
DRAWING THE DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYMENT INTENTIONS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR AMONG ROMANIAN STUDENTS RELIGIOSITY, RELIGIOUS BELONGING, BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

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Abstract

Few studies have focused on the influence of students' religious affiliation and their intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity on their intention to work in the public sector. Even less so for students studying Economics and Business Administration at a major Romanian university. This paper aims to address this gap by examining the role of certain religious facets and different beliefs and attitudes related to different institutional issues on students' intention to work in the public sector. Following a case study of a sample of 911 students, the findings show that there is a significant positive association between religious affiliation to Orthodoxy and both types of religiosity and the intentions to pursue a career in the public sector. We also found a significant relationship with different types of institutional trust, attitudes towards work ethic and competition or entrepreneurial experience. Understanding what modulates the intention of prospective employees is important for the sector to find the right people in their job search.

Keywords: intrinsic, extrinsic, employment, intentions, public sector

1. Introduction

Choosing the right career is mainly determined by individual needs [1]. Specifically, intrinsic, extrinsic and interpersonal factors are considered to be the most important in attracting preferences for a particular job [2]. More recent research has highlighted four categories of factors, ranging from personal identity to social, instrumental, and personal experience [3]. In this sense, it was stated that "the vast literature on motivating factors underlying career intentions focuses on a multifaceted and multi-dimensional mix of human motives in occupational preference formation and often argues that a broad range of aspects from culture

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and socialization to rewards for individuals draws people to work for either the public or the private sector” [4].

We found considerable academic interest in the attractiveness of public sector jobs [5, 6], but the major problem is the lack of studies to certify whether young people really want to start a career in such a sector. Only a few studies examined whether potential employees exhibit rational behaviour when interacting with various recruitment signals from the public and/or private employment sectors and whether their preference is for one or the other [7].

Particularly in countries with a large public sector, associated jobs are considered more secure than those in the private sector are. There are also significant wage differentials, which encourage people to start a career in a specific sector. For example, in the case of Italy, using data for the period 1993-2004, it was found that public sector wages were higher than those in the private sector. In addition, significant wage differentials were observed between the two sectors of the economy, more pronounced towards the lower and middle part of the wage distribution, and more attenuated towards the upper part [8]. In Estonia, the transition from communism to democracy and free market economy was accompanied by a focus on efficiency in the public sector, including staff redundancies and cost reductions [9]. After 2010, Hungary was an example of a former communist country that followed a different path, based on illiberal governance and a strong public sector [10]. Other research has shown differences in remuneration in the public-private sectors in former communist countries such as Estonia and Poland [11, 12].

In 2017-2018, the European economy suffered quite a bit, with the economic growth rate below the expected level. In Romania, we recorded the highest growth in average remuneration per employee in the European Union, a wage-based growth strategy, after a long period of wage austerity (2010-2014). Thus, compared to 2008, in 2018, we witnessed to an increase of 33.5%, and compared to 2017 of about 11.8%. The same was true for the gross minimum wage in the economy. Compared to the previous year, in 2018, Romania recorded a real increase in the minimum wage of 22.9%, but the net wage expanded by only 9.1% [13]. In terms of wage differentials, in 2019, compared to at least three years before, the average net wage in the public sector was higher than in the private sector [14]. In terms of the dynamics of the average gross wage, the gap between the public and private sectors remained consistent in favour of the former during 2021 [15].

The perceptions of the students in Economics and Business Administration were determined by this general framework. While in 2017, the largest share of the salaried workforce was employed in the private sector (72.2%) [16], it is well known that in Romania the public sector is considered oversized. Many voices criticize the lack of deep reform of the public sector and the high degree of corruption, clientelism and acute lack of meritocracy [17].

Using a Romanian university as a case study, the paper addresses several ideas that contribute to the literature on this topic. It aims to assess the role of different factors affecting university students in choosing a public career in the

near future. In general, remuneration, job satisfaction, and various financial incentives are considered to be the most important factors underlying this intention [18]. Specifically, this article tries to examine whether employment intentions in the public sector are influenced by religious affiliation and intrinsic or extrinsic religiosity, among other factors. Do other variables related to civic networks, different types of institutional trust, economic status, attitudes toward work ethic and competition or entrepreneurial background play a role in projecting these intentions? In addition, we aim to assess which factors are most important in influencing the decision for a career or another. Studying these can be useful for career counselling, especially when positions in public administration are intensely competed by other sectors to find suitable candidates with certain skills.

2. Literature review

Few studies have addressed these specific issues for European universities [19-21], much less for Romanian universities. The lack of research on such a topic is one more reason to try to identify and map a number of relevant factors that can significantly influence students' intention to engage in the public sector. It is important to highlight a thorough understanding of how they are influenced in this choice.

