

A Project entitled

***Investigating the influence of empowering leadership on job contentment within an educational institution.***

Submitted by

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submitted to The Education University of Hong Kong

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## Declaration

I, ***Siu Ping Ting***, declare that this research report / project report represents my own work under the supervision of ***Dr. Kwok Lai Yin, Percy***, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

***Siu Ping Ting***  
***15-4-2024***

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Literature Overview**

Empowering leadership is central to employee job contentment and organizational success. This research seeks to examine the effect of empowering leadership on job contentment within an educational institution (a through-train school at primary and secondary levels in Hong Kong). Topic for discussion will draw inspiration from Atik & Celik (2018)'s groundbreaking research studies regarding relationships between some school principals' empowering leadership styles and teachers' job contentment involving trust and psychological empowerment. However, during their empowerment of school leaders (principals and vice-principals), middle leaders such as executive officer and assistants were not fully explored as mediators in school administration and management literature. Being an Executive Management Bachelor Student myself, this area interests me deeply - I intend to investigate further by gathering relevant literature as support for my studies in this regard.

Empowering leadership refers to an approach which emphasizes employee autonomy, self-efficacy, and decision-making capabilities (Lee & Nie, 2014). Recently there has been growing curiosity regarding its influence on organizational results such as job contentment, workforce participation and dedication (Tuckey Bakker Dollard 2012).

Within any educational institution, school leaders play an essential role in shaping its workplace environment and increasing employees' job satisfaction levels (Hoy & Miskel 2013). Studies demonstrate a correlation between empowerment leadership and job contentment among educators (Bogler & Somech 2004). One study discovered that school leaders employing an empowering leadership style had an effectful and lasting influence on employees' job contentment as well as psychological empowerment (Atik & Celik, 2018). However, in

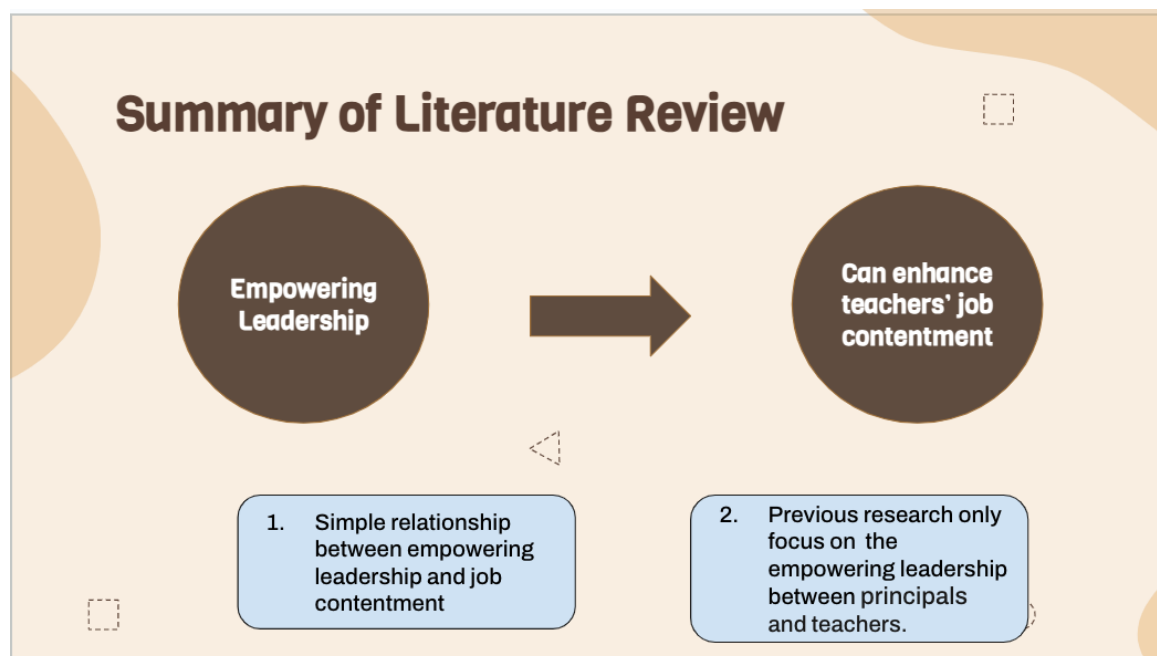
school administration and management research literature from previous decades during such empowerment of school leaders (principals and vice-principals), middle leaders' (executive officer and assistants) mediator role wasn't fully examined as middle leaders were seen only as intermediary functions (executive officer and assistants).

Study after study has also demonstrated how empowering leadership leads to increased organizational commitment levels among school staff as well as lower turnover intentions (Kim & Beehr 2018). Understanding how empowering leadership affects job contentment may provide important insight into creating more supportive school work environments - thus motivating my research direction.

To conclude, this research seeks to investigate how an empowering leadership style affects job contentment within an educational institution. Based on previous studies such as that conducted by Atik & Celik's paper only shows the effect principal and teacher empowerment. Empowering leadership has a direct correlation with increased job contentment among administrative staff members. Explored further, this topic will add new knowledge to existing research literature as well as offering school principals and executive officer insight on creating more empowering and satisfying work environments for employees. School Executive Officer play an indispensable role as mediators, encouraging effective communications and mediating conflicts within educational institutions. These officers serve as facilitators, working to bridge the divide among various stakeholders such as teachers, students, parents and administrative staff. By actively listening and responding to concerns or grievances they create an atmosphere conducive to open discussion and understanding between parties involved. School executive officer leverage their problem-solving abilities to mediate disputes and find mutually beneficial solutions, aiding harmony within their school community while upholding fairness and

maintaining order. Through mediation roles such as these, school executive officer is crucial in contributing to positive school operations.

(Figure 1)



## 1.2 Research Purpose and Research Questions

The research purpose is to investigate the influence of empowering leadership on job contentment within an educational institution. In particular, this research aims to determine the degree to which the empowering leadership approach of school executive officer and school principals influences administrative staffs' job contentment. Also, Atik & Celik (2018) merely investigate those relationships between some school principals' empowering leadership styles and teachers' job contentment. There is still a missing link between similar leadership style and the involved school administrators' job contentment. This is the main reason for me to do the research.

By delving into these aspects, the current research study seeks to add to the current body of knowledge on leadership and job contentment in the under-explored perspectives of school

administrative leaders, school office staff members, and other decision-makers in the middle leadership. These insights can be used to create a more empowering, satisfying, and supportive work environment for administrative staff, which may, in turn, lead to higher retention and increased job contentment. Here come the two core research questions:

1. What is the relationship between the empowering leadership approach of school executive officer and administrative staff members' job contentment?
2. How do different dimensions of empowering leadership influence administrative staff members' job contentment in intangible and tangible aspects?

*\*\*For the intangible and tangible aspects, there is no research literature in such distinction between tangible and intangible aspects. Therefore, it would be my focus in my research.*

### 1.3 Significance of the Study

This research is significant for several reasons, as it contributes to the understanding of the influence of empowering leadership on administrative staff members' job contentment and draws broader implications for their working performance, and staff retention. The key research areas include:

- 1. Enriching existing literature:** By investigating the influence of empowering leadership on job contentment within an educational institution such as the confidence in the school administration and the education institution's organizational climate. It provides valuable insights into the specific aspects of empowering leadership that are most closely associated with administrative staff's contentment, effectiveness, and commitment to their profession.
- 2. Improving leadership practices and professional development:** This research can aid school leaders, executive officer and professional development providers in recognizing empowering leadership behaviors which foster



improved job contentment among administrative staff. By adopting such behaviors, they can create more supportive work environments that help employees to perform at their maximum while nurturing professional growth and well-being simultaneously.

**3. Implications for Policy and Practice:** By offering evidence-based recommendations regarding empowering leadership's effect on job contentment, this research can act as a guide or suggest in policymaking processes and decision-making processes. Educational stakeholders including policymakers and school boards can use its findings to advocate for policies that foster empowering leadership practices which increase staff job contentment while contributing to overall school improvement. It further contributes to international research literature about middle leadership such as that from Tang et al 2022 which examines instructional middle leaders without considering administration as just part of middle leadership literature.

Overall, this study contributes significantly to our knowledge about empowering leadership and its effect on staff job contentment in schools. Furthermore, its findings offer school administrators, policymakers and educational stakeholders' practical strategies for creating an empowering, supportive work environment in order to foster staff happiness at work.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Background**

The mediator role of middle leaders (executive officer and assistants) was not fully investigated in school administration and management in the past research literature during such empowerment of school leaders (like principals and vice-principals).

### **2.2 Empowering Leadership in Schools**

Empowering leadership has gained increased attention in recent years as an effective leadership style that promotes employee autonomy, self-efficacy, and decision-making capabilities (Eldor & Harpaz, 2020). Within educational institutions, the research has found that empowering leadership can lead to diverse results, including educator motivation, dedication, job contentment, and innovation. (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2021).

Besides investigating the direct links between empowering leadership and employee outcomes, searchers have also explored potential mediating factors. For example, trust in the principal has been identified as an essential mediator, with empowering leadership fostering trust and, in turn, enhancing teacher job contentment and performance (Tschannen-Moran, 2021). Furthermore, psychological empowerment, characterized by feelings of autonomy, competence impact, and meaning, it has been discovered that certain factors mediate the connection between empowering leadership and favorable educator results, such as job contentment and dedication.

