

REVIEW OF DOCTORAL THESIS

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Title: **The Catalytic Role of Leader: Research in the Public and Private Sector**
Prof. field: 3.3 “Political Sciences (Public Administration)”
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1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

1.1. Structure and volume

The dissertation consists of 148 textual pages, 28 pages of bibliography and 20 pages of appendices. It is structured in **two parts** – theoretical (with three chapters) and analytical (two chapters). The structure and volume represent very clearly the ideas and searches of the author. The text flows logically from the theoretical bases, reasoning and limitations to the actual field study performed by the doctoral student. The structure of thesis conforms to the general principles and requests for dissertations.

The first chapter presents the research infrastructure of the dissertation, stating the research problem and its importance and the questions and hypotheses to be tested. The second chapter contains a thorough literature review on the concepts of leadership and emotional intelligence, where Mr. Pavlidis has successfully explored, summarized and synthesized the most important features of these topics. Chapter 3 tries to differentiate characteristics of the public and the private sectors through the prism of leadership and emotional intelligence. Chapter 4 presents the methodology and statistical apparatus used at the field research. The final chapter logically discusses the research results and offers conclusions and recommendations.

The dissertation contains 16 figures and 24 tables that additionally illustrate, summarize or supplement the flow of ideas and evidences.

The construct of the doctoral thesis can be characterized as **logical and comprehensive**. It clearly demonstrates that Mr. Pavlidis has a deep rooted interest in introducing a more modern approach to leadership in both private and public entities and combines good theoretical research skills with practically oriented approach of organizing specialized trainings with a before-and-after check on the attitudes of the participants.

1.2. Topicality

The questions regarding the importance of leadership in turbulent times and the similarities and differences of the leadership approaches in the public and private sectors are undoubtedly quite interesting for all kinds of researchers. The transfer of leadership knowledge and skills from the private to the public sector is not a new phenomenon. Nevertheless, its appropriateness, effectiveness and impact are still under debate. Recently we are witnessing another facet of the same topic while business leaders and entrepreneurs enter the political arena.

On the micro level, the role of the leader in setting the stage for effective work conditions, retaining and motivating employees and assuring the success of the organisations (no matter public or private) is well documented and theorized. The new approach in pairing those challenges with the concept of emotional intelligence makes the PhD thesis topical and timely.

1.3. Research infrastructure

The consistent, logical and very clear **research infrastructure** should be outlined as an element of the doctoral study. It is presented in detail in chapter 1 and is very well summarized in the abstract.

As an **object** of the thesis I perceive the logical path from a leader to a transformative leader to an emotionally intelligent leader and the **subject** is the consequences that path has on the job satisfaction of the employees in both the public and the private sector. This is not clearly stated in chapter 1, but can be logically derived from the hierarchy of 1 goal and 8 sub goals, formulated by the PhD student.

The main **goal** to search for evidence on the “catalytic role of the leadership for the management and results of any organization” (see p.12) seems a little bit self-explanatory

and obvious. What puts it in a good perspective is the accompanying set of sub goals and the 11 interconnected to them research questions.

The PhD candidate works on 5 **hypotheses** (see p.14-15 of the dissertation) that stem from the existing theoretical literature and the available research data. It is interesting to mention that all those hypotheses expect to agree with the already available body of knowledge. Not one of them is challenging or rejecting what is known on the subject. This further emphasizes on the practical orientation of the study and makes it clearly methodological and applicable, not purely theoretical.

The field work covers both leaders and employees and is done in a series of researches. A very good approach is the training sessions done in-between the two phases of the study.

The high degree of coherence in the research infrastructure is even more clear in **Chapter 4**. There the author follows the “general to specific” logic and defends the research strategy, purpose and goals, the links between hypotheses and research methods and tools. The **statistical methods** are carefully chosen, fully adequate and appropriate to the aims and the hypotheses. There is no doubt in the quality of the conclusions based of the field study results.

The field research is of high quality and is the core of the dissertation. Its applicability is the strongest element of the doctoral study and stands out by itself. I recommend the author to publish that part of the study as a monograph as soon as possible.

1.4. Bibliography

The author has studied and used appropriate number of bibliography sources used and quoted in the thesis. The bibliography consists of 300 sources –in English and Greek and covering the wide array of topics that are discussed in the dissertation. This is an evidence of the deep theoretical knowledge and very good orientation in the problem discussed in the thesis. Most of the sources are published in the new century and about 10 per cent are from the last 5 years. I would recommend the list of the sources to be subdivided into the traditional categories of monographies, articles, reports, government sources, etc.

All the sources are registered according to the official requirements and are quoted in the text earnestly and according to the rules.

2. RESULTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

As already discussed, the dissertation is almost fully practically oriented. The **theoretical critical analysis work** is concentrated in the **second chapter**, that reviews in comparative perspective the main and established leadership theories vs. the new trends towards transformative and even e-leadership. I admire the approach not to summarize all that work in the official summary, as no unknown to the scientific community concepts are included. What's more, the author has been meticulous in his literature review.

Of more interest is the cross-over of leadership theories and models with the concept of emotional intelligence (EI). While studying the personal traits of leaders in all walks of life is not new, the EI perspective is still in the phase of testing and development. In that line, the **third chapter** of the dissertation is a good try on assessing the opportunities EI opens in the Greek public sector that suffers the same general problems as the Bulgarian one.

The results from the **field studies** are of high quality and quite informative. This is not a surprise, given the sound research methodology applied: combination of questionnaires and face-to-face meetings; the inclusion of both points of view – those of the leaders and the employees; the two-wave approach that actually tests the flexibility of traits and the opportunity to train the stakeholders on emotional intelligence sensitivity and techniques.

Mr. Pavlidis states that the dissertation has led to 4 contributions, that I accept as **practice-oriented and applicable**.

The first one, formulated as identifying characteristics of the so called “catalytic leadership”, is actually the core and main focus of the research. Pinpointing the emotional intelligence as a core trait of the successful leader and testing its actual role through the various field studies is an interesting contribution. The next three contributions – structuring methodologies on the analysis of leadership in action and from the perspectives of the management and the employees – are thoroughly tested and verified.

Some of the final proposals (see p.147-148) clearly indicate the abilities of critical thinking and scientific curiosity of the PhD student. They depict limitations that are not stated at the introduction of the methodology of the study, but have become relevant during the phases of the field work. Putting the methodology in different contexts (urban vs. rural; capital vs. province; male vs. female; civil servants vs. hired workers in the public sector; different national cultures) would undoubtedly enrich and validate the obtained results.

3. ASSESSMENT OF THE PUBLICATIONS AND THE ABSTRACT

The PhD research of Mr. Pavlidis has resulted in several publications. The abstract lists a total of eight papers (two still under print but confirmed by the publishers) published in the time frame 2004-2006 / 2022-2023. I see these two periods as an evidence that the author has a long lasting research interests in the topic that have been reinvigorated by his PhD studies.

The good culture of collaborative research becomes evident by the fact that 50% of the publications are written by two authors, one of them is a joint effort of the PhD student and his scientific supervisor.

It is important to mention that the publications are visible in scientific journals (as opposed to the usual preponderance of conference papers). The author has also published a book in 2022 on the subject of emotional intelligence and leadership in the workplace=

The abstract summarizes precisely and clearly (in 29 pages) the main ideas and theses of the author. The emphasis is on the research infrastructure and methodology, the main results and conclusions. The achievements of the dissertation are accurately presented.

4. NOTES, QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the research abilities of Ms. Pavlidis I would propose to intensify the validation of the models he has developed; to continue testing them in different contexts and to present the results to various stakeholders – not only the academia, but also business leaders, politicians and public servants.

To foster that process of discussion and refinement, I would like to hear the answers to several questions, as well as some general deliberations from the author. On the more specific side it would be interesting to understand:

- 1) How did you define the participating 33 managers as leaders? Did you have a back-up plan in case the selected 33 managers did not show leadership / EI traits?
- 2) Can you comment the influence of COVID on the field research results?
- 3) It is clear that any kind of organization would attain its goals easier and in a more inspired way when there is a leader ahead of it. But the transformative leadership is not the only option. Organizations fulfill their missions under transactional

leadership and even when managed and administrated. Is it more important to find the leadership figure in the private sector? The public sector? Or both?

- 4) In the discussion part of the thesis you state (and the research approves) that emotional intelligence and transformational leadership can be taught even to experienced adults. So, when hiring managers, should their “starting level” of EI matter? Whose responsibility is to find and develop people with leadership traits and EI, especially in the public sector?

Finally, the research infrastructure of goals, objectives, questions and hypotheses has not resulted in a clear statement of the leading research thesis. Would you try to formulate the thesis of your dissertation in **one sentence**?

5. CONCLUSION

The doctoral thesis “The Catalytic Role of Leader: Research in the Public and Private Sector” prepared by Nikolaos Pavlidis under the scientific supervision of assoc. prof. Albena Taneva, PhD **meets all the requirements** for gaining a PhD degree in “Public Administration”. Therefore, I would recommend the members of the honorable scientific jury to vote positive and **to adjudicate a doctoral degree to Nikolaos Pavlidis**.

Reviewer:

assoc. prof. Denitsa Gorchilova

June, 27th 2023

Sofia