

Balancing Leadership Styles for Sustainable Public Sector Efficiency

Ionuț RIZA ✉ ✉

Faculty of Law, Economics and Administrative Sciences, Craiova
Spiru Haret University, Romania
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6977-7729>

Anca Mădălina BOGDAN ✉ ✉

Faculty of Law, Economics and Administrative Sciences, Craiova
Spiru Haret University, Romania
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2019-5960>

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Abstract

The study analyses the influence of various leadership styles - autocratic, transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire - on the efficiency and sustainability of public institutions. By applying the Spearman correlation coefficient, the research identified significant interrelationships among these leadership styles. The results showed that transactional and transformational styles are closely correlated, suggesting a synergy in promoting efficiency while uphold human rights principles. In contrast, the autocratic style is negatively correlated with the other styles, underscoring its limitations in fostering participatory and adaptive governance. Interestingly, laissez-faire leadership is positively linked to both transformational and transactional styles, emphasising the importance of autonomy in cultivating innovative and resilient organisational environments. The findings highlight that achieving a balance between diverse leadership approaches is essential for driving sustainable development within the public sector. This research provides actionable insights for public sector leaders, emphasising the role of adaptability, integrity, and collaborative leadership in advancing organisational performance and fostering sustainable institutional growth.

Keywords: leadership, public institution, autocratic, laissez faire, transactional, transformational.

JEL Classification: M12

Introduction

Leadership is a dynamic and complicated process in which a person or group exerts influence on other people or organisations in order to achieve common goals. This influence is not limited to the application of strategies or the accomplishment of tasks; it is also manifested through the ability to instil passion, enthusiasm, and consistency in the team. An effective leader builds his actions on a clear and inspiring vision, an essential element in the process of transforming organisational culture. Leadership style is not static, but one that is continuously developing and refining. True leadership mastery involves the flexibility to adopt various approaches, adapted to the specific objectives and the context in which the leader and his team operate. The defining elements of a leader's style are deeply influenced by his unique personality and the experiences accumulated over time. An effective leader understands that leadership is more than simply managing tasks or resources; it is, in fact, a complex art of motivating and leading people towards the achievement of a common goal. It requires a combination of emotional intelligence, communication skills, a deep understanding of human dynamics, and a clear vision of where the organisation needs to go. Therefore, effective leadership is a continuous process of learning, adaptation, and innovation that has the power to change not only the immediate goals, but also the culture and long-term direction of an organisation.

A capable leader continuously develops his leadership skills, being attentive to feedback, learning from the experiences of others and adjusting his style to best suit the needs of the team and the goals of the organisation. This holistic approach to leadership not only improves team performance, but also contributes to the personal and professional development of the leader. Leadership styles and the role of contemporary leaders represent an evolutionary synthesis, combining traditional elements of leadership with new approaches, adapted to changes in society and the continuous evolution of mentalities. Today's leaders are called to be versatile, able to take on and integrate the positive aspects of various leadership styles to achieve the established goals. Classic leadership styles, such as autocratic, democratic or transformational, provide a solid foundation and basic principles that modern leaders can adapt and refine. This adaptability is important in the context of rapid change and diversity in the contemporary world, where leaders must navigate complex challenges and respond to the needs of a multigenerational and multicultural workforce. A key point to remember is that a leader's success depends largely on his or her authenticity and integrity. A leader's performance is truly effective only when it is authentic and when his or her leadership attitude is recognized and respected by subordinates. This means that an effective leader must not only be competent and capable of achieving goals, but also inspirational and endowed with high emotional intelligence, so as to gain the trust and loyalty of his or her team.

In conclusion, contemporary leadership is a dynamic blend of tradition and innovation, where leaders must be adaptable, empathetic, and authentic to lead effectively in a constantly changing world. Authenticity and recognition from the team are key to ensuring not only organisational success, but also the sustainable and positive development of organisational culture.