### **2.3 Staff's Job contentment**

Job contentment has been recognized as a crucial element affecting staff's involvement, effectiveness, and retention in their work. (Kim & Park, 2020). Studies have indicated

that empowering leadership can enhance staff's job contentment by cultivating a nurturing workplace atmosphere that grants them the freedom to exercise autonomy, develop their professional skills, share their expertise, and collaborate in decision-making (Smith et al., 2021; Moolenaar et al., 2021)

To contextualize executive staff members' job contentment in my research context, I will clearly define the group of employees you consider as executive staff members in my research context. This could include senior managers or individuals holding leadership positions within the school. Also, I will explore the factors that are particularly relevant to executive staff members' job contentment. Executives may face unique challenges such as strategic decision-making, managing teams, and dealing with organizational complexities. Consider how these factors may influence their job contentment differently. Then, I will review existing research literature which conducts a thorough review of existing research or studies that specifically focus on executive staff members' job contentment such as the paper from Atik & Celik (2018) merely investigate those relationships between some school principals' empowering leadership styles and teachers' job contentment. Lastly, I will collect data while conducting primary research, design surveys, interviews and observation or other data collection methods specifically tailored to executive staff members. Seek their perspectives on job contentment, the influence of empowering leadership. This will provide firsthand insights into their experiences and help me gather data to support my research.

## **2.4 Individual Factors and Empowering Leadership**

Existing research suggests that individual factors, such as staff's years of experience, personal characteristics, and cultural context, can influence the connection between job contentment and empowering leadership (Brown & Moshavi, 2022; Huang & Li, 2021).

For instance, experienced staff may respond differently to empowering leadership than their less-experienced counterparts, possibly due to differences in self-efficacy, professional development needs, and expectations for autonomy and participation in decision-making (Wang et al., 2019; Liu & Zhang, 2021)

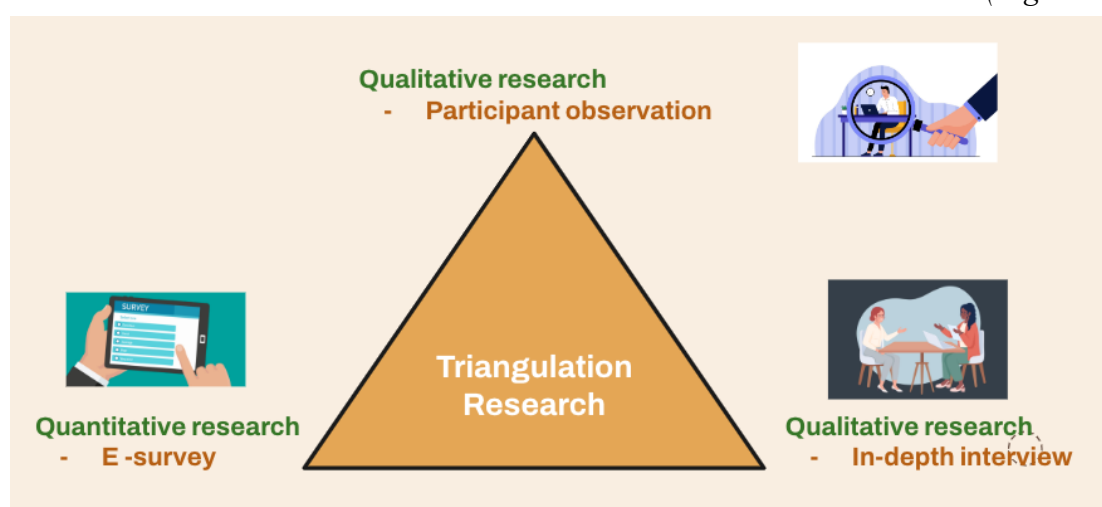
### **3. Research Design & Implementation**

#### **3.1 Research Methodology and Methods**

During my internship and part-time school administration job at an educational institution, the data collection strategy could employ a mixed-methods research design that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative techniques. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Notably, participation observation was one feasible qualitative research method. My first-hand interview and observational data strengthen the credibility of the research. This approach will enable me to capitalize on my presence at the school by collecting in-depth qualitative data such as I will have a 10–20-minute interview with each informant for asking about their real experiences, in addition to administering the quantitative survey which focus on finding whether the staff also agree with the empowering leadership is directly connected to job contentment. Apart from that, this research will follow the guidance of the paper of “Interviewing in Educational Research” such as preparing, conducting, reporting and analyzing interviews (Powney, J., & Watts, M., 1987). This thesis employs a mixed-method approach based on cross-method triangulation (Denzin, 2015), which promotes the use of several data collection techniques and makes it possible to comprehend how empowering leadership affects job contentment in an educational setting. Using mixed methods can be complementary strengths because qualitative methods focus on capturing rich and nuanced data, exploring complex phenomena, and generating in-depth understanding as my in-depth

interview. I drill very deep to ask them the question. On the other hand, quantitative methods focus on measuring and quantifying variables. Combining the strengths of both approaches can make the research more comprehensive and not only rely on a single method. To simultaneously try to make up for the flaws and deficiencies of any one approach, it is also able to increase the reliability of the data analysis results of this study (Noble & Heale, 2019).

(Figure 2)



### 3.2 Quantitative Data Collection

As part of my internship, I will have the opportunity to interact with the executive officer and administrative staff members at the school, which will facilitate the administration of the survey. I can distribute a paper or an online version of the survey to the staff at E-survey, making sure to adhere to the ethical requirements, such as obtaining informed consent and ensuring confidentiality. (Bryman, 2016).

### 3.3 Qualitative Data Collection

In addition to the quantitative data the participation observation can help me get the firsthand data and the 10-20 minutes interview can in-depth know about the real

experiences of empowering leadership. It can be conducted to obtain more comprehensive insights into their perspectives on empowering leadership and job contentment. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). These interviews can explore topics such as:

- Have the interviewees ever experienced that empowering leadership? (e.g. authority empowering leadership? Coaching empowering leadership? Distributed empowering leadership?)
- Any real experiences from them are related to the empowering leadership?
- Any other experiences that are also related to empowering leadership?
- Do you agree that empowering leadership directly affects the job contentment of intangible and tangible?

*\* All these technical terms need contextual elaborations using daily life examples for clarification as the interviewees lack research background.*

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

In order to handle qualitative data in a more contextualized manner, I will employ content analysis or thematic analysis methods. Through these approaches, I will carefully examine the transcriptions of interviews or focus group discussions to identify patterns, themes, and categories that emerge within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The data handling procedure will involve systematic data coding, rigorous theme identification, and comprehensive interpretation of the results, all of which will be conducted in alignment with the study's specific goals and research objectives. This contextualized approach will provide a deeper understanding of the qualitative data and enable meaningful insights to be drawn from the analysis.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Characteristics of empowering leadership

- By summarizing the paper “Psychological Empowerment in the Workplace: Dimensions, Measurement, and Validation (Spreitzer, G. M, 1995).

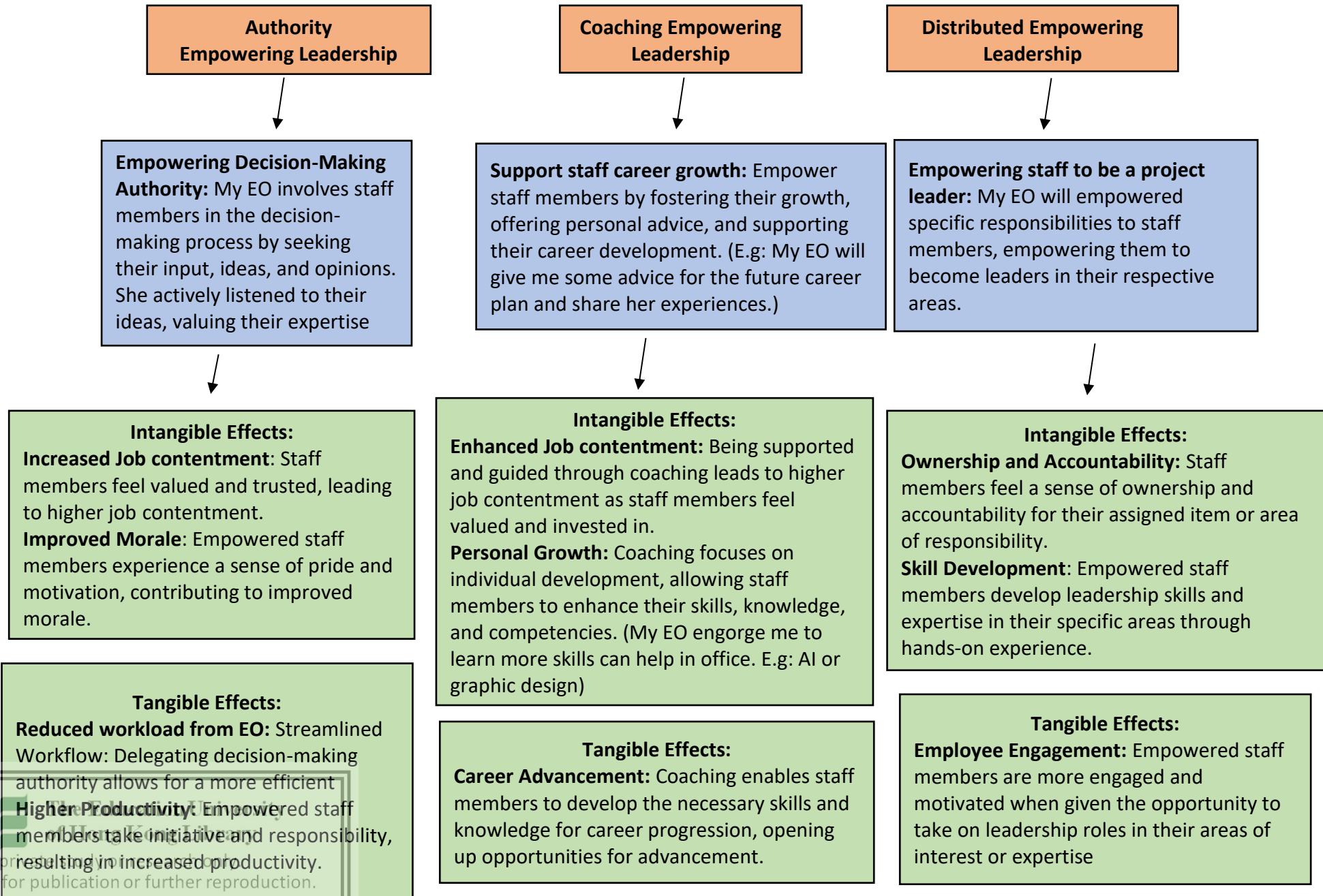
(Table 1)

