

Job Motivation of Communal Public Servants An Empirical Study in Hanoi

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Abstract: In the administration system of Vietnam, the communal government is the lowest level but it has a very important role. Communal servants are the key factor that determines the efficiency and effectiveness of the public administrative system at the grassroots level. The results of their civil service, in turn, depend mostly on their moral qualities, expertise, responsibility, attitude and job motivation. Hanoi is the capital of Vietnam with different characteristics from other provinces in the country. These characteristics significantly influence the job motivation of the civil public servants. This paper presents the results of an empirical study in My Duc district, Hanoi, to clarify the factors that play the role of job motivators of the public servants. Thus, some suggestions are raised to foster the job motivation of communal public servants.

Keywords: Job motivation, communal public servants.

1. Introduction

In the Vietnamese administrative system, communal authority is the lowest authority level, but it plays an especially important role. The group of communal public servants is a crucial element in determining the effective performance of the administrative machinery at the grassroots level. The results of the servants carrying out the civil service depends greatly on their morals, qualifications, responsibility, attitude and job motivation. In the process of dealing with their work, communal public

servants are the people who directly meet and work with local people. That process helps them understand the feelings and demands as well as the reasonable expectations of the local agencies and people. In addition to the role of a person carrying out executive rights, communal public servants are also the people who represent for the public's will and rights. Communal public servants are the people who not only carry out and implement the administrative decisions of the Communal People's Committee, as well as the State Administrative Agencies at the higher level, but they also express the local people's proposals and expectations (Vietnamese Parliament,

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2008) [1]. When this group of public servants works enthusiastically and eagerly, the effectiveness of the authority at the grassroots level in the state management will be improved. By contrast, when the servants lack job motivation, the efficiency and effectiveness of their task will be reduced.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Concept of motivation

The term “motivation” has been widely used in society and economics; for example: development motivation, study motivation, job motivation, labour motivation and so on. Depending on different approaches, each scholar has their own concept of motivation. From the philosophical perspective, some authors have regarded motivation as a factor that boosts the development and moving process of the society. From the administrative perspective, many authors have considered motivation as an element to enhance and encourage people to work hard in order to reach individual goals as well as organizational ones. According to Kreitner (1995), motivation is a psychological process which orients individual behaviors towards a certain aim [2]. Higgins (1994) defined motivation as the internal force in each individual to meet their demands [3]. Furthermore, Bedein (1993) gave a definition of motivation as an effort to achieve a particular objective [4].

Many Vietnamese scholars have proposed various definitions of motivation. Nguyen Van Diem and Nguyen Ngoc Quan (2007) stated that “motivation is the workers’ desire and willingness to make an effort in order to

achieve the organizational goals [5]. Individual motivation is the result of the interaction of each person with the living and working environment”. Tran Thanh Huong (2010) said that “motivation is the individual’s desire and willingness to exert his effort so that each individual can achieve not only his personal goals but also the organizational ones” [6]. Le Dinh Ly (2010) proposed that “motivation is the impact combined from both physical and mental factors to enhance and motivate the working enthusiasm and effort of each individual to achieve the individual goals as well as organizational ones” [7].

There are many different concepts of motivation; however, from the perspective of administrative study most of the scholars agree that: *Motivation is the factors encouraging people to work with all of their strengths to achieve the certain goals. The expression of motivation is the enthusiasm and effort of each individual.*

2.2. Factors affecting the job motivation of communal public servants

The job motivation of communal public servants is each communal public servant’s willingness to make an effort in the process of implementing the civil service. Demand and demand satisfaction help to create motivation in the working process of public servants. Furthermore, job motivation relates closely to the working results and achievements of the public servants. When the communal public servants have a high job motivation, they will be willing, enthusiastic and try their best to fulfill their tasks when taking up their public servant role.

The working effort of communal public servants depends on their own matters such as personalities, goals, ideals and demands... From the administration perspective, the

decisions of the State Administrative Organization will influence the job motivation of communal public servants. From a literature review of previous studies, we can generalize these factors into two groups: (1) factors related to civil service and office and (2) factors related to administrating and assigning public servants. The two groups of factors are summarized from the studies of King (1970) [8], Herzberg (1987) [9], Vroom (1970) [10], Hackman and Oldham (1976) [11].

2.2.1. Factors related to civil service and office

This group of factors includes five elements: the work itself, working conditions, interpersonal relationships, internal rules, and leadership style.

