THE EFFECTS OF AUTONOMY, EXPERIENCE, AND PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT ON JOB SATISFACTION: THE CASE OF PUBLIC SECTOR

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Abstract  
Although the past several decades of research on determinants of job satisfaction have generated a plethora of theoretical considerations among private and public management scholars across the globe, scholars has produced many conflicting findings. Research also shows that most of the studies are limited to the work cultures in developed western nations. Utilizing a subset of data from the International Social Survey Program on Work Orientations III module conducted in 2005, I conduct ordinary least squares multiple regression analyses to explore the relationships between job satisfaction and its key determinants in the public sector across 18 countries. For all countries, findings clearly show that organizational commitment explains the most variance in the respondents’ job satisfaction, followed by work experience and autonomy. On the autonomy, while autonomy regarding the control of hours was found to be negatively associated, the other two dimensions—ease of taking time off during working and organization of daily work—were found to be positively and significantly related to job satisfaction. In terms of work experience, the usage of past work experience and skills for the current job and helpfulness of the current work experience for future employment were both found to be positively and significantly related to job satisfaction. Job training, however, was not a significant predictor of job satisfaction.

Keywords: organizational learning, person-organization fit, job autonomy, job satisfaction

Introduction  
Over the past four decades or so, job satisfaction has generated considerable interest among the research community across the globe. Job satisfaction is referred to as a person’s general attitude toward the job or toward specific dimensions of the job (Knoop, 1995; Robbins, 2001). Job satisfaction has been mostly used as a performance indicator in terms of reducing absenteeism and turnover and in terms of increasing productivity in the workplace (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001; Sousa-Pouza & Sousa-Pouza, 2000; Vroom, 1964). Scholars have also connected it to improving the health and well-being of workers (Karasek, 1979; Totterdell, Wood, & Wall, 2006; Tsutsumi, 2005). As the literature suggests, job satisfaction is undoubtedly one of the most
frequently studied variables in organizational behavior, but the factors that lead to job satisfaction are not yet fully clear (Wyk & Adonis, 2008; Westover & Taylor, 2010).

We also acknowledge that despite the advances in technology and the emergence of a global economy that have brought together the people, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, national culture, and skillsets, studies that take into account these multitudes of factors together are significantly lacking, which hinders both scholars and practitioners from understanding the full potential of human capital as well as the practical significance of recruiting and retaining the type of employees public sector organizations need in order to be competitive in the delivery of public services. In addition, although the number of studies that emphasize the value of workforce diversity in organizations has increased, many of the existing studies are restricted to samples that are rather homogeneous in nature.

In this study we examine the impact of various organizational factors on job satisfaction using a variety of public sector jobs in 18 countries–Australia, the United States, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Bulgaria, Russia, New Zealand, Canada, Israel, Latvia, France, Portugal, Denmark, Switzerland, Flanders, Mexico, Taiwan, South Africa, and the Dominican Republic. The countries chosen in this study differ in many respects, from their national culture, customs, and mode of governance, to their stage of economic development (Westover & Taylor, 2010). These differences among countries can impact differently on the study variables, including job satisfaction. Although previous research has made contributions to the literature in shedding new light on job satisfaction by using sector variable as a moderator, it is unclear how the determinants of job satisfaction uniquely impact those specifically in the public sector. Only a few studies have looked into job satisfaction with respect to the form and type of employment (Markovits, Davis, & van Dick, 2010). This paper investigates the comparative influences of the following factors in the public sector: different dimensions of autonomy, person-organization exclusivity, past and current work experience, job training, and organizational commitment. We use the latest available data set from the 2005 International Social Survey Program (ISSP) on Work Orientations. This is an interesting data set because it covers numerous countries from four continents. It also contains data for several Eastern European countries that have received comparatively little attention in this field of research. In fact, as pointed out by Diener, Diener, & Diener (1995), cross-national research on job satisfaction has been primarily based on a very small number of nations in the past (for example, Easterlin, 1974; Veehoven, 1991) and heavily weighted toward Europe and the United States (for example, Blanchflower & Oswald, 1999). This is particularly the case in the job satisfaction literature (Spector, 1997).

Job Satisfaction in the Public Sector

Literature on job satisfaction between public and private sector employee can be found in the studies of organizational behavior and management studies, as well as in the works of organizational psychology research (Markovits et al., 2010). These studies often display the differences between the sectors’ organizational contexts which influence the attitudes and work behaviors of managers and employees alike (Boyne, 2002; Cho & Lee, 2001; Goulet & Frank, 2002). Alternatively, they examine methodological and research questions deriving from the similarities and differences observed between private and public sector organizations (Rainey & Bozeman, 2000). Although there is debate on whether there are clear differences in the levels of job satisfaction between public and private sector employees (Markovits et al., 2010), research is beginning to show the different effects of determinants of job satisfaction between the two sectors. For example, Westover and Taylor’s (2010) study shows that while public service motivation (PSM) was a non-significant factor in either sector, PSM-fit was a positive and strong indicator of job satisfaction in
the public sector. Also, their study showed that although extrinsic and intrinsic motivations and working relationships between both co-workers and management were all significant in both public and private sectors, the degree of significance was superior among those in the public sector. Understandably, the literature is mindful of the notion that during the times of economic prosperity and opportunities for personal and professional development, the private sector may be at an advantage in terms of attracting employment compared to the public sector (Markovits et al., 2010) whereas private sector employees are more extrinsically satisfied in their work than civil servants (Goulet & Frank, 2002; Young, Worchel, & Woehr, 1998; Caldwell, Chatman, & O’Reilly, 1990). However, recession-like economies, high unemployment rates, and low levels of job security may produce the opposite results in which civil servants become more extrinsically satisfied and more committed than private sector employees.