Characteristics	Explanation
1. Trust and autonomy	<p>Empowering leaders trust their team members and provide them with autonomy to make decisions and take ownership of their work. They delegate authority and encourage individuals to use their judgment and expertise.</p> <p><i>Mixed with Participant Observations (Table 1): E.g.: My school EO provide them to make decisions and encourage them to speak up their thoughts</i></p>
2. Supportive and collaborative	<p>Empowering leaders create a supportive and collaborative environment where team members feel valued and encouraged. They foster open communication, active listening, and provide resources and support to help individuals succeed.</p> <p><i>Mixed with in-deep interview results: E.g. My school EO always listen to their thoughts and advice, and it is an open communication.</i></p>
3. Development and growth	<p>Empowering leaders prioritize the development and growth of their team members. They identify and nurture individual strengths, provide opportunities for learning and skill-building, and offer constructive feedback to help individuals improve and reach their full potential.</p> <p><i>Mixed with in-deep interview results: Feeling that her potential has been fully realized, Ms. B likes children very much, so EO arranged a student attendance job for her so that she always can interact with children.</i></p>

<p>4. Shared vision and goals</p>	<p>Empowering leaders align their team members around a shared vision and goals. They communicate a clear and inspiring vision, involve team members in goal setting, and ensure that everyone understands how their work contributes to the overall objectives.</p> <p><i>Mixed with in-deep interview results: E.g. My school EO will clearly say what is the task and everyone understand the objectives.</i></p>
<p>5. Coaching and mentoring</p>	<p>Empowering leaders act as coaches and mentors to their team members. They provide guidance, support, and feedback to help individuals develop their skills, overcome challenges, and achieve their goals.</p> <p><i>Mixed with Participant Observations (Table 1): E.g. My school EO will encourage me to learn more advanced skills such as AI or graphic design)</i></p>



4.2 My Participant Observations (in triangulation with interview data) at the school (Figure 3)



### 4.3 Participant Observations:

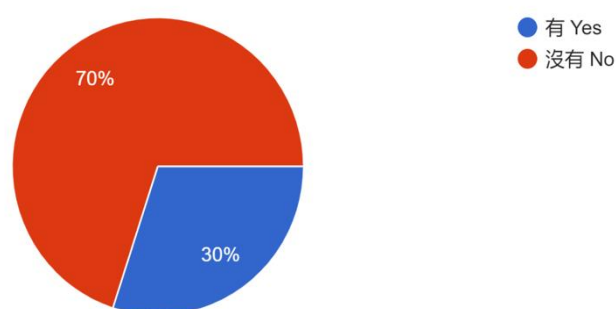
1. Authority Empowering Leadership is an empowering leadership style that empowers employees by engaging them in decision-making processes and actively listening to their input during decision making processes. An example would be when an executive officer seeks out opinions of staff during decision making processes and actively listens for input from them during this approach to decision making, actively listening for their opinions during discussions, seeking job contentment from staff members as a result, improved morale among staff as a result and reduced workload for themselves while producing higher productivity from staff - this type of leadership style not only fosters ownership among employees but also produces positive outcomes within organizations themselves.
2. Coaching empowering leadership is focused on supporting the career growth of staff members (Spreitzer, G. M, 1995). An example of this is when my executive officer provides personal advice for my future and shares her own experiences with me. This approach has both tangible and intangible effects. The intangible effects include enhancing job contentment by making staff members feel valued and fostering personal growth by allowing them to enhance their skills with the guidance of the executive officer, who acts as a coach. On a tangible level, this leadership style opens up opportunities for career advancement. By providing support and guidance, the executive officer empowers staff members to take ownership of their professional development and ultimately pursue new and rewarding opportunities within the organization.

3. Distributed empowering leadership that involves empowering staff members to become project leaders in their respective areas. By granting staff members the opportunity to lead projects, they can develop and hone their leadership skills and expertise through hands-on experiences. This leadership style has both tangible and intangible effects. The intangible effects include a heightened sense of ownership, accountability, and skills development among staff members. They feel more engaged and motivated when given the opportunity to be project leaders. On a tangible level, employee engagement increases, leading to higher levels of motivation, productivity, and overall team performance.

#### 4.4 Survey result analysis: (10 people from different department of administrative staff)

1. Empowering leadership which is an effective leadership style that focuses on employee autonomy, self-efficacy, and decision-making capability. Have you heard or have any idea of empowering leadership before?

10 responses



(Figure 4)

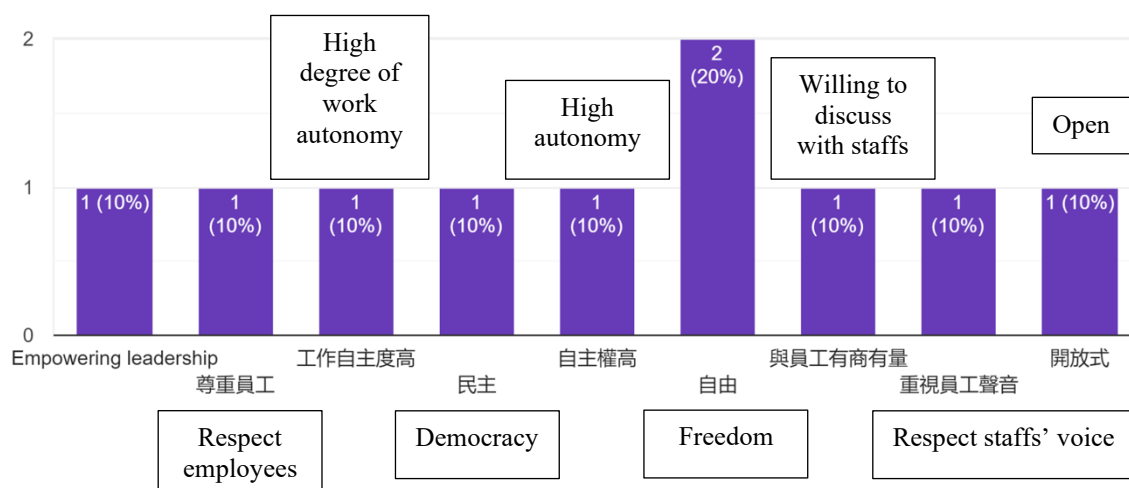
The survey results indicate that 70% of the clerks surveyed have not heard or are not familiar with the concept of empowering leadership. This finding aligns with the literature review, which emphasizes the need to investigate the influence of empowering leadership on job

contentment within an educational institution. It suggests that there may be a lack of awareness or exposure to empowering leadership concepts among administrative staff members.

## 2. What kind of leadership style is that school running?

(Figure 5)

10 responses



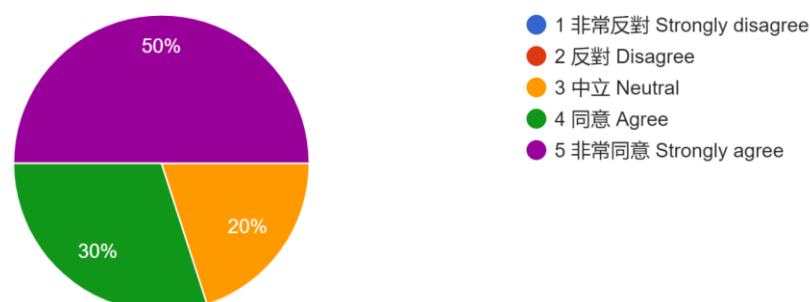
The responses indicate that the school is perceived to be implementing leadership styles that emphasize empowerment, respect for staff, high work autonomy, democracy, freedom, open communication, and paying attention to employee voices. These leadership styles align with the concept of empowering leadership mentioned in the previous section, which focuses on employee autonomy, self-efficacy, and decision-making capability.

The presence of empowering leadership indicates that the school values and encourages employee involvement and participation in decision-making processes. This leadership style has the potential contentment.

(Figure 6)

3. Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree" and 5 represents "Strongly Agree," please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:  
"The school executive officers encourage staff to take part in decision-making processes."

10 responses

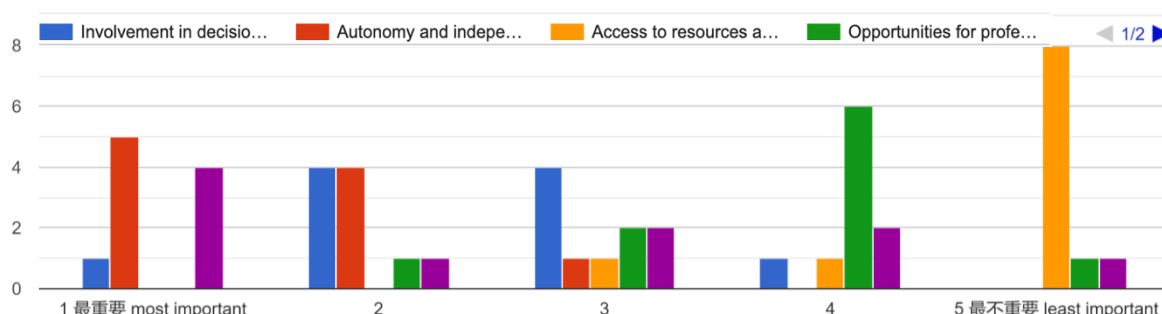


The survey results indicate that a majority of the respondents (80%) either strongly agree or agree that the school executive officer encourage staff to participate in decision-making processes. This finding suggests a positive perception among the clerks that the school values and employee involvement in decision-making.

