

## Research on Public Ethics of Vietnamese Civil Servants

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### Abstract:

Public ethics is the standard for recruiting civil servants and the standard for assessing the quality of civil servants in Vietnam, which is regulated in detail by law, because civil servants are given state power to perform public duties, serving the political goals of the state, serving the people. In terms of theoretical research and practice of state management, public ethics is mentioned to include many contents, of which the author has generalized into two core contents that have been built into two constituent contents and have a direct impact on the public ethics of civil servants, namely: Political qualities; Service attitude. Based on the theoretical framework developed, the author surveyed the opinions of 390 leaders of commune-level government agencies of 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Quang Ninh province (North), Quang Ngai province (Central), Hau Giang province (South). The purpose of the survey is to collect information to assess the practical ethics of public servants at the commune level - those who directly contact and resolve people's requests. The survey results show that local leaders assess the public ethics of public servants at the commune level as reflected in both political qualities and service attitude; however, service attitude is reflected at a lower level. From the results of this study, the author discusses solutions to improve the quality of local public servants to meet the requirements of serving the state and the people.

**Keywords:** Civil servant; Public ethics; Political qualities; Service attitude; Vietnam.

### 1. Introduction:

Local civil servants in Vietnam are established in the three-level government apparatus, including provincial level (63 provincial-level governments), district level (705 district-level governments) and

commune level (10,599 commune-level governments) [GSO, 2024]. Provincial and district-level civil servants are numerous and are organized according to specialized agencies; commune-level civil servants are few and are defined by law with 6 positions, including: 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 [VG, 2023].

In general, commune-level civil servants have basic qualifications that meet the title standards; the quality of civil servants is gradually improved, reflected in political qualities and attitudes toward serving the people [MOHA, 2024]. However, 2025 marks a historic change in the reform of the state apparatus in Vietnam: Orientation to eliminate district-level localities; organize a 2-level locality model, including provincial and communal levels [CPV, 2025]; and expected to reduce 50% of provincial-level localities, and 60%-70% of communal-level localities [TP New, 2025]. This reform is consistent with the trend of developing digital society and digital government, but poses new requirements for commune-level civil servants, because many new tasks are added for commune-level civil servants when the district-level government is abolished.

The above practice is not only a pressure on commune-level civil servants in terms of professional capacity, but the spirit of service will be more clearly demonstrated when the number of new jobs increases. That means that the civil service ethics of commune-level civil servants is an issue that needs to be concerned in the new situation, so that civil servants can meet the requirements of work in the trend of developing digital government and digital society to better serve the people. This is the reason that attracts the author's attention when conducting research on the topic of civil service ethics of civil servants.

## 2. Literature review:

In terms of theory, many researchers explain the content of public service ethics of civil servants with detailed contents, such as political ideology; working spirit; responsibility for performing public duties; attitude towards serving the people. According to Thai, P.H. (2016), public service

ethics are clearly demonstrated when civil servants are loyal to the state and serve to meet the legitimate requirements of the people, ensuring the legitimate rights of the people. Similarly, Phuc, T.V. (2025) explains public service ethics from the role and responsibility of civil servants, that: State power represents the will of the people, authorized by the people to the state apparatus, and civil servants are responsible for implementing it, there must be clear regulations on the authority and responsibility of civil servants in performing public duties; This is an indirect delegation, requiring civil servants to be clearly aware of their responsibilities, to have clear standards of ethical values and behavior, that is, to be close to the people, listen to the people, understand the people and make the people satisfied - truly serving the people.

Thus, the views of the above researchers all emphasize the content of political qualities (loyalty to the state, responsibility for performing public duties, etc.) and service attitude (behavior, attitude of serving the people, creating satisfaction for the people, etc.). This is also a common issue applied in the practice of state management in Vietnam, according to which the law stipulates the standards of public ethics of civil servants: Loyalty to the state; respect for the people, dedicated service to the people; close contact with the people, listening to opinions and being supervised by the people... (VNA, 2008); and Putting the interests of the nation - people, people, and collective above personal interests; having a sense of responsibility and coordination in performing tasks; having a proper attitude and standard behavior and working style; an attitude of serving the people in positions that directly contact or directly handle the work of the people (VG, 2020).

