Assessing the Work Results of Vietnamese Civil Servants

Ngo Sy Trung[1], Nguyen Thi To Loan[2]

Abstract

Commune-level public servants work as implementers of state policies and laws to ensure the legitimate rights and interests of the people; hence, their work results are significant to affirm the effectiveness and reputation of state agencies. In terms of theory and practice, their work results are shown in the progress and quality of implementing assigned tasks; affected by both subjective factors (qualifications, capacity, working attitude, etc. of public servants), objective factors (working environment, facilities, technology, etc. of state agencies). This study focuses on two subjective factors that have direct impacts on the work results of civil servants, including: Professional capacity and working capacity. A survey was conducted with 330 leaders of commune-level authorities in 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam: Thai Binh province (Northern region), Ha Tinh province (Central region), Bac Lieu province (Southern region). The results show that: Commune-level public servants' professional qualifications meet rank standards and job position requirements; however, they are not highly evaluated for their practical working capacity from their managers. The findings suggest policy development to promote the professional practical working capacity of public servants to accomplish the public service.

Keywords: *Professional capacity; working capacity; work results; commune-level public servants.*

Introduction

Local authorities of Vietnam are statutorily divided into 3 levels: provincial level, district level, and commune level [VNA, 2013], including: 63 provincial authorities (provinces and municipal cities); 705 district-level authorities (districts, towns, provincial cities, cities of municipal cities); 10,599 commune-level authorities (communes, wards, commune – level towns) [GSO, 2023]. The state agencies at local level are the People's Council (state power agency) and the People's Committee (administrative agency), except for some pilot localities that do not organize the People's Councils. The commune-level public servants on the payroll are categorized into 6 job titles in accordance with 6 sectors the public servants take in charge of: Commander of the commune military command; Clerical – statistics public servants; Cadastre - construction - urban and environment public servants (for towns); Cadastre - agriculture - construction - urban and environment civil servants (for communes); Finance and accounting civil servants; Judicial - civil status public servants; Social and cultural civil servants [VG, 2023].

Public duty performance appraisal is carried out annually in accordance with the provisions of law, relating to 4 levels of working performance: (1) Successfully complete the assigned task; (2) Well complete the assigned task; (3) Complete the assigned task; (4) Fail to complete the assigned tasks [VG, 2020]. According to general assessment: (1) the majority of local civil servants complete and successfully complete their annual assigned tasks and are standardized in terms of qualifications and profession. Local economic and social development tasks are guaranteed; (2) However, there is a big gap in the professional and practical working capacity of public servants in urban and ones in rural and mountainous areas. In many areas, the professional and practical capacity of civil servants are not adequate; (3) the work results of commune-level civil servants are still not sufficient enough to meet the requirements of local development governance in the context of reform to better serve the people [Ha, T.T. et al., 2023; Hung, L.D. et al., 2023].

If there are no innovations found out to improve the situation, it will lead to a limitation in human resources to perform public duties and pose a challenge to local managers. Hence, this research aims to objectively evaluate the professional capacity, working capacity and work results of commune-level public servants; providing scientific information to serve research and adjust policies appropriately to support commune-level public servants to meet the requirements of public service performance and better serve the people.

Literature Review

[1] University of Finance - Marketing, Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. Email: nstrung@ufm.edu.vn (Corresponding author)
[2] National Academy of Public Administration, Hanoi city, Vietnam; Doctoral student of VSB - Technical University of Ostrava, The Czech Republic. Email: ngu060@vsb.cz.

From an overall perspective, work results represent the output factor and is regarded as the main criterion to evaluate the quality of public servants. Thang, N.T. et al. (2023) interpret the work results of civil servants according to three contents: public servants ensure the progress and quality of implementing assigned tasks and create the people's satisfaction. Sharing the same opinion, Lan, V.T. (2023) and Hoi, D.X. (2024) further emphasize the content that meets practical requirements associated with job titles and positions in public service activities. This means in the process of performing assigned tasks, it is necessary for public servants to receive and handle the people's dossiers in accordance with correct appointment letters; Receive and perform tasks assigned by superiors as planned; Receive and handle the people's dossiers completely; Respect the people, create the people's satisfaction during the communication and avoid negative comments on working spirit and service attitude from the people. These research viewpoints are realistic, consistent with the provisions of Vietnamese law [VG, 2020], clearly demonstrating the output goals that public servants need to achieve in their public duty performance. Accordingly, that public servants well perform their assigned tasks to ensure work progress and quality as well as create satisfaction from the people - customers has contributed to realizing the goal of improving the public service, implementing democracy and building a rule - of - law state.

Findings from the previous researches and laws allow to develop the research scale of "Work results of public servants" (WR), including: Public servants keep the progress of assigned work; Receive and handle the people's dossiers in accordance with correct appointment letters (WR1); Public servants ensure the quality of assigned tasks; Receive and completely handle the people's dossiers in accordance with regulations (WR2); Civil servants dedicate to serving the people; Respect people, create people's satisfaction during the communication (WR3).

Each task assigned to public servants has its own deadline for completion and requirements of quality to be achieved and is aimed at serving customers - the people. Public servants are responsible for implementing the planned tasks or specific tasks to ensure the target and requirements. However, the working performance and work results of public servants are influenced by different factors, including subjective factors (qualifications, capabilities, working attitudes, etc. of public servants), and objective factors (working environment, facilities, technology... of state agencies). This study selects two subjective factors that have a direct impact on the work results of public servants: Professional capacity and working capacity.

Firstly, it is the professional capacity of public servants. From a theoretical perspective, the professional capacity of public servants refers to knowledge, skills, and expertise that individuals are trained before being recruited as public servants. This means their qualifications meet their rank standards and job position requirements; At the same time, they continue to be trained to meet the requirements of public duty performance at different development periods of their organization. According to the provisions of Vietnamese law [VNA, 2008; VG, 2017; VG, 2020], the professional capacity of public servants can be explained as follows: Professional qualifications meet ranks of public servants; State management level meets rank of public servants; Specialized knowledge and skills meet job position requirements. These are standard requirements for public servants in the public service system. The study develops the scale of "Professional capacity of public servants" (PC) with observed variables expressed with basic content, including: Public servants have professional qualifications with training levels and majors meeting public servant rank standards according to the law (PC1); Public servants are trained with state management knowledge to meet public servant rank standards according to the law (PC2); Public servants are trained and proactively study to improve specialized knowledge and skills to meet job position requirements according to regulations (PC3).

Professional capacity, in addition to professional qualifications, must also be shown efficiently in work practice. Accordingly, public servants are considered to be able to well apply their professional knowledge and skills gained from educational institutions to accomplish the assigned tasks with the best results. Then can professional capacity truly reflect the quality of civil servants. In this study, the hypothesis is that commune-level public servants with good professional capacity will well perform their assigned tasks: *Professional capacity has positive impacts, affecting public servants' work results (H1).*

Secondly, it is the working capacity of public servants which refers to the ability to work well thanks to moral qualities and professional capacity. According to Son, N.V. (2023), the working capacity of civil servants can be seen with the ability to work both independently and cooperatively; The ability to

accomplish assigned tasks with the expected results. This is a research approach to capacity based on results, associated with individuals' work performance results in the organization. Similarly, Hoi, D.X. (2024) affirms that ethical qualities and professional capacity are conditions to build up the working capacity of public servants; Only when public servants demonstrate their work results with ethical qualities and professional capacity, can they affirm their working capacity. In state management activities, Vietnamese laws [VNA, 2008; VG, 2020] show general regulations on the capacity of public servants associated with requirements for implementing public service activities. Accordingly, working capacity is evaluated with consulting competence, working performance competence and work control competence. Good consulting competence and working performance competence help public servants quickly transform ideas into specific professional products to advise their superior on implementation decisions [Hung, L.D. et al., 2023]. Good control competence enables public servants proactively control their work; summarize, learn from experience promptly, adjust appropriate plans to always well perform their assigned tasks in the professional field [Son, N.V., 2023]. On that basis, the study develops a scale of "Working capacity of public servants" (WC) with observed variables expressed as follows: Public servants have good advisory competence - the ability to analyse policies, the creative ability to transform ideas into professional products and advise superiors to decide on implementation (WC1); Public servants have the ability to analyse and make general assessments in professional activities; develop a plan to implement tasks in a reasonable and feasible way (WC2); Public servants proactively capture information; proactively evaluate and summarize task implementation to control work and ensure the results of assigned tasks (WC3).

When commune-level public servants demonstrate their working capacity in practice, their assigned tasks will be carried out smoothly both in terms of their independence and coordination. The work results will be guaranteed in accordance with the progress and quality goals as planned. In this study, the hypothesis is that commune-level public servants with good working capacity will well perform their assigned tasks: *Working capacity has positive impacts, affecting work results of commune-level public servants (H2).*

Based on the preceding researches, this study has developed the theoretical framework of evaluation on public servants' professional capacity, working capacity and work results with a research model consisting of 3 scales: Scale "professional capacity of public servants"; scale "Working capacity of public servants" (02 independent variables) and scale "Work results of public servants" (01 dependent variable). The scales in the model have a total of 09 observed variables, designed into questions in the survey questionnaire and measured with 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	Professional capacity of public servants	**PC**					
1	Public servants have professional qualifications with training levels and majors meeting public servant rank standards according to the law.	PC1	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
2	Public servants are trained with state management knowledge to meet public servant rank standards according to the law.	PC2	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
3	Public servants are trained and proactively study to improve specialized knowledge and skills to meet job position requirements according to regulations.	PC3	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
II	Working capacity of public servants	**WC**					
4	Public servants have good advisory competence - the ability to analyse policies, the creative ability to transform ideas into professional products and advise superiors to decide on implementation.	WC1	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
5	Public servants have the ability to analyse and make general assessments in professional activities; develop a plan to implement tasks in a reasonable and feasible way.	WC2	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
6	Public servants proactively capture information; proactively evaluate and summarize task implementation to control work and ensure the results of assigned tasks.	WC3	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
III	Work results of public servants	WR					

7	Public servants keep the progress of assigned work; Receive and handle the people's dossiers in accordance with correct appointment letters.	WR1	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
8	Public servants ensure the quality of assigned tasks; Receive and completely handle the people's dossiers in accordance with regulations.	WR2	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
9	Civil servants dedicate to serving the people; Respect people, create people's satisfaction during the communication.	WR3	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

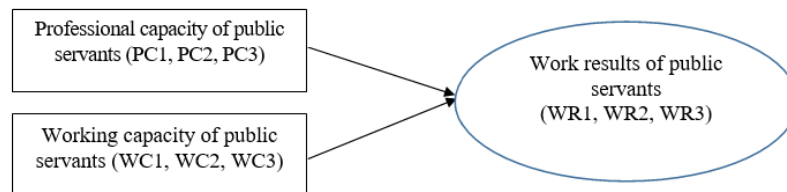**Source:** Compiled by the author through the review.

Figure 1. Research model.

Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative methods are both used in this study to collect and analyze secondary and primary data and draw research conclusions.

Qualitative Method

Qualitative methods were used in reviewing related researches and synthesizing state legal documents to build a theoretical research framework and research model. The secondary data were collected and analyzed through published documents to build a theoretical research framework with three scales: Professional capacity public servants; Working capacity of public servants; Work results of public servants (Table 1, Figure 1).

Quantitative methods

Quantitative methods were used in collecting and analyzing primary data through direct surveys of the opinions of 330 managers at commune level. The reliability of the scale and observed variables was tested; exploratory factor analysis was carried out; Regression analysis was performed to test research hypotheses and draw research conclusions. For primary data collection, there are two steps conducted: preliminary survey and official survey.

Preliminary survey: From the theoretical framework of evaluation on professional capacity, working capacity and work results of public servants the research model of 3 scales and 9 observed variables (Table 1, Figure 1), a survey questionnaire consisting of 9 questions corresponding to the 9 observed variables mentioned above was designed. In quantitative research, the minimum sample size needed when doing exploratory factor analysis for a model with 3 scales and 9 observed variables is $N = 9*5 = 45$ [Hai, D.H., 2019]. This survey was carried out with a sample size of $N = 330 > 45$ to ensure the reliability of data collection.

After designing and completing the survey questionnaire, the preliminary survey was conducted in a research area (Thai Binh province) with a sample size of $N = 110 > 45$ managers of commune-level government agencies. The preliminary survey results in Thai Binh province show that the measurement scales and observed variables are reliable enough to be used in official surveys on a wider scale.

Official survey: The official survey was conducted in 3 localities representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Thai Binh province (Northern region), Ha Tinh province (Central region), Bac Lieu province (Southern region). The survey participants included 330 managers of commune-level authorities. The survey was conducted selectively: the participants are those who have been managers of commune-level authorities for at least 2 years; The preliminary interviews were performed to capture information about the participants whether they were suitable or not, then the survey questionnaires were distributed based on their agreement to answer. The survey results received 330/330 valid votes, achieving a 100% response rate.

With the collected data, the scale testing and correlation analysis were conducted to test the research hypothesis.

Findings

Reliability of Research Scale

Cronbach' alpha test is carried out to eliminate junk variables, avoiding the case of junk variables creating spurious factors when exploratory factors are analyzed; Identify the reliability of measurement scales and observed variables in the research model. The scales are reliable when they meet the Cronbach' alpha standard > 0.6; Observed variables are reliable when they meet the standard condition of Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3 [Hai, D.H., 2019]. The test results show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables in the research model are reliable for further analysis [Table 2].

Table 2. Statistical results and testing results of the scales.

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Professional capacity of public servants (PC)	PC1	330	3	5	4.31	.528	.653	PC1 = .432
	PC2	330	3	5	4.27	.542		PC2 = .414
	PC3	330	3	5	4.02	.541		PC3 = .421
2. Working capacity of public servants (WC)	WC1	330	3	5	3.81	.617	.642	WC1 = .511
	WC2	330	2	5	3.86	.623		WC2 = .521
	WC3	330	2	5	3.73	.608		WC3 = .497
3. Work results of public servants (WR)	WR1	330	3	5	4.03	.534	.644	WR1 = .505
	WR2	330	3	5	4.01	.536		WR2 = .510
	WR3	330	3	5	3.98	.551		WR3 = .521
Valid N (listwise)		330						

Source: Author's survey results.

Data in Table 2 shows:

+ Observations on the scales "Professional capacity of public servants" (PC), "Working capacity of public servants" (WC), "Work results of public servants" (WR) were all evaluated on average Mean > 3.73, statistically significant according to the defined Likert scale (1-5).

+ However, the observed variables of the scale "Working capacity of public servants" (WC) are evaluated at a lower level than "Professional capacity of public servants" (PC): Mean (WC1) = 3.81, Mean (WC2) = 3.86, Mean (WC3) = 3.73, shows that commune-level managers don't highly appreciate the practical working capacity of public servants. Of these figures, the lowest is Mean (WC3) = 3.73, confirming that there are a number of public servants who have not proactively captured information, evaluated and summarized the task implementation to control work and ensure their work results.

Statistical and aggregated data in Table 2 contribute to reflecting the current state of commune-level civil servants' practical working capacity in Vietnam. That poses a requirement to research and innovate employment and evaluation policies for public servants to promote their knowledge, professional skills and expertise to improve their working capacity in practice.

Results of exploratory factor analysis

Exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation aims to preliminarily evaluate the unidimensionality, convergent value, and discriminant value of the scales to have more basis for drawing research conclusions. With the standard value confirmed through Cronbach' alpha test, exploratory factor analysis was conducted; The results of analysis and assessment of unidimensionality, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the scales are shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3. Total variance explained.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.825
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2732.503
	df	45
	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	5.133	51.328	51.328	5.133	51.328	51.328	4.277	42.768	42.768
2	1.469	14.686	66.014	1.469	14.686	66.014	2.101	21.013	63.781
3	1.033	10.326	76.340	1.033	10.326	76.340	1.256	12.559	76.340
4	.437	4.366	89.542						
5	.390	3.897	93.439						
6	.301	3.014	96.453						
7	.253	2.535	98.988						
8	.059	.593	99.581						
9	.042	.419	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
Professional capacity of public servants (PC)	PC1	.862		
	PC2	.824		
	PC3	.818		
Working capacity of public servants (WC)	WC1		.854	
	WC2		.849	
	WC3		.839	
Work results of public servants (WR)	WR1			.811
	WR2			.817
	WR3			.815

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 Hai, D.H. (2019), exploratory factor analysis is performed in accordance with the data set through the following values: $0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$; The Bartlett test has an observed significance level Sig. < 0.05; Eigenvalue ≥ 1; Total Variance Explained $\geq 50\%$; Factor Loading ≥ 0.5.

The data in table 3 and table 4 reveal that exploratory factor analysis confirms the appropriateness of the data set, shown by the KMO coefficient $= 0.825 > 0.5$; The observed variables are linearly correlated with the representative factor, shown through Bartlett's Test with the observed significance level Sig. $= 0.000 < 0.05$; The observed variables explain 76,340% of the variation of the representative factors, shown by Total Variance Explained with Cumulative % $= 76,340\% > 50\%$; The observed variables have good statistical significance and a close relationship with the representative factor, with Factor Loading > 0.5.

The results of exploratory factor analysis (Table 3, Table 4) confirm that the observed variables are selected into 03 factors corresponding to 03 original factors with Eigenvalues > 1, showing that the theoretical research framework is appropriately built; The original research model is maintained, including: 02 independent variables "Professional capacity of public servants" (PC), "Working capacity of public servants" (WC) and 01 dependent variable "Work results of public servants" (WR) with a total of 9 observed variables with good statistical significance, multivariate linear regression analysis can be performed to consider the relationship of independent variables with the dependent variable in the research model.

Results of Multivariate Regression Analysis

With the test value of the scale and observed variables meeting the standards (Table 2) and the results of exploratory factor analysis (Table 3, Table 4), the regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship of independent variables "Professional capacity of public servants" (PC), "Working capacity of public servants" (WC) and 01 dependent variable "Work results of public servants" (WR). The results of regression analysis are shown in Table 5, which is the basis for drawing research conclusions.

Table 5. Results of multivariate regression.

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.312	.108		10.913	.000	
	Professional capacity of public servants (PC)	.677	.032	.686	20.173	.000	1.728
	Working capacity of public servants (WC)	.323	.037	.314	6.701	.000	1.728

a. Dependent Variable: Work results of public servants (WR)
R Square = .693; Durbin-Watson = 2.016

Source: Author's survey results.

The data in Table 5 show that:

+ R Square = .693, confirming that the scales "Professional capacity of public servants" (PC), "Working capacity of public servants" (WC) explain 69.3% of the variation of the scale "Work results of public servants" (WR).

+ VIF = 1.728 (1 < VIF < 2), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.016 (1 < d < 3), showing that the regression model has no autocorrelation phenomenon, confirming the scales "Professional capacity of public servants" (PC), "Working capacity of public servants" (WC) are independent and both impacts on the scale "Work results of public servants" (WR).

+ The regression coefficients of the two independent variables "Professional capacity of public servants" (PC), "Working capacity of public servants" (WC) are both statistically significant with Sig. = 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05) and have a positive value: B (PC) = 0.677, B (WC) = 0.323, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables "Professional capacity of public servants" (PC), "Working capacity of public servants" (WC) and 01 dependent variable "Work results of public servants" (WR).

On the basis of the generalized regression model $Y = B_o + B_1*X_1 + B_2*X_2 + \ldots + B_i*X_i$ [Hai, D.H., 2019], the multivariate regression model of this study can be determined as: WR = 1.312 + 0.677*PC + 0.323*WC.

In the above regression model, the regression coefficient shows the degree of correlation of the independent variables and the dependent variable in descending order: "Professional capacity of public servants" (PC), "Working capacity of public servants" (WC).

Conclusion

With the results of statistical analysis (Table 2), results of exploratory factor analysis (Table 3, Table 4) and results of regression analysis (Table 5), the research conclusions are determined, which are: Commune-level managers do not highly appreciate the practical working capacity of public servants; Many public servants have not proactively captured information, evaluated and summarized the implementation of tasks to control work and ensure the results of assigned tasks.

This situation poses a need to research and innovate employment and evaluation policies for public servants to promote knowledge, professional skills and expertise to improve working capacity in practice; Commune-level civil servants need to proactively study and practise to improve their working capacity during public duty performance. The finding suggests discussions in terms of state policies to promote the qualifications, expertise, and practical working capacity of public servants, that is, researches to build a capacity framework and standardize the evaluation to commune-level public servants in accordance with the capacity framework of job positions.

- From a legal perspective, the discussions in this study can be valid, because the provisions of Vietnamese law on public servant evaluation [VG, 2020] haven't set mandatory requirements for the evaluation based on the capacity framework of each job title and position. Therefore, localities have not focused on building a capacity framework and evaluating public servants according to the capacity framework of each job title and position, leading to the evaluation results can't truly demonstrate their practical working capacity.

- From a scientific perspective, the discussion in this study can be valid, because building a capacity framework and evaluating commune-level public servants based on the capacity framework of each job position helps quantify evaluation criteria by characteristics and standards of each commune-level public servant position; helps localities evaluate the quality of public servants more accurately by characteristics and quality standards of public servants in each professional field. In addition, if this is popularly carried out, it will create consistency for localities in building a capacity framework and evaluating the capacity framework of each commune-level public servant position.

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