In the literature, two main theories have prevailed as to why an individual is differently motivated (different attitudes and perceptions) to start a career in the public sector versus the private sector: attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) and adaptation-socialization (AS) [22]. According to the attraction-selection-attrition theory, these differences are given by self-selection of individuals who obtained a high degree of public service motivation (PSM) into a public sector career [23]. In the words of a researcher: "Individuals who are characterized by public service motivation place a higher value on the intrinsic rewards of work (e.g. a feeling of self-worth, a sense of accomplishment) compared to extrinsic rewards (e.g. pay, promotion, prestige). Therefore, it is hypothesized that public workers value intrinsic job rewards more highly - and extrinsic ones less highly - than private sector workers. Consistent with this hypothesis, research findings generally indicate that in comparison to their private sector counterparts, public employees are not as motivated by higher pay ... but place a greater emphasis on the importance of meaningful work and service to society." [24, p. 91] On the other hand, other articles in the reward preference literature have shown contrasting results [25]. It was found that graduate management students from Botswana were motivated differently than their Western counterparts when choosing a particular sector (public/private) for their jobs [26]. Thus, their findings showed that altruism and intrinsic motivation were not significant predictors of their intention as found in studies conducted in developed Western countries.

The adaptation-socialization approach considers that PSM, defined as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations" [27, p. 368], could be enforced through

socialization and networking by which employees are inculcated with the values and norms of public organizations [28]. While previous studies have provided empirical evidence of a positive relationship between PSM and career preference in the public and non-profit sectors [29, 30], others have found challenging results [21]. Using two matched surveys conducted in two universities from Italy and the UK, their findings provided contradictory facts: among Italian students, there was a positive relationship between PSM and preferences for a career in the public sector, while for British ones this relationship was not valid. Also, a research based on 584 students from two well-known universities in eastern China found that PSM is related to occupational intention, but not all its dimensions (e.g. commitment to public interest) [31]. Also, female Social science graduates with relatives or parents working in the public sector are more likely to choose a career in this sector.

A study conducted among Romanian business and administration students enrolled in bachelor and master programs highlighted that extrinsic and interpersonal factors are the most significant in influencing a particular career [19]. An analysis of American public policy students revealed interesting results: those who are eager to start a career in the public sector intend to be more involved in making/creating a difference in society than those who prefer the private sector [32].

Other research has found that age is an important predictor, highlighting that older people prefer public sector jobs more than their younger counterparts [33]. Another study has not found such a significant relationship between age and a particular career desire [34]. Marital status is another predictor to be considered. Much of the literature has found that married students are more likely to opt for a career in the public sector because they are more vulnerable to the costs of becoming unemployed than young singles [35]. They are therefore more attracted to the job security offered by the public sector [36].

In the specific literature, it has been documented that gender is significantly associated with labour market participation. In this regard, as previously acknowledged, women's turnover intention is strongly reduced when public sector careers are attractive [37]. Life-work balance reasons are significant in predicting a low likelihood to leaving the public sector among women, as they are more attached to this type of career [38]. In addition, several studies have postulated that women are more likely to opt for public sector work compared to their male counterparts [31, 39, 40]. It has been shown that men are less likely to intend to work in the public health sector compared to women [41]. Other articles found no significant relationship between gender and specific desire to pursue a government career [42, 43].

Research on the relationship between educational attainment and a particular career intention is quite ambiguous. It has been illustrated that, using a sample of college students from South Central China, the relationship between college prestige and employment status or starting salary is insignificant [44]. Higher levels of education are positively related to the level of PSM [45], while years of work experience are negatively associated with PSM [46]. Research on a

sample of 26 countries found that older employees, women, and those with lower levels of education are more likely to prefer a job in the public sector [47]. The difficulty for highly educated young people to pursue a career in the public sector due to bureaucratic problems and greater resistance to change and reform has been cited [17].

Public sector employees have been found to be more likely to be civically active [24] and to participate in civic organizations [48]. Various studies have documented a positive relationship between voluntary activities and PSM [49, 50]. Recent research has found that two variables are important in predicting the propensity to enter and remain in public service. On the one hand, having parents employed in the public sector (especially fathers) predicts a higher level of pursuing the same career in the sector than those without such parental work experience; on the other hand, having an interest in politics has a similar, albeit less strong, significant influence [51]. Other studies have found that, compared to their non-profit counterparts, public sector employees are more likely to engage in altruistic behaviours [52]. Managers in the non-profit sector have been documented to exhibit this type of decision making [53]. Other research have shown that employees in the public sector are more prone to volunteer at the macro level, while those in the non-profit sectors are more predisposed to volunteer at the micro level [54].

