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## LAW AND PRACTICE OF PUBLIC ETHICS OF VIETNAMESE CIVIL SERVANTS

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### ABSTRACT

Vietnamese law stipulates in detail the ethics of public service, reflected in the recruitment standards and the standards for evaluating the quality of civil servants. Because civil servants are given state power, they need to have good public service ethics to perform their duties, serve the state, and serve the people. In this study, the author analyzes public service ethics according to two main contents, including Political qualities; Service attitude. These are two constituent contents and also factors that directly affect the ethics of public service of civil servants. The author builds a theoretical framework and surveys the opinions of 450 leaders of commune-level government agencies of 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Bac Ninh province (North), Quang Tri province (Central), Tay Ninh province (South). The survey aims to collect information to evaluate the practice of public service ethics of Vietnamese commune-level civil servants - those who regularly contact and resolve people's requests. The survey results show that commune-level civil servants have basic public service ethics that meet the requirements, expressed in two contents: Political qualities and Service attitude; however, the service attitude of civil servants is assessed at a lower level. From the results of this study, the author discusses the content of local civil servant management to improve the quality of human resources performing public service and serving the state and the people.

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**KEYWORDS:** Public ethics; Commune-level civil servants; Civil Service Integrity; Public Administration Ethics; Vietnam..

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Local civil servants in Vietnam are established in a two-level government apparatus, including the provincial level (34 provincial governments) and the communal level (3,321 communal governments) [GN, 2025]. In that system, the communal level is the grassroots level of government, and communal civil servants regularly contact and directly resolve the requests of local people; therefore, the effectiveness of local government operations is most clearly demonstrated through the qualities, capacities, and working attitudes of communal civil servants.

According to the general assessment of the Vietnamese civil servant management agency (Ministry of Home Affairs), commune-level civil servants have training qualifications and knowledge that meet the title standards prescribed by law; the quality of commune-level civil servants is gradually improved, reflected in political qualities and service attitudes [MOHA, 2024]. However, in 2025, Vietnam will carry out major reforms: Abolishing the district-level administrative unit level (changing the 3-level local government model: Provincial level, district level, commune level) and operating a 2-level local government model (provincial level, commune level); from there, many new tasks will be added for commune-level civil servants when the district-level government is abolished (CPV, 2025).

The reform of the local government apparatus in Vietnam is in line with the development trend of digital society and digital government, but it places new requirements on commune-level civil servants, not only in terms of pressure on the ability to handle professional work, but also in terms of service attitude, which will be more clearly demonstrated when the number of new jobs increases.

Therefore, the issue of public ethics of commune-level civil servants needs to be studied and evaluated in practice so that commune-level civil servants can meet work requirements and serve the people better.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers explain the ethics of public service of civil servants with the meaning of the value of civil servants expressed in the aspect of political qualities; the attitude of service of civil servants in the process of performing assigned tasks.

Thai, P.H. (2016) and HUHA (2020) analyzes the connotation of the ethics of public service of civil servants in the aspect of loyalty, service of civil servants to the state and people; accordingly, civil servants have the duty to serve to ensure the legitimate rights and interests of the people. According to Tam, N.T. (2011) and Thao, T.T.P.

(2024), the highest value of public service ethics is to serve the people, for the benefit of the people; therefore, improving public service ethics is to promote the responsibility of serving the country, serving the people of civil servants, thereby strengthening people's trust in the civil service. From a similar perspective, Thang, N.V. (2020) and Phuc, T.V. (2025) affirms that public service ethics originates from the role and responsibility of civil servants; Civil servants must be clearly aware of their roles and responsibilities, have standards of attitude and behavior, listen to the people, understand the people and serve the people.

It can be seen that the above research viewpoints refer to Political qualities expressed in the aspect of the loyalty of civil servants to the state, the responsibility of civil servants in performing public duties; refer to Service attitude expressed in the aspect of attitude, behavior, service to ensure the legitimate rights and interests of the people, creating satisfaction for the people. Those research viewpoints are also similar to the practice of Vietnamese legal regulations on civil servant management (VNA, 2008; VG, 2020). Accordingly, the civil service ethics standards of civil servants are determined: Loyalty to the state; dedicated service to the people, listening to the opinions of the people, being supervised by the people; putting the interests of the nation - people, people, collective above personal interests; being responsible for assigned work; having a standard working attitude, behavior, and working manners...

The theoretical and practical research contents on legal regulations on public ethics of Vietnamese civil servants mentioned above are explained in detail, in accordance with the political and cultural characteristics of the country and people. The author builds the scale "Public ethics" (PE) on the basis of inheriting those contents, **expressed through observations**

Civil servants are loyal to the state; serve for the benefit of the nation and the people (PE1); Civil servants respect the people, listen to their opinions, and create satisfaction for the people (PE2); Civil servants are responsible for the assigned work; have a standard working attitude, behavior, and working manners (PE3).

The content of public service ethics generally reflects the factors of Political quality and Service attitude. In both the theoretical and practical aspects of state management, these are two constituent factors, but also two factors that have a direct impact on the public service ethics of civil servants.

Therefore, this study identifies the scale of

"Political qualities" (PQ) and the scale of "Service attitude" (SA) as independent variables to establish a theoretical model of public service ethics of civil servants..

- Firstly, the political qualities of civil servants are the identifying characteristics of civil servants in terms of political awareness - ideology, attitude and behavior - work responsibility of civil servants in accordance with the characteristics of the civil service. In general, political qualities are an important aspect of personal qualities, especially for those working in the political field or playing an important role in society; it includes a system of political views, thoughts, and attitudes, reflecting the level of political awareness, class and national interests, and a person's responsibility for assigned political tasks. According to Thai, P.H. (2014) and Hanh, D.T., (2020), political qualities include political awareness and political attitudes and behaviors of civil servants. Thang, Q. et al. (2021) and Vu, V.N. (2023) affirms that political qualities are a fundamental issue, playing a fundamental role in repelling the degradation of ideology, politics, ethics, and lifestyle of civil servants. With that meaning, the scale "Political qualities" (PQ) implies characteristics related to the ideology and politics of civil servants, expressing the awareness, attitude and actions of civil servants in public service activities and in society, including: Civil servants have good political awareness, demonstrated by their steadfast stance and viewpoint in serving the national and people's interests (PQ1); Civil servants have good political attitudes, demonstrated by their standards of behavior towards the common goals and interests of the state and people (PQ2); Civil servants have good political behavior, demonstrated by their willingness to work, responsibility for work and results in performing assigned work (PQ3).
- Second, the service attitude of civil servants is the identifying characteristic of civil servants in terms of behavioral behavior towards people in the process of performing public duties. The service attitude of civil servants is stipulated by Vietnamese law as being polite, respectful, cooperative, modest and not being arrogant, authoritarian, causing difficulties or troubles for people; civil servants must be dedicated, devoted, honest, objective and fair in their work, and must comply with the law

and relevant regulations. In other words, it is the way civil servants communicate (attitude, behavior) and serve people professionally and thoughtfully, showing respect, politeness and dedication in the process of contacting and resolving people's requests. Thoi, H.V. (2016) and Tung, L.S. (2021) affirmed that a good service attitude is an important content to assess the quality of civil servants. According to Khanh, C.X. et al. (2010) and Nhan, T. (2023), service attitude is an important solution to improve people's satisfaction. With that meaning, the scale "Service Attitude" (SA) implies characteristics related to communication behavior and responsible conduct of civil servants in public service activities and in society, including: Civil servants have a communication style appropriate to the characteristics of contemporary culture and society; have a standard communication attitude when contacting and resolving people's requests (SA1); Civil servants respect people when communicating; listen to people's opinions; receive and process people's information in a timely and responsible manner (SA2); Civil servants treat people fairly, provide information guidance and serve thoughtfully so that people can conveniently access information and register administrative procedures to resolve their requests (SA3).

In each country, civil servants are defined as having a political role of serving the state and the people, so civil servants need to have good political qualities and a good service attitude.

With good political qualities and a good service attitude, civil servants will orient their goals and actions in accordance with the interests of the nation and people, and will wholeheartedly serve the state and the people.

With that explanation, this study puts forward the hypothesis that: Political qualities (H1) and Service attitude (H2) are the constituent contents and directly affect the Public Service Ethics of civil servants.

Through the research overview, the theoretical framework on public service ethics of civil servants is built with a model of 3 scales:

"Political qualities" (PQ), "Service Attitude" (SA) and "Public ethics" (PE).

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>PQ</b>					
1	Civil servants have good political awareness, demonstrated by their steadfast stance and viewpoint in serving the national and people's interests	PQ1					
2	Civil servants have good political attitudes, demonstrated by their standards of behavior towards the common goals and interests of the state and people	PQ2					
3	Civil servants have good political behavior, demonstrated by their willingness to work, responsibility for work and results in performing assigned work	PQ3					
<b>II</b>	<b>Service attitude</b>	<b>SA</b>					
1	Civil servants have a communication style appropriate to the characteristics of contemporary culture and society; have a standard communication attitude when contacting and resolving people's requests	SA1					
2	Civil servants respect people when communicating; listen to people's opinions; receive and process people's information in a timely and responsible manner	SA2					
3	Civil servants treat people fairly, provide information guidance and serve thoughtfully so that people can conveniently access information and register administrative procedures to resolve their requests	SA3					
<b>III</b>	<b>Public ethics</b>	<b>PE</b>					
1	Civil servants are loyal to the state; serve for the benefit of the nation and the people	ĐĐ1					
2	Civil servants respect the people, listen to their opinions, and create satisfaction for the people	ĐĐ2					
3	Civil servants are responsible for the assigned work; have a standard working attitude, behavior, and working manners	ĐĐ3					

Source: Compiled by the Author Through the Review.

**RESEARCH MODEL**

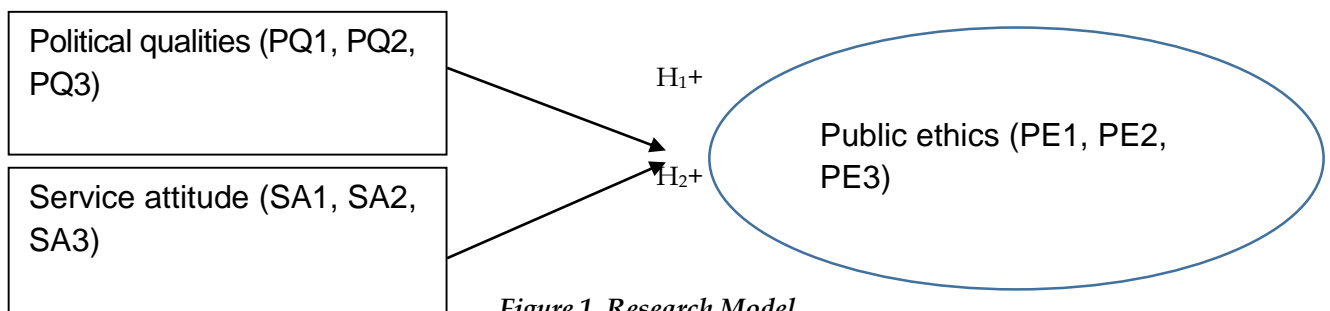


Figure 1. Research Model.

**3. RESEARCH METHODS**

In this study, qualitative and quantitative methods are used in combination. The author uses qualitative methods through secondary data collection to build a theoretical framework with a 3-scale research model, including "Political qualities" (PQ), "Service Attitude" (SA), "Public ethics" (PE) (Table 1, Figure 1); uses quantitative methods through collecting and analyzing primary data in the form of a survey of 450 leaders of commune-level government agencies of 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Bac Ninh province (North), Quang Tri province (Central), Tay Ninh

province (South).

This study conducted exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis to test the relationship between the scales and test the research hypothesis. According to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the minimum sample size required to conduct exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis for the 3-scale model and 9 observed variables of this study is  $N = 9 \times 5 = 45$ . The author surveyed with a sample size of  $N = 450$  leaders of commune-level government agencies ( $N > 45$ ), ensuring the reliability of data collection. The survey was conducted on the basis of preliminary interviews and the consent of the respondents; the results obtained 450/450 valid responses, achieving

a valid response rate of 100%.

#### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the collected survey data, 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 achieve reliability are: Cronbach's alpha > 0.6; the conditions for the observed variables to achieve reliability 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	450	1	5	4.20	.542	.696	PQ1 = .606
	PQ2	450	1	5	4.17	.605		PQ2 = .594
	PQ3	450	1	5	4.12	.614		PQ3 = .489
2. Service Attitude (SA)	SA1	450	1	5	4.04	.611	.652	SA1 = .571
	SA2	450	1	5	3.97	.634		SA2 = .583
	SA3	450	1	5	3.94	.578		SA3 = .497
3. Public ethics (PE)	PE1	450	1	5	4.14	.603	.686	PE1 = .612
	PE2	450	1	5	4.13	.598		PE2 = .623
	PE3	450	1	5	4.06	.601		PE3 = .598
Valid N (listwise)		450						

Source: Author's Survey Results

Data in Table 2 shows that the observed variables of the scales "Political qualities" (PQ), "Service Attitude" (SA), "Public ethics" (PE) are all rated at an average level of Mean ≥ 3.94, which is statistically significant according to the determined Likert scale (1-5). Local leaders rate civil servants as having political qualities and service attitudes that meet the requirements of public ethics.

However, there is a certain difference, that the observed variables of the "Service Attitude" (SA) scale are assessed at the lowest level with Mean (SA1) = 4.04, Mean (SA2) = 3.97, Mean (SA3) = 3.94, showing that many local leaders have low assessments of the service attitude of civil servants. That shows that there are still civil servants with inappropriate communication style, standard communication attitude when contacting and resolving people's requests; not respecting people when communicating, not listening to people's opinions, not receiving and processing people's information in a timely manner; not treating all people fairly, not providing information guidance and attentive service so that people can conveniently access information and register administrative procedures to resolve their requests.

The above survey results contribute to showing the practical situation of public ethics of local civil servants in Vietnam, similar to the assessment and evaluation of some recent studies. According to Bau,

D.N. (2022) and Dao, D.N. (2022), there are still civil servants who are not really exemplary in their daily behavior, lack awareness of self-training, cultivating ethics and public ethics, causing resentment among the people and affecting the image of those working for the state. Dung, N.V. et al. (2023) and Anh, N.T.M. (2025) analyzed the practical situation and assessed that there is still a situation where civil servants are not dedicated to their work; the situation where civil servants subtly conceal their arrogance and power abuse through a gentle and proper attitude in direct relationships with the people, but do not resolve the work promptly. The above practical problem is a factor that has a negative impact, affecting the effectiveness and efficiency of the civil service; it is very necessary for localities to pay attention and find solutions to overcome it promptly and thoroughly.

Data in Table 2 show that the scales and observed variables have standard test values, which are conditions for conducting exploratory factor analysis to test the theoretical research model. The author conducts exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation to preliminarily assess the unidimensionality, convergent value, and discriminant value of the scales to have more basis for drawing research conclusions about the suitability of the initial theoretical model. The results of exploratory factor analysis are shown in Table 3 and Table 4 below.

**Table 3: Total Variance Explained.**

KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.751

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1994.662
	df	36
	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	3.558	39.531	39.531	3.558	39.531	39.531	2.774	30.826	30.826
2	2.861	31.790	71.320	2.861	31.790	71.320	2.691	29.898	60.724
3	1.118	12.420	83.741	1.118	12.420	83.741	2.071	23.016	83.741
4	.486	5.396	89.137						
5	.425	4.724	93.861						
6	.194	2.160	96.021						
7	.174	1.937	97.958						
8	.127	1.415	99.373						
9	.056	.627	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

*Source: Author's Survey Results.*

**Table 4. Rotated Component Matrix**

Rotated Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>				
Scales	Observed variables	Component		
		1	2	3
1. Political qualities (PQ)	PQ1	.742		
	PQ2	.755		
	PQ3	.778		
2. Service Attitude (SA)	SA1		.809	
	SA2		.798	
	SA3		.794	
3. Public ethics (PE)	PE1			.801
	PE2			.792
	PE3			.787

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.  
 a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

*Source: Author's survey results*

In quantitative research, exploratory factor analysis is performed in accordance with the data set through the values:  $0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$ ; Bartlett's test has an observed significance level  $Sig. < 0.05$ ; Eigenvalue  $\geq 1$ ; Total Variance Explained  $\geq 50\%$ ; Factor Loading  $\geq 0.5$  (Hair, J.F. et al., 2009; Hai, D.H., 2019). The data in Table 3 and Table 4 show that:

+  $KMO = 0.751 > 0.5$ , confirming that exploratory factor analysis is appropriate for the data set; Bartlett's test has an observed significance level of  $Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05$ , showing that the observed variables have a linear correlation with the representative factor.

