

Empowering Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior of Local Government Officials toward Smart Local Development: A Case Study of Mueang District, Maha Sarakham Province*

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Abstract

This research aims to: 1) Study the level of empowering leadership of local government leaders and the behavior of good organizational citizenship among public sector personnel, to promote smart local development in Mueang District, Maha Sarakham Province; 2) Study the level of good organizational citizenship behavior of staff in public sector organizations under local government leadership; and 3) Investigate the relationship between empowering leadership and good organizational citizenship behavior within the same context. This is a quantitative research study utilizing a survey questionnaire as the research instrument. The sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula for cases with an unknown population size, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, resulting in a required sample size of 385. Data was collected from 400 respondents via questionnaires. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and standard deviations, as well as correlational analysis using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Key research findings indicate: 1) The aspect public sector employees value most and have a positive view of is the provision of information and communication. 2) Organizational citizenship behavior is at a very high level, especially concerning politeness and showing respect to others, which are fundamental factors for creating a positive working environment and leading to the development of an effective smart local organization. 3) When leaders provide trust, autonomy, support for learning, meaningful work, clear communication, recognition, and encouragement, it results in employees being more proactive in helping others, taking responsibility, exhibiting maturity in problem-solving, showing respect, and being aware of their duties as citizens of the organization.

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Introduction

Local administrative organizations (LAOs) today must adopt management systems focused on efficiency, transparency, and citizen-centered governance (Worapongpat & Song, 2025). The concept of Smart Locality, integrating technology, infrastructure, and human capital, has emerged as a key framework for sustainable local development (Phon Phuangpanya, 2024). However, successful implementation largely depends on the leadership abilities of LAO executives (Bolin, 1989).

Previous studies in Thailand reveal a significant link between empowering leadership and enhanced competency and accountability among local civil servants (Worapongpat, 2025). Yet, empirical research on the connection between empowering leadership and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in the context of smart locality development, especially in regional areas like Maha Sarakham Province, remains limited (Chompotjananan & Vichit-Vadakan, 2022).

Mueang District, Maha Sarakham, holds potential for socio-economic growth but faces challenges in infrastructure, technology, and public officials' capacity. Observations indicate a misalignment between leadership vision and frontline staff behavior, reducing governance effectiveness (Worapongpat & Arunyananon, 2025). Studies also link community leadership success here to empowerment and participatory skills, which build trust and promote development. However, the specific relationship between local executive empowering leadership and OCB among public officials in this district has not been explored (Dongling & Worapongpat, 2023).

This study aims to investigate the relationship between empowering leadership and OCB among local government officials in Mueang District using quantitative methods (Worapongpat, Arunyananon, & Rianwilairat, 2025). The findings will offer insights to improve civil servant behavior and guide empowerment-focused leadership programs and public management reforms aligned with smart locality goals (Gqamane & Taylor, 2013).

This article presents theoretical frameworks on empowering leadership and OCB, examines their interplay in northeastern LAOs, and provides policy recommendations to strengthen public organizations' responsiveness to smart locality initiatives, contributing to academic knowledge and practical development strategies.

Objectives

1. To examine the level of empowering leadership among local administrative executives and its association with organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) of public sector personnel in Mueang District, Maha Sarakham Province, in the context of advancing smart local development.
2. To investigate the level of organizational citizenship behavior among public officials in local administrative organizations as a contributing factor in the advancement toward a smart locality in Mueang District, Maha Sarakham Province.
3. To analyze the relationship between empowering leadership of local administrative executives and the organizational citizenship behavior of public officials in the context of promoting an effective transformation toward a smart locality in Mueang District, Maha Sarakham Province.

Literature Review

1. Empowering Leadership. Empowering leadership is defined as leader behaviors that enhance subordinates' capabilities, confidence, and autonomy, emphasizing power delegation, learning support, inspiration, and participation (Nua-amnat, Brahmakappa, Punturian, & Soonthondachar, 2021). This approach fosters psychological ownership and intrinsic motivation (Nua-amnat et al., 2021). In public organizations, empowering leadership has been shown to increase trust, engagement, and innovation, especially within centralized bureaucracies (Nua-amnat et al., 2021).

2. Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) is conceptualized as voluntary employee behaviors beyond formal job requirements that support organizational functioning, such as helping others, loyalty, and compliance (Worapongpat, 2025a). In Thailand, studies reveal that open and empowering leadership is significantly associated with higher OCB levels in local administrative contexts, contributing to stronger organizational cohesion and performance (Jianfeng & Worapongpat, 2024).

3. Smart Locality A smart locality integrates digital technology, data management, and civic participation to enhance local governance and citizen well-being (Worapongpat, 2025b). It comprises six elements: smart people, economy, governance, environment, infrastructure, and living. Successful implementation relies on capable, creative personnel exhibiting positive organizational behaviors, emphasizing that transformational leadership fostering learning and participation is vital for enabling such systemic change (Okmathok & Wongthanavas, 2022).

Empowering leadership and OCB are closely linked and essential to driving local administrative organizations toward becoming smart localities. This study explores the relationship between these variables in Mueang District, Maha Sarakham Province, a context that remains under-researched (Rangmeseesrisuk, 2021).

Conceptual Framework

1. Empowering Leadership Empowering leadership involves behaviors that build subordinates' confidence, encourage autonomy, support participation, and foster full potential without overdependence on leaders (Yasuttamathada & Worapongpat, 2025). It emphasizes decentralization, involvement, learning support, and intrinsic motivation. This can be measured by tools like questionnaires or the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) adapted for the public sector (Charoensuk, 2022).

2. Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) refers to voluntary behaviors by government officials that exceed formal duties, enhancing teamwork, organizational development, and the success of smart local government initiatives (Singhalert, 2017).

3. Theories and research show that empowering leadership positively influences OCB by fostering responsibility, motivation, and commitment, which support sustainable smart local government development (Yuawadee Phuang Rod, Wijittra Phuang Tha Kho, Kallayarut Wuthipratya Nanthan, & Chotbodi Rat, 2020).

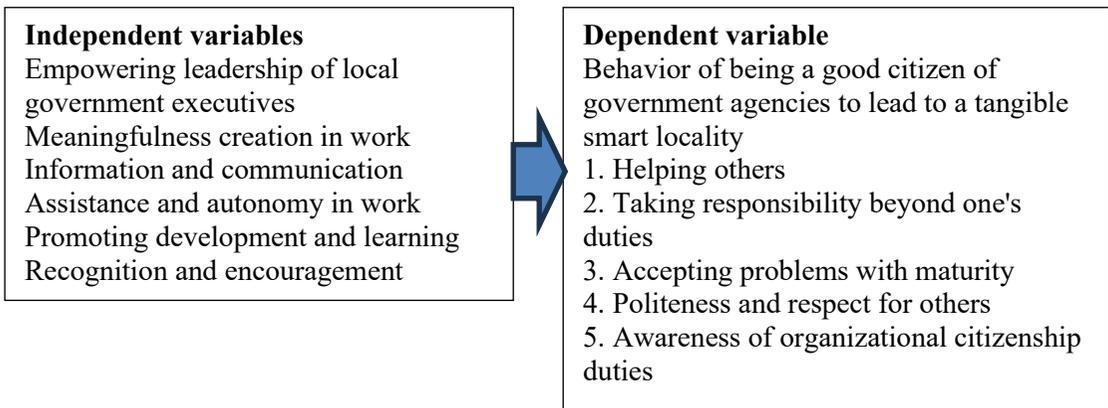


Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the research.