Previous studies have documented an increased level of distrust in government institutions and disdain for bureaucracy, which has done a great disservice to the public sector, making it less attractive to potential job seekers in the US [55, 56]. Not so in Asian countries with a strong Confucianist imprint, where public sector jobs offer high social status [57]. Findings from a recent article found that higher levels of trust in government enhances the willingness to work in public service [58]. Other research has documented that there is a positive association between trust in government and the president and the intention to work in the public sector [59].

It has been pointed out that public service motivation is associated with religion, among other factors [60]. There is a strong link and core between religion and religiosity, with the former being more extrinsically oriented [61]. Many research fields have incorporated the role of personal religiosity into their investigations, but the public service literature has received little evidence. According to previous research, it appears that US public employees are more spiritual than their private counterparts [62, 63]. Such a claim is based on the traditional view associated with public service that the public servant is endowed with a special vocation for “duty as a love or an intense inner commitment to a cause that extends beyond the exigencies of the moment” [64], providing the ‘soul’ of government [65]. In terms of Gawthrop, the need to help and serve others and fulfil one’s responsibilities “creates for the individual an inner imperative which guides the individual with a sense of purposeful direction or cause and creates in the individual a sense of personal coherence and selfhood” [64, p. 73]. In the midst of modernity, the influence of instrumental rationality and utilitarian factors has enhanced the impersonal facet of organizations and

bureaucrats [66]. Therefore, “while utilitarian philosophy has contributed to significant improvement in public administration because of its emphasis on efficiency, economy, bureaucracy and technology, it also contributed to the loss of an ennobling concept of the public” [67]. Moreover, the spiritual foundations of modern democracy, namely the common good and love, have been discarded in favour of appeals to other values, such as self-interest and rationality: “The lustre of our precious democratic concepts . . . [has] been intellectually, ethically, and motivationally neutered by the canons of objective impersonality in the name of efficiency, economy, impartiality, or procedural justice” [64, p. 73]. More in-depth studies have investigated and analysed the intention to start a particular career, especially in the public sector, as ‘a calling’, not just as a simple, repetitive or bureaucratic occupation [68-70]. Responding to such a vocation or ‘calling’ is synonymous with being imbued with religious and spiritual values, such as love and altruism [71]. As one might intuit, it is clear that public service, seen as a calling, is positively associated with literature on PSM [24]. Many employees in public administration consider themselves spiritual [72], believing that only by having this intrinsic quality can they find and give meaning to their careers [73]. Various other determinants are considered essential inputs in drawing the image of public service, ranging from goodwill, benevolence, civic humanism and Judeo-Christian characteristics to kindness, a spirit of justice, goodness and altruism [64, 74, 75]. This perspective provides insight into the potential differences between public and private sector employees. Other researchers have found interesting results. For example, those interested in public service jobs also postulated a greater emphasis on social trust, altruism, democratic values or civic duty [48, 76]. A research has found a negative correlation between Church involvement and PSM [60]. A study among volunteers highlighted that church attendance, prayer and involvement in religious communities showed a strong positive relationship with higher levels of PSM [49].

There are previous studies that have shown a positive link between the intention to work in civil service and prosocial motivation based on the need to help others [77]. Recently, it has been conducted a research among MPA students in several Russian universities and was found that prosocial motivation is positively and significantly related to their propensity to civil service jobs [78]. An investigation on second public administration undergraduates from two Russian universities in Moscow revealed two interesting results. On the one hand, only a quarter of them intend to work in civil service upon graduation, on the other hand, those who have such intention after graduation were driven by the desire to serve society and the willingness to do good for the others [T. Jaekel and G. Borshchevskiy, *Occupational Intention of Public Administration Undergraduates*, Higher School of Economics Research Paper WP BRP 07/PSP/2017, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2937656>]. Another research among Korean, Singaporean, and Chinese undergraduate students examined the relationship between different types of job motivators and the intention to work in the public sector [79]. Their results provided evidence that job security and salary are common motivators for the intention to pursue both public and private careers,

while the chance to benefit society is significant only in the relation to Korean and Singaporean students' desire for public sector jobs.

3. Data and methods

This article focuses on a questionnaire-based investigation conducted among students enrolled in economics and business administration (N = 1,769) within a Romanian university, namely 'Alexandru Ioan Cuza' University of Iași. We considered only those clear options for starting a career in the public sector, eliminating those answers that targeted only the private sector or simultaneously both sectors. We have eliminated the answers of students who do not live in the North-East of Romania, considering only those from the following counties: Suceava, Botoșani, Iași, Neamț, Vaslui, and Bacău. Also, those over 55 years who can become pensioners in the next 5 years. Thus, we obtained a database containing 911 unique responses.

