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## A Public Servant: To Be or Not to Be. The Determinants of Employment Decisions Among the Russian MPA Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study concerns the determinants of Russian MPA students' work preference. The authors explore the relationship between the image of a civil servant, the pre-employment work expectations, and the MPA students' intentions to work for government. The data are collected from four Russian universities by surveying 203 MPA students. The authors factor analyzed the descriptors of the civil servant image and the work expectations and applied logistic regression analysis to predict the probability of the MPA students' choice of public employment.

### KEYWORDS

Choice of government employment; determinants of government employment; image of a civil servant; MPA students' choices; pre-employment work expectations

### Introduction

The need for properly educated public servants in the Russian government is enormous. About 20 years ago, the concentration in public administration (PA) at Russian universities did not exist. Today the situation has changed. The largest universities in Russia have established and accredited bachelor and master programs in PA. The enrollment in PA programs is on the rise, and Russian government started employing PA graduates. Yet, the willingness of the graduate students from PA programs to choose employment in government is uncertain. In comparison with the volume of public service motivation (PSM) studies of government employees, the studies of the employment choices of master of public administration (MPA) students are rare. In Russia, particularly, only one study on this topic has been published recently (Nezhina & Barabashev, 2017).

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, most Russian universities have undergone significant change in teaching philosophy and educational content through university and curriculum redesign. The call for curriculum change has come primarily from the emerging market institutions and New Governance paradigm. Russia needed specialists for managing growing market economy and trained government professionals to work with new and old government constituencies. The first PA programs started appearing in 1993 at the largest Russian universities.

When high schoolers become university students, they often have a bleak idea of their future profession.

The master-level students are somewhat different. During two years in the MPA program, students learn about their future profession. In this study, the authors consider the antecedents of the choice of profession by MPA students in Russia. The focus is on the influence of the professional image of government employees and the individual pre-employment job expectations on the intention of Russian MPA students to choose government employment upon graduation.

International research literature on the match of MPA degree and career choice is still limited. Recent studies in China, Egypt, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and USA (Barsoum, 2016; Infeld, Adams, Qi, & Rosnah, 2010; Jang & Maghelal, 2016; Lee & Choi, 2016; Liu, Tang, & Zhu, 2008; Piatak, 2016; Redman-Simmons, 2008; Van der Wal, 2015) determined that culture, job security, carrier aspirations, and PSM determine the choice of public employment of MPA students internationally. For Russia and a number of transition countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the antecedents of government employment by MPA students are unknown. Political attitudes to government and the perceived value of government work in these countries have been changing during the transition from socialist to capitalist system from 1980 to 2017. Russian students typically have a limited experience working for government. Only few MPA students have experience in government office; most receive it through internships. Russian MPA students learn about government work from professors, class reading materials, from mass media, and from family and

friends. Lately, the Russian TV news started providing positive information on government achievements, which contrasts to the mostly negative picturing of government work about a decade ago. The authors assume that government image and reputation and its perceived *modus operandi* influence the students' desire to work in government office. This proposition has not been tested so far. This study is designed to empirically test the relationship between the perception of government reputation, the expectations from government employment, and the willingness of MPA graduates to work in the public office.

To determine whether the association exists between the favorable perception of government image, government internal operations, and the desire to work in government is beneficial to MPA programs, university career planning services, recruitment agencies, and government recruiters. University professors of PA might apply the results of this study to design MPA curriculum, to educate students about the future profession and the honorable public servants responsibilities. University career planning offices will benefit by receiving valuable information about proper match between the university major and prospective employment and might apply the analytical instrument from this study to measure the relationship between the two. Recruitment agencies will benefit from knowing the drivers of MPA students' intentions to work for government and with this information will make better selection decisions. The results of these studies will be of great interest to government agencies and will help initiate the selective recruitment of MPA students with enthusiasm and realistic expectations about government employment. The study contributes to the literature through the elaboration of the theory of government employment predictors. This study expands the knowledge of MPA students' perception of government and the choices they make. The results will help better understand the MPA students' choice of employment after graduation and are useful to multiple stakeholders.

