



# The Impact of Organisational Commitment on the Relationship between Motivation and Turnover Intention in the Public Sector

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Turnover intentions, which eventually lead to actual employees' turnover, negatively influence the performance and growth of organisations. This research aims to examine the effects of public service motivation (PSM) in reducing turnover intentions throughout mediating factors, including job satisfaction, organisational commitment and burnout, particularly in the public sector. Based on data collected from a sample of 492 respondents, who are employees working in public organisations in the Ben Tre Province of Vietnam, the study uses the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling approach to test the hypotheses in the research model. The findings indicate that there is no direct effect of PSM on the turnover intentions of public employees. Noticeably, although PSM boosts workers' satisfaction, this satisfaction does not significantly reduce people's intentions to leave. In addition, in spite of the fact that having a high level of PSM does not reduce burnout, turnover intentions rise as the level of burnout gets higher. However, the data analyses also reveal the strong mediating effects of organisational commitment on employees' turnover intentions. The implications of the study, meaningful recommendations for the local government, and limitations for further research are also discussed in detail.

**Keywords:** *Public service motivation, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, burnout, turnover intentions, public sector.*



## **Introduction**

The turnover intentions of employees are one of the recent topics that has attracted the attention of researchers, especially in public organisations. Due to the adverse effects on the organisation in terms of performance and cost, it is essential that worker turnover intentions be studied and examined (Roodt & Bothma, 1997; Sulu, Ceylan, & Kaynak, 2010). However, according to Paulsen (2014), previous studies have largely focussed on the consequences of actual employee turnover, instead of the factors leading to this situation. Public service motivation (PSM) has been considered as having a role in reducing turnover intentions. Previous studies have shown higher levels of PSM are associated with lower turnover intentions among public employees (Campbell, Im, & Jeong, 2014; Crewson, 1997; Crum & Naff, 1999). Consequently, studies about the factors and mechanisms that link PSM to turnover are crucial to implementation (Bright, 2008).

In another study on the relevance of job motivation, social support, public service motivation, and high workloads to turnover intentions among staff in Korean public organisations, Kim (2015) demonstrates that intrinsic motivation is an extremely important and influential factor in reducing intentions to quit. Meanwhile, self-sacrifice, one of the components of PSM, is correlated with the intention to quit. In addition, the study provided much information about the impact of exhaustion on internal motivation and the intention to quit. These findings are very urgent for public organisations because they help to manage employees' intentions to leave their jobs in an increasingly dynamic environment.

In addition, Imran, Allil and Mahmoud (2017) discover the process that begins with motivation, leads to a commitment to the organisation, and consequently reduces the intention to quit. An organisational commitment includes three types: affective, normative and continuance (Imran et al., 2017). They analysed the survey data of 46 teachers working in public schools in Dhofar, Oman and illustrated that the teachers' intentions to leave the job would be reduced as a result of motivation and appropriate commitment. Moreover, organisational commitment standards will also make employees stay longer. This research has shed some light on how motivation through organisational commitment can indirectly influence the intention to quit a job.

Previous studies have shown complex and inconsistent results of the factors influencing turnover intentions, as well as their correlations with PSM and turnover intentions in the public sector. Particularly, there are few studies on this topic in Vietnam's public sector. To fill in the research gap, this study aimed to investigate the relationships between PSM and turnover intentions throughout the mediating effects of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and burnout in Vietnamese public organisations. From the empirical results, the

findings provide some managerial implications for fostering employee efforts in public organisations.

## Literature Review

### *PSM and Turnover Intentions in the Public Sector*

Employees' turnover intentions are defined to be the intention of leaving their organisations or companies for the purpose of moving to a different workplace (Lacity, Iyer, & Rudramuniyaiah, 2009; Meyer & Tett, 1993). These intentions can result in an actual turnover incident and also influence the intentions of other workers in the organisation (Cho & Lewis, 2012; Kash, Naufal, Cortés, & Johnson, 2010; Semmer, Elfering, Baillod, Berset, & Beehr, 2014). Despite the reasons for turnover (e.g. retirement, changing jobs, working for other organisations or private companies), the resignation of valuable and skilful workers can lead to detrimental effects for the organisation in terms of cost and efficiency, including decreased performance, reduced delivery service, and administrative issues. Furthermore, hiring and training new staff can add additional costs for the firm (Roodt et al., 1997; Sulu 2010).

