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Leadership Development in the Public Sector: A Human Resources
Management Perspective.

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To my parents, for supporting all my efforts. To my family, for their patience, support, and perseverance throughout this journey.

Abstract

The purpose of the present thesis was to examine the importance of leadership in the public sector. More specifically, the thesis studied how the relationship between leaders and employees is related to leadership effectiveness as well as how leadership effectiveness is linked to employee empowerment, shared responsibility, human resource management practices, and New Public Governance (NPG) principles. For this purpose, a quantitative survey was carried out. Data were collected using a questionnaire, which was addressed to public sector supervisors and distributed online to employees of public organizations in Greece via Google Forms. A total of 160 public sector employees holding a supervisory position participated in the survey. The results of the research showed that the quality of the leader-employee relationship is positively associated with self-perceived leadership effectiveness. In addition, self-perceived leadership effectiveness was positively associated with employee empowerment, shared responsibility, human resource management practices and New Public Governance principles. Because the design is cross-sectional and all measures are self-reported, these findings are interpreted as associations rather than as causal effects. In conclusion, this research highlights that leadership in the public sector is an essential factor in how work is organized, responsibility is distributed and human resources are utilized. Effective leadership is not limited to directing employees, but can create the conditions for a climate of trust, participation and cooperation. In this way, the appropriate type of leadership can contribute to the formation of public organizations that operate with greater coherence and better respond to the requirements of New Public Management.

Keywords: Leadership, Public Sector, HRM, Leader-Member Exchange, Empowerment, Leadership Effectiveness

Περίληψη

Σκοπός της παρούσας διπλωματικής εργασίας ήταν να εξετάσει τη σημασία της ηγεσίας στον δημόσιο τομέα. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, η εργασία μελέτησε το πώς η σχέση ανάμεσα στους ηγέτες και τους εργαζομένους επηρεάζει την αποτελεσματικότητα της ηγεσίας καθώς και τον τρόπο με τον οποίο η αποτελεσματικότητα της ηγεσίας συνδέεται με την ενδυνάμωση των εργαζομένων, την κοινή ευθύνη, τις πρακτικές διοίκησης ανθρώπινου δυναμικού και τις αρχές του New Public Governance. Για το σκοπό αυτό πραγματοποιήθηκε μια ποσοτική έρευνα. Τα δεδομένα συλλέχθηκαν με χρήση ερωτηματολογίου, το οποίο απευθυνόταν σε προϊσταμένους του δημόσιου τομέα και διανεμήθηκε διαδικτυακά σε εργαζομένους δημοσίων οργανισμών στην Ελλάδα μέσω Google Forms. Στην έρευνα συμμετείχαν συνολικά 160 εργαζόμενοι στο δημόσιο τομέα οι οποίοι κατείχαν θέση ευθύνης. Τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας έδειξαν ότι η ποιότητα της σχέσης ηγέτη-εργαζομένου συνδέεται θετικά με την αυτοαντιλαμβανόμενη αποτελεσματικότητα της ηγεσίας. Επιπλέον, η αυτοαντιλαμβανόμενη αποτελεσματικότητα της ηγεσίας συνδέεται θετικά με την ενδυνάμωση των εργαζομένων, την κοινή ευθύνη, τις πρακτικές διοίκησης ανθρώπινου δυναμικού και τις αρχές του New Public Governance. Καθώς ο σχεδιασμός είναι συγχρονικός και όλες οι μετρήσεις είναι αυτοαναφορικές, τα ευρήματα ερμηνεύονται ως συσχετίσεις και όχι ως αιτιώδεις σχέσεις. Συμπερασματικά, η παρούσα έρευνα αναδεικνύει ότι η ηγεσία στον δημόσιο τομέα αποτελεί ουσιαστικό παράγοντα για τον τρόπο με τον οποίο οργανώνεται η εργασία, κατανέμεται η ευθύνη και αξιοποιείται το ανθρώπινο δυναμικό. Η αποτελεσματική ηγεσία δεν περιορίζεται στην καθοδήγηση των εργαζομένων, αλλά μπορεί να δημιουργήσει τις συνθήκες για ένα κλίμα εμπιστοσύνης, συμμετοχής και συνεργασίας. Με αυτόν τον τρόπο, ο κατάλληλος τύπος ηγεσίας μπορεί να συμβάλει στη διαμόρφωση δημοσίων οργανισμών που λειτουργούν με μεγαλύτερη συνοχή και ανταποκρίνονται καλύτερα στις απαιτήσεις του New Public Management.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Ηγεσία, Δημόσιος Τομέας, Διαχείριση Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού, Σχέση Ηγέτη-Μελών, Ενδυνάμωση, Αποτελεσματικότητα Ηγεσίας

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Public administration has operated in an environment of constant change, increased demands and complex administrative challenges in recent years. The economic crisis, the health crisis of the pandemic, the need for digital transformation, the pressure to better serve citizens and the demand for greater transparency have highlighted the need to readjust the way public organizations operate (Bryson et al., 2014). In this context, traditional bureaucratic models of administration, which are mainly based on hierarchy, adherence to procedures and control, are not always sufficient to meet the modern needs of public administration. A similar problem is also highlighted in recent Greek diplomatic works, which emphasize that the Greek Public Administration now operates in an environment of high uncertainty and liquidity, which makes it necessary to search for more effective ways of administration and leadership (Xanthopoulou et al., 2022).

The discussion on New Public Management is included in this context. New Public Management was associated with the effort to reorganize the public sector, with an emphasis on effectiveness, efficiency, management by objectives, improvement of service delivery and the utilization of practices derived from business management (Christensen & Lægreid, 2022). Its importance is not only limited to organizational changes or administrative reforms, but is also linked to the way in which public organizations manage their human resources, distribute responsibilities, enhance cooperation and respond to the needs of citizens. For this reason, the study of New Public Management cannot be separated from the study of leadership, as changes in public administration are not only implemented through institutional arrangements, but also through the way in which superiors guide, support and motivate workers (Lane, 2002).

In the context of New Public Management, leadership in the public sector acquires particular importance, because the quality of operation of public organizations is directly linked to the quality of operation of the state. The need for efficiency, accountability, cooperation and better utilization of human resources has made leadership a key factor in administrative operation (Kellis & Ran, 2015). In corresponding articles on leadership in

the public sector, it is pointed out that, while in the private sector the discussion on leadership has developed for decades, in the public sector the need for efficiency is today more intense and the contribution of leadership constitutes a significant administrative challenge. Leadership, therefore, is not examined only as a personal characteristic of the manager, but as a process that affects the functioning of teams, motivation, trust, cooperation and the achievement of organizational goals (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

In this thesis, particular importance is given to the leader-employee relationship, which is examined through the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory. The choice of this particular theory is linked to the fact that leadership is not exercised in the same way towards all employees, but is shaped through everyday relationships of cooperation, support, trust and communication (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Young et al., 2021). A positive relationship between the supervisor and the employee can influence the way in which the employee perceives the effectiveness of leadership, his participation in the team and his ability to contribute substantially to the functioning of the organization. For this reason, the present study is not limited to examining general leadership styles, but focuses on the quality of the relationship that develops between the leader and the team members (Bauwens et al., 2019; Young et al., 2021).

At the same time, leadership effectiveness is a key element in the context of New Public Management, as it reflects the extent to which leadership is considered to contribute to improving team performance, motivating employees and achieving organizational goals (Kellis & Ran, 2015). Leadership effectiveness is important to examine as it can show not only whether there is a positive leader-employee relationship, but also whether this relationship is linked to the perception that leadership functions effectively within a public organization (Vivona, 2024).

Similarly, the thesis is not limited only to the leader-employee relationship and the effectiveness of leadership, but also examines certain organizational dimensions associated with the operation of public organizations. Initially, human resource management practices related to leadership development are examined, as the effective operation of public administration presupposes the existence of mechanisms that support the development of leadership skills, the recognition of leadership potential and the attraction of employees with appropriate skills (Jiang et al., 2012). At the same time, shared responsibility is examined, as public organizations are called upon to strengthen cooperation within teams and not limit

decision-making exclusively to the upper administrative levels. This logic also includes the empowerment of employees, which concerns autonomy, taking initiatives, a sense of competence and the possibility of making a substantial contribution to improving the operation of the department (Lukasiewicz et al., 2017).

Finally, this thesis examines key principles of New Public Governance, such as interdepartmental collaboration, public value creation and transparency. These concepts are important because they reflect the transition from a strictly bureaucratic management model to an operating framework that places greater emphasis on collaboration, accountability and serving the public interest (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). In this sense, leadership in the public sector is not only evaluated based on the internal performance of a team, but also on its contribution to the formation of an organization that operates with greater transparency, better coordination and a clearer orientation towards the production of public value. Thus, this thesis attempts to connect the quality of the leader-employee relationship and the effectiveness of leadership with critical organizational dimensions of public administration.

1.2. Thesis Objectives

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the role of leadership in the public sector, with an emphasis on the quality of the relationship between the supervisor and the employee and the perceived effectiveness of leadership. More specifically, the paper examines whether the leader-employee relationship, as captured through the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, is positively associated with leadership effectiveness. At the same time, the paper examines whether the perceived effectiveness of leadership is related to individual organizational dimensions that are of particular importance for modern public administration. These dimensions are human resource management practices associated with leadership development, shared responsibility within the team, employee empowerment and basic principles of modern public governance, such as cooperation between departments, the creation of public value and transparency.

The contribution of the thesis at both the theoretical and empirical levels lies in the fact that it links in a single research model the leader-employee relationship, leadership effectiveness and dimensions related to participation, collaboration, empowerment and

public value. In this way, the study attempts to offer a more comprehensive approach to the importance of leadership in public administration.

1.3. Methodology Structure

In order to achieve the objectives of the thesis, quantitative research was conducted. The choice of the quantitative method was deemed appropriate, as the work is based on a specific research model and specific research hypotheses that examine relationships between variables. Data collection was carried out through a structured questionnaire, which was created on the Google Forms platform and distributed online to public sector employees. The questionnaire included demographic and professional questions, as well as questions that captured the main research variables. The answers to the main research variables were given on a five-point Likert scale. For each variable, an overall score was created based on the average of the answers to the corresponding questions.

1.4. Dissertation Structure

This thesis is structured in five chapters. In the first chapter, the introduction of the work is developed, where the general framework of the subject is captured, the objectives of the study are determined, the methodological approach is briefly described and the structure of the work is listed. The literature review is presented in the second chapter. First, New Public Management, its conceptual definition and its basic characteristics are examined. Then the concept of leadership, the main theoretical approaches, modern forms of leadership, the Leader-Member Exchange theory, as well as leadership in the context of public management are analyzed. The chapter concludes with the analysis of employee empowerment and the formulation of the conceptual model and research hypotheses. The third chapter analyzes the research methodology. In particular, reference is made to the research method followed, the questionnaire used, the participants, the data collection process, research ethics issues and the statistical analysis applied. The fourth chapter presents the results of the research, while the fifth chapter presents the discussion of the findings and formulates the main conclusions of the work. Furthermore, the limitations of the research are mentioned and suggestions for future research are given.

2. Literature Review

2.1. New Public Management

2.1.1. Conceptual Definition of New Public Management

From the study of the literature, a multitude of definitions are found regarding the concept of Public Administration. Based on what Aderibigbe and Olla (2014) argue, due to the fact that the scope of the whole subject is as numerous as it is questionable, there is no commonly accepted definition for Public Administration. In reality, the term is easier to explain and more difficult to define. The fundamental concept “Administration” and the second component of the term that contains the adjective “public” include two essential elements, that of collective effort and common purpose. In this way, the term administration refers to the collaborative effort of a group of individuals who seek to achieve a common goal (Holzer & Schwester, 2024).

New Public Management (NPM) is an approach to the administration of government services and organizations, which Denhardt and Denhardt (2015) characterize as *“a vision, ideology or set of specific management approaches and techniques”*. According to Bryson et al. (2014), NPM is an approach that requires knowledge and practices from the field of Business Administration, the aim of which is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of government structures (Rainey, 2014).

NPM first emerged as an attempt to control public spending and services in America and the United Kingdom and then expanded to Scandinavia, Australia and New Zealand. In the early 1990s, Public Administration was considered obsolete, due to many social changes that had taken place (starting in the 1980s, as reported by Clarke & Newman, 1997), which led to the need for reforms. These reforms brought about major changes in the way social services provided by the state were managed, through the adoption of business management principles.

The characteristics of NPM are the reduction of government involvement in public administration and the reduction of bureaucracy in its processes, in short, decentralization, and the orientation of the operation of the public sector based on the principles of management that govern the market and businesses, through the awarding of contracts,

privatization, control and performance management (Christensen & Lægreid, 2022). As a phenomenon of Public Administration, New Public Management, with the aforementioned characteristics, contrasts with Old Public Administration (Clarke & Newman, 1997), the old system of administration, where the main feature was the hierarchical structure and the concentration of powers. The pursuit of New Public Management was the more effective management of resources and goods, in order to achieve an increase in the performance and efficiency of public administration, for the provision of goods and services to citizens (Christensen & Lægreid, 2022).

