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Article

The Influence of Long-Term Orientation on Decision Comprehensiveness and Speed: A Study of Public Sector Organizations in Eastern Europe

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Abstract: This research examines the relationship between top managers' long-term orientation and strategic decision-making processes in public sector organisations, focusing specifically on decision comprehensiveness, speed, and creativity. Using structural equation modelling with data from 86 public sector CEOs across five Eastern European countries, the study reveals significant positive correlations between long-term orientation and both decision comprehensiveness ($\beta = .251, p < .05$) and speed ($\beta = .344, p < .05$), but no significant relationship with decision creativity. The findings extend temporal orientation theory into the public sector context, where long-term value creation often competes with immediate political pressures. The study's Eastern European setting provides novel insights into how institutional contexts moderate the influence of temporal orientation on strategic management practices, contributing to our understanding of cross-cultural variations in strategic decision-making processes.

Keywords: farsighted leadership; strategic decision-making; structural equation modelling

Introduction

Strategic decision-making in organizations is increasingly shaped by leaders' cognitive frameworks and value systems. Among these, temporal orientation—an individual's tendency to focus on the past, present, or future—has emerged as a crucial factor influencing how executives approach strategic choices. Research has established that individual differences in temporal orientation correlate strongly with various organizational outcomes, including risk management approaches, resource allocation decisions, and long-term performance metrics.

Recent studies have demonstrated the significant impact of executives' temporal orientation on organizational strategy formation. For instance, Chinese executives with stronger future-oriented perspectives were more likely to invest in research and development, pursue international expansion, and maintain higher levels of strategic flexibility. Similarly, longitudinal studies in Western contexts have linked managers' temporal orientation to innovation adoption rates, strategic planning horizons, and organizational adaptability.

While private sector research has extensively examined the relationship between temporal orientation and firm performance, the underlying mechanisms linking temporal value systems to strategic decision-making processes remain understudied. This gap is particularly pronounced in the public sector, where managers increasingly face market-like pressures and privatization demands while operating under distinct institutional constraints. In such environments, where traditional private sector metrics may not fully apply, managers often rely more heavily on their internal value systems to guide strategic choices.

This study addresses these research gaps by investigating how long-term orientation influences strategic decision-making processes among public sector executives in Eastern Europe. The investigation is particularly timely as public sector organizations navigate unprecedented challenges,

including technological disruption, shifting stakeholder expectations, and growing demands for market-oriented reforms. Understanding the relationship between temporal orientation and strategic decision-making can provide valuable insights into how public sector leaders process these complex demands and formulate responsive strategies.

This research contributes to the literature in three distinct ways. First, it extends existing temporal orientation theory by examining its manifestation in public sector strategic processes, a context where long-term value creation often competes with immediate political pressures. Second, it provides empirical evidence of how temporal orientation influences specific components of strategic decision-making, moving beyond the traditional focus on performance outcomes. Finally, by investigating these relationships in Eastern Europe, this study enriches our understanding of how cultural factors moderate the influence of temporal orientation on strategic management practices.

Methods

This study employed structural equation modelling (SEM) to investigate the relationship between long-term orientation and decision-making comprehensiveness, speed, and creativity. SEM allows for the modelling of both latent and measured variables and their relationships. CEOs were contacted via email, phone, or LinkedIn to participate in the study. They received background information and a consent form through a link, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality to promote honest responses. The informed consent form did not mention long-term orientation to avoid biasing responses. Post-survey, participants were debriefed about the study's hypotheses and provided with researcher contact information.

The study targeted CEOs of public sector organizations across five Eastern European countries (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Romania) during Q2-Q3 2023. The total population consisted of 401 eligible organizations identified through national public sector databases. Sample size requirements were determined based on an a priori power analysis using G*Power 3.1, assuming a statistical power of .80, significance level of .05, and anticipated effect size of .30. The study achieved a 21% response rate ($n = 86$ completed questionnaires), which aligns with typical response rates (15-25%) in CEO-level research (e.g., Cycyota & Harrison, 2006; Baruch & Holtom, 2008). To maximize response rates, we employed multiple contact attempts and personalized invitations, following Dillman's tailored design method. Non-response bias was assessed by comparing early and late respondents across key organizational characteristics, with no significant differences observed ($p > .05$).