Our primary data was collected between May 2018 and May 2019, before the outbreak of the global pandemic crisis, from all field specializations of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, including undergraduate, master and doctoral programs. The convenience sample was not pre-selected using a particular criterion. All questionnaires were physically distributed and collected at courses, labs or seminars, to monitor the quality of the responses.

The questionnaire consists of 49 separate questions, mainly covering socio-demographic variables and various attitudes related to entrepreneurship, migration, work ethic, bribery, networking, religiosity and interpersonal and institutional trust. Due to limited space, we have selected only those variables that have been found to be significant and robust and clearly supported by the specific literature. Selected items from the questionnaire used in the paper are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Items of the questionnaire used in the paper.

Variable	Item in the questionnaire	Coding
1	2	3
Employee_public_sector (dependent variable)	In which sector would you like to work in the next 5 years? Employee in public sector	0 = no, 1 = yes
Age_under25years	Are you under 25 years old?	0 = no, 1 = yes
Female	Your gender is female	0 = no, 1 = yes
Married	Are you married?	0 = no, 1 = yes
Family_size	How many members are in your family?	Number of family members

1	2	3
Last_grad_school	What is the last school you graduated from?	1 = Secondary education (high school, vocational school or post-secondary school) 2 = Higher education (university, master, doctorate in progress or completed)
Private_sector_income	Is most of your income earned in the private sector?	0 = no, 1 = yes
Religious_denomination	Which religious denomination do you belong to?	0 = Atheism 1 = Neoprotestantism 2 = Catholicism 3 = Orthodoxy
Prayer_frequency	How often do you pray?	0 = never, 1 = once a year or more rarely, 2 = several times a year, 3 = 1 up to 3 times a month, 4 = once a week or more than once a week, 5 = once a day or several times a day
Church_attendance	How often do you attend religious services?	0 = never, 1 = once a year or more rarely, 2 = several times a year, 3 = 1 up to 3 times a month, 4 = once a week or more than once a week
Member_civic_organisation	Are you a member of any other civic/voluntary organizations (foundations, associations)?	0 = no, 1 = yes
Member_political_party	Are you a member of a political party?	0 = no, 1 = yes
Own_business	Do you currently own a business?	0 = no, 1 = yes
Job_security	What is important to you when we talk about the workplace? Job security	0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much
Own_ideas_practice	What is important to you when we talk about the workplace? The opportunity to put your own ideas into practice	0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much
Salary_level	What is important to you when we talk about the workplace? Salary level	0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much

1	2	3
Decide_for_yourself	What is important to you when we talk about the workplace? the possibility to decide for yourself	0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much
Leader_team	What is important to you when we talk about the workplace? The opportunity to lead a team of people	0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much
Help_other_people	What is important to you when we talk about the workplace? The opportunity to help other people	0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much
Career_advancement	What is important to you when we talk about the workplace? The opportunity for career advancement	0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much
Innovative	What is important to you when we talk about the workplace? The opportunity to innovate	0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much
Balacing_family_career	What is important to you when we talk about the workplace? Balancing family and career	0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much
Doing_useful_things	What is important to you when we talk about the workplace? The opportunity to do useful things for society	0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much
Free_time	What is important to you when we talk about the workplace? The possibility to have a lot of free time	0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much
New_tasks	What is important to you when we talk about the workplace? The opportunity to receive new tasks	0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much
Increase_responsibility	What is important to you when we talk about the workplace? The possibility of receiving tasks requiring increased responsibilities	0 = not at all, 1 = very little, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = very much
Competition_harmful	What do you think about...? Competition is harmful because it brings out the worst in people	0 = total disagreement 1 = partial disagreement 2 = nor agreement, nor disagreement 3 = partial agreement 4 = total agreement

1	2	3
Work_no_success	In general, work done seriously does not bring success - it's more a matter of luck and suspicious relationships	0 = total disagreement 1 = partial disagreement 2 = nor agreement, nor disagreement 3 = partial agreement 4 = total agreement
Follow_own_beliefs	Try to follow your own beliefs/beliefs instead of following those of others (individualism)	0 = total disagreement 1 = partial disagreement 2 = nor agreement, nor disagreement 3 = partial agreement 4 = total agreement
Decide_for_yourself	You decide for yourself motivations in life (incentives)	0 = total disagreement 1 = partial disagreement 2 = nor agreement, nor disagreement 3 = partial agreement 4 = total agreement
Trust_presidency	To what extent do you trust the following institutions? presidency	0 = total mistrust, 1 = quite a bit of distrust, 2 = don't know, 3 = quite a lot of trust, 4 = total trust
Trust_government	To what extent do you trust the following institutions? government/ministries	0 = total mistrust, 1 = quite a bit of distrust, 2 = don't know, 3 = quite a lot of trust, 4 = total trust
Trust_parliament	To what extent do you trust the following institutions? parliament	0 = total mistrust, 1 = quite a bit of distrust, 2 = don't know, 3 = quite a lot of trust, 4 = total trust
Trust_justice	To what extent do you trust the following institutions? justice	0 = total mistrust, 1 = quite a bit of distrust, 2 = don't know, 3 = quite a lot of trust, 4 = total trust
Trust_local_public_administration	To what extent do you trust the following institutions? local public administration	0 = total mistrust, 1 = quite a bit of distrust, 2 = don't know, 3 = quite a lot of trust, 4 = total trust
Trust_army	To what extent do you trust the following institutions? army	0 = total mistrust, 1 = quite a bit of distrust, 2 = don't know, 3 = quite a lot of trust, 4 = total trust
Trust_police	To what extent do you trust the following institutions? police	0 = total mistrust, 1 = quite a bit of distrust, 2 = don't know, 3 = quite a lot of trust, 4 = total trust

