

# COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP STYLE AMONG ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS OF TWO FACULTIES AT INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study investigated perceptions about collaborative leadership style via a study among administrative assistants of the faculty of Economics and Management Sciences and Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia. Precisely, the study examined their perceptions, collective decision making and differences between faculties under study.

**Methodology:** A survey method was employed to collect the data. The data were analyzed using t-test and descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). A total of 44 administrative assistants were sampled through a self-administered questionnaire from two faculties, namely Economics and Management Sciences (KENMS) and Faculty of Knowledge and Human Sciences (IRKHS) at International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

**Main findings:** The results of the analysis indicated that perceptions of administrative assistants were positive towards a collaborative leadership style. The study also found statistically significant differences between administrative assistants of KEMNS and IRKHS. It was found that IRKHS administrative assistant was more elicited to activities of collaborative leadership than their counterparts. Overall, the study revealed that administrative assistants were of the view that applying a collaborative leadership style will facilitate effective decision making in their respective faculties.

**Implications/Applications:** This study is useful for administrative assistants in institutions of higher learning to adopt and adapt to understanding a clear collaborative leadership concept. Therefore, collaboration among staff will be recognized to develop a general perception in the educational institution.

**Novelty/Originality:** In this research collaborative leadership style had been studied among administrative assistants critically. Permission was granted by the Dean of post-graduate studies from the *kulliyah* of Education (IIUM).

**Keywords:** *Collaborative Leadership Style, Administrative Assistants, Concept of Leadership Communication, Collaborative Educational Leadership.*

## INTRODUCTION

A collaborative leadership style is another way of looking into shared decisions (DuBrin, 2015; Hoy & Miskel, 1991). Joint decisions in an organization are very crucial effort which indicates the role of the stakeholders in an organization or institution. As the decision is decided to contribute to the success of a collaborative enterprise, it is viewed as a collaborative leadership style (Rubin, 2009).

The term 'collaboration' is usually used as work jointly undertaken on an activity or project. The participation of every side is considered essential to carry out an activity or project. It is, therefore, a process or method to guide a diverse group of people in finding solutions to complex problems that affect them all (Brooks, 2018; Vroom, 2003). Collaborative leadership style is also known as shared decision making where decision making has taken on a peculiar identity of involving subordinates in the decision-making process. This may improve the quality and acceptance of decisions when participation fits the constraint of the situation.

This type of shared model of decision making is developed within the suggestions made by subordinates who are involved in making decisions that are made in the organization. This model describes not only when subordinates should be involved, but also the appropriate role of the administration which depends on the decisional situations.

The study conducted by Bellibasand Liu (2018) and Rubin, Bartels,&Bommer. (2002) indicated that some factors such as job satisfaction, decision making, job commitment are associated with principals and academic staff collaborative decision making and their involvement in the leadership style of the organization.

However, no study has been carried out on the collaborative leadership style of administrative assistants at the International Islamic University, Malaysia. Therefore, this study is timely in making an analysis of the administrative assistants in two selected faculties university.

The effort of each one partaking in a collaborative leadership style should not be overlooked in any educational sector. When an effort is recognized in an organization, the participant should be given strong consideration, especially in a positive way. Administrative assistant involvement in collaboration among the top management in the organization will give a different outcome(Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). Sometimes the implementation of levels in the organization through social communication by engaging assistants to feel reluctant to disagree with the idea been presented. It is appropriate

to foster a desire for consensus at the cost of a different opinion towards nurturing competition for managerial favor rather than enforcing ideas upon lower staff ([Bower & Paine, 2017](#)).

According to [Torrance \(1959\)](#) and [Stamarski and Hing \(2015\)](#), lower rank cluster associates are often ignored, even when they had correct explanations more frequently than higher status associates of the group. This call to the attention of the impending study to conceive this neglect of lower status staff in decision making as an obstacle to group cohesiveness that should be tackled in any organization. Meanwhile, the introduction of the hierarchy is not meant to favor a particular level but to satisfy the need of each level which in turn complements subsequent levels ([D'Otenzio, 2012](#); [Lunenborg, 2004](#)).

Based on the above premise, the problem of ignoring lower status staff in terms of collaboration with administrators is a general phenomenon in organizations and institutions all over the world. Consequently, subordinates may feel that they are being deprived of their rights, yet their participation would be crucial to the attainment of organizational objectives. The way lower status staff feel about their participation in the stewardship of organizations and the consequent implications of group cohesiveness then become matters of concern to all stakeholders in the organization or institution. They are likely to stonewall the higher status administrators, or the intended policies handed down to them for implementation. They feel strongly that they ought to have been consulted or involved in taking such a decision. Therefore, this research investigated, established and prescribed the collaborative leadership style among administrative assistants.