Previous research shows several notable differences between the private and the public sector that signal why job satisfaction in the public sector is especially important (Markovits et al., 2010). First, in terms of employment status, while those in the private sector are contract-based (mainly fixed term), those in the public sector in general earn life-time and secured employment. Second, while the main motivation behind job satisfaction is to maximize his or her monetary compensation for market transaction, those in the public sector cannot expect to benefit from such luxury in their transaction. In other words, intrinsic motivation that derives from helping others often becomes the bulk of his or her satisfaction depository. Research on citizen trust (Yang, 2009; Kim, 2010) also suggests that government’s performance is ultimately decided by the citizens who give high remarks on their trust in government based on their personal interaction with administrators. The trust level is mutual and reciprocal between the public servants and the citizens (Yang, 2009), which implies that public servants’ job satisfaction is positively correlated with their behavior and the quality of their services. Adding that their employment term is mostly permanent, their job satisfaction can be that much more meaningful and at the same time can be representative of the quality of the services that they provide. The next section reviews the relevant literature on a variety of job motivation factors followed by hypotheses.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Autonomy

According to Stamps and Piedmonte (1986), autonomy is defined as the amount of job-related independence, initiative, and freedom either permitted or required in daily work activities. Autonomy has been consistently linked to employee satisfaction as a positive factor (Parker & Wall, 1998; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Neuman, Edwards, & Raju, 1989). Many other research results also pointed out that autonomy is an essential component for professional development (Hart & Rotem, 1995; Manley, 1995; Gray & Pratt, 1989) and is a positive factor for job satisfaction (Blegen, 1993; Weissman, Alexander, & Chase, 1980; Finn, 2001). Given the unstructured nature of complex jobs, which require workers to exercise judgment, decision-making, creativity, and other discretionary behaviors (Chung-Yan, 2010), Frese and Zapf (1994) argued that those with discretion and control can more effectively resolve problems because they have the freedom to choose strategies to deal with the situation.

Researchers have recognized, in general, two types of job autonomy that can positively influence job satisfaction: control of task and control of time. Control of task can be further divided into the method of task being used and organizing the contents of work on a daily basis. Although autonomy regarding work method, which refers to the degree of freedom that workers have in going about their work, such as the kind of spreadsheet software an employee prefers to use, has been
examined as a positive factor (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Sims, Szilagyi, & Keller, 1976), time management has received significantly less attention and has received mixed findings at best. Autonomy regarding work scheduling refers to the level of control employees have in scheduling, sequencing, or timing their work activities, such as a choice of working from home versus workplace attendance. According to the EWCO report (2006) on the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, in the case of the Netherlands, taking time off during work hours, deciding the order of work activities, and interrupting work at any moment to take a break, and deciding the way the work is done all showed positive and statistically significant associations with job satisfaction at \( p < .01 \) level.

This paper analyzes how the different aspects of autonomy—working hours, taking time off, and work contents—are associated with job satisfaction among the public sector employees. The following hypotheses are tested in the study:

- **H$_{1a}$**: Autonomy on working hours is positively and significantly related to job satisfaction.
- **H$_{1b}$**: Autonomy on taking time off is positively and significantly related to job satisfaction.
- **H$_{1c}$**: Autonomy on work contents is positively and significantly related to job satisfaction.

**Work Experience**

There are mainly two dimensions of work experience: utility of the past work experience for the current job and the perceived benefits of the current work for future employment. Although a majority of past research on work experience mostly focused on the work experience dichotomy (e.g., whether one had a similar work experience or not) (see Shah, Al-Enezi, Chowdhury, & Al Otabi, 2004), recent research findings have shown that being able to relate to past work experience in the current job is a confidence booster and, therefore, adds to one’s job satisfaction (Dokko, Wilk, & Rothbard, 2009). For example, if the employee is able to utilize his or her skill set acquired from the previous job, confidence and perceived performance level may increase, which, in turn, increases job satisfaction.

Drafke and Kossen (2002) postulated that many people experience satisfaction when they believe that their future job prospects are good. This suggests that employee attitudes toward current jobs in conjunction with future employment affect their job satisfaction. Likewise, Igbaria, Parasuraman, and Badawy (1994) posited that work experience when coupled with career expectation was related to job satisfaction. In this regard, job satisfaction likely increases for two reasons: (1) employees recognize that the time they spent in previous organizations was worth the time and energy they had invested in that organization, and (2) employees feel competent and confident about their work as an expert, which increases their job satisfaction. Employees often start jobs with expectations based on their past work experiences, career aspirations, and personal characteristics (Woods, 1993). Maanen’s research (1984) referred to this concept as the “socialization chain,” a term describing the process whereby lessons or skills learned in one period or setting are tested and utilized in later periods or settings. Previous work experience in a similar setting may facilitate the development of a sense of task competence and, consequently, increase satisfaction in performing the work (Adkins, 1995). The literature on organizational behavior (Gioia & Manz, 1985; Gioia & Poole, 1984) also suggests that individuals with previous experience in similar tasks may learn new tasks more quickly. Feeling confidence about one’s knowledge of an organization’s rules and procedures (i.e., developing a sense of task competence) is necessary for job satisfaction (Adkins, 1995). Organizations seek employees whose prior work experience is similar to the current needs of the organization because they expect that these employees will bring knowledge that enables them to be immediately productive (Rynes, Orlitzky, & Bretz, 1997). In addition,
researchers have increasingly begun to notice the importance of work experience acquired in prior firms (Goldsmith & Venum, 2002; Quinones, Ford, & Teachout, 1995; Dokko et al., 2009). Schmidt, Hunter, and Outerbridge (1986) posited that prior related experience confers valuable knowledge and skills that can be applied to the current work context; however, empirical findings have been mixed (McDaniel, Schmidt, & Hunter, 1988). For example, even when occupation remains constant, behavioral outcomes can improve or worsen with a change in employers (Allison & Long, 1990). One reason for this lack of consistency in results may be greater complexity in the relationship between prior work experience and behavioral outcome than has been previously examined (Dokko et al., 2009). Their research showed that when prior related work experience was directly applied to behavioral work outcomes, the association was negative. However, when task-relevant knowledge and skills from the prior work were applied, the relationship was positive.

In this study I recognize that utility of past task-relevant knowledge and skill will increase one’s self-confidence and anticipation of what will happen in the next job and, thus, will increase job satisfaction. My study, then, takes one step forward noting that being allowed to use past work skills can significantly boost one’s confidence in his or her work. I analyze the extent to which past work skills are used in the current job and how that is related to job satisfaction. Additionally, I analyze how perceived helpfulness of present work experience and skills for future employment is associated with job satisfaction. The following hypotheses are tested in the study:

H$_{2a}$: The usage of past work experience and skills in current job is positively and significantly related to job satisfaction.

H$_{2b}$: The degree of helpfulness of present work experience and skills for future employment is positively and significantly related to job satisfaction.

