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VERSLO MOKYKLA

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Vilma Šliurpaitė

MASTER'S THESIS

VIRTUALIŲ IT PROJEKTŲ KOMANDŲ ĮGALINIMAS IR JO VAIDMUO KOMANDINIAM DARBUI TARPTAUTINĖJE FINANSŲ ĮMONĖJE	**VIRTUAL IT PROJECT TEAMS' EMPOWERMENT AND ITS ROLE FOR THE TEAMWORK AT THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCE COMPANY**

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SANTRAUKA

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TARPTAUTINĖS PROJEKTŲ VADYBOS PROGRAMA

STUDENTĖ VILMA ŠLIURPAITĖ

VIRTUALIŲ IT PROJEKTŲ KOMANDŲ ĮGALINIMAS IR JO VAIDMUO KOMANDINIAM
DARBUI TARPTAUTINĖJE FINANSŲ ĮMONĖJE

Magistro darbo vadovė – Assoc. prof., Dr. Dalia Bagdžiūnienė

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Magistro baigiamojo darbo aprašymas. Pastaraisiais metais vis daugiau organizacijų pradėjo siūlyti hibridinio bei nuotolinio darbo galimybes savo darbuotojams. Tačiau dirbant nuotolinėse komandose kyla iššūkių, buvo pastebėta, jog ypač suprastėja komandinis darbas. Ankščiau atliktuose tyrimuose buvo nustatyta, kad komandos įgalinimas teigiamai veikia keletą reiškinių: tarpusavio pasitikėjimą komandoje, žinių dalijimąsi tarp kolegų, darbuotojų pasitenkinimą darbu ir bendrą komandos atmosferą.

Tikslas ir uždaviniai. Šio darbo tikslas yra išanalizuoti komandų įgalinimą ir jo vaidmenį komandiniam darbui virtualių IT projektų komandose tarptautinėje finansų įmonėje. Tyrimo metu bus analizuojamas struktūrinis įgalinimas, lyderio įgalinantis elgesys ir psichologinis įgalinimas iš projektų vadovų ir projektų komandų narių pozicijų. Taip pat tyrimas analizuos būdus kuriais būtų galima pagerinti komandos įgalinimą.

Tyrimo metodologija. Darbo tikslam pasiekti buvo pasirinktas kokybinis tyrimo metodas. Tyrimas buvo atliekamas naudojant pusiau struktūruotus interviu. Pokalbių metu buvo surinkti duomenys apie komandų įgalinimą ir jo ryšį su komandiniu darbu. Šiam tyrimui buvo atrinkti penki projektų vadovai ir penki projektų komandų nariai, dirbantys virtualioje aplinkoje tarptautinėje finansų įmonėje.

Rezultatai ir išvados. Tyrimo duomenys parodė, kad įgalinimas turi tiesioginį ryšį su tuo, kaip gerai komanda gali dirbti kartu. Tačiau ne tik organizacijos yra atsakingos už komandos įgalinimą (struktūrinis įgalinimas), bet ir komandos vadovas (įgalinantis lyderio elgesys ir psichologinis įgalinimas). Būdai kuriais galima pagerinti komandų įgalinimą: suteikti prieigą prie informacijos ir išteklių, įtraukti komandą priimant sprendimus, tai pat leisti komandoms dirbti savarankiškai. Nuoseklus ir aiškus bendravimas bei komandos tarpusavio pasitikėjimo gerinimas buvo įvardinti kaip du pagrindiniai būdai siekiant pagerinti komandos narių įgalinimą.

SUMMARY

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

BUSINESS SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

STUDENT VILMA ŠLIURPAITĖ

VIRTUAL IT PROJECT TEAMS' EMPOWERMENT AND ITS ROLE FOR THE TEAMWORK AT THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCE COMPANY

MA thesis supervisor – Assoc. prof,. Dr. Dalia Bagdžiūnienė

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Number of references – 69 references.

A short description of Master thesis.

In recent years, more organisations started to offer hybrid or remote work possibilities for team members. However, working in remote teams comes with challenges. Particularly reduced teamwork among co-workers. Team empowerment has been linked to improving trust in the team, knowledge sharing between colleagues, job satisfaction and general team atmosphere.

Aim and objectives. To analyse teams' empowerment and its role for teamwork in virtual IT project teams at the international finance company. The study will analyse teams' empowerment through structural empowerment, empowering leader's behaviour and psychological empowerment from project manager's and project team members' perspectives. Also, it investigated in what ways team member empowerment can be improved.

Research methodology. To analyse raised aim and objectives, a qualitative research method was selected for this study. The research was conducted using semi-structured interviews. Data collected during the interviews was to investigate teams' empowerment and its relations with teamwork. Participants selected for this study were five project managers and five project team members working in virtual environments at an international finance company.

Results and conclusions. The research data showed that empowerment has a direct relationship to how well a team can work together. It is not only the organisation's responsibility to establish empowerment in the organisation (structural empowerment), but also, team leaders' and managers' (empowering leaders' behaviour and psychological empowerment). Ways in which team member empowerment can be improved – providing access to information and resources, involving the team in decision-making, and allowing them to self-organise. However, having clear, consistent communication and establishing trust was named as two main ways to improve empowerment in the team.

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the topic.

In recent years, more organisations started adopting remote or hybrid work arrangements. Therefore, more teams are beginning to work in a virtual environment, bringing different challenges and opportunities. The shift was strongly influenced by the pandemic situation, and just in the USA, employees working remotely increased by 12 times. It is necessary to explore how virtuality affects project teams and whether empowerment practices could mitigate the disadvantages of a virtual environment. Team member empowerment, also referred to as autonomy or authority delegating, has been linked to a positive outcome, such as increasing trust in the team, knowledge sharing, higher job satisfaction and better performance. In addition to that, team empowerment practices have been gaining popularity in scientific and business communities over the years.

Problem description.

The popularity of work in virtual teams is increasing; with employees moving to remote or hybrid work arrangements, managers are faced with challenges of the virtual work environment. Project teams are no exception. Project managers must adjust to the new working environment and find new ways of managing the team. Computer-mediated communication can bring different challenges for the team and managers, and the solutions might differ from collocated teams. Virtual environment comes with new constraints, such as different time zones, different languages, cultures. Moreover, not every person is tech-savvy up to the same level. Due to new conditions, team members might experience higher stress levels, lose motivation, or have lower job performance. Also, it has been found that the level of teamwork starts to decline while working remotely. Team member empowerment has been linked to having a positive relationship with trust in the team, knowledge sharing between colleagues, job satisfaction and general team atmosphere. It is important to explore if empowered team members will have an impact on teamwork in project teams. Employee empowerment has been researched mainly on the organisational level. Therefore, it is worth looking at whether empowerment would have the same outcome in project teams and whether it could help overcome virtual environment challenges with teamwork.

The object of the thesis

Team members empowerment and its role for teamwork in project teams.

The aim of the thesis

To analyse teams' empowerment and its role for teamwork in virtual IT project teams at the international finance company.

The objectives of the thesis:

- To analyse theoretical resources in relation to team member empowerment and teamwork.
- To analyse aspects of structural empowerment and its relations with project teamwork from managerial and team member perspectives.
- To analyse empowering leadership and its relations with project teamwork from managerial and team member perspectives.
- To analyse aspects of team members' psychological empowerment and its relations with project teamwork from managerial and team member perspectives
- To find out team members' empowerment improvement possibilities from managerial and team member perspectives
- To present conclusions and practical recommendations for virtual teams' empowerment.

Research methodology.

To analyse empowerment phenomena, qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted in this study. The conceptual research model has been composed based on the literature analysis. The research was carried out in an international finance company, with teams working in a virtual environment. Two perspectives were analysed: the team member's point of view and the project manager's point of view. Participants for both groups were selected using convenient sampling. The research was conducted with ten respondents: five project managers and five project team members. Selected participants were from different teams and not necessarily working with selected project managers.

Structure of the master's thesis.

This study is divided into four parts. In the theoretical part, the study analyses characteristics of virtual teams, challenges they are faced with and team member empowerment types. Three types of empowerment were analysed: structural empowerment, empowering leaders' behaviour, and psychological empowerment. The next part describes the research methodology, provides research questions and a research sample description. In the third part, respondents' in-depth interviews are presented, each interview question is discussed from the perspective of project managers and team members. Also, suggestions for team member empowerment improvements are provided. In the final part, the theoretical and empirical research findings are summarised and provided together with practical recommendations.

1. VIRTUAL TEAM MANAGEMENT

1.1. Virtual teams' attributes

Many office workers shift from conventional working methods towards remote, flexible, or hybrid work arrangements. In recent studies, it was discovered that more than two-thirds of 1372 respondents worked in a virtual environment (Alaiad, Alnsour, & Alsharo, 2019). Now more than ever, companies are offering work-from-home or even work-from-anywhere programs as a perk to attract employees. Also, this change was greatly accelerated by the global pandemic when most of the companies were forced to adjust — since then, working remotely had increased almost 12 times in the USA compared with pre-pandemic times when remote or hybrid work arrangements were chosen only by the minority (Feitosa & Salas, 2020). With organisations moving to remote work, so is the project teams. The information technology (IT) development industry has been using remote work arrangements even before the pandemic of COVID-19 started. And one of the mentioned benefits of it is being able to reach talents all over the globe (Chamakiotis, Panteli, & Davison, 2021). So, project teams in the IT development industry already have experience working remotely, but project teams in the other industries still need to adjust to the virtual environment. This section determines what characteristics are most often used to describe virtual teams and virtual project teams.

Even though remote work sometimes is addressed as distributed, virtual, flexible or distance work, terms should not be used interchangeably. This is due to all terms having unique definitions and different levels of virtuality (Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015; Martins, Gilson, & Maynard, 2004). Virtual teams entirely depend on or enhance face-to-face communications with technology (Martins et al., 2004). One characteristic valid to all types of work arrangements is that it utilises virtual communication tools such as electronic mail, videoconferencing, telephone call, or online chat channels (Munkvold & Zigurs, 2007; Rehman, Nawaz, & Abbas, 2020). While researchers agree that virtual teams communicate with the help of technology, opinions start to differ regarding other characteristics. Some consider teams located over different geographical locations, within the same or different time zones, communicating via technology without face-to-face contact (Choi & Cho, 2019; Morley, Cormican, & Folan, 2015; Munkvold & Zigurs, 2007). In addition to already mentioned features: different locations, time zone and virtual communication, teams distributed over various departments/organisations that are using computer-mediated communication are considered as well to be virtual teams (Martins et al., 2004; Morley et al., 2015). Also, temporarily created teams and project teams that are dispersed over different geographical locations and using technologies for communication are thought to be virtual teams (Tworoger, Ruppel, Gong, & Pohlman, 2013).

To determine virtual project success, researchers grouped factors into five categories (Castellano, Chandavimol, Khelladi, & Orhan, 2021; Stevenson & Starkweather, 2017):

- project manager's ability to communicate at different levels;
- work coordination;
- project manager's expertise;
- commitment;
- coping with uncertainty and change.

Face-to-face team management differs from virtual team management (Choi & Cho, 2019). Therefore different project success factors should be emphasised for virtual teams (Rehman et al., 2020). Most of the elements are interpersonal skills (Castellano et al., 2021; Stevenson & Starkweather, 2017). A new term was discovered to describe leadership style in virtual teams – e-Leadership, where leaders communicate with remote teams via technology (Walvoord, Redden, Elliott, & Coovert, 2008).

As we see, virtual teams have many names and descriptions. Each type of remote work has different virtuality to face-to-face ratio. Yet three characteristics remain the same for all virtual teams: geographical location, time zone and means of communication. It emerges that soft skills are the most significant contributor to project success.

1.2. Work in virtual teams' benefits and occurring challenges

Working in a virtual environment comes with great benefits for the businesses and team members. Companies can save money on physical offices, and team members can save time and money not having to commute every day. One of the technology giants (Microsoft) recently released its annual work trend report, saying that remote work increases productivity in the short term but reduces chances of innovation in the company (Microsoft 2021 Work Trend Index, 2021). However, businesses might be biased when it comes to team members returning to the offices. Virtual environment's benefits and challenges, also, has been gaining interest not just in practitioners community. But also, in the scientific research field, project managers leading virtual teams could face more challenges than leading a collocated team (Liao, 2017).

Virtual team benefits.

Technology advancement allows organisations to look for team members regardless of geographical location or other constraints (Choi & Cho, 2019). Being able to reach a global talent pool increases innovation and creativity in teams (Chamakiotis et al., 2021; Hahm, 2017), although reduced innovation opportunities have also been found as a disadvantage to the virtual work environment (Allen et al., 2015). Team members working in global teams could quickly gain knowledge from the experts to

enhance their skills (Liao, 2017). Another benefit for the organisations is reduced spending on building and maintenance of the physical office spaces (Choi & Cho, 2019). In addition to that, remote work comes with higher job satisfaction and lower work-related stress levels (Allen et al., 2015; Castellano et al., 2021). Job satisfaction could be related to workers being able to maintain and decide on their schedules. Also, the same Allen et al. (2015) research found that team members seeking higher-order and autonomy showed higher levels of satisfaction. Having a choice to work in the office or remotely resulted in more significant organisational commitment, and they were less likely to have intentions to leave the company. Team members autonomy affects the team member–supervisor relationship (Allen et al., 2015). Moreover, multicultural teams have excellent capabilities for fast problem solving and creative thinking (Hahm, 2017). Virtual teams have not just tangible benefits, such as reduced operational costs, but also a potential to be more creative at the workplace and satisfied with the job (Allen et al., 2015; Szewc, 2014). Key benefits of a virtual team:

- organisations can hire team members globally without geographical constraints;
- reduced operational spending;
- lower stress levels in team members;
- higher creativity;
- team members are happier about their job and less likely to leave the company.

Virtual team challenges.

Remote work teams, just as traditional, face-to-face ones, encounter challenges. However, challenges are different from face-to-face teams. Team members working remotely use computer-mediated communications, so they become dependent on a good internet connection; also, if working from home, one might not have a desk or a comfortable chair or even space to create a home office. In addition, technical challenges arise with virtual teams – technical equipment access, competence in using technology (Morrison & Jaime, 2020). Moreover, working from home with kids creates another difficulty - focusing on work, more challenging to find work-life balance and higher chances of burning out.

It is becoming a widespread practice in organisations to subcontract work, in project teams especially. Although that comes with the great value of having experienced professionals working for the organisations, more often, project teams are formed from people not having any previous experience of working together (Rehman et al., 2020). Virtual project teams usually are created ad hoc, without prior knowledge of one another and are expected to deliver results right away (Munkvold & Zigurs, 2007). Another popular trend is multitasking – having project team members work on multiple projects simultaneously (Rehman et al., 2020).

Having teams in different locations often means having multicultural teams, meetings in various languages, and time zones (Tworoger et al., 2013). Many researchers agree that teams find it difficult to establish trust, communicate issues or misunderstandings, solve conflicts (Lin, Standing, & Liu, 2008; Morley et al., 2015; Morrison & Jaime, 2020). Daily communication and goal communication is often described as essential leaders' attributes (Garro-Abarca, Palos-Sanchez, & Aguayo-Camacho, 2021; Walvoord et al., 2008). Team members feel less engaged and less likely will take ownership of the task. Researchers suggest that an initial face-to-face meeting would improve trust issues (Munkvold & Zigurs, 2007; Tworoger et al., 2013).

A significant challenge virtual teams face is social and professional isolation, which influences interpersonal and workplace relationships. Failing to manage this issue, workers are less likely to develop meaningful and trusted relationships while working remotely (Allen et al., 2015; Feitosa & Salas, 2020). Maintaining trust within the team and team members trust in their leader could be a determinant in project team performance (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021). In relation to trust issues in the team, knowledge sharing inside the organisation will decrease, and therefore, chances of innovation and highly interdependent tasks will reduce the team's productivity (Allen et al., 2015; Choi & Cho, 2019; Rehman et al., 2020). Level of virtuality in a team could have an effect on creativity through knowledge sharing, meaning with lower knowledge sharing, team members are less likely to suggest creative solutions (Hahm, 2017).