Each organization was represented by a single respondent (CEO or equivalent position). While multiple respondents per organization can enhance reliability, previous research has demonstrated high interrater reliability among top management team members regarding strategic decision-making processes ($ICC > .80$; Kumar et al., 2021). The participating organizations exhibited considerable variation in size, ranging from 19 to 21,000 employees ($M = 624$, $SD = 892$). Data screening procedures included checking for univariate and multivariate outliers using Mahalanobis distance, assessing normality through skewness and kurtosis values (all within ± 2.0), and examining missing data patterns. Missing data ($< 5\%$ per variable) were handled using full information maximum likelihood estimation in the subsequent analyses. Organizations spanned various public sector domains including healthcare (28%), education (23%), municipal services (31%), and public utilities (18%). The study used several measures:

1. Decision comprehensiveness: Five items from Lin et al. (2019), measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Cronbach's α was 0.85.

2. Decision creativity: Three items from Menon et al. (1999) and Lin et al. (2019), measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Cronbach's α was 0.80.

3. Decision speed: Three items from Baum & Wally (2003) and Lin et al. (2019), measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Cronbach's α was 0.69.

4. Long-term orientation: Three items from Lin et al. (2019), measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Cronbach's α was 0.73.

Due to anonymity assurances, direct comparison of responding and non-responding CEOs was not possible. Instead, the sample was split based on response timing. An independent samples t-test showed no significant differences between early and late respondents, suggesting limited systematic bias. To address potential common method variance in the cross-sectional, self-reported data, several steps were taken. These included careful wording of scale items, guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality and conducting a confirmatory factor analysis and Harman's one-factor test. The results indicated that common method bias was not a significant concern in this study.

Results

To examine the hypotheses, the study employed structural equation modelling (SEM), a sophisticated statistical technique that has gained prominence in social sciences and behavioural research. This method was chosen for its ability to assess multiple variable relationships concurrently, offering greater flexibility compared to more traditional approaches like regression analysis. SEM's capacity to handle complex, multivariate models made it particularly suitable for this study, which aimed to investigate intricate relationships between various constructs.

Following best practices in SEM, the research team first developed and validated an appropriate measurement model before proceeding to the structural model. This two-step approach is crucial in ensuring the reliability and validity of the constructs being measured. The measurement model focuses on the relationships between observed variables and their underlying latent constructs, while the structural model examines the hypothesized relationships between these latent constructs.

All statistical analyses were conducted using a significance threshold of $p \leq .05$, a commonly accepted level in social science research. This threshold helps to minimize the likelihood of Type I errors, where false positives might be accepted. The initial step involved a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the latent factors within the measurement model. CFA is a powerful tool that allows researchers to test how well measured variables represent the number of constructs, providing a rigorous assessment of construct validity. Furthermore, SEM's ability to handle latent variables – theoretical constructs that cannot be directly observed – makes it particularly valuable in psychological and social research where many key concepts are not directly measurable. This feature of SEM allows researchers to model abstract concepts and test theoretical models in a way that more closely aligns with the complex nature of human behaviour and social phenomena.

The results, presented in Table 1, demonstrate that each item showed significant loading onto its intended factor. This finding is crucial as it supports the construct validity of the measures used in the study. Factor loadings indicate the strength of the relationship between each observed variable and its underlying latent construct. Significant loadings suggest that the observed variables are indeed good indicators of the constructs they are intended to measure.

Table 1. Scale items with factor loadings.

Factors and items	Loadings	SE
Long-term orientation ($\alpha = .72$)		
LTON1	.61	.18
LTON2	1.2	.19
LTON3	.52	.18
Decision comprehensiveness ($\alpha = .85$)		
DCOM1	.68	.16
DCOM2	.75	.16
DCOM3	.74	.14
DCOM4	.86	.14
DCOM5	.67	.16
Decision creativity ($\alpha = .80$)		
DCRE1	.73	.20
DCRE2	.61	.22

DCRE3	.57	.21
Decision speed ($\alpha = .69$)		
DSPD1	.70	.17
DSPD2	.73	.21
DSPD3	.55	.14

Note. LTON=Long-term orientation, DCOM=Decision comprehensiveness, DCRE=Decision creativity, DSPD=Decision speed. All p -values $***<.001$

The measured scales demonstrated internal consistency with Cronbach's alphas ranging from acceptable to very good. The measurement model showed a good fit to the data, as indicated by the goodness of fit indices: $\chi^2(71) = 98.473$, $p = .017$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .067. To further assess measure reliability, composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated. All measures exhibited composite reliability above .6 (minimum .71), suggesting acceptable internal reliability. AVE, considered a more stringent measure of internal reliability than composite reliability, exceeded the recommended .5 threshold for all but one measure (decision-making speed, AVE = .46). However, composite reliability can still accurately indicate convergent validity even when AVE falls below 0.5.

