The role of administrative empowerment in reducing job burnout among female public school principals in Jubail governorate

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This study aimed to determine the level of administrative empowerment and job burnout among female public school principals in Jubail Governorate, as perceived by the principals themselves, and to explore the correlation between them. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed, utilizing a questionnaire administered to a random sample of 56 female school principals. The findings revealed a high level of administrative empowerment among female principals, with the dimension of influence ranking highest. Conversely, the level of job burnout was found to be moderate, with reduced personal accomplishment ranking first among its dimensions. The study highlights the importance of administrative empowerment dimensions, such as delegation of authority and participation in decision-making, and suggests further research into their individual impact on job burnout. Future studies could also examine the effect of training and development on self-confidence and burnout levels.

KEYWORDS

administrative empowerment, job burnout, female school principals, educational leadership, Jubail governorate

Introduction

Across diverse societies, education consistently emerges as a paramount priority. It is recognized as a catalyst for strength, a driver of reform and progress, and a cornerstone of holistic development. Educational institutions are pivotal in identifying the root causes of developmental gaps across all sectors. To align educational outcomes with comprehensive development strategies (Qarawani, 2015), a critical emphasis on human resources is essential. As a fundamental tool for progress, the training and appreciation of these resources are indispensable (Al-Habisiyyah, 2017). Implementing modern human resource strategies, particularly administrative empowerment, can effectively achieve this objective.

Education is universally prioritized as a vital tool for societal strength, reform, and development. Educational institutions must address developmental shortcomings by enhancing educational outcomes (Smadi and AL-Otaibi, 2024; Smadi et al., 2024). This requires investing in human resources through training and appreciation (Almousa, 2023). Administrative empowerment, among other modern human resource strategies, is key to achieving this.

Administrative empowerment is considered a cornerstone for successful work, as it plays a significant role in improving the relationship between supervisors and subordinates (Atiya, 2020). One of its benefits is that it helps school principals to showcase their best abilities, given their high skills, capabilities, and commitment to their institutions and jobs (Al-Tarawneh and Al-Nahdi, 2017). The approach of administrative empowerment has gained increasing attention in Saudi Arabia. Government agencies have set strategic goals to achieve the objectives of the Saudi Vision, and launched the National Transformation Program to contribute to the achievement of Vision 2030. Among these is the Ministry of Education, which has defined nine strategic goals to contribute to developing administrative empowerment, such as improving the educational environment to encourage creativity and innovation. To achieve these goals, the ministry has launched several initiatives and programs for administrative empowerment in public education, such as the Qualitative Development Program for Teachers, Educational and Supervisory Leaders and the Independent Education Departments Project, which includes a main goal of empowering education departments and schools to manage and direct the development process.

Numerous organizational variables, including employees' mental health and work stress, have been associated with administrative empowerment. One behavioral variable that closely relates to work stress is job burnout. Changes and developments in administrative processes and their interrelationships have affected school principals, causing them to experience work stress that reflects on their performance and motivation. This can also lead to significant problems and errors that result in material and sometimes human losses in the absence of resources and clear roles and in the presence of conflicting goals. The limited authorities granted to administrators have become an obstacle to developmental and reform ambitions, leading to a psychological state with an administrative dimension known as job burnout (Al-Husaini, 2016; Al-Za'abi and Al-Kreidis, 2012).

Given the significance of school administration and the critical role played by 21st-century principals in light of current challenges and diverse changes, this study aimed to complement existing research in this field and to explore the role of administrative empowerment in reducing job burnout. School principals are the cornerstone of achieving educational goals. Expanding the authority of school principals represents a qualitative shift toward administrative empowerment. Instead of reacting to problems after they arise, a school principal now anticipates potential issues and innovates ways to prevent them through administrative empowerment, thereby avoiding job burnout (Aboud and Dannan, 2016; Al-Zuaib, 2017).

According to the organizational guide for public schools, a job description for the roles and responsibilities of school principals has been included with the aim of improving performance and continuous improvement at Al-Masry (2021). Additionally, the Tenth Development Plan aimed to improve the educational environment to foster creativity and innovation, as stated in Article 196 of the Saudi Arabia Education Policy Document, which emphasizes the importance of providing adequate attention to training, renewal, and awareness courses to solidify experiences and acquire new knowledge and skills. However, this approach still faces a degree of ambiguity regarding whether it is a practical or a formal application in schools.

