Unlocking Politicians' Potential: What Fosters Purposeful Use of Performance Information in support of Voice?

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Pivotal for decision making quality in representative governing boards of local authorities is that performance information is used in a purposeful way by its members to challenge the status quo and express constructive changes in support of collective learning (i.e., voice). However, despite the presumed importance of purposeful use of performance information and voice, empirical insights on the relationship between both constructs as well as the motivational mechanisms fostering voice are limited. To address this omission, we build on motivated information processing theory and develop a model that includes a person-based and situation-based pathway. Data from 520 politicians populating the representative governing boards of 242 local authorities in Belgium are used to test the developed model. Results indicate that the studied drivers help explain the detected variance in purposeful use of performance information and voice, but that the role of individual antecedents like public service motivation and open-mindedness is predominant.

Keywords: Performance information use, voice, motivated information processing, politicians

Introduction

Over the last decades public organizations have invested substantial amounts of time and resources in the creation of performance information (PI) (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012b). One of the primary reasons for its proliferation is the widespread belief that providing PI to governing boards and management teams will stimulate organizational goal-based learning through dialogue and debate. Such goal-based learning will allow a better targeting of resources through more informed strategic decisions and give rise to ideas to improve program performance and efficiency (Hatry 2007; Moynihan 2005; Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012a). This belief, however, is built on the idea that for PI to have a positive impact on organisational performance PI has to trigger specific cognitive and behavioural processes amongst decision-making group members. Decision-

making group members need to be motivated to make sense –through a process of goal-based learning– of PI and, as such, create a more accurate interpretation of an organizational situation (Kor and Sundaramurthy 2009). Consequently, they have to use their newly acquired insights to reflect on how organizational processes can be improved (i.e., purposeful use of PI) (Sundaramurthy, Pukthuanthong, and Kor 2014), and share these insights with their group members to generate a shared understanding of organizational issues (Premkumar, Ramamurthy, and Saunders 2005). The decision-making literature refers to the behaviour of sharing insights accrued from PI as "voice" (LePine and Van Dyne 1998). Voice, a desired result of purposeful information processing, is defined as verbally sharing information with others with the intention to profoundly monitor organizational functioning, make innovative suggestions for change and recommend improvements (Detert and Burris 2007; Van Dyne and LePine 1998). Voice, thus, entails 'promotive behavior that emphasizes expression of constructive challenge intended to improve rather than merely criticize [and] making innovative suggestions for change' (Van Dyne and LePine 1998, 109). Voice is an important organizational behaviour as different members of a decision-making group can draw different lessons from the same information. Although often assumed the other way around, PI does not speak for itself but through an interpreter that converts the collection of digits into a persuasive explanation (Behn 2003). Bringing together and expressing different interpretations of different members of a decision-making group can generate deeper insights and enrich decision-making processes.

Despite the presumed importance of purposeful use of PI (Askim 2009; Nielsen and Baekgaard 2013; Nielsen and Moynihan 2017a) and voice for decision-making quality (Moynihan and Pandey 2010), empirical insights on the relationship between both constructs as well as the motivational mechanisms fostering voice are limited. This

shortcoming is even more pressing for decision-making groups within public organizations consisting of politicians (Meyfroodt and Desmidt 2021). We address this research gap by building on De Dreu, Nijstad, and van Knippenberg's (2008) motivated information processing theory, which postulates that individual and situational differences impact the kind of information group members attend to and the extent to which they disseminate information as well as engage in group-level interaction processes. Based on these insights, we developed an integrative model which includes a person-based pathway (i.e., person-based motivational mechanisms having the potential to stimulate cognitive effort and time invested in processing information regardless of [direct] personal gains) and a situation-based pathway (i.e., the motivational impact of a rational decision culture on information processing) (De Dreu, Nijstad, and van Knippenberg 2008) tailored to the contingencies of the public sector and based on prior insights on the drivers of the purposeful use of PI (Kroll 2015). The person-based pathway focuses on public service motivation (PSM) (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012a; Vandenabeele, Ritz, and Neumann 2018) and open-mindedness (Nijstad and De Dreu 2012) while the situation-based pathway zooms in on the transformational orientation of the chief administrative officer (CAO) (Sun and Henderson 2017; Wright and Pandey 2010) and the presence of a rational decision culture (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012b; Moynihan and Pandey 2010).

The developed theoretical model is tested using data from 468 politicians active in the representative governing boards of 225 Flemish local authorities. The findings answer Kroll's (2015) call to help mature insights on PI-use[1] within public organizations by not only examining indirect and contingency effects but also by shifting the attention

[1] From here PI-use refers to the purposeful use of PI.

to individual PI-users and examining how established and promising drivers are related to PI-use. First, the developed model is a multiple mediation model examining the interplay of several variables which allows to gain better insights into the mechanisms behind direct effects necessary to grasp complex social phenomena (Kroll 2015). By focusing on how specific drivers are related to PI-use and on how PI-use is related to voice, the presented model provides insights on how motivational mechanisms can explain the link between PI-use and improved decision-making.

Second, the developed theoretical model is tested using data derived from local politicians active in representative governing boards. Although empirical insights on PI-use by politicians has recently burgeoned (e.g., Desmidt and Meyfroodt 2021b; George et al. 2017; Nielsen and Moynihan 2017a; 2017b), the existing body of literature is still underdeveloped in comparison to the knowledge on PI-use by public managers (Meyfroodt and Desmidt 2021). This lack of insights is troublesome because representative governing boards are often 'collections of actors who are drawn together from different ways of knowing or bases of experience for the purpose of coproducing [public value]' (Feldman et al. 2006, 95). The fact that party affiliated politicians typically have diverging thoughts on how to create public value can impede the 'transformation of diverse views into shared knowledge and understanding' necessary for effective goal-oriented actions (Bryson, Berry, and Yang 2010, 507). Therefore, research focusing on how managerial mechanisms (i.e., PI-use) can foster behaviour (i.e., voice) to assist representative governing boards in collectively understanding and agreeing on what is important, is crucial (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012a).