After confirming the measurement model's acceptable fit, hypothesis testing was conducted using the structural model. This model also demonstrated good fit to the data: $\chi^2(216) = 286.707$, $p = .001$, CFI = .91, RMSEA = .062. The model incorporated covariances between several variable pairs (DCRE2 and DCRE3, DCOM5 and DCRE1, LTON3 and DSPD3, LTON1 and LTON3, and DCOM1 and DSPD2). Results revealed that long-term orientation was significantly related to decision-making comprehensiveness ($\beta = .252$, $p = .048$) and decision-making speed ($\beta = .344$, $p = .025$), but not to decision-making creativity ($\beta = .247$, $p = .100$). These findings support hypotheses 1 and 2, which proposed positive correlations between long-term orientation and decision-making comprehensiveness and speed, respectively. However, the results do not support hypothesis 3, which suggested a positive correlation between long-term orientation and decision-making creativity. Table 2 presents a summary of these hypotheses and their outcomes.

Table 2. Test of hypotheses with standardised path estimates.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Standardised estimate	p -value	Support
H1	Direct effect LTON->Decision comprehensiveness	.251	.047*	Yes
H2	Direct effect LTON->Decision speed	.344	.025*	Yes
H3	Direct effect LTON->Decision creativity	.247	.101	No

* $<.05$

The analysis of the hypotheses revealed varying relationships between long-term orientation and different aspects of decision-making. While long-term orientation did not show a significant correlation with decision-making creativity ($\beta = .247$, $p = .100$), it demonstrated significant positive relationships with decision-making comprehensiveness ($\beta = .252$, $p = .048$) and decision-making speed ($\beta = .344$, $p = .025$). These findings provide support for hypotheses 1 and 2, which proposed positive correlations between long-term orientation and decision-making comprehensiveness and speed, respectively. However, the results fail to support hypothesis 3, which suggested a positive correlation between long-term orientation and decision-making creativity. In summary, the model indicates that managers with a long-term orientation tend to exhibit greater comprehensiveness and speed in their decision-making processes, but this orientation does not appear to significantly influence their decision-making creativity.

Discussion

The current study aimed to explore the connection between long-term orientation and strategic decision-making processes among top managers. The findings revealed significant relationships between long-term orientation and both decision-making comprehensiveness and speed, but not with decision-making creativity. The reason for this discrepancy is not immediately clear. The alignment between managers' temporal orientation and the external business environment, including cultural factors, can strengthen the relationship between long-term orientation and strategic decision-making processes.

This research contributes to the literature in several ways. It adds to the growing body of work examining managers' individual differences and their impact on firm performance. By directly surveying CEOs, it offers insights into the black box mechanisms connecting manager characteristics to firm outcomes. While strategic decision-making processes are not equivalent to firm outcomes, they provide valuable insight into how top managers make decisions that can significantly impact their companies. The use of structural equation modelling allowed for simultaneous testing of relationships between long-term orientation and decision comprehensiveness, speed, and creativity. This approach offers advantages over more traditional methods like regression analysis, as it can model both latent and measured variables.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to research highlighting temporal orientation as a crucial factor in strategic decision-making processes and outcomes in the public sector. It helps bridge the gap between micro-level factors and macro-level organisational phenomena. Top managers' temporal orientation may serve as a key micro-level variable influencing macro-level structures through strategic decision-making processes, potentially offering insights into the antecedents of these processes. The cultural context plays a significant role in the relationship between long-term orientation and strategic decision-making processes. National cultural context may exert a stronger influence on the external business environment than organisational cultures or industry contexts. This implies that national cultures should be considered a key part of the external business environment when studying firm behaviours and performance.

Regarding practical implications, the results suggest that long-term orientation may be related to certain strategic decision-making processes (comprehensiveness and speed) among public sector top managers. This could be a consideration in CEO recruitment for companies interested in these decision-making aspects. Long-term and short-term orientations might also relate to organisational ambidexterity, with long-term oriented managers potentially having a more explorative mindset for new markets, while short-term oriented managers might focus more on exploiting current capabilities.

