

Development of the Empowering Leadership Scale for Thai Educational School Administrators

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Abstract

The development of the Empowering Leadership Scale for Thai Educational School Administrators aimed to study the components and indicators of empowering leadership among Thai school administrators and to verify the construct validity of the empowering leadership model. Data were collected from 520 teachers and school personnel selected through a multi-stage sampling process. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed, revealing that the model fit indices were $\chi^2 = 6.725$, $df = 3$, $p\text{-value} = .0812$, $RMSEA = .049$, $SRMR = .004$, $CFI = .999$, and $TLI = .996$. These statistical values meet the established criteria, confirming the main hypothesis that the theoretical model aligns with empirical data. As a result, the Empowering Leadership Scale demonstrated construct validity and can be effectively used to measure the empowering leadership of Thai educational school administrators.

Keywords: *Empowering Leadership, School Administration, Administrator, CFA.*

Introduction

Currently, global technological development continuously leads to the emergence of new forms of social media. Social and educational inequality has increasingly widened the gap between social classes. These rapid changes create a volatile and incomprehensible environment for organizations and leaders. In circumstances where everything lacks causal connections and excessive information prevents us from finding answers or explaining these changes (Kraaijenbrink, 2022), school administrators are responsible for managing crucial human resources, such as teachers. This can be achieved by empowering teachers to make independent decisions, which is a core component of Empowering Leadership, where leaders distribute leadership throughout the school (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Empowering Leadership encourages teachers to fully express their potential by granting them authority and responsibility (Stewart, 1994; Arnold et al., 2000; Ahearne et al., 2005; Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014), leading to a sense of control over their work, increased motivation, and enhanced self-confidence (Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000).

Empowering Leadership relies on key components: Information Sharing, Coaching, Participative Decision Making, Confidence Building, Leading by Example, and Showing Concern/Interacting (Arnold, Arad, Rhoads, & Drasgow, 2000; Jung, Kang, & Choi, 2020). These elements aim to foster self-reliance and self-regulation in alignment with the school's goals and strategies. Teachers must understand their work's significance, recognize their abilities, and make autonomous decisions to feel a sense of freedom and cognitive independence (Spreitzer, 1995; Kim & Beehr, 2017). Empowering Leadership from school administrators instills pride in teachers' work, enhances job satisfaction, fosters work commitment, and reduces emotional exhaustion (Cougot et al., 2022). Additionally, Empowering Leadership positively influences teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors within educational institutions (Pawinee Anamai et al., 2022).

In Thailand, research on Empowering Leadership remains limited and can be categorized into three groups: The first group uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the influence of Empowering Leadership on other variables, such as teachers' affective commitment (Boonyota & Wacharakul, 2022) and teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors in basic education schools (Anamai, Kullnapadol, & Burasirirak, 2022). The second group employs regression analysis to explore relationships between

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leadership variables and others, such as career adaptability (Charatpornthanya, 2021) and innovative work behavior (Khongkrapan, 2020). The third group includes studies indirectly related to Empowering Leadership, focusing on empowerment development models for teachers and administrators (Theppin & Paengthai, 2020; Khamuam & Pitayanan, 2015). However, research on measurement tools for school administrators' Empowering Leadership remains scarce.

In the context of Thai primary schools, there are 1,443,580 students from kindergarten to grade 6. Schools are categorized by various criteria, including size, which divides them into small, medium, large, and extra-large schools. Most primary schools are small and face numerous challenges, such as higher per-student educational costs than larger schools, lack of educational technology, and shortages of specialized and sufficient teaching staff (Iampaya et al., 2022). Studies also reveal that most schools lack support in educational management, personnel, budget, materials, and learning resources, obstructing student development (Sinthuwongsa, 2007).

These challenges suggest that managing education in Thai primary schools faces many obstacles. Research is needed to improve educational quality in this region by enhancing school administrators' leadership. Schools are like second homes, providing teachers with workplace happiness (Sakolpimonrat, 2013). However, this happiness is diminishing, and many teachers face immense pressures such as continuous meetings, criticism from administrators, overwhelming workloads, stress, and lack of rest (Chaichumkun, 2021). This situation reflects (1) burnout from excessive work and lack of decision-making authority (Thongkhundam et al., 2022) and (2) intergenerational conflicts (Julaphan, 2020).

Therefore, this study aims to develop a measurement tool for the Empowering Leadership of Thai school administrators to explore its components and indicators and to confirm its structural validity. This tool will align with the rapid and intense educational changes occurring globally.

