

A STUDY ON WORK MOTIVATION OF COMMUNE - LEVEL CIVIL SERVANTS IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Civil servants' work motivation is among the factors that greatly impacts on the quality and efficiency in the performance of their duties. During the operation process of any agency, unit or organization, there are many factors affecting employees' work motivation namely Labor remuneration (salary, allowances), Leaders' recognition, Commendation schemes, Career opportunities, Work environment and conditions, which have been analyzed and researched by many researchers. Within the scope of this research, the author focuses on four factors that are not only paid much attention in public service activities but also associated with the characteristics of Vietnam's political regime. They are labor remuneration (salary, allowances), leadership recognition, commendation schemes and career opportunities. He builds a theoretical framework for the research on the above-mentioned four factors and conducts a direct survey of 300 commune-level civil servants working in three big cities representing three regions Hanoi, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. The survey is cautiously undertaken and its subjects are civil servants at commune levels with the working time of 5 years or more, which is considered as reasonable time sufficient to have an objective assessment of the public service regime. With the secondary data collected and analyzed from published documents and the primary one from direct surveys, he contributes to clarifying the reality of the state regimes and policies which make a significant impact on commune-level civil servants' motivation. From that result, he suggests some scientific implications in the hope of providing leaders and managers with scientific information as a basis for amending policies appropriately, thereby satisfying commune-level civil servants' needs and creating the real motivation for them to work enthusiastically, maximize their capacity and dedicate themselves to the public services.

Keywords: Civil Servants, Commune-Level Civil Servants, Work Motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Local government in Vietnam consists of three provincial, district, and commune levels. At the commune level as the grassroots level, civil servants are those who regularly contact and

directly solve the people's requests to ensure their legitimate rights and interests as prescribed by law. In the state management activities, they play a crucial role in the implementation of policies and political objectives of the state. In fact, the performance of commune-level government agencies greatly depends on the quality and effectiveness of civil servants' duties performance. Their work motivation is among the factors that significantly affect the quality and effectiveness of their performance of duties, which has been theoretically confirmed by many previous studies so that it is necessary to conduct a field survey into commune-level civil servants' work motivation in Vietnam today. In this paper, based on the theoretical framework established to carry out a research on their work motivation, the author conducts a survey of people's opinions in a number of localities representing three regions in Vietnam. From the survey findings, he proposes some solutions for amending policies proper to Vietnam's conditions and commune-level civil servants' characteristics and needs with the aim of creating them work motivation so as that they promote their spirit of enthusiastic work, strive hard and dedicate themselves to public services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In terms of research and management, the work motivation of civil servants in general and of those at commune levels in particular is mentioned and analyzed under many aspects. Of which four ones, namely Labor remuneration (salary and allowances), Leadership recognition, Commendation schemes, and Career opportunities, are selected by the author in his study as not only are they scientific but also inherited from the previous studies and consistent with current Vietnamese laws.

Labor Remuneration (LAR)

In the field of research, labor remuneration is a material element, representing the labor value that laborers have performed (Koontz et al., 2004). For commune-level civil servants, it is the value and result of their assigned task performance (Tran, 2010). In the field of management, it is a policy guaranteed by the State in the form of salary and allowances (hereinafter referred to as income) which are commensurate with their actual capacity and tasks performance results according to the job position (Vietnam National Assembly, 2008; Vietnamese Government, 2018). Labor remuneration creates work motivation for civil servants in general and those at commune levels in particular when it meets the following requirements:

1. LAR1: Their income is commensurate with their working time and work pressure.
2. LAR2: Their income ensures the basic living needs of their families.
3. LAR3: Their income is equivalent to that of administrative officers in other occupations.
4. LAR4: Their income gives them peace of mind in their work and makes them devote themselves to the state and society.

Leadership Recognition (LER)

The timely leadership recognition is a spiritual factor that positively impacts and encourages laborers' enthusiasm and creativity in every agency, unit or organization (Tran,

2010). In Vietnam's public sectors, the leadership recognition for commune-level civil servants is institutionalized into a mandatory regulation. This means the head of any agency, unit or organs is responsible for regularly reviewing and detecting talented people in their public service activities in order to take appropriate and timely commendation measures (Vietnamese Government, 2020). Here are some basic contents expressed in the leadership recognition:

1. LER1: The leaders care, motivate their employees on a regular basis and create opportunities for them to show their capacity and creativity.
2. LER2: The leaders recognize and arouse potential and chances in such a way to be suitable with the characteristics of each employee.
3. LER3: The leaders properly assess their capacity and assign appropriate work to each.
4. LER4: The leaders acknowledge their results and achievements in a fair and transparent manner.

Commendation Schemes (COS)

The fair and timely commendation schemes have a great impact as they stimulate employees' enthusiasm and dedication in the organization (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2010; Tran, 2011). For commune-level civil servants, it is affirmed not merely as a form of encouragement and strong motivation (Tran, 2010) but also as an important policy, which is regulated and implemented under such principles as rewarding them in a fair and timely way, closely combining spiritual encouragement and material rewards (Vietnam National Assembly, 2013). The commendation schemes are summarized by many researchers and managers under a number of such main contents as:

1. COS1: The commendation policy is suitable to commune-level civil servants' work and the characteristics of local culture and society.
2. COS2: The commendation form is reflected in both material and spiritual aspects that are attractive to them.
3. COS3: The commendation regime is commensurate with their contributions and dedication to work.
4. COS4: The commendation shall be organized openly, fairly and persuasively.

Career Opportunities (CAO)

Career opportunities are non-physical factors that strongly affect civil servants' needs, psychology and aspirations in the organization (Nguyen and Nguyen, 2010; Robbins and Judge, 2016; Ngo, 2019). Although they perform their tasks at the grassroot levels in the government system, the needs for both professional development and promotion opportunities must always be attached great importance, which is stipulated in the policies of the legal system in Vietnam (Vietnam National Assembly, 2008). Accordingly, they are given opportunities to develop themselves in public service activities. Career opportunities are reflected in such a number of main contents as:

1. CAO1: Opportunities for improving their professional qualifications. Civil servants are trained and re-trained for their professional development when they meet job requirements and are assessed as capable of development.

2. CAO2: Opportunities for career development in the workplace. Civil servants are able to demonstrate their capacity and obtain good job positions through promotion exams and their appointment to higher ranks in a fair manner.
3. CAO3: Opportunities for getting promotion. Civil servants are able to demonstrate their capacity through open and competitive recruitment exams for leadership and managerial posts.
4. CAO4: Opportunities for working in higher-level agencies. Civil servants are accepted to work in higher-level agencies when they meet the job requirements and this must be performed openly and competitively.

In the literature review, the author identified four factors affecting commune-level civil servants' work motivation with 16 observed variables. Accordingly, the author gives the research model and hypothesis, which are (Figure 1):