Third, the developed model sheds light on the motivational mechanisms which could help answering the question why individuals engage in the desired behaviours of PI-use and voice. Based on prior research on the drivers of PI-use, the presented model

focuses on PSM and the role of a supportive leadership/culture (Kroll 2015). By doing so, this study simultaneously analyses the relationship of individuals' attitudes and perceptions of the organizational context with regard to PI-use and voice. Although the performance management literature considers PSM a promising driver of PI-use (Kroll 2015; Kroll and Vogel 2014; Moynihan, Pandey and Wright 2012a; Vandenabeele, Ritz, and Neumann 2018), PSM among politicians has received only scant scholarly attention (Ritz, Brewer, and Neumann 2016; Saliterer and Korac 2014). Additionally, by questioning if a CAO's transformational style is associated with representative governing board members' PI-use, the study contributes to a better understanding of the conditions for effective governance in local authorities characterized by a political board-senior management interface. This is important because local authorities' governing boards (which are in many countries populated by lay, often part-time, politicians [Kleven et al. 2000]) rely on the administrative management to provide PI about the organizational day-to-day activities and establish a supportive organizational culture focused on organizational goal clarity and informed decision-making (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012b).

Theory

Although over the past few decades public organizations have invested an increasing amount of resources into the creation of PI (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012b), the development of PI will not automatically lead to improvements: 'What really matters is whether and how the information is used to make better decisions and to improve public sector management' (Allegrini, Monteduro, and Del Prete 2021, 1). Although PI can be used for a variety of means (i.e., passive, political, and perverse use [Moynihan, Pandey, & Wright 2012a; Moynihan 2009]), PI-use for improvements (via evaluation, controlling,

budgeting, motivating, celebrating, learning, and/or improving [Behn 2003]) has been at the core of performance management research as this type of behaviour has the most potential to contribute to organizational performance (Moynihan 2009; Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012a). Therefore, we specifically focus on the purposeful use of PI[2] (referred to in this study as PI-use), which is defined and described by Kroll (2015, 461-462) as:

'[…] using performance information to improve services through better informed decisions, goal-based learning, or sanctioning and rewarding. Similarly, Van Dooren and colleagues (2010) identify learning (which is mostly concerned with future improvements) as well as steering and controlling (keeping track of present activities) as purposeful functions. Most of Behn's (2003) more disaggregated activities also fall in this category.'

Given that the public management literature views PI-use as an individual discretionary behaviour (Kroll and Vogel 2014; Kroll 2015; Moynihan and Pandey 2010), scholarly attention shifted quickly to the drivers of PI-use (Vogel and Hattke 2018). Kroll's (2015) literature review indicated that PI-use is influenced by environmental (e.g., stakeholder involvement and political competition), organizational (e.g., measurement system maturity and leadership support) and individual factors (e.g., prosocial motivation). The review also indicated that there is strong empirical evidence showing that internal organizational characteristics (e.g., strong leadership support and a supporting culture) matter and that there is a shortage of studies on promising individual

[2] One additional reason for not focusing on passive or perverse means is that these means have a negative connotation, raising concerns for social desirability bias (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012a).

factors such as (prosocial) motivation. Furthermore, Kroll (2015) concluded that more in-depth examinations of the mechanisms behind these relationships are required as well as studies analysing whether these "promising" factors are still significant when variables from the "established" drivers are taken into account. Kroll's (2015) emphasis on the importance of both organizational and individual factors accords with motivated information processing theory which states that individual and situational differences impact the kind of information group members attend to and the extent to which they disseminate information as well as engage in group-level interaction processes (De Dreu, Nijstad, and van Knippenberg 2008). In response to Kroll's (2015) call and based on insights derived from the motivated information processing theory (De Dreu, Nijstad, and van Knippenberg 2008), we developed an integrative model which proposes a set of serial mediations on how a person-based motivational pathway driven by an organizational actor's degree of PSM and a situation-based pathway focusing on leadership support are related to desired discretionary behaviours (i.e., PI-use and voice). Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model.

[Figure 1]

Person-based motivational mechanisms

Both PI-use and voice can be considered prosocial extra-role behaviours because their gains are mainly situated at the group, organizational and societal level (Kroll 2015;Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012a; Van Dyne and LePine 1998). This entails that the opportunities for individual credit claiming are rather limited. Specifically, although the use and processing of PI or the dissemination of insights accrued from PI processing require a great deal of effort and create significant additional work (Kroll 2015), these behaviours are hardly observable and therefore nearly impossible to enforce (Moynihan and Pandey 2010). Following this rationale, Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright

(2012a) argue that prosocial behaviours like PI-use and voice are mainly driven by prosocial motivation. Therefore, PSM, a specific form of prosocial motivation (Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise 2010) centring around high levels of commitment to public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice (Perry 1996; Wright, Moynihan, and Pandey 2012) and encompassing 'the [person-based] desire to benefit other people' (Grant 2008, 49), is expected to act as a driver of PI-use and voice (Vandenabeele, Ritz, and Neumann 2018). Specifically, given the absence of (direct) personal gains related to the cognitive effort and time invested in processing PI and voicing newly obtained insights, politicians with a higher level of PSM are expected to be more willing to go the extra mile, and put extra effort in PI-use and disseminating the insights accrued from PI-use. Such behaviour allows politicians to stay close to the intended role of being a politician and contribute to specific organizational and societal goals (Perry and Hondeghem 2008) by making informed strategic choices and fostering effectiveness (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012a).