## Background

Historically, from the early sixteenth century, Russian government has been structured and organized as a bureaucratic and highly centralized office. The internal politics of government offices were command-based and non-participatory (Makarenko, 1997; Nureev, 2005; Obolonsky, 1997). The traditional chain-of-command management in government limited innovation and promoted uncritical subordination. Today, after two revolutions, the socialist in 1917 and the capitalist in 1991, the organizational culture in modern Russia is still characterized by strict hierarchy and limited space for personal initiative (Jakobson, 2001; Obolonsky, 2005; Ozerney &

Samsonova, 1992; Yarskaya, 2003). Considering the history of Russian bureaucracy and modern internal bureaucratic politics, government jobs in Russia might seem unattractive for young MPA graduates. From 1991, for almost 10 years, Russian government institutions were dysfunctional and the decisions of the incumbent president were unpredictable. In 1996, public trust in president Boris Eltsin stood at only 14.1%, and in 1999 fell to a mere 3.2%. The situation started changing with the change of the president. In 2002, after two years in the office, trust in the institution of presidency rose from 3.2% to 57.2%, and in 2006 to 62.1% (Furman & Kaariainen, 2003; Levada Analytical Center 2008). Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the socialist economy, Russian universities started modifying their curricula in the early 1990s to match new government reality and market economy needs. Although technical university changed slightly, the schools of social science and humanities changed significantly. The most prominent change has been the introduction of a business administration (BA) degree in 1993; and few years later, of a PA degree. The Soviet university system before 1993 offered no BA or PA studies. In the Soviet Union, training in management was provided on-the-job for junior managers, and senior managers were trained at highly competitive Higher Party School of Management.

After the Soviet system breakdown in the 1990s, most young people aspired to become millionaires, while few still planned to make careers in government. Very quickly, professors in economics and finance designed new courses for BA departments and translated textbooks from American and European authors. However, few years later a new trajectory with specialization in government management appeared with new title—PA. In 1995, the five-year specialization in PA has been introduced by several universities. In the period from 2010 to 2013, the five-year programs have been transformed in four and two years of education, the bachelor in PA and the master in PA. Because the PA degree was not familiar to young Russians and its promise was unclear at the time of constant government reformation, the educators designed the curriculum to include a mix of regular management courses, economics, and law. Today Russian universities count 20 years of PA training, and the curriculum is still eclectic. It includes studies in economics, management, government, law, English, and history classes. The eclectic PA curriculum helps attract more students to the program, who seek employment in a variety of professions upon graduation. Because of relative newness and eclectic character of the PA curriculum, graduates with the MPA degree find jobs in business,

government, or the nonprofit sectors of economy. The typical Russian bachelor graduate with a PA diploma, instead of looking for a job, enters a masters program, thus prolonging her or his student status under the conditions of uncertain employment in an unstable economy.

Russian sociologists (Roshina & Drugov, 2002) examined the career preference of high-school graduates. Research results suggested that the teenagers' perception of government was negative, that young people had a poor understanding of public office functions, and expressed low trust in government (Roshina & Drugov, 2002). Research findings from sociological field suggest that working for government would be the last choice for young people in Russia. Yet, no research exists about the MPA students' attitudes and perceptions of government jobs.

The present study assumes that MPA students are different from high-school graduates in terms of public values and the perception of government service. The choice of MPA degree suggests the conscientious approach on the part of the applicants. Extensive research of PSM in Western countries has determined that people with an appreciation of public good and desire to help the country are motivated to work in government office (Perry & Wise, 1990). Yet, the literature review suggests that few international and none Russian studies examined the students' perception of government and their intentions to work for public office. Yet, this knowledge may be very useful to university educators, career counselors, government human resource managers, and recruitment offices.

This study consists of five parts. The first part describes the historical and contextual background of the study site; the second part presents findings from the literature that helps build the theoretical framework and derive relevant hypotheses. The third part describes research design and methods of data collection. The fourth part presents the data analysis and results. The fifth part is devoted to discussion and implications of the findings and follows up with the conclusions.

## Literature review and hypotheses

This study is designed with regard to two theoretical frameworks derived from the corporate image theory and the work contract theory. In absence of the government image theory, the study applies the convention from the corporate image theory to extrapolate the main idea that a positive image of a corporation attracts clients and new recruits, to develop the proposition that a positive image of a government agency attracts supporters and young recruits (Weiwei, 2007). The work

expectation proposition is grounded in the employment contract theory (Simon, 1951) and the work perception alignment proposition, which holds that government work expectations are based on incomplete information in the absence of accurate work previews.

