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THE INFLUENCE OF EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP STYLE ON ENHANCING TEAM MEMBERS' AUTONOMY AND INNOVATION CAPACITY

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Abstract - *Increasingly intense business competition requires organizations to develop human resources capable of adapting, making independent decisions, and generating innovative solutions. The leadership style adopted by organizational leaders plays a decisive role in shaping the character and performance of team members. Empowering leadership offers an approach that emphasizes granting authority, responsibility, and trust to team members in carrying out their tasks. This study aims to examine the role of empowering leadership in enhancing autonomy and innovation among team members, and to analyze how the delegation of authority and trust stimulates independence and the generation of new ideas. The method employed is a literature review that collects and evaluates relevant scholarly sources. The findings indicate that the application of empowering leadership enables team members to develop their capabilities, take initiative, and create new ideas that benefit the organization. The main conclusion of this study is that appropriately granting authority and trust enhances team members' sense of responsibility and motivation, enabling them to work independently and produce sustainable innovations. This study contributes to the development of knowledge in organizational behavior and human resource management, while providing practical guidance for organizational leaders in applying leadership styles that align with organizational objectives.*

Keywords: Empowering leadership, autonomy, innovation, team members, authority, trust, motivation

INTRODUCTION

The dynamic development of the business environment creates increasingly high demands for organizations to have the ability to adapt and create sustainable change. Change of this kind needs to be managed properly, since organizations that fail to adjust their internal structures and policies to new demands tend to run into compliance problems that hold back their progress (Darmawan et al., 2024). The phenomenon seen today is a shift in the role of team members from mere task executors who follow orders into individuals expected to make decisions and contribute actively to achieving organizational goals. This shift occurs because organizations realize that success in facing competition is determined not only by strategies formulated by top management but also by the ability of all team members to act appropriately and create innovative solutions suited to conditions faced in the field (Wehde, 2022). An adaptation strategy tends to work better when it takes the prevailing socio-cultural perspective within the organization into account, since each team carries its own values and work habits that shape how change is received (Oluwatoyin & Mardikaningsih, 2022). Therefore, organizations need a leadership style capable of encouraging team members to develop their potential and play an active role in the work process. Such a shift is easier to achieve when supported by education and consistent awareness-building, so that team members genuinely understand the reasons behind the change and are more willing to adjust their behavior (Gautama & Mardikaningsih, 2022). It is important to build a participatory culture where risk management is not solely the responsibility of the project manager but a shared responsibility of the entire team (da Silva et al., 2022).

Leadership behavior is understood as leadership activity embedded throughout the organization, forming a self-reinforcing system through relevant practices, so that the company can maintain economic, social, and environmental balance across its life cycle while helping the organization achieve its goals. One major issue that arises in organizational management practice is that many leaders still apply a centralized leadership style that controls every aspect of the work carried out by team members (Alam et al., 2023). This style positions the leader as the only party authorized to make decisions, so team members merely act as executors who must follow the orders given. This issue produces negative effects, where team members become less willing to take initiative, become fully dependent on the leader's direction, and have fewer opportunities to develop their abilities. As a result, the organization becomes less responsive to environmental change and struggles to create the innovation needed to sustain its competitive advantage. A leadership approach adjusted to actual conditions and team readiness tends to give better results than a rigid, uniform style, since it allows the leader to change approach according to the situation the team is facing (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022). This is reinforced by Barzani et al.'s (2022) finding that commitment from company leadership is the main factor determining the success of implementing sustainable supply chain management; without strong commitment from leaders, efforts to apply sustainability principles will only stop at the planning stage and will not be carried out consistently by the whole organization.

Another issue of concern is the still limited understanding of how to apply a leadership style capable of encouraging independence and innovation among team members. Many leaders assume that giving authority to team members creates a risk of mistakes and reduces the control they hold over the work process (Hernández & Rodríguez, 2018). Managers need to weigh the validity of that assumption through professional judgment (Eddine & Darmawan, 2021). Clear, two-way communication between leaders and team members helps reduce this perceived risk, since both sides gain a shared understanding of expectations and limits before authority is delegated (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022). In fact, if applied in the right way, granting authority and trust will increase team members' sense of responsibility, so they will try to do their work as well as possible and look for more effective ways to complete their tasks. This pattern can be explained through social exchange theory, where the trust a leader extends tends to be repaid by team members through greater effort and loyalty toward the organization (Darmawan & Gani, 2024). In addition, the trust given by the leader will also raise team members' motivation to develop their abilities and produce new ideas that benefit the organization. This approach reflects a modern management trend that emphasizes employee empowerment as a basis for fairness in evaluation and reward (Darmawan & Marsal, 2021).

There are also differing views on the relationship between empowering leadership and increased independence and innovation among team members. Some studies show that empowering leadership has a significant positive impact on team members' ability to work independently and produce innovation (Tang & Dong, 2022), while other studies find that this impact depends on factors such as individual characteristics and the existing work environment (Yadav et al., 2023). Part of this difference can be traced to cultural factors, since the way trust and reciprocity operate within a leader-team relationship does not necessarily work the same way across different cultural settings (Oluwatosin & Darmawan, 2024). This difference in findings creates uncertainty about the extent to which empowering leadership can contribute to greater independence and innovation, and about how other factors shape that relationship. It also makes it harder for organizational leaders to decide on the right steps for applying empowering leadership within their own work environment.

This research is based on the Empowering Leadership Theory developed by Conger and Kanungo (2021). This theory explains that empowering leadership is a process in which the leader builds a work environment that allows team members to develop their abilities, gain self-confidence, and take responsibility for their work. Creating a good work experience in a digital environment helps employees feel more comfortable and productive at work (Putra et al., 2022). According to this theory, empowering leadership covers several actions taken by the leader, such as granting decision-making authority, providing support and guidance, and creating opportunities for team members to develop their abilities. This support and guidance work best when delivered through continuous feedback, since it gives team members a clear picture of their progress and the areas they still need to improve (Warin & Darmawan, 2024). This theory stresses that the success of empowering leadership depends on the leader's ability to balance granting work freedom with providing the support team members need.

Based on a review of previous studies, there is still a gap in understanding the mechanism by which empowering leadership can specifically increase independence and innovation among team members. Some studies focus on the general impact of empowering leadership on organizational performance without adequately explaining the internal process within team members that leads to greater independence and innovation (Kim, 2018). Other studies discuss independence and innovation separately without examining in depth how the two relate to the application of empowering leadership (Jing, 2023). Part of this mechanism can be understood through how technology is used to support human resource development, since digital tools often become the medium through which team members practice new skills and produce innovative work (Mardikaningsih & Wardoyo, 2024). This gap makes it difficult for organizational leaders to understand the steps needed to apply empowering leadership in order to raise independence and innovation among their team members.

Another problem is the lack of understanding of the factors that influence how effectively empowering leadership is implemented in raising independence and innovation. Although many studies show that empowering leadership has a positive impact on independence and innovation, many organizations that adopt this leadership style still do not achieve the expected results (He, 2023). This suggests that certain factors determine whether empowering leadership is implemented well, yet these factors have not been adequately identified or explained in existing research. This lack of comprehensive understanding can hinder the implementation of effective strategies, reduce employee engagement, and slow organizational change (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2021).

Organizations whose team members can work independently and produce sustainable innovation will hold a competitive advantage that is difficult for other organizations to copy (Anjum, 2023). This is consistent with Abdullah et al. (2021), who found that innovation in human resource management plays a key role in strengthening organizational competitiveness at a global scale. Such an advantage grows stronger when team members are genuinely engaged with the organization's long-term goals, since engaged employees tend to contribute more consistently to sustainable outcomes (Hariani & Mardikaningsih, 2024). Empowering leadership is one of the main factors that can drive the creation of independence and innovation among team members, so that a deep understanding of this leadership's role will help organizations build a more effective management system for achieving their goals. In addition, this study is expected to

contribute to the development of knowledge in organizational behavior and human resource management, and to serve as a reference for future research on related topics.

The objective of this research is to examine the role of empowering leadership in enhancing independence and innovation among team members, as well as to analyze how the delegation of authority and trust triggers employee independence and new ideas. This objective is structured in alignment with the established problem formulation, so that each objective to be achieved will provide a clear answer to the problems faced. This research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept of empowering leadership and its impact on team member independence and innovation, as well as offer useful guidance for organizational leaders in applying appropriate leadership styles to achieve organizational success.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses the literature study method, which aims to collect, review, and synthesize various information sources relevant to the research topic to gain a comprehensive and systematic understanding. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to examine various previously conducted studies discussing empowering leadership, independence, and innovation among team members. Through this method, researchers can identify various evolving views, findings, and concepts regarding the role of empowering leadership, as well as develop a complete understanding of how the delegation of authority and trust can trigger employee independence and new ideas. This method is considered appropriate for the research objective, which aims to compile summaries and analyses from various previously conducted studies to provide a clear picture of the phenomenon being studied (Schafer, 1999).

The data sources used in this research are various scientific literatures relevant to the research topic. The literature sources collected include national and international scientific journals discussing leadership, organizational behavior, human resource management, and innovation. In addition, literature sources also encompass textbooks written by experts in the fields of management and organization, research reports published by prominent research institutions, and other scientific publications discussing factors influencing team member performance and development. Researchers ensure that the literature sources used possess high credibility and have undergone rigorous review processes, so that the information obtained is accountable and can be used as a basis for accurate analysis and synthesis.

The data analysis technique used in this research is thematic analysis, in which information collected from various literature sources is grouped into main themes corresponding to the focus of the study. The analysis process is conducted by identifying main ideas contained in each literature source, grouping them into relevant categories, and organizing them into systematic and structured descriptions. This technique enables researchers to compare and contrast existing views, as well as develop a complete synthesis regarding the role of empowering leadership in enhancing independence and innovation among team members. This approach aligns with the view of Maxwell (2019), who states that thematic analysis in literature reviews can be used to organize and present information logically, thereby providing a clear and comprehensive picture of the topic studied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Employees are a determining factor for the success of company implementation, alongside supporting facilities and infrastructure (Darmawan et al., 2020). Empowering leadership is understood as a series of leader actions focused on enhancing the capabilities and self-confidence of team members through the provision of autonomy, responsibility, and adequate support. This approach differs from traditional leadership styles that emphasize strict control and centralized decision-making. In practice, empowering leadership positions team members as parties who have an active role in determining how to complete the assigned tasks (Vu, 2020). Leaders who apply this style act as facilitators who provide guidance and the resources needed, rather than as supervisors who regulate every step of the work performed. This approach creates a work environment that encourages individuals to develop their potential and contribute maximally to the achievement of organizational goals.

The delegation of authority is a major component of empowering leadership that plays an important role in shaping the independence of team members. When leaders grant authority to team members to make decisions regarding the tasks they shoulder, these individuals will feel a greater sense of responsibility for the results of the work produced (Wehde, 2022). In the digital era, learning patterns also experience changes through online interactions that affect how information is obtained (Darmawan, 2021). This sense of responsibility encourages individuals to learn various aspects of the work that must be done, consider various alternative solutions available, and make decisions considered most appropriate according to the conditions faced. This process will gradually increase an individual's ability to work without depending entirely on directions from the leader, so that independence in carrying out tasks will be formed naturally and sustainably.

The trust given by the leader also plays a very significant role in triggering the independence of team members (Shin & Lee, 2023). Openness to support each other in mastering new systems is fundamentally influenced by a strong

positive psychological dimension to maintain individual commitment in completing collective tasks (Darmawan & Mardikaningsih, 2021). Trust creates a sense of safety for individuals to try new things and make decisions without the fear of being excessively criticized if mistakes occur. Individuals who receive trust from leaders will feel valued and considered capable of carrying out the given tasks, so they will strive to prove their abilities by working independently and responsibly. Trust also motivates individuals to continuously develop their capabilities, realizing that the trust bestowed must be guarded and maintained with good performance. This process will strengthen the independence possessed by team members in the long term.

The independence formed through the implementation of empowering leadership has a close relationship with the enhancement of innovation capacity among team members (Yadav et al., 2023). Individuals who are able to work independently tend to have the courage to put forward new ideas and offer solutions that differ from previously existing ways. Independence allows individuals to view problems from broader perspectives, as they have the freedom to conduct the analysis and research needed without having to wait for approval or direction from the leader. This freedom creates space for individuals to develop creative thinking and generate innovative ideas that can provide benefits for the improvement of overall organizational performance. Social sustainability also depends on the formulation of policies that support the development of local capacity to manage and utilize technology independently (Essa & Mardikaningsih, 2023).

The granting of authority in empowering leadership also plays a role in creating conditions that support the emergence of new ideas from team members (Tang & Dong, 2022). When individuals are granted the authority to determine how to complete tasks, they will be encouraged to seek more effective and efficient ways of finishing the assigned work. This process of searching for better ways will automatically give rise to new ideas that can be applied in the work process. In addition, the authority given also allows individuals to experiment with their ideas, enabling them to test the feasibility and usefulness of those ideas before applying them broadly within the organization. This opportunity to experiment is an important factor that allows innovation to develop and be applied in the work environment. Furthermore, employee involvement can increase motivation, productivity, and work quality, while effective team development can foster better collaboration, faster problem solving, and more efficient achievement of shared goals (Rojak & Darmawan, 2023). Creating a conducive work environment and work climate that can encourage employees to always innovate and be creative, including establishing a fair system and a flexible structure with a clear and humane division of tasks, authority, and responsibilities (Rojak & Darmawan, 2022).

The trust given by the leader also plays a role in increasing team members' willingness to put forward new ideas (Royston & Reiter-Palmon, 2022). Individuals who feel trusted will feel more comfortable conveying their thoughts and ideas, because they believe the leader will listen to and consider those ideas well. Trust also reduces the fear that often inhibits individuals from expressing new ideas, such as the fear of being ridiculed or criticized. When individuals feel that the ideas they convey will be appreciated and considered well, they will be more motivated to continuously develop and present new ideas that can provide benefits for the organization. This process will create a work environment rich in sustainable innovative ideas. When leaders act honestly and consistently, employees feel safe to express their opinions and ideas without fear of being criticized or punished (Mardikaningsih et al., 2022). A positive orientation toward work error correction requires ethical leadership from management to build a healthy and sustainable organizational culture (Mardikaningsih et al., 2022).

Empowering leadership also plays a role in increasing the intrinsic motivation of team members, which is a major driver in enhancing independence and innovation (O'Donoghue & Werff, 2021). This active involvement of human resources reflects the adoption of transformational leadership that acts as an agent of change for the organization's value system (Rojak et al., 2022). Intrinsic motivation arises when individuals feel that the work being done has meaning and provides an opportunity to develop their capabilities. Through the granting of authority and trust, leaders show that the work carried out by team members plays an important role in the achievement of organizational goals, so individuals will feel that the work performed holds high meaning. This sense of meaning will increase an individual's motivation to work independently and create innovations that can enhance the value of the work performed. Beyond interaction factors, the support of social capital and strong team collaboration functions as a vital foundation in maintaining work quality within an organization (Putra et al., 2021).

The enhancement of capabilities possessed by team members is also an impact of the implementation of empowering leadership that contributes to the increase of independence and innovation (Bayayda, 2020). When individuals are given authority and trust to carry out assigned tasks, they will face various challenges and opportunities that require the development of new capabilities. This concept even evolves toward posthuman human resource management that utilizes generative artificial intelligence optimally (Darmawan, 2022). Individuals will strive to learn the knowledge and skills needed to perform tasks well, so that their capabilities will increase gradually. This enhancement in capability will enable individuals to work more independently and create higher quality innovative ideas, as they possess sufficient knowledge and skills to develop and apply those ideas. Effective technology usage is not merely about access; it is crucial in ensuring that individuals derive meaningful value from innovation (Ramle & Mardikaningsih, 2022).

Empowering leadership also creates a work environment that supports collaboration among team members, which plays a role in enhancing independence and innovation (Ba, 2015). Even though individuals are granted authority and trust to work independently, empowering leadership also encourages individuals to work together with other team members in completing complex tasks. This collaboration allows individuals to share knowledge, experiences, and ideas they possess, enabling them to complement each other and develop better thinking. Through collaboration, individuals can also learn from the experiences and capabilities possessed by other team members, so that their own capabilities will increase and independence in working will become stronger (Fared & Darmawan, 2021). This is because effective collaboration within a team not only functions to improve technical knowledge, but (Fared & Darmawan, 2021) is very important in accelerating innovation, increasing responsiveness to market changes, and creating more holistic solutions to complex problems.

The implementation of empowering leadership also requires the leader's ability to determine the boundaries of authority given to team members (Cheong et al., 2019). Clear boundaries will ensure that the authority granted can be utilized well and in accordance with organizational goals. When authority boundaries are clearly defined, individuals will know the extent to which they can make decisions and take action without having to ask for approval from the leader. This will create a greater sense of self-confidence for individuals to work independently, knowing that the actions taken are still within the permitted scope. Clear boundaries will also prevent misunderstandings and the abuse of authority that could cause negative impacts on the organization (Gardi et al., 2024). Situational leadership enables leaders to choose the appropriate style whether directive, supportive, or delegating according to the stage of development of the individual or group in facing change (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022).

Leaders who apply empowering leadership also need to have the ability to provide the support and guidance needed by team members (Shin & Lee, 2023). The support and guidance provided do not mean that leaders must regulate every step of the work performed, but rather focus on providing assistance when individuals face difficulties in carrying out their assigned tasks. The support provided can be in the form of supplying necessary resources, giving constructive advice and input, as well as clear explanations regarding the goals and expectations to be achieved. In this way, senior employees can feel valued while having the space to improve their skills, so that their psychological well-being is maintained (Darmawan, 2020). Proper support and guidance will help individuals develop their capabilities, enabling them to work more independently and create better innovations.

The success of implementing empowering leadership is also influenced by the individual characteristics of the team members. Individuals who possess a desire to grow, sufficient self-confidence, and a willingness to take on responsibility will be more capable of utilizing the authority and trust given by leaders (Cheong et al., 2019). These characteristics allow individuals to work independently and generate new ideas that benefit the organization. Conversely, individuals with low self-confidence or a lacking desire to grow will require more time and support to develop their independence and innovation capabilities. Therefore, leaders need to understand the characteristics of their individuals and adjust the application of empowering leadership to existing conditions. Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to view difficult tasks as challenges to be faced, whereas individuals with low self-efficacy will view the same tasks as threats to be avoided (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022).

The work environment within the organization also plays a role in determining the effectiveness of implementing empowering leadership in enhancing independence and innovation. A supportive work environment is characterized by an organizational culture that respects differences of opinion, provides opportunities to learn and grow, and gives appreciation for the performance and contributions made by team members (Handoko et al., 2024). Leaders have an important role in creating a healthy work environment that supports the physical and mental well-being of employees (Darmawan et al., 2022). In social interactions, psychological well-being serves as a foundation for an individual's ability to engage in mutually beneficial and meaningful relationships (Hariani & Mardikaningsih, 2022). In such a work environment, individuals will feel more comfortable working independently and putting forward their new ideas. Conversely, a rigid and unsupportive work environment will hinder the implementation of empowering leadership, preventing independence and innovation among team members from developing properly

An effective communication strategy in change management aims to create a clear understanding and encourage the active involvement of all organizational members so that collective goals can be achieved more effectively and efficiently (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022). Empowering leadership also has a positive impact on overall organizational performance through the enhancement of independence and innovation among team members (He, 2023). Team members who are able to work independently will be able to complete assigned tasks more quickly and accurately, because they do not need to wait for directions from the leader in every step of the work performed. In addition, innovations generated by team members will provide a competitive advantage for the organization, as the organization will possess better working methods, products, or services compared to existing competitors. This positive impact will be seen in the increase in productivity, efficiency, and profits achieved by the organization in the long term. Beyond impacting the enhancement of organizational performance, this condition can also strengthen employee organizational commitment, where organizational commitment reflects emotional attachment and the willingness of employees to contribute optimally to the organization where they work (Putra & Darmawan, 2022).

The implementation of empowering leadership can also create a positive work climate and increase job satisfaction among team members (Vu, 2020). Furthermore, the satisfaction and morale of employees in providing excellent service must not be overlooked, as this directly affects the quality of work results (Eddine & Darmawan, 2022). Individuals who receive authority and trust from leaders will feel more valued and have the opportunity to develop the careers they desire. This sense of being valued and the opportunity to grow will increase the job satisfaction possessed by individuals, so they will be more committed to working well and making maximum contributions to the organization. High job satisfaction will also reduce the turnover rate occurring within the organization, allowing the organization to retain its quality and experienced human resources. This is in line with the findings of Darmawan et al. (2020) that the empowerment carried out provides benefits so that employees are more independent, competent, confident, more productive, more satisfied, and help increase overall company efficiency.

Empowering leadership plays a crucial role in strengthening autonomy and innovation among team members. The delegation of authority and trust by leaders creates conditions that support individual capability development, increased motivation, and the emergence of new ideas that benefit the organization. The success of empowering leadership depends on the leader's ability to balance freedom in task execution with the provision of necessary support, as well as the presence of a work environment that fosters the development of team members' potential. Proper implementation of empowering leadership provides significant long-term benefits for organizational development.

CONCLUSIONS

Empowering leadership has a strategic role in enhancing autonomy and innovation among team members. The delegation of authority and trust increases individual responsibility and motivation to develop their capabilities, enabling them to work independently in carrying out assigned tasks. Furthermore, authority and trust create space for individuals to propose new ideas and generate innovative solutions that contribute to organizational performance. The success of empowering leadership depends on the leader's ability to establish clear boundaries, provide appropriate support, and create a work environment that nurtures the potential of team members.

Future research is recommended to conduct empirical studies examining the relationship between empowering leadership, autonomy, and innovation across different organizational types and industrial sectors. Such studies could identify factors influencing the effectiveness of empowering leadership in diverse work environments and develop framework models that serve as references for organizational leaders in applying this leadership style effectively. Further research may also explore the broader impact of empowering leadership on organizational performance and identify strategies to overcome challenges in its practical implementation.

For organizational leaders, the findings highlight that adopting empowering leadership is an effective step toward enhancing autonomy and innovation among team members. Leaders must shift from centralized and controlling leadership styles to approaches that empower and support the development of team members' potential. Leaders should provide sufficient authority and trust to employees in carrying out tasks, while also offering guidance and support to help them develop their skills. Additionally, leaders must create work environments that encourage the growth of autonomy and innovation, ensuring that team members can contribute optimally to achieving organizational goals.

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