

Effects of Public Servants' Perceived Individual, Collective and Organizational Factors on Job Burnout

Hoe-Chang Yang¹, Yu-Gue Kim² and Hyung-Tak Seo³

¹*Dept. of Distribution Management, Jangan University*

^{2,3}*Graduate school of Knowledge-Based Technology & Energy,
Korea Polytechnic University*

pricezzang@jangan.ac.kr, ygkim7@naver.com, Seo1013@hanmail.net

Abstract

Against the backdrop of the fully enforced Anti-bribery Act and the raised retirement age associated with the ageing population, the present study was intended to determine the measures conducive to public servants' voluntary improvement of public service quality and prevention or reduction of their job burnout by selecting individual, collective and organizational factors and validating those factors with a structured model. To that end, 491 copies of valid questionnaire responses were analyzed to highlight the following.

Keywords: *Self-efficacy, Collegial trust, Equity (fairness), Public service quality, Satisfaction with the raised retirement age, Job burnout*

1. Introduction

Korean companies seem to be ageing seriously as the influx of younger generations into the workforce in both public and private sectors continue to decline due to inflated credentialism. In this context, the government has taken the initiative in adopting the wage cap scheme in the public sector since 2013 to respond to the employment cliff in an aged society, benchmarking the trend in the private sector. As a consequence, the government published a manual on the wage cap policy for the public sector in 2015 and coerced 313 government agencies into complying with the retirement age raised mostly to 60 based on its semi-mandatory recommendation. In addition, the government revised the Public Servant Pension Act in 2015 to secure the financial soundness of the pension, and raised the qualifying age for the pension from 60 to 65 years old, while reportedly having made several attempts including the policy research to fully adopt the wage cap scheme.

2. Related researches

The present study opted for self-efficacy as public servants' individual variable. Derived from the social cognitive theory, self-efficacy was suggested by [1] based on the roles of efficacy and human agency. [1] defined the self-efficacy as one's belief in his/her ability to organize and implement a behavioral process needed to achieve goals. According to Bandura, self-efficacy refers to a generative ability to achieve diverse goals with an effective combination of cognition and emotion and with organized behavioral standards [1]. Thus, self-efficacy is not an inherent trait but acquired by

Article history:

Received (July 13, 2016), Review Result (September 29, 2016), Accepted (October 08, 2016)

experience, acting not only as a key factor for senses of efficacy and achievement but also as an important factor for improving the job performance by observing and actively reconstructing the phenomena.

Collegial trust involves the trust in a horizontal relationship within a hierarchical organizational structure [2]. Previous studies on organizational trust in the field of organizational behavior mostly focused on the vertical trust including the relationship with superiors rather than the horizontal trust. Provided the enforced Kim Youngran Act works well, any coercive trust by superiors is likely to decrease. Hence, the present study focused on the effects of trust between colleagues in horizontal relationships. In social science, collegial trust means one's mind-set to trust and accept what other colleagues say and how they act with a good intention. In short, as [3] asserted, collegial trust is one's general expectation that he or she can trust the written or spoken promises made by colleagues.

Although there are many different arguments on fairness, the issue of organizational fairness was established based on [4]'s Equity theory, which is also related to balance, social exchange and cognitive dissonance theories. Recent research on fairness explored the distributive fairness which concerned the distribution per se from the perspective of social exchange theory, the procedural fairness which concerned the procedure of distribution [5], and the interactional fairness which concerned the issue of treatment in interpersonal relationships [6]. The fairness is based on social justice from the perspective of not only wider society but also organizational psychology and it is also associated with whether the process or outcome is emphasized.

Public service is categorized into different types of functionalities depending on the targets of the service, the environment surrounding the public administration, and the forms of service implementation. From the perspective of beneficiaries, the quality of public service may be related to the gap between their expectations and actual service status, whereas apart from the government as the service provider, it is important for the public servants as the persons in charge to make efforts to fulfil their roles and thus to improve the quality of service.

The retirement scheme forces workers to automatically and mandatorily retire once they reach a certain age [7]. The retirement system was introduced based on the awareness of the need to exclude high wage earners and to secure the vitality of staffing in the human resource management relative to the seniority order wage system. However, the corporate retirement system has recently evolved into the rank-based retirement scheme where one automatically retires if he or she fails to get promoted for a certain period of time, and the long-service retirement scheme where one should retire after certain years of continuous service, increasing the job insecurity. Thus, the satisfaction with the raised retirement age is a very important factor for not only private sector workers whose retirement age is not guaranteed but also public servants.

Burnout was first used as an academic terminology by [8]. Burnout refers to a process of work-related stress causing professionals' attitude and behavior to turn negative [9]. Or the term is defined as one's psychological and mental exhaustion as a response to relatively prolonged job strain or stress unlike the strain which is a short-term response to stress [10]. There is no clear consensus on the definition of burnout despite the extensive research on the subject. Still, in general, burnout is referred to as a state of feeling depleted during a face-to-face encounter with customers for extended hours, exerting negative physical, mental and psychological impacts and thus driving one insane [11]. Therefore, regardless of whether burnout is truly a state of job-related

depletion or a deliberate negligence, feeling pride in jobs is likely to reduce burnout. In the same vein, the roles of the satisfaction with the raised retirement age seemed worth exploring to seek some policy measures conducive to lessening the burnout.