2.1.2. Characteristics of New Public Management

The NPM involves a reorganization of the public sector, so as to make it indistinguishable from the private sector. Its goal is to reduce the size of the state, in which discretionary power is limited by the use of a uniform set of rules and to transfer the rules from professionals to politicians, managers and bureaucrats (Lane, 2002). The actions that make up the NPM are diverse and can be classified as follows (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015):

- Strategic policy planning (policy). In the context of the NPM, public organizations are understood as institutions for developing policies and not as institutions for providing services (delivery policies). The state has the character of a staff with the aim of designing and shaping “quasi-market” institutions within which available resources are allocated and coordinated.
- Improving the services provided to citizens.
- Results management by implementing programs to provide services and goods to citizens with the aim of efficiency.
- Total quality management which aims at the reliability, integrity and effectiveness of public services.
- Electronic governance by replacing time-consuming procedures with simpler and faster ones within the framework of the internet and the use of modern technology.
- Benchmarking and controlling. That is, the control of the achievement of the desired results through the process of specifying goals, measuring and quantifying results, critical analysis of financial resources, and control of operating costs.

- Budgeting and employee payroll based on performance indicators. Establishing performance contracts by setting goals and mutual obligations so that employees acquire performance incentives.
- Transparent decision-making.
- Knowledge-based human resources management.

Overall, the principles of New Public Management highlight the need for public organizations to operate in a way that enhances their efficiency and flexibility and responds to the needs of citizens to the greatest extent. However, the successful implementation of these changes does not only depend on structural changes and legislation but also to a significant extent on the role of leadership within public organizations (Crosby & Bryson, 2018). Leaders are called upon to guide employees, motivate them to accept changes, support innovation and create a work environment that encourages employee participation (Miao et al., 2018). At the same time, New Public Management has attracted substantial criticism, particularly for an emphasis on competition, measurable outputs and market-based mechanisms that can fragment public services and weaken cooperation between organizations. In response, a distinct body of literature has developed around New Public Governance (NPG), which is best understood not as a subset of New Public Management principles but as a subsequent and partly corrective framework (Osborne, 2006). Whereas New Public Management foregrounds efficiency, competition and the citizen as a customer, New Public Governance foregrounds inter-organizational collaboration, networks, transparency and the co-creation of public value together with citizens (Bryson et al., 2014; Christensen & Lægreid, 2022). This distinction matters for the present thesis, because the organizational dimension examined empirically in Chapter 4 — interdepartmental collaboration, public value creation and transparency — belongs to the New Public Governance tradition rather than to New Public Management in its original form. For this reason the corresponding variable is referred to throughout as New Public Governance (NPG) principles, while New Public Management is retained as the broader reform context within which contemporary public leadership operates. Therefore, after presenting the concept and key characteristics of New Public Management, it is necessary to examine the concept of leadership, as it is a crucial factor for the effective implementation of administrative reforms in the public sector.

2.2. Leadership

2.2.1. Conceptual Definition of Leadership: difference between leader and manager

The concept of leadership is multidimensional, as is its definition, a condition that aptly led Stogdill (1974) to state that “there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define the concept”, while a little later Burns (1978) stated that “leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth”, approaches that reflect the intense interest of human society in this specific concept. For his part, Bass (1990) confirms the extensive approach of the concept in many studies and research and depicts it as a determining variable that influences the way in which a group of people interact consciously and willingly in an environment. However, despite the continuous and thorough study of the term leadership, there is no set definition that identifies it. The attempt to find a single definition for leadership is considered ineffective, since the appropriate definition depends largely on the dedication of each scholar and the nature of the problem being examined (Wilson, 2023).

Hogan and Kaiser (2005), in another approach, argue that leadership is the process by which an individual influences the thinking, emotions, attitudes and behaviors of a group of people, who, working together well and effectively, achieve the set goals. Various scholars, such as Benmira and Agboola (2021), consider that leadership is the way someone behaves when coordinating a group of people working to fulfill a common goal. Similarly, Chemers (2014) defines leadership as a process of influencing the behaviors and values of followers in relation to the goals of the organization. In their review, Day et al. (2014) conclude that these definitions refer to a complex of two-way dynamic actions that indicate an interaction between leadership and its followers, with leadership as a process that occurs within a group that influences it, aiming to achieve defined goals. The same approach is adopted by Hogan and Kaiser (2005), arguing that leadership is nothing more than the interaction of an individual and his followers in the common effort for desired results. According to Yukl (1989), most definitions of leadership include the element of influence exercised intentionally by an individual or group on other individuals or groups and concern the activities and relationships of groups and organizations.

However, in addition to leadership, management is equally important for the survival of organizations in the modern economic environment. Although both are similar in some respects, they may involve different types of perspectives, skills and behavior. Good

managers must strive to be good leaders and good leaders need management skills to be effective (Kotter, 2001). Leadership differs from management in the sense that:

- While leaders set the direction, motivate and align employees with the vision of the business (Bennis & Nanus, 2007; Kotter, 2001), managers are concerned with planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, environmental control and problem solving (Kotter, 2001).
- Leadership deals with change in a competitive, rapidly changing world. Leaders focus on inspiration, people and their passion. On the other hand, management deals with complexity, which requires maintaining order and consistency by focusing mainly on results (Kotter, 2001; Wilson, 2023).
- The most important characteristics of leadership are “emotional”, reflecting the full range of human drives and desires. In contrast to the characteristics of management that reflect a more “impersonal” work that brings order and consistency to complex functions (Kotter, 2001).
- Leadership is about inspiring and supporting people to do things, while management is the command to do (Wilson, 2023).
- Leadership creates visions, sells its visions to those who must implement them, and evaluates whether these were successfully implemented, along with determining the next steps. Leadership is future-oriented. While management is concerned with achieving organizational efficiency and effectiveness within the parameters of the organization’s mission. Management tends to be systematic, structured, and present-oriented (Wilson, 2023).

2.2.2. Leadership Theories

As mentioned above, leadership contains an inherent complexity, as a phenomenon that mutates, as it is related to dynamic elements, such as psychosocial behaviors and developments, the values of those involved that interact with each other, individual and organizational culture, organizational complexities, and the complex conditions of the internal and external environment. Understandably, therefore, the bibliography that emerges for its study over time is enormous and its reading involves multiple perspectives (Northouse, 2021).

Trait Approach: The trait approach to leadership formed the basis of early research in this field. More specifically, in a series of lectures delivered in 1840 and published in 1841, Carlyle, through a study of historical leaders, developed the Great Man theory, which he presented under the title “On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History” (McManus & Perruci, 2015; Spector, 2016). According to this, leaders were proposed to be individuals sent by God with the divine gift of superiority, through which the allegiance and support of followers is ensured (McManus & Perruci, 2015; Spector, 2016). The trait approach focuses on the personal characteristics of leaders, such as physical personality traits, abilities, and values, always seen through the lens of the leader. The intention of the theory is the early identification and promotion of leaders (Zaccaro, 2007). According to this approach, people are born with innate characteristics that produce patterns of behavior that remain unchanged and unchanging over time and in every situation (Northouse, 2021).

Behavioral Approaches (The Ohio Studies and Michigan studies): The Ohio Leadership Studies are the behavioral theory of leadership. Specifically, a series of leadership studies conducted by Ohio State University in 1945 that instead of focusing on the characteristics or styles of effective leaders, as had been the focus of much early psychological research on leadership, these researchers focused on what successful leaders do rather than how they appear to others (Stogdill & Coons, 1957). These studies began to examine leaders in the context of the organization, identifying the behaviors exhibited by leaders that increase organizational effectiveness. In a review of early leadership research, Stogdill (1974) stated that attempts to discover the traits of effective leaders had largely failed. This perceived failure, combined with the rise of the behavioral school of psychology, which emphasized behaviors rather than personality or mental processes, helped lead to the abandonment of trait-based leadership research and the rise of the behavioral approach (Yukl, 2010). Using detailed observations of leaders’ behaviors, as well as reports from leaders themselves and their subordinates, the Ohio State researchers compiled a list of hundreds of leadership behaviors.

Around the same time as the Ohio studies, researchers at the University of Michigan focused on the behaviors of leaders on the performance of small groups (Hackman & Katz, 2010) mainly in supervisory or lower management positions with the risk that they may not apply to executive leadership (Smith, 2008). Studying leaders in several large, industrial organizations, they came to a conclusion similar to that of the Ohio researchers. Leader

behavior could indeed be divided into two broad categories. The Michigan researchers distinguished between task-oriented leadership behaviors (also referred to as production orientation), which corresponded to the dimension of “initiating structure” identified in the Ohio studies, and relationship-oriented behaviors (also referred to as employee orientation), which corresponded to the dimension of “consideration” (Northouse, 2021). Task-oriented behaviors include setting clear work standards, guiding followers’ activities regarding work processes, and achieving production goals always under the close supervision of the leader (Northouse, 2021). In this orientation, employees are viewed as a means to accomplish the task.

Relationship-oriented behaviors focus more on the well-being of employees as they care about them on a personal level and take their needs into account. They allow them to participate in decision-making processes such as setting goals, thus creating relationships of mutual trust and respect (Northouse, 2021). In the initial studies, the Michigan researchers considered that work-oriented behaviors and relationship-oriented behaviors were the opposite ends of a single continuum. That is, leaders who were oriented towards employees placed less emphasis on production and vice versa. With the completion of a larger number of studies, the Michigan researchers identified with the conclusion of their colleagues from Ohio that these are two independent orientations (Northouse, 2021).

Situational and Contingency Approach: In contrast to previous theories based on unidimensional forms of leadership, situational and contingency theories helped to understand more parameters of the leader-follower relationship such as circumstances, the nature of the work and the organization (Clark & Harrison, 2018), resulting in the assumption that leadership could be different in each situation (Northouse, 2021). It also contributed to measuring this relationship more precisely by establishing models (Clark & Harrison, 2018). Instead, contingency-situational theories were developed to show that the leadership style to be used depends on factors such as the situation, people, the task, the organization and other environmental variables (Northouse, 2021).

2.2.3. Modern leadership theories (charismatic, transactional, transformational and passive leadership)

Traditional theories of leadership have been widely criticized, as they failed to identify a leadership style suitable for all circumstances, signaling more modern reflections and

opening the discussion on transformational, transactional and later passive leadership (Northouse, 2021).

The development of these reflections led to the full-range leadership approach, also known as Full Range Leadership (FRL) theory, in which Avolio and Bass (1991) proposed differentiations in the behaviors that characterize a specific pattern of expression, introducing a third style, passive or avoidant leadership. These three leadership styles, transformational, transactional and passive, are conceptually attributed through dimensions in interaction with the organizational environment and which are related to behaviors, beliefs and characteristics of influence, motivation, activation, goals, management, reward, individualized treatment of employees, exceptional management skills or weaknesses in exercising them. In its current form, the model is analyzed through nine dimensions consisting of five transformational factors, three transactional leadership factors and one passive leadership factor (Avolio & Bass, 1991).

Essentially, the whole concept refers to a modern depiction of leadership outcomes through the measurement of these leadership predictors that at one level, the highest, have transformational leadership and at the other level, the lowest, passive. The main lever of this process is the degree of commitment of the leader, which translates into his active - one extreme - or passive - the other extreme - involvement in organizational events. This particular approach is widely applied in the field of organizational management today, although as Avolio et al. (1999) mentioned, this model did not intend to include all possible leadership factors, but rather to focus on a specific range of them and examine them thoroughly. Antonakis and House (2013) argue that the reason for this particular theory was not simply to talk about leadership, but mainly to explain, through social and economic exchanges, how a leader creates high performance and commitment.

However, the full-scope theory, which has been subject to revisions and relevant criticisms over the years regarding the structure of factors in various contexts, national, work, etc., is probably the basis for the development of additional valid predictive factors within the framework of a broader and comprehensive theory of leadership (Antonakis et al., 2003). To evaluate these factors and measure each element, Avolio and Bass (2004) created one of the most important research tools to date for assessing leadership, the so-called Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which measures the full scope of leadership, in the sense that a leader presents factors of both models at a certain frequency,

but presents them with different fluctuations, i.e. more of one factor and less of the other (Bass, 1990).

Transformational leadership: As mentioned, the concept of transformational leadership was first introduced by Burns (1978), who, borrowing elements from previous studies, mainly regarding leadership characteristics and styles, but also the relationships between leaders and followers, argued that this leader is in a state of interaction with others. Theoretically and ideally, according to him, transformational leadership can be realized in such a way and to such an extent that higher levels of motivation and ethics are created on both sides, through a transformational process that goes beyond the unit and creates group action, capable of constituting a cornerstone of the effectiveness of the organization, a view that is certainly not often found in traditional organizational structures (Northouse, 2021). Burns’ political approach was developed by Bass (1985) and applied in various organizational contexts. He extensively studied the behaviors that manifest transformational leadership, as a process that goes beyond the leader’s personal interest, is based on the human factor and has within it the concept of transforming the members of the organization, through feedback and interaction, in order to achieve the realization of its vision and goals (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

The transformational leadership dimension, therefore, as captured in the multifactorial approach of Bass and his collaborators, includes five components, such as Idealized Influence - Behavior - Attributed, which is related to exemplary behavior to be imitated and the building of a relationship of respect, and has two aspects. One refers to the behavior of leaders and is related to charismatic principles, values, and beliefs of the leader. The other refers to a two-way path, to elements that emanate from the leader to his associates, such as the transmission of the vision and goals, but also from the associates to the leader, such as the acquisition of respect, trust, identification, and a strong sense of loyalty that gives meaning to the roles and duties of the followers (Antonakis et al., 2003). Respect and trust are structural elements of the leader-follower relationship, capable of contributing to the management of organizational choices and changes, since the employee is not possessed by doubts or fears.