Theoretical and practical studies on Vietnamese law on public ethics of civil servants are interpreted in detail, in accordance with the political and cultural characteristics of the country and people. The author inherits the above contents to build the scale "Public ethics of civil servants" (ECS) implying the following contents: Civil

servants are loyal to the state; put the interests of the nation, people, and collective above personal interests (ECS1); Civil servants have a sense of responsibility and coordination in performing their duties; have a proper attitude and standard behavior and working style (ECS2); Civil servants respect the people, listen to their opinions, serve wholeheartedly, and create satisfaction for the people (ECS3).

The above research content on public service ethics of civil servants includes the element of Political qualities - loyalty to the state, responsibility for performing public duties; the element of Service attitude - behavior, attitude of serving the people, creating satisfaction for the people. These are two constituent elements, but also two elements that have a direct impact on the public service ethics of civil servants.

- Firstly, political qualities are characteristics, virtues, and virtues related to the ideology, politics, and ethics of civil servants, demonstrating their understanding, attitudes, and behaviors toward political and social issues. Hanh, D.T. (2020), emphasized that political qualities include political awareness and political behavior. And therefore, political qualities reflect how a civil servant perceives, evaluates, and acts in public service and in society. With that meaning, the scale "Political qualities" (PQ) was constructed to imply the following contents: Civil servants have a firm political stance and serve the development of the nation and people (PQ1); Civil servants have good political ideology, demonstrate awareness and standard attitudes towards national political goals, national interests, and ethnic interests (PQ2); Civil servants are willing to accept assigned tasks and take responsibility for the results of assigned tasks (PQ3).

- Second, service attitude is the way civil servants treat and serve customers who are citizens in a professional, thoughtful manner, showing respect, politeness and dedication. Service attitude includes communication, attitude and behavior in the process of contacting and resolving people's requests. According to Tung, L.S. (2021), good

service attitude is considered an important factor in assessing the quality of civil servants to meet the requirements and satisfaction of the people. With that meaning, the scale "Service attitude" (SA) is built to imply the following contents: Civil servants have a standard communication attitude when contacting and resolving people's requests (SA1); Civil servants carefully guide people so that people can easily access information and procedures to resolve administrative requests (SA2); Civil servants listen to and understand people's opinions; receive information and are responsible for processing people's information in a timely manner (SA3).

From a political and legal perspective, civil servants are defined as having the role and responsibility of serving the state and the people. Therefore, civil servants need to have good political qualities and a good service attitude to realize the political goals of the state. When civil servants have good political qualities, they will determine action goals in accordance with national interests and ethnic interests, forming a political culture, public service ethics and stability in the perception and actions of civil servants. When civil servants have a good service attitude, they will determine action goals and willingness to serve the people, wholeheartedly serve the people, demonstrating the democratic nature and service nature of state agencies. With that explanation, this study puts forward the hypothesis that: *Political qualities (H1) and Service attitude (H2) are factors that form and have a direct impact on the Public Service Ethics of civil servants.*

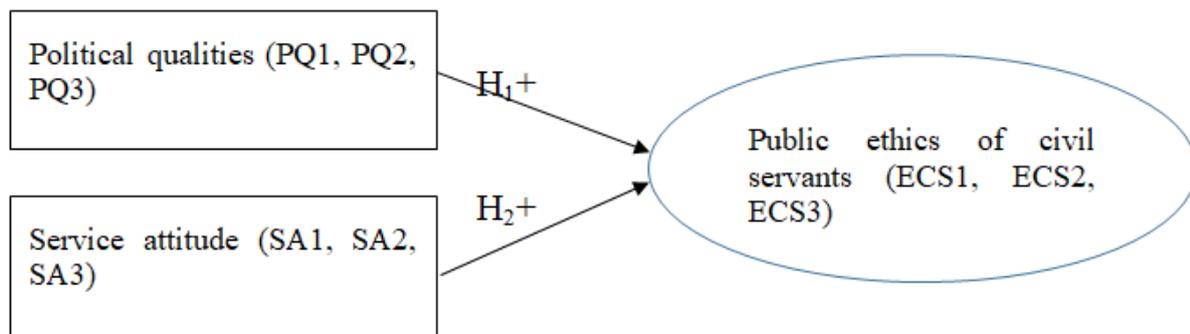
Through the general research content, the author has built a theoretical framework for research on public ethics of civil servants with a 3-scale model, including: 02 independent scales/variables "Political qualities" (PQ), "Service attitude" (SA) and 01 dependent scale/variable "Public ethics of civil servants" (ECS). The scales include 9 observed variables, designed into 9 corresponding questions in the survey form 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				
			1	2	3	4	5
<b>I</b>	<b>Political qualities</b>	<b>PP</b>					
1	Civil servants have a firm political stance and serve the development of the nation and people	PQ1					
2	Civil servants have good political ideology, demonstrate awareness and standard attitudes towards national political goals, national interests, and ethnic interests	PQ2					
3	Civil servants are willing to accept assigned tasks and take responsibility for the results of assigned tasks	PQ3					
<b>II</b>	<b>Service attitude</b>	<b>SA</b>					
1	Civil servants have a standard communication attitude when contacting and resolving people's requests	SA1					
2	Civil servants carefully guide people so that people can easily access information and procedures to resolve administrative requests	SA2					
3	Civil servants listen to and understand people's opinions; receive information and are responsible for processing people's information in a timely manner	SA3					
<b>III</b>	<b>Public ethics of civil servants</b>	<b>ECS</b>					
1	Civil servants are loyal to the state; put the interests of the nation, people, and collective above personal interests	ECS1					
2	Civil servants have a sense of responsibility and coordination in performing their duties; have a proper attitude and standard behavior and working style	ECS2					
3	Civil servants respect the people, listen to their opinions, serve wholeheartedly, and create satisfaction for the people	ECS3					

