

## Factors Affecting Civil Service Culture Of Vietnamese Local Civil Servants

Nguyen Van Dung<sup>1\*</sup>, Vu Hoang Manh Trung<sup>2</sup>,  
Ho Duc Hiep<sup>3</sup>, Le Thi Thanh Tuyen<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>National Academy of Public Administration Campus in the  
Central Region, Vietnam

\*Corresponding author, Email: [dunghvhcgvn@gmail.com](mailto:dunghvhcgvn@gmail.com);  
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1106-6362>

<sup>2</sup>National Academy of Public Administration Campus in the  
Central Region, Vietnam

Email: [trungvhm@napa.vn](mailto:trungvhm@napa.vn); Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4590-2349>

<sup>3</sup>National Academy of Public Administration  
Campus in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Email: [hoduchiep.2000@gmail.com](mailto:hoduchiep.2000@gmail.com); Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1999-2762>

<sup>4</sup>National Academy of Public Administration,  
Hanoi city, Vietnam

Email: [letuyen.huha@gmail.com](mailto:letuyen.huha@gmail.com); Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0192-1153>

### *Abstract*

Vietnam's civil servants are required by law to be loyal to the country and devoted to serving the people. This is the legal regulation, but also the civil service culture of each civil servant. In practice, civil servant culture is affected by many factors that managers need to take into account when making relevant policies. In this study, the author analyzes two main factors, which directly affect the civil service culture of civil servants, including: "The suitability of the civil servant law" and "Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants". The author conducted a survey of 300 leaders of commune government agencies of 5 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Lai Chau province, Dien Bien province (Northern region), Nghe An province (Central region), Dong Nai province, Tra Vinh province (Southern region). The research results show that the leaders of government agencies underestimate the factor "Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants"; set out requirements on the development of solutions suitable to local characteristics in order to raise the consciousness and responsibility of civil servants in performing civil service culture.

Keywords: Local civil servants; Civil service culture; Vietnam.

## **1. Introduction**

Vietnam's local civil servants are staffed in three-level government agencies, including: 63 provincial-level government agencies, 705 district-level government agencies, and 10.599 commune-level government agencies (GSO, 2023). Vietnamese law stipulates that civil servants have the obligation to be loyal to the country and to serve the people (VNA, 2008). The performance of this duty by civil servants has become a civil service culture, and is also prescribed as an annual criterion for assessing the quality of civil servants (VG, 2020).

According to the assessment of the Ministry of Home Affairs of Vietnam, local civil servants are assessed to complete their professional tasks every year, but in the locality, civil service culture has not been well implemented in the process of civil servants serving the people enterprises (MOHA, 2022). This is a limitation and is posing new requirements in the management of civil servants. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research and survey on the civil service culture of local civil servants. In this study, the author learns about civil service culture in the direction of analyzing a number of factors affecting the civil service culture of local civil servants with the goal of providing empirical information to assess the current state of civil service and suggest appropriate solutions.

The author builds a research theoretical framework and conducts a survey of 300 leaders of commune-level government agencies of 5 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Lai Chau province, Dien Bien province (Northern region), Nghe An province (Central region), Dong Nai province, Tra Vinh province (Southern region). With objective information from the survey results, the author makes research conclusions and suggests policy solutions suitable to Vietnam's conditions to improve the quality of local civil servants.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Civil service culture (CSC)**

Many researchers emphasize the values and ethical standards of civil servants in the process of performing official duties when they refer to the topic of civil service culture. According to Gretton, J. et al. (1989) and Edgar, H.S. (2004), civil service culture is the set of values of a civil service; it is the values, beliefs and conventions within the organization; This value is shared within the organization, governs the behavior of its

members and becomes the tradition of the organization. Similar to the above view, Trung, N.S. et al. (2023) emphasizes the value of civil service culture: Civil service culture creates trust and cohesion of civil servants with the civil service to serve the state and the people.

In the state management activities of each country, civil service culture is often clearly institutionalized into law. The formulation of laws on civil service culture is usually done on the basis of promoting the nation's traditional values and values suitable for contemporary society. In Vietnam, the administrative reform process has identified building a civil service culture as a key task (VG, 2021). In this study, the author mainly bases on the provisions of current law to build the theoretical content of civil service culture of civil servants to serve the assessment of civil service culture of local civil servants in Vietnam (VG, 2021; PM, 2021), that is: (1) Civil servants strictly abide by rules and regulations in civil service activities; (2) Civil servants are willing to work and cooperate, take responsibility for the assigned work; (3) Civil servants are willing to serve and dedicated to serving businesses and people.