Turnover intentions can be reduced by refining working conditions, building relationships with colleges and managers, and also in achieving promotions, career advancement and skill development (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Deleon & Taher, 1987; Ellickson & Logsdon, 2002; Emmert & Taher, 1992; S. Kim, 2002; Wright & Davis, 2003). Turnover intentions can be increased by adverse effects such as stress, politics, bullying and job dissatisfaction (Abbas, Raja, Darr, & Bouckenoghe, 2014; Chiu, Chien, Lin, & Yun Hsiao, 2005; Houshmand, O'Reilly, Robinson, & Wolff, 2012; Takase & Maude, 2000). Meanwhile, public service motivation is described as the motivation that raises people's orientation to serve and contribute to public interest (Perry, 1996). It is demonstrated through six major dimensions, including attraction to policy-making, commitment to the public interest, social justice, civic duty, compassion, and self-sacrifice (Perry, 1996). This study only focussed on the commitment to public interest based on Vietnam's public sector, after receiving valuable recommendations from the group discussion.

PSM is viewed as an important and crucial element in the public sector due to its emphasis on the meaning and purpose of employees' jobs, which increases their altruism and prosocial motivation (Perry, Hondgehem, & Wise, 2010). Moreover, PSM is also believed to have impacts on public workers' personalities, attitudes and, consequently, their behaviours (Perry et al., 2010; Perry & Wise, 1990). Specifically, former researchers have proven the fact that employees with a higher PSM tend to prefer working in public versus private organisations, have fewer monetary demands, and proactively report inappropriate acts that might cause harm to the public and their organisations (Brewer, Selden, & Facer II, 2000; Bright, 2005; Lewis & Frank, 2002).

There has been no consistent result in the effect of PSM on the turnover intentions of public employees. According to Kim and Lee (2007), turnover intentions of employees in a non-profit human service agency were not affected by their levels of PSM. Similarly, there was an insignificant relationship between PSM and turnover intention in the study of Bright (2008), in which person-organisation fit served as a partial mediator. However, this study attempts to examine that PSM can lead to a decrease in the turnover intentions of public employees for the following reasons. First, PSM positively enhances job satisfaction while job satisfaction has the opposite impact on turnover intentions, as the more satisfied workers are, the less likely they will leave the organisation (Crum & Naff, 1999). Second, since PSM indicates the individuals' prosocial inclination, workers with a high level of PSM will tend to choose public organisations and stay longer as their jobs satisfy their intrinsic motivational needs (Crum & Naff, 1999; Scott & Pandey, 2005). Third, while turnover intention is found to be increased by high level of stress, bullying, and job dissatisfaction (Abbas et al., 2014; Chiu et al., 2005; Houshmand et al., 2012; Takase & Maude, 2000), PSM, being closely related to intrinsic motivation, helps workers reduce stress and burnout (Bertelli, 2006; Keaveney & Nelson, 2017). As a result, previous studies imply that PSM reduces stress levels and turnover intentions. Fourth, PSM also strengthens employees' relationships with their organisations, enabling them to acknowledge the importance of themselves and their work, and this acknowledgement reduces employees' job changing intentions (Crewson, 1997; Im, Campbell, & Jeong, 2016; Pandey, Wright, & Moynihan, 2008; Wright, Moynihan, & Pandey, 2012). Finally, PSM also encourages public employees to be more concentrated on completing public missions rather than advancing through the hierarchical organisational structure (Scott & Pandey, 2005). Based on the discussion above, the study proposes:

H1: PSM has a negative relationship with turnover intentions.

### ***The Role Mediators of Job Satisfaction, Organisational Commitment, and Burnout in the Public Sector***

Crum and Naff (1999) completed a survey with a large sample in the public sector and demonstrated the strong correlation between PSM, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions of public employees (Crum & Naff, 1999). Workers who possess high PSM feel more pleased with their jobs and less concerned about leaving the positions to find other ones. This study proposes that PSM has a direct effect on job satisfaction, as well as turnover intentions of public employees. A similar result is also found in Scott and Pandey's (2005) research, in which higher PSM makes individuals more generous and with the characteristics of hierarchical organisations, more satisfied with their jobs and less likely to resign. Furthermore, according to Romzek (1990), commitment to public interest enhances personal satisfaction by creating a good association between organisational goals, serving the community as a public organisation and employees' value. It was also found that public

employees place greater emphasis on intrinsic rewards compared to those who work in private companies, which gives them the feeling of more satisfaction and accomplishment (Houston, 2000). From the discussion above, the study suggests:

