

# **The Impact of Civil Service Culture and Ethics to Work Results of Vietnam Commune-Level Civil Servants**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

In Vietnam, commune-level civil servants work at the lowest levels of government; they are the people who are close to the people and directly deal with the people's requests, and directly implement the laws and policies of the State to the people. The characteristics of the management activities of the commune-level government, in addition to the general principles prescribed by law, also have factors associated with the characteristics of the population and local culture distributed by region and region. That also affects the formation of distinctive features in civil service culture and civil service ethics of commune-level civil servants compared to district- and provincial-level civil servants. Therefore, the work results of commune-level civil servants (WR) besides the criteria of quality, qualifications and capacity, are also affected by the factors of civil service culture and civil service ethics. In this study, the author focuses on analyzing the influence of the factors of civil service culture (SC) and civil service ethics (SE) on the work results of commune-level civil servants (WR). Through the development of a research theoretical framework, the author designed a survey and conducted a survey of 400 people to assess the civil service culture, civil service ethics and work results of commune-level civil servants in the locality where they live. The survey area consists of 6 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam: Ninh Binh province, Ha Nam province (Northern region), Ha Tinh province, Quang Binh province (Central region), Binh Phuoc province, Hau Giang province (Southern region). The survey is conducted selectively, whereby the people surveyed are those who have had transactions with commune authorities at least 3 times in the last 5 years. The research results show that people consider civil service ethics (SE) to be the factor that has the strongest influence on the work results of commune-level civil servants (WR), followed by civil service culture (SC). From the results of this study, the author discusses appropriate policy issues to improve the quality of commune-level civil servants in Vietnam.

**Keywords:** Commune-level civil servants; civil service culture; civil service ethics; work result.

## **1. Introduction**

Vietnam's Law on Organization of Local governments promulgated in 2015 stipulates that administrative units consist of three levels: provincial level (including 63 provinces and

centrally run cities); district level (including 705 districts, urban districts, towns, provincial cities and centrally run cities); commune level (including 10,599 communes, wards and townships). Local government is established according to these 3 levels; each level consists of two agencies, namely the People's Council - the elected body, and the People's Committee - the executive authority (VNA, 2015). In this system, the commune level is the level of government close to the people and the commune-level civil servants are the ones who directly deal with the people's requests. As of October 1, 2022, Vietnam has 10,599 commune-level administrative units, including 1,737 wards, 614 townships and 8,248 communes (WIKIPEDIA, 2022).

According to the annual assessment, commune-level civil servants complete their professional tasks, contributing to the implementation of the local economic, social and political development tasks; The quality of commune-level civil servants has been improved in the direction of standardization of professional qualifications and practical results of implementation of assigned tasks. However, the results achieved from civil service activities of commune-level civil servants are still not commensurate with the State's policy investments in civil servants (MOHA, 2020); In many commune-level localities, the implementation of policies and laws has not met the requirements of serving the people, because commune-level civil servants are not flexible in contacting and dealing with people, showing weakness in civil service culture and civil service ethics (VG, 2021). That leads to the work results of commune-level civil servants still not really meeting the requirements of local development management tasks in the context of reform and serving the people. This is posing a challenge to local managers in improving the quality and performance of civil servants and government agencies.

The above fact sets out the requirements of the research and practical survey of civil service activities of commune-level civil servants. In that context, this research paper was conducted with the aim of providing scientific information for the management and policy making of the State on commune-level civil servants. The author conducts theoretical research, surveys and evaluates practice of 400 people in 6 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam on civil service culture, civil service ethics and civil work results of commune-level civil servants in the locality where they live. The survey results provide objective information for the author to make research conclusions and policy suggestions suitable to the conditions of Vietnam in the present and future period.

## **2. Literature Reviews**

### ***2.1. Civil service culture of civil servants***

Civil service culture is often referred to the values and ethical standards of civil servants in civil service activities. Gretton, J. and Anthony Harrison, A. (1989) argue that civil service culture is the set of values of a civil service; these values are present and sustainable in civil service activities. This approach comes from the cultural aspect and emphasizes the value factor, an important element of culture. Similarly, Kernaghan, Kenneth (1994) conceive of civil service culture as values, ethical standards, orientations and visions of the civil service; The value factor is an important element of the civil service culture mentioned, and at the same time, the author believes that ethical standards are also an element of the civil service culture. In another perspective, Edgar H. Schein (2004) defines civil service culture as the values, beliefs and conventions within the organization that are shared among the members of a group or organization; those values, beliefs, and conventions permeate the organization, become its traditions, and govern the behavior of its members.