- CSC1. Civil servants strictly abide by rules and regulations in official activities: During the performance of their official duties, civil servants are obliged to comply with the law when dealing with professional work; implement the principle of mutual benefit in the course of official duty performance; to comply with administrative discipline to ensure the maintenance of order and efficiency in the operation of government agencies.

- CSC2. Public servants are willing to work and cooperate, responsible for assigned work: During the performance of official duties, civil servants show their willingness to work; has the obligation to cooperate with colleagues, to cooperate with people and businesses to settle administrative records in accordance with regulations and to ensure progress and quality.

- CSC3. Public servants are ready to serve and dedicated to serving businesses and people: In the process of performing their official duties, civil servants must be ready to serve people and businesses; respect people and businesses and satisfy people and businesses when dealing with their request files.

## **2.2. Factors affecting civil service culture**

There are many factors affecting the civil service culture of civil servants, including objective factors (legal factors) and subjective factors (consciousness and responsibility of civil

servants). These factors have different levels of impact, but they are the main content that many studies are interested in and discussed (Thai, P.H., 2014; Tung, L.S., 2021; Trung, N.S., 2022). In this study, the author inherits and develops the content from the above studies when building a theoretical framework on the factors affecting the civil service culture of civil servants, which are: The suitability of the civil servant law; Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants.

a) The suitability of the civil servant law (CSL)

The suitability of the civil service law is an essential and directional element for all acts of civil servants in public service activities; has a great influence on the civil service culture of civil servants (Thai, P.H., 2014). This content requires that: The provisions of the civil service law on civil service culture are promulgated in accordance with the general characteristics of national culture; consistent with the characteristics of the civil service; in accordance with relevant regulations in professional activities of civil servants.

- CSL1. The content of the law on civil servants related to civil service culture is suitable to the characteristics of national culture. This is the basic requirement of the law-making in general. This content is guaranteed, will create consensus among the people when implementing the provisions of the law; civil servants will be convenient in the process of performing professional tasks and serving the people.

- CSL2. The content of the law on civil servants related to civil service culture is consistent with the characteristics of the civil service. In terms of organizational management, the legal regulations on civil service culture is one of the management tools of state agencies, so it must be suitable with the characteristics of the operating environment of the State agencies state agencies - civil service.

- CSL3. The content of the civil service Law relating to civil service culture is consistent with relevant regulations in the professional activities of civil servants. Civil service culture plays a role in guiding the behavior of civil servants in performing professional jobs. Therefore, it is necessarily consistent with relevant regulations in the professional activities of public servants.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Appropriately promulgated content of the civil service law related to civil service culture has an impact on civil servant culture.

b) Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants (CRC)

Many researches analyze and confirm that “Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants” is one of the basic criteria to evaluate the quality of civil servants; Vietnamese law also stipulates this criterion (VG, 2020). Tung, L.S. (2021) asserts that “consciousness and responsibility of civil servants” is clearly reflected in the performance of professional duties and the satisfaction of the people. Trung, N.S. (2022) emphasized: When civil servants have a sense of working and are responsible for their assigned work, they will form their own culture of performing official duties in a professional direction, administrative discipline will be improved ensure.

Vietnam’s civil service law stipulates that the “consciousness and responsibility of civil servants” in civil service performance is not only considered an aspect of civil service culture, but also considered in terms of public service ethics. It includes the following contents: Compliance with the law, observance of administrative discipline; willingness to work and cooperation at work; service attitude and dedication to serving the people.

- CRC1. Public servants abide by the law and abide by administrative discipline. That is the observance of the law in the field of professional activities; compliance with working procedures; Comply with regulations on working time. When civil servants abide by the law and abide by administrative discipline, they not only ensure order and discipline in the performance of their official duties, but also ensure that civil servants do not infringe upon the legitimate rights and interests of the people, enterprise.

- CRC2. Civil servants have a spirit of willingness to work and cooperation in work. This is not only a requirement for civil service culture, but also a requirement for basic capacity of civil servants. That is because civil servants implement the laws and policies of the state, they must have a spirit of willingness to work, cooperation in work so that the contents of policies and laws are uniformly deployed to the people and businesses; At the same time, receive timely feedback from people and businesses to research and advise on policies.