H2: PSM has a positive relationship with job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction and turnover intentions are alleged to be factors that reflect workers' future expectations about their jobs. These expectations are affected by the need to feel committed and satisfied with the work they are doing. When working conditions meet their expectations, employees will have higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions. In recent decades, there have been debates and studies with organisational data about whether public employees are pleased with the characteristics of their organisations (DeSantis & Drust, 1996; Steel & Warner, 1989). Some believed that both the hierarchical structures and low incomes in the public sector have significantly decreased public workers' satisfaction (Finlay - Martin & Blum, 1995). However, it is surprisingly noted that the majority of public employees score high in their satisfaction with many different government organisations (Bogg & Cooper, 1995; DeSantis & Drust, 1996; Ellickson & Logsdon, 2002; Kamdron, 2005; Maidani, 2015; Schneider & Vaught, 2014; Ting, 1996). Moreover, the most influential conditions altering job satisfaction and turnover intentions are non-monetary factors. For instance, a strong bond with colleagues and supervisors, promotion opportunities, and administrative strategies (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Deleon & Taher, 1987; Ellickson & Logsdon, 2002; Emmert & Taher, 1992; S. Kim, 2002, 2005; Wright & Davis, 2003). Through these studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Job satisfaction has a negative relationship with turnover intentions.

Organisational commitment has always gained much study and attention, especially in the area of behavioural economics, since it is the link between organisations and individuals. Organisational commitment is defined to be the psychological connection that employees possess, making them feel connected and committed to the organisations they are working with. It is also one of the most decisive factors that has an impact on decisions of whether to continue or leave the firm (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Therefore, it is essential that organisational commitment is analysed in the context of the public sector.

Several studies have also proved that a higher organisational commitment leads to a higher level of PSM (Camilleri & Van Der Heijden, 2007; Castaing, 2006). Civil servants that have more motivation to work for the public sector will contribute to improve public service quality and stay in an organisation for longer. Besides, committed employees can participate in creative and upbuilding activities; these employees can help to improve and enhance organisational performance. Based on the previous results, the following hypothesis was

developed:

H4: PSM has a positive relationship with organisational commitment.

The correlation between organisational commitment and employees' turnover intentions has been examined by several prior studies (Galletta, Portoghese, & Battistelli, 2011; Rashid & Sarfraz, 2011). The scholars have concluded that organisational commitment yields negative results to turnover intentions. However, these outcomes are still inconsistent and various when compared in size and influential levels of organisational commitment on turnover intentions. Therefore, in this paper, the relationship between commitment and turnover intentions will be studied and clarified in the context of the public sector. The next hypothesis was proposed:

H5: Organisational commitment has a negative relationship with turnover intentions.

Although job satisfaction is moderately found among public employees, burnout is discovered to be one of the critical threats in the public sector. This is implied by the cases in studies where job satisfaction has a negative correlation with the working length of public workers (Crum & Naff, 1999; Kamdron, 2005). In other words, the longer employees work in public organisations, the less satisfaction they have. In addition, other researchers have uncovered that exhaustion and burnout are two of the most frequent reasons employees give when they decide to quit their jobs (Kim, 2005; Sumantra, 1992).

It was found that emotional exhaustion significantly affected both the performance and turnover of employees (Cropanzano & Wright, 1998). Additionally, high job demands can cause health impairment, including burnout and health complaints (Demerouti, Bakker, De Jonge, Janssen, & Schaufeli, 2001). As a result, low PSM due to stressful job demands can be presented as one of the reasons causing high levels of stress and burnout among employees. Furthermore, PSM considered as a sole factor can also be an important source of motivation for civil servants (Giauque, Anderfuhren-Biget, & Varone, 2013). Specifically, an individual's burnout will tend to rise if he or she senses negative emotions or low work motivation. Thus, a lack of motivation, including work motivation, pro-social motivation, and public service motivation, can result in noticeable burnout and stress on public employees. Hence, the following hypothesis was suggested:

H6: PSM has a negative relationship with burnout.

