Research on Working Efficiency of Vietnamese Local Civil Servants

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Abstract

Vietnam is carrying out a revolution in the innovation of local government organization, building a two-level local government, including the provincial level and the commune level (removing the district level). At this time, the role of the commune level is affirmed with many new tasks; commune-level civil servants are also given increased tasks of serving the people on the basis of being the human resources directly implementing the laws and policies of the central and provincial levels to the people to ensure the legitimate rights and interests of the people. Therefore, the working efficiency of commune-level civil servants is decisive to the efficiency and prestige of local government agencies. In this study, the author evaluates the working efficiency of civil servants based on two contents, which are the working capacity and service attitude of civil servants. The author conducted a survey of 300 leaders of commune-level government agencies in 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam: Quang Ninh province (North), Quang Tri province (Central), Binh Phuoc province (South). The survey results show that local leaders assess that commune-level civil servants have a good service attitude, but their practical working capacity is still limited and needs to be trained to master digital knowledge and skills. From the results of this study, the author discusses policy issues aimed at improving knowledge and skills for local civil servants in the context of a digital society, building e-government and digital government in Vietnam.

Keywords: Working Efficiency, Working Capacity, Service Attitude, Commune-Level Civil Servants, Vietnam

Introduction

Localities in Vietnam are currently constitutionally divided into 3 levels: provincial level, district level, and commune level (VNA, 2013); the number includes 63 provincial-level localities; 705 district-level localities and 10599 commune-level localities (GSO, 2024). However, in 2025, Vietnam is implementing a revolution in streamlining the government apparatus (CPV, 2025), planning to build a 2-level locality model, including provincial level and commune level; the expected number is about 30 provincial-level localities and about 2,000 commune-level localities (TP New, 2025).

Local government at each level consists of the People's Council (an agency elected by voters) and the People's Committee (an agency exercising executive power, 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. According to current law, the commune-level government includes 6 civil servant positions of the People's Committee: 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

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(VG, 2023).

According to the general assessment, commune-level civil servants are standardized in terms of qualifications and expertise; work efficiency has been improved, but is not uniform between urban and rural areas, mountainous areas (MOHA, 2024); many challenges arise regarding the work efficiency of commune-level civil servants in the context of streamlining the local government apparatus according to the current reform policy. This is also an issue of interest to the author and is the reason why the author chose to conduct his research.

Literature Review

In many studies in Vietnam, the term "effectiveness" is often interpreted as achieving the desired results when comparing the output factors with the input factors of a certain work process. Many lexicographers define effectiveness as the ability to produce the desired results or the ability to produce the desired output; when something is considered effective, it means that it has a desired result or creates a deep, vivid impression (EPH, 2002). With the above research and definition, the effectiveness of civil servants is also interpreted in terms of output results in the process of performing tasks, and is synonymous with the results of civil servants' work.

According to Cuong, T.V. et al. (2018), the work efficiency of civil servants is demonstrated when civil servants perform their tasks to ensure progress, quality and create satisfaction for the people. Can, N.T. (2020) also believes that guaranteed progress, quality and good working attitude are factors that affirm the work efficiency of civil servants, thereby implying that training and fostering civil servants form and develop working capacity and public ethics for civil servants. Duong, N.T.T. (2022) also affirmed progress, quality (working capacity) and service attitude (public ethics) when discussing the work efficiency of civil servants, but emphasized the content aspect of meeting practical work requirements associated with job titles and positions in public service activities. Accordingly, civil servants perform their work in accordance with their assigned responsibilities and tasks; receive and process people's records completely and on time; serve and respect the people, create satisfaction for the people; do not let people reflect on the working spirit and service attitude of civil servants. In the management of civil servants, Vietnamese law also stipulates the evaluation of civil servants based on the criteria of working capacity - ensuring progress and quality of assigned tasks; criteria of public ethics - service attitude, creating satisfaction for the people (VG, 2020), which is an important legal basis for agencies and localities to evaluate the work efficiency of civil servants.