One of the biggest challenges of virtual teams is communication in the virtual environment, which is unavoidable whether one chooses partially or a fully remote work. Poor communication could impact the virtual team's performance (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021). Having remote work option for the organisations might be tempting, but project managers working with virtual teams should adapt their approach when leading such team (Chamakiotis et al., 2021; Clark, Marnewick, & Marnewick, 2019). Critical challenges faced by the virtual teams:

- communication issues, caused by, but not limited to cultural differences, different time zones and languages, lack of interaction within the team;
- team members' feeling of isolation;
- establishing and maintaining trust in the team;
- reduced knowledge sharing;
- lower innovation possibilities;
- lower productivity and performance of project teams.

Because of the findings that a higher level of virtuality negatively affects workplace relationships, knowledge sharing and innovation in the organisation (Chamakiotis et al., 2021; Garro-Abarca et al., 2021; Hahm, 2017), to reduce the adverse effects and to succeed, leaders should adapt

their approach when leading a virtual team (Clark et al., 2019; Feitosa & Salas, 2020). The focus for virtual team leaders should be:

- on building and maintaining the relationships and trust in the team (Chamakiotis et al., 2021; Rehman et al., 2020);
- empower team members, team empowerment has been found to improve knowledge sharing (Hahm, 2017);
- seek active an intentional communication (Clark et al., 2019);
- determine work-life boundaries (Chamakiotis et al., 2021).

It has been found that teams with higher autonomy perform better, has higher knowledge sharing intent, and trust each other more (Choi & Cho, 2019). Psychological empowerment fosters sharing environment (Hahm, 2017). Also, empowerment has a positive effect on trust in the team (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021). It seems that many challenges faced by a virtual team stem from a lack of trust within the team or a lack of trust in the leadership. Knowledge sharing or information sharing becomes harder if team members do not know each other due to difficulties establishing trust in the team (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021). Having higher autonomy in teams leads to improved teamwork, impacting performance (Choi & Cho, 2019). It has been suggested that at least the initial project team's meeting should be delivered face-to-face to increase teamwork (Tworoger et al., 2013).

Organisations and project teams working in a virtual environment should pay more attention to maintaining trust in teams and getting familiar with colleagues to establish trust in newly formed teams. Low trust reduces information sharing, which has an impact on job performance. It is essential to investigate how virtuality impacts organisations' and project teams' performance across different industries.

Team members feeling isolated, less productive, struggling to trust colleagues, and not exchanging expertise are the difficulties faced by virtual project teams. Stated challenges could have negative effects to project completion, for example – not meeting quality requirements. Trying to remedy the situation project team can overspend, causing project budget breakdown.

1.3. Teamwork characteristics

Virtual project teams are an evolving trend nowadays. Such teams can be a big advantage the organisat in many ways. It is easier to accomplish set goals with a team of experts from around the world. Teams working remotely communicate using technologies like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Jira, Confluence or Trello also, phone calls and emails. We have so many new technologies, which can be used to communicate. However, teamwork in virtual teams was mentioned as one of the main challenges.

Teamwork has been described as collective team member effort to achieve a common goal or complete a task (West, 2004, p. 252). It is important not only for solving complex problems, but also for team members' professional development with the help of knowledge sharing (Alsharo, Gregg, & Ramirez, 2017). Teams can achieve more than individuals, combined multiple talents and efforts can complete complex tasks at a greater velocity (Bell, Brown, Colaneri, & Outland, 2018; Feitosa & Salas, 2020). However, quite often, project teams are formed just for one particular project and do not have previous work experience in the said team (Munkvold & Zigurs, 2007; Rehman et al., 2020). That puts an additional strain on the team.

It was as found that knowledge sharing has positive effects on trust in the team (Alsharo et al., 2017). Each project team member assigned to a certain project has its' role in the project, however a formal contract is not enough when it comes to trust (Child, 2001). Trust is a belief that your fellow colleagues' actions will not be harmful but rather valuable (Child, 2001; Huang, 2009). Knowledge sharing has another inseparable component, and that is a mutual support, teams that learn together understand when help is needed and equally shares the workload (Clancy & Tornberg, 2007; Deering, Johnston, & Colacchio, 2011; Marsicano, Pereira, Silva, & Franca, 2017). A further factor that has influence on teamwork is team cohesion, it is an ability of a team to work as one unit. When team has a shared goal they fell more committed to the team, trust each other more and has higher intent of knowledge sharing (Gonzalez & Massaroli de Melo, 2021; Huang, 2009; Reinig & Shin, 2002). A study found that team member empowerment has connection to team cohesion (Speer, Jackson, & Peterson, 2001). When team members feel empowered, they take ownership of the tasks they perform and act in solidity towards the common goal. Trust is mentioned on several occasions when talking about teamwork, though it is important not to forget other dimensions. Four teamwork dimensions:

1. Collaboration as knowledge sharing in the team.

Access to information or expertise related to work and projects (Kotlarsky & Oshri, 2005). Also, team members knowledge division in the team (Alsharo et al., 2017).

2. Collaboration as mutual support in the team.

Maintaining work balance among team members (Clancy & Tornberg, 2007; Deering et al., 2011)

3. Trust in the team.

Believe in good faith that others' actions are advantageous rather than harmful (Child, 2001; Huang, 2009).

4. Cohesion of the team.

Team member alliance when achieving common goals (Gonzalez & Massaroli de Melo, 2021; Huang, 2009; Reinig & Shin, 2002).

Teamwork is an essential part of any team; it does not matter whether it is a project team or not. It allows people to learn from one another and complete tasks quicker than if each person was working

alone. Research conducted investigating teamwork has looked at it through many different dimensions. Knowledge sharing in the team, mutual support, trust in the team and team cohesion were selected teamwork dimensions to be investigated in this research.

2. TEAM MEMBER EMPOWERMENT

2.1. Empowerment perspectives

Employee empowerment was widely researched by J. Rappaport, who describes it as a process of giving authority and control over one's life (Rappaport, 1987). Also, in the same research, J. Rappaport mentions that environment rather than team members should be observed to better understand the conditions under which people feel empowered. Meaning that circumstances, when people feel empowered in different industries, cultural or historical backgrounds, would be different. In addition to that, it raised an assumption that participation, also referred to as engagement, would have a strong connection with empowerment and vice versa. Building on that, employee empowerment processes and outcomes should be separated (Rappaport, 1987). Processes could be – including in decision making, participating in organised activities, gaining access to recourses and results – organisational growth or network development. Employee empowerment by J. Rappaport was described as a process of giving authority, definition was expanded further by researchers by adding that empowerment is an intentional process (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Organisations and project managers create environment in project teams where team members feel empowered.

Team member empowerment is said to fulfil the need for autonomy (Gardner, Wright, & Moynihan, 2011). In some resources, team member empowerment is used in the same context as delegating autonomy (Nauman, Mansur Khan, & Ehsan, 2010), sharing power (Spreitzer, 2007). However, more evidence shows that delegating autonomy only partially represents empowerment (Lee & Koh, 2001). Nevertheless, autonomy relates to decentralisation, which is considered an empowerment component (Hempel, Zhang, & Han, 2012). According to Kirkman et al. (2004), a 'culture of autonomy' only refers to freedom in decision making. In the same research, term empowerment is referring to psychological empowerment and structural empowerment, where delegating autonomy, authority or decentralising are just smaller parts of structural empowerment.

Authors distinguish team member empowerment into three distinctive elements: organisational empowerment and psychological empowerment (Menon, 2001; Spreitzer, 1995) and empowering leaders' behaviour (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005). Team members empowerment is considered an important tool, particularly for the teams using computer-mediated communication (Kirkman, Rosen, Tesluk, & Gibson, 2004). Empowerment is understood as a tool used by leaders or team members'

feeling of empowerment (Lee & Koh, 2001). Therefore it is considered an ongoing action, where people are more empowered or less empowered (Spreitzer, 1995). Also, empowerment is understood to be specific to the organisation, industry, team or even job title (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Rappaport, 1987; Spreitzer, 1995). Without one framework to fit most of the teams, it becomes harder to generalise ideas and suggestions. Therefore, this could be the reason why researchers cannot reach a consensus on empowerment outcomes.

Structural empowerment refers to the tools and practices of an organisation when psychological empowerment refers to ones feelings of empowerment (Spreitzer, 2007). Structural empowerment is achieved through having a clear structure, procedures, and documented practices in the organisation (Hempel et al., 2012). Structural empowerment is connected with practices in the organisation, and it is described through access to opportunity, information, support and resources variables (Spreitzer, 1995, 2007). Psychological empowerment has two perspectives – leaders' perspective and team members perception/feeling of empowerment (Lee & Koh, 2001).

Empowerment is mentioned 19 times in project managers guide Project Management Body of Knowledge, also referred to as PMBoK ("Project Management Body of Knowledge (Pmbok® Guide)," 2017). The main difference between a project team and an organisation is time constrain; projects teams are only temporary – created to achieve a goal. Although there are some differences between the two, but project managers have many similarities to managers in organisations. Thus, empowerment tools could be used in project teams as well. By delegating authority or asking for advice from team members, project managers can promote horizontal or shared leadership and team effectiveness (Castellano et al., 2021; Yu, Vaagaasar, Müller, Wang, & Zhu, 2018). Virtual team performance was researched on virtual research & development (R&D) project teams; authors found that shared leadership brings better results in team performance (Castellano et al., 2021).

Freedom without any structure and procedures could increase stress levels in the team. Therefore Hempel et al. (2012) defined empowerment as autonomy within boundaries. We should not assume that what works for the collocated team will work for the virtual one; further research is necessary. Also, the importance of empowerment is even more significant in virtual teams than in collocated teams (Kirkman et al., 2004). All components: structural empowerment, empowering leaders' behaviour, and psychological empowerment, are essential when looking into team member empowerment.

2.1.1. Structural empowerment

Not only leaders are responsible for empowerment, but organisations have a part in it as well. Organisational empowerment, also described as structural empowerment in the empirical researches (Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, & Wilk, 2001) or empowerment climate (Seibert, Silver, & Randolph,

2004), enables the possibility of authority transferring to subordinates (Yu et al., 2018). Structural empowerment is more about processes and procedures, documentation and used practices, in the same research empowering climate key practices were defined as (Seibert et al., 2004):

- Information sharing – team members have access to sensitive information.
- Determining autonomy boundaries – team members have clear goals and visions, well-defined responsibility boundaries and standardised procedures.
- Demonstrating team accountability – team members are participating in the decision-making process and taking responsibility for their job.

Very similarly structural empowerment is described as access to information, support, resources, and opportunities (Boamah, Laschinger, Wong, & Clarke, 2018; Laschinger et al., 2001).

While team structural empowerment study (Hempel et al., 2012) describes it through such variables:

- Involving team members in the decision-making process (decentralisation).
- Rules regulating internal behaviours.

Previous studies found that standards and well-defined processes enhance team empowerment by eliminating uncertainty (Hempel et al., 2012). Bureaucracy can easily create rigid role and workplace structure and lower flexibility, therefore reducing empowerment, so level formalities directly link to empowerment (Hempel et al., 2012). Well defined processes and standards communicate values and explain goals, which help teams to focus on what is essential (Yu et al., 2018).

Structural empowerment refers to organisational structure and used practices (Hempel et al., 2012) and a shared understanding of policies (Seibert et al., 2004). For example, in a project management context, project management office (PMO) defines and explains all the processes, at the same time – ensures that it would be used throughout the organisation, coaches project teams if required ("Project Management Body of Knowledge (Pmbok® Guide)," 2017). PMO fosters knowledge sharing and consistency in the organisations through standards. Project managers have clear guidelines when filling out the documentation or using essential tools; it helps project managers to focus on the important parts of the project. So, project managers could get additional support from the PMO office depending on the organisation size.

With industries moving fast ahead and everchanging workplace environments, structural empowerment should not be left behind. With teams moving to a virtual environment, structural empowerment importance becomes greater. Support and information play a big part in how much team members feel empowered, especially in pandemic times when there is a lot of uncertainty.

2.1.2. Empowering leaders' behaviours.

Unfortunately, there is no such model that would fit all the circumstances; even the empowerment of many is different from the empowerment of an individual (Spreitzer, 2007). However, leadership behaviours could be split into two groups: task and people-oriented behaviours (Liao, 2017). And differently than in face-to-face teams, leaders working with virtual teams should adjust their managerial style to be more flexible and allow others to take charge if required (Nauman et al., 2010).

What leader's behaviours are considered empowering according to the four psychological empowerment dimensions:

1. Leaders should maintain and establish trust in the team because trust makes a significant impact on empowerment outcomes (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021). Without trust – power delegation will not be effective, and leaders could ignore advice from the team, micromanage them. Project managers should ensure aim to delegate authority appropriately and embrace teams autonomy (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2018).
2. Communicating meaningfulness to the team through clear vision and goal, being inspirational and influencing (Feitosa & Salas, 2020; Spreitzer, De Janasz, & Quinn, 1999).
3. Transparent and information sharing, fostering knowledge sharing between the team members. Coaching and assisting in goal achievement. (Feitosa & Salas, 2020; Greco, Laschinger, & Wong, 2006; Spreitzer, 2007)
4. Consult with the team and involve them when relevant decisions are being made.(Kirkman et al., 2004; Spreitzer, 1995)

Leaders should pay attention to communication in the team. It is frequently mentioned as a key factor determining project success. Open, deliberate communication is vital for virtual teams, and project managers should plan communications with the team (Allen et al., 2015). Having that in mind, empowering leader's behaviour consists of coaching the team, encouraging the team to be autonomous, involving when making decisions and communicating transparently.

2.1.3. Psychological empowerment.

Employee empowerment is often regarded as delegating autonomy, delegating authority and self-management (Hempel et al., 2012; Nauman et al., 2010). There is no one framework or concept that would fit all organisations (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Rappaport, 1987). Psychological empowerment is a motivational tool, that has four dimensions (Spreitzer, 1995):

- *Meaningfulness*

It's how team members perceive their job to be necessary, how much they care about the job being done.

- *Competence*

How team members perceive their knowledge to accomplish tasks and reach goals.

- *Self-determination*

How much self-confidence and freedom team members believes they have to make decisions and how much the team members are involved in decision-making by the leader.

- *Impact*

How much do team members believes they can have an influence on organisation procedures, outcome or decisions being made.

Team members need to have a sense of power (Spreitzer, 1995). It was found that higher levels of confidence result in team members feeling more empowered than the ones with low levels of confidence (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021). Psychological empowerment dimensions were also suggested by Menon (2001). Key dimensions for empowerment by Menon (2001):

- *Perceived control*

How much in power team members feels, regardless of whether he has or not the power in mind.

- *Perceived competence*

How much a team member believes in themself to have all the skills required to accomplish a given task.

- *Goal internalisation:*

How organisation goals align with the team members' personal goals, and how important are those goals.

Although authors use different terminology, but dimensions relate to each other – meaningfulness and impact to goal internalisation, competence to perceived competence and self-determination, impact to perceived control. Team members inclusion in decision making is one of the main ways how to decentralise and share power, but not forgetting that decisions should be relevant to the team members' position (Spreitzer, 2007). Another idea of empowerment – team members should feel ready to take on more responsibility and have flexibility over work being completed (Yu et al., 2018).

Team members feeling of empowerment is just one side of the phenomena; psychological empowerment feeling is strongly influenced by the behaviours of the supervisor or leader, or in project teams – project manager. Some leaders might find it difficult to delegate authority, and some struggle to trust team members to do the job. Leaders should understand the benefits of psychological empowerment and, with the use of four dimensions, promote empowerment at the workplace.

Three different empowerment types: structural empowerment, empowering leaders' behaviour and psychological empowerment should be investigated together when investigating virtual project teams. All empowerment types complement each other and coexists in the team, it creates environment where team members can feel empowered and add value to the project team. Overall, team member empowerment has been linked to positive and negative results in the teams.

