

**‘Explaining the causes and effect of experienced  
unmet expectations of civil servants at the Dutch  
central government’**



**Master thesis sociology: Contemporary social problems**

**Utrecht University**

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*‘Explaining the causes and effect of experienced unmet expectations of civil servants at the Dutch central government*



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## **Preface**

Five months ago, I started writing my master thesis to complete the master program '*Contemporary social problems*' at Utrecht University. Writing this thesis gave me the opportunity to apply the knowledge in the field of sociology I acquired in the past four years. I am happy to present to you the end result of my master thesis.

First of all, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor prof. dr. ing. Tanja van der Lippe for her guidance in the process of writing my thesis. Her insights and constructive feedback were inspiring and contributed significantly to a successful completion of my thesis. Furthermore, I would like to thank my supervisors at the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdomrelations for providing me with the opportunity to gain a great experience with doing my internship at the Ministry, the opportunity to execute my research and for the contribution to the development of my thesis. I also want to thank Luuk for sharing the experience of our internship and writing our master thesis with me. Your hard work and dedication inspired me and kept me motivated at times when I needed it the most. Also, I appreciate you for letting me share all my life stories and problems with you. Finally, I would like to thank my friend and roommate Merle for always taking care of me on busy days, occurring frequently in the past weeks, and her mental support.

Marlies van Dissel

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## Summary

The central government sees her employees as the most important asset of the organization. However, the central government has to take into account several developments in society and within their own organization in order to remain productive concerning their employees. Because of the tightening labour market, which will make it harder to find highly qualified employees, and because of the extra need to find highly qualified employees due to the aim to remain productive with less employees, extra pressure is put on the central government to increase their attractiveness. In order to increase the attractiveness of the central government as an employer, the expectations of potential employees about working at the central government are important to assess. Also, the experiences of new employees must be assessed in order to examine the appreciation new employees have for the central government as an employer and to what extent new employees experience that their initial expectations are unmet.

This research is examining what new employees expected of their new job at the central government, what their experiences are and to what extent expectations are unmet by the experiences. This is examined on eight different job aspects. Furthermore, several factors were examined as predictors for the amount of unmet expectations that new employees experienced. Also, this research examines to what extent new employees who experience a higher amount of unmet expectations are more likely to be searching for a new job already. The results of this research will be used to develop policy recommendations in order to reduce the amount of unmet expectations new employees will experience.

The factors that are expected to explain variation in the amount of unmet expectations that are experienced by new employees at the government are: the use of informal recruitment sources, the amount of recruitment sources used, previous work experience as a civil servant, total years of work experience, level of education and level of dissatisfaction with previous job of new employees. These factors are all considered to determine to a certain extent the ability of employees to develop realistic expectations, because of variation in the information that they received or how they used this information.

This research used data from the employee and mobility research (PoMo) commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom relations every two years. PoMo used large scale questionnaires to collect information about several different job aspects and experiences of civil servants. For this research the two most recent datasets were used, with data collected in 2014 and 2016.

The results showed that in general, new employees held high expectations about their new job, but were also satisfied in general about their new job. However, discrepancies existed on some aspects. It appeared that the central government is not meeting the high expectations new employees held regarding the content of the job. This suggests that new employees, in general, were not fully able to estimate what their new job at the central government would entail content wise. Furthermore, the

most unmet expectations were experienced on the career development possibilities. Especially among women and younger employees. The central government is not meeting the high expectations that these groups of new employees held on the possibilities they expected to receive. Also, the work experience of new employees prior to entering the job at the central government turned out to be an important predictor for the amount of experienced unmet expectations. Young new employees, with little work experience are experiencing a higher amount of unmet expectations.

It appeared that almost 30% of the new employees was searching for a new job already. The amount of unmet expectations was an indicator for the probability of a new employee to be searching for a new job. This result underscored the need for the central government to reduce the amount of unmet expectations by new employees. The following recommendations could be developed from the insights gained by this research.

The results showed that new employees were not fully able to develop realistic expectations about the content of the new job at the central government, which implicates that more effort should be put into communicating realistic information about the content of jobs of interest to potential employees. A suggestion would be to let potential employees experience what the job would entail themselves, by giving people the chance to participate in the work they are interested in for a short period of time, which would give them a realistic preview of what the job might entail for them. It would especially useful if this measure would apply to young potential employees with little work experience, since this group is most vulnerable to develop unrealistic expectations. Furthermore, the fact that women experience more unmet expectations regarding the career development possibilities of the new job at the central government, indicates that the internal upwards mobility of women should be an even stronger point of focus within the employee policies of the central government, in order to reduce unequal career development possibilities for men and women.

Finally, since the factors that were examined as predictors for the amount of experienced unmet expectations by new employees at the central government could only explain a small part of the variation among new employees, further research about this topic should focus on exploring more factors that could possibly explain the amount of unmet expectations that are experienced by new employees at the central government. A deeper understanding on how predictors examined in this research can improve the ability of new employees to develop realistic expectations would also be suggested to focus future research on. Finally, it is suggested that future research should gather more specific information about new employees, for example about when and where they enrolled at the central government precisely, in order to identify even more specific where problems with unmet expectations arise.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 *The central government as an attractive employer*

Central to the employee policies developed by the central government is the focus on a future proof policy. The central government sees her employees as the most important asset of the organization. However, the central government has to take into account several developments in society and within the organization in order to remain productive concerning their employees. The aging population of the Dutch labour market led to an increasing number of participants on the labour market to retire, while a limited number of young people entered the labour market (Groeneveld, Steijn & van de Parre, 2009). The greying population will cause a tightening labour force. The number of potential employees will decrease, which will make it harder in the future for organizations to attract and maintain suitable, qualified new employees. Potential employees will have more options to choose from and organizations will have to compete with each other. Organizations in the private sector will be better able to offer higher wages to their employees in order to attract them (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2013-1), which is why organizations in the public sector, such as the central government, must pay more attention to their attractiveness as an employer towards potential employees on other levels to be able to keep on attracting qualified employees in the future. The more attractive the central government becomes as an employer, the larger the group of potential employees they reach to potentially recruit.

Next to the tightening labour market that increases the need to pay attention to the attractiveness of the central government as an employer, another development is leading to this need as well. In their agreement '*Bruggen slaan*' the former coalition emphasized the goal of the government to aim towards a powerful, compact government (Rutte & Samson, 2012). In order to achieve this goal the government should shrink in size, while at the same time remain to deliver high quality services. The central government therefore needs employees that are highly qualified for their job in order to be the utmost productive and manage the pressure of their job at the central government. The central government has to make it attractive for these highly qualified people to work for them, instead of other organizations, in order for those individuals to be willing to be recruited at the central government (Luhoma-ao, 2007).

Therefore, because of the tightening labour market, which will make it harder to find highly qualified employees, and because of the extra need to find these highly qualified employees due to the aim to remain productive with less employees, extra pressure is put on the central government to increase their attractiveness. An important goal of the labour market communication strategy "*Werken voor Nederland*" that is in use since 2010 by the central government, is to improve the image of the central government as an employer (Stroeker, Honcoop & Hemminga, 2014). Next to improving the image, the goal of this strategy is to increase the knowledge of potential employees into what working for the central government entails. In this way, the strategy is used to influence the expectations that

individuals have about what it is like to work for the central government.

These expectations, prior to entering the job, are part of a consideration an individual makes before deciding to choose the job. Viewing a job decision from the individual perspective, the attractiveness of a job is determined by at least two considerations. The attractiveness of a job is determined by an individual by first developing expectations about whether the job is going to perform well or not on certain aspects of the job and then considering whether each of these expected outcomes would be desirable for the person. Individuals then have developed a perceived person-job fit. A person-job fit occurs when the interests of an employee are in congruence with the characteristics of the job (Cable & Judge, 1996; Harrison, 1978; Kristoff-Brown, et al., 2005). Considering the expectation about a potential person-job fit determines the attractiveness of a certain job and therefore, individuals choose the job with the highest personal level of attractiveness among the available jobs. In this way, via the process of self-selection, individuals who expect to fit the job are more likely to be attracted to the employer and enter the job (Carless, 2005). It is therefore important for an employer that employees develop positive expectations about working for them, because otherwise they would not choose to work for them.

### *1.2 Unmet expectations*

Next to creating positive pre-entry expectations of potential employees, meeting these expectations is also a relevant factor for employers to influence their attractiveness towards new employees. After entering the job, new employees experience the reality of the job, which can either support or contradict the pre-entry expectations (Weller et al., 2009; Cordes, 1993). The experiences of new employees about their new job at the central government influences the attractiveness of the central government as an employer. These experiences are subjective to the person and can be rather positive or negative (Porter & Steers, 1973). By considering the discrepancy between the pre-entry expectations and the post-entry experiences, expectations can either be met or unmet. In the definition of Porter and Steers (1973), which is used in most previous research about this topic, unmet expectations are the discrepancies between what a person encounters on his new job in the way of positive and or negative experiences and what he or she expected to encounter.

The experience of unmet expectations by new employees is undesirable for the central government, because it could influence the attractiveness of the central government as an employer negatively. New employees who experience unmet expectations will see the central government as a less attractive employer than they expected. This might lead them to leave the organization in order to search for a job that fits their expectations better. This expected consequence of unmet expectations is suggested in previous literature about this topic (Porter & Steers, 1973; Ilgen & Seely, 1974; Hellman, 1997). Not only would quitting the new job cause a waste of investments in the new employees, but it will also make it harder for the employer, in this case the central government, to remain with enough highly qualified employees who are very much needed in times of a tight labour market. Furthermore,

new employees who experience unmet expectations will disclaim the attractiveness of the employer. If these negative experiences of these employees are shared, the image of the employer will be damaged. This undermines the development of positive expectations of other potential new employees about working for the central government. The attractiveness of the employer then decreases and reduces the group of potential employees that would be willing to be recruited to work for the central government, making it even harder to recruit new, highly qualified employees in the future.

### *1.3 Research goals*

Concerning the attractiveness of the central government as an employer, it has become clear that the expectations and experiences of new employees are important factors to be examined. This research will develop several insights into this topic, in order to improve the attractiveness of the central government as an employer and prevent having a lack of qualified employees in the future.

First, the research will provide more insight into the expectations new employees had about their new job at the central government. This makes it possible to examine what the current reputation of the central government is through the eyes of employees that have decided to work for the central government and examine differences between aspects of the job. The expectations of new employees will be examined on eight different aspects about the new job at the central government, namely the content of the job, the cooperation with colleagues, the level of independency, the rewards, the amount of time spend on the job, the career development possibilities, the attention of the organization for personal care and the focus of the organization on results. The distinction of expectations between several aspects of the job makes it possible to examine on what aspects the central government has a rather good reputation and on what aspects improvements can be made. Furthermore, the research will give insights on the experiences of new employees, once they have actually worked at the central government. This will also be examined on the eight different aspects. This will give insight into what new employees think about their new job at the central government. Comparing the expectations of new employees with their actual experiences creates the opportunity to examine to what extent new employees experience unmet expectations at the central government and whether there are differences between the eight aspects that are examined.

After examining what the current situation is regarding the expectations, experiences and therefore the amount of unmet expectations experienced by new employees, the goal of this research is to examine what factors could explain the amount of experienced unmet expectations by new employees at the central government. These factors are concerned with the explanation for variation among new employees in their development of realistic expectations about working at the central government.

Another goal of this research is to examine whether the experience of unmet expectations can actually cause new employees to be more intended to search for another job than new employees who experience less unmet expectations. This will give insight into whether the experience of unmet

expectations can actually have this negative consequence for the central government. Furthermore, experiencing unmet expectations will be examined separately, in order to find out what aspects are worse than others to experience a higher amount of unmet expectations on.