1. Literature Review

Leadership style is the set of methods and approaches used by a leader to provide direction, develop strategies, implement plans, and motivate, direct, and mentor the people they lead. Regardless of the field, leadership style is a key element that influences the effectiveness and success of a team or organisation (Brooks, 2006). The differences between leadership styles are significant and manifest in the way leaders make decisions, communicate, interact with the team, and respond to challenges. The first significant study in the field of leadership styles was conducted in 1939 by Kurt Lewin, a German-American psychologist renowned for his contributions to the field of social psychology, together with Ronald O. Lippitt and Ralph K. White. This study marked an important moment in the understanding and analysis of leadership styles (Chahuara, 2014).

Kurt Lewin, often considered the *father of modern social psychology*, collaborated with Ronald O. Lippitt, a pioneer in applying social science to improve people's lives, and Ralph K. White, recognized for his contributions to the field of peace psychology (Dumdum et al., 2002). Their study was one of the first to attempt to classify and define different leadership styles, and it had a significant impact on the way leadership is understood and studied. The study by Kurt Lewin, Ronald O. Lippitt, and Ralph K. White was a landmark in leadership style research, establishing the foundations for understanding and classifying these styles. Their significant contribution was to identify and describe three main leadership styles: authoritarian (autocratic), participative (democratic), and delegative (*laissez-faire*), each with distinct characteristics and a unique impact on the groups they led (Kissinger, 2022).

These researchers analysed the advantages and disadvantages of each leadership style, emphasising that the essential differences between them are influenced by a number of factors, including (Bass, 2008).

Personality traits of leaders

They observed that leadership style is closely related to the personality traits of the leader, such as individualism, charisma, opportunism, and diplomacy. These personal characteristics are reflected in the way leaders interact with their team and in their approach to decision-making. For example, a leader with strong *charisma* often inspires and motivates their team through their vision and persuasive communication. Such leaders are likely to foster a culture of enthusiasm and commitment, which can be particularly valuable in driving innovation and change. However, over-reliance on charisma may sometimes overshadow practical planning or lead to an over-centralization of decision-making. *Individualistic leaders*, on the other hand, tend to rely heavily on their personal judgment and prefer autonomy in their decision-making. This trait can lead to bold and innovative solutions but might also result in challenges when collaboration or consensus is required. It can influence the dynamics within a team, as such leaders may prioritize personal goals over collective objectives (Rehman et al., 2019). *Opportunistic leaders* demonstrate a knack for identifying and leveraging opportunities in dynamic or uncertain environments. Their proactive and adaptable nature often benefits organizations facing competitive or volatile market conditions. However, opportunism may sometimes be perceived negatively if it leads to inconsistent strategies or decisions that prioritize short-term gains over long-term stability (Udin, 2024).

Diplomatic leaders excel in managing relationships and navigating complex interpersonal dynamics. Their ability to mediate conflicts, build alliances, and maintain harmony makes them particularly effective in multicultural or cross-functional teams. This style fosters inclusivity and collaboration, but it may also delay critical decisions if a leader prioritizes consensus over urgency. The interplay of these personality traits also impacts how leaders respond to challenges. For instance, in times of crisis, a charismatic leader may rally their team with confidence, while a diplomatic leader may focus on maintaining team cohesion. Meanwhile, an individualistic leader might take decisive, independent action, and an opportunistic leader may swiftly pivot strategies to mitigate risks (Ghanizadeh et al., 2023). Ultimately, the effectiveness of a leader's personality traits depends on their ability to adapt their style to the specific needs of their organization and the context in which they operate. Leadership development programs increasingly emphasize the importance of self-awareness and emotional intelligence, helping leaders leverage their personality traits while mitigating potential drawbacks. These personality traits not only influence leadership outcomes but also shape organizational culture. Leaders who value inclusivity and open communication, for instance, are likely to foster environments that encourage creativity and employee engagement (Araya-Orellana, 2022). Conversely, traits like excessive opportunism or individualism might create competitive or hierarchical atmospheres that could hinder collaboration.