2.2.   Empowerment outcomes

Over the years, empowerment received a considerable amount of criticism. It has been criticised whether empowerment is just another trendy word in the businesses (Argyris, 1998; Maynard, Gilson, & Mathieu, 2012) or whether it is just a new word for an old concept (Lee & Koh, 2001). There have been studies looking into the negative side of empowerment – few studies investigated empowerment effects on team members emotional exhaustion. However, it was found that empowering environment could lower stress levels at work and reduce the chances of emotional exhaustion. In general, empowerment effects are more positive than negative for both the organisation and members of the team. Also, it has been found that empowered team members might be more satisfied with their job and committed to the organisation but would not necessarily perform better (Dewettinck, Singh, & Buyens, 2003). So, what positive and negative results empowerment can bring.

Potential disadvantages of empowerment.

Empowerment does not come only with benefits; with team members autonomy to act, there is a greater risk for the business, organisational or project team hierarchy losing clarity and disorganisation could impact team's productivity. Also, empowerment might not be for the organisations that want to minimise spending and control the costs (Lee & Koh, 2001). On top of that, rigid procedures and administrative work that comes with structural empowerment can lower flexibility in the team (Hempel et al., 2012).

Besides financial and productivity issues, empowerment has been linked to team members exhaustion and burnout. However, both studies came to the same conclusion, that rather the absence of empowerment is the cause of team members exhaustion and burnout. First study was performed by Hochwälder back in 2007; the study focused on hospital nurses in Sweden. Empowerment was investigated as an independent variable, mediating and moderating one in the relationship between burnout and work environment. The research found that empowerment was negatively connected to burnout and moderating the relationship between burnout and the work environment (Hochwälder, 2007; Maynard et al., 2012). The second study, a meta-analysis, was conducted also with researches done with hospital nurses from 1990 to 2018. The paper was looking for a relationship between empowerment and burnout; it was determined that psychological and structural empowerment has an

effect of reducing the burnout and stress in hospital nurses (Zhang, Ye, & Li, 2018). The author suggested this could be because of empowering work environment, where relationships between colleagues had the biggest impact.

It is important to research empowerment not only as a positive phenomenon at the workplace but also worth looking into the side effects. Empowerment is very dependant on the organisation, industry or team. So there is a chance that empowerment in the virtual environment could have different disadvantages.

Empowerment disadvantages:

- establishing empowerment in the organisation could be expensive;
- lower team members flexibility.

Positive team member empowerment effects.

Team member empowerment benefits have been linked to team motivation, engagement, trust in the team and job performance. With all these variables, the connection was positive. Although team empowerment is very much dependant on the industry, team members either feel empowered or don't.

In a study performed by (Xue et al., 2011) connection between psychological empowerment, knowledge sharing and team climate were discovered. Variables affecting team climate: cohesion, innovation, and trust. Leaders' behaviour plays a big part in the empowerment process, thus affecting knowledge sharing. As previously found on virtual teams' challenge analysis, knowledge sharing has a big impact on innovation tendencies in an organisation (Allen et al., 2015). Therefore, it has an impact on organisational performance (Kirkman et al., 2004). Also, in the team, empowerment highly influences job performance (Bicudo de Castro & Sridharan, 2021; Hempel et al., 2012).

Also, psychological empowerment boosts team members motivation, which leads to better work results and organisational growth (Weeraratne & Namusonge, 2012). Team motivation has been a popular topic for many years because it is linked to many positive outcomes for organisations and teams. So, empowerment could be used as a tool to motivate subordinates.

Structural and psychological empowerment has been researched in relation to teamwork – it has been found that team members who are feeling empowered would have higher intent to share the knowledge with colleagues (Choi & Cho, 2019; Hahm, 2017; Xue et al., 2011). Empowering project team members would improve knowledge sharing, which has been found as one of the primary virtual team challenges (Choi & Cho, 2019). In addition, team member job satisfaction is positively related to empowerment (Dewettinck et al., 2003; Hahm, 2017), according to research – empowerment effect on job satisfaction has higher significance than on job performance, but nevertheless, the effect is also positive (Choi & Cho, 2019; Hahm, 2017). Happier and satisfied with their job, team members become more productive, therefore improving overall organisational performance. In Choi & Cho (2019)

research, it was also found that one empowerment component – autonomy has a direct positive relationship with trust. With higher autonomy, levels of trust were also higher, therefore helping to overcome another virtual team challenge – difficulties establishing and maintaining trust.

Team management in virtual teams is different from management in face-to-face, as well, empowerment practices would not work in both types of teams the same way (Kirkman et al., 2004). Overall, all types of empowerment has been found to be more important for high virtuality teams because of fostering knowledge sharing and learning from one another (Kirkman et al., 2004).

All mentioned above team member empowerment benefits:

- improved teamwork
- higher job satisfaction;
- higher motivation;
- better job and organisation performance;
- process improvement;
- improved knowledge sharing;
- team members happiness;
- mitigating effect on emotional exhaustion.

Team member empowerment should be especially considered while working in virtual teams. It was found that empowerment has a positive relationship with teamwork, job satisfaction and performance, information sharing and, to some extent – trust. When establishing organisation empowerment, leaders should take caution not to create too much bureaucracy, which could reduce productivity in the team.

Project teams working in virtual environment are facing challenges, most of them stems from communication issues. Also, four teamwork dimensions: collaboration as knowledge sharing, collaboration as mutual support, trust in the team and team cohesion, correspond to the biggest challenges faced by virtual project teams. Team member empowerment has been linked to positive effect towards teamwork.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research model

Type of industry has a great influence on empowerment outcomes (Rappaport, 1987). Therefore, it is important to perform research in different industries and compare it with literature review findings. Qualitative in-depth interviews were selected to analyse empowerment and it's understanding in project teams. The conceptual research model has been composed for the research based on the literature analysis, the model is presented in Figure 1. Team member empowerment effects on teamwork were analysed through project manager's and team member's perspectives.

Research aim:

To analyse teams' empowerment and its role for the teamwork in virtual IT project teams at the international finance company.

Objectives

- To analyse aspects of structural empowerment and its relations with project teamwork from managerial and team member perspectives.
- To analyse empowering leadership and its relations with project teamwork from managerial and team member perspectives.
- To analyse aspects of team members' psychological empowerment and its relations with project teamwork from managerial and team member perspectives
- To find out team members' empowerment improvement possibilities from managerial and team member perspectives.

Structural Empowerment:
1. Information
2. Support
3. Resources
4. Opportunity

Empowering leaders' behaviour:
1. Enhance meaning
2. Involve in decision making
3. Express confidence
4. Foster autonomy

Psychological Empowerment:
1. Meaning
2. Competence
3. Self-determination
4. Impact

Teamwork:
1. Collaboration as knowledge sharing
2. Collaboration as mutual support
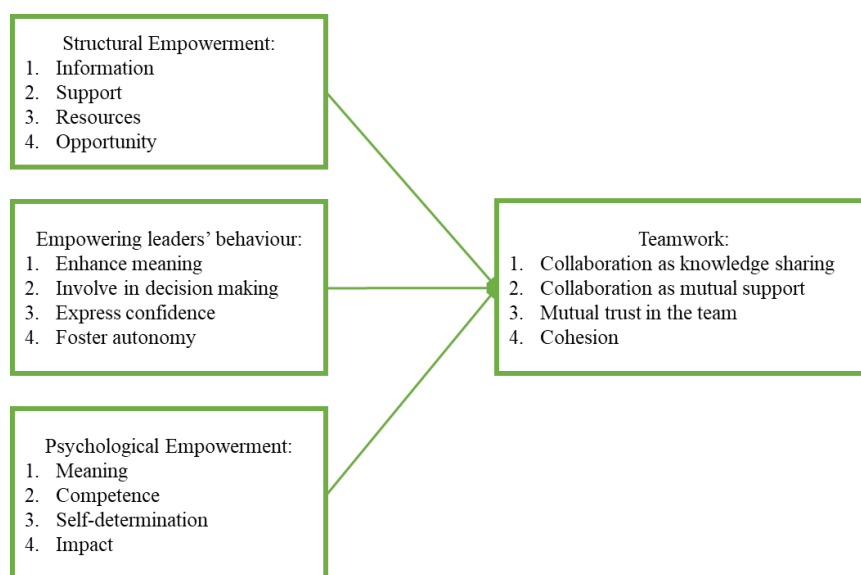3. Mutual trust in the team
4. Cohesion

Figure 1. Conceptual research model investigating team member empowerment effects on teamwork.

Source: Composed by the author.

Research variables and definitions:

Structural empowerment – organisation's existing processes, procedures and documentation enabling team members to have authority (Laschinger et al., 2001). This type of empowerment consists of four following dimensions:

1. **Information** – possibility for team members to access documentation about the organisation's vision, values, and goals.

2. **Support** – possibility for team members to access work-related guidance and colleagues' feedback.

3. **Resources** – possibility for team members to access tangible resources in the organisation: equipment, supplies.

4. **Opportunity** – possibility for team members to grow professionally and get recognition.

Empowering leader's behaviours – leader's behaviours that are helping to empower team members (Ahearne et al., 2005). Empowering leader's behaviour consists of four following dimensions:

1. **Enhance meaning** – leader's actions to increase understanding of the purpose of work being done.

2. **Involve in decision making** – leader's actions to involve team members when making decisions.

3. **Express confidence** – leader's actions to show trust in team members results and achievements.

4. **Foster autonomy** – leader's actions to give team members the freedom to make decisions and act within boundaries.

Psychological team empowerment – team members feeling of authority and power to perform work duties (Spreitzer, 1995). Characteristics of psychological empowerment:

1. **Meaning** – team members' perception on how important to the organisation is the job they do.

2. **Competence** – how much team members believe that they have enough knowledge to complete the work.

3. **Self-determination** – how much autonomy to make decisions team members believe they have.

4. **Impact** – how much influence team members believe they have on organisational procedures.

Teamwork – collective team member effort to achieve a common goal or complete a task (West, 2004, p. 252). Characteristics of teamwork:

1. **Collaboration as knowledge sharing** – access to information or expertise related to work/project (Kotlarsky & Oshri, 2005).

2. **Collaboration as mutual support -** maintaining work balance among team members (Clancy & Tornberg, 2007; Deering et al., 2011)

3. **Mutual trust in the team** – believe in good faith that other team members' actions are advantageous rather than harmful (Huang, 2009).

4. **Cohesion** – team members' alliance when achieving common goals (Huang, 2009; Reinig & Shin, 2002).

3.2.   Research sample

The research was carried out in an international finance company. Selected company has more than 3000 employees and is operating in the Baltic region with offices based over three countries. For this research participants selected were from teams working in a virtual environment. Two perspectives were analysed: the team members' point of view and the leader's point of view. Participants for both groups were selected using convenient sampling. Sample size for in-depth interviews varies depending on the scale of the research, five and more participants are sufficient if data gathered is similar (Boddy, 2015; Dworkin, 2012). The research was conducted with ten respondents: five project managers and five project team members. Selected participants were from different teams and not necessarily working with selected project managers. The method selected for data gathering – in-depth interviews, which allow to understand the experiences and views of the respondents. During the interviews, data was gathered, processed, coded, and patterns were found. Participant information is provided below; during the interview, confidentiality was guaranteed. Therefore, participants have numbers instead of names, also a brief description about the expertise and length of service.

Project manager group:

Not to name participants, each project manager had a label assigned to them – first questioned project manager had a label PM 1, second – PM 2 etc.

PM 1. Senior project manager. Works in the company for five years. For the last year have been working remotely. Currently works more on guiding and helping project managers of the organisation. Have over five years' experience in managing project teams.

PM 2. Project Manager. Working in the company for just over a year. Mainly works remotely but occasionally goes to the office – hybrid working arrangements. Works with software development. Overall has three years of project management experience.

PM 3. Project manager. Working in the company for three years. For the last year has been working remotely. At the moment is working on a new system implementation project. Started to manage projects five years ago.

PM 4. Project manager. Working in the company for four years. For the last year has been working remotely. Works with an operating system migration.

PM 5. Project manager. Working in the company for three years. Mainly works remotely, goes to the office one or two days per week – hybrid working arrangements. Works with software development.

Project team member group:

Not to name participants, each project team member had a label assigned to them – first questioned project team member had a label PTM 1, second – PTM 2 etc.

PTM 1. Team lead. Has been working in the company for more than two years. Has been working remotely for the last year. Works in a project team responsible for IT.

PTM 2. Project team member. Has been working in the company for more than a year. Works remotely since the pandemic started. The project team is implementing IT systems.

PTM 3. Project team member. Has been working in the company for three years. Has been working remotely for the last year. Works in a project team responsible for IT.

PTM 4. Project team member. Has been working in the company for more than three years Mostly works remotely, goes to the office one or two days per week – hybrid working arrangements. Works in a project team responsible for IT.

PTM 5. Team lead. Has been with the company for two years. Has been working remotely for the last year. Works in a project team responsible for IT.

3.3. Research method and questions

In-depth interviews allow to explore the participants' experiences, opinions, and views. With qualitative research, it is not possible to measure attitudes; instead, it can be investigated what type of attitudes individuals have. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview questionnaire via the Zoom video call program. During each interview, permission to record was obtained, and a brief introduction about the research was provided. Participants were asked to think about a specific project in the past or a project they are working on now.

Interview questionnaire. A total of 24 questions were divided into six parts: introduction, questions about structural empowerment, empowering leaders' behaviour, psychological empowerment, teamwork and closing questions.

Part 1. Introduction. Participants were asked about their experience within the role and the organisation. In this part, a general understanding of team empowerment and ways a team can be empowered were explored. If a participant were not familiar with the concepts, a short description was provided.

Table 1. *Introductory questions.*

How long have you been with your current organisation?
What is your current position in the company? And how long have you been working in this position?
Do you work now or previously worked in project teams? If so, what type of projects mostly did you work on?
Do you work now or previously worked remotely?
Have you ever heard about team empowerment? How would you describe it?
In what ways a team can be empowered?

Source: Composed by the author.

Part 2. Structural empowerment. Four variables representing structural empowerment were investigated. Questions for this part were adapted from previous empowerment studies by Laschinger (2012).

Table 2. *Structural empowerment questions.*

For the following questions, please think about your experiences while working in a project team.
Variable: Information **Questions for Project manager** *Can your team access all the information required for work, and if yes, how?* **Questions for a team member** *Can you access all the required information for work, and if yes, how?*
Variable: Support **Questions for Project manager** *Does your team have access to support? If yes, what kind of support can they access?* **Questions for a team member** *Do you have access to support? If yes, what kind of support can you access?*
Variable: Resources **Questions for Project manager** *Does your team have access to enough resources to do the work? If yes, what can they access?* **Questions for a team member** *Do you have access to enough resources to do the work? If yes, what can you access?*
Variable: Opportunity **Questions for Project manager** *Can project team members gain new skills at work? If yes, how?* **Questions for a team member** *Can you gain new skills at work? If yes, how?*

Source: Composed by the author.

Part 3. Empowering leaders' behaviour, which was analysed through four variables. Questions were adapted from Ahearne et al. (2005).

Table 3. *Empowering leaders' behaviour questions.*

Variable: Enhance meaning   **Questions for Project manager**   *Do you help your team members understand how their objectives and goals relate to the company's? If yes, how?*   **Questions for a team member**   *Does your project manager help you understand how your objectives and goals relate to the company's? If yes, how?*
Variable: Involve in decision making   **Questions for Project manager**   *Do you involve your team members when making decisions? If yes, how?*   **Questions for a team member**   *Does your project manager involve you when making decisions? If yes, how?*
Variable: Express confidence   **Questions for Project manager**   *Do you express confidence in your team members that they are capable of doing the job? If yes, how?*   **Questions for a team member**   *Does your project manager express confidence in you that you are capable of doing the job? If yes, how?*
Variable: Foster autonomy   **Questions for Project manager**   *Do you promote autonomy in your team? If yes, how?*   **Questions for a team member**   *Does your project manager promote autonomy in a team? If yes, how?*

Source: Composed by the author.

