

Quality, Capabilities of Vietnamese Civil Servants

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ABSTRACT

In each country, civil servants are obliged to exercise state power to manage social development, so the issue of the quality and capacity of civil servants is often clearly regulated by law. The law of Vietnam also clearly stipulates the evaluation of the quality of civil servants according to the following criteria: Quality, qualifications, capacity and performance results of assigned tasks. In this study, on the basis of the promulgated legal regulations, the author conducts research on two aspects showing the quality of civil servants, that is the quality and capacity of civil servants. The author builds a research theoretical framework with 3 scales: “quality of civil servants”, “capacity of civil servants” (02 independent variables) and “quality of civil servants” (01 dependent variable); direct survey of 300 leaders of commune-level government agencies in 4 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Cao Bang province, BacKan province (Northern region), Ha Tinh province (Central region), Vinh Long province (Southern region). Research results have shown that local leaders underestimate the working capacity of civil servants in the practice of implementing assigned tasks. From the conclusion of this study, the author suggests a number of research contents and appropriate policy adjustments to improve the quality of local civil servants.

Keywords: Civil servants; quality; qualities; capacity; Vietnam.

I. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam’s local government system consists of three levels (GSO,2023): Provincial level (63 provinces), district level (705 districts), commune level (10.599 communes), in which commune level is the lowest level, called the grassroots government. Civil servants who are staffed in government agencies include leading civil servants and professional civil servants; they are responsible for organizing the implementation

of central policies for social governance at the local level where they work.

According to the assessment of the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2022, local civil servants are trained and retrained to meet the standards of titles and ranks of civil servants. However, in many localities, the quality of local civil servants is still not commensurate with their qualifications; has not really met the task requirements in the trend of administrative reform and international integration (MOHA, 2022). This is a limited issue and is posing a challenge to local leaders in managing and developing the contingent of civil servants.

With the desire to provide factual information for research and policy making, the author carried out this study in the form of a direct survey of 300 leaders of commune-level government agencies in 4 provinces representing 3 regions. of Vietnam, including: Cao Bang province, BacKan province (Northern region), Ha Tinh province (Central region), Vinh Long province (Southern region). Through the results of practical research, the author suggests a number of contents suitable to the conditions of Vietnam in order to improve the quality of local civil servants.

II. RESEARCH OVERVIEW

2.1. Civil servants quality (CSQ)

The term “civil servant quality” is approached in many studies with the content showing the quality and capacity of civil servants to meet the work requirements of government agencies. According to Trung, N.S. et al. (2021), the quality of civil servants is the value of civil servants and this value is confirmed when they demonstrate their qualities and capacity to meet the work requirements of government agencies. In state management activities, Vietnamese law also stipulates that the assessment of the quality of civil servants includes both these contents and the content related to the service to meet the requirements of the people (VNA, 2008), detail:

- CSQ1. Professional qualifications that meet the title standards and requirements of the job position. This standard is universally obligatory for all public officials and is uniformly applied and regulated by law.

- CSQ2. Skills and expertise to meet the requirements of performing assigned tasks. This standard has its own characteristics for each industry and field and is set by the head of the sector management agency on the basis of the general provisions of the law.

- CSQ3. Dedicated to serving and meeting the requirements of people and businesses. This standard has a general mandatory nature, as well as a standard associated with civil service ethics of civil servants that is legally and uniformly applied.

With quality standards specified by law and confirmed by many studies, the author inherits the above content when discussing the quality of civil servants in this study.

2.2. Qualities of civil servants (QCS)

In both research and management fields, the qualities of civil servants are often mentioned with the content including the most basic knowledge and abilities of civil servants to meet the requirements of the title standards they undertake. According to Thai, P.H. (2016) and HUHA (2020), the qualities of civil servants include: political qualities, understanding and ability to self-study and be creative at work. Vietnamese legislators also identified with similar content (VG, 2020), including:

- QCS1. Political qualities, good morals. Civil servants are loyal to the fatherland, to the people; strictly abide by the law; steadfast political stance; no corruption; solidarity in the group.

- QCS2. Sense of discipline, good lifestyle. Civil servants strictly abide by the regulations and regulations of the working agency; comply with the assignment of tasks of superiors and strictly implement the work reporting regime; practice an honest, modest lifestyle; Respect colleagues, respect people.

- QCS3. Good working ability and ability to self-study and be creative at work. Civil servants capable of working independently; good working coordination to effectively carry out the assigned work; have the right attitude, democratic working style, in accordance with the principles; Actively learning, training and taking initiative at work.

With clearly defined standards, many analytical researchers emphasize that “the qualities of civil servants” is the most basic factor affecting the quality of civil servants. This is also applied by

Vietnamese state agencies and organizations as an annual evaluation criterion for civil servants.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). The qualities of civil servants is the most basic factor affecting the quality of civil servants.