Finally, the last goal of this research is to develop policy recommendations which could be used by the central government to develop policies to reduce the amount of unmet expectations that new employees will experience in the future and with that prevent the negative effects that the experience of unmet expectations could have for the central government. The insights gained in this research will be used to do so.

Based on the goals of this research, the following research questions were formulated:

- 1. To what extent are post-entry experiences meeting the pre-entry expectations of new employees at the Dutch central government?**
- 2. To what extent can the amount of experienced unmet expectations by new employees at the Dutch central government be explained by the information new employees had access to prior to entering the job?**
- 3. To what extent does the amount of experienced unmet expectations influence the job search behavior of new employees?**
- 4. How can the amount of unmet expectations experienced by new employees be reduced at the central government?**

#### *1.4 Scientific relevance*

This research builds further on existing literature about the unmet experiences of employees in several ways. The existing literature is mostly focused on the effects that the experience of unmet expectations could have on work outcomes for new employees (Porter & Steers, 1973; Wanous et al., 1992; Major et al., 1995). However, there is a lack of literature about what factors can explain the variance of arising unmet expectations among new employees. Some researches about the effect of the experience of unmet expectations by employees do address the cause of unmet expectations, by stating that unmet expectations are caused by a lack of realistic information that individuals receive about the job (Ilgen & Seely, 1974; Premack & Wanous, 1985; Moser, 2005). However, they do not address factors that can explain why some individuals receive or handle information about potential jobs differently compared to others. This research will therefore be an addition to the existing literature. Furthermore, this research also contributes to the existing literature about unmet expectations of employees by examining several distinctive aspects of the job on which new employees can experience unmet expectations, which has not been done before, but might yield useful new insights. Finally, this research is focused on the experience of unmet expectations of new employees within a specific sector, namely the central government.

#### *1.4 Social relevance*

The results of this research can be useful to develop recommendations for the central government about the development of successful employee policies aimed at reducing the amount of unmet expectations that new employees might experience in the future. When the central government will be able to reduce the amount of unmet expectations that are experienced by their new employees, harmful effects that might occur when their new employees experience unmet expectations can be prevented. The attractiveness of the central government as an employer then will be increased, which will prevent problems with attracting and keeping enough qualified employees within the organization. The central government will be able to remain productive, without having to make extra costs, which is of importance to the Dutch society as whole.

#### *1.5 Background information*

Before continuing with the theoretical approach, some more information is given about what the Dutch central government actually entails. Several organizations are characterized together as the central government. The central government, as a part of the Dutch government, consists of eleven ministries, situated at The Hague, many implementation organizations, inspection services and the high councils of the state. All organizations included within the central government develop national policies, execute these policies or monitor the compliance to these policies in the Netherlands.

Each ministry is under political leadership by a minister and is focusing on a particular work field. Next to the core departments themselves, many implementation organizations also belong to a specific ministry. For example, the tax authority is part of the Ministry of Finance, but can be seen as a distinctive working field for employees compared to the core department of finance. Also inspection services, such as educational inspection service, are part of a ministry which bears the responsibility of the implementations performed by that organization, in this case the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Finally, the higher councils of the state are included in the central government. Their duty is to control and advice the other organizations within the central government. They are independent and autonomous. Examples are the First en Second chamber of the Staten Generaal, the general accounting office and the office of the national ombudsman. Within all the organizations that are included in the central government, 110,000 individuals are employed (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2016).

#### *1.6 Research set up*

In the following part, the theoretical background of this research will be discussed. This will take place in two parts. In the first part of the theory section mechanisms on how different factors can explain variation in experienced unmet expectations by new employees in the central government will be discussed, after which expectations will be stated. In the second part of the theory section, the

expected influence of the amount of experienced of unmet expectations of new employees at the central government on job search behavior of new employees will be discussed. After this the methods of this research will be elaborated on by discussing the data, the operationalization of the variables used in the research and the analytical strategy. After that, the results will be showed and discussed. All these elements of the research will come together in a conclusion. The strong aspects and the limitations of this research will be pronounced in the discussion. Finally, the insights that were gained in this study will be used to formulate policy recommendations in the final section of this research.

## 2. Theory

### *2.1 Explaining unmet expectations*

The factors that will be expected to explain the amount of unmet expectations new employees experience are based on mechanisms about the variation in the ability and/or opportunities individuals have to gather and process information about the job, in order to be more or less able to develop realistic information about working at the central government. Before entering a job, individuals gather information about the job. Having information about the job is necessary for potential employees to develop pre-entry expectations about the job, because they base their expectations on the information they have.

Having access to accurate information, receiving more information or process information better, enables applicants to assess the degree of congruence between the individual and the job (Carless, 2005). In this manner, a potential employee can consider whether they expect a person-job fit if they would enter the organization. In order to make a more realistic consideration about the perceived person-job fit that might occur when entering the job better feasible, more information is needed. The person with the most accurate information then has the best chance to actually experience a good person-job fit, because he or she knew better what to expect from a situation and will be better prepared, and therefore will likely experience a lower level of unmet expectations (Ilgen & Seely, 1974; Premack & Wanous, 1985; Buckley et al., 2002).

Since it is impossible for individuals to gain complete knowledge about every characteristic of the potential job, their gained knowledge is based on imperfect signals they receive (Weller et al., 2009). Differences exist among individuals in the information gathering process. One individual might be able to have more access to information or put more effort into the information gathering process, in order to receive more (accurate) information about the job than the other. This makes the amount of knowledge gained, or the accuracy of the gained knowledge vary among different individuals, which creates differences in pre-entry expectations among new employees. Therefore, the experienced unmet expectations will also vary among of new employees. New employees who received less and/or less accurate information about the job prior to entering the job will experience more unmet expectations, because they were less able to develop realistic expectations about working for the central government, and therefore will be more often surprised by reality. In the following part of the theory section, several factors will be discussed that are expected to explain the amount of experienced unmet expectations by determining the amount of accurate information an individual has received prior to entering the job.

#### *2.1.1. Information via recruitment sources*

Some individuals have access to more information than others and/or have access to more trustworthy information than others. According to Granovetter (1995) the variation of information people receive about the job can be explained by the recruitment source that is used to gather

information. Based on the recruitment sources an individual uses to gather information in the job decision process, both the quantity and the quality of the information can vary among individuals, since every source can provide a different amount of information or differ in the accuracy of the information that is provided. A distinction is made between formal and informal recruitment sources. Recruitment sources such as employment agencies, advertisements online or in newspapers or an open job application are distinguished as formal recruitment sources, while using the personal social network as an information source in the job search process is seen as an informal recruitment source. (Granovetter, 1995; Moser, 2005).

Formal and informal recruitment sources differ in their supply of information towards potential employees. Informal recruitment sources can provide a higher quality of information than formal recruitment sources (Granovetter, 1995; Weller et al., 2009; Zottoli & Wanous, 2000). The personal social network can provide information that otherwise would be difficult to obtain, such as an accurate description of the working conditions at a specific organization (Mouw, 2003). Several reasons can explain why informal recruitment sources can provide job searching individuals with information that is of better quality than formal recruitment sources. First, an informal source will often entail a better quality relationship. The informal source will therefore be greater motivated to be of assistance towards the individual. Besides, the quality of the relationship will also entail that informal resources are typically more easily accessible to an individual (Granovetter, 1995). This makes sharing more information more likely.

Furthermore, the information that informal sources are able to provide will often be of more value than information that formal sources are able to provide. Informal recruitment sources can share personal, inside information about the organization, while this is rarer with formal recruitment sources. Obtaining inside information from someone within the personal social network indicates that the person giving the information has knowledge about the job from inside (Williams, Labig en Stone, 1993). This is why that person knows about the vacancy, informed the potential employee about it and provided that person with inside information about the job. This makes the information given by the informal source more accurate and therefore better quality information. Furthermore, informal sources are more likely to share sensitive information about the organization and/or the job. Especially if the relationship constitutes a base of trust, which is more likely among informal sources than formal sources (Krackhardt, Nohria & Eccles, 2003). The trust in the relationship between the individual and the informal sources makes it more comfortable for the informal sources to share sensitive information, but also makes the individual more comfortable to communicate sensitive questions towards the informal source, which he or she would not have asked formal recruitment sources.

Based on the above described reasons can be concluded that having access to informal recruitment sources can help with developing more realistic and accurate expectations about the job at the central government, because this person is more well-informed than others who don't receive information via informal recruitment sources. This makes new employees who made use of



information recruitment sources better prepared for the situation when entering the job (Moser, 2005). Therefore, the following is expected:

*H1a: New employees who used informal recruitment sources will experience a lower amount of unmet expectations than employees who did not use of information recruitment sources.*

In reality, job applicants will consult multiple sources and obtain their information from more than one source (Van Hoyer & Lievens, 2005). Next to the availability of informal recruitment sources to receive more accurate information about the job prior to entering the job, the amount of recruitment sources used in total might therefore be an important factor to consider as well. Having multiple sources not only increases the amount of information an individual receives, but can also increase the quality of the information an individual receives (Stumpf & Hartman, 1984; Williams, Labig & Stone, 1993). Information that can be shared by a source is based on personal opinions and experiences, which makes the information subjective to the source. Insights from different subjective perspectives could therefore create a more objective perspective, which makes the development of a more realistic picture of the actual situation of the job better feasible. Potential employees will be better able to make a realistic assessment of the potential job, which increases the chance of a realization of the expected person-job fit after entering the job (Saks & Ashford, 1997). Therefore, the following is expected:

*H1b: New employees at the central government who made use of more recruitment sources experienced a lower amount of experienced unmet expectations than new employees who made use of less recruitment sources.*

### *2.1.2 Previous sector experience*

Regarding the information gathering process about a potential job, variations might exist between individuals with different experiences in the past concerning their careers. Individuals possess information and knowledge about their previous jobs, which they take into account when developing expectations about the new job, because they compare the expected setting of the potential new job to their previous setting. The setting of the new job might be rather similar to the previous setting in which an individual has worked prior to this new job or it might be rather different. If the setting is more similar to the previous setting, the individual will enter a familiar situation. Their gained knowledge at their previous job about such that similar situation can help them form more accurate expectations about the new job than individuals who lack a similar previous job experience (Adkins, 1995). Individuals who lack job experience in a similar setting as the new job, lack access to more accurate information via their experience, and will be less able to develop realistic expectations as individuals who did have access to the information based on their previous job experience.

This research focuses on new employees at the Dutch central government. If their new job at the central government is compared to their previous job, having worked as a civil servant previously

can be considered as a situation that is more similar to the new one than not having worked as a civil servant previously. New employees who were a civil servant in their past job, before entering this new job at the central government, already have experienced what it is like to work as a civil servant, opposed to newcomers in the field. Therefore, they will have access to their own knowledge about what the new job might entail, since they already know to an extent what can be expected of working as a civil servant. This makes them better able to develop realistic expectations about the new job at the central government and is expected to experience a lower amount of unmet expectations.