Literature Review

Empowering leadership is generally defined in two ways. First, it refers to the behaviors of formal leaders (those holding status and authority within an organization), such as encouraging subordinates to express opinions and ideas, promoting participative decision-making, and facilitating information sharing and teamwork (Arnold et al., 2000). Second, to fully explain the inspirational effects, empowering leadership has been conceptualized as a power-sharing process by formal leaders that enhances employees' autonomy—both at the individual and team levels (Konczak et al., 2000). Although there are multiple definitions of empowering leadership, scholars converge on measuring it through observable leadership behaviors (Srivastava et al., 2006).

Arnold et al. (2000) define empowering leadership as increasing an individual's capabilities by emphasizing participative decision-making rather than merely initiating organizational structures. They propose five core components of empowering leadership: (1) Information Sharing, (2) Coaching, (3) Participative Decision-Making, (4) Leading by Example, and (5) Showing Concern.

Information Sharing

Spreitzer (1996) defines information sharing as leadership behavior that communicates organizational goals and how to achieve them. Arnold et al. (2000) describe it as the dissemination of critical information, such as organizational missions and philosophies. Konczak et al. (2000) highlight it as a leader's willingness to provide employees with essential information to ensure high-quality outcomes. Amundsen & Martinsen (2014) view it as a leader's effort to facilitate collaboration, communication, and information sharing among subordinates. It can be summarized as a leader's behavior in communicating key information to teachers, ensuring clarity regarding institutional goals, work methods, and decision-making processes.

Coaching

Arnold et al. (2000) define coaching as leadership behavior that provides knowledge and support to enable team members to become self-reliant. Konczak et al. (2000) emphasize coaching as fostering calculated risk-taking, creativity, and innovation. Amundsen & Martinsen (2014) describe it as providing guidance and support for professional growth. Jung et al. (2020) define coaching as guidance and support to enhance skills and overall performance. In summary, coaching refers to managerial behavior that provides knowledge and support to teachers to develop their skills, boost confidence, and promote self-development and professional growth.

Participative Decision-Making

Arnold et al. (2000) describe participative decision-making as involving team members in the decision-making process by gathering and considering their inputs. Konczak et al. (2000) emphasize empowering employees to initiate and make decisions related to their work. Ahearne et al. (2005) describe it as soliciting employee opinions and encouraging participation in organizational decision-making. Jung et al. (2020) stress the importance of considering employees' perspectives before making decisions. It can be summarized as leadership behavior that integrates teachers' inputs into decision-making while fostering an environment of collaboration and innovation.

Leading by Example

Arnold et al. (2000) define leading by example as leaders demonstrating commitment through hard work and adherence to ethical standards. Amundsen & Martinsen (2014) describe it as leaders serving as role models by exemplifying values and expected behaviors. In summary, leading by example involves a leader's actions that set high standards, align with organizational values, and inspire teachers to follow professional standards.

Showing Concern

Arnold et al. (2000) define showing concern as a leader's behavior that demonstrates respect for team members' well-being and actively engages with them. Jung et al. (2020) focus on addressing team members' concerns and fostering their professional growth. Li et al. (2021) describe it as building trust and a sense of belonging within the organization. In summary, showing concern encompasses leadership behavior that reflects care for teachers' well-being, creating an environment of mutual respect and open communication.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed quantitative data collection to develop a measurement tool for the Empowering Leadership of Thai educational school administrators.

Participants

The study sampled 60 schools, collecting data from 8-9 individuals per school. The respondents included 520 teachers and school personnel in primary schools, consisting of government teachers, government employees, administrative staff, and contract teachers. Participants were selected through multi-stage sampling. Preliminary data analysis showed that most respondents were female (402 individuals or 77.31%), primarily aged between 30-40 years (188 individuals or 36.15%). Most held a bachelor's degree (382 individuals or 73.46%) and were mainly non-tenured teachers (168 individuals or 32.31%). The majority worked in medium-sized schools (322 individuals or 61.92%).

Instrument

The research employed a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, developed through a literature review of 16 related studies on Empowering Leadership measurement. The researcher selected components based on Arnold et al. (2000), focusing on concepts with frequencies above 50%. The Empowering Leadership scale consisted of five components: (1) Information Sharing, (2) Coaching, (3) Participative Decision Making, (4) Leading by Example, and (5) Showing Concern. The draft questionnaire was reviewed by the research advisor and five experts for content validity using Item Objective Congruence (IOC), with indices ranging from 0.40 to 1.00. Initially comprising 39 items, four were removed, resulting in 35 items. The revised questionnaire was piloted with 30 schools, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.969.

Table 1. 35 Items from the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire

No.	Question
1	The administrator clearly communicates the school's goals to teachers.
2	The administrator clearly informs teachers about information affecting their work.
3	The administrator communicates the school's vision and goals clearly to teachers.
4	The administrator explains decision-making processes affecting teachers' work clearly.
5	The administrator discusses and explains reasons for decisions in various situations with teachers.
6	The administrator uses data and facts in decisions related to teachers' work.
7	The administrator thoroughly disseminates new policies, goals, and important changes to teachers.
8	The administrator clarifies the implementation of new policies and goals to teachers.
9	The administrator provides advice or guidance on teaching development to teachers.
10	The administrator provides additional academic knowledge or teaching techniques to teachers.
11	The administrator allocates time for teachers' skill and competency development.
12	The administrator praises and rewards teachers upon successful task completion.
13	The administrator encourages rewards and recognition for teachers' accomplishments.
14	The administrator participates in planning teachers' skill development.
15	The administrator provides resources or equipment to support teachers' skill development.
16	The administrator encourages teachers to participate in activities or training for essential skill development.
17	The administrator allows teachers to participate in school activity decision-making.
18	The administrator uses teachers' input and advice in decision-making.
19	The administrator is open-minded and listens to teachers' opinions.
20	The administrator has channels to receive feedback and suggestions from teachers.
21	The administrator encourages teachers to exchange opinions with one another.
22	The administrator organizes forums for teachers to exchange ideas.
23	The administrator gives teachers opportunities to propose new ideas or projects.
24	The administrator is committed and works to the best of their ability.
25	The administrator sets high goals and work standards as a good role model.

26	The administrator exemplifies good work practices for personnel.
27	The administrator adheres to the school's ethics and regulations.
28	The administrator follows shared values and agreed-upon standards.
29	The administrator is honest and responsible in their duties.
30	The administrator pays attention to teachers' personal issues or problems.
31	The administrator shows concern for teachers' health and well-being.
32	The administrator allows teachers to seek advice or share personal concerns.
33	The administrator closely communicates and works collaboratively with teachers.
34	The administrator provides opportunities for teachers to discuss work or concerns.
35	The administrator treats teachers equally and respects their human dignity.

Procedure

The researcher obtained official permission from the Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University, to collect data from selected primary education service area offices. An official request was submitted to the directors of these offices, and the questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to the selected schools.

Data Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to examine the model's overall fit. If the initial analysis showed inconsistencies between the theoretical structure and empirical data, model adjustments were made to meet the following goodness-of-fit criteria: Chi-square Statistics (χ^2): Tests model fit with empirical data. A p-value > .05 indicates a good fit, Chi-square/df, Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) : < .05 = good fit, .05–.08 = acceptable fit, .08–1.00 = poor fit, > 1.00 = very poor fit, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) : $\geq .95$ = good fit, .90–.95 = acceptable fit, Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) : $\geq .95$ = good fit, .90–.95 = acceptable fit, and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) : < .08 indicates a good fit.

Results

Empowering Leadership (EL) was measured using five indicators: Information Sharing (IS), Coaching (CO), Participative Decision Making (PD), Leading by Example (LX), and Showing Concern (SC). The analysis revealed that the mean scores (\bar{x}) for all indicators ranged from 4.13 to 4.29. The Coefficient of Variation (C.V.) ranged from 18.88% to 21.31%. Skewness values were mostly below 0, indicating a left-skewed distribution, and Kurtosis values were mostly above 0, indicating higher peaks than a normal distribution, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Individual-Level Research Variables

Variable	\bar{x}	S.D.	C.V. (%)	Max	Min	SK	KU
IS	4.16	0.80	19.23	5.00	1.63	-1.04	0.52
CO	4.14	0.85	20.53	5.00	1.13	-1.18	1.10
PD	4.15	0.85	20.48	5.00	1.14	-1.20	1.17
LX	4.29	0.81	18.88	5.00	1.17	-1.38	1.57
SC	4.13	0.88	21.31	5.00	1.00	-1.18	1.11

Structural validity analysis of Empowering Leadership revealed significant positive correlations among all observed variables at the 0.01 level ($p < .01$). Pearson's correlation coefficients ranged from .810 to .944. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was 3456.643 ($p < .000$), indicating that the correlation matrix significantly

differed from the identity matrix. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was .907, suggesting sufficient correlation among variables for factor analysis, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Coefficients of Empowering Leadership

Variable	SI	CO	PD	LX	SC
SI	1				
CO	.869**	1			
PD	.859**	.898**	1		
LX	.878**	.876**	.875**	1	
SC	.810**	.834**	.891**	.845**	1
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 3456.643 df = 10 p = .000					
Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) = .907					

**p < .01, *p < .05

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) indicated that the model fit the empirical data well. The Chi-square value (χ^2) was 6.725 ($p = .0812$, $df = 3$), showing no significant difference from zero. Fit indices included CFI = .999, TLI = .996, RMSEA = .049, and SRMR = .004.

Standardized factor loadings for observed variables were positive, ranging from .889 to .944, and statistically significant at the .01 level ($p < .01$). These indicators explained between 78.9% and 89.1% of the variance in Empowering Leadership, as shown in Table 4 and Figure 1.

Table 4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Empowering Leadership

Variable	β	S.E.	t	R ²
SI	.927	.007	125.786**	.860
CO	.934	.007	131.579**	.871
PD	.928	.007	125.179**	.862
LX	.944	.006	150.027**	.891
SC	.889	.010	85.801**	.789
$\chi^2 = 6.725$, $df = 3$, p -value = .0812, RMSEA = .049, SRMR = .004, CFI = .999 TLI = .996				

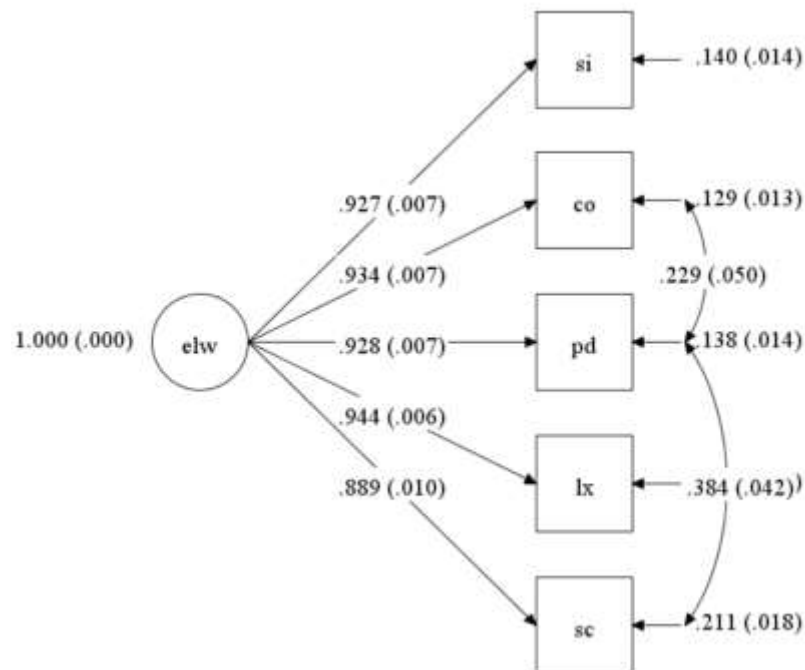


Figure 1. Results of the Validity Test of the Empowering Leadership Measurement Model.

Discussion

The analysis of the model fit for the Empowering Leadership measurement model of Thai school administrators showed that $\chi^2 = 6.725$, $df = 3$, $p\text{-value} = .0812$, $RMSEA = .049$, $SRMR = .004$, $CFI = .999$, and $TLI = .996$. These statistical values meet the criteria, confirming the main hypothesis that the theoretical model aligns with empirical data. The discussion of results is organized according to the weight of each component as follows: Leading by Example (LX): This component had the highest loading, reflecting not only the ability to work hard but also the adherence to ethical standards. In the modern context, being a role model is crucial for building credibility in the workplace and encouraging teachers to adopt consistent professional behaviors. This aligns with the findings of Amundsen & Martinsen (2014), emphasizing that leaders must demonstrate appropriate behavior to foster accountability and improve teachers' performance. Coaching (CO): This component is essential due to the growing need for continuous learning and skill development, particularly in dynamic and challenging educational environments. Leaders who provide coaching and guidance not only enhance teachers' professional skills but also inspire confidence and self-reliance. This supports the views of Arnold et al. (2000) and Amundsen & Martinsen (2014). Participative Decision-Making (PD): Involving teachers in decision-making processes fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance of diverse perspectives, leading to more comprehensive and thoughtful decisions. This approach aligns with Arnold et al. (2000), Ahearne et al. (2005), and Koczak et al. (2000), emphasizing empowerment and shared responsibility in organizational decision-making. Information Sharing (IS): In the digital era, timely and transparent communication is critical. Effective information sharing reduces misunderstandings and enhances collaboration, reflecting the concepts presented by Arnold et al. (2000). Showing Concern (SC): This component emphasizes the importance of mental health and well-being. School leaders who support and care for teachers' concerns reduce stress and foster a positive work environment. This finding aligns with Jung et al. (2020) and is particularly relevant for female teachers who value interpersonal leadership (Penpicha Ketchaiyakosol, 2021).

Conclusion

The development of a measurement tool for Empowering Leadership, tailored to the context of Thai school administrators, has produced a valid and reliable instrument for assessing leadership empowerment. The confirmatory factor analysis validated the model's consistency with empirical data, resulting in a comprehensive measurement tool that can support further research on Empowering Leadership in Thai educational settings.

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