

# Research on Quality of Vietnamese Civil Servants

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## ABSTRACT

Civil servants are those who perform public duties, serve the state and serve the people, so the quality of civil servants is always of interest to countries and is a decisive factor in the quality, efficiency and prestige of government agencies. In each country, the law clearly stipulates the quality standards of civil servants, often including the contents of professional qualifications, working capacity, and service attitude. In which, professional qualifications are easily identifiable standards demonstrated through graduation certificates of the training level corresponding to the recruited civil servant rank; but working capacity and service attitude are two contents that need to go through the practical working process to be able to identify accurately and objectively when assessing the quality of civil servants. Therefore, in this study, the author mentions working capacity and service attitude as both constituent contents and factors affecting the quality of civil servants. The author built a theoretical research model consisting of three scales: "Working capacity", "Service attitude", "Civil servant quality" and conducted a survey of 450 leaders of commune-level government agencies of 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam: Cao Bang province (North), Ha Tinh province (Central), Bac Lieu province (South). The survey aims to collect data for empirical research on the quality of local civil servants at the commune level in Vietnam. The research results show that local leaders underestimate the working capacity of civil servants, and have limited knowledge and digital skills. From the results of this research, the author implies the content of policy adjustments to improve the quality of local civil servants in Vietnam to meet the requirements of building e-government and digital government.

**Keywords:** Civil servant quality; Working capacity; Service attitude; Vietnam.

## INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is organizing a 3-level local model, including provincial level (63 provincial localities), district level (705 district localities) and commune level (10599 commune-level localities) (GSO, 2024). Local government at each level consists of two agencies: People's Council (a body elected by voters); People's Committee (a body performing executive functions, established by the People's Council of the same level). Commune-level government has 6 civil servant positions, including: Commander of the Commune Military Command; Office - Statistics; Land - Construction - Urban and Environment (for wards and towns)/or Land - Agriculture - Construction - Urban and Environment (for communes); Finance - Accounting; Justice - Civil Status; Culture - Society (VG, 2023).

In 2025, Vietnam is implementing a revolution to streamline the state apparatus towards organizing a 2-level local model, including provincial and communal levels, eliminating district-level localities (CPV, 2025); the number of provincial-level localities is expected to decrease by 50%, and commune-level localities by 60%-70%, leaving about 2,000 commune-level localities (TP New, 2025). Accordingly, commune-level civil servants are assigned new roles and tasks from the tasks of the district level, posing challenges in terms of professional capacity, becoming a factor affecting work results - the quality of civil servants. Although according to the general assessment, commune-level civil servants are trained and fostered to meet the title standards and the quality of civil servants is gradually improved (MOHA, 2024), however, the trend of developing e-government and digital government requires digital capacity for commune-level civil servants to serve people quickly, accurately, and on time; At the same time, the context of implementing the revolution of streamlining the state apparatus in Vietnam today is also posing new requirements for commune-level civil servants. Therefore, theoretical and practical research on the quality of commune-level civil servants is necessary and the reason attracts the author's attention in this study.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "quality" is interpreted by many Vietnamese lexicographers as implying the value of things, the value of people when placed in a specific context. According to Phe, H. (2011), it is what creates the quality and value of a person, a thing, an event; when placed in the scope of human resources performing public duties - civil servants, it is the quality and capacity of civil servants to meet the requirements of performing public duties. In terms of education and training, the

qualities of learners and the qualities of civil servants are interpreted by many researchers as including ethics, public ethics and professional qualifications (Phuong, N.T., 2023; Son, N.V., 2023); the issue of public ethics alone is quite broad, influenced by the political, cultural and social factors of each country, often including the contents of loyalty, compliance, and service of civil servants to the country and the people. Regarding working capacity, this content is also explained in detail in terms of practical working capacity, meeting the requirements of performing public duties - meeting the standards of the rank, meeting the requirements of the job position that the civil servant undertakes (Ha, N.T. et al., 2022; Toan, P.D. et al., 2023).