An even more similar setting than having been a civil servant previously would be if the new employee experienced being a civil servant at the central government previously. Individuals with experience at the central government will be even more able to develop realistic expectations, because they know part of what it is like to work at the central government. Based on the mechanisms described above, the following expectations are formulated:

*H2a: New employees who worked as a civil servant in their previous job will experience a lower amount of unmet expectations than new employees who worked in other sectors than the government in their previous job.*

*H2b: New employees who worked as civil servant at the central government in their previous job will experience a lower amount of unmet expectations than new employees who did not work at the central government in their previous job.*

*H2c: The positive effect that a similar previous job experience has on experiencing unmet expectations will be stronger for employees who worked as a civil servant at the central government in their previous job than for having experience as a civil servant in general.*

### *2.1.3 Total work experience*

Regarding the use of past experiences in developing expectations about a new job, the total years of work experience of new employees might also be an important factor to consider. An individual with more years of experience in the labour force has accumulated job-related experiences over the years (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998; Ng & Feldman, 2009). As described earlier, past work experience can be taken into account when developing expectations about the new situation. A person with more total work experience, regardless from where this experience is gained, will be more informed about what a job could entail in general, since he or she will have experienced more jobs than someone with less work experience. Furthermore, more work experiences makes it more clear to individuals what their work-related preferences are, what information they should gather and from whom. This gives more experienced individuals the opportunity to search information about these particular specific preferences (Kuhlthau, 1991). ‘Good situations’ and ‘bad situations’ will be recognized much quicker. These benefits of having more work experience increases the ability of individuals to develop realistic

expectations of the new job at the central government. Therefore the following is expected:

*H3: New employees with more years of work experience will experience less unmet expectations in a new job at the central government than new employees with less years of work experience.*

#### *2.1.4 Level of education*

Individuals with different levels of educational attainment might differ in the way they gather information in their job search process. In general, people who attained a higher level of education will possess more skills to gather more and better quality information. This can be explained by the amount of human capital they possess. The idea behind human capital is that individuals invest in their own knowledge and skills (Becker, 1994). Education and training are the most important investments in human capital, because it provides people with skills and knowledge. Higher educated people therefore have obtained more skills and knowledge than lower educated people, which they can use in the job search process.

First of all, possessing more skills and knowledge makes someone more attractive for an employer, which increases the opportunities for those individuals on the labour market. Earlier research about job search behavior suggests that individuals who expect that they are going to find a suitable new job, will intensify their search process (Harrel & Stahl, 1986; Rynes & Lawler, 1983). Individuals with more human capital are better able to find a new job because of their increased opportunities on the labour market, which is why higher educated individuals execute a more intensive search process in general than lower educated individuals. An intensive search process entails a high frequency of job search behavior through which effort and time are expended to acquire information (Blau, 1993). A more intensive search process therefore produces a situation wherein an individual receives more information than he or she would have if their search process was less intensive. With more information acquired, the potential new employee can develop more realistic expectations about a potential new job.

Furthermore, human capital enhances the ability of individuals to receive, decode and understand information (Nelson & Phelps, 1966). Therefore, individuals who attained a higher level of education will be better able to process the information they receive about the new job. This makes them better able to distinct high quality information from low quality information, which makes it more likely that they can develop more realistic expectations about the job at the central government than lower educated people. But also, it makes higher educated individuals better able to interpret the information they receive about the job at the central government and use it to create more realistic expectations about the job at the central government. Based on these described reasons, the following is expected:

*H4: Higher educated new employees will experience a lower amount of unmet expectations than lower educated new employees at the central government.*

#### *2.1.5 Dissatisfaction with previous job*

The job search behavior of individuals might differ between individuals based on their dissatisfaction with their previous job. Unacceptable conditions in the old job are likely to ‘push’ individuals to consider alternatives (Bretz, Boudreau & Judge, 1994). Individuals who are more dissatisfied with their job have a higher preference to find a new job quick than individuals who are less dissatisfied (Hom & Kinicki, 2001). Therefore, individuals who were dissatisfied with their old job might take less time to gather information about the new job at the central government than people who were satisfied and take less time to consider whether the new job at the central government will be a good fit for them. Because of this lack of time that these individuals have put into this process, individuals who were more dissatisfied with their previous job were less able to develop realistic expectations. Therefore, the following is expected:

*H5: A higher level of dissatisfaction with the previous job of new employees at the central government will lead to lower amount of experienced unmet expectations.*

#### *2.1.6 Moderating effects*

It was expected that making use more recruitment sources to receive information about the job at the central government can provide individuals with more information about their potential new job at the central government in order to be able to develop realistic expectations about that new job. However, since the composition of social networks of individuals vary, the supply of job-related information received via their informal contacts can therefore vary among new employees. It is suggested in previous literature about using social contacts in the job search process that good connections are important, because good connections can deliver individuals high quality information about jobs (Mouw, 2003).

Variations in social networks of individuals that are relevant to receiving information about the potential new job is about knowing the right people. Job searching individuals with a social network consisting of connections with people who actually have the accurate information that is needed, will benefit more from using their information. People who have been on the labour market for a longer period of time had the chance to build up their professional network. Therefore chances are higher that they know someone from who they can receive quality information about what the job at the central government entails. Differences in the quality of information that is received by individuals who make use of their informal sources creates differences in the ability of individuals to create realistic expectations. New employees with more work experience, and with that a higher chance of knowing the right people from whom they can receive quality information, will make the

use of informal sources an even better opportunity to develop realistic expectations about the new job at the central government. Therefore, the following is expected:

*H6: Having more years of work experience strengthens the influence of using informal recruitment sources on the amount of experienced unmet expectations as a new employee at the central government.*

It was expected that new employees with more years of work experience will experience a lower amount of unmet expectations at their new job at the central government, because individuals with more past work experiences can use these experiences to estimate better what to expect from jobs in general, since they base their expectations partly on their previous experiences. However, when part of the previous years of work experience are spent in a somewhat similar setting, it can be more beneficial to use previous work experience as a source to base expectations about the new job on. Individuals who have previous work experience in a somewhat similar setting, in this case having experience as a civil servant, gained sector specific information about what it entails to work as a civil servant. Therefore, they are even better able to use the total amount of work experience they gained in their working life to estimate what the new job at the central government might entail. Therefore, the following is expected:

*H7: Having worked as a civil servant previously strengthens the influence of having more work experience on the amount of experienced unmet expectations.*

## 2.2. Consequences of experiencing unmet expectations

### 2.2.1 Searching for a new job

In the previous part of the theory, factors that are expected to explain the amount of unmet expectations experienced by new employees at the central government were discussed. However, this research is also meant to examine whether the amount of unmet expectations of new employees at the central government could lead to a higher chance of these new employees intending to quit their new job at the central government already.

Previous literature about the experience of unmet expectations by employees has examined the possible post-hire outcomes of a high amount of unmet expectations by employees (Cable & Judge, 1996; Buckley et al., 1998; Judge et al., 2001; Kahya, 2007). A frequently mentioned outcome of experiencing unmet expectations at a new job is a low level of job satisfaction. Porter and Steers (1973) introduced the 'met expectations hypothesis' which suggested that the discrepancy between what an individual expected to encounter in the new job and what they actually encounter in the job could influence job satisfaction negatively. In later research about this topic, this idea has had a leading role and the hypothesis was reexamined in several studies (Wanous et al., 1992). While much research is done about the influence that unmet expectations could have on job satisfaction, there is no

clear definition of job satisfaction that has been used consequently. In his paper about how to define job satisfaction, Locke (1969) described job satisfaction as “*the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating one’s job values*”.

Wanous et al. (1992) performed a meta-analysis, in which numerous studies that examined the met expectation hypothesis were cumulated. The findings indicated that unmet expectations are indeed strongly associated with a low job satisfaction. There are several mechanisms described in the existing research about how unmet expectations could lead to low job satisfaction. Experiencing unmet expectations can implicate an absence of a good fit between the employee and the new job. As explained before, individuals make a consideration before choosing to enter the job. They base this on their expectations, and whether these expectations fit their interests. In this way, via the process of self-selection, individuals who expect to fit are more likely to enter the job, and therefore, jobs will on general be more taken by individuals who expected a good person-job fit. However, when pre-entry expectations do not comply with reality, and therefore new employees experience a certain amount of unmet expectations, the new employee did not have access to enough information to be able to make a knowledgeable consideration about whether the job would fit them. The expected person-job fit could then deviate from the real person-job fit. If the employees would have been more knowledgeable when making the consideration to enter the job, they would not have chosen to enter the job. This will lead to disappointment among new employees who experience a misfit compared to their expectations and a stressful work experience (Lait & Wallace, 2002). These feelings of disappointment when a lack of person-job fit occurs will lead to a decrease in job satisfaction (Wanous et al., 1992; Cable & Judge, 1996; Kristoff-Brown et al., 2005; Locke, 1969; Groeneveld, Steijn & van de Parre, 2009).

Furthermore, a lack of a person-job fit that occurs when a high amount of unmet expectations is experienced by new employees might lead to a lack of productivity of the new employee in the job. When choosing the job, and therefore expecting a good person-job fit, new employees expect their abilities to match the demands of the job (Kristoff-Brown, 2005). The abilities of the new employee need to fit to the job, in order to be assimilate quickly in the new job and be productive (Behery, 2009). However, when the expectations do not comply with the reality, it is more likely that the new employee does not possess the abilities that are necessary to be productive in the new job. For example, when the content of the job is different from the content that was expected by the new employee, the employee might have fewer abilities to work with that content of the job than they expected to have. Next to the fact that a lack of productivity is undesirable for the employer, it might also affect the personal situation and feelings towards the job from the employees perspective. The lack of this person-fit job type leads to a stressful work situation, because of the pressure to perform in a job where abilities might lack. This makes it harder to assimilate to the new job and could therefore lead to job dissatisfaction (Blau, 1981; Major et al., 1995).

Based on the above discussed arguments, previous research clearly suggests that the experience of unmet expectations could lead to a lower job satisfaction. Via the mechanism of a

decreased level of job satisfaction, voluntary job turnover is a likely consequence of a high amount of unmet expectations experienced by new employees (Pearson, 1995). It would be rational for an individual to prefer a working situation where they feel like their needs and preferences are fulfilled. Therefore, when a situation is experienced wherein expectations are unmet and they feel unsatisfied about their job, employees will start looking for a new working situation that fits their needs and preferences better. When a new employee at the central government experiences a sufficient amount of unmet expectations, their job satisfaction will be lower, which will cause a greater probability of withdrawal behavior, such as searching for a new job (Porter & Steers, 1973). Therefore, the following will be expected:

*H8: New employees at the central government who experience a higher amount of unmet expectations will be more likely to search for a new job than new employees who experience a lower amount of unmet expectations.*

### *2.2.2 Moderator effects*

Some individual attributes might influence the association between the amount of experienced unmet expectations and the probability that a new employee is already searching for another job. As mentioned before, it seems a rational choice to spend time on looking for a new job that would create a better working situation for individuals. However, there might exist differences between individuals, based on their personal characteristics, in the extent to which they are bothered by the experience of unmet expectations.