Thus, from many approaches, the civil service culture is mentioned with the values of the civil service; values to create pride, belief or love for the profession, the connection of civil servants to the civil service. At the same time, civil service culture also creates the vision, mission, and main goals of the administration to serve the interests of the state, people and society. In management activities in Vietnam, the process of reforming the state administration towards professionalism, modernity, effectiveness, efficiency, integrity, serving the people, is one of the important and meaningful tasks. The great meaning is to build a civil service culture (VG, 2021). That is towards the goal of ensuring discipline, administrative discipline and operational efficiency of agencies and organizations; at the same time, it helps civil servants to form more standard attitudes and behaviors compared to the previous period. The basic content of the civil service culture is shown (PM, 2021) including: Respect and cooperation with colleagues; Respect and serve the people; Compliance with working rules.

- SC1. Respect and cooperate with colleagues: Civil servants has a suitable attitude towards superiors, subordinates and peers; spirit of coordination in performing tasks to complete the agency's common tasks.
- SC2. Respect and serve the people: Civil servants have the obligation to respect the people; willing to serve and dedicated to serve to ensure the rights and interests of the people.
- SC3. Compliance with working rules: Civil servants only comply with the law when dealing with professional work and solving people's requests without being influenced by other factors.

Although there are many similarities between the views of researchers and managers about civil service culture, however this study analyzes and evaluates the practice of civil service culture of commune-level civil servants in Vietnam, so the author uses the provisions of the law as a basis for analysis and assessment of the civil service culture of civil servants, that is: Respect and cooperate with colleagues (SC1); Respect and serve the people (SC2); Compliance with working rules (SC3).

## ***2.2. Civil service ethics of civil servants***

Civil service ethics is a political and legal category regulated by the laws of each country and analyzed by many researchers. Thai, PH (2014) defines "public service ethics as attitudes, behaviors, manners, performance of duties and obligations of civil servants when performing official duties". Similar to this point of view, HUHA (2020) defines "civil service ethics as a system of principles and rules of conduct in civil service activities in order to regulate behavior, attitude, behavior and behavior in public service and responsibilities of civil servants while performing their official duties". Explaining from another perspective, Thoi, HV (2016) emphasizes that "civil service ethics is the synthesis of two groups of social ethics and personal ethics of civil servants in performing civil duties, it is constituted by public officials' awareness of politics, responsibility in civil service performance, and attitude of civil service performance". Thang, VN (2020) and Tung, LS (2021) affirm that the civil service ethics of civil servants reflects the democracy of civil service, that civil servants perform civil service to serve the people.

In the field of management, the law of Vietnam stipulates that civil service ethics is the criterion for recruitment and evaluation of civil servants. Contents of civil service ethics include: Good politics and ideas; Good ethics and lifestyle; Good working style and manners; Good sense of discipline (VNA, 2008; VG, 2020).

- SE1. Good politics and ideas: Public servants strictly abide by the law; putting the interests of the nation - nation, people and collective above personal interests; firm political bravery; steadfast stance.
- SE2. Good ethics and lifestyle: Civil servants live an honest, humble, sincere, pure and simple lifestyle; have a spirit of solidarity, build a clean and strong agency, organization and unit; not embezzlement, corruption, negativity, waste, bureaucracy, opportunism, self-interest, bossy, oppressive; do not let relatives and acquaintances abuse their positions and powers for personal gain.
- SE3. Good working style and manners: Civil servants are responsible for the assigned work; have a sense of responsibility and coordination in performing tasks; have the right attitude and style of conduct, standard working style, meeting the requirements of the civil service culture; dynamic, creative, dare to think, dare to do, flexible in performing tasks; scientific, democratic and principled working method.
- SE4. Good sense of discipline: Civil servants obey the organization's assignment; strictly implement the regulations, rules and regulations of the working agency; strictly implement the work reporting regime.

There are certain differences between the viewpoints of the above researchers and managers regarding the content of civil service ethics, but they all emphasize attitudes, behaviors, manners, performance of duties and obligations of civil servants while on duty. In this study, the author uses the provisions of Vietnamese law as a basis for analysis and assessment of civil service ethics of commune-level civil servants, that is: Good politics and ideas (SE1); Good ethics and lifestyle (SE2); Good working style and manners (SE3); Good sense of discipline (DD4).