## Governemnt image theories

This study uses the term "government image" to reflect the pre-employment image of a government worker among the MPA students in Russia. Government reputation and image have only recently become the study subjects. Although image and reputation describe different psychological phenomena, they share similar connotations: image depends on reputation, while reputation closely relates to image. Therefore, we pay attention to the literature that describes both *image* and *reputation* of government. Carpenter and Krause (2012) examine the stylized facts that help understand how government reputation is formed. They start from the definition of organizational reputation as a set of beliefs about an organization's capacities, intentions, history and mission, and proceed to the discussion of particular difficulties in developing a favorable reputation for bureaucratic agencies. The authors argue that the management of a government's image is necessary in the face of hostile external environment (Akimova, 2011; Carpenter & Krause, 2012; Hood, 2011; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot, 2012). Recently, a group of scholars started empirically testing the factors that affect government organizational image. Vigoda-Gadot, Vinarski-Peretz, and Ben-Zion (2003) argued that the stakeholders' perception of internal organizational politics impact government reputation, which, in turn, transforms into the public image of a government organization. Decision-making theories (Nebenzahl, 2001; Simon, 1951, 1978) suggest that people often make decisions and choices based on a set of perceptions rather than on factual information. Nebenzahl (2001) studies country image and argues that image is a mental picture, "...what counts is not reality, what counts is what the consumer has in its brain, not the facts..." (p. 767). The above studies suggest that the inexperienced work seekers would rely on perception rather than factual information about the future work agency.

In Russia, the image of government is contradictory in the eyes of various stakeholders. Burganova and Bataikina (2008) empirically study the image of public employees in Russia by analyzing the publications in the leading federal and regional newspapers. They find a predominantly neutral-negative image of government employees. Studies in sociology, acmeology, and social work discuss the formation of a negative image of Russian public servants, low level of trust, and the perception of self-serving goals of government employees (Gorshkov, 2006; Tavokin, 2010).

Other studies present the strategies to improve the falling image of a Russian public servant (Biryukova & Lebedinova, 2010). However, while new studies by Ogneva and Dorokhova (2014), Shleverda (2015) and Portnyagina and Fortunyak (2005) discuss low trust in government by the Russian public, other studies paint a different picture. Akimova (2011) argues that the psychological analysis of the public employees' responses reveals that their attitudes to work are characterized by a high level of responsiveness, the sense of duty, human decency, public goals orientation, and adherence to rules and norms of public organizations. She concludes that government employees have a favorable image of their own profession, while the external constituencies often view government as self-absorbed bureaucrats. Akimova also suggests that any image is characterized by subjectivity, emotional attitudes, and instability (2011). Depending on the personal experience, some stakeholders perceive government image favorably, while others see the dark side of the image. External and internal politics also influence the reputation of a government. In the 1996–1999s, the perception of the president and government was extremely negative, while in 2002 and 2008 the public opinion shifted to a positive perception. Russian sociologists argued that mass media successfully promoted a positive image of a new president who came to power in 2000 by contrasting the new president to the previous unpopular president (Arzhayev, 2008). The present study takes interest in how MPA students perceive the image of government in Russia and what they expect from government work, and test the connection of these two variables to their decision to choose or not to choose working for government.

Although several studies examine organizational norms, commitment, identity, and public mission of bureaucracies in the West (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Romzek, 1990), the academic writing on the public office reputation is “in its relative infancy” (Carpenter & Krause, 2012, 2). Carpenter (2010) defines organizational reputation as a complex concept that comprises the views about an organization's capacities and mission in the eyes of multiple audiences. One important audience for this study is the student population of university MPA departments, for whom government image and work perception determine the choice of employment. In everyday life, young people develop the image of government on the basis of the impression from the service quality and the attitudes of front line bureaucrats. Research also shows that family and friends influence the students' thinking of public employment.

Currently, in Western countries, the professional image of a government worker was tarnished by the anti-government political attacks from the times of the Reagan presidency and the rhetoric of vice president

Gore under the Clinton presidency (Dreier, 2011; Garrett, Thurber, Fritschler, & Rosenbloom, 2006). Government capacity to fulfil its work efficiently has been questioned by the reinventing government movement in the 1990s and the New Public Management anti-bureaucracy spirit (Nathan, 1995). The image of a government worker in the West is losing its attractiveness because government today is associated with inefficiency and “red tape.” Similarly, in modern Russia, government has suffered multiple ideological attacks as totalitarian, bureaucratic, inefficient, and ineffective during the times of reformation in the 1990s and 2000s (Brym & Gimpelson, 2004; Obolonsky, 2005). Global anti-government sentiments have not improved the government image in the eyes of the Russian public and the MPA students.