The high percentage of respondents who strongly agree indicates that a significant portion of the staff perceives a strong commitment from the school's executive officer in encouraging their participation. This can contribute to a sense of empowerment, ownership, and job contentment among the staff members.

(Figure 7)

4. Please rank the following aspects of empowering leadership in order of importance to your job contentment (1 = most important, 5 = least important):



Survey results demonstrate that autonomy and independence were the two key aspects of empowering leadership that contributed to job contentment among respondents, aligning with its fundamental principles - giving employees more freedom to make decisions, control over their workload, and accept ownership for responsibilities assigned.

A high ranking for autonomy and independence indicates that respondents value having the authority and flexibility to complete tasks and make decisions without excessive micromanagement or constraints from others. This underscores the necessity of empowered leadership to foster trust, competence, and job contentment among clerks.

(Figure 8)

5. How do you think empowering leadership affects your working practices and your working outcomes such as intangible or tangible affect?

10 responses

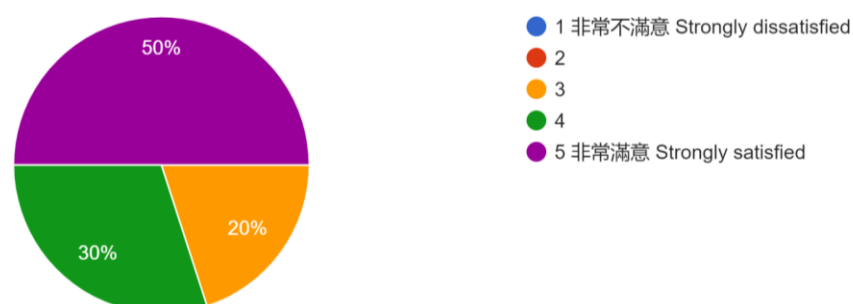
歸屬感	1. Sense of belonging
對自己要工作的部份, 更加上心	2. Be more attentive to the part they have work on.
滿足感, 因為覺得自己意見被高層重視	3. A sense of satisfaction because the opinions being valued.
工作效率高	4. High working efficiency
開心, 不會覺得返工是一種壓力	5. Happy and no pressure
對工作的主動性有提升	6. Increased initiative in work
因為上司會給予職業生涯規劃建議, 對我工作上及個人發展幫助很大	7. Helpful to their work and personal development because the EO will give advice.
對工作充滿熱誠	8. Passionate
成就感	9. Sense of achievement

In summary, empowering leadership can have a tremendously positive effect on many aspects of working practices and tangible or intangible results, including employee engagement, productivity and organizational success. Empowerment leadership fosters belonging, improve attentiveness, increase contentment and efficiency as well as foster happiness, stimulate initiative, provide career support ignite passion create a sense of achievement contribute positively towards a productive working atmosphere and contribute towards overall organizational success. These effects lead to improved employee engagement productivity and organizational success resulting in overall organizational growth.

(Figure 9)

6. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "strongly dissatisfied" and 5 being "strongly satisfied," how satisfied are you with the level of autonomy you have?

10 responses



Based on the survey results (Figure 9), most respondents (50%) expressed strong contentment with the level of autonomy provided to them in their workplace environment, with another significant portion (30%) reporting they felt content and 20% remaining neutral.

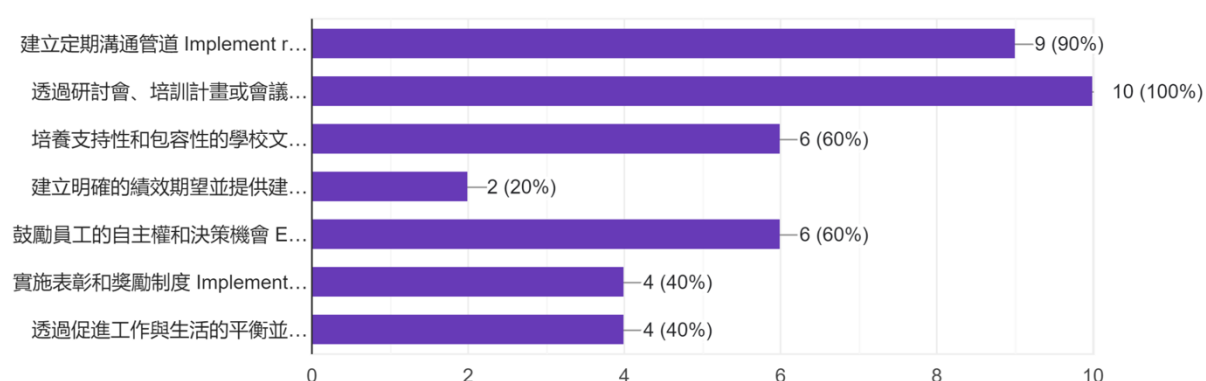
Overall, high employee contentment with level of autonomy demonstrates how empowering leadership practices have positively influenced employee working practices and outcomes. They have contributed to greater motivation, engagement, problem-solving innovation job contentment learning development which all lead to tangible benefits such as productivity increases quality work employee retention success overall organizational success.



(Figure 10)

7. In your opinion, what specific actions can the school executive officer or other administrators take to further promote empowering leadership and enhance job satisfaction among staff? Please feel free to choose from the following options or provide your own suggestions:

10 responses



- ☐ Implement regular communication channels
- ☐ Provide opportunities for professional development and growth through workshops, training programs, o...
- ☐ Foster a supportive and inclusive school culture
- ☐ Establish clear performance expectations and provide constructive feedback
- ☐ Encourage autonomy and decision-making opportunities
- ☐ Implement recognition and reward systems
- ☐ Create a positive work environment by promoting work-life balance and prioritizing employee well-being.

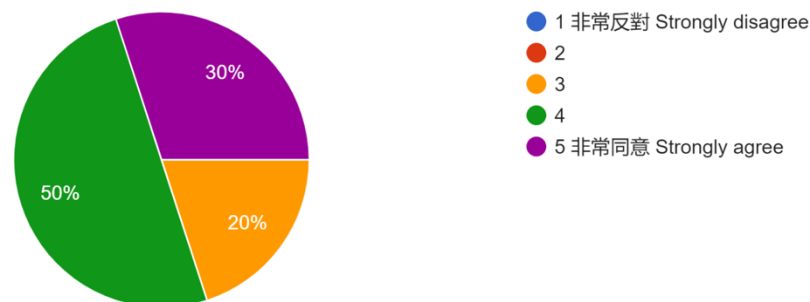
As shown in figure 10, respondents from all departments selected workshops, training programs or conferences as opportunities to promote professional growth and development as options of professional development and growth. This figure shows the selection rate across these three options by respondents from this study (90-100% of them respectively). Staff members seem to agree on the value of taking these actions, demonstrating a high degree of consensus within the staff about its significance. Offering opportunities like these is vital in order to foster empowerment leadership and enhance job contentment among staff members.

Administrators can leverage workshops, training programs or conferences as means for employees to enhance their knowledge, acquire new skills and remain up-to-date on industry innovations. Such investment in professional development demonstrates their dedication and support of staff growth and development. Staff development programs allow employees to explore areas for both professional and personal advancement while remaining engaged at work. Administrators create an environment which values continuous learning and promotes job contentment among their staff, leading them to feel empowered, motivated, and satisfied in their roles - leading ultimately to enhanced performance and organizational success.

(Figure 11)

8. Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree" and 5 represents "Strongly Agree," please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:  
"Empowering leadership greatly affects job contentment in tangible and intangible aspects"

10 responses



Based on our survey results, respondents showed an overwhelming level of agreement regarding the positive influence that empowering leadership had on job contentment. A majority either strongly agreed or agreed with statement: "Empowering Leadership Greatly Affects Job Contentment", showing how its implementation affected both tangible and intangible forms of happiness within employees' overall job contentment levels.

Empowering leadership involves giving employees autonomy, support, and opportunities for advancement. Doing so creates a work environment in which employees feel more engaged with their roles - motivated and fulfilled in them! By giving workers ownership over their duties as well as the sense of respect from management that empowering leadership promotes, more employees experience job fulfillment with increased job contentment levels.

#### 4.5 Interview results analysis:

(Table2)

<u>Mr. A (Office clerk- Engineering)</u>	
Does empowering leadership affect job contentment?	<p><b>Intangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Ownership</u></b>: EO gives him a sense of responsibility for his work, and he will personally do all school project-related matters.</li> <li>● <b><u>A great sense of contentment</u></b>: He can work in his profession without being controlled by others, and his suggestions are even used by the management, which is very satisfying.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>High productivity</u></b>: He likes this working environment and wants to improve the school environment. He often thinks of many suggestions. Many school facilities have been improved under his work.</li> </ul>

#### Intangible Effects:

**Ownership:** Empowering leadership allows Mr. A to feel an enhanced sense of ownership and responsibility over their work, increasing job contentment by giving employees more control and autonomy over their tasks. This in turn increases job contentment.