### **2.3. Work results of civil servants**

The work results represent the criteria for assessing the quality of civil servants, which are regulated by the laws of each country and mentioned in many research works (Trung, NS, 2021). Vietnamese law also stipulates that the work results is one of the contents of annual civil servant evaluation quite clearly. Accordingly, the work results execution are shown in three aspects: Ensuring the progress of the assigned tasks; ensure the quality of execution of assigned tasks; create people's satisfaction (VG, 2020).

- WR1. Ensure the progress of the assigned tasks. Each planned task assigned to perform has a deadline for completion. This is a time requirement for the work results, according to which civil servants are responsible for ensuring the progress of task performance according to the set plan or according to specific assigned tasks.
- WR2. Ensure the quality of execution of assigned tasks. Each planned task assigned to perform has a product quality goal to be achieved. This is a very important requirement, creating the value and characteristics of each product. Therefore, civil servants are responsible for ensuring the quality of tasks according to the set plan or according to specific assigned tasks.
- WR3. Creating people's satisfaction: Stemming from the role and responsibility to serve the people, the work results of civil servants are also reflected in the aspect of service attitude. Accordingly, civil servants are responsible for ensuring that people are satisfied when handling their requests; respect the people; fair treatment and protection of the people's legitimate rights and interests.

From the above overview, the author builds a research theoretical framework with a 3-factor model. The research scale and research model includes 02 independent variables and 01 dependent variable with a total of 10 observed variables when studying the influence of civil service

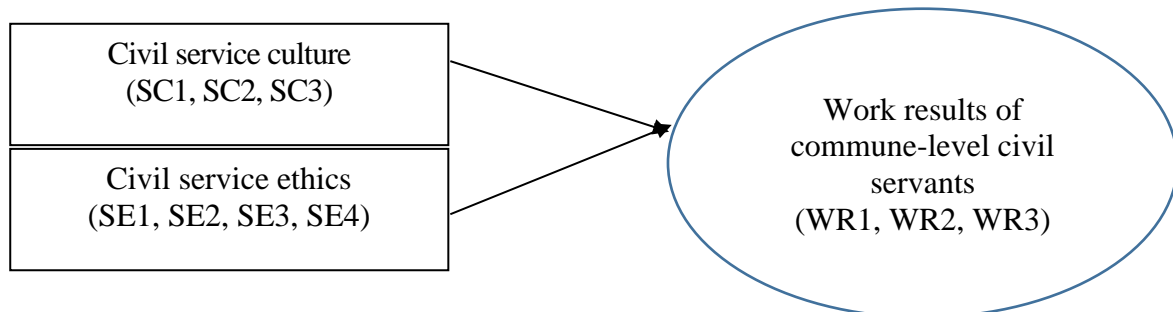
culture and civil service ethics on the work results of commune-level civil servants. The author designed the survey according to these observed variables and measured by the Likert measure 5 levels: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - No comments; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree (Table 1, Figure 1).

**Table 1.** *Research theoretical framework*

No	The scale	Code	Degree evaluation				
			1	2	3	4	5
<b>I</b>	<b>Civil service culture of commune-level civil servants</b>	<b>SC</b>					
1	Respect and cooperate with colleagues	SC1					
2	Respect and serve the people	SC2					
3	Compliance with working rules	SC3					
<b>II</b>	<b>Civil service ethics of commune-level civil servants</b>	<b>SE</b>					
1	Good politics and ideas	SE1					
2	Good ethics and lifestyle	SE2					
3	Good working style and manners	SE3					
4	Good sense of discipline	SE4					
<b>III</b>	<b>Work results of commune-level civil servants</b>	<b>WR</b>					
1	Ensure the progress of the assigned tasks	WR1					
2	Ensure the quality of execution of assigned tasks	WR2					
3	Creating people's satisfaction	WR3					

**Source:** *Compiled by the author through the review*

**Research models**



**Figure 1.** *Research model*

**Research hypothesis**

**H1:** Civil service culture has a correlation/impact on the work results of commune-level civil servants.

**H2:** Civil service ethics has a correlation/impact on the work results of commune-level civil servants.

**3. Research Methods**

The author uses a qualitative method (collection and analysis of secondary data - published documents) combined with a quantitative method (collection and analysis of primary data in the form of surveys and surveys close). The investigation and survey is carried out in two steps: Preliminary investigation and official investigation.