Drawing from established organizational behavior and human resource management theories, administrative empowerment, defined as the process of granting employees autonomy, authority, and resources to make decisions and take ownership of their work, stands in direct contrast to the conditions that often precipitate job burnout. Job burnout, a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment resulting from chronic workplace stress is frequently exacerbated by feelings of powerlessness, lack of control, and insufficient resources (Argyris, 1998; Maxwell, 1997; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990).

Additionally, the Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model suggests an inverse relationship between administrative empowerment and job burnout. When individuals perceive they are empowered, they are more likely to experience increased self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and a sense of value, acting as buffers against the depleting effects of job demands. Conversely, a lack of empowerment can amplify the impact of stressors, leading to feelings of frustration, disengagement and ultimately, burnout. This theoretical framework posits that fostering administrative empowerment within educational institutions can serve as a critical strategy in mitigating job burnout among principals and educational leaders, thereby enhancing their well-being, performance, and commitment to their roles and the overall development of the educational system (Al-Otaibi, 2021, Abd Al-Aal et al., 2020; Al-Hariry, 2012; Al-Noh, 2017, Al-Qahtani, 2021).

Studies by Al-Ghamdi (2017), Al-Tarawneh and Al-Nahdi (2017), Al-Salmi and Al-Alfi (2018), and Al-Hassan (2019) indicated that the level of administrative empowerment among school principals was moderate. Al-Osman and Al-Arifi (2019) study and Almousa et al. (2022), highlighted the main obstacles faced by educational institutions, including the preference for traditional administrative leadership styles by senior management, the inability of some principals to make appropriate decisions, centralization in communication between senior and executive leaders in schools, and the mismatch between the authority granted to principals and the responsibilities placed on them. Al-Zuaib's (2017) study showed the impact of administrative empowerment on increasing motivation for achievement, and Al-Ahmari (2020) study found that there is a significant role for delegation of authority and administrative empowerment in improving the performance of school principals.

Al-Masoudi (2021) study showed a positive impact of administrative empowerment in preparing future leaders in accordance with Vision 2030. Moreover, Al-Hadrami (2019) study concluded that job burnout among male and female principals of public secondary schools was at a moderate level. Al-Husaini (2016) study and Al-Sarhan (2016) study also indicated the emergence of job burnout in administrative and leadership roles and that it has become a phenomenon worthy of research and study. The aforementioned observation highlights the existence of studies that specifically focus on administrative empowerment, while others separately examine job burnout. This reveals the need to address and study the relationship between administrative empowerment and job burnout. The research problem can be formulated in the following main question: What is the role of administrative empowerment in reducing job burnout among female principals of public schools in Jubail Governorate?

The following sub-questions branched out from this main question:

1 What is the degree of administrative empowerment among female principals of public schools in Jubail Governorate from their perspective?

2 What is the level of job burnout among female principals of public schools in Jubail Governorate from their perspective?

3 Is there a significant correlation between the degree of administrative empowerment among female principals of public schools in Jubail Governorate and their level of job burnout?

Literature review

The study delved into two primary research areas:

1 **Administrative Empowerment**: Many organizations adopt the concept of administrative empowerment due to its significant impact in fostering mutual trust between management and employees, motivating them, and involving them in decision-making. Additionally, it helps break down internal administrative and organizational barriers between management and staff (Khalfa and Essaoui, 2018; Al-Talal, 2015, Al-Zahrani, 2018). Administrative empowerment is a product of the human relations movement, which advocated a focus on the human element within organizations (Makhdoum, 2020). Generally, the concept of empowerment emerged in management thought, calling for a departure from traditional leadership models. It emphasizes a leadership approach that believes participation and consultation can enhance human benefits. Besterfield (2003) viewed empowerment as investing in the vast reservoir of latent potential and diverse experiences possessed by employees. According to Dufour and Matoos (2013), administrative empowerment involves enhancing the capabilities and skills of school principals in managing the school as an educational institution with a vision and mission. It is also defined as the transfer of authority and responsibility from managers to employees to participate in decision-making, making employees accountable for the quality of decisions made (Ratmawati, 2007; John, 2007; Brown et al., 2006; Hung, 2005; Lee, 2005).