**Job Training**

The role of job training has grown significantly over what time period. For example, $7.7$ billion was spent on the wages and salaries of in-house company trainers and $2.8$ billion was spent on tuition reimbursement just in 1995 (Franzis, Gittleman, Horrigan, & Joyce, 1998). The American Society for Training and Development found that in 2004, the average annual training expenditure per employee was $955, which is an increase of $135 per employee from the previous year. These figures all indicate the growing importance of job training that facilitates an organization’s future success.

Landy (1985) defined job training as “a set of planned activities on the part of an organization to increase the job knowledge and skills or to modify the attitudes and social behavior of its members in ways consistent with the goals of the organization and the requirements of the job” (p. 306). The importance of employees’ attitudes toward workplace learning opportunities cannot be ignored (Schmidt, 2007). Rowden and Conine (2003) found that a large part of the worker’s sense of job satisfaction can be attributed to workplace learning opportunities (p. 463). Also, Lowry, Simon, and Kimberley (2002) concluded that employees who received training scored significantly higher on job satisfaction surveys than those who had not. Overall, an organization’s training efforts have wide-reaching effects on employees and on the organization (Schmidt, 2007).

Although job training has been an important element in many competitive industries, there is a significant debate among professionals and scholars as to the effect that training has on both employee and organizational goals (Author, 2007). One school of thought argues that training leads to an increase in turnover, while the other states that training is a tool that can lead to higher levels of employee retention (Colarelli & Montei, 1996; Becker, 1993). Although both sides of the argument are competitive,
most professionals agree that employee training is a complex human resource practice that can significantly impact a company’s success. In addition, previous research showed (or demonstrated) that human resource investments can yield positive performance-related outcomes for organizations (Subramony, Krause, Norton, & Burns, 2008; Becker & Huselid, 2006; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Heskett, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 2003; Likert & Bowers, 1969). Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli (1997) research also showed that these investments are repaid in the form of favorable employee attitudes.

Previous research also focused on the effects of perceived investment in employee development (PIED) on job satisfaction (Lee & Bruvold, 2003). Using samples of 405 nurses from the U.S. and Singapore, their results investigated the generalizability of the effect of PIED on work attitude and behavior in both Eastern and Western work settings. According to Cotton and Tuttle (1986), job satisfaction was or represented also an individual’s affective response to specific aspects of the job. They argued that PIED may result in increased job satisfaction for several reasons. First, individuals may perceive the organization offering the employee development programs as representing the organization’s concern for their long-term growth. Second, PIED gives employees a greater sense of control over their career due to the opportunities to update old skills and gain new ones and that being able to increase their employability through the training is likely to raise levels of job satisfaction. Third, the availability of employee development programs in the organization improves employees’ perceptions of their employer and increases employees’ overall positive feeling toward their employer, which in turn may have an impact on job satisfaction. Among the international studies that used the concept of PIED, Scarpello and Campbell (1983) first noted that investing in the development of employees from two multinational organizations positively influenced global job satisfaction through the symbolic action of the employer providing policies supportive of employees’ competence development. In Naumann’s (1993) study of expatriate employees, he found a significant, positive relationship between expatriates’ training and job satisfaction. Another study on employment relations in Norway (Kalleberg & Rognes, 2000) found that investment in employees in the form of training is positively associated with an increase in job satisfaction. PIED may increase job satisfaction due to positive feelings associated with working for an organization that visibly cares about the employability of its employees (Lee & Bruvold, 2003). Their findings suggested that, whether it is in Singapore or in the U.S., PIED is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction. A key point raised by the results of their study is that the perceptions and actual investment activities all have an impact on job satisfaction. This suggests that employees who are given the opportunity to build their skills and competence are more likely to develop a greater sense of confidence and job satisfaction that comes from having more control over their employability (Lee & Bruvold, 2003).

More recent research investigating the relationship between human resources management (HRM) practice and job satisfaction has supported this trend (Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011; Absar, Azim, Balasundaram, & Akhter, 2010). For example, in a study of job satisfaction among nurses involving the professional practice model (PPM), a multitude of different types and characteristics of PPM were significantly correlated with increased job satisfaction (Pierce, Hazel, & Mion, 1996). In Mudor and Tooksoon’s (2011) research, job training was used as one of the three variables in HRM practices believed to influence job satisfaction. In general, training is referred to as a planned effort facilitating the learning of job-related knowledge, skill, and behavior by employees (Noe, 2006). Bradley, Petrescu, and Simmons (2004) demonstrated that creating on-going learning as well as training in the workplace has a highly significant effect on job satisfaction. In addition, they posited that training
increases the probability of work being either completely or very satisfying.

The impact of human resource management (HRM) practices popularly known as HR practices on organizational performance and employee attitudes has been a leading area of research in the developed world for years (Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Huselid, 1995; Katou & Budhwar, 2007; Petrescu & Simmons, 2008). For example, Absar et al. (2010) show that among the types of human resource management practices—e.g., human resource planning, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance-appraisal, compensation, and industrial relations—training was the most powerful indicator of job satisfaction. Also, in his research involving a sample of customer contact representatives in nine organizations in the United States and Canada, Schmidt (2007) found the relationship between satisfaction with employer-provided workplace training and overall job satisfaction and found the relationship to be significant. Job training is often followed by the expectation for personal growth and is a major part of intrinsic motivation to stay in one’s job or organization. Violino (2001) posited or contended that satisfaction with training and development is a major factor in career decisions, particularly in the job-hunting process (Schmidt, 2007). For example, Ranstad’s 2001 North America Employment Review survey of 2,600 American and Canadian employees found that 80% of respondents said receiving training to increase their skills and abilities was a key component of what they looked for in jobs (“What Drives,” 2001). Likewise, results of a survey of 271 network professionals conducted by Lucentcare (2000) showed that the most important factor in job satisfaction was the opportunity to learn new skills (Blum & Kaplan, 2000). Another study involving a 2001 Network Computing survey of 1,400 information technology (IT) professionals found that IT employees felt educational and training opportunities were critical to their job (Violino, 2001; Melymuka, 2000).

Employees may view job training as a pleasant gesture by the organization when they generally feel that the organization cares about the professional efficacy of their employees for personal growth. For example, Barrett and O’Connel (2001) viewed it as a “gift” as being a type of self-fulfilling prophecy. In other words, organizations that invest in and provide general training make the participants feel like insiders. The sense of being an insider is displayed in the employee’s exertion of more effort, improved work ethic, and increased satisfaction. Our study tests the following hypothesis:

H2: Job training is positively and significantly related to job satisfaction.