Thus, it can be seen that the quality of civil servants is reflected in the value of civil servants, which is their moral qualities (loyalty, compliance, service), professional qualifications (thinking; knowledge, skills that have been trained and fostered) and their working capacity in public service activities, meeting the standards of civil servant titles, meeting the requirements of job positions in public service activities. These are also the contents prescribed by Vietnamese law, serving as criteria for assessing the quality of civil servants (VG, 2020). From here, the author has the basis to build a scale of "Civil Servant Quality" (CSQ) including the following contents: Civil servants with good moral qualities, meeting the standards of their titles and job positions in public service activities (CSQ1); Civil servants with thinking, knowledge, and skills appropriate to the standards of their titles and job positions in public service activities (CSQ2); Civil servants with appropriate working capacity and meeting the standards of their titles and job positions in public service activities - performing work effectively and ensuring progress and quality of assigned work (CSQ3).

With the above definition of civil servant quality, the author refers to the value of civil servants, which is generalized to include civil service ethics, professional qualifications and working capacity in practical public service activities. These are also basic contents that are often stipulated by the laws of countries, in which professional qualifications are easily identifiable standards demonstrated through graduation certificates of training levels corresponding to the recruited civil servant title. However, working capacity and civil service ethics (loyalty, compliance, service) are two contents that need to go through the practical working process to be able to identify accurately and objectively when assessing the quality of civil servants. Therefore, in this study, the author refers to working capacity and civil service ethics - focusing on service attitude, with the meaning of both constituting content and influencing the quality of civil servants. The author builds a theoretical model to research factors affecting the quality of civil servants, including scales/independent variables: "Working capacity" (WC), "Service attitude" (SA).

- Regarding the working capacity of civil servants, according to Toan, P.D. (2022), this capacity is formed on the basis of professional qualifications; at the same time, it is developed through the working process and proactive learning and training of civil servants, including advisory capacity, work organization and implementation capacity, and work control capacity. Hue, N.T.K. (2025) also affirmed that civil servants are the key factor of the civil service, because the working capacity of civil servants determines the success of the civil service. In general, the above studies emphasize the ability to work practically to meet the requirements of the job position that civil servants undertake and in the face of the strong development of social life, countries, including Vietnam, have increasingly high requirements for the capacity of civil servants to build a team of civil servants to meet new requirements and tasks. Civil servants with good advisory and organizational skills are subjective factors that determine work results, helping civil servants quickly transform ideas into advisory products for competent authorities. Civil servants with good control skills are subjective factors that ensure work results are always maintained, helping civil servants take the initiative in all situations and propose appropriate solutions to perform professional work well. In addition, civil servants need to have the ability to work independently, combined with the ability to cooperate in work to achieve results and work efficiency.

The author also believes that advisory capacity, work organization and implementation capacity, and work control capacity are basic contents, but digital capacity (digital knowledge and skills) and proficiency in solving work in the digital environment are added, in line with the current trend of developing e-government and digital government. With that explanation, the scale of "Working capacity" (WC) of civil servants designed by the author includes the following contents: Civil servants have good advisory capacity, work organization and control capacity, meeting the requirements of advisory work - realizing ideas into professional work results and ensuring progress and quality of professional work in public service activities (WC1); Civil servants have the capacity to work independently, good coordination capacity, meeting the requirements of work according to the assigned progress and quality in public service activities (WC2); Civil servants have digital capacity - proficient digital knowledge and skills to perform professional work well in the digital environment, ensuring progress and quality of assigned work (WC3).

- Regarding the service attitude of civil servants, according to Yen, L.T.H. (2022), it is the attitude of civil servants when contacting and handling people's records, showing respect, listening to people, serving people thoroughly to create satisfaction for people. Oanh, G. (2022) emphasized that local civil servants, as public servants of the people, have the responsibility to serve people attentively: Listening to people; ready to support in resolving people's requests in the best way; being objective and fair when handling people's work; protecting people's legitimate rights and interests; being responsible for the results of resolving people's requests, so that people trust civil servants and trust government agencies.

From a personal observation perspective, the author also believes that civil servants, as public servants, are paid by the state budget - from taxes paid by the people. Therefore, serving the people is the responsibility and obligation of civil servants, in which service attitude is an important content, deciding the results and effectiveness of civil servants' service. In communication, civil servants must always be polite to the people, have a communication attitude appropriate to each group of people, in accordance with the standards of contemporary society. With that meaning, the scale "Service Attitude" (SA) of civil servants, designed by the author, includes the following contents: Civil servants are always polite to the people, have an appropriate communication attitude towards each type of citizen, in accordance with the standards of contemporary society (SA1); Civil servants listen to the people; are ready to support in resolving people's requests in the best way (SA2); Civil servants are objective and fair when resolving people's work; protect the rights and legitimate interests of the people, and are responsible for the results of resolving people's requests (SA3).

Good working capacity along with public service ethics - good service attitude, are two factors that determine the quality of civil servants and affirm the working efficiency and prestige of government agencies. Civil servants with good working capacity, the work of the locality is implemented smoothly and effectively; civil servants with good service attitude, will create people's trust in the government; the quality of civil servants is also affirmed. With that meaning, the hypothesis put forward in this study is: *The working capacity of civil servants (H1) and the service attitude of civil servants (H2) are the constituent contents and are factors that affect the quality of civil servants.*

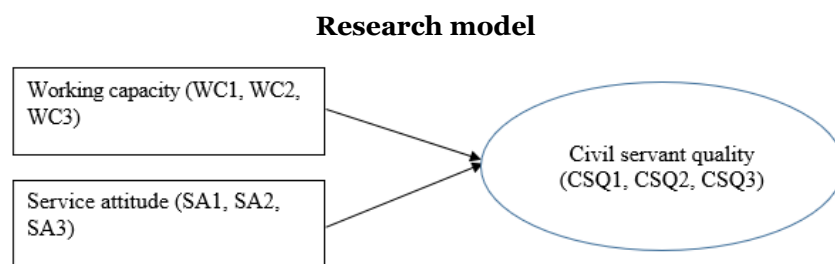
With the overview study, the author built a theoretical research model on factors affecting the quality of civil servants. The model includes 02 scales/independent variables "Working capacity" (WC); "Service attitude" (SA) and 01 scale/dependent variable "Civil servant quality" (CSQ). The scales in the model include 09 observed variables, designed by the author into a survey form with 09 corresponding questions and measured by a 5-level Likert scale: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - No opinion; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree (Table 1, Figure 1).

**Table 1.** Theoretical framework

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
<b>I</b>	<b>Working capacity</b>	<b>WC</b>					
1	Civil servants have good advisory capacity, work organization and control capacity, meeting the requirements of advisory work - realizing ideas into professional work results and ensuring progress and quality of professional work in public service activities.	WC1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
2	Civil servants have the capacity to work independently, good coordination capacity, meeting the requirements of work according to the assigned progress and quality in public service activities.	WC2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
3	Civil servants have digital capacity - proficient digital knowledge and skills to perform professional work well in the digital environment, ensuring progress and quality of assigned work.	WC3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
<b>II</b>	<b>Service attitude</b>	<b>SA</b>					
4	Civil servants are always polite to the people, have an appropriate communication attitude towards each type of citizen, in accordance with the standards of contemporary society.	SA1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
5	Civil servants listen to the people; are ready to support in resolving people's requests in the best way.	SA2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
6	Civil servants are objective and fair when resolving people's work; protect the rights and legitimate interests of the people, and are responsible for the results of resolving people's requests.	SA3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
<b>III</b>	<b>Civil servant quality</b>	<b>CSQ</b>					
7	Civil servants with good moral qualities, meeting the standards of their titles and job positions in public service activities.	CSQ1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
8	Civil servants with thinking, knowledge, and skills appropriate to the standards of their titles and job positions in public service activities.	CSQ2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
9	Civil servants with appropriate working capacity and meeting the standards of their titles and job positions in public service activities - performing work effectively and ensuring progress and quality of assigned work.	CSQ3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Source: Compiled by the author through the review



**Figure 1. Research model**

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

- Qualitative method: The author uses qualitative method to conduct the general research content and build the theoretical research model. The qualitative research results help the author build a theoretical research model consisting of three scales: "Working capacity" (WC); "Service attitude" (SA); "Civil servant quality" (CSQ) (Table 1, Figure 1).

- Quantitative method: The author uses quantitative method to collect and analyze primary data through survey of 450 local leaders at commune level, from which there is a practical basis for assessing the quality of local civil servants in Vietnam. The survey is conducted in two steps: Preliminary survey and official survey.

+ Preliminary survey: In this study, the author uses exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis to test the model and research hypothesis. According to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the minimum sample size required for exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis for the 3-scale, 9-observed-variable model of this study is  $N = 9 \times 5 = 45$ . The author conducted a preliminary survey in Cao Bang province with a sample size of  $N = 150$  leaders of commune-level government agencies ( $N > 45$ ). The results of the preliminary survey in Cao Bang province show that the scales and observed variables are reliable enough to be used in official surveys on a larger scale.

+ Official survey: The author conducted an official survey in 3 localities representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Cao Bang Province (North), Ha Tinh Province (Central), Bac Lieu Province (South). The selected respondents included 450 leaders of commune-level government agencies, who had held leadership positions for 3 years or more; based on their consent to respond, the survey results collected 450/450 valid ballots, achieving a response rate of 100%.

### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First, the author tested the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model to confirm the feasibility when performing the next analysis. According to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the condition for the scales to ensure reliability: Cronbach's alpha  $> 0.6$ ; the condition for the observed variables to ensure reliability: Corrected Item-Total Correlation  $> 0.3$ . The test results showed that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables were reliable enough to perform the next analysis (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Statistical results and testing results of the scale

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Working capacity (WC)	WC1	450	1	5	3.97	.678	.642	WC1 = .441
	WC2	450	1	5	3.99	.701		WC2 = .521
	WC3	450	1	5	3.89	.714		WC3 = .396
2. Service attitude (SA)	SA1	450	1	5	4.21	.718	.709	SA1 = .638
	SA2	450	1	5	4.19	.711		SA2 = .595
	SA3	450	1	5	4.10	.693		SA3 = .624
3. Civil servant quality (CSQ)	CSQ1	450	1	5	4.03	.613	.668	CSQ1 = .569
	CSQ2	450	1	5	4.11	.621		CSQ2 = .688
	CSQ3	450	1	5	4.09	.619		CSQ3 = .574
Valid N (listwise)		450						

Source: Author's survey results

Data in Table 2 shows that observations on the scales "Working capacity" (WC), "Service attitude" (SA), "Civil servant quality" (CSQ) are all rated at an average level of Mean  $\geq 3.89$ , which is statistically significant according to the determined Likert scale (1-5). However, the observed variables of the scale "Working capacity" (WC) are rated at a lower level than the scale "Service attitude" (SA), specifically: Mean (WC1) = 3.97, Mean (WC2) = 3.99, Mean (WC3) = 3.89, showing that local leaders at the commune level have a low opinion of the working capacity of civil servants in the practice of public service. In which, the lowest is Mean (WC3) = 3.89, showing that many civil servants have limited digital capacity: Digital knowledge and skills do not meet the requirements of the job position, so they are not proficient in transactions and interactions in the digital environment to solve assigned work to ensure progress and quality.

The author's survey results contribute to reflecting the practical working capacity and digital capacity limitations of Vietnamese local civil servants, while Vietnam is building and developing e-government, digital government and implementing the revolution of streamlining the state apparatus. This practice sets out the requirements and tasks of training and fostering civil servants and encouraging them to proactively study and self-train to equip, update and supplement digital knowledge and skills in a timely manner. This is of great significance, helping to build a team of competent local civil servants at the commune level who can quickly catch up with the development trends of the digital society; proficient in digital skills, proficient in work in the digital environment, meeting the requirements of the task of building and developing e-government and digital government.

With the above results of testing the scale and observed variables, the author has a scientific basis to conduct exploratory factor analysis. The exploratory factor analysis aims to preliminarily assess the unidimensionality, convergent value, and discriminant value of the scales, thereby providing more basis for drawing research conclusions. The results of exploratory factor analysis are shown in Table 3 and Table 4 below.

**Table 3.** Total Variance Explained**KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.753
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	2326.479
	df
	36
	Sig.
	.000

**Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.487	38.740	38.740	3.487	38.740	38.740	2.905	32.274	32.274
2	3.035	33.719	72.459	3.035	33.719	72.459	2.736	30.400	62.674
3	1.027	11.408	83.867	1.027	11.408	83.867	1.907	21.193	83.867
4	.508	5.645	89.512						
5	.432	4.796	94.308						
6	.179	1.989	96.297						
7	.166	1.846	98.142						

8	.116	1.292	99.434					
9	.051	.566	100.000					

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Author's survey results

**Table 4.** Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>				
Scales	Observed variables	Component		
		1	2	3
1. Working capacity (WC)	WC1	.789		
	WC2	.791		
	WC3	.778		
2. Service attitude (SA)	SA1		.805	
	SA2		.811	
	SA3		.797	
3. Civil servant quality (CSQ)	CSQ1			.798
	CSQ2			.802
	CSQ3			.786

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.  
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Source: Author's survey results

In quantitative research, according to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), exploratory factor analysis is performed in accordance with the data set through the values:  $0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$ ; Bartlett's test has an observed significance level Sig.  $< 0.05$ ; Eigenvalue  $\geq 1$ ; Total Variance Explained  $\geq 50\%$ ; Factor Loading  $\geq 0.5$ .