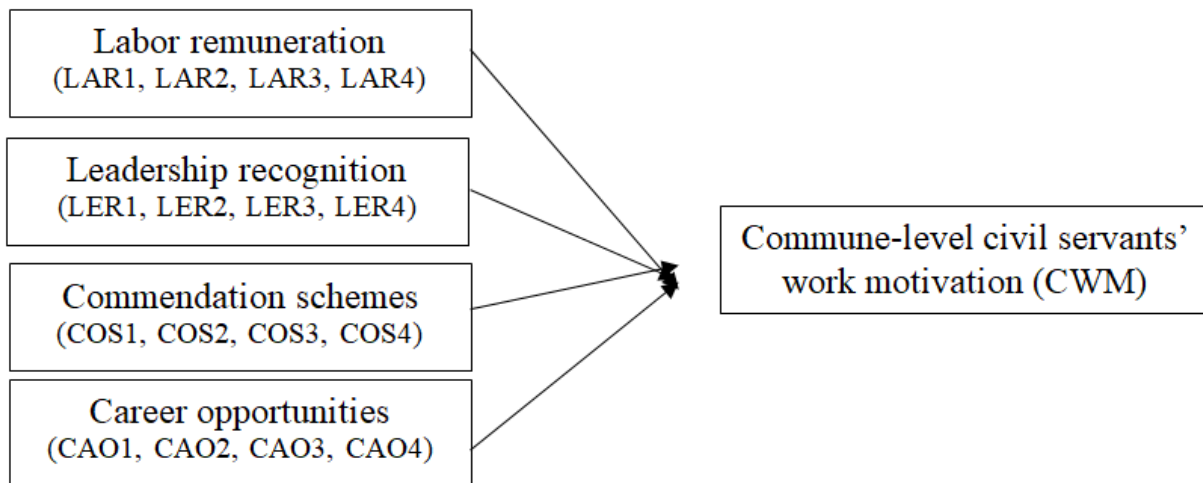


FIGURE 1
THE RESEARCH MODEL

Hypotheses

- H₁* Labor remuneration affects commune-level civil servants' work motivation.
- H₂* Leadership recognition affects commune-level civil servants' work motivation.
- H₃* Commendation schemes affect commune-level civil servants' work motivation.
- H₄* Career opportunities affect commune-level civil servants' work motivation.

RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, the author uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Of which, the qualitative method is used to analyse the secondary data collected from published

documents and expert consultation, thereby building a research theoretical framework, and the quantitative one is employed to gather the primary one from direct surveys. The primary data collection is conducted in two steps, which are preliminary and official surveys.

Preliminary Survey

Based on a theoretical framework for aforementioned 4 factors, the author designs a survey consisting of 16 questions with 16 observed variables. All of them are measured according to a 5-point Likert scale: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - Neutral; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree. Afterward, he conducts a preliminary survey of 100 people in the study area and its findings show that the observed variables are reliable enough to be used in the official survey.

Official Survey

The survey is directly conducted in a number of localities representing 3 regions in Vietnam in 2021. The respondents, who are 300 commune-level civil servants with working time of 5 years or more, are carefully chosen. The author conducts a preliminary interview to capture information about the respondents and distributes the survey on the basis of their consent.

The survey findings obtain 300/300 valid votes, reaching a response rate of 100%. He conducts statistics and analyses the data by using the method of exploratory factor and regression analyses. The findings are as follows:

RESEARCH RESULTS

Statistics of Research Samples

Descriptive statistics of the research samples in Table 1 show that male percentage rate is 61.3% but female 38.7%; postgraduate level of education is 18.3% and graduate 81.7%; working time from 5 to 10 years is 55% and over 10 years 45%; monthly salary below 6 million dong accounts for 59.3%¹, from 6 to 10 million dong 28%² and over 10 million dong 12.7%³.

Variables	Group classification	Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Male	184	61.3%
	Female	116	38.7%
Qualifications	Postgraduate	55	18.3%
	Graduate	245	81.7%
Working time	5-10 years	165	55%
	over 10 years	135	45%
Monthly wages	Under 6 million VND	178	59.3%
	6-10 million VND	84	28%
	Over 10 million VND	38	12.7%

The Results of Testing the Scale Reliability

The test results (Table 2) show that the total Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the variables is greater than 0.6 and the total correlation coefficient is greater than 0.3, so these variables continue to be used in exploratory factor analysis - EFA (Do & Ho, 2018).

Variables	Number of observed variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Minimum total variable correlation coefficient
LAR: Labor remuneration	4	0.643	0.421
LER: Leadership recognition	4	0.723	0.413
COS: Commendation schemes	4	0.767	0.589
CAO: Career opportunities	4	0.814	0.565
CWM: Commune-level civil servants' work motivation	4	0.664	0.403

Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The results of the scale test of the independent variables indicate that $\text{sig} = 0.000$, $\text{KMO} = 0.803$ (>0.5). EFA results after two tests show that by using the methods of Principal Component factor extraction and Varimax rotation, 4 factors were extracted with cumulative extracted variance of 68.4% ($>50\%$) and Eigenvalue ranging from 1.201 to 7.184 (>1). The factor loading coefficients of the observed variables are all greater than 0.5. And the scale is, therefore, satisfactory.