1	2	3
Trust_unions	To what extent do you trust the following institutions? Unions	0 = total mistrust, 1 = quite a bit of distrust, 2 = don't know, 3 = quite a lot of trust, 4 = total trust
Trust_religious_institutions	To what extent do you trust the following institutions? Religious institutions	0 = total mistrust, 1 = quite a bit of distrust, 2 = don't know, 3 = quite a lot of trust, 4 = total trust
Trust_political_parties	To what extent do you trust the following institutions? Political parties	0 = total mistrust, 1 = quite a bit of distrust, 2 = don't know, 3 = quite a lot of trust, 4 = total trust

Table 2. Summary statistics (only statistically significant variables).

Variables	N	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Employee_public_sector	911	0.39	0.49	0	1
Age_under25years	911	0.75	0.43	0	1
Female	911	0.68	0.47	0	1
Married	911	0.18	0.39	0	1
Last_grad_school	911	1.34	0.47	1	2
Private_sector_income	911	0.65	0.48	0	1
Orthodoxy	911	0.86	0.34	0	1
Prayer_frequency	911	3.74	1.72	0	5
Church_attendance	911	2.20	1.22	0	4
New_tasks	895	2.92	0.84	0	4
Member_civic_organisation	911	0.19	0.39	0	1
Own_business	911	0.06	0.25	0	1
Competition_harmful	911	2.03	1.24	0	4
Trust_political_parties	911	0.86	1.01	0	4
Trust_religious_institutions	911	1.74	1.30	0	4
Trust_unions	911	1.58	1.05	0	4

Source: author's calculation in Stata17

As shown in Table 2, of the 1,769 students who took part in the survey, only 911 ticked a clear 'yes' or 'no' option regarding a career in the public sector in the next 5 years. Of these, 358 students, representing 39.28% of the sample of 911, indicated a clear preference for the public sector. Of these, almost 75% were under 25 years old, more than 67% were women, about 18% were married and about 33.92% had already graduated a faculty. The remaining 858 respondents either did not fill in any answer or opted exclusively for other options (private sector, such as employed in the private sector; employed in NGOs, associations, foundations; or entrepreneur).

Next, we present the theoretical framework for analysing the students' intention to work in the public sector in the next 5 years. In order to analyse the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that could influence these intentions, we applied binary logistic regression:

$$\text{logit}(p) = \beta_0 + \sum_{k=1}^m \beta_k * X_k + e$$

where:

- p represents the probability of working in the public sector in the next 5 years;
- k is the total number of independent variables, ranging from 2 to m ;
- β_k is the effect of a change in variable X_k on the probability of working in the public sector in the next 5 years;
- X_k is the explanatory variable;
- ε is the error term.

We applied several tests and selection rules to keep only the most significant variables in the database. Thus, we eliminated those variables with values higher than 0.5 in the correlation matrix and higher than 10 after calculating VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values (accepted degree of collinearity [80]). Furthermore, we aimed to obtain higher values for both Pseudo R-square and AUCROC to increase the explanatory power of the models and classification accuracy. Robust standard errors were calculated for all regressions to correct for heteroskedasticity. For visual reasons, we constructed probability prediction nomograms [81] for our logistic regressions.

4. Interpretation of results

In this section, we present the results after applying binary logistic regressions and discuss some of the findings in line with previous research in the literature. The results following the above equation are presented in Table 3.

Table 4 exhibits the results after applying multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression (melogit command in Stata, by family size and last graduated school) only for the model considering intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Such robustness check was needed and confirmed the results shown in Table 3.

To assess the intention to work in the public sector in the next 5 years (Table 3), we used several socio-demographic variables as controls: age (below the average of 25 years), gender, marital status, religious affiliation, and source of monthly earned income.