Person-Organization (PO) Exclusivity
Borrowing largely from the person-organization (PO) fit literature, person-organization exclusivity (PO-exclusivity) is conceptualized as the compatibility between the needs and motives of individuals and the needs of the work environment. Although there has been surprisingly little analysis on the needs-based relationship between employees and organizations, a review of the extant literature suggests that the relationship between the employee and the organization is highly associated with job satisfaction (Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003). Other studies have consistently linked PO-fit to employees’ work-related attitudes and actions (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). The literature also recognizes several other forms of PO-fit. For example, compatibility may take the form of supplementary fit, achieved when an individual’s personal characteristics are congruent with the characteristics of the organization and its members, or complementary fit, achieved when an individual’s psychological needs are fulfilled by characteristics of the work environment (i.e., needs-supplies [NS-fit]) (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Kristof, 1996; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987).
Expanding on the demands-abilities (DA-fit), employees are more likely to feel satisfied with their job if the value of their talent is deemed rate and exclusive, and thus is highly un-replaceable. On a similar note, a sense of pride and respect for the organizations that comes from knowing that there may not be another organization as successful as his or her workplace is likely to raise the level of job satisfaction. Kristof (1996) defined PO-fit as the “compatibility between people and the organizations in which they work,” (p. 1), which suggests that when the feelings and the value assessments that employees and the organizations have for each other are positively mutual, both parties are likely to benefit from each other’s support. Essentially, PO-fit theory posits that there are characteristics of organizations that have the potential to be congruent with characteristics of individuals, and those individuals’ attitudes and behaviors will be influenced by the degree of congruence or fit between individuals and organizations (Argyris, 1957; Pervin, 1989).

Literature on PO-fit and work-related outcomes, especially involving job satisfaction, is emerging (Verquer et al., 2003). For the relationship to benefit for both the employees and the organizations, recognizing the exclusive features from each side facilitates the well-being of both parties. For example, Kristof (1996) posited that value congruence, the most frequently assessed dimension of PO-fit, involves the similarity between organizational values and those of the organization’s employees. Schneider, Goldstein, and Smith’s (1995) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework also posited goal congruence as an important dimension of PO-fit. This suggests that the goals by the employees as well as those by their organizations must match and benefit each other in the long run. Munchinksy and Monahan (1987) distinguished between needs-supplies fit and demands-abilities fit. Needs-supplies fit may be defined as the extent to which the organization fulfills the needs of an individual, whereas demands-abilities fit occurs when an individual’s characteristics fill the needs of the organization. Therefore, for the fit to sustain itself, it needs to be grounded not only on the needs-demand compatibility, but also on the uniqueness of each individual and institutional attributes. The study tests the following hypotheses:

H4a: Perceived degree of difficulty for finding a job at least as good as the current one is positively and significantly related to job satisfaction.
H4b: Perceived degree of difficulty for the organization to replace the respondent is positively and significantly related to job satisfaction.

Organizational Commitment
Organizational commitment can be defined as an employee’s strong belief in and acceptance of an organization’s goals and values, effort on behalf of the organization to reach these goals and objectives and strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Hunt & Morgan, 1994). In other words, organizational commitment points to the attitudes of employees concerning commitment towards the organizations they work for (Moorhead & Griffin, 1995; Northcraft & Neale, 1990). Despite the closely related constructs, such as public service motivation (in the public sector) and psychological contract (in the private sector), organizational commitment in general is rarely viewed as an antecedent of job satisfaction in the public sector. Rather, it is often used as a dependent variable and as a mediator at best.

Although a variety of outcomes have been identified in the past 30 years (Angle & Perry, 1981; Mowday, Streers, & Porter, 1979; Hall, 1977), studies that looked at the potential determinants of job satisfaction in both public and private sector comparison and in the international context have emerged only in the last several years (Westover & Taylor, 2010; Liu & Ramsey, 2008). Previous research that used job satisfaction as an antecedent of organizational commitment in the public sector is
a concern that needs to be addressed because while job satisfaction is often temporal by nature, organizational commitment often requires time for relationship to mature. Therefore, any organizations that are looking at the long term solution to keeping the level of job satisfaction high will have a better chance at that by examining their commitment to the organization. On the contrary, although previous research posited that job satisfaction is a positive antecedent of organizational commitment, job satisfaction can change even by the day as employees can have a good day or a bad day and organizational commitment built on job satisfaction is not a reliable indicator for organizations in the long run.

There is, however, compelling evidence on the impact of organizational commitment on job satisfaction (Namasiyayama & Zhaob, 2007). Moreover, Bateman and Strasser (1984) stated that the reasons for studying organizational commitment are related to job satisfaction. Increasing numbers of literature on organizational commitment in recent years have tested the relative effects of components of organizational commitment on job satisfaction (Meyer & Allen, 1990). According to Mowday et al. (1979), organizational commitment is a multidimensional structure and it is the relative strength of an individual’s identification with an involvement in a particular organization (Savery & Syme, 1996). Of the diverse components of organizational commitment, affective commitment has been strongly related to job satisfaction (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Affective commitment basically refers to one’s feelings of loyalty to a company or organization because he or she believes in the organization. In addition, Hawkins (1998) posited that affective commitment can enhance job satisfaction because employees agree with the organization’s objectives and principles and because employees feel they are treated fairly in terms of equity, and receive organizational care, concern and support.

Borrowing largely from the literature on psychology, scholars posited that work place commitment is thought of as a very important topic to consider and is also vital for understanding the psychology of human behavior (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005, p. 241). Their research also suggests that work commitment has an impact on job satisfaction (Markovits et al., 2007). Scholars have been also increasingly theorizing that the meaning of organizational commitment differs depending on the organizational context and environment in which it is assessed (Markovits et al., 2007). For example, public sector employees have, on average, organizational and job attitudes that are different from those of private sector employees (Karl & Sutton, 1998; Naff & Crum, 1999; Kelman, 2007). Thus, organizational commitment is expected to be different in its nature and meaning in different organizational settings as well as in different cultural environments (Clugston, 2000; Kirkman & Shapiro, 2001; Smith, Fischer, & Sale, 2001).