### Theoretical Framework

The infusion of shared leadership theory into institutional administration, management and organization has prompted a focus on the critical view of the employees' or subordinates' perceptions about the relevance and indispensability of collaboration in realizing institutional goals ([Jonassen, 2015](#); [Belzowski et al., 2013](#); [Rosi, 1997](#)). Educators and researchers alike agree that the effectiveness of institutional and organizational goals requires collaborative efforts on the part of the leaders and their subordinates if the organization or institution is to live up to its intended objectives ([Conger, 2003](#); [Lumsden, 2004](#); [Aamodt, 2012](#); [Kellerman, 2018](#)).

Several conditions are however necessary for the development of cohesiveness and opportunities for collaboration between the leaders and the teams ([Jonassen, 2015](#)). A necessary point of departure here is communication which will also aid other aspects like proper consultation, proper evaluation, task orientation, transaction orientation, democratic processes and shared ethics for the common good of the organization or institution.

Related to the above, the study equally commands adequate need for collaboration in the shape of communication, interaction, as well as consultation between the administration and the subordinates if the effectiveness of institutional goals and outcomes is to be fully realized. All these though are fully rooted within the way the subordinates perceive the idea of collaboration and cohesiveness within the institution or organization; whether it can usher in a positive aspect and therefore transform performance thereof.

Precisely put, therefore, the study is underpinned by a shared leadership theory which considers all members of the organization ([Wu & Cormican, 2016](#)). Then institutions as interdependent active participants in the process of leadership rather than having distinct differences between leaders and followers since leadership is a crucial social process taking place between people, yet people are equal social beings.

### Objectives

1. To determine the perceptions of the administrative assistants on a collaborative leadership style.
2. To identify the difference between the perception of the administrative assistants at the KEMS and faculty of IRKHS in a collaborative leadership style.
3. To investigate the administrative assistants' participation in a collaborative leadership style on effective decision making.

### Research questions

1. What are the perceptions of the administrative assistants on a collaborative leadership style?
2. Is there any significant difference between the perception of the administrative assistants at the KEMS and faculty of IRKHS in a collaborative leadership style?
3. To what extent do the administrative assistants' participate in a collaborative leadership style on effective decision making?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Concept of leadership

The idea of leadership has been undertaken within several disciplines, each of which contributed its own distinctive improvements to the subject ([Huang, 2013](#)). These disciplinary perspectives, from history and organizational behavior,

have helped to yield a rich and compound theoretical image of leadership. In the late twentieth century, within Western developed countries, an increasingly important cultural value is 'gender' and we may expect the idea of leadership to be subject to its influence. A historical framework of twentieth-century leadership ideas provides a useful entry to the subject ([Amanchukwu et al., 2015](#); [Gunter, 2001](#)).

Leadership is defined as the procedure of encouraging a group of persons in some direction through a furnished nonintimidating means ([Herbst, 2014](#); [Maxwell \(1998\)](#) meanwhile rightly asserts that leadership is not a purpose of control or situation, but of inspiration. The importance of leadership in safeguarding supportable school improvement has also been dully established in research and practice, subsequently, it is attractive increasingly obvious that the focus on student learning is a central element of the management mandate ([Ali, 2012](#)).

Leadership also connotes influencing parents, educators, and students to identify, comprehend and find answers to the problems that could hinder progress ([Okorogi et al., 2014](#); [Heifetz, 1994](#)). Educational leaders, therefore, need to build trust with investors because even though supremacy structures such as cooperative decision making and site-based management can bring the insights of more individuals to solve the multifaceted difficulties of schooling, they depend on trust ([Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015](#)).

Leaders need trust to cope with the stress of changing expectations and the demands of accountability being anticipated from them. Subordinates need trust to demonstrate creative endeavors with the organizational environmental levels, in this case, the faculty has to access the opportunities made available to them ([Abbas & Asghar, 2010](#)). Leaders, therefore, need to foster trust within each of the constituencies of their faculties for them to function intelligently and diligently ([Hyman-Shurland, 2016](#)).

According to [Fairholm \(1994\)](#), leaders should not command excellence; rather they build excellence by example. Excellence is 'being all you can be' in the limits of obligation what is right for your sector. To prevail in excellence you must first be a leader of good charisma. A leader should, in the process, be an example and become a responsible person to all individuals in the organization.

