

A Study on Local Civil Servants' Demands in Vietnam

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Abstract

Civil servants are the labor force who perform public duties to serve the society and the people through the exercise of power by the state. They have, therefore, the same fundamental characteristics as other employees in the society, which is reflected in their professional qualifications, working capacity, and ethical qualities. Psychologically, they also have the same necessary needs as other workers and always want them to be satisfied. In terms of research, their needs are studied in both material and spiritual aspects. Within the scope of this paper, the author focuses on understanding and analyzing them in both material and spiritual aspects, which are a demand for being paid a satisfactory salary; a demand for receiving leadership recognition and encouragement; a demand for being honored and rewarded, and a demand for being studied to improve the professional expertise. With the secondary data collected and analyzed by the qualitative research method in combination with the primary one which are the results from sociological surveys by the quantitative research method, he contributes to clarifying the reality of the civil servants' demands in local government agencies in Vietnam. Not only are these research results meaningful for himself in the implementation of other research tasks related but also for managers. This is considered as the necessity for conducting research and adjusting policies in order to further satisfy civil servants' demands so that they have more enthusiasm, effort and creativity in the working process.

Keywords: The demands, local government, civil servants, Vietnam.

1. Introduction

Local government in Vietnam consists of three provincial, district, and commune levels. The labor force who directly perform public duties in state agencies are civil servants, including leading, managerial and professional ones. They perform such public duties prescribed by law as exercising state management by specialized branches and fields in assigned areas, advising on policy making, settling the people's requests ensuring their legitimate rights and interests according to law and so on.

In fact, the operational efficiency of government agencies depends a lot on the quality of duties performed by civil servants. On the contrary, the quality of their duty performance is affected and influenced by many factors, in which whether their most basic needs as a social worker are satisfied or not. Therefore, in every period and regime, it is very necessary to conduct surveys into their actual needs. This makes sense both in terms of theory and practice because not only does it provide more theoretical basis for carrying out research in the field of managing civil servants and supplying managers with factual basis and objective information but it can also synthesize and conduct further research to well do the planning and adjust related policies ensuring the effective management of civil servants.

In this paper, on the basis of building a theoretical framework for studying the demands of employees in general and those of civil servants in particular, he conducts a survey of 350 civil servants in some localities representing 3 regions of Vietnam. Its results obtain objective information for him to draw research conclusions and suggest policies suitable to the Vietnamese context with the aim of responding to their demands as well as creating motivation for them to promote the working spirit with enthusiasm, effort and creativity.

2. Literature review

Demand is a psychological phenomenon of a person, expressing his desires and aspirations in terms of material and spiritual to exist and develop. It is a property of a living organism, conveying its own deficiency or imbalance in the living environment. When it tends to be satisfied, he will work actively, enthusiastically and creatively, thereby bringing high labor value. Therefore, in management activities, it is always necessary to study employees' demands in organizations to stimulate them to work enthusiastically and creatively, and then dedicate themselves to the work; at the same time, managers always have the initiative in applying appropriate policy in order to promptly meet their employees' demands as well as build a powerful organization.

In terms of research and management, the demands of employees in general and those of civil servants in particular include many factors which have been mentioned and analyzed by many researchers and managers. Of which there are 4 main ones are selected by the author in this study as they are both scientific and inherited from the results from many previous studies; at the same time they are also consistent with current Vietnamese laws. They are the demand for being paid a satisfactory salary, the demand for receiving leadership recognition and encouragement, the demand for being honored and rewarded, and the demand for being studied to improve the professional expertise.

2.1. The demand for being paid a satisfactory salary (SS)

Salary is seen as a basic element and an aspect of labor remuneration; it is a material element that represents the labor value performed by employees. For civil servants, it is the main measure affirming the value and performance of their assigned tasks (**Tran Huong Thanh 2010; Ngo Sy Trung 2019**). It is stipulated in a policy by the state guaranteeing that it is commensurate with their capacity and the efficiency of their task performance according to their job positions (**Vietnam National Assembly 2008**). In addition, the demand for being paid a satisfactory salary is the most

basic and necessary material one, becoming an important working motivation expressed through such a number of contents as:

- SS1: The salary is commensurate with the civil servants' qualifications and capacity. In each job position, civil servants are required to self-study and practice to meet the set requirements. For them, therefore, salary paid must be commensurate with their qualifications and capacity, and is a basic need that needs to be met.
- SS2: The salary must satisfy civil servants' daily living needs. This is a high demand, which is usually met only in developed countries (like United Kingdom, French Republic, Singapore, Korea...). Hence, it is paid much attention to by those in developing and undeveloped countries.
- SS3: The salary is paid equitably according to the job position. This is a very basic need showing the cognitive psychology of civil servants in particular and that of employees in general. When it is satisfied, they will work with peace of mind without negative comparisons and internal conflicts.
- SS4: The salary sets up civil servants' efforts and stimulate competitive development among them. Any one has the desire for a high salary, which enables them to strive towards the good performance of the assigned work, and thereby creating an active competition among them, which helps them always be creative and devote themselves to the organization.