Although it is believed that individuals with higher levels of PSM are more willing to engage in PI-use and voice, we argue that the type of relationship between PSM and both prosocial extra-role behaviours differs. We expect that PSM and PI-use are directly related, while PSM and voice are indirectly related whereby in the latter relationship PI-use acts as a mediator. First, the direct relationship between PSM and PI-use: Based on samples of public managers and political representatives, research by Kroll and Vogel (2014), Moynihan and Pandey (2010) and Saliterer and Korac (2014) confirms the assumption that PI-use can be viewed as a form of prosocial extra-role behaviour and is directly impacted by PSM. Second, the indirect relationship between PSM and voice: We argue based on information processing theory (Boivie et al. 2016) that PI-use acts as a mediator because it reflects a targeted search for a more accurate understanding of and

new insights into a specific organizational situation (Kor and Sundaramurthy 2009). This is important for voice given that Morrison (2014, 179) argues that constructing 'an idea, concern, or perspective that might be relevant or important to share or convey […] is the starting condition for voice [behaviour]'. Hence, constructing new insights through PI-use is a prerequisite of voice (Sundaramurthy, Pukthuanthong, and Kor 2014). Evidence in support of this relationship, based on a sample of Belgian local politicians, is provided by Meyfroodt and Desmidt (2021). Therefore we hypothesize that:

H1: PSM is positively related to PI-use which, in turn, is positively related to voice.

Given that the pursuit of 'do[ing] good for others and shap[ing] the well-being of society' (Perry and Hondeghem 2008, 3) requires willingness to collect, and process information to capture knowledge and create understanding (Nijstad and De Dreu 2012) on how to serve the public interest and benefit other people, open-mindedness or 'the degree to which new information is sought and attended to, encoded, and retrieved' (De Dreu, Nijstad, and van Knippenberg 2008, 22) can be attributed an important role in explaining how PSM impacts PI-use and voice. Departing from Bechtoldt et al.'s (2010) idea that the more one finds a cause important, the more one is open to search for and use information to be able to contribute to this specific cause, individuals with a high level of PSM can be expected to have higher level of open-mindedness. This entails that individuals having a high level of open-mindedness are more likely to search for and use available PI, and are more receptive to new information during decision-making processes (Van Kenhove, Vermeir, and Verniers 2001) even if it contradicts initial viewpoints and hinders more personal goals or gains. A rationale which fits with PI-use's intent: information should be used to uncover efficiency and effectiveness improvements which may alter the current course of events of an organization for the benefit of the

organization and society (Hatry 2007; Moynihan 2009). Therefore, it can be assumed that open-mindedness and PI-use are positively associated. Consequently, and in line with information processing theory's (Boivie et al. 2016) idea that PI-use is related to voice (Nijstad and De Dreu 2012; Sundaramurthy, Pukthuanthong and Kor 2014), we hypothesize that:

H2: PSM is positively related to open-mindedness which, in turn, is positively related to PI-use and, ultimately, voice.

Situation-based motivational mechanisms

Governing boards' oversight and advisory role entails that governing board members do not contribute directly to the daily activities of the organization, but rather are dependent upon provided or available organizational information to monitor the implementation of the organizational strategy (Walker, Boyne, and Brewer 2010). Therefore, the adopted style regarding PI by the CAO responsible for the execution of the strategy implementation, and thus for developing related PI, plays a pivotal role in stimulating PI-use and voice by politicians (Moynihan, Pandey and Wright 2012b). Particularly relevant is a transformational management style. Such style centres around the creation of an organization wide awareness of the importance of a shared purpose. When a transformational style is adopted by the CAO it sets the table for PI-use by other organizational strategic actors (Sun and Henderson 2017). Specifically, PI-use can help safeguard the chosen organizational direction (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012b) as it enables the effort of jointly working on, evaluating, adjusting and optimizing shared organizational goals (Jensen et al. 2019; Wright and Pandey 2010). Prior research supports this perspective and indicates that a manager's transformational style not only stimulates the own PI-use, but also actively stimulates other strategic actors PI-usage (Kroll and Vogel 2014). CAOs who adopt a transformational style will actively

participate in governing board meetings and use PI to provide insights on the organisation's progress and promote specific strategic options which is expected to stimulate governing board members to act in a similar vein as it enables them to weigh into the process of informed decision-making (Julnes and Holzer 2011; Melkers and Willoughby 2005).Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H3: The CAO's transformational style is positively related to PI-use which, in turn, is positively related to voice.

Although H3 builds upon the idea that specific CAO behaviour can stimulate PI-use, the establishment of an environment which relies on and is pre-programmed to use PI in support of decision-making (i.e., rational decision culture) helps to further explain how this relationship works (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012a). Specifically, a CAO adopting a transformational style is expected to foster the creation of a PI-rich environment in support of organizational goals (Jensen et al. 2019). Such environment contributes to a broader rational decision culture in which performance measurement and actual PI-use is a deeply embedded norm within the organization (Moynihan and Pandey 2010; Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012a). The presence of a rational decision culture has been claimed to urge politicians for a 'more efficient control of […] service production, better monitoring and follow-up of political decisions [and] more systematic evaluation of results' (Kleven et al. 2000, 106) which, in turn, fosters PI-use (Yang and Hsieh 2007). Moreover, given politicians' limited ability to effectively gather PI, a culture where the administration takes on the collection, preparation and coordination of otherwise dispersed knowledge can offer solace (van Ees, Gabrielsson, and Huse 2009). A rational culture, namely, facilitates the use of relevant PI by politicians which nurtures voice (Boivie et al. 2016). As such, PI helps politicians to assess if and when interventions are needed (Walker, Boyne, and Brewer 2010). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H4: The CAO's transformational style is positively related to a rational decision culture which, in turn, is positively related to PI-use and, ultimately, voice.