It can be seen that, in both theoretical research, practical research and legal regulations, the work efficiency of civil servants clearly shows the output product goals that civil servants need to achieve in the process of performing their duties in public service activities. That is, civil servants ensure progress, ensure the quality of assigned work and attentive service, creating satisfaction for the people. The author inherits the above research viewpoints and legal regulations to build the scale "Working efficiency of civil servants" (ECS), including some contents: Civil servants properly perform their assigned duties and tasks, ensuring the progress of handling people's records (ECS1); Civil servants properly perform their assigned duties and tasks, ensuring the quality of handling people's records - complete content and in accordance with regulations (ECS2); Civil servants properly perform their assigned duties and tasks, respect people, serve people attentively and create people's satisfaction in the process of handling people's records (ECS3).

Thus, the common issue that many studies and current legal regulations in Vietnam confirm

when discussing the work efficiency of civil servants is work capacity (ensuring the progress and quality of assigned work) and service attitude (respecting the people, serving the people attentively and creating satisfaction for the people). These are both two components of the work efficiency of civil servants, but also two factors that have a decisive impact on the work efficiency of civil servants. Therefore, in this study, the author builds a research model on factors affecting the work efficiency of civil servants (scale/dependent variable) with two scales/independent variables including "Working capacity" (WC) and "Service attitude" (SA).

- Firstly, discussing the working capacity of civil servants, many recent studies emphasize the ability to work practically to meet the requirements of the job position that civil servants undertake. According to Son, N.V. (2023), the working capacity of civil servants is formed on the basis of professional qualifications and the process of self-study and training of civil servants in practice, which are advisory capacity, task performance capacity and work control capacity; good working capacity along with good public ethics are two factors that determine the quality and efficiency of civil servants' work and affirm the working efficiency and prestige of government agencies. The viewpoint of Son, N.V. (2023) is agreed with by Hue, N.T.K. (2025) and affirms that: People are the key factor of social development and civil servants are the key factor of the civil service, because the working capacity of civil servants determines the success of the civil service; Faced with the strong development of social life, countries including Vietnam have increasingly high requirements for improving the capacity of civil servants to meet new requirements and task. The above researchers also emphasized that: Good advisory capacity and task execution capacity help civil servants quickly transform ideas into advisory products for competent authorities and easily receive support and implementation decisions; Good control capacity helps civil servants proactively control work and promptly learn from experience, adjust appropriate plans to always perform assigned tasks well. The author also agrees with the above research viewpoints, but adds more content/elements suitable for the current trend of developing e-government and digital government, which are digital knowledge, skills and proficiency in the process of solving work in the digital environment; in addition, there is the ability to work independently, combined with the ability to cooperate in work so that civil servants achieve the best work results. From here, the scale of "Working capacity" (WC) of civil servants is built including the following contents: Civil servants have the ability to advise, organize and execute tasks and have good work control, helping civil servants easily realize ideas into work products and ensure progress and quality of assigned work (WC1); Civil servants have the ability to work independently and coordinate well in work to ensure progress and quality of assigned work (WC2); Civil servants have digital knowledge, skills and proficient transactions and interactions in the digital environment to ensure progress and quality of assigned work (WC3).

- Second, discussing the service attitude of civil servants, many recent studies emphasize the attitude of civil servants when contacting and handling people's records; that is, respecting and listening to people; dedication to serving people and creating satisfaction for people. Tung, L.S. (2021) affirmed that local civil servants, as public servants of the people, are therefore responsible for serving, ready to support and serve people to resolve people's requests in the best way. Explaining in detail about this content, Tung, L.S. (2021) emphasized that civil servants must know how to listen to people; must demonstrate a spirit of objectivity and fairness when handling people's work; must have the obligation to protect the legitimate rights and interests of people, take primary responsibility for the implementation process and the results of resolving people's requests, only then can they truly create people's trust in the government. Similar to the