Part 4. Psychological empowerment. Widely researched psychological empowerment questions were adopted from research by Spreitzer (1995).

Table 4. *Psychological empowerment questions.*

Variable: Meaning   **Questions for Project manager**   *Do you think your team think the job they do has meaning? If yes, why do you think so?*   **Questions for a team member**   *Do you think the work you do has meaning? If yes, why do you think so?*
Variable: Competence   **Questions for Project manager**   *How do you know that your team members have enough competencies to do the work?*   **Questions for a team member**   *Was there ever a situation that you felt that you did not have enough competencies to do the work? Did you ask for help?*
Variable: Self-determination   **Questions for Project manager**   *How much do you need to get involved in day-to-day team management?*   **Questions for a team member**   *How much autonomy do you have at work?*

Table 4. *Psychological empowerment questions (continued).*

Variable: Impact **Questions for Project manager** *Can team members suggest process improvements? How are suggestions from team members received in the organisation?* **Questions for a team member** *Can you suggest process improvements? How are your suggestions received in the organisation?*

Source: Composed by the author.

Part 5. Teamwork. Questions for this part were composed using a few different sources. Teamwork as knowledge sharing questions were according to Fullwood, Rowley, & Delbridge (2013). Mutual support in the team was analysed by Deering et al. (2011), from where the question was applied. Trust and cohesion questions were adopted from Huang (2009).

Table 5. *Teamwork questions.*

Variable: Knowledge sharing **Questions for Project manager** *Does your team share manuals, know-how between the team members? If yes, how often do they share it?* **Questions for a team member** *Do you share manuals, know-how with other team members? If yes, how often do you share it?*
Variable: Mutual support **Questions for Project manager** *Does your team help each other if support is needed? If yes, do you need to encourage it?* **Questions for a team member** *Do you feel that you can get help from your colleagues? If yes, can you ask directly, or do you need to ask through the project manager?*
Variable: Trust **Questions for Project manager** *In your opinion, does your team trust each other? If yes, how that is shown?* **Questions for a team member** *Do you trust your colleagues? If yes, how do you show that?*
Variable: Cohesion **Questions for Project manager** *When making decisions, do your team members consider what's best for the project success? If yes, how?* **Questions for a team member** *When making decisions, do you consider what's best for project success? If yes, how?*

Source: Composed by the author.

Part 6. Closing questions. The final part of the questionnaire explored whether team empowerment has any effect on teamwork. Also, in what ways team empowerment could be improved.

Table 6. *Closing questions.*

Questions for Project manager
In general, what effect does team members' empowerment have on teamwork, especially when a team works virtually? Is it important for team knowledge sharing, mutual support, trust, and cohesion?
How would you suggest improving team members' empowerment?
Questions for a team member
In general, what effect does team members' empowerment have on teamwork, especially when a team works virtually?
How would you suggest improving team members' empowerment?

Source: Composed by the author.

3.4.   Data gathering and analysis

Interviews from participants were collected using video conferencing equipment in November 2021. Content analysis method and steps used for data analysis were taken from the research methodology book (Kumar, 2011, p. 277).

Data processing steps:

- After collecting all the interviews, recordings were transcribed.
- Coding the data and developing themes. Retrieved data was grouped, and themes were identified.
- Data analysis. Data from project managers group was compared to project team members group results.

Research results are presented the fourth chapter of this study in this order:

4.1. Section analyses general empowerment understanding in project teams from managerial and team member perspectives.

4.2. Section analyses aspects of structural empowerment in project teams from managerial and team member perspectives.

4.3. Section analyses empowering leadership in project teams from managerial and team member perspectives.

4.4. Section analyses aspects of team members' psychological empowerment in project teams from managerial and team member perspectives.

4.5. Section analyses teamwork dimensions in project teams from managerial and team member perspectives.

4.6. Section analyses empowerment effects on teamwork in project teams, from managerial and team member perspective.

4.7. Section provides responded suggestions how team member empowerment could be improved.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1.   Team empowerment understanding in project teams

During the literature review, it occurred that empowerment does not have one definition or agreed on an understanding of what it is. According to some research, empowerment is autonomy to others, and it is more of a feeling of empowerment, a complex phenomenon. So, in the first part of the interview, general empowerment understanding was explored.

When asked if they have ever heard about team empowerment and if they could describe it, half of the respondents could only vaguely explain what empowerment means to them *"If you ask me if I have ever heard about it, then yes. Do I understand how that actually works? Not so much. To my understanding, empowerment at the workplace is about letting team members to do the job and giving them all the tools to do it."* PTM 1. Or *"I heard about the empowerment, but in all honesty, I would find it difficult to describe."* PM 4. It is not something they were very acquainted with. *"Can't say I am very familiar with the empowerment or what that is, but I guess it's something to do with how work is organised, less management."* PTM 3, another similar opinion was PTM 4 *"I don't think it's something I have heard anyone talk about at work, but I have heard about it. Maybe I would say it's being in control, being able to choose tasks."* Only one responded described it as feeling *"I would describe it as a feeling, that you are the owner of your job."* PTM 2. Although respondents did not feel confident about the definition, the autonomy was mentioned more by project team member group .

The remaining participants were a bit more detailed on empowerment definition – *"Team empowerment for me is creating an atmosphere within the team, so that they would feel that they are the ones who can or should make the change, and feel that their work, what they do – matters."* PM 1. Project managers seemed more familiar with empowerment. *"It helps my team to stay focused and motivated to reach set goals. And that is a critical task for project managers. I could even recommend a few books on this topic."* PM 2. Two project managers could agree that empowerment is *"A self-organised team. Each team member is self-organised and responsible for the teamwork and, of course, the result."* PM 3, *"To me empowered team means self-organised team. I would describe empowerment as independence, accountability for your decisions and trust in each other."* PM 5.

All of the participants had a slightly different opinion of what empowerment is, but there were some universal themes that everyone agreed on. In the group of project managers, they felt that self-organised teams were a form of empowerment. When talking about self-organized respondents meant that team members are communicating directly and deciding on order when to perform tasks without project manager's involvement. In the project team members' group, they felt that autonomy was a form of empowerment because it meant they were able to take charge and accomplish tasks without being

micromanaged (table 7). The main difference between the two understandings would be that autonomous teams can decide the direction in which they should go, and self-organised teams have the freedom to choose how to accomplish a task towards a given direction.

Table 7. *Main topics of participant answers regarding empowerment understanding.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*Team is organising work themselves without my involvement*	PTM 1	*We organise work ourselves communicating with the team*
PM 2	*Team is organising work themselves without my involvement*	PTM 2	*Feeling of autonomy*
PM 3	*Team is organising work themselves without my involvement, responsible*	PTM 3	*Autonomous*
PM 4	*Trusting, making decisions*	PMT 4	*Autonomous, making decisions*
PM 5	*Team is organising work themselves without my involvement, responsible, trusting*	PTM 5	*Making decisions*

Source: Composed by the author

The following question was exploring in what ways a team can be empowered. Participants that were describing team empowerment as self-organising teams said that allowing your team to decide on processes how to achieve a goal is a way to empower them: *"Making them to think for themselves on how to approach and solve one or another problem rather than blindly follow project manager or any other authority figure. A project manager is there just to give guidance, not to think for all of the team, and give orders."* PM 1, *"In my opinion, a lot depends on the organisation, if the organisation itself is very rigid and it's common practice to micromanage, it would be very hard to empower anyone. To empower your team - is to give the power to your team, and by power, I mean power to decide and act freely, well not completely freely, but within your job description limits."* PM 5 also provides tools and knowledge *"By giving equipment or knowledge and ability to decide how to do the job."* PTM 1. In addition to process freedom, PM 2 talked about recognition *"To name a few: ownership of the tasks, knowing and understanding the project goal, giving credit when credit is due monetary incentives."* While project team members were talking primarily about the manager not being extensively controlling, PM 3 had the same idea *"No micromanagement, the team is creating their own decision-making process. Creating open and honest vibe in the team - forgiving mistakes."*, as well as PM 4 *"Allowing the team to be self-sufficient, not micromanaging them, trusting them to do the job."* Project team member PTM 3 said, *"Less management, if I could elaborate a bit on that, my manager is not telling me how to work or not telling me just do just because I said so. Giving a reason why we are doing this project and allowing me to decide within the boundaries of my expertise."* PTM 4 agrees and says, *"allow team members to do their job and trust them that they have enough knowledge to accomplish the task."* To empower the team, they should have the freedom to decide, said PTM 2, *"To empower means*

to allow make their own decisions and decide how to work. Even the option to work from home or from the office is empowering to me. Because that means my organisations trust me." Trust was also mentioned by PTM 5 *"Project managers should trust their team and be more of a guide than a manager, I think it's very empowering to know that your manager trusts you and is not constantly looking over your shoulder."*

Being able to decide on the way how to complete a given task was primarily mentioned by project managers, who believed that empowerment is being self-organised. While project team members, who felt empowered by having autonomy, said that a way to empower a team would be giving them more freedom and not micromanaging them (table 8).

Table 8. *Tools and practices how the team can be empowered.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*Not giving orders, allowing the team to decide on processes*	*PTM 1*	*Allowing the team to decide on processes, providing tools and knowledge*
PM 2	*Giving responsibility, acknowledging accomplishments*	*PTM 2*	*Giving responsibility of making decisions*
PM 3	*Allowing the team to decide on processes, not micromanaging, trusting the team*	*PTM 3*	*Not micromanaging, giving the responsibility of making decisions*
PM 4	*Allowing the team to decide on processes, trusting your team, not micromanaging*	*PMT 4*	*Not micromanaging, trusting the team*
PM 5	*Allowing the team to decide on processes, giving them the power to make a change*	*PTM 5*	*Not micromanaging, trusting the team*

Source: Composed by the author.

Overall interviewed project managers group and project team member group seemed to have very similar ideas within the group. Still, when comparing answers on what empowerment is and how to empower a team between the two groups, it seems to be a difference. Project managers give tasks but allow freedom when deciding how to complete them when project team members expect to have decision power on which tasks to complete without being closely managed. These differences might be because of different levels of experience also, different levels of knowledge about empowerment. Project managers were more confident when talking about it compared to project team members.

4.2. Structural empowerment

Team empowerment is usually described as a complex, multi-element phenomenon, structural empowerment being one of the elements. The next part of the questionnaire assessed how much information, support, opportunities, tools, and knowledge the organisation is providing. All participants

were working in the same organisation, although in different positions. According to Laschinger et al., (2001), having well defined and documented procedures enable team members to have authority. Structural empowerment was described as access to information, support, resources, and opportunity.

Access to information

All participants reported having access to company or job role-related information. Which can be found in organisations shared storage and internal document storage. PM 4 put it that way *"I would say, yes, they can access all the information that is needed to do the job. All the documentation or manuals are freely accessible in the internal company's storage, so it can be easily found on it if they need anything. If it happens that my team need something not available there, my team can always ask me or the department related to their questions, and the information will be provided. This happens when there are some security or legal restrictions."* Another project manager had a similar opinion *"In the organisation, we are quite transparent, so they can reach all the information they need, although we have some exceptions - legal or sensitive information, for those, if my team requires it, I can get the access, but they have to provide me with the solid reason why they need it,"* PM 5. So, depending on the sensitivity of the information required, team members might have to give a good reason to gain access to it PTM 2 said, *"Yes and no, some is available easily, like stuff available to everyone in the organisation. But there is some information which has limited access to it, for that if needed I can ask my project manager to get the permissions."* Regarding information related to the project that the team is working on or specific to their job role PTM 4 said, *"I would say most of the information about the project is available if there are some specific things, I go to my project manager and ask whatever I am missing. Usually is something related to the dependencies in our project, then my project manager finds out for me or finds a person who can help me."* The project manager group and project team member group had similar opinions about the access to information PM 2 *"They just have all the needed accesses, if they don't - they come to me, and I help them get it."* or *"I wouldn't say that I need much ad hoc information. Usually, I need some input from the other departments, then I go to my project manager and ask who the best person is to get in touch with,"* PTM 1. Also, they shared views on how transparent the organisation is PM 1 *"Documentation, detailed architecture etc. is available to anyone working in the organisation. As well as tools like Jira & Confluence to see what the issues are, plans and tasks for everyone,"* PM 3 agreed with open access to everyone *"All work-related information is stored in Opened shared place."* Project team member PTM 3 said, *"Most of the information is provided by my project manager, some general material I can find on the internal storage."* Moreover, depending on the job title depends on the level of access, said PTM 5 *"I am a team lead, so by default, I can access more information, which might not be available to everyone, but I would say that most of the info is out there with an easy access. If I ever need anything, I can ask my project manager. Although I need to provide a reason why I need it."*

For the most part, project managers and project team members agreed on the following – information accessibility in the organisation (table 9). It was said that project team members have a good enough access to information. However, sometimes due to the sensitivity of the information, they might require special permission. Processes for requesting information are well defined, and permissions can be requested via the project manager, although team members must provide a reason why they need such information.

Table 9. *Level of access to information.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*Acceptable*	PTM 1	*Good, can ask for access if not available*
PM 2	*Good*	PTM 2	*Acceptable, sometimes must ask for access*
PM 3	*Good*	PTM 3	*Good, can ask for access if not available*
PM 4	*Good, the team can request access*	PMT 4	*Acceptable, sometimes must ask for access*
PM 5	*Good, with some exceptions*	PTM 5	*Good, can ask for access if not available*

Source: Composed by the author.

Access to support

When receiving support at the workplace, most of the interviewees name the project manager as the first point of contact. PTM 1 said, *"If it's something related to my job role, usually it takes a bit longer to get the support since there are not many senior-level team members with the role like mine. But if it's something related to the organisation or contacting other departments, my project manager is my first point of contact, and she gets back to me swiftly."* When talking about how to access the support, PTM 2 said *"I have no issues with getting support. Most of the time, I find out myself or ask colleagues for help."* another team member PTM 3, also said that most of the time, he finds support himself without asking his project manager *"I look for the person who I can ask to help me with the issue. I will attempt to reach out to them via email or phone."* When asked what kind of support it is possible to access in the organisation PM 2, PM 3 and PTM 5 listed the same options available *"IT support, help desk, social support, human resources specialists, data specialist, support from project stakeholders. All kinds of support, also, help from colleagues or feedback from my project manager,"* and PM 5 said, *"If they need some guidance, they can get it from colleagues or me, they can get support with technical questions or general questions about work or laws. And at least in my team, I give feedback to my team every time we review the results, I tell them what went well what could be improved. Also, I welcome any feedback they would have for me."* PM 4 mentioned that more often, he is asked about support related to the project *"When it's something related to work organising, they always come to me because I am the main*

point of contact regarding all things related to projects. If it's something outside the project, maybe something personal, we have a great HR department that is ready to help. Then obviously, they can get technical assistance from our IT support." PM 1 summed up that asking for support is a team member responsibility and finding a way to provide the support is for the project manager. *"Depends on the support needed. Usually, in projects, if a team member needs to support, it's his responsibility to say that and project managers' responsibility to figure out how a team member can be helped."*

Support accessibility is good within the organisation, but project team members should do not forget that they should ask for it (table 10). When it comes to project-related support, the project manager is the first point of contact for most.

Table 10. *Level of access to support and who they would contact.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*Good, team members should ask if they need support*	PTM 1	*Acceptable, contacts project manager for help*
PM 2	*Good, the team member should contact the department directly*	PTM 2	*Good, ask the project manager for support first*
PM 3	*Good, the team member should contact the department directly*	PTM 3	*Good, ask directly to the person responsible*
PM 4	*Good, the team member should contact the department directly*	PMT 4	*Good, ask the project manager for support first*
PM 5	*Good, team members should contact project manager first*	PTM 5	*Good, ask the project manager for support first*

Source: Composed by the author.

Access to resources

When discussing access to resources, the answers were very similar to information and support answers. When working in the project team, the first person to contact if you need anything is a project manager. Every project has a budget and a timeline it should be accomplished, so having troubles with resources could affect project deadlines and budget. In this case, the project manager acts as the middleman between the project team and stakeholders and is always a person team asks for more resources.

