

**‘Dublin City Council: Public Service Motivation and its  
relationship with perceived social impact and task significance  
amongst employees’**

**Emma Leonard  
MSc in Management**

**National College of Ireland**

Submitted to the National College of Ireland, August 2021

## *Abstract*

### **Dublin City Council: Public Service Motivation and its relationship with perceived social impact and task significance amongst employees.**

By Emma Leonard

Little research has been done on the area of Public Service Motivation (PSM) in the Irish public sector to date. This study was designed to measure the levels of PSM across the different departments of Dublin City Council and to test for any correlation with perceived social impact and task significance. Two hypotheses were tested by surveying 170 general administrative grade employees of varying seniority to measure their levels of PSM and perceived social impact/task significance, which were then analysed to determine the variances and relationships that exist. Levels of both measurements were found to vary between department and a statistically significant relationship between PSM and perceived social impact/task significance was found. The results of this study support the existing literature by indicating that the work context and the employees work related perceptions can influence the levels of PSM, which this researcher posits could be used as a resource by management. This paper introduces the Irish context into the discussion on PSM at a time when the public sector is undergoing increasing scrutiny and transformation, particularly in light of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, and offers direction for future research in order to utilise PSM for the benefit of employees and organisations alike.

# Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland  
Research Students Declaration Form  
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name: Emma Leonard

Student Number: 19103361

Degree for which thesis is submitted: MSc in Management

Title of Thesis: Dublin City Council: Public Service Motivation and its relationship with perceived social impact and task significance amongst employees

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021

## Material submitted for award

A. I declare that this work submitted has been composed by myself.

B. I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.

C. I agree to my thesis being deposited in the NCI Library online open access repository NORMA.

D. **Either** \*I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

**Or** \*I declare that the following material contained in the thesis formed part of a submission for the award of

(State the award and the awarding body and list the material below)

## *Acknowledgements*

I wish to acknowledge the contribution and support openly provided by Dublin City Council and its employees in completion of this research, in particular the Homeless Services and Customer Services sections, for which I am extremely grateful.

I also wish to thank all at the National College of Ireland who have supported me in my studies, in particular my classmates and my dissertation supervisor, Ger Loughnane.

## *Table of Contents*

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Declaration .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>List of Appendices .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter 1 – Introduction .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 2 – Literature Review .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 – Public Service Motivation .....	11
2.2 – Perceived Social Impact and Task Significance .....	14
2.3 – Research going forward .....	17
<b>Chapter 3 – Research Problem/Hypotheses .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter 4 – Methodology .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Chapter 5 – Results .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Chapter 6 – Discussion .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>8</b>

## *List of Figures*

Figure 1: Scatter plot chart .....	25
Figure 2: Shapiro-Wilk test for normality .....	26
Figure 3: Participation by department, table .....	28
Figure 4: Participation by department, chart .....	28
Figure 5: Participation by gender, table .....	29
Figure 6: Participation by gender, chart .....	29
Figure 7: Participation by age, table .....	29
Figure 8: Participation by age, chart .....	30
Figure 9: Participation by grade, table .....	30
Figure 10: Participation by grade, chart .....	31
Figure 11: Mean levels of PSM by department, table .....	31
Figure 12: Mean levels of PSM by department, chart .....	32
Figure 13: Mean levels of PSITS by department, table .....	33
Figure 14: Mean levels of PSITS by department, chart .....	33
Figure 15: PSM and PSITS, scatterplot chart .....	34

## *List of Appendices*

- Appendix I: Items and dimensions found in the scale for the measurement of PSM, developed by Kim et al. (2013).
- Appendix II: Cronbach's Alpha for the instrument found at Appendix I.
- Appendix III: Items found in the scale for the measurement of perceived social impact and task significance, developed by Grant (2008a).
- Appendix IV: Cronbach's Alpha for the instrument found at Appendix III.
- Appendix V: Copy of the text provided at the beginning of the research survey.

### *List of Abbreviations*

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
DCC	Dublin City Council
PSM	Public Service Motivation
PSITS	Perceived social impact and task significance
COVID-19	SARS-CoV-2 Coronavirus Disease
APM	Attraction to public policy making
CPI	Commitment to the public interest
COM	Compassion
SS	Self-sacrifice
DECLG	Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
APS	Attraction to public service
CPV	Commitment to public values

## ***Chapter 1: Introduction***

Public Service Motivation (PSM) refers to the inherent drive to work for the common or social good, often found in public servants, and differs to standard motivation experienced by the general population (Perry, 1996). This topic has been discussed from various perspectives since the 1980s (Rainey, 1989; Perry and Rainey, 1988), with James L. Perry as the leading academic in developing this area of research over the years since (Paarlberg and Perry, 2017; Perry, Hondeghem and Wise, 2010; Perry 1996; Perry and Wise, 1990). Perry's scale to measure PSM was the first instrument developed and continues to be used, or adapted for use, globally (Karolidis and Vouzas, 2019; Kim *et al.*, 2013). While PSM measurement scales cannot determine which attributes are inherent to the participants and which have been developed over time, determining the levels across an organisation can provide managers with useful information for decision making and can provide a basis on which further research can be undertaken in the future.

Little research appears to have been done to date on organisations with a workforce distribution similar to that of Dublin City Council (DCC). Local authorities in Ireland employ general administrative grade staff, working in a variety of areas such as housing, environment or recreation services, who may be placed in several different departments throughout their career and usually do not choose which department or area that they work in within the local authority. This author proposes that a study of the levels of PSM in an organisation with this type of workforce distribution, while also measuring the level to which social impact and task significance are perceived by employees, could indicate if PSM is influenced by the nature or perception of the work being undertaken should any variances between department or area are discovered.

This research analyses the data gathered in a survey of DCC staff to measure the levels of PSM present, using the scale adapted by Kim *et al.* (2013) from the original scale created by Perry (1996). This research examines if variances exist between general administrative grades across different departments. Scales adapted by Grant (2008) from existing measures of perceived task significance (Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006) and perceived social impact (Spreitzer, 1995; Grant *et al.*, 2007) are used to assess for any correlation between levels of PSM and the employees perception of their work. An analysis and discussion will

follow, asking what lessons can be taken from prior research with regard to this new data and discussing any future direction that research in an Irish setting could take.

This paper explores the existing literature on the topic of PSM, focusing on European and Asian settings, and on perceived social impact/task significance, before discussing the objectives of the research, methodology, results and future research prospects.

## *Chapter 2: Literature Review*

### **2.1 Public Service Motivation**

#### *The seminal literature:*

The seminal author on the topic of PSM is James L. Perry, who has contributed or influenced the vast majority of PSM research in the last thirty years. Perry and Wise (1990) first discussed how PSM reflected an inherent need or want found in some individuals to respond to three specific ‘motives’: rational; norm-based; and affective.

#### *Rational*

Rational motives refer to actions taken with the intention of maximising an individual’s utility (Perry and Wise, 1990). This might represent an interest in creating or contributing to public policy, one of the most important functions of public service organisations. A person who wishes to be involved in such a function may believe the importance of the role corresponds to their sense of self, making this motive self-serving while also adding to the common good. Similarly, an individual may choose public service due to a personal interest in a particular cause or to advocate on behalf of a particular social group. For example, an individual who has had experience of homelessness may desire to influence policy for the good of those in that particular social group, i.e. the homeless.

#### *Norm-based*

Norm-based motives inspire action intended to fit the norm (Perry, 1996). Should attributes such as patriotism and altruism be valued in a society, as they are in the Republic of Ireland, an individual may seek employment in an organisation which allows one to contribute in a way that conforms to these societal norms. It is also suggested that a sense of loyalty to the government or society in general can inspire conformity through contribution; this could certainly be seen globally during the COVID-19 pandemic when communities followed public health guidelines which may have been personally challenging, but had become the norm.

#### *Affective*

Affective motives refer to actions that are based in genuine desire for the common or societal good (Perry and Wise, 1990), which has often been likened to the attribute of altruism (Perry *et al.*, 2010). One could argue that this is the motive found in public servants such as nurses or firefighters; individuals who undertake incredibly challenging and highly skilled work yet are widely considered underpaid. It is often asked, what would drive an individual to choose a career where the extrinsic benefits are modest compared to those in less dangerous or challenging careers?

While there are undoubtedly additional motives in which public service is grounded, it is these three motives that Perry (1996) used to develop his four dimensional scale for measuring PSM. This instrument uses 24 items with a five point Likert scale, covering the four dimensions: attraction to public policy making (APM); commitment to the public interest/civic duty (CPI); compassion (COM); and self-sacrifice (SS). This scale was the primary instrument created for the measurement of PSM and has been used or adapted many times since its publication. Kim *et al.* (2013) developed a frequently used adaptation of the original scale, considering the theory of PSM as a global construct and adapting the scale to reflect the effect that different cultures or values might have on the results.

#### ***Literature from Europe and Asia:***

Few studies have been done with regard to PSM specific to the Irish public sector. Several recent studies in Europe have used the scale developed by Perry or variations of the original, adapted to better suit the population being surveyed (Slabbinck and Van Witteloostuijn, 2020; Jensen, Andersen and Holten, 2019; Jacobsen, Hvitved and Andersen, 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2013). A common theme throughout studies based in European countries is the affect that PSM has on the desirability of an employer or employee. It is discussed that each of the four dimensions investigated by Perry's scale can be targeted by appealing to the motive behind it; one study shows that APM is positively associated to intrinsic achievement, i.e. a rational motive, and both COM and CPI are positively associated to an explicit need for affiliation, i.e. a norm-based motive (Slabbinck and Van Witteloostuijn, 2020). As such, if an organisation intends to employ individuals with high PSM in a particular area, they could target the relevant motive in the recruitment campaign. As the Irish public sector typically uses a competency-based interview process, this could possibly be implemented at interview stage.