Another important factor of transformational leadership is inspirational motivation (Inspirational Motivation), which activates followers to follow a leader who transmits his enthusiasm and vision to them, in order to ensure commitment to a common goal (Antonakis

et al., 2003). This dynamic is activated by the interaction with the individualized thinking and the intellectual stimulation that enhances the attraction of the leader, precisely because it creates in the followers a sense of value, self-confidence and faith that the leader will overcome any obstacles, showing the group the ways to cope with any issues that arise. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), this influence and this motivation are elements of charismatic leadership, a model of behavior that everyone would like to embrace, a finding that is consistent with Antonakis and House (2013), who argue that charismatic leadership is the element of idealized influence of transformational leadership, the emotional identification that followers experience with the leader who leads them to the common goal, since it creates pride, loyalty and respect, elements that are also associated with increased performance of those involved, as well as, equally, with work commitment and satisfaction.

The fourth factor refers to the intellectual stimulation that a leader can cause in his subordinates, showing them the way to go beyond established practices, to recognize problems and discover or invent creative solutions to difficult issues, to attempt new approaches, to innovate, to challenge given norms and perceptions at every level. Bass and Riggio (2006) reported in their study that the intellectual stimulation factor is related to a state of critical evaluation of data, vision formation, and application of standards and rules of action. This inspiration and vision are what encourage followers to work by choosing new, different tools, knowing that the leader will provide them with support and not criticism in their efforts.

The last factor of transformational leadership is Individual Consideration, the empathy expressed towards followers, which is interpreted as the special attention and understanding that the leader shows to each member of his team individually, depending on their individual needs and desires, in a personalized guiding effect that creates a supportive climate and helps in the individual development of the subordinate (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Many studies have concluded that the understanding demonstrated by emotionally mature leaders creates a positive climate in the organization and makes employees feel greater commitment (Deng et al., 2023).

Transactional leadership: The second type of leadership formulated by Burns in 1978 was, as mentioned, transactional. In contrast to transformational leadership, this form occurs when the leader chooses to reward or not the follower, depending on his performance. For Bass (1985), it is an agreement that creates a primary motivation. It is a widely used

model of transactional behavior through an agreement between those involved, in order to achieve their personal goals and possibly ensure privileges, security, stability (Northouse, 2021). The effectiveness of this leadership is characterized by the transactional agreement and its consequences. In the dimensions of Bass's model, transactional leadership includes a series of elements that capture the leader-follower relationship. In this form, the contingent reward is related to material or moral rewards, in exchange for achieving the set goals that is capable of inspiring participation and loyalty in employees and ultimately commitment and, as a consequence, performance. The leader assigns, providing clear instructions for actions, the follower agrees and executes them, within a time limit with subsequent rewards for the fulfillment of the tasks (Northouse, 2021) or possibly depending on the result and negative consequences (Antonakis et al., 2003). Another factor of transactional leadership is management by exception (Management by Exception) and concerns an active dimension, in which the leader monitors any deviations from standard rules or instructions that may lead to errors and proceeds with direct interventions (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In this case, the active leader pays great attention to any problems and uses tools and control methods to warn of difficulties or prevent problems.

Passive leadership (Laissez-Faire): There is, however, a form that is at the completely opposite extreme and is the most widespread negative leadership behavior. It is passive leadership or the so-called avoidant leadership (Laissez-Faire), which essentially refers, in contrast to the other dimensions, to the complete absence of leadership, with the leader remaining extremely passive, inactive, indifferent and ineffective (Antonakis et al., 2003). Although conceptually this style seems similar to passive management by exception, the result is the absence of action, even when it is necessary. The concept of laissez-faire in French is translated as “let it be” and was initially used in economics in the sense of unlimited freedom in economic and commercial activities. In administrative science, it was apparently adopted in the logic of “do nothing”, since the leader does nothing, he is essentially not a leader, as all those elements that would classify him as such are absent. His behavior is marked by a prevailing tendency to avoid any involvement or intervention in important issues and by a complete lack of interaction, an element that completely removes the dynamics of the group. The very meaning of the verbs that accompany the action indicators of this particular leader captures the whole of a person who avoids, remains inactive, denies, and is indifferent (Northouse, 2021).

The reference to the above modern leadership theories is not intended to simply describe different leadership styles, but to form the theoretical framework of the thesis through which the role of leadership in modern public organizations can be understood. Transformational, transactional and passive leadership show that leadership can take different forms, which do not have the same impact on the functioning of a public organization. On the one hand, transformational leadership is based on inspiration, motivation, trust and support of employees. These characteristics of transformational leadership can enhance the effectiveness of leadership in public organizations and contribute to the commitment and higher performance of public employees (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2021). On the other hand, transactional leadership emphasizes clarity of goals, rewards and control of employee performance. These characteristics of transactional leadership are more related to administrative effectiveness and control over whether goals are achieved, and in combination with transformational leadership can constitute an important leadership framework in public organizations (Antonakis et al., 2003; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). In contrast, passive leadership highlights the negative side of leadership and is based on the absence of guidance, as it is characterized by inertia, decision avoidance and lack of substantive intervention (Antonakis et al., 2003; Northouse, 2021). Therefore, the comparison of these theoretical approaches shows that effective leadership in public organizations is not limited to the administrative position of leaders, but is linked to their ability to influence, motivate and support employees. This synthesis is important for the present thesis, as the research model (presented below in section 2.4) examines leadership effectiveness as a factor influencing human resource management practices, the shared responsibility of a public organization, employee empowerment and the adoption of the basic principles of New Public Governance.

Based on the above, it follows that leadership theories offer a general framework for understanding the behaviors of leaders within an organization, however they are not sufficient by themselves to fully explain how leadership effectiveness is shaped in an organization. For this reason, this dissertation focuses more specifically on the Leader-Member Exchange theory, as this specific theoretical approach shifts the focus from the general leadership style adopted in an organization, to the quality of the relationships that develop between the leader and employees. This theory is particularly important for the

research model proposed in this thesis, as we will see below. The following section presents the key features of the Leader-Member Exchange theory.

2.2.4. Leader-Member Exchange

The relationship between leaders and followers depends on their position in the organization, job description, size of the organization, and willingness to interact and maintain contact with someone. In leadership research and literature, the leader-follower relationship has come under the relational leadership framework. Relational leadership is a relatively new term in the leadership literature, and its meaning is open to interpretation (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Uhl-Bien describes it from two perspectives, namely as an entity and from the relational perspective. The entity perspective focuses on identifying characteristics of individuals as they engage in an interpersonal relationship. Relational perspectives view leadership as a socially constructed process, although some conceptions of leadership appear to privilege ontology (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Relational leadership is based on the behavior of individuals with a relationship orientation, meaning that individuals like each other and therefore thrive in the relationship. Relational leadership is a process of social influence that evolves into a social process and new behavioral changes with values, attitudes, approaches, and ideologies. Its focus is on the interpersonal relationship, and their relational processes that are considered in relation to the characteristics of the parties and the personal outcomes with and within the exchange (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Many empirical studies have found that the relationship between a leader and followers is based on a relationship of trust between individuals (Muterera et al., 2018).

The best-known relationship-based approach to leadership is the leader-member exchange theory, according to which leadership occurs when leaders and followers are able to develop an effective relationship between associates (Sheer, 2015). The relationship is described as a developmental process that begins with two individuals engaging in a series of interactions, and the leader develops an exchange relationship over time with each follower on a one-to-one basis (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

The central point of their theory was that leadership is not a one-sided process. On the contrary, it is a two-way influence relationship between leader and follower. Each leader must develop different relationships with the members of his team. Some relationships are

high quality, based on trust, respect and mutual commitment, while others are of low quality, as they are characterized by formal transactions (Van Breukelen et al., 2006). The relationship between leader and follower essentially must be co-formed, so that the satisfaction of all goals is sought and achieved. Subordinates are not passive recipients of orders. They are active members who participate jointly in the relationship (Liden et al., 1997).

Dyadic leadership research is typically concerned with leader-follower exchange theory. This theory differs from other leadership theories that generalize leaders' behavior to all followers rather than examining a single leader-follower relationship. Dyadic leadership is based on the assumption that leaders differentiate followers as relationship initiators (Brower et al., 2000), and thus leader-member exchange theory is closely aligned with theories of interpersonal trust (Brower et al., 2000) and social exchange theory (Liden et al., 1997). According to Liden and Maslyn (1998), the significance of the leader-follower relationship is inherited in the social exchange between two actors.

2.2.5. Leadership in Public Management

In a landscape of intense and rapid change, as mentioned above, organizations must reconsider their strategic plans in order to have the long-term results that will bring prosperity. And if for the private sector this discussion began decades ago, highlighting the role of leadership in this entire edifice that encompasses competitive advantage through the optimization and commitment of human capital, in the public sector the qualitative functioning of which is an indication of the functioning of the state, the need for efficiency is more explicit than ever and the contribution of leadership in this direction is now a significant challenge (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022).

However, research and studies on leadership in the public sector do not have the same scope as their counterparts in business entities, perhaps because, as Van Wart (2003) argues, political leadership often attempts to bypass administrative leadership, as he calls leadership emanating from service factors at all levels, or perhaps again because the bureaucratic organizational structure of the public sector, despite its low productivity, with its formalistic obsession with inputs, rules and procedures, does not give much room for leadership to demonstrate its importance. Nevertheless, today, the debate on leadership in the public sector has strongly returned, mainly due to the reforms and changes being

attempted in public organizations in Europe and America in the context of the applications of the New Public Management, their evolution, as well as the new ways of governance that reflect a continuous transformation from management practices to leadership practices and from the view of the citizen as a customer to a user of the public service as a consumer and co-producer (Crosby & Bryson, 2018; O'Reilly & Reed, 2010).

Leadership in public administration and public management is one of the key fields of contemporary literature, as it is directly linked to the quality of public services, organizational performance, employee motivation and the ability of public organizations to respond to reforms, crises and increased social demands (Crosby & Bryson, 2018). Relevant research over the last decade shows that leadership in the public sector cannot be approached based on theoretical leadership models that have been applied in the private sector, because public organizations operate within a particular institutional environment, with political accountability, rules, public value, limited resources and an increased need for transparency. For this reason, the literature has focused on the study of the “public” dimension of leadership and not only on leadership styles (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022).

An important study in the literature on leadership in the public sector is that of Chapman et al. (2016). In their research, they conducted a review of the literature on leadership in public services. In their article, Chapman et al. (2016) showed that, although the number of empirical studies on leadership in the public sector has increased, the studies show significant variation in the theoretical and methodological approaches they adopt. The findings of Chapman et al. (2016) show that leadership in the public sector can be studied through different perspectives, such as transformational leadership, ethical leadership, public value-oriented leadership and leadership based on collaborative networks. Accordingly, Tummers and Knies (2016) developed some scales for assessing leadership in the public sector. Essentially, the tool they constructed was intended to assess four key leadership dimensions in the public sector: accountability leadership, rule-following leadership, political loyalty leadership, and network governance leadership. The contribution of Tummers and Knies (2016) is particularly important, because it shows that the leader in the public sector is not only evaluated in terms of his ability to motivate employees, but also in terms of his ability to help them operate within a complex institutional and political environment.

A later study by Vogel et al. (2020) tried to capture what the “public” dimension of leadership is. Vogel et al. (2020) developed a short scale to measure leadership in the public sector, based on data from the German public sector. The research by Vogel et al. (2020) confirmed that leadership in the public sector can be assessed through specific behaviors of leaders (supervisors or managers) regarding accountability, rules, the political dimension and collaboration. Therefore, leadership in public management is not identified only with personal characteristics of the leader, but with behaviors that help a public organization to function efficiently. Additionally, Vogel and Werkmeister (2021) examined citizens’ perceptions of what characterizes a leader in the public sector. Their research showed that a leader in the public sector is evaluated based on elements related to the administrative and institutional environment in which they operate. That is, leadership in the public sector does not only depend on the personality or ability of leaders to motivate their subordinates, but also on their ability to follow the rules and appropriate procedures as well as to create appropriate networks of cooperation with different public bodies. In this way, leadership in the public sector is associated with accountability, institutional consistency and the ability to coordinate complex administrative relationships (Vogel & Werkmeister, 2021).

