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Leveraging Leadership, Collaboration, and Decision-Making to Improve Team Effectiveness: A Case of Education Gathering Group (EGG) Alumni Network in Kayin State, Myanmar

Saw Kyaw Khaung Khalein¹, Sirichai Preudhikulpradab²

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Abstract

This article is survey-based research, comprising of two objectives, 1). to examine the current situations of leadership, collaboration, and decision making to improve team effectiveness of the Education Gathering Group (EGG) Alumni Network in Kayin State, Myanmar, and 2). to propose key developmental opportunities to improve team effectiveness. Research design, data, and methodology: The research site is Kayin State, Myanmar, with a total actual sample of 124 respondents who completed the survey. The instrument employed is a structured questionnaire, which is IOC validated and Cronbach Alpha Co-Efficient tested. The sampling technique is purposive sampling. Data is quantitative and treatments, comprise descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and Pearson correlation. Key findings indicated that leadership ($p=0.00$, $r=0.479$) and decision-making ($p=0.00$, $r=0.408$), which indicated a significant correlation with team effectiveness, and collaboration ($p=0.054$, $r=0.173$), which indicated insignificant correlation. Five sets of recommendations are proposed, including strengthening the collaboration and upgrading network's activities, increasing communication to minimize misunderstanding among members, managing the perception by activating a sense of ownership, co-creating the alumni network by embracing the entrepreneurial of the voluntary network, and investing in a full-time post who orchestrates on-going activities of the EGG alumni network

Keywords: Team Effectiveness, Leadership, Collaboration, Decision Making, Organization Development.

JEL Classification Code : M50, M51, D91, J50

1. Introduction

Education is one of the most critical factors for the strategic development of society and country. The standard of educational institutions has become mandatory of the regulator and stakeholders (e.g., parents and students), requiring many educational institutions to continue upgrading their educational management strategies to provide the learners' best education programs. Different teaching-learning strategies are employed in classroom arrangement and field trips, group work, and work-integrated learning. Learners work and learn through the experience with the participating organizations until their

graduation.

Colleges and universities worldwide are inevitably transforming their internal systems, processes and tools, and human resources to ensure quality education, adaptability, responsiveness, and the ability to appraise internal and external challenges, impacting pedagogy. Such dynamics require the educational institutions to demonstrate agile and creative leadership while pursuing faculty improvement efforts and growing the alumni network. (Stephenson & Yerger, 2014). The approach of the institution seemingly needs to be more diverse and strategic long-term planning tool to create strength and competitive advantage for the organization (Allio, 2006).

¹ Saw Kyaw Khaung Khalein; MMOD Student, Graduate School of Business and Advanced Technology Management, Assumption University of Thailand; +959770066500, Myanmar

² Sirichai Preudhikulpradab, Advisor, Graduate School of Business and Advanced Technology Management, Assumption University of Thailand

According to the quantitative studies of Kulkarni, Mutkekar and Ingalagi (2020) indicated that strategic objective, accountability and responsibility were significantly interdependence, and team engagement was depended on skills development.

In this article, the participating organization was Education Gathering Group (EGG) Academy, formed as the alumni network, called "EGG Alumni Network.". The main purposes of forming the network comprise 1. keeping in touch among EGG alumni and 2. cooperating with the community youth for social activities. A working team led the alumni network by five alumni under the EGG Management Team's supervision. EGG Alumni Network represents all future graduates from EGG Academy. Nowadays, one to six batches of alumni participate in the network. The engagement of the EGG alumni network is not only within alumni affairs but also in the community. EGG Alumni Network aspires to create a collaborative environment and runs its network successfully and effectively.

The alumni who finished their degrees serve their society and community as the youth leaders in their respective industries. Some further study with the same school, and some voluntarily provide the training related to youth capacity building training in Kayin State. They support the local student with study aid as a micro-credit program. There are opportunities created, such as youth fellowship and exchange programs, to upgrade the knowledge and information among youths or current students. All of the alumni's contribution is voluntary basis.