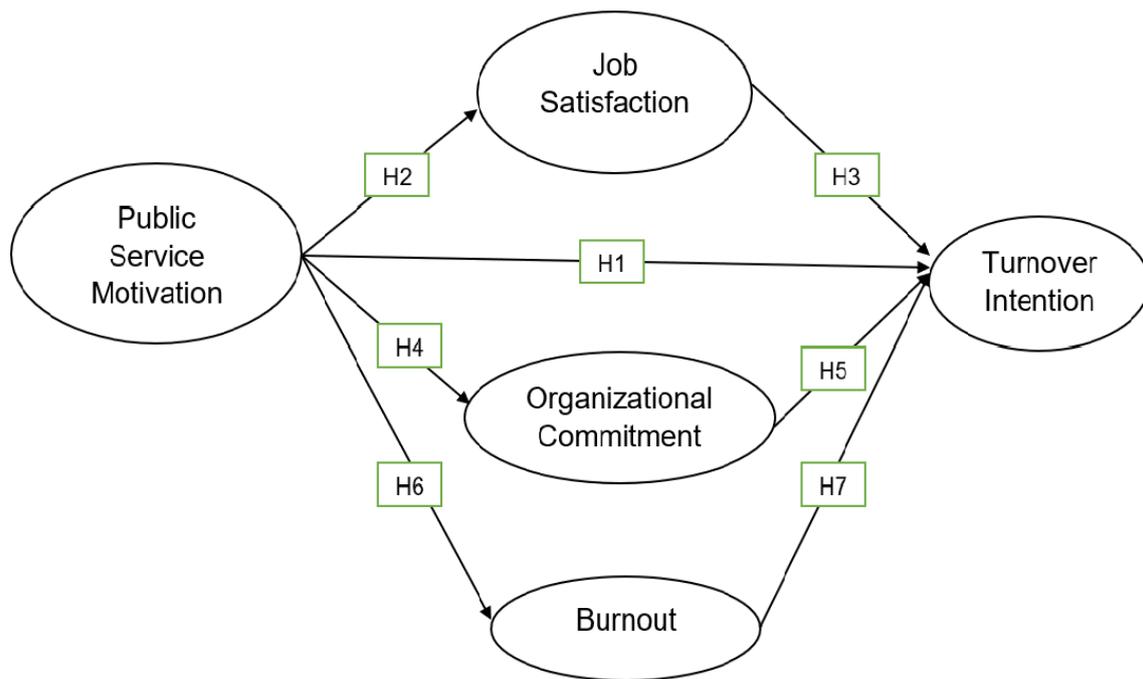
Burnout can be known as emotional exhaustion and can happen to anyone, anywhere, and is the result of improper work or life management. The most common cause of burnout is that the quantity and level of job demands exceed the capabilities of employees (Hsieh, 2014). Emotional exhaustion is the main source of job burnout and is defined as the employees'

exhaustion of psychological and emotional resources during the process of intensive interpersonal interactions. This emotional burnout is often accompanied by harm to employees' mental and physical health, making them feel drained, exhausted, discouraged, and like they do not want to work the next day (Maslach, 2003). When employees feel emotionally exhausted, they are likely to feel a low level of solidarity with colleagues and be more willing to leave their organisations. Therefore, in order to reduce turnover intentions, the balance between psychological needs at work and employees' own happiness has become a challenge that experts in all job fields have to deal with and investigate, especially in the public service sector. Therefore, the last hypothesis was proposed:

H7: Burnout has a positive relationship with turnover intentions.

Figure 1 below illustrates the research model with the hypotheses development.

**Figure 1.** The research model



## Methodology

### *Data collection*

The respondents of this research include civil servants and executives from public organisations in the Ben Tre Province of Vietnam. The questionnaire was created to consist of questions on public service motivation, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and burnout to examine their impacts on employees' turnover intentions. Each respondent was

asked to fill in his or her demographic information, business title, age, gender, educational level, and years of experience in the first section. In the second section, the respondent evaluated the main constructs of the research framework. In the event there were any unclear concepts or items that were hard for them to understand, they could choose to refuse to answer the questions. The survey was conducted within four months, from May 2019 to August 2019. The questionnaire was distributed to public organisations in the Ben Tre Province of Vietnam. First, the authors asked for the approval from the authorities of the public departments in Ben Tre to distribute the questionnaire. Additionally, we also received invaluable support from graduate students in the public administration program to deliver the survey to their executives and employees who satisfied the research's population criteria. A total of 642 questionnaires were delivered to the target respondents. Finally, we received 492 valid observations of respondents from public organisations located in the Ben Tre Province, for a response rate of 76.63 per cent. Of the respondents, approximately 48 per cent were female, about 87 per cent were government officials at the people committee of wards or equivalent levels, about 59 per cent earned a bachelor's degree, and approximately 85 per cent of the respondents were between the ages of 22 and 40.

### *Measures*

All of the measurement items of this paper were adopted from prior studies. First, based on the assessment of Perry (1996), we selected seven items of commitment to the public interest in order to conduct a group discussion with three human resource managers at the District People's Committee to gain further advice. They recommended the elimination of the reversed statements. Therefore, we selected and modified five items to measure for public service motivation, such as "I am willing to contribute to my community" (PSM1); "Meaningful public service is very important to me" (PSM2); "I would prefer seeing public officials do what is best for the whole community" (PSM3); "I consider public service my civic duty" (PSM4); and "An official's obligation to the public should always come before loyalty to superiors" (PSM5).