Empowerment holds significant importance, as highlighted by numerous researchers (Gurmu, 2023; Ramadan, 2011; Aziz, 2008; Afana and Badir, 2013; Al-Sharif, 2012; Qweider and Shaldan, 2017; Al-Masoudi, 2021; Al-Taie and Qadadah, 2008). Its benefits for organizations can be summarized as follows:

For organizations, empowerment is a fundamental tool for creating a learning institution, improving organizational performance, enhancing competitive advantage, fostering a culture of teamwork and excellence, rewarding individual and collective abilities, skills, and creativity, and ensuring a competent administrative staff capable of meeting work demands, increasing productivity, and promoting innovation (Al-Douri and Saleh, 2008; Bin Mani, 2009; Bouzenzen, 2015; Bouzid, 2020). A study by Rivera and Ibarra (2020), which aimed to examine the relationship between the level of empowerment of public elementary school principals and their perceptions of school management in the region of Ylaja, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, revealed that educational and administrative empowerment had a highly significant relationship with school safety and order.

For Managers: Empowerment contributes to employees' job satisfaction and organizational loyalty. It enables managers to track the achievement of results and disseminate performance metrics for organizational goals. Empowerment focuses on granting power and authority, not taking them away. It also frees up managers to concentrate on critical strategic issues and bolsters trust in managers.

For Subordinates: Empowerment enhances employee job satisfaction and provides opportunity for self-expression, skill development, and a sense of job security. It fosters employee engagement and participation in problem-solving, allowing them to identify critical outcomes and shape future goals related to those outcomes. Moreover, it prepares employees for higher positions in their career paths. Al-Hassan (2019) study revealed a positive correlation between the degree of administrative empowerment among school leaders in the Baha region and their level of participation in decision-making (Al-Masoudi, 2021).

Delving deeper into the theoretical underpinnings, administrative empowerment is hypothesized to mitigate job burnout through several key mechanisms.

Firstly, increased autonomy and control, inherent in empowered roles, directly counteract the feelings of helplessness and lack of influence that contribute significantly to emotional exhaustion and cynicism When administrators have greater discretion over their tasks and decision-making processes, they experience a stronger sense of ownership and are better equipped to manage work-related stressors effectively. Secondly, empowerment often entails the provision of adequate resources and support, enabling individuals to meet job demands without feeling overwhelmed or depleted. Thirdly, the enhanced sense of value and self-efficacy fostered by empowerment can buffer against feelings of reduced personal accomplishment. Finally, empowerment can cultivate a more positive and collaborative work environment, where open communication and mutual support are encouraged (Al-Masoudi, 2021).

Chapter two: job burnout

Job burnout is defined as a psychological syndrome that develops when workers encounter a stressful work environment, in addition to rising job demands and low resources (Baverly, 2005). It is also defined as an individual's experience of symptoms of both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, as well as reduced personal accomplishment (Bruce, 2009). Therefore, job burnout is defined as a personal response to prolonged and chronic occupational stressors, both psychologically and physically. It is a state that is accompanied by continuous stress, pessimism, and decreased professional effectiveness (Hakanen et al., 2006; Warrad, 2012; Al-Shoqran et al., 2021).

The following is an explanation of these dimensions:

- **Emotional Exhaustion**: This refers to the depletion of psychological energy. The continuous pressures leading to burnout represent a major factor in causing serious damage to the human body - mentally, psychologically, and physically. This physical and mental harm is the result of feeling anxiety, tension, frustration, and anger for prolonged periods of time.
- **Depersonalization**: Depersonalization or inhumanity appears in individuals as a result of being exposed to stress and anxiety for

long periods. This may cause individuals to tend toward isolation and a lack of communication with others. They may also tend to be unresponsive to the needs of others and interact with them without any sense of humanity.

- **Decreased Personal Accomplishment**: This dimension is characterized by an individual's negative evaluation of their personal achievements, which manifests as feelings of depression, withdrawal, low productivity, inability to cope with stress, feelings of failure, and low self-esteem.

Researchers have conducted numerous studies investigating these dimensions and the nature of the relationship between them. While Schwab and Iwanicki (1982) concluded that the burnout process is not necessarily a sequential process with one component leading to another, the study by Lee and Ashforth (1996) found that job burnout is a sequential process, meaning that the dimensions follow a sequence. Shirom (1989), on the other hand, found that burnout involves a complex set of factors, including physical exhaustion, emotional exhaustion, and cognitive weariness. Similarly, Koeske and Koeske (1989) presented distinct concepts of burnout, with emotional exhaustion considered the core of the burnout process, while depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment, although closely related, were not considered part of the structure of burnout. In contrast, Maslach et al. (2001) as well as Cordes and Dougherty (1993), Maslach et al. (2001), argued that using the term "exhaustion" as a sole criterion would lead to a misunderstanding of burnout as a multidimensional phenomenon where the dimensions are interrelated.