3. Research model and hypotheses

Based on the foregoing literature review, the present study selected self-efficacy as public servants' perceived individual variable, collegial trust as a collective variable, and fairness as an organizational variable in order to verify the effects of these factors on the quality of public service. In addition, the following structured model was developed and hypotheses were set up with intent to verify whether public servants' perceived quality of their own public service could reduce their job burnout and to verify the effects of their satisfaction with the raised retirement age on the relationship between the two.

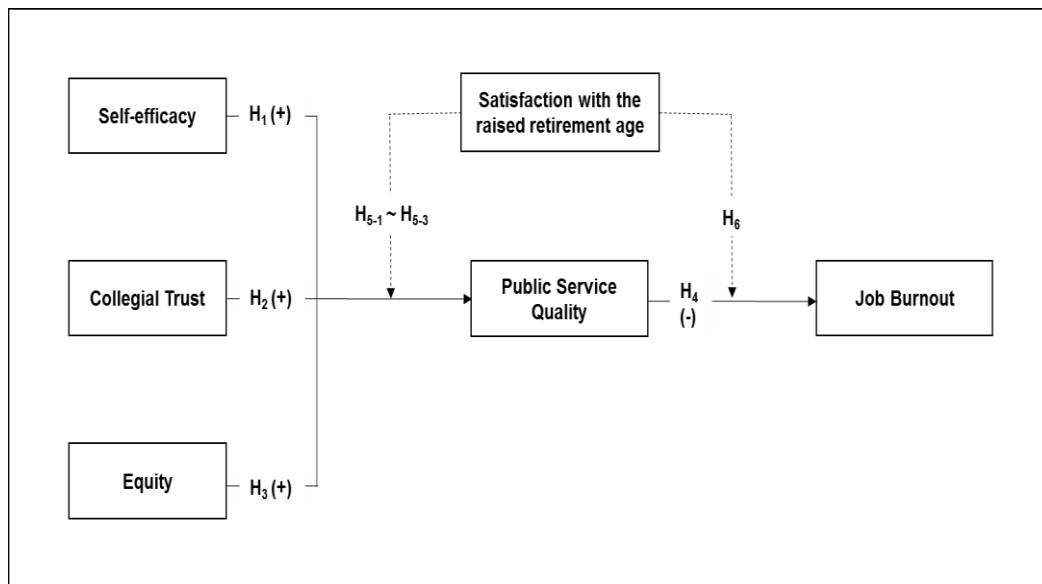


Figure 1. Research model and hypotheses

4. Data collection and research methods

500 public servants in 4 cities, i.e., Incheon, Suwon, Siheung and Whaseong were surveyed for 10 days from July 15th to 24th, 2016. 494 copies of the questionnaire were collected. Excluding three insincere copies, 491 copies were analyzed. Regarding the respondents' demographics, 289 males (58.9%) and 202 females (41.1%) responded. The largest number of respondents were 41-50 years old (n=180, 36.7%) followed by those who were 31-40 years old (n=154, 31.4%).

The self-efficacy was measured with 3 question items based on [1] and [12]. The collegial trust was measured with 3 question items based on [13]. The fairness was measured with 3 question items based on [14]. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale. 26 question items were used to measure the quality of public service based on [15], specifically concerning work attitude, responsiveness, convenience and rationality, in order to determine the individual respondent's attitude toward overall quality of public service. 8 question items were used to measure the job burnout based

on [16] and [17] Demerouti et al. (2004). 4 question items were used to measure the satisfaction with the raised retirement age based on [18] with each item rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

5. Results

As for the internal consistency of question items tested, the Cronbach's α values of self-efficacy, collegial trust and fairness were 0.871, 0.786, and 0.623, respectively. Also, the Cronbach's α values of the satisfaction with raised retirement age, the quality of public service and job burnout were 0.769, 0.945 and 0.756, respectively. The confirmatory factor analysis performed to test the validity found 4 question items on job burnout and 1 item on the satisfaction with raised retirement age had standardized loadings below 0.5. Thus, those items were eliminated prior to another factor analysis, where the construct reliability and the average variance extracted (AVE) were 0.641-0.984 and 0.376-0.829, respectively. Despite the construct reliability and AVE of fairness being 0.7 or less and 0.376, respectively, both of which were below the reference level, its discriminant validity was proved by the correlation analysis.

To verify the hypotheses, workplace, gender, age, place of service, ranks and length of service were controlled for the regression analysis. Statistically positive significant effects of self-efficacy ($\beta = .557$, $p < .01$), collegial trust ($\beta = .397$, $p < .01$) and fairness ($\beta = .297$, $p < .01$) on the quality of public service were found. Thus, <Hypothesis 1>, <Hypothesis 2> and <Hypothesis 3> were accepted. Demographic information was controlled to determine the difference in the effects of the factors on the quality of public service with the multiple regression analysis. Statistically significant positive effects of self-efficacy ($\beta = .469$, $p < .01$) and collegial trust ($\beta = .209$, $p < .01$) were found, whereas fairness ($\beta = .051$, $p = .198$) did not exert statistically significant effects. In addition, the efforts to improve the quality of public service were found to reduce the job burnout ($\beta = -.315$, $p < .01$). This finding suggests one's willingness to improve the quality of public service enhances the person's pride in his or her job while reducing the burnout, forming a virtuous cycle. Thus, <Hypothesis 4> was accepted.

The moderating effects of the satisfaction with the raised retirement age were verified with the hierarchical regression analysis. The interaction term between the fairness and the satisfaction with the raised retirement age proved significant at a confidence interval of 90% ($B = .051$, $p < .1$). Therefore, against the reference range of 95% CI, <Hypothesis 5-1>, <Hypothesis 5-2> and <Hypothesis 5-3> were rejected. The interaction term between the quality of public service and the satisfaction with the raised retirement age proved to have statistically significant positive effects on the relationship between the quality of public service and job burnout ($B = .126$, $p < .05$). Hence, <Hypothesis 6> was accepted. The 3-step mediation regression analysis based on Baron & Kenny (1986) was conducted to verify the mediating effects on the quality of public service. The self-efficacy, collegial trust and fairness partially mediated the quality of public service, respectively. Thus, <Hypothesis 7-1>, <Hypothesis 7-2> and <Hypothesis 7-3> were accepted.

6. Conclusions

The analyses highlighted the following conclusions and implications. First, self-efficacy, collegial trust and fairness contributed to the betterment of public service quality, respectively. This finding suggests individual, collective and organizational

efforts can improve the quality of public service. In particular, the multiple regression analysis indicated the positive effects of self-efficacy and collegial trust in the order named. This finding suggests diversified attention should be paid to self-efficacy and collegial trust. According to [1], as self-efficacy impacts on one's behavior via the person's cognitive, motivational and emotional adjustments, work-related sense of achievement, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion and encouragement and emotional stimuli are needed to enhance the self-efficacy. Therefore, empowerment, job design for both accountability and achievement, superiors' encouragement and support should be implemented, whereas stressors should be removed effectively. Also, a range of programs need be applied including a performance assessment system that enables competition in good faith for the purpose of increasing the collegial trust. Second, the betterment of the public service quality proved to reduce the job burnout. Thus, empowering public servants to voluntarily improve the quality of public service through, say, idea contests will be effective. Third, no moderating effects of the satisfaction with the raised retirement age were found on the relationship between self-efficacy, collegial trust and fairness and the quality of public service. Yet, the satisfaction with the raised retirement age was found to exert positive effects on the relationship between the job burnout and quality of public service. Lastly, the verified mediating effects on the quality of public service suggest that individual efforts should be accompanied by collective and organizational support. Hence, creative efforts for job performance as well as the development and implementation of diverse support measures could reduce public servants' job burnout and improve the quality of public service, laying the foundation for clean Korea.

References

- [1] Bandura, Editor, "Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control", New York: Freeman, (1997).
- [2] D.R. McCauley and K.W. Kuhnert, "Public Administration Quarterly", Vol. 16, No. 2, (1992).
- [3] J. B. Rotter, "American Psychologist", Vol. 26, No. 5, (1971).
- [4] J.S. Adams, Editor, "Inequity in Social Exchange", L. Berkowitz (ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, New York: Academic Press, (1965).
- [5] G.S. Leventhal, J. Karuza and W.R. Fry, Editor, "Beyond Fairness: A Theory of Allocation Preferences," G. Miikula (Eds.) *Justice and Social Interaction*. NY: Springer-Verlag, (1980).
- [6] R.J. Bies and J. Moag, Editor, "Interactional Justice: Communication Criteria Fairness", JAI Press, (1986).
- [7] D.H. Cho, *Korea Journal of Labor Economics*, Vol. 37, No. 3, (2014).
- [8] H.J. Freudenberger, *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 30, No. 1, (1974).
- [9] Cherniss, Editor, "Professional Burnout in Human Service Organizations", New York: Praeger Publishers, (1980).
- [10] A.M. Pines and G. Keinan, "Personality and Individual Differences", Vol. 39, No. 3, (2005).
- [11] M.M. Choi and J.H. Hyun, *Journal of Korean Social Welfare Administration*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (2006).
- [12] F. Luthans and C.M. Youssef, *Journal of Management*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (2007).
- [13] R. Lewick and B. Bunker, "Frontiers of Theory and Research", Vol. 1, (1996).
- [14] B.P. Niehoff and R.H. Moorman, *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 3, (1993).
- [15] K.S. Song, *Korean Society and Public Administration*, Vol. 13, No. 4, (2003).
- [16] E. Demerouti, A.B. Bakker, F. Nachreiner and W.B. Schaufeli, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 86, No. 3, (2001).
- [17] E. Demerouti, A.B. Bakker, I. Vardakou and A. Kantas, *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, Vol. 19, No. 1, (2003).

[18] I.H. Ham, Korea Social Policy Review, Vol. 21, No. 1, (2014).