The job itself that a public servant takes over is a factor positively affecting the job motivation of each person if they feel that these tasks of that public servant role are interesting, varied and not tedious; that work requires their creativity and creates new challenges for them to conquer. Besides this, clear responsibility or job stability also creates the motivation for them in their work.

Working conditions are factors relating to the physical working environment in the process of civil service implementation. If these conditions are much considered and favorable, then the public servants will feel comfortable in their job. Consequently, they will have chances to complete their intended work successfully.

Interpersonal relationships in the agency which are unhealthy in the meaning of being tense, with workers not supporting each other but blocking each other, will make staff feel bored with their working environment and they will eventually lose their job motivation. If these relationships are enhanced, and the group of public servants are friendly and supportive of each other; then these will create conditions for

promotion of individual capacities, but will not make them work more enthusiastically.

Internal rules and regulations of the agency are considered as obstacles if they are not designed properly. The policies, regulations or implemented processes which are properly and suitably designed will help the public servants carry out their activities continuously and smoothly. Over-supervision from the agency will create a tense psychology, which makes public servants feel constrained and to avoid doing their work.

The leadership style of the administrators will affect positively the working enthusiasm of the juniors. As regards the leadership style, this means the individual behavior system of the leader in using powers, rights, knowledge and assigned responsibility. The leadership style not only indicates subjective factors of the leader himself, but also shows the social and environmental factors in the administration system.

2.2.2. Factors related to managing and assigning public servants

A *public servant arrangement policy* is the total of ideas, strategies, goals and solutions to select and assign the public servants scientifically and properly to promote the capacity and strength of each individual in order to achieve the common goal of the organization. This is one of the factors creating the basic motivation in managing the human resources.

Income of public servants consists of the monthly salary and allowances according to the State requirements. This is the most important reward which influences directly the living standard of most communal public servants. Besides the above-mentioned official reward, public servants also receive unofficial income in the form of gifts, daily allowances and so on in the process of carrying out the civil

service. This study only mentions the basic reward, that is salary (and the attached allowances) which public servants are offered according to the State requirements.

An evaluation system of the communal public servants aims at identifying their achievements, work results, the level of their task completion in the process of carrying out their duties, as well as clarifying the specialized ability, morals and responsibility shown in implementing the work of public servants. The demand for being precisely evaluated and well-recognized is one of the high demands of the public servants.

Training and development policy aims at improving the knowledge, level and comprehensive capacity of the public servants to meet the higher and higher job requirements, as well as helping the public servants to perfect themselves. That process consists of the learning activities to improve the level and skills of the public servants to carry out effectively the assigned functions and duties. Training and development is one of the high demands of the public servants.

Reward and punishment is one of the efficient solutions to manage and utilize the human resources. The reward and discipline policies in the State Administrative Organ can mobilize and encourage the public servants to work with effort enthusiastically and to fulfill their duties successfully; as well as restrain and prevent illegal behaviors which can affect the overall outcome of the agency.

These above mentioned groups of factors have a direct influence on the effort of communal public servants in the process of carrying out their civil service. The improved and suitable factors will have a positive effect in creating their job motivation (Figure 1). The difference between these two groups of factors

is that the decisions about managing and assigning public servants need to be based on the public servants' working outcomes.

3. Methodology

A direct questionnaire survey was conducted in February 2015 in My Duc district, Hanoi to explore and analyze the factors which motivate the communal public servants at work. The questionnaire is structured into 3 parts. Part 1 has 5 questions to gather general information about the public servant including gender, age, education level, job tenure and position. Part 2 has 8 questions asking about the satisfaction of the public servant with their job and their intention to change jobs. Part 3 includes 22 questions to explore the job motivators of communal public servants regarding the job itself, work relationships, leadership style, income, regulations, career development opportunities, facilities and the evaluation system of the organization. 119 questionnaires were delivered to all public servants currently working at My Duc district, 82 of which have been returned and fully answered so that the response rate is about 68.9 percent. The data then was processed in SPSS version 20.0 to test the validity of the scale using Cronbach Alpha and to calculate the descriptive statistics of question items. All scales were subjected to validity and reliability tests in SPSS. The results show that all scales are valid for further analysis (Table 1).

This study used the Likert scale so you must check the validity of scale using Cronbach Alpha.