Without trust, communication becomes constrained and distorted, thus making problems more difficult to resolve. As common belief looms that school leaders work to build a common vision and foster acceptable group goals, but without trust, these leaders do not inspire their constituencies to go beyond minimum requirements which are needed and expected of a leader ([Downe et al., 2015](#); [Duignan & Macpherson, 1992](#)).

Leaders should be agents of learning who enrich the organization on management despite disrupting social, political and economic forces ([McCollum, 2012](#)). Leaders must commit to fair and ethical treatment of all subordinates, valuing diverse needs and their different views in exemplary leadership styles ([Othman & Abdul Rahman, 2014](#)).

Leaders should, by their very position, be public-constructors in their abilities and sections and beyond. Moreover, they must encourage to make learning a public worth and capacity, not just a separate motion ([Pyrko et al., 2017](#)). Leaders should be extremely dedicated to serving shape education and communities in which expert expansion is strong and external investors like religious and social service organizations support, learn and work with the sector.

The dean, deputy dean, head of the department and program coordinator, are not mere positions to occupy within colleges, universities, higher education institutions, and vocational colleges, but one to apply and discover several occupation path skills, information deed experiences to articulate a vision of excellence for faculties and departments ([Al-Sawai, 2013](#)). Educational leaders are accountable for the interrelationship between society and the institution. They must develop persons, a working atmosphere, and good communication inside the educational sectors. A leader should comprehend the pounded ways to develop responsiveness of what is going on both internally and externally of the administrative public ([Goncalves, 2013](#)).

Leaders who have understood the ability to synthesize are competent at sorting out and making the wisdom of a large sum of information, detecting what is significant and putting this knowledge together to reach influential and often demonstrate new deductions ([Selart, 2010](#)). Leaders who have grasped methods of innovation can combine the elements that are known in new ways to resolve the complications ([Knudson, 2014](#)). Leaders who have learned administrative measures are more accomplished to institutively identify ways of classifying what is essential, for considerate what makes a situation run or work in a convincing way and figuring out what to do to progress the situation. These qualities can lead to a new phenomenon of how the ecosphere of education works and how to function effectively ([Linda, 2003](#)). [Gardner \(1986\)](#) believes that leadership should be of good merits at dealing with responsibilities in the organization. He added that to keep a school consecutively parse those charismatic merits must prevail. These merits serve as representations, that enhance students with standards.

### Who is a Collaborative Leader?

According to [Pankake and Abrego \(2017\)](#) collaboration is the means by which leaders use their relationship with others to influence working towards a shared goal. Given the need to unlock the capacity of everyone in the organization, interest in collaborative leadership is growing; meanwhile, the influence of leadership in an organization is very crucial

when dealing with subordinates. A collaborative leader, therefore, is a person who agrees to take-responsibility for any successful goal of the organization.

If the structure of acceptance of the collaborative process is accepted, this will promote and safeguard collaborative leadership. This collaboration does not stop here but it is a continuous process that the leaders have no personal interest in a collaborative decision. However, they are proactive problem seekers. They tend to be good monitors and good listeners to the collaborative decision or collaborative plan. Furthermore, a collaborative leader commits to the future of the organization ([Clark, 2005](#)).

### **Collaborative Leadership Style**

This concept of leadership is not a new leadership style, perhaps people practice this in a different way. It may be directing, coaching, supporting, or delegating types ([Mwai, 2011](#)). In this context, we tend to use supporting the subordinates to agree on issues in a given organization. What is meant by the organization here is the institution and university.

Collaborative leaders can recognize the impact of their creative behavior on others and adjust accordingly to the atmosphere of the organization ([Wepner & Hopkins, 2011](#)). Collaborative leadership style is the way the administrators give supportive collaboration by creating room for listening, praising, asking for input, giving feedback to carry out agreed issues to the certain goal of achievements ([Rubin, 2009](#)).

### **Partnership**

The fundamental of a partnership should be recognized when collaboration exists as a tool that helps the collaborative leader and the subordinates. According to [David and Alex \(2009\)](#), “a partnership is not a static relationship, but a journey, made up of distinct stages covering different terrain” (p.34). This stage is the first before an agreement is established. A collaborative leader will be part of the decision when the collaboration in the organization is given priority. The aim of both parties is very important in considering the role of collaboration and partnership because both parties are aiming at the same goal.