Methods

Empirical setting

The theoretical model was tested using data from council members of Flemish (i.e., the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) Public Centres for Social Welfare (PCSW). A PCSW is a local authority responsible for organizing social services within a municipality. Its daily operations are coordinated by a management team chaired by the CAO. The activities of the management team and chairing CAO are steered and monitored by a governing board consisting of 9 to 15 politicians (depending on the municipality's population size) appointed by the city council to represent their respective political party. Allocation of seats in the PCSW-council is based on the electoral results of the political parties represented in the city council. Since 2014, Flemish PCSWs are mandated by the Flemish Government to adopt an integrated policy and management cycle. Such rational approach to strategy implementation increases internal and external transparency of Flemish local authorities' strategic planning processes and installs comparable formal control configurations. A key element of the integrated policy and management cycle is the development of a multiannual strategic plan for the period 2014-2019 (George, Desmidt, and De Moyer 2016). Local politicians in the PCSWs' governing boards are expected to be active strategic actors contributing to the strategic processes by engaging in strategic monitoring, hence, using and processing PI (Desmidt and Meyfroodt 2021b).

The population of the study comprises all politically appointed members of Flemish PCSWs. Given that a sampling frame with the contact details of all 3,080 PCSW governing board members is not publicly available, we complemented a publicly

available database containing their names (per municipality), party affiliation and gender with their email-addresses. In total, 2916 email-addresses were retrieved (95% of the population) from municipal and political party websites. These governing board members were invited to participate in an electronic survey as such approach has the advantage of physically distancing the interviewer from the respondent and 'reduces the tendency to give favourable responses in questions dealing with socially desirable behaviours' (Lee, and Woodliffe 2010, 575). After three reminders (throughout 2017-2018), 548 governing board members completed the survey which resulted in 520 usable respondents from 242 PCSW (i.e., usable response rate of 18%). Missing data regarding the latent variables were imputed using the single imputation expectation-maximization method because data are missing completely at random and the missing rate is limited (i.e., .03% of all observed data). When missing data regarding the control variables occurred, cases were listwise deleted. This resulted in a final sample of 468 respondents from 225 PCSW. 54.7% of the respondents are male and the average age of the respondents is 52 years (SD=12.3, range 23-80). To assess if significant differences between respondents and non-respondents occur, logistic regression was used. The results listed in the supplementary material (Appendix A.) indicate that there are no significant differences between respondents and non-respondents with respect to municipality characteristics while the differences regarding individual characteristics are limited (council members belonging to the NVA [a right-winged party] and Groen [a left-winged party] are only slightly underrepresented in the sample).

Measures

All items (See the Supplementary material [Appendix B.]) are based on validated scales that are slightly adapted to fit the specific context of the study and are measured using a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree [1] to strongly agree [7]). Voice

is measured based on the three items used by LePine and Van Dyne (1998) to measure the degree to which work group members speak out and challenge the status quo with the intent of improving the situation. PI-use was measured based on the four-item scale of Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright (2012a) to measure the extent to which organizational members use PI with the intent to improve performance via goal-based learning, efficiency improvements, better targeting of resources, and more informed strategic decisions. The five items used to measure PSM and the four items used to measure transformational style of the CAO were derived from prior work of Wright, Moynihan, and Pandey (2012). Asking governing board members to describe the transformational style of the CAO has the advantage of reducing the potential negative impact of upward response bias (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012b). Open-mindedness, the degree to which a respondent is receptive to alternative visions, solutions and new information, is measured using the reversed version of Kruglanski, Webster, and Klem's (1993) five-item scale developed to measure short-sightedness. Rational decision culture is measured using three items developed by Andrews, Beynon, and Genc (2017) and assesses respondents' perceptions of the degree to which the governing board uses a rational ingrained way of working to evaluate implementation success and the effectiveness of organizational changes.

Although we focus on a specific set of theoretically relevant drivers of PI-use and voice, behaviour is also believed to be impacted by person and setting specific supports or constraints (Boivie et al. 2016). Hence, two sets of control variables were added to the study's research model: (1) ideological position and perceived re-election chance as political inspired controls, and (2) gender, age and education as demographic controls (Askim 2009; Baekgaard et al. 2019; Nielsen and Moynihan 2017b). For A description

of the controls' impact on the research model, see the Supplementary material (Appendix C.).

Data analysis

Since the conceptual model contains latent variables at the within-level only and respondents are nested in PCSWs, lavaan.survey was used to analyse the data as it allows to correct for nested survey designs (Oberski 2014). The measurement and structural model are analysed using maximum likelihood estimation with bootstrapping (5,000 bootstrap samples).

Results

Table 1 provides insights into the variables' descriptive statistics and presents the bivariate statistics of the study's measures. PI-use (mean=5.34, SD=.97, min.=1 and max.=7) and voice (mean=5.66, SD=.96, min.=1 and max.=7) scores[3] are modestly high and vary among politicians. No problematic correlations (>.800) are observed and the variance inflation factor values do not exceed 1.594, indicating that multicollinearity is not expected to be an issue.

[Table 1]

The analysis of the model consists of two steps: The first step assesses the fit of the measurement model to the data using a CFA and in the second step the relationships between the constructs are estimated by means of a structural model. The standardized coefficients are reported in this section to ease the interpretation.

The measurement model

[3] PI-use scores are in line with earlier work (e.g., Bjørnholt, bækgaard, and Houlberg 2016; George et al. 2020; Korac, Saliterer, and Steccolini 2020).

