# A survey on lecturers' perceptions of collegiality at private colleges in Malaysia

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*Abstract:* **The purpose of this study was to examine lecturers' perceptions of collegiality at four private colleges in Sabah and Sarawak. The sample consisted of 44 lecturers who completed the Teacher Collegiality Scale that was administered online. Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed no significant differences in lecturers' perceptions by way of age and job experience, while Mann-Whitney U test showed no significant differences in terms of gender. Wilcoxon signed rank test revealed that four of the items (with low percentages of agreement) were significant at $p < 0.001$: (1) Professional interactions among lecturers are cooperative and supportive, (2) lecturers often ask each other for suggestions to specific student/discipline problems, (3) staff often consult each other informally and (4) staff often share materials related to their teaching. The same test also revealed that 19 of the items (with low percentages of agreement) were significant at $p < 0.05$. Percentages of agree/strongly agree for each item were collapsed to gain an overall impression of lecturers' perceptions of collegiality. Percentages of agreement were found to range from merely 9.1 percent to 47.7 percent, once again, indicating that lecturers' perceptions of collegiality at private colleges were extremely negative. In light of the findings, recommendations were made on ways to enhance collegiality amongst lecturers.**

*Keywords:* **lecturers' perceptions, collegiality, private colleges, Malaysia.**

## I.  INTRODUCTION

Collegiality refers to shared decision-making and attitudes that lead staff to regard all members of the tertiary institution as responsible for its success (Cipriano, 2013; Cipriano & Buller, 2012; Sorofman, 2011). It does not just occur, but is fostered through an enthusiastic, collaborative and intellectual culture. Tertiary institutions with high collegiality encourage free expression, research and intellectual inquiry; hence, they only employ staff with positive academic leadership that capitalizes on strengths and opportunities. Collegiality is characterized by trust, care and mutual respect that encourage staff not only to share self-doubts, but also to celebrate successes. It increases staff's willingness to give and receive constructive feedback and reinforcement. Tertiary institutions can only overcome the challenges of the 21st century when their staff's behaviours and attitudes are collaborative, sustainable and resilient. Collegiality is a critical aspect of professional development and a vehicle to increase faculty knowledge. Discouraging individualism and isolation, many departments are now restructuring in ways that provide more opportunities for staff to collaborate and learn together.

A collegial community exudes a collaborate climate that generates a spirit of innovation and enthusiasm among staff, while providing continuous support for professional enhancement. It encourages staff to recognize the value of working together and having a mutual ground. Staff who work in a collegial setting tend to be more receptive of novel ideas and instructional strategies.  Further, collegiality leads to increased staff satisfaction and adaptability, resulting in career pride and fulfillment. While stimulating enthusiasm among staff, it also reduces emotional stress and job burnout. It also creates

more cohesive bonds while inculcating a sense of belonging among staff. Further, collegiality increases staff commitment toward their department as well as their profession. They also tend to be more committed to their goals and to their students, thus influencing their career motivation and willingness to modify instructional practices (Cipriano, 2013; Cipriano & Buller, 2012; Sorofman, 2011).

Collegiality encourages more systemic assistance to beginning staff by helping them avoid the trial-and-error mode that novices usually face at the beginning of their career. Additionally, it encourages experienced staff to improve the competence and confidence of their new colleagues. Therefore, departments with a good collaborative culture and strong collegiality tend to experience lower staff attrition. Besides systemic assistance, collegiality enables staff to cope with complexity and uncertainty by effectively responding to change and creating a climate that values risk taking. Collegial staff tend to be more flexible in times of change and cope better with unprecedented demands that are exhausting for staff working in isolation. In brief, it is a powerful energizer that fosters strong emotional connections among colleagues (Cipriano, 2013; Cipriano & Buller, 2012; Sorofman, 2011).

In contrast to collegiality, individualism and non-interference tend to impair teaching efficacy and reduce student learning. Generally, departments with high collegiality tend to produce students with better achievement scores. Further, collegial staff relationships often lead to better quality instruction that, in turn, yields better student academic performance. Cultivating a collegial culture is more effective than introducing structural change to improve student learning. Moreover, staff who assume collective responsibility for student achievement tend to see greater gains in learning. Since staff at high-performing departments tend to experience greater collaboration than those in low-performing ones, a department culture should be less isolating, and more collaborative (Cipriano, 2013; Cipriano & Buller, 2012; Sorofman, 2011).