**Sense of Contentment:** Empowered leadership that values Mr. A's suggestions can create an enjoyable work environment, providing employees with a sense of fulfillment and contentment - increasing job contentment at the same time.

### **Tangible Effects:**

**High Productivity:** By encouraging employees to actively contribute their ideas and suggestions, empowered leadership encourages employees to become actively engaged with school facilities improvement resulting in higher productivity. One such individual showed this high productivity through constantly coming up with ways to upgrade school facilities - this tangible outcome demonstrated job contentment as well as motivation to make positive impacts within their profession.

*(Table 3)*

Specific example under the empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school EO is not very familiar with the engineering, but she would admit that she did not understand.</li><li>• Unlike other bosses who "pretend to understand"</li><li>• She listened to Mr. L's suggestions and trusted his work.</li><li>• She let him participate in decision-making and made him feel that his professionalism was respected.</li></ul>
Any examples of bad experiences of leadership at other schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other EO need all their colleagues to obey her.</li><li>• Denied his professional advice and instead believed in information on the internet or experiences of other schools, but in fact it was not applicable to our school.</li><li>• He felt that he was not valued and respected. He was very unhappy at work, so he resigned at last.</li></ul>

Memory and perception of the interviewee, Mr. A show the negative impacts of poor management on staff contentment, including demands for absolute obedience from colleagues, disregarding professional advice, listening only to dubious sources, failing to respect and value employees and failing to respect and value employees properly - experiences which led to an less positive work environment and reduced job contentment, leading to decreased contentment levels resulting in resignation.

There are multiple examples of how effective leadership can positively influence job contentment. The Executive Officer who acknowledges her lack of engineering knowledge

compared to many managers who pretend otherwise. By being open and honest about this fact, she fosters an atmosphere of honesty and trust between co-workers that leads to improved communications between team members.

Mr. A's professional and technical expertise was respected by actively listening to his suggestions. To empower Mr. A, they included him in decision-making processes while recognizing his value to the organization. By including Mr. A in a positive and stimulating work environment.

Leadership's impact on employee contentment is clear from these examples. A lack of leadership marked by demands to obey, disregard for professional advice, or feelings of disrespect can quickly cause employee dissatisfaction or resignation; while an empowered leadership that includes transparency, active listening, and trust fosters an environment in the workplace where employees feel respected and valued - which contributes to increased staff's job contentment, and organizational success.

**Ms. B (Office clerk)**

Does empowering leadership affect job contentment?	<p><b>Intangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Ownership:</u></b> She once asked for sick leave, but she knew that other colleagues were not familiar with how to operate it, so she insisted on taking roll calls remotely at home early in the morning. She said, “I have a stronger sense of responsibility for this task.”</li> <li>● <b><u>Happiness:</u></b> She thinks that EO assigned their job based on their personality and she likes interacting with children.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>High Productivity:</u></b> It is because the empowering leadership style builds up Miss M’s sense of responsibility and initiative, many things are done extra by her.</li> </ul>
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**Intangible Effects:**

**Ownership:** Ms. B shows a strong feeling of ownership when he or she takes on extra responsibilities while sick. It is clear that empowered leadership encourages accountability and commitment to their work. The increased sense of ownership and control can lead to greater job contentment, as the employee feels more in charge.

**Happiness:** Ms. B is happy with his or her job and enjoys interacting with kids. By aligning their job roles to their strengths and interests, a leader who is empowered can increase job contentment by considering the personalities of employees when assigning them tasks.

**Tangible Effects:**

**High Productivity:** Increased productivity has been achieved by the empowering style of leadership, as individuals are willing to take on additional tasks. It suggests the person feels empowered and motivated to do more than their duties. The increased productivity may contribute to job contentment as this signifies an overall sense of achievement and fulfillment in the work.

(Table 5)

Specific example under the empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The EO will accompany her to solve the problem.</li><li>• High degree of autonomy (The EO seldom control her work)</li><li>• Have the right to speak and decision-making power in communication.</li><li>• Feeling that her potential has been fully realized, Miss B likes children very much, so EO arranged a student attendance job for her so that she always can interact with children.</li><li>• EO would share her experiences which benefited her a lot and the EO is like her coach to guide her.</li></ul>
Any examples of bad experiences of leadership at other schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask her keep working after her working hours.</li><li>• Often asks about the working progress and even has a checklist. She felt like being checked like those primary students.</li></ul>

Poor leadership can have a negative effect on the staff's job contentment. The leader in these situations asks the employees to continue working beyond their working hours. This can create a feeling of overwork and may even interfere with work-life harmony. The leader may also make the employees feel undervalued and micromanaged by asking them to check their work and using a checklist.


Examples of the impact that effective leadership has on employee contentment are given under the empowerment leadership. The EO accompanies an employee in solving problems. They show support and foster a collaborative working environment. The high level of autonomy that the EO grants allows an employee to be in control of her own work. This promotes a feeling of empowerment and trust.

The employee's opinions are respected and valued, and she is granted the right to communicate and make decisions. The EO acknowledges that the employee is passionate about working with

children, and therefore arranges for her to have a job in student attendance. This allows her to realize her full potential and do meaningful work aligned with her interests.

The EO also serves as a mentor and coach to the employee by sharing her experiences and giving guidance. The relationship is supportive and encourages job contentment, growth, and development.

(Table 6)

<u>Ms. C (Office clerk)</u>	
Does empowering leadership affect job contentment?	<p><b>Intangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Sense of belonging:</u></b> She thinks that the relationship between EO and her is like a friend.</li> <li>• <b><u>Sense of achievement:</u></b> EO doesn't interfere much.</li> <li>• <b><u>Personal growth:</u></b> The decision making can train Miss K's adaptability and enhance her work experience and ability.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tangible</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>High working initiative:</u></b> She is responsible for and will take the initiative to prepare in advance.</li> <li>• <b><u>High productivity:</u></b> She doesn't mind OT which achieves the "Maslow hierarchy of needs" of self-actualization. (McLeod, 2018)</li> </ul> 

### Intangible Effects:

**Sense of Belonging:** Ms. C's perception of the relationship with the empowering leader is friendly. This indicates a strong feeling of belonging. The sense of belonging and connection can lead to improved job contentment by encouraging positive relationships with co-workers and creating a supportive environment.



**Sense of Achievement:** Ms. C feels that their leader is not very intrusive, indicating that they are independent and autonomous in the work that they do. The freedom of making decisions and taking ownership of tasks may enhance the sense of accomplishment, increasing job contentment and happiness.

**Personal Growth:** A leadership style that empowers decision-making, autonomy and empowerment can lead to personal development. Participating in the decision-making process allows an individual to develop adaptability, gain work experience and build a strong sense of professional growth. Personal growth has a positive impact on job contentment.

**Tangible Effects:**

**High Working Initiative:** Ms. C taking responsibility and actively planning ahead for tasks indicate a strong sense of ownership and motivation that contributes to job contentment through providing a sense of achievement and fulfillment in their jobs.

**High Productivity:** When Ms. C work overtime to fulfill self-actualization needs as defined by Maslow's hierarchy of needs, their dedication and drive shine through in their actions. Such high productivity can enhance job contentment by giving a sense of fulfillment and achievement through work.

(Table 7)

Specific example under the empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High degree of autonomy: EO will let her solve the problem and train her problem-solving skills.</li><li>• Have the right to speak and decision-making power in communication.</li><li>• She feels she is 100% trusted by EO at work.</li><li>• Feel that her potential is fully realized because she is good at paperwork.</li><li>• EO encourages her to study English so that can help her with promotions.</li></ul>
Any examples of bad experiences of leadership at other schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anything needs to be reported.</li><li>• The boss likes to judge without any constructive suggestions.</li><li>• No autonomy</li><li>• High pressure at work</li><li>• Hard to build a sense of belonging.</li><li>• One of the reasons for resignation was that she didn't like his boss's leadership style.</li></ul>

There is a real example from Ms. C. Poor leadership can have a negative effect on the staff's job contentment. Ms. C are forced to disclose everything in these situations, which creates a culture that is excessively monitored and lacks trust. Demotivation is caused by the boss's tendency of judging without providing constructive feedback. Absence of autonomy at work and high-pressure levels can lead to dissatisfaction and can hinder the sense of belonging of employees. This can lead to a resignation because of these negative experiences. An incompatible style of leadership can have a significant impact on staff contentment.

In contrast, the empowerment leadership provides specific examples of the positive effect that effective leadership has on the staff's contentment. This EO gives the employee a great deal of autonomy to help her solve problems. The employee feels more confident and takes ownership of her work when she has this level of autonomy.

Ms. C's opinions are respected and valued. She is also given the power to communicate and the right of decision making. She feels 100% trust by their EO, which increases confidence and contentment at work. The EO acknowledges an Ms. C's strengths and offers opportunities to utilize them, for example by utilizing their skills with paperwork. She feels fulfilled and satisfied when her skills are recognized and utilized.

The EO also encourages her to learn English to show that she is committed to growth and development. She is motivated and has better career prospects when they are given support to advance personally and professionally.

These examples demonstrate the impact that leadership has on employee contentment. Ineffective leadership, including excessive monitoring, a lack constructive feedback, limiting autonomy and high stress, can result in a decreased sense of job contentment and belonging. A positive workplace and increased staff's job contentment can be achieved by empowering practices such as autonomy, decision-making authority, trust, recognition, and growth support, etc. Leadership strategies that emphasize trust, autonomy and development have the potential to positively impact employee's job contentment and well-being.