The first characteristic that will be discussed is the age of new employees at the central government. In comparison, older employees will have different preferences in general than younger employees concerning their attitudes towards their working situation. Noe, Steffy & Barber (1988) distinguished three career stages in an employee's career; namely 'initial career stage', 'advancement stage' and 'maintenance stage'. Older employees will be more often represented in the maintenance career stage. According to Slocum & Cron (1985), differences in career stages account for differences in job attitudes. It is argued that employees in the maintenance career stage are less ambitious and more focused on maintenance, which concerns remaining productive within their job. In general, they will become less involved in work and more involved with other aspects in their life, such as family life (Noe, Steffy & Barber, 1988; Hellman, 1997). The experience of unmet expectations would still lead to dissatisfaction, but older employees will more often be not bothered enough by this to feel the intention to search for a new job, since they will be more focused on other aspects in their life and more often will have the preference to maintain their job than younger new employees. This means that when they experience unmet expectations, they will less often feel the need to search for a new job than younger employees. Therefore, the following is expected:

*H9: Advancement in age will weaken the influence that the amount of experienced unmet expectations has on the likelihood that a new employee at the central government is searching for a new job.*

The expected influence that the amount of experienced unmet expectations by a new employee at the central government has on the chance that the new employee will already be searching for a new job could potentially be weakened by the level of public service motivation of new employees. Public service motivation refers to the extent to which an individual is motivated to work for the government instead of a private organization, because of the desire to contribute to society (van de Parre, Steijn & Groeneveld, 2009). It is believed that employees with a high level of public service motivation hold different attitudes towards work than employees in private sectors. They are motivated by a concern for the community and the desire to serve the public interest by working for the government (Houston, 2000). However, the level of public service motivation also varies among civil servants. Research has shown that civil servants with a high level of public service motivation show more commitment to their job (Crewson, 1997). Experiencing unmet expectations after entering the job at the central government is expected to increase the probability that the civil servant will be searching for a new job. However, when the new employee is concerned with the idea of contributing to society with performing their job, this probability might be reduced. This can be explained by the importance that employees with a high level of public service motivation attach to their job, even though it does not comply with the expectations they held before entering the job. The increased commitment induced by a high level of public service motivation can reduce the decreased commitment to the job if the new employee experienced a high amount of unmet expectations. New employees at the central government with a high level of public service motivation will therefore be less likely to let the experienced amount of unmet expectations lead them to be searching for a new job. Therefore, the following is expected:

*H10: A high level of public service motivation among new employees at the central government will weaken the influence of the amount of experienced unmet expectations on the likelihood of searching for a new job.*



### **3. Methods**

#### *3.1 Data*

In this research data has been used that are produced by the employee and mobility research (PoMo) that was commissioned by the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom relations and is executed every two years, since 2004. PoMo used large scale questionnaires to collect information about several different job aspects and experiences of civil servants. The goal of the research is to follow developments in the experiences of civil servants about their jobs. In this way, PoMo is supposed to be used to develop insights into the labour market position of the government and how this position can be improved. The PoMo research is divided into three target groups, namely employees who are currently working for the government, individuals that have been working for the government but have left their organization in the past year and finally, employees who are working for the government, but have only entered the job in the year before the research was executed. Data from the latter category are used in this research.

For this research, the two most recent datasets were used. The first dataset contains data that was collected in 2016, from civil servants who entered a job at the government in 2015, and the second dataset contains data that was collected in 2014, from civil servants who entered a job at the government in 2013. The datasets do not contain further specification about when the new employees exactly entered the new job at the central government, only the year. The time already spend on the job when they filled out the questionnaire can therefore vary among new employees, with a maximum difference of one year. Data from both years are merged together in one dataset. The PoMo researched focused on all civil servants, but since the focus of this research is on the central government only civil servants working at the central government were included in this research.

The respondents have been reached by a letter, in which they were asked to participate in the research by filling out the questionnaire online. Civil servants from different organizations within the central government were asked to participate. In 2016, 27% of the civil servants that were asked to fill out the questionnaire participated. In 2014, 29% of the respondents that were asked to fill out the questionnaire actually participated in the research. The total number of new employees at the central government that were included in the dataset is 2259. However, only respondents who filled in every question that was used in this research were included, which makes the number of new employees at the central government that were included in the analyses 2203. Of these 2203 respondents, 1142 participated in 2016, while 1061 respondents participated in the research in 2014.

#### *3.2 Operationalization*

The distribution of new employees over categories of variables that are used in this research are shown in table 1. Descriptive information about the other variables that are used in this research are given in table 2, except for the descriptive information about expectations and experiences of new employees,

which will be given in table 3, and unmet expectations, which will be given in table 4. The latter two tables are shown in the first part of the results, since these will be discussed there. The operationalization of the variables will be discussed first.

### *Independent variables*

In order to explain the variation among new employees in the amount of unmet expectations they experienced, several variables will be used. These will be described first.

The first factor is a dichotomous variable which measures whether someone made use of informal recruitment sources to enter the job. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate whether they used certain methods to attain the job. Several options were given, among which the method of being informed about a vacancy by acquaintances, friends or (ex)colleagues. If a respondent made use of this method, he or she scores '1', while others score '0'. Informal recruitment sources were used by 26.4% of the new employees.

The second factor also concerns recruitment sources. This variable measures the amount of different recruitment sources that are used. Eight recruitment sources that can provide respondents with information about the job were mentioned and respondents were asked to state whether they had made use of that source. The following sources were included: Advertisement about vacancy in newspaper or magazine, advertisement about vacancy on the internet, a job fair, via acquaintances, friends or (ex)colleagues, asked by (new) employees, via school or internship, via an employment agency or a headhunter office. A new variable was created by counting the amount of times new employees responded 'yes' to the question in they made use of that recruitment sources. On average, respondents used one recruitment source.

Another variable that will be used is the amount of work experience. This will be measured by age, since the years of work experience is unknown for a substantial part of the respondents. Respondents were asked to fill in their date of birth. However, respondents were divided into 11 categories of age by the PoMo research, in order to prevent situations in which a respondent's identity can be found out. Since the categories are of equal distance to each other and can be ordered from youngest till oldest, the variable is used as a continuous variable. The distribution of new employees over age categories is given in table 1.

Two variables that will be used concern the previous job sector of the new employees. The first variable measures whether or not a new employee has been working as a civil servant in their previous job. It concerns a dichotomous variable which measures whether someone's previous job was at also in the public sector, on which a score of '0' means that someone was not a civil servant in the previous job. This category contains both respondents who have worked in other sectors in their previous job as respondents who indicated they did not experience a working situation before entering this new job at the central government. This can either be because they were unemployed, unable to work or because they left school that year. A score of '1' indicates that someone indeed was a civil

servant in their previous job, which includes employees who worked at the central government, a municipality, the provinces, regional water authorities, in defense, university medical centers, as a judicial officer or as a police officer. Of all respondents 36.7% worked as a civil servant in their previous job as well.

The second variable concerns a dichotomous variable as well, that measures whether someone already worked for the central government in their previous job. A score of '1' indicates that a respondent was working at the central government as well in their previous job. These are respondents that worked at the central government before, but at a different organization within the central government. A score of '0' indicates that a respondent did not work at the central government before, because they worked as a civil servant somewhere else, worked at an organization in the private sector, worked independently without an employer or did not experience a working situation before this job. Of all respondents, 21% of the respondents worked at the central government in their previous job.

Another independent variable is the level of education of new employees. Respondents were divided in five categories of the highest level of education they achieved, namely primary school (1), LBO/MAVO (2), MBO/HAVO/VWO (3), HBO/WO-bachelor (4) and WO-master (5). The distribution of the respondents over the categories is reported in table 1.

Furthermore, the dissatisfaction level is measured by creating a scale of twelve items about different aspects of the previous job. The following aspects are included: content of the job, cooperation with colleagues, the extent of independency, the amount of work, the focus of the organization on results, supervising behavior of the supervisor, information and communication services within the organization, career development possibilities, rewards, the amount of influence within the organization, the attention for personal care of the organization and finally the way of assessment. Respondents were asked per aspect of their old job, to indicate to what extent they agreed with the statement: *'Dissatisfaction on this aspect was an important reason to quit my previous job'*. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with this statement on a five point Likert scale. They could 'totally disagree' (1), 'disagree' (2), 'not disagree/not agree'(3), 'agree' (4) and 'totally agree'(5). An internal consistency method is used to test the reliability of the scale. The high Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .87 indicates that the scale is reliable enough. A higher score on the scale indicates a higher level of dissatisfaction with the previous job ( $M=2.64$ ,  $SD= .79$ ). The number of respondents that filled in this question is much lower ( $N=680$ ) than the total number of respondents included in this research (2203). This is partly caused by the fact that only respondents who experienced a job situation before entering the new job were asked about their dissatisfaction with their previous job, because of unemployment caused by several reasons or because of being a student before. The low number of respondents and the fact that it contains a specific group of new employees are reasons to include the level of dissatisfaction with the previous job of new employees in a separate analysis. This will be further elaborated on in the last part of the methods section, in which the

analytical strategy of this research will be discussed.

*Table 1. Distribution of new employees in categorical variables*

	Categories	N
<i>Total sample</i>		2203
<i>Informal source</i>	yes	581
	no	1622
<i>Previous job at central government</i>	yes	463
	no	1740
<i>Previous job as civil servant</i>	yes	808
	no	1395
<i>Age</i>	15-20	5
	20-25	116
	25-30	432
	30-35	334
	35-40	265
	40-45	242
	45-50	253
	50-55	239
	55-60	221
	60-65	88
	65+	8
<i>Education</i>	Primary	1
	LBO/MAVO	72
	MBO/HAVO/VWO	403
	HBO/WO-bachelor	655
	WO-master	1072
<i>Job search</i>	searching	658
	not searching	1545
<i>Year</i>	2014	1061
	2016	1142
<i>Gender</i>	male	1243
	female	960

Finally, the level public service motivation is measured by asking the respondents to comment on the following statement: *'I find it important to contribute significantly to the public good'*. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with this statement on a five point

Likert scale. They could be 'totally disagree' (1), 'disagree' (2), 'not disagree/not agree'(3), 'agree' (4) and 'totally agree'(5). Therefore, an employee with a high score on this variable has a high level of public service motivation (M=4.09, SD=.76).

### *Experienced unmet expectations*

In order to construct variables for the amount of unmet expectations that are experienced by new employees per aspect, two existing sets of variables in the dataset are used. The first set of variables measures expectations of new employees. The question was asked as following: '*A couple possible reasons to choose for this specific job are stated beneath. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements: I have chosen for this job, because of ...*'. Then, eight different aspects of the job are mentioned to which a respondent could give an answer to on a five point Likert scale. A respondent could 'totally disagree' (1), 'disagree' (2), 'not agree, not disagree' (3), 'agree' (4) or 'totally agree' (5). A respondent who agrees more with the statement that a specific aspect of the job was a reason to choose the job than a respondent who disagrees, will have thought more positively about that aspect of the particular job than the other respondent. Therefore, a higher level of agreement is interpreted as having higher expectations than a lower level of agreement or disagreement. The following eight different aspects are included: The content of the job, the degree to which someone can work independently, the amount of work, the cooperation with colleagues, the degree to which the job provides careers development possibilities, the rewarding of the job, the degree to which the organization is focused on getting results and the attention of the organization for the care of the employee. The second set of variables measures the experiences of new employees about the same aspects of their job they had expectations on prior to entering the job. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they are satisfied about their job regarding the eight aspects separately after they have been working at the new job. They could be 'very unsatisfied'(1), 'unsatisfied'(2), 'not satisfied, not unsatisfied'(3), 'satisfied'(4) or 'very satisfied'(5) about every aspect distinctively. A higher level of satisfaction is interpreted as a more positive experience about the specific aspect of the job. Descriptive information about the expectations and experiences of respondents are given in table 3.

In order to create a variable for the amount of unmet expectations experienced by new employees, the two sets of variables explained above are compared. The value of the expectations about an aspect of the job of a respondent minus the value of the experience of the respondent on that same aspect, shows the level of discrepancy between expectations and experiences and indicates to what extent unmet expectations are experienced on that aspect of the job. A positive outcome means that a respondent has experienced unmet expectations on that aspect, while a zero or a negative outcome means that a respondent did not experience unmet expectations. New variables are constructed for the experience of unmet expectations per aspect, on which the score of a respondent can vary between zero, which means a respondent did not experience unmet expectations at all, and

four, which is the maximum difference on a five point Likert scale and means the highest level of experienced unmet expectations on a specific aspect. In this research, an overall score of unmet expectations is used in general, by summing up the scores of the variables made per aspect, which indicates how many times new employees has experienced a more negative situation than was expected prior to entering the new job. The higher the score, the more unmet expectations are experienced by a respondent in total. Descriptive information is given about this overall score of unmet expectations and unmet expectations per aspect in table 4.

Furthermore, the amount of experienced unmet expectations could also have been measured by using the mean of the levels of unmet expectations experienced on all eight aspects. However, using this measurement did not lead to important changes in the results of the analyses, which is an indication of the robustness of the measurement of experienced unmet expectations used in this research.