Total Variance Explained with Cumulative % =  $83.741\% > 50\%$  (Table 3), showing that 83.741% of the

variation of the representative factors is explained by the observed variables; the observed variables all have Factor Loading  $> 0.5$  (Table 4), showing that the observed variables have good statistical significance. The theoretical research model initially proposed is consistent with the survey research practice.

+ The observed variables were extracted into 03 factors corresponding to the 03 initial factors with Eigenvalues  $> 1$  (Table 3), continuing to confirm the suitability of the initial research model. And the initial research model was kept intact, including: 02 independent variables "Political qualities" (PQ), "Service Attitude" (SA) and 01 dependent variable "Public ethics" (PE) with 9 observed variables with good statistical significance, which can perform

multivariate linear regression analysis to examine the relationship of the variables in the model. The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 5, which

is the basis for the author to draw research conclusions.

**Table 5: Multivariate Regression Results.**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
1	(Constant)	1.024	.225		11.217	.000	
	Political qualities (PQ)	.543	.316	.382	9.373	.000	1.818
	Service Attitude (SA)	.412	.205	.298	8.854	.000	1.801
a. Dependent Variable: Public ethics (PE) R Square = .739; Durbin-Watson = 2.011							

*Source: Author's Survey Results*

The regression analysis data in Table 5 shows that: + R Square = .739, confirming that the scales "Political qualities" (PQ), "Service Attitude" (SA) explain 73.9% of the variation in the scale "Public ethics" (PE). VIF = 1.818 and VIF = 1.801 (1 < VIF < 2), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.011 (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" (PE).

+ 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) = 0.543, B (SA) = 0.412, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables "Political qualities" (PQ), "Service Attitude" (SA) and 01 dependent variable "Public ethics" (PE); hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted.

Applying the generalized regression model of Hair, J.F. et al. (2009):  $Y = B_0 + B_1 \cdot X_1 + B_2 \cdot X_2 + \dots + B_i \cdot X_i$ , the author determined the regression model of this study as follows:  $PE = 1.024 + 0.543 \cdot PQ + 0.412 \cdot SA$

Based on the regression coefficients of the scales as independent variables: B(PQ) = 0.543, B (SA) = 0.412, it can be affirmed that the correlation level of the independent variables and dependent variables in ascending 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: Vietnamese commune-level civil servants have political qualities and service attitudes that meet the requirements of public service ethics. However, the service attitudes of civil servants are

assessed by local leaders at a lower level. Accordingly, there are still civil servants with inappropriate communication styles, standard communication attitudes when contacting and resolving people's requests; not respecting people when communicating, not listening to people's opinions, not receiving and processing people's information in a timely manner; not treating all people fairly, not providing information guidance and attentive service so that people can conveniently access information and register administrative procedures to resolve their requests.

The above practical issues are factors that have negative impacts, affecting the effectiveness and efficiency of the civil service and need localities to find solutions to overcome them promptly and thoroughly. From the above research conclusions, the author discusses solutions on civil service ethics to improve the quality of local civil servants to meet the requirements of serving the state and the people. Accordingly, localities need to regularly implement education on the spirit and responsibility of civil servants; implement a multi-dimensional system of monitoring and evaluating the working awareness and service attitude of civil servants to create correct awareness and promptly adjust the deviant behavior of civil servants in the process of performing public duties. Vietnam is strongly reforming the administrative system towards building a modern, streamlined, effective and efficient government apparatus; transforming from a governing administrative system to a service-oriented administrative system. Therefore, while the institutional system is gradually being perfected in the face of many changes in society, the working spirit and service attitude implemented by civil servants in a standard and voluntary manner will become an important factor, deciding the success of the reform. Therefore, implementing measures to

propagate and educate the spirit and service responsibility of civil servants on a regular basis, combined with multi-dimensional monitoring and evaluation of the working consciousness and service

attitude of civil servants is necessary and has practical significance to improve the quality of civil servants.

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