ATTRACTIVENESS OF GOVERNMENT AS AN EMPLOYER: The paradox of industrial action and public service attractiveness.

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This research investigated the relationship between frequent engagement in industrial action (also known as 'employee strikes') and the internal attractiveness of government employment. It focused on a special group of public employees: public university lecturers and public-school teachers in Uganda who frequently engaged in industrial action. At the very basic level, the research explored whether public employees frequently engaged in industrial action because they considered public service employment to be unattractive or whether frequent engagement in industrial action was in fact part of the attractiveness of government employment. Beyond exploring these relationships, it also explained why (or why not) such relationships existed.

Methodologically, the research was conducted using an exploratory sequential design – a mixed methods study design that starts with a qualitative followed by a quantitative phase. It is the results of the initial qualitative phase that determined the direction of the subsequent quantitative phase. The qualitative phase started with an exploration of the relationship between industrial action and internal public service attractiveness, resulting into two specific research questions:

1) Why do public employees engage in industrial action and what role does frequent engagement in industrial action play in their perception of public service attractiveness?
2) Why and how is organizational justice related to public employees' perception of public service attractiveness?

The above questions were answered both qualitatively and quantitatively. The theoretical postulations of the Social Movements Theories, Social Exchange Theory, and the Signaling Theory were used to structure the research assumptions and hypotheses.

The results showed that public employees engaged in industrial action mostly because of relative, rather than absolute deprivation. An established culture of workplace militancy was also found to be key in actualizing industrial action as was the (perceived) absence of alternatives to achieve workplace justice. Importantly, there was a clear dichotomy between absolute working conditions and frequent engagement in industrial action. Frequent engagement in industrial action was itself found to have both positive and negative effects on internal public service attractiveness. It was also found that public service attractiveness from the perspective of current public employees

might be different from what it is from the perspective of prospective employees. This is because current public employees do not assume what it feels like to work for government, but mostly use their day-to-day lived experiences to judge the attractiveness of their employer. The existing literature is particularly deficient on analyzing public service attractiveness from an internal perspective, which is surprising given the public sector's high reliance on internal recruitment.

The research results underlined key implications for theory, practice, and research. At theory level, the results suggested that public employee ratings of internal public service attractiveness were heavily affected by halo effects and should therefore not be taken at face value. The complex workplace social exchanges which are deeply rooted in organizational justice and the 'personification metaphor' were also emphasized. From an empirical perspective, the results underlined the need to prioritize internal public service attractiveness as recent research has confirmed the value of family socialization and internal recommendations in making public sector employment attractive, even to external applicants. This research argues that the centrality of organizational justice in public sector employee relations requires public sector organizations to be intentional in their bid to create fair, just, and attractive workplaces. Beyond assessing the fairness of personnel policies, procedures, and interactional relationships, it is also important to prepare and equip public managers with the right skills to promote and practice justice in their day-to-day interactions with public employees, and to encourage, improve, and facilitate alternative public employee feedback mechanisms.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Studie hat den Zusammenhang zwischen häufiger Beteiligung an Arbeitskämpfen (auch als „Mitarbeiterstreiks“ bekannt) und der internen Arbeitgeberattraktivität der Beschäftigung im öffentlichen Dienst untersucht. Der Fokus lag dabei auf einer speziellen Gruppe von Beschäftigten im öffentlichen Dienst: Dozenten*innen an öffentlichen Universitäten und Lehrer*innen an öffentlichen Schulen in Uganda, die sich häufig an Arbeitskampfmaßnahmen beteiligten. Auf einer sehr grundlegenden Ebene wurde untersucht, ob sich Beschäftigte im öffentlichen Dienst häufig an Arbeitskämpfen beteiligen, weil sie eine Beschäftigung im öffentlichen Dienst als unattraktiv betrachten oder ob die häufige Teilnahme an Arbeitskämpfen ein Bestandteil der Attraktivität einer Beschäftigung im öffentlichen Dienst ist. Neben der Erforschung dieser Zusammenhänge wurde auch erklärt, warum solche Zusammenhänge überhaupt bestehen (oder nicht).

Methodisch wurde ein exploratives, sequentielles Mixed-Methods-Studiendesign gewählt, das mit einer qualitativen Phase beginnt und einer anschließenden quantitativen Phase abschließt. Die Ergebnisse der ersten qualitativen Phase bestimmten die Richtung der anschließenden quantitativen Phase. Erstere begann mit einer Untersuchung der Beziehung zwischen Arbeitskampfmaßnahmen und der internen Attraktivität des öffentlichen Dienstes, woraus sich zwei spezifische Forschungsfragen ergaben:

1) Warum beteiligen sich Beschäftigte im öffentlichen Dienst an Arbeitskämpfen und welche Rolle spielt die häufige Beteiligung an Arbeitskämpfen in ihrer Wahrnehmung der Attraktivität des öffentlichen Dienstes?
2) Warum und wie hängt organisatorische Gerechtigkeit mit der Wahrnehmung der Attraktivität des öffentlichen Dienstes durch öffentliche Bedienstete zusammen?

Die obigen Fragen wurden sowohl qualitativ als auch quantitativ beantwortet. Zur Strukturierung der Forschungsannahmen und -hypothesen wurden die theoretischen Konzepte der *Social Movements Theories*, der *Social Exchange Theory* und der *Signaling Theory* herangezogen. Die Ergebnisse zeigten, dass Beschäftigte des öffentlichen Dienstes hauptsächlich aufgrund relativer und nicht absoluter Benachteiligung an Arbeitskämpfen beteiligt waren. Eine etablierte Kultur der Streikbereitschaft am Arbeitsplatz erwies sich ebenso als Schlüsselfaktor für die Durchführung von Arbeitskampfmaßnahmen, wie das (wahrgenommene) Fehlen von Alternativen zur

Verwirklichung von Gerechtigkeit am Arbeitsplatz. Wichtig ist, dass es eine klare Dichotomie zwischen absoluten Arbeitsbedingungen und häufiger Teilnahme an Arbeitskämpfen gab. Die häufige Teilnahme an Arbeitskampfmaßnahmen hatte sowohl positive als auch negative Auswirkungen auf die interne Attraktivität des öffentlichen Dienstes. Außerdem wurde festgestellt, dass die Attraktivität des öffentlichen Dienstes aus der Perspektive der gegenwärtigen Bediensteten des öffentlichen Dienstes möglicherweise anders sein kann als aus der Perspektive zukünftiger Beschäftigter. Dies liegt daran, dass derzeitige öffentliche Beschäftigte nicht davon ausgehen, wie es sich anfühlt, für den Staat zu arbeiten, sondern meist ihre alltäglichen Erfahrungen nutzen, um die Attraktivität ihres Arbeitgebers zu beurteilen. In der vorhandenen Literatur wird die Attraktivität des öffentlichen Dienstes nur unzureichend aus der internen Perspektive analysiert, was angesichts der hohen Abhängigkeit des öffentlichen Sektors von internen Rekrutierungen überraschend ist.

Die Forschungsergebnisse unterstrichen wichtige Implikationen für Theorie, Praxis und Forschung. Auf theoretischer Ebene deuteten die Ergebnisse darauf hin, dass die Bewertung der internen Attraktivität des öffentlichen Dienstes durch die Beschäftigten stark von Halo-Effekten beeinflusst wurde und daher nicht uneingeschränkt gültig ist. Der komplexe soziale Austausch am Arbeitsplatz, der tief in der organisatorischen Gerechtigkeit und der „Personifizierungsmetapher“ verwurzelt ist, wurde ebenfalls herausgestellt. Aus empirischer Sicht unterstrichen die Ergebnisse die Notwendigkeit, der internen Attraktivität des öffentlichen Dienstes Priorität einzuräumen, da neuere Forschungsergebnisse den Wert der familiären Sozialisation und interner Empfehlungen für die Attraktivität einer Beschäftigung im öffentlichen Sektor, auch für externe Bewerber, bestärkt haben. In dieser Studie wird argumentiert, dass die zentrale Bedeutung der organisatorischen Gerechtigkeit in den Beziehungen zu den Beschäftigten des öffentlichen Sektors von öffentlichen Organisationen verlangt, dass sie sich bewusst bemühen, faire, gerechte und attraktive Arbeitsplätze zu schaffen. Neben der Bewertung der Fairness von Personalpolitik, Verfahren und Interaktionsbeziehungen ist es auch wichtig, Führungskräfte des öffentlichen Dienstes darauf vorzubereiten und mit den richtigen Fähigkeiten auszustatten, in ihrem täglichen Umgang mit Bediensteten des öffentlichen Sektors fair und gerecht zu handeln sowie alternative Feedback-Mechanismen anzuwenden, zu ermöglichen und zu verbessern.

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Key Definitions

1. ***Industrial Action:*** Also known as job action or workplace militancy, the most popular form of industrial action are employee strikes. However, in the context of this research, strikes were not the only form of action that public employees got involved in – hence the use of the umbrella term 'industrial action'. The phrase 'industrial action' was also preferred because it is what was frequently used and easily understood by the respondents of this research.

2. ***Internal public service attractiveness:*** This refers to the attractiveness of government employment from the perspective of current public employees (as opposed to external attractiveness which relates to the perspectives of prospective employees/job applicants).

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List of Abbreviations

AFSCME – American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees

ASA – Attraction-Selection-Attrition

CFI – Comparative Fit Index

DAAD – Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst

EDM – Expectancy-Disconfirmation Model

FASPU – Forum for Academic Staff of Public Universities in Uganda

HR – Human Resource Management

ILO – International Labour Organization

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OLS – Ordinary Least Squares (regression)

P-O Fit – Person-Organization Fit

PSM – Public Service Motivation

RMSEA – Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

SEM – Structural Equation Modelling

UK – United Kingdom

UNATU – Uganda National Teachers' Union

U.S. – United States of America

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Setting the scene: Why this research?

> *"in sharp contrast to the distribution of most of its services, public administration stands in direct competition with employers in the private sector in the labor market"*
> Ritz & Waldner (2011, p.292)

One of the most important determinants of organizational success is the ability to attract and retain high quality employees. As Barber and Roehling (1993) eloquently argued, "the ultimate cost of failure to attract applicants may be organizational failure" (p.845). Public sector organizations are not immune to this challenge. In fact, the public sector suffers a very particular disadvantage of competing for talent with the private sector, while at the same time being expected to exclusively deliver certain services which the private sector cannot provide (Ritz & Waldner, 2011). On top of all that, the demand for public services continues to rise more than ever before. As Korac *et al.* (2019) argued, "turbulent times, as witnessed during the global financial crisis, amplify the demand for public services", yet demographic changes and diminished public trust continue to handicap the public sector in competing for talent with the private sector (p.798). It has indeed been argued that, in the war for talent[1], the public sector already "lost attraction as the employer of choice" as public sector employers "tend to lose competitions with private sector employers" in the struggle to attract high-end talent (Asseburg & Homberg, 2020, p.82). Linos (2018) also argued that "there is a human capital crisis looming in the public sector as fewer and fewer people show interest in government jobs" (p.67). Surprisingly, internal recruitment and internal public service attractiveness which would have given the public sector a distinct advantage (Harris, 2000) remain "largely unresearched" (Billsberry, 2007).

In developed economies, the looming talent crisis has been mostly blamed on demographic changes and the inflexible nature of the public sector (Siegel & Proeller, 2021; Korac *et al.*, 2019; Ritz & Waldner, 2011; Vandenabeele, 2008). Worryingly, the increased uncertainty caused by the

[1] The *'War for Talent'* as coined by McKinsey & Company describes the battle to attract and retain the best talents that can only be won through the creation of an employee value proposition that answers "why a smart, energetic, ambitious individual would want to come and work with you rather than with the team next door". (Chambers *et al.*, 1998, p.46).

global health crisis and political insurgencies is likely to further exacerbate the problem as the demand for public services rises and the supply for critical human capital declines. In developing countries, the issue might not necessarily be that the public sector cannot attract or retain any sort of employees, especially given the high levels of youth unemployment. The bigger problem is the increasing scarcity of skilled labor which is worsened by the hemorrhage of brain drain. Yet, as Rynes and Barber (1990) rightly pointed out, in discussions of employer attractiveness, "the most interesting questions often involve not the numbers, but the characteristics, of those attracted" (p.290). Clearly, the challenge is not to make public organizations attractive to all kinds of applicants, but more specifically to high quality applicants who will make a difference.

Besides the difficult task of attracting and retaining high quality public employees, many developing countries suffer the additional complication of frequent engagement in industrial action among public employees. As Gall (2014) noted, "the level of strike activity (might have) fallen massively in countless countries over the last 30 years, but it was never that high in the first place in many others" (p.210). This certainly appears to be the case for Uganda, where public university lecturers, public school teachers and public health workers engage in industrial action with almost clockwork regularity. In general terms, waves of industrial action appear to be shifting from the private/industrial sector to the public sector, simultaneously with increased union membership in the public sector (Kambasu, 2021; Kelly, 2015; Bewernitz & Dribbusch, 2014). As Gunderson (2005) noted, "although strikes in the private sector may be described as declining to a whimper, they are increasing to more of a bang in the public sector" (p.400).

From an empirical perspective, it is important to understand how such a critical phenomenon relates to the nature and structure of government employment, and whether it would affect the ability of government to attract and retain talent. It might be easy to ignore industrial action or assume that it has no effect on the attractiveness of government employment, but as Turban (2001) advised, researchers should not assume that anything is "unimportant because it does not directly influence attraction." Beyond direct effects, it is important to investigate *"how"* attraction is influenced (p.306). Further inspiration for studying the relationship between industrial action and public service attractiveness has been taken from studies on similar phenomena. For example, sick leave is a non-negotiable employee right (just like industrial action in the present context), and at

face value, it might appear as if managers have no role to play in increasing or reducing the number of sick days among their subordinates – because obviously when one is sick, they are sick. However, research has consistently found that the frequency of sick days among employees has strong connections with the quality of managerial leadership (Nyberg *et al.,* 2008); the level of organizational justice (Kivimäki *et al.,* 2003); and the level of supervisory support (Väänänen *et al.,* 2003). It is therefore not beyond the realms of possibility to suggest that frequent public sector employee strikes might also have links to the actions/behavior of public managers, or indeed to the attractiveness of government as an employer.

From a theoretical perspective, most of the existing research on the attractiveness of government employment (e.g., Ritz & Waldner, 2011; Vandenabeele, 2008; Highhouse *et al.,* 2003; Lewis & Frank, 2002) has been conducted from the theoretical lens of Public Service Motivation (PSM), with the argument that public employees are altruistically attracted to delivering the public good (Perry & Wise, 1990; Rainey, 1982). However, there is also considerable controversy on the total effect of PSM on organizational outcomes (Bright, 2008; Gabris & Simo, 1995). Indeed, if we are meant to believe that public employees are altruistically attracted to delivering the public good, why then do they sometimes engage in actions that might not necessarily advance their delivery of the public good?

Therefore, this research analyzed public service attractiveness in a unique context of frequent engagement in industrial action among public employees. The research did not only investigate how industrial action relates to public service attractiveness, but most importantly, why, and how public employees who frequently engage in industrial action can be kept attracted (and committed) to delivering the public good. In so doing, this research extended the much-needed public sector employer attractiveness debate to what Billsberry (2007) described as "the largely unresearched world of internal recruitment" (p.144). It also extended the public sector employer attractiveness discussion to Sub-Saharan Africa – a region that suffers severe labor shortages and constant outflows of skilled labor through human capital flight. In terms of theory, this research pushes the understanding of public service attractiveness beyond the PSM literature. As a truly exploratory study, this research started with no specific variables defined a priori. The initial motivation was simply to explore the interaction between frequent engagement in industrial action and internal

public service attractiveness. Through a phenomenological approach, the initial exploratory findings defined the research variables and later, the theoretical base. This incremental approach was also an innovative addition to the literature, especially in situations where research is conducted in under-researched contexts.

1.2 Research Questions

In the context of the present research, industrial action refers to employee strikes and any other actions conducted *collectively* by public employees for the purpose of expressing dissent or disagreement with their employer. Internal public service attractiveness is an analysis of the *perceptions of current public employees* (as opposed to external public service attractiveness which would refer to the perceptions of prospective public employees/jobseekers).

To investigate the interactions between the two variables above, this research focused on a specific group of public employees: public university lecturers and public-school teachers in Uganda who frequently engaged in industrial action. At the very basic level, the research explored whether public employees frequently engaged in industrial action because they considered public service employment to be unattractive or whether frequent engagement in industrial action was part of the attractiveness of government employment. Beyond exploring these relationships, it also explained why (or why not) such relationships existed.

Public university lecturers and public-school teachers in Uganda have been frequently engaging in industrial action for at least the last fifteen years. In fact, it has become so commonplace and more of an expectation that these particular public employees will engage in industrial action at least once each semester. In the absence of scientific research, explanations for this phenomenon remain largely anecdotal. Press reports usually link these persistent strikes to demands for better pay or improved working conditions. Government is said to often respond with promises or offers of salary enhancements. In some cases, the government responds by closing public universities and public schools, singling out suspected ‘ringleaders’ for punishment, or threatening to suspend striking public employees. However, these actions only seem to restart the cycle (The Daily

Monitor, 2019; Dahir, 2016; Ojok, 2016; Education International, 2013). This research is therefore motivated by the need to have a more scientific understanding of this persistent phenomenon among a section of Ugandan public employees, and to specifically understand how it relates to internal public service attractiveness.

As a sequential exploratory study, the research started with a qualitative phase whose main aim was to establish whether (and why or why not) frequent engagement in industrial action was related to internal public service attractiveness. This was based on the argument that if we are to understand people's grievances or indeed the roots of protest, "we need to understand how people interpret the situations in which they find themselves" (Gurr, 2011). It was therefore important to understand whether frequent engagement in industrial action was an expression of limited attractiveness of public service employment, or whether it was actually part of the attractiveness of government employment.

The main theme that came out of the initial exploratory phase was the fairness of the government as an employer. A perceived lack of fairness on the employer's part was said to be the reason for persistent engagement in industrial action, and it was claimed that public service employment can only remain internally attractive if the government (as the employer) was fair. This 'employer fairness' has been conceptualized in this study as Organizational Justice. Fujishiro (2005) explains that "standard English dictionaries list 'justice' and 'fairness' as synonyms", justifying the use of fairness and justice as interchangeable constructs (p.1). Colquitt *et al.* (2001) also emphasized that justice means "what is fair", while Greenberg (1990) conceptualized Organizational Justice to mean "fairness as a consideration in the workplace" (p.400). Therefore, in this research, employer fairness was construed as Organizational Justice, and this became the main independent variable for the research. Three main variables were defined for this research: Internal Public Service Attractiveness as the outcome variable, and both Organizational Justice and Engagement in Industrial Action as independent variables.

Therefore, based on the three variables above, the following were the specific research questions:

1. Why do public employees engage in industrial action and what role does frequent engagement in industrial action play in their perception of public service attractiveness?
2. Why and how is organizational justice related to public employees' perception of public service attractiveness?

1.3 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation started with an introduction (as seen above). Chapter 2 is a discussion of the State of the Research. Existing research on public service attractiveness, organizational justice and employee engagement in industrial action has been assessed. This was important for identifying research gaps and defining the position and value of the present research. Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical bases on which this research has been built. These theoretical explanations provide the basis for the hypothesized relationships between the three key variables of this research. The aim of this was to provide a foundation for the generalization of the research findings.

Chapter 4 details the methodology that has been used to collect, analyze, and interpret data. It specifically explains the research design and provides a justification for the study's methodological choices, thereby putting the research results in perspective. Appropriately then, Chapter 5 follows with results. The results are presented in sequential order, based on the hypothesized relationships, synthesizing both the qualitative and quantitative findings. The idea is to give a blow-by-blow account of what came out of the data analysis. After presenting the findings in detail, Chapter 6 presents the interpretation and discussion of results. The chapter gives meaning to the findings by explaining what they represent in both empirical and theoretical terms. It is then followed by a conclusion (in Chapter 7). The conclusion discusses the implications for theory, research, and policy as well as the study limitations and recommendations for further research. Finally, chapter 8 is a list of references which acknowledges the published data sources that have been used throughout the research. This is followed by Appendices which include additional data that could not be included in the main body of the dissertation as well as relevant administrative documents to further put the research context in perspective.

2.0 STATE OF THE RESEARCH

"nanos gigantum humeris insidentes"
John & McGarry (1955)

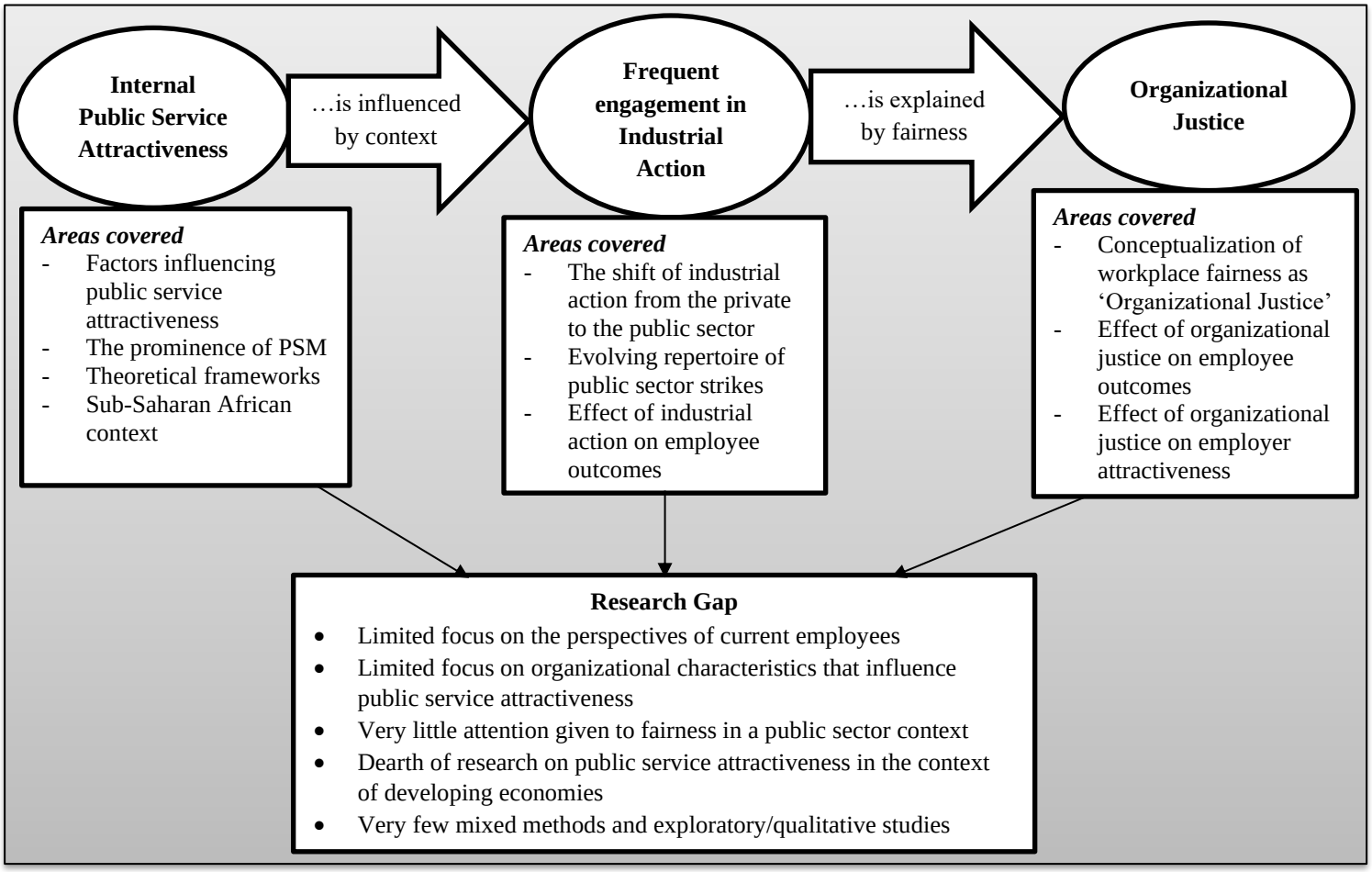
2.1 Introduction

John and McGarry (1955) provided one of the oldest, and perhaps one of the best-known rationales for the review of the State of the Research. They referenced a popular quotation attributed to 12th Century philosopher Bernard de Chartres, to wit: *"nanos gigantum humeris insidentes"*, literally meaning "dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants." They explained this with the argument that "we see more and farther than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are lifted up and borne aloft on their gigantic stature" (1955, p.167). This is exactly the logic behind this particular chapter. This state of the research covers three variables: public service attractiveness, industrial action, and organizational justice.

These three variables were settled on through a sequential process. The literature review started with the main goal of exploring how the attractiveness of government employment was framed and explained from the perspective of current public employees (i.e., internal public service attractiveness). The literature showed that internal public service attractiveness was mostly influenced by the organizational context. It was therefore deemed important to analyze the context in which the research was to be conducted. The major contextual factor in this case was frequent engagement in industrial action. Therefore, the main puzzle was to find out how (and why or why not) frequent engagement in industrial action interacted with internal public service attractiveness. For this reason, a review of the literature on the influence of industrial action on different employee outcomes was also made. The existing literature on employee engagement in industrial action then showed that employer fairness (organizational justice) was the main explanatory factor. Therefore, a review of the research on the effects of organizational justice on both engagement in industrial action and employer attractiveness was also done.

The figure below is an illustration of this sequential flow:

Figure 2. 1: Summarized logical flow of the State of the Research



The above is an illustration of the different topics covered in this review of the state of the research, which ended with an exploration of the research gap.

2.2 Employer Attractiveness in the Public Sector

In general terms, employer attractiveness research had its earliest roots in external marketing traditions. It is also noteworthy that the marketing function has always been stronger in the private sector where competition and profit-making motives make external marketing almost indispensable. For this reason, most of the early research on employer attractiveness was conducted in the private sector. Indeed, the most popular scales for measuring employer attractiveness, e.g., Ambler and Barrow (1996), Highhouse *et al.* (2003), and Berthon *et al.* (2005) were developed by marketing researchers, and essentially, for measuring job seekers' attraction to private sector employers.

However, just as Ritz and Waldner (2011) predicted that "employer marketing in public administration will become one of the most important functions in the light of shrinking labor supply due to future demographic change" (p.291), public service attractiveness has gained traction as one of the most prominent topics in the public personnel management literature. This is perhaps not surprising, given that it has been argued that "there is a human capital crisis looming in the public sector as fewer and fewer people show interest in government jobs" (Linos, 2018, p.67), and that the public sector already "lost attraction as the employer of choice" (Asseburg & Homberg, 2020, p.82). These arguments underscore the need to analyze what attracts (or would attract) employees to the public sector.

This state of the research focuses on academic publications (peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and case studies) on the subject of public sector employer attractiveness. For parsimonious reasons, only research published after 1990 has been considered in this review. The year 1990 is critical because that is when Perry and Wise published their seminal paper on 'the motivation bases of public service'. They emphasized the concept of Public Service Motivation (PSM), which has subsequently had a huge influence on the study of employer attractiveness in the public sector.

2.2.1 Factors that influence public service attractiveness

It is perhaps appropriate for a study that seeks to explain what influences public service attractiveness to start with reviewing factors that have been found to influence the same. Several researchers have explored these factors. In one of the earliest and highly cited publications on recruitment, Rynes (1991) suggested that "job and organizational characteristics are the dominant factors in applicant attraction". Job characteristics, also called 'vacancy characteristics' were said to include things like "pay, hours, working conditions, benefits and perquisites". While acknowledging the difficulties of modifying vacancy characteristics, e.g., the fact that it can be "prohibitively expensive" to modify things like pay or benefits, Rynes insisted that any potential drawbacks do not take away the fact that "applicants' job choices are *obviously* affected by these variables", and that the more relevant empirical question should be "whether investments in modifying various job characteristics are compensated by higher job acceptance rates, higher quality workers, or improved employee retention" (pp.432-433).

Indeed, the importance of job characteristics on applicant attraction and employee retention has consistently been acknowledged in the literature. Recent research by Bankins and Waterhouse (2019) suggested that the public sector has "traditionally been viewed as attractive due to factors such as workplace safety, generous pensions, and less daily work stress". These authors argued that such favorable public sector job characteristics are often considered to be trade-offs for accepting comparatively lower public sector salaries, as opposed to those offered by the private sector (p.222). Asseburg and Homberg (2020) also supported this argument by suggesting that "extrinsic rewards", specifically pay and career opportunities, are important in explaining attraction to public service employment. Similar results have been found in developing and emerging economies. Kuan Heong's (2018) research which was conducted in the Malaysian public sector, returned similar results. In fact, in this case, material rewards (pay, promotions and job security) were said to be "the most important" considerations for public sector attractiveness, and also "the most important push factors to non-choosers of public employment" (p.614).

However, Breitsohl and Ruhle's (2016) findings provided a contrasting opinion. In a study that was conducted among German Millennials, they found that "preferences for higher material aspects and lower work strain are not significantly related to choosing a job in the public sector" (p.479). This conclusion agreed with the findings of Buelens and Van den Broeck (2007) whose comparative study on public and private employees found that "public sector employees are less extrinsically motivated" (p.65). Relatedly, a comprehensive review by Pattakos (2004), which included interviews with over 200 public employees concluded that "money was not the primary motivator of public servants, even among those seeking so-called employment security" (p.108). Similar arguments have been advanced by several other authors, including Lewis and Frank (2002), Vandenabeele (2008), and Georgellis *et al.* (2011).

Besides job characteristics, Rynes (1991) suggested that organizational characteristics, especially "readily observable" factors like "industry, size, profitability, recent growth and financial trends" are "likely to affect applicants' general impressions of organizations" (p.431). These general impressions constitute the *'organizational image'* which then influences applicants' judgements of whether the organization is attractive or not. Several other authors have acknowledged the organizational image as having a huge impact on employer attractiveness. In a highly cited article

on organizational images, Dutton *et al.* (1994) argued that the organizational image has a strong influence on its attractiveness as an employer. Similar to Schneider's proposition (1987) of the person-organization (P-O) fit, these authors argued that attraction and attachment to the organization occurs "when a person's self-concept contains the same attributes as those in the perceived organizational identity". This then creates a "cognitive connection" that increases employee identification, attachment, and attraction to the organization. Importantly, they argued that organizational identification and attractiveness is a "reciprocal and recursive process" in a way that employees continuously assess their self-association with the organization and strengthen it based on the perceived match between the organizational image and their own individual characteristics (pp.239-246).

However, the argument that the organizational image influences employer attractiveness is also not without opposition. In research that tested applicant attraction to nine utility companies (in the United Kingdom), with a survey questionnaire completed by 621 graduate applicants for managerial trainee posts, Billsberry (2007) suggested that most of the times, when job applicants choose particular employers, they are "making vocational rather than organizational choices" (p.141). To arrive at this conclusion, he evaluated the influence of different P-O fit dimensions on employer attractiveness, including person-group fit, person-vocation fit, and person-people fit. The major conclusion of the research was that once person-vocation fit was controlled for; the influence of person-organization fit on employer attractiveness disappeared (p.132).

Another factor that has been found to influence the attractiveness of public sector employment, and even more so for people already working in the public sector is trust. Wæraas and Byrkjeflot (2012) argued that there has been a "drop in people's interest in finding work in the public sector" (p.187) because many public organizations lack charisma, and yet, in seeking employment, "individuals pursue their dreams and aspirations and expect satisfaction on an emotional rather than rational level." Therefore, for organizations to be attractive, they "must appeal to our identity and make us feel good, admire, respect, and *trust* them, not just offer us something that meets our functional needs" (p.196). These authors further argued that the reputation and trust in public institutions is not helped by the fact that "statements conveying a persistently negative image of public organizations have been heard for many years", with public organizations often perceived

to be “too big, wasteful, slow, unreliable, not sufficiently transparent, and inefficient”. To underline the enormity of the task ahead of public institutions if they are to become truly attractive employers, they quote Osborne and Plastrik (1997) in suggesting that the public sector is often described as “nightmarishly frustrating for those who are trapped inside it” (Wæraas and Byrkjeflot, 2012, pp.186-187). Indeed, Orren (1997) also argued that the loss of faith in government “hinders the task of recruiting and retaining capable public servants” (p.79). But what is trust? Kim (2005) crystallized the meaning of trust in government by suggesting that the trustworthiness of government is determined by five factors: credible commitment, benevolence, honesty, competence, and fairness (p.622).

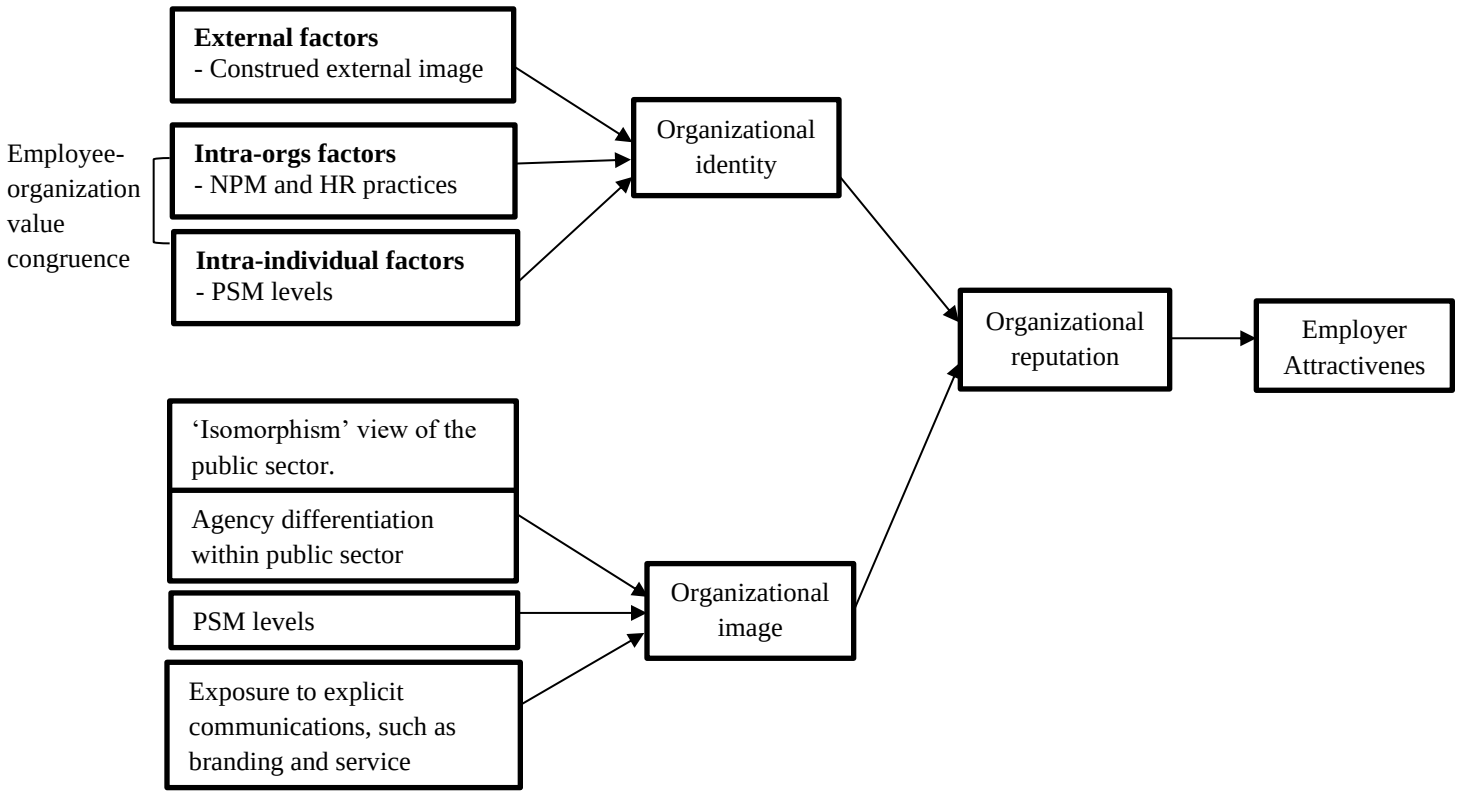
Similar to the organizational image and trust arguments, Dutton and colleagues further suggested that employer attractiveness is influenced by the organization’s level of “distinctiveness”. They argued that “members will find organizations attractive when the social identities there provide them with a sense of distinctiveness”. This ‘distinctiveness’ manifests when employees “believe their organization has a distinct culture, strategy, structure, or some other configuration of distinctive characteristics”, which ultimately leads to strong levels of organizational identification (Dutton *et al.*, 1994, p.246). Over time, this ‘distinctiveness’ hypothesis has grown into a popular strand of research on organizational reputation. Commenting on the reputation of public administration, Carpenter and Krause (2012) argued that people’s “behaviors towards government agencies are a function of their beliefs regarding what government agencies can and cannot perform effectively”, i.e., its reputation (p.26). Indeed, recent research by Bankins and Waterhouse (2019) suggested that “public organizations are increasingly leveraging branding strategies” in order to boost their reputation as employers with the ultimate goal of attracting and retaining quality employees (p.221).

To further underline the value of a positive corporate reputation, Chun (2005) provided a comprehensive explanation of the link between organizational image, organizational identity, and organizational reputation. Firstly, she argued that whereas organizational image and organizational reputation are frequently used interchangeably, especially in the marketing literature, treating them as synonyms “can lead to confusion” (p.95). A distinction was therefore made, with organizational image referring to “how others see us”, i.e., “a summary of the impressions or perceptions held by

outsiders", and organizational identity referring to "how we see ourselves" or simply, current "employees' perception of the organization". Corporate reputation on the other hand was described as an "umbrella construct" that includes both the organizational image and its identity, i.e., the "cumulative impressions of internal and external stakeholders" (pp.95-105). Importantly, Chun also argued that a positive organizational reputation positively influences employee retention and helps the organization to attract "good staff" (p.91).

Just like Chun (2005), Bankins and Waterhouse (2019) also argued that organizational reputation is a combination of the organizational image and the organizational identity, and that it is reputation that ultimately influences employer attractiveness. They produced an illustration of the assumed relationship between public sector reputation and the attractiveness of government employment that is worth reproducing here:

Figure 2. 2: Influence of identity, image, and reputation on employer attractiveness in the public sector



Source: Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019, p.223

As the above illustration shows, Bankins and Waterhouse (2019) suggested factors that aggregate to form the organizational identity and the organizational image, which then also combine to form the organizational reputation. They argued that it is this organizational reputation that then directly influences the attractiveness of the public sector as an employer. These authors acknowledged that corporate identity, image, and reputation are "still conceived as belonging to the domain of marketing and therefore arguably not particularly pertinent to the public sector" but insisted that "public sector organizations are beginning to actively manage their reputation", and rightly so, because of the massive competition they face in the labor market (p.227).

Besides job and organizational characteristics that make the public sector attractive, there has been sizeable research on individual traits that make certain individuals more likely to be attracted to the public sector than others. Personal characteristics like age, gender and attitude towards government work have received considerable attention. Breitsohl and Ruhle (2016) argued that gender is a "relevant factor" in the choice of government as an employer, emphasizing that several studies have consistently "found that women are more prone to prefer and actually choose employment in the public sector" (p.466). This agreed with the results of Wright and Christensen (2010) who found that in general terms, women were "more likely to be currently employed and retained in the public sector" (p.167). Several other authors have acknowledged this (e.g., Kuan Heong, 2018; Ritz & Waldner, 2011; Vandenabeele, 2008; Vandenabeele *et al.,* 2004). However, this argument was tempered by Lewis and Frank (2002) who used contingency table analysis and logistic regression on the 1989 and 1998 General Social Surveys (in the US) to investigate preference for government employment. These authors argued that although "women were slightly more likely than men to prefer government jobs", the gender gap "essentially disappeared once other demographic and attitudinal variables were controlled" (Lewis & Frank, 2002, p.400).