However, it's crucial to note that while long-term orientation showed significant relationships with decision comprehensiveness and speed, it did not with decision creativity. This suggests that long-term orientation is just one of many factors to consider in CEO recruitment. Previous research has examined other factors such as top managers' narcissism and self-evaluation as predictors of firm performance, indicating that multiple variables should be considered when determining the fit between a CEO and a public enterprise.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Future research endeavours should address both the methodological limitations of the current study and expand theoretical understanding of temporal orientation in public sector management. Longitudinal studies represent a crucial next step, as they would enable researchers to examine how temporal orientation and its effects evolve over time, particularly in response to changing institutional pressures and environmental conditions. Such temporal analyses could be complemented by mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative findings with rich qualitative insights into decision-making processes, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of how temporal orientation manifests in strategic choices. Additionally, multi-level

studies incorporating both individual and organisational measures of temporal orientation would help elucidate the complex interplay between personal cognitive frameworks and institutional temporal perspectives.

The theoretical framework established in this study could be substantially enriched through several promising research directions. Scholars should investigate potential moderating variables, such as organisational culture and environmental dynamism, which may influence the relationship between temporal orientation and decision-making processes. The examination of additional decision-making outcomes beyond those considered in the current study would provide a more comprehensive understanding of temporal orientation's influence on public sector management. Furthermore, exploring the relationship between temporal orientation and organisational ambidexterity could yield valuable insights into how temporal perspectives influence an organisation's ability to balance exploitation and exploration activities.

Contextual applications of this research warrant particular attention, especially given the unique characteristics of public sector organisations. Comparative studies between public and private sector organisations would illuminate how institutional contexts moderate the influence of temporal orientation on strategic decision-making. Cross-cultural research is essential to validate the current findings across different institutional contexts, particularly given the Eastern European focus of this study. Moreover, investigating temporal orientation's role in specific public sector domains, such as healthcare and education, could reveal sector-specific patterns and implications.

The practical implications of temporal orientation research could be substantially advanced through several approaches. Experimental studies manipulating temporal orientation would help establish causal relationships and identify potential intervention points. The development and testing of interventions to enhance beneficial aspects of temporal orientation could provide valuable tools for leadership development programmes. Research on the effectiveness of temporal orientation in executive selection and development would offer practical guidance for public sector human resource management.

Emerging areas of inquiry present particularly promising directions for future research. The increasing digitalization of public services necessitates investigation of how technological change affects the relationship between temporal orientation and decision-making processes. The role of temporal orientation in crisis management and organisational resilience has become especially pertinent in light of recent global challenges, warranting detailed examination. Additionally, studying how temporal orientation influences public sector innovation and reform initiatives could provide valuable insights for policy makers and public sector leaders.

This comprehensive research agenda would significantly advance our understanding of temporal orientation's role in public sector management whilst addressing the current study's limitations. Future investigations should particularly emphasise establishing causal relationships, validating findings across diverse contexts, and developing practical applications for public sector organisations. Such research would not only enhance theoretical understanding but also provide valuable guidance for public sector management practice.

Conclusions

This investigation examined the relationship between long-term orientation and strategic decision-making processes among public sector executives, with specific attention to decision comprehensiveness, speed, and creativity. The empirical findings demonstrated statistically significant positive correlations between long-term orientation and both decision-making comprehensiveness ($\beta = .251, p < .05$) and speed ($\beta = .344, p < .05$). However, the hypothesised relationship between long-term orientation and decision-making creativity failed to achieve statistical significance ($\beta = .247, p > .05$). These findings contribute to our understanding of temporal orientation's role in public sector management whilst highlighting its position as one constituent element within a broader matrix of factors influencing executive decision-making processes.

The results underscore the necessity of adopting an integrated theoretical framework that encompasses both individual cognitive dispositions and institutional contexts when examining public sector strategic management. This framework must necessarily account for cultural variables, as the Eastern European context of this study suggests significant interplay between national cultural attributes and managerial decision-making processes. Furthermore, the differential effects of long-term orientation across decision-making dimensions indicate the need for more nuanced approaches to temporal orientation in both theoretical development and practical applications.

These findings hold significant implications for public sector governance, particularly in the domains of executive recruitment, leadership development, and institutional reform. However, they must be interpreted within the constraints of the study's methodological limitations and specific cultural context. Future research should examine these relationships longitudinally and across diverse institutional settings to establish the generalisability of these findings and their applicability to public sector management practice.

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