The method used in this study should be indicated: descriptive statistics

119 questionnaires mean that this district has 119 officials? If yes, the author should indicated that the questionnaires are given to all officials in the district.

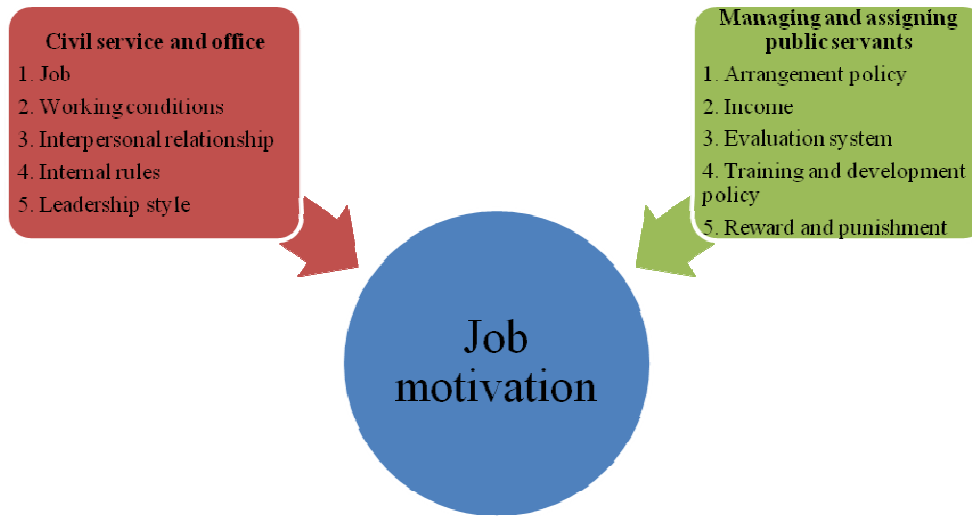


Figure 1: Components of job motivation.
 Source: The authors summarized from previous studies

Table 1: Validity of scale

Code	Description of variable	Cronbach Alpha	Number of items
JS	Job satisfaction	0.74	4
INT	Intention to change job	0.86	4
JI	Job itself	0.83	5
REL	Work relationship	0.79	3
STY	Leadership style	0.82	2
INC	Income	0.93	3
REG	Regulations	0.77	3
DEV	Career development chance	0.89	2
FAC	Facilities and evaluation system	0.75	4

Source: The authors' survey in My Duc district, 2/2015

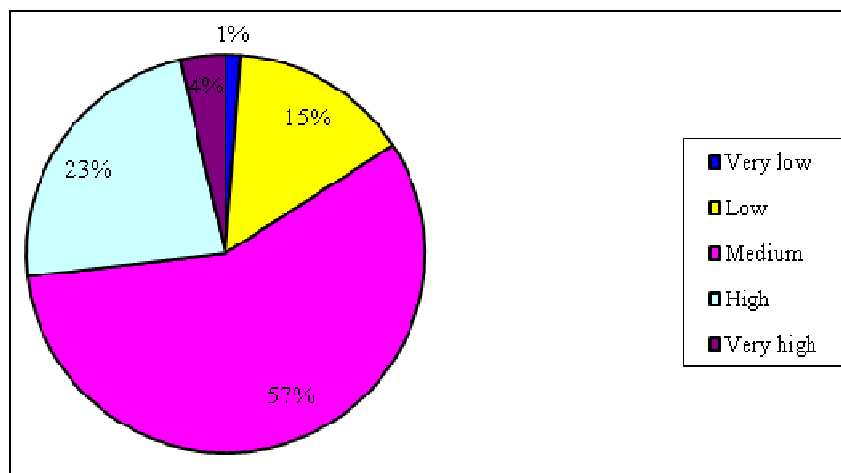


Figure 2: Job effort of communal public servants.
 Source: The authors' survey in My Duc district, 2/2015

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Job effort and intention to change job

The survey results show that most communal public servants do not have a high job effort. 57 percent of the respondents have a medium level of effort at work (Figure 2). Only those who are going to be promoted to a higher position have high or very high job motivation.

