RGC Ref. No.:
UGC/FDS14/B05/19
(please insert ref. above)

RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL
COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES FOR
THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (FDS)

Completion Report
(for completed projects only)

Submission Deadlines:	*1. Auditor's report with unspent balance, if any: within **six** months of the approved project completion date.*
	*2. Completion report: within **12** months of the approved project completion date.*

Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)

1.   Project Title

Leading through Paradox: A Dual-Component Approach of Control-Autonomy Paradox

2.   Investigator(s) and Academic Department(s) / Unit(s) Involved

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	Eko LIAO/Associate Professor	Department of Management, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong
Co-Investigator(s)	Chun HUI/Professor	School of Business, The Hong Kong University
Others		

3.   Project Duration

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval *(must be quoted)*
Project Start Date	2020.04.01		
Project Completion Date	2022.03.31	2023.03.31	2022.05.23
Duration *(in month)*	24	36	2022.05.23
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	2022.12.31	2024.03.31	2022.05.23

4.4 Please attach photo(s) of acknowledgement of RGC-funded facilities / equipment.
N/A

Part B: The Final Report

5.   Project Objectives

5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. Investigate the control-autonomy paradox encountered by organizational leaders.
2. Establish a theoretical framework that addresses both the "conflicting" and the "complementary" characteristics of leaders' needs for control and employee autonomy.
3. Explore negative effects of poorly managed control-autonomy paradox.
4. Develop theory-driven mechanisms that leaders can adopt to effectively address control and autonomy simultaneously, and in turn promote employee work effectiveness.
5. Explore theoretical implications of understanding the leadership paradox and seek solutions toward balancing the two poles in a paradox.
6. Identify and delineate practical implications of understanding the challenges of managing leadership paradox, particularly in the greater China area (e.g., Hong Kong).

5.2 Revised objectives

Date of approval from the RGC: N/A

Reasons for the change: N/A

1.

2.

3. ....

5.3 Realisation of the objectives
(Maximum 1 page; please state how and to what extent the project objectives have been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)

For the project on leadership paradox and its influence in the workplace, a series of research activities were performed. Firstly, we conducted a comprehensive literature search and review to gain a deeper understanding of existing theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, and under-addressed research questions regarding potential paradoxical leadership situations. During this process, we identified that leader vision, with its emphasis on higher-level guidance through a visionary image of desired future states, as well as its implicit

assumption of specifications in guiding employees' operational practices, is closely relevant to the leadership paradox in this research. Consequently, we conducted a systematic review on this topic to further comprehend the theoretical frameworks and the influence of leader vision on employees and other workplace outcomes, especially considering its high-level abstract guidance and inherent motivating nature. From the results, we gained a better understanding of the various manifestations that the leadership paradox may have in the workplace.

Secondly, to understand the leadership paradox in real-life organizational contexts, particularly for companies in Hong Kong, we conducted three case studies. These case studies involved a small-sized family business, an international firm in the hotel and tourism industry, and a service provider in the logistics industry, respectively. We investigated the managerial dilemmas and challenges that managers and leaders across different organizational levels faced in these organizations, as well as how they effectively dealt with difficulties or learned lessons throughout the process. Through our findings, we gained further insights into the practicalities of managing the balance between control and autonomy for leaders, especially during difficult times such as organizational changes or uncertain external environments.

Thirdly, building on the theoretical frameworks and findings from previous research activities, we conducted a second round of case studies to further investigate the leadership paradox. Specifically, we explored leadership and managerial paradox in organizational practices, such as corporate social responsibility, especially when facing challenging external environments like a global pandemic. We collected observational and interview data from companies across different industries, including chain restaurants, interior design firms, and small-scale cafés, to understand the paradoxical situations that leaders face. Our findings provided recommendations for organizational leaders to effectively leverage resources for beneficial outcomes.

Lastly, to gain an understanding of employees' experiences and perspectives, we conducted an empirical study on the paradox between expectations and realities. We investigated how this paradoxical situation relates to employees' work experiences and outcomes, such as work passion. Using a within-person approach, we collected empirical data from employees with various backgrounds. Through latent growth modeling tests, our findings suggested a dynamic relationship between expectations and realities, where unmet expectations influenced the initial status and subsequent changes in employees' work experiences.