**a) Preliminary investigation**

The minimum sample size required for factor analysis for the 3-scale and 10-observed model of this study is  $N = 10 \times 5 = 50$  (Hai, D.H. et al., 2018). The author carried out the survey with sample size  $N = 360 > 50$  to ensure the reliability of data collection. The survey was designed and completed; the author conducted a preliminary survey in Ninh Binh province with a sample size of  $N = 60$  people. Preliminary survey results show that the observed variables are reliable so that they can be used in the official survey on a broader scale.

**b) Formal investigation**

From the minimum sample size  $N = 50$  determined by scientific method, the author carried out the actual survey with sample size  $N = 360$  ( $N > 50$ ) showing high reliability when conducting survey research. The author conducted a formal survey in 6 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam: Ninh Binh province, Ha Nam province (Northern region), Ha Tinh province, Quang Binh province (Central region), Binh Phuoc province, Hau Giang province (Southern region). The survey is conducted selectively, whereby the people surveyed are those who have had transactions with commune authorities at least 3 times in the last 3 years. The survey was carried out with the consent of the respondents after the author's preliminary interview. The survey results were: 360/360 people agreed to answer and 352/300 valid answer sheets, achieving a valid response rate 97.7%. The characteristics of the study sample showed that the majority (252/352 people, accounting for 71.6%) of the survey respondents had more than 5 transactions with local government agencies in the last 3 years (Table 2).

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the study sample**

<b>Case Processing Summary</b>						
	Valid		Cases Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender * Age * Frequency	352	100.0%	0	0.0%	352	100.0%

<b>Gender * Age * Frequency of Crosstabulation</b>					
		Count			
Frequency	Gender	Age			Total
		< 30	30-40	>40	
3-5 times	Male	38	29		67
	Female	20	13		33
	Total	58	42		100
6-10 times	Male		120		120
	Female		52		52
	Total		172		172
> 10 times	Male			37	37
	Female			43	43
	Total			80	80
Total	Male	38	149	37	224
	Female	20	65	43	128
	Total	58	214	80	352

**Source:** Author's survey results

From the collected data, the author conducts scale testing, exploratory factor analysis, and regression analysis to test the research hypothesis.

## 4. Research Results

The author conducts Cronbach's Alpha test to identify the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. The test results show that all 3 scales and 10 observed variables have reliability when meeting the standard conditions: Cronbach's alpha > 0.6; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3 (Hai, D.H. et al., 2018) (Table 3).

**Table 3.** *Scale test results*

No	Scales	Observed variables	Reliability coefficients (Cronbach' Alpha)	The correlation coefficient of the smallest total variable
1	Civil Service Culture (SC)	SC1, SC2, SC3	.687	SC1 = .363
2	Civil Service Ethics (SE)	SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4	.865	SE1 = .5.31
3	Work results of commune-level civil servants (WR)	WR1, WR2, WR3	.661	WR3 = .379

**Source:** *Author's survey results*

With the standard test value, 3 scales and 10 observed variables in the model continue to be used to perform exploratory factor analysis. The author conducts exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation to preliminarily evaluate the unidirectionality, convergence value, and discriminant value of the scales. The results of the analysis are shown in Tables 4 and 5 below.

**Table 4.** *Total Variance Explained*

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.838
	Approx. Chi-Square	2418,884
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	45
	Sig.	.000

**Total Variance Explained**

Components	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	5.004	50.042	50.042	5.004	50.042	50.042	4.012	40.123	40.123
2	1.469	14.687	64,728	1.469	14.687	64,728	2.227	22,273	62,395
3	1,000	10.03	74,731	1,000	10.03	74,731	1.234	12,336	74,731
4	.847	8.466	83,198						
5	.485	4.851	88.048						
6	.386	3.855	91,903						
7	.347	3.474	95.377						
8	.279	2.789	98.166						
9	.102	1.023	99,189						
10	.081	.811	100,000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Source:** *Author's survey results*

**Table 5.** Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>				
Scales	Observed variables	Components		
		1	2	3
Civil service culture (SC)	SC1	.911		
	SC2	.809		
	SC3	.822		
Civil service ethics (SE)	SE1		.894	
	SE2		.851	
	SE3		.694	
	SE4		.807	
Work results of commune-level civil servants (WR)	WR1			.879
	WR2			.803
	WR3			.744