Second, we adopted four items from Kim (2015) to measure turnover intentions, such as "Sometimes I do not want to work, I want to transfer to other department" (TUR1); "I spend time searching for other jobs during the work hours" (TUR2); "I want to quit my job" (TUR3); "I will quit my job if I have chances to get other jobs" (TUR4).

Third, we adopted five items from Bright (2008) to reflect the variable of job satisfaction. They included: "How satisfied are you with your opportunities for achievement?" (SAT1); "How satisfied are you with your recognition opportunities?" (SAT2); "How satisfied are you with your level of responsibility on your job?" (SAT3); "How satisfied are you with the

meaningfulness of your job?” (SAT4); and “How satisfied are you with your advancement opportunities?” (SAT5).

Fourth, we adopted two items from Allen and Meyer (1990) to measure the variable of organisational commitment. They included: “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me” (COM1); and “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization” (COM2).

Finally, the variable of burnout was adopted from Hsieh (2014). They included: “I dread getting up in the morning and having to face another day on the job” (BU1); “I feel emotionally drained from my work” (BU2); “I feel used up at the end of the work day” (BU3); and “I feel burned out from my work” (BU4).

All measures were translated into Vietnamese to get further suggestions from the group discussion to meet the Vietnamese context and culture in a public organisation.

All the items were assessed on five-point Likert-type scales, with 1 meaning strongly disagree to 5 meaning strongly agree. Furthermore, the questionnaire was conducted in Vietnamese, enabling respondents to fully understand and easily fill in their responses. The questionnaire in the English version was first adapted and then translated into Vietnamese.

### ***Research Methods***

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to examine the hypotheses. SEM is an applicable statistical approach for testing cause-effect relationships that reflect multiple equations. The Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is very suitable for analysing a complex model with many simultaneous relationships. The PLS-SEM is being strongly developed in business research, marketing, economic management, and many other social sciences. Furthermore, this study mainly targets predicting employees’ turnover intentions affected by PSM, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and burnout. This is also an appropriate condition for using PLS-SEM as a prediction method for SEM. The PLS-SEM in SmartPLS 3.0 M3 was used to conduct the data analysis. Considering a rather complex model and relatively few well-established literatures exist, PLS-SEM is a suitable choice (Gefen, Straub, & Boudreau, 2000; Peng & Lai, 2012). Besides, considering the absence of distributional assumptions in some social science studies, the use of PLS-SEM is clearly an advantage (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019). To sum up, a PLS-SEM approach is appropriate for testing the research model.

## Data Analysis

### *Testing For Convergent and Discriminant Validity*

Various tests are used to examine the structural analysis. First, Cronbach's alpha of each construct is evaluated and the results are all higher than 0.7, assuring the construct's reliability. Second, all of the composite reliability of the factors are also above 0.7, which indicates a high internal consistency (Bagozzi, 1981; J. Hair et al., 2010; Hair et al., 2014; Gefen et al., 2000).

For convergent validity, which tests whether the latent factors are well presented by their observed variables, it is required that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is higher than 0.5. As one can see in Table 1, all AVEs are above the threshold, ensuring the convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981a; J. Hair et al., 2010) and indicating that each construct explains 50 per cent or more of the variance of the items that make up the construct. Furthermore, for outer loadings, most of the variables have outer loadings higher than 0.7, except for PSM1, SAT3 and SAT4, satisfying the theoretical requirement of Henseler et al. (2012) and reinforcing the reliability of the scale.

**Table 1:** Summary results for model measurement

Latent variables	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Rho_A	Composite reliability	AVE
<b>Threshold</b>			<b>≥ 0.6</b>	<b>≥ 0.7</b>	<b>≥ 0.7</b>	<b>≥ 0.5</b>
<b>Public Service Motivation (PSM)</b>	PSM2	0.744	0.760	0.765	0.846	0.580
	PSM3	0.758				
	PSM4	0.809				
	PSM5	0.731				
<b>Job Satisfaction (SAT)</b>	SAT1	0.824	0.762	0.762	0.863	0.677
	SAT2	0.843				
	SAT5	0.800				
<b>Organisational Commitment (COM)</b>	COM1	0.922	0.829	0.829	0.921	0.854
	COM2	0.926				
<b>Burnout (BUR)</b>	BUR1	0.804	0.903	0.914	0.932	0.775
	BUR2	0.923				
	BUR3	0.892				
	BUR4	0.898				
<b>Turnover Intentions (TUR)</b>	TUR1	0.887	0.911	0.912	0.937	0.789
	TUR2	0.899				
	TUR3	0.878				
	TUR4	0.888				