The ongoing political transformation in Russia is another contingency that negatively influences government reputation and image. Since the beginning of the Soviet Union disintegration in 1991, the Russian government has been in the state of continuous reform. Unsustainable reformation damaged the image and the prestige of government office and deteriorated the quality of public service to Russians (Barabashev, 2006; Zaitseva, 2003). Nonetheless, the universities experience growing enrollment of PA students in Russian universities (Mitrosheikov, 2004). This inconsistent dynamics raises questions about the antecedents of students' choices of MPA programs and government jobs.

### **Government work expectations**

The general theory of employment relationships (Simon, 1951) explains the interaction between an employer and a worker by mutual interest to establish rational employment contract. Both sides have expectations and limitations, and therefore, they continuously seek for a balance of interests. When students as future employees select a new job, they evaluate their experiences in relation to what they expect the job would be like and what they think the job would provide (Sutton & Griffin, 2004). Several authors investigated the beliefs about what the job will be like in terms of expectations (Wanous & Collella, 1989).

Similarly to business firms, the employment for government is also regulated by a contract (Simon, 1951). Often, a government contract for newbies is non-negotiable. However, new MPA graduates develop government work expectations and make decisions about employment without having insider knowledge. Typically, the MPA students have certain pre-employment work perceptions and psychological contract expectations. The job choice theory and subjective theory predict that people choose the employment that

promises positive economic and psychological outcomes, *a.k.a.* acceptable salary and personality match (Behling, Labovitz, & Gainer, 1968). A job expectation describes the individual perception of work conditions and a future state of affairs within a profession (Olson, Roese, & Zanna, 1996). Favorable individualized job expectation is a determinant of applicants' desire to enter a given employment contract (Barsoum, 2016; Jang & Maghelal, 2016). When MPA students expect that government jobs offer acceptable work conditions, and the opportunity to self-actualize, they are likely to choose working for government (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010; Rynes, 1993). Simultaneously, when MPA graduates perceive insufficient pay for the entry-level position in government and limited self-actualization opportunities, they may turn to alternative employment opportunities. This study focuses mostly on job expectations that entail mostly psychological conditions within a potential work contract. McFarlane and Tetrick (1994) argue that psychological contracts reduce work uncertainty, direct employee behavior without surveillance, and give employees a sense of predictability.

The literature review helped identify two potential determinants of the choice of government agency employment: positive image of government as an employer and favorable psychological expectations from government employment. By considering the motivational value of the professional reputation and image, and the pre-employment expectations or psychological contract, the authors formulate the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1[H1]:** *Those MPA students who hold positive government image are more likely to express intention to work in government upon graduation.*

**Hypothesis 2[H2]:** *Those MPA students who expect to find public service opportunities and favorable working conditions in government are more likely to express intention to work in government upon graduation.*

This study tests the association between the students' perception of government image, the expectation of government job opportunities, and the intended choice of government profession by MPA students.

## Methods and data

To investigate the association between the image of government employees, favorable work expectations, and the intention to work for government, the authors administered a survey among first- and second-year MPA students at four large Russian universities. Four

universities were selected by the method of purposive nonrandom sampling: two large universities in Moscow, one large university in Tyumen, and one university in St. Petersburg. Because in Russia the subject of PA is comparatively new, the most prestigious Russian universities were first to establish a bachelor in the PA program and the MPA program in their curriculum, while many other universities still have no PA studies. The survey participants were the master-level university students from the prominent universities in Russia with recognized MPA programs. The large cities were selected because of employment opportunities in private and public sectors, therefore avoiding the employment bias of smaller cities, where government is often a primary employer. The education opportunities in three cities are comparable. All cities in the sample have large state and private universities and smaller professional colleges. All cities attract a diverse population of students from Russian regions. This study considers the predictors of employment choices of PA students in the context of unrestricted educational and employment opportunities.