above viewpoint, Anh, N.T.M. (2025) believes that serving the people is the responsibility and obligation of civil servants, because they are servants of the people, paid by the people; therefore, service attitude is an important content when discussing the ethical qualities of civil servants. In terms of research, the author inherits the viewpoints of Tung, L.S. (2021) and Anh, N.T.M. (2025), but emphasizes the connotation of the concept of "service attitude", that is, civil servants must always show politeness in communicating with people: Have a polite attitude in communication, appropriate to each group of people, in accordance with the concepts and social etiquette of contemporary society. That is very necessary, because civil servants often directly contact and resolve people's requests. From here, the scale of "Service Attitude" (SA) of civil servants is built, including the following contents: Civil servants guide people enthusiastically, thoughtfully and communicate politely and courteously with people (SA1); Civil servants are objective and fair with all people when handling their requests; listen to people's opinions and accept them seriously and receptively (SA2); Civil servants respect people; protect people's legitimate rights and interests; are responsible for explaining the content and results of handling people's files (SA3).

In practical terms, when civil servants demonstrate good working capacity, the work of the government agency will be favorable, achieving effective goals; when civil servants have a good service attitude, conflicts from the people will be avoided, creating people's trust in the government agency; the work efficiency of civil servants is also affirmed. With that meaning, the hypothesis is: *Working capacity (H1) and service attitude of civil servants (H2) are the constituent contents and factors that affect the working efficiency of civil servants.*

From the general research content, the author built a research model on factors affecting the work efficiency of civil servants, including: 02 scales/independent variables "Working capacity" (WC); "Service attitude" (SA) and 01 scale/dependent variable "Working efficiency of civil servants" (ECS). 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				
I	**Working capacity**	**WC**					
1	Civil servants have the ability to advise, organize and execute tasks and have good work control, helping civil servants easily realize ideas into work products and ensure progress and quality of assigned work.	WC1	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
2	Civil servants have the ability to work independently and coordinate well in work to ensure progress and quality of assigned work.	WC2	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
3	Civil servants have digital knowledge, skills and proficient transactions and interactions in the digital environment to ensure progress	WC3	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5

	and quality of assigned work.						
II	**Service Attitude**	**SA**					
4	Civil servants guide people enthusiastically, thoughtfully and communicate politely and courteously with people.	SA1	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
5	Civil servants are objective and fair with all people when handling their requests; listen to people's opinions and accept them seriously and receptively.	SA2	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
6	Civil servants respect people; protect people's legitimate rights and interests; are responsible for explaining the content and results of handling people's files.	SA3	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
III	**Working efficiency of civil servants**	**ECS**					
7	Civil servants properly perform their assigned duties and tasks, ensuring the progress of handling people's records.	ECS1	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
8	Civil servants properly perform their assigned duties and tasks, ensuring the quality of handling people's records - complete content and in accordance with regulations.	ECS2	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
9	Civil servants properly perform their assigned duties and tasks, respect people, serve people attentively and create people's satisfaction in the process of handling people's records.	ECS3	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5

Source: Compiled by the author through the review
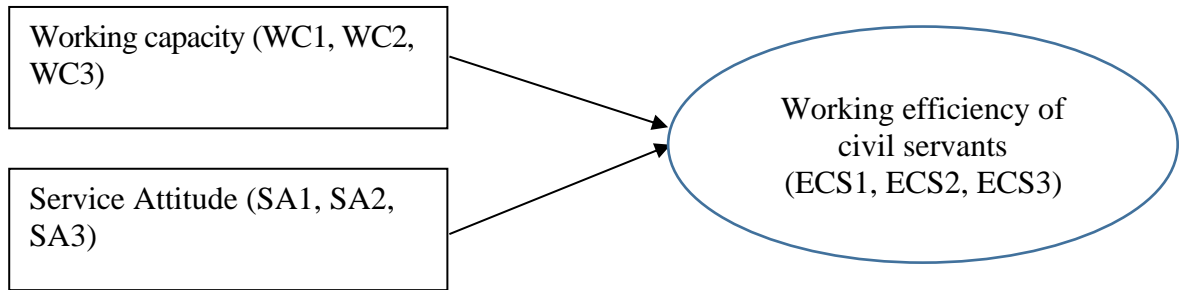
Research Model

Figure 1. Research Model

Research Methods

The author uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve the research objectives. The content of qualitative and quantitative methods is explained below.