Indeed, Cohen *et al.* (2005) also concluded that "regarding employment in the public sector, gender becomes less important in the process of making a sectorial choice" (p.471). Lewis and Ng (2013) extended this gender discussion to sexual orientation. Their research which targeted Canadian postsecondary students found "no evidence that gay, lesbian, transgender and queer people (GLBTQs) are less likely than heterosexuals to desire Canadian government jobs" (p.559), further emphasizing the fact that gender in itself might not be an effective determinant for the preference

of government as an employer. Beyond gender, other individual characteristics like age and family socialization (i.e., if parents have worked in the public sector) have been found to have an influence on preference for government employment (Fischer & Schott, 2020; Stritch & Christensen, 2016). However, the results for these haven't been always consistent either (Asseburg & Homberg, 2020).

As a final note, the factors that have been found to influence the attractiveness of government employment can be grouped into three categories: job characteristics, organizational characteristics, and the individual characteristics of jobseekers or public employees. In terms of individual characteristics, there are strong arguments suggesting that people who are attracted to (and or retained in) the public sector have very specific altruistic traits which make them amenable to availing themselves to the service of others. These specific public-facing traits have been described as Public Service Motivation (PSM).

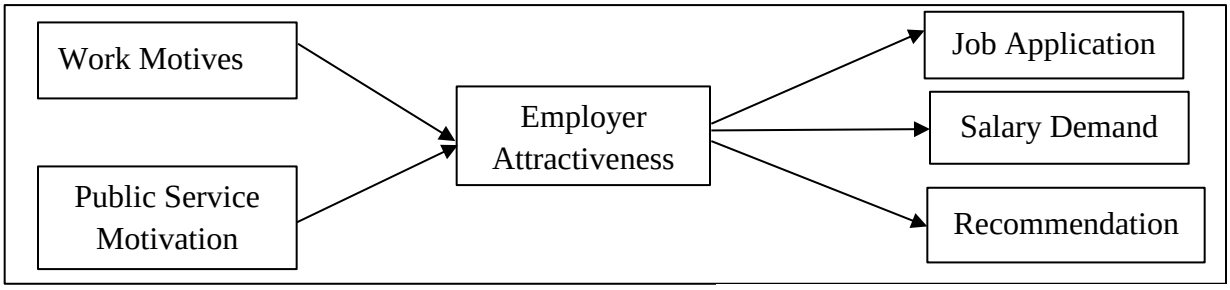
2.2.2 Prominence of PSM in the public service attractiveness literature

In a reflective review of the PSM propositions made by Perry and Wise (1990), Perry, Hondeghem and Wise (2010) reemphasized that "PSM originates from beliefs that unique motives are found among public servants that are different from those of their private sector counterparts" (p.681). Indeed, the main argument as advanced by Perry and Wise (1990) was that public servants are motivated by certain values that are unique to public institutions, e.g., civic duty and compassion. Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) strengthened this line of argument by defining PSM as a "general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation, or humankind". They also quoted Frederickson and Hart (1985) who described the existence of a "patriotism of benevolence" in public administration. This was said to involve "benevolent impulses and behaviors toward a broad community" with a strong drive for generous actions like defending people's basic rights, being equitable, exercising self-sacrifice, and striving to make a difference in people's lives, rather than seeking material gain (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999, p.23). Without doubt, PSM is one of the most popular themes in the public personnel management literature. Perry and colleagues noted that between 1990 and 2010, "more than 125 studies about public service motivation, covering more than a dozen countries" were published (Perry *et al.*, 2010, p.681). Such has been the popularity of PSM that this number could have easily more than

doubled in the last decade. In the context of public service attractiveness, Vandenabeele *et al.* (2004) surveyed 741 final year master's degree students across two universities and nine colleges in Belgium and concluded that PSM offers "an even greater explanation for selecting government as an employer of choice" than other models of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation (p.331). Another highly cited research article by Lewis and Frank (2002) which was conducted in the US, concluded that although job security could still be the strongest attraction to government jobs, the "desire to help others and to be useful to society had a significant positive impact on both preference for and possession of government jobs" (p.402). Similar conclusions have been made by several other authors, including Van der Wal and Oosterbaan (2013), Georgellis *et al.* (2011), Wright and Christensen (2010), Steijn (2008), and Heintzman (2007), among others.

Ritz and Waldner's (2011) work is also worth mentioning here. Their research incorporated both the PSM and P-O fit frameworks – two theoretical platforms that have been widely used in public sector attractiveness research. Crucially, they also studied the forward linkage of public sector employer attractiveness and concluded that if public employees perceive the public sector to be attractive, they will exhibit "desired behavioral intentions", and that "persons who perceive an organization as attractive also tend to actively pursue a job at this organization", and or recommend it to others. In addition, they argued that people who perceive an organization to be attractive would have lower salary demands than those who think it is not attractive (pp.297-298). This argument is presented in the illustration below:

Figure 2. 3: Ritz & Waldner's (2011) theoretical framework for public service attractiveness



Source: *Ritz & Waldner, 2011, p.293.*

However, the resounding evidence of PSM's influence on public service attractiveness and other public employee outcomes did not stop Schott and Ritz (2018) from studying the "dark sides of

public service motivation". They argued that there is need for a "more balanced view" on PSM because "PSM has the potential to increase negative outputs and outcomes at the individual and organizational levels", and that since "the question of what constitutes the public interest is in the eye of the beholder, we should be aware of the fact that the realization of PSM can be a 'bad' thing" (p.40). And, on the specific subject of public sector employer attractiveness, Kjeldsen and Jacobsen (2013) actually found that "PSM is relevant for neither attraction to the public sector nor actual sector of employment" (p.899).

The above antithesis notwithstanding, it is also important to note that the PSM construct has been studied mostly in developed economies. In fact, as Meyer *et al.* (2014) rightly argued, "PSM has so far been strongly anchored in the North American understanding of the state and its 'typical' civil servants", therefore needing "reconceptualization and adequate translation" if it is to transcend "the cultural sphere of the Western world" (p.878). Even within the Western World, the understanding of PSM and its related effect has not always been consistent. A comprehensive review of the structure and meaning of PSM across twelve developed economies that was conducted by sixteen leading PSM scholars concluded that "the exact meaning and scaling of PSM dimensions are likely to differ across cultures and languages" (Kim *et al.*, 2013, p.97). This agreed with Houston (2011) who criticized the universal application of US-centric definitions of PSM by arguing that "national context matters for public service motivation" and that "there is some indication that government workers in less-developed welfare states, which focus more on means-tested programs, have lower levels of obligation-based intrinsic motivation" (p.769).

But even in developed countries where the PSM model has been prominently used, the results haven't always been positive. In Germany, recent research by Siegel and Proeller (2021) questioned the influence of PSM by suggesting that its "resonance (and relevance?) in terms of practice is rather limited, at least in Germany" (p.384). More so, a comprehensive review by Korac *et al.* (2019) which included 28 articles with research conducted in different countries, including Canada, the US, China, Korea, and Singapore also concluded that "as it turns out, PSM is not necessarily the strongest factor driving individual preference to work for the public sector" (p.798). Unsurprisingly then, another international study by Van de Walle, Steijn and Jilke (2015) which included data from 26 countries recommended that "future research should take into account the

fact that people want to work in the public sector not only to serve the public good, but that factors such as money or job security also play a role" (Van de Walle *et al.*, 2015, p. 850). But perhaps the final word on this belongs to Gabris and Simo (1995) whose hardline conclusion was that: *"if public sector motivation does exist, its effect on employee behavior and attitudes toward work expectations and personal goals is negligible at best"* (p.33).

2.2.3 Theoretical frameworks used to study public service attractiveness

As mentioned above, PSM has provided one of the most popular theoretical frameworks used to study employer attractiveness in the public sector. But that does not mean it has been the only one. Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005) identified "three overarching metatheories focusing on environment processing, interactionist processing, and self-processing" that have been frequently used to explain employer attractiveness, both in the private and public sector (p.901). Bakanauskienė *et al.* (2017) relayed these three metatheories in a tabular format, as below:

Table 2. 1: Organizational Attractiveness Metatheories

Metatheories	**Theoretical Mechanism**	**Theory**	**Proposition**
Environment processing metatheory	Relationship between the actual environment and the perceived environment: individuals may hold different perceptions of the same actual environment based on which environment characteristics they attend to and how they process information about the environment	Signaling theory (Spence, 1973)	In the absence of complete information, applicants interpret the information they have about an organization as signals of organizational characteristics
		Image theory (Beach, 1990)	Individuals decide among job and organizational attractiveness by considering how those alternatives fit their image of what is desired
		Heuristic-systematic model (Eagly & Chaiken, 1984)	Type of cognitive processing that an individual implements depends on characteristics of the message being processed
	Relationship between the perceived environment and attraction: the way in which the perceived environment characteristics are processed and why individuals' perceptions of environment influence their attraction	Exposure-attitude hypothesis (Zajonc, 1968)	Repeated exposure to an object yields increasingly positive evaluations of it
		Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964)	Individuals are attracted to jobs or organizations that they perceive to offer valued characteristics
		Generalizable decision processing model (Soelberg, 1967)	Individuals choose their most preferred job or organization on the basis of their perceptions of the environment characteristics that are important to them (e.g., location, culture, firm size)

Interactionist processing metatheory	Objective fit: the extent to which actual characteristics of the environment interact with individual differences to predict the objective fit between a person and an organization	Need-press theory (Murray, 1938)	Environments have characteristics that either facilitate or inhibit the satisfaction of individual's needs: importance of the match between individual's needs and the actual environment's "positive press", or ability to satisfy those needs
		Interactional psychology (Lewin, 1935)	Behavior is a function of the interaction between person and situational characteristics: importance of the similarity between person and actual environment characteristics in predicting attraction
	Subjective fit: pertain to the process by which individuals determine whether they fit with a particular work environment.	Theory of work adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984)	Individuals desire "correspondence" or congruence with their work environment – work adjustment that is related to positive work outcomes (e.g., tenure and satisfaction)
		Attraction-selection attrition theory (Schneider, 1987)	People are differentially attracted to jobs and/or organizations with certain characteristics that they perceive match their own
Self-processing metatheory	Influences on the relationship between fit and attraction: individuals' perceptions about themselves and their own attributes contribute by influencing the relationship between subjective fit and attraction.	Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977)	People will be attracted to jobs and organizations based on the extent to which they believe they can succeed: individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to seek out environments with which they fit, based on their beliefs that they will be successful
		Consistency theory (Korman, 1967)	Individuals with high self-esteem use cognitions about the self to guide choices, and they prefer work that corresponds to their self-image
		Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986)	Self-concept is influenced by the evaluation of the group(s) with whom individual identifies: when organization is viewed positively, subjective fit should have a stronger influence on attraction

Source: *Bakanauskienė et al., 2017, pp.6-7.*

As the above summary shows, most of the theoretical frameworks that have been frequently used to study employer attractiveness have focused on what organizational theorist Chris Argyris described as a "corporate personality" (Argyris, 1957). Organizations have been viewed as if they were human beings with distinct personality traits. Davies *et al.* (2001) rationalized this approach by the inefficiency of models that measure corporate reputation based on financial performance or financial rewards. They argued that the "personification metaphor" is more suited to the measurement of "both the internal (often referred to as identity) and external (often referred to as image) elements of corporate reputation" (p.113). Indeed, Aaker (1997) followed this organization personification tradition to develop the highly cited corporate brand personality dimensions of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. In employer attractiveness research, these dimensions were used by Lievens and Highhouse (2003) to develop their

Instrumental-Symbolic Framework. Schreurs *et al.* (2009) further refined this approach by examining the moderating effects of the "Big Five personality factors", namely: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to Experience. But even much earlier than that, in 2001, Davis and colleagues had aggregated a 'corporate personality scale' with seven human attributes, including: Agreeableness, Enterprise, Competence, Chic, Ruthlessness, Machismo, and Informality (Davies *et al.*, 2001).

Finally, a discussion of the theories that have been frequently used to study employer attractiveness in the public sector would not be complete without giving special mention to the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) framework. The ASA framework is linked to the early works of psychologist Benjamin Schneider (1987) who suggested that people select themselves into environments that match their own personalities. Schneider argued that job attitudes are "clearly psychological phenomena" which should not be explained by "situationist interpretations" and "environmental determinism", but by the individual traits of the people who are attracted to, and or select themselves into organizations (Schneider, 1987, p.450). The utility of the ASA framework has been extended to describing individuals' compatibility with the environments in which they work or aspire to work. This compatibility, often described as Person-Organization (P-O) fit, has been conceptualized into different variations: person-job, person-environment, person-group, person-people, person-vocation, and person-supervisor fit (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Billsberry, 2007). A metanalysis by Kristof-Brown and colleagues (2005) suggested that employer attractiveness is influenced by different types of fit "because applicants generally get recruited based on elements of the job and organization simultaneously" (p.294).

However, there has also been credible arguments to suggest that the ASA framework might not necessarily be effective in explaining public sector employer attractiveness in all settings. Billsberry's (2007) research which was conducted in the United Kingdom empirically tested this and found that it is "not enough to say that similarity leads to attraction" because most job applicants are "concerned with vocational choice, not organizational choice" (p.144). Indeed, after evaluating the effects of different P-O fit dimensions on employer attractiveness, he found that that once person-vocation fit was controlled for; the "significant effects" of person-organization fit on employer attractiveness disappeared (p.132).

2.2.4 Employer attractiveness in the Sub-Saharan African context

Employer attractiveness remains largely understudied in Sub-Saharan Africa, more so in the public sector. Apart from an unpublished master's degree dissertation by Mahlaba (2018), the literature search returned no single published research on public sector employer attractiveness in Africa. Mahlaba's (2018) research was on the antecedents of employer attractiveness in South African local governments. The attractiveness of private sector employers is also still a very nascent field of research in Africa, just as Anlesinya *et al.* (2019) suggested that talent management research in Africa is still at an "embryonic stage" (p.440).

The existing employer attractiveness research conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa (which is essentially on the attractiveness of private sector employers) has been mostly conducted in South Africa, except for Hinson *et al.* (2018) which was conducted in Ghana, and Marika *et al.* (2017) in Kenya. The dearth of employer attractiveness research in Africa confirms the argument that employer attractiveness has mostly been framed as an issue for developed economies, and indeed, mostly from US-centric definitions of the State (Williamson, 2018; Houston, 2011). To be fair, apart from India (e.g., Puri, 2018; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Pattnaik & Misra, 2014; Pingle & Sodhi, 2011; Roy, 2008) and Indonesia (e.g., Nugroho & Liswandi, 2018), not much employer attractiveness research has been conducted in the developing and emerging economies of South Asia and Southeast Asia. Brazil is also a notable exception in Latin America (e.g., Reis & Braga, 2016; Reis *et al.*, 2017). Other than that, employer attractiveness (whether in the public or private sector) remains a largely under-studied subject in the so-called developing world.

As for the findings, the existing private sector employer attractiveness research which has been conducted in Africa has consistently suggested that the perceptions of employer attractiveness in Africa differ from US-Centric definitions (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, 2020; Hinson *et al.*, 2018; Williamson, 2018; Marika *et al.*, 2017). The main factors that have been found to influence employer attractiveness in Africa include person-organization fit, evaluations of corporate brands and corporate reputations (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, 2020; Potgieter & Doubell, 2018; Zungu, 2018); firms' engagement in corporate social responsibility (Hinson *et al.*, 2018; Williamson, 2018; Marika *et al.*, 2017); organizational fairness, opportunities for career advancement and social

relationships with colleagues (Mahlaba, 2018; Williamson, 2018). Strikingly, the factors that have been found to influence employer attractiveness in Africa seem to have a social, rather than economic outlook. Perhaps this justifies Hinson *et al.*'s (2018) argument that social factors "may hold more developmental and cultural relevance to the relatively less developed and more collectivist African continent than the other continents" (p.13).

2.3 Industrial Action as a variable in public sector employee outcomes

One of the major highlights from the above discussion has been the argument that employer attractiveness is highly influenced by corporate reputation which is also influenced by the organization's image and identity. From the perspective of current employees, the corporate reputation is said to be influenced by the "organizational identity". This identity is determined by what employees consider to be the true nature of the organization based on the context in which they work (Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019; Chun, 2005). In the case of Ugandan public educators, frequent engagement in industrial action was one of the major contextual issues. This is why a review of the existing literature on industrial action, and specifically its influence on employee outcomes has been included in this state of the research.

Generally, the influence of industrial action on public sector employee outcomes has not been well studied. This might be due to the fact that most developed countries have experienced consistently dwindling levels of strike action since the industrial turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s. However, as Gall (2014) rightly pointed out, "the level of strike activity (might have) fallen massively in countless countries over the last 30 years, but it was never that high in the first place in many others" (p.210). It is also important to note that industrial action has been progressively shifting from the private sector to the public sector – even in developed economies. As Gunderson (2005) noted, "although strikes in the private sector may be described as declining to a whimper, they are increasing to more of a bang in the public sector" (p.400). Indeed, Gall's (1999) analysis of strike action in Western Europe showed that while there has been an identifiable decline in strike activity in the mining and manufacturing sector, there is an "absolute and relative increase of strike activity in the public sector" (p.358). Kelly and Hamann (2010) also noted that, in OECD countries, "the frequency of general strikes to protest against government policy has risen since 1980" (p.646),

while in the US., Miller and Canak (1995) attributed this shift to the rise of public sector employee groups like the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) in the 1960s and 1970s. In Europe, Vandaele (2016) found that "compared with the period 1995–2004, in most of the Germanic and Nordic countries for which data are available, and unquestionably in the UK, public sector militancy, measured by its days-not-worked share, has increased in the past decade" (p.291). Elstad (2016) reported the rise of teacher strikes in Norway, Denmark, Estonia, and Iceland, most especially among public school teachers, while labor historian Toloudis (2008) elaborated the rampant strikes among teachers in France. Thörnqvist (2007) also described the rise of industrial action in the Swedish public sector with the argument that the "corporatist Swedish model" has meant that public sector employment in Sweden "differs rather little from employment in private-owned firms", making the public sector sometimes more vulnerable to industrial action than the private sector (pp.17-27). The situation is not any different in developing countries as "the changing locus of strike action appears as a simultaneous move from manufacturing to services and from the private to the public sector" (Kelly, 2015, p.724; see also: Posusney, 1993; Kambasu, 2021).

It is also arguable that employee strikes are no longer limited to general strikes sanctioned by trade unions. This is more of the case in the public sector where many public employees are not allowed to engage in general strikes. Heckscher and McCarthy (2014) emphasized the evolving repertoire of public sector strikes by describing the rise of new forms of workplace organizing in advanced societies. For example, they reported the rise of "something new": "a form of interaction and morality structured as something like the relationship of friendship, but looser and wider", which organizes "partially autonomous actors into coordinated swarms" that "are particularly effective in situations that require, as it were, guerrilla action, with rapid adaptation and local innovation". Such swarms "provide platforms for diverse groups to invent their own tactics and can bring together unlikely coalitions" (p.649). Zoll (2001) also argued that the decline of union-sanctioned general strikes does not necessarily mean a decline in employee voice actions as "the manifestations of workers' solidarity have sometimes had a spontaneous character that goes beyond trade union prudence" (p.109). Indeed, Vandaele (2016) advised that the absence of general strikes "should not be mistaken for an absence of conflict in employment relations" (p.291).

In terms of effects on employee outcomes, Elstad's (2016) research on engagement in industrial action among teachers in Norway and Denmark found that "successful industrial action may lead to employees feeling empowered, but when it comes to the overall direction and makeup of the educational system that feeling may be somewhat chimerical." Their argument was that once employees engage in industrial action, even if they "win", long-term reflections on their engagement often lead to feelings of being undervalued (NordSTEP 2016, 2: 31165). This argument corroborates the findings of Osakede and Ijimakinwa (2014) whose research on labor strikes among Nigerian public sector health workers concluded that "whether or not their demands are eventually met, doctors who have been involved in strikes usually end up disillusioned and demotivated" (p.159). Apart from negatively affecting motivation, it has also been argued that when public employees engage in industrial action, they lose trust in government as an employer. The crux of this argument is that public employees would never engage in industrial action if government kept its part of the bargain in the employment relationship. Public employee strikes are therefore seen as a conviction of government as an untrustworthy employer (Osakede & Ijimakinwa, 2014; van Rensburg & van Rensburg, 2013). Elstad (2016) added to this by suggesting that employee engagement in industrial action hurts the reputation of the employer, yet at the same time enhancing the striking employees' reputation as protest messages "help in awakening public opinion." This agrees with Thörnqvist's (2007) argument that public employee demands for fairness strike moral chords that legitimize strike action "in the eyes of public opinion" (p.25).

However, Gunderson's (2005) research on union voice in the American and Canadian public sector found that public employees' engagement in workplace militancy has two faces, i.e., that it can lead to both negative and positive outcomes. On the negative side, public employees' engagement in "strikes, political activity, and challenging managerial prerogatives" can "enhance rent-seeking and noncooperative behavior with negative effects on productivity, competitiveness, and resource allocation." But on the other hand, when public employees engage in strikes, "positive cathartic effects may ensue, and pent-up frustrations may be released". Moreover, when public employees have a voice, whether through union activism or strikes, their morale, loyalty and commitment to the public sector can improve, "reducing costly turnover, ensuring the receipt of deferred compensation, and providing information to employers" (p.393). In general terms, public employee voice activities provide platforms to positively articulate "preferences and trade-offs",

thereby “improving communications, and involving employees and enhancing their commitment to the organization” (ibid., p.404).

In conclusion, whereas research on the effects of industrial action on employee outcomes is still limited, it clearly suggests that public employee strikes can have both positive and negative effects on public employee outcomes. This aspect still needs further investigation in the specific context of public service attractiveness.

2.4 Organizational Justice as a variable in public sector employee outcomes

The preceding discussion has shown that organizational characteristics, along with job characteristics and individual employee attributes are the key factors that influence public service attractiveness. The organizational characteristics have been anchored on corporate reputation with the attendant factors of image and identity. Corporate reputation has been said to include factors like sincerity (Davies *et al.*, 2001), and openness (Schreurs *et al.*, 2009). The literature also showed that trust is another key influencing factor, especially for current employees. Wæraas and Byrkjeflot (2012) argued that organizations can only be attractive if they “appeal to our identity and make us feel good, admire, respect, and *trust* them, not just offer us something that meets our functional needs” (p.196), while Kim (2005) emphasized that the trustworthiness of government is determined by five factors: credible commitment, benevolence, honesty, competence, and fairness (p.622). This sincerity, openness, trustworthiness, credible commitment, honesty, and fairness has been construed as Organizational Justice, just as Greenberg (1990) explained that Organizational Justice means “fairness as a consideration in the workplace” (p.400).

In terms of the existing literature on organizational justice, Colquitt (2001) argued that the workplace interactions that employees face on a day-to-day basis, e.g., the salaries they earn, the projects they perform or the social settings in which they work “have both economic and socioemotional consequences, many of which form the foundation for why individuals work in organizations in the first place”. Because of this, employees tend to judge the workplace environment with a “very critical eye”, and one of the first questions they often ask is “was that fair?” (p.386). Cropanzano and Schminke (2001) added to this by suggesting that justice or fairness

is felt more clearly when there is an unfavorable event. They argued that "when something positive occurs, individuals have a reduced need for an explanation; (but) when something negative occurs, individuals try to understand it" (p.159). Like many other organizational justice researchers, these authors confirmed that organizational justice has different variations: distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice. These different forms of organizational justice are elaborated in greater detail by Colquitt (2001).

Whereas most of the empirical studies on organizational justice have been conducted in the private sector (Cho & Sai, 2013), there is also ample research explaining how organizational justice influences employee outcomes in the public sector. A comprehensive meta-analysis on the role of justice in organizations by Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001), which included 190 studies from both the private and public sector concluded that all forms of organizational justice are related to organizational citizenship behavior. Beyond that, organizational justice has been found to influence employee satisfaction, work performance, engagement in counterproductive behaviors, trust, organizational commitment, and emotional reactions, including mood and anger (pp.308-309). A similar meta-analytic review by Colquitt *et al.* (2001) which included 183 justice studies made very similar conclusions. Again, organizational justice was found to influence job satisfaction, organizational commitment, evaluation of authority, organizational citizenship behavior, withdrawal behavior, and employee performance (p.425).

In terms of specific public sector research, Cho and Sai (2013) used the 2008 Federal Human Capital Survey to investigate whether organizational justice matters in the Federal workplace. Their research confirmed that organizational justice in the public sector "matters". They found that all forms of organizational justice "are positively and significantly associated with employees' expectancy for career development, satisfaction, loyalty to senior leadership, and cooperation" (p.244). Relatedly, Ghosh *et al.* (2014) conducted a survey among 210 employees of public sector banks in India to investigate the relationship between organizational justice and employee engagement. They found that organizational justice has a strong positive influence on employee engagement in the public sector (pp.639-642). These results were not different from the findings of Heponiemi *et al.* (2011) who compared job attitudes among public and private physicians, using organizational justice and job control as possible mediators. Using a large sample of 2,569

physicians in Finland, they found that "physicians working in the private sector had higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment and lower levels of psychological distress and sleeping problems when compared with physicians working in the public sector." Unsurprisingly, "private physicians also had higher levels of organizational justice, which acted as a mediator behind more positive attitudes and better well-being in the private sector." Based on these findings, these authors advised public organizations to "invest effort to increase the fairness in their organizations" and argued that this "could possibly increase the attractiveness of the public sector as a career option" (p.520).

2.5 Research gap and position for the present research

This review has exposed critical gaps in the literature. Firstly, research on public service attractiveness has mostly focused on analyzing the perceptions of prospective public employees (mainly students and external job seekers). Very little analysis has been done on the perceptions of existing public employees, yet internal recruitment remains a critical source of labor for the public sector. It is probably assumed that current public employees are already 'attracted' to the sector, but as Harris (2000) argued, there are many instances where public employees choose not to internally apply for jobs especially when there is no guarantee that they have preference over external candidates as "it's very demoralizing when everyone knows you have been unsuccessful" (p.41). Indeed, Billsberry (2007) recommended that public sector employer attractiveness research needs to pay attention to *"the largely unresearched world of internal recruitment"* (p.144).

Additionally, most of the existing public sector attractiveness research focuses on individual attributes that are likely to predict people's attraction to public service employment, for example, personal traits like gender, age, family socialization, etc. (Korac *et al.*, 2020). Indeed, the largest number of publications on this subject have used the PSM theoretical platform, with the main argument being that some people have a greater public service orientation than others, and therefore more likely to be attracted to the public sector. Little attention has been given to understanding the characteristics and behavior of public sector organizations that would make them an attractive proposition for jobseekers, or indeed for existing public employees to continue working in the public sector. Yet, the behavior/characteristics of individual public organizations

might explain why certain public sector organizations are more attractive than others. It is also arguable that understanding the organizational characteristics that make public sector employment attractive would hand the initiative to public sector organizations to drive their own attractiveness.

Related to the above, it is also noticeable that the issue of fairness in the public sector has not been given its due attention. Yes, the literature underscores the value of corporate reputation and trust in applicant attraction and retention, but even when fairness is a strong antecedent to both reputation and trust, it has not been well-studied, especially in a public sector context. It is important to underline the fact that fairness (organizational justice) has already been found to affect a large number of employee outcomes: employee performance, commitment, motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, evaluation of authority, organizational citizenship behavior, withdrawal behavior, etc. (Cho & Sai 2013; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt *et al.,* 2001). Surely such a critical factor could also have an influence on attractiveness or is at least worth investigating in the context of public service attractiveness.

Besides content limitations, there is also an empirical gap in the literature. Most of the published research on public service attractiveness has been done in developed economies, especially in Western Europe and North America. Not much has been conducted in underdeveloped countries yet one would imagine that the increased skills shortage in places like Sub-Saharan Africa necessitates the need to understand attraction and retention of public employees even more (Rasool & Botha, 2011). Indeed, the little employer attractiveness research that has been conducted in Africa – and this is in the private sector – has suggested that US-Centric definitions of employer attractiveness might not wholly apply to the African context (Wolfswinkel & Enslin, 2020; Marika *et al.,* 2017). Bakanauskienė *et al.*'s (2017) argument that "what works in one industry sector or country may be quite different from what works in another" (p.5) makes the need to extend public sector attractiveness research to unresearched/under-researched contexts even more imperative.

Methodologically, most of the existing studies on public sector attractiveness have used quantitative methods, especially with the aid of employer attractiveness scales. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) pointed this out by noting that "a concern inherent in past studies on

organizational attractiveness was that researchers often determined a priori a fixed number of job and organizational characteristics" (p.84). Whereas this aids replicability, objectivity, and all the other advantages of quantitative methods, the respondents' lived experiences are not usually elaborately captured. The need for additional qualitative studies to supplement the existing quantitative evidence cannot be overemphasized.

Therefore, this research attempts to contribute to closing of the above gap in the following ways:

1) Based on the argument that organizational images and perceptions of people already working with the organization might be different from those held by outsiders (Dutton *et al.,* 1994), this research focuses exclusively on the perceptions of current public employees. The perceptions of current employees are based on lived realities, and not on assumptions or hearsay as is the case for prospective public employees. Lievens *et al.*'s (2005) research on the attractiveness of military organizations acknowledged that there might be a "gap between a romanticized view of this profession and organization, as portrayed in fiction and drama, and the realities of the 'hurry up and wait' stance required in many military jobs" (p.566). Ultimately, this might be the case for all kinds of jobs. This research therefore adds to the understanding of the insiders' view of public service attractiveness, thereby aiding both internal recruitment and employee retention.

2) Instead of focusing on individual attributes that make certain employees more likely to prefer the public sector, this research investigates the characteristics and behavior of public sector organizations that might make them attractive employers. The question of fairness in the public sector is central to the discussion herein. Consequently, this research hands the initiative to public sector organizations to drive their own attractiveness. This approach also increases relevance to practice as it highlights what public sector organizations need to do to improve their own internal attractiveness, rather than just hoping that there will always be individuals whose values match public sector values.

3) This research puts fairness in the public sector in the spotlight. For a factor that has been found to have such an influence on so many employee outcomes as it has, organizational justice is definitely worth investigating in the context of public service attractiveness. The added

motivation for using organizational justice as a key variable in this research is the fact that it has also been found to influence engagement in industrial action, which is a key contextual issue for this research. More so, fairness/justice is a major antecedent of corporate reputation and trust in organizations – factors that are said to be critical to the attractiveness of government employment – all pointing to the fact that it is worth investigating in its own right.

4) For parsimonious and contextual reasons, this research focuses on the perceptions of a special group of public employees: public university lecturers and public-school teachers who frequently engaged in industrial action, in a resource constrained setting. Firstly, it appeared that there was no single published research on public service attractiveness conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa. For sure there was none conducted in Uganda. There also appeared to be no public service attractiveness research focusing on public employees who engaged in industrial action. This might be because the phenomenon of frequent engagement in industrial action is not common in developed countries where most of the employer attractiveness research has been conducted. But in the case of Uganda, this was a big issue. It is also an issue in many other developing countries (Gall, 2014). This research is therefore the first one to investigate how and why engagement in industrial action interacts with internal public service attractiveness in this context.

5) Lastly, this research employs some methodological novelty. It uses an exploratory sequential design, which uses the qualitative findings as a platform for subsequent quantitative analysis. Qualitative perspectives were complemented by a structured quantitative inquiry. This ensured that the contextual details were not lost in the numbers, and that the numbers were backed up by context. This was particularly important, given that this was the first research of its kind in this particular setting. Importantly, the research did not start with any predefined variables. The only guide was to find out what made government employment attractive in the perspective of public employees who frequently engage in industrial action. This exploratory process unearthed Organizational Justice as the main independent variable, and from there, the research proceeded to establish why and how organizational justice, engagement in industrial action and public service attractiveness interact. This sequential incrementalism is also an addition to the methodological toolkit, especially in under-researched contexts.

3.0 THEORY

"Given that private sector strikes are essentially economic strikes, aiming to impose costs upon profit-seeking organizations, strikes in the public sector are essentially political, aiming to apply leverage on the government"
Gall, 2014, p.218

3.1 Introduction

The figure below is a brief illustration of the theoretical framework that has been adopted by this research to explain internal public service attractiveness from the perspective of public employees who frequently engage in industrial action.

Figure 3. 1: Theoretical interactions

As illustrated above, this chapter starts with the Social Movements theories to provide a basis for understanding why public employees frequently engage in industrial action. These theories suggest that engagement in industrial action is an attempt to "pay back" or "get even" with the employer. This denotes some sort of social exchange, necessitating the use of the Social Exchange theory. On its part, the Social Exchange theory suggests that persistent social exchanges at the workplace provide cues (signals) for the level of gratitude, or indeed disappointments that employees have towards their employer. For this reason, the interpretive power of the Signaling theory has been used to make sense of both the repetitive nature of industrial action and the framing of internal public service attractiveness from the perspective of public employees who frequently engaged in industrial action.

3.2 Why public employees engage in industrial action

In attempting to explain how, and why or why not, frequent engagement in industrial action relates to the internal attractiveness of government employment, it is important to understand why public employees engage in it in the first place. The theoretical underpinnings of the Social Movements theories provided a plausible explanation for this.

3.2.1 Social Movements Theories

McAdam *et al.* (2005) noted that the study of collective behavior was not given serious attention until the increased industrial turbulence of the 1960s and early 1970s in the US, and in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s (p.1). Since then, theorizing social movements has grown so much that it can no longer be described as one theory, but rather as a combination of many interrelated theories (Buechler, 1995). Theory building on this subject can be traced to the so-called 'Chicago School' with early groundwork made by luminaries like Park and Burgess (1921), French crowd analyst Gustave Le Bon (1960), and Neil Smelser (1962). But much of the structural definition of these theories is attributed to the later works of American theorists Gamson (1975), Tilly (1977), McCarthy and Zald (1977), and McAdam (1982). The European school of thought has also come up with the so-called New Social Movements theory with four distinct strands from theorists Castells, Touraine, Habermas, and Melucci (Buechler, 1995, p.443).

In their earliest form, Social Movements theories included four main approaches: the collective behavior approach, the mass society approach, relative deprivation, and the institutional school (McAdam *et al.*, 1988, pp.695-696). From a generalized perspective, these theories explain all sorts of collective behavior which could include political riots, coups, social protests, and general crowd behavior. However, in 1998, industrial psychologist John Kelly published his seminal book: *Rethinking Industrial Relations,* which specifically defined the Social Movements theories in the context of employee engagement in industrial action. This employee-specific conceptualization was described as the 'Mobilization theory'. Therefore, in explaining why Ugandan public employees frequently engaged in industrial action, this research used the Mobilization theory.

Kelly (1998) suggested that for employees to engage in industrial action they must perceive some sort of 'grievance'. However, "it is not enough for employees to feel aggrieved: they must also feel *entitled* to their demands and feel that there is some *chance* that their situation can be changed by 'collective agency'" (p.29). This conceptualization is linked to earlier work by American sociologist, Charles Tilly (1978), which had roots in Marxist ideology with its famed classification of ruling and working classes. In the context of public sector employee relations, the "ruling class" was conceptualized to mean senior state officials and employers, and the "working class" to mean the rank and file. According to Kelly, this classification gives rise to competing interests which

ultimately bread conflict. In summary, it is argued that the mobilization theory answers two important questions: how and why employees "acquire a sense of *injustice or grievance"*, and secondly, how "they develop a sense of their grievance being *collective*" (Kelly, 1998, pp.24-27). This indeed is the main assumption of the Social Movements theories, i.e.: "at a minimum, people need to feel both *aggrieved* about some aspect of their lives, and *optimistic*, that, acting collectively they can redress the problem" (McAdam *et al.* 1996, p.5).

The above postulations bring two important questions to the fore: first is the source of employee grievances, and second is the perceived instrumentality of collective action. Kelly (1998) suggested that these questions would be answered by two things: Relative Deprivation and Political Opportunity Structures.

3.2.1.1 Relative Deprivation

McAdam *et al.* (1988) mentioned Davies (1963), Aberle (1966) and Gurr (1970) as being among the 'chief proponents' of the relative deprivation hypothesis, with its main argument being that grievances stem from the perception that "one's membership group is in a disadvantageous position, relative to some other group" (McAdam *et al.*, 1988, p.696). Indeed, Gurr's classic book; *Why men rebel* (1970) was strongly hinged on this relative deprivation hypothesis. Gurr defined relative deprivation as a negative discrepancy between people's expectations and what they actually get and argued that: "the potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity" (1970, p.24). Korotayev & Shishkina (2020) connected this relative deprivation hypothesis to the Frustration-Aggression theory (Dollard, *et al*, 1939) which emphasizes that whereas frustration might not always be a sufficient cause, it is a necessary condition for aggression.

In the strict sense of employer-employee relations, the sources of relative deprivation have been explained by the Equity theory of motivation. In brief, the equity theory answers the questions of why employees feel relatively deprived; where their lofty expectations come from, who exactly they compare themselves with, and why. Robbins and Judge (2013) explained that employees tend to "perceive what they get from a job situation in relationship to what they put into it, and then compare their outcome-input ratio with that of relevant others." They added that any resultant feelings of being under-rewarded lead to "equity tension" which then creates anger, and "when

people are treated in an unjust manner (at least in their own eyes), they retaliate" (pp.219-223). Indeed, equity theorist, J.S. Adams connected workplace militancy to employee perceptions of injustice, arguing that if employees are dissatisfied with injustice, they tend to react in some way. He even asked a rhetorical question, to wit: "Does a man treated unfairly simply express dissatisfaction?... Are there not other consequences of unfair exchanges?" (Adams, 1965, p.268). This connection between relative deprivation and employee engagement in action against the employer was also supported by Skarlicki & Folger (1997). They argued that "if organizational decisions and managerial actions are deemed unfair or unjust, the affected employees experience feelings of anger, outrage, and resentment" which then provokes a desire for retribution, the need to "get even", and the desire to punish the employer (p.434).

Given that subjective feelings of inequity arise from making comparisons with *relevant others*, it is important to understand how employees choose those relevant others. Robbins and Judge (2013) suggested four sources of referent comparisons: the self-inside comparison which relates to employees comparing their personal experiences in different positions within the same organization; the self-outside comparison in which employees compare their current employment situation with past experiences in different organizations; the other-inside comparison where employees compare themselves to individuals or groups within the same organization; and the other-outside comparison in which employees compare themselves to individuals or groups outside their organization. These authors further argued that employees do not make thoughtless comparisons as their choices are "influenced by the information they hold about referents as well as by the attractiveness of the referent", with the moderating variables being "gender, length of tenure, level in the organization, and amount of education or professionalism" (p.220).

However, the relative deprivation hypothesis has been challenged (and, complemented) by more recent arguments that the existence of grievances alone is not enough for people to engage in collective action, but that they must also "*feel entitled"* to their demands and also "*feel that there is some chance"* for them to change the situation by acting collectively (McAdam *et al.,* 2001; Kelly, 1998; Gamson & Meyer 1996; Zald, 1996; Snow & Benford, 1992). The chief proponent of relative deprivation, Gurr, himself added further clarity to his earlier arguments by suggesting that if we want to understand the roots of protest, we must not just stop at analyzing relative

deprivation. Instead, we must consider three factors; "first is popular discontent (relative deprivation), along with an analysis of its sources; people's justifications or beliefs about the justifiability and utility of political action; and (thirdly), the balance between discontented people's capacity to act – that is, the ways in which they are organized – and the government's capacity to repress or channel their anger" (Gurr, 2011). This brings us to the next part of Kelly's (1998) conceptualization of engagement in industrial action: the political opportunity structures.