### *Job search*

In the second part of the research, it will be analyzed whether unmet expectations and job satisfaction could lead to searching for a new job already. Searching a new job by new employees is measured by the following question that was asked to the respondents: *'Are you currently looking for another job?'*. A score of '0' means no and a score of '1' means yes. Of all respondents, 29.9% were looking for a new job.

### *Control variables*

Several control variables were added in the analyses. The first is the year in which the respondent participated in the research. Since data collected in both 2014 and 2016 is used, a dichotomous variable is constructed on which a score of '1' means that the respondent participated in 2016 and '0' means that the respondent participated in another year, in this case automatically 2014. This variable is used as a control variable since it could be that the time in which the respondent entered the central government as an employee can influence what respondents were expecting and experiencing.

The second control variable is gender, since it could be the case that men and women differ in the development of expectations and the way they experience their new job at the central government. A dichotomous variable is constructed for which a score of '1' means that the respondent is male and a score of '0' means that the respondent is female. 56.3% of the respondents were male.

Table 2. Descriptive information of continuous variables

	Min	max	M	SD
Amount of resources used	0	8	1.02	.96
Level of dissatisfaction <sup>1</sup> (N=680)	1	5	2.64	.78
Public service motivation <sup>2</sup>	1	5	4.09	.76

<sup>1</sup> '1'= totally satisfied, '2'= satisfied '3'= not satisfied, not unsatisfied, '4'= unsatisfied, '5'=totally unsatisfied.

<sup>1</sup> '1'= totally disagree, '2'= disagree '3'= not agree, not disagree, '4'= agree, '5'=totally agree.

### 3.3 Analytical strategy

The analyses will take place in a univariate, a bivariate and a multivariate part. In the univariate part, descriptive results about pre-entry expectations, post-entry experiences and the amount of experienced unmet expectations of new employees at the central government will be discussed. After this, mean differences on expectations, experiences and unmet expectations will be tested between different groups of new employees, by making use of independent sample t-tests. The differences will be tested based on gender, age and level of education. Finally, independent sample t-tests will be performed to examine mean differences on the probability that someone will be searching for a new job already.

The multiple analyses will take place in two different parts. In part one, a multiple regression analysis will be performed by using an ordinary least square (OLS) method, in order to be able to test the hypotheses formulated about explaining the amount of experienced unmet expectations. As stated before, a separate analysis will be performed which will include the level of dissatisfaction with the previous job as a predictor for the amount of experienced unmet expectations. A separate analysis provides the opportunity to test the formulated hypothesis about the level of dissatisfaction with the previous job, while making sure that the results of the first analysis, which is used to test all the other hypotheses, remains more reliable because of the higher number of respondents included. The standardized regression coefficients will be reported in order to be able to compare the effect sizes of the explanatory variables.

In part two of the analyses, the influence of experiencing unmet expectations on searching for a new job will be examined. In order to do so, a binary logistic regression analysis will be performed. The level of public service motivation and the age of new employees will be tested as moderators and gender and the year in which the respondent came to work at the central government will be used as control variables. A final analysis will be performed that will examine the eight aspects on which new employees could experience unmet expectations separately as predictors for the probability that the

new employee will be searching for a new job, which will also be a binary logistic regression analysis. The results of both binary logistic regression analyses will be reported in odd's ratios.



## 4. Results

### 4.1 Univariate results

The first results that will be discussed give descriptive information about pre-entry expectations, post-entry experiences and the amount of experienced unmet expectations. These results give insights into the current situation prior to performing analyses on the data. Table 3 shows descriptive information about the pre-entry expectations and post-entry experiences. These will be discussed first.

*Table 3. Descriptive statistics for pre-entry expectations and post-entry experiences of new employees at the central government*

		Min	Max	Mean	S.D.
<i>Expectations<sup>1</sup></i>	content	1	5	4.24	.82
	cooperation	1	5	3.70	.92
	independency	1	5	3.82	.94
	Career development	1	5	3.54	1.14
	Amount work	1	5	3.25	.96
	reward	1	5	2.96	1.05
	Focus on results	1	5	3.22	1.02
	Attention care	1	5	3.18	1.04
<i>Experiences<sup>2</sup></i>	content	1	5	4.13	.87
	cooperation	1	5	4.19	.83
	independency	1	5	4.19	.84
	Career development	1	5	3.48	1.03
	Amount work	1	5	3.69	.94
	reward	1	5	3.50	.97
	Focus on results	1	5	3.29	1.02
	Attention care	1	5	3.18	1.04

<sup>1</sup> '1' = totally disagree, '2' = disagree, '3' = not disagree, not agree, '4' = agree, '5' = totally agree

<sup>2</sup> '1' = very unsatisfied, '2' = unsatisfied, '3' = not satisfied, not unsatisfied, '4' = satisfied, '5' = very satisfied.

First, several reasons come forward as important for new employees that led to the choice of working for the central government. On average, new employees have indicated the content of the job as the most important reason to have chosen for the new job at the central government. This is also the only aspect of the new job to which new employees in general clearly agree on as being an important reason to choose for the job. The high expectations of new employees about the content of the new job at the central government suggests that the central government has a reputation among new employees of an employer that provides jobs with an interesting content. After the content of the job, the cooperation with colleagues and the independency that new employees expected to experience were also mentioned as important reasons to choose the new job. The reward of the working at the central government was mentioned as the least important reason to have chosen for the job. These findings are in line with recruiting policies of the central government in the past, such as “*Werken voor Nederland*” that have been emphasizing the content aspects of working for them, mostly about the fact that

working there means contributing to society (Stroeker, Honcoop & Hemminga, 2014; Stijn, Groenveld & van de Parre, 2009). First of all to get rid of the ‘dusty image’ of being a civil servant that was believed to be present and furthermore to increase the willingness of recruitment of potential employees despite the low reward compared to working for organizations in the private sector.

Looking at the experiences of new employees, the three aspects that were mentioned as most important in general to choose the job initially, were also the three aspects on which new employees were most satisfied in general. The attention of the organization for personal care and the focus of the organization on results were mentioned as aspects of the job on which new employees were least satisfied. However, new employees were not unsatisfied in general, but more or less neutral about these aspects of the new job. The descriptive results show that new employees were rather satisfied about their new job at the central government in general, since new employees were not unsatisfied on a single aspect of the new job in general.

*Table 4. Descriptive statistics for the amount of experienced unmet expectations by new employees at the central government*

	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.
total	0	24 <sup>1</sup>	1.62	2.14
Content	0	4	0.31	.61
Cooperation	0	4	0.13	.44
Independency	0	4	0.12	.41
Career development	0	4	0.35	.64
Amount work	0	4	0.18	.47
Reward	0	4	0.13	.42
Focus on results	0	4	0.27	.56
Attention care	0	4	0.14	.43

<sup>1</sup> The total amount of times a new employee’s experience could deviate a point on a five point Likert scale in a negative sense from their expectation.

Table 4 contains descriptive information about the amount of experienced unmet expectations, which will be discussed now. When comparing the reasons that were mentioned to be important to choose the job, their expectations about those aspects, to the experience of new employees while they have been working at the new job, expectations can be unmet. Exceeded expectations were left out because of the scope of this research. The descriptive information shows that on average, new employees experiences deviate between one and two point in a negative sense from their expectations out of a maximum of 24. This suggests that the average amount of unmet expectations experienced by new employees at the central government is actually quite low. The most unmet expectations are experienced on career development chances. Apparently, new employees held higher expectations about the chances the new job would offer than they experienced while working there. The same goes for the content aspect of the job and the attention the organization has for their personal care.

## 4.2 Bivariate results

The descriptive results showed what expectations and experiences new employees held on average on different aspects of their new job at the central government. However, there might be differences between different groups of new employees in what they expected and how they experienced working at the central government. Therefore, the means of expectations and experiences are compared among different groups of new employees, based on age, gender and level of education. Also, the amount of unmet expectations that are experienced in total and per aspect are compared between these same groups. Finally, the differences in the percentages of new employees that are searching for a new job already will be compared between the groups. All results are shown in table 1 in the appendix.

Regarding gender, differences appeared. Women mentioned career development chances as a significantly more important reason to choose the new job at the central government than men ( $t(2201) = -3.19, p < .01$ ), which means that their expectations about their career possibilities were higher beforehand than the expectations that men held about this aspect of the new job. Women also held significantly higher expectations about the focus on results of the organization ( $t(2201) = -2.06, p < .05$ ). Furthermore, comparing average expectations between young employees (younger than 45) and older employees (older than 45), shows that differences definitely exist about the expectations they hold. Results, again, are shown in the appendix. Older employees held significantly higher expectations about the degree of independency ( $t(1756) = 4.21 = p < .00$ ), the cooperation with colleagues ( $t(1773) = 2, p < .05$ ) and the focus on results of the organization ( $t(1795) = 3.18, p < .01$ ), while younger employees held significantly higher expectations about the career development chances the new job would bring ( $t(2201) = -12.17, p < .001$ ), the rewards of the new job ( $t(2201) = -3.47, p < .01$ ) and the attention for personal care of the organization ( $t(1740) = -4.03, p < .001$ ). Finally, the expectations of lower educated new employees have been compared to the expectations of higher educated new employees. All results are shown in table 3 in the appendix. The results show that higher educated new employees held significantly higher expectations about the content of the job ( $t(724) = 6.81, p < .001$ ), while lower educated new employees held significantly higher expectations about the rewards they would receive ( $t(2201) = -2.26, p < .05$ ), the amount of work of the new job ( $t(2201) = -4.9, p < .001$ ) and the focus on results of the organization ( $t(2201) = -4.19, p < .001$ ).

Next, the means of different groups were compared concerning actual experiences. These results are reported in table 2 in the appendix. It turns out that women are significantly more satisfied with the reward they receive for the job than men ( $t(2201) = -2.5, p < .05$ ). Concerning differences based on age groups, younger employees were significantly more satisfied with the career development chances that are offered than older employees ( $t(1851) = -6.63, p < .001$ ). Younger employees are also more satisfied with the attention of the organization for their personal care than older employees ( $t(1634) = -3.14, p < .01$ ). Finally, higher educated new employees are significantly more satisfied with the content of the new job ( $t(2201) = 4.28, p < .001$ ) and more satisfied about the rewards of the job

( $t(2201)=2.61, p<.05$ ) compared to lower educated new employees. However, lower educated new employees are significantly more satisfied with the amount of work the job costs ( $t(2201)= -2.41, p<.05$ ).

Finally, differences in the amount of unmet expectations experienced by different groups of new employees are examined. It turns out that women experience significantly more unmet expectations in total than men ( $t(1873)= -2.41, p<.05$ ). When the experience of unmet expectations is compared separately for each aspects, the total difference seems to be largely caused by the fact that women experience more unmet expectations about the career developments chances ( $t(1890)= -3.84, p<.001$ ). Concerning age, taken all aspects together, there is no significant difference between younger and older new employees. However, when analyzing the aspects separately, it turns out that younger new employees experience more unmet expectations concerning the rewards of the new job ( $t(1925)= -2.21, p<.05$ ), the content of the job ( $t(1792)= -2.11, p<.05$ ) and the career development chances ( $t(1938)= -5.03, p<.001$ ) than older employees. However, older employees experience more unmet expectations concerning the degree of independency ( $t(1330)= 2.50, p<.05$ ) than younger employees. Finally, differences between lower and higher educated new employees were compared. There is no significant difference in the total amount of unmet expectations that are experienced. However, it turns out that lower educated new employees experience more unmet expectations concerning the rewards of the job ( $t(661)= -2.38, p<.05$ ) than higher educated new employees, while higher educated new employees experience more unmet expectations concerning career developments ( $t(829)= 2.14, p<.05$ ).