The fit indices indicate that the developed model captures the pattern of relationships found in the data adequately (thresholds as advised by Hair et al. [2010] between brackets): normed chi-square=2.02 (<5), $\chi^2$249=503.615 (p<.001) with TLI=.921 (≥.92), CFI=.939 (≥.92), RMSEA=.053 (<.07 with CFI ≥.92) and SRMR=.045 (<.08 with CFI≥.92). All item factor loadings are significant and exceed a value of .5 (average λ=.75) (see the Supplementary material [Appendix B.]) (Hair et al. 2010).

The structural model

Given that the developed theoretical model contains multiple mediations, we estimated a structural model including the hypothesized mediations and the direct effects. The estimated model indicates that there are significant direct effects of politicians' PSM and the CAO's transformational style on politicians' voice. Given that a structural model including the significant direct effects slightly outperforms the model without these effects, we discuss this extended structural model (normed chi-square=1.872 [<5], $\chi^2$262=490.497 [p<.001] with TLI=.934 [≥.92], CFI=.945 [≥.92], RMSEA=.048 [<.07 with CFI≥.92] and SRMR=.054 [<.08 with CFI≥.92] [Hair et al., 2010]). Figure 2 reports the (un)standardized coefficients and significance of the relationships of our structural model. The presented model explains 40.9% of the variance of PI-use and 72.1% of the variance of voice.

[Figure 2]

Results indicate that there is a significant direct relationship between PI-use and voice (β=.658, p<.001), between PSM and voice (β=.288, p<.001) and between the CAO's transformational style and voice (β= -.103, p=.030). Results also indicate that there is no direct relationship between PSM (β=.115, p=.353) or the CAO's transformational style (β=-.061, p=.515) on the one hand and PI-use on the other hand. Building further on these findings, the results of the mediation analyses suggest that

additional variables help to clarify the nature of the relationship between PSM, the CAO's transformational style and PI-use and voice. Table 2 displays the (un)standardized estimates and confidence intervals of the mediation tests.

[Table 2]

First, the relevance of person-based antecedents is discussed. There is no significant indirect effect (β=.076, p=.351) between PSM and voice via PI-use (i.e., not in support of H1) because a bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval includes zero (-.167 to .472). Although there is no significant direct effect of PSM on PI-use, the relationship between PSM and PI-use is significantly mediated by open-mindedness given that a bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero (.272 to 1.031) indicating that the indirect effect (β=.326, p=.001) is significant. Next, results provide support for H2 and indicate that PSM is positively related to voice via open-mindedness and via PI-use (a bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero [.158 to .708]).

Second, the relevance of organizational antecedents is elaborated on. Results indicate that PI-use does not mediate the relationship between the CAO's transformational style and voice (i.e., not in support of H3) because a bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval includes zero (-.121 to .061) and therefore indicates that the indirect effect (β=-.040, p=.521) is not significant. The serial mediation between the CAO's transformational style, rational decision culture, PI-use and voice is significant (i.e., in support of H4) because a bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero (.034 to .180). The complexity of the latter relationship is illustrated by the fact that, albeit the sign of the serial mediation is positive, the effect of the direct relationship of the CAO's transformational style on voice is negative.

Finally, although the inclusion or exclusion of the control variables does not impact our main findings, there is sufficient justification for their inclusion. Namely, the results indicate that the level of education (β=.112, p=.042) and the perceived re-election chance (β=.168, p=.001) relate positively to open-mindedness; that the level of education (β=-.118, p=.007) relates negatively to rational decision culture; that age relates positively to PI-use; and that gender (β=.120, p=.001) and re-election chance (β=.128, p=.002) relate positively to voice.

Discussion

Despite the recent influx in studies on politicians' PI-use, the majority of these studies examined how PI influences politicians' preferences and decision outcomes. Insights on the drivers of PI-use, however, are still largely based on research using samples of public managers (Moynihan, Nielsen, and Kroll 2017). This study addresses this research gap by not only focusing on the relationship between PI-use and voice, but also on the underlying mechanisms fostering such discretionary behaviours by politicians. Attuned with the literature (Kroll and Vogel 2014), the results indicate that individual and organizational antecedents help explain politicians' PI-use and voice but that the effect of individual antecedents is more prevailing. Results also suggests that the underlying motivational mechanisms are more complex and that insights derived from samples of public managers might not be fully applicable to politicians.

First, although research on public managers' PI-use indicates that PSM relates directly to PI-use (Kroll and Vogel 2014, Moynihan and Pandey 2010), our analysis of a person-based motivational pathway does not find evidence to support such direct relationship when it concerns politicians. However, the data does provide support for an indirect effect of PSM on PI-use and voice via open-mindedness as well as for a direct effect of PSM on voice. These results indicate that high-levels of PSM are not always

associated with PI-use. Is PSM a two-sided coin? Gailmard (2010, 38), for example, argued that decision-makers with high levels of PSM often 'bring to the table their own ideals and conceptions of good public policy and the appropriate means to peruse socially desirable results' and are sometimes dismissive of alternatives and averse to change (Schott and Ritz 2018). Likewise, Van Loon (2016) argued, building on the affective motives of PSM, that some may be too (emotionally) involved with specific policy domains or beneficiaries that it clouds their judgements. Concerning the direct relationship between PSM and voice, an explanation could be that politicians with high-levels of PSM have chosen to run for office because they are highly motivated to address specific societal issues or have a clear idea of what constitutes the public interest. While frequently expressing their opinions within the governing board to foster goal realization, they are –given their strong underlying motivation– less interested in considering alternative policy priorities or policy means suggested by PI (i.e., the non-significant relationship between PSM and PI-use). Could high levels of PSM sometimes lead decision-makers to neglect PI or display some sort of confirmation bias? Bailey (1964, 237) already hinted to the potential dark side of PSM by stating that 'there is no moral virtue which cannot in peculiar circumstances have patently evil results'. A rationale corroborated by the fact that the results indicate that PSM potentially fosters PI-use but only if it is related to open-mindedness. This prompts the question if the underlying motives of a politician's PSM could have behavioural implications and thus a diverging effect on PI-use. It could be that politicians driven by a PSM rooted in self-sacrifice and/or civic duty have a higher level of receptiveness to new information and are more willing to adopt newly acquired insights even if such insights contradict their initial viewpoints (Perry 1996). In contrast, PSM rooted in attraction to policy making and/or compassion could lead to a higher level of commitment to a public program because a personal