Source: Compiled by the author through the review

**Research model**



**Figure 1. Research model**

**3. Research methods:**

- Qualitative method: The author uses qualitative method through collecting secondary data to build a theoretical framework for the study.

Accordingly, the theoretical framework is built, including the scales: "Political qualities" (PQ), "Service attitude" (SA), "Public ethics of civil servants" (ECS) [Table 1].

- Quantitative method: The author uses quantitative method through collecting and analyzing primary data in the form of a survey of 390 leaders of commune-level government agencies of 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Quang Ninh province (North), Quang Ngai province (Central), Hau Giang province (South).

In this study, the author analyzed regression to test the relationship between the scales and test the research hypothesis. According to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the minimum sample size needed to perform regression analysis for the 3-scale model and 9 observed variables of this study is  $N = 9 * 5 = 45$ . In fact, the author surveyed with a sample size of  $N = 390$  leaders of commune-level government agencies ( $N > 45$ ), ensuring the reliability of data collection.

The survey was conducted selectively with respondents who had at least 3 years of experience

as leaders of local government at the commune level; it was conducted based on the consent of the respondents. The results obtained 390/390 valid responses, achieving a valid response rate of 100%.

**4. Research results and discussion:**

From the survey data collected from 390 leaders of commune-level government agencies, the author conducted statistics and tested the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. According to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the conditions for the scales to be reliable are: Cronbach'alpha > 0.6; the conditions for the observed variables to be reliable are: Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3. The test results show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables are reliable enough to serve as a basis for further analysis [Table 2].

**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. Political qualities (PQ)	PQ1	390	1	5	4.22	.538	.709	PQ1 = .604
	PQ2	390	1	5	4.19	.574		PQ2 = .597
	PQ3	390	1	5	4.11	.602		PQ3 = .493
2. Service attitude (SA)	SA1	390	1	5	4.02	.615	.649	SA1 = .541
	SA2	390	1	5	3.93	.647		SA2 = .552
	SA3	390	1	5	3.96	.563		SA3 = .575
3. Public ethics of civil servants (ECS)	ECS1	390	1	5	4.12	.593	.686	ECS1 = .623
	ECS2	390	1	5	4.14	.584		ECS2 = .634
	ECS3	390	1	5	4.09	.611		ECS3 = .596
Valid N (listwise)		390						

Source: Author's survey results

Data in Table 2 shows that the observed variables of the scale "Political qualities" (PQ), "Service attitude" (SA), "Public ethics of civil servants" (ECS) are all rated at an average level of Mean  $\geq 3.93$ , which is statistically significant according to the determined Likert scale (1-5). Accordingly, local leaders assess that civil servants have basic public ethics that meet the requirements, expressed in two contents Political qualities and Service attitude.

However, the observed variables of the "Service attitude" (SA) scale were assessed at the lowest level with Mean (SA1) = 4.02, Mean (SA2) = 3.93, Mean (SA3) = 3.96, showing that the service attitude of civil servants was affirmed by local leaders at a low level. Accordingly, there are still civil servants with substandard communication attitudes when contacting and resolving people's requests; not providing thorough guidance to people so that people can easily access information

and procedures for resolving administrative requests; not listening to and understanding people's opinions; not receiving information and being responsible for handling people's information in a timely manner.

The author's research and survey results contribute to demonstrating the practice of public ethics of Vietnamese civil servants, similar to the assessment and evaluation of a number of recent studies. According to Thang, Q. et al. (2021), the violation of public ethics in a part of civil servants is a degradation of ethics and lifestyle, a red alert issue, with harmful impacts on the revolutionary cause; if not treated promptly, it will lead to self-evolution, self-transformation, causing serious consequences for the cause of national construction and development. Or as Anh, N.T.M. (2025) affirmed, there is still a situation where civil servants are not

dedicated to their work; they hide their arrogance and power abuse with a gentle and proper attitude in direct relationships with the people, but do not resolve work promptly, essentially sophisticated harassment. The above practices are bottlenecks and obstacles, reducing the effectiveness of the civil service. This problem needs to be addressed by local authorities and a thorough solution sought.

The test results in Table 2 confirm that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables in the initial research model have achieved reliability: Cronbach's alpha > 0.6; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3. Therefore, these scales and observed variables continue to be used to conduct regression analysis to examine the relationship between the independent variables "Political qualities" (PQ), "Service attitude" (SA) with the dependent variable "Public ethics of civil servants" (ECS) [Table 3].

**Table 5. Multivariate regression results**

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

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.011	.216		9.627	.000	
	Political qualities (PQ)	.454	.247	.378	7.573	.000	1.814
	Service attitude (SA)	.328	.175	.296	6.735	.000	1.795

a. Dependent Variable: Public ethics of civil servants (ECS)

R Square = .746; Durbin-Watson = 2.102

Source: Author's survey results

The regression analysis data in Table 3 shows:

+ R Square = .746, confirming that the scales "Political qualities" (PQ), "Service attitude" (SA) explain 74.6% of the variation in the scale "Public ethics of civil servants" (ECS). VIF = 1.814 and VIF = 1.795 (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. That confirms that the scales "Political qualities" (PQ), "Service attitude" (SA) are independent; they both have an impact on the scale "Public ethics of civil servants" (ECS).

+ The regression coefficients of the two independent variables "Political qualities" (PQ),

"Service attitude" (SA) are both statistically significant with Sig. = 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05) and have positive values: B (PQ) = 0.454, B (SA) = 0.328, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables "Political qualities" (PQ), "Service attitude" (SA) and 01 dependent variable "Public ethics of civil servants" (ECS); hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted.

Applying the generalized regression model of Hair, J.F. et al. (2009):  $Y = B_0 + B_1 * X_1 + B_2 * X_2 + \dots + B_i * X_i + e$ , the author determined the regression model of this study as follows:

$$ECS = 1.011 + 0.454 * PQ + 0.328 * SA$$

Based on the regression coefficients of the scales as independent variables: B(PQ) = 0.454, B (SA)

= 0.328, it can be affirmed that the correlation level of the independent variables and dependent variables in increasing order is: "Political qualities" (PQ), "Service attitude" (SA).

Thus, based on the statistical results, scale verification and regression analysis results mentioned above, the research conclusion is affirmed: Commune-level civil servants have basic public service ethics that meet the requirements, expressed in two contents: Political qualities and Service attitude. However, local leaders underestimate the service attitude of civil servants. Accordingly, there are still civil servants with substandard communication attitudes when contacting and resolving people's requests; not providing thorough guidance to people so that people can easily access information and procedures for resolving administrative requests; not listening to and understanding people's opinions; not receiving information and being responsible for handling people's information in a timely manner. This practice is creating bottlenecks and obstacles, reducing the effectiveness of the civil service. This issue needs to be addressed by localities and thoroughly resolved.

From the above research conclusions, the author discusses the content of solutions to improve the quality of local civil servants to meet the requirements of serving the state and the people, which are: It is necessary to strengthen awareness education and adjust the behavior of civil servants in the process of performing public duties. In fact, the Vietnamese administration is aiming for the goal of modernization, streamlining, effective and efficient operation; when the system of regulations and laws is not complete and synchronous, the spirit, attitude, and self-awareness of civil servants in performing public duties become important factors, this awareness is formed through propaganda and education measures. Therefore, strengthening awareness education and adjusting the behavior of civil servants in the process of performing public duties is necessary and meaningful at present.

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