3.2.1.2 Political Opportunity Structures

Eisinger (1973) is credited with the earliest use of the concept of 'political opportunity structures' which he described as "elements in the environment (that) impose certain constraints on political activity or open avenues for it" (pp.11-12). Whereas Eisinger's analysis was specific to political protests, it has been extended to other forms of social movements (McAdam, 1982) and to the specific subject of employee engagement in industrial action (Biggs, 2002; Kelly, 1998). The existence of political opportunities is said to embolden actors by giving them the belief that they can change their situation by acting collectively. Commenting on the specific subject of employee engagement in industrial action, Biggs (2002) took the argument even further by suggesting that "workers respond to opportunities, rather than being motivated by grievances" (p.587).

So, what exactly are these political opportunities? Eisinger (1973) simply described them as "openings, weak spots, barriers, and resources" within the political system that facilitate or inhibit collective action (p.12). Marx and Wood (1975) provided another detailed explanation that is quite useful. They started by emphasizing that for people to act collectively, there must be a structural strain, i.e., "ambiguities, deprivations, tensions, conflicts, and discrepancies in the social order". However, collective action can only happen when such "strains occur in a conducive context, when an ideology interpreting the strain develops, when people are available for mobilization, and when social control is not unduly repressive" (p.376). They described these political opportunities as "necessary and sufficient conditions for collective behavior". And, these include: "structural conduciveness or the permissiveness of social arrangements" to allow collective organizing; "the growth and spread of generalized beliefs", including the framing of problems and possible solutions; "precipitating factors, or the occurrence of some type of specific event that gives the generalized beliefs concrete substance"; the strength of mobilization structures and "the ineffective

operation of control or the ineffectiveness of social counter-determinants that prevent, interrupt or inhibit the accumulation of other determinants of collective behavior" (ibid., pp.410-411).

In an explanation that is no different from the above, Doug McAdam, one of the foremost proponents the political opportunity theory, also described political opportunities as environmental factors that affect the "interaction between movement groups and the larger sociopolitical environment they seek to change". He argued that political opportunities can be internal or external to the agitating group, and that both forces are important, i.e., "social movements are not autonomous forces hurling toward their destiny only in response to the... intensity of commitment, and skill of activists. Nor are they epiphenomena completely at the mercy of groups in their external environment seeking to block or facilitate them" (McAdam, 1999, pp.39-40).

Another detailed description of how grievance(s) combine with political opportunities to stimulate collective action was provided by Campbell (2005) who suggested three major social mechanisms: environmental, cognitive, and relational. Environmental mechanisms are said to be the "external factors that affect actors' capacities to engage in change", the most important of which is the political opportunity structures. These are also divided into four: "the degree to which formal political institutions are open or closed to challengers of the status quo"; "the degree to which political elites are organized in stable or unstable coalitions and alignments"; "the degree to which movements have allies within the political elite"; and "the degree to which political authorities are willing to use repression against challengers" (p.44). Campbell suggested that these political opportunity structures could create incentives for actors to seek change or constrain the range of strategic alternatives to pursue change (2005, p.48).

Therefore, the first hypothesis was based on the duality of the above theoretical assumptions, thus:
H1: ***Public employees' engagement in industrial action is influenced by negative perceptions of employer fairness in combination with the existence of political opportunities.***

3.3 Explaining employer attractiveness from the perspective of public employees who frequently engage in industrial action

Employer attractiveness has been categorized into two: internal employer attractiveness, which is attractiveness from the perspective of current employees, and external employer attractiveness, i.e., attractiveness from the perspective of prospective employees or jobseekers (Pattnaik & Misra, 2014; Davies *et al.,* 2001; Dutton *et al.,* 1994). This research is exclusively focused on internal employer attractiveness. Onken-Menke *et al.* (2018) related this form of attractiveness to organizational attachment as both constructs involve employees evaluating their employer. Indeed, it could be argued that perceived employer attractiveness (from the perspective of current employees) is one of the explanations for both employee commitment and employee attachment.

It is also important to note that this research analyses the perceptions of a unique category of public employees: *public university lecturers and public-school teachers who frequently engaged in industrial action.* The postulations of the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) model (Schneider, 1987) have been used to understand why people get attracted to government employment in the first place. Indeed, the measurements for public service attractiveness that this research has employed have relied heavily on the person-organization fit and person-job fit literature (Brkich *et al.,* 2002; Cable & Judge, 1996; Kristof, 1996; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Schneider, 1987). However, as Schneider *et al.* (2000) argued, the Attraction-Selection-Attrition model is more suited to studying job choices at organizational entry and how individual employee attributes then influence the organizational environment or indeed, force them out of certain environments.

Another theoretical platform that has been frequently used to explain attraction to public service employment is the Public Service Motivation (PSM) model. However, even in developed countries, its applicability has not always yielded consistent results. Commenting on its applicability to the German context, Siegel and Proeller (2021) noted that its "resonance (and relevance) in terms of practice is rather limited" (p.384), while in the US context, Linos (2018) found that "personal benefits of applying for the job" were three times more likely to attract people to the public sector than PSM (p.67). In fact, Gabris and Simo (1995) were bold enough to suggest that "if public sector motivation does exist, its effect on employee behavior and attitudes toward work expectations and personal goals is negligible at best" (p.33). Therefore, although the PSM and the ASA model have been used to provide a framework for understanding attraction to public

service employment, a different theoretical model has been chosen to explain public service attractiveness from the specific context of current public employees, more so, those who frequently engaged in industrial action. For this, the social exchange theory has been chosen.

3.3.1 Social Exchange Theory

In its broadest sense, the social exchange theory explains interactions between two parties, involving the voluntary exchange of gifts, rewards, favors and or, actions which then obligates one party to the other. The medium of exchange "is not exclusively goods and wealth, real and personal property, and things of economic value", but rather "courtesies, entertainments, rituals… and fairs in which the market is but one element" (Blau, 1964, p.89). Peter Blau, who is one of foremost proponents of this theory emphasized that "the basic and most crucial distinction" between social exchange and economic exchange is that "social exchange entails *unspecified* obligations", and "the benefits involved in social exchange do not have an exact price in terms of a single quantitative medium of exchange". In brief, social exchanges are not based on formal contracts or bargained obligations or indeed value-specific returns as is the case with economic exchanges. What social exchanges create is the expectation of some sort of reciprocation. This reciprocation is not expected to be immediate, neither is it explicitly spelt out. Blau further argued that "only social exchange tends to engender feelings of personal obligation, gratitude, and trust; purely economic exchange as such does not" (ibid., pp.93-94).

Another notable luminary of the social exchange theory, George Homans, was also keen to distinguish social exchanges from economic exchanges by suggesting that social exchanges are not based on rewards, but rather on the context and "value of rewards". Once again, the core argument here was that there is no definite price for social interactions, courtesies, behavior, or other items (tangible or intangible) in social exchanges. Most importantly, it was emphasized that such exchanges could occur between two or more individuals or between an individual and a "non-human environment" (Homans, 1961, p.39). This application to non-human entities is what makes the Social Exchange theory suitable for the present research as it could potentially explain employee interactions with government (which could be perceived to be non-human).

Indeed, Redmond (2015) noted that "the social exchange theory has been applied to almost every type of social situation" including organizational management, consumer behavior, politics, and marriage (p.5). Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) also argued that the social exchange theory is "one of the most influential conceptual paradigms in organizational behavior", especially because it has "the potential to provide a unitary framework for much of organizational behavior" (p.874).

In the specific context of employee-employer relations, Eisenberger and colleagues applied the social exchange theory in studying the effect of perceived organizational support on employee commitment. They argued that "employees tend to view actions by agents of the organization as actions of the organization itself" because "the organization has a legal, moral and financial responsibility for the actions of its agents". This personification of the organization then allows employees to enter an exchange relationship with the organization. Through this exchange, "employees develop global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being", and it is from these beliefs that they develop judgements of perceived organizational support, which then influences their attitude towards the organization (Eisenberger *et al.,* 1986, pp.500-501). Bishop *et al.* (2000) also used the social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) to suggest that employees express positive attitudes towards their employer (e.g., affective commitment to the organization, team commitment, and job performance) based on their perception of how supportive the employer is towards them (pp.1116-1118).

Based on the above, this study assumes that: *Public employees' perception of internal public service attractiveness is influenced by the perceived level of organizational support.*

In addition to organizational support, Witt and Wilson (1990) also underlined *fairness* as a key ingredient of workplace social exchanges. Their study on the interactions between income sufficiency, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment found that some sort of social quid pro quo relationship exists between employees and the employer, with employees giving back to the organization what they feel it deserves. For example, "if treated fairly, they will work hard, if not, they won't" (p.267). This fairness exchange was also supported by Puri (2018), Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), and Organ and Konovsky (1989).

Relatedly, this study further assumes that: *Public employees' perception of internal public service attractiveness is influenced by the perceived level of employer fairness.*

To fully appreciate how organizational support and employer fairness are contextualized by employees, it is important to note the frequent use of the organizational personification metaphor in studying employer attractiveness. This follows in the footsteps of Argyris's (1957) conceptualization of the 'corporate personality'. Notable studies on employer attractiveness that have personified the organization include: Kausel and Slaughter (2011); Schreurs *et al.* (2009); Chapman *et al.* (2005); Slaughter *et al.* (2004); Lievens and Highhouse (2003); Davies *et al.* (2001) and Aaker (1997). In fact, Puri (2018) specifically fused the personification metaphor with the social exchange theory to study how voluntary behavior on the part of the employee, including internal attraction to the organization is influenced by perceptions of organizational justice and or, fairness.

Therefore, following in the above footsteps, the present research adopted Blau's (1964) argument that only social exchange can explain "feelings of personal obligation, gratitude, and trust" among employees towards their employer. The rationale for choosing the social exchange theory for this analysis was eloquently elaborated by Organ and Konovsky (1989), thus:

> "In the job context, the exchange between employee and organization is obviously some mixture of both economic and social exchange. However, the frequent rendering of organizational citizenship behavior gestures would seem to reflect mainly a sense of social exchange relationship with the organization in that it does not inhere in contractual obligations. So long as the individual can sustain an attitude of trust in the long-term fairness of the organization in the relationship, he or she need not worry about the recompense for this or that specific organizational citizenship behavior gesture. If, however, that trust is violated by perceived unfairness in the relationship, the tendency is to recast the relationship in terms of a more rigidly defined economic exchange, with services rendered only upon the more contractually enforceable quid pro quo. Thus, the extent to which organizational citizenship behavior is given in an unrestrained manner would seem to depend on intermittent cognitive appraisal of fairness of overall treatment by the organization" (p.162).

Therefore, as elaborated above, the present research assumed that Ugandan public university lecturers who frequently engaged in industrial action were likely to perceive the attractiveness of government employment based on their interactions and relationships built through social exchanges with the government as their employer. Just as Organ and Konovsky (1989) argued, "appraisals of work conditions or outcomes" are likely to depend more on social exchanges between the employer and the employees, and any form of organizational citizenship behavior "cannot be accounted for by incentives that sustain in-role behavior", but rather by the attitudes built through social exchanges (Organ & Konovsky, 1989, p.158).

Therefore, the second hypothesis this research makes is that:

H2: ***Public service attractiveness from the perspective of public employees who frequently engage in industrial action is influenced by their perception of organizational support and employer fairness (organizational justice).***

3.4 Relationship between engagement in industrial action and the attractiveness of government employment

In one of the earliest critiques of research on the effects of collective action, McAdam *et al.* (1988) argued that although research on social movement outcomes had focused more on policy changes, it had "begun to shift attention toward other more indirect outcomes of movement action" (p.727). This research took a similar route to investigate the possible indirect effect of public employees' engagement in industrial action on their perception of internal public service attractiveness. The idea was to investigate how or if, public employees' engagement in industrial action affected their perception of the attractiveness of government as an employer. Would internal public service attractiveness be perceived differently by public employees who frequently engaged in industrial action as opposed to those who do not? If so, why? And if not, why?

The Signaling theory provided a suitable framework for investigating this particular aspect.

3.4.1 Signaling Theory

In his seminal work on job market signaling, Spence (1973) described the information asymmetry that typifies the job market. The main argument was that in the absence of perfect information, recruiters have to rely on cues or signals to judge an unknown candidate's capabilities. He then distinguished signals which are "observable characteristics attached to the individual that are subject to manipulation by him" from fixed attributes which he called "indices" (p.357). The publication laid ground for what is now known as the Signaling Theory. It has since grown to become one of the most popular theories in the Management literature. As Connelly *et al.* (2011) noted, the "signaling theory holds a prominent position in a variety of management literatures, including strategic management, entrepreneurship, and human resource management" (p.39).

So, what exactly is the signaling theory about? In its basic form, the signaling theory explains situations where two parties have access to different kinds of information, and one party chooses how to convey the information they hold (the signal) while the other chooses how to interpret it (Connelly *et al.,* 2011). However, not all signals are intentional on the part of the communicator. For example, Spence (1973) noted that candidates' levels of education could be used by recruiters as signals for their (candidates') eventual job performance, but "the individual, in acquiring education, need not think of himself as signaling" (p.358). Indeed, the existence of unintentional

signals has been widely acknowledged in the literature (Spence, 2002; Janney & Folta, 2003) as "parties may send a wide range of signals without even being aware they are signaling" (Connelly *et al.,* 2011, p.59).

In the Management literature, the signaling theory has been used in a variety of scenarios. In one of the highly cited texts in the recruitment literature, Rynes (1991) used the Signaling theory to suggest that in the absence of perfect information, job applicants use recruitment characteristics as signals to make conclusions about the organization as an employer. For example, "recruiter preparedness may become a symbol of general organizational efficiency".

On the specific subject of employer attractiveness, Turban (2001) used the signaling theory to study firms' attractiveness on college campuses. He proposed a "mediation model in which recruitment activities influence attraction through influencing perceptions of job and organizational attributes". For example, he argued that "unimpressive recruitment messages may signal that the company does not invest much in developing human resources, resulting in low attraction to the firm" (p.295). Highhouse *et al.* (2007) also used the signaling theory to study the "self-presentation goals that underlie attraction to organizations." They argued that "prospective jobseekers draw inferences about instrumental and symbolic features from the signals in the marketplace" (p.136), further suggesting that "many of the associations that make up a company's distinctiveness as an employer go beyond the perceived quality of its pay, benefits, and opportunities for promotion, and deal with less tangible properties of the corporation (e.g., Apple is 'hip', IKEA is 'fashionable')" (ibid., p.134). Lievens *et al.* (2001) also used the signaling theory to study the effect of objective organizational characteristics on applicant attraction to the organization. They argued that because "organizational characteristics are visible and salient for applicants quite early in the application process, they might be perceived as signals of the organizational culture and values and, hence, influence applicants' intentions to pursue further contact with a firm" (p.33). Indeed, the signaling theory has been one of the most popular theoretical frameworks used in the study of employer attractiveness (e.g., Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Ryan *et al.,* 2000; Gatewood *et al.,* 1993).

One of the most convincing reasons for the popularity of the Signaling theory in employer attractiveness research was given by Highhouse and colleagues (2007) who argued that "because impressions of the employer are in the head of the prospective applicant, psychology is the appropriate place to find answers about the content of these impressions, and how these impressions can be damaged, or resurrected" (p.146). In this research, I argue that the same holds true for current employees.

It is also important to note that in most of the employer attractiveness research where the signaling theory has been used, signals have been used as mediators for employer attractiveness. Turban (2001) rationalized this approach with the argument that researchers should not assume that anything is "unimportant because it does not directly influence attraction", as some things might not have direct effects, but explain *"how"* attraction is influenced (p.306). Appropriately therefore, this research makes three assumptions in relation to the signaling power of industrial action:

a. *Persistent engagement in industrial action is a signal for limited attraction to government employment.*

The above assumption views industrial action as an expression of the frustration or retaliation against an 'unattractive' employer, just as the Social Movements theory suggested that when employees feel relatively deprived, they retaliate. Indeed, the Social Exchange theory also suggested that employees would pay perceived unfairness with 'quid pro quo' retaliation.

However, there is an alternative possibility that:

b. *Persistent engagement in industrial action is a positive signal for the attractiveness of government employment.*

There is a large strand of research that supports the above alternative assumption. For example, Gunderson (2005) argued that employee strikes can have "positive cathartic effects" by "releasing pent-up pressures" and that public employees might feel more valued when they have opportunities to express their voice, or a platform to influence some aspects of their work. Similar arguments were advanced by Hebdon and Stern (2003), Godard (2011) and Gall (2014).

Finally, in terms of the relationship between the three variables, this research assumes that:

c. *Engagement in industrial action mediates the relationship between organizational justice and employer attractiveness.*

The above interaction happens in a way that public employees' engagement in industrial action prompts a response from government which then provides the most evocative scale for public employees to make judgements on the attractiveness of government as an employer. This process is similar to what Marx and Wood (1975) described in the political opportunities structure as "specific events that give generalized beliefs concrete substance" (p.411).

Therefore, this research made two further hypotheses:

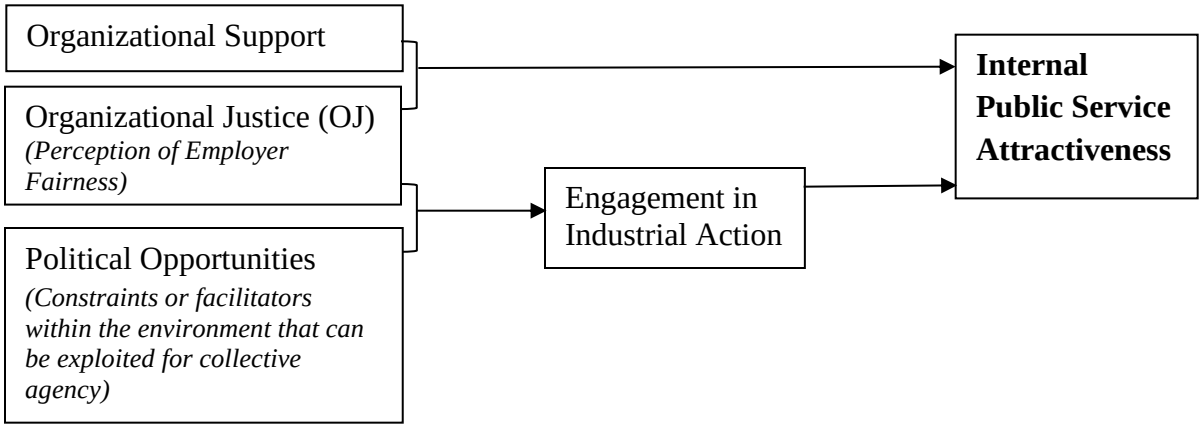
H3: ***Public employees' engagement in industrial action influences their perception of internal public service attractiveness.***

H4: ***Public employees' engagement in industrial action mediates the relationship between organizational justice and internal public service attractiveness.***

3.5 Conclusion

The above discussion has suggested that public employees are likely to engage in industrial action if they perceive their employer as being unjust and if they have access to political opportunities that can be exploited to actualize collective agency. Furthermore, employer attractiveness was theorized as a 'social exchange' in which employees give positive ratings of employer attractiveness based on perceived employer fairness and the level of organizational support. Finally, frequent engagement in industrial action was assumed to be a signal for internal employer attractiveness, or the absence of the same. Frequent engagement in industrial action was therefore hypothesized to mediate the relationship between organizational justice and employer attractiveness, either positively or negatively. These hypotheses are illustrated in the figure below:

Figure 3. 2: Hypothesized research model



4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research methods and provides a rationale for the same. It also provides a brief overview of the case study and context of this research, as well as an appraisal of the different data collection and analysis tools used.

4.2 Research Design

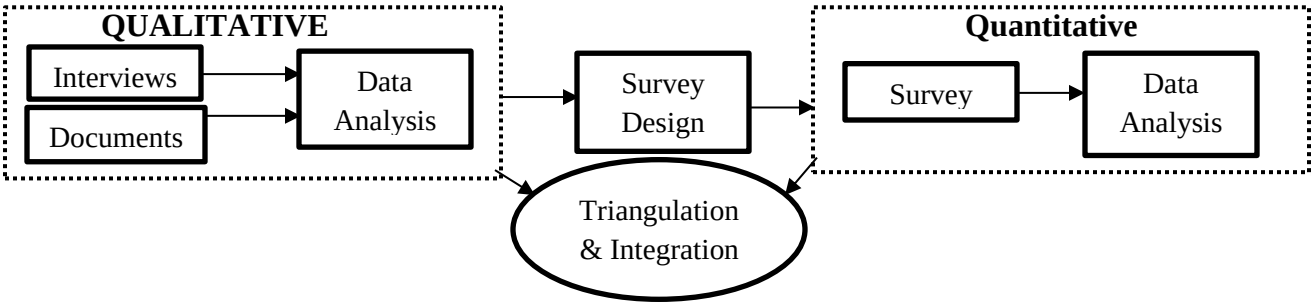
This research was conducted using mixed methods with an Exploratory Sequential Design (QUAL→quant). Mihas and Odum Institute (2019) provided a detailed explanation of the exploratory sequential design by suggesting that when using this type of design, the qualitative and quantitative phases of the research interact in a way that the qualitative phase "provides critical fodder for developing specific research questions for the quantitative phase" (p.3). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) also described the Exploratory Sequential Design as a method that "begins with and prioritizes the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the first phase" and then builds on that first phase to specify research questions, develop data collection tools, and identify participants for the quantitative phase. The quantitative phase then focuses on expanding the initial qualitative findings by collecting complementary data and conducting counterpart analyses. The logic for choosing this sort of design "is based on the premise that an exploration is needed for one of several reasons: (1) measures or instruments are not available, (2) the variables are unknown, or (3) there is no guiding framework or theory". Finally, "because this design begins qualitatively, it is best suited for exploring a phenomenon" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, pp.72-87). Panke (2018) also argued that the explorative sequential design is "useful if the empirical object of interest is novel" and when "we do not yet have informed ideas about what explanatory forces might be at play" (p.131).

The above description fits the exact context of the present research. This research set out to explore internal public service attractiveness from the perspective of Ugandan public employees who frequently engaged in industrial action. In the context of Uganda, such research had not been conducted before, so indeed, the variables were largely unknown. The only starting point was to

ask why public employees in this context persistently engaged in industrial action, and how, why (or why not) their engagement interacted with the internal attractiveness of government employment. This was a purely exploratory question that necessitated the use of qualitative methods. However, given that engagement in strike activities is a highly emotive issue, it was important to increase the objectivity of the qualitative results by complementing them with additional quantitative data. This is exactly as Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) argued that the exploratory sequential design is most suitable "when the researcher wants to generalize, assess, or test qualitative exploratory results to see if they can be generalized to a sample and a population" (p.87). Beyond the suitability of the exploratory sequential design to the structure of this research, mixed methods have been found to have several advantages, e.g., that they increase the accuracy of research findings, help to project multiple voices and constructions of a phenomenon, and help in the logical implementation of theoretical frameworks (Moran-Ellis *et al.*, 2006, p.47).

The sequential nature of this design meant that the qualitative phase was designed at the start of the study without a predetermination of what might appear in the subsequent quantitative phase. It is the results of the qualitative phase that determined the direction of the quantitative phase, as illustrated in the figure below:

Figure 4. 1: Brief illustration of the research design

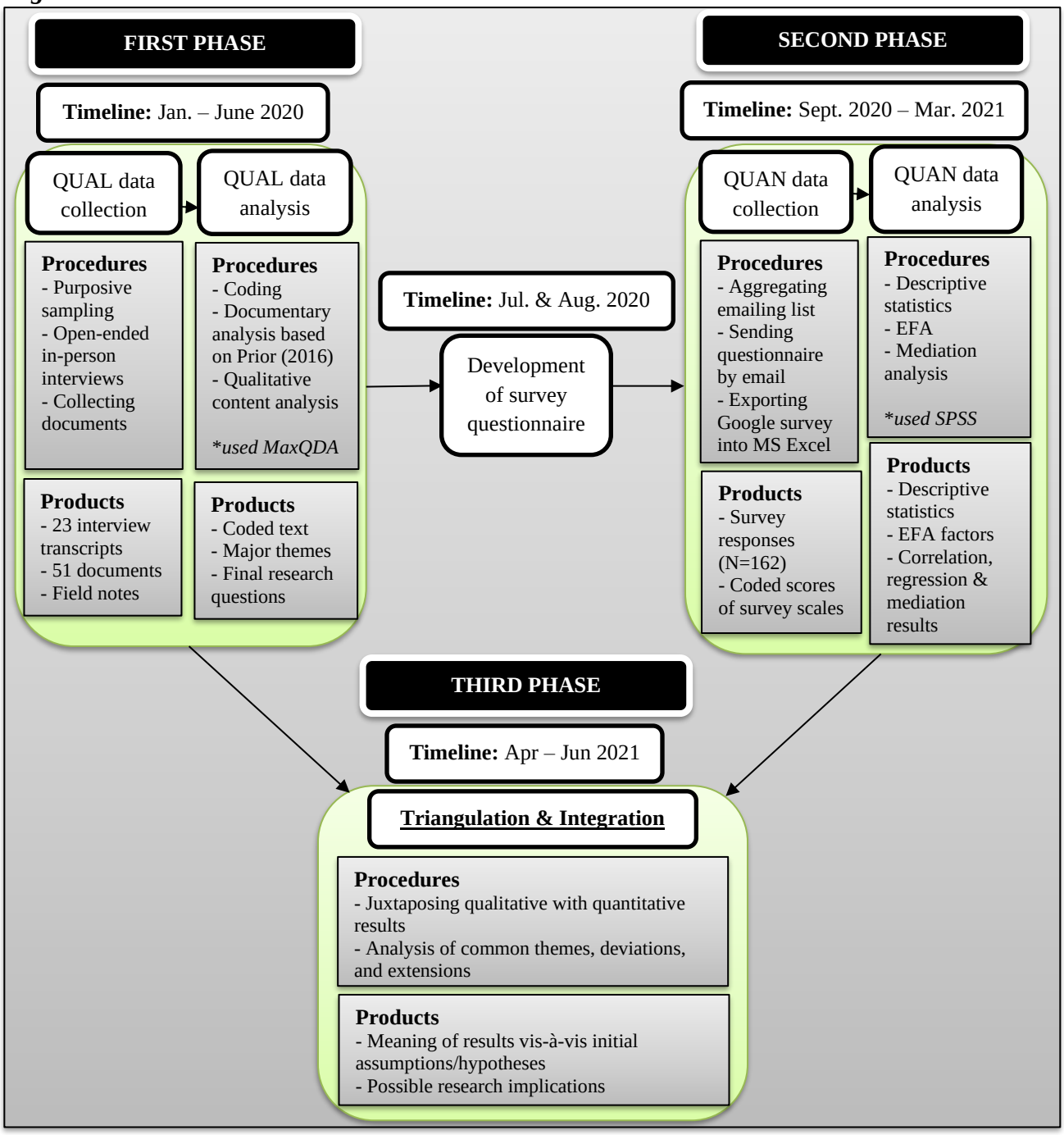


Adapted from: Wu (2012, p.183)

As illustrated above, the initial qualitative phase included interviews and documentary analysis. The collection of documents and conduct of interviews was done in January and February 2020, followed by the qualitative analysis (March to June 2020). The qualitative results were then used to design an online survey for the quantitative phase, which was administered between September

and December 2020. The quantitative analysis was done between January and March 2021, and finally triangulation and integration (April to June 2021). Below is an elaborate figure detailing how this research design was practically actualized:

Figure 4. 2: Detailed Research Process



4.3 Case Study and Case Selection

As indicated in the above discussion, this research was conducted in three phases: the qualitative phase, quantitative phase and the final step being triangulation and integration. The first phase begun with an exploration of two case studies: public school teachers and public university lecturers in Uganda. The decision to use a case study was based on methodological guidance provided by Yin (2014), who argued that methods should be selected based on three criteria: the form of research question; whether the study requires control of behavioral events; and whether it focuses on contemporary events. Yin suggested that case study research is most suitable when the questions to be answered are 'why' and 'how' questions "because such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidences". The case study method is also used "when examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated" as it offers the opportunity to access different forms of evidence, including documents, artefacts, observations, and interviews (Yin, 2014, pp.9-14). This indeed was the case for the present research.

Having settled on the case study as the method of choice, the next step was to find a suitable case. Yin (2014) suggested five different case study designs. The present research used what has been described as an "*extreme* case" or "*unusual* case", which is a case that deviates from "theoretical norms or even everyday occurrences" (p.52). The main goal of this research was to explore how (and why or why not) frequent engagement in industrial action interacts with internal public service attractiveness. Frequent engagement in industrial action is not a very common phenomenon among public employees, especially in developed economies. Even in developing countries, industrial action is not something that is always associated with the public sector, especially because of the prohibitions that come with it in a public sector setting (Bauernschuster *et al.*, 2017).

However, public school teachers and public university lecturers in Uganda are a notable exception. The frequency of strike action among these two sets of Ugandan public employees is so high that their engagement is now more of an expectation, rather than an exception. Whereas many public servants (especially those in the so-called essential services) are not allowed to go on strike, the education sector is exempt from this restriction. The International Labour Organization (ILO) principles on the right to strike expressly specify the education sector as one whose right to strike shall not be curtailed (ILO, 2006, para. 587). The Ugandan labor laws (Constitution of the Republic

of Uganda, 1995, Article 40; The Uganda Public Service Standing Orders, 2010, Section G) also allow public school teachers and public university lecturers the right to unionize and consequently, the right to engage in "lawful strikes". Indeed, public school teachers and public university lecturers in Uganda have been consistently involved in a series of strike activities over the past fifteen years. Within this period, these two groups of public employees have been going on strike at least once a year – usually more than that as their strikes are generally staged at the start of every school term or semester.

Therefore, to understand how frequent engagement in industrial action interacts with public service attractiveness, it was only logical to choose public employees who frequently engaged in industrial action, more so in a context which the researcher was familiar with. The initial exploratory phase of this study therefore started with two cases: public school teachers and public university lecturers in Uganda – who were indeed the natural choice in this respect. The use of two or more cases in qualitative studies has been said to increase the overall robustness of research results by making the evidence "more compelling" (Yin, 2014, p.57). Moreover, not much was known about both cases to aid the choice of one case over the other.

4.4 Sampling

As already elaborated, this research was conducted in three phases: an initial qualitative phase, a quantitative phase, and the third phase being triangulation and integration. Different sampling techniques were used for each of the data collection phases.

4.4.1 Sampling method for the qualitative phase

For the qualitative phase, I used the non-probability purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling, also called judgmental sampling relies on the researcher's judgement to select subjects that best represent the population. Berg (2001) argued that purposive sampling techniques are preferable in studies that target "certain types of individuals or persons displaying certain attributes" (p.32). There are different techniques used in purposive sampling. In the present research, I used the *critical case purposive sampling technique* for the in-depth interviews. Critical case sampling involves selecting participants that are "crucial to the operation of what is being researched" and can therefore provide a "vibrant illustration" (Saunders & Townsend, 2018,

p.488). Patton (2015) also described critical case sampling as a technique that involves selecting participants on the basis of being able to demonstrate a position "dramatically", and therefore being *critical* to the understanding what would be a typical case. Therefore, on the basis of trying to understand how frequent engagement in industrial action relates to internal public service attractiveness, my goal was to choose participants with first-hand experience in engaging, organizing, and leading industrial action. The best chance for this was to interview representatives of the public-school teachers and public university lecturers who led their colleagues in conducting strike activities. Indeed, critical case purposive sampling was the most logical choice, just as Sharma (2017) noted that it is most suitable when the researcher is interested in establishing "whether the phenomenon is worth investigating further" (p.751), as was the case for this research.

Public school teachers in Uganda are unionized under the Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU). It is the only union for teachers in the Ugandan public sector, and its membership is limited only to teachers "on government payroll". Joining this teachers' union is voluntary, but its decisions are binding on all its members. On the other hand, public university lecturers in Uganda are not formally unionized. They are organized in loose associations at university level: the so-called 'public university academic staff associations.' The academic staff associations in the different public universities are then united in another loose umbrella body called the Forum for Academic Staff of Public Universities in Uganda (FASPU). Industrial action by public university lecturers can be sanctioned by either FASPU or by the individual university academic staff associations. Given that the academic staff associations in the different public universities are independent of each other, it is not uncommon to find an academic staff association in one public university calling for industrial action while academic staff in other public universities continue to work normally. Indeed, it is often the case that lecturers in a public university go on strike while non-teaching staff in the same university continue to work.

Therefore, the interview sample included two groups: union executives from the Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU) and executive committee members from the different public university academic staff associations. The respondents were not office-based union executives, but rather practicing public school teachers and public university lecturers who only had the added responsibility of representing their colleagues at Union or Association level.

The documents were collected as a convenience sample – on the basis of availability. These documents were sourced from the teachers' union (UNATU) and the public university lecturers' forum (FASPU). A description of the collected documents is included in the Appendix.

4.4.2 Sampling method for the quantitative phase

As described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), when using an exploratory sequential design, it is the results of the initial qualitative phase that determine the research questions, data collection tools, and research participants for the quantitative phase. The initial qualitative results showed that the two groups interviewed in the first phase had some differences. One of the key differences was that public school teachers did not make individualized decisions on whether to engage in industrial action or not. Once the leadership of the teachers' union (UNATU) decided that industrial action is the way to go, every public-school teacher across the country was obliged to engage in it. The university lecturers on the other hand had more individual autonomy. Individual lecturers did not face any formal sanctions if they chose not to engage in industrial action, even if it was called by a staff association or forum they belonged to. Indeed, there was evidence of some individual lecturers choosing not to engage in industrial action, against the directives of their staff associations. Given that this research was more suited to an individual level analysis, it was decided that public university lecturers (who made individualized decisions to engage or not to engage in industrial action) would be the only participants for the quantitative phase. Therefore, public school teachers were not involved in the subsequent quantitative phase.

The quantitative phase was based on an online survey. The survey respondents were selected using a probability sampling technique described by Couper (2000) as *"List-based samples of high-coverage populations"*. This Web-survey approach begins with preparing a frame or list of possible survey respondents with Web access. Then "invitations are sent by e-mail", and "access is controlled to prevent multiple completions by the same respondent" (Couper, 2000, p.485). Andrews, *et al.* (2003) also described this technique as "list-based sampling", whereby "everyone on a list is sent an invitation to increase coverage" (p.190). Similar to the forementioned authors, Fricker Jr (2017) described this method as a "list-based simple random sampling" technique and argued that it is "straightforward to implement" as it "requires nothing more than the contact information (generally an email address for an online survey)" (p.168). The drawback for this

sampling technique, as acknowledged by Couper (2000), Andrews and colleagues (2003), and Fricker Jr (2017) is that it does not address nonresponses. However, in some instances, as was the case for this research, it is the only possible option to take. More so, sending multiple emails and email reminders can help mitigate this limitation.

In consistence with the above description, I received lists of email addresses for public university lecturers in Uganda from the Forum for Academic Staff of Public Universities in Uganda (FASPU). The Forum maintains a database for its member associations (the academic staff associations in public universities) with contact details of their respective members (i.e., the individual lecturers). Nevertheless, the lists were not comprehensive, so I supplemented them with publicly available email addresses on university websites. I visited the websites of the different public universities in Uganda and copied out the email addresses of their academic staff. Reaching the public university lecturers in Uganda by email was the only option as there was no pre-recruited panel database to call upon. To avoid multiple entries, I used the data sorting tool in Microsoft Excel to ensure that each email address only appeared once on the list. In total, my list had 1,309 unique entries. This was about 45% of the total study population as the Forum for Academic Staff of Public Universities in Uganda (FASPU) reported that it had 2,911 members, as of July 1, 2020. After sorting the email addresses, I created mailing batches and sent the link to the survey questionnaire in individualized emails – using the blind carbon copy (bcc) tool. I then sent out reminder emails after every two weeks (for a period of three months).

In the context of Uganda, the response rates would have been higher if I had used a printed questionnaire. This is especially because internet connectivity is not well-spread. However, given that this research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the associated lockdowns and travel restrictions, the use of printed questionnaires was practically impossible. This is why I had to settle for an online questionnaire, and indeed the sampling method described above. The advantage though was that public university lecturers generally have higher access to the internet than the rest of the population as they also have online teaching obligations. The situation would have been different if I had also targeted public school teachers (who generally have limited internet access) in the second phase, as was the case in the first phase.

4.5 Data Collection

For **the qualitative phase**, I developed an interview protocol based on the comprehensive guidance provided by Jacob and Furgerson (2012), with all the interview questions being open-ended. The interview questions were designed from a phenomenological perspective, which Groenewald (2004) described as being "concerned with the lived experiences of the people involved, or who were involved, with the issue that is being researched" (p.44). To further clarify what phenomenology is about, Creswell (2013) emphasized that phenomenological studies do not focus "on the life of an individual but rather on understanding the lived experiences around a phenomenon" (p.122). The phenomenon of interest for this study was frequent engagement in industrial action. The interview questions were therefore designed to interrogate the lived experiences around this phenomenon, and especially how it relates to the internal attractiveness of government employment, and the motivation to continue working for government. A copy of the interview protocol is included in the Appendix.

Twenty-three (23) face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted: nine with union leaders from the Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU) – the trade union for public school teachers in Uganda; and fourteen with executive committee members of academic staff associations in public universities. The nine teacher representatives were schoolteachers working in public schools, but with the additional responsibility of representing their colleagues in Union meetings. The public university lecturers on the other hand were not formally unionized, but they had loose associations at university-level: the so-called 'public university academic staff associations.' The fourteen lecturers' representatives that were interviewed were executive committee members of academic staff associations from across eight different public universities. They were essentially university lecturers, but with the added responsibility of leading and mobilizing their colleagues for collective action. This ensured that they had some experience in not only engaging, but also in leading industrial action.

The initial qualitative phase also included documentary analysis. Fifty-one (51) documents, including minutes and resolutions to declare or halt industrial action; notices and memos to members declaring the start or end of industrial action; and official letters written by the teachers' union/staff associations to the central government ministry of education, and to relevant public

managers were collected. These documents were sourced from the Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU), and from different academic staff associations in public universities through their umbrella body, the Forum for Academic Staff of Public Universities in Uganda (FASPU). A descriptive list of the documents that were used in this research has also been included in the Appendix.