The partnership is always referred to as business partners but what is meant here is the recognition of collaborative leaders and the subordinates to work together to a joint goal. According to [Stragich \(2006\)](#), the vision of collaborative partnership has become a reality. Competition is now giving way to collaborative partnerships that provide greater long-term mutual benefits for everyone in the organization.

### **Coordination**

A collaborative leadership style is a method that coordinates creates a network of operations in a systematic way within an organization. The organization is required to have this kind of process when dealing with different types of people making the same action towards a goal ([Christian, 2016](#)). The institution or organization must see what role is played by the collaborative leader and the subordinates. This method is highly needed by both sides to achieve an effective outcome.

It is known that the essence of collaboration in any given school, institution, organization, society, or community is a successful goal. This goal may be decided on a certain issue or success of a particular expectation but these differences in people are expected to have an influence. An element of the collaborative leadership style should be given special consideration ([Rubin et al., 2002](#)).

### **Cooperation**

According to [Rubin \(2009\)](#) “a decision to cooperate is an agreement to a shared purpose” (p.14). The organization cannot do without cooperation; a collaborative leader seeks the knowledge of his subordinates when a decision or planning is going to commence. The purpose of this action is that the leader does not enforce upon anybody an action in the organization. Thus, he tries to seek cooperation, which is mutual support from others. This issue is crucial in an organization because the leader here, in the real sense, is a seeker of collaboration.

The downfall of any organization starts with its lack of cooperation. Mutual respect is a bond of both a collaborative leader and his subordinates ([Daskal, 2017](#)). This implies that if a collaborative leader wants to succeed, he/she has to cooperate with other members in the organization as far as the goal and objective are aimed.

### **Communication**

Communication is the essence of institutional management. The process that links persons to the cluster inside the organization. Hence, it refers to the extent to which information flows freely and without distortion, vertically and horizontally within the organization ([William & Paula, 2009](#)). A collaborative leadership style needs strong communication in the organization so as to have a central flow of interaction in its decision or plan for the outcome of the students ([DuBrin, 2015](#)). According to [Bernard \(1938\)](#) communication inhabits a fundamental place in the organization because the erection, breadth, and the room of the organization are totally determined by interaction methods” (p.19). [Katz and Kahn \(1978\)](#) have also concluded that communication is the essence of organizations.



As a result, a collaborative leadership style needs a flow of communication so as to match the task with the decision. A task cannot be accomplished, objectives cannot be met, and decisions cannot be implemented without adequate communication in the organization so the collaborative leader's essence as a leader in the organization is to have a better picture of communication. The communication process has to be clear and planned because it involves the exchange of ideas between the sender and the receiver.

In a school, the process of communication is a general phenomenon that a collaborative leader and the subordinates have in common to bring together a clear decision for the improvement of the students. Perhaps the exchange of information is still there between the sender and the receiver in the context of the meaning of communication in an organization. In this sense, the ultimate outcome will impact the students by the time the collaborative decision has been made in the organization.

### **Collaborative Leadership Style and other Leadership Styles**

Leadership has in existence been since the creation of human beings. The perception of collaborative leadership style and other types of leadership may not be strange because each type occupies the styles its uses in its applications as far as the organization is concerned ([Vandewaerde et al., 2011](#)). The collaborative leadership style seeks total interaction and relationships among the members in an organization to achieve a remarkable goal. At this moment this leadership does not seek voluntary support as in participative leadership ([Sinani, 2016](#)). The essence here is to have the members be aware that their impact is not just mere participation. The main aim of this leadership is to actualize a mutual leadership to attain a goal in the organization or institution. Regardless, collaboration can impact other kinds of leadership. However, these leadership kinds try to see the organization in different forms. Therefore, the categories of leadership are as follows:

#### **Participative Leadership**

Alternatively called 'group', 'shared' or 'teacher' leadership, it stresses on the decision-making process of the group. Decision-making was a means for teachers to lead in the faculty and beyond the organizations ([Sinani, 2016](#); [Gronn, 1999](#)). One of the main benefits is that participative leadership gives room for other leaders to develop the organization later. An effective participative leadership allows the talents and skills of the entire team member to be utilized in arriving at decisions and taking the course of action.

#### **Instructional Leadership**

Instructional leadership includes "those actions that a principal takes, or delegates to others, to promote growth in student learning" ([Gunter, 2001, p. 20](#)). The term instructional leadership' gives a clear picture of the primary role of the administrator in the quest for excellence in management ([Katz, 2009](#)). The creation of ideas and intellectual precedents will help to make a strong school principal. Leaders are responsible for educational achievements; he or she makes an instructional quality top priority in the organization.

