

# Vietnamese Civil Servants' Public Service Responsibilities

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## Abstract

Civil servants are people who implement state policies and resolve people's requests to ensure the people's legitimate rights and interests according to the law. Therefore, the effectiveness of social management by government agencies, especially at the local government level, depends heavily on the public service responsibilities of civil servants. In this study, the author builds a theoretical framework on the civil servants' public service responsibilities, including responsibility for performing professional work and attitude of serving people. The author surveyed 330 leaders of commune-level local government agencies in 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including Thai Nguyen province (Northern region), Nghe An province (Central region), and Dong Thap province (Southern region). Research results have confirmed that local leaders evaluate civil servants who demonstrate public service responsibilities to meet the requirements of public service activities; However, the content "attitude of serving people" is evaluated at a lower level than the content "responsibility for performing professional work". From the results of this research, the author suggests several contents that need to be researched and adjusted for managers to improve the quality of local civil servants to meet the requirements of serving the people in Vietnam.

Keywords: Public service responsibilities; Responsibility for performing professional work; Attitude of serving people; Vietnamese civil servants.

## 1. Introduction

Vietnam's local civil servants are recruited and appointed to hold positions and titles in the 3-level government agency

system (63 provincial governments, 705 district governments, and 10.599 commune-level governments) [GSO, 2022] and agencies of the Communist Party of Vietnam, socio-political organizations and several other agencies at the local level according to the provisions of law (VNA, 2013).

The assessment of the quality of civil servants is carried out annually, including many contents, including the assessment of the civil service responsibilities of civil servants prescribed by the Government (VG, 2020). According to general opinion, Vietnamese civil servants today are standardized in terms of professional qualifications; The capacity to perform tasks and public duties is demonstrated, contributing to affirming the effectiveness of performing tasks of civil servants and the effectiveness of management of government agencies. However, there is still a situation where civil servants lack official responsibility and have not created satisfaction from people in the local area (VG, 2021). This reality is posing challenges for managers in improving the quality and efficiency of civil servants and local government agencies to better serve the people.

In order for the above problem to be resolved, it is necessary to conduct research and surveys on content related to civil servants, including the content of public service responsibilities of civil servants, especially at the local level. With that meaning, the author conducted research and surveyed the opinions and assessments of local government agency managers on the public service responsibilities of Vietnamese civil servants. The survey sample size was determined to include 330 managers of 115 commune-level government agencies in 3 provinces representing three regions of Vietnam.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Civil servants' public service responsibilities (PSR)**

The term "public responsibility" is a political and legal category regulated by Vietnamese law and analyzed by many researchers. In the political aspect, public service responsibility is the duty of civil servants to realize the political goals of the state and serve the people (Thai, P.H., 2014). In the legal aspect, public service responsibility is the standard for evaluating the quality of civil servants prescribed by law. Vietnamese law (VNA, 2008; VG, 2020)

specifically regulates the public responsibilities of civil servants, which are: Civil servants are responsible for accepting assigned tasks (PSR1); Civil servants are responsible for organizing the implementation of assigned tasks (PSR2); Civil servants are responsible for reporting and explaining assigned tasks (PSR3).

PSR1. Civil servants are responsible for accepting assigned tasks. This is the individual's responsibility towards the organization, in which they must accept assigned tasks from superiors without evading work. At the same time, civil servants must also show a willingness to accept assigned tasks, not only professional tasks but also other support and service tasks in public service activities.

PSR2. Civil servants are responsible for organizing the implementation of assigned tasks. This is done using specific methods, suitable to the characteristics of professional work: Independently solve tasks; coordinate to solve tasks. The activities of government agencies are carried out according to the one-stop, one-stop-shop mechanism, so civil servants not only work independently but also have to coordinate closely with relevant departments process of performing assigned work.

PSR3. Civil servants are responsible for reporting and explaining assigned tasks. This is a generally regulated work reporting regime, but it is also the accountability of civil servants to ensure honesty and transparency in public service activities. Accordingly, civil servants are responsible for reporting fully, honestly, and providing accurate and objective information on contents related to the performance of assigned responsibilities and tasks within a specified time limit.

The above contents of public service responsibilities of civil servants are specifically regulated by Vietnamese law and are inherited by the author to build a theoretical framework for this research. It can be affirmed that it is reasonable, because this study surveys and evaluates the current state of public service responsibilities of local Vietnamese civil servants; should be implemented based on the general provisions of the host country's laws.