In the same context, several studies evaluate classical leadership styles (mainly transformational, transactional and passive/laissez-faire leadership) in the public sector. Transformational leadership is associated with visioning, supporting, motivating and encouraging change. Transactional leadership relies more on supervision, goals, rewarding and correcting deviations. In contrast, laissez-faire leadership is characterized by an absence of guidance, delayed decision-making, and limited accountability. Backhaus and Vogel’s (2022) meta-analysis shows that international research in the public sector examines different leadership styles, such as transformational, transactional, ethical, authentic and servant leadership, but emphasizes that leadership effectiveness depends on the administrative context, the type of public organization and the demands.

In the Greek literature, the available research on leadership in the public sector is limited. Samanta and Lamprakis (2018) investigated leadership styles in the Greek public sector, and specifically in the public procurement sector, using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire as a tool. Their research assessed three leadership styles: transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership. The findings of Samanta and Lamprakis (2018) showed that transactional leadership is the dominant leadership style in public organizations.

However, they confirmed that transformational leadership (although practiced to a significantly lesser extent) is positively related to perceived leadership effectiveness and job satisfaction, while laissez-faire leadership is negatively related to perceived leadership effectiveness and job satisfaction. The study by Samanta and Lamprakis (2018) is important because it shows that even in a public organization with significant bureaucratic constraints, leadership should not be limited to implementing rules, but should motivate employees to be more efficient.

Additionally, Despoteris and Kriemadis (2024) examined leadership in the Greek public sector during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study used the Full Range Leadership Model (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership) as a theoretical framework. Their research showed that the dominant leadership style in the public sector is transactional leadership. This shows that in crisis conditions the Greek public administration seems to rely more on styles that emphasize organization, control, goals and management. However, the same research showed that transformational leadership had the strongest positive relationship with perceived effectiveness, which highlights the need for leaders who are not limited to managing processes and correcting mistakes, but must support and motivate their subordinates.

More recently, Aravidou et al. (2025b) examined the relationship between leadership and conflict management in the Greek public sector. Their study focused on collaborative, transformational and authoritarian leadership styles. From their research it emerged that collaborative and transformational leadership are related to better communication and more effective conflict management in the workplace, while authoritarian leadership is related to more tensions and difficulties in collaboration. In another study, Aravidou et al. (2025a) focused on inclusive leadership in the Greek public sector, while examining the role of mentoring and digital tools. Their study showed that the modern leader in the public sector needs to create conditions of participation, cooperation and trust, so that employees are effectively supported and the organization operates with greater coherence and adaptability.

Overall, the international and Greek literature shows that leadership in the public sector is evaluated through two main approaches. The first approach is to explore leadership style, mainly transformational, transactional, passive, collaborative, ethical and inclusive leadership. The second approach concerns the investigation of the particular characteristics of public leadership, such as accountability, adherence to rules, institutional accountability,

cooperation, conflict management and public interest orientation. Especially in Greece, research shows that transactional leadership is the dominant leadership style in the public sector due to the administrative culture and the importance of achieving goals, but transformational, collaborative and inclusive leadership emerge as more suitable for enhancing the effectiveness, communication and adaptation of public administration to the needs of citizens.

At this point, it is necessary to introduce the concept of employee empowerment, which is developed in the next section. The concept of empowerment is included in this thesis because it is directly linked to effective leadership in public management and to the way in which employees can participate more actively in the operation of public organizations. In the context of New Public Management, the emphasis is not only on following procedures and control, but also on the more active participation of employees, on assuming responsibility and on their ability to contribute substantially to the improvement of public services. Therefore, the analysis of empowerment is necessary, as it allows us to examine how leadership can enhance the autonomy, initiative and responsibility of employees in the public sector.

2.3. Employee empowerment

2.3.1. Conceptual Definition of Empowerment

The concept of empowerment gained particular interest in the late 1980s, when it became a field of investigation for many researchers regarding the way in which management is practiced in many organizations and businesses (Cheng et al., 2025). Despite the lack of a widely accepted conceptual definition of empowerment, the attempt to provide a simple and general definition refers to the transfer of more authority and initiatives to employees in matters concerning both the work itself and the environment in which it is provided (Honold, 1997). Over the years, empowerment has been treated as a basic leadership practice in human resource management, with the aim of successfully addressing the particularly complex needs of modern organizations and businesses (Wen et al., 2023).

When we talk about empowerment in the workplace, we are referring to a situation or context or environment where employees have the greatest or complete authority in making decisions on work processes without the involvement of top management. In short, power is transferred from management to employees. Employee empowerment reduces the

duration of tasks as it brings decision-makers closer to employees (Murray & Holmes, 2021). According to another definition, the concept of “empowerment” lies in the fact that by providing greater autonomy to employees in decision-making, their job satisfaction is enhanced, thus bringing beneficial results not only for their performance and loyalty, but also for the satisfaction of the organization’s customers (Choi et al., 2016).

2.3.2. Employees Empowerment Approaches

The different practical contexts of empowerment and its diverse use by both the academic community and managers (Wilkinson, 1998) led to its broad conceptual delimitation. In the literature, however, the concept of empowerment is found in two approaches (dimensions), the structural (relational) and the psychological empowerment.

Structural Empowerment: Structural empowerment refers to practices through which management transfers power, responsibilities, and the ability to participate in decision-making to employees at lower levels of the organizational hierarchy. Through these practices, employees play an active role through their ability to significantly influence the results of the organization. Kanter (1977), through her approach to groups of practices that enhance employee empowerment, focused on the superiority of structural factors in the empowerment of employees in an organization in relation to individual characteristics. When within an organization-business there are structures that ensure access to information and its various resources, job support, the possibility of learning and development, as well as the assignment of formal and informal power, then employees will feel empowered and will be able to respond to any challenge that arises (Monje-Amor et al., 2021).

Bowen and Lawler (1995) argued that employee empowerment is based on certain key organizational elements. These are access to information about the organization’s performance, the knowledge needed to understand this performance, the rewards associated with performance, and the ability to participate in decision-making. According to them, when employees have access to these elements, they can better understand the importance of their role. Thus, they perceive that their contribution is important for the functioning, survival, and growth of the organization. On the other hand, Wilkinson (1998) included as empowerment practices five similar elements such as, the distribution of information, the limitation of problem solving by the upper management hierarchy, the effect on attitudes,

work autonomy and self-management. According to Wilkinson (1998), the distribution of information, in whatever form it takes (newsletters, group meetings) strengthens employee loyalty, as the content of the decisions made is better understood and the uncritical expression of opinions and complaints is strengthened.

Structural empowerment plays a key role in the management of an organization and directly affects organizational commitment (Aggarwal et al., 2018). It is a powerful factor in creating a work environment that will attract and retain individuals in an organization (Laschinger et al., 2009). This is because, when an individual has the opportunity to develop their abilities and skills, while at the same time being rewarded and recognized for their contribution to organizational goals, then the individual will invest in the organization (Monje-Amor et al., 2021). Therefore, structural empowerment is positively associated with organizational commitment, as the more the individual perceives a high level of structural empowerment, the more they want to remain in the organization (Laschinger et al., 2009).

This approach, however, has also received much criticism. According to international literature, the prevailing perception is that senior management, and in general anyone in a position of power, are often motivated by their own benefits and may grant power more to exploit a situation than to provide empowerment. Sometimes, empowerment may also be supported by management, but not adopted in practice, as control and hierarchy practices are preferred (Aggarwal et al., 2018).

Psychological Empowerment: There are different interpretations and delimitations of psychological empowerment by researchers internationally. Conger and Kanungo (1988) were the first to define psychological empowerment as the delegation of power, sharing of resources and providing motivation through the enhancement of self-efficacy. The basis of empowerment is based on increasing employee motivation by delegating power to subordinates in an organization where specific decisions can be made (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). An important element of empowerment is the transfer of responsibility and autonomy to employees, to such an extent that it provides them with the necessary freedom to perform their duties (Aggarwal et al., 2018).

Psychological empowerment is an essential element of leadership based on commitment and awareness (Spreitzer, 1995). It can be characterized as a motivation state that reflects the adaptation of the individual to the environment (Krishnan, 2012). A state that enhances the level of activation of employees as they perform their tasks (Thomas &

Velthouse, 1990). In addition, it has been described as a process of improving perceptions of self-efficacy, through the recognition of factors that promote weakness and through the use of formal and informal organizational techniques and practices. Thus, the importance of psychological empowerment is highlighted at the individual, group and organizational levels (Stander & Rothmann, 2010). According to Spreitzer (1995), psychological empowerment is a behavior that involves the adaptation of the individual's work and values. It describes the view that each individual has the appropriate skills and knowledge to successfully perform their tasks, so as to make a big difference in the work environment.

Employees' perceptions of empowerment enhance their sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Ma et al., 2021). They do not have feelings of weakness, doubt, and anxiety, but feelings of pride, self-esteem, and respect and, therefore, can take on more responsibilities and take more initiatives (Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024).

2.3.3. Employees Empowerment and Leadership

Employee empowerment has been explored in the literature in relation to leadership because leader behaviors significantly shape the environment in which employees perceive their role (Helalat et al., 2023; Kundu et al., 2019). When leadership provides clear direction, trust, support, and opportunity to participate in decision-making, employees are more likely to feel that they have a voice in decisions concerning their work, that they can take initiative, and that their work matters to the organization. Conversely, when leadership is based solely on control or is characterized by an absence of guidance, empowerment is limited, as employees do not develop the same degree of autonomy and responsibility (Choi et al., 2016; Saira et al., 2021).

The relevant literature shows that employee empowerment depends not only on organizational structures and corresponding processes, but also on the daily behaviors of leaders. Leaders who provide information to employees, explain the goals to be achieved, encourage employee participation in decision-making, and support employee development and career development create more favorable conditions for employee empowerment. In this context, leadership functions as a mechanism that can enhance employees' sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and influence, i.e. the key dimensions of empowerment (Wen et al., 2023). A particularly important leadership style in this context

is transformational leadership, as it is associated with behaviors that enhance employee empowerment. For example, Bose et al. (2021) showed that transformational leadership positively affects employee empowerment. Furthermore, Bose et al. (2021) confirmed that empowerment acts as a significant mediating factor in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee organizational commitment. This means that employees who feel they have greater autonomy, competence, and influence in their work are more likely to develop stronger commitment to the organization they work for. This relationship has been confirmed in more recent empirical studies. Ibrahim et al. (2024) conducted research on nursing staff and showed that transformational leadership enhances employee empowerment, which is then associated with higher organizational citizenship behavior. This finding is useful because it shows that empowerment is not only an internal perception of the employee, but can also translate into more active, collaborative, and responsible behavior in the workplace.

The importance of leadership style is also confirmed by the study by Schermuly et al. (2022), who conducted a systematic literature review and meta-analysis to investigate the relationship between different leadership styles and employee empowerment. The findings of Schermuly et al. (2022) showed that empowering, transformational and servant leadership enhance employee empowerment, while no significant relationship between empowerment and transactional leadership was confirmed. Schermuly et al. (2022) concluded that employee empowerment does not arise through the exchange of goals-rewards, but through leadership behaviors that enhance trust, participation and the feeling that the employee is important to an organization.

In addition to transformational leadership, empowering leadership also plays an important role. Empowering leadership refers to practices by which the leader provides greater autonomy, encourages participation in decision-making, shares information, and supports employee development. Kim et al. (2018), in a meta-analysis of 55 independent samples, showed that empowering leadership is positively associated with employee motivation, attitudes, and performance. Accordingly, Lee et al. (2018), in a meta-analysis of 105 samples, showed that empowering leadership is associated with performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and creativity, both at the individual and team levels. These findings reinforce the view that empowerment does not occur by chance, but is linked to specific leadership behaviors that give space, responsibility, and support to employees.

An important theory in the context of the relationship between leadership and empowerment is the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, which focuses on the quality of the relationship that develops between the leader and each employee. When the leader-employee relationship is based on trust, mutual respect, support, and open communication, employees are more likely to feel that their supervisor recognizes their contributions and empowers them to participate more actively in work-related issues. Therefore, LMX theory is important in the context of how leadership affects employee empowerment (Young et al., 2021). For example, Aggarwal et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between LMX, psychological empowerment, work engagement and psychological withdrawal of employees. The results of their research showed that employees who recognize a high-quality relationship with their leader show higher psychological empowerment and greater work engagement, while showing lower psychological withdrawal. This shows that the leader-employee relationship is not a single factor of work climate, but can significantly influence whether the employee feels important within an organization.

In conclusion, the literature shows that employee empowerment is directly linked to leadership in a workplace. Transformational, empowering and servant leadership seem to be able to create favorable conditions for employee empowerment, because they are based on trust, support, participation and development of employees. At the same time, LMX theory shows that not only the general leadership style is sufficient for employee empowerment, but the quality of the daily relationship between the leader and the employee is also important. Therefore, effective leadership enhances employee empowerment, as it creates a framework of trust, participation and responsibility, within which employees can contribute more meaningfully to the functioning of an organization.