In 2015, the authors contacted the administration and the faculty of four selected universities with requests to survey the first- and second-year MPA students. The survey provided students the assurance of voluntary participation, anonymity, and personal protection. The survey produced completed questionnaires from all four universities with the following completion rate: the university in St. Petersburg, with a smaller MPA program submitted 28 completed questionnaires (57% response rate). Tyumen university submitted 48 questionnaires with a response rate of 76%. In Moscow, the MPA students from one large university produced 85 completed surveys with the response rate of 75%. Another Moscow university submitted 42 completed questionnaires, which accounted for a 68% response rate. University professors and administrators helped survey the MPA students after the lectures, when the majority of students were still in the classrooms. The in-class survey has benefits of increased response rate, while the limitation is that a certain number of participants could have produced "desirable" answers because of their professors' presence. However, the authors expect that most answers were honest, because the survey did not ask sensitive or confidential information and was anonymous.

The students evaluated the descriptors of the image of government workers and the expected benefits from government employment. To pre-test the relevance of image and the work expectation questions, the authors asked MPA professors to evaluate the questions, and tested the questionnaire with a small sample of students

for clarity and proper understanding. The pilot test allowed clarifying some definitions and confirmed that most of the selected variables were properly understood. The questions concerning the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the respondents were included in the survey as control variables.

The authors conceptualized the term *government image* as the *image of a government employee* because young people primarily get the impression of government through the interaction with the street-level bureaucrats and from working on government internships. The term *work expectations* is conceptualized as the perception by the external audience of the self-actualization opportunities within the public office. The self-actualization is conceptualized as the opportunity to receive good salary, to build careers alongside with the opportunity to serve the public and the country. Table 1 presents 13 characteristics of a hypothetical government employee that were offered to participants for ranking. Further, students were asked to rank nine descriptors of work expectations and opportunities. For both variables students marked responses in the range from 1 to 4 from “completely disagree—1” to “fully agree—4” for image descriptors, and from “most unlikely—1” to “most likely—4” for opportunities and expectations. The description and operationalization of dependent and predictor variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 presents the variables that were selected to test the hypotheses of the effects of image and job expectations on the intention to work in government upon graduation. The dependent variable is labeled *WG* (*work in government*) as the outcome of interest for this study. Government employee characteristics and work expectations were determined by expert interviews. The experts who study government and human resource management (HR) were selected from research institutes in Moscow. These experts interact with bureaucrats to perform studies in HR. Four public service and three HR experts responded to several questions concerning government employees’ image and their work including “how would you characterize a government employee?” and “what do the

recruits for government work expect from the job?” The information from the experts helped build the questionnaire.

The data were collected with the formalized questionnaire from 203 MPA students in Russian universities. The measurements for a DV and 22 IVs described the choice of employment, the government image characteristics, and the work expectations. To test the hypotheses, the authors applied the following analytical techniques. First, the image variables and all expectations variables were tested for internal reliability with the Cronbach  $\alpha$  test. Second, the factor analyses were performed for both groups of independent variables to reduce the number of variables and to determine the latent unobserved factors; the imputed factor scores were saved for further inferential analyses. Third, two logistic regressions were built with the *WG* as dependent variable and the imputed factor scores for the *image of government* and for the *work expectations* as independent variables. The next part presents the detailed description of the results of statistical analyses.

## Results

The data were collected from MPA students at four large universities in Russia. The responses were inspected to detect spoiled or incomplete questionnaires. Three questionnaires were withdrawn from the analysis as incomplete (with less than 50% of completed answers). The other 203 questionnaires were analyzed with the SPSS 22 statistical package to test the research hypotheses.

The demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the respondents follow. The majority of respondents are females (54%; male 46%), who characterize themselves as good students (64.6%), about half of them define themselves as religious, with more than half having fathers working in the private sector (63%), while mothers dominate in the public sector (54%). The respondents are predominantly from an upper middle-class background (61.1%), with the majority intending to work in government upon the

**Table 1.** Dependent and independent variables.

Dependent variable (DV): <i>WG</i> — <i>work in government</i> is binomial	DV: 0— <i>want other work</i> 1— <i>want work in government</i>
Independent variables (IVs) Group I— <i>Image</i> Operationalized as characteristics of government employees. Ordinal, from 1—fully disagree to 4—completely agree	IVs—competent, careerist, hardworking, accurate, polite, creative, socially active, strong common sense, a woman, a bureaucrat, an idealist, a patriot, an effective manager
Independent variables (IVs) Group II <i>Expectations</i> Expectations from government work. Ordinal, from 1—most unlikely to 4—most likely	IVs—good salary, interesting work, achieve high rank position, be useful to people, improve life in the country, grow professionally, influence important government decisions, establish useful connections.

completion of the MPA program (56.2%). Further, the study discusses the results of factor analyses for all IVs, and the logistic regressions for the DV-*IntentGW*, two groups of independent variables from Table 1, and the control variables such as gender, religiosity, parents' professions, and family income.