In all models (1 to 6), age below the sample mean (*Age_under25years*) has a negative influence on the dependent variable. Students aged 18-24 are less likely to start a career in the public sector compared to older students, a finding that seems to be consistent with previous research [33]. Female students are more likely to prefer such a career in the next 5 years, while the same pattern was observed for married students. Both results are consistent with previous work found in the literature [36, 39, 40]. Students belonging to a particular Christian denomination (*Orthodoxy*) are more likely to prefer working in the public sector in the near or distant future. In addition, those students who earn most of their

income from the private sector (for those who work while studying) are less interested in making this paradigm shift, i.e. preferring a government job in the future, than students who do not earn income from the private sector.

Table 3. Logit models for the intention to work in the public sector in the next 5 years.

Employee_public_sector	Model					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Age_under25years	-0.8930**** (0.2124)	-0.9352**** (0.2212)	-0.9769**** (0.2191)	-1.0457**** (0.2232)	-0.8959**** (0.2111)	-1.0103**** (0.2280)
Female	0.5210*** (0.1661)	0.5859**** (0.1712)	0.4458*** (0.1696)	0.3625** (0.1739)	0.5157*** (0.1668)	0.3531** (0.1715)
Married	0.4456* (0.2391)	0.4628* (0.2502)	0.4584* (0.2481)	0.3376 (0.2468)	0.4297* (0.2375)	0.2328 (0.2553)
Orthodoxy	0.7264*** (0.2558)	0.6814*** (0.2570)	0.7101*** (0.2569)	0.7477*** (0.2678)	0.7223*** (0.2564)	0.8850*** (0.2807)
Private_state_income	-1.1451**** (0.1538)	-1.1349**** (0.1563)	-1.0871**** (0.1590)	-1.0120**** (0.1590)	-1.1501**** (0.1548)	-1.0866**** (0.1576)
New_tasks		-0.2435*** (0.0914)				
Own_business			-0.7673** (0.3680)			
Competition_harmful			0.1221** (0.0596)			
Trust_political_parties				0.2777**** (0.0821)		
Trust_religious_institutions				0.3742**** (0.0700)		
Trust_unions				-0.1639* (0.0908)		
Member_civic_organisation					-0.4458** (0.1968)	
Church_attendance						0.2351*** (0.0756)
Prayer_frequency						0.1484** (0.0582)
Constant	-0.1473 (0.3107)	0.5917 (0.4215)	-0.2598 (0.3199)	-0.6755* (0.3513)	-0.0508 (0.3109)	-1.1819*** (0.4059)
N	911	895	911	911	911	911
chi2	159.3450	164.0226	156.4626	173.4135	166.4581	163.0057
p	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Pseudo R2	0.1411	0.1487	0.1480	0.1806	0.1453	0.1685
AIC	1060.6211	1034.5569	1056.1473	1018.3239	1057.4500	1031.0898
BIC	1089.5084	1068.1347	1094.6636	1061.6548	1091.1518	1069.6061
AUCROC	0.7248	0.7346	0.7360	0.7655	0.7317	0.7575

Source: author's calculation in Stata 17. Note: The reported coefficients are odds-ratios (standard errors in parentheses), * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.001$.

In model 2 from Table 3, we found that such people who do not want at all to have the opportunity at work to receive new tasks are more likely to opt for such a professional vocation. There is already a habit among young people to accept it without reservation. Namely that a job in the state sector implies a tendency not to put too much pressure on the fulfilment of tasks, thus being a certain formalisation of a set of practices and procedures that offers fewer chances to take a step out of the 'comfort' zone by being assigned new responsibilities.

Model 3 highlights the following ideas. The same relationship is observed for students who own a businesses at the time of the interview compared to those who do not own such an asset. Therefore, students who are already working in private firms or companies or those who are currently running their own

businesses are attached to this sector and do not want to start a career in the public sector.

Table 4. Robustness check using multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression (melogit by *family size and last graduated school*).

Employee_public_sector	(1)	(2)
Age_under25years	-1.0103**** (0.2430)	-1.0102**** (0.2430)
Female	0.3531** (0.1743)	0.3530** (0.1743)
Married	0.2328 (0.2729)	0.2328 (0.2729)
Orthodoxy	0.8850**** (0.2675)	0.8850**** (0.2675)
Private_state_income	-1.0866**** (0.1598)	-1.0866**** (0.1598)
Church_attendance	0.2351*** (0.0799)	0.2351*** (0.0799)
Prayer_frequency	0.1484** (0.0609)	0.1483** (0.0609)
Constant	-1.1819*** (0.3994)	-1.1819*** (0.3994)
N	911	911
chi2	152.9022	152.8997
p	0.0000	0.0000
AIC	1031.0898	1031.0898
BIC	1069.6061	1069.6061

Source: Author's calculation in Stata 17. Note: The reported coefficients are odds-ratios (standard errors in parentheses), * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.001$.