Qualitative methods are used in the content of the general research and the construction of the theoretical research model; carried out on the basis of analyzing related research results and synthesizing legal documents; the theoretical research model is formed with three scales: "Working capacity" (WC); "Service attitude" (SA); "Working efficiency of civil servants" (ECS) (Table 1, Figure 1).

Quantitative method is used in the content of analysis, practical assessment of the working efficiency of local civil servants in Vietnam; is carried out to collect and analyze primary data through a survey of 300 local leaders at the commune level. In this method, the author uses a number of analytical techniques to test the reliability of the scale, observed variables; test the model, research hypothesis and draw research conclusions. The survey is conducted in two steps: Preliminary survey and official survey.

- Preliminary survey: The minimum sample size required for exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis in quantitative research for a model of 3 scales and 9 observed variables is $N = 9*5 = 45$ (Hair, J.F. et al., 2009). The author conducted a preliminary survey in Quang Ninh province with a sample size of $N = 90$ leaders of commune-level government agencies ($N > 45$). The results of the preliminary survey in Quang Ninh 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: Quang Ninh Province (North), Quang Tri Province (Central), Binh Phuoc Province (South). The selected survey subjects included 300 leaders of commune-level government agencies, who had held leadership positions for 3 years or more. The author conducted preliminary interviews to capture information and conducted the survey based on their consent to respond. The survey results collected 300/300 valid ballots, achieving a response rate of 100%.

Research Results and Discussion

From the survey results obtained, the author tested the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. 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 (Hair, J.F. et al., 2009). The test results in Table 2 show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables are reliable enough to perform the following analysis.

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 WC2 WC3	300 300 300	1 1 1	5 5 5	3.95 3.98 3.88	.697 .712 .748	.638	WC1 = .449 WC2 = .513 WC3 = .387
2. Service attitude (SA)	SA1 SA2 SA3	300 300 300	1 1 1	5 5 5	4.12 4.09 4.18	.701 .712 .688	.715	SA1 = .683 SA2 = .557 SA3 = .645
3. Working efficiency of civil servants (ECS)	ECS1 ECS2 ECS3	300 300 300	1 1 1	5 5 5	4.08 4.12 4.07	.648 .625 .611	.679	ECS1 = .576 ECS2 = .681 ECS3 = .569
Valid N (listwise)		300						

Source: Author's survey results

Data in Table 2 shows that observations on the scales "Working capacity" (WC), "Service attitude" (SA), "Working efficiency of civil servants" (ECS) are all evaluated at an average level of Mean > 3.88, which is statistically significant according to the determined Likert scale (1-5). However, the observed variables of the scale "Working capacity" (WC) are evaluated at a lower level than "Service attitude" (SA): Mean (WC1) = 3.95, Mean (WC2) = 3.98, Mean (WC3) = 3.88, showing that local leaders at the commune level have a low assessment of the working capacity of civil servants in the process of practicing public service. In which, the lowest is Mean (WC3) = 3.88, affirming that many civil servants are limited in knowledge, digital skills and proficient in transactions and interactions in the digital environment to ensure progress and quality of assigned work.

The survey results are summarized and summarized in Table 2, contributing to reflecting the practical working capacity and limitations in digital capacity of Vietnamese local civil servants in the context of building and developing e-government and digital government. This reality poses training and development requirements and tasks to equip, update and supplement digital knowledge and skills for commune-level civil servants in a timely manner so that commune-level civil servants are proficient in digital skills and work in the digital environment, meeting the requirements of building and developing e-government, digital government and the revolution of streamlining the government apparatus in Vietnam today.