2.4. Conceptual Model and Research Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework analyzed in the previous sections and the main findings of the relevant literature, the research model of this thesis was formed. Based on the literature review, it emerged that leadership plays a key role in the functioning of modern public organizations, as it can influence relationships in the workplace, contribute to the empowerment of employees and promote the basic principles of New Public Governance. Particular importance is attributed to the quality of relationships between leader and members, as this can affect the way in which employees perceive the effectiveness of

leadership. In this context, the present study results in the formation of a research model, which captures the main relationships that arise from the theoretical framework and which is presented in Figure 1.

In this thesis, the proposed research model examines the relationship between the quality of the leader-employee relationship, the effectiveness of leadership and key dimensions of the operation of public organizations. Before formulating the research hypotheses, it is necessary to briefly clarify the basic concepts used in the model.

- **Self-perceived leadership effectiveness** refers to the extent to which leadership contributes to improving team performance, motivating employees, and achieving organizational goals (Yukl, 2010, 2012). In this thesis the construct is operationalized at the level of the individual respondent: participants assessed whether their own leadership contributes to team performance, whether they can motivate their team and whether they contribute to the achievement of the organization's goals. The variable therefore records the respondent's assessment of his or her own leadership contribution, and not an evaluation of the supervisor's effectiveness. This operationalization is consistent with Leader-Member Exchange theory, according to which the quality of the exchange relationship with the supervisor shapes the support, latitude and confidence available to the employee and, through these, the employee's own effectiveness in his or her work role (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997; Young et al., 2021). For brevity, the variable is reported as leadership effectiveness in the tables that follow.
- The **leader-employee relationship** is examined through the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory. This theory emphasizes the quality of the relationship that develops between the supervisor and the employee. When this relationship is based on trust, respect, support and open communication, the employee is more likely to perceive leadership as more effective (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).
- **Human resource management practices** are examined through three dimensions: training opportunities that support the development of leadership skills, performance evaluation as a means of identifying leadership potential, and processes for attracting personnel with leadership skills. Therefore, the positive relationship with leadership effectiveness means that the more leadership is perceived to be effective, the more

the organization appears to support leadership development and utilization practices (Jiang et al., 2012).

- **Shared responsibility** refers to the extent to which decision-making and problem-solving are not limited to the supervisor alone, but are distributed within the team. This concept includes involving employees in decisions, encouraging collaborative problem solving, and having a collaborative culture within the department (Han et al., 2018).
- **Employee empowerment** refers to the extent to which employees feel they have autonomy, decision-making ability, ability to manage difficult work situations, and influence over team processes. This concept is linked to effective leadership, as support, trust and the ability to take initiative can enhance employee autonomy and responsibility (Spreitzer, 1995).
- Finally, the **principles of New Public Governance (NPG)** are reflected through cooperation between departments, the creation of public value and transparency in the operation of the organization. These principles are linked to the transition from a strictly bureaucratic management model to a more collaborative and public interest oriented operating framework (Osborne, 2006).

Based on the above, this thesis seeks to fill a research gap regarding the connection between the leader-employee relationship and leadership effectiveness and critical organizational dimensions in the public sector. The research contribution of the thesis lies in the fact that it simultaneously examines the LMX relationship, leadership effectiveness, human resource practices, shared responsibility, employee empowerment and basic principles of public governance, providing a more comprehensive picture of the role of leadership in the functioning of public organizations. The research hypotheses of the paper are as follows:

- H1: The quality of the leader-member exchange (LMX) relationship is positively related to self-perceived leadership effectiveness.
- H2: Self-perceived leadership effectiveness is positively related to perceived human resource management practices associated with leadership development and leadership potential.

- H3: Self-perceived leadership effectiveness is positively related to perceived shared responsibility.
- H4: Self-perceived leadership effectiveness is positively related to perceived employee empowerment.
- H5: Self-perceived leadership effectiveness is positively related to perceived New Public Governance principles (interdepartmental collaboration, public value creation and transparency).

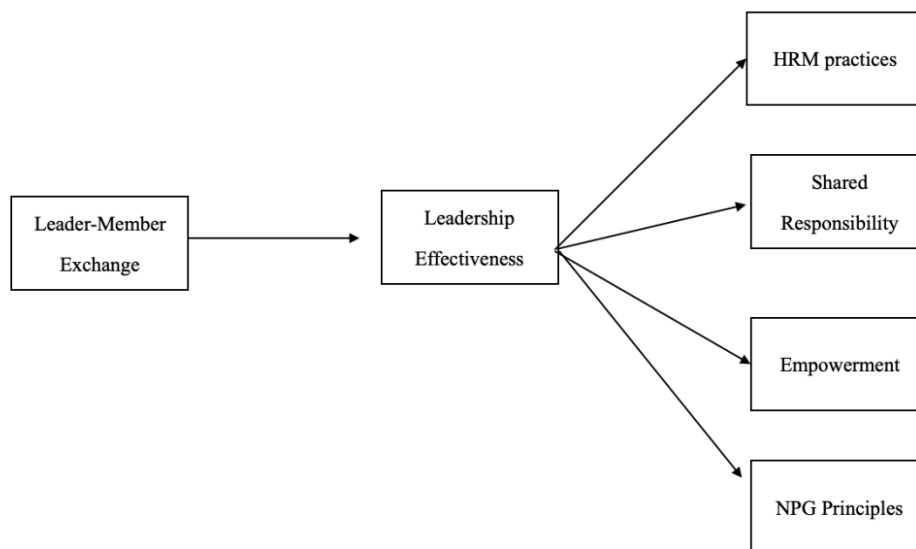


Figure 1. Conceptual model

3. Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology followed to conduct the research. In particular, reference is made to the research method, the research tool, the sample, the data collection process, ethical issues and the method of statistical processing of the responses.

3.1. Research Method

To achieve the purpose of the study, the quantitative research method was chosen. This choice was deemed appropriate, as this study examines specific variables and seeks to explore the relationships that develop between them. More specifically, the leader-employee relationship, leadership effectiveness, employee empowerment, shared responsibility, human resource management practices related to leadership development and the principles of modern public governance are studied. The quantitative method allows for the standardized collection of responses, the coding of data, and their statistical processing. This makes it possible to test research hypotheses and investigate the degree to which the variables of the research model are related to each other (Saunders et al., 2023). Moreover, the research was based on primary data, as the data were collected directly from the participants through a questionnaire. At the same time, it is cross-sectional, as the data collection took place in a specific period of time and the change in responses over time is not examined. Through this specific approach, an attempt is made to capture the perceptions of public sector employees regarding the role of leadership and its connection with key organizational dimensions (Bryman & Bell, 2019).

3.2. Questionnaire

A structured self-report questionnaire was used as a research tool. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions to facilitate data collection and statistical processing. The questions were formulated in a clear and understandable manner so that participants could answer based on their personal work experience in the public sector (Bryman & Bell, 2019).

The questionnaire consists of 31 questions and was addressed to employees holding a supervisory position in the public sector; in its introduction, participants were asked to

answer on the basis of their experience as supervisors. The first six questions concern the demographic and professional characteristics of the participants. Specifically, gender, age, level of education, years of service in the public sector, years in a supervisory position and the type of organization in which they work are recorded.

Questions 7-13 concern the leader-employee relationship and were based on the logic of the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX-7) scale. The LMX-7 scale is used to measure the quality of the relationship between the supervisor and the employee, focusing on elements such as trust, support, recognition, mutual understanding and quality of cooperation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Scandura & Graen, 1984). In the present study, the questions were adapted to the public sector context and examine whether the supervisor understands the employee's needs, recognizes the employee's potential, provides support when needed, provides feedback and whether their cooperation is based on trust.

Questions 14-19 concern employee empowerment. The questions in this section of the questionnaire were based on the theory of psychological empowerment, according to which empowerment is linked to the meaning of work, the sense of competence, self-determination and the employee's influence on their work environment (Spreitzer, 1995). In the present study, empowerment is reflected through autonomy in performing work, the ability to make decisions, the ability to manage difficult work situations, influence on team processes, the freedom to choose how to perform tasks and the ability to contribute to improving the functioning of the department. It should be noted that these items capture three of the four dimensions proposed by Spreitzer (1995) — competence, self-determination and impact — whereas the dimension of meaning was not included in the questionnaire.

Questions 20-22 are about shared responsibility within a group. This concept is linked to the participative approach to leadership, according to which the responsibility for decision-making and problem-solving is not limited exclusively to the leader, but is also distributed among team members (Carson et al., 2007; Pearce & Sims, 2002). In this research, shared responsibility is examined through the sharing of responsibility for decisions, the supervisor's encouragement of collaborative problem solving, and the existence of a collaborative culture in the department.

Questions 23-25 assess human resource management practices related to the development and utilization of leadership skills. This paper does not examine all human

resource management practices, but specifically practices related to training, evaluating and attracting personnel with leadership skills. This specific group of questions was based on the literature on leadership development and the role of human resource practices in the development of employees’ knowledge, skills and abilities (Jiang et al., 2012).

Questions 26-28 capture basic principles of New Public Governance. In this context, cooperation between departments, the creation of public value and transparency in the functioning of the organization were assessed. These dimensions are linked to the literature on New Public Governance and public value, which emphasizes cooperation, accountability, transparency and the production of value for citizens and society (Bryson et al., 2014; Osborne, 2006).

Questions 29-31 capture self-perceived leadership effectiveness. The items are worded in the first person and ask participants to assess whether their own leadership contributes to improved team performance, whether they can effectively motivate their team and whether they contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. The variable therefore records the respondent’s assessment of his or her own leadership contribution and not an evaluation of the supervisor’s effectiveness. The conceptual basis of the variable is linked to the literature on effective leadership behavior and leadership outcomes (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Yukl, 2012).

Questions 7-31 were answered using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly agree. A higher value on the scale indicates a higher degree of agreement with the corresponding statement. For each research variable, an overall score was created based on the average of the responses to the questions that comprise it. In this way, each participant’s responses were converted into individual indicators, which were then used in the statistical analysis.

3.3. Participants

The research sample consisted of 160 public sector employees holding a supervisory position. The questionnaire was explicitly addressed to public sector supervisors, and participants were asked to answer on the basis of their own experience in a supervisory role, so that they could report on the relationship with their own supervisor, on the functioning of the team they lead, on organizational practices, and on their own leadership effectiveness.

Supervisors of different gender, age, educational level, years of service and type of organization were included in the survey. In addition, years of service in a supervisory position were recorded, as this paper examines issues of leadership, collaboration and team functioning in the public sector. The selection of the sample was carried out by the method of convenience sampling. This method was chosen due to the possibility of direct access to public sector workers and the collection of data in a limited period of time. However, this choice is a limitation of the research, as the results cannot be safely generalized to all public sector workers (Saunders et al., 2023). Finally, because participation was voluntary and no item of the online questionnaire was set as mandatory, a small number of responses were missing at item level. In total, 35 of the 4,960 individual responses were left blank (0.7%), distributed across 25 of the 160 participants. Four participants did not report their years in a supervisory position and one did not report the type of organization. For the six research variables, each participant's score was calculated as the mean of the items he or she had actually answered, so that a single unanswered item did not eliminate the entire case; a variable was treated as missing only when a participant had left all of its items blank. This occurred once, for one participant who answered none of the three leadership effectiveness items. Consequently, the valid N is 160 for the leader-employee relationship, employee empowerment, shared responsibility, human resource management practices and New Public Governance principles, and 159 for leadership effectiveness. In analyses involving years in a supervisory position or type of organization the valid N is further reduced to 156 and 159 respectively. The valid N is reported separately in each table.

3.4. Research Procedure and Ethics

Data collection was carried out via an electronic questionnaire, which was created on the Google Forms platform. The questionnaire was distributed online, by sending the relevant link to public sector employees. This specific procedure was chosen because it facilitated direct access to participants and allowed the collection of responses in a unified and organized manner. Participants completed the questionnaire individually, based on their personal work experience from the public organization in which they work. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were briefly informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation and the anonymous processing of the

responses. The completion and submission of the questionnaire was considered as consent to participate in the research. The basic principles of research ethics were observed during the conduct of the research. Participation was voluntary and participants had the option of not continuing to complete the questionnaire, without any consequences. No personal information, such as name, email address, or exact work department, was requested. The responses were used solely for the purposes of this study and the results are presented in aggregate form, without reference to specific individuals or public organizations.

3.5. Statistical Analysis

After completing the data collection, the responses were extracted from the Google Forms platform and coded for statistical processing. First, a descriptive analysis of the demographic and professional characteristics of the sample was carried out. For the categorical variables, frequencies (n) and % were calculated to present the profile of the participants in terms of gender, age, education level, years of service in the public sector, years in a supervisory position, and type of organization.

A reliability analysis was then performed for the dimensions of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the scales. This test was performed because the main variables of the survey result from a set of individual questions. Cronbach's alpha values equal to or greater than 0.70 are an indication of acceptable reliability for the scales (Bryman & Bell, 2019).