Similar theory is also posited in another study, which interestingly uses an alternative scale not inspired by Perry. Vandenabeele and Jager (2020) suggest that an individual's level of PSM

can influence how attractive a role is perceived and that organisations should utilise this, to attract the most suitable high PSM prospective employees. They continue to suggest that this approach to recruitment campaigns could also dissuade unsuitable or non-PSM displaying candidates. The scale used in that study was developed due to critique that the original scale and its most frequently used adaptation (Kim *et al.*, 2013) are too time consuming if being surveyed in conjunction with another topic (Karolidis and Vouzas, 2019; Vandenabeele and de Vries, 2016). While Vandenabeele and de Vries (2016) note that this alternative scale scores a Cronbach's Alpha well above .7, one could posit that as this scale contains only four items, it will provide the researcher with confirmation if PSM is present however it may be limited in providing any additional information on the type or level of PSM.

Another theme frequently discussed in European research is the impact of PSM levels on the individual, both good and bad. Research shows that high PSM displaying employees can become dissatisfied or even stressed by their inability to perform to their intrinsic standards, possibly due to organisational or extrinsic pressures such as budget constraints or staff shortages (Breugh, Ritz and Alfes, 2018; Giauque, Anderfuhren-Biget and Varone, 2013; Telci *et al.*, 2011). However, Breugh *et al.* (2018) contest that PSM can be a source of job satisfaction when morale or general motivation in an organisation is reduced. This suggests that an importance could be placed on organisation-wide awareness of the impact and results of work being undertaken to maintain, or possibly increase, levels of PSM by increasing the perception of prosocial impact. In turn, high PSM employees who identify with their organisation and its goals can have a positive impact on performance (Karolidis and Vouzas, 2019). During difficult times, such as economic downturns or the COVID-19 pandemic, managers could therefore utilise PSM as a resource to keep standards high, when other resources such as funding or human capital may be limited.

Kim *et al.* (2013) note the importance of considering cultural differences while undertaking PSM research, as the disparate value placed on self-sacrifice, social welfare systems or community can result in great variances in the resulting data. Research undertaken in Thailand posits that the employee displaying high levels of PSM will be less affected by going the extra mile for their employer or stakeholders as it is congruent with their predisposition for acting in the best interest of the public, provided that they are facilitated to do so (Potipiroon and Faerman, 2020). Conversely, studies indicate that Korean public servants are expected to go above and beyond to the detriment of their personal lives or wellbeing, as is their common organisational culture (Lee and Lee, 2019). This could not be directly compared to the culture

in Ireland, where employee wellbeing is typically prioritised; both Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council have wellbeing initiatives for employees for example (Dublin City Council, 2019; Fingal County Council, 2019).

Themes found in Asia based research show some similarities to that based in Europe, such as a link between high levels of PSM and identifying with the organisational mission and goals (Miao *et al.*, 2019), but distinct differences between the two can also be found. While the European research frames PSM as an attribute or resource that is inherently individual, the Asian literature appears to view PSM as a much broader and communal theory. As earlier discussed, there is a great importance and honour placed on public service in some Asian cultures (Lee and Lee, 2019; Miao *et al.*, 2019). An emphasis is consistently placed on the influence of management and leadership, both senior and local, in the development and sustainment of PSM in Asian public sector organisations, with trust between the different levels of bureaucratic hierarchy having particular value attached (Lee, Oh and Park, 2020; Miao *et al.*, 2019). Further research found that PSM can reportedly be developed in a work group or team by management exhibiting servant leadership, that is, putting the needs of the work group or team ahead of their personal needs (Shim and Park, 2019).

Interestingly, both European and Asian focused studies reference or use Perry's original PSM measurement scale and refer to his seminal works on the topic. The predominant difference between the two areas of research appears to be rooted in the three motives first mentioned by Perry and Wise (1990). Where European literature tends to focus on how the rational motive can be utilised or studied to increase performance in an organisation, the Asian literature consistently disregards the rational motive as it is the motive most related to an individual's sense of self, something which contradicts the honour of public service as it is seen in many Asian cultures. This acts as a reminder that cultural differences must be a strong consideration when engaging in the study of PSM.

## **2.2 Perceived Social Impact and Task Significance**

Perceived social impact in public service refers to the scale of the impact which an employee feels that their work has on the community in which they serve. This is oft described as a result of perceived task significance, which is the extent to which an employee believes their work

has significant consequence (Grant, 2008a). To give an example in the healthcare sector, perceived social impact refers to the external results of the work, i.e. efficient healthcare provision, whereas task significance refers to the work itself, i.e. nursing.

### ***The seminal literature:***

Adam M. Grant is the leading academic in the field of research on perceived social impact or task significance and their correlation to job design, performance and employee experience. While job design had previously been researched and discussed with regard to operational task structures (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), Grant (2007) proposed that the motivation to work for the public good is relational and that due consideration must be given to the interpersonal elements of a role. Grant continued to note how the motivation to work for the public good is linked with several consequences which are beneficial to an organisation:

- *Behavioural*: How hard the employee is willing to work and how willing they will be to go above and beyond to achieve what they perceive to be the optimal prosocial outcome.
- *Identity*: How an employee views themselves in light of the behavioural consequences detailed above, i.e. competent and valuable to society.

These behavioural and identity related consequences can then be analysed through the lens of Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Telci, Maden and Kantur, 2011). When an employee consistently behaves in a prosocial manner and begins to identify themselves or identify with their colleagues as a prosocial employee, they will continue to act in such a way as it is congruent with their sense of self and reduces the risk of experiencing cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance refers to the psychological discomfort experienced when one feeling, action or event is inconsistent with another (Aronson and Aronson, 2012). For example, if an employee works for a company which partakes in sustainable and ethical clothing production, and they identify with the company's ethics, the making of an unethical work decision would create cognitive dissonance for the employee.

### ***Perceptions and their importance:***

It is important to stress that it is the level of social impact 'perceived' by employees that is the focus in these studies, rather than the objective level. Grant and Campbell (2007) note that the perceptions of the employees differs between persons, cultures and contexts. An occurrence which might be perceived as largely positive in one organisation may be perceived as the worst possible outcome in other.

Grant noted how the very nature of public service careers place employees in positions of authority and responsibility in their community, where not only are they open to scrutiny and criticism by the many stakeholders impacted by their work (2008b), but they are also exposed to interactions with stakeholders which can be taxing on their emotional resilience (Grant and Parker, 2009). Employee burnout has been frequently associated with professions such as this, where the employee may experience intense or emotionally charged interpersonal situations regularly (Grant and Campbell, 2007). Interestingly, while this indicates that being exposed to the intended beneficiaries might result in burnout, further studies suggest that contact with those who benefit from one's work is shown to increase perceived task significance and in turn increase their motivation to make what is perceived as positive social impact (Grant *et al.*, 2007). Furthermore, research also indicates that perceived prosocial impact acted as a buffer between perceived antisocial impact and both the employees' job satisfaction and burnout (Grant and Campbell, 2007).

It has been agreed across numerous studies that the belief or perception that one is positively influencing the lives of others through their work can be a motivating factor for employees (Moynihan, Pandey and Wright, 2012; Grant and Sonnentag, 2010; Grant, 2008b). It is suggested that consideration of how employees perceive their social impact or task significance, thus engaging with or encouraging the development of their PSM, could be leveraged to mitigate negative aspects of the career and even improve performance (Grant and Sonnentag, 2010; Grant, 2008b). However, while persons exhibiting high levels of PSM may be more inclined to apply for public service employment, research indicates that the benefits of having high-PSM employees may not be fully enjoyed by an organisation in which the employees do not perceive their social impact (Bright 2007; Steijn 2008; Taylor 2008; Vandenabeele 2009).

As noted in an earlier section, where a high-PSM employee feels that their work is not having an impact on the community at the level to which they aspire or believe optimal, this may create a state of cognitive dissonance as their work output is not congruent with their sense of self, i.e. the employee highly motivated to serve the public good as best they can (Breaugh, Ritz and Alfes, 2018; Giauque, Anderfuhren-Biget and Varone, 2013; Telci *et al.*, 2011). This can in turn lead to dissatisfaction with their role or employer, thus not utilising their high-PSM state to benefit the organisation from a management perspective. Conversely, the employee may

increase their perceived task significance to align it with their sense of self and reduce cognitive dissonance, thus allowing their intrinsic motivation to influence their perceived social impact (Stritch and Christensen, 2014). However, this may also have negative effects if the employees perception is objectively incorrect.

It is clear through this research that perceived social impact and task significance are an important consideration in the field of PSM research. An understanding of these areas, in addition to PSM, may provide managers with baseline knowledge with which to establish employee centred Human Resource Management practices.

### **2.3 Research going forward**

A consistent recommendation made in existing literature is that organisations should seek to develop the levels of PSM shown in their staff, though specific and intentional management practices (Ritz, Brewer and Neumann, 2016). However, a recurring issue in the literature is a lack of clear direction for how PSM theory can be applied as a management practice for the benefit of an organisation, leading to the question: how can this knowledge be put to use?