Professional experience

The experience gained by leaders in their careers also influences their leadership style. Leaders with extensive experience may tend to adopt more nuanced and balanced approaches, while leaders with less experience may be more rigid in their approach.

Experienced leaders often bring a wealth of insights derived from diverse challenges, industries, and team dynamics they have encountered over the years. This exposure enables them to navigate complex situations with confidence and foresight. For example, a seasoned leader may be adept at weighing multiple perspectives and anticipating potential outcomes, allowing them to make decisions that are both strategic and pragmatic. Their experience often translates into a transformational leadership style, where they inspire and mentor others by sharing lessons learned and fostering a vision that motivates the team to achieve long-term goals. In contrast, leaders with less experience may lean toward more transactional leadership styles, focusing on clear instructions, established rules, and structured feedback (Vyttas & Xanthopoulou, 2024). While this can bring efficiency and predictability, particularly in well-defined tasks or stable environments, it may also limit their ability to adapt to unexpected challenges or foster innovation within their teams. Their rigidity may stem from a reliance on theoretical knowledge or fear of deviating from proven methods, as they may lack the confidence that comes with years of trial and error.

Emotional intelligence

Leaders' ability to recognize and manage their own and others' emotions is another crucial factor that influences leadership style. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are often more effective at managing teams, motivating and inspiring them, and navigating complex or stressful situations. Self-awareness allows leaders to understand their emotions, strengths, and weaknesses, ensuring that they approach situations with authenticity and

humility, which fosters trust among team members. Self-regulation enables leaders to control their impulses and remain calm under pressure, allowing for rational and balanced decision-making during conflicts or crises. Motivation, driven by passion and purpose rather than external rewards, helps leaders inspire their teams and create a positive work environment. Empathy allows leaders to understand and consider others' emotions and perspectives, which helps in building strong relationships and creating an inclusive and supportive atmosphere. Strong social skills enable leaders to communicate effectively, influence others, and foster collaboration, which are critical for achieving organizational goals (Burke, 2010).

Their study paved the way for further research in the field of leadership, allowing for a deeper understanding of the impact that different leadership styles have on organisational effectiveness (House & Javidan, 2004). Over time, other researchers have added other leadership styles, but the basic principles established by Lewin, Lippitt, and White have remained fundamental to the study and practice of leadership (Hannah & Gardner, 2005). Kurt Lewin, a German-born psychologist (1890 - 1947), is often recognized as one of the pioneers of social psychology. His contributions to the field were fundamental and had an important impact on how we understand human behaviour and group dynamics.

One of the most important theories proposed by Lewin is that the basic features of human behaviour should be understood and accepted as part of the totality of the contexts and events in which an individual was involved (Hill & Alexander, 2000). This holistic approach changed the way psychologists view individual behaviour, emphasising the importance of the social environment and interactions in shaping it. Lewin also made an essential contribution to the study of group dynamics and how groups influence the individual behaviour of their members. Through his research, he showed how groups can have a strong impact on individual attitudes and behaviours, paving the way for further research in the field of group dynamics and psychology (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

In addition, Lewin is known for defining leadership styles - authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire - and for exploring the effects of these styles on groups and individuals (Achor, 2010). This work was a pioneer in the study of leadership and contributed significantly to the subsequent development of theories and practices in the field. Overall, Kurt Lewin's work had a profound impact on social psychology and remains an important reference for researchers and practitioners to this day. Through his works, Lewin laid the foundation for a deeper understanding of human nature and social interactions, a foundation on which many contemporary theories and practices in psychology and management have been built (Keller, 2019). Leadership can be described as a practical ability of a person or group to *lead*, influence or guide other people, teams or organisations (Chahuara, 2014).

Essentially, leadership is not about titles, positions in the hierarchy, age or seniority, and it is not even guaranteed by academic achievements or the presence of personal charisma. Thus, leadership transcends these superficial aspects, focusing more on the ability to mobilize and inspire people in achieving common goals. An important distinction must be made between leadership and management. While leaders are focused on leading people, managers are involved in managing processes, resources and tasks. However, an effective leader can also possess management skills, and a manager can develop leadership qualities. These two roles, although different, are complementary in many organisations.

