

A TALE OF TWO CONTRACTS

*Public service motivation and satisfaction between
internal and external employees at RVO.*

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between type of contract, internal or external, on public service motivation and job satisfaction among employees at the Netherlands Enterprise Agency. Because of the increase in reliance on external hires in the public sector, it is important to understand how contract type impacts motivation and satisfaction. This is an important aspect for public service delivery. Using a cross-sectional, quantitative research design, data was collected through surveys (N=153), representing internal (N=116) and external (N=37) employees. The scale of public service motivation (PSM) ($\alpha=.775$) and job satisfaction ($\alpha=.754$) were used to measure these key constructs. To test the difference between the two groups, independent-samples t-tests were done that revealed a significant difference in overall PSM between internal and external employees, with internal employees scoring higher. Looking at dimensions of PSM, the self-sacrifice dimension revealed a high difference between internal and external employees as well for this particular construct ($p<0.001$). Yet, no significant difference was found for job satisfaction between the two groups ($p=.910$). Regression analyses done for both dependent variables revealed that type of contract does significantly predict PSM, but not job satisfaction. These findings highlight that even though external employees report lower levels of PSM, their job satisfaction level is similar to that of internal employees. This research contributes to the limited research on external employees in the public sector and offers recommendations to the Netherlands Enterprise Agency to suggest human resources policies that align with the organizational message. Limitations include the small sample size and the low reliability reported in the PSM subscales, which could be tackled by future research

Keywords: public service motivation, job satisfaction, public sector, government agency

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1. Introduction

In March 2025, the Dutch government announced structural budget cuts which would affect various areas of government, such as external hires, less administrative burdens and less bureaucracy (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2025). These cuts are part of a larger agenda that is focused on streamlining processes in government agencies. As mentioned, this agenda will also impact how public organizations are staffed, specifically external hires. The trend of hiring external employees has been increasing since 2019 (ZiPconomy, 2024a). Since then, project-based work and a demand for specialist knowledge in combination with labor market shortages, has led the government to rely more on consultants, contractors, and other temporary staff (Staffing Industry Analysts, 2024). Temporary staff and consultants are in every part of government agencies, and can be found at any level (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2025).

The use of external hires can be for many reasons. Public sector reforms in the Netherlands in the 80s and 90s already introduced external hires such as consultants or academics. In the past few years, this amount has only increased. RVO (Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland) is one of the government agencies that make use of external hires. RVO consists of various locations around the Netherlands, and has over 100 subsidy schemes, and over 6000 employees. The percentage of external hires in 2023 was at 27,3% (Ministerie van Financiën, 2023) making it one of the most externally staffed organizations within the government. This growing reliance on external hires raises questions regarding internal dynamics, as there is a sort of dual structure within organizations where there is a difference between internal and external employees with regard to motivation, commitment, benefits, team cohesion (Kashefi, 2011). Thus, this paper places the focus on the internal dynamics and the influence this has on the motivation and job satisfaction of employees.

For that reason, the research question of this paper is *What is the impact of type of employment on motivation and employee satisfaction at RVO?* By using this research question, further research can be done on deeper motivations for external hires. Much of the research done in the public sector has, understandably, been done so by taking internal employees into account. Since the involvement of external hires has been growing in the past six years, this research aims to also find out how established theories of public service motivation apply to external hires.

There is also societal relevance for this research paper. Understanding the dynamics of the dual workforce in government agencies is key to ensuring that public trust in governmental

institutions remain. For society, the motivation and satisfaction of public servants, or those that work in the public sector, impact the quality of public services delivered to them. Government agencies should know that in the end, delivering high quality public services is important for public trust, and that if employees are either unsatisfied or not motivated for the public, then they can adjust hiring practices.

This paper is structured as follows. Chapter two discusses relevant literature and the theoretical framework surrounding this issue. In chapter three, the research design and methods are laid out, followed by chapter four, where empirical findings and the statistics are discussed. Presents. Chapter five has the conclusion of the paper, and there is a reflection and discussion of the research in chapter six. Finally, chapter seven offers recommendations for future research and for government agencies such as RVO to implement.

2. Theoretical Framework

Internal Versus External Employees

Internal employees are those working at the organization, who are not restricted to a specified work period, and directly on the organization's payroll, as defined by George (2003). External employees are those that are under administration of another agency or organization, but are temporarily seconded or lent out to another organization. Even though they work within the organization and might even perform similar roles or tasks, they work at the organization through a secondary employer, and usually for a limited period of time. This distinction is critical to this study as this structure influences the motivation and satisfaction of employees, regardless, but perhaps due to employment type.

This process whereby more external actors are involved in the government also called externalization (Craft & Howlett, 2013). Davis-Blake and Uzzi (1993) explain the myriad of reasons for externalization. One of the main reasons to use external employees is to ensure long term cost efficiency, by limiting expenses related to healthcare, pensions and even insurances. Making use of external employees takes away the need to invest in an employee, especially if it's only a temporary job (Davis-Blake & Uzzi, 1993). Now with the rise of secondment agencies, and consulting firms that provide specialized employees for various different organizations or businesses, the administrative work and costs related to employment are completely taken out of the hands of the future workplaces of these employees. Additionally, Davis-Blake & Uzzi (1993), discuss how the internal labor market of a company have not changed to include external employees. Whereas internal employees have access to the job

ladder, including promotions, benefits and internal job mobility, the same does not apply to external employees.

For organizations or government agencies that use external workers, this can also result in consequences for the internal employees. More recently, Craft & Howlett (2013), discuss how the decision-making power has changed with the influx of external employees which has also changed the internal prioritization of employees. Whereas initially internal employees were the main driving force of decisions policy advices, now both internal and external employees do so. This has led to the integration of external employees into domains in the public sector that were previously traditionally internal. This phenomenon goes against the insider-outsider theory in the traditional sense, whereby insiders have access to different aspects than outsiders. The theory was initially created to explain labor market differences between existing employees and those on the outside who are struggling to get a job due to access to jobs, influence and knowledge.