PSM could certainly be utilised as an aid by Irish public sector organisations where innovation and accountability are increasingly important, particularly in light of recent recommendations that some 20% of the Irish public sector should make the permanent change to working from home beyond the COVID-19 pandemic (Miley, 2021). Grant (2007) notes that motivation to act in the public good is often cultivated in work contexts; if the work context is undergoing unprecedented change, how do organisations ensure that they do not lose the benefits of a prosocial culture amongst their staff?

This author posits that preliminary research on how PSM and perceived social impact/task significance present themselves in an Irish public sector setting must first be done to establish a starting point for future developments. While several investigations have been made into the levels of PSM in European countries, the cultural and organisational differences between Ireland and its European neighbours cannot be discounted. Little research also appears to have been completed on the different levels of PSM within one organisation. Miao *et al.* (2019) note that local management, i.e. low-level managers or supervisors, can have a distinct impact on

the levels of PSM found in their subordinate staff, but this does not appear to have been researched in detail.

It must also be considered that analysing cross-sectional data cannot indicate any cause and effect relationships, but it can provide us with information reflecting the current and existing state of play. It may be of more use to engage in longitudinal study to determine any changes that occur following the implementation of any suggested management practices. This study will contribute to the field of PSM research by bringing the Irish Public Sector into the discussion, establishing the levels of PSM in a large public sector organisation and how differences may be present between departments within one organisation, with specific reference to how this correlates to the perceptions that employees have of their social impact and task significance.

### ***Chapter 3: Research problem & hypotheses***

#### ***Context:***

Since the recession of 2008 onwards, significant reform has taken place in the Irish public sector. In 2012, an action programme was published by the then named Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) which envisioned that local government would provide ‘efficient and good value services...representing citizens and communities, as effectively and accountably as possible’ (2012, pp. 2-3). The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) have since published the current action plan, Our Public Service 2020 and aim to publish an updated plan over the course of 2021 (DPER, 2017). As such, it is evident that efficiency, accountability and innovation are priorities in the Irish public sector with considerable effort being made to implement reform. This research aims to contribute knowledge which may be of benefit to the on-going public sector reform objective, by identifying fluctuations in the levels of PSM within one large public sector organisation, determining any correlations with the levels of perceived social impact or task significance, and investigating what lessons can be taken from existing research.

#### ***Research problem:***

Housing a population of over 550k people, with a projected growth of 58k over the next 5 years, DCC is the most populous local authority in the Republic of Ireland, serving a further 169k people commuting into the administrative area for work (Dublin City Council, 2020). Just under 6000 employees provide approximately 520 services to various stakeholders across different departments such as Housing & Community Services, Environment & Transportation, and Planning (Dublin City Council, 2020).

The data for this research is collected from employees of general administrative grades of varying levels of seniority who, upon employment or promotion, do not choose which department they must work in. Studies have posited that the perceived importance of a task can influence PSM (Stritch and Christensen, 2014), which supports the theory that the work environment and communication of the organisational goals or values can help develop or strengthen PSM in employees (Rayner, Reimers and Chao, 2017). As such, it is proposed that the nature of the work undertaken by certain departments will create a culture which fosters high PSM in its staff. New staff to these departments could be influenced by the norm-based

motive discussed by Perry and Wise (1990) as they take action to conform with existing staff. Hypothesis *H1* will therefore be proven or disproven by measuring the levels of PSM across several departments of DCC.

*H1: PSM in general administrative grades will vary across different departments.*

While all departments within DCC have a social impact, as is the nature of local government, one could posit that employees of certain departments may perceive their social impact as greater than others. Perceived social impact in this context is understood as the extent to which an employee feels that the community they serve is affected or influenced by any actions undertaken in the course of their work, a result of perceived task significance which similarly indicates the extent to which one feels that their work makes a substantial impact (Grant, 2008a). Housing & Community Services are responsible for the provision of housing supports to eligible citizens, such as homeless services and senior citizens housing complexes. Dublin City Libraries are embedded in the community, linking in with schools and community groups all over the city. Waste Management provide a discreet but incredibly important service, keeping the streets clean, emptying bins and more. This author proposes that higher levels of PSM may be recorded in some departments due to the tangible effect that their services have on the community, i.e. it may be easier to perceive social impact where the result of ones work is clearly visible. Conversely, it may be found that lower PSM will be recorded for departments such as Planning, the Rates Office and the Motor Tax Office. While still undeniably important services, these departments deal with the community in less frequent and more administrative transactions, i.e. employees may not have the opportunity to perceive the social impact of their work as it is less tangible. As such, *H2* will be tested by assessing any correlation between the measurement of PSM found for *H1* with the levels of perceived social impact or task significance found in those same employees.

*H2: PSM levels will be higher where employees perceive that their work has a greater social impact/significance.*

Another basis for these hypotheses is the rational motive for PSM, given by Perry and Wise (1990). An individual exhibiting PSM who has a particular set of skills will want to maximise their utility. In using their particular skills to serve the common good, their work is congruent with their sense of self. Vandenabeele and Jager (2020) suggest that advertising specific roles

within a public sector organisation could have the effect of dissuading non-PSM exhibiting applicants. As noted above, general administrative grades in organisations such as DCC do not choose which department they work in, i.e. they do not choose the task that they will undertake in the course of their daily work. If correlation between perceived task significance and PSM is shown, this could indicate that targeted recruitment campaigns or allowing employees to influence which department they are assigned to may be more efficient at attracting or encouraging high PSM employees.

## ***Chapter 4: Methodology***

This research was undertaken to test the two null hypotheses detailed in Chapter 3 and as such, required data to be gathered to determine the levels of PSM found in employees across different departments in DCC and their levels of perceived social impact/task significance, to allow for any correlations to be viewed and analysed. Quantitative research was selected as the researcher felt that through the positivist paradigm, empirical research allows for an objective initial analysis of the current state of being at DCC. It is acknowledged that should the results of this research warrant further investigation, a qualitative approach may be suitable. As noted in Chapter 2, the original scale developed by Perry (1996) or later adaptations (Vandenabeele and Jager, 2020; Kim *et al.*, 2013) have been widely used to measure PSM but consistent difficulties have been met in establishing the next step, i.e. how to use the knowledge to the benefit of organisations and their employees, from this positivist perspective. However, for the purpose of this initial primary research, quantitative research was deemed most suitable.

### ***Research instruments:***

#### ***PSM***

The scale developed by Kim *et al.* (2013) in response to the need for an adapted version of Perry's original scale (1996) to suit international research was used to measure PSM. Consideration was given to using the first scale developed by Perry, however it places a focus on populations in the USA, which this author posits will likely have different values and attitudes to that of an Ireland based population. The scale by Kim *et al.* (2013) was tested in European countries, some of whom fall under the remit of European Union labour law (European Commission, 2021) along with the Republic of Ireland, indicating that more similarities of experience could be expected. The selected scale uses 16 items to cover four dimensions: self-sacrifice (SS), attraction to public service (APS), commitment to public values (CPV), and compassion (COM)(see Appendix I). The items were presented in the survey and analysed in random order, not divided into the four dimensions. A five point Likert scale was used, measuring from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The original study used composite reliability to determine internal consistency and found that each dimension sufficiently ranged from .716 to .824 (Kim *et al.*, 2013). In this research, Cronbach's Alpha was measured over the 16 items together and a result of 0.926 was found (see Appendix II).

### *Perceived social impact/task significance*

A scale developed by Grant (2008a) was used to measure employee perceptions of their social impact (adapted from Spreitzer (1995) and Grant et al. (2007)) and task significance (adapted from Hackman and Oldham (1975) and Morgeson and Humphrey (2006)). The word ‘guests’ was amended to ‘citizens’ in the task significance items, for relevance to the participants jobs. The scale consists of 7 items, seen at Appendix III. A Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.940 was found for this scale (see Appendix IV). These items were also presented in random order and were not separated by relevance to perceived social impact or task significance.

### ***Sample:***

This research collected both nominal and ordinal data from 170 staff of DCC through convenience sampling. As noted by Kim *et al.*(2013), it would be preferred to have collected approximately 200 responses for this survey. However, given that this research was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic when many employees working from home are less involved with non-task specific work activities, and during the summer months when many employees take annual leave, it was aimed to collect a minimum of at least 100 responses. Data regarding the genders, departments, ages and seniority of grade amongst the participants was recorded for descriptive statistics. Three criterion were set for participation in this study; the participants were required to be employees of DCC, employed specifically at a general administrative grade and over the age of 18. For context, the general administrative grades in DCC range from Grade 3 to Grade 9. Grades 3-4 are entry level grades, Grades 5-6 are junior or middle management and Grade 7 upwards are senior management.

### ***Procedure:***

Permission to carry out the research was sought initially from senior management in DCC. In order to obtain permission, a brief proposal and draft of the survey had to be presented to management for approval. Final approval was received in June 2021. It was intended that the survey be sent to all staff with a DCC email address and made available on the on the staff noticeboard, on the DCC intranet site, for staff without a DCC email address to access. However, as one of the criteria was that the participant be employed at a general administrative grade, a decision was made not to circulate the survey by email due to the large number of ineligible employees that would receive it. The survey was posted on the staff noticeboard, on the DCC intranet site, and team leaders were contacted in departments to request that they notify eligible staff. The criteria for participation was stressed both on the intranet noticeboard

posting and in the information at the beginning of the survey. A copy of this information can be found at Appendix V.