The results of the above scale and observed variable testing are necessary conditions for the author to conduct exploratory factor analysis to preliminarily assess the unidimensionality, convergent validity, and discriminant validity 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.		.747
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2369.785
	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	3.396	37.736	37.736	3.396	37.736	37.736	2.959	32.875	32.875
2	3.081	34.235	71.971	3.081	34.235	71.971	2.762	30.685	63.561
3	1.056	11.733	83.704	1.056	11.733	83.704	1.813	20.143	83.704
4	.522	5.795	89.499						
5	.440	4.883	94.382						
6	.176	1.961	96.343						
7	.164	1.821	98.164						
8	.115	1.276	99.440						
9	.050	.560	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. Working capacity (WC)	WC1	.785		
	WC2	.788		
	WC3	.771		
2. Service attitude (SA)	SA1		.811	
	SA2		.798	
	SA3		.803	
3. Working efficiency of civil servants (ECS)	ECS1			.797
	ECS2			.801
	ECS3			.789
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 $\geq 50\%$; 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 = 0.747 > 0.5; observed variables have linear correlation with representative factors, shown through Bartlett's Test with observed significance level Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05; observed variables explain 83.704% of the variation of representative factors, shown through Total Variance Explained with Cumulative % = 83.704% > 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 "Working capacity" (WC), "Service attitude" (SA) and 01 dependent variable "Working efficiency of civil servants" (ECS) 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 "Working capacity" (WC), "Service attitude" (SA) and dependent variable "Working efficiency of civil servants" (ECS). 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	t	Sig.	VIF
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.014	.191		12.382	.000	
	Working capacity (WC)	.413	.133	.308	9.985	.000	1.792
	Service attitude (SA)	.602	.179	.412	8.146	.000	1.792
a. Dependent Variable: Working efficiency of civil servants (ECS) R Square = .724; Durbin-Watson = 2.102							

Source: Author's survey results

The data in Table 5 shows that:

+ R Square = 0.724, confirming that the scales "Working capacity" (WC) and "Service attitude" (SA) explain 72.4% of the variation in the scale "Working efficiency of civil servants" (ECS).

+ VIF = 1.792 (1 < VIF < 2), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.102 (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 the same impact on the scale "Working efficiency of civil servants" (ECS).

+ 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) = 0.413, B(SA) = 0.602, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables "Working capacity" (WC), "Service attitude" (SA) and 01 dependent variable "Working efficiency of civil servants" (ECS).

Based on the generalized regression model $Y = B_o + B_1*X_1 + B_2*X_2 + \ldots + B_i*X_i$ (Hair, J.F. et al., 2009), the multivariate regression model of this study can be determined as: ECS = 10.24 + 0.413*WC + 0.602*SA.

In the above regression model, the regression coefficient shows the correlation level of the independent variables and the dependent variable in ascending order: "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 limited in digital knowledge, skills and proficient in transactions and interactions in the digital environment to ensure the progress and quality of assigned work.

The results of this study contribute to reflecting the practical working capacity and the limitations of digital capacity of Vietnamese local civil servants in the context of building and developing e-government and digital government. Meanwhile, working capacity is a direct factor that helps civil servants create output products, directly affirming their working efficiency and has been evaluated and affirmed by many studies (Son, N.V., 2023; Hue, N.T.K., 2025): The working capacity of civil servants determines the success of the civil service; in the face of the strong development of social life, countries including Vietnam have increasingly high requirements for improving the capacity of civil servants to meet new requirements and tasks.

This reality raises the requirement and task of training and fostering to equip, update and supplement digital knowledge and skills for commune-level civil servants in a timely manner so that commune-level civil servants are proficient in digital skills, proficient in working in the digital environment, meeting the requirements of the task of building and developing e-government, digital government and the revolution of streamlining the government apparatus in Vietnam today. That also raises the requirement of researching and innovating policies on assessment, use and training and fostering so that civil servants can promote their knowledge, professional skills and expertise and form and develop digital capacity to improve work efficiency in practical public service activities. In this study, the author implies the policy content, which is: Implementing the policy of training and encouraging civil servants to proactively train digital knowledge and skills 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 and the revolution of streamlining the government apparatus in Vietnam.

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