We believe that the reasons behind such a potential decision are not job security, reduced risks or more stability, but reasons related to corruption, bureaucracy or lack of meritocracy. Respondents who agree with the statement that competition is harmful because it brings out the worst in people are also more tempted to choose the public sector. The explanation is quite logical: the private sector is, by its very nature, a competitive one, so respondents who fear competition, seeing it as a source of dehumanization among others, will prefer the public sector, which is seen or considered much less competitive and safer.

In model 4 we assessed the influence of different types of institutional trust. Those who have a high level of trust in the various institutions in society (political parties, Church institutions) are more likely to want to pursue a career in the public sector in the next 5 years, while those who have such a high level of trust in trade unions would not choose such an opportunity. While it is difficult to offer an explanation based on previous research that has or has not validated such influences, it is reasonable to assume that those who trust public institutions want to work in such an environment (which for them is guaranteed to be meritocratic,

secure or trustworthy). On the other hand, as we have seen in recent years, trade unions in Romania have less and less influence in society, as evidenced by the reduced presence at organized protests or debates with civil society on important issues of the country. For a long time, there has also been no representative social dialogue between trade unions and the executive branch of government for various reasons. Thus, the citizen who observes the bureaucratisation of the trade union movement to the point of disinterest can conclude that the system of governance is unable to understand vital problems and try to solve them. This union-related perspective increases distrust of public institutions which, in turn, dramatically reduces the willingness to perform in a sector perceived as incapable and unreformed.

The results highlighted in model 5 show that those students who answered 'yes' to the question whether they are members of civic/voluntary organizations (e.g. foundations, associations) other than political parties are less inclined to pursue a career in the public sector compared to those who are not members. A reasonable explanation is that these persons who get involved in civic projects are aware of their skills and competences, they are people willing to sacrifice their energy and time for a good cause, committed, active, i.e. a profile closer to the private, more competitive environment than the public one.

Very important in our analysis is the influence of religious factors, namely intrinsic religiosity (frequency of prayer) and extrinsic religiosity (frequency of attendance at religious services). According to the results of model 6, both components of religiosity show a positive, highly significant effect on the intention to become a civil servant in the more or less distant future. On the one hand, those students with a high level of extrinsic religiosity are more likely to opt for such a career compared to those who do not or rarely attend religious services. On the other hand, the higher the level of intrinsic religiosity, the higher the propensity to seek a job in the public sector; in other words, those who pray and attend religious services often and very often are more likely to choose a job in the public sector in the next 5 years. Therefore, they appear to be more spiritual than others, an important idea that is consistent with other previous findings [62, 63].

For a graphical interpretation of the predictors of intention to work in the public sector from the binary logistic regressions, we computed some nomograms. One is based on control variables and religiosity predictors only. Another captures the most comprehensive pattern from the regression below.

Figure 1 shows only the visual perspective of significant influences such as age (under 25 years), gender (female), membership of a particular religious denomination (Orthodoxy), source of income (public/private), and intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity on the intention to work in the public sector in the next 5 years. Drawing a vertical line from the scale value of each variable to the 'Score' scale determines the score of each predictor. In our case, for the 6 variables analysed, the total score is about 45.5. Those who pray once a day or several times a day, attend religious services once a week or more than once a week, who have most of their income currently coming from the public sector, who declare

themselves Orthodox, who are women and who are over 25 years old are approximately 90% more likely to prefer a career in the public sector.

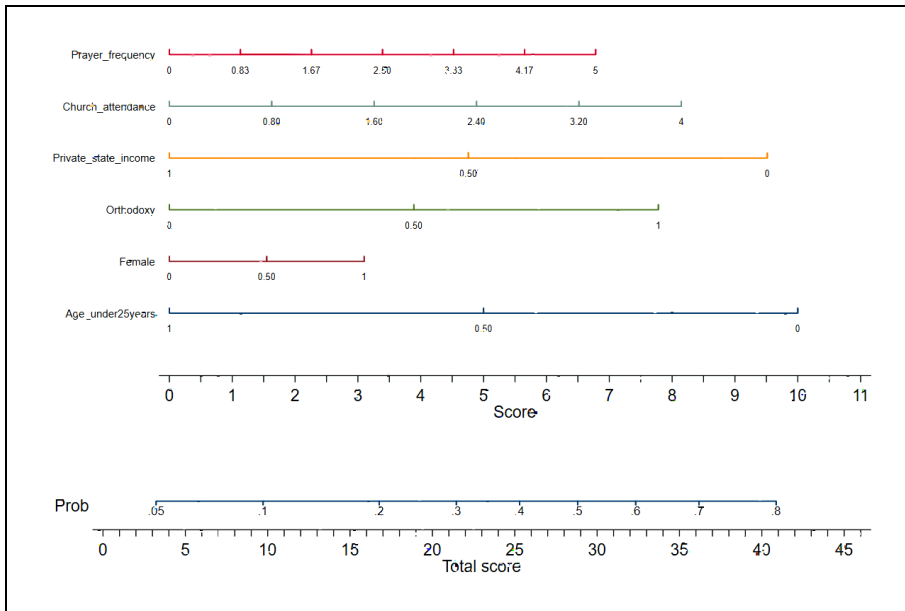


Figure 1. Nomogram for assessing intention to work in the public sector (control variables and intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity). Source: own calculation in Stata 17.