The survey was given through an online form to ensure ease of access for all staff working under different circumstances. DCC have many different office buildings spread across the region, meaning that the use of an online form would capture the widest variety of responses without travel between buildings, something which had to be taken into consideration due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, while many staff are also working from home. It was also of great importance to minimise any risk of unnecessary physical contact, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the researcher deemed any distribution or collection of physical survey copies too great a risk. It was intended that the survey would be done using Google Forms, however upon testing it was discovered that this site is not accessible through the DCC network due to their firewall. All general administrative grades in DCC have access to a Microsoft email account and Microsoft Office 365 suite, therefore Microsoft Forms was tested and deemed a suitable alternative.

***Data analysis:***

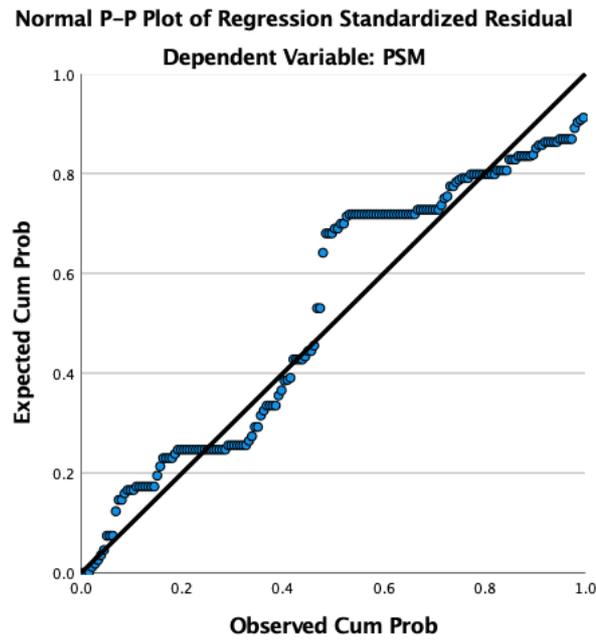
Data analyses were undertaken using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27. To analyse the data, it was first addressed separately as nominal and ordinal data. The nominal data was organised into descriptive statistics, recording frequencies of each category.

The internal consistency of the two scales used was first tested by using Cronbach's Alpha (as noted above and at Appendices II and IV). Upon receiving satisfactory results, the ordinal data was then transformed via the Compute Variable function in SPSS to show the median of each scale item for further analysis. The median was chosen as the value to use for further analysis as it represents the value at the centre of the responses. These median values, which will henceforth be referred to as the PSM and PSITS (perceived social impact/task significance) data, were then analysed into descriptive statistics, looking at the means of both PSM and perceived social impact/task significance by department.

This information was then assessed using multiple linear regression, with department and PSITS as the independent variables and PSM as the dependent variable, intended to determine any correlation between PSM and PSITS for the purpose of *H2*. The required assumptions were met to undertake this testing: a scatterplot showing homoscedasticity can be seen at figure 1; a

Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.978 was returned, indicating positive autocorrelation; and VIF values of 1.018 were achieved for both independent variables, indicating an absence of multicollinearity.

Figure 1: Scatter plot chart (SPSS Statistics)



Two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse the interaction between the dependent variable of PSM and the independent variables of department and seniority of grade, to test for  $H_1$ . Assumptions for the two-way ANOVA were met: when testing for homogeneity of variances, both independent variables returned  $p$ -values  $>.05$  as required (department  $p = .703$  and grade  $p = .806$ ); and the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality can be seen at figure 2, showing  $p$ -values  $<.05$  for each department.

Figure 2: Shapiro-Wilk test for normality

<i>Department</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Culture, Recreation and Economic Services	0.727	9	0.003
Dublin City Library & Archive	-	4	-
Environment and Transportation	0.813	13	0.010
Finance Department	0.699	12	0.001
Housing & Community Services	0.726	79	0.000
Human Resources, Corporate Services, Transformation & Digital Services	0.713	29	0.000
Information Systems	0.63	4	0.001
Law Department	0.63	4	0.001
Other	0.552	5	0.000
Planning and Property Development Department	0.739	11	0.002

***Limitations:***

As noted above, the method of convenience sampling was used in the hopes of obtaining the largest possible sample across a population which is spread between different departments in multiple buildings. Also contending with the restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, convenience sampling allowed flexibility to ensure any interested employee could participate from home. However, this method of sampling meant that the researcher could not control the dispersion between departments of the participants. A breakdown of participation between departments will be provided in the next chapter and will show how two departments participated in higher numbers. Some departments who have large numbers of employees are represented in this survey by only a few participants, which will not provide a fully accurate measurement of PSM or perceived social impact/task significant within the department.

***Ethical considerations:***

The nature of the survey and the aims of the research were disclosed clearly before the survey began, so that any prospective participants could give fully informed consent by continuing on to begin the survey (see Appendix V). All participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any stage of completing the survey.

The contact details for the Staff Support Unit of Dublin City Council were included at both the beginning and the end of the survey, along with two external support services. While there were no explicitly distressing items contained in the survey, general reference was made to social problems and self-sacrifice. The researcher acknowledges that this had the potential to

cause distress and as such, it was made as clear as possible how participants could access supports if they were required.

The survey was completely anonymous with no identifiable information requested. The researcher could not know who had completed the survey. No management or supervisor within DCC ever had or will have access to this information.

## Chapter 5: Results

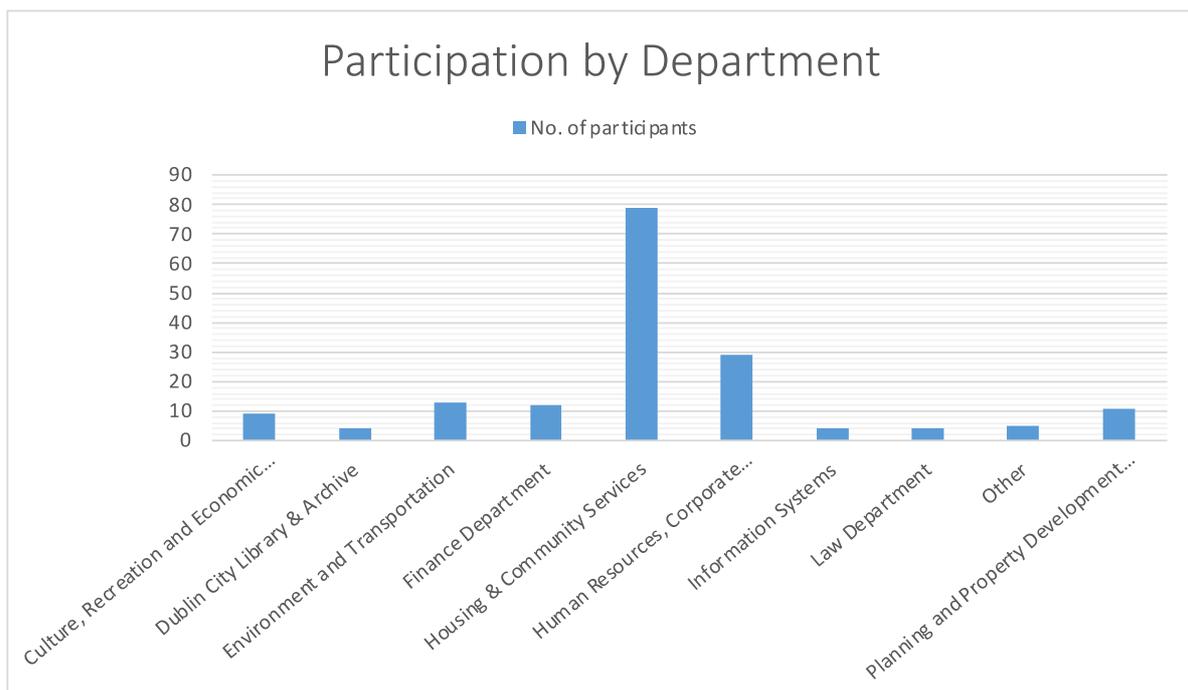
### Demographics:

The 170 responses received can be categorised by department as seen in table format in figure 3 and chart format in figure 4 below.

Figure 3: Participation by department, table

<i>Department</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Culture, Recreation and Economic Services	9	5.3
Dublin City Library & Archive	4	2.4
Environment and Transportation	13	7.6
Finance Department	12	7.1
Housing & Community Services	79	46.5
Human Resources, Corporate Services, Transformation & Digital Services	29	17.1
Information Systems	4	2.4
Law Department	4	2.4
Other	5	2.9
Planning and Property Development Department	11	6.5
<i>Total</i>	170	100

Figure 4: Participation by department, chart

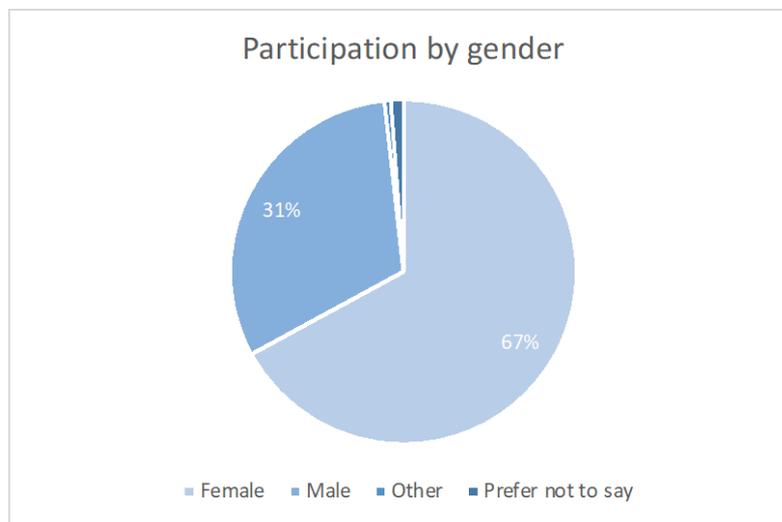


Females made up the majority of the participants at 67.06%, with male participation at 31.18% and the remaining 1.78% either preferring not to say or identifying as an unlisted gender (see figures 5 and 6 below).