There are different approaches to leadership within different leadership styles. Each style has its advantages and disadvantages and may be more suitable in certain situations or contexts. Awareness and understanding of these styles can significantly improve interpersonal relationships and leadership effectiveness. For example, recognizing a leader's typology in a colleague or subordinate can help develop more effective collaboration and communication strategies (Horton & Farnham, 2007).

The observation that historical and contemporary leaders such as Winston Churchill, Angela Merkel, Queen Elizabeth I, and Martin Luther King approached leadership in different ways, but also had common aspects in their styles, is very pertinent. This highlights the diversity and complexity of leadership and suggests that there is no universally applicable "perfect style." The leaders mentioned had different personalities, contexts, and challenges, but each managed to influence and lead in significant ways. This highlights several essential truths about the nature of leadership (Keller, 2019):

- Combination of styles: rarely does a leader adopt a single leadership style in all situations. Leaders usually combine aspects of multiple styles, adapting to the specific needs of the situation or the group they are leading.
- Personality influence: a leader's personal traits and personality significantly influence their approach. Charisma, resilience, emotional intelligence, and other personality traits are key factors in how a leader connects with and mobilizes people.
- Group needs and situational context: effective leadership requires a deep understanding of the needs and expectations of those being led, as well as an appreciation of the context and circumstances. The specific situation, whether it is a crisis, a period of change, or development, requires different approaches.
- Purpose and objectives: a leader's vision and objectives guide the way they lead. Whether it is a long-term goal, such as social or political change, or more immediate goals, such as managing a crisis, leadership style must be aligned with these goals.

Leadership is a dynamic and adaptive process, influenced by a multitude of factors. Understanding that there is no single *right way* to lead, but rather a range of approaches that can be adapted to suit the situation, personality and goals, is essential to developing an effective and authentic leadership style (Keller, 2019). In conclusion, leadership is a complex quality, involving the ability to guide, influence and inspire people in a way that goes beyond simply administering or managing tasks. It is more about creating a vision, motivating people to work together to achieve that vision and developing a culture that supports innovation and growth.

2. Research Methodology

The sample chosen for the study included a total of 212 individuals who held leadership positions within various public institutions in Dolj County, Romania. The data collection process took place between February and May 2024. In order to gather the necessary information, the electronic questionnaire method was used, using for this purpose the Google Forms application, an efficient digital tool for surveys and questionnaires. This method allowed for a quick and structured collection of responses, facilitating data analysis and ensuring comprehensive coverage of the target group within the study. The use of Google Forms, due to its accessibility and ease of use, significantly contributed to the efficiency of the data collection process and the quality of the information obtained.

The main aim of the aforementioned study was to determine which of the four leadership styles: *autocratic*, *transactional*, *transformational* and *laissez-faire*, exerts the greatest impact on public institutions, particularly in terms of respecting and promoting human rights. This research aimed to explore how different leadership approaches influence efficiency and ethics within public institutions, focusing on how each leadership style can affect the respect for fundamental human rights. By identifying the leadership style that best aligns with human rights principles, the study aimed to provide valuable insight for improving leadership practices in the public sector.

Autocratic leadership is a leadership style characterized by the centralization of power and decisions in the hands of a single person or a small group of people. In this context, the autocratic leader makes decisions without consultation or participation of other members of the organisation or citizens. This leadership style can have significant implications for human rights, depending on how it is practiced. Autocratic leaders often prioritize efficiency, control, and rapid decision-making. In certain scenarios, such as crisis management or environments requiring strong direction, this style can be beneficial. For example, during emergencies, an autocratic leader's decisive action can provide clarity and focus, potentially averting disaster. However, the absence of broader input can also lead to decisions that do not fully account for diverse perspectives or long-term consequences, increasing the risk of missteps or unintended harm (Safdar & Khan, 2023).