Communal public servants who are on the payroll of the city administration system, are paid from the state budget [12]. They often have worked for the grass-root state administration organization for a long time. Otherwise, if they are in a public service position on a new term basis, they should have taken a very highly competitive exam. However, some communal public servants are still anxious about their job despite the fact that they are holding a stable position in the public administration system. This phenomenon significantly affects their psychology and effort at work while they have to frequently communicate with organizations and citizens. When the public servants are questioned about their intention to change their job in the future, 27 percent of the respondents says “Yes” while 54 percent says “No” and 15 percent are not sure about their future intention. Particularly,

most of those servants who want to change their job are male (Table 2).

4.2. Public service and office

Many communal public servants believe that they are holding a stable and suitable job in accordance with their ability. The fact is that most positions in a grass-root public administration organization are not challenging at all. Survey results revealed that 88 percent of the respondents believe their job is suitable, 56 percent say the job is interesting. 45 percent of the respondents say the job is challenging and only 23 percent think the job is hard to accomplish (Figure 3).

Recently, Hanoi capital government has invested in building and improving the office of communal government by equipping it with new facilities and tools. Thus, many communal public servants are satisfied with the facilities and regulations at work. The internal regulations do not put too much pressure on the servants. However, regarding the relationship with colleagues and leadership style, most servants responded that they are not very satisfied with their percentage for these factors, being 57 percent and 51 percent, respectively.

Table 2: Intention to change job of communal public servants
(Unit: person)

Intention to change job	Male	Female	Total
Yes	17 (35%)	5 (15%)	22 (27%)
No	24 (50%)	20 (59%)	44 (54%)
No idea	7 (15%)	9 (26%)	16 (20%)
Total	48 (100%)	34 (100%)	82 (100%)

Source: The authors' survey in My Duc district, 2/2015

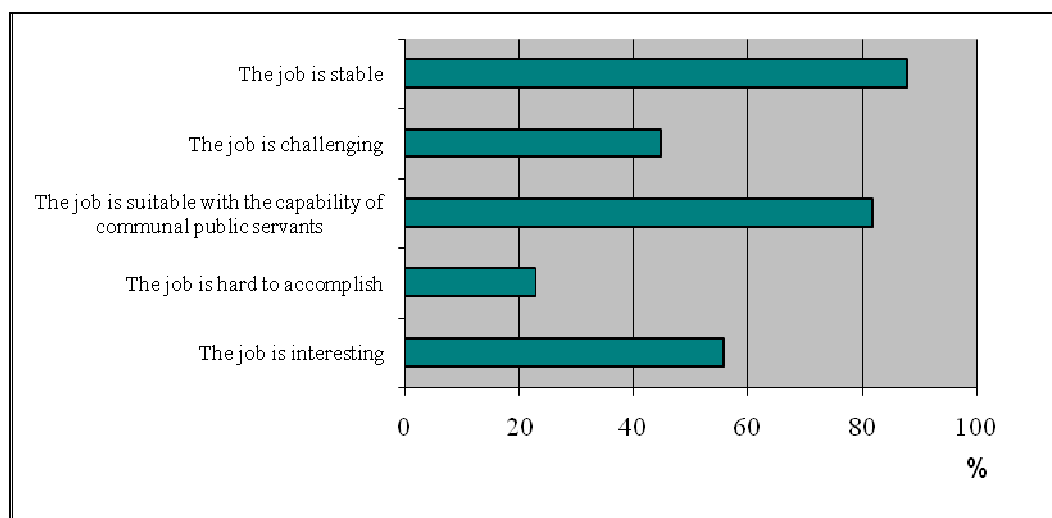


Figure 3: Job viewpoint of the communal public servants.

Source: The authors' survey in My Duc district, 2/2015

4.3. Managing and assigning public servants at work

Current job assignments that the People's Committee leaders give to the public servants have relatively matched the positions that they are holding. Their jobs are also suitable to their capabilities and strengths (Figure 4). In the procedure of recruiting communal public servants, the city recruitment committee has determined the structure of training programs to suit each specific title [12, 13]. In 2012, the city recruited 1,326 new communal public servants. To improve the qualifications of communal public servants, the city issued a policy of direct recruitment without exams for several applicants who hold a master degree or who are top graduates from universities and colleges. However, the real number of directly recruited communal public servants is not high.

According to this survey, the communal public servants are not very satisfied with the performance evaluation system with 67 percent of the respondents claiming that they are dissatisfied (Figure 5). Some shortcomings of

the evaluation system that they cited in the survey included inappropriate evaluation criteria, non-scientific procedures, unsystematic evaluation frequency, etc. Moreover, the evaluation method still focuses more on characteristics and social relationship of the public servants rather than the quantity, quality and efficiency in doing their task.

