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Assessment and Ranking of the Behavioural Leadership Model in the Process of Implementing Reforms in Public Sector of the Republic of Serbia Using the PIPRECIA Method

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Abstract: The establishment of sustainable leadership is essential for the process of implementing reforms in public sector. Sustainable leadership implies effective leadership capable of responding to changes that come from both the internal and external environment. To achieve this, it is necessary to apply multi-criteria decision-making methods. In this paper, the new multi-criteria decision-making method PIPRECIA was used to assess the criteria and five models of leader behaviour that are significant for the process of implementing reforms in the public sector of the Republic of Serbia. In essence, the paper aims to emphasise the simplicity of the practical application of the PIPRECIA method, which was discussed through a numerical illustration on the basis of which the conclusions were drawn. The research results indicate that the criterion Individual competence of the leader ($C_4-0.24$) has the greatest weight. By ranking the alternatives, it was estimated that the Charismatic model of behaviour ($A_5-0.219$) is the leader's behaviour model that can have the greatest importance in the process of implementing public sector reforms. The Directive model of behaviour ($A_3-0.197$) was derived as the second most important, which is understandable if we consider the fact that this model of leader's behaviour traditionally dominates the work of the public sector. Furthermore, Participatory behaviour model ($A_1-0.193$), Supportive behaviour model ($A_2-0.193$) and Transformational behaviour model ($A_4-0.193$) have equal rank, which means that they have the same importance for the decision-maker. The findings provide significant information to leaders of public organisations on how to implement reforms and manage human resources more effectively.

Keywords: sustainable leadership; behavioural models of leaders; public sector; reform; PIPRECIA method

1. Introduction

In every organisation, as well as in public administration organisations, there should be a strategic balance between short-term and long-term goals, accepted policy values and interests of different stakeholders. If the interests of stakeholders are observed, the organisation must be sustainable in financial, social, technological, and environmental aspects of business [1]. To achieve these, there is a need for effective leadership that must be sustainable as well. In particular, the transition from current situations to a

sustainable future requires support in the form of leadership concepts, tools, methods, and behaviour [2]. This means that leadership requires the development of appropriate diagnostic tools in order to observe the characteristics of tasks, the employees, to adapt the leader's behaviour and achieve effective results [3]. In other words, sustainable leadership needs leaders with exceptional abilities [4]. Authors Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) claim that "sustainable leadership requires a long-term perspective in decision-making; encouraging system innovations aimed at increasing user value; developing a qualified, loyal and highly engaged workforce by offering quality products, services and solutions" [3]. The decision-maker must take optimal decisions at all times, bearing in mind that the consequences of bad decisions can have a catastrophic and long-term effect. When optimal decisions are made and implemented, the chances of success are higher than before, and favourable situations are created to preserve the system and prevent it from entering a crisis. Bearing in mind that in the scientific literature there are different views regarding the definition of sustainable leadership, Fry and Egel (2021) made a synthesis of all definitions through a series of common characteristics, such as: emphasis on leadership; long-term vision; broader goals that connect organisations with society; ethical behaviour; social responsibilities of leaders and organisations; innovation capacity; systemic change; involvement of interested parties; capacity-building of stakeholders. The stated authors consider that sustainable leadership is achieved through collective or distributed efforts aimed at shaping organisational culture, leading people to work and job satisfaction, as well as redesigning work systems to achieve new goals [3].

Leadership in public administration has been the subject of research by an increasing number of authors in the last few decades [5–11]. Furthermore, many studies highlight the importance of leadership in change processes [6,7,12–17]. According to Dunoon (2002), the challenge for public sector organisations is how to achieve and maintain the appropriate balance between "management for ongoing operations and leadership for deep change" [8]. In addition, Thakhathi et al., 2019 claim that it is important to know "pragmatic practices" for the realisation of organisational change. The authors believe that "sustainability leaders" use influence strategies to create readiness and strengthen the institutionalisation of major organisational changes in the direction of corporate sustainability [18].

The reform of the public sector refers to the improvement of service provision and coordination, and it is stimulated by digital transformation. However, a bureaucratic structure with individual dimensions such as centralisation, formalisation, low interdependence, and low integration does not fit into the logic of digitisation. The benefits of digitisation can be exploited when organisations build structures that foster collaboration and information exchange among work groups, support integration within and between functions, encourage bottom-up involvement, apply flexible rules and procedures, and avoid narrowly defined skills and functional roles [19]. Considering that the public sector will face great challenges in the future due to economic, political, technological, and cultural factors, leaders of public organisations will have to adapt to these demands by changing their competencies and behaviour as well as leadership styles [20]. In this regard, the review of scientific literature reveals a gap when it comes to research related to the assessment of behaviour models of leaders, managers, and supervisors in the public sector during the process of implementing reforms. Earlier research mainly focused on the influence of certain leadership styles on employees, not considering the factors that impact the leader's behaviour, which is a limitation when it comes to effective leadership. In the same way, research gaps also refer to studies on leadership in the public sector of the Republic of Serbia. Furthermore, previous research largely referred to the Anglo-American, East Asian and Central European areas [5].