**Ms. D (Office clerk)**

Does empowering leadership affect job contentment?	<p><b>Intangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Happiness:</u></b> Like feeling of being trusted</li> <li>● <b><u>Sense of belonging:</u></b> She thinks the working atmosphere under the EO leadership style is very friendly.</li> <li>● <b><u>High working motivation:</u></b> She don't want to betray EO's trust, so she tries her best to do every task well.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Report more duty day:</u></b> She thinks she works very happily and will work whenever she has free time.</li> </ul>
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**Intangible Effect:**

**Happiness:** Ms. D experiences a feeling of being trusted under the empowering leadership style. This trust can contribute to job contentment by fostering a positive emotional state and job contentment.

**Sense of Belonging:** Ms. D found the working environment with her EO's welcoming, providing her with an atmosphere conducive to camaraderie and support among colleagues that enhanced job contentment.

**High Working Motivation:** Ms. D is highly motivated to do well and do her work right by not betraying the trust of EO, which provides her with a sense of responsibility and commitment in her job that enhances job contentment by giving purpose and fulfillment in what they are doing.

**Tangible Effects:**

**Reporting More Duty Days:** As Ms. D is a part-time staff, She willingly reported more duty days while she worked whenever they had free time - this indicates her high level of job contentment, finding joy in their work while making extra efforts voluntarily.

**Ms. E (Executive officer, Department head)**

Does empowering leadership affect your subordinates job contentment by your observation?	<p><b>Intangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Good working atmosphere:</u></b> She has a good relationship with colleagues.</li> <li>● <b><u>Sense of belonging:</u></b> Strong team spirit.</li> <li>● <b><u>High working motivation:</u></b> She observed that some of the subordinates are very dedicated to their work, and she rarely has to rush them to work.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>High productivity:</u></b> All subordinates have responsibility and ownership for the work they are responsible for. She has noticed that some subordinates do not mind OT completing their work.</li> </ul>
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**Intangible Effects:**

**Good Working Atmosphere:** The EO has a good relationship with their colleagues, indicating a positive working atmosphere. This positive relationship can contribute to job contentment by fostering a supportive and collaborative work environment.

**Sense of Belonging:** The strong team spirit observed by the EO suggests a sense of belonging among the team members. This sense of camaraderie and unity can enhance job contentment by creating a sense of shared purpose and identity within the team.

**High Working Motivation:** The EO notices that some of the subordinates are dedicated to their work and do not require constant reminders or rushing. This high working motivation indicates a sense of ownership and responsibility among the subordinates, which can positively impact job contentment by fostering a sense of pride and fulfillment in their work.

**Tangible Effects:**

**High Productivity:** The EO observes that all subordinates have a sense of responsibility and ownership for their work. Additionally, some subordinates are willing to work overtime to

complete their tasks. This high productivity demonstrates a strong work ethic and commitment, which can contribute to job contentment by providing a sense of accomplishment and job contentment.

(Table 10)

Specific example under the empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When she was working in an international school, her boss was an empowering leader. She benefited a lot because her boss taught her how to talk to different people. She felt that it was very useful.</li> <li>• Her boss will filter and assign the task to her.</li> </ul>
As a leader, do you think empowering leadership is a good leadership technique?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is worthy of reference.</li> <li>• It needs to depend on the employee's personality or ability to determine the intensity of empowerment.</li> <li>• She thinks that “empowering leadership is a rubber band” → High ability= 90% trust and autonomy, Low ability= 30-50% trust and autonomy.</li> <li>• No matter if the staff's ability is high or low, she will listen to all employee's opinions and feelings.</li> </ul>

The experience of working under an empowering leader in an international school had a profound impact on her development and provides tangible evidence of the effectiveness of empowering leadership. Her boss's approach to leadership involved providing guidance and mentorship, particularly in the area of communication skills. This investment in her professional growth enabled her to navigate interactions with diverse individuals confidently and effectively. Moreover, her boss's trust in her abilities was evident through the careful assignment of tasks, aligning responsibilities with her strengths and interests. This empowered her to excel in her role, fostering a sense of ownership and fulfillment in her work. This specific example serves as a compelling testament to the positive outcomes that can be achieved through empowering leadership, demonstrating its capacity to enhance employee skills, confidence, and overall job contentment.

Her perspective on empowering leadership is grounded in the belief that it is a valuable approach for any organization. She aptly describes empowering leadership as akin to a rubber band, where the extent of trust and autonomy bestowed upon employees may vary based on their individual personalities and abilities. For high-ability employees, she advocates for a higher level of trust and autonomy, approximately 90%, as this fosters an environment conducive to maximizing their potential and encouraging innovation. Conversely, employees with lower abilities may benefit from a lower level of trust and autonomy, around 30-50%, while still receiving the necessary guidance and support for growth. However, irrespective of an employee's ability, she emphasizes the significance of actively listening to and valuing the opinions and feelings of all staff members. This inclusive approach ensures that everyone feels respected and appreciated, contributing to a collaborative and supportive work culture. Her perspective underscores the importance of tailoring empowerment strategies to individual needs while promoting open communication and inclusivity within the organization.

## **5. Conclusions:**

In conclusions, this research explored the effect of empowering leadership on job contentment within an educational institution. The findings show an impactful relationship between empowering leadership and job contentment among administrative staff members and job contentment levels.

Survey results indicated that an overwhelming majority (80%) of participants acknowledged empowering leadership practices as having a substantial effect on their job contentment and job contentment, suggesting empowering leadership practices play a pivotal role in increasing job contentment within an educational setting (e.g. a full train mode primary/secondary school in Hong Kong).

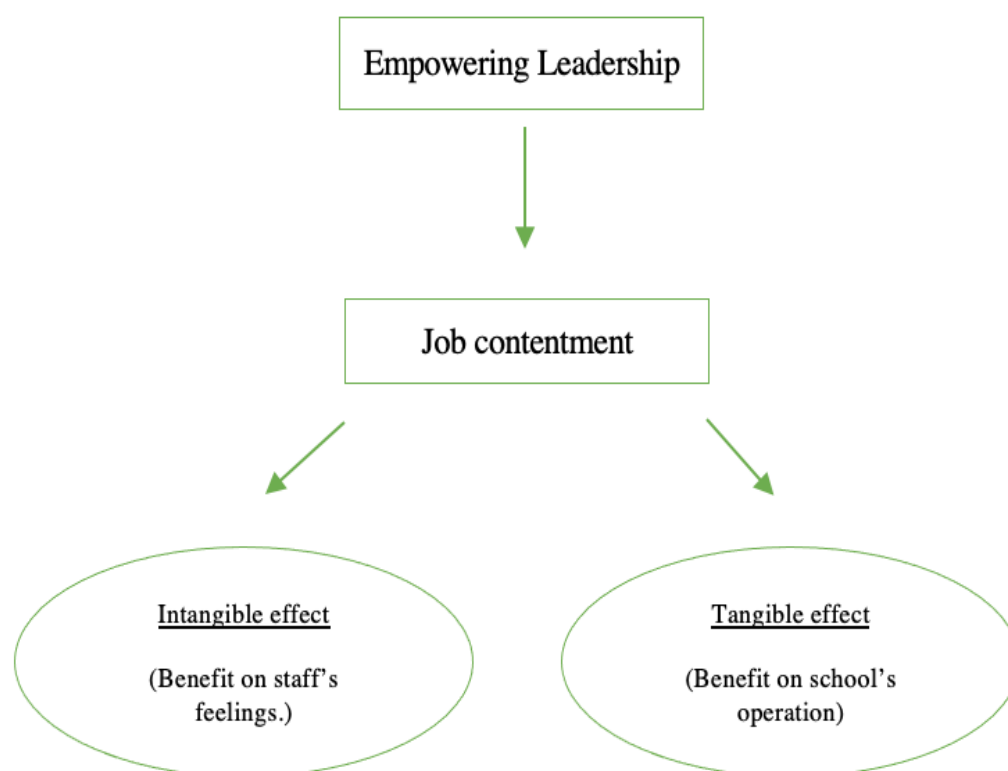
Furthermore, insights gleaned from interviews further reinforced leadership style as related to job contentment. Many participants expressed discontentment with previous school leadership styles which eventually caused them to seek employment elsewhere; these results emphasize the significance of encouraging positive and empowering leadership approaches within educational institutions in order to increase employee contentment and retention rates.

Interview results highlighted that empowering leadership style promoted staff members' sense of ownership and responsibility; evidenced by participants willing to invest additional time and effort, including overtime hours or taking on extra responsibilities to achieve high quality outcomes. Empowering leadership style was found to positively affect motivation levels, happiness levels, and job contentment levels of those within its ranks.

An impressive finding emerged from this research; that of how empowering leadership affects both intangible and tangible aspects of job contentment. While intangible elements tend to benefit individual staff members directly such as mental well-being and productivity increases; tangible elements, like proactive work behavior directly contribute to increasing operational effectiveness at educational institutions.



(Figure 12)



### 5.1 Responses to research questions

For Question 1, “What is the relationship between the empowering leadership approach of the school executive officer and administrative staff members' job contentment?” As to Atik and Celik (2018)'s research question regarding empowering leadership's relationship to administrative staff members' job contentment, existing research supports this linkage. Their study looked into school principals' empowering leadership styles versus teachers' job contentment by emphasizing trust and psychological empowerment; their results provided evidence that increased job contentment among staffers can result from engaging empowering leadership practices.

Interviews, surveys and observations revealed that the school executive officer exhibited characteristics associated with empowering leadership as described by Spreitzer (1995). These attributes include delegating authority, providing support and resources, encouraging employee development, recognizing contributions while honoring them appropriately and encouraging self-determination. Participation in interviews and observations allowed for detailed evaluation of this relationship between empowering leadership characteristics and staff job contentment in both tangible and intangible ways.