Finally, for the second phase – **the quantitative phase** – an online questionnaire was used. As already mentioned, three main variables were tested in the survey questionnaire: Internal public service attractiveness, Organizational justice, and Engagement in industrial action. Engagement in industrial action was investigated using a simple ratio scale that asked how many times respondents had participated in different forms of industrial action during their time working in a public university. The forms of industrial action that were listed in the survey questionnaire had been aggregated from the qualitative results. For the other two variables, the Organizational Justice scale (Colquitt, 2001), and the Employer Attractiveness Scale (*EmpAt*) developed by Berthon *et al.* (2005) were used. These two were 5-point Likert scales, from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Given that the *EmpAt* was primarily developed to measure the attractiveness of private sector employers, it was adapted for this study to include items from the Internal Attractiveness Scale by Trybou *et al.* (2014), and adaptations from public sector-oriented scales by Cable and Turban (2001), Highhouse *et al.* (2003), and Lievens *et al.* (2005). It also included items from the Person-Organization fit literature (Cable & Judge, 1996; Kristof, 1996; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Schneider, 1987) and the job fit scale (Brkich *et al.*, 2002). To test organizational justice, Colquitt's (2001) Organizational Justice scale was used without changes. This was because it has been lauded as probably the most widespread organizational justice measure with multiple validations performed around the world (Omar *et al.*, 2018). Indeed Maier *et al.* (2007) validated its German translation with a sample of 512 employees from different organizations in Germany and confirmed the four factors as proposed by Colquitt (2001). Similar validations were made in Italy (Di Fabio, 2008), Norway (Olsen *et al.*, 2012), Japan (Shibaoka *et al.*, 2010), and Puerto Rico (Rodríguez-Montalbán *et al.*, 2015), among others. All these studies confirmed the dimensionality, reliability, validity, and consistence of Colquitt's (2001) scale. This gave me the confidence to adopt it for the Ugandan context, without changes.

Even when it needed modification to suit this research, the *EmpAt* scale (Berthon *et al.*, 2005) was chosen because, compared to other existing employer attractiveness scales, it has been praised for offering "more convergence in terms of attribute classification" as it integrates dimensions from different taxonomies (Reis & Braga, 2016, p.106). Roy (2008) actually argued that Berthon *et al.'s* (2005) *EmpAt* scale is "the only validated scale existing in the literature for identifying the attractiveness dimensions of an employer brand" (p.117). Indeed, it is by far the most popular employer attractiveness scale having been used in the marketing literature (e.g., Babikova & Bucek, 2019; Wallace *et al.*, 2012; Arachchige & Robertson, 2011), applied psychology (e.g., Eger *et al.*, 2019; Holtbrügge & Kreppel, 2015), and in the HR literature (e.g., Santiago, 2019; Liu, 2018; Reis *et al.*, 2017; Reis & Braga, 2016). But as already mentioned, most of its usability has been in the private sector, and this is why I made edits to adapt it to a public sector context.

The online survey was completed by 162 respondents, representing a response rate of 12% of the 1,309 email addresses to whom the online questionnaire was sent. All the responses were usable with no missing data. This was because the questionnaire was restricted to only allow submission when all questions were completely answered. Below are some key descriptive statistics for the study respondents:

Table 4. 1: Description of quantitative study respondents

Table 4.1a: Gender of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	115	71.0	71.0	71.0
	Female	47	29.0	29.0	100.0
	Total	162	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.1b: Respondents' Type of Employment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Permanent employment	126	77.8	77.8	77.8
	Fixed-term contract	25	15.4	15.4	93.2
	Part-time employment	10	6.2	6.2	99.4
	Probation	1	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	162	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.1c: Respondents' Current Position

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Professor	20	12.3	12.3	12.3
	Senior Lecturer	24	14.8	14.8	27.2
	Lecturer	57	35.2	35.2	62.3
	Assistant Lecturer	51	31.5	31.5	93.8
	Teaching Assistant	9	5.6	5.6	99.4
	Non-teaching academic staff	1	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	162	100.0	100.0	

The three tables above highlight the representativeness of the quantitative data. **Table 4.1a** shows a ratio of 7:3 for male and females. This agrees with the population estimates of about 65% male and 35% female. **Table 4.1b** was a perfect fit for the population as it was reported that about 80% of the population were on permanent employment contracts and at least 10% were on fixed-term contracts, including older professors who had retired but were still hold short-term contracts. **Table 4.1c** is also representative of the population, as FASPU reported that the majority of its members were at the level of 'Lecturer' and 'Assistant Lecturer' which in Germany might be comparable to the appointment grades of 'Juniorprofessor' and 'Juniordozent', respectively. As already mentioned, the survey response rate was 12% of the 1,309 public university lecturers that were emailed. These 1,309 lecturers represented 45% of the study population (which is reported to be about 2,900 public university lecturers).

4.6 Data Analysis

As already mentioned, having used an exploratory sequential design, this research had a separate qualitative and quantitative phase. The analysis was also *sequential*.

4.6.1 Qualitative Analysis

To execute the qualitative analysis, the computer software, *MaxQDA (Analytics Pro 2020)* was used. The qualitative interviews and documentary analysis explored how and why industrial action interacted with internal public service attractiveness. To this end, the interviews aimed at finding out what role frequent engagement in industrial action played in the attractiveness of government

employment, and or, whether public employees engaged in industrial action irrespective of their perception of public service attractiveness.

As highlighted in Section 4.3, the interview protocol was designed from a phenomenological perspective, which is "concerned with the lived experiences of the people involved… with the issue that is being researched" (Groenewald, 2004, p.44). The qualitative analysis also followed the same trend, focusing on "the examination of the meaning of experiences toward a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p.124).

Consistent with the above, an open coding system was used. This form of coding, which has also been described as data-driven coding, is the coding method mostly used by phenomenologists, given its emphasis on the use of the so-called "concept bracketing" which involves "setting aside presuppositions, prejudices, and preliminary ideas about phenomena" (Gibbs, 2007). Therefore, the coding process did not start with any predetermined codes. It is the data that suggested possible codes, which were then grouped into themes. The themes were generally interpretive (making sense of the respondents' lived experience). Using the computer software *MaxQDA Analytics Pro 2020* was very helpful for this process because it aided the integration of audio files, text transcriptions as well as scanned documents for the documentary analysis. *MaxQDA Analytics Pro 2020* also has an excellent sorting tool that retrieves coded segments and extracts quotations by just a single click. Its visual tools, especially the "Code Matrix" and "Word Cloud" were also very useful in the generation of major themes from both the interviews and documents.

Two key procedures were central to the qualitative analysis: a detailed extraction of meaning from the documents and a qualitative content analysis.

4.6.1.1 Preparing documents for qualitative content analysis

Documents could be described as 'naturally occurring' data as they are not designed based on specific research questions. Therefore, to prepare them for the qualitative content analysis, I first conducted a separate analytical process. The goal of this initial preparation phase was to extract answers to the specific research questions from the documents. In this process, I used the "four approaches to the study of documentation" (Prior, 2016). This involved analyzing both the content

and function/use of each document from two angles: a). looking at the document as a resource and, b). looking at it as a topic. This systematic process is highlighted in the table below:

Table 4. 2: Approaches to the study of documents

Focus of Research Approach	**Document as Resource**	**Document as Topic**
Content	Approaches that focus almost entirely on what is 'in' the document ● What language is used? ● Is there any repeated count of words and co-association of words (intratextuality)? ● How does the text interweave to produce narratives? ● How does the text express specific rhetorical styles? ● How does the text express specific accounts of events or processes?	'Archeological' approaches that focus on how document content comes into being ● Who *exactly* produced the document (or on whose behalf was it produced)? ● What is the document production process (as claimed/suggested by the document)?
Use and Function	Approaches that focus on how documents are used as a resource by human actors for purposeful ends ● Who is the document intended for, and for what purpose? ● What does the writer seem to take for granted about the reader(s)? ● What do reader(s) need to know in order to make sense of the document?	Approaches that focus on how documents function in, and impact on, schemes of social interaction and social organization ● What does the document want the reader(s) to do? ● What does the document seem to take for granted?

Adapted from: Prior (2016, p.172).

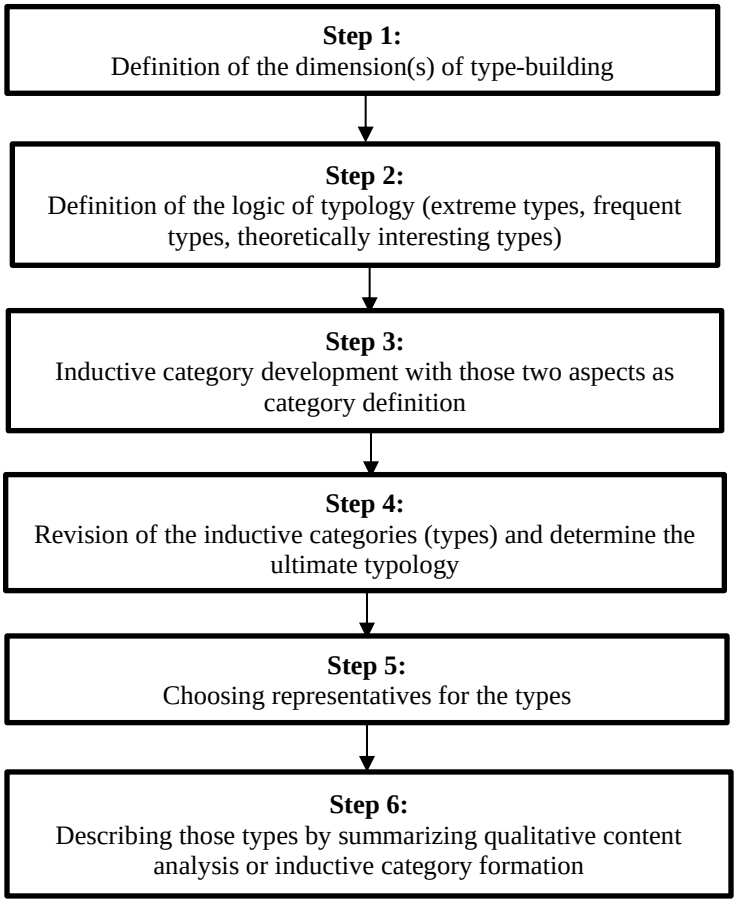
Note: All the bulleted items were added by the author for purposes of the present research.

As shown in the above table, the focus for the documentary analysis was on the interpretation of the meaning behind the text, just as Prior (2016) advised that "the task of the analyst is not so much to 'understand' the text but to interpret it" (p.175).

4.6.1.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

After extracting meaning from the documents, the notes from the documents and the interview transcripts were subjected to a rigorous Qualitative Content Analysis. The major aim here was to develop themes/categories. I specifically used the step-by-step "type-building content analysis" (Mayring, 2014), as shown in the figure below:

Figure 4. 3: Step-by-step model for type-building content analysis



Source: Mayring (2014, p.106)

As described in the above figure, the categorization started with the definition of dimensions for type-building. This was based on the specific research questions in the interview protocol and document guide. I then defined the logic, which was basically to look out for the most frequent narrations and those that sounded 'extreme' or theoretically interesting. The third step was to develop categories based on two extremes: "the typical best" or "the typical worst" (Mayring,

2014). The criteria here was as much about frequency as it was about novelty. The fourth step involved revising the categories, especially checking out similar naming from theory and from existing literature. This then culminated into the fifth step which was settling on the specific categories to represent the qualitative findings. The sixth and last step was to describe the chosen categories, i.e., turning my analysis into a systematic presentation of results.

4.6.2 Quantitative Analysis

As described in Section 4.3, data for the quantitative phase was collected using an online survey. The online questionnaire was completed by 162 public university lecturers in Uganda. The quantitative data was analyzed using *IBM SPSS® Statistics (Version 25)*. The data was collected in complete form (with no missing data), owing to the fact that the questionnaire was restricted to only allow submission after all questions had been answered. Moreover, the questionnaire was not shared on open forums. It was shared directly to the official email addresses of the public university lecturers in Uganda, so there was a guarantee that only the intended respondents completed it. Because of this, there was not much data cleaning to do. Nevertheless, the data was checked and transferred from the online Google Forms platform to an offline Excel Sheet. The Excel sheet was then coded and exported into the IBM SPSS software. Using IBM SPSS, three key operations were conducted: 1) extracting the descriptive statistics; 2) conducting an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for the internal public service attractiveness scale; and 3) performing a mediation analysis, with relevant regressions analyses.

The descriptive statistics were specifically focused on the individual characteristics that have been found to influence employer attractiveness. These included: gender, age, type of employment (i.e., whether on permanent, part-time, or fixed-term contract employment), job tenure, and current position (to gauge seniority). These statistics were important for the exploration of possible control variables. Finally, the descriptive statistics included details of involvement in industrial action, to aid the exploration of the interaction between engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness.

The second operation was an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for the internal public service attractiveness scale. This was necessary because the present research created its own scale for internal public service attractiveness (albeit as an adaptation of the *EmpAt* by Berthon *et al.*, 2005). It was therefore important to explore the structure of the itemized indicators in order to parsimoniously explain any resulting covariations. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) described EFA as "a process of creating groups of variables (e.g., items) that have high correlations with each other, and at the same time have low correlations with other groups of variables" (p.71). Consequently, an EFA provides a more parsimonious explanation for the research variables, just as Worthington and Whittaker (2006) argued that EFA helps researchers to "group a large item set into meaningful subsets that measure different factors" (p.807).

In the survey questionnaire, the scale for internal public service attractiveness had 32 items. To group these items into 'more meaningful' factors, I conducted a principal axis factor analysis with oblique rotation. The principal axis factor analysis was preferred to the maximum likelihood factor analysis because maximum likelihood extractions have been said to "result in occasional problems that do not occur with principal-axis factoring". It has also been argued that oblique rotation should be used when factors are "assumed or known to be correlated", especially because "using an orthogonal rotation with correlated factors tends to overestimate loadings" which may lead researchers into rejecting or retaining items inappropriately (Worthington &Whittaker, 2006, pp.819-820). In the EFA, factors were retained based on Kaiser's criterion of having eigenvalues greater than 1 (Kaiser, 1958), and also based on the results of the Scree plot (Cattell, 1966). Finally, only factors with three or more items were retained, as advised by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001).

The final step was conducting a mediation analysis. Mediation analysis was necessary because it was hypothesized that engagement in industrial action would mediate the relationship between organizational justice and internal public service attractiveness. The mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018). The creator of this macro, Andrew F. Hayes, described it as "a computational tool for observed variable path-based moderation and mediation analysis as well as their integration as conditional process analysis". PROCESS estimates model coefficients, standard errors, t- and p-values, and confidence intervals using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. It generates direct and indirect effects in mediation models.

Performing the mediation analysis through PROCESS was preferred over the widely used causal steps approach (Baron & Kenny, 1986) because the PROCESS macro calculates the indirect effect even if there was to be no direct effect in the first two steps of mediation analysis. This is especially important for analyzing previously untested hypotheses, given that "hypotheses tests are human inventions that are fallible" (Hayes, 2018, p.116). Moreover, Rijnhart *et al.* (2017) noted that "the causal steps method does not provide an estimate of the indirect effect" (p.134), yet a comprehensive review by Rucker *et al.* (2011) suggested that it is not necessary to focus mediation analysis on comparing the magnitude by which the independent variable affects the dependent variables before and after mediation tests, but rather that "attention in mediation analysis should be shifted towards assessing the magnitude and significance of indirect effects" (p.359). It was therefore important to use a mediation analysis tool that can measure the indirect effect, even if there was to be no direct effect – and PROCESS does exactly that. The causal steps approach, on the other hand, would stop in its tracks if any of the outcomes in the causal system was to be insignificant.

It is also worth mentioning that I considered conducting the analysis through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). However, the structure of my data showed that this wasn't necessary as SEM is more suitable for a confirmatory factor analysis, rather than an exploratory factor analysis (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). In terms of mediation, although PROCESS operates differently than a structural equation modelling (SEM) program, "the use of SEM will frequently generate results that are similar or identical to those produced by PROCESS" (Hayes, 2018, pp.551-552). Rijnhart *et al.* (2017) supported this argument by suggesting that OLS regression and SEM tend to produce the same effect estimates, especially when using a continuous mediator, and even when there might be differences in standard errors when using the two methods, "these differences are mostly very small and can safely be ignored" (p.133). Further research by Hayes *et al.* (2017) suggested that differences in results between SEM and PROCESS "tend to be trivial, and rarely will the substantive conclusions a researcher arrives at be influenced by the decision to use PROCESS rather than SEM" (p.78). All these arguments cemented my decision to use the PROCESS macro for the mediation analysis.

4.6.3 Triangulation and Integration

The final part of my data analysis involved the fusion of the qualitative findings which were generated in the first phase with the quantitative findings generated in the second phase. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) argued that the triangulation and integration of qualitative and quantitative findings cures the "polarizing" dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative methodologies. They further described triangulation as a process of generating inferences and argued that "inferences that are based on multiple perspectives are stronger (i.e., are more trustworthy, and have better internal validity)" (p.73). Indeed Greene *et al.* (1989) described the purpose of triangulation as "convergence, corroboration and correspondence of results from different methods" (p.259), while Moran-Ellis *et al.* (2006) described integration as "the generation of a tangible relationship among methods, data/and or perspectives (while) retaining the integrity of each" (p.51). Triangulation is not about comparison, but more about aiding complementarity.

Therefore, after completing the quantitative analysis, I conducted a formal integration of the qualitative and quantitative results. This process involved exporting text summaries of the quantitative findings into MaxQDA and using the 'Mixed Methods' tab to make visual and sorting analyses. I particularly used the 'Side-by-Side Display' tool to help with the visualization. This helped me to think through the convergences and interactions between the qualitative and quantitative results. I have followed a similar (sequential) approach in the presentation of results.

4.7 Data Validity and Reliability

Noble and Smith (2015) broadly defined data validity as the "integrity and application of the methods undertaken and the precision in which the findings accurately reflect the data", and data reliability as the "consistency within the employed analytical procedures" (p.34). Clearly, data validity and reliability can increase the credibility of the research findings, and I took this as a key consideration in the design, analysis, and interpretation of the data. Firstly, I chose a research design that ensured triangulation. By using the exploratory sequential design, I was able to complement the qualitative findings with quantitative results. Whereas the goal was not to strictly compare the qualitative and quantitative findings, the use of different instruments/methods ensured

that the measurements are at least repeatable and more valid (Panke, 2018; Drost, 2011). Indeed, Noble and Smith (2015) argued that the use of different methods, instruments and perspectives can help to produce more comprehensive, reliable, and valid findings (p.35).

It is also worth noting that I used already existing validated scales, especially for the survey questionnaire. For example, I used Colquitt's (2001) organizational justice scale. The validity, reliability and consistence of this scale has been confirmed in different contexts (Omar *et al.*, 2018; Rodríguez-Montalbán, *et al.,* 2015; Olsen *et al.,* 2012; Shibaoka *et al.,* 2010; Di Fabio, 2008; Maier *et al.,* 2007). I also adapted the *EmpAt* scale (Berthon *et al.,* 2005) which has been described as offering "more convergence in terms of attribute classification" (Reis & Braga, 2016).

Beyond using mixed methods and validated scales, I also pretested the data collection tools. Before conducting the face-to-face in-depth interviews, I first conducted three mock interviews (with two public university lecturers and one schoolteacher in Uganda). These pretest interviews were conducted online. I used these three pretest interviews to refine the interview protocol. A similar procedure was done for the survey questionnaire as it was pre-completed by five sample respondents before being approved for data collection. The main objective for these pretest activities was to clarify terminologies, gauge understandability and estimate relevance to the intended audience. Finally, I discussed the data collection tools with two subject experts (my research supervisors); presented them at three research colloquiums for third-party critique; and also subjected them to an external research ethics committee.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

The laws of Uganda require everyone conducting research that involves human participants in the country to subject their research instruments to a review by a government-approved Research Ethics Committee (Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, 2014). Accordingly, I submitted my research proposal, data collection tools and Informed Consent forms to the Research Ethics Committee sitting at the Uganda Christian University (UG-REC-026). This Research Ethics Committee was chaired by Prof. Dr. Peter Waiswa. I physically presented my research plan, methods, and tools to the committee. After suggesting minor revisions, the committee approved

and classified my research under the “minimum risk category” for research involving human participants. The relevant approvals for this are included in the Appendix.

Beyond the legal requirements, this research was conducted with great respect for confidentiality and voluntary participation. The purpose of the research, data processing and storage process as well as the right to opt out at any stage of the data collection process were spelled out to all research participants (in writing). The interview respondents also completed an Informed Consent Form (which was approved by my University of Potsdam research supervisor and by the external Research Ethics Committee). All transcriptions and data processing were conducted by the researcher alone, with no third-party involvement.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

As indicated in the foregoing chapter, the present research utilized mixed methods, with a sequential exploratory design. This involved starting with a qualitative phase, followed by a quantitative phase. The qualitative findings were analyzed through a qualitative content analysis. Whereas the qualitative inquiry achieved a satisfactory level of data saturation, it explored several aspects that required boosting with complementary data. For instance, there were situations of high disagreements within the data (e.g., in cases where the study respondents were split into two equally convincing extremes). Therefore, as advised by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), there was need to expand the initial qualitative findings with complementary (quantitative) data. The intention of the quantitative phase was not to disprove, or to create a comparison with the qualitative results, but to make more sense out of the initial qualitative findings by complementing them with a bigger sample and more objective methods.

Just like the data collection, the results presented herein are both qualitative and quantitative, and are presented sequentially. For some questions (e.g., the explanation for why public employees engaged in industrial action), a quantitative inquiry was not necessary – as the answer to it was deemed complete based on high consensus and consistence with theory/existing literature. In such a case, only qualitative findings are presented. For questions which were answered both qualitatively and quantitatively, the presentation of results also follows a sequential format as was the case for the data collection and analysis.

5.2 Forms of industrial action

The first step to exploring the research puzzle was to find out if the research participants had engaged in industrial action while working with their current employer, and if so, what forms of industrial action they had been engaged in. Industrial action (also described as job action or workplace militancy) is mostly perceived to mean employee strikes. However, whereas employee strikes are the most common form of industrial action, collective action among public employees is not just limited to strikes (Gall, 2014; Heckscher & McCarthy 2014; Gunderson, 2005).

It was therefore important to explore the specific forms of industrial action that were prevalent in this context. This particular aspect was explored both qualitatively and quantitatively. As explained in Chapter 4.0, the qualitative phase involved documentary analysis and in-depth interviews with two groups of Ugandan public employees: public-school teachers and public university lecturers who both frequently engaged in industrial action. The qualitative content analysis showed that six different forms of industrial action were the most frequent in this context: downing tools, slowdowns, picketing, sit-down strikes, public demonstrations, and selective performance of tasks.

Downing tools was the most popular form of industrial action in this context. It was described as 'staying away from the workplace'. In the public employee relations literature, this indeed is the most known form of employee strikes, sometimes also called general strikes (Gall, 2014). Besides downing tools, *slowdowns* were also popular in this context. These were described as acts of intentionally reducing personal input. Basically, employees collectively agreed to slow down their performance/delivery of tasks (i.e., intentionally acting inefficient). These slowdowns were in some ways similar to what has been described in German as *"Dienst nach Vorschrift"* (Wettstein & Beschorner, 2011). *Selective performance of tasks* (which involves refusing to perform specific tasks) was also another popular form of industrial action. It was different from downing tools and slowdowns in a way that employees continued to work but decided not to perform some of their duties. For example, there were instances where university lecturers specifically refused to mark student exams or refused to supervise student research (while at the same time performing other tasks normally). This was mostly done when the conflict in question was related to a specific activity/task. *Sit-down strikes* which involved coming to the workplace to occupy the place, but not to work; and *public demonstrations* and *picketing* (which means causing disruptions and stopping others from working) were also recorded.

Below is a selection of quotations which provide a feel of the different (and mostly unorthodox) forms of industrial action that the respondents said they engaged in:

> *"Sometimes we intentionally teach wrong content, or we go to class and simply do nothing. I have personally done it before. I just sit in class and let the students make as much noise as they want. In such situations, we hope that the students will go and tell their parents,*

and hopefully then the parents will complain, and the authorities will listen." – Public school teacher in Uganda.

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"I remember a time when government forcefully stopped our strike. They threatened us with sacking and even said they would replace us with lecturers from abroad. We went back to work, but we would only sit in our offices and not teach. You see the interest of government was to make sure that we went back to work. Yes, we returned to our workstations but did nothing. We used to call it 'presenteeism'. And I can assure you, our country here has been in that type of strike for a very long time. Many people just pretend to be working. And this is happening all across our public service, even among technocrats in government ministries who may not be allowed to go on strike. People just turn up at work, take tea and do nothing. I can assure you of that because I also worked with a central government ministry where we were not allowed to go on strike. But the reality is that we did, only that many people think the only way to strike is to hold placards on streets." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

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"Not all strikes require work stoppage. Sometimes our strikes are about something specific. For example, if it is about research supervision, we might choose not to supervise any student research until our demands are met. In such a situation, we might continue teaching normally. And this is why sometimes many people take long to understand our strikes. When they see us at work, they imagine that we are performing all our duties, which is sometimes not the case." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

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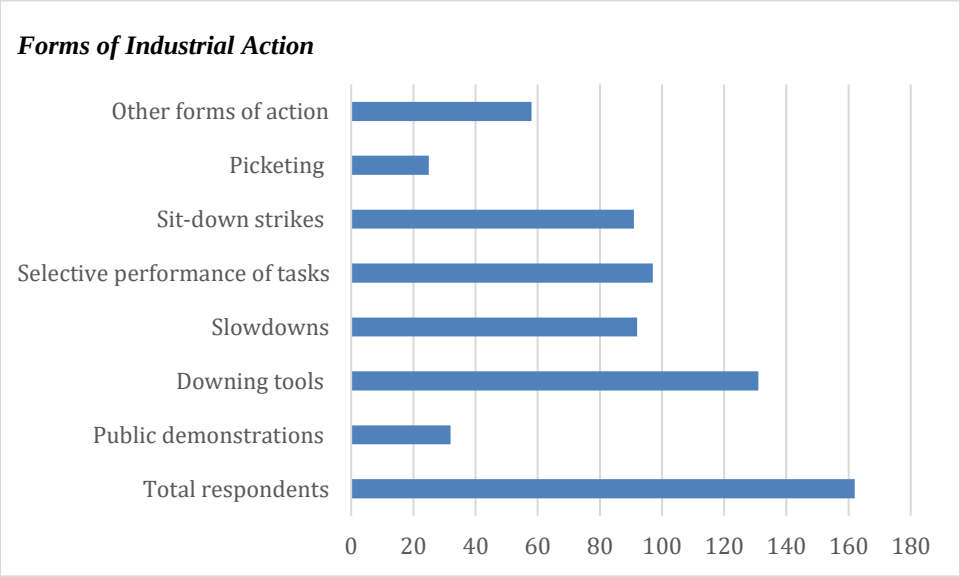
"We do many things that you might not consider to be strikes but for us they are even more lethal. For example, there was a time when we chose not to indicate the university in the author affiliation section of our research products. That obviously hurt the reputation of our employer, but not our individual reputations as researchers. If such a thing happens for a long time, you start seeing private universities being ranked higher than public universities. Hopefully then the government might investigate the cause and act." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

The results of the documentary analysis were not too dissimilar from the above narratives. In some cases, the teachers' union or the university academic staff associations encouraged their members to be "innovative", and to find ways of causing disruptions "in a peaceful way". In the end, some of these actions were too latent to a level that they were not always discernible as industrial action. Indeed, at first glance, they might appear as if they were individual cases of insubordination or unprofessionalism, but what made them collective was the fact that public employees usually agreed to conduct them simultaneously. The employees also gave advance warning about the conduct of these disruptions and described them as strike activities – usually with reason(s) for the action. It is also important to note that these actions were sanctioned by the employee union or staff associations, so they were by no means individual cases of insubordination.

To complement the qualitative data and provide further context, this aspect was also investigated quantitatively. Below is a graphic presentation of the quantitative results:

Figure 5. 1: Forms of industrial action engaged in by public university lecturers in Uganda



Source: *Quantitative results (N=162)*

As seen above, the quantitative results were a mirror image of the qualitative ones. Once again, downing tools was the most popular form of strike action, followed by selective performance of tasks, slowdowns, and sit-down strikes. Interestingly, 'other forms of action' were also common. These were earlier explained in the qualitative results as the unorthodox forms of action (e.g., intentionally teaching wrong content or not indicating author affiliation on research products).

5.3 Why public employees engage in industrial action

A key objective of this research was to establish how and why public employees rationalized their engagement in industrial action. This was critical to the exploration of whether frequent engagement in industrial action signaled limited attractiveness of government employment, or conversely, whether it was part of the internal attractiveness of government employment. This aspect was explored only qualitatively. The qualitative results provided sufficient in-depth understanding of the rationale for frequent engagement in industrial action from the perspective of those involved.

The categorization from the qualitative content analysis suggested that frequent engagement in industrial action was based on six key arguments:

a. That, public employees engaged in industrial action because they felt relatively deprived.
b. Engaging in industrial action was an act of self-validation, i.e., public employees used it to prove their worth or to 'show that they are also important'.
c. Public employees engaged in industrial action because they distrusted alternative public institutions to deliver justice.
d. Frequent engagement in industrial action was related to public managers not being responsive to employee complaints.
e. Public employees felt that frequent engagement in industrial action gave them the opportunity to participate in public sector agenda setting (especially when they felt left out of the process).
f. Public employees also argued that engaging in industrial action was part of their civic responsibility.

The above categorization was supported by theory and existing literature. However, the literature also showed another explanation for persistent engagement in industrial action which was not explicitly defined in the present findings. Even without deprivation, it has been suggested that employee strikes might happen persistently due to an established culture of industrial turbulence (Toloudis, 2008; Zoll, 2001). Indeed, in one of the earliest explanations for the "French tradition of urban revolution", Gurr (1968) suggested that "populations in which strife is chronic tend to develop, by an interaction process, a set of beliefs justifying violent responses" (p.1106).

Although this was not explicitly acknowledged by the respondents of the present research, a deeper analysis confirmed its relevance to this context. Many respondents argued that they persistently engaged in industrial action because *"it works"* or because it was the *"only option"*. Such arguments underline the deep-rooted culture of industrial turbulence. It was obvious that because of its relatively high frequency, industrial action had become a trusted go-to option in this context.

That said, the six main categories from the qualitative content analysis are illustrated by the quotations below:

a) Feeling relatively deprived

> *"You see, we don't live in a vacuum. We are part and parcel of the broader Uganda, so when we see other people earning hefty sums of money, and these are people who pass through the hands of the professor, and the professor is still earning peanuts, it becomes obvious that we deserve better…"* – Public university lecturer in Uganda.
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> *"Personally, I think our pay isn't too bad. As a senior lecturer, I earn about nine million shillings per month (about USD 2,400) and I get additional allowances if I teach evening classes or supervise student research. This would be okay. But do you know what the boys at Uganda Revenue Authority earn? They come here, we teach them for three years, and they go and earn tens of millions. If the people we teach can earn that much, then how much do we deserve?"* – Public university lecturer in Uganda.
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> _____
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> *"We are not blind. We read newspapers, watch television, and see what other people earn. There are people in this country who earn salaries that are ten times more than ours, yet they are not even more qualified than us, unless you tell me that what they do is more important than what we do!"* – Public school teacher in Uganda.
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> *"You are asking me why we go on strike? Well, just look at my office. All I have is this desk and an old computer in this little dusty room. Then go to the Ministry of Education or even to our Vice Chancellor's office. You will see our bosses swinging in ergonomic chairs in airconditioned rooms. Even their assistants have high class amenities that we can only*

dream of. For me, if I want to print out something, I have to go and line up with the students at the university library. Yet I am a professor. So, do you still want to know why I engage in strikes? Are you not seeing the level of injustice under which we operate?" – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

As elaborated in the above quotations, public university lecturers and public-school teachers in Uganda explained their engagement in industrial action by comparing their situation to that of other public employees. The main argument was that if they were treated *'fairly'*, their current situation in itself would not necessitate frequent engagement in industrial action. The results of the documentary analysis were no different. Most of the circulars and press releases from the teachers' union or from the public university academic staff associations made explicit references to other public officials. For example, in most of the documents, the main referent group for public university lecturers were Members of Parliament who were said to earn about 30 million Uganda shillings (approximately 8,000 US dollars) per month. The public university lecturers argued that the qualifications for becoming a Member of Parliament were the same as the university entry qualifications for undergraduate degrees. Their argument then was that if Members of Parliament can earn that much, a professor (with at least three academic degrees and several publications) deserved to earn as much, if not more. Indeed, at the time of conducting the interviews, the major demand by the public university lecturers was that a professor should earn a minimum monthly pay of fifteen million Uganda shillings (a half of what they said a legislator in the Ugandan parliament earned). They argued that that would be the first step towards attaining parity with Members of Parliament. This explicit demand was emphasized in their correspondence with government representatives.

Similar to the above arguments, the respondents also suggested that they engaged in industrial action in order to express their worth or "value".

b) Industrial action makes us feel valued

"Engaging in strikes makes us feel important. Just the fact that we can stay away from work for some days and still get our full salary at the end of the month makes us feel valued.

I personally would never leave the public sector because I know that in the private sector, if you strike you are fired. Here we are valued" – Public school teacher in Uganda.

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"I think many people do not realize that engaging in strikes increases our motivation to work for government. I am not saying that we enjoy going on strike, but these strikes give us an opportunity to release steam. I imagine if we had no way of expressing our grievances, with the problems we have, some people would even commit suicide" – Public school teacher in Uganda.

The above narrative suggests that engagement in industrial action might have positive cathartic effects. But most importantly, it also emphasizes the argument that public employees engage in industrial action when they think they are considered to be *relatively unimportant* – relative to other public employees or some other referent group.

Beyond feelings of relative inequity, there were also suggestions that engaging in industrial action was the only way they could be heard. This was mostly related to a distrust of public institutions.

c) Lack of trust in public institutions

"I feel that if the institutions were working; the Ministry of Education is as strong as it is supposed to be, the Labour Office is as strong as it is supposed to be, the Courts are as impartial as they have to be, there would be no industrial action. But because we have no trust in these institutions, all we are left with is industrial action." – Public school teacher in Uganda.

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"Our government is very segregative. You hear people suggesting arbitration, but would this arrogant government even listen to those so-called arbitrators? And you know Court processes in Uganda are managed politically. If we go to court demanding a salary increment, that court case will take five years. But you also have to look at our context: how do you even dream of winning a court case against this government?" – Public school teacher in Uganda.

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"I think many people do not realize that we don't enjoy these persistent strikes. But what options do we have? If you submit a complaint to government without threatening them with industrial action, you are wasting your own time. They wouldn't respond. And if you go to Court, you are also wasting your time. Our courts have no autonomy. So, the only viable option is industrial action." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

Arguments similar to the above were also evident in the documentary analysis. In some documents, public university lecturers and public-school teachers responded to suggestions that they should seek redress for any grievances from Industrial Courts or from third-party arbitrators. Such suggestions were supposedly made by government or the media. In response to these suggestions, the lecturers and teachers categorically emphasized their distrust for the courts or arbitrators.

In addition to blaming the perceived unfairness of government as an employer and the lack of trust in public institutions, at a more personal and bi-lateral level, the role of public managers was emphasized.

d) Irresponsive public managers

"If we had managers that consider us to be important, we would not engage in any sort of strike activities. We may say government is not responsive, but who is government? For me, my first port of call is my head of department, then the faculty dean, then the vice chancellor. But honestly speaking, all these people don't care. They probably think we are disposable. Do you know how many letters we write to them before resorting to industrial action? They have no time for us, so the only option we have is to raise alarm through strikes." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

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"We engage in industrial action only because it is the only way we can be heard, as unfortunate as that might be. Usually, we go for industrial action because Management has paid a deaf ear to our concerns." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

The documentary analysis was also not too dissimilar from the above narrative. The statement "we will have no choice but to declare industrial action" was almost a cliché in 88% of the 51

documents analyzed. These included official letters from the striking groups to government ministries as well as memos and circulars declaring industrial action. Indeed, a critical analysis of the correspondence between public university lecturers and their respective public managers confirmed that these public employees usually tried to avoid (or at least delay) industrial action. Some of the documents analyzed were "reminders" almost begging for responses on previously raised concerns.

But what other actions did these public employees take before 'resorting' to industrial action? The documents showed evidence of engaging in negotiations with respective public managers and seeking third-party interventions before declaring industrial action. For example, when university lecturers had disagreements with the University management, they usually sought the intervention of a central government minister. Alliance building and appealing to public sympathy were also noticeable strategies. It was almost as if the striking public employees would prepare the public for their strikes and also make an effort to rationalize their strikes to the public. Almost every strike was preceded by a public-facing announcement (usually a press release), explaining what their demands were, and why thought they were entitled to those demands.

Besides the foregoing arguments, industrial action was also rationalized with the argument that it has its own advantages. For example, it was perceived to be an effective strategy to engage in public sector agenda setting.

e) For agenda setting

> *"We use strikes to remind government of its unfulfilled promises. If government is not fulfilling its promises, what do you want us to do? We have no guns. All we can do is to stay at home. And by the way, our strikes have been useful in putting some forgotten issues on the agenda."* – Public school teacher in Uganda.
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> *"When I engage in industrial action, I am pointing out what is not right. Ultimately, I am helping government to appreciate what is happening on ground. Through industrial action, I am telling government that there are no learning materials in schools or that teachers*

are not paid enough. That is the only way government can improve its operations, and in the end, that is for the good of the learners." – Public school teacher in Uganda.

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"For us, strikes are a good participation tool. Our government rarely consults us on how the education sector could be improved. If we send them unsolicited suggestions, they probably will just throw them in the bin. But with strikes they listen. Maybe if we were invited to plan for our sector, some of the issues we strike for would be addressed without any fuss. But in a situation where we have no other voice, strikes are very effective for us to raise issues for the government to address." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

The above quotations were not just exceptions. The issue of using strikes to interact with government was a popular theme in the interviews. In some interviews, respondents reflected on their engagement in industrial action with a real sense of pride with arguments that strikes are useful tools for influencing public policy, striking an equilibrium in employer-employee relations, and or influencing the public sector agenda. Similar arguments were made in relation to what they viewed as their civic responsibilities.

f) Part of civic responsibility

"I think it is unfair for people to paint a caricature of public servants as being troublesome or unconcerned. Why would I find fun in disrupting my work from which I earn a living? I am here to serve the best interest of my clients – the learners. That is my calling. So, if it means engaging in industrial action in order to protect my students, then I definitely have to do it. Our strikes help our students and the parents to get value for money. We want to make sure that lecturers are happy so that they can then provide the best service to their students, and therefore value for money for the parents who pay tuition fees" – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

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"I don't need better working conditions just for myself. It is only to allow me to deliver better on my responsibilities as a public servant. So, I am fighting for the people I serve. You have to remember that we are not just government employees. We are also citizens,

and it is our duty to use these positions to speak for those who have no voice" – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

Narratives similar to the above were also evident in the documentary analysis. Most of the documents carried some sort of selfless tone which could easily be perceived as posturing. For example, some documents emphasized that teachers and lecturers who had already retired were also participating in industrial action as a show of support to their colleagues who were still in service, but that most importantly, because they were interested in promoting the "best interests" of the students. Even for issues like outright demand for salary increments, the respondents were keen to frame it as a selfless act done in the interest of serving their clients better, e.g., so that teachers can concentrate on teaching and not resort to looking for a second job to cover the income deficiencies.

Finally, the influence of an established culture of workplace militancy needs to be emphasized. Although persistent engagement in industrial action was mostly connected to perceived injustice, when respondents were asked to recount their day-to-day workplace experiences, there was an apparent dichotomy between frequent engagement in industrial action and actual working conditions. The suggestion that they engaged in strikes because their employer was "unfair" was almost cliché. However, when asked to elaborate the unfairness, it was not always clear-cut. In addition, the argument that they frequently engaged in industrial action because it was the "only option that works" also pointed to some sort of established culture that had become part of the employee negotiation toolkit.

