Research Article

Factors Affecting the Working Efficiency of Vietnamese Local Civil Servants

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Local civil servants in Vietnam, especially commune-level civil servants, play a direct role in implementing laws and policies of the central government and higher-level local governments (provincial and district levels) to the people to ensure their legitimate rights and interests. Therefore, the work efficiency of local civil servants is decisive to the effectiveness and prestige of government agencies. In fact, the work efficiency of civil servants is reflected in the progress and quality of performing assigned tasks (professional capacity of civil servants); the attentive service of civil servants and the satisfaction of the people with civil servants (service attitude of civil servants). In this study, the author approaches the work efficiency of civil servants based on two constituent elements, but also plays a role as factors affecting the work efficiency of civil servants, which are the professional capacity of civil servants and the service attitude of civil servants. The author conducted a survey of 240 leaders of commune-level government agencies in 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam: Nam Dinh Province (North), Quang Binh Province (Central), Binh Duong Province (South). The research results show that local leaders assess that commune-level civil servants have a good service attitude, but their professional capacity is still limited, and need to be trained to equip, update, and supplement to master digital knowledge and skills. From the results of this research, the author discusses the research problem and policy implications for improving knowledge, skills, and expertise for local civil servants in Vietnam. **Keywords:** Working efficiency; Professional competence; Service attitude; Local civil servants; Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnamese law stipulates that local government consists of three levels: provincial, district, and commune [VNA, 2013]. Local government at each level includes the People's Council (a state power agency, elected by voters) and the People's Committee (a state administrative agency, established by the People's Council of the same level) [VNA, 2015]. In that system, the commune-level government is the lowest level of government, also known as the grassroots government.

As of 2023, Vietnam has 63 provincial-level governments (provinces, centrally-run cities); 705 district-level governments (districts, urban districts, towns, provincial cities, centrally-run cities) and 10599 commune-level governments (communes, wards, and towns) [GSO, 2024]. Commune-level governments are staffed with 6 civil servant positions of the People's Committee, 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].

According to the general assessment, the majority of local civil servants are standardized in terms of qualifications and expertise; work efficiency is improved, contributing to the successful implementation of local economic and social development goals and tasks; however, the work efficiency of local civil servants is still uneven between urban and rural areas, mountainous areas, attracting the attention of managers and researchers to objectively

identify the practical situation and adjust appropriate policies [MOHA, 2023; Ha, T.T. et al., 2023]. This is also an issue of concern and the reason why the author chose to conduct his research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "effectiveness" is often interpreted to mean achieving a desired result when comparing the output with the input of a process of performing a certain job. According to EPH (2002), effectiveness is the ability to produce a desired result or the ability to produce a desired output; when something is considered effective, it means that it has a desired result or creates a deep, vivid impression.

According to the above approach, the work efficiency of civil servants is also explained in terms of output results in the process of performing tasks - the work results of civil servants. According to Thang, N.T. et al. (2023), the work results of civil servants are reflected in the progress and quality of the assigned tasks and the satisfaction of the people. Hoi, D.X. (2023) and Hoa, N.T.T. (2024) also agree with Thang, N.T. et al. (2023) but emphasize the content aspect of meeting practical work requirements associated with job titles and positions in public service activities. Specifically, performing assigned tasks according to plan; receiving and processing people's records completely and on time; Respecting the people, creating satisfaction for the people when they contact and work with civil servants - people are satisfied, not reflecting on the working spirit and service attitude of civil servants. Vietnamese law also stipulates the evaluation of civil servants based on the criteria of civil servants performing assigned tasks to ensure progress, ensure quality and create satisfaction for customers who are the people, as a basis for evaluating the results and effectiveness of civil servants' work [VG, 2020].