While job satisfaction or burnout reflects the well-being, or lack thereof, of an individual, organizational commitment brings the advantage of group cohesiveness. For example, Carrière and Bourque (2009) view organizational commitment as a “psychological stabilizing or helpful force that binds individuals to courses of action relevant,” to the organization. Individuals with higher levels of organizational commitment have a sense of belonging and identification with the organization that increases their desire to pursue the organization’s goals and activities, and their willingness to remain a part of the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The explanatory power of organizational commitment is noteworthy even in an international context. For instance, in a study of employees in pharmaceutical industry in Pakistan, one unit change in organizational commitment accounted for over 70% change in job satisfaction, which shows that great commitment of employee with the organization has strong impact on satisfaction (Anis, Kashif-ur-Rehman, Ijaz-Ur-Rehman,
Richard Steers (1977) also showed in his research that the more committed an employee is, the more positive attitude he or she has about employment, which leads to job satisfaction. Likewise, increasing organizational commitment within employees through affective and normative commitment was shown to have a significant effect on job satisfaction (Park & Rainey, 2007, p. 219). Moreover, someone who is committed to the organization has a clearer set of goals and vision that helps elevate his or her satisfaction because job satisfaction is likely to be low for those without clear vision and goals for the organizations (Moon, 2000). The following hypothesis is tested in the study:

H₅: Organizational commitment is positively and significantly related to job satisfaction.

**Method**

**Sample**

This study utilizes the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) Work Orientations data for 2005. Because this study focuses on job satisfaction in the public sector, only the respondents who participated in the labor market working for the government were taken into account. They consisted of individuals who were engaged in full-time employment, part-time employment, casual employment, and those who were helping out a family member with their work. The final sample size was 3,973 individuals. This is further divided into 18 countries: United States of America, Australia, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Bulgaria, Russia, Canada, Israel, Latvia, France, Portugal, Denmark, Switzerland, Mexico, Taiwan, South Africa, and Dominican Republic. The numbers of respondents were 191 (Australia), 182 (United States), 124 (Ireland), 254 (Norway), 217 (Sweden), 123 (Bulgaria), 122 (Russia), 122 (New Zealand), 118 (Canada), 96 (Israel), 115 (Latvia), 231 (France), 182 (Portugal), 308 (Denmark), 164 (Switzerland), 144 (Flanders), 74 (Mexico), 116 (Taiwan), 99 (South Africa), and 124 (Dominican Republic).

**Measures**

The dependent variable of job satisfaction was measured by the following question: “How satisfied are you in your (main) job?” The response scale ranged from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 7 (completely satisfied). The independent variables in this study are autonomy, entrepreneurial intentions, work experience, human resource development, and fit exclusivity. First, regarding autonomy, the respondents were asked the following three questions: “Which of the following statements best describes how your working hours are decided (By working hours we mean here the time you start and finish work, and not the total hours you work per week or month.)?” Response scale used included 1 (Starting and finishing times are decided by my employer and I cannot change them on my own), 2 (I can decide the time I start and finish work, within certain limits), and 3 (I am entirely free to decide when I start and finish work). Although constructs formulated from multiple items are generally preferred, particularly in meeting validity and reliability standards, the purpose here was to shed light on distinguishing autonomy on personnel issues from autonomy on work issues. The fact that single items are used to develop this construct, however, should be noted as a limitation of this study.

Work experience was measured by the following two items: “How much of your past work experience and/or job skills can you make use of in your present job (response scale ranged from 1 (almost none) to 4 (almost all))” and “If you were to look for a new job, how helpful would your present work experience and/or job skills be (response scale ranged from 1 (not helpful at all) to 4 (very helpful))?”

Regarding human resource development, the respondents were asked the following question: “Over the past 12 months, have you had any training to improve your job skills, either at the workplace or somewhere else (1 for “Yes” and 0 for “No”)?”
Regarding PO-exclusivity, the respondents were asked the following two questions: “How difficult or easy do you think it would be for you to find a job at least as good as your current one (response scale ranged from 1 (very easy) to 5 (very difficult))?” “How difficult or easy do you think it would be for your firm or organization to replace you if you left (response scale ranged from 1 (very easy) to 5 (very difficult))?”. Regarding organizational commitment, the respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with each of the following statements: (1) “I am willing work harder than I have to in order to help the firm or organization I work for succeed”, (2) “I am proud to be working for my firm or organization”, and (3) “I would turn down another job that offered quite a bit more pay in order to stay with this organization.” The response scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Several other independent variables based on the literature (Westover & Taylor, 2010) were also taken into account. They are PSM, workplace rewards (extrinsic rewards and intrinsic rewards), work relations (with co-workers and management). The workplace rewards variable consists of six items, with three for extrinsic rewards, and another three items for intrinsic rewards. The PSM variable is made up of two items.

Several employee characteristics were controlled for in this study. They are age, gender, education, hours worked, and supervisory role. Literature shows that gender (Vaydonoff, 1980; Hulin & Smith, 1967), age (Lee & Wilbur, 1985; Ting, 1997), and education (King, Michael, & Atkinson, 1982; Reiner & Zhao, 1999) affect job satisfaction (Blegen, 1993).

Research Design
The primary method of analyses is ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Several researchers have argued that the OLS regression is acceptable if the satisfaction variable uses a Likert scale, as was the case in this study, because most respondents would be able to know that the difference between responses of 1 and 2 is similar to the difference between responses of 2 and 3, and so forth (Westover & Taylor, 2010). Using the OLS regression results also enable the $R^2$ value of a model to be reported and compared across models. Therefore, all regression results reported herein are OLS regression results.