Considering the percentage of new employees at the central government that is searching for a new job already, which is 29.9%, differences might exist between groups based on age, gender and level of education. The results show that younger employees are searching for a new job within a year more often than older employees who are new at the central government ( $t(1776)=3,11, p<.01$ ). When comparing men to women, the results show that women tend to be searching for a new job within a year more significantly more often than men ( $t(2016)=2.36, p<.05$ ), because 32,5% of the new female employees were searching for a new job already, while 27.84% of the new male employees were searching for a new job already. Since the results showed earlier that women experience more unmet expectations when entering the central government than men, the finding that women also tend to search for a new job within a year is a first supportive finding for the idea that experiencing more unmet expectations could lead to wanting to leave the job. Finally, comparing higher to lower educated new employees, it turns out that there is no significant difference in the percentage of new employees that are searching for a new job already between lower and higher educated employees.

### 4.3 Multivariate results

#### 4.3.1 Explaining unmet expectations

To explain the variation of experienced unmet expectations among new employees at the central government and test the hypotheses, several explanatory factors were analysed in a step-by-step linear regression analysis. In the first model the control variables were included, namely gender and the year in which the respondent came to work at the central government. In the second model, the independent variables that are expected to explain the amount of experienced unmet expectations, namely the use of informal recruitment sources, the amount of recruitment sources that are used, having worked at the central government previously, having worked as a civil servant previously, the amount of work experience and level of education were added in order to test the hypotheses on the direct effects. In the third model, moderator variables were added, in order to test those hypotheses. The results are shown in table 4. Model 2 explained the variation in the amount of experienced unmet significantly ( $F(8,2194)=2.25, p<.05$ ). This model will be used to test the hypotheses that expect explanatory variables to have a direct effect on unmet expectations. Model 3, in which interaction variables were added, was a significant model to explain the variation in the amount of experienced unmet expectations ( $F(10,2192)= 2.44, p<.01$ ). Moreover, this model significantly improved on the previous model concerning the explanation of the variation in the amount of experienced unmet expectations ( $\Delta F(2,2192)= 3.18, p<.05, \Delta R^2=.003$ ). The results in this model are used to test the hypothesis about the moderating effects. Since another analysis has been performed in which the level of dissatisfaction at the previous job is included, this will be discussed separately.

From the results can be derived that the use of informal recruitment sources was not associated with the amount of experienced unmet expectations. The amount of recruitment sources used was not associated with the amount of experienced unmet expectations as well. This means that no evidence was found for the formulated expectations that different usage of recruitment sources were predictors for the variation among new employees in experiencing unmet expectations. Therefore, hypothesis 1a and hypothesis 1b can be rejected.

Moving over to the explanatory factors concerning the experiences new employees had in their previous jobs. From the results of the general analysis can be derived that having worked as a civil servant in the previous job of a new employee does not significantly lower the amount of unmet expectations new employees experience. Therefore, no support has been found for hypothesis 2a. Furthermore, the results show that having worked at the central government in the previous job was not associated with the experience of unmet expectations. This means that no evidence is found for hypothesis 2b. This result also makes it necessary to reject hypothesis 2c, since there is no stronger effect found for having worked at the central government in the previous job than having worked as a civil servant.

Furthermore, the amount of work experience new employees have, for which age is used as an

indicator, appeared to be an important factor to explain the variation in amount of experienced unmet expectations among new employees. The more experienced people are, the less unmet expectations they experience in the new job at the central government ( $\beta = -.06$ ,  $t(8,2194) = -2.53$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This result supports hypothesis 3.

The level of education of new employees was not associated with the experience of unmet expectations. This result suggests that having a higher level of education does not lead to a lower amount of unmet expectations. Therefore, no evidence has been found for hypothesis 4.

Finally, concerning the control variables, the results showed that the year in which the respondent came to work at the central government was not associated with the amount of experienced unmet expectations. There were no significant differences in the amount of unmet expectations that were experienced in 2013 and 2015 by new employees at the central government. This finding suggests that no important development has taken place in the two years that passed. Concerning the effect of gender, no significant differences have been found between men and women in the amount of unmet expectations they experienced when working as a new employee at the central government.

#### *Results moderating effects*

The direct effect suggested that when a new employee has more work experience in total, the amount of unmet expectations he or she experiences in the new job at the central government will be lower. Considering whether the new employee has been working as a civil servant previously, the results show that when the new employee has been a civil servant previously, the effect of more work experience, this main effect will be reduced ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $t(10,2192) = 2.85$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This effect is shown in figure 1. This figure shows that having more years of work experience leads to less unmet expectations if a new employee has no experience as a civil servant previously, while having more years of work experience leads to a higher amount of experienced unmet expectations when new a new employee was a civil servant previously. This result suggests the opposite of what was expected. Therefore, the results do not support hypothesis 7.

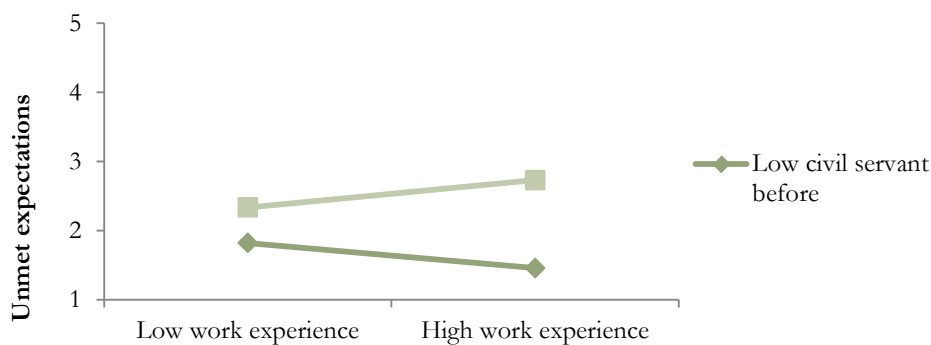


Figure 1. The interaction between having worked as a civil servant before and having more work experience on the amount of unmet expectations experienced by new employees at the central government.

Furthermore, a moderating effect of work experience was expected for the influence that the amount of recruitment sources used has on the amount of unmet expectations a new employee experienced in the new job at the central government. However, this effect was not found in the results. Therefore, hypothesis 6 can be rejected.

*Table 5. Results of linear regression analysis. DV= amount of experienced unmet expectations.*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)
Gender <sup>1</sup>	-.05 (.09)	-.04 (.10)	-.04 (.10)
Year <sup>2</sup>	-.01 (.09)	-.00(.10)	-.01 (.10)
Informal resources		-.01 (.12)	-.02 (.28)
Amount of resources		.04 (.06)	-.04 (.06)
Previous civil servant		-.02 (.14)	-.16 (.28)**
Previous central government		.04 (.15)	.04 (.15)
Work experience		-.06 (.02)*	-.11 (.03)***
Education		-.01 (.06)	-.01 (.06)
Informal*work experience			.02 (.05)
Work experience * civil servant before			.17 (.04)**
N	2203	2203	2203
F test (DF)	3,06(2, 2200)	2,25(8,2194)	2,44(10,2192)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.01	.01	.01

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

1. Reference category = female.

2. Reference category = 2014.

### *Separate analysis*

As mentioned before, a separate analysis has been performed in which the level dissatisfaction with the previous job was included. The results of this analysis are shown in table 2 in the appendix. The results will be used to test the hypothesis about dissatisfaction level at the previous job. Furthermore, since this analysis only includes respondents who have previous work experience, it is interesting to compare the differences of the results of other indicators with the results of the first analysis in which they were examined.

In this separate analysis, the same models were used as in the previous analysis, but now the

scale for the level of dissatisfaction at the previous job was included in model 2. This model could explain the variation in unmet expectations significantly ( $F(9,670)= 2,67, p<.01$ ). The results show that the total amount of variation explained by this analysis is much higher compared to the previous analysis which excluded the level of dissatisfaction at the previous job (2,9 percent compared to 1%). This indicates that the level of dissatisfaction is an important factor in explaining the amount of unmet expectations that are experienced by new employees. This is confirmed by the fact that the level of dissatisfaction with the previous job of new employees is indeed significantly associated with the amount of unmet expectations that are experienced by new employees ( $\beta=.10, t(9,670)=2.72, p<.01$ ). This result suggests that new employees who were more dissatisfied with their previous job, experience a higher amount of unmet expectations than new employees who were less dissatisfied with their previous job. This is in line with the expectations, which supports hypothesis 5.

Furthermore, in this separate analysis, the effects of the other independent variables changed. The results showed that gender is associated with the amount of unmet expectations that are experienced by new employees at the central government ( $\beta = -.11, t(9,670)= -2,87, p<.01$ ). Men experience less unmet expectations than women. The fact that this results is only found when including only new employees with previous work experience, suggests there is no difference based on gender among new employees who are young and have little experience, while women do experience more unmet expectations in a later stage of their career.

Furthermore, the results showed that the amount of work experience was not negatively associated with the amount of experienced unmet expectations in this analysis, as was expected and confirmed in the first analysis. Since new employees with no previous work experience were excluded in this separate analysis, the change in the results suggests that having no previous work experience is an important factor to explain high amounts of experienced unmet expectations, but when people do have work experience, the amount of work experience does not really creates significant differences anymore.

Model 3, in which the interaction variables were added to the analysis, was a significant model to explain variation in the amount of experienced unmet expectations ( $F(11,668)= 2.25, p<.05$ ). However, this model was not a significant improvement in explaining the variation in the amount of experienced unmet expectations by new employees. The interaction variables were both not significantly associated with the amount of experienced unmet expectations by new employees.

#### *4.3.2 Searching for a new job*

To test whether the amount of unmet expectations experienced by new employees at the central government influences whether new employees have been searching for a new job already, a binary logistic regression analysis has been performed. The following control variables were included in model 1: gender, level of education the year in which the respondent entered the new job at the central government. In model 2, the total amount of experienced unmet expectations, age of the new



employee and the level of public service motivation were added to the analysis. The interaction variables were added in model 3. The results of the analysis are shown in table 6.

*Table 6. Results of the binary logistic regression about the probability that a new employee is searching for a new job.*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	OR(CI)	OR(CI)	OR (CI)
Gender <sup>1</sup>	.81 (.67- .97) *	.91 (.75- 1.11)	.91 (.75-1.11)
Year <sup>2</sup>	.96 (.80- 1.16)	.96 (.79- 1.16)	.96 (.79-1.16)
Education	1.03 (.92- 1.14)	.95 (.84- 1.06)	.94 (.84-1.06)
Unmet expectations		1.28 (1.22- 1.34)***	1.23 (.93- 1.63)
Age		.92 (.88- .96)***	.93 (.87- .98)**
PSM		1.17 (1.02- 1.33)*	1.13 (.95- 1.34)
Age * unmet expectations			1.00 (.97- 1.02)
PSM * unmet expectations			1.02 (.96- 1.08)
N	2203	2203	2203
-2 Log likelihood	2680.54	2540.59	2539.94
Nagelkerke pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.00	.09	.09
$\chi^2$ (df)	6 (3)	145.94 (6)	146.60 (8)

<sup>1</sup> Reference category= female

<sup>2</sup> Reference category = 2014

From the results of model 2, which is used to test the direct effect of the amount of experienced unmet expectations on searching for a job, can be derived that the total amount of unmet expectations that are experienced by new employees at the central government is positively associated

with searching for a new job ( $OR= 1.28(1.22-1.34)$ ,  $p<.001$ ). This supports hypothesis 8, new employees at the central government who experience a higher level of unmet expectations are more likely to be searching for a new job already.