Income and living standards of public servants are quite low in comparison with the current socio-economic development of the country. Salaries paid by the government are the main source of income for public servants. As a result, public servants in My Duc in particular and Hanoi in general face many difficulties as the spending level in the big city is much higher than in other provinces. 21 percent of the respondents reported that they have an extra job to earn more money for living and supporting their family. They also explained that the current wage policy is not based on the volume and results of their work, but is only based on the coefficient of ranks and grades of each public servant. Consequently,

their monthly salary remains unchanged whatever the quality and the quantity of their job is. The allowances for the communal civil servants are also relatively low, so income from their current salary is low and this factor has very large impact on their job motivation.

In this survey, the need for training and development is found to be a high level demand of the civil servants who responded. When recruited, as well as during the working period,

civil servants are sent to training courses to master and enhance their professional expertise. Training funds are often partially supported and the civil servants are allowed to take leave from work to attend the training courses. They also commented that the training duration is suitable. Unfortunately, many communal civil servants believed that their career development opportunities are still at a medium level in spite of the fact that they have been trained well.

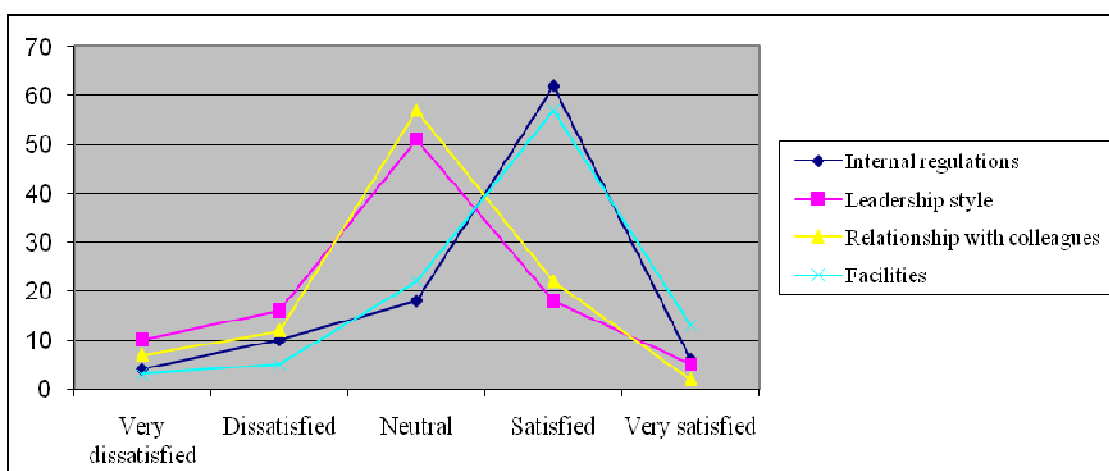


Figure 4: Job satisfaction of public servants with factors in public administration office.
 Source: The authors' survey in My Duc district, 2/2015

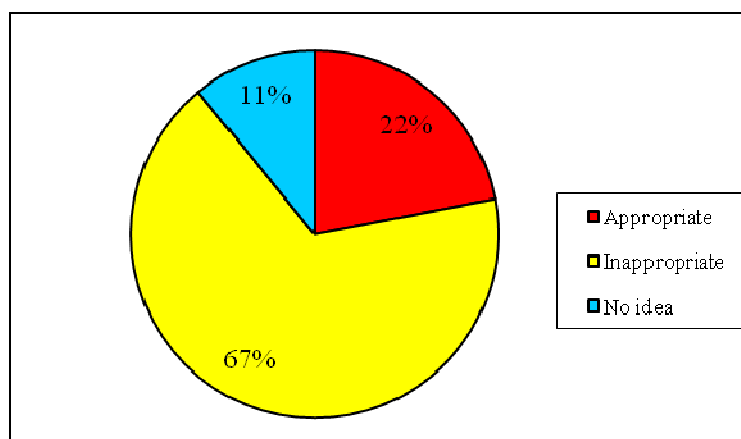


Figure 5: Viewpoints of communal public servants of the appropriateness of the evaluation system.
 Source: The authors' survey in My Duc district, 2/2015

Actually, the promotion and punishment policies for public servants still have many limitations. Promotion and punishment are not timely. Some communal People's Committees do not pay much attention to implementing the policy frequently and just evaluate the public servants' performance for promotion and recognition only once at the end of each year. Moreover, the evaluation system is not based very much on the efficiency and achievement of the servants, while the punishment actions are not fully implemented as they should be. The value of prizes for the public servants is not equivalent to the results and achievement of the servants. Therefore, the prizes fail to motivate the public servants to exert a higher level of effort in their job.