Results
Table 1 shows the characteristics of the employees in the public sector from the 18 countries. Overall, more than 76% of the respondents were in the 26-55 age bracket with the exception of Denmark and Switzerland where more than 20% of the respondents were in the 56-65 age range. A majority of the workers were female (61%). Mexico and Taiwan were the only two countries where the majority of the public sector workers were male at 52% and 53%, respectively. On the educational level, roughly 48% of the respondents had four-year university degree completed, while 33% were above higher secondary level. There were, however, large variations among the countries. For example, in Latvia, 100% of the respondents had no formal education, while less than 20% of the respondents in Denmark, Switzerland, and Flanders were with four-year college degree. Majority of the employees were full-time workers (77%) led by Taiwan (98%), Portugal (95.3%), Russia (94.7%), Bulgaria (91.1%), South Africa (88.6%), and United States (86.9%). Using the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), we grouped the classifications by major group. Overall, professionals (34%) and technicians and associates (21%) were the most dominant categories of the survey respondents, followed by service workers, shop, and market sales workers (16%) and clerks (9%). Why list % for only the last two?
Table 1  *The characteristics of the public sector employees in 18 countries*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 and younger</td>
<td>.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>.225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>.261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>.284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-65</td>
<td>.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66 and older</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No formal qualification</td>
<td>.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest formal qualification</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above lowest qualification</td>
<td>.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher secondary completed</td>
<td>.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above higher secondary level</td>
<td>.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University degree completed</td>
<td>.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>.209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Classification (ISCO 88)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers</td>
<td>.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technicians and Associate Professionals</td>
<td>.209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Workers and Shop and Market Sales Workers</td>
<td>.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Agricultural and Fishery Workers</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft and Related Trades Workers</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of the study variables by country. As observed in Table 2, the mean values of the study variables are significantly different across the 18 countries. Among the countries, the respondents’ job satisfaction was above average in the United States, Ireland, Bulgaria, Israel, Latvia, Portugal, Denmark, Switzerland, Mexico, and Dominican Republic. Job satisfaction was the highest in Mexico (x̄ 6.09) while Latvia showed the lowest job satisfaction (mean score: 4.85). Regarding autonomy on working hours, Denmark (mean score: 1.66) and Switzerland (mean score: 1.63) showed the highest mark, while South Africa (mean score: 1.15) and Bulgaria (mean score: 1.17) were the lowest in the category. In terms of the autonomy on organizing daily work schedule, countries which showed equal to or above average (mean score: 1.91) included Australia, United States, Ireland, Sweden, New Zealand, Canada, France, Denmark, Switzerland, and Taiwan. On the degree of usage from the past work experience (average mean score: 2.92) and helpfulness of current work experience for future job (average mean score: 3.22), Sweden and Norway showed the highest average, respectively. In terms of whether the respondents had received training to improve job skills over the past 12 months, New Zealand showed the highest average. In terms of PO-fit (exclusivity of the job), Bulgaria showed the highest average (mean score: 4.09). On the other hand, PO-fit (exclusivity of the employee) was the highest in Russia. Among the countries in the study, the respondents’ organizational commitment was above average (mean score: 3.32) in Australia, United States, Ireland, Bulgaria, New Zealand, Canada, Israel, Portugal, Switzerland, Flanders, Mexico, Taiwan, South Africa, and Dominican Republic.
Table 2  ANOVA results by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>All (%)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>7.887*</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>1.156</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy (working hours)</td>
<td>20.362*</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>0.569</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy (time-off)</td>
<td>9.822*</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.051</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy (organization of work)</td>
<td>12.788*</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience (past)</td>
<td>14.878*</td>
<td>2.922</td>
<td>1.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience (current)</td>
<td>12.957*</td>
<td>3.224</td>
<td>0.822</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job training</td>
<td>21.611*</td>
<td>0.594</td>
<td>0.491</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person-organization exclusivity (job)</td>
<td>11.650*</td>
<td>3.473</td>
<td>1.128</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person-organization exclusivity (employee)</td>
<td>7.994*</td>
<td>2.524</td>
<td>1.146</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment</td>
<td>28.571*</td>
<td>3.318</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < 0.001.

Multiple Regression Analyses
The results of multiple regression analyses in Table 3 show that, overall, autonomy (time-off) (p < .01) and autonomy (organization of work) (p < .01) were positively associated with job satisfaction, while autonomy on working hours (p < .01) was found to be negatively associated. Country differences were also observed for the comparative influence of the study variables on job satisfaction. First, regarding autonomy on working hours, only Mexico, Taiwan, and South Africa were statistically significant (p < .01). On being able to take time off during working hours, Norway (p < .1), Sweden (p < .1), Russia (p < .05), Denmark (p < .05), Switzerland (p < .05), and South Africa (p < .1) showed positive and statistically significant relationship with job satisfaction. On autonomy regarding organization of work, only United States (p < .05), Bulgaria (p < .05), France (p < .01), Denmark (p < .05), Switzerland (p < .05), and Taiwan (p < .01) showed positive and statistically significant relationship with job satisfaction. Dominican Republic, however, was found to be the only country with a negative relationship with job satisfaction (p < .05).
Table 3 Regression results by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>All (%)</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy (working hours)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.122</td>
<td>.033***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy (time off)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>.018***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy (organization of work)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td>.029***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience (past)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>.019***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience (current)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td>.024***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job training</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO-exclusivity (job)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>.016***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO-exclusivity (employee)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.619</td>
<td>.022***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>.002**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female = 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>.037**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status (full-time = 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>.044**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory status</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.044</td>
<td>.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td></td>
<td>101.325</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$n$</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *$p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

Both past and current work experiences ($p < .01$) were positively related to job satisfaction in general. Bulgaria and Flanders were the only two countries where past and current work experience, respectively, were negatively associated, although not statistically significant. Unlike the respondents from other countries, the respondents in Australia ($p < .01$), Sweden ($p < .01$), Canada ($p < .05$), Latvia ($p < .1$), France ($p < .01$), Switzerland ($p < .1$), Taiwan ($p < .01$), and Dominican Republic ($p < .05$) regarded past work experience as a significant predictor of job satisfaction, while the respondents in United States ($p < .01$), Norway ($p < .05$), Bulgaria ($p < .01$), Russia ($p < .01$), Israel ($p < .05$), Denmark ($p < .05$), Switzerland ($p < .01$), and South Africa ($p < .01$) regarded current work experience as positive and significant variables affecting their job satisfaction.

HRD was not a statistically significant predictor of job satisfaction in general. Comparative influence of the study variable, however, was different among the countries. For example, the respondents in Israel ($p < .05$), Latvia ($p < .1$), and South Africa ($p < .1$) regarded HRD as a positive and significant variable.
affecting job satisfaction. Of the six countries that regarded HRD as a negative influence on job satisfaction, only the United States was found to be a statistically significant influence ($p < .1$).