From the foregoing, it is clear that Maslach et al., 2001 relied on the three dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment) combined in the scale she developed for job burnout. The researcher adopted Maslach et al. (2001) scale due to its comprehensiveness and accuracy in measuring levels of job burnout among female public school principals. Toker's study (Toker, 2015) employed Maslach's scale to assess the level of job burnout among academics in Turkish universities. The results showed that associate and assistant professors experienced a low level of job burnout, while research assistants experienced a high level of job burnout compared to professors. Al-Hadrami (2019) study employed Maslach's scale to determine the prevalence of job burnout among male and female principals of public secondary schools in the General Education Directorate of the Makkah Region. The results indicated that the level of job burnout among male and female principals of public secondary schools in the General Education Directorate of the Makkah Region was moderate.

The researcher holds the belief that the various dimensions of managerial empowerment, such as meaning or a sense of purpose, personal will or freedom of choice, and ability or influence, allow for the effective application of all these methods.

Research methodology and procedures

To achieve the study objectives, the researcher used the descriptive correlational method, which aims to discover and describe the strength of the relationship between different variables. The study population consisted of (87) female principals in public schools in Jubail Governorate, according to the Ministry of Education statistics for the academic year 2024. A random sample of 22 principals was selected

from the study population, representing 25.3% of the study population. Through the responses of the pilot sample, the internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire were calculated. Stephen Thompson's formula (Thompson, 2012) yielded a primary sample size of 56 principals after removing the pilot sample from the equation.

Research instrument

The researchers constructed a questionnaire as the research instrument. The initial version of the questionnaire included preliminary data and a number of axes covering the dimensions of the study. 16 experts reviewed the instrument to ensure its content validity and provided valuable comments. The experts adopted an agreement rate of 80% or above for the questionnaire items, which led to the near-final form of the instrument. The internal consistency reliability was then verified using Pearson's correlation coefficient, which was 0.942 for the administrative empowerment dimension and 0.903 for the job burnout dimension. The table shows Pearson's correlation coefficients for the dimensions related to the administrative empowerment and job burnout dimensions of the questionnaire, indicating the suitability of the questionnaire for application to the study sample. The stability of the questionnaire was also verified using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which was 0.951 for the administrative empowerment dimension, 0.939 for the job burnout dimension, and 0.964 for the questionnaire as a whole, indicating the reliability and suitability of the instrument. A five-point Likert scale was used.

The research instrument was distributed, and responses were collected to answer the research questions. The following results were obtained to answer the first research question, which states, "What is the level of administrative empowerment among female principals of public schools in Jubail Governorate from their perspective?" The mean, standard deviation, ranking, and estimation of the empowerment level were used, and the following table illustrates this (Table 1).

The table shows that three statements were rated as having a "Very High" level of empowerment:

- "I make sure to cooperate with others to analyze the problems we face," ranked first. This may be attributed to the shared perception of problems between the school principal and her staff.
- "I feel that my work as a school principal is worthwhile," ranked second. This could be due to the importance of the tasks undertaken by the school principal.
- "I believe that my decisions contribute to achieving the goals of the educational process," ranked third. This can be explained by the belief of school leaders in their role in achieving the school's goals, making their decisions in line with those goals.

It is noted from the table that the "sense of purpose" dimension as a whole was rated as "High" with a mean of 4.10. This indicates that the level of empowerment among school principals is at a level that achieves a sense of purpose for them (Table 2).

As evident from the table, all statements were rated at a "High" level of empowerment:

- "I have the necessary authority to access information" ranked first. This can be attributed to the education office's belief in the

TABLE 1 Presents the mean, standard deviation, ranking, and estimation of the administrative empowerment level among female principals of public schools in Jubail governorate, as viewed from their perspective on the dimension of sense of purpose.

Number	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Empowerment level
5	I make sure to cooperate with others to analyze the problems we face.	4.36	0.962	1	Very High
1	I feel that my work as a school principal is worthwhile.	4.36	0.999	2	Very High
2	I believe that my decisions contribute to achieving the goals of the educational process.	4.34	0.92	3	Very High
4	I feel appreciated for the efforts I put into my work.	3.79	1.091	4	High
3	The ideas I suggest to the education office are taken into consideration to address work problems.	3.66	1.032	5	High
	Sense of Purpose Dimension	4.1	0.696		High

TABLE 2 Mean, standard deviation, ranking, and estimation of the level of administrative empowerment among female principals of public schools in Jubail governorate from their perspective on the dimension of participation in decision-making.