In sum, several findings from the survey results of job motivators for communal public servants in My Duc province are listed as followed:

Firstly, the current task of communal public servants is to conduct what their managers assign them to do. Most tasks are of regular administration procedures which are not very challenging and basically easy to do.

Secondly, office, facilities and working tools in many administrative organizations have been significantly upgraded so that they meet the need for fulfilling the tasks. The public servants are satisfied with the organization's regulations and policies, but they are not satisfied with the relationship with colleagues and leadership style.

Thirdly, qualification criteria, job description and responsibilities for each title of communal public servant are clearly identified and applied. The percentage of public servants taking assignments matching their education background is increasing. However, the evaluation and recognition process is still not appropriate and is not based on the results of public service achievement.

Fourthly, training is paid much attention to improve the quality of the public servants. Unfortunately, the career development opportunities for communal public servants are still limited due to the discontinuity of human resource planning between communal public servants and superior officers. Even those civil servants, who are selected for leader positions in local government, themselves identify that development opportunities in their profession are only of a medium level.

Fifthly, most public servants have low income while they have to spend a lot for their living in the capital. As a result, a big proportion of the public servants have to seek extra jobs to earn their living. This affects their enthusiasm and effort at work.

5. Suggestions

Actually, the working motivation has a considerable impact on the performance and achievements of public servants. However, citizens as well as the leaders of provinces and cities are currently paying attention to the fact that communal public servants are lacking the motivation to work effectively. The main cause is that some factors remain that are influencing their motivation, which is not positive enough to encourage the communal public servants to work with their best effort and interest. In the near future, to raise the working motivation of communal public servants, in not only My Duc province but also the others, some solutions are proposed as follows:

First, forming an organization culture which is suitable for the organizational structure

Organization culture is considered as a system of beliefs, standards and values to orientate the behavior and activities of the

members in the organization in order to reach the common targets. An organization culture is formed by the overall objectives, management policies, the psychological atmosphere, working styles and personal relationships in the organization. The organization culture also expresses its own identity and the ways of living and working of the members in the organization. The cultural characteristics of the organization are represented in the history and working style influenced by leaders, especially the predecessors.

To continually improve the communal administrative system, we should look to building up and developing a strong organization culture for People's Committees at the level of communes, wards and towns. The working environment, together with the belief systems and standards of value ingrained into the members' subconscious minds, then respectively shared, preserved and strengthened by all, is known as a strong culture. The organization culture provides its members with directions to deal with the difficulties that arise in our lives, and even at work, so as to create cooperative relationships in the unit. By sharing their experiences, members can find out the common viewpoints which may be useful for their daily operations. Leaders should understand what their public servants think, and whether the policy directions are reasonable or not, so that they may adjust the policy if needed. Moreover, they should have the subordinates voluntarily comply and minimize the need for controlling effort at work. In this way, their ideas could be unified by most of the members. It also helps increase their collaboration, loyalty and the commitment of staff members to the achievement of common organizational goals

Second, innovating the leadership style of communal People's Committees

Leadership style is a system of methods, habits, behaviors and characteristics that are used to combine the efforts of the individuals in an organization to form the synergy to achieve the common goals. Furthermore, the leadership style influences on-the-job motivation, attraction and gathering the operatives during the operation process. It is formed by the consistency of elements of the surroundings and leader's internal factors. According to K. Lewin (1938), there are three types of basic leadership styles: autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire style [14].

Each leadership style has its own strengths and weaknesses, so we cannot choose a unique leadership style for all situations. The leaders in communal People's Committees should themselves determine which leadership style is best suited to lead and promote subordinates. To do these tasks, the leader must be a shining example for their subordinates when complying with the rules of the organization, and need to be fair in all cases. They should provide clear instructions, clarify responsibilities for each individual and also give rewards and punishments equally. Additionally, they should not criticize subordinates in front of their workmates so that their personal dignity is not violated. The leaders ought to be willing to receive all feedbacks from the subordinates and understand what subordinates want. In this case their decisions will be easily accepted by the subordinates, and the operatives will be more eager to work. In other words they will have job motivation which in turn will become the trigger for the leader's improvement at work.