Person-organization exclusivity in general has shown mixed results. For example, while the exclusivity of the organization to the employee was positively related to job satisfaction ($p < .01$), the exclusivity of the employee to the organization was neither statistically significant nor positive. Of those countries that showed positive relationship between exclusivity of the organization and job satisfaction, the respondents in Ireland ($p < .1$), Sweden ($p < .05$), Denmark ($p < .01$), and Mexico ($p < .05$) regarded the exclusivity of the organization as positive indicator of job satisfaction. The respondents in South Africa ($p < .05$), however, regarded the exclusivity of organization as a negative predictor of job satisfaction. In terms of person-organization exclusivity on the employees, the respondents in Australia ($p < .1$), Ireland ($p < .1$), Israel ($p < .05$) regarded exclusivity of the employee as a negative predictor of job satisfaction, while those in Denmark ($p < .1$) and Switzerland ($p < .1$) regarded it as a positive influence.

Organizational commitment was generally a positive and a significant indicator of job satisfaction ($p < .01$). The respondents in every country regarded it as a positive and statistically significant indicator of job satisfaction. Among the control variables, age ($p < .05$) and gender ($p < .05$) were positively related to job satisfaction, while employment status ($p < .05$) was found to be a negative influence. This indicated that while the older and/or female respondents were more likely to express high level of job satisfaction, those working in full-time basis were less likely to express high level of job satisfaction compared to those in part-time basis. Educational level and supervisory status were not significant indicators of job satisfaction.

A comparative analysis of the different groups of antecedents found that some antecedents play a more salient influence than others. For example, in general, organizational commitment was found to explain the most variance in the respondents’ job satisfaction, followed by current work experience, past work experience, autonomy (time-off during working hours), and autonomy (organization of daily work). The salience of organizational commitment was consistent across the 18 countries.

In summary, the results of the regression analyses of the models in general support several hypotheses regarding the positive associations of autonomy (H1b, H1c), work experience (H2a, H2b), person-organization exclusivity (H5a), and organizational commitment (H6) with job satisfaction among the public sector employees.

Discussion
This study revealed similarities and differences in the factors affecting job satisfaction among the public sector employees in the 18 countries. Regarding autonomy, as evidenced in Table 3, there were several variations in how different dimensions of autonomy are associated with job satisfaction both within and among the countries. For example, in general, autonomy was a significant antecedent of job satisfaction, but the more autonomy the respondents had on deciding the times one would start and finish work was negatively associated with job satisfaction. This result is not surprising as, in certain cultures, it is the organizational norm to be constantly exposed and interacting with supervisors and management staff with the belief that important projects can be rightfully bestowed upon them only if they are around. In certain Asian countries, it takes the guts and risk to leave for the day when their supervisors are still working. In the same fashion, employees whose working hours are not monitored by the management may develop a sense of being unwanted by their organizations and feel “left out” of important responsibilities. For example, in the case of higher education, Bozeman and Gaughan (2011), their research showed that faculty members who have a larger number of research collaborators...
tended to have higher job satisfaction. From the perspective of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory, degree and frequency of interaction between the leader and the member can elevate the employee’s perceived compatibility or comfort with an organization (Mitchell, Holton, & Lee, 2001). Results from Table 3, however, show that the negative effects of autonomy on working hours were relatively more salient in France, Mexico, Taiwan, and South Africa, which may suggest that other factors beyond cultural factors must also be taken into account in future research.

This research also introduces new findings in how work experience affects one’s job satisfaction. The study shows that the more the usage of their past work skills in their current job, the higher the level of job satisfaction. This is a new contribution to the literature that focused exclusively on whether one had a similar work experience and the number of years in the previous job. In fact, work experience was the second most powerful antecedent, after organizational commitment, of job satisfaction in this study. Another interesting finding in this study is that majority of the respondents regarded current work experience as a more significant indicator of job satisfaction than past work experience. This suggests that although how past work experience relates to current jobs was important from the perspective of both the employees and the employers, potential for future prospects from their current job was even more important. The study also revealed that countries were almost equally divided between past and current work experience. For example, while the respondents in Australia, Sweden, Canada, Latvia, France, Taiwan, and Dominican Republican regarded past work experience as statistically significant rather than current work experience, the significance was shown in reverse as the respondents in the remaining countries such as United States, Norway, Bulgaria, Russia, Israel, Denmark, and South Africa regarded current work experience as more important.

As evidenced in this study, job training was not, overall, a significant indicator of job satisfaction. This lack of support for the hypothesis overall despite the strong indication given by the literature on its positive impact on individual and organizational performance management, is a testament to how complex the nature personnel management practices in general and in the public sector more specifically. For example, public sector employees are traditionally required to complete a multitude of basic service training that is neither deemed necessary by the employees nor specifically designed to enhance one’s job skills. In addition, it is possible that while current work experience is regarded as a significant antecedent of job satisfaction, the type of job training that public sector employees has may not equip them to be competitive when the future employment opportunity comes. Another potential explanation may be that public sector employees are getting too many job training. If job training schedule is in conflict with the employees’ main tasks, for example, in meeting the deadlines and therefore interferes with their main performance criteria, their level of dissatisfaction may be elevated. Of those countries that showed negative association between job training and job satisfaction, the relationship was statistically significant only in the United States. The respondents who regarded job training as favorable condition for job satisfaction included were from Israel, Latvia, and South Africa. Moreover, the negative relationship between job training and job satisfaction may stem from the notion that too many job trainings can limit the number of interactions between the employees and the supervisors, which can result in reduced workload not to mention not being invited to join on important tasks. This is similar to the respondents whose autonomy on working hours was inversely associated with job satisfaction. By examining the exclusivity of the job training combined with the type of training, future research may help us understand the conditions under which job training can be instrumental in raising employee job satisfaction.
As Kristof (1996) noted, the exact nature of this compatibility is not easy to describe. The current study has shown that while the difficulty of finding a job at least as good as the current one can affect his or her pride in being affiliated with the organization and therefore increase their job satisfaction, being irreplaceable was not a significant factor of job satisfaction. This partially contradicts previous research (Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011), for example, where tenured faculty members enjoyed a significantly higher level of job satisfaction than those not tenured but on tenure track.