Methodology

1. Population and Sample

1.1 Population: The population consisted of officers, local officials, and temporary employees from local administrative organizations in Mueang District, Maha Sarakham Province. As the total number of individuals could not be precisely determined, the sample size was calculated using the Cochran formula (1977) for an unknown population size, with a 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, and a population proportion of 0.5. Based on the calculation, a minimum sample size of 385 was determined. To prevent data collection errors, a total of 400 respondents were selected. Purposive sampling technique was employed, and data collection occurred over a five-month period from January 1, 2025 to April 30, 2025.

1.2 Target Group: The target group included five experts (Connoisseurship) and ten executives at the supervisor level, including heads of civil servants and heads of temporary staff in Mueang District, Maha Sarakham Province.

2. Variables Studied

2.1 Independent Variables: Empowering leadership behaviors of local administrators, synthesized from 10 related research studies, with the five most frequently occurring dimensions selected: Creating work meaning, Providing information and communication, Fostering trust and autonomy in work, Promoting development and learning, Acknowledgement and encouragement

2.2 Dependent Variables: Organizational citizenship behavior of government employees, synthesized from 10 related research studies, with the five most frequently occurring dimensions selected: Helping others, Going beyond responsibilities, Maturity in problem acceptance, Courtesy and respect for others, Civic duty awareness within the organization

3. Research Instruments

3.1 Instrument Used: A questionnaire was developed to assess the relationship between empowering leadership of local administrators and organizational citizenship behavior of government employees as a step toward building a smart local organization in Mueang District, Maha Sarakham Province. The questionnaire consists of three parts:

Part 1 : Opinions of civil servants regarding empowering leadership and organizational citizenship behavior, using a 5-point Likert scale 5 checklist.

Part 2: Teachers' opinions on organizational citizenship behavior contributing to smart local organizations, using a 5-point Likert scale 5 checklist.

Part 3 : Assessment of the relationship between empowering leadership and citizenship behavior, using a 5-point Likert scale 5 checklist.

4. Instrument Construction and Quality Testing

4.1 The research questionnaire was constructed following these steps:

4.1.1 Review of academic literature and related research on empowering leadership and citizenship behavior to guide instrument construction.

4.1.2 Designing the questionnaire in accordance with research objectives and operational definitions.

4.1.3 Seeking validation from the research advisor and experts, followed by revisions based on their feedback.

4.1.4 Submitting the revised questionnaire to five experts to assess content validity using the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) Index.

4.1.5 Calculating IOC values, which ranged from 0.8 to 1.0, then revising the instrument accordingly and seeking final approval from the advisor.

4.1.6 Conducting a tryout with 30 individuals similar to the sample group (but not part of it), and analyzing item-total correlations, which ranged from 0.287 to 0.878. The questionnaire's reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, yielding a result of 0.891.

4.1.7 An electronic version of the questionnaire was created for data collection.

5. Data Collection

5.1 Data were collected during the second semester of the 2024 academic year, from January 1 to April 30, 2025, following these steps:

5.1.1 Official authorization was sought from administrators to collect data by sending questionnaires to 385 individuals.

5.1.2 Copies of the authorization letter and the Google Form link were distributed to the target group. A total of 385 completed responses were obtained through Google Forms.

5.1.3 The returned data were verified for accuracy and completeness before statistical analysis.

6. Statistical Methods Used

6.1 Statistics used for instrument quality analysis included the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) index

Results

Part 1: Empowering Leadership and Good Membership Behavior in Public Sector Organizations Toward Smart Local Development in Mueang District, Maha Sarakham Province

Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviation of Empowering Leadership Components

Empowering Leadership Components	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level	Rank
1. Creating Meaning in Work	4.34	0.45	High	3
2. Providing Information and Communication	4.41	0.55	Highest	1
3. Granting Confidence and Autonomy in Work	4.35	0.55	High	2
4. Promoting Development and Learning	4.37	0.54	High	4
5. Offering Recognition and Encouragement	4.12	0.53	High	5
Overall	4.32	0.37	High	-

The findings indicate that the overall level of empowering leadership among local government executives, as perceived by public officials, is high ($\bar{X} = 4.32$, S.D. = 0.37). The highest-rated component is “Providing Information and Communication” ($\bar{X} = 4.41$), emphasizing the importance of clear communication in enhancing participation and supporting the development of a smart locality.

Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation of Organizational Citizenship Behavior Contributing to Smart Local Development

Organizational Citizenship Behavior for a Smart Locality	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level	Rank
1. Helping Others	4.51	0.45	Highest	4
2. Taking Responsibility Beyond Duty	4.45	0.45	Highest	5
3. Accepting Problems Maturely	4.54	0.46	Highest	2
4. Politeness and Respect Toward Others	4.57	0.43	Highest	1
5. Awareness of Organizational Citizenship Duties	4.53	0.48	Highest	3
Overall	4.52	0.45	Highest	-

The results indicate that government officials in Mueang District, Maha Sarakham Province, demonstrate a very high level of organizational citizenship behavior ($\bar{X} = 4.52$, S.D. = 0.45). The highest-rated behavior is “Politeness and Respect Toward Others” ($\bar{X} = 4.57$), emphasizing the importance of fostering respectful interactions to support organizational collaboration and the development of a smart locality.

Other highly rated behaviors include “Accepting Problems Maturely” ($\bar{X} = 4.54$) and “Awareness of Organizational Citizenship Duties” ($\bar{X} = 4.53$), reflecting officials’ strong responsibility and problem-solving orientation. “Helping Others” ($\bar{X} = 4.51$) and “Taking Responsibility Beyond Duty” ($\bar{X} = 4.45$) also received high scores, indicating a proactive and team-oriented work ethic.

Table 3 Correlation Coefficients Between Empowering Leadership of Local Administrators and Good Membership Behavior of Government Employees (n = 385)

Empowering Leadership of Local Administrators	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Ytot
X1 (Confidence and Independence)	0.305**	0.216**	0.208**	0.231**	0.376**	0.350**
X2(Development and Learning Promotion)	0.243**	0.207**	0.302**	0.208**	0.370**	0.351**
X3 (Trust and Autonomy)	0.301**	0.213**	0.406**	0.305**	0.408**	0.423**
X4 (Recognition and Encouragement)	0.307**	0.161**	0.380**	0.267**	0.440**	0.407**
X5 (Meaningful Work Creation)	0.304**	0.203**	0.341**	0.234**	0.398**	0.388**
Xtot (Total Empowering Leadership)	0.335**	0.236**	0.381**	0.305**	0.462**	0.445**

Note: Statistically significant at the .01 level

The analysis shows a statistically significant positive correlation between empowering leadership and good membership behavior in all dimensions ($p < .01$). The strongest relationship was found between overall empowering leadership (Xtot) and awareness of organizational citizenship responsibilities (Y5) ($r = 0.462^{**}$), followed by overall behavior (Ytot) ($r = 0.445^{**}$).

Among individual leadership traits, “Trust and Autonomy” (X3) had the highest correlation with overall behavior ($r = 0.423^{**}$), followed by “Recognition and Encouragement” (X4) and “Meaningful Work Creation” (X5).

Discussion

Objective 1: Empowering Leadership of Local Administrators Empowering leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing employee engagement and organizational adaptability, particularly through open communication and shared decision-making. The study found that local administrators exhibited a high level of empowering leadership, especially in communication and information sharing, which was rated highest by respondents. This highlights the importance of transparency in building trust and participation. The findings are consistent with those of Worapongpat, Cai, and Wongsawad (2024) and align with empowering leadership theory, which emphasizes mutual understanding and open relationships as key drivers of organizational effectiveness.

Objective 2: Good Membership Behavior of Government Officials Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) supports positive organizational culture and effective teamwork. The study revealed that officials demonstrated high levels of OCB, with politeness and respect for others rated the highest. This reflects the role of mutual respect in fostering collaboration and a healthy work environment. The results support the findings of Worapongpat, Thavisin, and Viphoouparakhot (2024) and align with theories of healthy organizations, which highlight respect and civility as essential for sustainable development in public agencies.