5.4 The role of political opportunities in explaining engagement in industrial action

The social movements theories, which were based on to explain public employees' engagement in industrial action, suggested that grievances alone do not provide sufficient explanation for this phenomenon. The argument was that for employees to engage in industrial action, they must feel aggrieved, but also have access to "political opportunities" that can be exploited to actualize collective agency. Political opportunities were described as "openings, weak spots, barriers, and resources" within the political system that facilitate or inhibit collective action, or elements in the environment that "impose certain constraints on political activity or open avenues for it" (Eisinger, 1973, pp.11-12). Indeed, it has been argued that public sector employee strikes "are essentially political, aiming to apply leverage on the government", in the same way that employee strikes in the private sector are "economic strikes, aiming to impose costs upon profit-seeking organizations" (Gall, 2014, p.218).

It was therefore important to investigate the relevance of political opportunities in the specific context of the present research. Just as hypothesized, the qualitative results underlined the importance of political opportunities in explaining persistent public employee engagement in industrial action. This is elaborated in the following quotations:

> *"We only engage when we know that we have a good chance of being listened to. You don't expect us to act without planning. Obviously, we have insiders in government ministries who tell us what is in the budget even before it is read. They also tell us which tactics might work, based on the political season."* – Public school teacher in Uganda.

> *"Probably what you don't realize is that even in those big government offices, there are people who support our strikes. When we go on strike, it gives them the opportunity to ask for resources to demobilize us. It is also a chance for them to appear as if they are the angels. But as they issue public statements castigating us, they are sending us private messages, encouraging us to continue with the industrial action. There are a lot of operational resources that our government throws into fighting industrial action, and for many people in those line ministries, it is an opportunity to make a killing."* – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

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"But you also know the kind of government we are dealing with. Unless this government is pushed, it can never do anything for its people. In any case, it is the government that has taught us that industrial action works. Remember that we first send them warnings before we engage in any sort of strike. So, if they don't respond to those warnings but only respond to strikes, what message are they sending?". – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

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"Let me tell you one thing: for any industrial action to succeed, you must have a bait. That is why you see most of our strikes come towards exams or at the start of the semester. Sometimes we target the electoral season when we know government is most vulnerable. The problem might have been there, but you must stage your strikes at a time when they are likely to have more impact. In the public sector, timing is important." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

Consistent with the theoretical assumptions, the above quotations confirmed that public university lecturers and public-school teachers in Uganda usually scan the environment for 'political opportunities' before engaging in industrial action. Indeed, it appears that grievances alone do not provide a sufficient explanation for industrial action, just as the last quotation suggested that "*the problem might have been there, but you must stage your strikes at a time when they are likely to have more impact".*

The documentary analysis also showed a similar trend. Most of the strikes were organized at key times in the academic calendar: either at the start of the semester or just before end of semester exams. Indeed, there was no evidence of strikes being held during semester breaks – underlining the fact that the timing of the strikes was carefully planned.

This discussion on political opportunities also further underlined the explanatory power of an established culture of workplace militancy. Clearly, in the context of Ugandan public educators, the enablers and frames for strike activity were systemically entrenched.

5.5 Internal public service attractiveness

Having explored the forms of industrial action public university lecturers and public-school teachers in Uganda engaged in, and also assessing the justification for the same, this research turned to investigating how internal public service attractiveness was perceived by this particular category of public employees. This aspect was investigated both qualitatively and quantitatively. As already explained, whereas the qualitative phase had two case studies (public school teachers and public university lecturers in Uganda), the quantitative phase focused on one group: the public university lecturers.

The qualitative analysis explored six major factors that explained internal public service attractiveness from the perspective of Ugandan public educators who frequently engaged in industrial action. These are elaborated in the quotations below:

a) Public sector reputation, prestige, and credibility

"If you ask me what keeps me attracted to government employment, the first thing I will tell you is that we are not working in public institutions because of money. Public institutions do not pay the highest salaries, but they have big reputations that you cannot find elsewhere. For example, the money I earn from external consultancies is maybe ten times more than my government salary. But I want to keep my government job because it gives me an address and the credibility to win those consultancy contracts." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

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"The prestige and respect that comes with working in the public sector is unmatched. For instance, I have gone to so many countries which have strict visa requirements, but because I am a professor in a public university, I am exempted from most of those restrictions. The consular officers at whichever embassy don't need convincing that a university professor in a public university will default on the terms of her visa." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

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"Government jobs are very prestigious, and that comes with many advantages. Think about the loans we get from banks. Personally, I access a lot of unsecured credit simply because

I am an officer of government. Even at community level, it is easy for people to trust me with leadership positions because working for government is associated with authority. A government job commands respect, and you cannot put a price on that." – Public school teacher in Uganda.

b) Workplace democracy

"Even when we go on strike, the public sector remains attractive because those strikes are themselves a form of democracy. At least I am sure that I can go on strike and still be protected by the Law. And obviously no one can wake up one day and just sack me for flimsy reasons. There are clear procedures to be followed. Plus, when we make demands, at least we know that government will hear us. They may not act on our demands, but they won't stop us from making them." – Public school teacher in Uganda.

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"In the public sector, we have a voice. For example, we have the option of going on strike but that is not something you get in other sectors. I personally worked in the private sector for a long time, but there, you either agree or leave. And then there is flexibility. I think the flexibility in the public sector is something many people do not appreciate. In the private sector, employers are so obsessed with targets that they sometimes lose the human values. Working in the public sector gives me the flexibility and opportunity to influence the design of my work." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

c) Greater opportunities for growth

"The public sector offers a lot of opportunities that many people take for granted. For example, there is a time I went to Australia for a two-years master's degree programme. I was on study leave for those two years, but I continued receiving my full salary. How many private sector organizations can offer you that? Those are the little things that keep us attracted to the public sector." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

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"For me the biggest internal attraction are the opportunities for growth. There is a clear career development path in the public sector. There is no politics around it, except maybe

at the highest level where appointments are made by the Executive." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

d) Job security

"Maybe it gets underrated but many of us prefer working for government because of the job security. With all the strikes some of us have engaged in, we would have been sacked long ago if we were in private universities." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

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"My biggest attraction is the certainty that I will retain my job for a long time. Even when our pay is not that good, at least we are able to plan for ten years or actually for our whole lives. It is great to have a permanent and pensionable job!" – Public school teacher in Uganda.

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"I feel trusted. As a public employee, I do not feel the insecurity of being constantly watched as would be the case in other sectors. Here we are trusted, and that for me is the biggest reason why I will never leave the public sector." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

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"You know, teaching in a government school comes with timely payments. But even if my pay does not come on time, I know government will always be there and for sure I will be paid. In other sectors, there is a chance that your employer can go bankrupt. But when will government ever stop operating?" – Public school teacher in Uganda.

e) Retirement benefits

"I am attracted by the retirement benefits. Even with all the problems we have in the public sector, at least you are sure that at the end of your career, you will have your pension and gratuity. The government offers generous pensions, and for sure that is a big pull for me." – Public school teacher in Uganda.

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"For me personally, job security alone wouldn't keep me in this job. With the qualifications I have, I am sure I can always get a job in whichever sector. But the biggest thing is social

security. There will come a time when I am too old or too weak to work. That is when the real value of a government job manifests, and for me that is why the public sector remains the most attractive proposition. The government takes good care of its employees, even in retirement or long-term illness." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

f) Serving the public good

"Serving the public good is one of our biggest motivations. Just the feeling that I work in a public university is satisfying on its own. I feel that I am adding a brick to the building of our nation, and not many people can say that. So, I would say the attractiveness of government employment is inbuilt." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

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"We remain attracted to the public sector because of the services we provide. Those who think we are in public service to look for money are mistaken. For me as a teacher, when I stand in front of my students, I see the future. I want to contribute to creating a better world because you don't know how far these young people can go. There are things that that we see which are beyond what other people can see. Much of the satisfaction we get from working for in the public sector cannot be bought with money." – Public school teacher in Uganda.

The above is a qualitative description of how internal public service attractiveness was perceived by Ugandan public employees who frequently engaged in industrial action. As described in the Methodology section (Chapter 4.0), the qualitative findings were also used to design the survey questionnaire for the quantitative phase. In the questionnaire, Berthon *et al.*'s (2005) employer attractiveness scale was adapted with nuances from the qualitative results and from the human resource management literature (e.g., the job fit and P-O fit aspects) to tailor it to a public sector setting. That customized scale had 32 items, which were assessed with a 5-point Likert scale. In order to ensure that this large item set is grouped into "meaningful subsets that measure different factors" (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006), an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted.

The EFA was intended to complement the qualitative results. A principal axis factor analysis (with oblique rotation) was conducted on the 32-item internal public service attractiveness scale. The

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of adequacy was, KMO = 0.83 (“meritorious” according to Kaiser & Rice, 1974, p.112), while the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity returned a statistically significant value of <0.001, with both tests suggesting that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix, therefore being suitable for EFA. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each factor in the data. In that initial analysis, nine factors had eigenvalues over Kaiser’s criterion of 1 and in combination explained 64.6% of the variance. However, the Scree Plot showed inflexions that would justify four or five factors. Given that Kaiser’s criterion has been found to overestimate the numbers of factors to retain (Field, 2018, p.790), I decided to run a second analysis with four fixed factors. The four retained factors explained 45.7% of the variance. Below is the pattern matrix for the rotated factor loadings (for the four fixed variables):

Table 5. 1: EFA Pattern Matrix for the Public Service Attractiveness Scale (N = 162)

Pattern Matrix[a]

	Pattern Loadings			
	Public sector characteristics and P-O Fit	Job characteristics	Pay and rewards	Work environment
Working in public sector is prestigious	**.761**	-.170	.114	
Public sector values match mine	**.730**			.128
Government offers me opportunities	**.667**		-.134	
I feel acceptance and belonging	**.657**			
I feel sense of ownership	**.647**			
I'm more self-confident as a result of working in the public sector	**.590**		.176	-.286
I can’t imagine leaving the public sector	**.565**			
Government is an honest employer	**.562**		-.162	-.104
Government values my creativity	**.555**	.113	-.313	
I feel appreciated by Management	**.419**		-.256	-.162
I'm getting hands-on experience	.373		-.149	-.266
I'm gaining career enhancement	.352			-.267
I'm able to use my talents	.268			
My workload is too much		**.523**		
I feel work-related stress		**.515**	.112	
I don’t have promotion opportunities		**.446**		

It is difficult balancing teaching and research		**.433**	-.157	.145
I'm not satisfied with my job	.218	**.411**	.149	-.259
I'm not rewarded fairly for my effort		**.407**	-.309	-.224
I wouldn't recommend the public sector to friend	.158	.339	.261	-.230
I work in PS because of no other option	.276	.337	.264	-.292
Government doesn't listen to us	.139	.334		-.228
My office space isn't good enough		.305	-.273	
I am rewarded fairly for my responsibilities	.330	.109	**-.602**	-.170
My salary isn't enough for the work that I do	.365		**-.460**	-.198
This isn't the job I like to do	.166	.349	**.407**	-.126
I have a good relationship with my supervisor				**-.731**
I have a fun working environment				**-.702**
I enjoy the work-life balance in the public sector	.231			**-.543**
I have supportive colleagues				**-.508**
I have an exciting work environment			-.396	**-.487**
I enjoy job security in the public sector	.271	-.199	.216	**-.475**
Eigenvalues	***8.08***	***2.64***	***2.12***	***1.78***
Percentage of variance (%)	***25.26***	***8.26***	***6.64***	***5.57***
Cronbach's α (based on structure matrix)	***0.88***	***0.68***	***0.86***	***0.78***

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.[a]

a. Rotation converged in 21 iterations.

The above is the pattern matrix from the EFA. The decision to use the pattern matrix (rather than the structure matrix) to make conclusions about the four factors was based on the fact that it presents "regression coefficients of the variable on each of the factors" and is the mostly used matrix for interpreting factors, as opposed to the structure matrix which only presents "correlations between the variables and the factors" (Rietveld & van Hout, 1993, p.281).

The factor extraction followed guidance from Stevens (2002) whereby only factor loadings with values greater than 0.40 were retained. The most popular factor related to the ingrained characteristics of the public sector and what it offers, outside material benefits. This factor (public sector characteristics and P-O Fit) had ten items with factor loadings greater than 0.40, and in total explained 25.3% of the variance. The factors related to job characteristics and working environment each had six items with factor loadings greater than 0.40, while pay was the least

popular, albeit significant factor with three items fitting the criteria and explaining 6.6% of the variance.

The four factors extracted from the EFA were similar to the qualitative categories that had been explored earlier. Through qualitative content analysis, the six factors which were explored qualitatively were grouped into three main categories: public sector characteristics; public sector-specific rewards; and person-organization fit. However, whereas the quantitative analysis confirmed these categories, it showed some minor differences to the structure. For example, the EFA showed that P-O fit could not be divorced from the inherent public sector characteristics while 'pay and rewards' was a better categorization for what had initially been categorized as 'public sector specific rewards'. The other critical difference was that job characteristics and work environment came out as distinct (and equally important) factors.

In conclusion, combining the qualitative and quantitative results provided a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influenced internal public service attractiveness in this context. All factors that came out of the qualitative content analysis were also confirmed quantitatively (through the EFA), but the quantitative results provided a more structured and expanded view. For this reason, this research adopted the factor structure as explored through the EFA, i.e., ***public sector characteristics and P-O fit; job-related characteristics; pay and rewards; and working environment.***

5.6 The prominence of perceived Organizational Justice

One of the most critical findings of this research was the central role played by *perceived* organizational justice in explaining both engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness. This was emphasized by both the qualitative and quantitative results.

The qualitative content analysis showed that organizational justice was not always objectively framed. It was mostly construed based on individual perceptions. Analyzing these individualized perceptions was the most effective way to explain internal public service attractiveness in this context, just as Highhouse *et al.* (2007) argued that "because impressions of the employer are in the head of the prospective applicant, psychology is the appropriate place to find answers about the content of these impressions" (p.146). Indeed, perceived employer fairness came out as the most prominent public sector trait with the highest potential to explain the internal attractiveness of government employment. It also stood out as the most critical explanation for frequent engagement in industrial action. The quotations below provide an illustration for this:

Perceived organizational justice and engagement in industrial action:

> *"We engage in industrial action because our government is very segregative, and the only language they hear is protest. You see, we don't live in a vacuum. We are part and parcel of the broader Uganda, so when we see other people earning hefty sums of money, and these are people who pass through the hands of the professor, and the professor is still earning peanuts, it becomes obvious that we deserve better…"* – Public university lecturer in Uganda.
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> *"I wish I could tell you that we enjoy engaging in industrial action. Maybe many people wouldn't believe it, but we do it painfully. I find no fun in constantly clashing with my employer. What we have here is a very unfair employer. If they say they have no money, then let it cut across. But how do you explain the fact that some government employees with qualifications similar to ours are being paid four or five times more than us? Is the service we provide less useful to the development of this country?"* – Public school teacher in Uganda.

Perceived organizational justice and internal public service attractiveness:

> *"I personally think there is a difference between what attracts us to government employment when we are searching for jobs and what keeps us attracted to our jobs once we get employed. When I was joining public service, the biggest attraction was job security. But now that I am here, all I want is for my employer to be fair. I don't want to be paid less than people who are not as qualified or don't do as much as I do, simply because I have job security. We are all government employees, we all have job security, so we must be treated equally."* – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

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> *"To be honest, I find public service to be very attractive. We have job security, we are paid relatively well, and our jobs are prestigious. Many people admire us. The only thing that makes working for government less attractive is the segregation. The same government that says it has no money to increase our salaries is paying 30 million shillings to an MP who does literally nothing. Surely that cannot make government an attractive employer in our eyes."* – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

The documentary analysis also unearthed anecdotes similar to the above. This text from one document is worth sharing*: "The government insists that we signed up for terms that were well-known to us. Let it be known that we still respect the terms of contract which attracted us to the public sector. What we cannot accept is for government to treat us as if we are second-rate employees. Are we asking for too much if we demand fairness?"* (Document 050, Press Release).

In almost all the documents that were reviewed, the fairness theme was central. The rationalization of industrial action involved some sort of comparisons. Even when strikes were motivated by demands for salary increments or improvements in working conditions, such demands were not made in absolute terms. Striking employees always tended to compare their employment situation with that of some named or unnamed referent groups. The arguments rotated around what they earned in relation to what others earned. In most of the documents, the referent group was other public servants (for example those working in government ministries), or teachers and lecturers in neighboring countries.

The same was true for the explanation of internal public service attractiveness. For example, the social exchange theory suggested that organizational support could explain the internal

attractiveness of government employment. But in the present context, organizational support could not be decoupled from organizational justice. Organizational support was not viewed as an end in itself. It was only appreciated in relation to the kind and level of support they felt other government employees received.

The influence of organizational justice was also investigated quantitatively. Unsurprisingly, the quantitative results were very similar to the qualitative findings. Strong connections were found between organizational justice and engagement in industrial action, as they were between organizational justice and internal public service attractiveness. Below are summary results from the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression through the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018), with Organizational Justice (OJ) as the independent variable; and Internal Public Service Attractiveness (PS_Attra) and Engagement in Industrial Action (Engage) as dependent variables:

a. Effect of Organizational Justice on Engagement in Industrial Action

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**************************************************************************
Model  : 4
    Y  : PS_Attra
    X  : OJ
    M  : Engage

Sample
Size:  162

**************************************************************************
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
 Engage

Model Summary
     R       R-sq        MSE          F        df1        df2          p
    .2055      .0422     3.3374     7.0513     1.0000   160.0000      .0087

Model
              coeff         se          t          p       LLCI       ULCI
constant     4.6635      .7770     6.0021      .0000     3.1290     6.1980
OJ           -.6670      .2512    -2.6554      .0087    -1.1630     -.1709
```

As seen above, organizational justice significantly predicted engagement in industrial action: b = -0.67, 95% CI [-1.2, -0.17], t = -2.65, p = 0.009. The negative beta indicates that a rise in positive perceptions of organizational justice would reduce the possibility of engaging in industrial action.

b. Effect of Organizational Justice on Internal Public Service Attractiveness

```
************************ TOTAL EFFECT MODEL ***************************
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
 PS_Attra

Model Summary
    R       R-sq        MSE          F         df1         df2          p
   .7805      .6092      .1058    249.4526     1.0000    160.0000      .0000

Model
             coeff         se          t          p       LLCI       ULCI
constant    1.1967      .1383     8.6525      .0000      .9236     1.4699
OJ           .7062      .0447    15.7941      .0000      .6179      .7945
```

The effect of Organizational Justice on internal public service attractiveness was even greater. There was a significant positive relationship: b = 0.70, 95% CI [0.62, 0.79], t = 15.8, p < 0.001. It is worth noting that the above is the total effect of organizational justice on internal public service attractiveness (i.e., when controlling for engagement in industrial action).

Even when engagement in industrial action was included in the model, the relationship remained largely unaffected – as seen below:

c. Regression results for the effect of organizational justice on internal public service attractiveness, with engagement in industrial action included in the model

```
**************************************************************************
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
 PS_Attra

Model Summary
     R       R-sq        MSE          F         df1         df2          p
    .7815      .6108      .1060    124.7432     2.0000    159.0000      .0000

Model
             coeff         se          t          p       LLCI       ULCI
constant    1.1449      .1533     7.4696      .0000      .8422     1.4476
OJ           .7136      .0457    15.6010      .0000      .6233      .8039
Engage       .0111      .0141      .7889      .4313     -.0167      .0389
```

Again, as the above shows, organizational justice significantly predicted internal public service attractiveness even when engagement in industrial action was included in the model: b = 0.71, 95% CI [-0.62, -0.80], t = 15.6, p < 0.001.

In summary, consistent with the qualitative results, the three PROCESS outputs presented above confirmed the following:

- Organizational justice had a significant negative effect on engagement in industrial action (b = -0.67, 95% CI [-1.2, -0.17], t = -2.65, p = 0.009).

- Organizational justice had a significant positive effect on internal public service attractiveness (b = 0.70, 95% CI [0.62, 0.79], t = 15.8, p < 0.001).

- Frequent engagement in industrial action did not reduce the effect of organizational justice on public service attractiveness. It in fact slightly enhanced it (b = 0.71, 95% CI [-0.62, -0.80], t = 15.6, p < 0.001).

The above findings are made even clearer in the summary regression table below:

Table 5. 2: Regression table showing the effect of organizational justice on internal public service attractiveness

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.197	.138		8.652	.000	.924	1.470					
	Organizational Justice	.706	.045	.781	15.794	.000	.618	.794	.781	.781	.781	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	1.145	.153		7.470	.000	.842	1.448					
	Organizational Justice	.714	.046	.789	15.601	.000	.623	.804	.781	.778	.772	.958	1.044
	Engaged in Industrial Action	.011	.014	.040	.789	.431	-.017	.039	-.122	.062	.039	.958	1.044

a. Dependent Variable: Public Service Attractiveness

The summary table above emphasizes the fact that both the total and direct effects of organizational justice on internal public service attractiveness were significantly positive.

5.6.1 Antecedents of perceived organizational justice

There is a general consensus in the literature that organizational justice is a "largely subjective construct" (Baldwin, 2006). It has also been argued that justice becomes more tangible through its perceived absence as individuals are more likely to seek explanations for negative experiences than they are for positive ones (Baldwin, 2006; Colquitt, 2001; Cropanzano & Schminke, 2001). The present research arrived at similar conclusions. There was generally no universal agreement among the study respondents about what constitutes an injustice. However, the qualitative content analysis explored three major antecedents of injustice perceptions: limited involvement in decision making; insufficient communication; and inconsistency on the part of the employer.

Limited involvement in decision making generally related to employees not always having the opportunity to make an input into the decisions that affect their work, or even their lives. The respondents described what they considered to be 'arbitrary' decisions as drivers of injustice perceptions. Relatedly, ***insufficient information*** described situations where the employer did not explain or provide a rationale for their actions (especially those that affect employees). For example, many public-school teachers mentioned that they were transferred from one public school to another without sufficient notice, as highlighted in the quotation below:

> *"For the first six years of my service as a government employee, I worked at a school near my home. My family was settled there, and I was one of the best performing teachers at that school. Then one day, a friend who is not even a teacher, calls and tells me that I had been transferred to another school. Apparently, he had visited the district headquarters and seen my name on the public noticeboard as one of the teachers who had been transferred. My new workplace was over 50 miles away from where I lived. No one cared to consult or at least inform me. And since then, I have been regularly transferred from one school to another without ever being consulted. They just toss me around like a coin without considering what is good for me and my family."* – Public school teacher in Uganda.

Inconsistency was an even stronger theme than the above. It mostly related to how the government (or specific public managers) handled employee-related issues. The seeds of injustice perceptions were sowed through the creation of a 'them against us' mentality, most especially when similar issues were not handled in the same way.

5.7 The mediating role of engagement in industrial action

As seen in the preceding discussion, the results strongly suggested that both frequent engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness had links to the same independent variable: *Organizational Justice*. The initial qualitative results emphasized that frequent engagement in industrial action sequentially appeared between organizational justice and internal public service attractiveness. Since both frequent engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness were influenced by organization justice, moderation was out of question (given that the process variable was not independent of the predictor variable). Therefore, the most logical expectation was a mediation relationship.

Whereas qualitative methods do not provide a good measure for mediation, they may still be useful in identifying possible mediators through explaining contextual process factors (MacKinnon, 2008). In its strictest sense, Newson (2016) described mediation as a "hypothesized causal chain in which one variable affects a second variable that, in turn, affects a third variable". Based on this logic, organizational justice was considered to be the first variable. The qualitative results suggested that its absence accounted for frequent engagement in industrial action (which in this case was the second variable). The remaining question therefore was whether the second variable (frequent engagement in industrial action) would also influence the third variable, i.e., internal public service attractiveness.

What the qualitative results could not confirm was the direction of the mediation relationship. The qualitative content analysis showed a sharp disagreement within the results. Although it was suggested that frequent engagement in industrial action had an effect on internal public service attractiveness, it could not be confirmed whether that effect would be positive or negative. There were strong voices suggesting that frequent engagement in industrial action enhanced workplace democracy which then positively influenced internal public service attractiveness. However, there were also strong suggestions that frequent engagement in industrial action magnified the negative aspects of employer-employee conflicts and further strengthened negative public employee stereotypes, which ultimately reduced internal public service attractiveness.

The quotations below are a description of the mixed qualitative effects elaborated above:

A. Frequent engagement in industrial action POSITIVELY influences internal public service attractiveness:

"Believe it or not, I think more positively of government as an employer because of what you call persistent strikes. Just the fact that I am allowed to engage makes me feel valued. These strikes give us a voice in many ways, and I think government is to thank for that. Our colleagues in the private sector have similar problems, if not more, but if they go on strike, they will be fired. So, although it might sound funny, our constant strikes make us appreciate government employment even more." – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

———

"Government employment is more attractive to me because of these strikes. If we were not engaging in strikes, I personally would have left the public sector long ago. You see, strikes at least give us hope that we can influence something. An employer who gives you the chance to express yourself the way you want is obviously attractive." – Public school teacher in Uganda.

B. Frequent engagement in industrial action NEGATIVELY influences internal public service attractiveness:

"Of course, my engagement in industrial action affects the way I perceive government as an employer. How can you expect me to say that my employer is attractive when I am constantly fighting with them?" – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

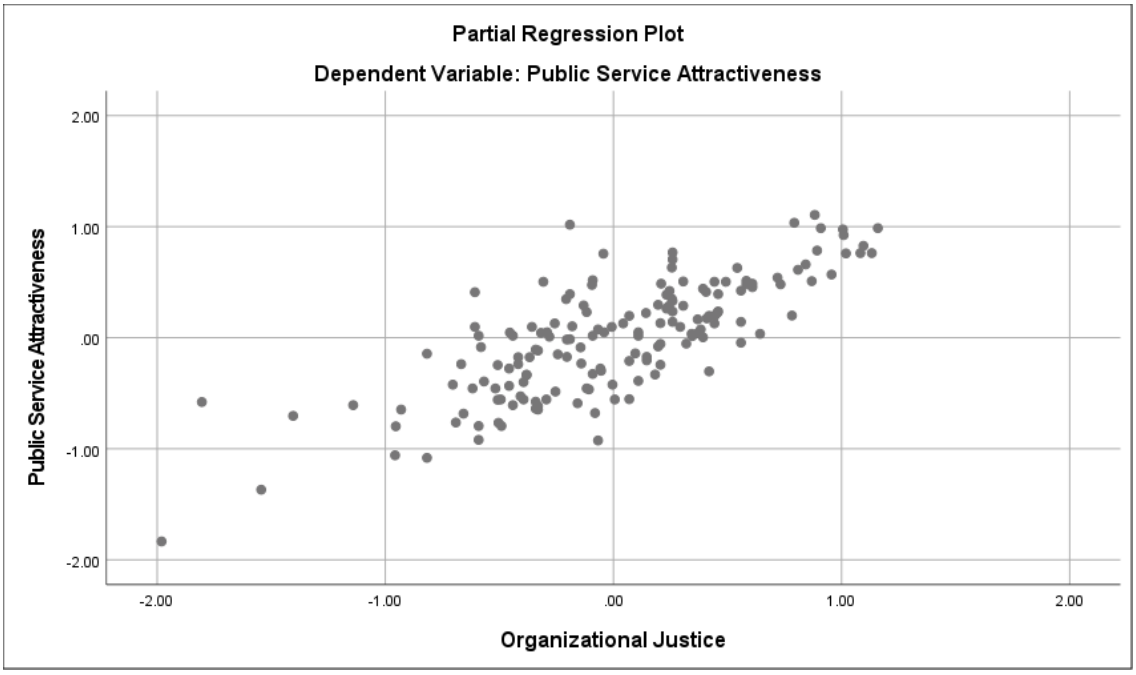
———

"If you listen to the way people describe us, you will immediately understand why we cannot think of government as an attractive employer. Whereas it is government that pushes us into all these strikes by not listening to our concerns, many people out there think we are the devils. For the average man on the street, lecturers are already paid enough and even if we go on strike for different reasons, the media tends to paint it as a struggle for more money. Because of that, people call us gluttons, ingrates, etc. But who puts us in such a precarious situation? Now tell me: if you were the one, would you consider such a thankless employer to be attractive?" – Public university lecturer in Uganda.

The above quotations were just a snippet of the overall direction of the qualitative findings. In the interviews, the respondents' opinions on this aspect were highly divided. Whereas some strongly believed that their frequent engagement in industrial action had a negative effect on how they perceived the attractiveness of government employment, others were convinced that frequent engagement in industrial action had a positive influence on internal public service attractiveness. The documentary analysis was also not conclusive on this particular aspect – as similar mixed effects were found.

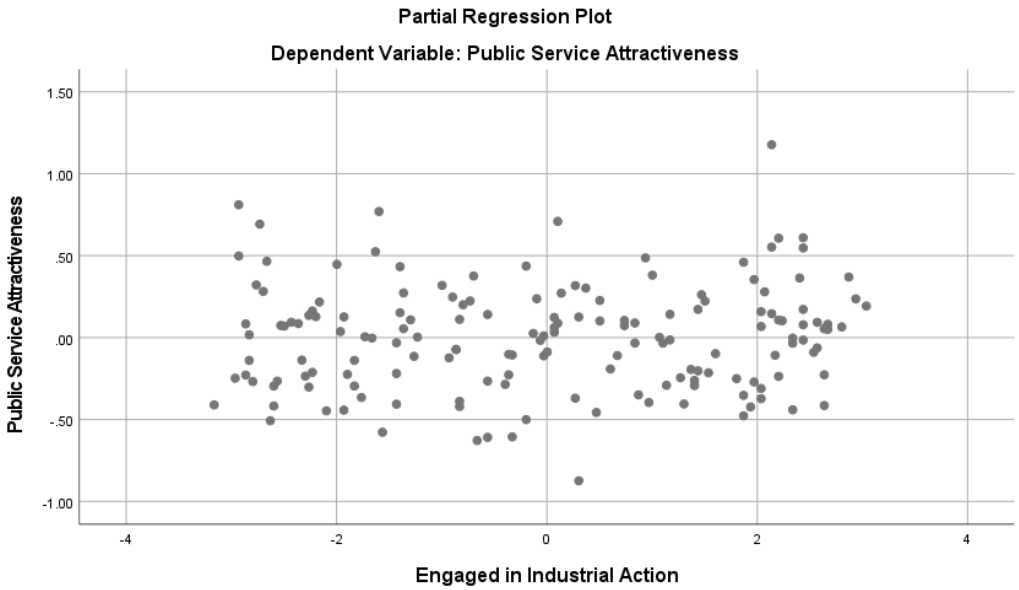
Testing this aspect quantitatively therefore became an absolute necessity. It was vital to complement and provide more clarity to the initial qualitative findings. Indeed, the quantitative results provided more succinct clarity. The positive influence of organizational justice on internal public service attractiveness, and the negative influence of organizational justice on frequent engagement in industrial action were quantitatively confirmed. However, the quantitative results showed that frequent engagement in industrial action did not predict internal public service attractiveness (b = 0.01, 95% CI [-0.02, -0.04], t = 0.79, p = 0.431).
The two scatter plots below are a visual representation of these particular findings:

Figure 5. 2: Partial regression plot for the effect of organizational justice on internal public service attractiveness



As seen above, there was a clear positive regression effect between organizational justice and internal public service attractiveness. However, the same could not be said for the effect of frequent engagement in industrial action on internal public service attractiveness, as seen below:

Figure 5. 3: Partial regression plot for the effect of frequent engagement in industrial action on internal public service attractiveness



The above regression plots are extracts from the multiple regression analysis for organizational justice and frequent engagement in industrial action on internal public service attractiveness as the dependent variable. They showed that whereas organizational justice influenced internal public service attractiveness (as earlier suggested by the qualitative results), frequent engagement in industrial action did not. This raised a question on the mediating role of frequent engagement in industrial action.

However, given that both the theoretical assumptions and the qualitative findings suggested mediation, it was important to also test mediation quantitatively. For this reason, the PROCESS macro was used for the mediation analysis. PROCESS was used because it has the ability to test mediation even if there were to be no effects in parts of the hypothesized causal process (Hayes, 2018). Conducting the mediation analysis using the widely used causal steps approach (Baron & Kenny, 1986) would have been impossible in this case as it insists on confirmed relationships between X→Y, X→M and M→Y.

Below is the PROCESS output for the mediation analysis:

```
************** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y **************

Total effect of X on Y
     Effect         se          t          p       LLCI       ULCI
      .7062      .0447    15.7941      .0000      .6179      .7945

Direct effect of X on Y
     Effect         se          t          p       LLCI       ULCI
      .7136      .0457    15.6010      .0000      .6233      .8039

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
           Effect     BootSE   BootLLCI   BootULCI
Engage     -.0074      .0106     -.0302      .0135

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
           Effect     BootSE   BootLLCI   BootULCI
Engage     -.0143      .0208     -.0592      .0266