Furthermore, from the results in model 3 can be derived that age does not strengthen the association between the amount of unmet expectations that are experienced by a new employee and the probability that he or she will be searching for a new job already significantly. Therefore, no evidence has been found to support hypothesis 9, which is why it can be rejected. The results also show that having a high level of public service motivation does not strengthen the effect of the amount of experienced unmet expectations on the probability that a new employee will be searching for a new job already. This means that no support has been found for hypothesis 10, which therefore must be rejected.

*Table 7. Results of the binary logistic regression in which the eight aspects are included separately as predictors for the probability of searching for a new job.*

	Model 1	Model 1
	OR (CI)	OR(CI)
Gender <sup>1</sup>	.88 (.73-1.07)	.90 (.74-1.10)
Year <sup>2</sup>	1.00 (.83-1.20)	1.01 (.84-1.23)
Education	.97 (.86-1.08)	.96 (.86-1.08)
Age	.91 (.87-.95)	.92 (.88-.96)***
Content		1.62 (1.38-1.90)***
Cooperation		.99 (.78-1.24)
Independency		1.15 (.90-1.47)
Career development		1.34 (1.15-1.56)***
Amount work		1.20 (.98-1.48)
Rewards		1.35 (1.09-1.69)**
Focus on results		1.29 (1.09-1.54)**
Attention care		1.19 (.94-1.50)
N	2203	2203
-2 Log likelihood	2659.58	2531.97
Nagelkerke	.02	.10
pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		
$\chi^2$ (df)	26.96 (4)	154.57 (12)

<sup>1</sup> Reference category= female

<sup>2</sup> Reference category = 2014

In the second binary logistic regression analysis the eight aspects of the job on which respondents could experience unmet expectations are examined separately as predictors for the probability that a new employee is already searching for a new job. The results are reported in table 7. In model 1, gender, level of education, age and the year in which the respondent entered their new job at the central government were included as control variables. In model 2, the eight aspects were added to the analysis.

From the results can be derived that unmet expectations on the content of the job was significantly associated with job search ( $OR=1.62$  (1.38-1.90),  $p<.001$ ). The same goes for unmet expectations on the rewards of the job ( $OR= 1.35$  (1.09-1.69),  $p<.01$ ), the focus of the organization on results ( $OR=1.29$  (1.09-1.54),  $p<.01$ ) and the career development chances that the job offers ( $OR=1.34$  (1.15-1.56),  $p<.001$ ). Unmet expectations based on attention of the organization for personal care, level of independency, cooperation with colleagues and the amount of work were not associated with the probability that a new employee it already searching for a new job.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 *The current situation*

This research has tried to gain insights into the experience of unmet expectations of new employees at the central government. First, the current presence of unmet expectations, on different aspects of the new job at the central government and differences in experiences between new employees was examined. The first important finding concerning the current situation at the central government, which should be explicitly noted is that the results have shown to be positive for the central government in general regarding the expectations and experiences of their new employees. New employees held high expectations on the job prior to entering the job. Apparently, the reputation of the central government as an employer is currently quite high among new employees. Especially on the content of the job, the expected cooperation with colleagues and the level of independency. This is in line with the purpose of the labour market communication strategy ‘*Werken voor Nederland*’ that was introduced in 2010 by the central government, which first goal was to increase the attractiveness of the central government as an employer (Stroeker, Honcoop & Hemminga, 2014). However, it should be noted that this finding concerned the reputation of the central government as an employees in the eyes of new employees, who already have higher expectations than other individuals, otherwise they would not have chosen a job at the central government. The actual reputation of the central government as an employer towards society, and not only new employees, will probably be less good.

Since this research focused on the unmet expectations of new employees, it was important to find out what the actual experiences were of new employees and whether these experiences were living up to the high expectations that new employees had. The aspects that new employees had the highest expectations on were also the three aspects that new employees were most satisfied about after they had a chance to experience the actual job. These findings suggests that the high expectations about working for the central government concerning these aspects that new employees held prior to entering the new job are not based on false believes or misconceptions, but suggests that the central government is performing quite well on these aspects of the jobs they provide new employees with.

Despite the fact that the central government seems to perform well in general on meeting the high expectations that new employees have, discrepancies between the expectations of new employees and their experiences at the central government do exist. Especially noteworthy are the discrepancies that exist on the content of the new job and on the career development possibilities of the new job.

First, new employees held a much higher expectation about the content of the job than they were actually experiencing on this aspect. Even though new employees were satisfied concerning this aspect of their new job, it did not live up to their initially high expectations in general. The high expectations that new employees held prior to entering the central government as a new employee could be due to the focus of the “*Werken voor Nederland*” strategy on the interesting content of working at the central government by underscoring the fact that working for the central government

entails working hard towards a better society (Stroeker, Honcoop & Hemminga, 2014). However, the found discrepancy between expectations of new employees and their experiences regarding the content of the job suggests that the central government is currently not living up to the highly raised expectations of new employees set by the labour market communication strategy, concerning the content of the job.

This can possibly be explained by the fact that the strategy is underscoring the interesting part of working for the central government, because of working towards a better society, on a general level and not about the specific new job that the new employee entered. The strategy therefore might have increased their expectations on the content of working for the central government in general, which was not based on the job specific content, which might have caused a lack of the development of realistic expectations on that new job they entered at the central government.

Furthermore, the central government is currently also not meeting the high expectations that new employees held on the career development possibilities within the central government. The most unmet expectations were experienced on the career development possibilities within the central government. This was especially the case for women and younger employees.

Women experienced a larger amount of unmet expectations in general and this is mostly caused by their experience of unmet expectations on the career development possibilities at the central government. They held higher expectations before entering the central government as an employee about their possibilities than men. The fact that they held higher expectations, can possibly be explained by the reputation of the central government as a socially responsible employer, that is putting effort into increasing the amount of women that are involved in higher functions (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2017). In 2016, they reached their goal of involving 30% women as top officials, which supports the idea that the central government is performing better on this aspect than organizations in the private sector (Giebels, 2016). Therefore, women expect much of the central government as their employer to give them equal career development possibilities, compared to what other organizations would give them. Working for the central government is then expected to give women more advantage on the career development possibilities than it is for men, since there is no reason for men to expect to receive less career development possibilities in other sector. A larger expected advantage attracts women to work for that organization, which is in line with earlier research (Lewis & Frank, 2002). Therefore, women having higher expectations about this aspect than men seems logical. However, the fact that women experience unmet expectations on their career development possibilities suggests that the central government is not yet living up entirely to the raised expectations of women about their career development possibilities at the central government.

For younger employees also applies that they experience more unmet expectations regarding career development possibilities than their older colleagues. The fact that younger employees held higher expectations about career development chances of the new job at the central government can

possibly be explained by the idea that younger individuals are more focused on the development of their professional skills since they are more at the beginning of their career and therefore would find that aspect more important. They apparently regard the central government as an employer where they would receive the career development chances they find important. However, the central government cannot meet these expectations enough according to the high level of discrepancy between the pre-entry expectations and post-entry experiences of young employees that come work for them.

## *5.2 Explaining unmet expectations*

The second goal of this research was to examine what factors could explain the amount of unmet expectations that are experienced by new employees at the central government. These factors were expected to have influence on the variation among new employees in the amount of unmet expectations that they experience, based on the amount and/or quality of information they could have obtained prior to entering the central government as an employee. This is in line with an important goal of the labour market communication strategy “*Werken voor Nederland*”, namely to increase the insight of potential employees into what working for the central government entails. This strategy is therefore partly focused on giving potential employees more information and therefore opportunities to develop realistic expectations about working for the central government.

First of all, recruitment sources did not appear to be of influence of the amount of unmet expectations new employees experience at the central government, both the quality of the source as the amount of sources used. The idea behind the expectation was that people who receive information via their informal network would receive better quality information and people who use more recruitment sources receive more information. This would make them better able to develop realistic expectations about working for the central government. However, since this was not of influence, this idea is not supported. It could be that information obtained via recruitment sources can vary in quality, because individuals speak to different people. Some individuals might obtain worthy information which they can use to develop realistic expectations, while others receive little or bad quality information.

However, an individual’s own previous experiences did appear to be of importance when explaining why some new employees experience more unmet expectations than other new employees. Employees with more work experience in total are experiencing a lower amount of unmet expectations than employees with less work experience. This applies even more for new employees at the central government that have been a civil servant previously to this new job. Individual experience therefore seems to be relevant into developing realistic expectations about a new job at the central government. The fact that individual experiences are more useful in the development of realistic expectations than receiving information via other sources, suggests that individuals can use information they gained themselves by experiencing likewise situations better than information they gained via other people’s experiences, which could be interpreted differently by different individuals. In other words, having more experience, in total amount of years and sector-specific gives individuals the opportunity to

develop his or her own sense of what to expect, instead of building expectations based on experiences of others. In order to reduce the amount of experienced unmet expectations by new employees, the central government should focus on young people, with little work experience, people who do not have sector related work experience and specifically on people who lack the experience in both ways, since they are most vulnerable to experience unmet expectations.

Finally, it appeared that new employees who were dissatisfied about their previous job will experience more unmet expectations. This is in line with the expectation that individuals who were dissatisfied with their jobs before, will be quicker in deciding to move on to another job, for example at the central government, which makes it less likely for them to have obtained a lot of information and a fair impression about what working for the central government would entail. This finding supports the idea that it is important for individual to be able to make a considerate choice, based on realistic information.

### *5.3 The consequences of experienced unmet expectations*

This research also intended to find out whether the experience of unmet expectations can lead new employees to be searching for a new job already. The idea behind this was that those employees experience a lower level of satisfaction and will be looking for a new job that fits him or her better. Results showed that this was indeed the case. These findings are in line with earlier research about this topic (Porter & steers, 1973). It was important to find out whether this expectation was also present in this study, because earlier research about this topic was not specifically focused on the public sector. Furthermore, new employees who are older and have higher levels of public service motivation are less intended to be searching for a new job already, however this is due to other reasons than their levels of unmet expectations, since it did not influence the negative effect of unmet expectations on searching for a new job already.

The finding that the experience of unmet expectations, despite the fact that the discrepancies are small, can have such an impact on the thoughts and behavior of new employees at the central government, underscores the importance of reducing the amount of unmet expectations that are experienced by new employees. As stated in the introduction, the attractiveness of the central government as an employer will decline when new employees get disappointed because their expectations are not met. New employees are then more intended to quit their job, which will be problematic when the central government cannot afford to lose highly qualified employees, because they need them in a tight labour market situation and already invested time and money in them. Besides, the attractiveness will also decline because of the new employees who are disappointed and spread this information into the world, which will lead to a decreasing amount of potential new employees who will want to work for them, because of the more negative reputation.

## 6. Discussion

In this part the limitations of this current research will be discussed as well as the recommendations for further research about this topic. This research has contributed to the existing literature about unmet expectations that are experienced by employees in several ways. A gap in previous literature about this topic existed concerning differences among new employees in the amount of unmet expectations they experienced. Most research was focused on the consequences unmet expectations could have. Literature that did focus on preventing unmet expectations was only concerned with experimenting with lowering the expectations of potential employees, so they would be disappointed less often. However, in the context of this study, concerning the attractiveness of the central government as an employer, lowering the expectations in general would be a rigorous and reputation damaging approach. Furthermore, the fact that this research concerns new employees at the Dutch central government is providing the central government with valuable information. It has brought insight into what aspects of the job should be focused on, but moreover for what group of people specifically. This can contribute to an approach that would lower the amount of unmet expectations new employees experience and with that, improve the attractiveness of the central government as an employer towards both new employees as potential new employees. The insights that are gained with this research have provided some implications for future policies by the central government, which will be discussed in the policy advice.