identification with the program and an advocacy for the interests of specific groups (reflected by strong views about the appropriate course of action) could have a negative impact on PI-use. As our findings suggest that the relationship between PSM and PI-use is more complex than expected, future research should refrain from using a composite measure of PSM and analyse how the dimensions of PSM have a potentially divergent impact on PI-use.

Second, regarding the analysed situation-based motivational pathway, the findings indicate that the relationship is more complex than expected and that the transformational style of the CAO potentially is a double-edged sword. The findings are in line with previous research and indicate that the influence of a transformational style is real but indirect: 'leaders can "set the table" for success by shaping key mediating variables' (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012b, 143). When the CAO has a transformational style, it stimulates the presence of a rational decision culture focused on evaluating goal progress which, in turn, is related to voice via PI-use. However, we also observe a negative direct relationship between the CAO's transformational style and voice. Although counterintuitive at first sight, a transformational style can also generate negative side-effects (Dong et al. 2017). On the one hand, CAOs having a transformational style can stimulate others to challenge existing assumptions, reframe problems and approach situations in new ways, while on the other hand they can be authoritarian and 'censor [others'] critical and non-conformal viewpoints and ideas that differ from their own, thereby triggering dependency and limiting innovativeness' (i.e., hindering voice) (Eisenbeiß and Boerner 2013, 57). Again, it seems that there is a dark side. Given politicians' limited ability to effectively gather and process PI, it is the administration's responsibility to collect and prepare PI and advise politicians. But what if the CAO becomes a gatekeeper or takes up a too dominant role? Local politicians are

often lay, part-time, strategic actors who need to function in an environment characterized by managerial professionalization and technically complex managerial processes (Boyne et al. 2004). The results suggest that CAOs having a transformational style can create an environment conducive of rational planning processes, but that the same transformational style could also hamper politicians to speak up. Research by Desmidt and Meyfroodt (2021a, 450) indicates 'that many local politicians struggle with the increasing technicality of management processes and are often not properly trained or informed to take up this role effectively' resulting in feelings of uncertainty and/or resistance which, in turn, could increase politicians' dependency on the CAO.

Conclusion

While many public sector organizations have focused on implementing performance measurement practices, leading to the availability but not necessarily the use of PI, this study indicates that understanding what drives PI-use is important as PI-use could trigger desired constructive behaviours like voice. While both the person-based and situation-based motivational mechanisms are identified as relevant, the effect of individual antecedents (i.e., PSM and open-mindedness) shows to be prevailing. However, the results also indicate that the drivers related to PI-use and voice could have unexpected side-effects and more insights are needed on how PI-use by politicians can be stimulated.

Albeit the relevance of the study's findings, at least five limitations need to be noted. First, the study did not examine how PI-use and voice fluctuate. Given that political diversity influences the level of shared understanding of strategy relevant content in representative governing boards (Meyfroodt, Desmidt and Goeminne 2019), how do different constellations or the presence of dominant political coalitions weigh in on voice? Second, given that the selected cross-sectional research design is prone to presence of endogeneity, the magnitude of the estimated relationships should be interpreted with care.

The research model did not account for the impact of strategic planning. Although PI can help politicians to focus on achieving specific objectives, these objectives preferably fit within a strategic planning process that was installed to establish the overarching strategic goals on which the applied performance indicators are based (Poister, Pasha, and Edwards 2013). Moreover, the empirical model itself gives no proof of causation and merely suggests a pattern of relationships that is observable between variables consistent with the theory we have advanced. Third, although ex-ante precautions were implemented and a post-hoc factor analysis and common latent factor test (see supplementary material [Appendix D.]) did not indicate that common method bias influences model estimation, its presence can never be entirely excluded. The same goes for upward response bias: Although it is difficult to directly observe cognitive processes like PI-use and relying on self-reported beliefs is a commonly used technique, it is reasonable to assume that there might be some upward response bias (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012a). Fourth, the study focuses solely on "purposeful" use of PI, while PI-use can have different means (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012a), support different purposes (Behn 2003) and result in different relationships with regard to our conceptual model. Finally, we make no distinction between forms of PI. Future research could build on insights derived from the literature on framing effects in public opinion, rhetoric approaches, and presentation formats (Baekgaard et al., 2019) to investigate the impact of framing, format, and rhetoric on different means for which PI can be used. It may also be fruitful to study how absolute versus relative PI differs in impact on attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (Baekgaard and Serritzlew 2016) or how too much or too little PI is at the origin of cognitive problems (Van Dooren and Van de Walle 2016) interfering with the relationship between PI-use and voice behaviour.

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Figure 1. Conceptual model.