Number	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Empowerment level
2	I have the necessary authority to access information.	4.02	0.82	1	High
1	I have the necessary authority to make administrative decisions in my school.	3.84	1.023	2	High
3	Administrative empowerment has helped to reduce direct supervision of my performance.	3.8	0.923	3	High
4	I enjoy a high degree of independence while performing my work.	3.77	1.009	4	High
5	I involve the local community in the decision-making process related to the school and students.	3.75	0.995	5	High
	Participation in Decision-Making Dimension	3.84	0.66		High

importance of information to assist school principals in decision-making and problem-solving.

- "I have the necessary authority to make administrative decisions in my school" ranked second. The school principal's deeper understanding of the school's conditions and issues explains this. Therefore, it is essential for her to have the authority to make administrative decisions in order to effectively manage its operations.
- "Administrative empowerment has helped to reduce direct supervision of my performance" ranked third. This may be due to the education office's belief in school principals' ability to take responsibility for their work and perform their duties.

Moreover, the "participation in decision-making" dimension was rated at a "High" level of empowerment with a mean of 3.84. This indicates that empowerment among school principals is at a level that facilitates their participation in decision-making (Table 3).

As evident from the table, one of the statements was rated at a "Very High" level of empowerment:

- "I possess the necessary skills and knowledge to manage the school effectively" ranked first. This can be attributed to the professional development programs provided to school principals, which have equipped them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively manage their schools.

- "I have the ability to deal with modern technologies that develop work procedures" ranked second. This can be attributed to the importance of technology and its activation in the operations of the Ministry of Education, as well as education administrations and offices. This has made it essential for school principals to possess the ability to deal with modern technologies.

Moreover, the "capabilities and skills" dimension as a whole was rated at a "High" level of empowerment with a mean of 4.09. This indicates that empowerment among school principals is at a level that ensures they possess the necessary capabilities and skills to perform their work and duties effectively (Table 4).

The table reveals that three statements achieved a 'Very High' empowerment rating:

- **I have the ability to motivate school staff to complete tasks efficiently**. Ranked first, this can be attributed to the school principal's recognition of the importance of motivation and encouragement in boosting the morale of school staff, which positively impacts their job performance.
- **School staff members respect me**. Ranked second, this can be explained by the fact that school principals value their staff and treat them well, fostering mutual respect.
- **School staff members demonstrate commitment to ethical and professional standards in their practices**. Ranked third, this can be explained by the fact that ethical standards are part of Islamic values, and the principal's professional and respectful treatment of staff members enhances their commitment to professional standards.

The overall 'influence' dimension was rated as 'Very High' with a mean of 4.31. This indicates that school principals have a high level of empowerment, which is evident in their ability to influence others (Table 5).

The table demonstrates the following:

- **The influence dimension ranked highest and was rated as very high**. This finding can be attributed to the fundamental nature of leadership, which revolves around the capacity to influence others. This is the primary role of a school principal: to exert influence over school staff.
- **Overall, the level of administrative empowerment among female school principals in Jubail Governorate was rated as 'high,' with a mean score of 4.08**. These results align with Al-Za'eebir's study (Al-Za'eebir, 2017), which found a high level of empowerment among secondary school leaders in Saudi Arabia. However, these findings diverge from those of Al-Hassan's study (Al-Hassan, 2019), which reported a moderate level of empowerment among female school leaders in the Baha region of Saudi Arabia, and Qaralleh's study (Qaralleh, 2020), which concluded that empowerment levels were moderate among school leaders in the Karak region of Southern Jordan.

To address the second research question: "What is the level of job burnout among female principals of public schools in Jubail Governorate from their perspective?" we employed mean scores, standard deviations, rankings, and level estimations. The subsequent tables present the results of this analysis (Table 6).

"The table shows that:

- **One statement was rated as 'High'**: "I feel that psychological stress negatively affects my job performance and health." Ranked first, this can be attributed to the fact that individual performance is influenced by one's psychological state. Therefore, the school principal's perception that psychological stress negatively affects her performance is understandable.
- **The remaining statements were rated as 'Moderate'**. For example, the statement "I feel tired quickly when working" ranked second with a moderate rating. This could be attributed to the school principal's active engagement in her work and sense of responsibility toward her duties, which prevents her from feeling quickly exhausted while performing her tasks and responsibilities.
- **The statement "I feel frustrated with my job duties" ranked third**. This can be explained by the fact that feelings of frustration often arise when tasks are not successfully completed. However,

TABLE 3 Mean, standard deviation, ranking, and estimation of the level of administrative empowerment among female principals of public schools in Jubail governorate from their perspective on the dimension of capabilities and skills.