Despite the fact that this research has brought new insights into the topic of interest, some limitations should be mentioned and discussed. First of all, the new employees that were included in the research were new because they enrolled as an employee at the central government in the year prior to the year in which they filled out the questionnaire. However, it is unknown at what time that prior year they enrolled exactly. Therefore, differences exist among new employees in the time they have spent at the new job at the central government before they participated in the PoMo research. The timeframe could possibly have had an impact on the experiences new employees filled out to have on different aspects of that job, because initial experiences could deviate from experiences about the job they already worked in for quite a while. Also, a part of the new employees that enrolled in that prior year, might already have quit their job within that timeframe. It is possible that these specific employees experienced the most unmet expectations and therefore left the organization, but this group could not be included in the research.

Also, it is unknown what the position of the new employee is within the central government. While there might exist differences between lower, middle or high positions within the government concerning the expectations new employees have about their job and their actual experiences, this could have been an important factor in explaining variation in the amount of unmet expectations that new employees experience. It would then possibly become clearer at what kind of positions people experience the most unmet expectations, which would be valuable information in the aim is to reduce



the amount of unmet expectations that new employees experience. Including this in future research is therefore recommended. The same goes for the fact that no distinction is made between different organizations within the central government.

Furthermore, for new employees that are included in this research and indicated that they are currently searching for a new job, information is missing about whether they are searching for a new job inside the central government or outside the central government. Searching for a new job within the central government might be less problematic, because the qualified employee will stay within the organization. However, in this short timeframe it still involves a loss of energy and recruitment costs when a new employee quits the first job that fast.

Finally, the factors that were examined as predictors for the amount of unmet expectations could explain only a small part of the variation in the amount of unmet expectations among new employees. Therefore, it can be suggested for future research to examine other factors as well, in order to find out what large explaining factors are for the experience of unmet expectations. It might be worthwhile the effort to do an explorative, qualitative research involving interviews with new employees, in order to find out what factors could possibly be of importance to include in a new quantitative research.

The theoretical framework that was used to formulate expectations about factors that could influence the amount of experienced unmet expectations of new employees at the central government was focused on the variation in the ability to develop realistic expectations about the new job among new employees. It was expected that this ability could vary among new employees by examining the amount and/or quality information about the new job they received or the extent to which they were able to use the received information better. The results of this research did not support all the expectations based on these mechanisms. However, it is recommended that future research builds further on this theoretical framework, in order to get a deeper understanding into what information individuals actually receive and how they use this information. This deeper understanding could also be realized by using qualitative measures to examine on what information individuals base their expectations on, from whom they receive it and how they use it that information. It is therefore also recommended that other factors that might explain the amount of unmet expectations by new employees that were not included in this research concern receiving or process information about the new job of new employees.

Another point of interest for future research is to be able to research developments over the years in the pre-entry expectations and post-entry experiences of new employees. The data that was used in this research was not sufficient to research developments over the years, since the datasets of all the years in which the POMO research was executed were not systematically coherent to each other. It will be interesting for the central government to research the trend in the following years, so they will be able to track differences down and create the possibility to evaluate employee policies concerning this topic.

## 7. Policy recommendations

In the final part of this research, an answer will be given to the policy question “*How can the amount of unmet expectations experienced by new employees be reduced at the central government?*”, by making use of the insights that are gained by this research. As stated in the conclusion, despite the fact that the amount of unmet expectations that are experienced by new employees is quite low, it still has such a negative impact on the new employees, because they are intending to quit their job within a year much more often if they experience a higher amount of unmet expectations. Therefore, the insights that are gained by this study are valuable and should be used in order to reduce the amount of unmet expectations that are experienced by new employees at the central government. The insights have various implications on how the central government could possibly give more attention to the expectations and experiences of new employees, in order to prevent the development of unmet expectations by future new employees. Therefore, the following recommendations that are given, based on the insights gained in this research, are directed at the central government. More specifically towards the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdomrelations, which is the ministry that is responsible for general policies surrounding central government employees. Within the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdomrelations the department ‘Civil servant and Organization’ is performing this task. Therefore, they could use the following recommendations in the development of new policies about labour market communication strategies and policies surrounding new employees at the central government.

First, the fact that the central government is not yet able to meet the high expectations of new employees on the content of working for the central government, implicates that more effort should be put into communicating realistic information about content of jobs of interest to potential employees. The experience of new employees of the job based on the content of the job could be better when individuals who enter the job actually have a good person-job fit by liking the content of the job. If they would have received specific and more realistic information about what to expect, they would be better able to make an accurate consideration about whether they would enjoy the content of the job. Therefore, via the process of self-selection, individuals who are interested in a specific content of a job will apply for the job. Then, not only will they have higher expectations about the content, but will have a more positive experience at the job as well.

This is in line with a sub goal of the labour market communication strategy “*Werken voor Nederland*” to increase insight of potential employees into what working for the central government entails. However, this strategy focuses on the information that is communicated via their website and only has limited information available about specific jobs. Based on the insight of this research, that someone’s individual experience is more valuable than receiving information communicated by others, a suggestion would be to let potential employees experience what the job would entail themselves, by giving people the chance to participate in the work they are interested in for a short period of time, which would give them a realistic preview of what the job might entail for them. Not

only would this give potential employees the chance to consider whether they would like the content of the job, but it would also oblige them to spend more time on the consideration process and not jump in it too quickly. This measure would take some time from current employees at the central government, since they have to accompany the potential employees and show them around the workplace, but if it helps to find the person that fits the job better and will experience less unmet expectations, this will be worth it in the long-term.

Furthermore, when developing a strategy to communicate more realistic information about working for the government, and specific jobs potential employees are interested in, it should be considered that especially young people with little experience are a group that is sensitive for experiencing a high amount of unmet expectations. In order to reduce the total amount of unmet expectations, the focus should therefore lie on this specific group. In order to reach this group better, it can be suggested to communicate information about the suggested days to experience a certain job at the central government by inviting them to work along with a civil servant at the central government with a similar job via social media or reaching them via schools and universities.

Second, since the most unmet expectations are experienced on career development possibilities, and this is mainly caused by the fact that women and young people experience this a lot, the central government should put even more effort into giving equal career development chances to all employees. The central government describes herself as a socially responsible employer (Jaarraportage bedrijfsvoering Rijk, 2016), among other things because of the growing percentage of women at high level functions. This raises high expectations of the career development possibilities that they will have as an employee at the central government. The discrepancy between their expectations and their actual experiences leads to disappointment among women. Therefore, the internal upwards mobility of women should be an even stronger point of focus within the employee policies of the central government, in order to prevent unequal career development possibilities for men and women.

As regards to younger employees versus older employees, older employees usually have more work experience, and will therefore qualify for higher options more often. However, career development possibilities for younger employees do not specifically have to be about receiving promotions. For younger employees it will be interesting to develop themselves, by learning more skills and develop on a personal level, which they can eventually use to reach promotions. Therefore, the suggestion can be made to involve younger employees in courses and trainings that are useful for their development. This is something that is already done for very young employees, in the traineeships that are offered to them. However, this will be valuable for other young, new employees who are lacking much work experience as well.

## Appendix

Table 1. Results of independent sample t-tests.

		Male vs female <sup>1</sup>			Older vs younger <sup>2</sup>			Higher vs lower educated <sup>3</sup>		
		Mean difference	DF	t	Mean difference	Df	T	Mean difference	DF	T
<i>Expectations</i>	content	-0.03	2201	-.90	-.03	2201	-.69	.30	724	<b>6.81***</b>
	cooperation	-.03	2201	-.79	.08	1773	<b>2*</b>	-.01	2201	-.16
	independency	.01	2201	.21	.17	1756	<b>4.18*</b>	-.01	2201	-.28
							<b>**</b>			
	Career development	-.16	2201	-	-.59	2201	-	.07	2201	1.20
							<b>3.19</b>			
							<b>**</b>			
							<b>12.17</b>			
						<b>***</b>				
Amount work	-.04	2201	-.93	.08	2201	1.86	-.24	2201	<b>-4.90***</b>	
Reward	-.04	2201	-.98	-.16	2201	-	-.12	2201	<b>-2.26*</b>	
						<b>3.47*</b>				
						<b>*</b>				
Focus on results	-.09	2201	-	.14	1795	<b>3.18*</b>	-.22	2201	<b>-4.31***</b>	
						<b>2.06</b>				
						<b>*</b>				
Attention care	-.02	2201	-.53	-.18	1740	-	-.01	2201201	-.21	
						<b>4.03*</b>				
						<b>**</b>				
<i>Experiences</i>	content	.00	1970	.05	.05	2201	1.40	.19	2201	<b>4.28***</b>
	cooperation	-.02	2201	-.57	.04	2201	1.19	-.00	2201	-.08
	independency	.05	1955	1.25	.01	2201	.34	.07	2201	1.71
	Career development	-.02	1927	-.34	-.33	1851	-	-.07	2201	-1.36
							<b>7.63*</b>			
							<b>**</b>			
	Amount work	.01	1961	.14	-.05	2201	-1.23	-.12	2201	<b>-2.32*</b>
	Reward	-.11	2201	-	-.08	2201	-1.78	.13	2201	<b>2.55*</b>
						<b>2.53</b>				
						<b>*</b>				
Focus on results	-.07	2201	-	.05	2201	-7.39	-.21	2201	<b>-3.96***</b>	
						1.50				
Attention care	.02	1961	.34	-.14	1634	-	.08	710	1.51	
						<b>3.14*</b>				
						<b>*</b>				
<i>Unmet expectations</i>	Total	-.23	1873	-	<b>-.16</b>	<b>2201</b>	<b>-1.74</b>	-.02	2201	-.21
						<b>2.41</b>				

						*			
content	-0.01	2201	-0.46	-0.06	1792	<b>-2.11*</b>	.02	2201	.52
cooperation	-0.02	1880	-	-0.03	1817	-1.40	.01	2201	.45
			1.17						
independency	-0.01	2201	-0.55	.05	1330	<b>2.50*</b>	-0.02	2201	-0.70
Career development	-0.11	1890	-	-0.14	1938	-	.07	829	<b>2.14*</b>
			<b>3.84</b>			<b>5.03*</b>			
			***			**			
Amount work	-0.02	1932	-	.02	2201	.86	-0.03	691	-0.98
			1.15						
reward	.02	2157	1.16	-0.04	1925	<b>-2.21*</b>	-0.06	661	<b>-2.38*</b>
Focus on results	-0.04	1936	-	.04	1621	1.59	.01	2201	.39
			1.47						
Attention care	-0.04	1889	-	-0.02	2201	<b>-.84</b>	-0.03	950	-1.14
			1.91						
Job search	.05	2016	<b>2.36</b>	.06	1776	<b>3.11*</b>	-0.02	771	-1.05
			*			*			

<sup>1</sup>Referency category = female.

<sup>2</sup>Reference category = younger employees.

<sup>3</sup>Reference category = lower educated employees

Table 2. Results of linear regression analysis including dissatisfaction with previous job. DV= amount of unmet expectations.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)
Gender <sup>1</sup>	-.11 (.16)**	-.11 (.16)**	-.11 (.16)**
Year <sup>2</sup>	-.04 (.16)	-.04 (.17)	-.04 (.17)
Informal resources		-.04 (.20)	-.04 (.20)
Amount of resources		.05 (.13)	.05 (.13)
Previous civil servant		.00 (.21)	-.09 (.50)
Previous central government		.04 (.24)	.04 (.24)
Work experience		-.06 (.04)	-.09(.06)
Education		-.07 (.11)	-.07 (.11)
Dissatisfaction previous job		.10 (.10)**	.10 (.10)**
Informal resources*work experience			.00 (.08)
Work experience * civil servant before			.11 (.08)
N	680	680	680
F test (DF)	4.45(2,677)	2,67(9,670)	2,25(11,668)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.01	.02	.02

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

1. reference category = female.

2. reference category= 2014.

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