2.3. The capacity of civil servants (CCS)

The capacity of civil servants is mentioned by many researchers in the sense that it is “the ability to work well thanks to ethical qualities and professional qualifications” (Thu, TT et al., 2013); or the ability of civil servants to perform effectively and efficiently assigned tasks (Khanh, C.X. et al., 2010); Trung, N.S et al., 2021). Vietnamese law (VNA, 2008; VG, 2020) clearly stipulates the working capacity of civil servants according to the assigned work norms associated with the working position and according to the requirements of the job position, including:

- CCS1: Good advisory capacity. Civil servants have the ability to research, analyze and evaluate relevant issues in their professional fields to serve as advice and policy making; the ability to transform consulting ideas into products for professional work.

- CCS2: Good ability to perform tasks. Civil servants have the ability to analyze the situation of performing their professional duties in a scientific and timely manner; develop a plan to perform tasks in a reasonable and feasible manner; organize the implementation of tasks, ensure the progress and quality of the assigned tasks.

- CCS3: Good ability to test and evaluate. Civil servants have the ability to inspect and evaluate to actively grasp the situation and summarize the performance of assigned tasks.

With basic competencies according to standards and the initiative to learn and practice in practice, civil servants will accumulate experience and work capacity to meet the requirements of the civil service in the changing trend. of society. This is a basic and important criterion for assessing the quality of civil servants applied in practice in state agencies and organizations of Vietnam.

Hypothesis 2 (H2). The capacities of civil servants is a factor that directly and greatly affects the quality of civil servants.

On the basis of the overview research content, the author builds a research theoretical framework. The research model includes 02 independent variables and 01 dependent variable with a total of 9 observed variables when studying the quality and capacity of civil servants. All observed variables are measured by 5-level Likert measure when designing into questions in the survey: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - No

comments; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1. Summary of research scales on quality of civil servants

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
			1	2	3	4	5
I	Qualities of civil servants	QCS					
1	Political qualities, good morals.	QCS1					
2	Sense of discipline, good lifestyle.	QCS2					
3	Good working ability and ability to self-study and be creative at work.	QCS3					
II	The capacity of civil servants	CCS					
1	Good advisory capacity.	CCS1					
2	Good ability to perform tasks.	CCS2					
3	Good ability to test and evaluate.	CCS3					
III	Civil servants quality	CSQ					
1	Professional qualifications that meet the title standards and requirements of the job position.	CSQ1					
2	Skills and expertise to meet the requirements of performing assigned tasks.	CSQ2					
3	Dedicated to serving and meeting the requirements of people and businesses.	CSQ3					

Source: Compiled by the author through the review

Research model

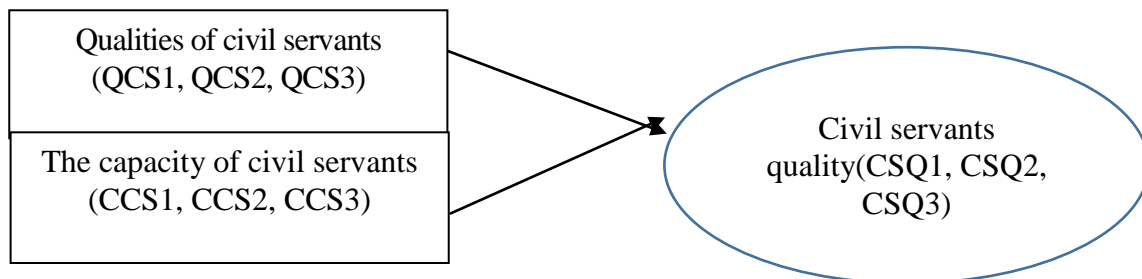


Figure 1. Research model

III. RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, the author uses a quantitative method by directly surveying the opinions of 300 leaders of commune-level government agencies in 4 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Cao Bang Province, BacKan province (Northregion), Ha Tinh province (Central region), Vinh Long province (Southern region). The survey is carried out in two steps: Preliminary survey and official survey.

a) Preliminary survey

With 9 observed variables of the 3-scale research model, the minimum sample size needed in quantitative research is $N = 9 \times 5 = 45$ (Hai, D.H. et al., 2018). In this study, the author performed with sample size $N = 300 > 45$, showing high reliability when conducting survey research. Initially, the

author conducted a preliminary survey in Cao Bang province with a sample size of $N = 100$ leaders of commune-level government agencies. The results of the preliminary survey in Cao Bang province show that the observed variables are reliable enough to be used in the official survey on a broader scale.

b) Formal survey

The author conducted a formal survey with 300 leaders of commune-level government agencies of 4 localities representing 3 regions of Vietnam as mentioned above. The survey was conducted in 2023 and the survey results collected 280 votes and 280/280 valid votes; the majority of survey respondents (64.3%) are commune-level government agency leaders with 3 years or more of management experience (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the study sample