To start, the authors checked two groups of independent variables *Image* and *Expectations* for internal reliability. Both groups of variables turned out to have a high internal reliability index with *Image* having standardized Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.804$ , and with *Expectations* having standardized Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.882$ . After having established the level of internal reliability for two groups of IVs, the authors proceeded to analyze the data to determine the latent unobservable factors that describe the variables highly correlated with other IVs in each group. The goal of the principal component analysis and the factor analyses was (1) to reduce the number of variables in each group to determine the latent factors that combined the characteristics of each correlated variable, (2) to save the factor scores for further use as independent interval variables in the forthcoming logistic regressions, and (3) to avoid the multicollinearity problem. Table 2 presents the results of factor analysis for each group of variables independently.

The factor analysis in Table 2 is performed by the method of principal component and factor analysis with Varimax rotation. Results in Table 2 show four latent factors. The iterations have distributed 13 variables into four meaningful latent factors by the strength of correlation among the variables. The analysis of the variables in each individual factor permits to detect logical commonalities. The first factor describes *good employee* (IV-1), the second factor describes *effective manager* (IV-2), and the third factor describes the *patriot* (IV-3). All three factors describe a positive connotation of the image of government workers. Yet, the fourth factor combines two seemingly unrelated variables, which are hard to interpret in combination. Presumably, the fourth factor united certain undesirable

**Table 2.** The rotated matrix of the components for government *Image*.

	Components			
	1	2	3	4
Courteous person	.744			
Creative person	.733			
Active person	.708			
Person with common sense	.705	.479		
Effective manager	.402	.482	.479	
Hardworking		.814		
Competent		.753		
Accurate		.715		
Patriot			.733	
Idealist			.696	
Career-oriented			.529	
A woman				.766
A bureaucrat				.692

features to be a bureaucrat and a woman at the same time. The new study is needed to help determine the perceptions of women in government. The last factor was labeled as a *Bureaucrat* (IV-4).

Further, the authors design predictive modeling through the use of logistic regression, where DV is *working for government*—*WG* and predictor variables—IVs—are the four latent factors determined by the process of factor analysis and represented by calculated factor scores. Next, the logistic regression is run with the binary variable *WG* and four factor scores (the interval variables). The results of logistic regression are presented in Table 3.

A logistic regression is performed to ascertain the effects of the variables *Good employee*, *Effective manager*, *Patriot*, and *Bureaucrat* on the likelihood that the students choose *WG*. The logistic regression model is statistically significant,  $\chi^2(4) = 14.965$ ,  $p < .005$ . In Table 3, the model correctly classifies 65.9% of cases. Sensitivity is 82.5%, specificity is 43.8%, positive predictive value is 66.1%, and negative predictive value is 65.3%. Of the four predictors, three are statistically significant: *Effective manager* ( $p = .028$ ), *Patriot* ( $p = .045$ ), and *Bureaucrat* ( $p = .029$ ). Students who attributed a government worker the image of *Effective manager* had approximately 1.43 times (or 43%) higher odds to choose *WG* than those who did not. Students who attributed the image of *Patriot* to a government worker had 1.39 times (or 39%) higher odds to choose *WG* than those who did not. Finally, the model calculated the value of Exp (B) of the variable *Bureaucrat* as 0.695, which is less than 1.000, which indicates a statistically significant inverted relationship between the IV (*Bureaucrat*) and the DV (*WG*), which means that the *WG* odds ratio decreases for an increase in one unit of the *Bureaucrat* (indicated by negative  $\beta$ ). For clarity, the odds ratio for the IV *Bureaucrat* (coefficient  $-.364$ ) is inverted ( $1/0.695 = 1.44$ ). The result allows us to conclude that with the increase of *Bureaucrat* by one unit, the likelihood of *WG* decreases by a factor 1.44 (or 44%). One unit increase of the likelihood of attributing positive connotations to the IV *Image* of a government worker is associated with a 43% increase of the probability to choose *WG* by the respondents. The opposite is also correct: those students, who chose the *Bureaucrat image* (a negative connotation) characteristic of a government worker, were less likely to choose government jobs. The conclusion is that the