Figure 5: Participation by gender, table

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Female	114	67.1
Male	53	31.2
Other	1	0.6
Prefer not to say	2	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 6: Participation by gender, chart

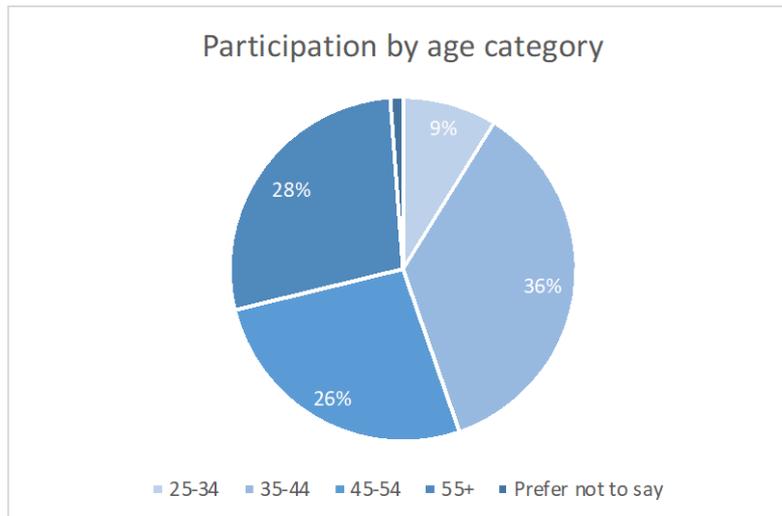


No participants fell into the 18-24 year old category, with 8.8% from 25-34, 35.9% from 35-44, 26.5% from 45-54 and 27.6% over 55 years old. 1.2% of participants preferred not to provide their age profile. A breakdown can be seen at figures 7 and 8.

Figure 7: Participation by age, table

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
25-34	15	8.8
35-44	61	35.9
45-54	45	26.5
55+	47	27.6
Prefer not to say	2	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 8: Participation by age, chart

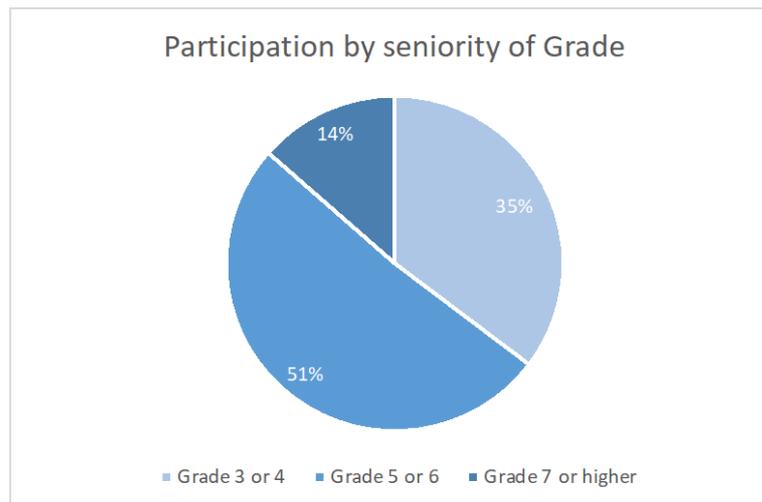


The seniority of grade of the participants was also recorded. For context, general administrative grades are ranked from Grade 3 to Grade 9 with increasing seniority. A Grade 3 or 4 does not directly supervise or manage staff. A Grade 5 or 6 would be responsible for the supervision or management of staff or a function within a department. A Grade 7 or higher is senior management who may be responsible for entire sections within a department, or the department itself. 60 (35.3%) participants were Grade 3 or 4, 87 (51.2%) participants were Grade 5 or 6 and the remaining 23 (13.5%) were Grade 7 or higher (see figures 9 and 10 below).

Figure 9: Participation by grade, table

<i>Seniority of Grade</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Grade 3 or 4	60	35.3
Grade 5 or 6	87	51.2
Grade 7 or higher	23	13.5
<i>Total</i>	<b>170</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 10: Participation by grade, chart



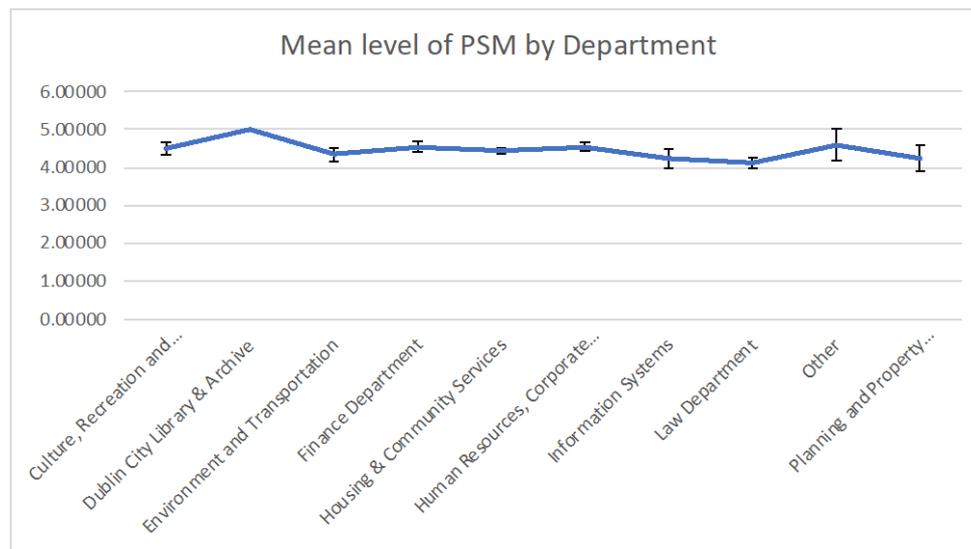
**PSM across departments:**

The levels of PSM were determined and analysed by finding the mean value for each department, as at figure 11, and plotted onto a line chart as at figure 12.

Figure 11: Mean levels of PSM by department, table

<b>Department</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
Culture, Recreation and Economic Services	4.50000	0.16667
Dublin City Library & Archive	5.00000	0.00000
Environment and Transportation	4.34620	0.17343
Finance Department	4.54170	0.14379
Housing & Community Services	4.43670	0.07663
Human Resources, Corporate Services, Transformation & Digital Services	4.53450	0.11883
Information Systems	4.25000	0.25000
Law Department	4.12500	0.12500
Other	4.60000	0.40000
Planning and Property Development Department	4.22730	0.33954

Figure 12: Mean levels of PSM by department, chart



A two-way ANOVA was undertaken to assess the effect of both department and seniority of grade on the levels of PSM found in participants, testing for *H1*. There was a statistically significant interaction found between both department and seniority of grade ( $F(12) = 2.258$ ,  $p = .012$ ) and the effects of department alone on the level of PSM found in participants, with  $F(9) = 2.157$  and  $p = .028$ . This type of test, including seniority of grade as an independent variable, was selected as there was a wide spread of the different grade seniorities that participated in this study, offering an opportunity to establish any variances that might have existed. However, seniority of grade alone was found not to be statistically significant, with a result of  $F(2) = 2.570$  and  $p = .080$ .

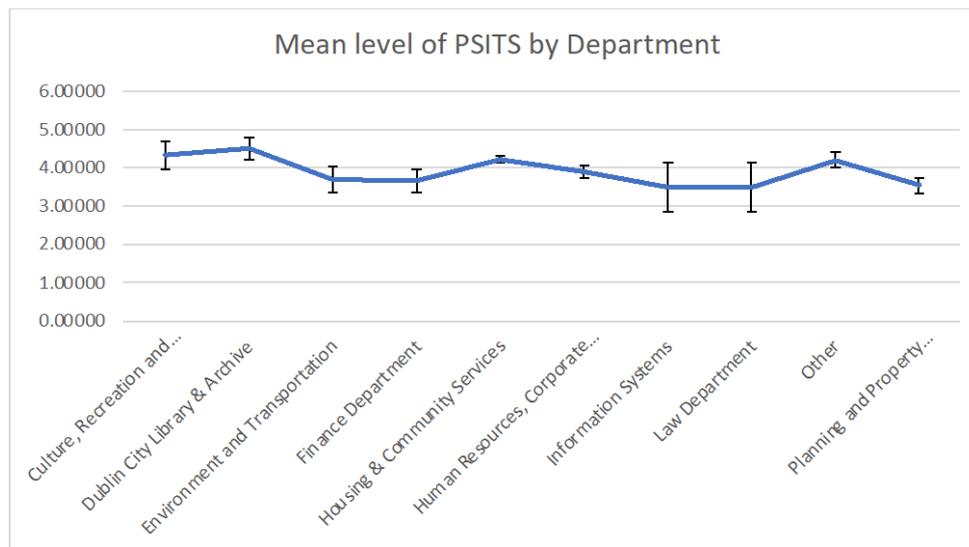
***PSITS and PSM:***

The levels of PSITS were determined and analysed by finding the mean value for each department in the same manner as PSM, visible in table format at figure 13 and line chart format at figure 14.