By incorporating the theoretical frameworks and findings from all these research activities, we have gained an in-depth understanding of the various aspects of leadership paradox in different organizational practices. Additionally, we have made contributions to the literature on leadership paradox and other paradoxical situations in the workplace.

5.4   Summary of objectives addressed to date

Objectives *(as per 5.1/5.2 above)*	Addressed *(please tick)*	Percentage Achieved *(please estimate)*
1. Investigate the control-autonomy paradox encountered by organizational leaders.	✓	100%
2. Establish a theoretical framework that addresses both the "conflicting" and the "complementary" characteristics of leaders' needs for control and employee autonomy.	✓	100%

3. Explore negative effects of poorly managed control-autonomy paradox.	✓	100%
4. Develop theory-driven mechanisms that leaders can adopt to effectively address control and autonomy simultaneously, and in turn promote employee work effectiveness.	✓	100%
5. Explore theoretical implications of understanding the leadership paradox and seek solutions toward balancing the two poles in a paradox.	✓	100%

6. Research Outcome

6.1 Major findings and research outcome
(Maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)

There are several major findings generated from this project. We found that organizational members, such as leaders, managers, and employees, encounter paradoxical situations in their organizations. Particularly during difficult times, such as periods of uncertainty or external challenges, leaders face the control-autonomy paradox. On one hand, leaders need to ensure the direction of employee work practices for favorable work outcomes by practicing control at higher levels (e.g., vision as a soft control). On the other hand, leaders should also allow autonomy at the operational level, empowering employees with decision-making power. To achieve this, leaders must strike a balance between maintaining control over overall directions and allowing autonomy for employee work experiences. In addition to recognizing the paradox for leaders, we also identified other paradoxes faced by organizational leaders, such as the need to achieve sustainability in terms of firm outcomes while also fulfilling a wider range of stakeholder expectations, including social responsibility. While our project focuses on employees' experiences as well, our findings also indicate how the interplay between expectations and organizational realities influences employee attitudes and experiences.

From the abovementioned research activities, we have the following research outcomes:

- Two conference presentations to share our research findings with fellow researchers (The Southeast Asia Chapter of the Academy of International Business (AIBSEAR), and Academy of Management Annual Conference).
- Two book chapters published for the case study on leadership paradox in organizations.
- An empirical study was completed and published.
- A research paper was completed and is now under review.
- Two postgraduate students' dissertations were supervised with related topics.

6.2 Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action
(Maximum half a page)

- We will work on the research paper once we receive feedback from the journal and aim at a publication.

- Based on the findings of this project, the PI will explore opportunities in conducting further research projects related to the topics of leadership paradox and organizational paradoxical situations.

7. Layman's Summary

(Describe <u>in layman's language</u> the nature, significance and value of the research project, in no more than 200 words)

   In this project, we investigated the paradoxes in organizations, particularly for key members such as leaders and employees. For organizational leaders and managers, their role in organizations inherently involves dealing with various paradoxical situations and demands that require effective management. Specifically, the control-autonomy paradox, which refers to the leader's need to address conflicting yet complementary control and autonomy simultaneously, is often overlooked but important for leaders in the contemporary organizational environment. This paradox is crucial for addressing both performance unity and employee work experience. We suggest that organizational leaders need to practice control by providing directions for employees' work outcomes, while also allowing them to make decisions in operational details. Additionally, employees who face and deal with paradoxical situations at work are likely to be influenced in their work experiences. Therefore, organizations are advised to provide training for their leaders in dealing with paradoxes at work. There are various other paradoxes that leaders need to leverage. Leaders should strive for effective and systematic ways to manage these paradoxes in order to maximize the synergy effect and improve workplace functionality.