Thus, in both research and management aspects, the performance of civil servants clearly shows the output product goals that civil servants need to achieve in performing public duties. In each public service activity, when civil servants perform their assigned tasks, ensuring progress, ensuring quality and creating satisfaction for customers who are the people, they have contributed to the implementation of the goal of public service reform, implementing democracy and building a rule of law state. With that meaning, the author builds the scale "Working efficiency of civil servants" (WE), including a number of contents: Civil servants perform well assigned tasks; receive and process people's documents on time (WE1); Civil servants perform well assigned tasks; receive and process people's documents with full content and in accordance with regulations (WE2); Civil servants serve the people, respect the people, and create people's satisfaction during the work and performance of official duties (WE3).

The author's research viewpoint inherits and develops from previous studies as analyzed, that the working efficiency of civil servants is reflected in the output results in the process of performing tasks: Progress, quality of assigned work, serving and creating satisfaction for the people. However, the working process and achieving working efficiency of civil servants are influenced by many factors, including subjective factors (professional qualifications, professional capacity, service attitude of civil servants), objective factors (working environment, facilities, technology). In this study, the author chooses two subjective factors that have a direct impact on the working efficiency of civil servants, which are: Professional capacity and Service attitude of civil servants.

- Firstly, the professional capacity of civil servants is explained in a general sense, which is the ability to work well thanks to moral qualities, professional qualifications and the process of self-study and practice. Son, N.V. (2023) emphasized the ability to apply knowledge and skills in professional work and the ability to work independently, the ability to coordinate work of civil servants when discussing the professional capacity of civil servants. Hoi, D.X. (2023) specifically explained professional capacity, that it is the capacity to advise, the capacity to perform tasks and the capacity to control work; good capacity to advise and perform tasks helps civil servants quickly transform ideas into specific professional products to advise competent authorities to decide on implementation; good control capacity helps civil servants control work in a proactive manner; summarize, draw lessons in a timely manner, and adjust appropriate plans to always perform well assigned tasks in the professional field. Hoan, D.K. (2024) also shares the same view as Son, N.V. (2023) and Hoi, D.X. (2023) but emphasizes more on digital knowledge, skills and proficiency in the process of solving work in the digital environment. On that basis, the author builds a scale of "Professional Competence" (PC) of civil servants including the following contents: Civil servants have good consulting capacity, task execution capacity, work control capacity and can easily realize ideas into professional products, ensuring progress and quality of assigned work (PC1); Civil servants have the ability to work independently and coordinate work well, ensuring progress and quality of assigned work (PC2); Civil servants have

digital knowledge, skills and proficiency in the process of solving work in the digital environment, ensuring progress and quality of assigned work (PC3).

When commune-level civil servants demonstrate professional competence in practical work, the work of the agency will be carried out smoothly and achieve results and efficiency according to the set progress and quality goals and serve the people in the best way. With that meaning, the hypothesis is: *Professional competence has a positive impact, affecting the work efficiency of commune-level civil servants (H1).*

- Second, the service attitude of civil servants is explained in a general sense, which is the attitude of respecting and listening to the people; serving and creating satisfaction for the people. According to Tung, L.S. (2021), local civil servants, as public servants of the people, have the responsibility to be ready to work and support, serve the people to resolve their requests in the best way; listen to the people; be objective and fair when resolving people's work, protect the rights and legitimate interests of the people, take primary responsibility for the implementation process and the results of resolving people's requests, only then can people's trust in the government be truly created. Tuyen, H.T.M. et al. (2022) share the same view as Tung, L.S. (2021) but emphasize that civil servants must always be polite in communicating with people; because civil servants are the ones who regularly come into direct contact and resolve people's requests, so in the process of resolving people's work, they must have a polite attitude in communication, appropriate to each group of people, in accordance with the concepts and social etiquette of contemporary society. Inheriting and developing the above views and research content, the author builds a scale for "Service Attitude" (SA) of civil servants, including the following contents: Civil servants respect people, show courtesy and politeness in communicating with people; guide people in a dedicated and thoughtful manner (SA1); Civil servants listen to people's opinions, are fair to all people when resolving their requests (SA2); Civil servants protect the legitimate rights and interests of people, and are primarily responsible for the implementation process and results of resolving people's requests (SA3).

