

The Raffles Review

Issue 5. 10 June 2015

In Pursuit of Public Passion?¹



SOURCE

'International Comparison of Public and Private Employees' Work Motives, Attitudes, and Perceived Rewards'² was published in the latest issue (May-June 2015) of [Public Administration Review](#). Drawing on the International Social Services Survey 2005 containing data from 30 countries, the study analyses differing motivations and commitments of public and private sector employees.

BIG IDEAS

- The differences between public and private sector motives and attitudes are generally consistent across many nations, languages and cultures.
- Public employees everywhere demonstrate higher prosocial tendencies, that is public-service-oriented motives and perceive greater positive social impact for their work.
- Public employees reported lower levels of high-income motives, "although the differences are often not large enough to show statistical significance."
- Public employees unexpectedly expressed higher levels of organizational commitment than their private sector counterparts except in the Scandinavian nations, Switzerland, Canada, Great Britain and New Zealand.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

- In the light of increased collaboration among the public and private sectors internationally, the differing motivations and attitudes of public and private employees need to be factored in HRM decisions.
- Since the motives and reward preferences of public employees differ from their private sector counterparts, similar incentive structures or packages are unlikely to be as effective.
- Financial incentives and disciplinary procedures in the public sector are important, but should not be the sole considerations.

The Raffles Review
aims to ruffle your thinking!

This weekly offering summarises insights on public service matters to challenge assumptions and question the status quo.

- Public sector incentive systems are better off emphasizing the impact of employees' work on the well being of others and on the community and society.
- Accounting for cultural contexts is critical if utilizing organizational commitment as a motivation tool.
- Additional variables like pay differentials that complicate the relationship between income preferences and sector employment choices must be taken into account when analyzing differences.

¹ New Public Passion is the GCPSE's new approach to examining the issue of motivation of public service officials. Please see: http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/capacity-development/English/Singapore%20Centre/NotesPSE1_PublicPassion.pdf

² Bullock, J.B., Stritch, J.M., Rainey, H.G., (2015). 'International Comparison of Public and Private Employees' Work Motives, Attitudes, and Perceived Rewards'. *Public Administration Review*, 75(3): 479–489.