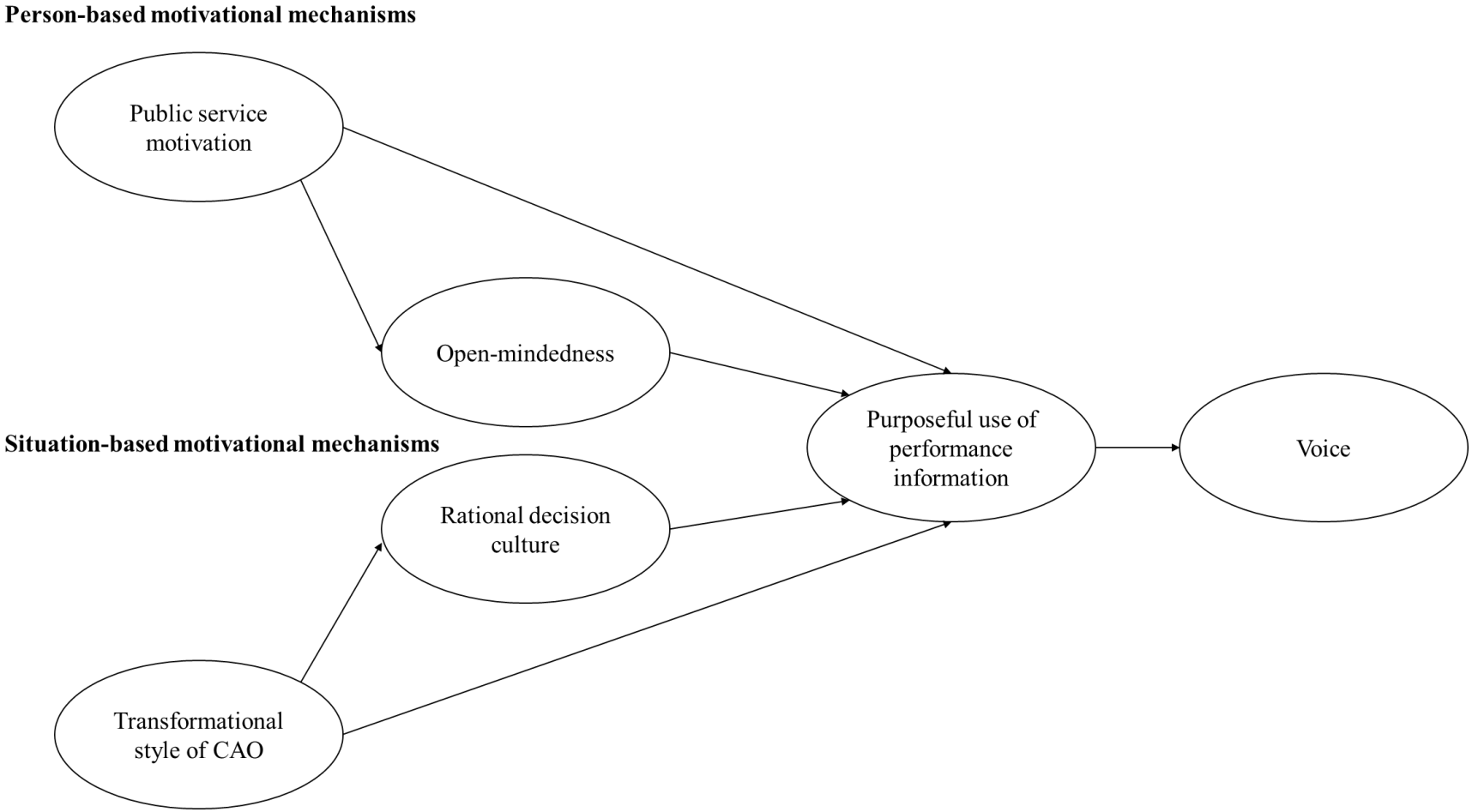
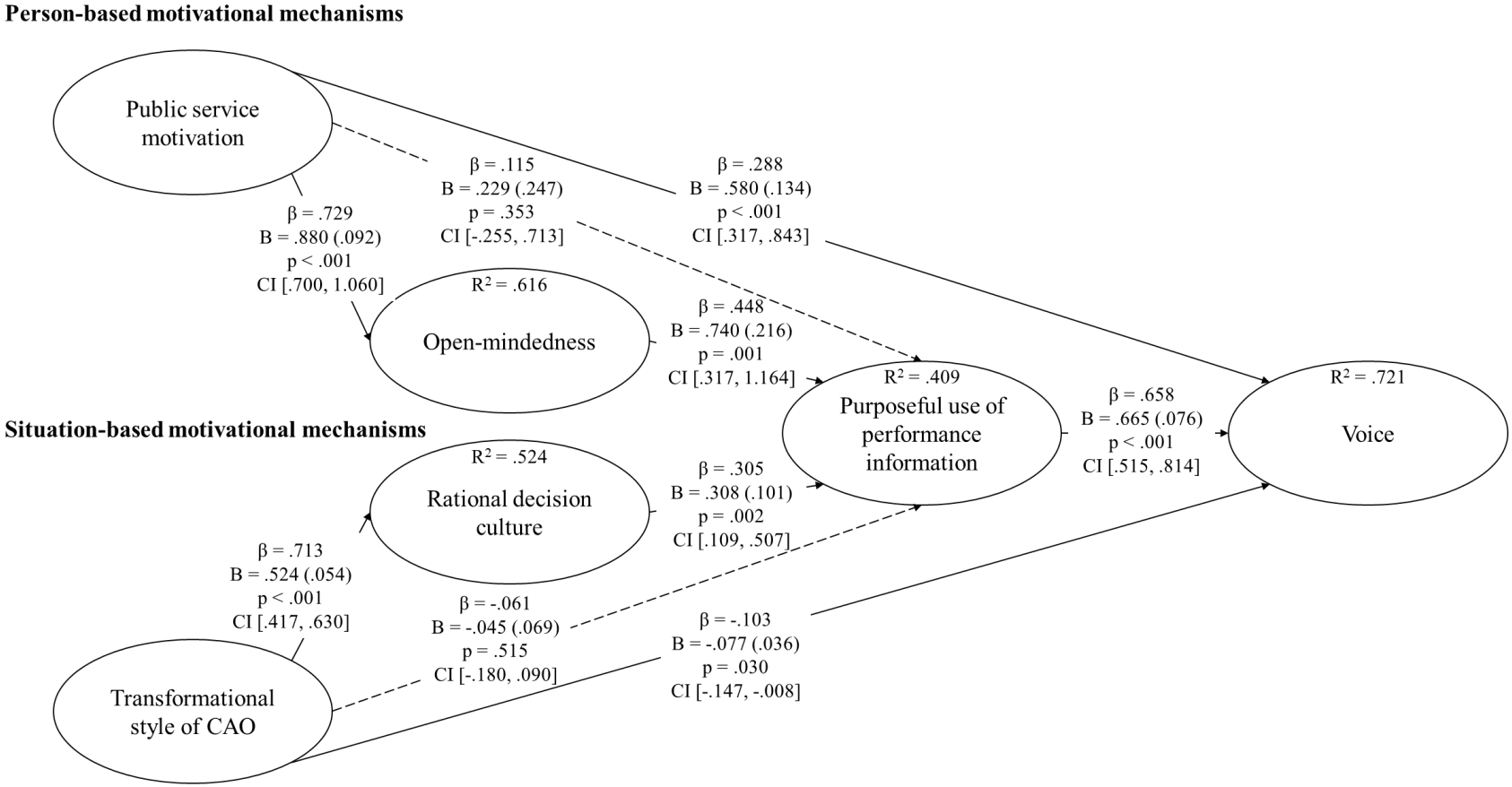