Transactional leadership refers to a leadership style based on the exchange of rewards and penalties to motivate employees. This leadership style focuses on performance and compliance with established rules and standards, offering rewards for achievements and applying penalties for non-compliance with standards. The essence of transactional leadership lies in its structured and goal-oriented approach. Leaders operating in this style establish clear expectations, define specific tasks, and set measurable goals for their team members. Employees are motivated to meet these expectations through a system of contingent rewards, such as bonuses, promotions, or recognition, and are discouraged from deviating through the application of penalties, such as reprimands or demotions. This leadership style is particularly effective in environments where routine tasks and well-defined processes are predominant. For instance, transactional leadership is often employed in industries such as manufacturing, logistics, and retail, where adherence to operational standards and efficiency is critical. By focusing on compliance and performance, transactional leaders help maintain consistency and ensure that organizational objectives are met (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Transformational leadership refers to a leadership style that focuses on inspiring and motivating employees to exceed standard expectations and achieve a higher level of performance and commitment. Transformational leaders inspire their team members by articulating a compelling vision that aligns with the organization's goals and values. They motivate employees to look beyond their immediate tasks and consider the broader impact of their work, fostering a sense of purpose and shared mission. By doing so, transformational leaders not only drive higher performance but also cultivate a strong sense of loyalty and engagement within their teams (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

A defining characteristic of transformational leadership is the ability to challenge the status quo and encourage innovation. These leaders foster an environment where creativity and critical thinking are valued, enabling team members to explore new ideas and take calculated risks. This approach is particularly effective in dynamic and competitive industries where adaptability and forward-thinking are essential for success (Eagly et al., 2003).

Laissez-faire leadership refers to a leadership style characterized by providing employees with a high degree of autonomy and freedom in making decisions and carrying out their tasks. Laissez-faire leadership is a powerful style that can drive creativity, innovation, and employee empowerment in the right context. By fostering autonomy and trust, it allows skilled professionals to excel and contribute to organizational success. However, it requires careful implementation and ongoing support to mitigate potential challenges such as confusion, inefficiency, or leader disengagement. When executed effectively, laissez-faire leadership can cultivate a highly motivated and innovative workforce capable of achieving exceptional results (Howell & Avolio, 1993).

The analysis of the impact of these leadership styles on the effectiveness of public institutions must consider how each style affects the institutions' capacity to respect, protect and promote human rights. A balance between efficiency and respect for fundamental rights is essential to ensure that public institutions not only achieve their objectives, but also contribute to the good of society as a whole.

To investigate the possible mutual influences between the different leadership styles - autocratic, transformational, transactional and laissez-faire - we used the statistical software SPSS, specifically applying the Spearman correlation coefficient. This methodology allowed us to examine in detail the relationships between these leadership styles, providing us with a deeper understanding of how they can influence each other in an organisational environment. The Spearman correlation coefficient (ρ) is an effective tool to measure the degree of association between variables, in this case, different leadership styles, allowing us to identify significant links and trends within our data. Through rigorous statistical analysis, we were able to determine whether there are significant correlations between these styles and, if so, the nature of these correlations, thus contributing to a broader understanding of the dynamics of leadership in public institutions (Table 1).

Table 1: Mutual influences between different leadership styles

Spearman coefficient		Autocratic leadership	Laissez-faire leadership	Transactional leadership	Transformational leadership
Autocratic leadership	Spearman correlation coefficient (ρ)	1	-.468**	-.389**	-.434**
	Sig. (2)		.000	.000	.000
	N	212	212	212	212
Laissez-faire leadership	Spearman correlation coefficient (ρ)	-.468**	1	.793**	.879**
	Sig. (2)	.000		.000	.000
	N	212	212	212	212
Transactional leadership	Spearman correlation coefficient (ρ)	-.389**	.793**	1	.910**