- CRC3. Civil servants have a service attitude and dedication to serving the people. Civil servants have the duty to serve the people. They must have a attentive service attitude; ready to assist in solving the requests of people and businesses; dedicated service to create satisfaction for people and businesses.

Hypothesis 2 (H2). Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants in the performance of official duties have an impact on the civil service culture of civil servants.

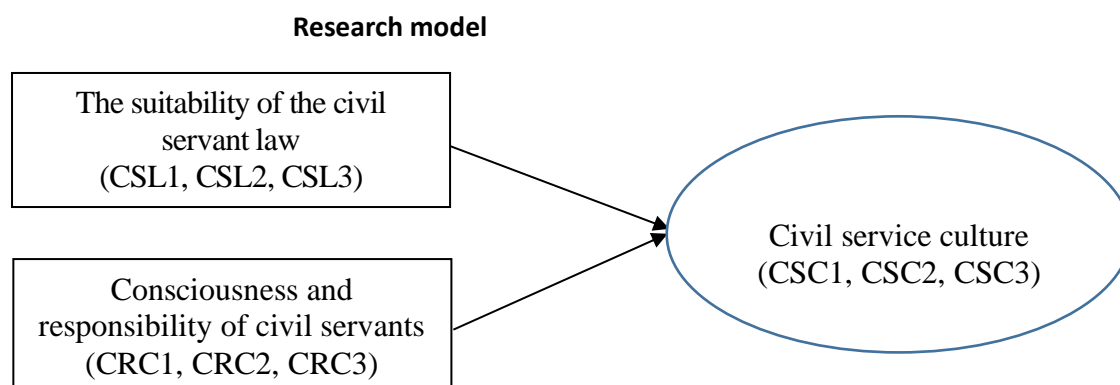
With the overview study, the author builds a theoretical framework to study the factors affecting the civil service culture of civil servants. The research model includes: Scale “The suitability of the civil servant law”, scale “Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants” (2 independent variables) and scale “Civil service culture” (01 dependent variable). Three scales include 9 observed variables, designed by the author into 9 questions in the survey questionnaire and measured by the Likert measure with 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	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
			1	2	3	4	5
<b>I</b>	<b>The suitability of the civil servant law</b>	<b>CSL</b>					
1	The content of the law on civil servants related to civil service culture is suitable to the characteristics of national culture.	CSL1					
2	The content of the law on civil servants related to civil service culture is consistent with the characteristics of the civil service.	CSL2					
3	The content of the civil service Law relating to civil service culture is consistent with relevant regulations in the professional activities of civil servants.	CSL3					
<b>II</b>	<b>Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants</b>	<b>CRC</b>					
1	Public servants abide by the law and abide by administrative discipline.	CRC1					
2	Civil servants have a spirit of willingness to work and cooperation in work.	CRC2					
3	Civil servants have a service attitude and dedication to serving the people.	CRC3					
<b>III</b>	<b>Civil service culture</b>	<b>CSC</b>					
1	Civil servants strictly abide by rules and regulations in official activities.	CSC1					
2	Public servants are willing to work and cooperate, responsible for assigned work.	CSC2					

3	Public servants are ready to serve and dedicated to serving businesses and people.	CSC3					
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Source: Compiled by the author through the review



**Figure 1. Research model**

### 3. Research methods

In this study, the author uses sociological survey method to collect primary data for analysis, evaluation and conclusions. The survey is carried out in two steps: Preliminary survey and official survey:

- Preliminary survey: This study conducts correlation analysis to test the relationship of the scales, test the proposed research hypothesis. According to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the minimum sample size needed to perform the above analysis for the 3-scale and 9-observed model of this study is  $N = 9 \times 5 = 45$ . In fact, the author carried out the survey. Surveying opinions of leaders of commune-level government agencies with sample size  $N = 300 > 45$  to ensure the reliability of data collection.