Figure 13: Mean levels of PSITS by department, table

<b>Department</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
Culture, Recreation and Economic Services	4.33330	0.37268
Dublin City Library & Archive	4.50000	0.28868
Environment and Transportation	3.69230	0.32786
Finance Department	3.66670	0.30977
Housing & Community Services	4.22780	0.09177
Human Resources, Corporate Services, Transformation & Digital Services	3.89660	0.16716
Information Systems	3.50000	0.64550
Law Department	3.50000	0.64550
Other	4.20000	0.20000
Planning and Property Development Department	3.54550	0.20730

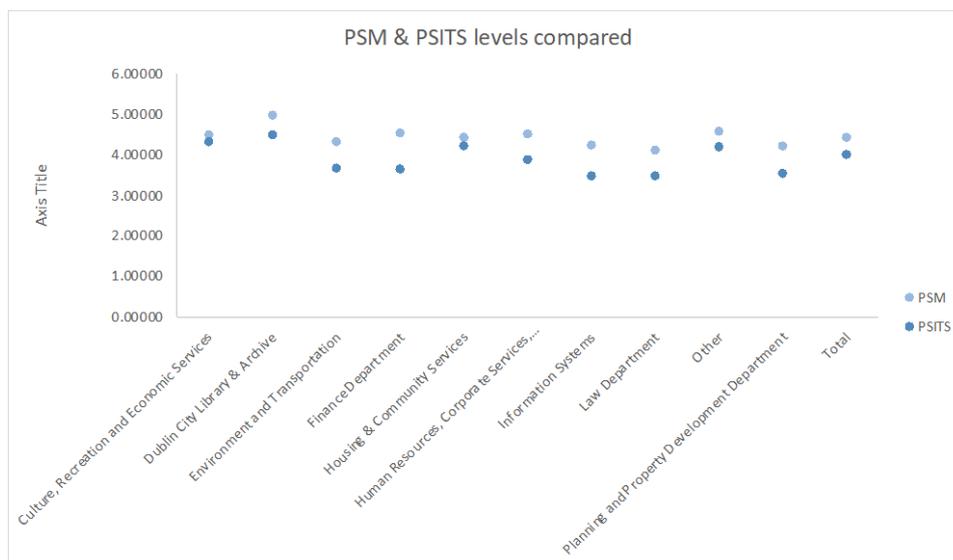
Figure 14: Mean levels of PSITS by department, chart



A multiple linear regression was used to analyse for any correlation between the levels of PSM and PSITS in testing for  $H_2$ , entering PSM as the dependent variable and both PSITS and department as the independent variables. Outputs from this analysis showed that R Square = .060, however  $F(2) = 5.354$  and a  $p$ -value of .006 was recorded in the regression ANOVA. When looking at the coefficients, the department variable returned  $t = -.707$  and  $p = .481$ . PSITS returned  $t = 3.074$  and  $p = .002$  indicating that there is a significant relationship between the levels of PSM and PSITS, regardless of department (which was shown in the earlier two-way ANOVA to have a significant relationship alone).

As seen in the scatterplot chart at figure 15, the mean levels of both PSM and PSITS follow a consistent pattern across different departments, except for the Housing & Community Services and Culture, Recreation and Economic Services departments, where the mean level of PSM and PSITS appear to measure much closer than the other departments. The total mean for all departments was 4.4500 for PSM and 4.0235 for PSITS, with Law Department returning the lowest mean for PSM at 4.1250 and the joint lowest mean for PSITS at 3.5000 with the Information Systems department. Conversely, the highest mean was returned by the Dublin City Library & Archive for both dependent variables, at 5.0000 for PSM and 4.5000 for PSITS. It can be clearly seen in figure 15, and when comparing figures 12 and 14, that the pattern of PSM across the departments almost mirrors that of PSITS.

Figure 15: PSM and PSITS, scatterplot chart



## *Chapter 6: Discussion*

The purpose of this research was to measure the levels of PSM found in general administrative grades across DCC, to determine if there were any variances to be found between each department and if there is any correlation between the levels of PSM and how the employees perceive their social impact or task significance by testing two hypotheses. The results support that these hypotheses should be accepted, however there are limitations to the accuracy of the results which the researcher recommends be remedied by further research of a larger scale. This chapter will discuss each of the hypotheses, the place of this research amongst the existing literature and the future directions that this field of research, specifically in an Irish context, could take.

*H1: PSM in general administrative grades will vary across different departments.*

This hypothesis is considered tentatively proven, with the scores varying from the lowest mean level of PSM at 4.1250 (Law Department) and the highest at 5.0000 (Dublin City Library & Archive) as given in the *Results* chapter. It should be noted that PSM was measured between 0 and 5.00, so the variances between the highest and lowest scoring departments is considerably small. It should also be noted that there were but four participants from the highest scoring department and two from the lowest, meaning that these results may not be representative of these departments. However, both departments have relatively low numbers of general administrative grade employees assigned to work there. Dublin City Library & Archive is staffed primarily by Librarians or Library Assistants, while the Law Department employs professionals such as solicitors. As such, while these results are not representative of the entire department, they may be representative of the small number of general administrative grades within the department.

Similarly, the Environment & Transportation Department returned a mean result of 4.3462, which is a considerable level of PSM, however this was determined by the responses of 13 staff members. The Environment & Transportation Department is one of the largest departments in DCC and employs a considerable number of general administrative grades, alongside professional or analogous grades such as engineers, environmental scientists or traffic control room operators. Again, the Finance Department returned a mean result of 4.517, determined by the responses of 12 staff members. This is another department which employs

professional grades such as accountants alongside general administrative grades. As such, the results of such departments should not be considered representative of the entire department. As the participation from these departments was reasonably small, one should hesitate to suggest the results are representative of the general administrative grade population of the department also.

However, one can assess the results of the Housing & Community Services department with more confidence that they can be considered representative of the relevant population. Also one of the largest departments in DCC, the Housing & Community Services department employs a significant number of general administrative grades in addition to professional or analogous grades such as quantity surveyors, electricians and sheltered housing liaison officers, to name but a few. 79 employees from this department participated, returning a mean result of 4.4367. The Human Resources, Corporate Services, Transformation & Digital Services department, one of the smaller departments in DCC and staffed by a majority of general administrative grades, was represented by the sizeable (considering department size) participation of 29 employees returning a mean result of 4.5345.

While the variances are small, these findings are important given the organisational context of the research. The employees surveyed did not choose their department allocation and therefore which task or tasks that they would undertake in the course of their daily work. While a study such as this cannot determine cause and effect relationships between variables, it has been considered in past research that prosocial motivation can be influenced by the environment in which an employee works (Grant, 2007). This researcher believes that these results warrant further research into the levels of PSM amongst employees of DCC and other local authorities, or public sector organisations, to determine if the lessons learnt from studies internationally may be applied in Ireland. This will be discussed further at the end of this chapter.

When interpreting the results, showing that levels of PSM vary between department, one must situate this study in the existing literature to ascertain what, if any, lessons might be drawn. One could posit that these results are significant for the management of DCC in light of one specific 'motive' that Perry and Wise (1990) propose form part of PSM: the norm-based motive. As detailed in the literature review, norm-based motives inspire an individual to act in a way which allows them to conform to a societal or organisational norm. Considering that these results have shown that the levels of PSM differ between each department, managers may

wish to determine if or how they can potentially leverage the concept of norm-based motives to inspire higher levels of PSM in their department, to match the levels found amongst their colleagues. Studies have shown that management can influence the development of PSM in employees (Lee *et al.*, 2020; Miao *et al.*, 2019; Shim and Park, 2019), which in turn can result in a morale, or even performance, boost for employees during difficult times (Karolidis and Vouzas, 2019; Breugh *et al.*, 2018).

Now that it is evident that variations exist in DCC across departments, it may be prudent for DCC to establish what steps can be taken to consolidate the levels of PSM for utilisation as a resource in the future. Given that public expenditure of approximately €24.6 billion was made in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic alone (Conefrey, Hickey and McInerney, 2021), it is likely that measures will be required across the sector over the coming years to offset this extraordinary expenditure. If similar measures are taken as during the recession which started in 2008, public sector organisations such as DCC may need to prepare for a possible moratorium on recruitment and pay reductions. Strengthening the PSM of employees and giving managers a greater understanding of this theory may help DCC navigate through what has the potential to be a challenging period for employees.

*H2: PSM levels will be higher where employees perceive that their work has a greater social impact/significance.*

H2 posits that the levels of PSM found in employees of DCC will measure higher where the level of perceived social impact or task significance also measures higher. The results returned for the multiple regression used to test this hypothesis suggest that the levels of perceived social impact and task significance in the employees of DCC has a positive effect on the levels of PSM recorded. It should be noted that the levels of perceived social impact and task significance were lower and more spread out amongst participants than PSM: the mean PSITS recorded for the sample was 4.0235, marginally lower than the mean level of PSM (4.4500), and the standard deviation for PSITS stood at .92278 compared to .67423 for PSM. While these figures cannot be directly compared as they are the measurements of different variables, it is important to note the difference in result to understand that the two are not mutually exclusive. It is evident that employees can show high PSM behaviour while perceiving their social impact or task lower on the scale, which was similarly to PSM measured from 0 to 5.00.