Overall, research findings and direct experiences with school executive officer demonstrate a direct link between empowering leadership approaches and staff member's job contentment and staff engagement with work. Empowering leadership's positive influence impacts staff contentment both tangibly and intangibly.

For question 2, “How do different dimensions of empowering leadership influence that administrative staff members’ job contentment in intangible and tangible aspects?”

One intangible effect of empowering leadership is staff members' feelings of ownership over their work. When given autonomy support, staff feel an increase in responsibility and ownership which ultimately increases job contentment and dedication to tasks at hand. Because staff feel so invested in what they're doing, overtime work or additional responsibilities don't bother them since their own feelings matter in what they are doing; these benefits of ownership relate directly to feelings associated with work itself rather than physical attributes that measure it directly.

Empowering leadership can be seen in its tangible effects through increased productivity and efficiency in administrative staff members. By engaging them in decision-making processes,

empowered leaders leverage the unique perspectives and expertise of their staff members. Engaging administrative staff members in decision-making processes not only increases job contentment but also fosters their sense of value and contribution. By including staff in key decision-making processes, their opinions can be heard with consideration - helping ensure their contribution matters and is valued. Empowered leadership helps staff members feel motivated and committed to reaching positive results, with productivity levels increased and staff taking on additional responsibilities or tasks, ultimately improving school operations and outcomes. It can have a tangible effect on performance; increasing productivity levels as staff take up additional tasks or take on responsibility, leading to enhanced school operations and results.

Self-Career Development plays an integral part of job contentment for employees at every level, from intangible aspects like increased job security to tangible ones such as development. Empowered leaders prioritize staff members' growth and advancement. By offering employees opportunities for training, skill building and career advancement they demonstrate their long-term dedication. Investment in self-career development contributes intangibly to job contentment by strengthening staff members' self-esteem, confidence, and job contentment. Furthermore, such training equips staff members with necessary skills and knowledge necessary for effective role performance; ultimately leading to improved job performance for themselves as well as tangible benefits for schools.

Overall, empowering leadership has an enormous effect on administrative staff members' job contentment in both intangible and tangible aspects. These effects include developing feelings of ownership and belonging while the tangible results include higher productivity levels and positive organizational results. Finally, empowered leadership creates an atmosphere in which

staffers feel valued, motivated and encouraged to give their best contributions to an organization's goals.

## **6. Limitations**

Limited research time and the avoidance of sensitive leadership issues surrounding the power dynamics between the vice principal and Ms. E, the Executive Officer (Yin, R., 1994). The study does not attempt to generalize any patterns with mere limited research data patterns. The above data-driven conceptual frameworks/maps solely inform the general readers of further research. Consequently, the research focus was primarily directed towards examining the impacts of decentralized power exercised by the EO on staff contentment within the selected school as a case study and with a careful approach to avoid overgeneralization into the broader scope of the vice-principalship impacts. Also, vice-principal did not disclose any sensitive topic. It is hard to get reliable data from him. Owing to the big school, the chief principal was not totally involved in the empowering leadership aspects under my investigation.

## **7. Discussions and Implications**

This research, based on participant observations, interviews, and results of a survey, sheds light upon the empowering roles played by the Executive Officer (EOs) in an educational institution. It also identifies key practices which have a significant impact on job contentment. These findings provide a thorough understanding of how the EO empowers staff and promotes a positive working environment.

Observation and interview of participants revealed several empowering roles for the EO. The EO's role includes prioritizing and filtering the tasks of the vice principal to ensure that the essential materials and supports are available for the staff. EOs also play a key role in establishing strategic plans to complete important jobs. This ensures that staff have a roadmap

for success. The EO also helps front-line clerical staff and administrative personnel to evaluate their performance and adjust accordingly by providing them with realistic timeframes and facilitating step-by-step evaluations.

The EO also checks that decentralized tasks are performed efficiently by the staff in the general office of the school, ensuring that responsibilities have been distributed effectively. The EO emphasizes that it is important to enhance professional development, both within the context of the work and outside of the workplace. Workshops, conferences, and training programs can help staff expand their skills.

The EO also uses social skills to promote a high level of morale in the office, encourage teamwork, and share ideas with other groups. The EO creates a supportive environment that encourages teamwork and allows individuals to share their perspectives and ideas. It creates a feeling of belonging and encourages positive workplace culture. These results reinforce the value of empowering leadership. The data shows that the staff recognizes the importance of continuing education and is eager to improve their knowledge and skills.

90 % of staffs also stressed the importance of regular channels for communication. The importance of transparent and open communication in the organization is highlighted by this. The EO will be able to ensure staff are informed, connected, and engaged by establishing communication channels. 60 % of staff also expressed their desire for an inclusive and supportive school culture as well as opportunities to make decisions and have autonomy. It is important to create an environment in which individuals are respected and feel empowered. They can then contribute ideas and own their work.

These findings highlight the importance of adopting empowering leadership techniques to improve employee's job contentment, motivation, and organizational performance. The educational institution, by providing opportunities for professional development, creating effective communication channels, and fostering an inclusive and supportive school culture and encouraging autonomy, can foster a vibrant work environment. This is beneficial to both individuals and organizations. These practices encourage growth, job contentment at work, and success for the organization.

Future research agendas could include cross-cultural investigations that investigate how empowerment leadership dimensions influence job contentment across different cultural groups. Cross-cultural research offers invaluable insight into cultural variations in leadership styles and their effects on employee outcomes. Researchers can study perceived effectiveness and impact by looking into what role empowering leaders have across different cultural contexts. Furthermore, this type of investigation helps researchers gain an in-depth knowledge of which cultural factors impact employee dynamics with leaders as well as outcomes of empowering leadership strategies.

Studies could also explore how cultural values impact the effectiveness and implementation of empowering practices at both a national and regional level. Understanding which cultural beliefs support or undermine empowering leadership principles will assist programs and policies for leadership development that foster workplace contentment across diverse cultural settings.

**END**

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## Appendices

### *Appendix 1: Interview questions (For staff)*

#### **For Staff version**

**1. Background:**

- 5-10 mins to share the main concept of empowering leadership to participants then start the interview.
- Ask the participant to provide some background information, such as their role within the educational institution, years of experience, and their perception of the importance of leadership in their work.

**2. Self-experiences on empowering leadership:**

- Can you provide examples of specific behaviors or actions that you have under the empowering leadership?

**3. Other bad experiences of leadership at other schools:**

- Can you provide examples of specific behaviors or actions?

**4. Relationship between Empowering Leadership and job contentment:**

- How did that experience make you feel in terms of job contentment such as intangible and tangible effect?


**5. Others:**

- Can you share the thoughts on Empowering leadership?

*Appendix 2: Interview results (4 administrative staff)*

Questions	Interview result 1: Mr. A (Engineering staff)
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worked in school for 7 years.</li> <li>• Responsible for: Engineering Department</li> </ul>
Specific example under the empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school EO is not very familiar with the engineering, but she would admit that she did not understand.</li> <li>• Unlike other bosses who "pretend to understand"</li> <li>• She listened to Mr. L's suggestions and trusted his work.</li> <li>• She let him participate in decision-making and made him feel that his professionalism was respected.</li> </ul>
Any examples of bad experiences of leadership at other schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other EO need all their colleagues to obey her.</li> <li>• Denied his professional advice and instead believed in information on the internet or experiences of other schools, but in fact it was not applicable to our school.</li> <li>• He felt that he was not valued and respected. He was very unhappy at work, so he resigned at last.</li> </ul>
Does empowering leadership affect job contentment?	<p><b>Intangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Ownership</u></b>: EO gives him a sense of responsibility for his work, and he will personally do all school project-related matters.</li> <li>• <b><u>A great sense of contentment</u></b>: He can work in his profession without being controlled by others, and his suggestions are even used by the management, which is very satisfying.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>High productivity</u></b>: He likes this working environment and wants to improve the school environment. He often thinks of many suggestions. Many school facilities have been improved under his work.</li> </ul>
Thoughts on Empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership style is very important to him.</li> <li>• He believes that sometimes giving employees appropriate freedom will help them grow both at work and in their personal development.</li> </ul>

Questions	Interview result 2: Ms. B (Office clerk)
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worked in school for 6 years.</li> <li>• Responsible for: Student attendance</li> </ul>
Specific example under the empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EO will accompany her to solve the problem.</li> <li>• High degree of autonomy (The EO seldom control her work)</li> <li>• Have the right to speak and decision-making power in communication.</li> <li>• Feeling that her potential has been fully realized, Ms. B likes children very much, so EO arranged a student attendance job for her so that she always can interact with children.</li> <li>• EO would share her experiences which benefited her a lot and the EO is like her coach to guide her.</li> </ul>
Any examples of bad experiences of leadership at other schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask her keep working after her working hours.</li> <li>• Often asks about the working progress and even has a checklist. She felt like being checked like those primary students.</li> </ul>
Does empowering leadership affect job contentment?	<p><b>Intangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Ownership:</u></b> She once asked for sick leave, but she knew that other colleagues were not familiar with how to operate it, so she insisted on taking roll calls remotely at home early in the morning. She said, “I have a stronger sense of responsibility for this task.”</li> <li>• <b><u>Happiness:</u></b> She thinks that EO assigned their job based on their personality and she likes interacting with children.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>High Productivity:</u></b> It is because the empowering leadership style builds up Ms. M’s sense of responsibility and initiative, many things are done extra by her.</li> </ul>
Thoughts on Empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The empowering leadership style suits her very well.</li> <li>• Love being trusted.</li> <li>• She believes that this is a leadership style that all bosses should learn. Adults like a work environment with a high degree of autonomy, and no one likes to be constantly controlled.</li> </ul>