The service attitude of civil servants is not only a responsibility that civil servants must fulfill, but also a political goal of state agencies when performing the task of social management and serving the people. In the process of resolving people's requests, civil servants with good service attitudes will avoid conflicts between the people and the government agencies, thereby affirming the work efficiency of civil servants as well as the work efficiency of the government agencies. With that meaning, the hypothesis is: *Service attitude has a positive impact, affecting the work efficiency of commune-level civil servants (H2).*

From the above general research content, the author has built a theoretical framework for studying factors affecting the work efficiency of civil servants. The research model includes: 02 scales/independent variables "Professional competence" (PC); "Service attitude" (SA) and 01 scale/dependent variable "Working efficiency of civil servants" (WE). The scales in the model include 09 observed variables; the author designed a survey form according to these 09 observed variables and measured it using 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				
I	**Professional competence**	**PC**					
1	Civil servants have good consulting capacity, task execution capacity, work control capacity and can easily realize ideas into professional products, ensuring progress and quality of assigned work.	PC1	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5
2	Civil servants have the ability to work independently and coordinate work well, ensuring progress and quality of assigned work.	PC2	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5
3	Civil servants have digital knowledge, skills and proficiency in the process of solving work in the digital environment, ensuring progress and quality of assigned work.	PC3	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5
II	**Service Attitude**	**SA**					
4	Civil servants respect people, show courtesy and	SA1	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
	politeness in communicating with people; guide people in a dedicated and thoughtful manner.						
5	Civil servants listen to people's opinions, are fair to all people when resolving their requests.	SA2	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5
6	Civil servants protect the legitimate rights and interests of people, and are primarily responsible for the implementation process and results of resolving people's requests.	SA3	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5
III	**Working efficiency of civil servants**	**WE**					
7	Civil servants perform well assigned tasks; receive and process people's documents on time.	WE1	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5
8	Civil servants perform well assigned tasks; receive and process people's documents with full content and in accordance with regulations.	WE2	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5
9	Civil servants serve the people, respect the people, and create people's satisfaction during the work and performance of official duties.	WE3	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5

Source: Compiled by the author through the review
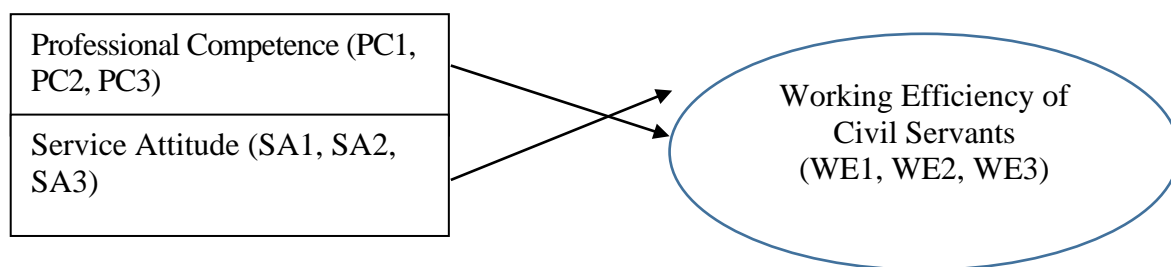
Research model

Figure 1. Research model

3. RESEARCH METHODS

a) Qualitative method

Qualitative methods are used to conduct a research overview and build a research theoretical model. Based on the analysis of related research results and the synthesis of legal documents, the author builds a research theoretical framework and a research model with three scales: Professional competence; Service attitude; Work efficiency of civil servants [Table 1, Figure 1].

b) Quantitative method

Quantitative methods were used to collect and analyze primary data through direct surveys of opinions of 240 local leaders at the commune level. The author tested the reliability of the scale, observed variables; analyzed exploratory factors; and analyzed regression to test the research hypothesis and draw research conclusions. The survey sequence was conducted in two steps: Preliminary survey and official survey.

- Preliminary survey: In quantitative research, according to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the minimum sample size required for exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis for a model of 3 scales and 9 observed variables is N = 9*5 = 45. The author conducted a preliminary survey in Nam Dinh province with a sample size of N = 60 leaders of commune-level government agencies (N > 45). The results of the preliminary survey in Nam Dinh province showed that the scales and observed variables are reliable enough to be used in an official survey on a larger scale.

- Official survey: The author conducted an official survey in 3 localities representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Nam Dinh province (North), Quang Binh province (Central), Binh Duong province (South). The survey subjects

included 240 leaders of commune-level government agencies. The survey was conducted selectively: Survey respondents were leaders of commune-level government agencies for 3 years or more; the author conducted preliminary interviews to capture information about the standards of survey respondents and distributed survey forms based on their consent to answer. The survey results collected 240/240 valid forms, achieving a response rate of 100%.

4. KẾT QUẢ NGHIÊN CỨU

First, the author tested the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. According to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the condition for the scales to ensure reliability: Cronbach'alpha > 0.6; the condition for the observed variables to ensure reliability: Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3. The test results in Table 2 show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables are reliable enough to perform the following analyses.

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. Professional competence (PC)	PC1 PC2 PC3	240 240 240	2 2 1	5 5 5	3.96 3.99 3.93	.712 .667 .701	.633	PC1 = .424 PC2 = .465 PC3 = .399
2. Service attitude (SA)	SA1 SA2 SA3	240 240 240	2 1 2	5 5 5	4.15 4.08 4.13	.607 .612 .628	.704	SA1 = .568 SA2 = .582 SA3 = .601
3. Working efficiency of civil servants (WE)	WE1 WE2 WE3	240 240 240	2 2 2	5 5 5	4.04 4.08 4.11	.594 .606 .599	.684	WE1 = .606 WE2 = .591 WE3 = .578
Valid N (listwise)		240						

Source: Author's survey results

Data in Table 2 shows that observations on the scales "Professional Competence" (PC), "Service Attitude" (SA), "Working Efficiency of Civil Servants" (WE) are all assessed at an average level of Mean > 3.93, statistically significant according to the determined Likert scale (1-5). However, the observed variables of the scale "Professional Competence" (PC) are assessed at a lower level than "Service Attitude" (SA): Mean (PC1) = 3.96, Mean (PC2) = 3.99, Mean (PC3) = 3.93, indicating that local leaders at the commune level underestimate the practical working capacity of civil servants. In which, the lowest is Mean (PC3) = 3.93, confirming that many civil servants are limited in digital capacity; not proficient in digital skills in the process of solving work in the digital environment to ensure progress and quality of assigned work.

The statistical data and summary in Table 2 contribute to reflecting the actual working capacity of local civil servants at the commune level in Vietnam in the context of the fourth industrial revolution. Accordingly, civil servants need to be trained and fostered to equip, update, and supplement digital knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of the fourth industrial revolution and digital transformation, building and developing e-government and digital government in Vietnam. That requires research and innovation in assessment, use and training and fostering policies so that civil servants can promote their knowledge, professional skills, and form and develop digital capacity to improve work efficiency in practical public service activities.

With the standard value confirmed through Cronbach'alpha test, the author conducted exploratory factor analysis to preliminarily assess the unidimensionality, convergent value, and discriminant value of the scales to have 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.		.768
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1767.611
	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	3.777	41.968	41.968	3.777	41.968	41.968	2.648	29.424	29.424
2	2.708	30.088	72.056	2.708	30.088	72.056	2.611	29.007	58.430
3	1.169	12.992	85.048	1.169	12.992	85.048	2.396	26.618	85.048
4	.394	4.382	89.430						
5	.365	4.054	93.484						
6	.216	2.405	95.889						
7	.175	1.950	97.838						
8	.131	1.455	99.294						
9	.064	.706	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Source: Author's survey results