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

Table 4 and Table 5 data show that:  $KMO = 0.838 > 0.5$ , confirms that exploratory factor analysis is appropriate for the data set; Bartlett's test with Sig. =  $0.000 < 0.05$ , shows that the observed variables are linearly correlated with the representative factor; Total Variance Explained with Cumulative % =  $74.731\% > 50\%$  shows that 74.731% variation of representative factors is explained by observed variables; all observed variables have Factor Loading  $> 0.5$ , showing that the observed variables have good statistical significance; the observed variables were extracted into 03 factors corresponding to 03 initial factors with Eigenvalues  $> 1$ , showing that the original research model was kept unchanged, including: 01 dependent variable (WR), 02 independent variables (SC, SE) with a total of 10 observed variables having good statistical significance, it is possible to perform multivariable linear regression analysis to consider the relationship of independent variables (SC, SE) with the dependent variable (WR).

**Table 6.** Multivariable regression results

Model	Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				t	Sig.	VIF
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	Remove	Beta			
(Constant)	1.257	.112			11.243	.000	1,000
1 Civil service culture (SC)	.196	.032		.219	6.138	.000	1,000
Civil service ethics (SE)	.840	.031		.958	26.839	.014	1,000

a. Dependent Variable: Work results of commune-level civil servants (WR)  
 Adjusted R Square: 0.713  
 Durbin-Watson: 2.134

**Source:** Author's survey results



Table 6 data shows:

- Adjusted R Square = 0.713, confirms that the factors SC, SE explain 71.3% of the variation of the WR factor in the research model. The built multivariate regression model is suitable for the data set.
- The coefficient of variance exaggeration of the factors (VIF = 1,000 < 2), shows that the regression model does not have multicollinearity.
- Durbin-Watson = 2,134 (1 < d < 3), shows that the regression model does not have autocorrelation. The regression coefficients of the two independent variables (SC, SE) are statistically significant (Sig. < 0.05), showing that the factors SC, SE are correlated with the WR.
- The unnormalized regression coefficients have positive values, so the factors in the research model have a positive relationship, the hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted.

On the basis of the generalized regression model  $Y = B_0 + B_1 * X_1 + B_2 * X_2 + \dots + B_i * X_i$  (Hair, J.F. et al., 2009), a regression model can be identified the multivariate of this study is as follows:

$$WR = 1.257 + 0.196 * SC + 0.840 * SE$$

Based on the standardized regression coefficient, it can be seen that the correlation level of the independent variables and the dependent variable in increasing order is: Civil service culture (SC) and Civil service ethics (SE).

## 5. Conclusion

From the above study results, it can be confirmed that: The civil service culture (SC) of commune-level civil servants is rated at a lower level than that of civil service ethics (SE). It also means that commune-level civil servants need to improve the contents of civil service culture prescribed for civil servants to perform their duties better. From this conclusion, the author suggests a number of governance innovations for local leaders, which are:

- To build and implement a specific training program for civil servants on civil service culture and conduct annual training. This will help local government agencies regularly foster knowledge, practice coordination skills to solve work and spirit and service attitude of civil servants.
- To build and implement criteria for evaluating civil servants on civil service culture in a specific way, combining internal assessment (internal assessment) and external assessment (evaluating opinions of the people) and conduct an annual review. This will help local government agencies to regularly check and evaluate civil servants on the spirit of cooperation, work coordination, service spirit of civil servants to have full and multi-dimensional information about the civil servants during the performance of their duties.

The training combined with the examination and evaluation of the civil servant's civil service culture, which is well done, will help form the civil servant: A culture of respect and cooperation with colleagues (attitudes appropriate to the level of the civil servant). superiors, subordinates and peers; the spirit of coordination in performing tasks to complete the common tasks of the agency); culture of respecting and serving the people (respecting the people; willing to serve and dedicated to serving to ensure the rights and interests of the people); culture of compliance with working rules (only complying with the law when dealing with professional work, solving people's requests without being influenced by other factor).

In civil service activities, the policy conditions are good, but the civil service culture of civil servants is not good, the operation of local government agencies cannot achieve high efficiency. When civil servants are regularly fostered knowledge and training in civil service culture, people will see respect, dedicated service and more trust in the local government. From there, local government agencies can mobilize the participation of the people, mobilize resources from the people in a favorable way to serve the local development.

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