The above-mentioned results of Cronbach's Alpha and EFA tests indicate that the scales of the independent and dependent variables both meet the requirements in terms of their value and reliability and will be included in the next quantitative study (Kovach, 1987).

Results of Regression Analysis

Variables	Regression coefficient (B)	Beta coefficient	Level of significance	Multicollinear Statistics	
				Tolerances	VIF
Constants	1.322		0.000		
LAR: Labor remuneration	0.185	0.287	0.000	0.731	1.360
LER: Leadership recognition	0.122	0.218	0.000	0.710	1.410
COS: Commendation schemes	0.113	0.302	0.000	0.711	1.389
CAO: Career opportunities	0.166	0.313	0.000	0.672	1.458
CWM: Commune-level civil servants' work motivation					
R ² = 0.353					

The results of the regression analysis in Table 3 show that the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is statistically significant (Sig. < 0.05). Adjusted R² = 0.353 reveals that 35.3% of the variation of the dependent variables is explained by the independent ones. The VIF coefficients of all variables are less than 10, showing that there is no multicollinearity. The independent variables (LAR, LER, COS, CAO) have a positive B coefficient, with Sig. < 0.05, so the hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4 are accepted. Here is the regression equation:

$$Y = 1.322 + 0.113 * X1 + 0.122 * X2 + 0.166 * X3 + 0.185 * X4$$

All regression coefficients with a positive sign (+) indicate that the independent variables have a positive relationship with the dependent ones. The impact of 4 independent variables (LAR, LER, COS, CAO) on the dependent ones in descending order is as follows: LAR (labor remuneration), CAO (career opportunity), LER (leadership recognition) and COS (Commendation schemes).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The research results confirm that the aforementioned factors all have an impact on the civil servants' work motivation. In the context of Vietnam, the level of impact is gradually decreasing: LAR (labor remuneration), CAO (career opportunities), LER (leadership recognition), COS (commendation schemes). From the research findings, the author suggests some ideas on management as follows:

Researching and adjusting the salary policy towards creating motivation for commune-level civil servants to feel secure in their work and devote themselves to the civil services.

Labor remuneration (salary, allowances) gets the most attention by commune-level civil servants and affects their enthusiasm, creativity and dedication the most. In fact, 59.3% of civil servants have an income of less than 300 USD, 28% have an income of 300-500 USD (Table 1), which is only equivalent to the average income of Vietnamese people in 2019-2020. Hence, it is essential to study and adjust the salary policy in the direction of creating motivation for them to feel secure in their work and devote themselves to the civil services. Their income from salaries must be commensurate with their working time and work pressure, but at the same time equivalent to the income level of those in other professions. In addition, it must ensure the essential living needs for their families.

Not only is this solution implemented to meet their material needs, but it creates an important motivation for them to make wholehearted contributions to the development of the civil services as well. That contributes to the stability and socio-political development of the locality as mentioned in the national governance goals.

Researching and adjusting policies to create opportunities for the professional development and promotion prospects of commune-level civil servants.

Career opportunities (in both professional and promotion) are also of great concern to them. The low income resulting in their psychological desire is that how to obtain higher positions to

be able to express their talents and improve their income. Therefore, it is necessary to study and adjust policies on training, retraining, rank promotion examinations, and leadership recruitment tests in the direction of flexibility and diversity in content and evaluation methods so that commune-level civil servants have many opportunities to show their talents and develop their professional skills; thereby creating a strong motivation for each of them to self-practice and strive for self improvement, contributing to improving the quality of Vietnamese local government civil servants.

Not only will this solution meet their needs in terms of career development and create moral motivation for them, but it also contributes to the successful implementation of administrative reform objectives set by the State, which are building a contingent of civil servants with sufficient qualities, necessary qualifications and capabilities to meet the requirements of serving the people and developing the society.

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