Non-parametric tests were used to investigate differences in the main research variables regarding the demographic and professional characteristics of the participants. Specifically, for comparisons between two groups, such as gender, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was applied. For comparisons between more than two groups, such as age, educational level, years of service in the public sector, years in a supervisory position and type of organization, the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was applied. Where the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated a statistically significant difference, pairwise post-hoc comparisons were carried out using Dunn's test with a Bonferroni adjustment, since the Kruskal-Wallis test itself does not identify which particular groups differ. For the analysis by education level, the two participants who reported post-secondary vocational training (IEK) were grouped with holders of a bachelor's degree, as the category was too small to

be treated separately; supplementary checks confirmed that this decision does not alter the pattern of results.

Correlation analysis (using Spearman correlation) and linear regression analysis were performed to investigate the relationships between the variables. Specifically, for the first research hypothesis, it was examined whether the leader-employee relationship predicts perceived leadership effectiveness. For the remaining hypotheses, it was examined whether perceived leadership effectiveness predicts human resource management practices, shared responsibility, employee empowerment, and the principles of New Public Governance.

4. Results

4.1. Demographics

The demographics of the 160 employees who participated in the survey are presented in Table 1. 41.9% (n = 67) of the sample identified as male and 58.1% (n = 93) identified as female. Regarding the age of the sample, 46.9% (n = 75) were 50–59 years old, while 36.3% (n = 58) were 40–49 years old. A smaller percentage of the sample were 30–39 years old (n = 14, 8.8%), 60 years old and above (n = 11, 6.9%) or 18–29 years old (n = 2, 1.3%). Regarding the educational level of the sample, the majority of the participants had a master’s degree (n = 110, 68.8%), while 18.8% (n = 30) had a bachelor’s degree. A smaller percentage of the sample had a PhD (n = 13, 8.1%) or high school education (n = 7, 4.4%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample demographics

		n	%
Gender	Male	67	41.9%
	Female	93	58.1%
Age	18–29	2	1.3%
	30–39	14	8.8%
	40–49	58	36.3%
	50–59	75	46.9%
	60+	11	6.9%
Education	High school	7	4.4%
	Bachelor’s degree	30	18.8%
	Master’s degree	110	68.8%
	PhD	13	8.1%
Years of service in the public sector	<5	21	13.1%
	6–10	19	11.9%
	11–15	10	6.3%
	16–20	25	15.6%
	>20	85	53.1%
Years in a supervisory position	<2	76	48.7%
	3–5	22	14.1%
	6–10	14	9.0%
	>10	44	28.2%
	Missing	4	—

Type of organization	Municipality	79	49.7%
	Independent Authority	41	25.8%
	Ministry	8	5.0%
	Region	25	15.7%
	Other	6	3.8%
	Missing	1	—

Note. N = 160. Percentages are valid percentages, calculated excluding missing responses (years in a supervisory position: n = 156 valid; type of organization: n = 159 valid).

Moreover, the results showed that 53.1% (n = 85) of the employees who participated in the survey had more than 20 years of service in the public sector, while 15.6% (n = 25) had 16–20 years of service. In addition, 13.1% (n = 21) reported less than 5 years of service, 11.9% (n = 19) reported 6–10 years of service and 6.3% (n = 10) reported 11–15 years of service. Regarding years in a supervisory position (n = 156 valid responses), 48.7% (n = 76) had less than 2 years of experience in a supervisory position, while 28.2% (n = 44) had more than 10 years. In addition, 14.1% (n = 22) had 3–5 years and 9.0% (n = 14) had 6–10 years in a supervisory position. Regarding the type of organization (n = 159 valid responses), 49.7% (n = 79) worked in a municipality, 25.8% (n = 41) in an independent authority, 15.7% (n = 25) in a region, 5.0% (n = 8) in a ministry and 3.8% (n = 6) in another type of organization (Table 1).

4.2. Reliability analysis

A reliability analysis was then performed by calculating Cronbach’s α for the scales used in the survey. In addition, an analysis was performed to check for improved reliability in the event of excluding a question from each of the scales.

Table 2 shows that the overall reliability level of the leader-employee relationship scale is equal to $\alpha = 0.951$, indicating that the scale as a whole exhibits a very high level of reliability. Additional analysis (Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted) showed that removing any of the 7 questions from the tool would not increase the overall reliability of the scale, as all the corresponding Cronbach’s alpha values were lower than the initial value.

Table 2. Reliability analysis for “Leader-Employee Relationship” scale

	Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items
	.951	7

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted
My supervisor understands my problems and needs.	20.4	37.2	.875	.940
I have an effective working relationship with my supervisor.	20.2	37.8	.848	.943
My supervisor recognizes my potential.	20.2	38.1	.782	.948
My supervisor supports me when needed.	20.2	36.8	.862	.941
I can rely on my supervisor for important matters.	20.3	37.0	.810	.946
My supervisor provides feedback that helps me improve.	20.6	36.1	.839	.943
There is mutual trust in our cooperation.	20.3	37.3	.829	.944

Table 3 shows that the overall reliability of the employee empowerment scale is $\alpha = 0.865$, indicating that the scale has a high level of reliability. Additional analysis (Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted) showed that removing most of the questions would not increase the overall reliability. The exception is the question “*I am capable of handling difficult work situations*”, as its removal could marginally increase the reliability from 0.865 to 0.874. However, this increase is small and does not indicate a significant problem in the internal consistency of the scale.

Table 3. Reliability analysis for “Employee empowerment” scale

Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items
.865	6

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I have significant autonomy in how I perform my work.	18.9	14.7	.679	.839
I can make decisions that affect my job.	18.9	13.8	.727	.830
I am capable of handling difficult work situations.	18.2	17.7	.449	.874
I can influence processes related to my team.	18.7	14.8	.731	.831
I have the freedom to choose how to complete my tasks.	19.0	13.8	.721	.832
I can contribute to improving my department's functioning.	18.7	14.5	.666	.842

Table 4 shows that the overall reliability level of the shared responsibility scale is equal to $\alpha = 0.815$, indicating that the scale as a whole exhibits a fairly high level of reliability. The additional analysis (Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted) showed that the removal of any of the 3 questions from the tool would not increase the overall reliability of the scale.

Table 4. Reliability analysis for “Shared responsibility” scale

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.815	3

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Responsibility for decisions is shared within my team.	6.6	4.7	.598	.814
My supervisor encourages collective problem-solving.	6.7	4.1	.734	.675
There is a culture of collaboration in my department.	6.4	4.4	.671	.741

Table 5 shows that the overall reliability level of the human resource management practices scale is equal to $\alpha = 0.824$, indicating that the scale as a whole exhibits a fairly high level of

reliability. The additional analysis (Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted) showed that the removal of any of the 3 questions from the tool would not increase the overall reliability of the scale.

Table 5. Reliability analysis for “Human resource management practices” scale

	Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items
	.824	3

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted
Training opportunities support leadership development.	6.5	3.5	.717	.720
Performance appraisal helps identify leadership potential.	6.5	3.9	.695	.746
Recruitment processes aim to attract candidates with leadership skills.	7.2	3.8	.634	.805

Table 6 shows that the overall reliability level for the scale concerning the principles of modern public governance is equal to $\alpha = 0.843$, indicating that the scale as a whole exhibits a high level of reliability. The additional analysis (Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted) showed that the removal of any of the 3 questions from the tool would not increase the overall reliability of the scale.

Table 6. Reliability analysis for “New Public Governance principles” scale

	Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items
	.843	3

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted
Collaboration with other departments is encouraged.	6.9	5.0	.678	.812

My organization promotes the creation of public value.	6.9	4.4	.727	.764
Transparency is a core principle in our operations.	6.6	4.3	.726	.766

Finally, Table 7 shows that the overall reliability of the leadership effectiveness scale is equal to $\alpha = 0.844$, indicating that the scale exhibits a high level of reliability. The additional analysis (Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted) showed that removing any of the 3 questions from the tool would not increase the overall reliability of the scale.

Table 7. Reliability analysis for “Leadership effectiveness” scale

Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items
.844	3

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted
My leadership contributes to improved team performance.	7.9	2.5	.723	.782
I can effectively motivate my team.	7.7	2.8	.752	.742
I contribute to achieving organizational goals.	7.6	3.3	.681	.818

4.3. Descriptive statistics

The results of the descriptive analysis using mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) for the items regarding the leader-employee relationship are presented in Table 8. The findings show that a higher degree of agreement is recorded for the statements “My supervisor recognizes my potential” (M = 3.5, SD = 1.1) and “*My supervisor supports me when needed*” (M = 3.5, SD = 1.2), while a lower degree of agreement is recorded for the statement “*My supervisor provides feedback that helps me improve*” (M = 3.0, SD = 1.3).

Table 8. Descriptive statistics for “Leader-Employee Relationship” items

	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
My supervisor understands my problems and needs.	3.3	1.1
I have an effective working relationship with my supervisor.	3.4	1.1
My supervisor recognizes my potential.	3.5	1.1
My supervisor supports me when needed.	3.5	1.2
I can rely on my supervisor for important matters.	3.4	1.2
My supervisor provides feedback that helps me improve.	3.0	1.3
There is mutual trust in our cooperation.	3.4	1.2
I have significant autonomy in how I perform my work.	3.6	1.0

Table 9 presents the results of the descriptive analysis for the items regarding employee empowerment. The findings show that a higher degree of agreement is recorded for the statements “I am capable of handling difficult work situations” ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.7$), “*I can influence processes related to my team*” ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 0.9$) and “*I can contribute to improving my department’s functioning*” ($M = 3.7$, $SD = 1.0$), while a lower degree of agreement is recorded for the statements “*I can make decisions that affect my job*” ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 1.1$) and “*I have the freedom to choose how to complete my tasks*” ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 1.1$).

Table 9. Descriptive statistics for “Employee empowerment” items

	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
I have significant autonomy in how I perform my work.	3.6	1.0
I can make decisions that affect my job.	3.5	1.1
I am capable of handling difficult work situations.	4.2	.7
I can influence processes related to my team.	3.8	0.9
I have the freedom to choose how to complete my tasks.	3.5	1.1

I can contribute to improving my department's functioning.	3.7	1.0
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Table 10 presents the results of the descriptive analysis for the items regarding shared responsibility. The findings show that a higher degree of agreement is recorded for the statement “*There is a culture of collaboration in my department*” (M = 3.5, SD = 1.2), while a lower degree of agreement is recorded for the statement “*My supervisor encourages collective problem-solving*” (M = 3.1, SD = 1.2).

Table 10. Descriptive statistics for “Shared responsibility” items

	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Responsibility for decisions is shared within my team.	3.3	1.2
My supervisor encourages collective problem-solving.	3.1	1.2
There is a culture of collaboration in my department.	3.5	1.2

Table 11 presents the results of the descriptive analysis using mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) for the items regarding human resource management practices. The findings show that a higher degree of agreement is recorded for the statements “*Training opportunities support leadership development*” (M = 3.6, SD = 1.1) and “*Performance appraisal helps identify leadership potential*” (M = 3.5, SD = 1.0), while a lower degree of agreement is recorded for the statement “*Recruitment processes aim to attract candidates with leadership skills*” (M = 2.9, SD = 1.1).

Table 11. Descriptive statistics for “Human resource management practices” items

	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Training opportunities support leadership development.	3.6	1.1
Performance appraisal helps identify leadership potential.	3.5	1.0

Recruitment processes aim to attract candidates with leadership skills.	2.9	1.1
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Table 12 presents the results of the descriptive analysis for the items regarding New Public Governance principles. The findings show that a higher degree of agreement is recorded for the statement *“Transparency is a core principle in our operations”* ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 1.2$), while a lower degree of agreement is recorded for the statements *“Collaboration with other departments is encouraged”* ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 1.1$) and *“My organization promotes the creation of public value”* ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 1.2$).

Table 12. Descriptive statistics for “New Public Governance principles” items

	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Collaboration with other departments is encouraged.	3.3	1.1
My organization promotes the creation of public value.	3.3	1.2
Transparency is a core principle in our operations.	3.6	1.2

Table 13 presents the results of the descriptive analysis for the items regarding leadership effectiveness. The findings show that a higher degree of agreement is recorded for the statement *“I contribute to achieving organizational goals”* ($M = 4.0$, $SD = 0.8$), followed by the statements *“I can effectively motivate my team”* ($M = 3.9$, $SD = 0.9$) and *“My leadership contributes to improved team performance”* ($M = 3.7$, $SD = 1.0$).

Table 13. Descriptive statistics for “Leadership effectiveness” items

	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
My leadership contributes to improved team performance.	3.7	1.0
I can effectively motivate my team.	3.9	.9
I contribute to achieving organizational goals.	4.0	.8

Table 14 presents the descriptive statistics for the main research variables. The findings show that the highest mean is recorded for leadership effectiveness ($M = 3.9$, $SD = 0.8$), followed by employee empowerment ($M = 3.7$, $SD = 0.8$), leader-employee relationship ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.0$), NPG principles ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.0$), shared responsibility ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 1.0$) and HRM practices ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 0.9$). These findings indicate that employees report more positive perceptions of leadership effectiveness and empowerment, while shared responsibility and HRM practices are rated at a moderate level.