Interestingly, the Culture, Recreation and Economic Services (4.33330) and Housing & Community Services (4.22780) Departments scored second and third highest on PSITS (falling only behind Dublin City Library & Archive at 4.50000), but scored comparatively lower for PSM towards the other departments (4.50000 and 4.43670 respectively). It is clear that the participants from these departments perceive their social impact and task significance to be high, and while their PSM levels are still considerably high, it would be reasonable to believe that there may be an explanation for the slight dip in PSM compared to the pattern seen amongst the other departments. Looking back to prior research, it has been noted that work contexts in which employees are unable to fulfil their role to the best of their ability due to constraints beyond their control may have a negative impact on their level of PSM or job satisfaction (Breugh, Ritz and Alfes, 2018; Giaque, Anderfuhren-Biget and Varone, 2013; Telci *et al.*, 2011). This author posits that this may apply to the two aforementioned departments.

It is well documented that Ireland is in the midst of a housing crisis – there are currently approximately 16,705 households on the Dublin City Council waiting list for social housing support (Dublin City Council, 2021) and in May 2021, there were 5,713 individuals (including 1,659 children) accessing homeless accommodation in the Dublin region (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2021). It would be reasonable to expect that the demand on the services provided by the Housing & Community Services department, when met with budget constraints and housing supply shortages, may have a negative impact on the experience of the employee as described.

One must also consider the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting public health crisis which was on-going at the time of this research, when analysing the results of this study. This may be a factor in the slightly differing results returned for the Culture, Recreation and Economic Services department as detailed above. This department is responsible for recreational facilities such as gyms, the Hugh Lane Gallery, playgrounds and parks, all of which were impacted greatly or closed by the restrictions enforced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This department also arranges events such as the European Football Championship, ‘Euro 2020’, which was due to take place partly in Dublin in summer 2020 but was relocated due to local restrictions. While many other departments continued to operate almost as normal, this department looks after many functions that the Government deemed non-essential during so-called ‘lockdowns’. These restrictions preventing the employees from this department from engaging in their usual work may have interfered in their PSM levels.

The same consideration should however be given to all participants in this study. As there was no study done prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not possible to determine if it has positively or negatively impacted the levels of PSM or perceived social impact/task significance. Prior research indicates that awareness of the impact or results of work undertaken could increase an employee's perception of their prosocial impact (Breugh *et al.*, 2019; Grant and Sonnentag, 2010; Grant, 2008b; Grant *et al.*, 2007), which this study shows has a significant relationship with the levels of PSM exhibited. If employees have been working remotely or working in vastly different environments, for example offices closed to the public or employees separated from their colleagues to facilitate social distancing, they may no longer have the same opportunities to fully perceive their social impact or task significance. The work environment will likely remain changed post-pandemic, with hybrid remote and office-based work arrangements being proposed for many public sector employees, so it is highly unlikely that researchers will ever be able to fully understand the levels of PSM and perceived social impact/task significance in DCC prior to this research. However, this researcher posits that efforts should be made to ensure that employees retain the ability to perceive the social impact and task significance of their day to day work, to ensure that PSM levels do not suffer over time.

***Future research:***

As noted in the literature review, it is frequently discussed in the existing literature that a lack of clarity exists in how to proceed with knowledge gained on PSM, while there is widespread agreement that PSM should be a consideration in management practices (Ritz *et al.*, 2016). However, little research could be found on organisations with a workforce distribution such as DCC and little research had been done in an Irish context. There is great potential to use the knowledge gained in this study as a basis on which to run a longitudinal study, measuring the fluctuations of PSM and its relationship with the perceived social impact/task significance of employees as they move between departments in an organisation with a considerably large functional scope such as DCC. This researcher proposes that a longitudinal study beginning with new employees and continuing over the course of their career, using both quantitative methods as used in this study and qualitative methods would be most useful. The vast majority of research discovered in the preparation for this study engaged only in quantitative research, which may be necessary to establish the presence of PSM or perceived social impact/task

significance, but in order to move forward beyond its existence, a qualitative approach may be more suited.

It may also prove useful to engage in a study such as this in other public sector organisations throughout Ireland, not least other local authorities. There are 31 local authorities in the Republic of Ireland (Local Government Management Agency, 2021) who all encounter different, locally specific, issues but are under the same pressure to provide the best service possible to the citizens of their administrative area. Studies across each local authority would provide a bank of knowledge from which an innovative approach to public sector management could be developed, with the employee at the centre, to the benefit of the stakeholders.

***Conclusion:***

This research set out to establish if variances exist in the levels of PSM in the general administrative grades of DCC and what relationship exists between PSM and the perceived social impact and task significance of those same employees. Based on the quantitative analysis of 170 participants, it has been determined that the levels of PSM fluctuate between departments and that a statistically significant relationship exists between PSM and perceived social impact/task significance. The results indicate that the perception held by employees about their work can impact the levels of PSM exhibited, which can be utilised by managers to potentially improve both employee experience and performance. While limitations do exist, this research has started the conversation on how learnings from studies in other countries can be applied in an Irish setting. This research may be of particular interest to public sector managers in light of the unprecedented change occurring in the work environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## References

- Aronson, E. and Aronson, J. (2012) *The social animal*. 11<sup>th</sup> edn. New York: Worth.
- Breaugh, J., Ritz, A. and Alfes, K. (2018) 'Work motivation and public service motivation: disentangling varieties of motivation and job satisfaction', *Public Management Review*, 20(10), pp. 1423-1443.
- Bright, L. (2007) 'Does Person-Organization Fit Mediate the Relationship Between Public Service Motivation and the Job Performance of Public Employees?', *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 27(4), pp. 361-379.
- Conefrey, T., Hickey, R. and McInerney, N. (2021) *COVID-19 and the Public Finances in Ireland*. Available at: [https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/economic-letters/vol-2021-no-3-covid-19-and-the-public-finances-in-ireland-\(conefrey-hickey-and-mcinerney\).pdf?sfvrsn=11](https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/economic-letters/vol-2021-no-3-covid-19-and-the-public-finances-in-ireland-(conefrey-hickey-and-mcinerney).pdf?sfvrsn=11) [accessed 13 August 2021].
- Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (2017) *Our Public Service: What is OPS2020?*. Available at: <https://www.ops2020.gov.ie/what-is-ops2020/overview/> [accessed 20 January 2021].
- Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (2012) *Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government*. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5655c2-putting-people-first-action-programme-for-effective-local-government/> [Accessed 31 October 2020].
- Dublin City Council (2019) *Annual Report and Accounts 2019*. Available at: <https://www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/2020-11/final-annual-report-2019.pdf> [Accessed 20 January 2021].
- Dublin City Council (2020) *Dublin City Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024*. Available at: <https://www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/2020-06/dublin-city-council-corporate-plan-2020-2024.pdf> [Accessed 31 October 2020].

Dublin City Council (2021) *Apply for a Council Home*. Available at: <https://www.dublincity.ie/residential/housing/i-am-looking-home/i-want-apply-council-home> [Accessed 12 August 2021].

European Commission (2021) *Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion: Labour law*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=157&langId=en> [Accessed 21 June 2021].

Fingal County Council (2019) *Annual Report 2019*. Available at: <https://www.fingal.ie/sites/default/files/2020-06/annual-report-2019.pdf> [Accessed 20 January 2021].

Giauque, D., Anderfuhren-Biget, S. and Varone, F. (2013) 'Stress Perception in Public Organisations: Expanding the Job Demands-Job Resources Model by Including Public Service Motivation', *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 33(1), pp. 58-83.

Grant, A. M. (2007) 'Relational job design and the motivation to make a prosocial difference', *Academy of Management Review*, 32(2), pp. 393-417.

Grant, A. (2008a) 'The Significance of Task Significance: Job Performance Effects, Relational Mechanisms, and Boundary Conditions', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(1), pp. 108-124.

Grant, A. M. (2008b) 'Employees without a cause: The motivational effects of prosocial impact in public service', *International Public Management Journal*, 11(1), pp. 48-66.

Grant, A. M. and Campbell, E. M. (2007) 'Doing good, doing harm, being well and burning out: The interactions of perceived prosocial and antisocial impact in service work', *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 80, pp. 665-691.

Grant, A. M., Campbell, E. M., Chen, G., Cottone, K., Lapedis, D., and Lee, K. (2007) 'Impact and the art of motivation maintenance: The effects of contact with beneficiaries on persistence behavior', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 103, pp. 53-67.

Grant, A. M. and Parker, S. K. (2009) 'Redesigning Work Design Theories: The Rise of Relational and Proactive Perspectives', *The Academy of Management Annals*, 3(1), pp. 317-375.

Grant, A. M. and Sonnentag, S. (2010) 'Doing good buffers against feeling bad: Prosocial impact compensates for negative task and self-evaluations', *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes*, 111, pp. 13-22.

Hackman, J. R., and Oldham, G. R. (1975) 'Development of the Job Diagnostic Survey', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 60, pp. 159-170.

Hackman, J. R. and Oldham, G. R. (1976) 'Motivation through the design of work: test of a theory', *Organizational Behaviour and Human Performance*, 16(2), pp. 250-279.

Jacobsen, C. B., Hvitved, J. and Andersen, L. B. (2014) 'Command and motivation: How the perception of external interventions related to intrinsic motivation and public service motivation', *Public Administration*, 92(4), pp. 790-806.

Jensen, U. T., Andersen, L. B. and Holten, A. (2019) 'Explaining a Dark Side: Public Service Motivation, Presenteeism, and Absenteeism', *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 39(4), pp. 487-510.