#### **Collaborative Educational Leadership**

"Education is a process towards which we all contribute. Organizations are buildings, simply places where the process of education occurs" ([Rubin, 2009](#)). Educational leadership is measured as part of overall management and settles with the elements in wide-ranging collaborative leadership, which confines the style of activities in the organization. The mutual basics between them are known as elements of management which are preparation, establishing, guiding and overseeing.

According to [Rubin \(2009\)](#), effective educational leaders are not simply school administrators (site-based managers and regulators); educational leaders are community-wide advocates, mentors, and conveners. Collaborative educational leadership aims at organizing educational institutions, supervising and structuring them to work on clear and definite bases and principles in order to achieve its aims in educating the entire generation and the subsequent ones ([Jubran, 2002](#)).

According to [English \(2005\)](#) and [Gray \(1989\)](#), "a collaborative educational leadership is to create democratic communities in which power is shared and there is a mutual belief in working together for the common good" (p.45). The process of managing and ruling educational procedures is certain in communities according to the ideology, aims, and objectives of education. Furthermore, it involves the process of organizing efforts, coordinating activities and management of personnel engaged in collaborative educational processes in order to ensure the success of educational objectives ([Burns, 1978](#)).

#### **Research Hypothesis**

This research adopted the null hypothesis that stated: There is no relationship between administrative assistants in the Faculties of Economics and Management Sciences and the Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences.

## Research Design

This study uses a survey method on administrative assistants in the Faculties of Economics and Management Sciences and the Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences. Data is collected to establish the perceptions of administrative assistants on a collaborative leadership style. In this study, the researcher selects a sample of respondents and administers a questionnaire to collect data and information and then the data is analyzed to answer the research questions. The variable involved in this research was a collaborative leadership style and decision making.

## Sampling and Procedure

This study employs a convenience sampling approach. The total sample of 53 administrative assistants (secretarial and operational) from the Faculties of Economics and Management Sciences and Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences at IIUM was considered. These are the people that have the same characteristics, level of education and administrative work experience (Creswell, 2008). The questionnaire was distributed to the targeted group based on availability (Creswell, 2008), due to the tight schedule of the group. The researcher distributed 53 questionnaires to the respondents. The questionnaires are distributed to the subjects during their free time. The respondents were asked to fill out the questionnaires immediately after distributing them or to help the questionnaires and return them the next day. The questionnaires were given to them at their convenient time to allow them to fill it properly. Out of 53 questionnaires distributed, only 44 questionnaires are returned and therefore analyzed. The equivalent percentage is (83%) (100%). The questionnaire used in this research was self-constructed by the researcher based on collaborative leadership style and decision making based on shared leadership theory. The face and content validity were conducted by giving expertise on leadership and management to check on the items that consisted of 19 items, and open-ended questions. A pilot test was conducted on a separate sample of 30 respondents from other faculty in the university (IIUM). The result of the reliability analysis conducted reveals an overall alpha .79.

## DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher undertook to establish the administrative assistants' perceptions about the collaborative leadership style in their respective faculties. This set the apparatus for understanding and conceptualizing what administrative assistants hold as beliefs regarding the collaborative leadership style as well as its perceived indispensability.

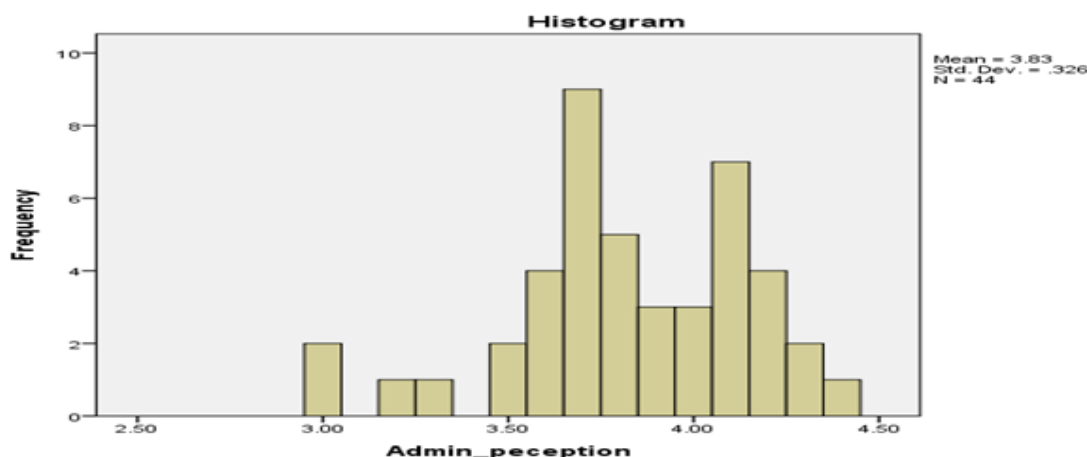
**Table 1:** Perception of administrative assistants towards a collaborative leadership style