## **2.2. Criteria for civil servants' public service responsibilities**

In the field of research and management, there are many criteria for evaluating the content of "Civil servants' public

service responsibilities”, confirmed by many researchers and prescribed by law. According to Tung, L.S. (2021), civil servants’ public responsibilities are affirmed in terms of their willingness to accept tasks and perform assigned tasks; Service spirit, and service attitude of civil servants when contacting and resolving people’s requests. Trung, N.S. (2022) emphasized the criteria for public service responsibilities of civil servants, which is responsibility for progress and quality when performing assigned professional tasks; service responsibility and service attitude of civil servants towards the people. Vietnamese law also clearly stipulates the civil service responsibilities of civil servants in the following criteria: Civil servants demonstrate their responsibilities when performing professional duties; Civil servants demonstrate an attitude of serving the people, creating satisfaction for people when handling their files (VG, 2020).

It is possible to see similarities in the research contents and the provisions of the law mentioned above on the public service responsibilities of civil servants, expressed in the aspect of responsibility for assigned work and service responsibilities of civil servants civil servants to the people. In this study, on the basis of inheriting previous research content and provisions of current Vietnamese law, the author builds a theoretical framework of criteria for public service responsibilities of civil servants including: Responsibility for implementation professional work (RP); Attitude to serve the people (AP).

a) Responsibility for performing professional work (RP)

The responsibility of performing professional work of civil servants is not only reflected in the aspect of responsibility for the progress and quality of the work that civil servants are assigned to perform (Tung, L.S., 2021; Trung, N.S., 2022); In terms of public service culture and organizational culture, it is also the responsibility of civil servants to the prestige and honor of the agency and the people in the process of performing assigned tasks (Thoi, H.V, 2016). Therefore, this study determines the content of the scale “responsibility for performing professional work”, including: Civil servants ensuring the progress of assigned work (RP1); Civil servants ensuring the quality of assigned work (RP2); Civil servants preserving the reputation and honor of the agency and the people while performing their assigned tasks (RP3).

Each task assigned to a civil servant has a deadline for completion (work progress), and a product quality goal to be achieved (quality of work performance). Civil servants are responsible for ensuring work is carried out on schedule and with quality, which will create people's satisfaction and trust in government agencies; thereby creating prestige and honor for the people and government agencies; The public responsibilities of civil servants are also affirmed. In other words, when civil servants work responsibly and demonstrate responsibility for performing professional work, it will be a factor that has a direct impact on the civil servant's public service responsibilities.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). Responsibility for performing professional work is a factor that forms public service responsibilities, directly affecting the civil servants' public service responsibilities.

b) Attitude of serving people (AP)

The nature of public service activities is to realize the political goals of the state and serve the people; Civil servants are the subjects of public service activities and will be responsible for serving the people (Khanh, C.X. et al., 2010; HUHA, 2020). This responsibility is expressed through the awareness and behavior of civil servants in the process of contacting and handling people's documents, that is: Civil servants are aware and ready to serve the people and are dedicated to serving the people (AP1); Civil servants respect people and listen to people's opinions (AP2); Civil servants treat all people fairly and protect people's legitimate rights and interests (AP3).

Civil servants are aware of their readiness to serve the people and are dedicated to serving the people, which demonstrates the democratic nature and service nature of state government agencies. As a representative of a government agency to exercise state power, serve and meet the legitimate requests of the people, civil servants need to have the following responsibilities: Show courtesy and politeness in communication with the people; Guide people enthusiastically and thoughtfully; receive feedback and policy criticism from the people, becoming a direct bridge connecting the people and the government; Treat people fairly and protect their rights and interests when resolving their requests.

When civil servants perform their role of serving the people well, they have fulfilled their assigned responsibilities and tasks. That will give people confidence and satisfaction with civil servants and government agencies; The civil service responsibilities of civil servants are guaranteed to be carried out according to law.

Hypothesis 2 (H2). The attitude of serving the people is a factor in ensuring the performance of public service responsibilities and has a direct impact on the civil servants' public service responsibilities.