Table 14. Descriptive statistics for research variables

	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Leader-employee relationship	3.4	1.0
Employee empowerment	3.7	0.8
Shared responsibility	3.3	1.0
HRM practices	3.3	0.9
NPG principles	3.4	1.0
Leadership effectiveness	3.9	0.8

4.4. Comparisons regarding employees/ demographics

Comparisons were then performed to examine whether the main research variables differed according to employees' demographic and work-related characteristics. More specifically, differences were examined by gender, age group, education level, years of service in the public sector, years in a supervisory position and type of organization.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test regarding employees' gender are presented in Table 15 ($N = 160$; $N = 159$ for leadership effectiveness, due to one missing case). The findings showed that there was no statistically significant difference in any of the research variables according to gender ($p > .05$).

Table 15. Mann-Whitney U test results by gender

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Leader-employee relationship	Male	67	85.93	5757.00
	Female	93	76.59	7123.00
	Total	160		
Employee empowerment	Male	67	83.34	5583.50
	Female	93	78.46	7296.50
	Total	160		
Shared responsibility	Male	67	80.04	5363.00
	Female	93	80.83	7517.00
	Total	160		
HRM practices	Male	67	78.83	5281.50
	Female	93	81.70	7598.50
	Total	160		
NPG principles	Male	67	81.93	5489.00
	Female	93	79.47	7391.00
	Total	160		
Leadership effectiveness	Male	67	85.81	5749.00
	Female	92	75.77	6971.00
	Total	159		

Note. N = 160; N = 159 for leadership effectiveness, as one participant did not complete this scale.

	Mann-Whitney U	p
Leader-employee relationship	2752.0	.208
Employee empowerment	2925.5	.510
Shared responsibility	3085.0	.916
HRM practices	3003.5	.697
NPG principles	3020.0	.740
Leadership effectiveness	2693.0	.170

The Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to examine differences in the research variables across age groups. As shown in Table 16, no statistically significant differences were found in any of the research variables ($p > .05$).

Table 16. Kruskal Wallis H test results by age

	Age	N	Mean Rank
Leader-employee relationship	<39	16	90.63
	40-49	58	75.66
	50-59	75	82.13
	>60	11	80.23
	Total	160	
Employee empowerment	<39	16	91.00
	40-49	58	68.41
	50-59	75	84.72
	>60	11	100.23
	Total	160	
Shared responsibility	<39	16	84.97
	40-49	58	70.97
	50-59	75	85.78
	>60	11	88.27
	Total	160	
HRM practices	<39	16	62.66
	40-49	58	80.91
	50-59	75	85.19
	>60	11	72.27
	Total	160	
NPG principles	<39	16	73.41
	40-49	58	72.71
	50-59	75	86.07
	>60	11	93.95
	Total	160	
Leadership effectiveness	<39	16	83.22
	40-49	57	75.06
	50-59	75	80.83
	>60	11	95.23
	Total	159	
	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	p
Leader-employee relationship	1.5	3	.683
Employee empowerment	7.4	3	.059

Shared responsibility	3.9	3	.269
HRM practices	3.5	3	.316
NPG principles	4.1	3	.254
Leadership effectiveness	2.0	3	.572

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test by education level are presented in Table 17. The findings showed statistically significant differences in leader-employee relationship ($H = 13.2$, $p = .004$, $\varepsilon^2 = .083$), employee empowerment ($H = 10.3$, $p = .016$, $\varepsilon^2 = .065$), shared responsibility ($H = 12.3$, $p = .006$, $\varepsilon^2 = .077$) and NPG principles ($H = 11.2$, $p = .011$, $\varepsilon^2 = .070$). The accompanying effect sizes indicate that education level accounts for a small to moderate share of the variation in these variables.

The Kruskal-Wallis test is an omnibus test: it indicates that the distributions differ across the four education groups, but it does not identify which particular groups differ from one another. Pairwise post-hoc comparisons were therefore conducted using Dunn’s test with a Bonferroni adjustment. For leader-employee relationship, master’s degree holders (Mean Rank = 86.97) scored significantly higher than PhD holders (Mean Rank = 44.35), $p = .010$, and the same contrast was significant for NPG principles (84.91 versus 41.62), $p = .008$. For shared responsibility, the significant difference was recorded between employees with high school education (112.57) and PhD holders (52.69), $p = .033$. For employee empowerment, no pairwise comparison remained significant after adjustment, which indicates that the overall difference cannot be attributed to any single pair of groups. It should be noted that the high school group comprises only seven participants and the PhD group thirteen, so that mean ranks based on these subgroups are unstable and a single respondent can shift them substantially. The differences by education level are therefore reported as indicative rather than conclusive.

Table 17. Kruskal Wallis H test results by education level

	Education	N	Mean Rank
Leader-employee relationship	High school	7	98.29
	Bachelor’s degree	30	68.28
	Master’s degree	110	86.97

	PhD	13	44.35
	Total	160	
Employee empowerment	High school	7	95.57
	Bachelor's degree	30	66.87
	Master's degree	110	86.64
	PhD	13	51.88
	Total	160	
Shared responsibility	High school	7	112.57
	Bachelor's degree	30	66.35
	Master's degree	110	85.60
	PhD	13	52.69
	Total	160	
HRM practices	High school	7	91.36
	Bachelor's degree	30	72.10
	Master's degree	110	85.43
	PhD	13	52.35
	Total	160	
NPG principles	High school	7	96.00
	Bachelor's degree	30	77.57
	Master's degree	110	84.91
	PhD	13	41.62
	Total	160	
Leadership effectiveness	High school	7	88.43
	Bachelor's degree	30	69.92
	Master's degree	110	83.43
	PhD	12	68.83
	Total	159	

	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	p
Leader-employee relationship	13.2	3	.004
Employee empowerment	10.3	3	.016
Shared responsibility	12.3	3	.006
HRM practices	7.5	3	.057
NPG principles	11.2	3	.011
Leadership effectiveness	3.1	3	.384

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test by years of service in the public sector are presented in Table 18. The findings showed that there were no statistically significant differences in any of the research variables ($p > .05$).

Table 18. Kruskal Wallis H test results by total experience in public sectors

	Years of service in the public sector	N	Mean Rank
Leader-employee relationship	<5	21	73.02
	6-10	19	82.05
	11-15	10	86.80
	16-20	25	83.80
	>20	85	80.29
	Total	160	
Employee empowerment	<5	21	80.43
	6-10	19	65.29
	11-15	10	75.80
	16-20	25	74.04
	>20	85	86.37
	Total	160	
Shared responsibility	<5	21	69.21
	6-10	19	70.13
	11-15	10	74.35
	16-20	25	77.00
	>20	85	87.36
	Total	160	
HRM practices	<5	21	74.45
	6-10	19	65.29
	11-15	10	80.15
	16-20	25	73.16
	>20	85	87.59
	Total	160	
NPG principles	<5	21	77.71
	6-10	19	66.74
	11-15	10	66.10
	16-20	25	73.18
	>20	85	88.11

	Total	160	
Leadership effectiveness	<5	21	79.33
	6-10	19	72.82
	11-15	10	75.20
	16-20	24	78.88
	>20	85	82.65
	Total	159	

	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	p
Leader-employee relationship	.9	4	.927
Employee empowerment	4.0	4	.402
Shared responsibility	4.4	4	.351
HRM practices	5.1	4	.278
NPG principles	5.7	4	.223
Leadership effectiveness	.9	4	.926

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test by years in a supervisory position are presented in Table 19. The findings showed that there were no statistically significant differences in any of the research variables ($p > .05$).

Table 19. Kruskal Wallis H test results by total experience in supervisory position

	Years in a supervisory position	N	Mean Rank
Leader-employee relationship	<2	76	82.27
	3-5	22	79.93
	6-10	14	77.89
	>10	44	71.47
	Total	156	
Employee empowerment	<2	76	74.68
	3-5	22	85.50
	6-10	14	61.57
	>10	44	86.98
	Total	156	
Shared responsibility	<2	76	74.16
	3-5	22	77.64

	6-10	14	71.18
	>10	44	88.75
	Total	156	
HRM practices	<2	76	74.71
	3-5	22	99.80
	6-10	14	61.75
	>10	44	79.73
	Total	156	
NPG principles	<2	76	73.16
	3-5	22	85.73
	6-10	14	70.32
	>10	44	86.72
	Total	156	
Leadership effectiveness	<2	76	76.55
	3-5	22	81.61
	6-10	14	60.68
	>10	44	85.99
	Total	156	

	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	p
Leader-employee relationship	1.6	3	.653
Employee empowerment	4.6	3	.202
Shared responsibility	3.4	3	.337
HRM practices	7.5	3	.058
NPG principles	3.6	3	.311
Leadership effectiveness	3.7	3	.294

The final comparison was conducted according to type of organization. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test are presented in Table 20 and showed a statistically significant difference only in NPG principles ($H = 13.2$, $p = .010$, $\epsilon^2 = .084$). Inspection of the mean ranks indicates that employees working in ministries (105.69) and regions (100.78) recorded higher values than employees working in independent authorities (70.04) and in other types of organization (45.00). However, pairwise post-hoc comparisons with a Bonferroni adjustment did not identify any statistically significant difference between individual types of organization, which indicates that the overall effect cannot be attributed to a specific

contrast. This finding should therefore be treated with particular caution, especially because the ministry and the “other” categories contain only eight and six participants respectively, and because it is the single statistically significant difference among the comparisons reported in this section.

Table 20. Kruskal Wallis H test results by organization type

	Type of organization	N	Mean Rank
Leader-employee relationship	Municipality	79	78.32
	Independent Authority	41	73.10
	Ministry	8	102.19
	Region	25	95.06
	Other	6	56.92
	Total	159	
Employee empowerment	Municipality	79	83.29
	Independent Authority	41	72.21
	Ministry	8	75.75
	Region	25	88.16
	Other	6	61.58
	Total	159	
Shared responsibility	Municipality	79	81.11
	Independent Authority	41	70.83
	Ministry	8	93.50
	Region	25	91.40
	Other	6	62.50
	Total	159	
HRM practices	Municipality	79	82.76
	Independent Authority	41	68.21
	Ministry	8	83.69
	Region	25	93.54
	Other	6	62.92
	Total	159	
NPG principles	Municipality	79	78.65
	Independent Authority	41	70.04
	Ministry	8	105.69
	Region	25	100.78
	Other	6	45.00
	Total	159	

Leadership effectiveness	Municipality	79	80.32
	Independent Authority	41	73.26
	Ministry	8	99.19
	Region	24	81.60
	Other	6	76.67
	Total	158	

	Kruskal-		
	Wallis H	df	p
Leader-employee relationship	7.1	4	.131
Employee empowerment	3.4	4	.491
Shared responsibility	4.8	4	.307
HRM practices	6.1	4	.193
NPG principles	13.2	4	.010
Leadership effectiveness	2.4	4	.664

4.5. Hypothesis testing: correlation and regression analysis

The results of the correlations between the research variables based on the Spearman correlation coefficient are presented in Table 21 (N = 160; N = 159 for correlations involving leadership effectiveness). In more detail, the analysis revealed that leader-employee relationship was positively correlated with employee empowerment ($r = .532$, $p < .001$), shared responsibility ($r = .702$, $p < .001$), human resource management practices ($r = .407$, $p < .001$), NPG principles ($r = .578$, $p < .001$) and leadership effectiveness ($r = .430$, $p < .001$). Employee empowerment was also positively correlated with shared responsibility ($r = .642$, $p < .001$), human resource management practices ($r = .426$, $p < .001$), NPG principles ($r = .573$, $p < .001$) and leadership effectiveness ($r = .679$, $p < .001$). At the same time, shared responsibility was positively correlated with human resource management practices ($r = .460$, $p < .001$), NPG principles ($r = .643$, $p < .001$) and leadership effectiveness ($r = .541$, $p < .001$). Human resource management practices were positively correlated with NPG principles ($r = .658$, $p < .001$) and leadership effectiveness ($r = .505$, p

< .001), while NPG principles were positively correlated with leadership effectiveness ($r = .608$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that more positive perceptions of the leader-employee relationship are associated with higher levels of employee empowerment, shared responsibility, human resource management practices, NPG principles and leadership effectiveness. Similarly, higher leadership effectiveness is associated with higher levels of employee empowerment, shared responsibility, human resource management practices and NPG principles.

Table 21. Spearman correlation coefficient between research variables

		Leader- employee relationship	Employee empowerment	Shared responsibility	HRM practices	NPG principles	Leadership effectiveness
Leader-employee relationship	r	--					
	p	.					
	N	160					
Employee empowerment	r	.532**	--				
	p	<.001	.				
	N	160	160				
Shared responsibility	r	.702**	.642**	--			
	p	<.001	<.001	.			
	N	160	160	160			
HRM practices	r	.407**	.426**	.460**	--		
	p	<.001	<.001	<.001	.		
	N	160	160	160	160		
NPG principles	r	.578**	.573**	.643**	.658**	--	
	p	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.	
	N	160	160	160	160	160	
Leadership effectiveness	r	.430**	.679**	.541**	.505**	.608**	--
	p	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.
	N	159	159	159	159	159	159

Note. Pairwise deletion was applied. N = 159 for all correlations involving leadership effectiveness. ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 22 presents the results of the linear regression analysis with the leader-employee relationship as the independent variable and leadership effectiveness as the dependent variable. The analysis showed that the model is statistically significant ($F(1, 157) = 34.067$, $p < .001$, $N = 159$) and explains 17.8% of the variance in leadership effectiveness ($R^2 = .178$). The analysis further showed that the leader-employee relationship is a significant predictor of leadership effectiveness ($b = .327$, $t = 5.837$, $p < .001$). This finding

indicates that a higher-quality leader-employee relationship is associated with a higher level of self-perceived leadership effectiveness.