Number	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Empowerment level
1	I possess the necessary skills and knowledge to manage the school effectively.	4.3	0.952	1	Very High
5	I have the ability to deal with modern technologies that develop work procedures.	4.23	1.062	2	Very High
4	The education administration encourages the exchange of experiences among leaders.	4.04	1.026	3	High
2	I receive the necessary training to develop my administrative skills.	3.98	1.136	4	High
3	I receive the necessary support to develop my administrative skills.	3.89	1.139	5	High
	Capabilities and Skills Dimension	4.09	0.804		High

TABLE 4 Mean, standard deviation, ranking, and estimation of the level of administrative empowerment among female principals of public schools in Jubail governorate from their perspective on the dimension of influence.

Number	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Empowerment level
4	I have the ability to motivate school staff to complete tasks efficiently.	4.48	0.914	1	Very High
2	School staff members respect me.	4.43	1.076	2	Very High
5	School staff members demonstrate commitment to ethical and professional standards in their practices.	4.34	0.92	3	Very High
1	I have the ability to bring about change in the school environment.	4.18	1.208	4	High
3	I encourage school staff to prioritize the school's interests over their own.	4.13	0.974	5	High
	Influence Dimension	4.31	0.705		Very High

TABLE 5 Mean, standard deviation, ranking, and estimated level of administrative empowerment among female principals of public schools in Jubail governorate from their perspective (overall).

Number	Dimension	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Empowerment level
4	Influence Dimension	4.31	0.75	1	Very High
1	Sense of Efficacy Dimension	4.1	0.696	2	High
3	Capabilities and Skills Dimension	4.09	0.804	3	High
2	Participation in Decision Making Dimension	3.84	0.66	4	High
5	Overall Administrative Empowerment	4.08	0.624		High

TABLE 6 Mean, standard deviation, ranking, and estimated level of burnout among female principals of public schools in Jubail governorate from their perspective on the dimension of emotional exhaustion.

Number	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Level
4	I feel that psychological stress negatively affects my job performance and health.	3.46	1.348	1	High
2	I feel tired quickly when working.	2.98	1.483	2	Moderate
3	I feel frustrated with my job duties.	2.8	1.445	3	Moderate
1	I feel a lack of motivation and enthusiasm toward work.	2.73	1.342	4	Moderate
5	I am seriously considering leaving school administration.	2.68	1.377	5	Moderate
	Emotional Exhaustion Dimension	2.93	1.082		Moderate

given that school principals possess the necessary skills and abilities for their roles, this is less likely to occur.

Overall, the 'emotional exhaustion' dimension was rated as 'Moderate' with a mean of 2.93. This suggests that there are few factors that contribute to emotional exhaustion in school principals' work environments (Tables 7, 8).

The table indicates that **all statements fell within the moderate level**. These include:

- "I find it difficult to balance my professional achievements with my health **and personal well-being**." Ranked first, this moderate level can be attributed to the multifaceted nature of a school principal's role, often requiring them to compartmentalise

TABLE 7 Mean, standard deviation, ranking, and estimated level of burnout among female principals of public schools in Jubail governorate from their perspective on the dimension of depersonalization.

Number	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Level
4	I find it difficult to express my feelings and personal needs at work.	2.98	1.446	1	Moderate
5	My feelings have been negatively affected by work.	2.86	1.368	2	Moderate
3	I feel that my female colleagues are unprofessional in their interactions.	2.75	1.338	3	Moderate
1	I feel I have become insensitive to the emotions and emotional demands of work.	2.75	1.417	4	Moderate
2	I feel isolated and find it difficult to communicate with my female colleagues.	2.68	1.441	5	Moderate
	Depersonalization Dimension	2.8	1.059		Moderate

TABLE 8 Mean, standard deviation, ranking, and estimated level of burnout among female principals of public schools in Jubail governorate from their perspective on the dimension of depersonalization.