Weisbach (2021) posits that collegiality is an important element of most professions that influences the manner in which colleagues interact with one another. It can make the difference in promotion and salary decisions and, consequently, has a major impact on a person's career path. In academe, many people would benefit substantially if they learned to become better colleagues who add value to the institution in ways that go beyond their specified job requirements. For instance, most academics have to teach a certain number of classes and are expected to regularly produce research papers. However, they also perform many other tasks that are not explicitly stated, including developing curricula, supervising students' research and mentoring junior faculty, participating in research seminars, advising student clubs and interacting with the general community.

Kliem (2022) reiterated that collegiality is important for three reasons. First, it helps maintain positive mental health among junior academics who have many concerns, including their own teaching appraisal, student passing rates, research and job focus. Moreover, the academic job market together with its fluctuations often require academics to relocate to start afresh without having any friends and family around; collegiality at the new place offers the much-needed support. Second, collegiality often results in serendipity; friendly conversations among colleagues can lead to all kinds of unplanned solutions. For instance, a lecturer might reveal student problems that he or she has been facing, while another lecturer could offer possible solutions. Another might share the difficulties that he or she is facing with regards to data analysis, while a colleague could have undertaken a similar study. Lastly, collegiality often results in mutual support; it encourages staff to relieve an overburdened colleague from grading or teaching a class. It is also easier for academics to cope with a heavy workload when colleagues are willing to lend them a helping hand.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature was conducted to establish a conceptual framework and determine the research gap on collegiality. Hellawell and Hancock (2001) interviewed 14 academic middle managers about the extent to which collegiality could impact their university's internal decision-making process. Findings revealed that academic middle managers tended to experience many difficulties in collegial decision-making, especially in terms of introducing new initiatives with change-resistant staff who often bypassed or subverted them in non-collegial ways. Nevertheless, findings implied that collegiality is still the most appropriate form of decision-making in tertiary education mainly because it enables management to win staff support for innovation and change.

Jarzabkowski (2002) synthesized the social and emotional dimensions of teacher collegiality. The 21st century has encouraged schools to incorporate new dimensions of collaborative activities, due to the adoption of innovative school-based management practices. Teachers are now increasingly required to work in groups and on project teams and committees to promote the educational goals of their schools. Social and emotional collegiality are important aspects of the daily experience of teachers at schools; they reflect teachers' involvement with their peers on the intellectual, moral, political, social and emotional dimensions. Moreover, it has a communal aspect since it is regarded as a "group property" that unites a group of professionals. Collaboration is also a subset of collegiality since it relates to the professional sphere of relationships, while collegiality encompasses both professional, social and/ or emotional interactions in the workplace.

Jarzabkowski (2002) added that collegiality involves activities in which the school culture is being developed, evolving in a particular way when teachers spend time both socializing and working together. However, traditional school culture pays little attention to the social relationships since they rarely believe that such interpersonal relationships contribute significantly to teaching and learning. While acknowledging that affection among colleagues can promote cooperation and support, traditional schools do not consider it as a necessary component of collegiality. Nevertheless, school leaders need to highlight the role of relationship-building since teachers learn their colleagues' affirmative qualities by interacting with them in both work and social contexts to display optimism, humour and buoyancy. Teachers should have ample opportunities to get to know one another informally to develop a trusting, open and affirmative environment that mobilizes their school to attain the best outcomes.

Seigel (2004) postulated that the best colleagues are affirmatively collegial who often go beyond their job descriptions, interests or abilities to assume additional assignments, for example, to relieve overworked colleagues, to substitute colleagues on sabbatical leave or to display dedication to student learning. Others publish journal papers that will bring recognition not only to themselves, but also help raise their institution's ranking. Still others undertake administrative assignments, such as chairing a committee or directing a centre. Affirmatively collegial individuals strive to help others, besides doing their own job well, for instance, they mentor junior faculty, present papers at local and international conferences, appraise colleagues' drafts and plan social events. Further, they try to participate in all aspects of academic life, such as processing appointments, promotion and tenure, supporting the institution's administrative units and volunteering for institutional causes. In short, they exhibit enthusiasm, dedication and a positive attitude, while striving to further the vision and mission of their institution.

Trigwell (2005) examined university students' attitudes toward cross-disciplinary collegiality and interaction with research-active instructors based on two separate studies. The first examined students' knowledge and experience of collegiality, while the second explored the relationship between students' perceptions of collegiality in relation to the learning environment, learning outcomes and student satisfaction. Findings showed that students tended to perceive collegiality as an overall sense of allegiance and interactions with significant others. Interactions among students in one disciplinary area and those in other disciplines, among students in one subject and other students in the same discipline, and between the same and a different year of study were found. Additionally, learning tended to be most effective between students and research-active instructors, with students adopting deeper approaches to learning. Strong correlations were also found between learning approach and research-active instructors, implying that universities should emphasize both faculty research and deep learning to promote collegiality.