Table 22. Regression analysis with leader-employee relationship as independent variable and leadership effectiveness as dependent variable

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.422 ^a	.178	.173	.73497

a. Predictors: (Constant), Leader-employee relationship

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
1	Regression	18.403	1	18.403	34.067	<.001 ^b
	Residual	84.809	157	.540		
	Total	103.212	158			

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership effectiveness

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leader-employee relationship

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.754	.198		13.943	<.001
	Leader-employee relationship	.327	.056	.422	5.837	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership effectiveness

Table 23 presents the results of the linear regression analysis with leadership effectiveness as the independent variable and employee empowerment as the dependent variable. The analysis showed that the model is statistically significant ($F(1, 157) = 133.870$, $p < .001$, $N = 159$) and explains 46.0% of the variance in employee empowerment ($R^2 = .460$). The analysis further showed that leadership effectiveness is a significant predictor of employee empowerment ($b = .647$, $t = 11.570$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that a higher level of self-perceived leadership effectiveness is associated with a higher level of employee empowerment.

Table 23. Regression analysis with leadership effectiveness as independent variable and employee empowerment as dependent variable

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.678 ^a	.460	.457	.56785

a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership effectiveness

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
1	Regression	43.167	1	43.167	133.870	<.001 ^b
	Residual	50.625	157	.322		
	Total	93.792	158			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee empowerment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership effectiveness

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.250	.220		5.679	<.001
	Leadership effectiveness	.647	.056	.678	11.570	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Employee empowerment

Table 24 presents the results of the linear regression analysis with leadership effectiveness as the independent variable and shared responsibility as the dependent variable. The analysis showed that the model is statistically significant ($F(1, 157) = 73.002$, $p < .001$, $N = 159$) and explains 31.7% of the variance in shared responsibility ($R^2 = .317$). The analysis further showed that leadership effectiveness is a significant predictor of shared responsibility ($b = .705$, $t = 8.544$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that a higher level of self-perceived leadership effectiveness is associated with a higher level of shared responsibility.

Table 24. Regression analysis with leadership effectiveness as independent variable and shared responsibility as dependent variable

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
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1	.563 ^a	.317	.313	.83842
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a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership effectiveness

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
1	Regression	51.316	1	51.316	73.002	<.001 ^b
	Residual	110.362	157	.703		
	Total	161.678	158			

a. Dependent Variable: Shared responsibility

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership effectiveness

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.585	.325		1.799	.074
	Leadership effectiveness	.705	.083	.563	8.544	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Shared responsibility

Table 25 presents the results of the linear regression analysis with leadership effectiveness as the independent variable and human resource management practices as the dependent variable. The analysis showed that the model is statistically significant ($F(1, 157) = 48.596$, $p < .001$, $N = 159$) and explains 23.6% of the variance in human resource management practices ($R^2 = .236$). The analysis further showed that leadership effectiveness is a significant predictor of human resource management practices ($b = .564$, $t = 6.971$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that a higher level of self-perceived leadership effectiveness is associated with a higher level of human resource management practices.

Table 25. Regression analysis with leadership effectiveness as independent variable and HRM practices as dependent variable

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.486 ^a	.236	.232	.82205

a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership effectiveness

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
1	Regression	32.839	1	32.839	48.596	<.001 ^b
	Residual	106.096	157	.676		
	Total	138.935	158			

a. Dependent Variable: HRM practices

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership effectiveness

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.179	.319		3.699	<.001
	Leadership effectiveness	.564	.081	.486	6.971	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: HRM practices

Table 26 presents the results of the linear regression analysis with leadership effectiveness as the independent variable and NPG principles as the dependent variable. The analysis showed that the model is statistically significant ($F(1, 157) = 88.571, p < .001, N = 159$) and explains 36.1% of the variance in NPG principles ($R^2 = .361$). The analysis further showed that leadership effectiveness is a significant predictor of NPG principles ($b = .755, t = 9.411, p < .001$). This finding indicates that a higher level of self-perceived leadership effectiveness is associated with a higher level of NPG principles.

Table 26. Regression analysis with leadership effectiveness as independent variable and NPG principles as dependent variable

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.601 ^a	.361	.357	.81547

a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership effectiveness

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
1	Regression	58.899	1	58.899	88.571	<.001 ^b
	Residual	104.403	157	.665		
	Total	163.302	158			

a. Dependent Variable: NPG principles

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership effectiveness

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.494	.316		1.562	.120
Leadership effectiveness	.755	.080	.601	9.411	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: NPG principles

5. Conclusions

5.1. Results discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the role of leadership in the public sector, with an emphasis on the leader-employee relationship, leadership effectiveness, human resource management practices, shared responsibility, employee empowerment and the principles of New Public Governance. The choice of the topic was based on the importance that leadership has today for public organizations (Bryson et al., 2014; Christensen & Læg Reid, 2022), and on the fact that the demand for efficiency, accountability and better use of human resources has made leadership a central administrative challenge for public organizations (Aravidou et al., 2025a; Backhaus & Vogel, 2022).

The first research hypothesis, according to which the quality of the leader-employee relationship is positively related to self-perceived leadership effectiveness, was supported. Regression analysis showed that the leader-employee relationship is a statistically significant predictor of leadership effectiveness. This finding is consistent with the Leader-Member Exchange theory, according to which leadership is not exercised in the same way towards all employees, but is shaped through the relationship that develops between the leader and each employee (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The literature supports that quality leader-employee relationships are based on trust, respect, support, and mutual commitment, elements that can enhance employees' perception of effective leadership (Bauwens et al., 2019; Young et al., 2021). Therefore, the result of this research shows that the quality of the daily relationship between the leader and employees in the public sector is an important factor for the effectiveness of leadership in the public sector.

The second research hypothesis, according to which self-perceived leadership effectiveness is positively related to HRM practices associated with leadership development and leadership potential, was also supported. This result shows that the higher the effectiveness of leadership is evaluated, the more positively the practices related to training, performance evaluation and recognition of leadership skills are evaluated. This finding is compatible with the literature, according to which human resource management is a key mechanism through which public organizations develop the skills of their employees and enhance their performance (Jiang et al., 2012). In the public sector, this connection is of

particular importance, as effective management depends not only on institutional changes, but also on the ability of organizations to develop their human resources and identify people with leadership potential.

The third research hypothesis, according to which self-perceived leadership effectiveness is positively related to shared responsibility, was supported. This finding shows that effective leadership is related to the creation of shared responsibility in public organizations. In other words, when leadership is perceived as effective, employees are more likely to perceive that responsibility for various decisions and problem solving is not limited to the supervisor, but is something that concerns all employees. This finding is linked to the logic of modern public administration, where cooperation, participation and collective problem solving are essential conditions for the better functioning of public organizations (Crosby & Bryson, 2018; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Therefore, effective leadership can act as a factor that enhances collective responsibility and limits exclusive reliance on hierarchical decision-making.

The fourth research hypothesis, that self-perceived leadership effectiveness is positively related to employee empowerment, was supported. This result is consistent with the empowerment literature, which suggests that employees feel more empowered when they have autonomy and initiative (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). At the same time, the literature shows that leadership is directly linked to empowerment, as leaders who provide clear direction, trust, support, and opportunities to participate in decision-making create more favorable conditions for enhancing employee autonomy and responsibility (Kim et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2018; Schermuly et al., 2022). Therefore, the finding of this research confirms that effective leadership in the public sector is not limited to guidance and control, but is also linked to the enhancement of the active participation of employees.

The fifth research hypothesis, according to which self-perceived leadership effectiveness is positively related to New Public Governance principles, was also supported. Leadership effectiveness was found to be a positive predictor of NPG principles as captured through cross-departmental collaboration, public value creation, and transparency. This finding is in line with the New Public Governance literature, which emphasizes collaboration across organizational boundaries, the co-creation of public value and transparency in the operation of public organizations (Bryson et al., 2014; Osborne, 2006). At the same time, linking

leadership to public value and collaboration is compatible with the contemporary public governance debate, according to which public organizations need to operate with greater coordination, accountability, and public interest orientation (Bryson et al., 2014; Crosby & Bryson, 2018).

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that all research hypotheses were supported. The quality of the leader-employee relationship is positively associated with self-perceived leadership effectiveness, which in turn is positively associated with human resource management practices, shared responsibility, employee empowerment, and New Public Governance principles. The direction of these relationships cannot be established from the present data. These results confirm research that reports that leadership is an important factor for the functioning of public organizations, human resource development, collaboration, empowerment, and improvement of public administration (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022; Kellis & Ran, 2015; Vogel et al., 2020).

5.2. Limitations

Like any empirical study, this paper has certain limitations. The first limitation is that the research was based on a quantitative approach and a structured questionnaire. This method allowed for the statistical investigation of the relationships between the variables, but did not allow for an in-depth recording of the personal experiences of public sector employees. The second limitation concerns the sample. The sample included public sector employees, however, it cannot be considered fully representative of all public sector employees in Greece. This specific limitation is related to the type of sampling used in the research (convenience sampling). Therefore, the results must be interpreted with caution and cannot be generalized without reservation to all public organizations in Greece. The third limitation is that the data were based on the perceptions of the participants themselves. This means that the responses reflect the subjective perception of employees and the results were not based on objective indicators of performance or administrative effectiveness. Despite this limitation, employee perceptions are of particular importance, as leadership, trust, empowerment and shared responsibility are perceived mainly through daily work experience. A fourth limitation concerns the research design. The study is cross-sectional and all variables were measured at a single point in time from a single source, namely the

employees themselves. The findings should therefore be read as associations rather than as evidence of causal effects, and the possibility of reverse or reciprocal relationships cannot be excluded; employees who already experience high levels of empowerment may, for instance, evaluate leadership more favorably in the first place. Moreover, because the predictor and the outcome variables were collected with the same instrument and from the same respondents, the observed relationships may be inflated by common method bias. A fifth limitation concerns the measurement of leadership effectiveness. The relevant items are worded in the first person and therefore record the respondent's assessment of his or her own leadership rather than an independent evaluation of the supervisor. Since almost half of the participants reported fewer than two years of experience in a supervisory position, the interpretation of this variable requires caution, and future studies would benefit from collecting supervisor ratings or objective performance indicators alongside self-reports. A sixth limitation concerns the empowerment scale used in this study, which captured three of the four dimensions of psychological empowerment proposed by Spreitzer (1995) — competence, self-determination and impact — while the dimension of meaning was not measured. A final limitation concerns the subgroup comparisons reported in section 4.4. Six research variables were tested across six demographic and work-related characteristics without adjustment for multiple comparisons, and several of the resulting subgroups were very small. Some of the differences identified may therefore reflect chance, and these comparisons should be regarded as exploratory rather than confirmatory.

5.3. Future Research Proposal

Future research could extend the present study to a larger and more representative sample of public sector employees in Greece. Future studies could include different categories of public organizations, such as ministries, municipalities, regions, independent authorities and service providers, in order to examine whether the relationships between leadership, empowerment, shared responsibility and NPG principles differ depending on the type of organization. Also, a mixed-method study could be applied in a future study, combining quantitative and qualitative research. In this way, the experiences of employees and supervisors regarding the leader-employee relationship, leadership effectiveness and the implementation of empowerment practices could be captured more analytically. The need

for further investigation is important because, as noted in the literature, leadership in the specific context of the Greek public sector has not been sufficiently investigated using quantitative methods.

Finally, it is proposed to investigate the impact of leadership in public organizations and other variables, such as organizational culture, work commitment, job satisfaction and resistance to change. These variables could help to better understand how leadership affects the functioning of public organizations and their ability to respond to modern administrative requirements.

5.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis confirmed that leadership is a key factor for the functioning of public organizations in Greece. All research hypotheses were supported, as the quality of the leader-employee relationship was found to be positively associated with self-perceived leadership effectiveness, which was in turn positively associated with human resource management practices, shared responsibility, employee empowerment and the principles of New Public Governance. The findings show that effective leadership in the public sector in Greece should not be limited to the exercise of administrative control or the observance of procedures. On the contrary, it should be linked to the quality of the relationship between the supervisor and the employee, to the support of employees, to the strengthening of their autonomy, to the collective assumption of responsibility and to the formation of a more collaborative and transparent public organization. Based on the above, this thesis confirms the importance of leadership as a critical factor for improving public administration and enhancing the effectiveness of public organizations.

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