Figure 2. Overview of the study results.



β=standardized coefficient; B=unstandardized coefficient
Standard errors between parentheses
CI=95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval (5,000 bootstrap samples)
Control variables are not shown (See Appendix B in the supplementary material for a detailed discussion)

Table 1. Correlation analysis (N=468).

	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Pearson correlation coefficients										
					1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Voice	5.66	.96	1.00	7.00	(.83)										
2. Purposeful use of PI	5.34	.97	1.00	7.00	.656**	(.89)									
3. PSM	5.93	.68	4.00	7.00	.449**	.407**	(.73)								
4. Open-mindedness	5.42	.80	3.00	7.00	.507**	.393**	.482**	[.65]							
5. Transformational style of CAO	4.71	1.33	1.00	7.00	.079	.207**	.124**	.121**	(.88)						
6. Rational decision culture	4.84	1.21	1.00	7.00	.120**	.315**	.184**	.120**	.562**	(.88)					
7. Ideological position (left/right)	5.39	1.75	1.00	10.00	-.065	-.082	-.261**	-.105*	.008	-.010					
8. perceived re-election chance	36.16	27.25	0.00	100.00	.233**	.126**	.040	.181**	-.046	-.035	.116*				
9. Gender[1]	.55	.498	0.00	1.00	.147**	.045	.008	.062	-.009	-.054	.074	.049			
10. Age	52.33	12.31	23.00	80.00	.062	.166**	.074	-.100*	.052	.029	.029	-.065	.109*		
11. Education[2]	3.09	.844	1.00	5.00	.066	-.013	-.050	.117*	-.088	-.122**	-.120**	-.112*	-.017	-.306**	

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients between parentheses, Spearman-Brown coefficients between square brackets

SD=Standard deviation

* p<.05; ** p<.01

[1] Female = reference category

[2] Education = Ordinal measurement level (Spearman rang correlation coefficients)

Table 2. Mediation tests (N=468).

	Path	Direct effect				Indirect effect				Total effect			
		β	*b (s.e.)*	95% CI	Sign.	β	*b (s.e.)*	95% CI	Sign.	β	*b (s.e.)*	95% CI	Sign.
H1	PSM→PUPI→VB	.288	*.580 (.134)*	[.317, .843]	<.001	.076	*.152 (.163)*	[-.167, .472]	.351	.363	*.732 (.213)*	[.314, 1.150]	.001
	PSM→OM→PUPI	.115	*.229 (.247)*	[-.255, .713]	.353	.326	*.651 (.194)*	[272, 1.031]	.001	.441	*.881 (.132)*	[.621, 1.140]	<.001
H2	PSM→OM→PUPI→VB[1]	.288	*.580 (.134)*	[.317, .843]	<.001	.215	*.433 (.140)*	[.158, .708]	.002	.502	*1.013(.171)*	[.678, 1.347]	<.001
H3	TS→ PUPI→VB	-.103	*-.077 (.036)*	[-.147, -.008]	.030	-.040	*-.030 (.047)*	[-.121, .061]	.521	-.143	*-.107 (.058)*	[-.221, .007]	.066
	TS→RDC→ PUPI	-.061	*-.045 (.069)*	[-.180, .090]	.515	.217	*.161 (.054)*	[.056, .267]	.003	.157	*.116 (.047)*	[.024, .209]	.014
H4	TS→RDC→PUPI→VB[2]	-.103	*-.077 (.036)*	[-.147, -.008]	.030	.143	*.107 (.037)*	[.034, .180]	.004	.040	*.030 (.048)*	[-.064, .123]	.532

PUPI=Purposeful use of PI; OM=Open-mindedness; TS=Transformational style of CAO; RDC=Rational decision culture; VB=Voice.
s.e.=Standard error; Sign.=Significance
[1]Excluding direct effect PSM-PUPI
[2]Excluding direct effect TS-PUPI