Resources are planned and are available to everyone. If the need for extra resources arises project manager can be consulted, this was said by PM 3 *"Usually team knows what kind of resources they need, all is opened. If something is missing, then they ask for support.",* that was agreed by PM 2 and PTM 3 who said, *"More or less yes, everything that is not available I can discuss with my project manager, and he will try to see what a possible solution could be."* This seemed to be a common opinion because it was also mentioned by PM 4 *"When team members start to work with the project, they know what resources they can get. Planned resources are available to everyone. If they need anything additional that was not planned, they can always ask for support from me, and we review why it's needed*

and what I can do about it." Issues with resources happen if estimations of tasks were planned incorrectly said PTM 2 *"Maybe sometimes the assignment estimations are not accurate, then I can't do it on time, but I talk with my project manager, and we see what can be done about it."* Three interviewees found that access to resources was good – PM 5 *"Like everywhere resources are limited, but my team can always ask about the possibilities to get some extra hands. Then we discuss what can be done. If we see that some tasks can't be completed on time because we need some extra hands, I will look if it's possible to get someone on board. What I am trying to say is that my team knows what is accessible to them, and if they need anything extra, they come to me."* In addition to what previously was said, PTM 1 and PTM 5 agree with the opinion that they would have enough resources on most occasions. Overall, access to resources for project managers seems to be more often good than to project team members, who most often said that accessibility was only acceptable (table 11).

Table 11. *Level of access to resources and who they would contact.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*Acceptable, not all requests can be accommodated*	PTM 1	*Good, ask my project manager if needed something*
PM 2	*Good, the team can ask if something is needed*	PTM 2	*Acceptable, ask my project manager if needed something*
PM 3	*Good, the team can ask if something is needed*	PTM 3	*Acceptable, ask my project manager if needed something*
PM 4	*Good, not all requests can be accommodated*	PMT 4	*Acceptable, ask my project manager if needed something*
PM 5	*Acceptable, not all requests can be accommodated*	PTM 5	*Good, ask my project manager if needed something*

Source: Composed by the author.

Access to opportunity

The last variable discussed in the structural empowerment part was team members access to opportunity. It could be anything from gaining new skills to getting a promotion in the organisation. According to project managers, every project is a unique learning opportunity because most of the learning is happening from your colleagues.

Learning from the peers was mentioned the most as the opportunity available PM 4 said, *"Usually if it's a hard skill, so like learning about new technology that we will use, everyone involved will get training. In the organisation, we have a budget for team members to spend on self-development, they can use it for the online learning platforms. Also, team members can learn from colleagues working in cross-functional teams."* that was backed up by another project managers PM 3 and PM 5 *"Most of the skill up is gained through work from colleagues. There is a budget that team members could use for personal development. Also, we have some internal trainings, although those do not happen very often."* When asked about opportunities, project team members had slightly different opinions PTM 1 said,

"Kind of, we have some access to online platform courses. Some colleagues give advice every now and then, but that would be pretty much it. I have not seen any other opportunities so far," another team member PTM 3 *"We have some possibilities to skill up. If it's related to technical skills, it's quite easy to get it. Any other trainings would be hard to get."* Online platforms were mentioned by PM 1, who said, *"Gaining new skills can be done by learning from colleagues, going to trainings or using self-development platforms such as Udemy, Coursera or Skillshare."* When discussing trainings, PTM 4 mentioned internal trainings which were not so easy to get *"I would say I am constantly learning from my colleagues. Also, I try to participate in most of the relevant internal trainings."* The same opinion was expressed by PTM 5 he was saying that *"Trainings for technical, so-called hard skills it's quite easy to get, but when it comes to soft skills, like communication, it's very hard to get those type of trainings. If we talk about conferences, we do not go to them as well, those are for top-level management. So, we have some opportunities, but nothing special."* Project manager PM 2 and team member PTM 2 had the same opinion that learning opportunities are limited to learning on the job. When reviewing the answers, none of the respondents mentioned promotion opportunities, also, most of them were talking about learning from peers as the primary learning opportunity (table 12).

Table 12. *Access to opportunity types.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*Learning from peers, internal and online platform trainings*	PTM 1	*Learning from peers, online platform trainings*
PM 2	*Learning from peers*	PTM 2	*Learning from peers*
PM 3	*Learning from peers*	PTM 3	*Online platform trainings, technical trainings*
PM 4	*Learning from peers, internal and online platform trainings*	PMT 4	*Learning from peers*
PM 5	*Learning from peers, internal and online platform trainings*	PTM 5	*Technical trainings, online platform trainings*

Source: Composed by the author.

When asked about their understanding of empowerment, there was a consensus among the respondents. However, when it came to opinions on structural empowerment, there was a divergence in opinion. When it came to the question of whether project members had access to information, support, resources and opportunities, the majority of the project managers said this was good, but for those who were on the project team themselves, it was more acceptable than good. Structural empowerment defines roles and responsibilities, creates clear processes and procedures. However, it depends on how well defined and documented procedures and processes are. It also depends on how much the staff is informed about it. Project managers seemed to have very little power to make any significant changes without input from the senior management.

4.3.   Empowering leaders' behaviour

Leaders enable their teams to feel empowered by creating an environment where they are trusted, respected, and given the resources to be successful. That was researched by Ahearne et al., (2005), who said that in order to empower your subordinates, one should enhance the meaning of the work they do, involve them in decision making, express confidence in their abilities and foster autonomy within the team. This part of the questionnaire explores leaders' behaviours towards team members.

Enhance meaning

Part of the empowering behaviour is enhancing the meaning of the work your project team members do. Since project managers is not exactly a line manager for the project team members, PTM 5 said that *"It's not project managers responsibility to talk about the meaning of work project team members do, that should be done by their line manager,"* also, his opinion was supported by PTM 4 who said, *"No, I wouldn't say that she explains what meaning my job has or how it relates to the organisations or at least projects goals."* Project manager PM 2 had a strong opinion regarding that *"Why do we need it? For that? We have more serious stuff to do."* Project team members said that they hear more about the project goals rather than organisations or departments' vision and goals PTM 1 said, *"My project manager talks more about the project goals, so I wouldn't say he helps me to understand how my goals relate to the ones of the organisation,"* in addition, PTM 4 said *"We talk at the beginning of our project what's the goal, what we will achieve with this project. But during the project, not so much, unless we need to make a decision and we struggle to understand in which direction it should be."* Project manager PM 1 said, *"When talking about project team members, it's important for them to understand why we are doing the project and what we are trying to achieve with it, "this* opinion was met by project team member PTM 2, who said that his project manager explains about project goals *"My project manager explains project goal and how the project that we are doing relates to organisation's strategy. But I do not hear so much about my personal objectives."* Generally, project managers were explaining about project goals and what completed project will achieve PM 3 said, *"Each status update we are discussing how our work has a positive impact on work."*, as well as, PM 4 *"I couldn't say that I help them to understand, but I do try to explain why we are doing the project and what company will be able to achieve by finishing this project."* and finally PM 5 was behaving the same way *"I explain them about project importance, it's the goal. But that would be as far as I go to explain about how they job related to organisations goals."* When looking at an overview comparison (table 13) between project managers and project team members, it is common for project managers to highlight the team's goals they are working with. This will typically include information about what they are trying to accomplish and how they are going to get there. However, project managers were not talking much about the meaning of work itself.

Table 13. *Enhancing meaning question overview.*

	Project managers		Project team members
PM 1	*Explain the goals and objectives of the project to the team*	PTM 1	*Hears about goals and objectives of the project*
PM 2	*There is no value in that*	PTM 2	*Hears about goals and objectives of the project*
PM 3	*During reviews discusses the impact team has on others*	PTM 3	*Briefly gets the explanation about project goals*
PM 4	*Explain the goals and objectives of the project to the team*	PMT 4	*Does not get any information about it*
PM 5	*Explain the goals and objectives of the project to the team*	PTM 5	*Does not get any information about it*

Source: Composed by the author.

Involvement in decision making

Part of empowering behaviour is involving your team when making decisions. This helps build trust, mutual respect and keeps the team involved in the process. All of the respondents had very similar answers about it. Project managers were consulting with their team members said PM 1 *"I consult with my team all the time,"* another PM 2 explained that communication with the team is crucial, and without involvement, they would not be engaged at work *"If you do not involve the team in the decisions, they simply will not care."* Project team members all said in consensus that they are being involved when the team needs to make any decisions PTM 1 *"Yes, my project manager always asks for my input. More often, I would say I make the decision relevant to my job title,"* PTM 2 *"I get invited to team meetings where my project manager asks for my opinion,"* PTM 3 *"I get consulted on what we should do during meetings,"* PTM 4 *"For most of the decisions my project manager involves the whole team."* One Project team member said that quite often, he makes the decisions PTM 5 *"Most of the time we discuss all the options in the team, and later I explain to project manager what we agreed with the team."* When it comes to project manager responses PM 3 said, *"My team is making decisions, we get together, discuss it and make a decision."* Project manager PM 4 allows the team to make decisions, but there are cases when involvement is required *"My team is making the decisions. I get involved in the process only if I see the team is losing focus on what's important."* It seems to be a common understanding between project managers that the team should be involved not just to keep them engaged but also because they are the experts on the matter PM 5 said, *"9 times out of 10 I would consult with the team. In my opinion, decisions should be made by those who know the best, but I always check whether the decision is in line with the project's goal."* Both groups had the same experiences when it came to involvement in making decisions (table 14). It is considered an important part of the daily work routine that helps keep the team engaged in the project and make more informed decisions.

Table 14. *Involving in decision making question overview.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*I am consulting with my team*	PTM 1	*Yes, I am involved when making decisions*
PM 2	*I am consulting with my team*	PTM 2	*Yes, I am involved when making decisions*
PM 3	*My team is making decisions*	PTM 3	*Yes, I am involved when making decisions*
PM 4	*My team is making decisions*	PMT 4	*Yes, I am involved when making decisions*
PM 5	*I am consulting with my team*	PTM 5	*Yes, I am involved when making decisions*

Source: Composed by the author.

Expressing confidence in team member competences

A project manager's behaviour and attitude are instrumental in fostering a productive and professional environment for their team. Leader trusting his team and believing in their abilities creates a trusted environment, where team members feel valued for the work they do. PM 1 said, *"I constantly engage with them, communicate, encourage. I support them if they need any help. Also, consult with them when I need advice."* Another project manager PM 2 said, *"I try to communicate with them as much as I can, I try to show that I trust my team's abilities as much as I can: we have open discussions, we talk about concerns or blockers that I can help with to do the tasks better,"* project manager talked about daily meetups they have to address the concerns they would have. All project team members mentioned that project manager consults with them when making decisions, and that was a way their manager would show confidence in their competencies PTM 3 *"My project manager never questions my decisions and asks for my opinion when we have an issue, so I feel she has confidence in my skills."* Also, project team members were allowed to plan their schedule PTM 4 *"I get to decide how I will do my job, plan my schedule, I have the ability to make decisions relevant to my work."* Some project managers were not direct when showing their trust in teams confidence PM 4 said, *"My expression of confidence in my team wouldn't be so direct – so I wouldn't say that 'team I believe in your abilities. I think by allowing my team to do their job - the job they know better than me how to do it they feel my trust in them. Also, if we have any issues regarding the project, we discuss them openly, and I ask for their input. I believe that shows my team that I have confidence in them."* The ability to plan their work was mentioned by PTM 2 *"I believe so, my project manager only checks in with me to see how I am doing, if I need any help with the tasks. But other than that, I am not being micromanaged,"* another PTM 1 said in a simple way. *"My manager trusts me to do the job without much intervention."* In addition, PM 3 said, *"We start our status updates with expressing our feeling of confidence in others. We have honest feedback in the tea,"* and PTM 5 added that *"My project manager is great at giving and*

receiving feedback, we get involved in most of the decisions being made. I feel valued when my project manager asks if I could help him with something." Most of the respondents mentioned that honest feedback and involving them in the decision-making process is the main way their manager shows trust in their competencies (table 15). Ensuring that teammates feel cared for is an important part of fostering a positive team atmosphere. When necessary, by acknowledging their contributions and providing them with reassurance, project managers can help maintain a healthy team environment.

Table 15. *Expressing confidence in team members question overview.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*Communicating, encouraging if needed*	PTM 1	*I get challenging tasks, consulting when making decisions*
PM 2	*Honest feedback, communication, consulting when making decisions*	PTM 2	*Consulting when making decisions, not micromanaging*
PM 3	*Honest feedback, trust when delegating*	PTM 3	*I get challenging tasks, consulting when making decisions*
PM 4	*Honest feedback, trust when delegating, consulting when making decisions*	PMT 4	*Consulting when making decisions, control of my job*
PM 5	*Honest feedback, trust when delegating*	PTM 5	*Consulting when making decisions, not micromanaging*

Source: Composed by the author.

Fostering autonomy

To get the best possible work from your staff, you need to foster autonomy. Autonomy is a word that's been thrown around a lot in recent years, but what does it really mean? It essentially means giving people the freedom and authority to do their job while letting them know what's expected of them. Having well-defined roles is part of self-organising teams PM 1 *"I could say I would be fostering by clearly defining roles and responsibilities. By encouraging my team and steering them to make decisions on their own within the defined role and its responsibilities."* Not getting involved in the day-to-day management and allowing the team to work said PM 2, *"Just let the stuff get done. However, they want it: solo, duo, trio, whatever suits them the best,"* also, PTM 1 was saying, *"I think the atmosphere in the team is that everyone should be self-organised, we decide how to accomplish our tasks. So, I would say yes, our team is quite autonomous."* Autonomy is acceptable if the team is working according to schedule PM .5 said, *"I allow my team to organise work however they want as long as it is done on time and up to the quality required,"* another project manager had a very similar outlook on the autonomy PM 4 *"I wouldn't say promote; I would rather describe it as allowing them to be independent. So, if you ask whether I allow it, then yes, I try not to interfere with the day-to-day work of my team. I could say that there are times when I fail that, and that is when the deadlines are approaching, then I tend to check in with my team more often, but I try not to micromanage every single detail."* However, one project

manager said that autonomy is not something he is promoting PM 3 *"I would say my team is autonomous to a certain extent, but I am not encouraging it."* Generally, project team members said that their teams are self-organised PTM 3 *"We are quite independent in the team, our project manager seems to be fine with it."* or PTM 4 words *"In our team, we are quite autonomous, our project manager does not get involved much into our day-to-day work."* One project team member said that he and project manager communicated on a daily basis PTM 5 *"We communicate almost daily, but more about if everything is okay, if I need anything, that is not like he calls to check on me how I do things."* A good leader not only has to have the ability to inspire others but also to let them act on their own. They must also communicate expectations clearly and often, make sure that everyone on the team understands their role, delegate work effectively takes responsibility for their decisions, empower them by giving them more responsibility and finally trusting in their team members. If they are told what needs to be done from one minute until the next or if they are micromanaged, then it is unlikely that the job will feel fulfilling or worthwhile. When discussing empowering leaders' behaviour – fostering autonomy, project managers and project team members mostly said that their team is self-organised, meaning that they have freedom to decide on how to perform tasks, also, communication is direct, responses overview provided in the table 16.

Table 16. *Fostering autonomy in the team question overview.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*Self-organised, autonomous*	PTM 1	*Self-organised, autonomous*
PM 2	*Self- organised*	PTM 2	*Self-organised*
PM 3	*Not really promoting autonomy*	PTM 3	*Self-organised, autonomous*
PM 4	*Self-organised, not interfering*	PMT 4	*Self-organised*
PM 5	*Self-organised*	PTM 5	*Self-organised, autonomous*

Source: Composed by the author.

4.4.   Psychological empowerment

The next part of the questions focused on psychological empowerment and how empowered a team felt. Psychological empowerment is a unique and special type of empowerment that is not about the individual but rather about the environment and whether they feel empowered. It is a way to help the project team succeed. Team members who feel in control of their work are more productive and satisfied. Many companies have taken note and have turned to team members empowerment as a way to boost company morale and productivity. Psychological empowerment can be assessed through four variables: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact a team member feels he has. This section will review how respondents replied to the questions related to it.