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
           Effect     BootSE   BootLLCI   BootULCI
Engage     -.0082      .0117     -.0333      .0150
```

The first and second parts of the above output are repetitions of the results reported earlier, i.e., that organizational justice influences internal public service attractiveness when controlling for frequent engagement in industrial action (total effect), and also when frequent engagement in industrial action is included in the model (direct effect).

The third part presents the indirect effects of organizational justice (X) on internal public service attractiveness (Y), through frequent engagement in industrial action. These indirect/mediated effects were represented by an estimated b value of 0.007 with a bootstrapped standard error of 0.01, at a 95% confidence interval. Assuming this sample is part of the 95% that hits the true value, the b value of the indirect effect would fall between -0.03 and 0.01. In this case, mediation could not be inferred given that the range includes a zero, because if b=0, that would mean no mediation (Field, 2018, p.505). The standardized beta for the indirect effect was: $\beta = 0.008$, 95% BCa CI [-0.03, 0.02]. Based on this, the quantitative results falsified the mediation hypothesis.

5.8 The mixed relationship between frequent engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness

There is need for a brief note on the relationship between frequent engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness. The quantitative results showed that frequent engagement in industrial action did not mediate the relationship between organizational justice and internal public service attractiveness. What was confirmed however, (both qualitatively and quantitatively), was that both frequent engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness were influenced by organizational justice. The qualitative results also showed that the effect of frequent engagement in industrial action on internal public service attractiveness was both positive and negative. Some interview respondents argued strongly that their frequent engagement in industrial action negatively influenced their perception of internal public service attractiveness, while others argued that frequent engagement in industrial action led to positive ratings of government employment.

In summary, the total results on this aspect suggested two things:

Firstly, consistent with the Signaling Theory, frequent engagement in industrial action appeared to be a negative proxy for internal public service attractiveness. This was because both could be explained by the same variable (organizational justice), albeit in different directions. However, this needs to be further tested quantitatively, with methods that are better suited for testing proxy variables. There is certainly value in testing this assumption with longitudinal data and or, with objective vignettes that could juxtapose industrial action and internal employer attractiveness.

Secondly, the quantitative effect of frequent engagement in industrial action on internal public service attractiveness produced a null result because the effects were in two opposite directions. Frequent engagement in industrial action had both positive and negative effects on internal public service attractiveness. Such a relationship is better understood from a qualitative point of view, rather than using quantitative methods which heavily rely on sample averages, in which negative effects cancel out the positives.

5.9 Summary of the research findings

5.9.1 Textual summary

Below is a summary of the major findings of this research:

a) Public university lecturers and public-school teachers in Uganda had access to a diverse repertoire of strike strategies. As a result, some forms of industrial action were not discernible as such at first glance. These included actions similar to what has been described in German as “Innere Kündigung” and “Dienst nach Vorschrift”.

b) Public employee strikes were strongly related to relative, rather than absolute deprivation. Even where relative deprivation did not provide a sufficient explanation, there was a clear dichotomy between absolute working conditions and frequent engagement in strikes.

c) The influence of political opportunity structures in actualizing collective agency in the public sector was confirmed. As predicted by the Social Movements Theory, grievances alone were not enough to trigger engagement in industrial action. There had to be ‘political opportunities’ within the environment to be exploited.

d) The internal attractiveness of government employment in this context was influenced by four main factors: the characteristics of public sector organizations combined with person-organization fit; job characteristics; pay and rewards; and the working environment.

e) A strong connection was found between person-organization (P-O) fit and internal public service attractiveness. However, public service motivation (PSM) did not have a strong influence in this context.

f) Employer fairness (also called workplace justice or organizational justice) was a central theme in the research findings. In consistence with the Social Exchange Theory, public employee ratings of internal employer attractiveness were based on their day-to-day workplace interactions, the exercising of managerial prerogatives, and the perceived fairness of public sector resource allocation processes and procedures.

g) Organizational support did not influence internal public service attractiveness, as was suggested by the social exchange theory. In the present context, organizational support was perceived as being part of organizational justice. It was only appreciated in the context of how it compared with how much support other public employees received from the government or from the respective public organizations they worked for.

h) Organizational justice had a very significant positive influence on internal public service attractiveness, with complete agreement from both the qualitative and quantitative results.

i) Organizational justice also had a very significant (negative) influence on frequent engagement in industrial action.

j) Frequent engagement in industrial action had both positive and negative effects on internal public service attractiveness. On one hand, it enhanced workplace democracy which positively influenced internal public service attractiveness, while on the opposite side, it increased public employee stereotypes and magnified the negative aspects of employer-employee conflicts which negatively influenced internal public service attractiveness.

k) Whereas the theoretical assumptions and qualitative results suggested mediation, the quantitative results showed that frequent engagement in industrial action did not mediate the relationship between organizational justice and internal public service attractiveness.

l) The results also showed that both frequent engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness were influenced by organizational justice (but in different directions). On the basis of this opposite-direction relationship, it was concluded that frequent engagement in industrial action could be a negative proxy for internal public service attractiveness.

5.9.2 Graphical summary

The above summary can also be graphically illustrated by the two figures below. The first one shows the hypothesized relationships, while the second one illustrates the actual findings:

Figure 5. 4: Hypothesized relationships between research variables

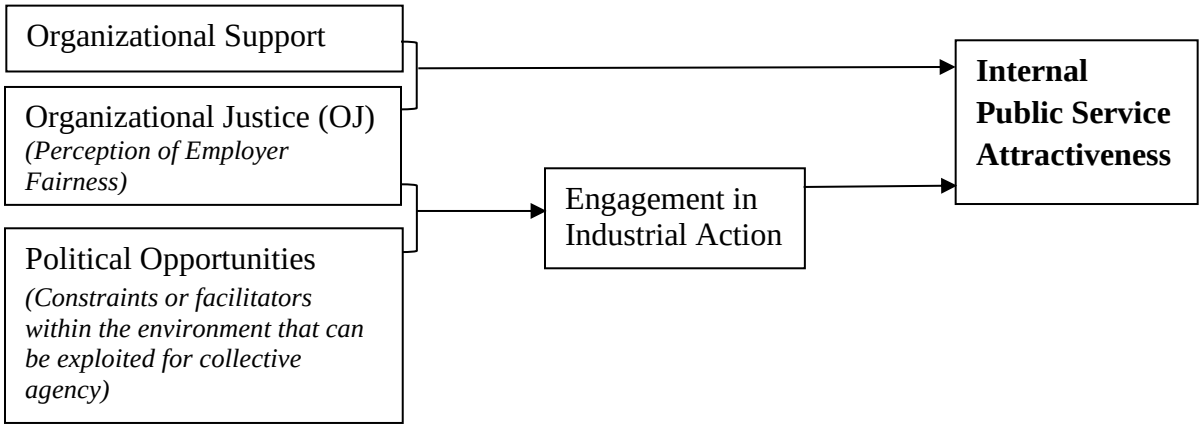
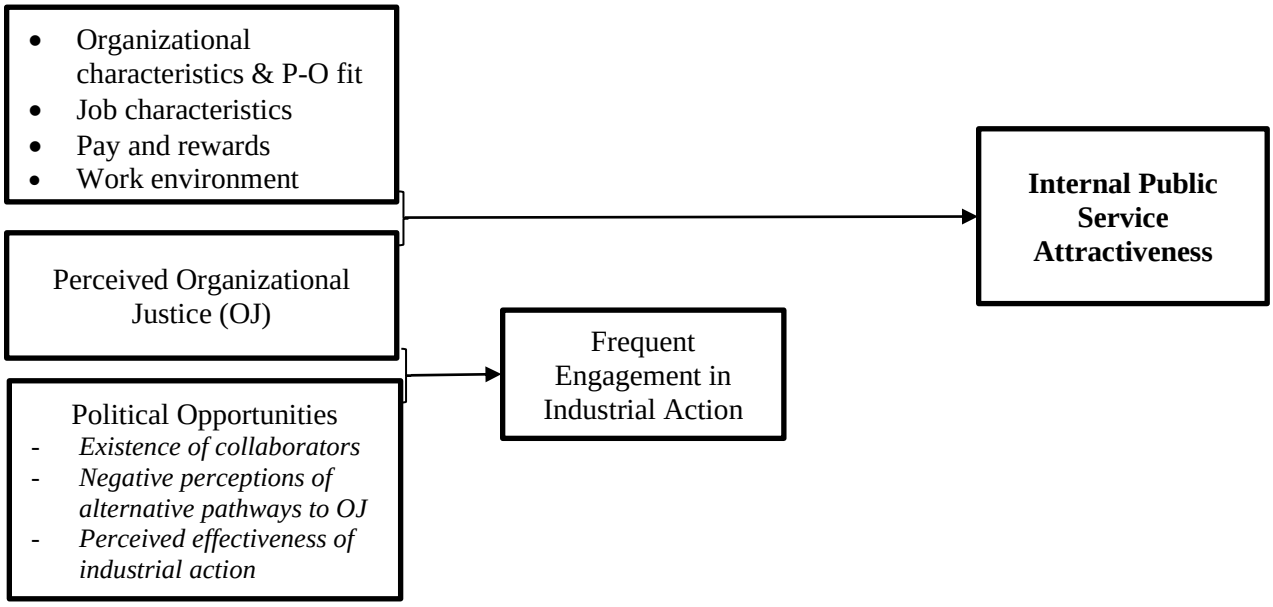


Figure 5. 5: Confirmed research results



As shown in Figure 5.5, the results were more aligned to '*perceived* organizational justice'. Employees' perception of workplace fairness had a strong influence on both internal public service attractiveness and frequent engagement in strikes. However, in both cases, it worked in combination with other factors. Additionally, whereas both frequent engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness were influenced by perceived organizational justice, the results showed that the two were dichotomous.

6.0 INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

This research focused on a specific group of public employees: public university lecturers and public-school teachers in Uganda who frequently engaged in industrial action. The main goal was to analyze how and why (or why not) frequent engagement in industrial action interacted with the internal attractiveness of government employment. The research explored whether public employees frequently engaged in industrial action because they considered public service employment to be unattractive or whether frequent engagement in industrial action was in fact part of the attractiveness of government employment. Beyond exploring these relationships, it also explained why (or why not) such relationships existed.

Therefore, the research set out to answer the following specific questions:

1. Why do public employees engage in industrial action and what role does frequent engagement in industrial action play in their perception of public service attractiveness?
2. Why and how is organizational justice related to public employees' perception of public service attractiveness?

This chapter analyses the research results in relation to the above questions. The results have been interpreted based on context, literature and theory. By so doing, the chapter places the research results in context and highlights the research contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

In general terms, this discussion focuses on the meaning and implications of the research results from a public management perspective. It contributes to the literature on internal public service attractiveness (and by extension, internal recruitment in the public sector). The discussion also shines a light on the rising levels of industrial action in developing economies, and the general shift of industrial action from the private to the public sector – even in developed economies. Crucially, it also explains what all this means for the specialist field of public sector human resource management.

6.2 The new face of public sector employee strikes

In this section…

Lessons for public management

→ *Stereotypical descriptions of public employees need to be interpreted within context because some perceived 'laziness' or 'inefficiencies' could actually be latent forms of workplace militancy.*

→ *The strike repertoire for public employees is so diverse that some forms of industrial action might not be easily perceived as such.*

→ *Generally, strike activities are shifting from the private to the public sector. This might necessitate retooling and retraining public managers to deal with emerging employee relations dynamics.*

→ *Restricting the right to strike might not be an effective option as it could potentially force public employees to channel their frustrations through more undesirable means.*

→ ***For theory:*** *Whereas the present results do not discount the role of trade unions in actualizing collective action, they suggest that theories which connect strike activity to union strength might be insufficient in explaining all forms of job action in the public sector.*

→ ***For research:*** *There is need for further research on how public employees who do not engage in industrial action channel their "frustrations", especially in contexts where other public employees frequently do so.*

Industrial action in the context of the present research was not limited to general strikes sanctioned by unions. In fact, public university lecturers in Uganda were not formally unionized. Their frequent strikes were led by informal structures (the so-called public university academic staff associations). The strike activities they engaged in were even more informal. At face value, some of their actions could easily have passed for isolated cases of individual insubordination or acts of unprofessional conduct. It was only a deeper analysis of their collective nature, and the fact that public employees announced them beforehand that made them discernible as industrial action.

Subterranean and other unorthodox forms of industrial action are not new to the public sector employee relations literature. Whereas general employee strikes have been on the wane, especially in developed economies (Vandaele, 2016; Kelly, 2015; Gall, 1999), Heckscher and McCarthy (2014) found that collective action in developed countries had not actually declined as reported, but that it had merely *"changed in form"* (p.627). Without denying the relative industrial peace in developed economies, these authors described the rise of "something new": "a form of interaction and morality structured as something like the relationship of friendship, but looser and wider". They added that this new form of interaction organizes "partially autonomous actors into coordinated swarms" that "are particularly effective in situations that require, as it were, guerrilla action, with rapid adaptation and local innovation" (Heckscher & McCarthy, 2014, p.649).

The above description fits well with the Ugandan case. Clearly, public university lecturers and public-school teachers in Uganda were employing some sort of guerilla tactics. For example, the suggestion that public school teachers intentionally taught wrong content or that public university lecturers decided not to acknowledge the universities they worked for on their research products were not archetypal forms of strikes. But whereas such unconventional actions were surprising, they were not completely unexpected. As Hyman (2015) argued, increased restrictions on union activities could inadvertently lead to diverse repertoires of industrial action, as workers are forced to become more creative. In the Ugandan case, repressive legislation, and high-handed responses from government (e.g., ostracizing suspected 'ring leaders' or terminating the contracts of striking public employees) could be blamed for the craftiness in the conduct of industrial action.

It is also worth noting that such unorthodox forms of industrial action are not only happening in Uganda, but generally, in most of Sub-Saharan Africa. While describing public sector employee relations in Sub-Saharan Africa, Kasuka (2013) noted that "the civil servants pretended to work while the state pretended to pay them" (p.175). And, besides the unconventional forms of industrial action, public sector employee strikes have generally been on the rise in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly every single African country has had its fair share of public sector employee strikes since the turn of the century. For example, in 2012, South Africa suffered one of Africa's most bloody strikes when at least 45 lives were lost in clashes between armed forces and striking mining sector workers. This strike, commonly referred to as the Lonmin Strike or the Marikana Massacre, "caused a surge in global platinum prices by 1.3%" (Kamau, 2012). Tenza (2020) also described the persistent employee strikes that have "bedeviled" the South African public sector, noting that "South Africa recorded 114 strikes in 2013 and 88 strikes in 2014, which cost the country about R6.1 billion (over 400 million US dollars)", pushing "the economy on the brink of recession" (pp.520-521).

In Nigeria, public sector strikes are so frequent that they are now more of an expectation, rather than an exception. For example, in a period of three years, 2013-2015, "more than eight different strikes involving doctors, nurses and allied healthcare workers" were recorded in Nigeria's public health sector (Oleribe *et al.,* 2016), while student and staff strikes in Nigerian public universities have been described as "incessant" (Aremu *et al.*, 2015; Kawugana, 2016). In Egypt, increased

public sector employee strikes have been linked to the democratization process, with suggestions that they "provided the background for some of the most important organizing" which Facebook activists "promoted" to ignite the famous Arab Spring in the country (Blackburn, 2018). Zimbabwe is another African country that has suffered the brunt of unending public employee strikes. Saunders (2001) described the almost dramatic frequency of public sector strikes in Zimbabwe which are mostly responded to with extreme high handedness from the government. In spite of the tough (sometimes brutal) response from the State, Zimbabwean public employees, especially public-school teachers, have continued to engage in strike activities with predictable regularity. Mabhoyi (2020) described public-school teachers' strikes in Zimbabwe as having a "well-established cycle" in a way that "towards the beginning of each term, teachers threaten to strike, government offers negotiations and, after three weeks into the term, nothing tangible comes out of those negotiations. Beginning of the following term the cycle starts all over again" (p.63). Such a cycle is similar to the situation in Uganda.

However, whereas public sector employee strikes have been on the rise in Africa (as described above), strike activity has undeniably declined in most industrialized economies (Vandaele, 2016; Kelly, 2015; Gall, 1999). This notwithstanding, there is also the argument that what has truly reduced are private sector strikes, with public employee strikes continuing to rise. Kelly and Hamann (2010) noted the increase in protests against government policies in OECD countries since the 1980s (p.646) while Gunderson's (2005) research in the US and Canada confirmed a strong shift of employee strikes from the private to the public sector.

But even if we were to believe that industrial action has indeed declined in developed countries, Godard (2011) raised some critical questions that may be worth considering before making any rush conclusions. These questions are in sync with Heckscher and McCarthy's (2014) argument that strike activities might not have actually reduced but could have merely changed form. Here are the questions:

> *"If conflict is fundamental to the employment relation, has it simply been diverted into alternative, less organized and less overt forms since the 1970s? Is it possible that, indeed, it is not fundamental or defining and that the main causes of industrial conflict have diminished or even disappeared? Or is it possible that it has just become so repressed that*

> *it now appears in various forms of dysfunctional behaviour not typically considered to reflect conflict? Finally, is organized conflict just dormant, and widespread industrial (if not social) unrest just around the corner?"* (Godard, 2011, p.283).

We might probably never get all the answers to all the above questions, but what is clear is that strike activity has metamorphosed into different forms over the last few decades. There is also an undeniable shift of strike activity from the private to the public sector (even in developed economies). Van der Velden *et al.*'s (2007) research, which was conducted across 15 diverse countries (ranging from Germany, USA, Mexico, South Korea, and South Africa), found that "the center of gravity" of strike activity was steadily shifting from the manufacturing to the public sector, and most especially to the education, health, and transportation sectors. Indeed, as Gunderson (2005) aptly put it, "although strikes in the private sector may be described as declining to a whimper, they are *increasing to more of a bang in the public sector*" (p.400). Unsurprisingly, Gall's (1999) analysis of strike activity in Western Europe showed that while there has been an identifiable decline in strike activity in the mining and manufacturing sector, there is an "absolute and relative increase of strike activity in the public sector" (p.358). The situation is not any different in developing economies as "the changing locus of strike action appears as a simultaneous move from manufacturing to services and from the private to the public sector" (Kelly, 2015, p.724).

Outside the Sub-Saharan African context, unconventional forms of workplace organizing have been noted, especially in situations where public employees are not allowed to openly engage in strikes, or where strikes are simply not feasible for one reason or the other. For example, Wettstein and Beschorner (2011) elaborated a phenomenon called *"Dienst nach Vorschrift"* (in German) which describes situations where employees do no more than the minimum required of them. Brinkmann and Stapf (2005) also described another situation where employees internally resign themselves from their work, engage in things like clock-watching or simply come to work and do nothing at all. This has been described in German as *"Innere Kündigung".* These two aspects were visible in the present case, and in this particular context, public employees described them as forms of industrial action. Indeed, in the context of the present research, such unconventional actions were premeditated and discussed beforehand at collegial level.

So, what does all this mean for public management?

Firstly, it is worth pointing out that in many countries, public employee strikes are generally regarded with disdain – especially because they are viewed as disruptions to the delivery of *essential services*. Indeed, most governments try as much as possible to restrict public sector employee strikes (Bauernschuster *et al.,* 2017). Widespread restrictions exist even in regions where public sector strike activity is relatively low. For example, Akkerman *et al.* (2013) reported that there is an "alarming and increasing number of union rights violation, such as strike bans and strike breaking norms by public authorities, unrightful dismissals, demotion, discrimination, and even harassment in Western Europe" (p.251). In the U.S., Bauernschuster and colleagues (2017) described the New York State Public Employees' Fair Employment Act *(Taylor Law)* which "prohibits any strike or other concerted stoppage of work or slowdown by public employees" as a "particularly draconian measure" (Bauernschuster *et al.,* 2017, p.2). If this is the case in democratic countries where strike activity is relatively low, one can only imagine what happens in less democratic societies, where persistent public employee strikes are often seen as a public nuisance!

In some African countries – Zimbabwe for example, when public school teachers declare a strike, the government deploys state security intelligence officers in schools to spy on the teachers, single out the "bad apples", and create situations where the striking teachers cannot trust one another (Mabhoyi, 2020, pp.64-65). The State basically uses rebel tactics to cow striking public employees into silence. In Uganda (which was the case study of the present research), many public employees are barred from engaging in industrial action, and for those who have a right to engage (e.g., the public university lecturers and public-school teachers in this case), government response to strikes often includes tough measures like closing public institutions, dismissing suspected strike leaders, or creating rival camps within the striking employees through bribery and intimidation. However, all these measures do not seem to elicit the desired impact as strikes continue to occur with almost clockwork regularity. Moreso, even where public employees have no right to engage in industrial action, some crafty creativity has been observed. For example, police officers in Uganda are not allowed to engage in any form of industrial action, but in November 2012, the wives of Ugandan policemen staged public demonstrations demanding better working conditions for their husbands (Malaba, 2012; AllAfrica News, 2012).

In light of the above narration, public managers whose employees frequently engage in industrial action might need to take heed of an old warning by Cooke (1983), thus: *"taking away the right to strike is a bit like eliminating the vapor safety valve on a boiler. Employees need to know that they have this means of relieving their frustrations and internal tension – even if they never use it. Otherwise, an explosion is inevitable"* (p.99). Therefore, even if there might be a temptation to curtail strike activity in the public sector (and more so in settings where public employee strikes are persistent), such a move needs to be taken with caution as it could potentially be counterproductive with employees finding alternative employee voice pathways, which might not necessarily be more desirable.

It is also important for public managers and public policy actors to note that not all forms of industrial action are straightforward or easy to recognize. There is generally a well-documented anti-public service bias with widespread beliefs that public employees are inefficient, lazy, greedy, and corrupt (Willems, 2020; Pandey *et al.*, 2007; Wright, 2001). But as Willems (2020) noted, "stereotypes about public servants might be fueled by overall social constructions in society, rather than the sum of personal and real experiences" (p.810). That said, it is difficult to deny that some of this bias might be based on real experiences from citizen interactions with public servants. A Ugandan child who is taught wrong content by their teacher in a public school certainly has reason to believe that public servants are inefficient. Someone would also rightly describe an employee engaged in "Innere Kündigung" (Brinkmann & Stapf, 2005) as being inefficient, or even lazy. But that is not the end of the story…

What the present results emphasized is that any dysfunctional behavior by public employees should not be taken at face value. In some contexts, some of that 'laziness' or 'inefficiency' might be connected to latent forms of industrial action or to situations where public employees try to get even with their employer on the basis of some perceived injustice. Indeed, Gall (2014) described "subterranean forms of industrial action short-of-a-strike" that might not easily be perceived to be strikes in the traditional sense of the word (p.219). Interestingly (and unsurprisingly perhaps), the findings of a 2004 British industrial relations survey showed that these concealed forms of industrial action short-of-a-strike had nearly become a "preserve of the public sector" (Kersley *et al.*, 2005, p. 209).

The shift of industrial action from the private to the public sector, coupled with the almost enigmatic public sector strike repertoire requires public managers and policymakers to be more aware and better equipped to deal with covert forms of workplace militancy. Public managers and public sector HR strategists cannot afford to join the bandwagon of those suggesting that public employees are inherently lazy or inefficient without giving due consideration to contextual factors.

These findings also underlined the need to contextualize the role of trade unions in actualizing collective agency. In the present context, not all strike activities were led by trade unions. In fact, Ugandan public university lecturers were not unionized, but they frequently engaged in strikes – mostly through the informal leadership of loose staff associations. Collective organizing in this case had a spontaneous character and was less structured than union-backed general strikes. In many ways, the findings supported Heckscher and McCarthy's (2014) description of a looser and wider form of interaction that "organizes partially autonomous actors into coordinated swarms" (p.649). There was also support for Zoll's (2001) argument that the decline of union-sanctioned general strikes might not necessarily mean a decline in employee voice actions. Indeed, even non-unionized public employees could potentially agree on unorthodox forms of workplace militancy, which if not properly analyzed could be mistaken for inefficiency, incompetence, or laziness.

Finally, in the specific context of Uganda (or countries with similar challenges), it is important for public managers and policymakers to be proactive in their interactions with public employees. It is not enough for government to respond to employee demands only when they engage in strikes. Such an attitude could further instrumentalize strike activity, as public employees are then conditioned to think that they can only influence their working conditions through strikes. Ugandan public managers, especially in public schools and universities, need to pay more attention to all forms of deviant or counterproductive behavior, discuss them with employees, and address them before they blossom into open strikes. It is also important for line managers to take their representation role more seriously. For the ordinary public employee, their line manager is the physical representative of their employer, and in effect the line manager's actions are interpreted to be the actions of government. Line managers must therefore take decisions with full knowledge of the fact that such decisions do not only affect their interaction with concerned employees, but that they also affect the general perception of government as an employer.

6.3 Why public employees engage in industrial action

In this section…

Lessons for public management

→ *There was a clear dichotomy between absolute working conditions and frequent engagement in industrial action. This was mostly because an established strike culture catalyzed further strikes, even when working conditions were not so dire.*

→ *The public sector must create buffers against the development of strike cultures because the onset of one strike could turn into an unwanted spiral of persistent public employee strikes.*

→ *Frequent engagement in industrial action is more aligned to relative, rather than absolute deprivation. Therefore, public managers whose employees frequently engage in industrial action need to address sources of perceived inequity, rather than focus on improving working conditions in absolute terms.*

→ *Employees want to feel valued, and a key part of that comes from open communication. Good public managers must be good communicators.*

→ *There is no substitute for fairness. For striking public employees, better pay or improved working conditions mean nothing unless they are perceived as being fair (relative to known or perceived referent groups).*

→ *Public employees do not necessarily enjoy engaging in industrial action. The (perceived) absence of alternative pathways to seek justice is a critical explanatory factor for frequent employee engagement in strikes.*

→ ***For theory:*** *It is important for theoretical explanations of industrial action to consider the contextual framing and translation of grievances, and not just define grievances in absolute terms.*

→ ***For research:*** *The present research only focused on self-reported explanations of public employees. In the context of Uganda, it would be beneficial to also study the employer's perspective.*

It is important to immediately point out that strike activity is not always representative of actual working conditions or absolute amounts of pay received by employees. This dichotomy between absolute working conditions and engagement in industrial action has been subjected to a lot of discussion in the industrial relations literature. Most of the literature on workplace militancy and union organizing suggests that employee strikes are mostly motivated by demands for improved working conditions and or, pay. However, empirical research has also consistently shown that public employees who frequently engage in strikes are not always the worst paid or those whose actual working conditions are poor. For example, in Germany, it was found that rather than being connected to working conditions, employee strikes were mostly related to "union density and links to political parties", which might explain why German rail workers have a longer history of engaging in strikes, even when they might not be the least paid (Dribbusch, 2016). The present research had similar findings: persistent engagement in industrial action was clearly decoupled

from working conditions and pay in absolute terms. In the present context, persistent employee strikes were mostly connected to relative, rather than absolute deprivation.

As mentioned earlier, this dichotomy between actual working conditions and persistent employee strikes is not new to the literature. In many countries with persistent cases of industrial action, in France for example, employee strikes have been mostly linked to an established culture of industrial turbulence (Toloudis, 2008; Zoll, 2001). This agrees with early theorizing by Gurr (1968) who explained the "French tradition of urban revolution" with the argument that "populations in which strife is chronic tend to develop, by an interaction process, a set of beliefs justifying violent responses" (p.1106).

However, whereas it is true that an established strike culture might catalyze further strikes (as much of employee behavior evolves through social bricolage and sociological framing), that is not the whole story. It is arguable that people do not just do things because they see others doing them. For employees to effectively adopt and continuously repeat certain forms of behavior, the actions or outcomes therein must resonate with their personal convictions. The bigger question therefore should be why this culture of persistent workplace militancy is seen as the most viable option, and indeed why employees feel the need for action in the first place.

In general terms, the existing public administration literature is deficient when it comes to general explanations for public employee strikes. What frequently appears in the literature are analyses of the causality of specific strike activities. There is a clear dearth of general qualitative explanations for public employee engagement in strikes. This is probably because the low levels of industrial action in countries with well-developed research infrastructure have not warranted in-depth analyses of the same. It might also be related to the fact that persistent engagement in industrial action is relatively new to the public sector. However, public employee strikes are on the rise, and the general locus of strike activity is gradually shifting from the private sector to the public sector (Kelly, 2015; van der Velden *et al.*, 2007; Gunderson, 2005; Gall, 1999). For some countries (Uganda, for example), persistent public employee strikes are clearly a wicked problem that must be addressed. This calls for a clear understanding of the same. It is for this reason that the present research avoided discussions related to the causality of specific strike activities and focused on

investigating how and why public employees generally rationalized persistent engagement in industrial action.

Part of the motivation to investigate the rationale for persistent public employee strikes was hinged on the well-established theoretical argument that public employees are altruistically attracted to delivering the public good (Perry & Wise, 1990; Rainey, 1982). Yet, empirical research has consistently shown that persistent public sector employee strikes can harm the delivery of essential public services (Tenza, 2020; Bauernschuster *et al.*, 2017; Osakede & Ijimakinwa, 2014; Thörnqvist, 2007). So, if public employees are indeed altruistically attracted to delivering the public good, why then do they sometimes engage in actions that might hinder that goal?

In response to the above dilemma, the present research results showed that public employees who frequently engaged in industrial action did not always view their actions as being disruptive or negative. Whereas some respondents acknowledged that their persistent engagement in industrial action was not always in public interest, some argued that frequent engagement in industrial action was actually part of delivering the public good. There was the argument that engaging in strikes was part of their civic responsibility both as public servants and as citizens. They also argued that strikes were useful in reminding government to fulfill its commitments/obligations.

However, the suggestion that persistent strikes are meant to "remind government about unfulfilled promises" should not be taken at face value. In many cases, this only meant reminding government about promises made in response to previous strike activities. For example, if a strike is held to demand salary enhancements, government might make promises to offer the same within certain timelines. When such promises are not kept, the concerned public employees might stage another wave of strikes to 'remind government about its commitments'. However, in some instances, it also included general service delivery aspects. For example, 'reminding government' about the need to reduce overcrowding in classrooms or to improve hygiene conditions in public institutions. The respondents of this research argued that since it was them who frequently interfaced with the conditions in public schools and public universities, it was their responsibility to bring such issues to the attention of government – and for them, the best way to do that was through engagement in industrial action.

Of course, the above argument begs the question of why engagement in industrial action was seen as the best way to communicate with government. On this, the respondents argued that "industrial action was the last resort". If there was one unanimous claim in the findings of this research, it was the suggestion that strikes were only resorted to as the last option. In fairness, there was evidence of public employees trying to avoid (or at least delay) industrial action. Before engaging in any sort of strike activity, public school teachers and public university lecturers in Uganda usually wrote to their superiors, mostly requesting for audience to discuss what they considered to be grievances. There was also evidence of seeking third-party interventions (for example, asking the central government Minister in charge of Education to arbitrate in a disagreement between lecturers and the university administration). It was suggested that only when these less-controversial actions failed would they resort to engaging in strikes.

The argument that strikes were only resorted to as a last resort pointed to a bigger malaise within Uganda's public sector. Firstly, it is important to appreciate how issues were framed in this context. Even in the absence of formal trade unions, the academic staff associations at the different public universities and public schools appeared to have a big influence on defining popular narratives, and determining which issues end up being framed as 'grievances'. Secondly, there was evident distrust for alternative pathways to seek organizational justice. For example, many respondents either did not know about the existence of industrial courts, or simply did not trust them. An entrenched culture of persistent workplace militancy also played a big role in the determination of these social frames. It is arguable that the difference between engaging in industrial action and not engaging in it is not based on absolute differences in working conditions but has more to do with the perceived effectiveness of different pathways to attain justice at the workplace.

Lastly, this discussion on why Ugandan public educators engaged in industrial action would not be complete without mentioning *perceived organizational justice*. Just as suggested by the Social Movements theories, the findings of this research confirmed that the existence of grievances was a basic ingredient for strike activity. It is safe to assume that every strike action would be explained by some sort of deficit between expectation and reality. This is why all striking employees usually lay down their 'demands'. The question to ask therefore is where such inflated expectations come from.

Why would public employees who not only serve their country, but also have the opportunity to use their talents and expertise to deliver the public good persistently feel aggrieved? There is even a further question to this: the public sector often has transparent salary structures, and so people usually apply for government jobs with full knowledge of exactly how much they will earn. Why then do public employees strike to demand better pay when they knew exactly what they signed up for even before deciding to work in the public sector? The answer to this was in one word: FAIRNESS. The present results were unanimous in suggesting that public employees engaged in industrial action because of a perceived lack of fairness on the part of government as their employer, or the specific public organizations they worked for. This was a bit surprising given the context of this research (as it was conducted in a resource-constrained setting).

Based on the content theories of motivation, it was initially assumed that the research respondents in this context would explain their dissatisfaction with public service employment in absolute physiological terms. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which is probably the best-known content theory of motivation, posits that human needs are hierarchical in a way that the most pressing needs have to be satisfied before employees turn their attention to higher needs. Maslow suggested that higher needs cannot be pursued before the basic physiological needs are met (Arnold *et al,* 1998). Alderfer's ERG (existence, relatedness, and growth) theory also suggests that; "existence needs are characterized first by the goal of obtaining a material substance, and second, by a person's satisfaction tending to be correlated with another person's frustration, when resources are limited" (Schneider & Alderfer, 1973, p.490). It was therefore logically expected that public employees in a poor country like Uganda would explain their persistent engagement in industrial action by the struggle to meet the very basic needs. Indeed, in the absence of scientific research, media reports are often relied on to explain why public-school teachers and public university lecturers in Uganda persistently engage in industrial action. The common narrative from mass media is usually that public employee strikes in this context are motivated by demands for better pay or better working conditions. What is not always explained is why those demands arise in the first place. Is it because public sector salaries are simply not enough to meet the basic needs of the public employees in question?

The present results showed that public employees did not demand better working conditions or better pay simply in the interest of meeting basic needs, but more in the interest of attaining parity with known (or assumed) referent groups. This is explained in the theory as relative deprivation (as opposed to absolute deprivation). Robbins and Judge (2013) explained how employees make comparisons. They suggested four sources of referent comparisons: *the self-inside comparison* which relates to employees comparing their personal experiences in different positions within the same organization; *the self-outside comparison* in which employees compare their current employment situation with past experiences in different organizations; *the other-inside comparison* where employees compare themselves to individuals or groups within the same organization; and *the other-outside comparison* in which employees compare themselves to individuals or groups outside their organization. Similar comparisons were visible in the present case of Ugandan public educators. The 'other-inside comparison' and the 'other-outside comparison' were the most prevalent in this case. Comparisons were mostly made with public employees outside the education sector, and also with non-teaching staff in public education institutions. There were also some few cases of 'self-outside comparisons' where public educators compared their current situation(s) to previous positions they held – mostly outside the public sector.

The above results might have been surprising in the context of the present research, but they were not entirely new to the employee relations literature. In instances where the general causation for industrial action has been explained, relative deprivation has indeed been suggested. For example, in explaining the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike, labour historian Steve Estes noted that "despite some union leaders' claims that this was a labour dispute, the 'real' issue was race." He then highlighted the contestations that existed within the different groups of workers, with Black men feeling unequal to White men but also, young Black men "contesting not only White constructions of manhood, but also the manhood espoused by older Black leaders" (Estes, 2000, pp.154-157). Fundamentally then, even when this might sound like a gender or race contestation; at the root of it was the desire to achieve equity with known referent groups. This is consistent with the argument that anger, and equity tensions build up when employees perceive their input-output ratio as being unequal to that of relevant others (Adams, 1965; Robbins & Judge, 2013).

In a similar historical account, Toloudis (2008) traced the emergence of the 19th Century French Teachers' Movement to the rise of categorical boundaries and different identities among teachers, in what he described as friction between *instituteurs* and ecclesiastical authorities. The argument was that "resentment built between secular teachers and religious teachers, as the latter had more influential support from their superiors than the instituteurs had from secular school authorities" (p.73). It is therefore immediately clear that the striking 'secular' teachers felt deprived by comparing themselves with their 'religious' counterparts.

However, relative deprivation (or perceived unfairness) is not the only possible explanation for industrial action. Gall (2014) highlighted gender and self-determination arguments as in the case of *Playboy Bunny* protests in Detroit and other US cities in the 1960s, in which female restaurant and hotel workers protested masculine definitions of attractiveness. The same author also described the 2011 'Operation La BARBE!' protests in Luxembourg in which bus drivers refused to shave their beards to protest against 'poor working conditions', including, long working hours and a lack of toilet facilities (pp.216-217). The Luxembourg case was more aligned to absolute deprivation, rather than relative deprivation. McCartin (1997) also connected the industrial turbulence in the United States during World War I to a search for "industrial democracy" – which was not necessarily a case of relative deprivation.

Therefore, although equity, fairness and relative deprivation provided the major explanation for frequent engagement in industrial action in the context of the present research, a case could also be made for absolute working conditions in public organizations. In light of this, the main argument advanced here is that even in situations where employers offer good pay and above average working conditions in absolute terms, an analysis of how that compares to what is offered elsewhere should not be forgotten. Public employees constantly compare their employment situation(s) with that of relevant others. Such comparisons can be at individual level (within the public organization or business unit), between different public organizations, across different employment sectors, or indeed across comparable countries. In the present case, comparisons were made with other Ugandan public employees (in other occupations), but also with employees holding similar occupations in neighboring countries or in countries perceived to be of comparable profile to Uganda.

The above discussion notwithstanding, it is difficult to get away from the fact that public employees engaged in strikes largely because they had seen them work. Even in the present context, there was evidence of strikes building up through social bricolage in a similar way to the "French tradition of urban revolution" as described by Gurr (1968). It is the belief that *"strikes work"* that created the perception that they were the 'only viable option'. This also had a lot to do with the perceived effectiveness of alternative pathways to pursue workplace justice. Therefore, internal conflict resolution mechanisms, third-party arbitrators, and industrial courts must be strengthened if cases of industrial action are to be reduced. It is also important for public managers to address employee concerns before they blossom into full-scale strikes. Once employees start engaging in strikes, it might be difficult to stop the creation of a strike culture. There is a reason why employee strikes tend to persist in certain countries or certain groups of employees!

Finally, it is also worth noting that public employee strikes tend to happen in cycles. This is mostly because the employer's response to strikes often leads to some sort of Catch-22 situation. If government responds to striking public employees by making concessions or offering what they ask for, it unfortunately creates a spiral of viewing industrial action as a viable solution, which then adds to the negotiation toolkit of public employees in such a context. On the other hand, ignoring the strikes or rubbishing employee demands only enhances injustice perceptions. It is therefore prudent for countries or individual public organizations with low levels of industrial action not to take this for granted, but to continuously invest in improving their working conditions, workplace interactions, and HR policies to foster workplace fairness and enhance pathways to justice. The public sector must create buffers against the development of a strike culture because the onset of one strike could turn into an unwanted spiral of persistent public employee strikes.

6.4 What makes public sector employment internally attractive?

In this section…

Lessons for public management

→ *What attracts prospective employees to the public sector might be different from what keeps them attracted once they start working in the sector. Current employees mostly evaluate the employer based on lived experiences rather than on promises, branding messages or public commitments.*

→ *Fairness is a central theme for internal public sector employee relations. Public managers should not just promise fairness. They must also be perceived to be fair.*

→ *Government enjoys a prestigious employer reputation based on its perpetual nature and the indispensability/monopoly of most of its services. Whereas this provides a competitive advantage to build on, it does not offer public institutions the license not to care about internal attractiveness because retaining unhappy employees (who only stick around because of job security or a lack of alternatives) might be counterproductive.*

→ *In the context of the present research, P-O fit had a strong influence on internal public service attractiveness. However, public employees continuously evaluated that fit. Therefore, beyond selecting employees whose values match public sector values, the public sector must constantly review working conditions and employee feedback mechanisms to ensure that the sector continues to meet the expectations of recruited employees.*

→ ***For theory:*** *The results strongly questioned the universality and applicability of PSM, especially in contexts with high levels of public employee strikes. In the present context, PSM appeared to be an idealistic or even fanciful paragon that is not tangible in day-to-day work experiences.*

→ ***For research:*** *Public sector employer attractiveness has been mainly studied from an 'external' perspective (i.e., studying the perceptions of prospective employees). The perceptions of current public employees remain largely unresearched even when the public sector frequently relies on internal recruitment.*

Beyond investigating the forms of industrial action that public school teachers and public university lecturers in Uganda engaged in, and exploring why they engaged, this research also investigated how internal public service attractiveness was perceived by this particular group of public employees.

However, before delving into this discussion, it is important to take note of the context. Firstly, this was a unique category of public employees: public educators who frequently engaged in industrial action. Public school teachers and public university lecturers are distinguishable from traditional public sector bureaucrats. Teachers and lecturers are generally tied (or attracted) to their occupations by way of training. This is even more true for teachers (who are specifically trained to teach) than lecturers (who can also find research jobs outside the education sector). The other critical difference for this particular category of public employees is that they were allowed to engage in industrial action, unlike several other government bureaucrats who work in the so-called

'essential services', e.g., policemen, firefighters, and officers in line ministries. It is therefore important to note that the perceptions of the research respondents in the present case might have been heavily influenced by their special context and may therefore not be representative of public employees in general. Finally, this discussion is about *internal* public service attractiveness, i.e., public service attractiveness from the perspective of current employees, rather than that of prospective public employees or jobseekers.

The results showed that the attractiveness of government employment from the perspective of current employees is distinct from the perspective of prospective employees who generally assume what it feels like to work for government. As Dutton *et al.* (1994) rightly argued, "insiders and outsiders to an organization have access to different information about the organization and apply different values and goals in interpreting this information" (p.249). Van de Walle's (2018) analysis of citizen satisfaction with public services also had similar anecdotes as it was argued that "having had direct experience makes the formation of a satisfaction judgement more informed overall" (p.232). The respondents of the present research emphasized this in no uncertain terms. They argued that their perception of the attractiveness of government employment was different from what it was before they started working for government. The major difference was that before they started working in the public sector, they based their assessments on hearsay and preconceived perceptions of public sector employment. But as actual public employees, their assessments were largely dependent on their day-to-day workplace interactions, i.e., on lived experiences. They did not rely on written commitments, policy documents, organizational profiles, service charters, company websites or word-of-mouth (as would be the case for prospective employees). This is not to suggest that these aspects did not affect their judgement, but they were unlikely to be their primary source of information.

Additionally, as alluded to in the above paragraph, public employees' assessments of internal public service attractiveness were also influenced by prior expectations. During the qualitative content analysis, it initially sounded paradoxical that public employees who frequently clashed with their employer (through strikes) could consider the same employer to be attractive. But later, it became clear that evaluations of employer attractiveness were not only based on current realities but also on prior expectations – which employees might have held before joining public sector

employment. Employees whose initial expectation was that public service employment was not so attractive might be pleasantly surprised to find that it is actually better than what they expected. This alone might not stop them from engaging in strikes. Indeed, in the present context, persistent public employee strikes were not framed as an indictment of the internal attractiveness of government employment.

In light of the above and given the public sector's heavy reliance on internal recruitment, it is somewhat surprising that the existing public sector HR literature has not prioritized the analysis of internal public service attractiveness. Public service attractiveness has mainly been studied from the perspective of prospective employees (usually students or other categories of jobseekers). Indeed, Billsberry (2007) underlined "the largely unresearched world of internal recruitment" in the public sector (p.144). To be fair, employer attractiveness (even in the private sector) has been framed as an external-facing concept. It is probably assumed that employees who are already working with the organization are already 'attracted'. However, there is evidence in the empirical literature to suggest that sometimes employees choose not to apply for positions internally (Harris, 2000), or that employees might continue working with the organization only because of a lack of viable alternatives (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This underlines the need to strengthen the understanding of internal employer attractiveness.

In the case of Ugandan public-school teachers and public university lecturers who frequently engaged in industrial action, the strongest determinant for internal public service attractiveness was *perceived organizational justice*. It was argued that public service employment can only remain internally attractive if the government (as the employer) or indeed the specific public organizations they worked for were fair. Both the qualitative and quantitative results confirmed this. Fairness perceptions were largely hinged on employees' lived experiences, or at least the attitudes that their lived experiences created. However, there was also evidence of generalized perceptions about public sector employer fairness. Not all respondents who claimed that their employer was unfair were able to elaborate exactly how that was the case. As Fujishiro (2005) rightly pointed out, justice perceptions and evaluations of fairness are totally subjective. It is therefore not so much about what is said or what is written in policy documents, but more about the day-to-day lived experiences of public employees. Whereas it is possible for these justice