Considering the current situation of the EGG alumni network, especially its main purpose and function. The EGG alumni network focuses on social networking with members and the youth community as it copes with the growing involvement with its communities. The network's sustainability is invariably on the brink due to a lack of systematic approaches from strategizing, leading, setting the direction until governing the internal systems that would allow the EGG alumni network to cope with growing expectations sustainably.

1.1 Statement of the problem

A group of the non-full-time team runs the EGG alumni network. There are some challenges and limitations within the network in keeping the alumni network alive and active. The EGG alumni network's events and activities were occasionally arranged but lack a strategic plan that clearly outlined its leadership, collaboration, and decision-making priorities. Those lasting issues potentially cause a long-term threat to the EGG alumni network's survival and sustainability. Accordingly, there is an urgent need to improve Kayin state's EGG network in Myanmar; and thus, the study focuses on understanding the current team effectiveness situations within the EGG Alumni network and then identifying a long-term development plan.

1.2 Research Questions

1) Is there a significant relationship between a.) Leadership and Team effectiveness; b.) Collaboration and Team effectiveness, and c.) Decision-making and Team effectiveness of EGG Alumni Network in Kayin State, Myanmar?

2) What could the recommendations and action plan be proposed to improve the EGG Alumni network's team effectiveness?

1.3 Research Objectives

1) To analyze the relationship between a) Leadership and Team effectiveness, b) Collaboration and Team effectiveness, and c) Decision-making and Team effectiveness of EGG Alumni Network in Kayin State, Myanmar.

2) To propose a recommendation and action plan for EGG Alumni Network in Kayin State, Myanmar.

1.4 Hypothesis

- H1₀: Leadership has no significant relationship with team effectiveness.
- H1_a: Leadership has a significant relationship with team effectiveness.
- H2₀: Collaboration has no significant relationship with team effectiveness.
- H2_a: Collaboration has a significant relationship with team effectiveness.
- H3₀: Decision-making has no significant relationship with team effectiveness.
- H3_a: Decision-making has a significant relationship with team effectiveness.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Team Effectiveness

Team effectiveness is a two-way street condition representing individual, team, and organization outcomes drawn from human social interaction with the organization systems. The studies of Cohen and Beiley (1997), and DeOrtentiis, Summers, Ammeter & Dauglas (2013) suggested that team effectiveness was the outcomes of task and group interaction that were influenced by both internal and external organization systems such as organization design, work processes, and individual-group attributions to bring about team members' cohesion and satisfaction. The attributes of successful teams from the case study of Tarricone & Luca (2002) suggested that teamwork is an essential ingredient for successful institutions or organizations; key attributes to the long-term success of team effectiveness are underlined by the commitment to goals, positive interdependent environment, interpersonal skills, open communication and feedback, team composition and

leadership and accountability.

Draganidis and Mentzas (2006) elaborated that technology also plays an important role in organizational communication with team members; it serves as an internal mechanism that coordinates and conveys information across the boundary and geography. These variations bring about the requirement to exchange data and information to coordinate and integrate technologically as a medium for team communication and decision-making. LePine (2003); Bunderson and Sutcliffe (2003) articulated that team effectiveness has two constructs; first, the construct bounded by different tasks and external contexts, and second, the construct bounded by leaders and members' interaction. Castka, Bamber, Sharp, and Belohoubek (2001) concluded that teamwork is an important factor in this turbulent environment for many organizations, and it is defined to its successful implementation. Ross, Jones, and Adams (2008) stated that using teams to get the job done and succeed in the results is widely considered a simple way to enhance productivity and effectiveness.