Meaning

When asked interviewees how much their project managers were trying to explain the meaning of work they do, the most common answer was that – not so much, project managers talked more about project goals rather than the meaning of work. If team members come to work to do their job, then they must feel it has meaning said PM 4 *"I would like to think my team finds work meaningful. In my opinion, if you think that job you do is meaningless, then there is no point in doing it since I have my team coming to the job every day - then I think they believe it has a meaning."* Two more project managers had the same opinion on the meaning of PM 2 *"If they didn't see the meaning, they would be depressed, unhappy and leave the organisation as soon as possible,"* also, PM 3 *"They see the results every week, they come to work."* Similarly, to project managers PTM 5 said, *"I'm not sure how it is for the others, but for me – I feel my work has meaning, if I thought there was no meaning, I would not be working in this position."* Project team members also talked about the results of work they do PTM 1 *"I see my work results, and I enjoy my job; I don't think too much about the meaning."* moreover PTM2 said, *"I am interested in what I do, and I enjoy what I do, that is enough for me. Not overthinking it."* Another project manager was not very concerned whether the team finds work meaning PM 5, *"It does not really matter to me if they find meaning in what they do as long as they do their job well. I know it sounds bad, but if you come to work every day, that might mean you find it has meaning or at least something motivates you to come to work,"* and when talking about motivation PTM 4 mentioned other incentives *"I am more motivated by other things, like money, rather than meaningful work to work in the organisation."* When it comes to the meaning of work, project managers did not seem to express a lot of concern if team members were finishing their tasks on time. Project manager PM 1 said, *"In my opinion, some see meaning, some don't, I don't think I can change much. It should come from team members themselves, like motivation – it should come from the team members."* In order to have a meaningful career, people need to have a connection with their work. With psychological empowerment, they find ways to connect their skills and passions with what they do at work. They need to feel that their hard work is being recognised and appreciated, or else it will not feel meaningful. Most of the project team member respondents found work to be meaningful; project manager group had mixed opinions about their subordinates (table 17).

Table 17. *Team members perception of how meaningful their work is.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*Not everyone finds meaning*	PTM 1	*I enjoy my work; I see results*
PM 2	*It has meaning for my team*	PTM 2	*I enjoy my job*
PM 3	*It has meaning for my team; they see results*	PTM 3	*It has meaning*
PM 4	*It has meaning for my team*	PMT 4	*I do not really care about the meaning*
PM 5	*Do not really care if my team members find meaning*	PTM 5	*It has meaning*

Source: Composed by the author.

Competence

When discussing team members competence, team members were asked to describe if they feel they have enough skills and knowledge to accomplish given tasks. Project managers were questioned whether they thought the team is capable of accomplishing tasks on their own. It provides team members with a sense of control over their work, which in turn increases their overall satisfaction. This feeling of empowerment also influences how the team members perceive themselves in relation to the company. It helps them have a better sense of purpose, which can lead to more creativity and productivity. The key to knowing your team is communication PM 3 said, *"Communication, communication, communication. If you do not talk to your team, you will not know how they feel if they need help. I believe that with consistent communication, we can anticipate the difficulties ahead."* Project manager PM 2 put it this way *"Even if my team lacks any knowledge, everything can be learned and done. I would say I know my team quite well; I know how they work."* Another project manager agreed that it is important to know your team, *"I have some team members that we are working together for a few projects, so I already know them very well and the way they work. With team members that we start working together for the first time, I always ask how they feel and if they need help with anything. Generally, I try to communicate as often as possible to understand if there are any struggles,"* PM 3. Sometimes close monitoring is used said PM 5 *"I observe my team members constantly check if they deliver when they say they will. Discuss any concerns I have to understand better how competent they are. So, in this case, I would say communication is very important."* That was agreed by another project manager PM 1 *"At the beginning of a project I check in with them quite often, then check the work progress, and if needed adjust accordingly."* When interviewing project team members, it turned out that team members almost daily find themselves asking for information, but that did not mean being incompetent PTM 5 said, *"Although I am constantly learning and asking questions because of lack of knowledge in some specific part of a task I feel confident that I have enough skills to do my job up to a standard."* Another respondent PTM 3 had the same opinion *"I think I am good at my job. I have a few*

years of experience; I am learning on my own using Udemy. I would not be able to remember any situation that I didn't know something related to my work." Team members PTM 1, PTM 2 and PTM 4 said that sometimes they request help because the task that needs to be accomplished is out of their knowledge *are "I ask for help or information that I don't know at least once a week,* "PTM 1; *"I still feel fairly new to the organisation I constantly find myself asking for help from the others,* "PTM 2; "It does happen every now and then, that I find myself asking for help, but if I ever need anything I just ask one of my colleagues or my project manager," PTM 4. Communication was mentioned as one of the main tools to get to know the team. Project managers felt that their team had enough skills to complete delegated tasks, although project team members reported sometimes lacking skills (table 18).

Table 18. *Team members perception of how competent they are at work.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*Thinks team had enough competences*	*PTM 1*	*Asks for support but feels confident with the level of knowledge*
PM 2	*Even if the team does not have the required competencies supports them to solve issues*	*PTM 2*	*Asks for support, in certain occasions struggles with the level of knowledge*
PM 3	*Thinks team had enough competences*	*PTM 3*	*Has enough knowledge*
PM 4	*Thinks team had enough competences*	*PMT 4*	*Asks for support but feels confident with the level of knowledge*
PM 5	*Thinks team had enough competences*	*PTM 5*	*Has enough knowledge for the role*

Source: Composed by the author.

Self-determination

The ability to take control and make decisions for oneself is part of psychological empowerment. For example, a mentor can grant the team members permission to make decisions. When empowered, individuals are granted control over themselves and not controlled by others they are satisfied with work. Self-determination represents just that – being able to make decisions. Project team members said that mostly they have independence within their job description PTM 1 said, *"I would say I have Full autonomy within my level of expertise."* Another felt like he had complete control and said PTM 5, *"I could say that it's nearly full independence within my job description. I know my job extremely well, and for the last year, I have been working remotely, so I work without big restrictions."* Most project team members felt like they were in control *"I feel independent, I can always consult with my project manager, but generally, she lets me do my work without close management,* "PTM 4, also, "I can decide how I would like to do my job, I can suggest process improvements, "*PTM* 3. Another project team member talked about how clear manuals and guidelines make it easier to work independently *"I feel that I have quite a lot of freedom when at work. We have manuals and guidelines, so it's clear what's needed and what's not. I know what I can access and when I will have to ask for permission."* In the project manager group opinion about how much power a team has over decision making was in unison,

all of them said that team had full control. However, when talking about level of autonomy, it was said that team members have autonomy until tasks related to the project are being completed on time. Project manager PM 5 said, *"At work, I am less of a manager to them and more of a consultant. I wouldn't say that I get involved much, my team is quite independent,"* so the project manager acts more like a mentor rather than a manager. Another manager explained that when he trusts his team, they can make the decisions on their own *"My team can make decisions even if I am not there. I have to trust them and believe that my team will think about what's best for the project when making a decision. So usually, I do not get involved. However, my team always informs me about the decision they want to take,"* PTM 4. One project manager said that she is not getting involved in daily management *"I don't usually get involved in my teams' daily work. They get in touch with me for advice on how to deal with certain problems, but they are generally independent,"* PM 1. Some had regular meetings or check-*ups "I just check in with them if they need any help and what's the status of their work,"* PM 2; *"We have weekly meetings with all team, other than that is pretty much an ad hoc management,"* PM 3. Empowerment can also be thought of as a feeling or belief that one has the power and ability to make choices freely, without any pressure from others. When talking about the power to make decisions, project managers and team members had the same thoughts, for managers, they were giving the power to the team, for the team – they felt in control to make decisions (table 19).

Table 19. *Team members perception on how much decision-making power they have.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*The team has full control, only involved when needed*	PTM 1	*Full power*
PM 2	*The team has full control*	PTM 2	*Full power*
PM 3	*The team has full control*	PTM 3	*Full power*
PM 4	*The team has full control*	PMT 4	*Full power*
PM 5	*The team has full control*	PTM 5	*Nearly full power*

Source: Composed by the author.

Impact on the organisation

This part studied how much influence team members believe they have on the procedures of an organisation. Decisions made by team members affect the overall performance of the company. For example, a team members could make a suggestion for a new approach to improve efficiency in their office; this could decrease operating costs and increase overall productivity. When interviewing, respondents were asked if they could suggest any process changes and how those suggestions were received. Project manager PM 1 said, *"During meetings, I consult with team members. And always welcome any suggestions they would have. They are carrying out procedures, so they know the best how we could improve."* Another project manager said that team does not bring many suggestions, but he would welcome any ideas *"At the end of a project we usually have 'lessons learned' meetings, where*

we discuss if we would have any process or procedures improvements, what went well, what went not so well. However, my team doesn't really bring any suggestions to the table." Project manager PM 3 said, *"The way we do in my team, everyone is saying if they have any ideas how to improve, then we discuss benefits and drawbacks of it, and finally we vote for the solution. But usually it' a change related how we do projects in our team, if it's a change on the organisational scale, then it is harder to implement."* Project team members can always suggest improvements, PTM 4 said, *"We talk in the team if there is anything we could do better. We explore different solutions, pass it to our team lead, and he goes with it to the project manager. Sometimes we get to make the change, but sometimes it takes time."* Another project team member said PTM 5, *"Most of the time I am proactive about things like that, I don't think there is a point to wait for the end of a project if we could implement something right away."* Discussing improvement in the team was mentioned a few times *"We meet up regularly, so every meeting is an opportunity for improvement. Together in video calls, which just made it easier to get everyone together quickly, we consider the suggestions and, if possible, try to implement,"* said PM 5; *"We think about pros and cons, discuss it, and decide,"* PM 2. Small things can make a big difference, which was discovered by one of the project team members PTM 1 said, *"Typically we meet up to discuss important issues face to face, or on video calls, otherwise, the process gets dragged through time, and it just slows down the whole project. That's one of the improvements that was suggested by the team, so I would say yes, we have the power to make a change."* All of the participants said that discussions are held in the team, discussing issues *"Decisions are made together in the meetings, we discuss what would be the best option,"* PTM 2, also, *"We meet up and discuss what's the issue and what could be a possible solution."* Most organisations are required to have a formal process for accepting, reviewing, and approving changes. However, with the emergence of new technologies and leadership theories, many organisations reconsider their current procedures and loosen rigid procedures. All respondents said they have influence on some degree to make the change. Usually, that's related to changes in the team (table 20).

Table 20. *Team members perception on how much impact they have over procedures and practices.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*The team can suggest improvements. However, it's easier to implement the changes on a team level*	PTM 1	*Can make an influence, but more for the small things*
PM 2	*The team can suggest improvements*	PTM 2	*Some power, more for changes in the project team*
PM 3	*The team can suggest improvements. However, it's easier to implement the changes on a team level*	PTM 3	*Some power, more for changes in the project team*

Table 20. *Team members perception on how much impact they have over procedures and practices (continued).*

PM 4	The team can suggest improvements	PMT 4	Some power, more for changes in the project team
PM 5	The team can suggest improvements	PTM 5	Can make influence

Source: Composed by the author

4.5. Teamwork

Teams that work together and collaborate on projects are more successful. Effective teamwork in a project team can lead to great successes whenever effective teamwork is in operation. It is important to identify the strengths of each member in order to find the best possible roles for everyone. Teamwork is not something that can be just asked to do. The last part before closing questions studied teamwork as knowledge sharing, mutual support, trust, and cohesion.

Collaboration as knowledge sharing

Collaboration as knowledge sharing is important for teams' creativity and innovative thinking. So, participants were asked whether they share manuals or know-hows with colleagues or colleagues who tend to share information. Since every team is individual, people working together might not know each other well, also, it depends on the personalities of the team members. The project manager said a similar thing PM 1 said, *"It really depends on the people and the need of the information. Many things they can already find on shared drives or in manuals. So, the team might share know-hows more often than manuals, but that depends if there is a need for that."* That was agreed by PTM 1 *"It depends if there is a need, we share information whenever is needed."* That was agreed by PTM 2 who said, *"If there is a need, we do help each other and share information, but with remote work that became a bit more difficult, we see each other briefly, so it's not always enough time,"* similar experience was described by PTM 3 *"Depending on the situation, most of the time all the information is available to everyone, so there is no need to share it again."* That teams exchange knowledge only when needed was also said by PM 5 "It very much depends on the situation. A *lot of the information is stored on internal storage that can be easily accessed without me needing to give any permissions. So, knowledge sharing between team members about their goo practices happens only when team members initiate that."* Another project manager said that team is quite open when it comes to sharing *"Yes, my team is sharing the knowledge, I would say always, but that is when there is a need. My team is open, but that might be because they know each other pretty well,"* said PM 2. Project manager PM 3 agreed with the opinion and said, *"Yes, we have short meetings on a daily basis, so my team exchanges comments and advice daily."* When it comes to sharing opinions and comments project manager said that *"Some of the information is stored on our internal storage so that anyone can access it. We share information related*

to the project during our weekly meetings. Still, I would not be able to tell you if they are sharing any knowledge between themselves as I do not monitor their personal communication. We exchange comments or feedback during daily meetings," PM 4. One team member PTM 5 said, *"I personally try to help when colleagues are asking. But it's not like we have dedicated meetings to knowledge sharing,"* so it seems that knowledge sharing is practised more when it is required, one project team member said it is helpful to share common practices *"I share good practices or other useful information. I think there is value in it, that helps us to be more successful as a team and upskill as team members."* Nine out of ten respondents said that they share knowledge or witnessed knowledge sharing in the team (table 21), in addition, there is value in sharing information with your colleagues: a better chance for project success, a way to progress as a professional.

Table 21. *Collaboration as knowledge sharing question overview.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*Whenever there is a need, but it also depends on people*	PTM 1	*Whenever there is a need*
PM 2	*Whenever there is a need*	PTM 2	*Whenever there is a need*
PM 3	*Shares it regularly*	PTM 3	*Information is available online, so no need in sharing it again*
PM 4	*I share project-related information*	PMT 4	*We share it regularly*
PM 5	*Whenever there is a need*	PTM 5	*Whenever there is a need*

Source: Composed by the author.

Collaboration as mutual support

Mutual support goes close to knowledge sharing in the team. The team can help each other solve problems that can speed up project delivery. Every member of the project team should be giving each other mutual support in order to increase productivity. But for the team to start helping each other, they need to know the person other PM 2 said, *"It greatly depends on people, if they just started to work together, I need to encourage or be the mediator between the team members."* Moreover, PM 3 was saying that *"I was needed in the beginning to encourage team members to support each other. Once a healthy vibe was established, then they had no issues to communicate between themselves."* The team member who has not been working as long as the other respondents said that project managers involvement was needed *"Sometimes I need to ask my project manager for support, then either I get a name of the person who can help me or my manager just asks for help in the team,"* said PTM 2. Mutual support, similarly, like information sharing, depends on the team itself PM 4 said, *"Since I have been working with few different teams, I would say support between team members is better in teams that know each other well, if it's a new team then quite often I need to get involved to 'break the ice' and encourage them to help each other. Also, sometimes I know better who is responsible for what, so my*

team asks me to point them towards the required person." The same idea was said by PM 5 *"That varies from team to team because it strongly depends on how well the team knows each other. And I would say that since we started working remotely, it has been harder for new team members to get into that team spirit. So yes, I do need to encourage my team sometimes."* Sharing the workload is part of mutual support said PM 1 *"It doesn't happen very often, but when we are approaching deadlines, and part of the project is lacing behind, the team puts resources together to get the job done."* Usually, team members can ask for support directly *"The organisation is casual, so there is no need to ask for support through managers I can ask myself, however, if anyone needs help from me, they need to ask, I am not going around asking to do their work,"* said PTM 3, this was agreed by PTM 1 when it was aid *"There is no need to get the project manager involved."* Project team members PTM 4 were saying, *"If I need any support, I just ask the person who can help me, if I am not sure who can help me, I ask my project manager,"* and that was a dominant answer between the respondents, also, mentioned by PTM 5 *"Maybe that's just me, but I don't involve project manager when I can easily find the person with required info or resources myself. It only becomes an issue if it's in another department, then I talk with my project manager, and we see what we could do."* So mutual support can be colleagues helping with the knowledge or sharing workload if needed. The project manager group said that supporting fellow team members depends on people, how well they know each other, while in the project team member group, the answer "we help each other" was more common (table 22).