Objective 3: Relationship Between Empowering Leadership and Good Membership Behavior The analysis showed a significant positive correlation between

empowering leadership and OCB ($p < .01$). Leadership behaviors such as trust, autonomy, and support for learning were strongly linked to responsible, polite, and engaged employee behavior. These findings support Zhou, Worapongpat, and Liuyue (2024) and align with empowering leadership theory, which suggests that empowering practices enhance motivation, responsibility, and collaboration—key components in achieving smart local development.

New knowledge from research

From the study of Empowering Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour of Local Government To Smart Local Development: A Case Study of Mueang District, Maha Sarakham Province, the research knowledge can be summarized as follows:

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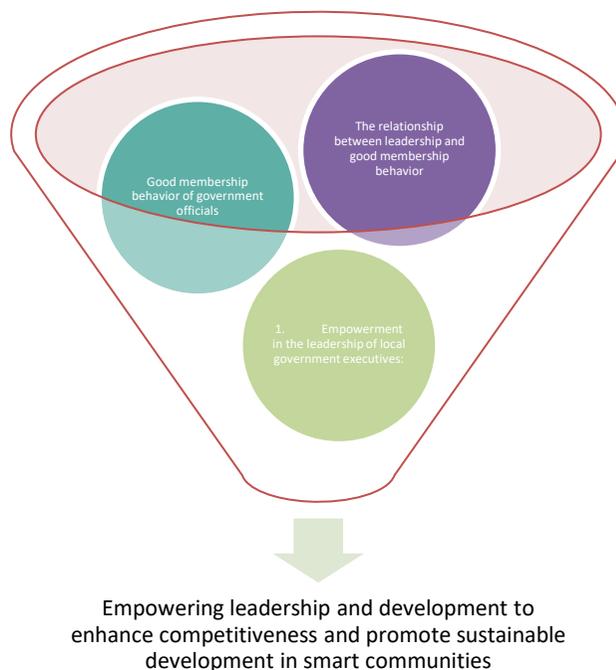


Figure 2 shows that empowerment in leadership and the development of good membership behavior are key factors that can lead to the development of government organizations and local areas, enhancing their competitiveness and fostering sustainable development in smart localities.

Figure 2 illustrates that empowering leadership and good membership behavior are key drivers in advancing government organizations and local communities toward smart and sustainable development. Empowering Leadership: Trust, autonomy, and support for learning enhance officials' enthusiasm, responsibility, and courtesy, creating a positive work culture conducive to smart local development. Good Membership Behavior: Officials demonstrate high levels of politeness and respect—core values that foster teamwork and support organizational transformation.

Leadership–Behavior Relationship: Empowered leadership significantly influences citizenship behavior. Clear communication, recognition, and encouragement from leaders strengthen officials’ sense of responsibility and commitment to organizational goals.

Conclusion

Empowering leadership significantly enhances good membership behavior among government employees. Traits such as trust, autonomy, support, recognition, and meaningful communication foster behaviors vital to building smart local governance such as responsibility, cooperation, maturity, and respect. These findings affirm the crucial role of leadership in driving public organizations toward smart local development.

Recommendations

Objective 1: Since communication and information sharing were rated highest, local agencies should enhance internal communication strategies to ensure clarity, transparency, and trust-building among staff.

Objective 2: With politeness and respect as key strengths, agencies should cultivate a culture of mutual respect through ongoing training programs that promote empathy, collaboration, and positive workplace values.

Objective 3: Empowering leadership through trust, autonomy, and learning support enhances responsibility and citizenship behavior. Leaders should promote employee engagement, recognition, and autonomy to build a motivated, smart-oriented workforce.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should: Examine the long-term impact of empowering leadership on employee performance and organizational change. Explore how technology and digital tools can support the development of smart local communities. Investigate the role of community participation and public-private partnerships in advancing smart governance.

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