For the aforementioned reasons, the main goal of the paper is to use the PIPRECIA method to evaluate the behavioural model of leaders in public sector organisations of the Republic of Serbia and to determine which has the greatest significance for the process of implementing reforms.

In addition to the introductory part, the rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the Theoretical Background. Section 3 indicates the Research Methodology, while Section 4 demonstrates the Numerical Illustration. Section 6 presents the Conclusion.

2. Theoretical Background

In the scientific literature, there is a great interest in the study of leadership as a phenomenon and a concept. For a long period of time, the concept of leadership has traditionally been considered as a focus on an individual leader trained to lead a work group or team as part of a hierarchical organisational structure [21]. Only recently, collectivist or distributed approaches to leadership have attracted increased attention [22–24].

The basis for empirical studies of leadership as a concept is represented by conventional theories that arose in the 19th and 20th centuries. The first leadership theories dealt with the study of leadership from the aspects of traits, skills, and competencies, and the most famous are the Theory of the Great Man (1840) and the Theory of Leader Traits (1930–1940). The later development of theories related to the behaviour of leaders, as well as to the study of relationship between the leader and his followers, leadership styles, the observation of leadership in the context of changes and organisational processes.

Theories related to the study of leadership behaviour were known as the Iowa, Ohio and Michigan studies. Researchers from the University of Iowa, Kurt Lewin and his colleagues, identified three basic leadership styles in an experimentally created environment: autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire style. They published this research in 1939 in the article entitled “Patterns of aggressive behaviour in experimentally created social climates” [25]. A few years later, research conducted at the universities of Ohio and Michigan indicated that leaders basically exhibit two types of behaviour: behaviour that is focused on performing tasks and achieving goals, and leadership behaviour that is focused on building good interpersonal relationships. To determine a leader’s orientation, Ohio State University researchers constructed the Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ). This form of questionnaire contained over 150 questions about leadership behaviour. A few years later, Ralph Stogdill published a shortened version of the LBDQ-XII questionnaire, which is used in many studies [26] (p. 48). Considering that none of the early studies on leadership behaviour could identify one universal style that would be applicable in all situations, this led to a new shift in the study of leadership and new theories, such as contingency theories. The most famous contingent theories are Fiedler’s theory [27], Participative leadership, Situational leadership [28,29], and Path-goal theory [30,31]. The appearance of modern leadership theories, which differ from classical ones in the fact that leadership as a process does not rely only on a set of leader’s character traits but considers the effectiveness of leadership as a relationship between leader and follower, was conditioned by the modern way of doing business and the increasingly dynamic changes that came from the external environment. This is how the Theory of Transformational Leadership was developed [32,33], as well as the Theory of Charismatic Leadership [34].

2.1. Behavioural Models of Leaders and Managers

The behaviour of leaders and managers depends on numerous factors, among which the most significant are the personal characteristics of the leader. Based on personal characteristics, one can also predict the behaviour, that is, the leadership style that the leader or manager prefers. The leadership style represents the way in which the leader makes decisions, solves problems, chooses work methods, motivates, and communicates with employees, manages processes and values. Leaders can be recognisable by a certain style. They can apply one or combine several styles. In addition to the characteristics of the leader’s personality, the choice of style is also influenced by the characteristics of the job, the task, the situation, the environment, and the characteristics of the employees. A correctly chosen style is almost always a predictor of a leader’s success, motivation, and inspiration of employees, as well as goal achievement. The results of many studies indicate

that leaders can influence the performance of teams, work groups or organisations by their behaviour [35] (p. 466). Given that the choice of a leader's style depends on many factors, there is no leadership style that is universal and that gives the best results, but the effectiveness of the style depends on the situation.

Fernandez et al., 2010 developed a concept of integrated leadership that is applicable in the public sector, which includes five major models or orientations of leader behaviour such as: task-oriented leadership that corresponds to an authoritarian style; leadership oriented to interpersonal relations, which refers to the participative behaviour of the leader; change-oriented leadership that corresponds to the transformational style; diversity-oriented leadership and integrity-oriented leadership, which implies the leader's orientation to fulfilling legal regulations, standards, fairness to employees and all interested parties' common interests [13]. Bearing in mind the multitude of behavioural models depending on the characteristics of the leader and the requirements of the environment, for the purposes of this analysis we single out the supportive, participatory, directive, charismatic and transformational behaviour of leaders, i.e., managers [36], which corresponds to the concept of integrated leadership in the public sector developed by Fernandez et al. (2010).

House (1971) considers that the supportive behaviour of leaders is one of the key characteristics of effective leaders [37]. Furthermore, Meierhans et al., 2008 state that supportive leader behaviour results in employee commitment to the organisation, leading to increased individual and group performance [38]. Supportive behaviour implies that the leader provides support and assistance to employees in the implementation of tasks and achieving goals, as well as feedback on the results, which increases the level of satisfaction among employees [39,40].