Part C: Research Output

8. Peer-Reviewed Journal Publication(s) Arising <u>Directly</u> From This Research Project
(Please attach a copy of the publication and/or the letter of acceptance if not yet submitted in the previous progress report(s). All listed publications must acknowledge RGC's funding support by quoting the specific grant reference.)

| The Latest Status of Publications | | | | Author(s) *(denote the corresponding author with an asterisk*)* | Title and Journal / Book *(with the volume, pages and other necessary publishing details specified)* | Submitted to RGC *(indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)* | Attached to this Report *(Yes or No)* | Acknowledged the Support of RGC *(Yes or No)* | Accessible from the Institutional Repository *(Yes or No)* |
Year of Publication	Year of Acceptance *(For paper accepted but not yet published)*	Under Review	Under Preparation *(optional)*						
NA	NA	Yes	NA	Eko Liao*, Chun Hui, & Xudong Ke	Visioning to Transform: A Systematic Review of Leader Vision Research from a Motivational Perspective *Currently under review*	No	Yes (Abstract, Appendix 1)	Yes	No
2022	NA	NA	NA	Eko Liao*, Yuen Shan Noel Wong, & Hao Kong	Inherent or context-dependent? Untangling the dynamic nature of work passion from a latent growth modeling approach in Journal of Vocational Behavior (Volume 138, 2022)	No	Yes (Appendix 2)	Yes	Yes https://researchdb hsu.edu hk/view/publication/202200143 https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001879122000811

9. Recognized International Conference(s) In Which Paper(s) Related To This Research Project Was / Were Delivered
(Please attach a copy of each conference abstract)

Month / Year / Place	Title	Conference Name	Submitted to RGC *(indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)*	Attached to this Report *(Yes or No)*	Acknowledged the Support of RGC *(Yes or No)*	Accessible from the Institutional Repository *(Yes or No)*
12/2020/ Hong Kong	Paradoxical leadership and employee work outcomes: an empirical investigation	The Southeast Asia Chapter of the Academy of International Business (AIBSEAR)	Yes (2021)	Yes (Appendix 3)	Yes	No
08/2021/ virtual conference	Disentangling the Dynamic Nature of Work Passion: A Latent Growth Modeling Approach	Academy of Management Annual Conference	No	Yes (Appendix 4)	Yes	Yes https://research.hsu.edu.hk/publications/conference-presentations/

10. Whether Research Experience And New Knowledge Has Been Transferred / Has Contributed To Teaching And Learning
(Please elaborate)

The PI incorporated the topic of leadership paradox in teaching activities. For example, in one postgraduate level course, the topic was introduced to students, and they were encouraged to discuss relevant discussion questions.

11. Student(s) Trained
(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis)

Appendices 5 and 6

Name	Degree Registered for	Date of Registration	Date of Thesis Submission / Graduation
███████████	MSc in Entrepreneurial Management	September 2019	August 17, 2020
███████████	MSc in Entrepreneurial Management	September 2019	August 17, 2020

12. Other Impact

(e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, teaching enhancement, etc.)

1. Book chapter: Liao, E. Y., Wang, Amy, Y., & Zhang, Q. (2021). To Control or To Delegate? *Effective Leadership in Challenging Times. Strategic Management During a Pandemic*. Edited By Vikas Kumar, Gaurav Gupta. Routledge. (Appendix 7)
2. Book chapter: Wang, A. Y., Zhang, C. Q., & Liao, E. Y. (2021). The Responsibility Paradox: Is CSR Truly Beneficial During the Global Pandemic? In V. Kumar, & G. Malhotra (Ed.), *Stakeholder Strategies for Reducing the Impact of Global Health Crises* (pp. 150-168). IGI Global. (Appendix 8)

13. Statistics on Research Outputs

	Peer-reviewed Journal Publications	Conference Papers	Scholarly Books, Monographs and Chapters	Patents Awarded	Other Research Outputs (please specify)	
No. of outputs arising directly from this research project	2 (1 under review)	2	2	0	Type	No.
					Postgraduate student dissertation	2

14. Public Access Of Completion Report

(Please specify the information, if any, that cannot be provided for public access and give the reasons.)

Information that Cannot Be Provided for Public Access	Reasons
NA	NA