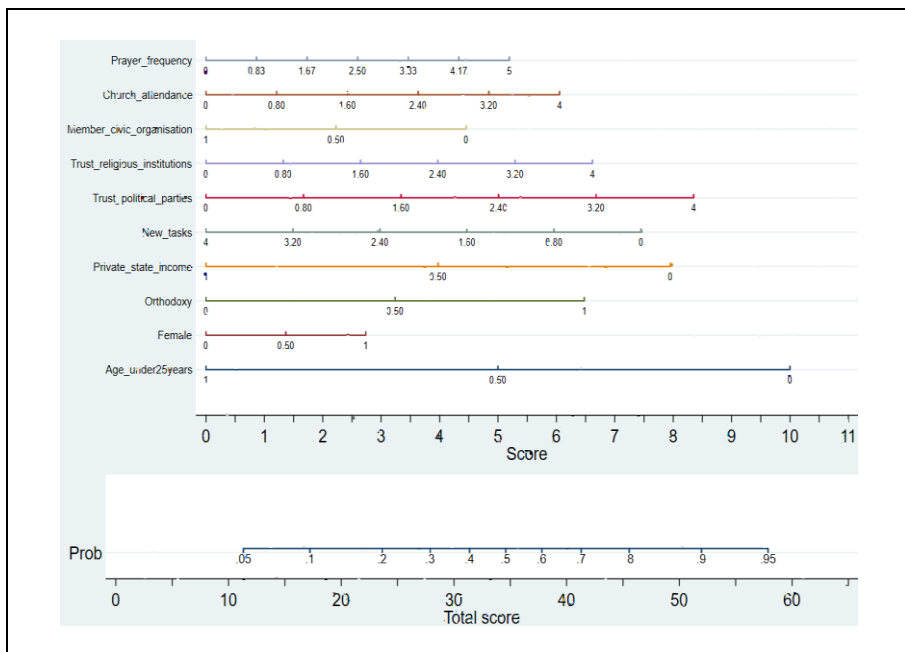


Figure 2. Nomogram for assessing intention to work in the public sector (the most comprehensive model, only significant variables). Source: own calculation in Stata 17.

The role of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity, together with a formal membership to a certain Christian denomination (Orthodoxy), are extremely vivid and important to consider.

From a broader perspective (Figure 2), based on binary logistic regression, the total score after summing the score of each of the 10 significant predictors is about 65.4. Students who pray once a day or several times a day, attend religious services once a week or more than once a week, who are not members of any civic/voluntary organizations, who have total trust in religious institutions and political parties, who do not want at all to be able to take on new tasks at work, who get most of their current monthly income exclusively from the public sector, who declare themselves Orthodox, who are women and who are over 25 years old have a probability of more than 95% of working in the public sector in the next 5 years.

5. Conclusions

This article set out to examine a particular set of variables, from religious affiliation, intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity, participation in certain types of civic networks, labour market status, institutional trust, to attitudes towards work ethic and competition. Our findings show that intentions to work in the public sector present a number of interesting particularities.

Empirical findings highlight the positive association between religious affiliation to Orthodoxy, as well as both types of religiosity and students' intention to work in the public sector in the next 5 years. We found a significant linking relationship with respect to this sector among students who showed a high level of trust in political parties and religious institutions, while trust in trade unions has a negative influence. We also showed that people who at the time of completing the questionnaire earned the majority of their income in the public sector, who completely agreed that it is important to have the opportunity to receive new tasks and assignments in their career, who had not no any entrepreneurial experiences, who did not attend different civic organizations (e.g. foundations, associations, NGOs) and who agreed with the view that competition is harmful because it brings out the worst in people, intended to pursue a career in the public sector.

Finally, the empirical results confirm the sensitivity of the dependent variable to a number of socio-demographic variables. Thus, students aged over 25, female and married are more likely to embrace a career in the public sector in the next 5 years.

Further investigation is needed when complementing the model with more detailed research to better understand what the objective and subjective reasons for such a decisive decision may be. Also, these other variables could be considered as an additional robustness test.

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