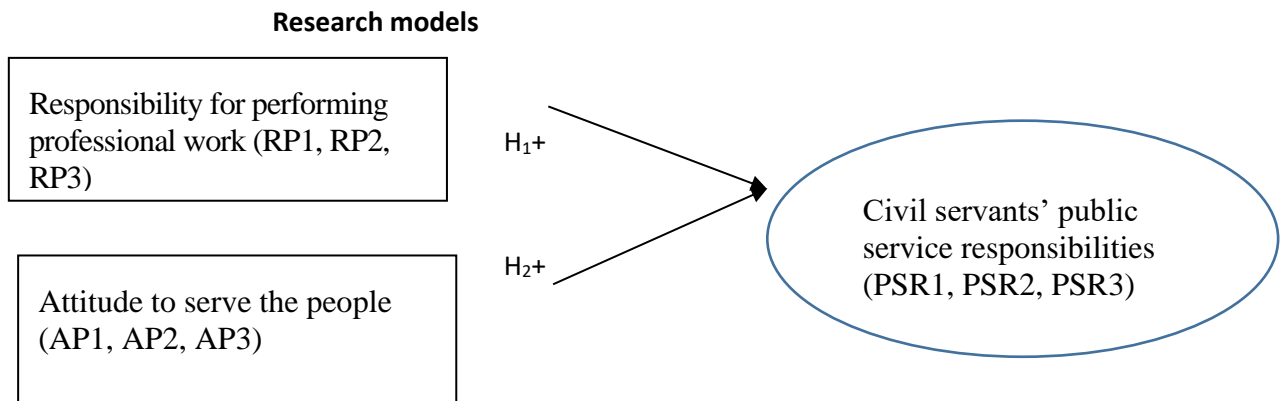
From the mentioned above research content, the authors build a research theoretical framework on civil servants' public service responsibilities. The research model consists of 3 scales: "Responsibility for performing professional work", "Attitude to serve the people" (two independent variables); and "Civil servants' public service responsibilities (01 dependent variable). The above scales include 9 observed variables, designed by the authors into 9 questions in the survey questionnaire, and are measured by the 5-level Likert scale: 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>Responsibility for performing professional work</b>	<b>RP</b>					
1	Civil servants ensuring the progress of assigned work.	RP1					
2	Civil servants ensuring the quality of assigned work.	RP2					
3	Civil servants preserving the reputation and honor of the agency and the people while performing their assigned tasks.	RP3					
<b>II</b>	<b>Attitude to serve the people</b>	<b>AP</b>					
1	Civil servants are aware and ready to serve the people and are dedicated to serving the people.	AP1					
2	Civil servants respect people and listen to people's opinions.	AP2					
3	Civil servants treat all people fairly and protect people's legitimate rights and interests.	AP3					
<b>III</b>	<b>Civil servants' public service responsibilities</b>	<b>PSR</b>					

1	Civil servants are responsible for accepting assigned tasks.	PSR1					
2	Civil servants are responsible for organizing the implementation of assigned tasks.	PSR2					
3	Civil servants are responsible for reporting and explaining assigned tasks.	PSR3					

Source: Compiled by the authors from the literature review



**Figure 1. Research model**

**3. Research methods**

a) Qualitative method

The author uses qualitative methods through collecting and analyzing secondary data and making initial comments on the content of theoretical and practical research on civil service responsibilities of civil servants. Next, the author conducts in-depth interviews and collects comments on the initial research content to complete the theoretical research framework and practical research conclusions.

b) Quantitative method

The author uses quantitative methods through collecting and analyzing primary data in the form of a direct survey of 330 leaders of commune-level local government agencies of 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including Thai Nguyen province (North), Nghe An province (Central), and Dong Thap province in the South).

In quantitative research, the minimum sample size needed to perform the above analysis for the model with 3 scales and 9 observed variables of this study is  $N = 9 \times 5 = 45$  (Hai, D.H., 2019). In fact, the author conducted a survey of the opinions of leaders of commune-level local government

agencies with a sample size of  $N = 330 > 45$ . This sample size ensures the reliability of data collection. The survey results are: 330/330 leaders of commune-level local government agencies agreed to answer and 330/330 valid responses, reaching a valid response rate of 100%.

With data collected from survey activities, the author tested the reliability of the scale and observed variables; Correlation analysis, and regression analysis to test research hypotheses and draw research conclusions.

**4. Research results**

From the theoretical research framework built, the author surveyed the opinions of 330 leaders of commune-level local government agencies. With data collected from survey activities, the author conducted a Cronbach's 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 scales to be reliable are: Cronbach's alpha  $> 0.6$ ; The condition for 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 2).

**Table 2.** Statistical and scale testing results

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach ' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Responsibility for performing professional work (RP)	RP1	330	1	5	4.22	.427	.638	RP1 = .531
	RP2	330	2	5	4.17	.439		RP2 = .544
	RP3	330	2	5	4.12	.391		RP3 = .539
2. Attitude to serve the people (AP)	AP1	330	1	5	3.72	.614	.578	AP1 = .493
	AP2	330	1	5	3.68	.623		AP2 = .517
	AP3	330	1	5	3.59	.612		AP3 = .512
3. Civil servants' public service responsibilities (PSR)	PSR1	330	2	5	4.12	.573	.672	PSR1 = .528
	PSR2	330	2	5	4.09	.592		PSR2 = .521
	PSR3	330	2	5	4.10	.604		PSR3 = .503
Valid N (listwise)		330						