Overall, the cross-country analysis displayed several prominent features in terms of how the job satisfaction of the respondents varied depending on the specific antecedent that was accounted for, with the exception of organizational commitment, which has consistently explained the most variance in job satisfaction in all countries. For example, autonomy regarding the organization of work was a positive and significant only six countries, including the United States, Bulgaria, France, Denmark, Switzerland, and Taiwan, while the relationship was completely reversed in Dominican Republic, with the remaining 11 countries not showing significant association. Also, contrary to the popular belief that flexibility of controlling working hours by the employees, majority of the respondents regarded it as a factor that would lower job satisfaction, including those in the United States. In addition, the different dimensions of autonomy almost played a different role depending on the country. For example, while autonomy on the organization of work was a positive and significant factor in United States, Bulgaria, France, and Taiwan, autonomy regarding the control of hours was either non-significant or reversed in relationship with job satisfaction. Also worth mentioning is that no factors, other than the organizational commitment, seem to be associated with job satisfaction in New Zealand, Portugal, and Flanders. Rather, it was age that played a more important role than others in New Zealand and Flanders. These results also reflect that cultural factors may play a more important part and affect the attitudes of the individuals and the characteristics of the organizations.

Conclusion
We recognize limitations relative to our data. First, the measures used here are perceptual rather than objective due to the use of pre-existing dataset. The measurement of the study variables, particularly job satisfaction, human resource development, and organizational commitment, is constrained by the limited items used in the survey. Single-item measurement scales, such as job satisfaction, work experience, autonomy, human resource development, and person-organization exclusivity could be problematic and could be more rigorous as a single item can often hinder the evaluation of internal consistency. Therefore, the variance due to the specific wording of the item cannot be averaged out (Sousa-Poza & Sousa-Poza, 2000). Second, this study is based on limited survey data collected in 2005 and, therefore, conclusions about causation cannot be made. A more complete analysis would require additional data on those working in the public sector. However, the study was founded upon a large body of suggestive empirical findings, which give more confidence that the causal linkages are correctly specified. Nevertheless, experimental and longitudinal research is necessary to establish causation. Also, more objective measure that distinguishes extrinsic from intrinsic job satisfaction (McCormick & Illgen, 1985) could be used. Third, despite the diversity of the sample, which is composed of people of different occupations within the public sector from various educational and training backgrounds around the world, the data were, nevertheless, collected through self-report measures, raising the possibility that common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) may have affected the results. However, Spector (2006) argues that problems associated with common method variance are largely overstated. As noted previously, the
reliability of some of the new and established measures used here fell slightly below commonly accepted levels for well-established instruments (Nunnally, 1978). However, overall patterns of results were consistent across survey administrations, suggesting that the reliabilities were not highly problematic (Adkins, 1995).

Despite these limitations, this research supports the descriptive literature and empirical studies that look at job satisfaction, workplace autonomy, work experience, organizational commitment, human resource development, and person-organization exclusivity. In particular, this study affirms the prior efforts of prior workplace autonomy research on distinguishing three types of job autonomy: control of working hours, difficulty of taking time off during work hours, and organization/scheduling of work (Griffin, Patterson, & West, 2001; Janz, Colquitt, & Noe, 1997). Another contribution comes from the relationship between work experience and job satisfaction. Moving beyond the traditional literature on work experience where previous research focused on the potential linkage between the number of years in previous jobs and performance in the current job, the current study was able to shed a new light in which the usage of work skills and knowledge acquired through the previous job is positively related to job satisfaction in the current job. In addition, as shown in Table 3, by understanding the respondents' attitude toward their current work experience and its potential for future job hunting, it sends a practical message to the practitioners that progressiveness of the work contents is an important aspect of personnel management practice that should not be taken lightly. As evidenced in this study, employers need to be careful in the design of job training in their human resource development practices. Future studies can further explore the scope and nature of the job training and its influence on job satisfaction using a cross-national perspective.

In conclusion, we recognize that advances in technology and the advent of a global economy are bringing the people of the world closer together than ever before. Given this fact, businesses, educational systems and other entities are investigating ways to better serve their constituents. This includes being able to attract and retain the best and most qualified workers. Organizations that can develop and employ the necessary policies and procedures to do this will maintain a competitive advantage among their counterparts and increase their effectiveness. This is a common practice in the private sector. Although such a private sector competitive model may not squarely fit the public sector, given the lack of profit motive, the public sector organizations must compete at the same time to recruit and retain the best talent if they hope to achieve their bottom line and their statutory missions. For any government, especially in the United States, to continue to be effective and motivate citizens to contribute to building these institutions, the leaders must recognize and capitalize upon the diversity of the nation. For the public sector employers to have a sustainability plan for the growth of their human capital in the long run, understanding the preferences, background, and motivation of the employees is crucial for their success. Although organizational commitment has been a consistent predictor of job satisfaction among the 18 countries studied in this study, results showed inconsistent and mixed results from a comparative perspective. For example, while the respondents in Israel, Latvia, and South Africa regarded human resource development as a significant antecedent of job satisfaction, the response was completely reversed in the United States. Although we recognize the limitations that come from using a single-item for the HRD construct, we recognize the importance of understanding how job training can be both effective and ineffective between the countries. Although the previous research in human resource management in general suggests that learning new skills as part of the job training benefits both the employees and the
organization, how that translates into keeping the employees satisfied and be productive in the workplace in the public sector where the primary focus is on dealing with and managing people is still not clear and warrants further research. As also evidenced in this study, the usage of past work skills in the current job as well as the potential utility of current work experience for future jobs were significant indicators of job satisfaction. These findings may also suggest that rather than the management determining the nature and type of job training, autonomy in terms of what job training the employees desire may play an important part in maximizing the potential effectiveness of human resource development practices.

The findings from work autonomy, experience, and the exclusivity of the employee and the organization all suggest that there are many variations as to how employees around the world respond to institutional characteristics and practices differently. By understanding the attributes of employees in this study, each country may be able to benefit from learning about different key variables under different culture. We believe having an understanding of these different practices at an international level will help the public sector organizations into effective delivery of essential services to communities with diverse needs. We provide our initial findings in this study to provide a “Kodak moment” that describes the general views and fits of the workforce in the public sector in 18 countries. In order to conduct a more rigorous comparative study on job satisfaction in the public sector among the various countries, scholars should consider more survey research for long-term studies and develop additional measurement tools relate to job satisfaction. More studies on job satisfaction should be conducted at the global level to understand how the social as well as human capital factors around the world affect public service workers differently.

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