Number	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Level
1	I find it difficult to balance my professional achievements with my health and personal well-being.	3.3	1.292	1	Moderate
3	I do not have enough time to complete my administrative tasks.	2.96	1.321	2	Moderate
5	I feel less satisfied with my work than I used to.	2.91	1.339	3	Moderate
4	I find it difficult to successfully complete tasks as I used to.	2.86	1.458	4	Moderate
2	I feel that my personal accomplishments at work have declined.	2.71	1.358	5	Moderate
	Reduced Personal Accomplishment Dimension	2.95	0.99		Moderate

different aspects of their lives in order to allocate sufficient time to each.

- **"I do not have enough time to complete my administrative tasks."** Ranked second, this moderate level suggests that the numerous administrative duties of a school principal can lead to feelings of time scarcity.
- **"I feel less satisfied with my work than I used to."** Ranked third, this finding might be explained by the tendency for job satisfaction to decrease over time as tasks become more routine.

Overall, the mean rating for the **reduced personal accomplishment** dimension was **moderate** with a mean of 2.95. This suggests that while there are factors contributing to feelings of reduced personal accomplishment, there are also elements that enhance the principals' sense of achievement (Table 9).

**The table reveals that all dimensions exhibited a moderate level, with reduced personal accomplishment ranking the highest, followed by emotional exhaustion and then depersonalization. Overall, the study found a moderate level of job burnout among female principals in public schools in Jubail Governorate, with a mean score of 2.90. These results align with Al-Hadrami, 2019 study, which reported a

moderate level of job burnout among school principals in the Makkah Al-Mukarramah region. However, they differ from the findings of Al-Felflan, 2020 study and Al-Shamri, 2022 study, which indicated low and rare levels of burnout among school vice principals in Makkah and educational supervisors in Hail region, respectively.

To answer the third research question: "Is there a statistically significant correlation at the 0.05 significance level between the level of administrative empowerment among female principals of public schools in Jubail Governorate and their level of job burnout?," a Pearson correlation coefficient was employed. The following table presents the results (Table 10).

The table reveals the following:

- There is a statistically significant negative correlation ($r = -0.365$, $p < 0.01$) between the level of administrative empowerment and job burnout among female principals in public schools in Jubail Governorate.

While the statistical significance ($p < 0.01$) indicates that the observed negative correlation between administrative empowerment and job burnout among female principals in public schools in Jubail

TABLE 9 Mean, standard deviation, ranking, and estimated level of job burnout among female principals of public schools in Jubail governorate from their overall perspective.

Number	Dimension	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Level
2	Reduced Personal Accomplishment Dimension	2.95	0.99	1	Moderate
1	Emotional Exhaustion Dimension	2.93	1.082	2	Moderate
3	Depersonalization Dimension	2.8	1.059	3	Moderate
4	Overall Burnout Level	2.9	0.94		Moderate

TABLE 10 Pearson correlation coefficient between the level of administrative empowerment and job burnout among female principals of public schools in Jubail governorate.

Job burnout level	Level of administrative empowerment	Correlation coefficient	Significance level	Interpretation
		−0.365	0.006	Significant at $p < 0.01$

Governorate is unlikely to have occurred by chance, the magnitude of the correlation ($r = −0.365$) speaks to its practical significance. Here's a breakdown of what this moderate negative correlation implies in a real-world context:

Direction of the Relationship: The negative sign (−) confirms that as the level of administrative empowerment increases, the level of job burnout tends to decrease. Conversely, lower levels of administrative empowerment are associated with higher levels of job burnout among these principals.

Strength of the Relationship: A correlation of −0.365 is generally considered a **moderate** correlation in social sciences research. This means that while there is a discernible and statistically significant relationship between the two variables, it is not a very strong or very weak one.

Not a Perfect Predictor: Administrative empowerment is not a perfect predictor of job burnout. While higher empowerment is associated with lower burnout, it does not mean that every highly empowered principal will have low burnout, or vice versa. Other factors are also likely at play.

o **Beyond Chance**: However, the correlation is strong enough to suggest a meaningful connection that goes beyond random variation.
• **Practical Implications for Educational Institutions**:
o **Potential for Intervention**: The moderate negative correlation suggests that efforts to enhance administrative empowerment among female principals in Jubail Governorate could potentially lead to a reduction in their levels of job burnout. This provides a practical avenue for intervention.
o **Focus Area for Improvement**: Educational authorities can consider initiatives and policies aimed at increasing principals' autonomy, decision-making authority, access to resources, and support systems as a strategy to address and mitigate job burnout.

Understanding a Contributing Factor: While not the sole determinant, administrative empowerment appears to be a relevant factor influencing job burnout. Understanding this relationship can inform the development of more supportive and sustainable work environments for school leaders.