- Official survey: The author conducted an official survey for 300 leaders of commune-level government agencies of 5 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Lai Chau province, Dien Bien province (Northern region), Nghe An province (Central region), Dong Nai province, Tra Vinh province (Southern). The survey results are: 300/300 people agree to answer and 300/300 valid answer sheets, achieving 100% valid response rate. The characteristics of the study sample showed that the majority (254/300 people, accounting for 84.6%) of the survey respondents had more than 3 management experiences (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	31	112	45	188
		Gender	16.5%	59.6%	23.9%	100.0%
	Female	Count	15	53	44	112
		Gender	13.4%	47.3%	39.3%	100.0%
Total	Count		46	165	89	300
	Gender		15.3%	55.0%	29.7%	100.0%

Source: Author's survey results

With the data collected from survey activities, the author tests the reliability of the scale and observed variables; exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test research hypotheses and draw research conclusions

#### 4. Research results

The author conducts Cronbach Alpha test to identify the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. According to Hai, D.H. (2019), the conditions for the scales to achieve reliability are: Cronbach Alpha > 0.6; The condition for the observed variables to be reliable is: Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3. The test results show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables are reliable (Table 3).

**Table 3. Scale test results**

No	Scales	Observed variables	Reliability coefficients (Cronbach' Alpha)	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1	The suitability of the civil servant law (CSL)	CSL1, CSL2, CSL3	.631	CSL1 = .418 CSL2 = .483 CSL3 = .416
2	Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants (CRC)	CRC1, CRC2, CRC3	.619	CRC1 = .412 CRC2 = .563 CRC3 = .491
3	Civil service culture (CSC)	CSC1, CSC2, CSC3	.648	CSC1 = .404 CSC2 = .411 CSC3 = .382

Source: Author's survey results

With the standard test value (Cronbach' Alpha > 0.6; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3), all 3 scales and 9 observed variables in the research model continue to be used to perform



exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). We used exploratory factor analysis to determine the scales' unidirectionality, convergence, and discriminant values; used confirmatory factor analysis to kiểm định giả thuyết nghiên cứu. The analysis's findings are displayed in Table 4, Table 5 and Figure 2 below.

**Table 4. Total Variance Explained**

Total Variance Explained							
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings <sup>a</sup>
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	3.694	41.042	41.042	3.694	41.042	41.042	3.043
2	1.857	20.639	61.681	1.857	20.639	61.681	2.687
3	1.345	14.942	76.623	1.345	14.942	76.623	2.547
4	.884	9.820	86.443				
5	.535	5.945	92.388				
6	.364	4.042	96.430				
7	.224	2.490	98.919				
8	.076	.850	99.769				
9	.021	.231	100.000				
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.							
a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.							
KMO and Bartlett's Test: KMO = 7.28; Sig. = .000							

**Table 5. Pattern Matrix****Pattern Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

		Component		
		1	2	3
The suitability of the civil servant law (CSL)	CSL1	.966		
	CSL2	.955		
	CSL3	.904		
Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants (CRC)	CRC1		.906	
	CRC3		.856	
	CRC2		.783	
Civil service culture (CSC)	CSC1			.873
	CSC2			.851
	CSC3			.690
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.				

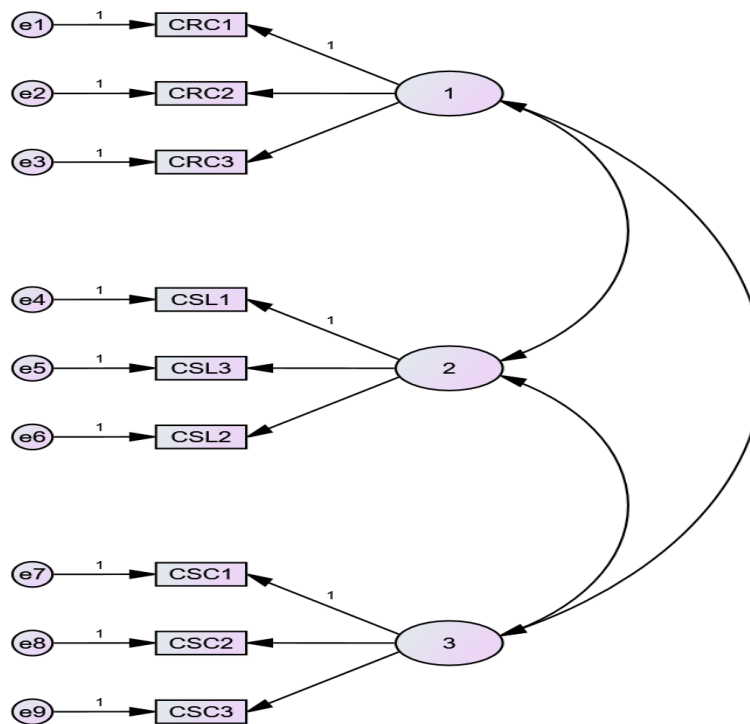
Source: Author's survey results

According to Hai, D.H. (2019), exploratory factor analysis was carried out in quantitative research using the following values:  $0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$ , Bartlett's test has the level of significance  $Sig. < 0.05$ , Eigenvalue  $\geq 1$ , Total Variance Explained  $\geq 50\%$ , and Factor Loading  $\geq 0.5$ .