**Notes:** PSM1, SAT3 and SAT4 were eliminated because of outer loading values less than 0.7.

For discriminant validity, the statistical difference between the two constructs is testified by examining the cross-loadings. According to Hair et al. (2013), the outer loadings of all items within a construct should be higher than its cross-loadings with another construct. For this criterion, all the cross-loadings values satisfy the requirement. Subsequently, based on the Fornell-Larcker requirement, the square root of the AVE of a factor needs to be higher than the highest correlation coefficient of the factor with other factors, or the AVE needs to be higher than the square of the highest coefficient correlation (Fornell & Larcker, 1981b; Hair et al., 2010). In observation of the results from Table 2, all indicators satisfy this criterion.

Furthermore, discriminant validity was evaluated by using Heterotrait-Monotrait ratios (HTMT), which are the mean value of all item correlations across constructs relative to the mean of the average correlations for the items measuring the same construct. Using the HTMT as a criterion, it is suggested that values are compared to a threshold of 0.85 (Clark & Watson, 1995; Kline, 2011). If the value of the HTMT is higher than this threshold, one can conclude that there is a lack of discriminant validity. Since all indicators are lower than 0.85, the discriminant validity of this model is well-confirmed (see Table 3).

**Table 2:** Fornell Larcker criterion

	<b>Burnout</b>	<b>Job satisfaction</b>	<b>Organisational commitment</b>	<b>Public service motivation</b>	<b>Turnover intentions</b>
<b>Burnout</b>	<b>0.880</b>				
<b>Job satisfaction</b>	0.122	<b>0.823</b>			
<b>Organisational commitment</b>	-0.085	0.370	<b>0.924</b>		
<b>Public service motivation</b>	0.032	0.379	0.369	<b>0.761</b>	
<b>Turnover intentions</b>	0.639	-0.020	-0.271	-0.088	<b>0.888</b>

**Note:** Square root of AVE in bold on diagonal

**Table 3 :** Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) ratio

	<b>Burnout</b>	<b>Job satisfaction</b>	<b>Organisational commitment</b>	<b>Public service motivation</b>	<b>Turnover intentions</b>
<b>Burnout</b>					
<b>Job satisfaction</b>	<b>0.149</b>				
<b>Organisational commitment</b>	<b>0.095</b>	<b>0.462</b>			
<b>Public service motivation</b>	<b>0.045</b>	<b>0.482</b>	<b>0.458</b>		
<b>Turnover intentions</b>	<b>0.699</b>	<b>0.095</b>	<b>0.311</b>	<b>0.111</b>	

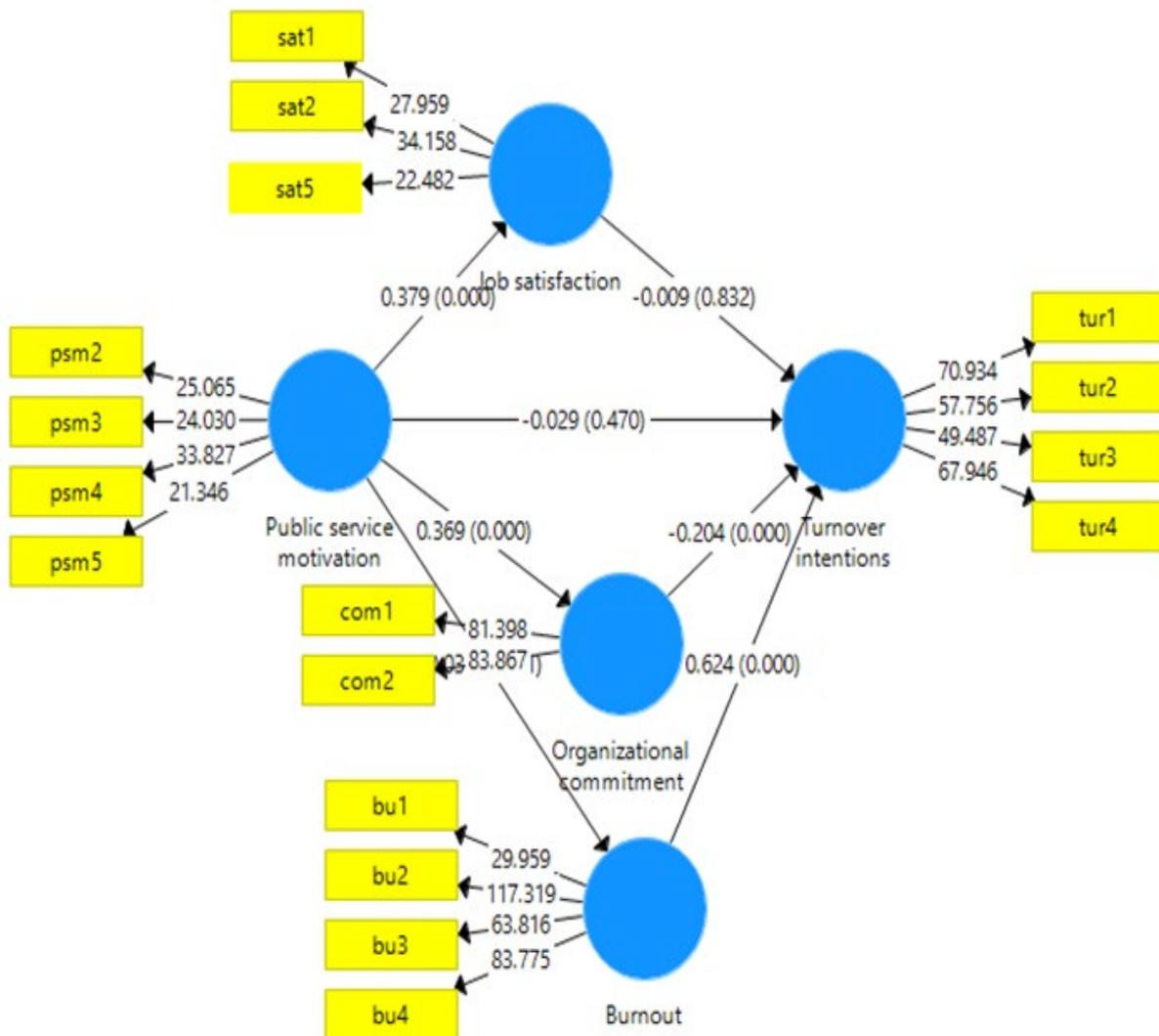
### *Hypothesis Testing Results*

Table 4 and Figure 2 show the hypothesis testing results. Four hypotheses are accepted as their p-values are less than 0.01, while three others are rejected with p-values over 0.05. PSM can lead to a greater job satisfaction and higher organisational commitment. However, only organisational commitment can have a significant impact on decreasing employees' turnover intentions. Furthermore, although PSM does not necessarily reduce burnout among employees, there is a strong correlation between turnover intentions and workers' burnout levels.

**Table 4:** PLS-SEM path coefficients

Hypotheses	Estimates	P_Values	Results
H1: Public service motivation -> Turnover intentions	-0.029	<b>0.481</b>	Rejected
H2: Public service motivation -> Job satisfaction	0.379	<b>0.000</b>	Accepted
H3: Job satisfaction -> Turnover intentions	-0.009	<b>0.836</b>	Rejected
H4: Public service motivation -> Organisational commitment	0.369	<b>0.000</b>	Accepted
H5: Public service motivation -> Burnout	0.032	<b>0.499</b>	Rejected
H6: Organisational commitment -> Turnover intentions	-0.204	<b>0.000</b>	Accepted
H7: Burnout -> Turnover intentions	0.624	<b>0.000</b>	Accepted

**Figure 2.** Result of a Structural Equation Modelling



### *The Test of Mediating Effects*

This paper adopted the three-step approach of Baron and Kenny (1986) in evaluating the mediating effects. Table 5 shows that organisational commitment only has a full mediating effect on the relationship between PSM and turnover intentions. Besides, both job satisfaction and burnout have no mediating role in this relationship.

**Table 5:** Results of testing the mediating effects

IV	M	DV	IV → DV	IV → M	IV+M → DV		Mediating
					M → DV	IV → M → DV	
PSM	SAT	TUR	-0.029	0.379***	-0.009	-0.003	No effect
PSM	COM	TUR	-0.029	0.369***	-0.204***	-0.075***	Full
PSM	BUR	TUR	-0.029	0.032	0.624***	0.020	No effect

Notes: \*\*\*p-value<0.001. IV=Independent Variable, M=Mediator, DV=Dependent Variable, PSM=Public service motivation, SAT=Job satisfaction, TUR=Turnover intentions, COM=Organizational commitment, BUR= Burnout

### **Discussions**

First, this paper reveals that there is no direct effect of PSM in reducing employees' turnover intentions and this result is different from that of previous studies. As the level of PSM gets higher, the workers will be more likely to stay and continue with their jobs (Crum & Naff, 1999; Kamdron, 2005; Perry, 1996; Pandey & Moynihan, 2014; Keaveney & Nelson, 2017; Bertelli, 2006). Second, although PSM is found to be an effective tool in fostering employees' job satisfaction, which is consistent with prior findings (Crum & Naff, 1999; Vandenabeele, 2009), this paper does not affirm the possible influence of job satisfaction on decreasing the turnover intentions of civil servants. This means that, unlike previous studies (Brawley & Pury, 2016; Zeffane & Melhem, 2017), making public employees more satisfied does not substantially decrease their intentions to leave. One of the possible explanations for this case is that working conditions are flexible in terms of worktime and there is less pressure, so that the civil servants have no need to change jobs. Besides, most civil servants in the Vietnamese public sector have known in advance that the salaries in the public sector are not high. They have already accepted fewer monetary demands when pursuing their careers in the public sector.

According to DeSantis and Drust (1996), and Steel and Warner (1989), when the conditions and characteristics of their working environments are satisfactory, employees tend to experience fewer intentions in changing jobs. Ghosh, Rai, Chauhan, Gupta, and Singh (2015) refer to this as context satisfaction, which can influence employees' perceptions of the organisations and play as a predictor for their intentions to leave. This study provides no

evidence to support the linkage between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Therefore, it implies that although the job itself may not bring much joy and satisfaction, civil servants in the Ben Tre Province do not find it necessary to switch to the private sector, as long as the working conditions are acceptable. Another reason why job satisfaction cannot alter turnover is because of the psychological factors. This may make them feel there is leisure to life and they have a responsibility to serve the community. One of the precious attributes of Vietnamese people is they are willing to sacrifice personal interests for the good of their communities.

Third, although there is no significant relationship between PSM and burnout among civil servants, burnout turns out to be the strongest factor which triggers turnover intentions. The result is not in line with that of Kim (2015), but the correlation between PSM and burnout has been explained and supported by several studies. When individuals are willing to serve and contribute to society, they overreach their resources and capabilities, or they feel that they have not fully contributed as they wanted. This will result in frustration and disappointment and finally lead to higher burnout levels (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker, Van Emmerik, & Van Riet, 2008; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Furthermore, as proposed in Kim (2015), burnout may significantly influence turnover intentions. Therefore, public organisations should encourage employees to perceive less burnout by providing them with better working conditions, compensation benefits, and mental health care in order to prevent switching jobs.

Finally, the findings confirm the mediating role of organisational commitment in reducing the turnover intentions of employees (McInerney, Ganotice, King, Marsh, & Morin, 2015; Morin, Meyer, McInerney, Marsh, & Ganotice, 2015). As individuals experience higher levels of PSM, they will devote more time and effort to enhance the organisational outcomes and be less likely to think about changing jobs. Consequently, public organisations should generate more incentives and benefits to make civil servants motivated to improve public service quality and stay engaged in their jobs. Furthermore, the leaders in the public sector should pay more attention to creating a professional, convenient working environment and upgrade the facilities to make the subordinates more comfortable. Particularly, leaders should not generate stressful workplaces that drive more negative outcomes.

## **Conclusions**

In short, this paper focussed on examining how PSM can reduce the turnover intentions of public employees through the mediating role of organisational commitment. Surprisingly, there is no direct impact of PSM on turnover intentions. Nevertheless, PSM can enhance organisational commitment, which in turn will create strong job engagement and reduce turnover intentions. The findings also imply that civil servants are willing to sacrifice their



interests in community benefits. In other words, the essential characteristic of civil servants with high levels of PSM is not their commitment to public organisations, but their willingness to meaningfully contribute to the public good. High levels of PSM will make public employees satisfied and motivated to improve public service quality and organisational performance. Finally, the better working environments and lower burnout levels will produce the added benefits of less turnover among civil servants.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

This paper also contains several limitations. First, the nature of this study is based on the cross-sectional data, which means that it may only be valid for a particular period. As a result, researchers and scholars should conduct longitudinal studies to observe behavioural changes over time. Second, this study only adopted and modified one dimension of the PSM measures, which have been created in developed countries. Therefore, due to cultural and political differences, future studies should develop the specific PSM scale for the Vietnamese public sector.

**Acknowledgement:** This research is funded by the International University, VNU-HCMC under grant number SV2019-CPA-03.



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