NO.	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	I feel that a collaborative leadership style helps the organization to carry out its duties effectively.	-	-	13 29.5	20 45.5	11 25.0
2	Collaborative leadership style is important when the organization is having issues to be tabled for discussion.	-	-	11 25.0	20 45.5	13 29.5
3	I feel that a collaborative leadership style supports proceedings in meetings with the administrators	-	-	14 31.8	21 47.7	9 20.5
4	A collaborative leadership style is essential in promoting cooperation among the staff in the faculty.	-	-	15 34.1	19 43.2	10 22.7
5	The collaborative leadership style coordinates leaders towards the achievement of the organizational vision.	-	-	14 31.8	22 50.0	8 18.2
6	Collaborative leadership style is relevant in realizing Students' academic excellence.	-	-	22 50.1	17 38.5	5 11.4
7	Collaborative leadership style helps administrators in achieving organizational goals.	-	-	15 34.1	24 54.5	5 11.4
8	Collaborative leadership style helps in perceiving problems from different angles before proceeding with decisions.	-	-	16 36.4	21 47.7	7 15.9
9	A collaborative leadership style helps to carry out a result during meetings.	-	-	15 34.1	24 54.5	5 11.4
10	A collaborative leadership style helps to carry out a result during meetings.	-	1 2.3	20 45.5	17 38.6	6 13.6

Note: SD= strongly disagree, DA= disagree, N= neutral, A= agree and SA= strongly agree.

Source: Author, 2019

The upper values indicate the number of respondents and the lower values indicate the percent of those respondents.



**Figure 1: Administrative Perception about Collaboration**

**Source:** Author, 2019

In the overall analysis, the dashes found in the table and graph indicate that there are no respondents for items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 which indicate (strongly agree) and agree. However, for Item 10, at least one respondent chose (disagree) as his choice which was not found in the other items.

This table indicates the general perceptions of the administrative assistants on a collaborative leadership style in their respective faculties. Items 1-10 discuss how a collaborative leadership style was perceived by them. In order to simplify the discussion, the Likert scale was combined into three categories. The first category is SD= strongly disagree and DA= disagree, the second is N= neutral, and the third is A= agree and SA= strongly agree. The last item reveals that there is dissatisfaction with opportunities to present new ideas that can be used by other colleagues and the organization 1 (2.3%). Only one respondent disagreed, and this means that the idea was supported by the others. However, the neutral responses were 20 (45.5%); this is a huge amount that needs to be properly addressed. It is noticed from Table 1 that the neutral scale was chosen many times, and this may be as a result of the respondents not wanting to warrant himself into complicated issues during meetings.

Regarding collaborative leadership style helping the organization to carry out its duties effectively as the first item, it reveals that collaborative leadership helps the respondents in carrying out the duties with 45.5% of respondents agreeing, 25% strongly agreeing with the statement while 13 (29.5) were neutral. For Item 2, 11 (25.0%) chose to be neutral, 20 (45.5%) agreed and 13 (29.5) strongly agreed. For Item 3, respondents were neutral 14 (31.8%), 21 (47.7%), agreed while 9, (20.5) strongly agree. For Item 4, 15 (34.1 %) remained neutral, 19 (43.2%) agreed and, 10 (22.7%) strongly agree. For Item 5, 14 (31.8%) respondents neutral, 22 (50%) agreed, 8 (18.2%) strongly agree. For Item 6, 22 (50%) of the respondents were neutral, 17 (38.5%) agreed, and 5 (11.4%) strongly agreed. For Item 7, 15 (34.1%) were neutral, 24 (54.5%) agree, 5 (11.4) strongly agree. For Item 8, 16 (36.4%) were neutral, 21 (47.7 %) agreed, and 7 (15.9) strongly agreed. For Item 9, 15 (34, 1%) were neutral, 24 (54.5%) agreed, and 5 (11.4%) strongly agreed.

From the overall statistical analysis, it is found that the lowest frequency gathered from the respondents is presented by Item 6 which had 50.1% as neutral on the matter. This may be a consequence and experience of the administrative assistants in these respective faculties. On the other hand, 38.5% agreed and only 11.4% strongly agreed with the statement.

### **Test of significant difference between the administrative assistants' perceptions on collaborative leadership style between the two faculties**

The researcher undertook to examine whether there are significant differences in the administrative assistants' perceptions about the collaborative leadership style in their respective faculties. This would set the apparatus for understanding and conceptualizing what administrative assistants hold as beliefs regarding the collaborative leadership style in respect of their faculties.

T-test was performed to examine the differences between KENMS and IRKHS administrative assistants' perceptions about collaborative leadership style. T-test analysis shows that there were differences pertaining to the scores ( $t = 3.117$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ) of the two faculties. What is more, these results are statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.005$ ). These results indicate that there were statistically significant differences between the Faculties of KENMS and IRKHS in terms of collective collaboration among their administrators. The  $p$ -value reveals that these differences were statistically significant. These results suggest that IRKHS administrative assistants had more belief in collaborative leadership activities than their counterparts at KEMNS respectively.

**Table 2:** Administrative Assistants Perception on Collaborative Leadership Style

Variables	Group	N	M	SD	t	p
Administrative assistants of KENMS and IRKHS collaborative leadership style	KENMS	18	4.38	1.236	3.117	0.005
	IRKHS	26	3.84	1.879	-	-

Source: Author, 2019

In a nutshell, it is obvious that statistically significant difference which was the aim of this research question. This result indicates that administrative assistants in IRKHS viewed collaborative leadership style in a broader picture than their counterparts.

### Description of the collaborative leadership style's influence on effective decision making

This section considers the administrative assistants' own views about how collaborative leadership style influences the effectiveness of decision making within their respective faculties or organizations as well as a deliberation of issues in a meeting setting. For this study, a collaborative leadership style is herein being identified as a basic area or source of the determinants of effectiveness in decision making at the organizational or institutional level.

Table 3. shows a summary of the administrative assistant's views about the influence of collaborative leadership style on decision making effectiveness.

**Table 3:** Collaborative Leadership style

Impact of Collaborative leadership style on effective Decision making

No	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Sd	p
11.	I feel that a collaborative leadership style support decision making for an organization to be more reliable.	-	1 2.3(%)	20 45.5(%)	15 34.1(%)	8 18.2(%)	.80	.0001
12.	Subordinates should have a responsibility for decision making in order to realize a good outcome.	-	3 6.8(%)	16 36.4(%)	18 40.9(%)	7 15.9(%)	.83	.0001
13.	As subordinate's responsibility governs our daily routines to enable us to provide original outcomes for the organization.	-	1 2.3(%)	18 40.9(%)	18 40.9(%)	7 15.9(%)	.82	.0001
14.	Sufficient time should be given to come up with a decision.	-	1 2.3(%)	23 52.5(%)	13 29.5(%)	7 15.9(%)	.78	.0001
15.	Decision making in the organization is based on collaborative wisdom.	-	1 2.3(%)	24 54.5(%)	15 34.1(%)	4 9.1(%)	.69	.0001
16.	The quality of decision making is determined by the participation of participants rather than its frequency.	2 4.5(%)	3 6.8	20 45.5(%)	12 27(%)	6 13.6(%)	.96	.0001

Note: SD= strongly disagree, DA= disagree, N= neutral, A= agree and SA= strongly agree

Source: Author, 2019

These results shown in Table 3. indicate that respondents agree that decision making supports collaborative leadership style in these faculties because the Likert scale which was used earlier makes it easy to interpret these results. By agreeing and strongly agreeing, the results reveal a positive outcome of these items. For Item 11, 1 respondent (2.3%) disagreed, 20 (45.5%) remained neutral, 15 (34.1%) agreed, and 8 (18.2%) strongly agreed. For Item 12, 3 (6.8%) disagreed, 16 (36.4%) chose to be neutral, 18 (40.9%) agreed, and 7 (15.9%) strongly agreed. For Item 13, 1 (2.3%) disagreed, 18 (40.9%) remained neutral, 18 (40.9%) agreed, and 7 (15.9%) strongly agreed. For Item 14, 1 (2.3%) disagreed, 23 (52.5%) chose to be neutral, 13 (29.5%) agreed, and 7 (15.9%) strongly agreed. For Item 15, 1 (2.3%) disagreed, 24 (54.5%) remained neutral, 15 (34.1%) agreed, while 4 (9.1%) strongly agree. For Item 16, 2 (4.5%) strongly disagreed, 3 (6.8%) disagreed, 20 (45.5%) chose to be neutral, 12 (27.3%) agree, 6 (13.6%) strongly agreed. In the case of 'neutral' which reveals an alternative belief or view, it was basically reflective of respondents' indecisiveness or choice of preferring indifference in light of the questions asked as a way of avoiding jeopardy of position.

Overall, the study found that administrative assistants have positive beliefs about collaborative leadership style in their various faculties in terms of ushering ineffectiveness of decision making as well as cohesiveness in carrying out institutional or faculty tasks. It was also found that there is a statistically significant difference between KENMS and IRKHS administrative assistants' perceptions about the relevance and indispensability of collaborative leadership style. In addition, administrative assistants in both faculties believe in collaboration in terms of decision making to enhance their effectiveness and cohesiveness in decision making and implementation processes. Nonetheless, what contributed to



significant differences was believed to be the population of the respondents in KENMS which dully outweighed that of KIRKHS.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Three research questions were dully examined as reflected in the following analysis:

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of the administrative assistants on a collaborative leadership style?

The results of descriptive statistics employed on the perception of the administrative assistants on a collaborative leadership style found that their perceptions were positive towards a collaborative leadership style. Despite, some exhibiting seemingly neutral stands, what is crystal clear is that the positive beliefs outweighed the neutral perception on a levelled platform.

Research Question 2: Is there any significant difference between administrative assistants of KENMS and faculty of IRKHS in a collaborative leadership style?

The results of the t-test that was used to examine the significant difference between administrative assistants at KENMS and faculty of IRKHS in a collaborative leadership style found that there is a significant difference in collaborative leadership style. At IRKHS there is a stronger belief or perception about the practice of collaborative leadership style compared to KENMS. Meanwhile, the respondents from IRKHS were more than their counterparts in KENMS which may be the reason for their higher frequencies in terms of perceptions about collaborative leadership style.

Research Question 3: To what extent does administrative assistants' participation in collaborative leadership style facilitate effective decision making?

**Table 4:** Total Mean Score

Variables	Groups	N	Total mean score	Scale 1-5 (SD-SA)	Sample
Administrative assistants of KENMS and	KENMS	4.38			44
IRKHS participation in decision making	IRHKS	3.84			44
Total		8.22	8.22/5	=1.64	

**Source:** Author, 2019

This study found that administrative assistants are in support of the view that applying a collaborative leadership style will facilitate effective decision making in their respective faculties with the result of the individual mean. However, the analyses revealed that administrative assistants are not involved in decision making at their respective faculties and are below average (1.64). The expected Mean was (2.66) at a moderate level according to (Howell, 2014). Nevertheless, their stand on sufficient time given for collaboration in order to come up with effective decisions was quite neutral. Consequently, it is found that their position in applying collaborative wisdom in the organization was also neutral implying that they are either not well consulted or avoided the response for fear of jeopardizing their positions and relations with the top brass.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the study concluded that collaborative leadership style was well perceived and held in esteem by the administrative assistants in KENMS and IRKHS. Given the existence of a positive belief in collaboration, the study further affirmed that there is a courageous perception toward how they feel about collaborative leadership style, which predicts and therefore justifies that these administrative assistants believed that collaborative leadership style can contribute positively to their collective decision making and cohesiveness in their departments. The study also concludes that there is a significant difference statistically in terms of perceptions of administrative assistants about collaborative leadership style and its relevance and indispensability between the two faculties.

## LIMITATIONS

The scope of this research is limited to the Kulliyyah administrative assistants in the Faculties of Economics and Management Sciences (KENMS), and Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (IRKHS) at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Gombak campus. The findings of the research will not be used to make a generalization to other faculties in the university.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

With regard to the findings of the study and the conclusions it arrived at, the study makes the following recommendations for future research works to support administrative and educational excellence in institutions and organizations.

1. A study should be conducted in a larger scope to ensure a generalization of the study which can include schools towards a collaborative leadership style.

2. Additional research should be conducted with different types of instruments to confirm the results of the study.
3. Studies should be conducted on foreign students to establish the impact of a collaborative leadership style.

The researcher hopes that further studies will incorporate a larger number of respondents as well as organizations in order to draw on a wider perspective in view of perceptions about collaborative leadership style and its indispensability with the process of decision making and implementation in institutions or organizations.

## IMPLICATIONS

This research will add to the existing literature on collaborative leadership style and decision making regarding administrative assistants' perception. The adoption and adaption collaborative leadership style in higher institutions of learning will be a useful tool to enhance a clear collaboration among academic staff and administrative staff.

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