Insider-outsider theory by Lindbeck and Snower (1986) provides a structural lens through which dynamics of employment at RVO could be understood. Within this idea, permanent internal staff are able to enjoy access to safe/secure contracts, promotion routes and knowledge of how the organization operates. External staff is often excluded from these benefits. The internal labor market reinforces this division (Davis-Blake and Uzzi, 1993), that are not designed nor altered to integrate external workers in long-term developments. At the same time, public organizations such as RVO do depend on external employees to maintain flexibility and to fill skill gaps, creating a dual workforce (Craft and Howlett, 2013). These ongoing dynamics impact both internal motivation and job satisfaction, making it essential to understand how employment type influences employee experience in the public sector.

Public Service Motivation

As Perry (1996) explains it, public service motivation (PSM) is about what drives someone to seek a job in the public service. Perry (1996) discusses various dimensions of public service motivation (PSM). These are attraction to public policymaking (the factor behind someone's desire to work in the public service) , commitment to public interest (serving the public interest even at personal cost), self-sacrifice (willing to forego personal rewards for the greater good) and compassion (be driven by a sense of empathy for the people). So, unlike extrinsic motivations such as financial rewards or career advancements, PSM is a reflection of the intrinsic motivation of an individual to undertake work in the public sector. For that reason,

PSM is an important factor in determining job satisfaction and motivation. Furthermore, Perry and Hondeghem (2008)

Motivations to work in a sector are quite different. Whereas the above dimensions explain PSM, private sector motivation may lie more in extrinsic factors such as creating profit. This can lead to misalignment, when private sector consultants are expected to work in a public sector organization. The external hires that come to work at RVO have different backgrounds from different agencies and thus, must have varying levels of PSM, which can affect their motivation and integration into the organization. PSM reflects intrinsic values and is considered a crucial factor influencing job satisfaction, especially in the public sector (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). In the context of this study, PSM serves as a key variable for understanding how different types of employees experience and derive meaning from their roles within a government organization like RVO.

PSM varies among employees. Not just in general, but also based on the type of employment, e.g. internal or external employment. For example, Harari et al. (2018) recognize that age and gender are important factors influencing PSM. Furthermore, Grund and Thommes (2017) found that other types of employment contracts also influenced PSM. The types of contracts researched are fixed term vs. permanent, but also part-time and fulltime employment. Fulltime employees with a permanent contract show higher PSM rates than their counterparts who are fixed term, and sometimes part time as well. The difference here is the link between employee and organization. Those with fulltime/permanent contracts tend to be at the core of the organization, whereas other employees are more towards the periphery, and thus are not fully integrated.

Employment satisfaction, job satisfaction & motivation

Employee satisfaction as a whole refers to how happy an employee is with their job and working environment (Sageer, 2012). Employee satisfaction encompasses various aspects such as workplace culture and productivity, and has a positive influence on job satisfaction and motivation. A high level of employee satisfaction is also a predictor of organizational success, as Harter et al. (2002) demonstrates a significant positive relationship between employee satisfaction and business outcomes such as productivity, profitability and employee retention. Gregory (2011) discusses the importance of employee satisfaction, since unhappy employees is related to diminishing job performance, and eventually leads to quitting the job. Motivators for satisfaction mentioned by Gregory (2011) are recognition of one's hard work, pay, new challenging tasks, interest on a personal level and appreciation of achievements.

In the public sector, employee satisfaction also carries significance, due to governmental agencies and its employees being tasked with delivering public services. Wright and Davis (2003) discuss that the role of public organizations are different from the private sector. Additionally, employee satisfaction is an important link to public service motivation. Employee satisfaction and public service motivation are positively related. Homberg et al. (2015) explain that PSM is a predictor of job satisfaction, which means that employees with higher levels of PSM tend to be more fulfilled with their work. This can be attributed to the fact that employees with a strong sense of PSM feel aligned with the mission of their organization, and thus, intrinsic motivation.

Even though the public sector provides jobs with PSM, that does not mean that they are the only ones to do so. But, according to Steijn (2008), employees with a high PSM in the private sector tend to not only have lower job satisfaction, but they also are more likely to search for a job in the public sector. This, in turn, leads to a higher turnover rate. In the Netherlands, the turnover rate has already risen in 2024, due to reluctance to hire external employees, as well as organizations hiring external employees as internal employees.

Sageer et al. (2012) identified various factors that influence employee satisfaction, broadly categorized between organizational variables, and personal variables. Organizational variables are those that are dependent on the organization. Even though Sageer et al. (2012) have identified these key factors, they are not further categorized. For the purposes of this paper and to create a more structured explanation, these variables have been grouped into overarching themes: (1) Organizational factors; (2) Job-level factors; and (3) Social factors. To begin, Sageer et al. (2012) mention organizational factors, which are organizational development, policies with regards to salary and benefits, career advancement, job security and leadership styles. Also mentioned are “other factors”, such as use of technology and equipment provided for by the organization. These all shape the main structure of the organization. Then, Sageer et al. (2012) discuss job-level factors, which are related to the job itself, which are job satisfaction, work environment, and the use of technology. Lastly, the social factors are discussed. Here, the key variables that were identified are the relationship with the supervisor, work group, group dynamics, and other factors such as receiving encouragement and having a sense of belonging.

Personal variables also play a role according to Sageer et al. (2012), who discuss five in total: personality, expectation, age, education and gender. Personal variables are used to control for individual differences that affect employee satisfaction. First, personality influences how individuals see their workplace and their attitude. The expectations of employees is a factor as a better alignment between the job and the employees’ expectations can contribute to a higher

level of satisfaction. Third is age. According to Sageer et al. (2012), older employees are generally more resistant to change, thus leading to lower satisfaction. Education is another factor, as it contributes to critical thinking, self-development and cognitive skills, so an individual who is highly educated is also more likely to feel satisfied. Lastly, gender differences play a role as well. Sageer et al. (2012) briefly mention that women are generally more likely to experience job satisfaction as opposed to men, even when doing the same job.