Karolidis, D. and Vouzas, F. (2019) 'From PSM to Helping Behaviour in the Contemporary Greek Public Sector: The Roles of Organizational Identification and Job Satisfaction', *Public Performance & Management Review*, 42(6), pp. 1418-1447.

Kim, S., Vandenberg, W., Wright, B. E., Andersen, L. B., Cerase, F. P., Christensen, R. K., Desmarais, C., Koumenta, M., Leisink, P., Liu, B., Palidaukaite, J., Pedersen, L. H., Perry, J. L., Ritz, A., Taylor, J. and De Vivo, P. (2013) 'Investigating the Structure and Meaning of Public Service Motivation across Populations: Developing an International Instrument and Addressing Issues of Measurement Invariance', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 23(1), pp. 79-102.

Lee, H. and Lee, S.-Y. (2019) 'Is More Commitment Always Better? A Study on the Side Effects of Excessive Organizational Commitment on Work-Family Conflict', *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, Sage Journals. doi: 10.1177/0734371X19857799.

Lee, H. J., Oh, H. G. and Park, S. M. (2020) 'Do Trust and Culture Matter for Public Service Motivation Development? Evidence From Public Sector Employees in Korea', *Public Personnel Management*, 49(2), pp. 290-323.

Local Government Management Agency (2021) *Local government*. Available at: <https://www.lgma.ie/en/irish-local-government/> [accessed 13 August 2021].

Miao, Q., Eva N., Newman, A. and Schwarz, G. (2019) 'Public service motivation and performance: The role of organizational identification', *Public Money & Management*, 39(2), pp. 77-85.

Miley, I. (2021) 'Employees to be given right to request remote working under Govt plan', *RTE News*, 15 January. Available at: <https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2021/0115/1189819-remote-work-strategy/> [accessed 20 January 2021].

Morgeson, F. P., and Humphrey, S. E. (2006) 'The Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ): Developing and validating a comprehensive measure for assessing job design and the nature of work', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91, pp. 1321-1339.

Moynihan, D. P., Pandey, S. K. and Wright, B. E. (2012) 'Prosocial Values and Performance Management Theory: Linking Perceived Social Impact and Performance Information Use', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, 25(3), pp. 463-483.

Paarlberg, L. and Perry, J. L. (2017) 'Public Service Motivation Research: Lessons for Practice', *Public Administration Review*, 77(4), pp. 529-542.

Perry, J. L. (1996) 'Measuring Public Service Motivation: An Assessment of Construct Reliability and validity', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 6(1), pp. 5-22.

Perry, J. L., Hondeghem, A. and Wise, L. R. (2010) 'Revisiting the Motivational Bases of Public Service: Twenty Years of Research and an Agenda for the Future', *Public Administration Review*, 70(5), pp. 681-690.

Perry, J. L. and Rainey, H. G. (1988) 'The Public-Private Distinction in Organization Theory: A Critique and Research Strategy', *Academy of Management Review*, 13(2), pp. 182-201.

Perry, J. L. and Wise, L. R. (1990) 'The Motivational Bases of Public Service', *Public Administration Review*, 50(3), pp. 367-373.

Potipiroon, W. and Faerman, S. (2020) 'Tired from Working Hard? Examining the Effect of Organizational Citizenship Behaviour on Emotional Exhaustion and the Buffering Roles of Public Service Motivation and Perceived Supervisor Support', *Public Performance & Management Review*, 43(6), pp. 1260-1291.

Rainey, H. G. (1989) 'Public Management: Recent Research on the Political Context and Managerial Roles, Structures, and Behaviours', *Journal of Management*, 15(2), pp. 229-250.

Rayner, J., Reimers, V. and Chao, C. (2017) 'Testing an International Measure of Public Service Motivation: Is There Really a Bright or Dark Side?', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 77(1), pp. 87-101.

Ritz, A., Brewer, G. A. and Neumann, O. (2016) 'Public Service Motivation: A Systematic Literature Review and Outlook', *Public Administration Review*, 76(3), pp. 414-426.

Shim, D. C. and Park, H. H. (2019) 'Public Service Motivation in a Work Group: Role of Ethical Climate and Servant Leadership', *Public Personnel Management*, 48(2), pp. 203-225.

Slabbinck, H. and Van Witteloostuijn, A. (2020) 'Explicit and Implicit Basic Human Motives, and Public Service Motivation', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11(2020), Directory of Open Access Journals. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01542.

Spreitzer, G. M. (1995) 'Psychological empowerment in the workplace: Dimensions, measurement, and validation', *Academy of Management Journal*, 38, pp. 1442-1465.

Steijn, B. (2008) 'Person-environment fit and Public Service Motivation', *International Public Management Journal*, 11(1), pp. 13-27.

Stritch, J. M. and Christensen, R. K. (2014) 'Looking at a job's social impact through PSM-tinted lenses: probing the motivation-perception relationship', *Public Administration*, 92(4), pp. 826-842.

Taylor, J. (2008) 'Organizational influences, Public Service Motivation and work outcomes: An Australian study', *International Public Management Journal*, 11(1), pp. 67-88.

Telci, E. E., Maden, C. and Kantur, D. (2011) 'The theory of cognitive dissonance: A marketing and management perspective', *Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 24, pp. 378-386.

Vandenabeele, W. (2009) 'The mediating effect of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on self-reported performance: more robust evidence of the PSM-performance relationship', *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 75(1), pp. 11-34.

Vandenabeele, W. and de Vries, J. P. (2016) 'A global measure of public service motivation: comparing a global attitude of PSM to the Kim et al measure', in *2016 20<sup>th</sup> International Research Society Public Management Conference*. Hong Kong, 13-15 April 2016. Available at:

[https://irspm2016.exordo.com/files/papers/731/final\\_draft/Vandenabeele\\_and\\_Penning\\_de\\_Vries\\_IRSPM.pdf](https://irspm2016.exordo.com/files/papers/731/final_draft/Vandenabeele_and_Penning_de_Vries_IRSPM.pdf) [accessed 20 January 2021].

Vandenabeele, W. and Jager, S. (2020) 'Government Calling Revisited: A Survey-Experiment on the Moderating Role of Public Service Motivation in Assessing Employer Attractiveness', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11(2020), Directory of Open Access Journals. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.559011

## *Appendix*

### **Appendix I:**

*Items and dimensions found in the scale for the measurement of PSM, developed by Kim et al. (2013).*

Dimensions	Items
APS	I admire people who initiate or are involved in activities to aid my community.
	It is important to contribute to activities that tackle social problems.
	Meaningful public service is very important to me.
	It is important for me to contribute to the common good.
CPV	I think equal opportunities for citizens are very important.
	It is important that citizens can rely on the continuous provision of public services.
	It is fundamental that the interests of future generations are taken into account when developing public policies.
	To act ethically is essential for public servants.
COM	I feel sympathetic to the plight of the underprivileged.
	I empathize with other people who face difficulties.
	I get very upset when I see other people being treated unfairly.
	Considering the welfare of others is very important.
SS	I am prepared to make sacrifices for the good of society.
	I believe in putting civic duty before self.
	I am willing to risk personal loss to help society.
	I would agree to a good plan to make a better life for the poor, even if it costs me money.

### **Appendix II:**

*Cronbach's Alpha for the instrument found at Appendix I*

#### **Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.926	16

### Appendix III:

*Items found in the scale for the measurement of perceived social impact and task significance, developed by Grant (2008a).*

Measurement	Items
Perceived social impact	I am very conscious of the positive impact that my work has on others
	I am very aware of the ways in which my work is benefiting others
	I feel that I can have a positive impact on others through my work
Perceived task significance	My job provides opportunities to substantially improve the welfare of citizens
	A lot of citizens can be positively affected by how well my job gets done
	My job enhances the welfare of citizens
	My job provides opportunities to have positive impact on citizens on a regular basis

### Appendix IV:

*Cronbach's Alpha for the instrument found at Appendix III*

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.940	7

### Appendix V:

*Copy of the text provided at the beginning of the research survey.*

'Public Service Motivation (PSM) is the inherent drive to work for the common or social good, often found in public servants. This research will measure PSM in the staff of Dublin City Council, along with perceived social impact (i.e. how we view the connection between our work and its outcomes) and perceived task significance (i.e. belief that our work is important).

This survey will ask four non-identifying questions to allow the researcher to categorise participants. You will then be asked to indicate, on a scale of 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree', your perception of 23 statements. This survey should take no longer than 5-10 minutes.

In order to partake in this voluntary research, you must be:

- an employee of DCC
- employed as a general administrative grade (e.g. Clerical Officer, Administrative Officer, etc.)
- aged 18 or older.

You can withdraw participation from the survey at any stage before submitting at the end. Once submitted, it will not be possible to identify which answers are yours and therefore they cannot be withdrawn beyond this point.

This research will inform a dissertation on PSM in DCC, being undertaken as part of the Msc in Management at the National College of Ireland. While the final findings of this dissertation will be made available to DCC management, participation is completely anonymous and voluntary.

The data collected will be used solely for research purposes as described above. By continuing to the next page, you are agreeing for your submission to be used as part of this research.

If at any stage you experience distress as a result of participating in this survey, support can be sought from the following:

- Text 'HELLO' to 50808
- Call Samaritans on 116 123
- Contact DCC Staff Support Unit on 01 [REDACTED]\*

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey or the research, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher Emma Leonard by email: [x19103361@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:x19103361@student.ncirl.ie).

*\* This contact number has been redacted as it is for internal use by DCC staff only*