Spearman coefficient		Autocratic leadership	Laissez-faire leadership	Transactional leadership	Transformational leadership
	Sig. (2)	.000	.000		.000
	N	212	212	212	212
Transformational leadership	Spearman correlation coefficient (rho)	-.434**	.879**	.910**	1
	Sig. (2)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	212	212	212	212

Source: developed by authors

3. Results and Discussion

Spearman's coefficient analysis, detailed in Table 1, provides an interesting insight into the dynamics between different leadership styles within public institutions. The results indicate that the autocratic leadership style has a unique and negative influence on the other leadership styles. This finding suggests that there is an inversely proportional trend between autocratic leadership and the other styles:

- Autocratic - laissez-faire leadership (rho = -0.468): moderate negative correlation. This result indicates that as the autocratic style predominates, the likelihood of adopting a laissez-faire style decreases and vice versa.
- Autocratic - transactional leadership (rho = -0.389): weak to moderate negative correlation. As the level of autocratic leadership increases, the transactional style is less likely to be used.
- Autocratic - transformational leadership (rho = -0.434): moderate negative correlation. Autocratic and transformational leadership tend to be mutually exclusive.

Specifically, as autocratic leadership characteristics become more pronounced in an institution, the tendencies associated with transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire styles appear to decrease. A possible explanation for this phenomenon could be that the centralized nature and strict control of the autocratic leader limits the space for more flexible and participative approaches, such as transformational or laissez-faire. In an environment dominated by autocratic leadership, where decisions are made unilaterally and communication is one-way, there may not be sufficient opportunities for personal initiative or innovation, key aspects in transformational and laissez-faire leadership:

- Laissez-faire - autocratic leadership (rho = -0.468): the correlation is explained above, being moderately negative.
- Laissez-faire - transactional leadership (rho = 0.793): strong positive correlation. This suggests a tendency for laissez-faire and transactional styles to coexist to some extent.
- Laissez-faire - transformational Leadership (rho = 0.879): very strong positive correlation. This indicates that individuals who exhibit laissez-faire tendencies are generally more open to transformational styles.

Also, with regard to transactional leadership, which is based on a clear trade-off between employee performance and rewards, an autocratic style can reduce the effectiveness of this trade-off by imposing rigid directives and limiting individual autonomy:

- Transactional Leadership - autocratic ($\rho = -0.389$): the correlation is explained above, being weak to moderate negative.
- Transactional Leadership - laissez-faire ($\rho = 0.793$): the correlation is explained above, being strong positive.
- Transactional Leadership - transformational ($\rho = 0.910$): very strong positive correlation. These styles support each other and have many common characteristics.

Transactional leadership, which is based on an exchange of rewards and penalties, can be compromised in an autocratic environment. This is because an autocratic environment can discourage initiative and innovation, which are essential for employee motivation and commitment. As a result, this leadership style can have a negative impact on professional and personal development, key elements of human rights at work. An autocratic leadership can lead to an organisational culture in which fear, conformity and lack of trust are prevalent. This contrasts sharply with the organisational cultures promoted by transformational and laissez-faire styles, which encourage openness, innovation and mutual respect. From a broader perspective, the effectiveness of a public institution in promoting and protecting human rights can be affected by the prevailing leadership style. Transformational and transactional styles may be more effective in promoting policies and practices that respect human rights, while an autocratic style may be less effective in this regard.

The autocratic style is characterized by centralized decisions and rigid control, which can restrict employee participation in decision-making processes. This can have a negative impact on human rights as it limits employees' autonomy and freedom of expression. In contrast, transformational and laissez-faire styles promote employee participation, autonomy and empowerment, which are important aspects in respecting individual rights.

- Transformational - autocratic leadership ($\rho = -0.434$): the correlation is explained above, being moderately negative.
- Transformational Leadership - laissez-faire ($\rho = 0.879$): the correlation is explained above, being very strong positive.
- Transformational Leadership - transactional ($\rho = 0.910$): the correlation is explained above, being very strong positive.