Need for Further Investigation: The moderate nature of the correlation also highlights that other factors likely contribute to job burnout among female principals. Future research could explore these additional variables to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Variance Explained: To further understand the practical impact, we can square the correlation coefficient (r^2) to determine the proportion of variance in one variable that is explained by the other. In this case, $r^2 = (−0.365)^2 \approx 0.133$. This means that approximately 13.3% of the variance in job burnout among these principals can be statistically accounted for by variations in their level of administrative empowerment. While this is not a large percentage, it still represents a meaningful amount of variance that can be attributed to empowerment.

• This indicates an inverse relationship, meaning that as the level of administrative empowerment increases, the level of job burnout decreases, and vice versa.
• Administrative empowerment plays a significant role in reducing job burnout among female principals in Jubail Governorate. Empowerment fosters independence, self-confidence, job satisfaction, and psychological well-being, which accounts for this. Principals who feel empowered experience a sense of responsibility, altruism, and accomplishment, as well as a belief in their ability to perform their duties. Additionally, their involvement in decision-making and influence over outcomes can reduce stress, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, thereby mitigating job burnout.
• These findings align with previous research, such as Al-Za'eebir (2017) study, which demonstrated a positive relationship between empowerment and achievement motivation among secondary school principals in Saudi Arabia, and Al-Ahmari (2020) study, which highlighted the role of empowerment in improving the performance of female secondary school principals and educational supervisors in Khamis Mushait. Rivera and Ibarra (2020) study also found a significant relationship between empowerment and school safety, system, task, and job accomplishment among elementary school principals in the Philippines.

Based on the study findings, the researcher recommends the following actions:

1 **Increasing the level of administrative empowerment among female principals in public schools in Jubail to a very high level through**:
o Providing financial and moral incentives and rewarding female principals to increase their sense of job satisfaction.
o Increasing professional development programs for female principals and activating experience-sharing programs.

o Expanding the authorities granted to female principals and increasing their participation in decision-making.

2 **Reducing the level of job burnout among female principals in public schools in Jubail to a low level through**:

o Providing female principals with reports on their achievements and encouraging them to improve by providing developmental feedback and exemplary models to follow.

o Providing a safe and comfortable school environment to reduce emotional stress and psychological tension among female principals and increasing the number of administrative staff to assist female principals in reducing their workload.

o Improving female principals' feelings toward their work by holding meetings and discussion groups where female principals have the opportunity to express their needs and the challenges they face at work and organizing guidance workshops to help female principals interact positively and communicate effectively with the professional community.

3 **Recognizing the importance of empowerment and its role in reducing job burnout by**:

o Raising awareness of empowerment by conducting workshops on empowerment skills for educational leaders.

o Developing systems and procedures to achieve greater empowerment in public schools.

Potential limitations

1 Sample Specificity: The focus on female public school principals in Jubail Governorate inherently limits the generalizability to other contexts.

2 Cross-Sectional Design (if applicable): If the study employed a cross-sectional design, it can only establish associations and not causality between administrative empowerment and job burnout. Longitudinal studies would be needed to infer causal relationships.

3 Self-Reported Data: Reliance on self-reported questionnaires for measuring both administrative empowerment and job burnout might be subject to common method variance and social desirability bias.

4 Cultural and Contextual Factors: The specific cultural and organizational context of Jubail Governorate might influence the perceptions and experiences of administrative empowerment and job burnout.

5 While the findings provide valuable insights into this particular cohort, caution should be exercised when generalizing these results more broadly.

6 We suggest that future research could replicate this study with larger and more diverse samples across different geographical locations to enhance generalizability.

Conclusion

Administrative empowerment includes several critical dimensions, such as delegation of authority, participation in decision-making, providing necessary resources, and developing employee skills. Studies should highlight these dimensions separately, and analyze how each dimension affects job burnout.

For example, studies can examine the impact of delegation of authority on employees' sense of control and responsibility, and how this contributes to reducing burnout. The impact of providing training and development on employees' self-confidence, and how this affects burnout levels, can also be analyzed.

In conclusion, a more elaborate evaluation of the conclusions and recommendations should emphasize the grounding of the findings within relevant theoretical frameworks, highlight the specific theoretical contributions made to our understanding of empowerment and burnout, and discuss the broader implications for theory development, future research directions, and practical applications in educational settings.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval were not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent from the participants was not required to participate in this study in accordance with the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

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The author(s) declare that no Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

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