perceptions to be influenced by hallo effects, the value of lived experiences (as opposed to mere talk) in influencing public service attractiveness has been underlined by previous research (e.g., Windscheid *et al.*, 2016). The old adage that *'justice must not only be done but must also be seen to be done'* appears to be true for public employees.

Organizational justice has already been found to influence a whole host of other public sector employee outcomes. These include job satisfaction, outcome satisfaction, trust, organizational commitment, evaluation of authority, performance, withdrawal behavior, negative reactions, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Colquitt *et al.,* 2001; Masterson *et al.,* 2000; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Organ, 1990). In the present results, internal public service attractiveness was strikingly similar to organizational citizenship behavior, and to the postulations of the social exchange theory. As Colquitt *et al.* (2001) argued, "people in organizations assume, at the outset, a social exchange relationship" and "this expectation continues until unfairness is evidenced, at which time the relationship is reinterpreted as economic rather than social" (p.430). This is exactly what was visible in the present research. Internal public service attractiveness was mostly associated to the largely unquantifiable social perceptions of justice. The influence of material rewards and other tangible factors on internal public service attractiveness appeared to be subsequent to social exchange considerations.

In the context of the present research, internal employer attractiveness was also closely related to organizational commitment, especially the affective dimension, which assess the degree to which employees identify with the employing organization and treat organizational goals as their own (Meyer & Allen, 1991). For most respondents, the descriptions of internal public service attractiveness were similar to affective commitment. Most of them argued that government can only be perceived to be an attractive employer if it "supports" them to achieve their dreams and aspirations. In tangible terms that meant opportunities for career progression, capacity building and pay. However, this 'organizational support' was also framed in some sort of comparative perspective. These particular public employees compared the level of support they got from their employer to what they think other public employees received. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that organizational support, which is incidental to both employee commitment and internal employer attractiveness, has consistently been found to be strongly influenced by organizational

justice (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Bishop *et al.,* 2000; Greenberg, 1990; Eisenberger *et al.,* 1986).

Besides perceived organizational justice, internal public service attractiveness in this context was also influenced by factors similar to what has been found in other contexts. These factors, which were explored through qualitative content analysis and structured by an exploratory factor analysis have been grouped into four categories. These include public sector characteristics and P-O fit; job characteristics; pay and rewards; and work environment.

6.4.1 Public sector characteristics and P-O fit

Public sector characteristics and person-organization (P-O) fit was found to be the most popular determinant of internal public service attractiveness in the context of the present research. Indeed, it could be argued that the aspects of organizational justice and organizational support discussed earlier also fall within this factor – as they relate to the employer's characteristic of being fair or supportive. In the exploratory factor analysis, this factor included ten specific aspects, including: the prestige associated with working for government; public sector organizational values matching individual values; sector-specific opportunities; the sense of belonging and sense of ownership engendered by public service employment. Most importantly, it also included aspects related to employer honesty and how much the government valued its employees. These assessments of value were mostly based on comparisons with how different they thought the same employer (in this case, the Ugandan government) treated other public employees, or how they thought other countries treated their public employees. As already mentioned, employer fairness and organizational support are subjective judgements that can only be made by individuals based on their personal workplace experiences (real or perceived). Indeed, as Highhouse *et al.* (2007) eloquently argued, "because impressions of the employer are in the head of the prospective applicant, psychology is the appropriate place to find answers about the content of these impressions, and how these impressions can be damaged, or resurrected" (p.146). This is also true for current employees!

Indeed, there is sizeable research emphasizing the relevance of organizational characteristics in determining employer attractiveness. In an early seminal masterpiece on recruitment and

organizational attractiveness, Rynes (1991) described "organizational characteristics" as dominant factors in applicant attraction. For Rynes (whose research was based on the perceptions of prospective employees, both in the public and private sector), these organizational characteristics included observable aspects like organizational size, industry, profitability, and recent growth. Whereas organizational characteristics were also very important in the context of the present research (which specifically focused on the perceptions of current public employees), in this case, organizational characteristics were more experiential. It was not about the size or growth trajectory of the public organization, but rather about what was felt from the day-to-day experience of working with the organization. Issues like employer fairness, honesty and the value accorded to employees were subjective and more aligned to lived experiences. The consensus in the literature though is that organizational characteristics affect the organizational image which ultimately influences employer attractiveness (Rho *et al.*, 2015; Cohen *et al.*, 2005; Cable & Turban, 2001; Dutton *et al.*, 1994; Gatewood *et al.*, 1993; Rynes, 1991).

The public sector HR literature has also consistently emphasized that characteristics associated with particular public organizations have an influence on the trust levels accorded to those public agencies, or even to the public sector as a whole. The level of trust then translates into a corporate reputation that is based on to judge the employer attractiveness of the public organizations in question, or indeed the attractiveness of government as an employer. Carpenter and Krause (2012) emphasized that people's "behaviors towards government agencies are a function of their beliefs regarding what government agencies can and cannot perform effectively", and that such beliefs originate from what is perceived to be the *true nature* of those public organizations (p.26). Wæraas and Byrkjeflot (2012) also associated the "drop in people's interest in finding work in the public sector" with the loss of faith in the public sector which has been persistently described as being "nightmarishly frustrating for those who are trapped inside it" (pp.186-187). In that sense, the results of the present research mirrored existing knowledge on the attractiveness of government employment, even if most of the existing research has been based on the perceptions of prospective public employees. As Kim (2005) emphasized, trust in government is determined by its perceived fairness, honesty, credible commitment, benevolence, and competence (p.622). Fairness and honesty were certainly central themes in the findings of the present research.

6.4.2 Job Characteristics

The ***job characteristics*** that came out of the exploratory factor analysis were: workload, work-related stress, work-life balance, promotion opportunities and rewards associated with the job, and job satisfaction. Although there might be a fair argument to suggest that public school teachers and public university lecturers are tied to vocation, and therefore do not have much of a job choice, they do have the option of working in private educational institutions. For some (especially the public university lecturers), there is also the option of working outside academia, and therefore in the private or the Third sector.

Besides job choice arguments, there is another possible anti-thesis to the strength of job characteristics in influencing internal public service attractiveness, especially in resource-limited settings like Uganda where youth unemployment is relatively high. Steen (2008) made a very strong argument when suggesting that "becoming a public sector employee involves not only making a choice to work in the public sector, but also having the opportunity to do so", and even more so, in countries where "more people want to get into government than there are jobs" (p.204). It is indeed quite reasonable to assume that in settings where many people would count themselves lucky to chance on a government job, any job would do.

However, the present findings showed that job characteristics were still remarkably important factors in determining the internal attractiveness of government employment, even in a context with high levels of youth unemployment. Job characteristics remained a strong factor even when public school teachers and public university lecturers in Uganda expressed cognizance of the fact that many people were desperately looking for jobs similar to theirs.

Outside this particular research context, the influence of job characteristics on different employee outcomes in the public sector is well-documented. Perry (2000) listed job characteristics as one of the four important ingredients for the motivational context that attracts and retains public employees (p.481). Camilleri (2006) also emphasized that job characteristics are among the "most dominant predictors of PSM dimensions" (p.76), and indeed, subsequent research by Kim (2016) found a strong positive correlation between job characteristics and public service motivation. Furthermore, a detailed analysis by Wright and Hassan (2014) also underlined the fact that job characteristics

have a critical influence on both employee performance and employee retention in the public sector. The main argument that Wright and Hassan (2014) made was that most of the employee outcomes are functions of the "interplay between ability and situation" (p.105). Job characteristics were part of the "situation" in this case.

Perhaps public sector organizations and public management scholars in resource-limited settings like Uganda need to wake up to the reality that job design is still an important determinant for happy workplaces, and therefore important in making not only jobs, but also employers attractive. At a general level, job design, job classification and job evaluation in the public sector have received a fair amount of criticism (and sometimes rightly so), especially with suggestions that favoritism and politics often influence public sector job value decisions, and that public sector job designs are marred by bureaucratic thinking (Heneman, 2003). This notwithstanding, the results of the present research emphasized that job characteristics still have a strong influence on the internal attractiveness of government employment. Therefore, if there is need for any excuse to further prioritize the design (or redesign) of public sector jobs, this is certainly one. Indeed, these results are not new to the public administration literature. A lot of recent research (e.g., Asseburg & Homberg, 2020; Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019; Kuan Heong, 2018) has underlined the importance of job characteristics in influencing the attractiveness of public sector employment, even from the perspective of prospective public employees.

6.4.3 Pay and rewards

Pay and rewards were also important considerations for internal public service attractiveness in the context of the present research. In the exploratory factor analysis, this factor returned items specific to the appropriateness of pay and rewards in relation to responsibilities, and or qualifications. The qualitative results had also emphasized the strong influence of material rewards on the internal attractiveness of government employment. This was in agreement with Kuan Heong (2018) whose research in the Malaysian public sector also confirmed that material rewards (pay, promotions and job security) were "the most important" considerations for public sector attractiveness, and also "the most important push factors to non-choosers of public employment" (p.614). Outside developing economies, Äijälä (2001) found that OECD countries prioritized extrinsic motivation in their bid to increase public service attractiveness. The strategies they

adopted for this purpose included introducing new pay systems and flexible salary scales, offering extra incentives, introducing performance-based pay systems, offering loyalty bonuses, flexible working hours, staff trainings and defined career plans (pp.6-7). Indeed, Rynes (1991) argued that although pay, benefits and perquisites can be "prohibitively expensive" to modify, they remain extremely valuable that the more relevant empirical question should be whether such expensive modifications "are compensated by higher job acceptance rates, higher quality workers, or improved employee retention" (pp.432-433).

However, the suggestion that pay, rewards, and other material benefits play a significant role in influencing internal public service attractiveness (especially in an African context) is not without challenge. Admittedly, there is very little research on employer attractiveness that has been conducted in Africa. In fact, Anlesinya *et al.* (2019) described talent management and employer attractiveness research in Africa as being at an "embryonic stage" (p.440). Nevertheless, the little employer attractiveness research that has been conducted in an African context has consistently suggested that money was not an important factor. Hinson *et al.* (2018) argued that employer attractiveness in Africa has a social, rather than economic outlook because social factors "may hold more developmental and cultural relevance to the relatively less developed and more collectivist African continent than the other continents" (p.13). Indeed, several other authors have made similar arguments (e.g., Wolfswinkel & Enslin, 2020; Potgieter & Doubell, 2018; Zungu, 2018; Williamson, 2018; Marika *et al.*, 2017). The caveat on this is that all these studies were focused on the attractiveness of private sector employers. This is even more surprising because private employees are supposedly more likely to be motivated by financial benefits than their public sector counterparts (Buelens & Van den Broeck, 2007).

Outside the African context, there has also been suggestions that public employees are generally less likely to be motivated, attracted, or retained on the basis of material rewards. Breitsohl and Ruhle's (2016) research which was conducted among German Millennials concluded that "preferences for higher material aspects and lower work strain are not significantly related to choosing a job in the public sector" (p.479). From the perspective of current public employees, Pattakos (2004) found that "money was not the primary motivator of public servants, even among those seeking so-called employment security" (p.108). Comparative studies have also suggested

that “public sector employees are less extrinsically motivated” (Buelens & Van den Broeck, 2007, p.65). But perhaps the most popular counterargument to the suggestion that material rewards have a strong influence on internal public service attractiveness comes from the famous Public Service Motivation (PSM) literature. It has been suggested that public employees are altruistically attracted to the beau idéal of serving the public good and a sizeable amount of research (e.g., Georgellis *et al.*, 2011; Vandenabeele, 2008; Lewis & Frank, 2002) has confirmed this as the major pull factor for public service employment. Whereas the present results do not discount such arguments, they strongly suggest that any perceived selfless orientations of public employees should be considered in relation to context. It is possible for PSM to be a higher-order goal whose relevance is more visible in contexts where the basic pull factors are already satisfied.

6.4.4 Working environment

The last factor explored in this context was the ***working environment***. In the exploratory factor analysis, this factor included interpersonal relationships, i.e., having supportive work colleagues and relating well with one’s superiors; the general work atmosphere factors including having a fun and exciting work environment; having a good work-life balance; and most importantly, job security. The qualitative content analysis also showed that job security was perceived as being part of the working environment as it ensured that employees had adequate peace of mind knowing that their jobs were safe and secure.

Whereas working environment has not always been highly pronounced in general employer attractiveness studies, there is sufficient research in the public administration literature emphasizing its importance. As Van Loon *et al.* (2015) rightly argued, “employees’ attitudes are not only determined by themselves but also by the environment” in which they work (p.349). Indeed, Ng and Gossett’s (2013) research in the Canadian public sector showed that a “progressive working environment” was a very important factor for public service attractiveness. There is also a large amount of research supporting the idea that work-life balance (or, work-family balance) is an important pull factor for choosing public sector employment (Pedersen, 2013; Vandenabeele, 2008). But perhaps the biggest explanation for this comes from the person-environment fit literature. The idea that people choose themselves into environments which match their personal values is well-established in the public administration literature (Wright & Christensen, 2011;

Wright & Grant, 2010; Steijn, 2008; Kristof-Brown *et al.,* 2005). It is therefore arguable that if employees prefer to work in very specific environments based on their individual personalities, then surely the working environment is an important consideration for their choice of employer, and indeed for their desire to stay with specific employers.

It is also possible that the working environment is an even stronger consideration for current employees than it would be for jobseekers. Lived experiences are the biggest determinant of employer ratings on the part of existing employees. This is obviously different for prospective employees who heavily rely on hearsay and the images created by organizational brands. As already mentioned, there is relatively little public sector employer attractiveness research focusing on the perceptions of existing public employees. However, Camilleri's (2006) research conducted in the Maltese public sector is one such research. In that particular research, public officials in Malta underlined working environment and employer-leader relations as very strong determinants for the internal attractiveness of public service employment. The argument was that positive employer-leader relations "strengthen the employees' sense of self-worth" while a positive working environment "facilitates and encourages a compelling sense of organizational commitment", both of which are important for the internal attractiveness of government employment (Camilleri, 2006, p.79).

A final note on the influence of working environment on public service attractiveness would be that it might be different for different kinds of public employees. Hasenfeld (1972) suggested that public organizations could be categorized according to the nature of their operations: people-changing organizations (e.g., educational institutions) and people-processing organizations (e.g., local government authorities). People-changing organizations, as was the case of the present research, involve intensive contact between public employees and the recipients of public services while people-processing organizations are capable of operating with limited contact. It has been argued that jobs that involve high human interactions and intensive contacts are associated with higher levels of employee burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). It might therefore be logical to suggest that the working environment could be a greater consideration for public employees with intensive contacts than for those whose jobs require less physical interactions.

6.4.5 The relevance of PSM in this context

Any discussion on what attracts people to the public sector would not be complete without mentioning ***Public Service Motivation (PSM)***. Perry *et al.* (2010) underlined the prominence of the PSM model by suggesting that between 1990 and 2010, "more than 125 studies about public service motivation, covering more than a dozen countries" were published (p.681). It is possible for that number to have more than doubled in the last decade – such has been the popularity of PSM in explaining public sector attractiveness, public employee motivation and other related public employee outcomes. Whereas the present research did not have a specific focus on PSM, it could not avoid checking for its possible effect. In the context of Ugandan public employees who frequently engaged in industrial action, PSM did not have as strong an influence on internal public service attractiveness as some previous studies have suggested. Yes, some respondents suggested that they remain attracted to the public sector because it gives them the opportunity to "serve the public good". The idea was that the work they do as public educators was satisfying and attractive in itself. However, the analysis of the total results showed that this was more aligned with Person-Organization (P-O) fit than PSM. There were clear arguments suggesting that the internal attractiveness of public service employment depended on how much public sector organizations provided a "sense of belonging" to their employees, the personal fulfillment derived from the work itself, and how much public sector values matched individual public employee values.

Therefore, just as many studies have suggested incorporating P-O fit in recruitment and selection processes (Weske *et al.*, 2020; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Cable & Judge, 1996; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986), the present research suggests that the search for fit should be a continuous process that must be incorporated in public sector policies, values, and operations. Public sector jobs must be consistently evaluated and redesigned to ensure that they continue to match the values and expectations of recruited public employees. Moreso, public organizations and individual public managers need to consistently uphold trustworthiness (through honesty and open communication). This would ultimately give public employees a greater sense of belonging – if they feel trusted and also feel that they can trust the employer. That reciprocal feeling of trust would consequently increase the internal attractiveness of public service employment, as trust has indeed been found to positively influence public sector employer attractiveness (Korac *et al.*, 2019; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot, 2012; Orren, 1997).

Finally, it is important to analyze PSM in relation to context. In the context of the present research, it appeared as though PSM might be a high-level motivator that can only become tangible once the more immediate physiological and safety needs are met (in typical Maslow fashion). P-O fit was much easier to discern in this context. Therefore, the present research takes the same path as Van Loon and colleagues (2015) who criticized previous PSM studies for treating public organization as if they were alike. The present research goes a notch higher to suggest that there are not only differences between public organizations as Van Loon *et al.* (2015) suggested (p.355), but also differences among individual public employees or public employee groups that affect PSM levels. As Kim *et al.* (2013) rightly argued, "the exact meaning and scaling of PSM dimensions are likely to differ across cultures and languages" (p.97). But even within the same country, public employees can be quite diverse. The operating environments in different public organizations are also not always the same. It should therefore not be assumed that all public employees (even in the same country) would perceive PSM in the same way. The public sector has enough diversity in terms of hierarchies, managerial ideology, workplace amenities, and services provided. All these aspects influence employee attitudes towards their employer. As Schneider (1987) argued that "the people make the place", the reverse is also true – the place makes the people.

As the above discussion shows, the factors that influenced public service attractiveness from the perspective of Ugandan public employees who frequently engaged in industrial action were not so much different from what has been found to influence the attractiveness of public sector employment in other contexts. Organizational characteristics, P-O fit, job characteristics, pay and rewards, and the working environment have been found to influence public service attractiveness in other contexts. It is only the aspect of employer fairness (organizational justice) that attracted greater emphasis in the context of the present research than has been in previous studies. It could be argued that the extra emphasis on organizational justice stemmed from the fact that employer attractiveness in this case was investigated from a context of frequent engagement in industrial action. Given that a perceived lack of employer fairness was blamed for frequent engagement in industrial action, it might not be surprising that these particular public employees also associated public service attractiveness with employer fairness. Additionally, organizational justice is more likely to be critical for current employees than it would be for prospective employees. This is

because current employees largely base their employer ratings on their day-to-day work experiences, and how they feel they are being treated by the employer (or the employer's representatives). However, this is not to suggest that internal employer attractiveness is completely different from external employer attractiveness. The only argument made here is that there are some differences between the perceptions of current employees and those held by prospective employees. Such differences are mainly based on nuances from the lived experiences of current employees which prospective employees or jobseekers do not have.

The above discussion, and more specifically the fact that internal employer attractiveness might be different from external employer attractiveness, has several implications for public management. Firstly, it calls upon public managers to go beyond merely recruiting the right people to creating the right environments. It is all well and good to recruit employees whose values match public sector values, but they would still want their expectations to be met when they eventually start working in the public sector. Open communication, swift responses to employee feedback, and building trusting relationships should be cardinal priorities for public managers. This is admittedly not a particularly straightforward proposition in a public sector setting given the bureaucratic nature of public sector operations and the interpretive dynamics involved in public sector workplace politics. However, as Mulcahy (1971) advised, in public employee relations, ignoring employee concerns should never be an option. Public managers should try to create and facilitate forums "for the interchange of ideas between supervisors and employees" so that supervisors can get advance knowledge of what is on their employees' mind, "in order to take corrective action before minor complaints blossom into full grown formal grievances" (p.323).

Internal employer attractiveness is about keeping employees excited about reporting for work every single day and for them to look forward to taking on additional responsibilities within the organization/sector. For this to happen, they must feel trusted, feel valued, enjoy their work, but also trust the employer. This is because employment relationships are inherently steeped in social exchanges as employees often tend to give back what they believe they receive or are likely to receive from their employer.

6.5 Industrial action and internal public service attractiveness

In this section...

Lessons for public management

→ *In the present context, frequent engagement in industrial action did not always translate into negative perceptions of internal public service attractiveness, and vice versa.*

→ *Public employees sometimes perceived frequent engagement in industrial action as a positive sign of workplace democracy, which then had a positive influence on internal public service attractiveness. Enhancing alternative pathways for workplace democracy might help reduce employee strikes, but where strikes are unavoidable, public managers should harness the positive effects of the same.*

→ *On the other hand, frequent public employee strikes might enhance negative stereotypes against public servants and magnify the negative aspects of workplace conflicts, which could then negatively affect employees' perception of internal public service attractiveness.*

→ *Given that frequent engagement in industrial action is explained by the presence of employee grievances, it might signal an unhappy working environment and therefore be an inverse proxy for internal public service attractiveness.*

→ ***For theory:*** *Internal public service attractiveness was strongly affected by halo effects. Therefore, analyses of public service attractiveness need to pay attention to generalized perceptions of government as a whole.*

→ ***For research:*** *The suggestion that industrial action could be an inverse proxy for internal public service attractiveness needs to be tested further, preferably through longitudinal studies with greater ability to detect possible confounding variables.*

This research also investigated how (and why or why not) frequent engagement in industrial action interacted with the internal attractiveness of government employment. The initial qualitative results created the impression that frequent engagement in industrial action would have a negative influence on internal public service attractiveness, and that it would mediate the relationship between organizational justice and internal public service attractiveness. However, the total results showed that the effect of frequent engagement in industrial action on internal public service attractiveness was double-edged.

On one side, frequent engagement in industrial action engendered positive perceptions of workplace democracy which then positively influenced internal public service attractiveness. However, on the reverse side, it increased public employee stereotypes and magnified the negative aspects of employer-employee conflicts which ultimately created a negative influence on internal public service attractiveness. Moreso, whereas frequent engagement in industrial action did not mediate the relationship between organizational justice and internal public service attractiveness, it appeared to be a negative proxy for internal public service attractiveness.

The possibility of public employee strikes having positive effects on employee outcomes is not new to the public administration literature. Although it has been argued that public employee strikes are "an ill wind that blows nobody any good" (Kawugana, 2016, p.68), it has also been suggested that they might serve as a feedback mechanism to convey employee feelings to the employer (Gunderson, 2005). There is also the argument that employee strikes provide useful pathways to relieve employee frustrations and internal tensions (Cooke, 1983, p.99), and that they engender "positive cathartic effects" by "releasing pent-up pressures" (Gunderson, 2005, p.399).

Apart from the potential benefits for employee wellbeing, recent research by Hertel-Fernandez *et al.* (2021), which was also specifically focused on public sector educators, found that mass public employee strikes can be a positive public relations tool. In a detailed study conducted among US public educators, these authors found that instead of creating resentment and anger against public employees as has been suggested by several authors (e.g., Kane & Newman 2019; Cramer, 2016; McCartin, 2008), persistent public sector strikes "can increase support for workers and unions more generally, possibly by emphasizing the public goods that unions provide" (p.75). Their findings suggested that mass strikes by teachers generated "greater public support" for the striking teachers and positively influenced parents' attitudes towards labor movements in the education sector. This was because strikes gave teachers the platform to demonstrate that they care about the best interests of "parents, children, and their broader communities" (*ibid.*, p.86). Therefore, whereas the present research's exploration of the positive face of persistent public employee strikes might not be well pronounced in the Ugandan context, it is not entirely new to the body of knowledge on public sector employee relations.

Furthermore, similar to the workplace democracy argument advanced by the present research, Haque (2000) suggested that employee participation and their ability to exercise "solidarity and collective power" is the "most prominent feature of workplace democracy" in the public sector, with a further argument that "the existence of a democratic mode of governance at the national level is inadequate without democracy at the micro-organizational level, especially in the workplace" (p.237). Hatcher (2007) supported this idea by suggesting that workplace democracy has historically been associated with labor movements, and that with the decline in organized labor, especially in developed economies, "workers have fewer opportunities to experience

workplace democracy". Most importantly, it has been argued that workplace democracy enhances employee commitment and attachment as well as the desire to continue working with the organization (Hatcher, 2007; Dahl, 2001).

In a similar vein, the present research strongly suggests that workplace democracy has a strong influence on the internal attractiveness of government employment. Feelings of being 'valued' or having a strong 'sense of ownership' can only be enhanced if employees feel that they have a say in what happens at their workplace. In the context of the present research, public employees felt that engaging in strikes gave them a voice. There were also strong suggestions that employee strikes shift the balance of power in public sector employee relations. It is important to note that the government is no ordinary employer. Apart from having a monopoly over the provision of certain services and enjoying the privilege of being a self-regulator, governments often have an absolute monopoly over tools of violence and coercion. Public employees therefore suffer the disadvantage of working for an all too powerful employer. In the context of public educators in Uganda, strikes were seen as the only means to strike some semblance of power equilibrium. This situation was similar to what Scott (1985) described in his seminal work on "weapons of the weak". Indeed, strikes were at least able to push government to the negotiating table. In this sort of context, without engaging in strikes, there would be a dearth of viable employee voice alternatives, and in that sense, public sector employment would be less attractive.

However, the value and need for workplace democracy has also been challenged. As Butcher and Clarke (2002) noted, "the idea that democratic principles should play an essential part in the world of work has a long and controversial history" (p.35). Indeed, Mayer (2001) staged a strong challenge against Robert Dahl's luminary arguments on workplace democracy with the suggestion that employees have no moral right to demand workplace democracy especially because their "submission to powerlessness is voluntary", since they have the freewill to choose which employer to work for. On the specific context of the academic job market where the strength of public universities and tenure positions for professors makes them feel like 'serfs', he argued that even "academics have other feasible employment opportunities of which they could avail themselves" (p.233). Mayer's argument obviously ignored the fact that in some environments all employers might be similar, and therefore employees might stay in an undemocratic work environment only

because there are no employers who offer what they crave for. In such a case, the internal attractiveness of the employer would still be adversely affected even when employees remain put. And as Dahl (2001) himself responded, “if large numbers of workers are driven by the fear of unemployment to accept any job available”, it would be erroneous to regard that as a voluntary choice (p.251). Indeed, internal employer attractiveness is not only about employee retention. It has more to do with how employees perceive their employer, i.e., whether they consider their employer to be good or bad, which ultimately determines whether they would want to stay with the same employer if they had other viable alternatives.

As already mentioned, persistent public sector employee strikes were also found to have a negative influence on internal public service attractiveness. The findings showed that public employee strikes magnifed the negative aspects of employer-employee tensions, or conflicts. When public employees engage in strikes, government is provoked into a response. It is not possible to perpetually ignore public employee strikes (especially if the provision of public services is brought to a halt), but even if that was to be possible, in the context of employer-employee relations, silence would also be perceived to be a response. If government chooses not to respond to strikes, the involved employees might construe that as a message that they are dispensable. But on the other hand, yielding to employee demands is sometimes interpreted as an admission of guilt on the part of the government or the specific public managers. Rebuffing employee demands is perceived as cruelty and disregard for employee wellbeing, or even as a sign that the government does not value her employees. In many ways, government cannot win the psychological battle that emanates from public employee strikes. And this is where Mulcahy’s (1971) age-old advice comes in. While acknowledging that conceding to employee demands, however justified they might be, could create a precedent for further demands, Mulcahy advised that rather than trying to avoid the problem, public managers must accept to meet and listen to employee representatives, but “the character of such meetings should be clearly identified in writing to the employee organization in order to rebut any such presumption.” More so, public managers should actively participate in employee forums as this “might foster sound labour relations by providing a forum for the interchange of ideas between supervisors and employees, thereby making it possible for the supervisors to know what was on their employee’s mind, in order to take corrective action before minor complaints blossom into full grown formal grievances” (Mulcahy, 1971, pp.322-323).

In addition to magnifying negative aspects of employer-employee conflicts, persistent public employee strikes perpetuate anti-public service sentiments and public employee stereotypes. These stereotypes often end up turning into self-fulfilling prophecies, but critically, they suck the prestige out of government jobs. In the context of the present research, public employees did not enjoy being branded as troublemakers, or as being lazy, corrupt, and inefficient. The respondents of the present research were at pains to emphasize that they only engaged in industrial action as a "last resort", and that the public was wrong to perceive them as the "evil ones". They argued that because of their persistent strikes, the public often described them as gluttons, ingrates, and several other negative descriptions. They claimed that these descriptions reduced the prestige associated with public sector jobs, thereby reducing the internal attractiveness of government employment.

Indeed, previous research has confirmed that negative stereotypes against public employees can reduce the attractiveness of government employment (Willems, 2020) or the attractiveness of specific public sector jobs (Van de Walle, 2004). The present findings also agreed with theorizing by social psychologist Steven Spencer and colleagues who described a phenomenon called the "stereotype threat". It was argued that when individuals feel that they are negatively stereotyped, their performance will be adversely affected. The stereotype threat also "fosters negative emotions in the stereotyped domain" and undermines "targets' sense of belonging, affecting their motivation and making them more likely to withdraw from the setting". In a work setting, it is suggested that this stereotype threat could reduce employee commitment, decrease employees' sense of belonging and negatively affect their desire to continue working in that stigmatized setting (Spencer *et al.*, 2016, p.424).

The final note to make on the relationship between frequent engagement in industrial action and the internal attractiveness of government employment is the fact that they both have similar explanations. Ugandan public employees argued that they frequently engaged in industrial action because they perceived the government (as their employer) to be unfair. At the same time, they argued that government employment can only remain internally attractive if the government (as their employer) is fair. The obvious deduction from these twin arguments is the fact that frequent engagement in industrial action could be a signal for low levels of internal public service attractiveness. If perceived unfairness explains frequent engagement in industrial action, and an

unfair employer is perceived to be unattractive, it then becomes difficult to disentangle persistent public employee strikes from the striking employees' perception of internal public service attractiveness. The signaling theory offers an appropriate explanation for this in a sense that frequent engagement in industrial action among public employees signifies a negative perception of organizational justice, and negative perceptions of organizational justice are related to low levels of internal public service attractiveness. The theory perfectly fits into this context, especially with its emphatic suggestion that some signals might not necessarily be intentional (Connelly *et al.*, 2011; Janney & Folta, 2003; Spence, 2002). Therefore, frequent engagement in industrial action could be a 'signal' for low levels of internal public service attractiveness. However, this conclusion needs further testing (as that was beyond the scope of the present research).

In summary, the relationship between frequent engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness was found to be threefold. Firstly, frequent engagement in industrial action had a positive influence on internal public service attractiveness. Paradoxically, it also had a negative influence on the same. And thirdly, it appeared to be a signal for low levels of internal public service attractiveness. This complex relationship between frequent engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness was best suited for qualitative inquiry. Unsurprisingly, quantitative tests did not provide a good understanding of this relationship. The double-sided nature of this relationship (having both positive and negative effects) created some confusion that correlation and regression tests could only perceive as neutrality. The study respondents were clearly divided on what they perceived as the true effect of frequent engagement in industrial action on internal public service attractiveness. For some it was negative, while for others it was positive. This double-faced effect canceled itself out in quantitative tests which rely on averages. It is only the in-depth qualitative analysis that was able to unearth the paradoxical relationship between frequent engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness. At face value, there appeared to be complete decoupling between persistent public employee strikes and internal public service attractiveness. It was only a deeper (qualitative) analysis of the interaction between the two variables that showed that positive and negative effects cancelled themselves out in quantitative analyses.

6.6 Organizational justice and internal public service attractiveness

In this section…

Lessons for public management

→ *Organizational justice goes beyond how the public sector treats/rewards certain employee groups and extends to the quality of interpersonal relationships nurtured by public managers as well as the group dynamics within public organizations.*

→ *Public sector employers must always be cautious of the fact that they actively compete for talent with the private sector. Public employees do not only compare themselves to other public employees, but also to their private sector counterparts. Justice perceptions are therefore not sector specific.*

→ *For current employees, every offer from the employer is viewed with some sort of comparison in mind. Internal employer attractiveness is therefore steeped in justice perceptions. Given that current employees' assessments of employer attractiveness are largely experiential, it is important for justice concerns to be incorporated into all workplace procedures, policies, and processes.*

→ ***For theory and research:*** *Organizational justice theories and the personification metaphor provided a good platform to understand public service attractiveness from an internal perspective. It might be worthwhile to also test them from an external perspective, especially in contexts similar to that of the present research.*

In the context of the present research, the critical value of perceived organizational justice in influencing internal public service attractiveness needs to be underlined. It is worth emphasizing that justice perceptions are usually subjective, and that they are often based on some sort of comparison. Public employees, like all other employees, frequently compare their employment situation with that of relevant others. They often want to reassure themselves of how their pay, working conditions and job prospects compare with those of other public cadres at a similar level (either within their country or in countries with comparable profiles). The results also showed that 'organizational support', which has been found to strongly influence workplace social exchanges (Bishop *et al.*, 2000; Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986) cannot be divorced from organizational justice. Public employees in the present context only appreciated organizational support in relation to how they thought other employees were supported by their employers.

Public employees do not only make sector-specific comparisons. They also sometimes cast an eye on their private sector counterparts. This is because the private sector is also a potential employer for public employees. Indeed, although the public sector might have a monopoly over the provision of certain services, as Ritz and Waldner (2011) rightly pointed out, it suffers a very particular disadvantage of competing for talent with the private sector. Worryingly, as Asseburg and

Homberg (2020) found, the public sector tends "to lose competitions with private sector employers" in the struggle to attract high-end talent (p.82).

It is worth noting that many employers, even in the public sector, often market themselves as being ***competitive*** employers. But competitiveness in itself denotes comparison. An employer can only be competitive in comparison with other employers. There is no competition if there is no comparison, and this is an aspect that must not be lost on public sector employers. This comparison does not only end at the sector or employer level. It also trickles down to the group level, the job level, and indeed to the individual level. Justice concerns therefore go beyond how government treats certain public employee groups, and extends to the management of teams, the resolution of group conflict, and the interpersonal relationships between public managers and their subordinates. Workplace social exchanges are multifaceted and often have complex dimensions. For the public sector, this calls for a review of both systemic relations created by public policies and the interactional justice in the management of groups and individual public employees. Cropanzano *et al.,* (2015) described "justice rules" and categorized them into four types: "distributive (e.g., equity, equality), procedural (e.g., voice, consistent treatment), interpersonal (e.g., politeness, respectfulness), and informational (e.g., candor, timeliness)" (p.279). These categories are more representative of the totality of workplace interactions than the narrow framing of the equity theory and relative deprivation hypothesis which are largely based on the instrumentality of rewards.

The above notwithstanding, there is a valid empirical argument to suggest that public employees who frequently engage in strikes are not always those who suffer the most injustice. Dribbusch's (2016) on German rail workers and Mabhoyi's (2020) on Zimbabwean public-school teachers provided critical insights into this. These two studies showed that persistent strikes among the two cases did not necessarily mean that they were the least paid or most maltreated public employees. Whereas that might have been true, it is important to note that workplace justice is largely subjective. So, rather than asking whether striking employees are the least paid, it is more critical to investigate sources of perceived inequity. The comprehensive Organizational Justice scale by Colquitt (2001) provides good insights into the real meaning of workplace justice. Colquitt (2001) provided a comprehensive organizational justice scale with four dimensions, including: distributive justice which relates to outcome satisfaction; interpersonal justice which involves

leader evaluation; procedural justice which describes rule compliance; and informational justice which relates to collective esteem (Colquitt, 2001, p.394). Pay and rewards are often part of the distributive justice dimension, and clearly, that only tells part of the story. Therefore, when public employees blame relative deprivation for their engagement in strikes, they are not just making a pay gap argument. The perceived injustice could relate to the way information is managed and shared within that particular employee group, or how rules and procedures are instituted/implemented. It could also be an assessment of superior-subordinate relationships. Most importantly, the question often rotates around how that particular employee group perceives its situation in relation to relevant others.

Indeed, based on its comprehensiveness, the present research adopted Colquitt's (2001) validated organizational justice scale. Regression analyses showed that all the four justice dimensions significantly predicted internal public service attractiveness, as did the composite scale. The qualitative results were also unequivocal in suggesting that the internal attractiveness of government employment largely depended on how fair or just the government (as the employer) was perceived to be. It is worth repeating that employer fairness in this context was not only based on overall government policy or general analyses of how government treated/rewarded different public employee groups. It also extended to supervisor-subordinate relationships. For many public employees in this context, their supervisor was the representative of government and therefore, the supervisor's actions were sometimes construed to be government actions. This was in complete agreement with recent developments in the agent-system model that has been used to explain the complex social exchanges in employer-employee relationships, with agent-referenced outcomes mostly predicting interpersonal justice and system-referenced outcomes predicting procedural justice (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2002; Masterson *et al.*, 2000).

Conclusively, it might be appropriate to end this section with the words of Folger and Cropanzano (1998), to wit: the greatest memories of employees' working lives, and their happiness at work are not determined by office floor plans, stock plans, or even the benefit systems, but by the day-to-day interactions with colleagues and supervisors, and the kinds of emotions created by organizational systems and policies (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998, p.133). In this respect, public sector employer fairness must be understood from a comprehensive perspective. The first

consideration should be on how government interacts with the different public employee groups (including their involvement in the design of workplace procedures and processes). Second is the quality of communications and interactions between public managers and their respective employees. Intergroup interactions and the management of teams also come into question, as is the quality of line management. Additionally, workplace justice also extends to conflict resolution and grievance-handling procedures. Clearly, it would be erroneous to pigeonhole workplace justice into the narrow lens of pay and rewards.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Major findings

Below is a summary of the major findings of this research:

1) Public university lecturers and public-school teachers in Uganda had access to a diverse repertoire of strike strategies. As a result, some forms of industrial action were not discernible as such at first glance. These included actions similar to what has been described in German as “Innere Kündigung” and “Dienst nach Vorschrift”.

2) Public employee strikes were strongly related to relative, rather than absolute deprivation. Even where relative deprivation did not provide a sufficient explanation, there was a clear dichotomy between absolute working conditions and frequent engagement in strikes.

3) The influence of political opportunity structures in actualizing collective agency in the public sector was confirmed. As predicted by the Social Movements Theory, grievances alone were not enough to trigger engagement in industrial action. There had to be ‘political opportunities’ within the environment to be exploited.

4) The internal attractiveness of government employment in this context was influenced by four main factors: the characteristics of public sector organizations combined with person-organization fit; job characteristics; pay and rewards; and the working environment.

5) A strong connection was found between person-organization (P-O) fit and internal public service attractiveness. However, public service motivation (PSM) did not have a strong influence in this context.

6) Employer fairness (also called workplace justice or organizational justice) was a central theme in the research findings. In consistence with the Social Exchange Theory, public employee ratings of internal employer attractiveness were based on their day-to-day workplace interactions, the exercising of managerial prerogatives, and the perceived fairness of public sector resource allocation processes and procedures.

7) Organizational support did not influence internal public service attractiveness, as was suggested by the social exchange theory. In the present context, organizational support was perceived as being part of organizational justice. It was only appreciated in the context of how it compared with how much support other public employees received from the government or from the respective public organizations they worked for.

8) Organizational justice had a very significant positive influence on internal public service attractiveness, with complete agreement from both the qualitative and quantitative results.

9) Organizational justice also had a very significant (negative) influence on frequent engagement in industrial action.

10) Frequent engagement in industrial action had both positive and negative effects on internal public service attractiveness. On one hand, it enhanced workplace democracy which positively influenced internal public service attractiveness, while on the opposite side, it increased public employee stereotypes and magnified the negative aspects of employer-employee conflicts which negatively influenced internal public service attractiveness.

11) Whereas the theoretical assumptions and qualitative results suggested mediation, the quantitative results showed that frequent engagement in industrial action did not mediate the relationship between organizational justice and internal public service attractiveness.