These findings may be essential for public institutions seeking to optimize the effectiveness of their leadership, suggesting that balancing the various styles. Although the autocratic style may be effective in certain situations, the present analysis suggests that it may have a negative impact on leadership styles that are more conducive to respecting and promoting human rights within public institutions. Therefore, it is important for leaders in these public institutions to consider these findings when developing and implementing their leadership strategies.

Conclusions

This study highlights the significant influence of leadership styles - autocratic, transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire - on public institutions, particularly regarding their effectiveness in promoting and protecting human rights. By analysing the mutual relationships between these styles using Spearman's correlation coefficient, the research provides insights into how leadership approaches shape sustainable public sector efficiency.

The findings reveal a distinct inverse relationship between autocratic leadership and other leadership styles. Autocratic leadership, characterized by centralized decision-making and rigid control, often inhibits the adoption of more participative and innovative styles, such as transformational and laissez-faire leadership. This centralization reduces opportunities for employee autonomy, creativity, and collaboration, which are critical elements for respecting human rights within public institutions.

In contrast, the study highlights strong positive correlations between laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational leadership styles, suggesting that these approaches are more aligned with fostering inclusive organisational cultures. Transformational leadership, in particular, stands out as a highly effective style, promoting motivation, innovation, and ethical practices. It is strongly associated with the respect and promotion of fundamental human rights by empowering employees and encouraging their active participation in decision-making processes. Similarly, the transactional style, while focused on performance and compliance, complements transformational leadership by offering clear rewards for achievements, creating a structured yet motivating work environment.

While these findings provide valuable approaches, the study is not without limitations. First, the research was conducted exclusively within public institutions in Dolj County, Romania, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other regions or organisational contexts. The cultural, institutional, and socio-economic factors unique to this setting may influence the applicability of the findings elsewhere. Second, the use of self-reported data through electronic questionnaires, while efficient, introduces the potential for response bias, as participants may provide socially desirable answers. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to establish causality between leadership styles and their impacts on human rights.

Future research should address these limitations by expanding the scope of the study to include a more diverse range of institutions, regions, and cultural contexts. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the causal relationships between leadership styles and institutional outcomes. Furthermore, qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, could complement quantitative data to explore the nuanced experiences of leaders and employees. Examining the interplay between leadership styles and other organisational variables, such as employee well-being, innovation capacity, and stakeholder trust, would also enrich our understanding of effective leadership in public institutions.

These results underscore the need for a balanced approach to leadership within public institutions. While the autocratic style may be effective in scenarios requiring swift decision-making and strict control, its potential to stifle employee initiative and innovation makes it less conducive to long-term organisational success and the promotion of human rights. Conversely, transformational and laissez-faire leadership styles, often working in tandem with transactional

elements, provide a more sustainable and ethical framework for leadership, aligning institutional objectives with the principles of human dignity, equity, and participation.

Public institutions must recognize the important role of leadership in shaping organisational culture and advancing human rights. Leaders are encouraged to embrace adaptability, integrating the strengths of various leadership styles while prioritizing approaches that foster openness, innovation, and mutual respect. By doing so, they can create an environment that not only achieves institutional goals but also upholds ethical standards and contributes to the broader societal good.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that leadership in public institutions is a complex and dynamic process, requiring careful consideration of its impact on both organisational effectiveness and human rights. While this research provides a foundation for improving leadership practices, further exploration is necessary to fully understand the dynamics of leadership and to develop actionable strategies for high-performing public institutions.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Riza, I. contributed to the conceptualization and development of the study methodology, data collection, and analysis using statistical tools, as well as drafting the original version of the manuscript. Additionally, coordinated the validation of results and the final revision of the text. Bogdan, A.M. contributed to the literature review, preparation and organisation of data for analysis. The corresponding author, Riza, I., ensured the accuracy of the contributions and acted as the primary contact throughout the review and publication process.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors, declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest. All findings, analyses, and interpretations presented in this article were carried out independently, ensuring objectivity and integrity throughout the research process.

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