Gender * Time Crosstabulation						
			Time			Total
			< 3 years	3-5 years	> 5 years	
Gender	Male	Count	64	44	48	156
		Gender	41.0%	28.2%	30.8%	100.0%
	Female	Count	36	19	69	124
		Gender	29.0%	15.3%	55.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	100	63	117	280
		Gender	35.7%	22.5%	41.8%	100.0%

Source: Author's survey results

With the collected data, the author conducts scale test, regression analysis to test the research hypothesis.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

The author conducts statistics and tests Cronbach' Alpha to identify the reliability of the

scales and observed variables in the research model. According to Hai, D.H. et al. (2018), the scale ensures reliability when reaching the Cronbach' Alpha value > 0.6; The observed variable is reliable when it reaches the Corrected Item-Total Correlation value > 0.3. Statistical and test results are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Statistical results, scale testing

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Qualities of civil servants (QCS)	QCS1	280	1	5	4.05	.480	.836	QCS1 = .654
	QCS2	280	1	5	4.27	.507		QCS2 = .698
	QCS3	280	1	5	4.17	.486		QCS3 = .741
2. The capacity of civil servants (CCS)	CCS1	280	1	5	3.61	.885	.780	CCS1 = .595
	CCS2	280	1	5	3.65	.931		CCS2 = .614
	CCS3	280	1	5	3.39	.936		CCS3 = .644
3. Civil servants quality (CSQ)	CSQ1	280	1	5	4.05	.605	.783	CSQ1 = .681
	CSQ2	280	2	5	4.95	.578		CSQ2 = .619
	CSQ3	280	2	5	4.16	.502		CSQ3 = .577
Valid N (listwise)		280						

Source: Author's survey results

Table 3 data shows:

+ The observations on the scale "Qualities of civil servants" (QCS), "Capability of civil servants" (CCS), "Civil servants quality" (CSQ) are all rated at mean Mean>3.0 , has statistical significance according to the Likert measure (1-5) identified. Particularly, the scale "Capability of civil servants" (CCS) has observed variables that are rated at a low level: Mean (CCS1) = 3.61, Mean (CCS2) = 3.65, Mean (CCS3) = 3.39, showing capacity the work of civil servants in practice is still limited, not meeting the high

requirements in terms of consulting capacity, task performance capacity and inspection and evaluation capacity.

+ All 3 scales and 9 observed variables in the model have standardized test values: Cronbach' Alpha > 0.6; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3. These scales continue to be used to perform regression analysis to examine the relationship of the independent variables "Qualities of civil servants" (QCS), "Capability of civil servants" (CCS) with variables depends on "Civil servants quality" (CSQ).

Table 4.Multivariable regression results

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.380	.230		5.996	.000		
	Qualities of civil servants (QCS)	.552	.060	.500	9.237	.000	.825	1.212
	The capacity of civil servants (CCS)	.106	.039	.145	2.686	.008	.825	1.212

a. Dependent Variable: Civil servants quality (CSQ)
R Square: 0.576; Durbin-Watson: 2.007

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Table 4 data shows:

+ R Square = 0.576, confirming the factors “Qualities of civil servants” (QCS), “Capability of civil servants” (CCS) explain 57.6% of variation of the factor “Civil servants quality” (CSQ) in the research model; The built multivariate regression model is suitable for the data set.

+ VIF = 1.212 (1<VIF<2), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity. Durbin-Watson = 2.007 (1< d<3) shows that the regression model does not have autocorrelation.

+ Regression coefficients of two independent variables “Qualities of civil servants” (QCS), “Capability of civil servants” (CCS) are statistically significant (Sig. < 0.05), showing the factors “Qualities of civil servants” (QCS) , “Capacity of civil servants” (CCS) are all correlated with “Civil servants quality” (CSQ). The unnormalized regression coefficients (B) have positive values, so the factors in the research model have a positive relationship; Hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted.

On the basis of the general regression model $Y = B_0 + B_1 * X_1 + B_2 * X_2 + \dots + B_i * X_i$ (Hai, D.H. et al., 2018), a regression model can be identified. The multivariate of this study is as follows:

$$CSQ = 1.380 + 0.552 * QCS + 0.106 * CCS$$

Based on the standardized regression coefficient (Beta), it can be seen that the correlation level of the independent and dependent variables in increasing order is: Capacity of civil servants (CCS) and qualities of civil servants (QCS).

V. CONCLUSION

From the above research results, it can be affirmed that local leaders underestimate the practical working capacity of civil servants. Therefore, the author recommends that local leaders need to innovate the assessment of the

working capacity of civil servants; focus on assessing the competency framework of each job position.

The above content implemented will help quantify the criteria for assessing the quality of civil servants according to job characteristics, title standards and employment positions of civil servants easily. This also contributes to creating consistency in the assessment method and content of the quality assessment of civil servants by local government agencies; overcome the limitations of the assessment of civil servants in accordance with the current law with the main form of internal assessment.

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