2.2. Leadership

Yukl (2012), Bligh et al. (2006) elaborated that the organization's success often depends on leadership behaviors, roles, and partnerships with other counterparts while embodying three distinctive actions: external observation, representation, and networking. External observation involves testing information, which is concerned with handling issues, individual-team issues both inside and outside the organization, including gathering information to raise the awareness of the current needs (Balkundi & Kilduff, (2006); and Caldwell & Hayes, 2016) . Representation is concerned with the pursuit of advocacy, consensus, and growing the organization's reputation. Lastly, networking is concerned with advancing its goals, meditating, and negotiating priorities and expectation. According to Crippen, (2004) suggested that leadership in educational institution settings is often employed as a vehicle to serve and involve organization members to cause possible systems to change.

Lastly, according to Balkundi & Kilduff, (2006) suggested that it is not always easy to determine the cause and outcome of organizational leadership; nevertheless, responsive leadership makes a difference while encouraging people to conquer its goal and mission. In the meantime, leadership advances organizations in times of instability and tension, so devotion to building leadership and sustaining commitment is worth pursuing success. When the organization leaders fail to pursue their goals and priorities, the cost of losing public confidence is exponential and can negatively derail the long-term image of the institution

2.3 Collaboration

Harvey and Koubek (2000) introduced the collaboration model, stating that it generally comprises two characteristics: psychological and social settings shape and substantively lead to new forms of the organization activities based on its goals. Huxham (2003) theorized that an organization demonstrating collaborative advantage could be both painful and rewarding caused by a common goal, trust, structure, and leadership. The studies of Chiocchio, Forgues, Paradis, and Iordanova (2011) also suggested that fostering collaboration was found to have helped trust and minimize conflicts in a team setting. Meanwhile, teamwork is also pictured as another kind of collaboration that helps the organization achieve its tasks and missions. Collaboration is also demonstrated as a shared leadership that determines team performance. According to the studies of Caron, Tesluk, and Marrone (2007) confirmed that internal team environment consists of team purpose, socialization process, conversation, and on-going feedback process motivated the teams to embrace shared responsibility and leadership.

Bedwell, Wildman, DiazGranados, Salazar, Kramer, & Salas, (2012) suggested that engagement with key stakeholders is another form of collaboration; it effectively addresses the problems and challenges and produces potential solutions while maintaining and promoting effort, team spirit, equal opportunity, trust, and participation, respectively. Lastly, the studies of Jagdev, & Thoben, (2001) suggested that collaboration from the business enterprise is often employed as a functional driver of economic gain of the enterprises.

2.4 Decision Making

Seijts, Latham & Whyte, (2000), and Bourgault, Drouin, and Hamel (2008) articulated that decision-making is a part of the logical mechanism by which decision-makers aim at reaching their desired goals while considering all possible alternatives, investigating, and agreeing on all possible solutions. The authors further elaborated that the development of the option decision is the cognitive process of building a choice, evidence, and alternatives, funneling through four stages of producing a successful call, which comprises 1). Searching for the data, anticipating the outcome, 2). Taking smart actions, and 3). Reducing the negative aspects that can get in the way of accomplishing the goal with the options processed by each individual's learning courses about the data, from analyzing different schemes to finalizing decision making

Oliveira (2007) further elaborated that decision-making is the cognitive process involving six phases of achievable options: 1). defining the question or problem, 2). identifying the conditions for the choices, 3). allocating weights to the variables, 4). creating alternatives or

developing options for solutions, 5) assessing the alternatives, and 6) choosing the most doable alternatives for implementation.

2.5 Theoretical Framework I

2.5.1 Theoretical Framework I

The first theoretical framework supports the choice of this topic of this research titled "Cross-functional team effectiveness: an examination of an internal team environment, shared leadership, and cohesion influences. ", illustrated the interdependent factors between team effectiveness, which represents an output of share shard leadership, cohesion, and internal team environment, where every factor represents an input and an outcome in itself.