Table 4. Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix[a]				
Scales	Observed variables	Component		
		1	2	3
1. Professional competence (PC)	PC1	.742		
	PC2	.781		
	PC3	.778		
2. Service attitude (SA)	SA1		.804	
	SA2		.789	
	SA3		.813	
3. Working efficiency of civil servants (WE)	WE1			.810
	WE2			.798
	WE3			.805
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 ≥ 1; Total Variance Explained ≥ 50%; Factor Loading ≥ 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 = 0.768 > 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 85.048% of the variation of representative factors, shown through Total Variance Explained with Cumulative % = 85.048% > 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] confirmed that the observed variables were extracted into 03 factors corresponding to 03 initial factors with Eigenvalues > 1, showing that the research theoretical framework was appropriately built; the original research model was kept intact, including: 02 independent variables "Professional Competence" (PC), "Service Attitude" (SA) and 01 dependent variable "Working Efficiency of Civil Servants" (WE) 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 conducted regression analysis to examine the

relationship of independent variables "Professional Competence" (PC), "Service Attitude" (SA) and dependent variable "Working Efficiency of Civil Servants" (WE). 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[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.124	.188		11.032	.000	
	Professional competence (PC)	.337	.125	.296	9.838	.000	1.803
	Service attitude (SA)	.635	.187	.419	7.854	.000	1.803
a. Dependent Variable: Working efficiency of civil servants (WE)							
R Square = .732; Durbin-Watson = 2.004							

Source: Author's survey results

The data in Table 5 shows that:

+ R Square = 0.732, confirming that the scales "Professional Competence" (PC) and "Service Attitude" (SA) explain 73.2% of the variation in the scale "Working Efficiency of Civil Servants" (WE).

+ VIF = 1.803 (1 < VIF < 2), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.004 (1 < d < 3), showing that the regression model does not have autocorrelation, confirming that the scales "Professional Competence" (PC), "Service Attitude" (SA) are independent and have the same impact on the scale "Working Efficiency of Civil Servants" (WE).

+ The regression coefficients of the two independent variables "Professional Competence" (PC), "Service Attitude" (SA) are both statistically significant with Sig. = 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05) and have positive values: B(PC) = 0.337, B(SA) = 0.635, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables "Professional Competence" (PC), "Service Attitude" (SA) and 01 dependent variable "Working Efficiency of Civil Servants" (WE).

Based on the generalized regression model $Y = B_0 + B_1*X_1 + B_2*X_2 + ... + B_i*X_i$ [Hair, J.F. et al., 2009], the multivariate regression model of this study can be determined as: WE = 1.124 + 0.337*PC + 0.635*SA.

In the above regression model, the regression coefficient shows the correlation level of the independent variables and the dependent variable in increasing order: "Professional Competence" (PC), "Service Attitude" (SA).

5. CONCLUSION

From the results of statistical analysis [Table 2], the results of exploratory factor analysis [Table 3, Table 4] and the results of regression analysis [Table 5], the author has the basis to draw the research conclusion, which is: Local leaders at the commune level underestimate the practical working capacity of civil servants; many civil servants have limited digital capacity; have not mastered digital skills in the process of solving work in the digital environment to ensure the progress and quality of assigned work.

 The results of this study contribute to reflecting the actual working capacity of local civil servants at the commune level in Vietnam in the context of the fourth industrial revolution. Accordingly, civil servants need to be trained and fostered to equip, update, and supplement digital knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of the fourth industrial revolution and digital transformation, building and developing e-government and digital government in Vietnam. That raises the requirement to research and innovate assessment, use and training and fostering policies so that civil servants can promote their knowledge, professional skills, and form and develop digital capacity to improve work efficiency in practical public service activities.

From the conclusion of this study, the author discusses policy issues to promote the qualifications, expertise and improve the practical working capacity of civil servants serving the public service, which are: Implementing training, fostering and encouraging civil servants to study and practice regularly to update and supplement digital knowledge and skills to meet the job requirements of public service activities in the context of digital transformation, building and developing e-government, digital government.

To implement this content, each local government agency, in its role as the subject of management and use of civil servants, implements training and fostering policies and encourages civil servants to regularly and voluntarily foster, promote the initiative in learning and practicing of civil servants to update and supplement digital knowledge and skills. This is necessary and very meaningful in the current context, because the development of e-government and digital government is an inevitable trend, affecting public service activities, requiring a lot of information, knowledge and digital skills to be updated for civil servants.

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