Questions	Interview result 3: Ms. C (Office clerk)
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positions: CO2</li> <li>• Worked in schools for more than 10 years.</li> <li>• Responsible for: Admission</li> </ul>
Specific example under the empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High degree of autonomy: EO will let her solve the problem and train her problem-solving skills.</li> <li>• Have the right to speak and decision-making power in communication.</li> <li>• She feels she is 100% trusted by EO at work.</li> <li>• Feel that her potential is fully realized because she is good at paperwork.</li> <li>• EO encourages her to study English so that can help her with promotions.</li> </ul>
Any examples of bad experiences of leadership at other schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anything needs to be reported.</li> <li>• The boss likes to judge without any constructive suggestions.</li> <li>• No autonomy</li> <li>• High pressure at work</li> <li>• Hard to build a sense of belonging.</li> <li>• One of the reasons for resignation was that she didn't like his boss's leadership style.</li> </ul>
Does empowering leadership affect job contentment?	<p><b>Intangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Sense of belonging:</u></b> She thinks that the relationship between EO and her is like a friend.</li> <li>• <b><u>Sense of achievement:</u></b> EO doesn't interfere much.</li> <li>• <b><u>Personal growth:</u></b> The decision making can train Ms. K's adaptability and enhance her work experience and ability.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tangible</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>High working initiative:</u></b> She is responsible for and will take the initiative to prepare in advance.</li> <li>• <b><u>High productivity:</u></b> She doesn't mind OT which achieves the "Maslow hierarchy of needs" of self-actualization. (McLeod, 2018)</li> </ul>  <p>The diagram is a pyramid with five levels, each with a title and a list of associated needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Self-actualization</b> (top, blue): desire to become the most that one can be</li> <li><b>Esteem</b> (second from top, green): respect, self-esteem, status, recognition, strength, freedom</li> <li><b>Love and belonging</b> (middle, orange): friendship, intimacy, family, sense of connection</li> <li><b>Safety needs</b> (second from bottom, red-orange): personal security, employment, resources, health, property</li> <li><b>Physiological needs</b> (bottom, red): air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing, reproduction</li> </ul>

Thoughts on Empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Suitable for schools because everything's needed to report will lead to slow efficiency.</li> <li>● Push the staff to improve because sometimes they make their own decisions, so they can absorb experience</li> </ul>
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Questions	Interview result 4: Ms. D (Office clerk)
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Part time staff</li> <li>● No experience</li> <li>● Undergrad</li> </ul>
Specific example under the empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● EO has clear instructions for every task she performs, so that she won't be too arrogant.</li> <li>● EO won't control her as she lacks experience.</li> <li>● EO talks to her about her future development and encourages her to develop more skills.</li> </ul>
Any examples of bad experiences of leadership at other schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● N/A</li> </ul>
Does empowering leadership affect job contentment?	<p><b>Intangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Happiness:</b> Like feeling of being trusted</li> <li>● <b>Sense of belonging:</b> She thinks the working atmosphere under the EO leadership style is very friendly.</li> <li>● <b>High working motivation:</b> She don't want to betray EO's trust, so she tries her best to do every task well.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Report more duty day:</b> She thinks she works very happily and will work whenever she has free time.</li> </ul>
Thoughts on Empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● She like the feeling of being trusted</li> </ul>

### *Appendix 3: Interview questions (For executive officer)*

#### **For executive officer version**

##### **1. Background:**

- 5-10 mins to share the main concept of empowering leadership to participants then start the interview.
- Ask the participant to provide some background information, such as their role within the educational institution, years of experience, and their perception of the importance of leadership in their work.

##### **2. Self-experiences on empowering leadership:**

- Can you provide examples of specific behaviors or actions that you have under the empowering leadership?
- The reasons for often giving a lot of work experience to your subordinates?

##### **3. Other bad experiences of leadership at other schools:**

- Can you provide examples of specific behaviors or actions?

##### **4. As an management level:**

- Do you think empowering leadership is a good leadership technique?
- Will the workload be reduced by delegating decision-making authority?
- Does empowering leadership affect your subordinates job contentment by your observation?
- Why did you choose this management style?

##### **6. Others:**

- How do you handle the work assigned to you by your boss?
- What do you think of the principal/ vice principal leadership style?
- Thoughts on Empowering leadership?

**Appendix 4: Interview results (For executive officer)**

Questions	Interview result 5: Ms. E (Executive officer, Department head)
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worked in education for more than 10 years.</li> <li>• She worked as a teacher but ended up liking paperwork and got promoted to the EO position.</li> <li>• Worked in different schools (Aided Schools, International Schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools)</li> <li>• Have extensive experience in educational administration</li> </ul>
Specific example under the empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When she was working in an international school, her boss was an empowering leader. She benefited a lot because her boss taught her how to talk to different people. She felt that it was very useful.</li> <li>• Her boss will filter and assign the task to her.</li> </ul>
The reasons for often giving a lot of work experience to your subordinates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She believes that empowering leadership has a great influence on her.</li> <li>• As she has experienced it, she clearly understands that encouragement and sharing of experience are more important to subordinate.</li> </ul>
Any examples of bad experiences of leadership at other schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She has tried an indulgent leadership style from one of her bosses and the boss always doesn't check her work, so she is often in a state of worry.</li> <li>• She has tried a totalitarian leadership style from one of her bosses. The boss often checks and judges what she has done. She even must report daily to her boss about what tasks she has done today. She said that he was under a lot of pressure.</li> </ul>
As a leader, do you think empowering leadership is a good leadership technique?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is worthy of reference.</li> <li>• It needs to depend on the employee's personality or ability to determine the intensity of empowerment.</li> <li>• She thinks that “empowering leadership is a rubber band” → High ability= 90% trust and autonomy, Low ability= 30-50% trust and autonomy.</li> <li>• No matter if the staff's ability is high or low, she will listen to all employee's opinions and feelings.</li> </ul>
Will the workload be reduced by delegating decision-making authority?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The workload must have been reduced, but some tasks have always been reviewed by herself because she is responsible for it.</li> </ul>



Does empowering leadership affect your subordinates job contentment by your observation?	<p><b>Intangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Good working atmosphere:</u></b> She has a good relationship with colleagues.</li> <li>● <b><u>Sense of belonging:</u></b> Strong team spirit.</li> <li>● <b><u>High working motivation:</u></b> She observed that some of the subordinates are very dedicated to their work, and she rarely has to rush them to work.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tangible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>High productivity:</u></b> All subordinates have responsibility and ownership for the work they are responsible for. She has noticed that some subordinates do not mind OT completing their work.</li> </ul>
Why did you choose this management style?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As she starts from a normal clerk, she can have a deeper understanding of what should be a better leadership style for her colleague.</li> <li>● Learn the management style of different bosses in the past.</li> </ul>
How do you handle the work assigned to you by your boss?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● After filtering, she will assign some tasks that she thinks are easy or suitable for a colleague to follow up on.</li> <li>● The filtering skills are learned from the past boss.</li> </ul>
What do you think of the principal/ vice principal leadership style?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Freedom</li> <li>● Respect her voice.</li> <li>● Friendly</li> </ul>
Thoughts on Empowering leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It depends on the employee's personality and ability to determine the intensity of empowerment.</li> <li>● If she assumes that all employees have high ability and a strong sense of responsibility, empowering leadership is a good method. It will also have a positive impact on work efficiency/relationship harmony/work motivation...</li> </ul>

## Appendix 5: E-Survey

link: <https://forms.gle/yaNuUdfUjcERddfH6>

### E-Survey Questions:

1. **Multiple Choice:** Empowering leadership which is an effective leadership style that focuses on employee autonomy, self-efficacy, and decision-making capability. Have you heard or have any idea of empowering leadership before?

Yes    No

2. **Open-ended:** What kind of leadership style is that school running?

\_\_\_\_\_.

3. **Selection:** Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree" and 5 represents "Strongly Agree," please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "The school executive officer encourage staff to take part in decision-making processes."

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

4. **Ranking:** Please rank the following aspects of empowering leadership in order of importance to your job contentment (1 = most important, 5 = least important):

Involvement in decision-making	
Autonomy and independence	
Access to resources and support	
Opportunities for professional development	
Recognition and appreciation	

**5. Open-ended:** How do you think empowering leadership affects your working practices and your working outcomes such as intangible or tangible affect?

\_\_\_\_\_.

**6. Selection:** On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "strongly dissatisfied" and 5 being "strongly satisfied," how satisfied are you with the level of autonomy you have?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Strongly satisfied

**7.** In your opinion, what specific actions can the school executive officer or other administrators take to further promote empowering leadership and enhance job contentment among staff? Please feel free to choose from the following options or provide your own suggestions:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement regular communication channels to facilitate open dialogue between administrators and staff.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide opportunities for professional development and growth through workshops, training programs, or conferences.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Foster a supportive and inclusive school culture that values collaboration and recognizes the contributions of staff members.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish clear performance expectations and provide constructive feedback to help employees grow and excel in their roles.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Encourage autonomy and decision-making opportunities for staff to foster a sense of ownership and empowerment.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement recognition and reward systems to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts and achievements of staff members.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create a positive work environment by promoting work-life balance and prioritizing employee well-being.</li> </ul>

**8. Selection:** Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree" and 5 represents "Strongly Agree," please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "Empowering leadership greatly affects job contentment."

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree