

## Civil Service Culture Of Vietnamese Civil Servants

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### *Abstract*

In Vietnam, civil servants are determined to be loyal to the country and devoted to serving the people. The performance of this obligation has become the culture of every civil servant in public service, also known as civil service culture and is affected by many factors that managers need to take into account when making policy relate to. This study discusses the factors affecting the civil service culture of civil servants. The author builds a theoretical framework consisting of two factors “conformity and rigor of the law” and “consciousness and responsibility of civil servants in public service activities” (two independent variables) and the factor “civil service culture” (01 dependent variable); conducted a survey of 300 leaders of commune-level government agencies of 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Bac Ninh province (Northern region), Quang Nam province (Central region), Bac Lieu province (Southern region). Research results show that leaders of government agencies underestimate the factor “consciousness and responsibility of civil servants in civil service activities” of commune-level civil servants in performing civil service, affecting “civil service culture of civil servants”. From the results of this study, the author suggests management content suitable to local characteristics in order to enhance the sense of responsibility and responsibility in the performance of civil service culture of civil servants.

Keywords: Civil servants; Civil service culture; Vietnam.

### **1. Introduction**

Vietnamese civil servants are employed in central and local state agencies and organizations. The local level consists of 63 provincial administrative units, 705 district administrative units and 10,599 commune administrative units (GSO, 2023). The Law on Cadres and Public Officials

of Vietnam stipulates: Civil servants are determined to be loyal to the country and devoted to serving the people (VNA, 2008). The performance of this obligation has become the culture of every civil servant in the performance of public duties, also known as the civil service culture, and is detailed in the Government's legal documents (VG, 2021) and become an annual criterion for assessing the quality of civil servants (VG, 2020).

According to the general assessment, although civil servants are evaluated for completing their professional tasks every year, in many agencies, organizations and localities, civil servants show weakness in civil service culture; has not met the requirements of serving the people, has not yet created the satisfaction of people and businesses (MOHA, 2022). This is posing a challenge for managers in improving the quality and performance of civil servants. From that fact, it is very necessary to study and survey the civil service culture of civil servants. Within the scope of this research, the author focuses on analyzing a number of factors affecting the civil service culture of civil servants with the goal of providing empirical information for management and policy making on civil servants.

The author conducts theoretical research, surveys 300 leaders of commune-level government agencies of 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Bac Ninh province (Northern region), Quang Nam province (Central region), Bac Lieu province (South region). 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 period and future.

## **2. Research overview**

### **2.1. Civil service culture of civil servants (CSC)**

The term "civil service culture" has been studied by many studies to emphasize the values and ethical standards of civil servants in the process of performing official duties. Gretton, J. et al. (1989) asserted: Civil service culture is the set of values of a civil service; this value is present and sustainable in public service activities. In another perspective, Edgar, HS, (2004), emphasized: Civil service culture is the values, beliefs and conventions in the organization; These values and beliefs are shared internally, become the traditions of the organization and govern the behavior of its members. The above studies have different approaches, but all emphasize the value of civil service culture: Creating trust and cohesion of civil servants with the civil service to serve the state and the people.

In state management activities, the construction of civil service culture is often institutionalized by countries into laws and legal documents clearly. This legalization is often based on the promotion of the nation's traditional values and values suitable for contemporary society. In Vietnam, building a civil service culture is identified as a central task of the state administrative reform process (VG, 2021). In

this study, the author mainly bases on the provisions of current law to build theoretical content on civil service culture of civil servants (PM, 2021; Trung, N.S. et al., 2023), that is: (1) Civil servants adhere to discipline in civil service activities; (2) Civil servants cooperate and take responsibility for assigned work; (3) Civil servant is dedicated to serving the people.

- CSC1. Civil servants comply with discipline in civil service activities: Civil servants are obliged to comply with the law when performing their duties; implement the principle for the common good in the process of performing official duties.

- CSC2. Civil servants cooperate and take responsibility for assigned tasks: Civil servants are obliged to cooperate with colleagues, people and businesses to handle administrative documents in accordance with regulations, ensuring progress and quality as required.

- CSC3. Civil servants are dedicated to serving the people: Civil servants must be ready to serve the 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 of civil servants**

There are many factors affecting the civil service culture of civil servants, including objective factors (appropriateness and rigor of the law) and subjective factors (consciousness and responsibility of civil servants in civil service activities). These factors have an impact at different levels, but they are the main content that many studies are interested in and discussed.

### **a) Conformity and strictness of the law (CSL)**

According to Thai, P.H. (2014), the appropriateness and seriousness of the law are necessary and directional factors for all acts of civil servants in public service activities. In terms of civil service culture, it means that the provisions of the law on civil service culture are promulgated in accordance with the general characteristics of the national culture; consistent with the characteristics of the civil service; in accordance with relevant regulations in professional activities of civil servants.

- CSL1. The provisions of the law on civil service culture are suitable to the characteristics of national culture. This is the basic requirement of the construction of the law in general, including the law on civil service culture. This requirement is guaranteed and will create consensus among the people when implementing the provisions of the law.

- CSL2. The legal provisions on civil service culture are consistent with the characteristics of the civil service. This is a requirement that is the intrinsic operation of the civil service. The legal regulations on civil

service culture is one of the management tools of state agencies, so it must be consistent with the characteristics of the operating environment of state agencies - the civil service.

- CSL3. Laws on civil service culture in accordance with relevant regulations in professional activities of civil servants. The promulgation of regulations on civil service culture is essentially to serve the activities of civil servants, to guide standards and behaviors 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): The appropriateness and seriousness of the law of the civil service culture has an impact on the civil service culture of civil servants.

b) Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants in civil service activities (CRC)

In the field of research, the issue of “consciousness and responsibility” of civil servants is considered as one of the important evaluation criteria of civil servants working capacity, which is clearly reflected in the implementation results professional duties and people’s satisfaction. According to Tung, L.S. (2021) and Trung, N.S. (2022), when civil servants have a sense of work and responsibility for their assigned work, they will form for themselves a culture of performing official duties in the direction of professionalism and discipline. Administrative outline will be guaranteed. In management activities, the “consciousness and responsibility” in performing the duties of civil servants is not only considered an aspect of civil service culture, but also considered in the aspect of civil service ethics. Vietnam’s law on cadres and civil servants regulates this issue, including the following contents: Obey administrative discipline; willingness to work; attentive service attitude.

- CRC1. Civil servants comply with 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. This not only ensures discipline in the performance of official duties, but also ensures that civil servants do not infringe on the legitimate rights and interests of people and businesses when handling their dossiers.

- CRC2. Civil servants are willing to work. Civil servants are the implementers of the laws and policies of the state, so they must be ready to work so that the management and administration contents of the leadership levels are uniformly deployed to the people and businesses. Karma; at the same time receive timely feedback from people and businesses to advise policies effectively.

- CRC3. Civil servants have attentive service attitude. Civil servants have the obligation to serve the people, so they must be ready to work,

support and serve to solve the requirements of the people and businesses in the best way; attentive service to create satisfaction and trust of people and businesses for state government agencies.

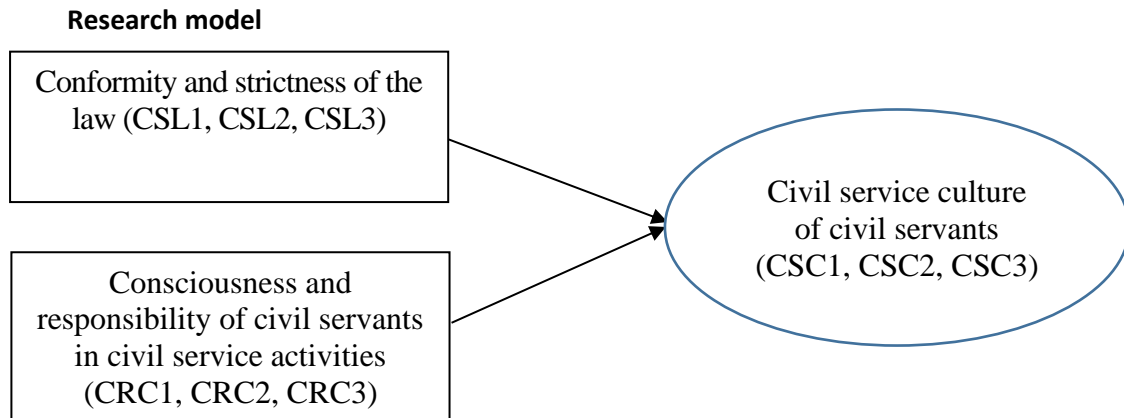
Hypothesis 2 (H2). Consciousness and responsibility in civil service activities have an impact on the civil service culture of civil servants.

From the content of the above overview research, the author builds a theoretical framework to study the factors affecting the civil service culture of civil servants. The research model consists of 3 scales: The scale “conformity and seriousness of the law”, the scale “consciousness and responsibility of civil servants in civil service activities” (two independent variables) and the scale “civil servant culture” (01 dependent variable). The above 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>Conformity and strictness of the law</b>	<b>CSL</b>					
1	The provisions of the law on civil service culture are suitable to the characteristics of national culture.	CSL1					
2	The legal provisions on civil service culture are consistent with the characteristics of the civil service.	CSL2					
3	Laws on civil service culture in accordance with relevant regulations in professional activities of civil servants.	CSL3					
<b>II</b>	<b>Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants in civil service activities</b>	<b>CRC</b>					
1	Civil servants comply with administrative discipline.	CRC1					
2	Civil servants are willing to work.	CRC2					
3	Civil servants have attentive service attitude.	CRC3					
<b>III</b>	<b>Civil service culture of civil servants</b>	<b>CSC</b>					
1	Civil servants comply with discipline in civil service activities.	CSC1					
2	Civil servants cooperate and take responsibility for assigned tasks.	CSC2					
3	Civil servants are dedicated to serving the people.	CSC3					

Source: Compiled by the author through the review



**Figure 1. Research model**

**3. Research Methods**

In this study, the author uses two main methods: Qualitative method (collection and analysis of secondary data - published and unpublished documents); Quantitative method (collection and analysis of primary data in the form of surveys). 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 Hai, D.H. et al. (2018), 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 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Bac Ninh province (Northern region), Quang Nam province (Central region), Bac Lieu province (Southern). The survey was conducted with the consent of the respondents after the author’s preliminary interview. 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 (226/300 people, accounting for 75.3%) 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	49	102	37	188
		Gender	26.1%	54.3%	19.7%	100.0%
	Female	Count	25	46	41	112

Total	Gender	22.3%	41.1%	36.6%	100.0%
	Count	74	148	78	300
	Gender	24.7%	49.3%	26.0%	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; Correlation analysis 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. 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 (Hai, D.H. et al., 2018). The test results show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables are reliable (Table 3).

**Table 3. Scale test results**

STT	Scales	Observed variables	Reliability coefficients (Cronbach’ Alpha)	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1	Conformity and strictness of the law (CSL)	CSL1, CSL2, CSL3	.611	CSL1 = .411 CSL2 = .486 CSL3 = 3.76
2	Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants in civil service activities (CRC)	CRC1, CRC2, CRC3	.559	CRC1 = .336 CRC2 = .573 CRC3 = .459
3	Civil service culture of civil servants (CSC)	CSC1, CSC2, CSC3	.648	CSC1 = .374 CSC2 = .412 CSC3 = .360

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 correlation analysis. The results of the correlation analysis are shown in table 4 below.

**Table 4. Correlation test of the scales**

Correlations				
		CRC	CSL	CSC
CRC	Pearson Correlation	1	.638**	.348**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	300	300	300

CSL	Pearson Correlation	.638**	1	.800**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	300	300	300
CSC	Pearson Correlation	.348**	.800**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Source: Author’s survey results

Table 4 data shows:

+ The correlation coefficient of the scales reached the value  $0 < r < 1$ , showing that there is a positive relationship between the two independent variables “Conformity and seriousness of the law” (CSL), “Consciousness, responsibilities of civil servants in civil service activities” (CRC) and 01 dependent variable “Civil servants culture” (CSC).

+ Based on the values  $r$  [ $r$  (CRC) = .348 and  $r$  (CSL) = .800], 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 in civil service activities” (CRC) and “Conformity and seriousness of the law” (CSL).

## 5. Conclusion

With the above analysis and testing results, the research conclusion is confirmed, that: Managers underestimate the “Consciousness and responsibility of civil servants in civil service activities” (CRC). It shows that civil servants need to be regularly trained in civil service culture to show high awareness and responsibility in civil service activities. From the conclusion of this study, the author suggests the content of governance innovation for local leaders, which is: (1) Developing a policy to foster civil service culture with content suitable to the characteristics of the civil service local culture and conduct annual training for civil servants; (2) Develop a policy to evaluate civil servants on civil service culture in a specific and scientific way, including internal assessment (internal assessment) and external assessment (collecting opinions and evaluations of the people).

The implementation of the policy of fostering civil service culture in combination with a well-executed policy of assessing the civil service culture of civil servants will help civil servants to regularly update and supplement their knowledge of civil service culture; help local government agencies regularly check and evaluate civil servants on their awareness and responsibilities in civil service activities so as to have full and multi-dimensional information about civil servants in the process of performing their duties service.



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