Third, improving the performance evaluation system for communal public servants

To objectively and accurately appraise the working performance, and the level of accomplishment of public servants, it is necessary to establish a suitable scientific evaluation system. This evaluation system will be based on the quantity and quality of their results. The evaluation system used can be considered as comprising the benchmarks to measure the level of working accomplishment of the public servants. In order to evaluate correctly and effectively, these standards should be set up logically and objectively to reflect the results and required behaviors to complete the tasks.

The public servants should be appraised monthly, quarterly (3 months) or every half a year and yearly. If necessary, or for important cases, performance appraisal should be done as the requested progress of work and after finishing work [15]. In fact the assessment, combined with many different forms and methods, should be done as promptly and regularly as possible, and it should also be in association with the plans for arrangement and commendation of public servants to get the best efficiency. To help communal public servants have strong motivation, we should clarify the achievements, working performance and the level of work accomplishment in the appraisal papers. The evaluation process should be conducted democratically, overtly, and transparently as mentioned in the regulations. Also, there should be suitable mechanisms and policies so that the citizens can monitor and give their comments about officers forthrightly.

Fourth, gradually increasing the income of communal public servants

In our current socio-economic conditions, the majority of public servants have low income

and living standards, and salary is the main source of income to support them and their families. Unless salaries are high enough to meet their minimum need for living, they will be depressed and even absent from work. In the near future, to maintain and enhance the job motivation of communal public servants, it is time to renew the salary regime towards implementing results-based work to determine the level of real salary for each officer. It should be based on both their salary scale specified by the government, and the actual performance of each employee.

The income from salary of communal public servants is quite low today. With the received monthly salary, most public servants are experiencing difficulties in meeting not only mental demands (high-ordered demands), but even the basic and essential demands (lower-ordered ones) in the unstable economic conditions with more and more increasing prices. Therefore, in the future the Government should raise the salary for the communal public servants, so that they can meet their basic and essential needs, and then be satisfied with higher-ordered ones to get motivation in working.

Fifth, exercising democracy and transparency in the management of communal public servants

Recruitment, training and appointment are the important contents of building up public servants generally, and specially communal public servants to create professional and well-educated teams to contribute to effective actions against corruption [16, 17]. Therefore, managing and using communal public servants should be conducted openly and transparently and ensure the proper implementation of public policies and legislation in the recruitment, training, retraining, and work allocation for communal public servants.

The openness and transparency in monitoring public servants play an important role in creating working motivation. To solve this problem better, my suggestions are: Continue to review, amend and supplement the provisions of the regime and policies related to recruitment, management, evaluation, and appointment for public servants; Build and amend the mechanisms about publicity and transparency in managing and using communal public servants; push up PR and dissemination activities, and conduct thoroughly the Government's policies and laws involved in the formulation and implementation of grassroots democracy; strengthen the inspection, investigation, and detection and strictly handle legal violations on managing and using public servants in general and communal public servants in particular.

6. Conclusion

This study investigates the job motivation of communal public servants in My Duc district, Hanoi to clarify two groups of factors that play the role of job motivators. Survey results show that the three factors of top priority to be immediately improved to motivate the communal public servants include (1) the job itself, (2) the income, and (3) leadership style.

Therefore, in the coming years, communal public servants should have more concern from the State and the City Council and other governmental organisations. Beside investment in the working environment, the policies for public servants should also be changed to be more systematic and consistent. These policies will play the role of motivators for communal public servants to be more enthusiastic, less anxious about their job, eager to update their expertise and skills and improve their moral

qualities as well. To attract and retain high performing communal public servants in the long term, the job motivators should be at the center of the strategic human resource plan of the local administrative agencies.

This study has the limitation of small sample size so that it might not represent Hanoi as a whole. It is suggested that further study should be conducted in all other districts of the capital. Besides, the authors have just done an exploratory research to discover and classify the job motivation factors of public civil servants in the context of Hanoi capital. The relationship between the motivation factors and job satisfaction and the relationship between job satisfaction and intention to change job has not been tested in this study. Therefore, the authors suggest further studies should address these issues.

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