Source: Authors' survey results

Table 2 data shows:

+ Observations on the scales "Responsibility for performing professional work" (RP), "Attitude for serving the people"



(AP), and "Public service responsibilities of civil servants" (PRS) were all evaluated. at the average level Mean > 3.5, statistically significant according to the defined Likert scale (1-5); Civil servants are assessed to have official responsibilities that meet the requirements of performing assigned tasks. However, the observed variables of the scale "Attitude for serving the people" (AP) are rated at the lowest level with Mean (AP1) = 3.72, Mean (AP2) = 3.68, Mean (AP3) = 3.59, shows that local leaders rate civil servants' attitude to serving the people at a low level. This is a factor that greatly affects the public service responsibilities of local Vietnamese civil servants today.

+ All 3 scales and 9 observed variables in the research model have standard test values (Cronbach'alpha > 0.6; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3). From this test result, the author has a basis for reliability to continue performing correlation analysis and regression analysis to consider the relationship of variables in the research model (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Correlation analysis results of the scales

Correlations				
		RP	AP	PSR
RP	Pearson Correlation	1	.337**	.542**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	330	330	330
AP	Pearson Correlation	.337**	1	.396**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	330	330	330
PSR	Pearson Correlation	.542**	.396**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	330	330	330

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors' survey results

The data in Table 3 shows: Correlation coefficients of the scales reach  $0 < r < 1$ , indicating that there is a positive relationship between the two independent variables "Responsibility for performing professional work" (RP), "Attitude to serve the people" (AP) and 01 dependent variable "Civil servants' public service responsibilities" (PSR); hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted. Based on the values of r [r (RP) = .542 and r (AP) = .396], it can be confirmed that the correlation level between the independent variables

and the dependent variable in ascending order, that is: “Attitude for serving the people” (AP), “Responsibility for performing professional work” (RP).

**Table 4.** Multivariable regression results

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.506	.301		3.116	.000	
	Responsibility for performing professional work (RP)	.418	.066	.471	3.970	.000	1.842
	Attitude to serve the people (AP)	.343	.071	.394	6.877	.000	1.842

a. Dependent Variable: Civil servants’ public service responsibilities (PSR)  
R Square = .732; Durbin-Watson = 2.012

Source: Authors’ survey results

Data in Table 4 shows: R Square = .732, confirming that the scales “Responsibility for performing professional work” (RP), and “Attitude to serve the people” (AP) explain 73.2% of the variation bias of the scale “Civil servants’ public service responsibilities” (PRS). The regression coefficients of the two unique variables “Responsibility for performing professional work” (RP) and “Attitude to serve the people” (AP) are both statistically significant with Sig. = 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05) and has a positive value: B (RP) = 0.418, B (AP) = 0.343, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables “Responsibility for performing professional work” (RP), “Attitude to serve the people” (AP) and 01 dependent variables “Civil servants’ public service responsibilities” (PSR); Hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted; The correlation level of the independent and dependent variables in ascending order is: “Attitude for serving the people” (AP), “Responsibility for performing professional work” (RP).

## 5. Conclusion

With the results of correlation analysis and regression analysis explained (Table 3, Table 4), the research conclusion is confirmed, that: Local leaders evaluate civil servants who demonstrate public responsibility (Responsibility for performing professional work; attitude to serve the people) during the performance of duties. However, the attitude of serving the people is evaluated at a lower level than the responsibility of performing professional work.

From the above research conclusion, the author discusses related content, which is: Innovating the assessment of public service responsibilities of civil servants in the direction of combining internal assessment (internal assessment) and assessment from the outside people (external assessment); Focus on organizing to collect comments from the people on the work responsibilities and service attitudes of civil servants. This content is explained as follows:

- First, Civil servants' public service responsibilities are not only a matter of implementing regulations within each government agency but also a matter of serving the people and meeting their requirements in the best way possible. Therefore, when there is active participation of the people in evaluating the public service responsibilities of civil servants, government agencies will have objective information to evaluate the quality of civil servants annually.

- Second, the evaluation of civil servants in Vietnam is carried out annually according to law with the main form being internal evaluation: Civil servants self-assess; The agency approves and recognizes civil servant assessment results for each department. Therefore, it is also necessary to focus on organizing and collecting comments from the people on the work responsibilities and service attitudes of civil servants and be carried out regularly.

With the above conclusions and discussions, this study has helped the author and managers of local government agencies in Vietnam to see more clearly the reality of Civil servants' public service responsibilities, expressed through the responsibility for performing professional work for performing professional work and attitude for serving the people.

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