Table 22. *Collaboration as mutual support question overview.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*Sharing workload*	PTM 1	*We help each other*
PM 2	*Depends on people*	PTM 2	*We help each other, project manager sometimes needs to get involved*
PM 3	*It depends on people and how well the team knows one another*	PTM 3	*We help each other*
PM 4	*It depends on people and how well the team knows one another*	PMT 4	*We help each other*
PM 5	*It depends on people and how well the team knows one another*	PTM 5	*We help each other*

Source: Composed by the author.

Trust in project teams

Project teams are often assigned to work on projects that require high levels of trust in order to succeed. During the interviews, trust and communication were mentioned very often as the pillars to project success. Although it is easy to say that project team should trust each other, it is a whole different thing when it comes to practice. Project team member PTM 2 said that trust for his colleagues is expressed when sharing information *"Team that I work with now is very friendly, I can always trust that my colleagues will pass important stuff to me, that if I ask for help, I will always get it. To me, trust is*

when a team helps each other to grow professionally." Knowing your colleagues is another important point that was said by PTM 4 *"It would be very difficult to work with the team that I don't trust. So, for me to be able to trust them, I have to know them, I enjoy going to team building or offsites, that's where you see who your colleagues are."* Project manager PM 4 said, *"I would say my team trusts each other although I can't be certain 100%, but I haven't heard any other way. I could say that we do not tolerate dishonest people or those who try to gain something at other people's expense. I see my team discussing issues openly and giving feedback to each other."* Expanding on that opinion was PM 1 and PM 2, for them, trust in the team is when members can share their thoughts openly *"My team has very heated discussions and challenges each other, but all discussions never cross a line when it just becomes a disrespectful argument."* In addition, PTM 3 said, *"Most of my team trusts each other; maybe it's hard with new people because it takes time to get familiar. Now when working remotely, it's even harder to maintain close relationships within the team. But we have open discussions where we address issues without hiding anything, that for me is trust in the team – not hiding anything."* Project manager PM 5 said, *"Not everyone has the same level of trust towards each other, but generally, I would say yes, my team trusts each other. The best way they show it, by taking responsibility when something goes wrong and not blaming each other."* Project team member PTM 5 said, *"I would say trust is an atmosphere in the team, where the team can share their views without being criticised, can they give feedback and receive feedback without getting defensive."* The opposite opinion was expressed by PM 3, *"Not everyone trusts colleagues. In my opinion, it's because we have different personalities and mentalities. People who the team does not trust start to feel left out. I see that my team should work on that, for example, less blaming would help to improve the trust in the team,"* as well as PTM 1 who said, *"My team has a bit of trouble in trusting each other, sometimes we lose temper, argue, and blame each other. I wish we could express our views without being judged."* If project managers want to have successful teams, they need to build trust in the team. This is done by adequately assigning roles and responsibilities, providing growth opportunities, and communicating honestly. From participants' answers, it can be said that knowing colleagues is an integral part of building trust in the team. One project manager and one team member said that trust should be improved in their team, other respondent teams had no issues with trust (table 23).

Table 23. *Trust in the team question overview.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*The team trusts each other*	PTM 1	*Not all team members show trust in others*
PM 2	*The team trusts each other*	PTM 2	*The team trusts each other*
PM 3	*Not all team members show trust in others*	PTM 3	*The team trusts each other*

Table 23. *Trust in the team question overview (continued).*

PM 4	The team trusts each other	PMT 4	The team trusts each other
PM 5	The team trusts each other to a certain extent	PTM 5	The team trusts each other

Source: Composed by the author.

Team cohesion in project teams

Team cohesion is an important factor in creating a positive team atmosphere. The communication and spirit of the team dynamically affect the quality and direction in which work progresses. A cohesive team means that communication becomes more apparent and that goals are more easily defined. Members feel invested in the project's success, and conflicts are easier to resolve. The team should be working towards a common goal said PTM 5, *"I think project goal is always on my mind when I am making decisions. I believe the whole team considers what's best for the project. Otherwise, we would not move forward, imagine how hard it would be to move something if two people are pushing something in two different directions. Team atmosphere greatly depends on project managers behaviours."* All respondents expressed the same idea – that team should be considering what's best for the *project. "Teamwork is a crucial element of any successful project. I have too many examples when the team is not working together, and something goes wrong. The whole team must be willing to put in the necessary effort and work together if the project is going to succeed. In my team, we have a responsibility not only for their individual tasks but also for those that are assigned to others within the team. When teamwork is at its best, we are not only more productive but also more efficient when it comes to decision making,"* PTM 1. In addition to that, a successful project means personal success for the team said PTM 2, *"If the project is successful, I would be successful. It's a win-win situation because it could very well result in the achievement of my professional goals. At the same time contribute to the overall success of my organisation."* Thinking not just about the project but also about colleagues was said by PTM 4, *"I like to be as helpful as possible, and I always prioritise tasks that create dependencies for others. This way, they can feel comfortable knowing that I will execute the task as soon as possible."* The project manager said that it is their responsibility to bring together the team together by explaining about the project goal and generally creating a positive atmosphere in the team. Project manager PM 1 said, *"Project manager's work is to make sure that all decisions are made having the best project interest in mind. For me, it helps to keep an eye on the scope, budget and schedule vs benefits or drawbacks the decision will bring. When I know where we are standing on a timeline, it is easy to communicate that to the team and make the decision together. I believe it is important that Project managers unify the team towards a common goal."* That was agreed by PTM 3, who said, *"I'm driven by knowing what's best for the project, but sometimes I focus on the action-items instead of the strategy,*

so my project manager keeps reminding me on what's important." The project goal is important when gathering team PM 2 said, *"The guiding star of every decision is the goal, period. My team is very organised when it comes to decision making. We think about the pros and cons of each option, determine what needs to get done, and then work together to carry out the plan."* Also, if the project team find their work to be meaningful, then they are more likely to consider projects success *"I think that is very related to the importance or meaning of the job team member do. If you believe your work is important, you understand why you are doing what you are doing, then, of course, you will consider what brings success to the project. But sometimes I have to step in and explain what is important and in which direction we should move forward,"* said PM 4. A project manager is responsible for providing information about the project so that team can make well-informed decisions *"Typically, the project manager will provide an overview and discuss some of the aspects of the project that need to be considered,"* said PM 3, also another project manager had parallel practices *"I try to provide as much information as possible from my side, so that we can make well-informed decisions and for most of them my team would consider what would be the best for the project, then we discuss how can we achieve what we intended to,"* said PM 5. In general, the project manager and project team members said that the teams they work with are in unity (table 24). Common goal or project goal keeps focus in the team, another important part for cohesion in teams was meaning of work.

Table 24. *Team cohesion when making decisions regarding the project question overview.*

Project managers		Project team members	
PM 1	*My team mainly acts together, the project manager responsible for team cohesion*	PTM 1	*The team acts together, we think about the goal when making decisions*
PM 2	*My team mainly acts together, the project manager responsible for team cohesion*	PTM 2	*Team acts together*
PM 3	*My team mainly acts together, but the project manager needs to remind what is important*	PTM 3	*Team acts together*
PM 4	*My team mainly acts together, the team need to feel meaning in the job they do to be united*	PMT 4	*Team acts together and trusts each other*
PM 5	*My team mainly acts together, we consider what's best to complete the project*	PTM 5	*Team acts together*

Source: Composed by the author.

4.6. Empowerment effect on teamwork

In the closing part of the questionnaire, participants were asked about the effects of their team members' empowerment on teamwork when teams are working virtually. Does it have any influence

regarding knowledge sharing, mutual support, trust, and cohesion. It was said that empowerment has positive effects when it comes to teamwork in virtual and collocated teams *"Teams' empowerment is important, and it does not matter whether they work remotely or onsite. The effect it brings is a strong, self-sufficient team which can fully operate within boundaries of role and responsibilities,"* PM1. Remote work became extremely popular during the pandemic year and would not be possible without empowerment in the organisation *"Virtual teams have been a growing trend for a while now. These teams work together online with the use of collaborative software and communication tools. The idea of a virtual team is that you can have a group of people from different locations working together on the same project, regardless of location, in our organisation, we have teams located over a number of countries. So, I would say that it greatly affects teamwork. I don't think that virtual teams would be possible without giving some kind of autonomy to the team and allowing them to organise work how it suits best,"* PM 2. Empowerment helps to build a strong team *"In my opinion, there are many positive outcomes to the empowerment. Confident and productive professional teams would be the main great benefit of it,"* PM 5. Similarly, well organised, and productive teams were mentioned by PM 4, who said, *"I would say that it has a positive effect, especially for the teams that are working remotely. If teams are empowered to do the job - it goes faster and smoother."* This opinion was met by PM 3 *"For sure it brings great benefits, like motivation, trust in colleagues and me."* Empowerment might be even more important for virtual teams *"I feel that it is even more important when working in a virtual team because I feel that I am more connected to the organisation and team when I know that I can make a difference. Even though we may be physically separated from one another, we can still work together as a whole to accomplish our goals. And empowerment helps us to achieve that,"* said by PTM 1. Besides that, it was noted that it improves team atmosphere *"The positive atmosphere in the team and the sense of trust when working remotely are the essential aspects to having effective teams. Empowerment is another factor that contributes to making remote work productive,"* by PTM 2. Other team member said that it is a must for the teams working remotely, PTM 5 said *"I think if you have empowered team, I don't think you will have any difficulties working in virtual teams. Generally, I don't see any problems working virtually, it all depends on the processes the organisation has and if management trusts their employees."* With autonomy comes responsibility, but that only improved team morale said PTM 3 *"Empowerment is the act of giving somebody power. Giving somebody power usually means giving them some responsibility to complete a particular task. It's not the only thing that improves team morale, I guess it can help by creating a sense of fulfilment and accomplishment within certain members of the group."* And sometimes it's hard to say if teamwork is because of team cohesion or empowerment, PTM 3 said *"I can't really say how empowerment helps, but I know it's not just about the leader empowering their team members; but rather, it's about how the entire team works together for a common goal."*

In general, most of the respondents mentioned only the positive effects of empowerment without stating any negative side effects. Empowerment was said to have a good influence on the team's atmosphere, so trust and cohesion could fall under that. However, mutual support and knowledge sharing were not mentioned, answers overview provided in table 25.

Table 25. *Team empowerment effects on teamwork.*

	Project managers				
Respondent label	PM 1	PM 2	PM 3	PM 4	PM 5
Team empowerment effect on teamwork	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Main benefit team empowerment has on teamwork	Self-sufficient team	Self-organising team	Motivation, trust in colleagues	Velocity in finishing project	Confident and productive professional teams
	Project team members				
Respondent label	PTM 1	PTM 2	PTM 3	PTM 4	PTM 5
Team empowerment effect on teamwork	Positive	Positive	Neutral	Positive	Positive
Main benefit team empowerment has on teamwork	Connection to the organisation and team	Positive atmosphere and the sense of trust	Higher team morale, sense of fulfilment and accomplishment	Belonging to the team, working together for a common goal	Eliminates issues when working remotely, more efficient team

Source: Composed by the author.

4.7. Suggestions how project team members' empowerment could be improved

All participants were asked if they could name some improvements from their perspective and what could help improve empowerment.

PM 1

"I would say that probably the most important part plays communication. Clear roles, responsibilities, constant communication with the team and status updates. Communication should be frequent, also, not forgetting to encourage and support your team. Creating the atmosphere where team members see you more than a project manager, but as a person, whom they can rely on."

PM 2

"I am a great believer in team activities. I think having more team building events or off-sites can help to build a strong team. A team that trusts each other and looks after one another. Obviously, that trust is difficult to achieve without organisational support, but at least in our organisation, team building activities are encouraged."

PM 3

"Anything that would improve mutual support, trust or knowledge sharing is always the key to success. I guess it is harder to achieve that when working remotely, but weekly team meetings to talk about daily stuff could help. I get my team members saying that they are missing live interactions with people over coffee, which is important if you want to know your colleagues."

PM 4

"I would say trust your team and communicate with them, so you are aware of what is happening. So main suggestion – communication, communication, communication. And for the trust part – everyone who joins remotely could at least turn on the video camera, so we know how a person looks like"

PM 5

"I wouldn't improve anything – my team is empowered *(laughs)*. We have a nice atmosphere in the team. But since we are talking seriously, I would like to improve knowledge sharing in my team, I think that is such a valuable practice. It improves team members professional skills. Also, discussions help with creative thinking. To achieve that, I would say do "lessons learned" meetings that will start the conversation about good and bad."

PMT 1

"Personally, for me, it would be to have more opportunities to gain new skills, that would be great, because sometimes I feel that I am just busy with work, and it never ends. So, I do not have time to improve my professional side. Not sure if that's related to empowerment that much, but at least that would make me happier with the organisation."

PTM 2

"I understand that it's hard to trust your team when they are working remotely but having a board where you can see who is working on what, that might help. Also, team activities would be nice, and it would be nice to meet colleagues outside of work to get to know them."

PTM 3

"Communicate with your team about the opportunities available, don't forget to check in with them, not just about work. Involve them as much as possible in the decision-making process or at least consult with them, so they feel valued team members."

PTM 5

"In my opinion, communication could happen more frequently. Also, get to know your team, so any activities for that would be great. It is tough to trust someone when you do not know them. I have colleagues that joined remotely, and I have not even seen them in person."

To sum up, the suggestions all of them can be categorised in two: trust-related and communication-related improvements. Only one participant mentioned higher involvement in decision

making. The organisation already provides tools for self-organisation, so building a stronger team relies on project managers. They should encourage the team to participate in team-building activities or at least actively participate in video calls with cameras on.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research overview and comparison with literature analysis

As detailed throughout this study, there is no one definition of what team member empowerment means. For some, it is delegating authority and autonomy, for others, it is a state of empowerment, one's feeling of being in control over their own life, work, relationship. When talking with the participants empowered teams meant self-organised teams, deciding on how to perform tasks. delayed

Team member empowerment can be explained as a sum of structural empowerment, and empowering leaders' behaviour and psychological empowerment. Structural empowerment is described as access to information, support, resources, and opportunity. During interviews project managers had an opinion that access to information, support, resources, and opportunity was good for the team. While in team member group that some improvements could be done when it comes to opportunity access in the organisation. The study shows that organisation is well organised when it comes to providing information related to performing a task, access to information mainly was evaluated as good. Still, when it comes to opportunities for team members, it seems that those are very scarce. Access to opportunity, in other words – learning and growing in the organisation opportunity on many occasions was described as learning from peers.

Another part of empowerment is empowering leader's behaviour, which consists of a few actions a project manager should be doing in order to empower the team. Those actions would be enhance meaning for the work your team does, involve the team in the decision-making process, express confidence in your team's abilities and foster autonomy in the team. Overall, it was found that project managers use these behaviours, although enhance meaning for the work your team does was found to be the leased expresses behaviour. Project managers said they explain project goals and the value it will bring once completed but did not get into detail about project team members part in the organisation. It was said that line managers of team members should be doing that. Likewise, were the answers from the team members, their project managers were not trying to enhance the meaning of the job team member do but were explaining or reminding the project goal. The behaviour that was expressed the most – involving the team when making decisions. Opinions of project managers and team members agreed on this. It was noted that the team is actually making decisions, and the project manager is just a consultant. Overall, it was found that project managers express team empowering behaviours, involving team in decision making, fostering autonomy, and expressing confidence in the team the most. The least expressed behaviour – enhance meaning.