Participatory leadership behaviour implies the inclusion of employees in the process of decision-making and defining goals. The leader consults with employees and uses their suggestions in making decisions [41]. The positive effects of the participative behaviour of leaders are multiple. Participation in decision-making and defining goals raises the level of motivation and self-confidence of employees, which inevitably contributes to their satisfaction [42]. In addition, participation enables the acceptance, better understanding and implementation of decisions and organisational goals, which is important for the process of acceptance and implementation of changes. Joint participation in decision-making affects employee performance [43,44] and contributes to establishing good interpersonal relationships [45]. However, this model of behaviour is not applicable for large, oversized groups [46].

Bass indicates that directive leadership results in less acceptance of managerial decisions compared to participative leadership. For directive behaviour, it is characteristic that the leader makes decisions independently, without the participation of employees, takes responsibility for them, makes it clear to employees what is expected, and gives instructions to employees regarding the implementation of a task [47]. Directive behaviour traditionally dominates the work of the public sector. This style is characteristic of large systems in which structure and bureaucratic culture are emphasised. In directive style, employee behaviour is strictly controlled through punishments, rewards, guidelines, defined rules, standards, procedures [48]. This style is difficult to adapt to changes.

In the Theory of Charismatic Leadership, Robert House (1976) states that charismatic leaders behave in a unique way that has specific effects on followers [34]. The author indicates that charismatic leaders possess characteristics such as dominance, having a strong desire to influence others, self-confidence, and a sense of moral values of an individual. The leader's charismatic behaviour stems from his personality and charisma. Charismatic leadership behaviour implies a clear vision, highlighting values that are in line with the vision and establishing strong connections with followers [49]. An important element is the way leaders communicate with employees and explain the vision and the need for change. They model the behaviours of employees by indicating how the vision can be realised [16]. The influence of charismatic leadership on followers increases with the growth of the leader's status and expertise. Some authors consider that the receptivity of charismatic

leadership is limited in organisations with a bureaucratic structure, such as organisations that belong to the public sector [16]. It is important to point out that charismatic leaders have high moral and ethical standards of behaviour because: they articulate ideological goals that include moral values; set high goals and support followers in meeting them; and encourage follower motivation that is oriented toward meeting the goals. The effects of charismatic leadership are reflected in expressed trust, respect and loyalty that result in the willingness to fully follow the ideas of the leader, that is, the vision that the leader promotes [26] (p. 121).

Transformational leaders inspire and motivate followers through charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individual appreciation to embrace change and follow through on vision realisation. The result of the process is a new value, a different social environment, and culture, that is, a better state of the organisation. Transformational leaders are “pro-social” leaders who inspire employees to achieve exceptional results [50]. Bernard Bass (1990) states that transformational leadership motivates followers to do more than what is expected of them by raising the level of followers’ awareness of the importance and value of idealised goals, i.e., followers’ awareness moves towards higher-order needs [48]. In this way, followers are encouraged to overcome their own interests for the sake of the interests of the team or organisation. Furthermore, in the mid-eighties of the last century, Bernard Bass expanded the theory of transformational leadership, which was based on the works of James MacGregor Burns (1978) and Robert House (1976), by paying more attention to the needs of followers than to the needs of leaders, suggesting that transformational leadership could apply to situations where the results are not positive. The explanation is focused on the fact that the leader should see the necessity of changing the organisation before it falls into a crisis. Awareness of the need for change is the starting point of initiating the change itself. The second step is preparing employees to accept the change, as well as paying attention to the needs of followers, which emphasises the importance of followers in the leadership process [51]. Consequently, this approach gained popularity in the late 1990s [33]. By applying a transformational style, followers’ motivation levels are raised, and they are enabled to reach their full potential. Transformational leaders encourage creative thinking and inventiveness in employees, set high expectations for followers, and inspire them to take on the challenge. They provide all the support to the followers in the realisation of the goals and vision. By using three factors—inspirational motivation, idealised influence, and intellectual stimulation—transformational leaders essentially direct, inspire, and empower their employees.

The behavioural models of leaders and managers that traditionally dominate the work of public organisations are based on “command and control” [52,53]. The directive or commanding style, as well as the transactional style, which have a lot of similarities, are characteristic of large systems where structure is emphasised [36]. Namely, in both styles, the behaviour of employees is strictly controlled through punishments, rewards, guidelines, defined rules, standards, and procedures [48]. Unlike the directive style, the transactional style can be applicable to employees who are motivated exclusively by material rewards, because it is based on a pure transaction, that is, an exchange of values between leaders and employees [51]. Furthermore, this style is applicable to jobs that are routinely performed according to pre-set rules and procedures, as is the case in bureaucratic systems. However, both styles are difficult to adapt to changes. Since the public sector faces certain challenges when implementing reforms, leadership styles based on hierarchy and rank are not the best approach [54]. Consequently, behavioural styles should change in accordance with the challenges and demands of certain situations, that is, they should follow an evolutionary course [36].

2.2. Behavioural Models of Leaders and Managers in Different Cultural Groups

The researchers of the GLOBE project studied the similarities and differences between cultural groups in terms of culture and leadership within 10 regional groups: the Anglo-American area, Latin Europe, Nordic Europe, Germanic Europe, Eastern Europe, Latin

America, Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Confucian Asia. The overall goal of the GLOBE project was to determine how people from different cultural groups view leadership. In addition, the researchers wanted to determine the ways in which cultural characteristics are associated with culturally accepted leadership behaviour. The results indicated that leadership varies depending on the cultural characteristics of different cultural groups, i.e., clusters [26] (p. 218).

Backhaus and Vogel (2022) conducted a meta-analysis of leadership in the public sector based on 151 studies published in Public Administration journals since 2000, shown in Table 1. In addition to conceptual diversity, the results of this study indicated a relationship between leadership and outcomes. For example, the leadership of the public sector in the Anglo-American area indicates more favourable outcomes (such as motivation, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, work/job engagement, proactive/innovative behaviour, participation, performance, etc.) compared to the leadership of the Germanic, Scandinavian, East Asian and the Eastern European area, where there is a high degree of formalisation that can neutralize the effects of leadership. The reason for this outcome lies in the fact that transformational, supportive, or empowering leadership is dominant in public sector organisations in the Anglo-American area [5]. As for the Scandinavian area, which is characterized by lower power distances and collectivism, participative leadership and team-oriented leadership are more prevalent [55].

Table 1. An overview of research studies on leadership styles in the public sector from different cultural groups.

Leadership_Style	Country	Cultural Group	Author, Year of Research
Transformational	Denmark	Scandinavian	Pedersen et al., 2020; Høstrup and Andersen, 2020; Fjendbo, 2020; Günzel-Jensen et al., 2018; Jensen and Bro, 2018; Lauritzen et al., 2021; Hansen and Pihl-Thingvad, 2019
Transactional	Denmark	Scandinavian	Günzel-Jensen et al., 2018; Andersen et al., 2017
Participative	Denmark	Scandinavian	Hansen and Villadsen, 2010
Controlling/directive	Denmark	Scandinavian	Hansen and Villadsen, 2010
Supporting	Denmark, Norway	Scandinavian	Günzel-Jensen et al., 2018; Mutonyi et al., 2020
Transactional	Netherlands	Germanic	Klijn et al., 2020; van der Voet, 2016; van der Voet and Steijn, 2020; Masal and Vogel, 2016;
Transformational	Switzerland, Germany	Germanic	Ritz et al., 2014, Kroll and Vogel, 2014
Supporting	Germany	Germanic	Hattke et al., 2018a
Controlling/directive	Germany, Netherlands	Germanic	Hattke et al., 2018b, Vermeeren et al., 2014
Task-oriented	Netherlands	Germanic	Tummers et al., 2018
Public	Germany	Germanic	Vogel et al., 2020
Transformational	USA	Anglo-American	Moynehan et al., 2012; Wright and Pandey, 2010; Wright et al., 2012; Pandey et al., 2016; Sun and Henderson, 2017; Pasha et al., 2017; Park and Rainey, 2008; Valero and Jang, 2020, Azhar and Yang, 2021
Transactional	USA	Anglo-American	Park and Rainey, 2008; Caillier and Sa, 2017
Supporting	USA	Anglo-American	Park and Hassan, 2018; Jin et al., 2019; Kwon and Jeon, 2020; Bae et al., 2019; Hassan et al., 2019a
Task-oriented	USA	Anglo-American	Hassan et al., 2019b
Participative	USA	Anglo-American	Kim, 2002

Table 1. *Cont.*

Leadership_Style	Country	Cultural Group	Author, Year of Research
Supporting	Vietnam	Soviet	Luu, 2020
Transformational	China	Soviet	Bao and Ge, 2019, Zhang et al., 2020
Public	China	Soviet	Schwarz et al., 2020
Transformational	South Korea	East Asian	Khaltar and Moon, 2019; Chu and Lai, 2011; Kim and Yoon, 2015; Lee and Lee, 2021; Bak et al., 2021; Campbell et al., 2018
Supporting	South Korea	East Asian	Jung and Lee, 2016; Park et al., 2021
Transactional	South Korea	East Asian	Park et al., 2021; Kim and Yoon, 2015

Source: Adapted by Backhaus and Vogel, 2022 [5].

Bearing in mind the above, the question that arises relates to the behavioural model of leaders and managers that should be applied when implementing public sector reforms in accordance with the cultural group of Eastern Europe, to which the Republic of Serbia belongs. The cultural cluster of Eastern Europe is specific for its high degree of collectivism, as opposed to its low degree of orientation towards the future and avoidance of uncertainty [26] (p. 215).

3. Research Methodology

The development of multi-criteria decision-making represents a progress in the evolution of scientific decision-making and solving complex organisational problems that reduces the risk of making wrong decisions, which is highly important for effective and sustainable leadership. This approach represents a systematic, analytical, and quantitative approach to the decision-making process. Multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM) is an applicable tool for the analysis of complex problems, which aims to enable the decision-maker to choose the best options from the final set of alternatives by examining them from several angles, i.e., criteria or attributes [56,57]. Criteria weights can have a significant impact on the ranking of alternatives or the selection of the most acceptable alternative in Multiple-Criteria Decision-Making. Therefore, many methods have been proposed so far for determining criteria weights—the Entropy method, Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), Criteria Importance Through Intercriteria Correlation (CRITIC), Analytic Network Process (ANP), Step-wise Weight Assessment Ratio Analysis (SWARA), Best-Worst Method (BWM), Full Consistency Method (FUCOM) [58,59].

The PIPRECIA method is a modified SWARA method [60]. Due to the limitations of the SWARA method that the criteria are pre-sorted by expected importance, the authors of the PIPRECIA method [61] made certain adjustments, so that it does not require prior sorting of the criteria and enables a simple and comprehensible definition of importance. Due to these advantages, PIPRECIA was applied in the research. Furthermore, this method can be applied based on the responses of one or more decision-makers and is applicable in practice.

To achieve the research goal, using the PIPRECIA method, the first step will include the evaluation of the criteria, and then the assessment and ranking of the leader behaviour models will be performed. The analysis will indicate the behaviour model that has the greatest importance and is the most applicable for the process of implementing reforms in public sector organisations. By applying this method, the weights of the criteria and alternatives, as well as their ranking, will be determined based on the manager's views in public sector organisation. One decision-maker is included in the decision-making process, regarding the nature of the leadership process and the role played by leaders or managers, as well as due to the simplicity and applicability of the PIPRECIA method in practice.

The research methodology is presented in Figure 1.

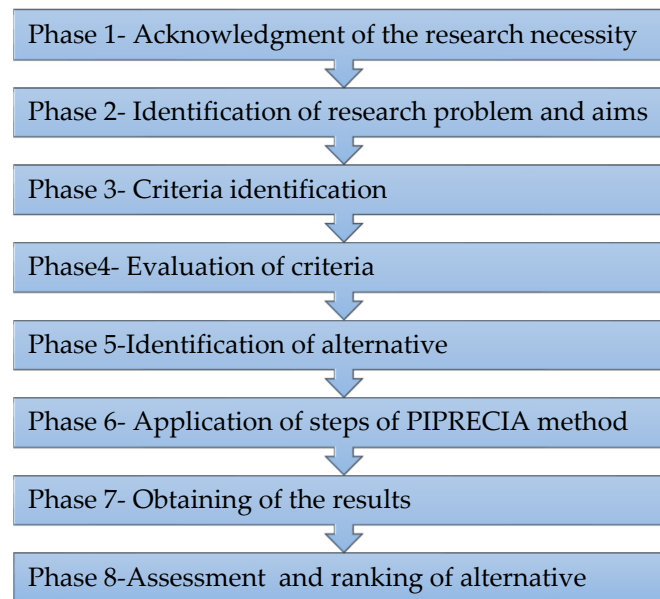


Figure 1. The flowchart of research methodology.

3.1. Method

The *Pivot Pairwise Relative Criteria Importance Assessment*—PIPRECIA is a relatively new multi-criteria decision-making method (MCDM) developed and tested by researchers Stanujkić et al. [61]. The main purpose of this method is to determine the importance (weight) of evaluation criteria, but it can also be applied for solving MCDM problems, that is, to evaluate alternatives [57], which will be shown in this paper.

The calculation procedure of the mentioned method is presented through the following steps [57]:

Step 1. Selection of the criteria that will be included in the evaluation process.

Step 2. Determination of the relative importance of s_j , starting from the second criterion, as follows:

$$s_j = \begin{cases} > 1 & \text{if } C_j > C_{j-1} \\ 1 & \text{if } C_j = C_{j-1} \\ < 1 & \text{if } C_j < C_{j-1} \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

Step 3. Determination of the k_j coefficient as follows:

$$k_j = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } j = 1 \\ 2 - s_j & \text{if } j > 1 \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

Step 4. Determination of the converted value of q_j , as follows:

$$q_j = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } j = 1 \\ \frac{q_{j-1}}{k_j} & \text{if } j > 1 \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

Step 5. Determining the relative weights of the considered criteria as follows:

$$w_j = \frac{q_j}{\sum_{k=1}^n q_k} \quad (4)$$

where w_j denotes the relative weight of criterion j .

3.2. The Usage of the PIPRECIA Methods for Ranking Alternatives

The PIPRECIA method can be used for evaluating, i.e., ranking. In such cases, it is necessary to determine the relative importance of the alternatives concerning each criterion, using the following procedure [57]:

Step 1. Starting from the second alternative, set the relative significance s_i of alternative i as follows:

$$s_i = \begin{cases} > 1 & \text{if } A_i > A_{i-1} \\ 1 & \text{if } A_i = A_{i-1} \\ < 1 & \text{if } A_i < A_{i-1} \end{cases} \quad (5)$$

where A_i denotes the significance of alternative i , and A_{i-1} denotes the significance of the previous $i-1$ alternative.

Step 2. Calculate the coefficient k_i as follows:

$$k_i = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } i = 1 \\ 2 - s_i & \text{if } i > 1 \end{cases} \quad (6)$$

Step 3. Calculate q_i as follows:

$$q_i = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } i = 1 \\ \frac{q_{i-1}}{k_i} & \text{if } i > 1 \end{cases} \quad (7)$$

Step 4. Determine the relative importance of alternatives concerning the criteria, as follows:

$$i_{ij} = \frac{q_i}{\sum_{k=1}^n q_k} \quad (8)$$

where i_{ij} denotes the relative importance of alternative i concerning the criterion j , and n denotes the number of the alternatives.

Steps 1 to 4 are repeated cyclically for each criterion. After that, the utility of each alternative u_i is determined as follows:

$$u_i = \sum_{j=1}^n i_{ij} w_j \quad (9)$$

After that, the alternatives are ranked according to the value of u_i , and the alternative with the highest value of u_i is declared the best one.

4. A Numerical Illustration

The interview with the manager from public sector organisation of the Republic of Serbia was conducted in February 2023. The decision-maker was asked the following questions:

Which of the criteria has the greatest importance for the behaviour of leaders and managers?

Which of the behavioural models can have the greatest importance for the implementation of reforms in the public sector of the Republic of Serbia?

Answers were offered with an explanation of each of the mentioned criteria and behavioural models.

4.1. Assessment of the Criteria That Have the Greatest Importance on the Leader's Behaviour

In this research, the following criteria that influence the leader's behaviour were used [62]:

- Organisation (C_1),
- Context (C_2),
- Situation (C_3),
- Individual competence (C_4),
- Group (C_5).

Criterion Organisation includes the organisation's strategy, organisational culture, organisational structure, and processes.

Criterion Context includes political, economic, and social factors.

Criterion Situation refers to clarity (availability and relevance of information) and pressure such as time limit and pressure regarding decision-making and risks.

Criterion Individual competence includes professional competence (knowledge of the job, technological knowledge), strategic competence (strategic decision-making, knowledge management, problem-solving), personal competence (resistance to stress, motivation), social competence (empathy, tolerance, leadership skills, communication skills) and inter-cultural competence.

The Group criterion refers to the structural (group composition, goals, norms) and dynamic aspects of the group (interpersonal relations, communication).

Based on the answers of the decision-maker from the organisation belonging to the public sector, using Formulas (2)–(4), criteria weights were obtained and shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Calculation details obtained while determining the criteria weights.

Criteria	s_j	k_j	q_j	w_j	Rank
C ₁		1	1	0.19	3
C ₂	0.9	1.1	0.91	0.17	4
C ₃	1.1	0.9	1.01	0.19	3
C ₄	1.2	0.8	1.26	0.24	1
C ₅	1.05	0.95	1.06	0.20	2
SUM			5.25	1	

The results presented in Table 2 show that the criterion Individual competence (C₄-0.24) has the highest weight, while the lowest weight is registered for criterion Context (C₂-0.17). Furthermore, the ranking results indicate that certain criteria such as the Organisation criterion (C₁) and the Situation criterion (C₃) have the same rank, which means that they have the same importance for the decision-maker.

4.2. Assessment of Leadership Behaviour Models

Based on the theoretical background, for the purposes of this research, five models of manager behaviour were selected [36]: participative (A₁), supportive (A₂), directive (A₃), transformational (A₄) and charismatic (A₅) leader's behaviour. Using the PIPRECIA method, models of leader behaviour were evaluated with the five previously mentioned criteria, and then their ranking was performed.

Calculation details, calculated using Equations (5)–(8), are shown in Tables 3–7.

Based on the data from Tables 2–7, an initial decision matrix was formed which contains the weights of the criteria and the relative importance of alternatives concerning the criteria. The initial decision matrix was shown in Table 8.

Table 3. The relative importance of alternatives concerning the first criterion.

Alternatives	s_i	k_i	q_i	i_{i1}
A ₁		1	1	0.21
A ₂	0.9	1.1	0.91	0.19
A ₃	1.1	0.9	1.01	0.21
A ₄	0.9	1.1	0.92	0.19
A ₅	1	1	1.01	0.21
SUM			4.85	1

Table 4. The relative importance of alternatives concerning the second criterion.

Alternatives	s_i	k_i	q_i	i_{i2}
A ₁		1	1	0.19
A ₂	1.1	0.9	1.11	0.21
A ₃	0.9	1.1	1.01	0.19
A ₄	0.95	1.05	0.96	0.18
A ₅	1.2	0.8	1.26	0.24
SUM			5.35	1

Table 5. The relative importance of alternatives concerning the third criterion.

Alternatives	s_i	k_i	q_i	i_{i3}
A ₁		1	1	0.17
A ₂	1.2	0.8	1.25	0.22
A ₃	0.9	1.1	1.14	0.20
A ₄	0.95	1.05	1.08	0.19
A ₅	1.1	0.9	1.26	0.22
SUM			5.73	1

Table 6. The relative importance of alternatives concerning the fourth criterion.

Alternatives	s_i	k_i	q_i	i_{i4}
A ₁		1	1	0.21
A ₂	0.9	1.1	0.91	0.19
A ₃	0.95	1.05	0.87	0.18
A ₄	1.1	0.9	0.96	0.20
A ₅	1.2	0.8	1.08	0.22
SUM			4.82	1

Table 7. The relative importance of alternatives concerning the fifth criterion.

Alternatives	s_i	k_i	q_i	i_{i5}
A ₁		1	1	0.19
A ₂	0.9	1.1	0.91	0.17
A ₃	1.2	0.8	1.14	0.22
A ₄	0.95	1.05	1.08	0.21
A ₅	1	1	1.14	0.22
SUM			5.26	1

Finally, the utility of each alternative is calculated using Equation (9), as shown in Table 9.

From Table 9, it can be seen that the Charismatic model of behaviour (A₅) has the greatest importance for the process of implementing reforms of public sector organisations. The Directive model of behaviour (A₃) is the second most important, which is understandable, because this model of behaviour traditionally dominates the work of public sector organisations. The Participatory behaviour model (A₁), Supportive behaviour model (A₂) and Transformational behaviour model (A₄) have the same rank, which means that they have the same importance for the decision-maker.

Table 8. Initial decision matrix.

	C ₁	C ₂	C ₃	C ₄	C ₅
w_j	0.19	0.17	0.19	0.24	0.2
A ₁	0.21	0.19	0.17	0.21	0.19
A ₂	0.19	0.21	0.22	0.19	0.17
A ₃	0.21	0.19	0.2	0.18	0.22
A ₄	0.19	0.18	0.19	0.2	0.21
A ₅	0.21	0.24	0.22	0.22	0.22

Table 9. Utility and ranking order of alternative.

	C ₁	C ₂	C ₃	C ₄	C ₅	u_i	Rank
A ₁	0.040	0.032	0.032	0.050	0.038	0.193	2
A ₂	0.036	0.036	0.042	0.046	0.034	0.193	2
A ₃	0.040	0.032	0.038	0.043	0.044	0.197	3
A ₄	0.036	0.031	0.036	0.048	0.042	0.193	2
A ₅	0.040	0.041	0.042	0.053	0.044	0.219	1

5. Discussion

To determine the importance of each criterion, as well as the behaviour model of managers that influence the process of implementing reforms, the multi-criteria decision-making method Pivot Pairwise Relative Criteria Importance Assessment—fuzzy PIPRECIA was used. The application of this method is discussed through a numerical illustration. The weights criteria and alternatives, as well as their rankings, were performed using this method based on the views of decision-makers, due to the nature of the leadership process and the role played by leaders or managers. The most important criterion that affects the behaviour of leaders is the individual competence (C₄-0.24). It implies professional competence, that the leader knows the field of work and has technological knowledge, strategic competence that refers to strategic decision-making, knowledge management, ability to solve problems, personal competence that implies resistance to stress and self-motivation, social competence including empathy, tolerance, leadership skills, communication skills and intercultural competence. The least significant criterion is Context (C₂-0.17).

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the Charismatic model of behaviour (A₅-0.219) represents the model of leader behaviour that has the most importance in the process of implementing reforms. The Directive model of leader behaviour (A₃-0.197) stood out as the second most important, which is understandable if we consider the fact that this model traditionally dominates the work of the public sector. It is characteristic of large systems in which structure and bureaucratic culture are emphasised. This style is difficult to adapt to changes and may result in less acceptance of the manager's decisions by the employees. Also, by applying this style, there is a probability that employees will show resistance to changes. Regarding the fact that administrative systems are still burdened by bureaucratic principles, as well as the fact that they coexist with several systems, in the process of reform they should be replaced by new systems and management practices [63]. The Participative behaviour model (A₁-0.193), Supportive behaviour model (A₂-0.193) and Transformational behaviour model (A₄-0.193) have equal rank, which means that they have the same importance for the decision-maker.

Charismatic leadership implies a clear vision, emphasising values that are in line with the vision and establishing strong ties with employees, which is highly important for the effectiveness of the process. Many authors suggest that charismatic leaders strive for change and act as change agents [16]. Bednar and Welch (2020) consider that the idea of a charismatic leader, who inspires employees with a shared vision and a desire to accept change, is attractive and can be preferred over "management" in organisational discourse [1]. Although there are many studies on charismatic leadership, this model of behaviour has not been sufficiently examined in the public sector. Pawar and Eastman

(1997) believe that charismatic leadership can have certain limitations in bureaucratic organisations [16]. However, it should be noted that the mentioned authors did not take into account the context, that is, any factor, when making this statement. Given that the previous research mainly related to the Anglo-American, Central European and East Asian areas, it should be considered that the Republic of Serbia belongs to the cultural cluster of Eastern Europe, which is specific for a high degree of collectivism, as opposed to a low degree of orientation towards the future and avoidance of uncertainty. A charismatic leader focused on values, people, and results corresponds to these cultural characteristics. Furthermore, charismatic leadership has a specific effect on employees because the leader instils them with confidence, and they feel safe around him. Charismatic leadership implies a clear vision, emphasising values that are in line with the vision and establishing strong connections with followers [64]. Robert House (1976) believes that charismatic leaders have specific effects on their followers, such as dominance, a strong desire for influence, self-confidence, a strong sense of moral value [26] (p. 121), which, among other things, characterises the individual competence of the leader. The list of leader's characteristics can also include energy, empathy, i.e., a high degree of emotional intelligence, and willingness to take risks, which is extremely important for the process of implementing reforms. Although there is little research related to the effects of this behavioural model, some authors recommend charismatic leadership when implementing public sector reforms [15,16]. Moreover, it should be emphasised that most authors suggest that the transformation model of behaviour can have a positive effect when implementing reforms in the public sector [5,7,14,65–67].

The extent to which leadership styles, i.e., behavioural models, attract the attention of theoreticians and practitioners depends on the effectiveness of goal realisation. At the same time, it should be noted that the same leadership style can vary depending on the outcome, that is, on the factors that influence the leader's behaviour. Many researchers are faced with the question of how different styles differ and relate in terms of conceptualisation and measurement. Practitioners are often confused when deciding which styles should be prioritised when it comes to developing and promoting leadership within given time and resource constraints [5]. Yukl believes that constructs, i.e., behavioural models, are conceptual tools that are most useful when they can be accurately measured, predicted and explained, which confirms the justification of our research [35] (p. 466). Previous research on the effects of leadership behaviour has certain limitations that include differences in how behaviour is defined and measured that vary from study to study. Some of the researchers used a survey questionnaire, others applied different instruments such as critical incidents, journaling, observation, interviews to collect data on leader behaviour [35] (p. 459). Ulucan and Yavuz Aksakal (2022) applied the Fuzzy Topsis Method during the selection of leaders in the hospitality sector [68]. The application of the PIPRECIA method has not yet been used to evaluate the behaviour model of leaders or managers; that is, this method has not yet been applied to solve multi-criteria decision-making problems, especially in the public sector.

5.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study provides a perspective on the factors that influence the leader's behaviour and enhance the effectiveness of the leadership process. It contributes to closing the research gap when it comes to the model of leader behaviour that should be applied in accordance with the characteristics of the cultural group to which the Republic of Serbia belongs, with a special emphasis on the implementation of reforms in public sector.

As for the practical implications, the findings provide significant information to managers of public organisations on how to be effective and how to apply behavioural models that will give the best results in the process of implementing reforms. Moreover, the contribution of this paper is that it indicates the simplicity and applicability of the PIPRECIA method in practice. Furthermore, this study suggests to leaders and managers which behaviour model they should avoid, to reduce resistance to change, that is, to make

the implementation of the reform more efficient. The results of this study are also significant for policy makers in terms of planning and organising training programs for leaders and managers in public sector organisations.

5.2. Limitations and Future Research

Considering the existence of many leadership behaviour models, the limitation of this study is that only five behaviour models were considered. Another limitation refers to the fact that the weights of the criteria and alternatives, as well as their rankings, were performed on the basis of one decision-maker, which is suitable for bureaucratic organisations in the public sector. In this regard, it should be considered that most organisations are based on a shallower organisational structure, composed of teams, where Multiple leaders and Shared Leadership can occur. For this reason, further research should analyse the model with a larger number of decision-makers, especially if we take into account that it is possible to provide it with the PIPRECIA method. Additional research could include the evaluation of leader behaviour models in different organisational and cultural contexts, as well as the evaluation of factors when defining organisational strategies. Moreover, future research should be focused on the evaluation of factors when it comes to ethical practices, bearing in mind that research on ethical and responsible leadership is still limited [35] (p.467), especially when it comes to the public sector in the Republic of Serbia, which has not been sufficiently studied. When designing future research, it is significant to choose adequate methods in order to obtain valid results. Multi-criteria decision-making methods (MCDM) could be suitable for obtaining projections of factor evaluations as well as leadership behaviour in different contexts.

6. Conclusions

In this article, the new multi-criteria decision-making methods PIPRECIA was applied to determine criteria weights and to evaluate the models of leadership behaviour that have the greatest importance for the process of implementing public sector reforms. The results obtained by applying this method indicate that the criterion Individual competence has the greatest importance, as well as that the Charismatic model of leader behaviour stood out as the best solution for the process implementation of public sector reforms in the Republic of Serbia.

Public sector reform is institutional change, and leaders and managers are instruments for successful implementation of change [69]. When implementing reforms in the public sector, it should be considered that behavioural models change in accordance with the challenges and requirements of certain situations—that is, they follow an evolutionary course—as well as that behavioural models such as directive leadership can be difficult to adapt to changes. Bearing in mind that the charismatic model of leader behaviour is characterised by an emphasised vision and influence on employees and the fact that this model of behaviour is characteristic of the Eastern European cultural group to which the Republic of Serbia belongs, it is understandable that it was recognised as the model that has the greatest importance in the process of implementing reforms.

Regarding the specificity of public sector organisations, this study provides a good basis for further research when it comes to establishing sustainable leadership, which is essential for the process of implementing public sector reforms.

The results presented in this paper provide significant information to public sector leaders and managers on how to effectively manage reforms by applying multi-criteria decision-making methods (MCDM). Furthermore, the study suggests to the management which behavioural models should be applied in agreement with the cultural group, for the reform process to be effective. The study can be replicated in different sectors as well as in different cultural groups. In future research, it would be useful to apply this methodology to perform analyses of other models of behaviour in different sectors.

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