**Table 3.** The effects of *image* variables on the *WG*.

Factors	B	S.E. $\beta$	Wald	df.	Sig.	Exp ( $\beta$ )
F1 Good employee	.175	.162	1.172	1	.279	1.191
F2 Effective manager	.356	.163	4.804	1	.028**	1.428
F3 Patriot	.331	.165	4.002	1	.045**	1.392
F4 Bureaucrat	-.364	.167	4.746	1	.029**	.695
Constant	.306	.162	3.548	1	.060	1.358

\*\* $p < 0.05$



positive image of government employees increases the odds of Russian MPA students to choose government work upon graduation. This finding supports *Hypothesis 1* that stipulates a positive relationship between the positive *image* of a government worker with the intention to *WG* among the sampled MPA students.

**B.** Factor analysis for the independent variables that denote “expectations” from government work is presented in *Table 4*.

The factor analysis in *Table 4* is performed by the method of principal component and factor analysis with Varimax rotation. The rotated iteration has distributed eight composite *Expectation* variables into two meaningful factors by the level of correlation among the variables. The distribution of the variables between two factors helps detect the commonalities. The first factor describes *public service expectations* (F1), because most variables inside the factor describe favorable expectations such as “interesting work,” “be useful to people,” “improve life in the country,” and “influence important government decisions.” The second factor predominantly describes *self-centered expectations* (F2), such as “good salary,” “high rank position,” and “useful connections.”

Further, the authors design predictive modeling through the use of logistic regression, where DV is *working for government—WG* and predictor variables—IVs—are *public service expectations* (F1) and *self-centered expectations* (F2), the two latent factors defined in the process of factor analysis as discussed in the previous paragraph. Next, the logistic regression is run with the binary variable *WG* and two factor scores (after transformation are the interval variables). The results of the logistic regression are presented in *Table 5*.

The logistic regression is performed to ascertain the effects of the variables *public service expectations* and

*self-centered expectations* on the likelihood that students choose the option *WG*. The regression model is statistically significant,  $\chi^2 = 6.437$ ,  $p < .055$ . The model correctly classified 64.9% of cases. Sensitivity of the model is 92.2%, specificity is 26.4%, positive predictive value is 63.9%, and negative predictive value is 29.6%. Of the two predictors in the model, one was statistically significant: *public service expectations* ( $p = .023$ ), while the other predictor *self-centered expectations* was not statistically significant ( $p = .862$ ). This means that the students who expect that government jobs will allow them to “to be useful to people,” “to improve life in the country,” and “to influence important government decisions” had 1.44 times (or 44%) higher odds to choose *WG*.

In other words, the increasing likelihood of attributing public service expectations to government work is associated with the increasing probability for those students to choose *WG* upon graduation. The opposite is also correct: the choice by the students of *self-centered expectations* from government work was not associated with the choice of government jobs. Perhaps the students expected that these expectations might be futile in government jobs.

The results of the analyses allow concluding that public service expectations of government work positively influence the intention of Russian MPA students to choose government employment upon graduation. This finding supports *Hypothesis 2* that stipulates a positive relationship between the public service expectations of government work and the intention to *WG* among the sampled MPA students.

## Discussion and conclusions

The study confirmed the association between the positive perception of government image and public service work expectations with the intention to work for government among MPA students in Russia. These findings signal to educators that young people learn and internalize the importance of government role in the society and want to contribute to the Russian government goals. Government recruiters can use the method and the instrument from the study to select those MPA graduates whose choices match government mission best. The offices of the president and government

**Table 4.** The rotated matrix of the components for government work *Expectations*.

Expectations	Components	
	1	2
High salary		.692
Interesting work	.689	
High rank position	.439	.679
Be useful to people	.881	
Improve life in the country	.900	
Grow professionally		.583
Influence important govt. decisions	.642	.480
Establish useful connections		.817

**Table 5.** The effects of explanatory variables *Expectations* on the *WG*.

	B	SE B	Wald	d.f.	Sig.	Exp (B)	95% CI for Exp (B)	
							Lower	Upper
F1— <i>public service expectations</i>	.364	.160	5.189	1	.023**	1.439	1.052	1.968
F2— <i>self-centered expectations</i>	.027	.157	.030	1	.862	1.028	.755	1.399
Constant	.366	.157	5.456	1	.020	1.442		

\*\* $p < .05$

learn from this study that publicly spirited graduate students are a good fit for the government jobs.