Freedman (2009) appraised several factors that tend to influence collegiality among library leaders. First, leaders' attitudes can facilitate collegiality across the functional units of the library; for example, they can set the example of how to be collegial through mutual trust, clear values and support from colleagues. Library leaders often avoid using authority and power like autocrats, which can destroy collegiality by keeping the peers distrustful of each other. Second, they practise open communication that is preconditioned by trust amongst staff. Instead of creating a silo environment, they try to take full advantage of information technology to promote open communication. They adopt communication channels that enable the library culture to further its goals. In brief, they promote collegiality by fostering mutual support, respect and trust through sharing ideals, knowledge and problem-solving that in turn foster trust amongst colleagues in an environment characterized by positive interpersonal communication.

Freedman (2009) added that a great starting point for library leaders to develop open communication is by initiating a dialogue with staff on subjects that matter to them. Library leaders can instil mutual respect amongst staff since they often

interact with faculty members who uphold research and scholarship. In other words, collegial relationships are often governed by mutual respect for expertise in teaching and research, as well as shared values and decision-making based on participation and consensus. Respect for the professional expertise and knowledge of academics enables the evaluative committee to focus not only on interpersonal relations, but also on interprofessional relations. Lastly, to reinforce collegiality, leaders need to explicitly articulate common goals that bind the institution to ensure that the entire staff consent to a foundation for the vision, direction and goal accomplishment.

Shah (2012) summarized the benefits of teacher collegiality in schools. Teacher collegiality significantly contributes to school improvement whereby successful schools are characterized by high levels of collegiality among teachers who are encouraged transition from the traditional norms of isolation and autonomy toward greater collegiality and collaboration. It encourages teachers to collaborate with one another to best serve their students, make their work more meaningful and keep the school vibrant and relevant. Teachers tend to perform better when cooperating professionally since it promotes authentic teamwork that allows them to interact regularly to share ideas and expertise, besides developing a common understanding of organizational goals and the means to attain them. It creates a congenial climate that enhances innovation and enthusiasm among teachers, while providing continuous support for their professional enhancement. Additionally, collegiality leads to increased teacher satisfaction and adaptability by eliminating classroom isolation, while yielding career rewards and job satisfaction.

In addition, collegiality stimulates enthusiasm among teachers and reduces emotional stress and burnout by fostering a sense of belonging among them, besides creating more cohesive bonds. It increases teacher commitment to their school and profession. It also influences teacher motivation and career commitment to the extent that they are willing to modify classroom practice. Moreover, collegiality provides more systemic assistance to beginning teachers by helping them avoid the sink-or-swim mode that they usually face during the initial stages of their career. It also brings experienced and beginning teachers closer together that in turn reinforces the latter's competence and confidence. Lastly, schools that emphasize a positive collaborative culture and collegiality tend to have lower attrition rates since it helps teachers cope with uncertainty and complexity, respond resiliently to changes and take calculated risks. As an important energizer, collegiality allows teachers to form strong emotional connections with colleagues that in turn increases their instructional energy (Shah, 2012).

Palaniandy (2017) elaborated that collegiality is a psychological contract that encourages academics to work in harmony, while demonstrating integrity that enhances their efficacy via knowledge sharing practices. Both collegiality and knowledge sharing play a vital role in augmenting professional growth and development, job satisfaction, organizational and professional commitment, besides institutional quality and student performance. A supportive, collegial environment enables staff to maintain open lines of communication and interaction whereby they are willing to listen to the concerns and ideas of others. Collegial staff do not make inquiries for the purpose of criticizing their peers' work, but rather converse with them out of genuine interest in what they are doing. They take pride and appreciate one another's accomplishments, while recognizing the efforts of every member of the team. Instead of competing unnecessarily with one another, they seek to work in harmony with a true spirit of collaboration; they respect their peers, discuss their needs with them and assume joint responsibility in problem solving and decision making. A collegial environment characterized by respect, dignity and genuine care for one another among staff can nurture a knowledge-seeking and knowledge-sharing culture characterized by trust among academics and strong support from management.