2.2. The demand for receiving leadership recognition and encouragement (RE)

The leaders' timely recognition and encouragement is a factor that positively affects and encourages the working morale by employees in general and those in the state apparatus in particular (**Nguyen Thi Tuyet Mai 2019**). This is what every civil servant wants to get and it is institutionalized into legal regulations in Vietnam, which means that heads of agencies are responsible for regularly reviewing and detecting their talented employees in order to be able to effectively apply policies on emulation and commendation (**Vietnam Government 2020**).

- RE1: Leaders recognize and properly evaluate the capacity and efficiency of civil servants' tasks performances. If this need is satisfied, it will give them peace of mind to work and avoid them having the feeling of being equated.
- RE2: Leaders care and motivate civil servants' efforts in a timely and objective manner. This is considered as both the need and the common psychology, and also as a very strong motivation for them to dedicate themselves to their work.
- RE3: Leaders detect and arouse the civil servants' potential in the working process. When their need is met, they will see themselves and their development opportunities in the future, which enables them to continue striving.
- RE4: Leaders recognize civil servants' capacity and publicly honor their achievements. When their need is met, they are very proud and see their values shine, thereby having confidence to strive and contribute themselves to the organization.

2.3. The demand for being honored and rewarded (HR)

This need is a common psychological factor of employees in general and civil servants in particular. In every organization, when they are honored and rewarded promptly and publicly, they will have a very strong work motivation, thereby achieving high working efficiency (**Le Thanh Ha 2011**). For them, honoring and rewarding are affirmed as a form of encouragement and spiritual stimulation that has a strong impact (**Tran Huong Thanh 2010**). It is seen as an important measure implemented with such principles as rewarding the right person and true achievement in a timely manner; rewarding in a public and fair manner (**Vietnam National Assembly 2013**). Some of the main contents about the demand for being honored and rewarded are emphasized by managers and researchers, which are:

- HR1: The demand for being honored and rewarded in both material and spiritual aspects for the civil servants' efforts and achievements.
- HR2: The demand for being honored and rewarded in a public and solemn manner for the civil servants' efforts and achievements.
- HR3: The demand for being honored and rewarded in a fair and objective manner for the civil servants' efforts and achievements.
- HR4: The demand for being honored and rewarded with the commensurate and convincing values for the civil servants' efforts and achievements.

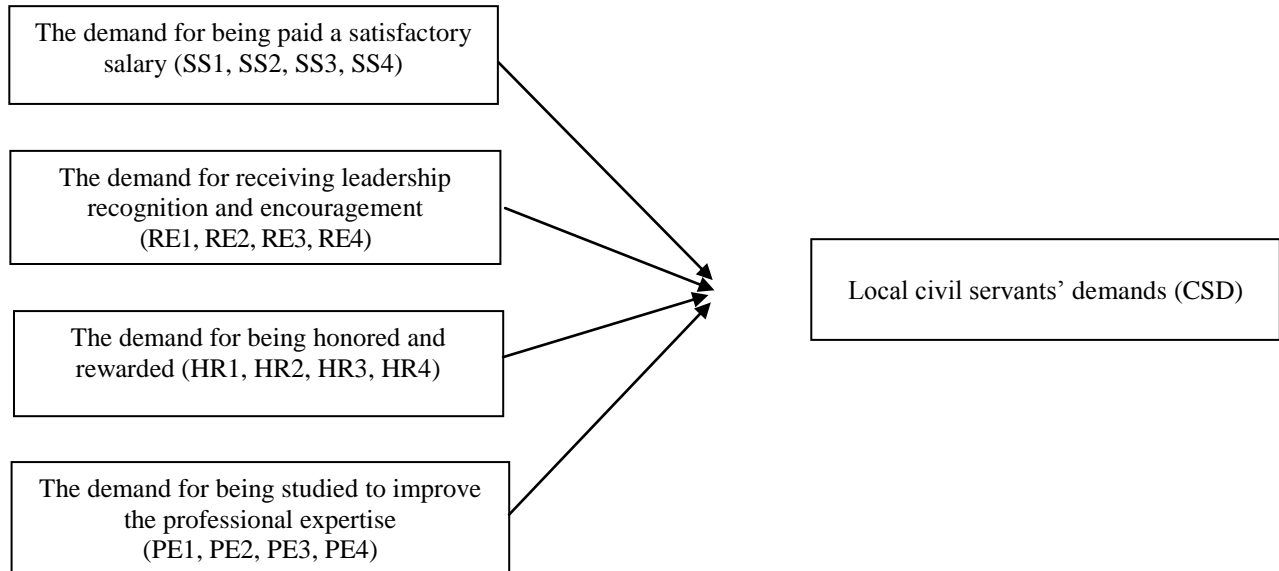
2.4. The demand for being studied to improve the professional expertise (PE)