However, several unexplained findings call for comments. The study found that the combination of *women* and *bureaucrat* is associated with the lack of desire to work for government. This may be explained by the gender-biased division of power and limited career opportunities for women in modern Russia. Women in the Russian government typically perform routine and unheroic work by sitting in the service offices. They are found at every bureaucratic office such as passport registration, utility payment, bookkeeping, and other clerical jobs. The word *bureaucrat* has a negative connotation in Russia similar to procrastination, low visibility, and routine unexciting tasks. Women have low opportunities to advance their careers in government agencies if they have children (Isupova & Utkina, 2016). It seems like the study respondents viewed women in bureaucracy as a less appealing image of government employment. Therefore, those who perceived government work as contaminated by gender issues did not want working in government.

At the beginning of this study, the prospects of finding positive image and favorable work expectations in government among MPA students in Russia were not clear. No research existed in Russia or in other countries on MPA students' perception of government and government work expectations. Media publications on government ineffectiveness, misuse of funds, and corruption scandals suggest that students might be skeptical about government and avoid working for it. Besides, the entry-level government positions in Russia are notorious for low pay and heavy workload. This knowledge might have influenced the responses of young people with the hedonist life expectations. Those young men and women perceived better opportunities to advance careers and receive higher pay on the private sector jobs. MPA students in Russia find jobs in the private sector because the MPA degree is perceived by the employers as a management degree. However, the descriptive analysis suggests that the majority of respondents, more than 50%, from four MPA programs in different Russian universities express the intention to work for government. It seems like the political and social preferences are changing now among the young. Earlier research in sociology and public opinion polls suggested that the critical view of government was prevailing among the Russian public and the young people from 18 to 24 years of age until 2013. Only in 2014–2015, polls started showing the raising approval of the president and the government by Russian public. Russian pollsters determined that in 2015 public approval of the Russian president by the young people from 18 to 24 years of age rose to unprecedented 92%, and the approval of government work reached 64% (WCIOM, 2015). These unusual results suggested that the

political and economic situation influenced the responses of the young. In the period of 2014–2017, Russia started profiling its policies internationally, and since has been under constant attacks by the Western powers for real and fictitious misdeeds. International events of 2013–2017, such as the Winter Olympic Games, the Ukrainian political crises, the Crimea peninsular return to Russia, the expansion of NATO to Russian borders, the sanctions against Russia by NATO powers have stimulated a “rally around the flag” particularly among the young. The level of patriotism and government approval went up among the young people of Russia. The mentioned events and the spillover effect of the presidential popularity on the image of government workforce were revealed by opinion polls.



However, the suggested explanations of the growing popularity of government in Russia are contemplative. Serious explanatory study is needed to make sound conclusions on the antecedents of president and government popularity. The actual study was concerned with testing the association between the positive image of government and job expectations by Russian MPA students and their desire to *WG* agencies.

The study limitations are related to the sampling and data collection methods. The group of respondents was selected from the most advanced and economically developed cities in Russia. Although Moscow and St. Petersburg universities attract students from all regions of the country, yet the selected sample for this study may not be fully representative of all Russian student population. The diversity of economic and political conditions in various regions might produce different effects on the respondents' survey choices.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study are important because they have established (1) the connection between the positive image of government and the desire to get government jobs upon graduation and (2) the connection between favorable public service expectations from government jobs and the desire to work for government among Russian MPA students. Initially, the positive associations were not expected but should not be surprising. What can be more logical for MPA students than selecting employment in a place that has positive image and promises the opportunity to self-actualize for publicly spirited students? Following the findings of PSM studies in the USA and Europe, the study results suggest that Russian MPA students choose *WG* because they are predisposed to serve the public. The study suggests that those students in the sample who have marked the negative image descriptors and unfavorable expectations from government work are not predisposed to choose *WG*. However, this study also found that the majority of MPA students in Russia had no such negative perceptions. The study results call for reviewing

the image of Russian students, who are perceived by older generation and by academics as self-absorbed materialists and hedonists. The results of the quantitative analysis suggest that the majority of Russian MPA students are oriented to public service. They are willing to take upon themselves a difficult government task to serve the people and the country.

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