Data in Table 3 and Table 4 show: Exploratory factor analysis confirms the suitability of the data set, shown through the KMO coefficient =  $0.753 > 0.5$ ; observed variables have a linear correlation with the representative factor, shown through Bartlett's Test with an observed significance level of Sig. =  $0.000 < 0.05$ ; observed variables explain 83.867% of the variation of representative factors, shown through Total Variance Explained with Cumulative % =  $83.867\% > 50\%$ ; observed variables have good statistical significance, have a close relationship with representative factors, with Factor Loading  $> 0.5$ .

The results of exploratory factor analysis (Table 3, Table 4) confirm that the observed variables are extracted into 03 factors corresponding to 03 initial factors with Eigenvalues  $> 1$ , showing that the research theoretical framework is appropriately built; the original research model is kept intact, including: 02 independent variables "Working capacity" (WC), "Service attitude" (SA) and 01 dependent variable "Civil servant quality" (CSQ) with a total of 9 observed variables with good statistical significance, it is possible to perform multivariate linear regression analysis to examine the relationship of independent variables with dependent variables in the research model. On that basis, the author conducts regression analysis to examine the relationship of independent variables "Working capacity" (WC), "Service attitude" (SA) and dependent variable "Civil servant quality" (CSQ). The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 5, which is the basis for drawing research conclusions.

**Table 5.** Multivariate regression results Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.102	.189		14.892	.000	
	Working capacity (WC)	.409	.138	.317	11.913	.000	1.812
	Service attitude (SA)	.611	.131	.421	9.469	.000	1.812

a. Dependent Variable: Civil servant quality (CSQ)  
R Square = .736; Durbin-Watson = 2.101

Source: Author's survey results

The data in Table 5 shows that:

+ R Square = 0.736, confirming that the scales "Working capacity" (WC) and "Service attitude" (SA) explain 72.4% of the variation in the scale "Civil servant quality" (CSQ).

+ VIF = 1.812 ( $1 < \text{VIF} < 2$ ), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.101 ( $1 < d < 3$ ), showing that the regression model does not have autocorrelation, confirming that the scales "Working capacity" (WC), "Service attitude" (SA) are independent and have an impact on the scale "Civil servant quality" (CSQ).

+ The regression coefficients of the two independent variables "Working capacity" (WC), "Service attitude" (SA) are both statistically significant with Sig. = 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05) and have positive values: B(WC) = 0.409, B(SA) = 0.611, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables "Working capacity" (WC), "Service attitude" (SA) and 01 dependent variable "Civil servant quality" (CSQ).

Based on the generalized regression model  $Y = B_0 + B_1 \cdot X_1 + B_2 \cdot X_2 + \dots + B_i \cdot X_i$  (Hair, J.F. et al., 2009), the multivariate regression model of this study can be determined as:  $\text{CSQ} = 1.102 + 0.409 \cdot \text{WC} + 0.611 \cdot \text{SA}$ .

Based on the above regression coefficient (Table 5), it can be seen that the correlation level of the independent variables and the dependent variables in ascending order is: "Working capacity" (WC), "Service attitude" (SA). From here, the research conclusion is affirmed, that is: Local leaders at the commune level underestimate the practical working capacity of civil servants; many civil servants are found to have limited digital capacity: Digital knowledge and skills do not meet the requirements of the job position, so they are not proficient in transactions and interactions in the digital environment to solve assigned work to ensure progress and quality.

The author's empirical research results contribute to reflecting the practical working capacity and digital capacity limitations of Vietnamese local civil servants, while Vietnam is building and developing e-government, digital government and implementing the revolution of streamlining the state apparatus. This practice poses the requirement and task of timely training and fostering civil servants, that localities need to implement training policies, policies to encourage civil servants to proactively study and self-cultivate digital capacity to update and supplement digital knowledge and skills to meet the job requirements of public service activities in new conditions. This is of great significance, helping to build a team of high-quality local civil servants at the commune level, quickly catching up with the development trend of the digital society; proficient in digital skills, proficient in work in the digital environment, meeting the requirements of the task of building and developing e-government, digital government.

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