This is a psychological factor, expressing the employees' aspirations to rise in every organization (**Robbins, S.P. and Judge, T.A. 2016; Nguyen Thi Tuyet Mai 2019**). For local civil servants, this need includes both the professional development and promotion opportunities and if being met, it is satisfaction that will be a great motivation for them to work. The professional development and promotion opportunities are stipulated in the Vietnamese policies and laws, which is reflected in the following main aspects (**Vietnam National Assembly 2008**):

- PE1: The need to be learnt to improve professional qualifications and knowledge. It is institutionalized by the thing that civil servants are trained and retrained for professional development until meeting the job requirements and being assessed as capable of development.
- PE2: The need to be assigned to their proper job positions and/or be appointed to higher ranks at the working agency. It is institutionalized by the thing that they can demonstrate their capacity in a fair manner through rank promotion exams.
- PE3: The need to be promoted. It is institutionalized by the thing that they can demonstrate their capacity publicly and competitively through examinations for leading and management positions.
- PE4: The need to work in higher-level agencies. It is institutionalized by the thing that they are accepted to work in higher-level agencies when meeting the job requirements, which is conducted openly and competitively.

Through the literature review, the author identifies 4 independent factors with 16 observed variables about the local civil servants' demands. From here, he gives the following research models and hypothesis.

Figure 1. Research models



Research hypothesis

H1: Local civil servants' demand for receiving a satisfactory salary.

H2: Local civil servants' demand for receiving leadership recognition and encouragement

H3: Local civil servants' demand for being honored and rewarded fairly and openly.

H4: Local civil servants' demand for being studied to improve their professional expertise.

3. Research methods

To achieve the research objectives, the author uses the method of collecting and analyzing the secondary data from published documents in combination with the primary ones from preliminary and official surveys conducted directly.

3.1. Preliminary surveys

From the theoretical framework designed to conduct the research into the local civil servants' demands according to the 4 factors discussed in the literature review, he designs a questionnaire consisting of 16 questions with 16 observed variables. All of the observed variables are measured using a 5-level Likert scale that are 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - Neutral; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree. With the questionnaire, he conducts a preliminary survey of 100 civil servants in the study area and the results reveal that the observed variables are reliable enough to be used in the official survey.

3.2. Official surveys

Afterwards, he carries out an official survey in some localities representing 3 regions of Vietnam, namely Hai Phong city, KhanhHoa province and Can Tho city. It is directly done in 2021. Its selected subjects are of 350 civil servants with the working time of 5 years or more.

He also does a preliminary interview to capture information about the respondents' standards and then distributes the questionnaire on the basis of their consent. Survey results obtains 350/350 valid votes, reaching 100% response rate. Finally, the data collected is analyzed by the method of exploratory factor and regression analysis, giving the following results.

4. Research results

4.1. Statistics of research samples

Descriptive statistics of the study sample in Table 1 prove that male percentage is 70% and female 30%; postgraduate level of education is 30.8% and graduate 69.2%; the working time from 5 to 10 years is 70.5% and over 10 years 29.5%; monthly salary below 7 million dong accounts for 62%¹, from 7 to 12 million dong 25.4%² and over 12 million dong 12.6%³.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the study sample

Variables	Group classification	Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Male	244	70%
	Female	106	30%
Professional qualifications	Postgraduate	108	30.8%
	Graduate	242	69.2%
Working time	5-10 years	247	70.5%
	Over 10 years	103	29.5%
Monthly salary	Under 7 million VND	217	62%
	7-12 million VND	89	25.4%
	Over 12 million VND	44	12.6%

Source: Author's survey results in 2021

4.2. The results of testing the reliability of the scale

The author tests the reliability of the scale and the results demonstrate that the sum of the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the variables is greater than 0.6 and the total correlation coefficient is greater than 0.3 so that these variables continue to be used in the exploratory factor analysis - EFA (**Le Van Huy, Truong Tran Tram Anh 2012**).

¹ This level reaches about 300 USD.

² This level reaches about 300-500 USD.

³ This level reaches about 500 USD or more.