Denis et al. (2019) reiterated that collegiality is regarded as an inherent characteristic of various professions that is related to the normative expectations among peers. It is materialized at work through engagement in co-production whereby academics negotiate and compromise the legitimate modes of governance. It enables academics to achieve collective objectives by acting as a vector of change and an adaptation of professional work at tertiary institutions. According to Kaguhangire-Barifaijo and Nkata (2021), collegiality is often regarded as the most significant governance pillar for tertiary institutions, especially in terms of promoting independence of thought, impartial leadership decisions, mutual respect and peer support. However, some corporate cultures may adopt a system that rewards individual accomplishments, while steadily weakening the collegial aspect. Tertiary institutions should, therefore, intensify institutional inquiry to address non-collegial work behaviour, while making collegiality a part of decision-making. Since it clearly stipulates indicators of desirable behaviour, collegiality is pivotal in establishing a civil and harmonious work environment that fosters staff engagement, productivity and institutional stability.

Su, Baird and Tung (2022) examined the mediating role of collegiality on the perfomances among 203 lower-level managers in Australian organizations. Collegiality was found to have an impact on different types of controls that influence specific aspects of performance, including job performance, financial performance and non-financial performance. Further, it mediated the relationship between behaviour controls with both financial and non-financial performance, as well as employee job performance. Specifically, to encourage and promote collegiality, organizations can consider introducing a social committee to organize formal team building events and/or informal gatherings over a cup of coffee or some interactive group games over lunch breaks. Lastly, they need to provide appropriate training, seminars and workshops to guide employees on how to deal with disagreements and conflicts in a respectful manner, thereby creating a collegial environment where employees feel comfortable to openly address conflicts and concerns in a congenial manner.

Dawson, et al. (2022) examined the influence of collegiality on academic review, promotion and tenure (RPT) among 129 universities. Findings suggested that collegiality plays a role in RPT decisions, even though most institutions do not explicitly acknowledge it as a specific RPT factor in their processes or guidelines. Nevertheless, tertiary institutions should incorporate it within their evaluation frameworks by providing operational definitions of teaching, research and community service since collegiality often increases faculty morale and job pride that will lead to greater institutional effectiveness and global rankings.

Jeyaraj and Wald (2023) examined the role and issues of collegiality among 18 academics at a private university college in Malaysia. Findings showed that, while collegiality is often regarded as a driver for research output through collaboration, limited research evidence is found on its role in cultivating research capacities in Malaysia, a country that has high power distance. It is can be more difficult to practise collegiality at Malaysian tertiary institutions due to strict organizational hierarchy and other sociocultural norms. Findings implied that, while some Malaysian academics tend to perceive collegial leadership and intellectual collegiality as pivotal, they are often unsupported and disengaged under the dominant top-down leadership style.

Lastly, Fleming and Harley (2023) asserted that academic collegiality is an indispensable aspect of university teaching. While universities explicitly rewards job performance in terms of institutional metrics and prestige, many academics devote considerable time performing tasks that fosters collegiality. Collegial tasks that are often unaccounted for include reviewing manuscripts and mentoring junior colleagues; in short, some faculty members continue to perform such unspecified tasks in an institution that is characterized by a strong audit culture simply because it considered collegial to do so. Collegiality is valued not only for its intrinsic value, but it also occurs in tandem with performance metrics that motivate academics to undertake unquantified tasks. In brief, it is a form of good organizational citizenship that requires a fuller, more multidimensional expression at tertiary institutions.

## III. SIGNIFICANCE, GAP AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

According to Åkerlind and Quinlan (2001), collegiality plays a pivotal role in academia, positioning itself at the intersection of its various dimensions. Research has shown the significance of collegiality in terms of scholarly teaching, academic leadership, research productivity and community service. While faculty developers should encourage faculty to enhance their collegial networking skills, faculty development strategies and activities for collegial networking have received meagre attention in academe. Collegial networking is also often narrowly defined; for example, its purpose is often limited to enhancing career progression and building research contacts, with mentoring as the most common developmental strategy. Åkerlind and Quinlan (2001) reiterated that a broad conceptualization of collegiality as a common theme underlying academic scholarship is urgently needed. The concept of creating a variety of collegial networks and forums to promote collegiality is still unheard of among many faculty developers. Establishing collegiality and colleagueship is advantageous because teaching, research and community service are tertiary undertakings that require collegial review and collaboration. Helping faculty members establish collegiality is a principal task in academic development; however, there is currently a lack of empirical research on how collegiality is manifested, promoted and applied more broadly across tertiary departments and disciplines.

Sahlin and Eriksson-Zetterquist (2023) asserted that academic collegiality is associated with recent changes in tertiary systems, debates on academic freedom and the changing roles of knowledge in society; hence, there is a need for a conceptually precise model on what academic collegiality is, including its practical utility and role in higher education governance. The current study will generate greater insight into collegiality as a form of self-governance that includes rules

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and structures for decision-making and underpinnings of identities and purposes of tertiary education. According to van Schalkwyk and Cloete (2023), many university campuses are highly politicized spaces in settings characterized by real-time, global networked digital communication that influences collegiality along two dimensions, including horizontal collegial relations that promote knowledge creation and transfer, as well as vertical collegiality that describes collegial relations between faculty and top management. As tertiary communication becomes increasingly politicized, the motivations of faculty and top management, as well as stakeholders, extend beyond knowledge creation to fulfilling individual and ideological agendas. The purpose of the current study is to examine lecturers' perceptions of collegiality at private colleges in Malaysia. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- Were there any significant age, gender and experiential differences in lecturers' perceptions of collegiality?

- Were there any significant differences in lecturers' perceptions of collegiality based on a hypothesized value of 3.5?

- What were the descriptive statistics on lecturers' perceptions of collegiality?

## IV. METHODOLOGY

### A. Sample

The sample consisted of 44 lecturers drawn from four private colleges in Sabah and Sarawak. According to Parnell (2023), the rule of thumb for sample size is a minimum of 30 for analyzing continuous data. The sample size of the current study might appear small, but 44 respondents should provide sufficient information to make a statistically sound conclusion about the college population in Sabah and Sarawak. By having a total of 44 participants, the authors could generate meaningful insights into their research objectives, with high confidence in their results. Moreover, the central limit theorem states that a sample size of $n \geq 30$ is sufficiently large to yield valid and reliable data for a basic descriptive study. In this study, male lecturers comprised 31.8 percent, while female lecturers comprised 68.2 percent of the sample. Respondents mostly belonged to the 46-55 age group, with 47.7 percent indicating 20 or more years of job experience. 45.5 percent had a Master degree, while 18.2 had a PhD (see Table 1).

**TABLE I: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS**

| Characteristic | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 22-35 | 11 | 25.0 |
| | 36-45 | 9 | 20.5 |
| | 46-55 | 14 | 31.8 |
| | 56-60 | 10 | 22.7 |
| Gender | Male | 14 | 31.8 |
| | Female | 30 | 68.2 |
| Job experience (years) | 1-5 | 4 | 9.09 |
| | 6-10 | 7 | 15.9 |
| | 11-15 | 6 | 13.6 |
| | 16-20 | 6 | 13.6 |
| | More than 20 | 21 | 47.7 |
| | Bachelors | 16 | 36.4 |
| | Masters | 20 | 45.5 |
| | PhD | 8 | 18.2 |

### B. Instrument

The Teacher Collegiality Scale (Shah, 2011) was adapted and administered online to collect data. It consists of 38 Likert-scale items, ranging from Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, to Strongly disagree = 1. In Shah's (2011) study, it was indicated that exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to analyze data obtained from 364 secondary school teachers; results showed that the reliability coefficients of the scale ranged from .71 to .85. For the current study, the scale was pilot-tested on 25 local lecturers from Sabah, and results indicated that its Cronbach alpha value was 0.97, reflecting high reliability. The full score is 190 (with 152-190 being equivalent to High, 151-133 = Average, lower than 151 = Low).

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### C. Data Collection and Analysis

In order to collect data, respondents were told that their response should take 10 minutes and would in no way be associated with their name or institution and that completion of the scale was their indication of consent to voluntarily participate in the study. Additionally, there were no known risks since all responses would remain anonymous, with respondents' identities kept strictly confidential. Data that were collected were automatically transferred onto a spreadsheet and subsequently analysed using SPSS 26.0. For data analysis, Kruskal-Wallis H was first conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in lecturers' perceptions of collegiality in relation to age and job experience, while Mann-Whitney U was used to determine if there were any significant differences in terms of gender. Lastly, descriptive statistics were used to present the percentages of agreement on the collegiality items.

## V. FINDINGS

The Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed no significant differences in lecturers' perceptions of collegiality by way of age and job experience, while Mann-Whitney U test showed no significant differences in terms of gender (see Table 2).

### TABLE II: RESULTS OF KRUSKAL-WALLIS H AND MANN-WHITNEY U TESTS

| Fixed variables | Non-parametric test | $p$-value |
|---|---|---|
| Age | Kruskal-Wallis H test | 0.556 |
| Gender | Mann-Whitney U test | 0.005 |
| Job experience | Kruskal-Wallis H test | 0.139 |

Wilcoxon signed rank test revealed that four of the items (with low percentages of agreement) were significant at $p < 0.001$ with a hypothesized value of 3.5. The items are as the following: (1) Professional interactions among lecturers are cooperative and supportive, (2) lecturers often ask each other for suggestions to specific student/discipline problems, (3) staff often consult each other informally and (4) staff share materials related to their teaching. The same test also revealed that 19 of the items (with low percentages of agreement) were significant at $p < 0.05$ with a hypothesized value of 3.5 (see Table 3).

### TABLE III: WILCOXON SIGNED RANK TEST WITH A HYPOTHESIZED VALUE OF 3.5

| ITEM | $p$-value |
|---|---|
| Staff in my institution provide strong social support for colleagues | 0.209 |
| Professional interactions among lecturers are cooperative and supportive | 0.001** |
| There is a feeling of trust and confidence among staff members | 0.003* |
| I can count on most of my colleagues to help me out anywhere, anytime even though it may not be part of their official assignment | 0.241 |
| Lecturers in my institution acknowledge their own mistakes | 0.310 |
| Staff consider their colleagues as their friends | 0.347 |
| Lecturers in my institution respect the professional competence of their colleagues | 0.001* |
| Lecturers invite other colleagues to observe their teaching (or to moderate) | 0.462 |
| Lecturers in my institution do not mind being observed by their colleagues while teaching (or being moderated) | 0.950 |
| Staff regularly observe one another teaching (moderation) as a part of sharing and improving instructional strategies | 0.599 |
| Most of the staff in my institution are receptive to the presence of other professionals in their classrooms | 0.575 |
| Staff are open with colleagues about their successes and challenges | 0.002* |
| My colleagues consider and respond to feedback appropriately | 0.040* |
| Cooperation and collaboration exist across departments in my institution | 0.030* |
| We jointly plan and prepare teaching strategies and procedures (panel meetings) | 0.149 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Majority of the staff actively participate in meetings | 0.029* |
| We collectively test an idea or new approach in teaching (panel meetings) | 0.006* |
| We jointly accredit new programs and practices | 0.003* |
| My colleagues and I collectively analyze our teaching practice | 0.501 |
| Lecturers avoid criticizing the others' teaching | 0.042* |
| Lecturers often share educational theories, philosophies or approaches | 0.171 |
| Staff encourage one another to contribute ideas and suggestions | 0.036* |
| Staff often ask each other about classroom management ideas and suggestions | 0.004* |
| Staff in my institution feel comfortable about discussing students' problems | 0.003* |
| Lecturers often ask each other for suggestions to specific student/discipline problems | 0.001** |
| Staff often discuss teaching and learning strategies for improvement | 0.007* |
| Staff often consult each other informally | 0.001** |
| Lecturers in my institution enjoy team teaching (co-marking, moderation, etc) | 0.109 |
| Staff feel part of a learning community that values shared responsibility for ongoing learning | 0.001* |
| Staff give demonstrations on how to use new models or strategies (teaching/learning seminars) | 0.001* |
| Staff in my institution like to share what they have learned or want to learn | 0.579 |
| Most staff actively contribute to making decisions about the curriculum (unit/subject panels) | 0.232 |
| I find time to work with colleagues on curriculum matters during a regular work day | 0.023* |
| Staff in this institution jointly prepare their lesson plans (panel meetings) | 0.603 |
| Staff are not hesitant in asking for help on specific instructional problems | 0.023* |
| My colleagues and I share materials related to our teaching | 0.001** |
| Staff often share materials, including unit/subject outlines, lesson plans and slides | 0.002* |
| We often share journal articles and other educational resources to improve teaching and learning. | 0.034* |

**significant at $p < 0.001$; *significant at $p < 0.05$

The overall group mean for collegiality was found to be 140.75 (out of 190), indicating that the Malaysian lecturers tend to experience low collegiality at work.  Additionally, percentages of agree/strongly agree for each item were collapsed to gain an overall impression of the Malaysian lecturers' perceptions of collegiality.  Percentages of agreement were found to range from merely 9.1 percent to 47.7 percent, once again, indicating that some lecturers' perceptions of collegiality at private colleges in Malaysia were extremely low or negative (see Table 4).

**TABLE IV:  PERCENTAGES OF AGREEMENT ON THE COLLEGIALITY ITEMS**

| ITEM | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Staff in my institution provide strong social support for colleagues | 11.4 | 25.0 | 40.9 | 20.5 | 11.4 |
| Professional interactions among lecturers are cooperative and supportive | 2.3 | 20.5 | 59.1 | 18.2 | 2.3 |
| There is a feeling of trust and confidence among staff members | 6.8 | 18.2 | 59.1 | 15.9 | 6.8 |
| I can count on most of my colleagues to help me out anywhere, anytime | 4.5 | 34.1 | 47.7 | 11.4 | 4.5 |
| Lecturers in my institution acknowledge their own mistakes | 11.4 | 38.6 | 38.6 | 6.8 | 11.4 |
| Staff consider their colleagues as their friends | 4.5 | 36.4 | 45.5 | 11.4 | 4.5 |
| Lecturers in my institution respect the others' professional competence | 4.5 | 18.2 | 63.6 | 13.6 | 4.5 |
| Lecturers invite other colleagues to observe their teaching or to moderate | 9.1 | 27.3 | 45.5 | 13.6 | 9.1 |
| Lecturers in my institution do not mind being observed by colleagues | 9.1 | 36.4 | 43.2 | 9.1 | 9.1 |
| Staff regularly observe one another teaching (moderation) as a part of sharing and improving instructional strategies | 15.9 | 27.3 | 43.2 | 9.1 | 15.9 |

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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Most of the staff in my institution are receptive to the presence of other professionals in their classrooms | 6.8 | 34.1 | 50.0 | 6.8 | 6.8 |
| Staff are open about their successes and challenges | 4.5 | 20.5 | 61.4 | 13.6 | 4.5 |
| My colleagues consider and respond to feedback appropriately | 6.8 | 25.0 | 59.1 | 9.1 | 6.8 |
| Cooperation and collaboration exist across departments in my institution | 4.5 | 25.0 | 54.5 | 13.6 | 4.5 |
| We jointly plan and prepare teaching strategies and procedures | 6.8 | 25.0 | 61.4 | 4.5 | 6.8 |
| Majority of the staff actively participate in meetings | 6.8 | 20.5 | 56.8 | 13.6 | 6.8 |
| We collectively test an idea or new approach in teaching | 2.3 | 22.7 | 63.6 | 9.1 | 2.3 |
| We jointly accredit new programs and practices | 0.0 | 25.0 | 63.6 | 9.1 | 0.0 |
| My colleagues and I collectively analyse our teaching practice | 9.1 | 25.0 | 54.5 | 6.8 | 9.1 |
| Lecturers avoid criticizing the others' teaching | 4.5 | 31.8 | 47.7 | 15.9 | 4.5 |
| Lecturers often share educational theories, philosophies or approaches | 4.5 | 29.5 | 45.5 | 15.9 | 4.5 |
| Staff encourage one another to contribute ideas and suggestions | 4.5 | 25.0 | 56.8 | 11.4 | 4.5 |
| Staff often ask each other about classroom management ideas and suggestions | 4.5 | 18.2 | 59.1 | 15.9 | 4.5 |
| Staff in my institution feel comfortable about discussing students' problems | 4.5 | 18.2 | 54.5 | 20.5 | 4.5 |
| Lecturers often ask each other for suggestions to specific problems | 2.3 | 15.9 | 59.1 | 20.5 | 2.3 |
| Staff often discuss teaching and learning strategies for improvement | 2.3 | 25 | 52.3 | 18.2 | 2.3 |
| Staff often consult each other informally | 0.0 | 20.5 | 50.0 | 27.3 | 0.0 |
| Lecturers in my institution enjoy team teaching | 2.3 | 29.5 | 52.3 | 11.4 | 2.3 |
| Staff feel part of a learning community that values shared responsibility for ongoing learning | 0.0 | 22.7 | 65.9 | 9.1 | 0.0 |
| Staff give demonstrations on how to use new models or strategies | 2.3 | 18.2 | 59.1 | 18.2 | 2.3 |
| Staff in my institution like to share what they have learned or want to learn | 6.8 | 36.4 | 43.2 | 11.4 | 6.8 |
| Most staff actively contribute to making decisions about the curriculum | 4.5 | 29.5 | 50.0 | 11.4 | 4.5 |
| I find time to work with colleagues on curriculum matters during a regular work day | 4.5 | 18.2 | 63.6 | 9.1 | 4.5 |
| Staff in this institution jointly prepare their lesson plans (panel meetings) | 6.8 | 27.3 | 50.0 | 9.1 | 6.8 |
| Staff are not hesitant in asking for help on specific instructional problems | 4.5 | 22.7 | 61.4 | 9.1 | 4.5 |
| My colleagues and I share materials related to our teaching | 2.3 | 13.6 | 70.5 | 13.6 | 2.3 |
| Staff often share materials, including unit/subject outlines & lesson plans | 4.5 | 20.5 | 59.1 | 15.9 | 4.5 |
| We often share journal articles and other educational resources | 9.1 | 18.2 | 52.3 | 18.2 | 9.1 |

*Strongly disagree = 1, Agree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly agree = 5*

## VI.   IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study implied that some Malaysian lecturers tend to experience low collegiality at work.  According to Weisbach (2021), low collegiality at tertiary institutions is often associated with three factors. First, some academic interactions can be not beneficial. This can happen when some academics are seen as not friendly during seminars or faculty meetings, scrutinizing each other's papers or treating one another unprofessionally at times. Second, academe can be hierarchical; while some tenured professors may be well-remunerated, other non-tenure-track lecturers and adjunct faculty may feel burdened, with heavy teaching loads and relatively low compensation.  Third, some colleges and universities may still have covert sexism and racism to a certain extent; in some countries, some women and minorities may feel underrepresented in some aspects of their professional lives.

Kliem (2022) suggested that collegiality can be promoted in several ways.   First, tertiary institutions need to create the right environment that encourages serendipitous meetings.  They need to give staff spaces to relax and interact with each other; perhaps offering free beverages, fruits or snacks at times, as this practice may pay off in terms of collegiality in the long run.  Second, staff presence can be increased; for example, a team meeting can be arranged every fortnight to promote

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interpersonal communication and socialization amongst academics.  Third, tertiary institutions need to encourage greater collaboration and learning amongst staff so that they can share their ideas or concerns with others.  Regular forums can also be planned to encourage staff to present their undertakings, be it research or best teaching practices.  Fourth, tertiary institutions can involve their staff in major decisions that concern them and ensure that everybody feels heard.  Therefore, it is crucial to give every person space and time to talk, either in meetings or outside.  Fifth, tertiary institutions can incorporate social aspects of academe by providing a social calendar that allows everyone to participate in team-building events; for example, regular lunch meetings, and book or movie clubs allow staff to spend some time with others talking about things other than just work.   Lastly, tertiary institutions can keep collegiality in mind when making hiring decisions.  Recruits who share the values of institution and regard success as a shared value will become better colleagues.

Wilson (2023) postulated that collegiality can be fostered through educational leaders' intentional decisions to cultivate congenial relationships and reduce barriers to create a more collaborative working environment in support of academic achievement and organizational success.  First, leaders can use their positional power to make space for academics to figure out what equity looks like by providing staff release time from classes to plan and learn, openly support staff as they introduce changes to better support students' performance and mentor staff whose students hold marginalized identities.  Consequently, staff tend to be more willing to trust and approach such leaders with honesty and curiosity when they disagree or question each other.   Second, tertiary leaders can intentionally cultivate relationships with staff members by individually meeting with them to discuss their visions as educators and what scaffolds are needed to be effective.  They can use the instructional leader model by supporting staff in improving their practice, while sharing their own journey to becoming the leaders they have envisioned.  Such actions show that they are approaching staff with the best intentions and an honest desire to improve their practices, rather than as administrators looking for negative evidence for staff appraisal.  Third, leaders can arrange staff meetings and retreats so that staff can learn about one another as individuals and how they approach their work with students, colleagues and families.  They can also encourage staff to connect with others around specific practices as a way of bridging the gap between colleagues who disagree on instructional methods and other matters.

Wilson (2023) added that educational leaders often promote collegiality by being transparent about decision-making, institutional goals and objectives, and their interactions with families when they have a concern or complaint.   They can clearly delineate what decisions are collective staff decisions, what decisions are solely theirs and what decisions are theirs to make after they have gathered information from staff.  Their transparency allows staff to trust them since the latter know that they will not get surprised by an initiative or parent complaint that in turn gives them the capacity to focus on curriculum and student support.  Lastly, leaders can provide opportunities for staff to continue building the culture and structures necessary for collaborative relationships to support teaching and learning.  Overall, leaders' willingness to support staff in their professional endeavours often provide the latter with additional evidence that they can view their leaders as true colleagues and thought partners, not just as administrators.

As final thoughts, the findings of the current study have limited generalizability due to various constraints.  First, although respondents are all college lecturers, there are obvious differences in how their department and work are divided and whether tenure is offer at each institution.  Some of these dissimilarities can account for differences in their perceptions of collegiality. Further, greater diversity in the sample is needed to yield more reliable and valid data on their collegial experiences; their perceptions might be influenced by different social and geographic locations and institutional ranking and research requirements.  Therefore, future research should investigate specific factors that promote collegiality, such as mentoring and job satisfaction across academic ranks.  Lastly, difficulties with collegiality should also be examined since there is a pressing need for more extensive and systematic examination of how it impacts occupational satisfaction and morale among academics.

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