468). Under this situation, to become a public official is Kamal's best way to make his family safe in many ways. He could also be satisfied with a high level of social status and bureaucratic power that have been historically formed from the British colonial period.

Boong from Cambodia became a public tax official because of the popularity of the job, his mother's suggestion relating to their financial situation, and social recognition. His major in university influenced his career choice as well. In his case, environmental factors were more important than his individual factor.

In the case of Thu from Vietnam, her family's financial situation was the most important reason to decide to be a public official when she was in high school. Job security, her parents' lifestyle, and contribution to society were secondary reasons. The contribution to society could be related to public service motivation theory, but the reason was different from Juan's case. In Juan's case, his family's devoted religious life led him to public service motivation; however, Thu started thinking about social contribution because she received many benefits from the city government.

Firman's case is similar to Thu's case. His family's financial situation was a primary reason, and job security and social recognition were secondary reasons to become a public official.

Even though we cannot generalize the results with these five cases, we have found several interesting points for motivation studies in the public management field. First, social recognition (high prestige and social status) was an important reason to choose public service careers in developing countries. Interestingly, the social recognition (high prestige and social status) was the least important reason for civil servants in the USA in Jurkiewicz et al.'s (1998) study. In developing countries where the private sector is not fully developed, meaning there is less job availability and public officials could still use their bureaucratic power somehow, civil servants have high prestige and social status, and more people want to be a public official, even though the corruption level of the public sector is pretty high. Second, relating to the first reason, bureaucratic power could be another fundamental reason to be a public official in developing countries. Democracy in government is not fully developed and public officials historically have used strong authoritative power towards the citizens, and government bureaucrats could abuse their power for themselves. Under these situations, belonging to a bureaucrat's network might be another benefit to being a public official, specifically to protect one's family's security. Third, some important drivers to be a public official are related to the family. The family's security, financial situation, parents' lifestyle as a role model, and family's opinions were influential to deciding these subjects' future careers. Lewis and Frank (2002, p. 400) found that "people who had a parent working

for government were more likely than others to have government jobs but not to prefer civil service” in the USA. It meant that parents could provide favorable connections to access and get a position in government. In the current study, we found parents gave good impressions of government jobs to one interviewee and most interviewees were concerned with their family – family’s security, financial situation, their opinion as a son or daughter of a family. It might reflect a strong family-oriented culture of Asian countries. Last, as a general principle, job security was a crucial reason to choose public service career in developing countries in this study.

Conclusion

The current study has tried to find motivation factors to choose a public service career in developing countries. Even though we have examined a limited number of civil servants from only five different countries, we could find several interesting and nascent factors influenced by the governmental situation, society, culture, and history of the country. Family-oriented culture, high bureaucratic power and network, and social recognition of the job could be significant drivers for individuals to be a public official in developing countries. Surprisingly, factors relating to public service motivation like contribution to society and serving to the public were a minor reason to choose public service careers in these cases. Because most recent studies about public service motivation have been conducted by a survey research method, social desirability bias might negatively influence the result of those surveys. PSM might not be as much important to decide many organizational behaviors as well as career decision-making as we have hugely focused on the theory recently.

We firmly expect that many scholars in the public management field will criticize these results from personal interviews with a very limited number of public officials. However, this study could be an “intellectual goldmine” (Jensen & Rodger, 2001, 235) to finding new factors of public sector motivation in developing countries. Future studies will be conducted with a higher number of public officials or people who prepare their future careers

based on the results of this study, and with different research methods such as a quasi-experiment or surveys to develop motivation theories.

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