Data from Tables 4 and 5 demonstrate that  $KMO = 0.728 > 0.5$ , supporting the appropriateness of exploratory factor analysis for the given data collection. With a significance threshold of  $Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05$ , Bartlett's test demonstrates that the observed variables have a linear relationship with the representative factor. Total Variance Explained with Cumulative% =  $76.623\% > 50\%$  indicates that observed variables with Factor Loading  $> 0.5$  explain  $76.623\%$  of the variation of the representative factors, demonstrating the observed variables' strong statistical importance. With Eigenvalues  $> 1$ , the observed variables were divided into three factors that matched the original three factors of the research model: One dependent variable "Civil service culture" (CSC), two independent variables "The suitability of the civil servant law" (CSL), "Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants" (CRC), and nine observed variables with high statistical significance. Confirmatory factor analysis' result can be used to

examine the relationship between the independent variables (CSL, CRC) and the dependent variable (CSC).

**Figure 2.** Confirmatory factor analysis' results



**Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)**

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
CSL1	<---	1	1.000				
CSL2	<---	1	.654	.147	4.445	***	
CSL3	<---	1	.587	.140	4.184	***	
CRC1	<---	2	1.000				
CRC3	<---	2	5.385	1.276	4.219	***	
CRC2	<---	2	4.490	1.049	4.281	***	
CSC1	<---	3	1.000				
CSC2	<---	3	.799	.074	10.861	***	
CSC3	<---	3	.038	.034	1.137	.002	

**Covariances: (Group number 1 - Default model)**

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
1	<-->	2	.048	.012	3.914	***	
1	<-->	3	.251	.028	9.055	***	

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
2 <--> 3	.073	.018	4.045	***	

**Variances: (Group number 1 - Default model)**

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
1	.185	.042	4.442	***	
2	.009	.005	2.014	.001	
3	.261	.035	7.357	***	
e1	.603	.049	12.365	***	
e2	.151	.017	9.141	***	
e3	.507	.042	12.150	***	
e4	.218	.036	6.087	***	
e5	1.033	.086	12.054	***	
e6	.950	.079	12.087	***	
e7	.175	.020	8.816	***	
e8	.520	.043	11.981	***	
e9	.510	.042	12.235	***	

Source: Author's survey results

The data in Figures 2: Estimate > 0, show that independent variables "The suitability of the civil servant law" (CSL), "Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants" (CRC) have a positive relationship to dependent variable "Civil service culture" (CSC); the hypothesis H1 and H2 are therefore accepted. Based on the values Estimate, it can be confirmed that the correlation level of the independent variables and the dependent variable in ascending order is: "Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants" (CRC) [Estimate = .073] and "The suitability of the civil servant law" (CSL) [Estimate = .251].

## 5. Conclusion

From the above analysis and testing results, the leaders of local government agencies have underestimated the "Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants" (CRC). That shows that local civil servants in Vietnam need to have a higher sense of responsibility in public service activities. That sets a requirement for local government agencies, which is regular training on civil

service culture so that civil servants can show high sense of responsibility in public service activities.

From the conclusion of this study, the author suggests solutions for local leaders, which are: (1) Developing a policy on fostering civil service culture and implementing an annual training plan for officer; (2) Develop content to evaluate civil servants on civil service culture and conduct annual assessment; combining methods of internal assessment (internal assessment) and external assessment (collecting opinions of the people) to assess the civil service culture of civil servants.

The combination of implementing the policy of fostering civil service culture and the policy of assessing the civil service culture of civil servants will help civil servants improve their qualifications and awareness of civil service culture. It also helps local government agencies to regularly check and evaluate the consciousness and responsibility of civil servants in the implementation of civil service culture. That will have a positive impact on the performance of civil servants and the management efficiency of local government agencies.

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