Psychological empowerment is a feeling of being empowered, it is described through how meaningful team believes their work is, how much competence they believe they have, self-determination or how much autonomy they believe they have and how much of an impact they can make in the organisation. In the study, similarly to the enhancing meaning behaviour of a leader, the meaning

was the most debated state. One project manager did not care if his team members felt their job had meaning as long as the job was done on time. Project team members said that if there would be no meaning in the work they do, they would simply change the job. Overall, project managers described their team as psychologically empowered, however, project team members found that they do not have that much impact in the organisation and the changes they could do are only on the team level.

When it comes to teamwork in project teams, knowledge sharing was happening only when requested. Also, collaboration as mutual support was more of a reactive behaviour once the project manager requested, rather than proactive asking if your colleagues need any help. Teamwork is a shared effort for a common goal, described as team cohesion, trust in the team, mutual support, and knowledge sharing. Teamwork according to project managers mutual support and trust depends on the team members, some are more helpful than the others. Project team members who participated in the study, said that they trust, help, share knowledge, and always think what is best for the team. Also, when it comes to teamwork in virtual environment, team empowerment was mentioned as a required component for the team to be efficient. Trust and communications were the top suggestions when participants were asked to suggest how empowerment could be improved.

In the literature review, it was found that empowerment has positive effects on the team: improved knowledge sharing and teamwork, higher job satisfaction and motivation, better team member and organisation performance. During the interview, it was found that project managers and team members were associating empowerment with positive effects, such as higher trust in the team, better cohesion, and generally better team morale. Although it is not clear whether empowerment improves trust in the team or trust is a necessary condition for team empowerment. No negative empowerment outcomes were mentioned during the interviews.

The study found that trust and communication were the key elements which could improve team empowerment. Project managers were emphasising more on team building and trust, whereas team members were asking for more growth opportunities and trust in the team improvement. Trust was mentioned many times by all respondents. In contrast to that, enhancing meaning was found to be the least meaningful for the project teams. Overall team empowerment was said to have positive effects on teamwork and work in virtual project teams would not be possible without team empowerment.

Recommendations

This study provides practical recommendations for project managers, even though the analysis was performed in a team working remotely, recommendations could be applied regardless. Team empowerment is a great tool to establish confident, self-organised teams. In order to improve empowerment in the team, project managers should:

1. Involve the team in the decision-making process – when a team of people come together to solve a problem, they often have more wisdom and information than any single person.

By consulting with the team, the group has an increased chance of solving the problem quickly and efficiently. It also helps to boost morale and allow colleagues to feel more valued by giving their input on the issue.

2. Communicate frequently – communication is a great way to form a successful team. It's important to communicate with your team often to ensure everyone is on the same page. Share latest company updates, growth opportunities or relevant knowledge. This way, you can stay up to date with what your team members are doing and make sure nothing says unsolved. Communicating often also helps you form stronger relationships with your team and improves problem-solving skills.

3. Encourage activities that would build trust in your team - trust is essential to the success of any team. It's important for people to trust their colleagues and feel that they are respected, that their work is valued, and that they are given opportunities to grow. Without trust, you cannot have a productive team.

Study limitations

This study used a qualitative research method with small sample size. This means that the results of this investigation cannot be generalised to a larger population. Furthermore, respondents can falsely claim to be experts. Also, results can be influenced by the researcher's personal believes or perceptions and not represent accurate data.

Future studies

This study was carried out in an international finance company with teams working remotely. Although the company selected for the study uses a traditional project management model, they are innovative and already employs many new leadership practices. Also, using different research method and bigger sample could discover other connections with team empowerment and teamwork. Further studies could investigate different industries, such as state organisations, to better understand the role of empowerment in teamwork. Research in the more conservative organisation could indicate different aspects of empowerment relation towards teamwork. Trust was mentioned as a required condition when establishing team empowerment, further research could look what are those required conditions for the team empowerment.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Example of an interview

How long have you been with current organization?   With this organization I have been for, let me think… I have been for two years and now starting my third year.
What's is your current position in the company? And how long have you been working in this position?   So, I have started in the position that I am currently in and that is a solution architect, you could say I am a team lead.
Do you work now or previously worked in project teams? If so, what type of projects mostly did you work on?   Primarily I work in project teams and when I say I am sort of a team lead, I mean in the project team that I am working there is project manager and us, developers, so I am their team lead. So, I have worked, and I am working now in project teams. I think my job role describes that I work with the IT related projects, I am not going to tell you too many details, because those are very technical, but project that I am in are related to technologies and software.
Do you work now or previously worked remotely?   Yes, I am working remotely for the last year. But even before I would take one or two days to work from home, it's not something very new to me. I am used to it and not only in this company, but also, at my previous company we used to work remotely even without the pandemic.
Have you ever heard about team empowerment? How would you describe it?   Yes, I'm not sure if I understand exactly how I should understand that it's not an easy thing to describe. I think there is like a few ways to look at the empowerment, so one way could be from the managers perspective, like solution architects are the people who can take on many roles in the project teams, they can be team leaders, project managers. They can be anybody in the project team. Another way if you are an engineer, you don't really care whether other are empowered. They can only help each other, for example taking unwanted tasks from colleagues or if someone is struggling help with the solution of the problem, I think in that way they could empower each other. If you're a team leader you can create opportunities for your team members to feel better, more valued, and complete tasks faster. You can provide the tools they require or just leave them to work in the way they want. I think it is more team leaders and project managers task, team members have very little power to empower someone, at least that's what I think. Team members in the team can only request for something, like "we would like more resource, we need permissions to make decisions or access to information to make better decisions". I think empowerment is a lot about being able to decide what to do and how to do it.   ***In what ways a team can be empowered?***   I think that there is two ways. One way: to give power to the team or gathered a great team which would have all required competences to do the job, without looking for help from the outside, so they could handle all the decisions and complete tasks. Team would not have to go looking for information to do the job. I think it's either your superiors and upper management enables team to do the job or the team itself is competent enough to do the job. Second thing is trust from your superiors, from the upper management. That team is trusted that they will do the job without too much involvement from manager. Project managers should trust their team and be more like a guide than a manager. I think it's very empowering to know that your manager trusts you and is not constantly looking over your shoulder.

For the following questions, please think about your experiences while working in a project team.

Variable: Information
Questions for team member
Can you access all the required information for work and if yes, how?

It depends on the project that I am working. It could be that information is restricted due to the sensitivity of it, it is available only to certain people because of the security restrictions or GDPR. However, all the information that is required to do the day-to-day job or to perform a task related to your job is shared with the team to that level that they require. If you ask about me, I am in a bit of a different situation, I am a team lead, so by default, I can access more information, which might not be available to everyone, but I would say that most of the info is out there with an easy access. If I ever need anything, I can ask my project manager. Although I need to provide a reason why I need it. Sometimes I don't even need to know the information that I have access to. There is so much information in the organisation and small details might not always be necessary to everybody. Let's say a project manager would not need a network specific tech sheet, that I need, because it's needed for him. For me mostly if I need anything, I can easily find it or ask for the access to it, but like I said, whenever I ask access for certain information that is restricted to me, I need to have a good reason for asking.

Variable: Support
Questions for team member
Do you have access to support? If yes, what kind of support can you access?

IT support, help desk, social support, human resources specialists, data specialist, support from project stakeholders. All kinds of support, also, help from colleagues or feedback from my project manager. There are a few levels of support, one is for tools accesses requests to the information, IT support. Next one, support from stakeholders of the project, it depends on what is required, what is accessible. However, if you need support from stakeholders, you will not go directly but ask for it through project manager. It depends on the support that you require, so if you need a basic tool that is accessible to everybody, you will get it without any questions, but if you need a certain access to information that you need, like I mentioned before, you will need a reason why you require it. But stuff related to the project I usually get without much trouble. Stakeholders or project manager helps a lot, at the end of the day they want the project to be completed.

Variable: Resources
Questions for team member
Do you have access to enough resources to do the work? If yes, what can you access?

Yes, I have access to anything. It could be anything from extra pair of hands to technical tools, but of course I need an explanation why it needed. When asking if I have enough arguments why I need certain resources my project manager sees what is possible and tries to get it. Usually just because of the job that I do, he would just say OK we will extend the timeline, that's because I am one out of the few persons available with that competence, but sometimes it is possible to get someone from company resources. So, if there is such person available, my project managers could ask them to come on board, but as I said, in many cases he would just review and extend the timeline of the project. Usually before the project starts, tasks, scope and available resources are being estimated and once we start the project, we pretty much have everything we are going to need. And I am asked to participate in the planning part, so I kind of know what I will have during project. It happens that some unforeseen circumstances happened, and we need something extra, then the project manager checks how we could solve this resources problem. If it's something equipment wise I just go to my project manager with the request.

Variable: Opportunity
Questions for team member

Can you gain new skills at work? If yes, how?
Yes, so this is similar like with the resources. If I need some trainings, I will go to my project manager and ask if it's possible to have them. So, to gain new skills is possible if the project has already a budget that is dedicated for upskilling people. Also, if it's not in the project then it's in my department, we have some budget for gaining new skills. We have internal training and a budget that every team member can spend on trainings. We have online platforms available for us like Coursera, Plural skills and we can learn from there. It's more hard skills training that we have internally, soft skills not so much. And trainings for technical, so-called hard skills it's quite easy to get, but when it comes to soft skills, like communication, it's very hard to get those type of trainings. If we talk about conferences, we do not go to them as well, those are for top-level management. So, we have some opportunities, but nothing special.
Variable: Enhance meaning   **Questions for team member**   *Does your project manager help you understand how your objectives and goals relate to the company's? If yes, how?*
It's not project managers responsibility to talk about the meaning of work project team members do, that should be done by their line manager. He should do that, I think with some roles, the job they do is not in any way related to the company's objectives. And project goals are not like company's goals. If we talk about projects, then yes, a project manager talks about project goals. Not sure about my colleagues, but at least me – I wouldn't do the job if I wouldn't think that it's meaningful. It must have some value to the company, generally in all the teams that I worked, everyone seemed to be very motivated to do the job. And we all are from completely different teams, we don't know each other, and we never worked before in one team. So, when I choose a project, I can choose the project that I find meaningful and valuable. We have a choice when choosing in which project, we want to work or which one we would like to work.
Variable: Involve in decision making   **Questions for team member**   *Does your project manager involve you when making decisions? If yes, how?*
In my team the project manager does not really have much voice unless he's very technical person who can actually say something. He's not really a decision maker, the decisions are made by the people who are doing the job. They can tell how to make it easier, which way would work better, how long it will take to complete it, how we will accomplish it. Project manager just calculates the budget and draws the timeline. Project manager is not the decision maker, he doesn't say this is how we are going to do or at least I just do not have an example of a project manager making decisions. Decisions come from the team, most of the time we discuss all the options in the team, and later I explain to project manager what we agreed with the team. Project manager doesn't need to know all the possible ways how we could do it; he just wants to know how we're going to do it. But project manager would make decisions which are related to actual project management, like budgeting. And that is solely project managers decision, even timeline is influenced by team, because of their availability and technical knowledge.
Variable: Express confidence   **Questions for team member**   *Does your project manager express confidence in you that you are capable to do the job? If yes, how?*
Yes, I think he must express confidence in the team that he is working with. My project manager is great at giving and receiving feedback, we get involved in decision making. I feel valued when my project manager asks if I could help him with something. Not interfering with the team members doing their job. He knows that we are professionals who came to

work with the project, and he trusts us to do the job. If previously he had some issues with the team member, he knows what to control.
Variable: Foster autonomy
Questions for team member
Does your project manager promote autonomy in a team? If yes, how?
Yes, but I'm not sure if I would call it that way, it's not like promoting. He doesn't get involved in little details. We communicate almost daily, but more about if everything is okay, if I need anything, that is not like he calls to check on me how I do things.
Variable: Meaning
Questions for team member
Do you think the work you do has meaning? If yes, why you think so?
Obviously yes. I always think that my job has meaning, but maybe that's just me. I'm not sure how it is for the others, but for me – I feel my work has meaning, if I thought there was no meaning, I would not be working in this position. I don't think there is a point to continue working if the job that you do is meaningless. If some tasks are meaningless in my work that I do I try to automate it, so I can do something more interesting.
Variable: Competence
Questions for team member
Was there ever a situation that you felt that you did not have enough competences to do the work? Did you ask for help?
Yes, of course. Almost every day I have questions to other people from my team or the department. The questions that I have I usually ask directly to the people that have the competence. Although I am constantly learning and asking questions because of lack of knowledge in some specific part of a task I feel confident that I have enough skills to do my job up to a standard. I do not ask my project manager for help unless it is related to the project management itself. If it's a technical question my project manager might not even know the answer, or if it's a process related to my job, he might not know the answer. But I would ask my project manager for a person who I could contact in relation to the questions that I have if I didn't know who I should ask. And then I would go to that person directly, I'm not a fan of a broken telephone.
Variable: Self-determination
Questions for team member
How much autonomy do you have at work?
Complete, okay maybe I could say that it's nearly full independence within my job description. I know my job extremely well, and for the last year, I have been working remotely, so I work without big restrictions.
Variable: Impact
Questions for team member
Can you suggest process improvements? How are your suggestions received in the organization?
Yes, although I do not have many things to say about process improvements. Most of the time I am proactive about things like that, I don't think there is a point to wait for the end of a project if we could implement something right away.
Variable: Knowledge sharing
Questions for team member
Do you share manuals, know-how with other team members? If yes, how often do you share it?
Yes, always, however, manuals are available to everyone, but I personally try to help when colleagues are asking. But it's not like we have dedicated meetings to knowledge sharing, if I see that there is a better way to do, I usually talk with the engineers, and we see if there is an improvement to be made. I share good practices or other useful information. I think there

is value in it, that helps us to be more successful as a team and upskill as team members. But that depends if its required or not.

Variable: Mutual support
Questions for team member
Do you feel that you can get help from your colleagues? If yes, can you ask directly or you need to ask through project manager?

Maybe that's just me, but I don't involve project manager when I can easily find the person with required info or resources myself. It only becomes an issue if it's in another department, then I talk with my project manager, and we see what we could do.

Variable: Trust
Questions for team member
Do you trust your colleagues? If yes, how you show that?

Very hard question, you should always trust your colleagues. But not everyone has the same level of trust towards each other, but generally, I would say yes, my team trusts each other. The best way they show it, by taking responsibility when something goes wrong and not blaming each other.

Variable: Cohesion
Questions for team member
When making decisions, do you consider what's best for project success? If yes, how?

When you take the project, you do it to succeed not to fail it. I don't think there are people in the team who do not think about project success and instead think about their own success. If you have those people, you escalate it to the project manager or his manager, like it's sorry the person is dragging the project down, luckily, I never encountered such person. Like I said, I think project goal is always on my mind when I am making decisions. I believe the whole team considers what's best for the project. Otherwise, we would not move forward, imagine how hard it would be to move something if two people are pushing something in two different directions. Also, I believe that team atmosphere greatly depends on project managers behaviours.

Questions for team member
In general, what effect does team members' empowerment have on teamwork, especially when team works virtually?
In my opinion, there is a big difference if the team is empowered when working virtually. They are much faster when completing tasks, because if you work remotely, you can't just run to project manager or colleague to ask something. So, you must have a certain level of autonomy. When working virtually it's much harder to organise meetings and ask for access to something over emails. You must be empowered to work efficiently and productively in virtual teams. I think if you have empowered team, I don't think you will have any difficulties working in virtual teams. Generally, I don't see any problems working virtually, it all depends on the processes the organisation has and if management trusts their employees.
How would you suggest improving team members' empowerment?
I think the main thing would be trust your team, I know it's easy to say not so easy to do. It is tough to trust someone when you do not know them. I have colleagues that joined remotely, and I have not even seen them in person. I think managers should only look at the first house like team member delivers where he said he will deliver there should be no issue with someone working remotely. Also, communication could happen more frequently and try to get to know your team, so any activities for that would be great.