Table 2. Results of testing the reliability of the scale

Variables	Number of observed variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Minimum total variable correlation coefficient
SS: The demand for being paid a satisfactory salary	4	0.704	0.432
RE: The demand for receiving leadership recognition and encouragement	4	0.699	0.424
HR: The demand for being honored and rewarded	4	0.671	0.485
PE: The demand for being studied to improve the professional expertise	4	0.754	0.502
CSD: Local civil servants' demands	4	0.774	0.443

Source: Author's survey results in 2021

4.3. Exploratory factor analysis results (EFA)

The results of the scale test of the independent variables show that sig = 0.000, KMO = 0.812 (>0.5). EFA results after two tests indicate that by using the methods of Principal Component factor extraction and Varimax rotation, 4 factors were extracted with cumulative extracted variance of 63% (>50%), Eigenvalue from 1,302 to 6.918 (>1) and the factor loading coefficients of all the observed variables of > 0.5. Therefore, the scale is satisfactory.

The aforementioned results of Cronbach's Alpha and EFA tests manifest that the scales of the independent and dependent variables both meet the requirements in terms of value and reliability and they will be included in the next quantitative study.

4.4. Results of regression analysis

Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis

Variables	Regression coefficient (B)	Beta coefficient	Level of significance	Multicollinear Statistics	
				Tolerances	VIF
Constants	1.341		.000		
SS: The demand for being paid a satisfactory salary	.183	.291	.000	.711	1.310

RE: The demand for receiving leadership recognition and encouragement	.165	.246	.000	.709	1.398
HR: The demand for being honored and rewarded	.121	.299	.000	.712	1.381
PE: The The demand for being studied to improve the professional expertise	.186	.323	.000	.705	1.388
CSD: Local civil servants' demands					
R2 Adjustment: 0.636					

Source: Author's survey results in 2021

The results of the regression analysis in Table 3 prove that the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is statistically significant (Sig. < 0.05). Adjusted R2 = 0.636 indicates that 63.6% of the variation of the dependent variables is explained by the independent ones. The VIF coefficients of all variables are less than 10, displaying that there is no multicollinearity. The independent ones (SS, RE, HR, PE) have a positive B coefficient with Sig.<0.05, so the hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4 are accepted. Here is the regression equation:

$$Y = 1.341 + 0.121 * X1 + 0.165 * X2 + 0.183 * X3 + 0.186 * X4$$

All regression coefficients have a positive sign (+), showing that the independent variables have a positive relationship with the dependent ones. The impact of 4 independent variables (SS, RE, HR, PE) on the dependent ones in descending order is as follows: PE (the demand for being studied to improve the professional expertise), SS (the demand for being paid a satisfactory salary), RE (the demand for receiving leadership recognition and encouragement) and HR (the demand for being honored and rewarded).

5. Conclusion

The research results once again affirm that the local civil servants' demands include both material and spiritual factors, expressed in decreasing order of magnitude namely PE (the The demand for being studied to improve the professional expertise), SS (the demand for being paid a satisfactory salary), RE (the demand for receiving leadership recognition and encouragement) and HR (the demand for being honored and rewarded). From the research results, the author suggests some management ideas as follows:

- Firstly, the demand for being studied to improve the professional expertise attract the most local civil servants' attention and also affects their enthusiasm, creativity and dedication the most. The cause of this phenomenon originates from Vietnamese people's cultural characteristics, which is the psychological desire to be promoted and respect for fame and title in the style of "A big fish/a leading light is the crutch of the whole village/area'. Historically, Vietnamese dynasties have

attached great importance to examinations to select the talented people to be officials in the government apparatus at all levels. That historical tradition also gives local civil servants psychological desire to rise to higher positions in order to display their talents, to be registered and honored. This is also a good psychological aspect; the State, however, needs to study and adjust the policy of training, retraining, rank promotion exams and entrance ones for leading and management positions towards the flexibility and diversity in content and quality so as that local civil servants have many opportunities to demonstrate their talents and stimulate their professional development. Since then, the competitive entrance exams have really become a strong motivation for each to retrain himself and self-strive with the aim of contributing to building, developing and improving the quality of the contingent of civil servants in the local government agencies as well as meeting the development requirements of society.

- Secondly, the demand for being paid a satisfactory salary is also paid much attention by local civil servants, which has a great influence on their enthusiasm, creativity and dedication. In fact, 62% of whom has an income of around \$300 per month, and 25.4% earn from \$300 to 500 (Table 1). This income level is assessed as a low level, only equivalent to the average income of ordinary Vietnamese people. For example, the per capita income is 3,442 USD in 2019 and 3,521 USD in 2020 (**Communist Party of Vietnam 2021**). The State, therefore, needs to study and adjust the salary policy in the direction of creating sufficient material motivation for local civil servants to feel secure in their work and devote themselves to civil services. For instance, civil servants' salary must be commensurate with ' their qualifications and capacity; it must satisfy their basic and essential living needs; it must be paid fairly according to the job position..., which gives them efforts and competition to perfect themselves.

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