12) The results also showed that both frequent engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness were influenced by organizational justice (but in different directions). On the basis of this opposite-direction relationship, it was concluded that frequent engagement in industrial action could be a negative proxy for internal public service attractiveness.

As the above summary shows, the factors which influenced internal public service attractiveness from the perspective of Ugandan public employees who frequently engaged in industrial action were not so different from what has been found to influence public sector employer attractiveness in other contexts. However, the present research brought several new insights to the fore:

Firstly, the results emphasized that employer attractiveness from the perspective of current employees is different from what it is from the perspective of prospective employees. This particular finding supported Chun's (2005) separation of the organizational identity from the organizational image. Chun (2005) defined organizational identity as "employees' perception of the organization" and warned against treating it as a synonym for the organizational image which is "a summary of the impressions or perceptions held by outsiders" (p.95). The present results emphasized this. They showed that current public employees do not speculate what it feels like to work for government, as would be the case for prospective employees. This is because current public employees are already living in the reality of working in the public sector. Therefore, their assessments of internal public service attractiveness are mostly based on perceptions of their lived experiences, not what the organization promises to do or what it is externally known for.

This difference between internal and external public service attractiveness was also alluded to by Lievens *et al.* (2005). Their research on the attractiveness of the Belgian military suggested that there might be gaps between the "romanticized view" of the military profession as portrayed in the media and the realities of the "hurry up and wait" stance required in many military jobs (p.566). Indeed, the respondents of the present research emphasized that their perception of public service attractiveness was different from what it was before they started working in the public sector. They argued that before becoming public employees they were strongly attracted to public sector specific perks like job security, work-life balance, and well-defined career paths. However, once they started working in the public sector, all these were recast in terms of how they compared with what others get. It could actually be argued that public employees take the permanent employment contracts in the public sector for granted – this at least appeared to be the case in the context of the present research. For many respondents of this research, job security appeared to be an expectation, rather than a privilege they received from their employer. In the context of the present research, the biggest consideration was employer fairness, also known as organizational justice.

Generally, organizational justice is likely to be an even greater concern for employees who frequently engage in strikes, given that persistent strikes have been linked to perceptions of (in)justice. As Cropanzano and Schminke (2001) eloquently asserted, justice is one of those subjective human needs that becomes more tangible through its perceived absence. Therefore, employees who think they are not treated fairly will value fairness even more highly. And clearly, organizational justice is bound to be felt more by organizational insiders than outsiders.

Closely related to the above was the suggestion that public employees do not engage in strikes because they need more money – even when most employee strikes are based on demands for salary enhancements. It would be erroneous to assume that demands for salary increments are always based on an urge for more money in absolute terms. The reality is that most of the times, such demands are not about absolute amounts of money. They are usually (and almost always) about equity. Persistent employee strikes and demands for salary enhancements might be responded to with matching salary enhancements, but if the equity question is not addressed, the cycle will continue to spiral. Moreover, as Organ and Konovsky (1989) eloquently elaborated, "in the job context, the exchange between employee and organization is obviously some mixture of both economic and social exchange". However, the relational nature of workplace interactions often ensure that employees mainly evaluate their employer based on social exchanges, which are not strictly based on contractual obligations. It is only when that trust is violated by some perceived unfairness that the relationship is recast "in terms of a more rigidly defined economic exchange, with services rendered only upon the more contractually enforceable quid pro quo" (p.162).

There is another observation to be made from the rationale for persistent strikes. Given that these strikes were explained by perceived injustice, we can logically expect contexts with persistent public employee strikes to be associated with low levels of organizational justice. And, since low levels of organizational justice are associated with low levels of internal employer attractiveness, persistent strikes could signify low levels of internal employer attractiveness. The signaling theory (especially the suggestion that signals are not always intentional) provides a clear understanding of this conclusion. Indeed, it would be stretching a point to suggest that public employees engage in strikes in order to signal limited public service attractiveness. The present study only suggests that industrial action could be an unintended signal of limited public service attractiveness.

Additionally, the findings showed that high levels of employee retention do not necessarily signify high levels of internal employer attractiveness. By its nature, the public sector has many employees on permanent and pensionable contracts. The fact that they stay on until retirement does not necessarily mean that they think public sector employment is internally attractive. Some long-serving public employees are only in their positions because they do not have viable alternatives. This also speaks to the heart of public employee stereotypes. The negative categorization of public employees as being lazy, corrupt, and inefficient needs to be interpreted within context. Some of those negative stereotypes are obviously based on generalized biases, but where they do exist in reality, it should not be taken for granted to be the real nature of public employees. Some of that dysfunctional behavior might be silent manifestations of workplace militancy or latent attempts to "get even" with the employer.

Finally, the findings emphasized the fact that public service attractiveness from the perspective of current public employees is largely experiential. Public employees rate their employer based on day-to-day workplace interactions and how they think that compares with other employees. Such referent groups might be work colleagues or employees on different hierarchical levels within the same public organization. They might also be public employee groups in other public agencies. It is also possible for the referent group to be public employees in other countries (especially those perceived to be logically comparable to the country in context), or even private sector employees who perform similar duties. Beyond comparing themselves with other employee groups, public employees also tend to evaluate the fairness of the overall government resource allocation process. If they perceive their sector or agency as being neglected or underprioritized, that could also potentially lead to negative ratings of internal public service attractiveness. These multifaceted possibilities make the quest for public sector workplace fairness a complex process. However, the first step is awareness. Public managers and policymakers must be aware that public employees are constantly comparing themselves with other employees in different situations, and that such comparisons are not only based on pay and rewards, but also on a whole host of other outcomes. Justice concerns must be prioritized in government employment policies, processes, and procedures, as well as in the day-to-day managerial decision-making and interaction processes.

7.2 Implications for theory

The present findings have several implications for theory:

Firstly, the findings questioned the universality of the public service motivation (PSM) model. The idea that public employees are altruistically attracted to serving the public good is well established in the public administration literature. Indeed, the present research also found that 'serving the public good' was a motivator for Ugandan public educators. However, they still continued to frequently engage in industrial action, even with the full knowledge that industrial action might impede their delivery of the public good. Clearly, some other motivations were more pressing than PSM. Altruistic attraction to public sector goals (as explained in the PSM model) appeared to be a higher-level ideal whose significance could be felt more when the basic physiological and safety needs have been attained – in typical Maslow fashion. This might partly explain Houston's (2011) suggestion that "government workers in less-developed welfare states have lower levels of obligation-based intrinsic motivation", including PSM (p.769). Indeed, in the context of the present research, 'serving the public good' was more aligned to person-organization fit, or even to person-vocation fit rather than to the more idealistic PSM. It is therefore important for the theoretical understanding of PSM to give due consideration to contextual differences and the different hierarchies of the public employees in question.

As indicated above, the presence and utility of the person-organization fit theories was confirmed. In the case of public-school teachers, person-vocation fit was an even stronger consideration. What was found, however, was that 'Fit' is a continuous process. It does not mean that if the public sector hires employees whose values match public sector values, that 'Fit' will continue to exist forever. Once hired, public employees embark on a continuous process of evaluating their employer's characteristics and behavior to check if their initial expectations are consistently met. This is similar to what Dutton *et al.* (1994) described as a "reciprocal and recursive process" in which employees continuously assess their self-association with the organization (pp.239-246). During this continuous assessment, sometimes employees find that the public sector or the specific public sector organization they work for is not exactly what they thought it was. Such a scenario has been described as a "reality shock" and is said to partly explain public employee turnover (Kramer, 1974). The present research argues that even if this reality shock does not result into

turnover, it might lead to behavioral adjustments which might then destabilize P-O fit. The suggestion that it is the people who make the place (Schneider, 1987) is valid, but the reverse is also true: sometimes it is the place that makes the people!

In consideration of the above, this research suggests the extension of the expectancy-disconfirmation model (EDM) of satisfaction (Oliver, 1977) to the analysis of internal public service attractiveness. Van de Walle (2018) listed a number of public management scholars who have adopted this model, especially in the analysis of citizen satisfaction with public services. In its basic form, the EDM "posits that satisfaction can only be interpreted in conjunction with knowledge about prior expectations" as perceived performance is "evaluated in comparison to the original expectations" (Van de Walle, 2018, p.230). A recent metanalysis by Zhang *et al.* (2022) also emphasized that the EDM is a "robust tool" that governments can use to assess citizen satisfaction with public services (p.147). But beyond citizen satisfaction, Organ and Konovsky (1989) argued that the appraisal of all life domains; be it family, job, health, employer, etc., "rests implicitly on comparing these domains against some standard or criterion, such as prior expectation or significant referent persons" (p.158).

Indeed, based on the present evidence, this research strongly recommends extending the EDM to the public sector personnel management toolkit. It clearly has the potential to predict employee outcomes like satisfaction, motivation, and employee perceptions of internal public service attractiveness. At a general level, the present research found that Ugandan public employees who frequently engaged in industrial action also thought public sector employment was internally attractive. This sounds paradoxical, and that is why an analysis of their original expectations would be helpful. If they expected working conditions in the public sector to be poor, they might engage in strikes to demand improvements – if they have the opportunity to do so, but at the same time still think public sector employment is attractive (in comparison to earlier expectations)!

The dichotomy between frequent engagement in industrial action and internal public service attractiveness has another implication for theory. In the context of the present research, there appeared to be some sort of halo effects in the interpretation of public service attractiveness. Halo effects describe situations where the overall impression of something biases assessments of its

more specific aspects. Like EDM, halo effects have been used in the study citizen satisfaction with public services (Van de Walle, 2018; Marvel, 2016). While explaining halo effects in the context of citizen evaluation of public sector performance, Marvel (2016) suggested that "individuals' evaluations of government performance are weighed down by their deep-seated, unconscious views of the public sector", and therefore anyone hoping to change perceptions on this is "fighting against a hidden opponent" because "individuals' implicit attitudes exist outside of their conscious awareness" (p.155). Wæraas and Byrkjeflot (2012) also alluded to halo effects in their research on public sector reputation. They argued that the reputation of public institutions is not helped by the fact that "statements conveying a persistently negative image of public organizations have been heard for many years" (p.186). There is a clear relevance of this theoretical model to the understanding of public service attractiveness, especially given the fact that employer reputation has also been found to influence employer attractiveness. Empirically, the present research showed a clear decoupling between public employees' personal experiences and their overall rating of internal public service attractiveness. The phrase "our employer is not fair" was almost cliché among the research respondents, but when asked to recount their day-to-day experiences, sometimes injustice was not that much visible. It is therefore a considered opinion of this research that an analysis of halo effects might provide a useful platform to understand public service attractiveness, especially in the context of current employees.

In addition to the above, the research findings also emphasized the fact that public employee strikes are more likely to be explained by relative deprivation, rather than absolute deprivation. This was true even in a resource-limited setting like Uganda. Public employees (even in this context) did not engage in industrial action because they needed more money, per se. What they fought for was equity, and not just equity of earnings but also fairness in their day-to-day interactions with colleagues and superiors; their access to information; their level of participation in decision making processes; and in the procedures that determine their work experience. When people start working in the public sector, they get more personalized interactions with the public sector as an employer. The workplace becomes part of their lives. Therefore, they do not evaluate their employer only on the basis of pay and rewards, but also based on the less tangible human interactions. It is therefore important for researchers to extend the equity and relative deprivation discussion beyond material benefits. In light of this, the present research proposes extending the application of the composite

organizational justice (OJ) framework to different employee outcomes. The results of this research showed that the Equity theory of motivation as proposed by Adams (1965) and the relative deprivation framework (Gurr, 1970) are deficient in explaining employee outcomes, especially because they are strongly focused on the instrumentality of rewards. The OJ framework (as elaborated by Colquitt, 2001) is, on the other hand, more comprehensive and more representative of the multifaceted workplace interactions that influence employee perceptions and behavior.

The above argument also strengthens the postulations of the social exchange theory. Even in resource-constrained settings, public employee behavior is not primarily motivated by economic motives. Because public organizations are usually nonprofits, there is a natural tendency for public employees to evaluate them based on social interactions, rather than on a quantifiable quid pro quo basis. This might partly explain the theoretical suggestion that public employees are less extrinsically motivated than their private sector counterparts (Buelens & van den Broeck, 2007). Many public employees would struggle to put a figure on how much money they have helped government to earn. However, they would easily point out how many relationships they have built or mended on behalf of government. This is why they expect the same from government as their employer. It is only when the trust-based social exchanges fail that they reinterpret the relationship in the more contractually enforceable economic terms, just as suggested by Organ and Konovsky (1989). This underlines the value of the social exchange theory in explaining employee behavior, even in resource-limited settings.

7.3 Implications for policy and practice

In many contexts, persistent public employee strikes are viewed as a public nuisance that must be avoided at all costs. Indeed, public employee strikes are highly restricted even in regions where public sector strike activity is relatively low (Akkerman *et al.*, 2013). This is for good reason as persistent public employee strikes could disrupt the delivery of essential public services. However, what the present research emphasized was that public employee strikes should not only be perceived in negative terms. Strikes, even in the public sector, do have a verifiable positive face. For instance, they could potentially provide an important feedback outlet, and in the context of the present research, strikes also had positive cathartic effects on the involved public employees. It is undeniable that public managers and policymakers often need feedback on policy, organizational processes, and the exercise of managerial prerogatives. Whereas public employee strikes may not be expressly encouraged for this purpose, it might be useful to harness their positive effects, especially in situations where they cannot be avoided.

The results also highlighted the critical need for public sector employers to prioritize internal employer attractiveness. It is not enough to retain employees on the basis of having lifelong contracts. What is more critical is for employees to consider the public sector to be internally attractive as that might lead to higher job enjoyment, better employee wellbeing, and reduce on counterproductive behavior. It is also important to note that recent developments in public sector attractiveness research have confirmed family socialization to be an important factor for the attractiveness of government employment (e.g., Fischer & Schott, 2020; Stritch & Christensen, 2016). What this means is that people working in the public sector must be happy to recommend the public sector to their own children, relatives, and friends. How would they do this if they think the public sector is not internally attractive?

Elevating internal employer attractiveness as a central concern requires including it in routine employee feedback mechanisms. This might for example mean developing toolkits to evaluate employee perceptions of internal employer attractiveness and what they think could be done to improve the same. As it is being predicted that the public sector will find it more difficult to attract quality external applicants (e.g., due to demographic changes or due to the reengineering of private

sector firms), it is important for the public sector to ensure that it at least does not lose the valuable human capital it already possesses. Internal public sector attractiveness is key to that!

The findings also placed a lot of emphasis on perceived organizational justice. There is need for the public sector to be more intentional in its bid to create fair and just workplaces. In some contexts, this might call for a revision of public personnel policies and procedures. For example, in Uganda, a special commission was instituted to reevaluate public service salary structures. This is a step in the right direction, but such commissions should not only look at public employee salaries in absolute terms, but also in terms of how they compare with similar public employee salaries in the region, and indeed within the specific public service jurisdiction in question. It is also important to note that addressing salary disparities is not an end in itself. Public employees also want to get involved in the determination of these salaries. Beyond pay and rewards, they also often demand interactional and informational justice. This requires constantly evaluating and improving employee voice options so that strikes do not appear to be the only alternative. Moreso, it is important to analyze the fairness of procedures across different aspects of the workplace experience. This might require the analysis of things like work strain, working hours, holidays and leave, interactional distances among different employee groups, and the day-to-day exercising of managerial prerogatives. Workplace justice is not just economic!

Beyond addressing the fairness of personnel policies, procedures, and resource allocations processes, it is also important to prepare and equip public managers with the right skills to promote and practice justice in their day-to-day interactions with public employees. For many public employees, their direct supervisor is the physical representative of government. The supervisor's actions are therefore interpreted as actions of government. The personification metaphor (Argyris, 1957; Davies *et al.*, 2001) is well and live in public employee relations. Preparing for this reality might require retraining and retooling public managers to be aware of justice concerns, and to detect and address any cases of perceived injustice. Public managers must also be equipped with the skills and ability to encourage, improve, and facilitate public employee feedback mechanisms, and most importantly, to quickly respond to employee concerns.

In the specific context of Uganda, it is important for public managers and policymakers to be more proactive in their interactions with public employees. What the current results showed was that the Ugandan government tends to be reactive to strikes. They mostly respond to open forms of industrial action, especially when they lead to complete work stoppages. The latent manifestations of workplace militancy (e.g., work-to-rule tendencies) are usually ignored or not even recognized. There is also a tendency for the Ugandan government to respond to the specific employee demands raised through strikes without paying enough attention to why the demands are made in the first place. Ugandan policymakers and public managers need to go beyond basic *'wound suturing'* in their handling of public employee strikes. Attention must be paid to the contextual issues that breed this persistent strike culture (for example, the inefficiency of alternative employee feedback mechanisms). It is also important for public managers to recognize and address any forms of deviant or counterproductive behavior before they blossom into open strikes.

For the public-school teachers and public university lecturers in Uganda, the results of this research challenged the narrative that strikes are mostly explained by poor working conditions or poor pay. The bigger issue seemed to revolve around inefficient employee feedback mechanisms, and an established culture of workplace militancy. Therefore, instead of constantly demanding for better pay and rewards, Ugandan public educators might be better served by demanding and nurturing better feedback mechanisms within public workplaces. Employee unions/associations could play an important role in facilitating healthy communications, interactions and relations between their members and the relevant public managers. Effective communications between public employees and government as their employer would reduce the urge for industrial action – which can be costly for both sides!

7.4 Research limitations

The first limitation of the present research relates to the type of respondents it studied. Public school teachers and public university lecturers are not exactly representative of traditional public sector bureaucrats, or public employees in the equivalent of the German 'Beamte'. Unlike public employees in the so-called 'essential services' e.g., military officials, public school teachers and public university lecturers are not restricted from engaging in strikes. More so, they work in highly specialized public agencies/vocations, unlike the bureaucrats in different line ministries. The present research chose to study this specific group of public employees as a unique case study (based on their frequent engagement in industrial action). However, it is admissible that the perceptions of these public educators might be different from those of other public employees, especially those who do not have the right to strike. For this reason, the findings and conclusions of the present research must be interpreted and understood within the appropriate context, and not be taken to represent 'typical' public sector bureaucrats. However, the uniqueness of this phenomenon is also what drives its novelty. As Yin (2014) rightly argued, analyses of such *unusual* cases might "reveal insights about normal processes" (p.52).

Secondly, this research suffered a methodological limitation, especially during the quantitative phase. The quantitative part of this research would have been richer if it had used a bigger sample. There is also considerable criticism for the use of list-based sampling frames in survey questionnaires (as was the case for this research), especially because of the possibility of unequal access and nonresponse bias (Fricker Jr, 2017). However, there were no pre-recruited panels to call upon. Given the limited internet accessibility in Uganda, a printed survey questionnaire would have been the most appropriate option. But this was also not possible because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its related lockdowns and travel restrictions. Employing research assistants to collect the data and later send the questionnaires by post/scanning was considered, but the risk of getting unreliable data was high. As Panke (2018) rightly argued, using list-based sampling frames can sometimes be indispensable because "obtaining original data that are not available in databases or in secondary literature" exceeds the pragmatic advantages of resource and time economy (p.221). Nevertheless, the limited quantitative sample meant that the present results remained generally explorative. There is merit in conducting confirmatory studies with bigger samples, especially when studying quantitative aspects similar to the ones presented in this research.

Finally, the present research included a mediation analysis. In the end, the research turned out to be mostly exploratory which made mediation less critical. Instead of cross-sectional studies (like the present one), the understanding of possible mediators and moderators of public service attractiveness could be improved with more longitudinal studies. As the present findings showed, the complexity of government employment requires researchers to go beyond making simple causal inferences. For example, an analysis of frequent engagement in industrial action showed that not all strike activities are easy to discern by merely looking out for the traditional forms of industrial action. It was also found that fairness in a public sector setting is multifaceted, and the same was true for the internal attractiveness of government employment. People who work for government are not just working for a company or an individual investor. In many ways, they are working for themselves (as they are also among the 'owners' of government). These complex processes require a deeper understanding of possible confounding or intervening variables – and there is a better chance of doing this through longitudinal studies.

7.5 Recommendations for future research

As already mentioned in the above research limitations, there is need for further in-depth studies investigating possible process variables for the relationship between industrial action or other forms of counterproductive work behavior and public sector employer attractiveness. The use of larger samples, comparative, and longitudinal studies is highly recommended.

Moreso, employer attractiveness has mostly been studied from the perspective of prospective employees. In a public sector setting, that has often meant studying the perceptions of students in public administration schools, or public-facing institutions like military academies. The perceptions of current public employees have not been well studied, yet the public sector heavily relies on internal recruitment and the retention of current employees. In all contexts, there is urgent need to prioritize the study of employer attractiveness from the perspective of existing public employees. This also goes hand in hand with the need for more research on internal recruitment in the public sector. The present findings emphasized that employer attractiveness from the perspective of current employees might be different from what it would be from the perspective of prospective job seekers. However, validating this claim was beyond the scope of the present research. It would add more credence if this conclusion was confirmed by studies that compare the perspectives of current employees to those of prospective employees. Future studies could take this direction.

Additionally, the present research did not investigate the effects of internal public service attractiveness. Do public employees who think public sector employment is attractive behave differently from those who do not? If so, in what ways and why? Although it was suggested that improving justice within organizations would lead to a reduction in strike levels and an increase in internal employer attractiveness, the specific value of internal employer attractiveness was not assessed. It would therefore be valuable if future research can investigate both the antecedents and outcomes of internal public service attractiveness. Previous research by Ritz and Waldner (2011) suggested that internal public service attractiveness could lead to “desired behavioral intentions”, lower salary demands and positive job pursuit intentions (pp.297-298). Future research could build on this. A detailed understanding of the outcomes of internal public service attractiveness would especially help public managers and policy actors to appreciate the value of prioritizing the same.

Methodologically, the present research did not find any validated tool for assessing the internal attractiveness of government employment. It is also true that even for external attractiveness, most of the existing tools (e.g., Berthon *et al.*, 2005; Highhouse *et al.*, 2003; Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Pingle & Sodhi, 2011) were designed from a private sector perspective. For this reason, the present research designed its own data collection tools that were very specific to context. This context was characterized by frequent engagement in industrial action by a specialized group of public employees. Admittedly, this is not representative of the 'typical' public employee. Therefore, future research would do well to develop sector-specific tools to measure employer attractiveness in the public sector. It is even more critical to develop and validate tools that measure public service attractiveness from the perspective of current public employees – as the largely unresearched field of internal public service attractiveness has been highlighted in this research.

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9.0 APPENDICES

Appendix I: Description of Interview respondents

Code	**Gender**	**Position**	**Date**	**Length** ***(in minutes)***
001	Female	Public university lecturer	30.01.2020	48
002	Female	Public university lecturer	30.01.2020	67
003	Male	Public school teacher	31.01.2020	39
004	Male	Public school teacher	03.02.2020	62
005	Male	Public university lecturer	03.02.2020	51
006	Female	Public university lecturer	06.02.2020	56
007	Male	Public school teacher	06.02.2020	42
008	Female	Public university lecturer	06.02.2020	33
009	Male	Public university lecturer	07.02.2020	42
010	Male	Public school teacher	10.02.2020	35
011	Male	Public university lecturer	10.02.2020	71
012	Male	Public school teacher	12.02.2020	44
013	Female	Public university lecturer	12.02.2020	53
014	Male	Public university lecturer	13.02.2020	28
015	Female	Public school teacher	14.02.2020	64

016	Male	Public university lecturer	17.02.2020	52
017	Female	Public university lecturer	17.02.2020	41
018	Male	Public university lecturer	17.02.2020	43
019	Male	Public university lecturer	18.02.2020	52
020	Female	Public school teacher	18.02.2020	48
021	Male	Public university lecturer	19.02.2020	49
022	Female	Public school teacher	20.02.2020	31
023	Male	Public school teacher	20.02.2020	43

Appendix II: List of documents reviewed

Document Type	**Number of Documents**	**Document Codes**
Circulars from teachers' union or university staff association leadership to members *calling for the start of* Industrial Action	12	001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006, 007, 008, 009 010, 011, 012
Circulars from teachers' union or university staff association leadership to members *calling for an end to* Industrial Action	09	013, 014, 015, 016, 017, 018, 019, 020, 021
Non-confidential letters from teachers' union or university staff association leadership to the central Government Ministry of Education	13	022, 023, 024, 025, 026, 027, 028, 029, 030 031, 032, 033, 034
Non-confidential letters from teachers' union or university staff association leadership to Institutional leadership (university/school)	06	035, 036, 037, 038, 039, 040
Non-confidential letters from the central Government Ministry of Education to teachers' union or university staff association leaders	07	041, 042, 043, 044 045, 046, 047
Press release by teachers' union or university staff association	04	048, 049, 050, 051

Appendix III: Explanation of total variance for EFA loadings

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings[a]
Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	8.084	25.262	25.262	7.518	23.493	23.493	6.474
2	2.642	8.256	33.518	1.996	6.239	29.732	2.572
3	2.124	6.638	40.156	1.551	4.847	34.579	1.684
4	1.782	5.567	45.723	1.180	3.686	38.265	5.087
5	1.401	4.378	50.102				
6	1.318	4.118	54.220				
7	1.198	3.743	57.963				
8	1.110	3.468	61.431				
9	1.023	3.198	64.629				
10	.979	3.060	67.689				
11	.910	2.844	70.532				
12	.775	2.422	72.954				
13	.734	2.293	75.248				
14	.714	2.231	77.479				
15	.668	2.087	79.566				
16	.626	1.955	81.521				
17	.597	1.865	83.386				
18	.552	1.724	85.110				
19	.501	1.565	86.675				
20	.473	1.479	88.154				
21	.441	1.377	89.531				
22	.420	1.311	90.842				
23	.406	1.267	92.109				
24	.397	1.239	93.349				
25	.333	1.041	94.389				
26	.328	1.025	95.414				
27	.309	.966	96.381				
28	.285	.891	97.271				
29	.275	.859	98.130				
30	.236	.737	98.867				
31	.223	.698	99.565				
32	.139	.435	100.000				

a. When factors are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

Appendix IV: Approved copy of interview protocol

Interview Protocol – Obed Kambasu, Uni Potsdam

Research Question(s)	Interview Question(s)	Possible Follow-up Questions
Introductions	*Introducing myself and the research project. Also administering the 'declaration of consent'.*	
Setting the scene	1). Let's begin by talking about the different forms of industrial action. What forms of industrial action do teachers usually engage in? **** If the interviewee doesn't understand the term 'industrial action, explain it as 'strike'.*	What other things they do individually (without working together as a group) also for the same purpose as industrial action?
Question 1: Why do public sector employees engage in industrial action? • How do public sector employees rationalize their engagement in industrial action? • Why do public sector employees choose specific forms of action and how do they determine the right time to engage?	2). People often have different ways of explaining things. How do teachers explain their engagement in industrial action? What usually are their reasons?	
	3). Now, let's talk about your own experience. The very first time you personally engaged in industrial action, what personally convinced you to join in?	So, how did it all start? How did you know about the action and what influenced your decision to join in?
	4). Besides what you have explained, what are usually the other reasons for engaging in industrial action? Maybe you have colleagues who have engaged for different reasons…	Maybe there are also general group reasons rather than personal ones…?
	5). Now let's talk about timing. For example, the last time you engaged how did you and your colleagues determine that it was the right time to engage?	Looking back, would you say there was a specific trigger or was it a more of a process that was building up? *How so?*
	6). Generally, what would you say are the specific signals or conditions which indicate that it is the right time to engage? How does the whole process look like?	
	7). Assuming you don't engage in industrial action, what other options would be available to you in order for you to achieve your goals?	So, why do you choose industrial action among all the other options? **Or,** So, does it mean if there were other options, you wouldn't engage in industrial action? What kind of options would those be?
Question 2: How does engagement in industrial action relate to the motivation to work for government?	1). Looking back at the previous times you have engaged in industrial action, was there a time when you felt like your engagement in industrial action was in conflict with your responsibility as a government employee?	What makes you feel that there is no conflict? **Or,** How then do you manage that conflict?

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1

• How compatible is engagement in industrial action with the motivation to work for government? • How does the result of industrial action affect the motivation of public sector employees who are engaged in industrial action?	2). By the way, why do you think government employees engage in industrial action more than employees in other sectors?	Would you say it has anything to do with the nature of government work? How so? ***If they mention pay:*** But we also know some private sector employees who are paid less than government workers. Why do you think they don't strike?
	Thank you for teaching me more about industrial action. Finally, I would like us to talk about how it affects your motivation to continue working for government...	
	3). Sometimes things that happen around us affect our motivation to do our jobs. How do you think your engagement in industrial action affects your desire to work hard or even to improve your performance as a teacher?	
	4). Let's talk about the last time you engaged in industrial action. Did you come back more energized or probably more demoralized to do your work?	What would you say generally influenceedthose feelings?
	5). Let's also think back about a time when you engaged in industrial action but didn't achieve your goals for the action. How did that affect your motivation?	What about when you got what you were striking for? Was your motivation any different? How so?
	6). How about your colleagues? Usually how does the result of industrial action affect their desire to continue working as teachers in government service?	Do you think some of your colleagues work less or reduce the quality of their input because of what happens during industrial action?
	7). When you applied to become a teacher in government service, how did the fact that government teachers frequently engage in industrial action affect your decision?	Did you apply with some reservations or did it actually encourage you?
	8). By the way, have you ever considered quitting your job because of what happens during industrial action, or would you rather say it increases your love for your job?	What about your colleagues?
	9). Thank you for educating me about this subject. So, before we conclude this interview, can we also talk about the things that keep you attracted to your job.	Could the possibility of engaging in industrial action also be one of things that keep you attracted to this job?
	This is the end of our interview. Do you have any questions for me? Or maybe some other things to add that we haven't spoken about?	***Thank you so much for your kindness.***

- END –

Appendix V: Approved copy of online questionnaire

Industrial Action & Public Service Attractiveness

Thank you for accepting to participate in this research. This is a purely academic study (part of a PhD research at the University of Potsdam). Your participation is voluntary, and all your answers will be kept completely anonymous, e.g., you will not be asked for your name or the name of the university where you work, and your email address will not be recorded.

This research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Uganda Christian University, UG-REC-026, chaired by Prof. Peter Waiswa. Any ethical inquiries should be directed to the researcher (kambasu@uni-potsdam.de) or to the UCU REC Administrator, Mr. Osborn Ahimbisibwe (oahimbisibwe@ucu.ac.ug).
* Required

1. Qn1. How many times have you engaged in the following forms of industrial action during your time working in a public university? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1	2	3	4	5	>5	Never
Public demonstrations (e.g. holding placards or marching on streets)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Downing tools (e.g. staying away from the workplace)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Slowdowns (i.e. intentionally reducing personal input)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Selective performance of tasks (i.e. not doing certain tasks, while still doing others)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sit-down strikes (i.e. coming to the workplace only to sit around, but not to work)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Picketing (i.e. causing disruptions and stopping others from working)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Other	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

How I see my work environment

2. Qn2. The following statements describe how you perceive your work environment. How far do you agree with each statement? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have a good relationship with my superiors					
I have a fun working environment					
My workload is too much					
I have supportive and encouraging colleagues					
I am working in an exciting environment					
It is difficult for me to strike a balance between teaching and research					
I enjoy the job security in the public sector					
I am not satisfied with my job					
I enjoy the work-life balance in the public sector					
I feel a lot of work-related stress					
My salary is enough for the work that I do					
I am rewarded fairly considering the responsibilities that I have					
I am not rewarded fairly for the effort that I put into my work					
I feel appreciated by Management					
The government knows how to value its employees					
The government does not listen					

to its employees					
The government is an honest employer	○	○	○	○	○
The government values and makes use of my creativity	○	○	○	○	○
My office space is not good enough	○	○	○	○	○
I am gaining a career-enhancing experience	○	○	○	○	○
The government offers me enough opportunities for training and education	○	○	○	○	○
I feel more self-confident as a result of working in the public sector	○	○	○	○	○
I do not have good promotion opportunities within the public sector	○	○	○	○	○
I am getting hands-on inter-departmental experience	○	○	○	○	○
Working in the public sector is prestigious	○	○	○	○	○
The values I see in the public sector match my own values	○	○	○	○	○
I feel a sense of ownership for my university rather than being just an employee	○	○	○	○	○
This job is not really what I would like to be doing	○	○	○	○	○
I cannot imagine myself leaving government employment	○	○	○	○	○
I feel a lot of acceptance and belonging in the public sector	○	○	○	○	○
I am only working in the public sector because I have no other option	○	○	○	○	○

I am able to use my talents, skills and competencies in my current job					
I wouldn't recommend working in the public sector to a friend looking for a job					

How I see my employment situation

3. Qn3. The following statements describe how you perceive your current employment situation. How far do you agree with each statement? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I always have opportunities to express my views and feelings about everything that affects my work					
Rules and procedures that affect my work are applied consistently					
I have no influence over procedures that affect my work					
The procedures used in my university are free of bias					
Most procedures related to my work are not based on accurate information					
I always have the opportunity to appeal any decisions that am not comfortable with					
All procedures related to my work uphold ethical and moral standards					
My pay reflects the effort I put into my work					
My pay is appropriate for the work I do					
My pay does not reflect what I contribute to the organization					
My pay matches my performance					
My supervisor treats me in a polite manner					
My supervisor does not treat me with dignity					
My supervisor treats me with					

respect					
My supervisor refrains from improper remarks or comments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The university administration is not honest in its communications with me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The university administration explains all procedures thoroughly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The university administration gives reasonable explanations regarding all procedures and decisions they make	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The university administration communicates decisions in a timely manner	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The university administration doesn't tailor communications to individuals' specific needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How I can influence my work situation

4. Qn4. The following statements describe how you can influence your work situation. How far do you agree with each statement? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagreee	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Industrial action is the only option I have to express my views and feelings about everything that affects my work					
Rules and procedures that affect my work can only be applied consistently if we engage in industrial action					
There are many avenues I can use to influence procedures that affect my work					
Without industrial action, I wouldn't be able to appeal any decisions that am not comfortable with					
I have several platforms through which I can influence my pay to reflect the effort I put into my work					
Besides industrial action, there is no way I can influence my pay to reflect the work that I do					
If I do not engage in industrial action my pay wouldn't match my performance					
The only way I can get my supervisor to treat me in a polite manner is through industrial action					
I have several platforms through which I can express my feelings if I feel my supervisor does not treat me with dignity					
If I do not engage in industrial action my supervisor wouldn't					

treat me with respect					
The university administration can only be honest in its communications with us if we engage in industrial action	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The university administration wouldn't explain all procedures thoroughly if we do not engage in industrial action	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The university administration always gives reasonable explanations regarding all procedures and decisions they make even if we do not engage in industrial action	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The only way to get the university administration to communicate decisions in a timely manner is by engaging in industrial action	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Some Background Info

To provide some bit of context, below are some final questions. Once again, all the information you provide is completely anonymous.

5. What is your current position? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Professor or head of department
- ◯ Senior lecturer
- ◯ Lecturer
- ◯ Assistant lecturer
- ◯ Non-teaching academic staff
- ◯ Teaching Assistant
- ◯ Other:

6. What is your gender? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male

7. How old are you? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Less than 35 years
- ◯ 35-45 years
- ◯ 46-60 years
- ◯ Over 60 years

8. How long have you worked in a government university? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Less than 3 years
- ◯ 3-5 years
- ◯ 6-10 years
- ◯ Over ten years

9. What is your employment status? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Permanent employment
- ◯ Fixed term contract
- ◯ Part-time
- ◯ Other: _____

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for your kind participation.

If you have any questions or comments, please email the researcher at: kambasu@uni-potsdam.de

Appendix VI: Informed consent form for interview respondents

wipcad
Wicked Problems, Contested Administrations: Knowledge, Coordination, Strategy

UniversitätPotsdam . August-Bebel-Straße89 . 14482 Potsdam

Universität Potsdam

Wirtschafts- und SozialwissenschaftlicheFakultät
DFG-Research Training Group 1744*"Wicked Problems, Contested Administrations: Knowledge, Coordination, Strategy" (WIPCAD)*

Interview consent and data processing statement

The researcher, Mr.ObedKambasu, is conducting research on the *'Attractiveness of government as an employer: The paradox of Industrial Action and the Motivation to work for government.'* This is a purely academic research which is conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctoral degree (Dr.rer. pol.) of the University of Potsdam.

If you consent to being interviewed and to any data gathered being processed as outlined below, please print and sign your name, and date the form, in the spaces provided.

- This research project is being conducted as a requirement for the partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctoral degree (Dr.rer. pol.) of the University of Potsdam.
- All data (including personal and interview data) will be processed electronically and stored securely.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher. No third parties will be involved.
- You are free to withdraw from the research at any point of the interview, and you are free to choose not to respond to any specific question(s).
- Copies of interview tapes and transcripts will be offered to the University of Potsdam Data Archive.
- A copy of your interview transcript will be provided to you, free of charge, on request.
- Data collected may be processed manually and or, with the aid of computer software.
- Please indicate, by ticking ONE of the boxes below, whether you are willing to be identified, and whether we may quote your words directly, in reports and publications arising from this research.
  - ☐ I and my employer (*delete whichever is not applicable*) may be identified in research reports, papers, or other publications arising out of this research.
  - ☐ Neither I, nor my employer, may be identified in research reports, papers, or other publications arising out of this research. *My words may be quoted provided that they are anonymised.*
  - ☐ Neither I, nor my employer, may be identified in research reports, papers, or other publications arising out of this research. *My words may not be quoted.*

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28 JAN 2020
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Please print your name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Location: _____

Note: This consent form was reviewed by the Uganda Christian University Research Ethics Committee (UCU-REC). In case of ethical enquiries, kindly contact the Committee Administrator, Mr. Osborn Ahimbisibwe (oahimbisibwe@ucu.ac.ug) or the Committee Chairperson, Prof. Peter Waiswa (pwaiswa@musph.ac.ug).

Appendix VII: Ethical approval

UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

28th January, 2020

Mr. Obed Kambasu,
P. O. Box 527, Bwera, Kasese
+256(0)772 586 056
kambasu.obed@gmail.com, kambasu@uni-potsdam.de

UG-REC-026 APPROVAL NOTICE

To: Mr. Obed Kambasu, Principal Investigator
Re: UCUREC Application titled *"ATTRACTIVENESS OF GOVERNMENT AS AN EMPLOYER: the paradox of engaging in industrial action and the motivation to work for government." A case study of public university lecturers and public primary school teachers in Uganda".*

Application Number: **10.01.603/2/8**

Version: 2.0

Type: [ ] Initial Review
[ ] Protocol Amendment
[ ] Letter of Amendment (LOA)
[ ] Continuing Review
[ ] Material Transfer Agreement
[ ] Other, Specify:_____

I am pleased to inform you that at the 3rd convened meeting on **23rd January, 2020**, the **UG-REC-026; UCUREC** voted to approve the above referenced application.

Approval of the research is for the period of 28th January, 2020 to 28th January, 2021

This research is considered minimal risk category.
As Principal Investigator of the research, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:

1. All co-investigators must be kept informed of the status of the research.
2. Changes, amendments, and additions to the protocol or the consent form must be submitted to the REC for re-review and approval prior to the activation of the changes. The REC application number assigned to the research should be cited in any correspondence.
3. Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or other must be submitted to the REC. New information that becomes available which could change the risk: benefit ratio must be submitted promptly for REC review.
4. Only approved consent forms are to be used in the enrollment of participants. All consent forms signed by subjects and/or witnesses should be retained on file. The REC

may conduct audits of all study records, and consent documentation may be part of such audits.

5. Regulations require review of an approved study not less than once per 12-month period. **Therefore, a continuing review application must be submitted to the REC eight weeks prior to the above expiration date of 28th January, 2021 in order to continue the study beyond the approved period.** Failure to submit a continuing review application in a timely fashion may result in suspension or termination of the study, at which point new participants may not be enrolled and currently enrolled participants must be taken off the study.

6. You are required to register the research protocol with the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) for final clearance to undertake the study in Uganda.

The following is the list of all documents approved in this application by **UG-REC _026:**

	Document Title	Language	Version	Version Date
1.	**Proposal:** *"ATTRACTIVENESS OF GOVERNMENT AS AN EMPLOYER: the paradox of engaging in industrial action and the motivation to work for government." A case study of public university lecturers and public primary school teachers in Uganda".*	English	2.0	28th January, 2020
2.	**Informed Consent Form**	English	2.0	28th January, 2020
3.	**Interview protocol**	English	2.0	28th January, 2020
4.	**Rating the Ethical proposal**	English	1.0	23rd January, 2020
5.	**Introductory letter by Co-investigator**	English	1.0	17th January, 2020
6.	**Research Design**	English	1.0	17th January, 2020
7.	**Copy of National Identity card**	English		17th January, 2020
8.	**Obed Kambasu Curriculum Vitae(CV)**	English		17th January, 2020
9.	Research agreement with Co investigators	English		17th January, 2020
10.	Student's admission letter	German		17th January, 2020
11.	Research Proposal	English	3.0	28th January, 2020

Signed and Stamped

Prof. Peter Waiswa
UCUREC Chairperson,
pwaiswa@musph.ac.ug

UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
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28 JAN 2020
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE