
IMPACT OF EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES ON LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING IN THE WORKPLACE

***Mark Angelo G. Cadiz**

Master of Arts in Teaching major in Social Studies, Graduate School, Valencia Colleges
(Bukidnon), Inc. Purok 17-A, Hagkol, Valencia City, Bukidnon, Philippines.

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*Corresponding Author: Mark Angelo G. Cadiz

Master of Arts in Teaching major in Social Studies, Graduate School, Valencia
Colleges (Bukidnon), Inc. Purok 17-A, Hagkol, Valencia City, Bukidnon,
Philippines.

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ABSTRACT

This research used a quantitative, descriptive-correlational study to evaluate the effects of empowerment strategies on the ways that school leaders in Malaybalay City lead and make decisions. The study evaluated the degree to which the school leaders are implementing various types of empowerment strategies and quantified their leadership behavior and decision-making. This study also examined the relationships between empowerment strategies and leadership and empowerment strategies and decision-making.

Ninety-one (91) school principals participated in this study by purposive sampling. Data were collected using a 90-item Likert scale questionnaire, which has previously been shown to be both valid and reliable. Additionally, ethical standards were followed; all participants voluntarily participated in the study and were assured of confidentiality. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to calculate the levels of the variables, using Pearson's product-moment correlation to test for relationships among the variables.

The analysis showed that school leaders used a variety of empowerment strategies, and that the two most used strategies were effective management and information sharing. Among the various dimensions of leadership practice (strategic, administrative, collaborative, and instructional), all practice dimensions ranked equally highly, showing overall leadership effectiveness. The results also showed that the school leaders made decisions with high collaboration and reliance upon data, consistent with the goals of their schools/companies. The study revealed a significant relationship between empowerment strategies and

leadership, whereas no relationship was found between empowerment strategies and decision-making.

KEYWORDS: *Impact of Empowerment, Strategies, Leadership, Decision-Making in the Workplace.*

INTRODUCTION

A major challenge faced by the modern workplace today is the underutilization of its human capital due to the use of traditional top-down leadership structures, which centralize authority and decision-making in the hands of a few people at the top. Because of this, most employees have become more disengaged from the organization and, therefore, are less motivated to do their jobs, resulting in reduced productivity, low morale, and higher turnover rates. As such, under-utilization of an organization's human capital is a critical concern for organizations wanting to be successful in a competitive global economy

There is a significant body of international literature that unequivocally supports the trend toward empowering employees. In fact, many studies have demonstrated that psychological empowerment is positively associated with a variety of important organizational outcomes. For example, in 2017, Chen & Aryee published an empirical study that demonstrated that employees who feel they have some degree of control over their work take more initiative and are more proactive in their work environment (Chen & Aryee, 2017). In addition, Lee & Chen (2018) conducted a review of research published in the Journal of Applied Psychology in 2018 that discussed the characteristics of successful leaders. The findings were that strong leaders empower their subordinates, creating a culture of collective responsibility and innovation. Thus, the empirical research from around the world validates the strategic need to empower employees to create an agile and successful organization.

Like what is happening globally, there is also emerging evidence in the Philippines to support the advantages that result from employing an empowering leadership style. Filipino employees who were given more freedom in controlling their day-to-day workload had both higher levels of job satisfaction and were more likely to put forth extra effort at work than those who had less freedom (Pascual, 2019). An analysis of the rapidly growing Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector in the Philippines during 2021 also found that businesses with more participative leadership styles had experienced dramatic increases in their ability to retain employees and deliver quality services to customers (De Guzman & Lim, 2021). These national findings support the notion that empowering employees through U.S. business

empowerment strategies can be successfully employed in the Philippine business environment. Locally, specifically in Cagayan de Oro City, many small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are still centralized with a few individuals making all of the major decisions regarding how to run their business.

This has created an environment where businesses are slow to respond to changes in the marketplace and are unable to innovate. Local business leaders have pointed out that providing employees with opportunities to be more involved in decision-making and putting their voices into the decision-making process can be a meaningful way to create more resiliency and grow these local businesses.

While there is an increasing amount of literature regarding empowerment, a significant gap remains in the research regarding how empowerment impacts leaders' decision-making styles and, ultimately, leads to positive benefits for employees. The existing literature often focuses on general benefits of empowerment, such as increasing employee job satisfaction, productivity, etc., but does not provide an in-depth examination of how empowerment converts leaders' decision-making from a directive style to a facilitative style or creates more rapid, high-quality, inclusive decisions.

Theoretical Framework

The present research examined the effects of empowerment strategies on leadership and decision-making using three key psychological theories: Social Exchange Theory (SET; Homans, 1958), Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985), and Psychological Empowerment Theory (Spreitzer, 1995). Together these three theories provide a well-rounded, multi-faceted theoretical perspective on the ways in which empowerment strategies influence leadership and decision-making. SET theory asserts that social behaviors result from the costs and benefits of social exchanges and that when the costs/benefits are equal, the exchange will be reciprocal. For example, in the workplace, by implementing empowerment strategies such as delegating authority and/or providing access to resources to their employees, managers create a social exchange. A psychological contract is established as a result of creating an obligation on the part of the employee to reciprocate by enhancing their performance, increasing their loyalty, taking on additional leadership roles, and actively participating in decisions made by the organization.

SDT provides an explanation of the intrinsic motivation to maximize their performance, loyalty, and encourage additional leadership roles and participation in decision-making as a result of meeting the employee's three basic psychological needs of autonomy (i.e., giving

employees the ability to control their work), competence (i.e., developing new skills), and relatedness (i.e., sense of belonging). SDT postulates that by providing employees with sufficient levels of empowerment, empowering employees promotes intrinsic motivation, which, in turn, drives employees to be more proactive and self-directed. The Psychological Empowerment Theory builds upon these two theories using the employee’s subjective experience of using empowerment strategies as a framework. It provides a clear definition of empowerment, which is not simply a behavioral act of management, but a cognitive state that includes four conceptual dimensions.

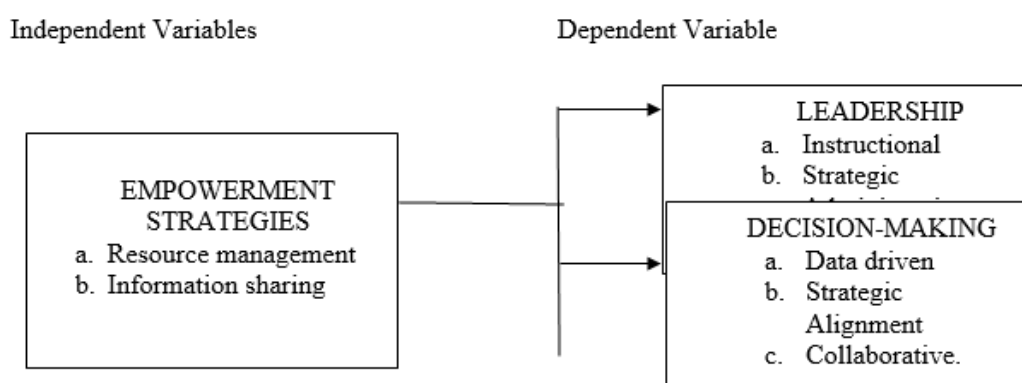


Figure 1. The schematic diagram shows the relationship of the independent and the dependent variables.

Scope

This study was delimited to the Division of Malaybalay City, focusing exclusively on a population of school leaders, including principals and assistant principals, during the 2025-2026 school year. The research was confined to investigating the relationship between empowerment strategies, leadership effectiveness, and decision-making. Specifically, the study measured empowerment strategies through the dimensions of resource management and information sharing. Leadership effectiveness was assessed based on its instructional, strategic, administrative, and collaborative aspects, while decision-making was evaluated in terms of its data-driven, strategic alignment, and collaborative nature. The scope did not include other educational stakeholders, such as teachers or non-teaching staff, nor does it extend to school leaders from other divisions. Finally, the study's findings were based on self-reported data collected through a structured questionnaire, and thus, they do not account for other potential influencing factors external to the chosen variables.

Review of the Literature

Multiple studies have documented how empowerment impacts employees' psychological and behavioral outcomes. Research clearly indicates that providing employees with decision-making power and autonomy increases their sense of purpose and self-efficacy (Lisak et al., 2022; Ahmed et al., 2022). This perceived state of mind is an important precursor to positive employee outcomes. When employees are trusted and value added, they will act more proactively, resiliently, and responsively (Avey et al., 2008). This last point is especially important in rapidly changing work environments (e.g., hybrid work) when employees' ability to compete with others depends largely upon how well these employees are able to use their agility (Zhang et al., 2024).

Several researchers have examined the connection between empowerment and employee well-being. Empowering leaders has been shown to reduce negative mental states (such as workplace loneliness) by increasing the employee's belief in their ability to undertake a wider range of work (Firoz & Chaudhary, 2022). Empowerment functions as both a productivity technique and an integral part of fostering a supportive, healthy working environment. The literature reviews demonstrate that empowering employees is one of the distinguishing characteristics of effective modern leadership. Recent studies have also established that empowering leadership style is distinguished from the more traditional, autocratic leadership styles by its emphasis on decentralization of authority and sharing power with followers (Miller & Williams, 2024). A meta-analysis published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* found that the democratic leadership style, which includes empowering leadership, is very effective at increasing employee creativity and innovation by creating an environment of psychological safety and open communication (Garcia & Kim, 2024).

Recent literature clearly demonstrates a direct relationship between empowerment and the speed and quality of organizational decision-making. By empowering all employees with decision-making authority, organizations are able to benefit from a broader base of experience and expertise from the employee base (Reyes & Santos, 2024). This increased employee engagement ultimately results in more innovative and well-thought-out decisions (Villanueva & Cruz, 2024). Numerous studies have emphasized that participation of stakeholders in the decision-making process leads to long-term solutions that are both effective and sustainable (Lopez et al., 2024).

Across multiple studies, one of the most frequently cited findings is that giving employees access to the resources needed to perform their job has a direct effect on increasing employee purpose and accountability (Choi & Kim, 2023). Examples of these resources may include

adequate access to financial tools, such as project budgets or the ability to purchase equipment or supplies.

The past three years internationally have shown through literature that there is emphasis being laid on the distributed and specialized forms of leadership. The emphasis on instructional leadership is majorly supported by different studies determining the direct connection between instructional leadership and student achievement on the one hand and teacher effectiveness on the other hand (Robinson, 2023). Instructional leadership entails a leader being a part of the curriculum, the teacher coach, and offering pedagogical advice to teachers as a valid method of enhancing the quality of teaching. A research done by researchers at the University of Cambridge (Chen & Lee, 2024) revealed that the percentage of time spent by the principal giving feedback to the teachers and their professional growth, statistically increased the score of the tests of the students, as reported by the outcomes of a state assessment. It is quite justified by the fact that a number of meta-analyses have been identified concerning the concept of instructional leadership and its direct dependence on a higher level of teacher job satisfaction and a more robust school culture (Miller et al., 2024).

There is also the emerging concept that is strategy leadership. Strategic leadership entails a vision of an organization in the long term and the extent to which an organization fits in its environment. The studies by Harvard Business School (Johnson and Smith) reveal the benefits of the strategy leaders in relation to managing change and identifying future trends, as well as having their resource allocation skills when planning strategically and making proactive (instead of reactive) decisions to help the organization achieve its long-range goal(s). The classical models of leadership normally addressed the daily business activity.

Recent sources have reconsidered administrative leadership as a bottom-up role to the current stage of becoming the infrastructural backbone of other forms of leadership to be effective (Thompson and Brown, 2022). Through this effective administration, administrative leaders can distribute their resources, time and policy most efficiently and transparently so that the instructional leaders are able to focus their efforts only on teaching and learning.

The importance of collaborative leadership as a requirement to establish a good and fair working place has been well recorded. The rising morale increased organizational commitment, and high chances of generating creative solutions in the presence of teachers, staff, and even students, make the decision-making process more effective and involve teachers in the process (research conducted at the University of Toronto, Perez et al., 2023). The transition to collaborative model of operation whereby all stakeholders are in charge

would be key in dealing with the ever more challenging issues that educational leaders are grappling with.

The studies carried out in the Philippines reflect the trends provided above on the international level and cope with the cultural and educational context of the Philippines. The local research often examines the leadership styles in addressing the challenges encountered by lower-resourced schools, and also the characteristics of the diverse student population at the schools. Instructional leadership remains one of the major subjects of discussion in the Philippines.

In 2023, Filipino researchers (Santos and Cruz, 2023) published a study in the Philippine Journal of Public Administration which depicted a significant connection between the practice of instructional leadership by principals and the performance of teachers of public elementary schools. The research revealed that principals whose classes were frequently monitored and provided with constructive feedback achieved a lot more success in improving their pedagogical competencies as compared to principals who did not apply observational and feedback protocols.

The ability to make effective decisions is the single most critical factor separating thriving organizations from those that fall behind. In the context of empowerment, recent international and local studies have shown that meaningful decision-making is not a top-down, solitary act. Instead, it is a dynamic, multi-faceted process driven by data, aligned with strategic goals, and built on collaboration.

A major finding in recent international literature is the move toward using data to inform choices. Studies consistently show that when employees are empowered with access to and training on relevant data, the quality of their decisions improves dramatically. Using this method decreases the likelihood of bias and raises the accuracy and likelihood of discovering hidden opportunities (Davenport & Patil, 2023). The Journal of Management Information Systems conducted a study which supports this assertion by demonstrating that organizations that have had their data analytics incorporated into everyday operations have made their decisions faster and more accurately (Kim & Lee, 2024).

The 2023 Philippine Journal of Public Administration had a study on using data for an allocation of resources in a local government unit. The researchers determined that empowering mid-level managers with data-access has improved both efficiency and equity in budgetary decisions. A separate analysis of the BPO industry in the Philippines (Villanueva & Cruz, 2024) corroborates these findings. Researchers in that study discovered that

companies who trained and empowered their workforce with real-time performance data reported significant improvement in service quality and customer satisfaction.

Decisions should not only be made quickly but should also align with the organization's overall vision. Recent research indicates that when leadership shares its company's strategic plan and allows employees to provide input in decision-making, it promotes a sense of shared ownership and purpose (Johnson & Chen, 2023). This not only makes an employee's individual decision-making experience more valuable but also builds a more cohesive and resilient organization consisting of employees with the same long-term vision.

Research in a local context further emphasizes the necessity of aligning employee decisions with the organization's strategy in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) due to their limited resources. A successful family-operated business in Cagayan de Oro (Reyes et al., 2022) reported on how the owners shared their vision for long-term growth openly and included key staff members in decision-making about their company's strategic planning activities, which was cited as one of the main contributors to the company's long-term success and resilience.

The body of literature has been consistent from 2022-2025 with the premise that when diverse perspectives are included in making a decision, the decision will generally be better (Perez & Diaz, 2023). Research published in the *Academy of Management Journal* (Garcia et al., 2024) reported that making collaborative decisions can lead to not only improved quality of the final decision but that it can also enhance the commitment and buy-in of all the individuals involved.

In many local literature examples, there are references made to the concept of *bayanihan* (community spirit) as a very strong parallel to the concept of collaborative decision-making. Research done in 2024 regarding community-based organizations in the Visayan region (Lopez, 2024) found that leaders who engaged their community to work together toward a common goal (in this case, working through the decision-making process) built organizations that were resilient and had the capacity to address complex social problems. The findings suggest that the collaborative nature of the Filipino culture enhances the effectiveness of empowerment strategies.

Research Methodology

A descriptive-correlational research design was used to determine the influence of empowerment strategies on leadership and decision-making in the workplace within the Division of Malaybalay City. The descriptive part aimed to assess the levels of empowerment strategies, leadership practices, and decision-making approaches that school leaders currently

employ, while the correlational component aimed to find significant relationships among these variables. In particular, the study aim at answering five major problems: (1) What is the level of empowerment strategies of school leaders when it comes to resource management and information sharing; (2) What is the extent of leadership practices on instructional, strategic, administrative and collaborative leadership; (3) What is the level of decision-making in terms of data-driven practices, strategic alignment and collaboration; (4) Is there a significant relationship between leadership and empowerment strategies; and (5); Is there a significant relationship between decision-making and empowerment strategies among school leaders in the Division of Malaybalay City.

A purposive sampling technique was used, where the respondents of the study were chosen, with school principals accounting for ninety-one (91) total respondents. This approach was taken to focus the research on individuals who are in leadership roles because they participate directly in managing and making decisions about their schools. For a functional response you have to do with what was only one available for this case and ways then their features, hence the selection of full research locale in which naturally conducive is due to the established institutes of the education system or set up administrative division well enough to engage with empowerment mechanize there by and also adequately show them in empowerment strategies with dynamic leadership.

Data was collected in an exhaustive 90-item Likert-style questionnaire specially designed with options offered from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). A process of expert reviews was done to confirm content validity so that the items of the instrument would correctly capture empowerment strategies, leadership and decision-making as constructs. All ethical considerations were respected during the data collection, including obtaining relevant institutional approvals, voluntary participation, and confidentiality and anonymity of respondents.

Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were employed to assess the levels of empowerment strategies, leadership, and decision-making for data analysis. Responses were defined in terms of a five-point scale ranging from based on computed mean ranges: Very Low (0 to 1.49), Low (1.5 to 2.49), Medium (2.5 to 3.49), High (3.5 to 4.49), and Very High (>4,6). Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was employed as the primary inferential statistical tool to determine relationships among variables. Moreover, the step of descriptive and inferential analyses also served as a comprehensive evaluation tool in exploring not only the perceptions but also the links of empowerment strategies, leadership

practices, and decision-making to school leaders of Division of Malaybalay City for School Year 2025-2026.

Findings

School leaders in the Schools Division of Malaybalay City provide a Very High level of empowerment strategies about resource management and information sharing. School leaders are consistently and effectively employing empowerment practices within their schools. On the management of resources, school leaders have demonstrated that they are capable and competent in the allocation of support staff, management of financial and material resources and providing professional development that provides teachers with the tools and resources needed to fulfil their roles effectively. In addition, school leaders have demonstrated high levels of transparency and clear and open channels of communication in making decisions that involve inclusive input from all groups affected by the decision. Relevant information is consistently disseminated, and collaborative working relationships are built among teachers/staff. In the area of empowerment strategies, there is a solid foundation in school leadership practices in the Division. Leadership disseminated, created a supportive, participative, and well-managed work environment.

Table 1. Level of Empowerment Strategies of School Leaders in Malaybalay City

Indicators	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description	Qualitative Interpretation
Resource Management	4.65	.32	Strongly Agree	Very High
Information Sharing	4.42	.33	Strongly Agree	Very High
Overall Mean	4.54	.33	Strongly Agree	Very High

Table 2 shows that the leadership ability of divisional school leaders for the Schools Division of Malaybalay City in relation to instructional leadership, strategic leadership, administrative leadership, and collaborative leadership is all rated Very High, meaning that divisional school leaders consistently demonstrate strong and effective leadership practices in each dimension. In the aspect of strategic leadership, divisional school leaders are effective in communicating their school's vision, establishing goals, and synthesizing programs and initiatives with long-term objectives. Administrative leadership demonstrates the capacity of divisional school leaders to manage school operations, execute policies, and effectively utilize all resources. Collaborative leadership encourages the creation of teamwork, collaborative decision-making, and the establishment of positive working relationships among teachers/staff. Instructional leadership was indicated to be the least emphasized of the four dimensions; however, instructional leadership was found to demonstrate a strong level of engagement

from divisional school leaders in monitoring instructional quality, mentoring teachers, and providing opportunities for continuing professional development.

Table 2. Extent of Leadership School Leaders in the Division of Malaybalay City.

Indicators	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description	Qualitative Interpretation
Instructional	4.30	.60	Strongly Agree	Very High
Strategic	4.61	.38	Strongly Agree	Very High
Administrative	4.40	.34	Strongly Agree	Very High
Collaborative	4.37	.32	Strongly Agree	Very High
Overall Mean	4.42	.41	Strongly Agree	Very High

Table 3 presents the decision-making ability of divisional school leaders for the Schools Division of Malaybalay City. It showed a Very High level in relation to data-driven decision-making, strategic alignment, and collaborative decision-making. Divisional school leaders use an effective and structured process for decision-making. As a result of the structured process in collaborative decision-making, divisional school leaders engage teachers/staff and stakeholders, encourage involvement of all stakeholders, and provide transparency regarding all school operational activities. A leadership approach that embraces collaborative ownership and participative engagement can be seen through strategic alignment as well. School leaders are open-minded, looking at each of their decisions as they relate back to the school vision, mission, and long-term goals.

Table 3. Level of Decision-Making of School Leaders in the Division of Malaybalay City

Indicators	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description	Qualitative Interpretation
Data Driven	4.21	.44	Strongly Agree	Very High
Strategic Alignment	4.22	.44	Strongly Agree	Very High
Collaborative	4.39	.57	Strongly Agree	Very High
Overall Mean	4.27	.48	Strongly Agree	Very High

Table 4 reveal no association between the empowerment strategies of school leaders within the Schools Division of Malaybalay City and the decision-making behavior of those leaders, meaning that, overall, the implementation of empowerment strategies, including how resources are managed and shared, has no effect on how school leaders make decisions. The study suggests that other factors affect decision-making practices (whether they be data-driven, strategically aligned or collaborative), including school leader's past experience with leadership, their training/education, their individual leadership style, or policies of the school or district in which they lead socioeconomically disenfranchised children, rather than the level of implementation of empowerment strategies by the school leader.

Table 4. Significant relationship between leadership and empowerment strategies of school leaders in the Division of Malaybalay City.

Indicators	Correlation value	Probability	Interpretation
Empowerment Strategies	.247	.018*	Significant
Resource Management	.424	.000**	Significant
Information Sharing	-.067	.527	Not Significant

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Finally, while the use of empowerment strategies has a positive impact on teacher engagement with their leaders and their view of school leaders' effectiveness, the use of such leadership strategies does not affect the way in which school leaders make decisions. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted that the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between decision-making and empowerment strategies is rejected for further, therefore, supporting the acceptance of the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between empowerment strategies and decision-making.

Table 5. Significant relationship between Decision-making and Empowerment Strategies of School Leaders in the Division of Malaybalay City.

Indicators	Correlation value	Probability	Interpretation
Empowerment Strategies	.074	.486	Not Significant
Resource Management	.064	.547	Not Significant
Information Sharing	.040	.710	Not Significant

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the research yield many implications for the practice of school leaders in the Schools Division of Malaybalay City. Overall, this research demonstrates that school leaders within the Schools Division of Malaybalay City exhibit a very high level of use of empowerment strategies.

In decision-making, school leaders apply high standards of practice based on the collaborative use of data to make decisions that are aligned with the strategic goals of the organization.

Furthermore, it is evident from this investigation that the empowerment strategies applied by leaders have a direct relationship with their leadership practices and resource management.

While the use of empowerment strategies does not show a strong correlation to the decision-making capabilities of school leaders, the need may exist for school leaders to examine their experience, preferred style of leadership, and training relative to the impact of their decisions.

With the observed very high level of empowerment strategies demonstrated by school leaders, it is recommended that the Division of Malaybalay City officials continue and expand practices related to the efficient use of resources and the sharing of information.

Given the considerable multidimensional and comprehensive leadership potential demonstrated by school leaders, it is recommended that school leaders continue to develop their strategic, administrative, collaborative, and instructional leadership competencies.

Because of the high degree of decision making that takes place among school leaders as demonstrated by high use of collaborative-related decision-making practices, it is suggested that leaders concentrate on continuing to integrate evidence-based and strategy-aligned practices into their daily decision-making processes.

Because there is a positive relationship among school leaders' empowerment strategies and their practice of leadership, it is recommended that school leaders continue the use of tangible supports, delegation of authority, and appropriate use of resource provision as indicators of how successfully they will lead their schools.

Conversely, as empowerment strategies were found to be only moderately related to the decision-making capabilities of school leaders, it is recommended that school leaders look for additional strategies such as coaching, leadership development programs, or the use of policy documents as additional means to develop their decision-making capacities.

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