There are two main theories about motivation that can provide more clarity on the variable of employment satisfaction. Deci and Ryan (2015) discuss self-determination theory of human motivation, distinguishing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation then refers to the personal fulfilment the individual gets from their job. Extrinsic motivation refers to motivations related to rewards, such as job security or salary. As explained before, type of employment can be influenced by the type of motivation someone has for the job. External hires are more likely to come from a private sector background where they are led by extrinsic motivations, thus clashing with RVO and its intrinsically motivated environment.

Herzberg (1959) created the two-factor theory, which would explain job satisfaction or dissatisfaction among employees. According to Herzberg, there are motivators, and there are hygiene factors. The motivators are what lead to job satisfaction. Examples of this are recognition for the work, or personal growth. Hygiene factors can lead to job dissatisfaction, including factors such as working conditions. These factors could also explain the perceived difference of satisfaction between internal employees and external ones at RVO.

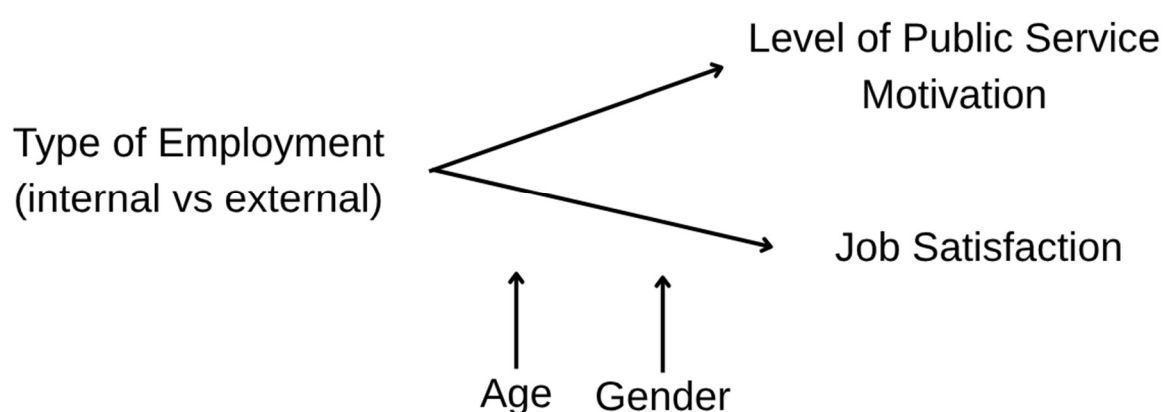


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Hypotheses

Based on the theories discussed, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H1: Type of employment (internal vs. external) significantly influences employee satisfaction.

H2: Public service motivation positively correlates with employee satisfaction.

H3: Type of employment significantly influences public service motivation.

H4: For each of the four public service motivation dimensions, internal employees score significantly higher than external employees.

H5: The difference in levels of public service motivation can be explained by gender.

3. Research design & Methods

Research design

The objective of this study is to compare levels of job satisfaction and public service motivation between internal, usually long-term employees, and external, usually short-term employees. This study is done at RVO, the Netherlands Enterprise Agency, to examine this difference.

This study uses a quantitative approach, so as to allow for a statistical comparison of internal and external employees on variables such as job satisfaction and PSM. A quantitative approach was chosen to examine the relationships between the different variables and to be able to generalizable observations across a large group. As the research study aims to measure attitudes and behaviors of employees at an organization, and does so in a large sample, quantitative data collection seemed much more appropriate than qualitative data.

This is a cross-sectional study, as the attitudes and behaviors being measured are being done so at a single point in time. This design was chosen because the aim of this research was to figure out the difference between internal and external employees at the current moment, rather than over a period of time. Furthermore, using this type of design causal connections cannot be researched, but it will still give an opportunity to research the connections and differences among groups at the time of collection about the variables.

Data was collected through a survey, using standardized responses to ensure consistency and reliability in attitudes and perceptions across employment types. In order to appease as many people as possible, both a paper version of the survey was made available, as well as a online link using Qualtrics. Online surveys are more accessible in terms of sharing and oftentimes easier to fill out. Written versions were also available for those that preferred this method.

Sampling

The target population of this study was made up of employees of RVO, a Dutch government agency that implements policies for various sectors, such as sustainability, innovation, and education (RVO, 2025). This agency was chosen for two reasons. Firstly, as a government agency, this organization has a clear public mission as it offers public services. It essentially carries out public policies, making it a link between the public and the politics. Considering this, RVO provides a good environment for testing PSM against type of employment.

Second of all, this agency is one of the largest users of external employees compared to other government agencies. It consists of various locations around the Netherlands, and has over 100 subsidy schemes, and over 6000 employees. The percentage of external hires in 2023

was at 27,3% (Rijksfinancien, 2023), making it one of the most externally staffed organizations within the government.

RVO is an interesting government agency because it falls under the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate, but the work they do regarding policies are across various other ministries and sectors, primarily focusing on sustainability and innovation. Because RVO works with different ministries, employees face different expectations and a different work culture depending on which ministry they carry policies out for. For this research however, those specific ministries will not be part of the analysis.

In order to obtain a large, representative amount of, various forms of sampling were combined. Due to this survey taking place within RVO alone, methods for nonprobability sampling were used, specifically convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a method where the researcher relies on available subjects to participate in the survey. For this study, this meant asking people at the office whether they wanted to participate in this study. Also, internal communication channels such as mailing lists or the intranet were used to post about the study to reach a large group of potential subjects.

To ensure that external subjects were represented in the study as well, efforts were put towards recruiting and reaching those employees. Using an existent network with external employees, a direct approach was used to ask external employees to fill in the survey, as well sharing the survey through various communication channels that were accessible for all employees at various times to ensure visibility. Additionally, survey partakes were asked to share the survey with other external employees they knew at RVO, also considered to be the snowball method (Babbie, 2013). These efforts were aimed to maximize the participation of external employees, as they still represent a smaller proportion in the overall workforce at RVO.

Using the abovementioned methods, an adequate sample from the target population could be collected. Given that external employees are a smaller proportion, some additional recruitment strategies were utilized, such as direct communication within the researcher's own network at RVO and snowball methods. The final sample was divided as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample count with totals and percentages

Type of employment	N	%
Internal	116	75.8
External	37	24.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>153</i>	<i>100%</i>

Representativeness

Even though efforts were put towards including both external and internal employees, the final sample shows a lower proportion of external employees. This imbalance reflects the composition at RVO as well, as internal staff form the majority. The sample may not perfectly mirror the overall demographics of RVO, considering the total sample size, a relatively adequate number of external respondents were found. This forms a sufficient sample size for the statistical analyses being done.

Survey

In order to find an answer to the research question, it is hypothesized that type of employment contract influences satisfaction and PSM in employees at RVO. For full operationalization, see Appendix A. In this part, the survey will be further explained.

The survey was distributed in Dutch and consisted of four main questions. The first main question was to assess the sociodemographic factors of the respondents, as well inquire about the type of employment. Questions pertaining to age, gender, and employment contract were asked. Age and gender were both measured as scales. Type of employment is a categorical demographic variable, where there are only two options for survey participants to choose from: internal, with a permanent or temporary contract directly at RVO, or externally. This type of classification ensures that we can clearly group the respondents so collected data can be compared. Within the survey, type of employment is assessed by asking the question which employment type aligns best for employees.

Questions two and three had statements from public service motivation scales (Kim, 2009; Perry, 1996) and the job satisfaction survey (Spector, 1985). For PSM, ten items were asked of respondent, and for job satisfaction it were eleven items. Each item was measured on a five-point Likert scale. Though the job satisfaction survey (Spector, 1985) was originally a six-item scale, without a neutral middle point, for the purpose of this study, however, these aspects were adjusted to fit the length and scale of this research. Firstly, to ensure that the survey was of reasonable length and to minimize responder fatigue, 9 items were selected to represent at least one of the facets in the original questionnaire, as well as 2 extra items in reverse-coded to minimize response bias and improve reliability of the results. These reverse-coded items were recoded prior to analysis so that the variable correctly reflected the job satisfaction.

To measure public service motivation, one reverse item from the Perry (1996) scale was also used, as Kim (2009) did not add reverse items in the scale. This item was asked in reverse, as a way to eliminate response bias, whereby respondents blindly answer the questions

assuming a line of pattern. This item was also recoded prior to statistical analysis so as to correctly reflect the level of agreement.

The survey ends with the question whether the respondents want to get information about the results of this study, and if they do, they can leave their email address. Respondents were reassured that their survey results would be analyzed apart from their personal data, a column that was also deleted prior to the analyses in SPSS. To ensure data privacy, these email addresses were stored securely on a password protected map, only accessible for the researcher. These contact details will only be kept for the necessary amount of time after research is completed, after which this document will be deleted to ensure confidentiality.

Analyses in SPSS

To analyze the gathered data, IBM SPSS version 31 was used for testing the hypotheses and find a conclusion. The independent-samples t-test was chosen to examine the difference between the two different employment groups, internal and external employees. This test is appropriate for comparing the means of two independent groups, rather than an ANOVA test, which is generally more suitable for comparing means across more than two groups (Field, 2018)

A correlation was used to assess how strong certain relationships between variables are, specifically Pearson correlation. This method is appropriate to examine associations between two continuous variables (Field, 2018).

Additionally to control for variables such as age and gender, a multiple linear regression analysis was done, using sociodemographic variables in Model 1, and adding the independent variable in Model 2. This way, any variance explained by type of contract could be assessed. Limitations based on the survey, sampling or other areas can be found in chapter 6.

4. Results

In this chapter, the results of the analyses in SPSS will be discussed. First, the descriptive statistics in total will be shown, after which these will be grouped by employment contract type. After, the relationships between the variables will be analyzed.

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 below shows the descriptive statistics of the entire sample, showcasing the Cronbach's Alpha (CA), mean (M) and standard deviation (SD).

The Cronbach's Alpha (α) is a reliability test, it checks whether scale items are internally consistent, and therefore reliable means of measuring a construct. In this study, the two variables PSM and Job satisfaction are scales made up of 10 and 11 items respectively. The CA of PSM is reported to be .775, while that of Job satisfaction is .754. As both variables have a CA above, the data from this scale is acceptable. Since PSM is a scale made up of four separate concepts, these concepts have also been tested for internal consistency. These individuals sub-variables' CA drops below the generally acceptable CA of 0.70. This could be explained by the fact that each facet has only 2-3 questions ascribed to it. Because of this, each facet is also questioned by items that capture different underlying constructs, which does result in lower inter-item correlations. Given these limitations this research will not make inferences about the specific underlying concepts of PSM, rather focusing on the variable as a whole.

From table 2, it shows that gender falls more towards the 2 between 1 and 2, making the sample have a slightly larger amount of female responders than male. In the survey an option was given for 3=Different, with a text box and 4=I would rather not say, but these options were not used by the respondents. Also, looking at age, the mean is 3.32, and given that the questions were in subgroups, it would seem that the middle group (35-44 years old) is the average age. However, looking at frequencies, the second age option (25-34 years) was the option that was chosen most often).

Table 2 also has some statistically significant correlations, such as the relationship between PSM and type of contract ($r=-.184$, $p<0.05$), signaling that employees with an external contract report slightly lower PSM levels. Furthermore, there is a negative relationship between type of contract and age ($r=-.290^{**}$, $p<0.01$). This indicates that younger employees are more likely to have an external contract, whereas older employees tend to have an internal employment.

Additionally, for PSM and job satisfaction both, the mean of answers was around the 3.4. For PSM it was 3.426, and for job satisfaction it was 3.395. As 1=strongly disagree, and 5=strongly agree, most people tended to agree to some extent with the statements.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics in total (N=153)

	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	St.Dev	1	2	3	4	5	VIF
1. Type of Contract	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,093
2. Gender		1,55	0,499	-0,040	-	-	-	-	1,002
3. Age		3,12	1,235	-0,290	0,023	-	-	-	1,092
4. PSM_all	0,775	3,426	0,621	-0,184	0,130	0,079	-	-	
<i>PSM_Attraction</i>	0,663	3,654							
<i>PSM_Commitment</i>	0,328	3,623							
<i>PSM_Compassion</i>	0,509	3,02							
<i>PSM_Selfsacrifice</i>	0,758	3,196							
5. Job satisfaction	0,754	3,395	0,579	-0,009	0,087	-0,95	0,127	-	

Based on table 3 and 4, the descriptive statistics grouped by type of contract, some correlations become visible. For internal employees, a small negative relationship exists between job satisfaction and age ($r = -.187$, $p < 0.05$), which means that older internal employees tend to report slightly lower job satisfaction. There is not a big difference between the amount of men and women reported in either group, as for external employees ($M=1.51$) the average is slightly lower than that of internal employees ($M=1.56$)

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for internal employees

	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	St.Dev	1	2	3	4
Internal employee (N=116)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1. Gender		1.56	0.498	-	-	-	-
2. Age		3.32	1.199	-0.250	-	-	-
3. PSM	0.780	3.491	0.622	0.138	0.041	-	-
4. Job satisfaction	0.764	3.398	0.586	0.036*	-0.187	0.103	-

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for external employees

	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	St.Dev	1	2	3	4
External employee (N=37)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1. Gender		1.51	0.507	-	-	-	-
2. Age		2.49	1.146	0.132	-	-	-
3. PSM	0.750	3.224	0.579	0.079	-0.220	-	-
4. Job satisfaction	0.728	3.386	0.564	0.251	0.190	0.212	-

Independent-samples t-test

To further test the relationship between type of contract and PSM and job satisfaction, an independent-samples t-test is a suitable test for comparing differences in PSM and Job satisfaction in two different groups. This test is suitable, as various assumptions are met. The dependent variables are both continuous scales, whereas the independent variable is a categorical variable existing with two groups. The Levene's test has a significance value of .742, which means that for the t-test, equal variances are assumed. The results of the t-test can be found table 5 below. For PSM, there seems to be a significant difference between the groups of internal ($M=3.491$, $SD=.622$) and external employees ($M=3.224$, $SD=.579$; $t(151)=2.304$, $p=.023$, two-tailed). With Cohen's D being .611, this suggests that there is a medium effect size, thus a meaningful difference between these two groups.

Tabel 5. Independent-samples t-test results for PSM

		<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
PSM Level	Internal employees	3,491	116	0,023
	External employees	3,224	37	

For Job satisfaction, an independent-samples t-test was also done to compare means between internal and external employees. This showed that the means of internal ($M=3.398$, $SD=0.586$) and external employees ($M=3.386$, $SD=0.564$; $t(151) = .113$, $p=.910$, two-tailed), did not differ that much, leading to no significant difference between the two. This indicates that type of employment contract does not have a measurable or significant impact on job satisfaction.

Tabel 6. Independent-samples t-test results for Job satisfaction

		<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Job satisfaction	Internal employees	3,398	116	0,910
	External employees	3,386	37	

Testing PSM subscales for employment type

To see whether any specific sub-scale of PSM explains more about the difference between internal and external employees, another independent-samples t-test was done. Because the Cronbach's Alpha for two out of the four subsets were below acceptable (PSM_Commitment $\alpha=0.328$; PSM_Compassion=.509), which was explained with table 1. The CA for Attraction to Policymaking (.663) and Self-sacrifice (.758) were acceptable. In order to see whether there is a difference in either one of these subsets, another independent sample t-test was done. Though the CA for Attraction to Policymaking is slightly below the norm for CA, analyzing this subset can give more insight into the dimensions of PSM that differ between

internal and external employees, as a significant difference already as found in the overall PSM scale.

The findings are as follows, also laid out in table 6/7. For Attraction to policymaking, no significant difference was found between internal employees ($M=11.077$, $SD=2.389$) and external ones ($M=10.595$, $SD=2.533$, $t(151) = 1.055$, $p=.293$). This means that for this dimension of PSM, the average of answers between internal and external workers was the same. For the Self-sacrifice dimension, this difference is significant, where for external workers ($M=5.189$, $SD=1.955$) and internal workers ($M=6.776$, $SD=1.929$, $t(151)=4.341$ $p<.001$) the difference is large.

Table 7. Dimensions of PSM divided by internal and external employees

PSM dimension		Mean	N	Sig.
Attraction to Policymaking	Internal employees	11.077	116	.293
	External employees	10.594	37	
Self-sacrifice	Internal employees	6.775	116	<.001
	External employees	5.189	37	

Regression analysis

Lastly, to examine the relationship between type of employment and PSM, a multiple regression analysis was conducted for both dependent variables. Model 1 includes control variables age and gender, and model 2 adds the independent variable type of employment, and for job satisfaction the variable PSM as an independent variable as well.

The model for PSM as dependent variable is shown below. Model 1 does not produce a significant F statistic, which implies that the variables in model 1 do not explain public service motivation adequately: $F(150, 2) = 1.736$, $p=.180$.

For model 2, the F statistic is almost statistically significant: $F(3, 149) = 2.590$, $p = .055$. In both models, the p-levels of the variables were all $p>0.05$, except for Type of contract in Model 2. This confirms what was found earlier, that there is a significant relationship between type of contract and level of PSM. In this case there is a negative relationship, meaning that a external contract is correlated with a This also confirms that neither age or gender do not significantly predict PSM.

Table 8. Model 1 & 2 for level of PSM

PSM	Model 1 Beta (β)	Model 2 Beta (β)
Age	.076	.027
Gender	.128	.122
Type of contract	-	-.172 (sig.=.042)

R-squared	0.150	0.223
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For Job satisfaction similar models were analyzed, however for neither model the f-statistic proved to be significant. Model 1 = $F(150, 2) = 1.736$, $p=.276$, and does not prove significant. Additionally, model 2 which includes type of contract and level of PSM as independent variables, does not prove significant either. Model 2 = $F(2, 150) = 1.252$, $p=.292$. These findings suggest that within this dataset, job satisfaction does not differ significantly by age, gender, contract type or PSM.

Table 9. Model 1 & 2 for Job satisfaction level

JSS	Model 1 Beta (β)	Model 2 Beta (β)
Age	.098	-.111
Gender	.089	.073
Level of PSM	-	.123
Type of contract	-	-.016
R-squared	0,130	0,181

Hypotheses testing summary

Based on the statistics shown above, each hypothesis will be summarized and explained.

The first hypothesis was the type of employment had a significant influence on employee satisfaction. The independent-samples t-test as well as the regression analysis showed no significant difference between internal and external employees. Thus, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

The second hypothesis stated that public service motivation correlated positively with employee satisfaction. Though a weakly positive relationship was found in the final regression analysis, this relationship remained nonsignificant ($p=.139$). This means that for this hypothesis, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

The third hypothesis stated that type of employment significantly influences public service motivation. This significance can be found in the t-test, as well as the regression analysis, both of which showed a significant negative effect. This effect indicates that external employees report a lower level of PSM. Based on the current data, this hypothesis can be accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis four said that for each public service motivation dimension, internal employees would score significantly higher than external employees. Because the Cronbach's Alpha for two out of four dimensions was unsatisfactory, only two of those dimensions were tested, Attraction to policymaking and Self-sacrifice. Out of these two, only Self-sacrifice

showed a significant difference in the independent-samples t-test. For this reason, we can partially support this hypothesis.

Finally, the fifth hypothesis stated that difference in levels of public service motivation could be explained by gender, however the regression analysis showed that there was no significant difference between men and women to support this hypothesis. For that reason, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

5. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to research the following research question: *What is the influence of type of employment on motivation and employment satisfaction?* In answering this question, a survey was conducted at the Dutch government agency RVO, to measure PSM and job satisfaction among internal and external employees working in the Dutch public sector. The goal was to reach a better understanding potential differences in motivation and job satisfaction among the two groups of employees, to see where the gap was.

To answer the question, the analysis has shown that there was a significant and negative relationship between employment type and public service motivation, which means that external employees have a lower reported level of public service motivation in comparison to their peers that work directly at the organization. However, there was no statistical significance found to say that type of employment does affect job satisfaction, thus on average, internal and external employees reported similar satisfaction levels. The first part is in line with the theory that was found in chapter 2. Generally speaking, the motivations of employees to work either in a public sector or in the private sector are different. So, employees that originally work for a private company, end up in the public sector temporarily, will not necessarily have the same motivations as people that choose to work directly for this governmental agency (Grund & Thommes, 2017).

For job satisfaction, the data was much less clear, showing no significant relationships whatsoever between type of contract and satisfaction, though it was hypothesized that internal employees would have a higher rate of satisfaction as opposed to external employees. This means that internal and external employees was similar. Thus, contract type does not in a meaningful way, influence job satisfaction, which could mean that external employees do to some extent enjoy the same or similar benefits. This, despite the fact that PSM did have a significant difference, is interesting though, which means that there is no significant relationship between PSM and job satisfaction. So a higher level of PSM in the public sector does not translate to a higher job satisfaction.

There was a gap in the research, as mentioned in the introduction. This research has addressed this gap by doing research to the public sector and external employees, a group that is usually not included in studies about PSM or job satisfaction in the public sector. Even though there are some limitations to this study, I believe that this gap did contribute to more knowledge about internal and external employees' motivations and satisfaction. This research can certainly help government agencies be more aware when it comes to hiring staff from external organization to work in public service delivery. Understanding how, and that employment type

does impact motivations to work, can ensure different HR-strategies for recruitment. Ultimately, this is also important to maintain citizen's trust in the quality of public services.

Additionally, specific subdimensions of PSM were also measured against internal and external employees, to gain a more detailed understanding of where this difference lies in. Though the hypothesis connected to this part could only be accepted for one variable, but it is still important to understand the motivation behind PSM.

In conclusion, the result of this thesis has shown that PSM does differ between internal and external employees, but not that there is a relationship between job satisfaction and employment type. Hopefully, this thesis contributes to the existing knowledge about the external employment in the Dutch public sector and public service motivation in general.

6. Reflection and discussion

In writing and doing this research, some limitations occurred in the process. First, there was trouble gathering data. The initial survey was sent out mid-June 2025 via e-mail to various employee groups. As I worked at RVO myself, I had access to a large group of people. However, finding people to fill out the survey was difficult, and in the first two weeks I gathered around 30 responses. More aggressive sampling tactics were tried, such as approaching people in office, as well as hanging flyers around coffee corners, and posting on various internal communication channels at various times throughout the week and day. Eventually, this culminated in an $N=153$. Given that there are several hundred people working at RVO, I had hoped that the N would be larger, though this amount was satisfactory for this research.

Another difficulty was finding external employees. Though there was a network of colleagues I used to find and recruit other external employees from, it was still difficult to gather a larger amount of external employees, ending with a $N=37$, which is 24% approximately of the total amount of responses. This imbalance makes it hard to make real inferences with regards to the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other organizations. Consequently, the findings related to the external employees cannot necessarily be generalizable for other organizations with external employees, and they might not in all aspects reflect the range of external employees at RVO. One potential reason for this difficulty in reaching external employees could be due to the channels used for recruitment. Survey respondents were sought in the office, in mailing lists and internal communication channels. These channels might be less accessible or less frequently checked by external employees, or external employees may not be as involved in the organization. Either way, external employees were underrepresented in this study, which could be addressed in future research so that external employees could be represented more effectively.

A limitation to the study was the low levels of inter-item correlation between the subdimensions of the PSM scale, where the reported CA of 2 items was below the acceptable threshold of $\alpha=.60$ point, falling to $\alpha=.328$ for Commitment to the public interest, and $\alpha=.509$ for subdimension Compassion. This means that there could be no conclusions drawn for these two dimensions, limiting the hypothesis testing for this topic. Low internal consistency could be the result of the limited amount of items chosen per subdimension, as each item hits on a different part of the overarching dimension. For Commitment to the public interest for example, there were only 3 items. Even though these three items measure the subdimension well, they could reflect related but yet different ideas within this dimension, leading to a lower overall consistency. Also, constructs with fewer items can often struggle with reaching a high

Cronbach's Alpha, and in this case that could also be the limitation (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). This limitation resulted in hypothesis 4 not being able to be tested adequately, which is also a limitation connected to the reported low CA.

Another limitation to this study overall is that there were limited control variables used in this study, which were gender and age. There could have been other control variables potentially impacting PSM or job satisfaction that were not included. Examples of such variables are amount of years in the organization, job roles, educational background and generally the work environment. Additionally, the various ministries that RVO carries out public policies for could also have been a variable that could give insight into differences within RVO across employment types. Because of this absence, there is a limit to the understanding of the dynamics at play at RVO. Job roles for example could give insight into the extent to which external employees can grow or which jobs they can fulfill, which could affect intrinsic or extrinsic motivations.

Separating the job satisfaction into larger dimensions could also have given more insight into the specific aspect that are at play at RVO. This research could only infer based on the entire scale, as each facet within this scale had merely one item. Broadening to more specific items, more in depth inferences could have been made to give more insights into the job satisfaction aspect of this research. Without a more detailed measurement, distinctions for specific parts of job satisfaction and their relationship with internal and external employees cannot be made. Having a multiple items for a few specifically selected facets of job satisfaction could give a better understanding of patterns and a more nuanced insights that could be valuable for the organization or managers who are trying to improve employee retention or well-being.

Because this research was conducted at RVO at a relatively small scale, another limitation is that it would be difficult to translate these findings into meaningful data for other organizations or organizations across borders. While this research does give data about the current job satisfaction and motivation of employees, they cannot be generalized for other settings.

7. Recommendations

In this section, recommendations will be put forward for future research or the organization, RVO. First, for future research, I would suggest some advice for the limitations discussed in the previous section. To ensure a reliable scale in the various PSM subdimensions, these subdimensions could be deepened to use a more comprehensive scale. This way, a more nuanced understanding of which specific items cause a difference between internal and external employees can be realized.

The scale for job satisfaction could also be made more in depth. Currently, the job satisfaction scale consists of 11 items divided into 9 facets. This means that these facets are not well fleshed out in this research, not enough to make inferences about the specifics facets that could give more information about the differences between internal and external employees on Pay or promotion for example. Thus, I would recommend that in future research, a more refined measurement of job satisfaction should be included.

For RVO, there are a few things I would like to suggest. To begin, PSM should be more of a priority when screening for new potential hires, especially those that are still in the hiring process. Prioritizing PSM to some degree could bridge the gap between internal and external employees so that the difference between these two groups becomes smaller. Incorporating PSM should be done by current hiring managers of RVO, and could be done simply by asking questions about a candidate's motivations, values that could align with RVO's mission and values. This type of screening could improve the gap and ensure that all employees, regardless of contract type are committed to delivering high quality public services.

Another recommendation for RVO would be to implement development programs for employees that currently work there to get these employees familiar with RVO's mission and values and ensure that they also feel aligned with this. Given that the research showed significant difference between internal and external employees, I would recommend workshops or other sessions where the public service, organizational goals, and the motivation and value in public sector work is really highlighted. This way, RVO can enhance more cohesion between employees.

Finally, I would recommend RVO to improve external employee engagement and reach. During the survey collection, and as is visible by the amount of external employees (N=37), the external employees of RVO were very hard to reach, despite usage of internal communication channels, mailing lists, and approach in the office. RVO should establish channels for external employee communication, such as a intranet page, a newsletter or a portal where they can easily

find one another. This way, initiatives such as this research can have an increase in response rate and can also foster a stronger sense of inclusion for external employees.

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Appendix A: Operationalization

Below each variable is explained and turned into measurable variables.

Type of contract was divided into two groups: internal employees on either a temporary or permanent employment at RVO, or external employees, or those on a project basis, internship or through a detachment agency.

Public service motivation is defined by Perry & Wise (1990, p. 368) as “an individuals’ predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations”. In his 1996 paper, Perry has a PSM scale with 6 total dimensions, and a total of 24 items. As this research was primarily done in the United States, a scale was sought that had an international aspect to it. This was found in Kim (2009), who developed a PSM scale created for international use. These items were eventually used in the survey, whereby the four dimensions that ended up in Kim’s (2009) scale were: Attraction to policymaking, Commitment to the public interest, Compassion and Self-sacrifice. Of the items under these dimensions, a total of 9 were selected from Kim’s (2009) scale for the survey. One item was from the original Perry (1996) scale, a reverse item : “It is hard for me to get intensely interested in what is going on in my community.” (Perry, 1996, p. 10).

To measure employee satisfaction, there are various questions and scales that could be used to find this out. The most common one to use is Spector’s Job Satisfaction Survey (1998). This questionnaire consists of nine topics, with which someone’s level of satisfaction can be measured: pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, coworkers, nature of work, and communication. this framework was created with the public service in mind.

Concept	Label	Survey question
Sociodemographic factors	Age	What is your age?
	Gender	What is your gender?
Type of contract	Contract	What kind of employment contract do you have with RVO?
Public service motivation	Attraction to policymaking	I am interested in making public programs that are beneficial for my country or the community I belong to.
		Sharing my views on public policies with others is attractive to me.
		Seeing people get benefits from the public program I have been deeply involved in brings me a great deal of satisfaction.
	Commitment to the public interest	I consider public service my civic duty.
		Meaningful public service is very important to me.

		It is hard for me to get intensely interested in what is going on in my community.
	Compassion	It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress.
		I feel sympathetic to the plight of the underprivileged.
	Self-sacrifice	Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements.
		I believe in putting duty before self.
Job satisfaction	Pay	I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.
	Promotion	There is really too little chance for promotion on my job.
		Those who do well on the job stand a fair chance of being promoted.
	Supervision	My supervisor /manager is quite competent in doing his/her job.
	Fringe benefits	The benefit package we have is equitable.
	Contingent rewards	When I do a good job, I receive the recognition for it that I should receive.
		I don't feel my efforts are rewarded the way they should be.
	Operating procedures	My efforts to do a good job are seldom blocked by red tape.
	Coworkers	I like the people I work with.
	Nature of work	I feel a sense of pride in doing my job.
	Communication	Communications seem good within this organization.

Appendix B: Survey

Beste lezer,

Welkom bij deze onderzoeksstudie! Mijn naam is Aliya Hayat. Ik doe dit onderzoek in het kader van mijn masterscriptie bij het Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam. Dit onderzoek heeft als doel inzicht te krijgen in publieke servicemotivatatie en tevredenheid bij interne en externe medewerkers werkzaam bij de Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland.

Uw deelname aan dit onderzoek is volledig vrijwillig. U kunt op elk moment besluiten om niet (verder) deel te nemen. Het invullen van de vragenlijst duurt ongeveer 7 minuten. Uw antwoorden worden strikt vertrouwelijk behandeld en geanalyseerd.

Aan het einde van de vragenlijst kunt u, indien u dat wenst, uw e-mailadres achterlaten om de onderzoeksresultaten te ontvangen. Deze informatie wordt uitsluitend voor dat doeleinde gebruikt en niet gedeeld met derden.

Als u vragen of opmerkingen heeft, neem dan gerust contact op met mij op via e-mail: 501781ah@eur.nl.

Stemt u in met deelname?

- ☐ **Ik stem hiermee in, start de enquête**

Vraag 1

De volgende vragen peilen een aantal achtergrondkenmerken. De antwoorden worden alleen gebruikt om de gegevens te analyseren. U blijft zelf niet individueel herleidbaar.

Vraag	Antwoord
Wat is uw leeftijd?	☐ 18 t/m 24 jaar ☐ 25 t/m 34 jaar ☐ 35 t/m 44 jaar ☐ 45 t/m 54 jaar ☐ Ouder dan 55 jaar
Wat is uw geslacht?	☐ Man ☐ Vrouw ☐ Anders, licht toe: ☐ Ik geef liever geen antwoord
Wat voor dienstverband heeft u bij het RVO?	☐ Interne medewerker op vast of tijdelijk contract (in dienst bij de overheid) ☐ Externe medewerker of op projectbasis/stage/gedetacheerd

Vraag 2

Deze vragen meten de intrinsieke motivatie en hebben ook betrekking op uw visie op de samenleving. Geef aan in welke mate u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen door het antwoord te omcirkelen. Er is geen goed of fout antwoord.

	Helemaal oneens	Eerder oneens	Neutraal	Eerder eens	Helemaal eens
Ik ben geïnteresseerd in het ontwikkelen van overheidsprogramma's die gunstig zijn voor mijn land of de gemeenschap waar ik toe behoor.	1	2	3	4	5
Het delen van mijn mening over overheidsbeleid met anderen spreekt mij aan.	1	2	3	4	5
Het geeft mij veel voldoening om mensen te zien profiteren van een overheidsprogramma waar ik nauw bij betrokken ben geweest.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik beschouw werken in de publieke sector als mijn burgerplicht.	1	2	3	4	5
Zinnvolle publieke dienstverlening vind ik erg belangrijk.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind het moeilijk om echt geïnteresseerd te raken in wat er in mijn gemeenschap gebeurt.	1	2	3	4	5
Het is moeilijk voor mij om mijn emoties te beheersen wanneer ik mensen in nood zie.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik heb veel begrip voor de moeilijke situaties van kansarmen.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind het belangrijker om een wezenlijke bijdrage aan de samenleving te leveren, dan om persoonlijk succes te hebben.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik geloof dat mijn plicht belangrijker is dan mijn eigen belang.	1	2	3	4	5

Vraag 3

De volgende vragen gaan over uw tevredenheid met verschillende aspecten van uw werk bij RVO. Geef aan in welke mate u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen door het antwoord te omcirkelen. Er is geen goed of fout antwoord.

	Helemaal oneens	Eerder oneens	Neutraal	Eerder eens	Helemaal eens
Voor mijn gevoel krijg ik genoeg betaald voor het werk dat ik doe.	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn baan biedt echt te weinig kans op promotie.	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn baas/manager is behoorlijk bekwaam in zijn of haar werk.	1	2	3	4	5
De arbeidsvoorwaarden bij dit bedrijf zijn rechtvaardig.	1	2	3	4	5
Degenen die hun werk goed doen, maken een goede kans op promotie.	1	2	3	4	5
Als ik een goede prestatie lever, krijg ik daarvoor de erkenning die ik zou moeten krijgen.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik heb zelden last van (bureaucratische) regels bij mijn inzet om goed werk te leveren.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind de mensen met wie ik werk aardig.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik haal een gevoel van trots uit mijn baan.	1	2	3	4	5
Er lijkt goed gecommuniceerd te worden in dit bedrijf.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik heb niet het gevoel dat mijn inzet op de juiste manier beloond wordt.	1	2	3	4	5

Vraag 4

Bedankt voor het invullen van deze vragenlijst. Tot slot wil ik u vragen of u interesse heeft in de resultaten van dit onderzoek.

Vraag	Antwoord
Zou u het interessant vinden om de resultaten van dit onderzoek te ontvangen?	☐ Ja, ik wil graag de resultaten ontvangen ☐ Nee, dat hoeft niet
Indien u ja heeft aangekruist, laat dan hiernaast uw e-mailadres achter.	E-mailadres:
<i>Uw e-mailadres wordt alleen gebruikt om de resultaten te versturen en wordt niet gekoppeld aan uw enquête-antwoorden.</i>	