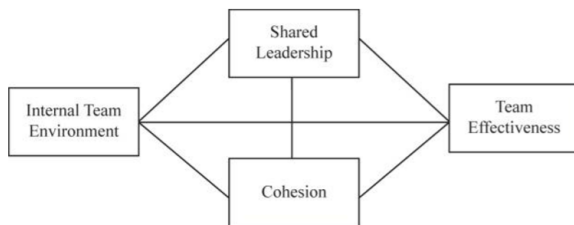


Figure 1: Cross-Functional Team Effectiveness

Source: Josh D., C., Tillman, J., Nancy G., B., and McKee, V. (2013) Cross-functional team effectiveness. *An International Journal*, 19 (1/2), 34-56. <http://DOI.org/10.1108/13527591311312088>

2.5.2 Theoretical Framework II

The second theoretical framework supports the choice of this research work titled "A study on the relationship of organizational communication and effective teamwork.", it illustratively implied that effective teamwork was a dependent factor of organization communication and demographic profiles.

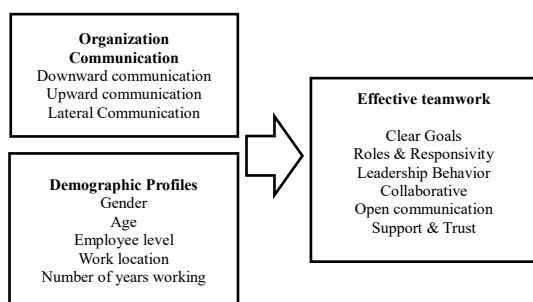


Figure 2: Organizational Communication and Effective Work work

Source: Ross, T., Jones, E.C. and Adams, S.G. (2008). Can team effectiveness be predicted? *Team Performance Management*. <http://DOI.org/10.1108/13527590810898518>

2.5.3 Theoretical Framework III

The third theoretical framework supports the choice of this topic of this research titled "How organizations support distributed project teams: key dimensions and their impact on decision making and teamwork effectiveness."; it illustratively implied that teamwork effectiveness was the result of the quality of the decision-making process whereby the quality of decision-making process was effected by strategic staffing, training and tools, team autonomy and top management monitoring.

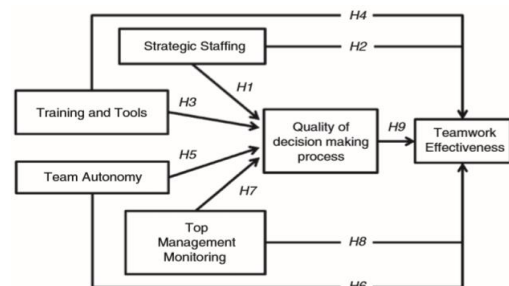


Figure 3: Teamwork Effectiveness

Source: Drouin, N., Bourgault, M. and Gervais, C. (2010). How organizations support distributed project teams: Key dimensions and their impact on decision making and teamwork effectiveness, *Journal of Management Development*, 32 (8). <http://DOI.org/10.1108/JMD-07-2012-0091>

In summary, all three theoretical frameworks presented above focused on team effectiveness, whereby team effectiveness is interdependent with different factors, and where team effectiveness represented both an input and output in itself. Yes, the context of the study was different in terms of the studied group or target population. Nevertheless, the three theoretical frameworks' commonality illustrated that team effectiveness's success was underlined by leadership, collaboration, and decision.

2.5.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework represents the study's scope, drawn from the initial situation analysis of the global, regional, and Asian contexts and theoretical frameworks of Organization Development and management concepts.

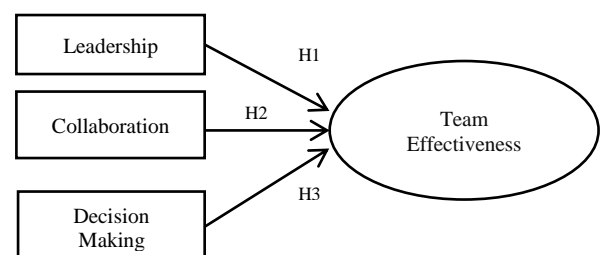


Figure 4: The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework, as illustrated, comprises independent and dependent variables. The independent variables consist of leadership, collaboration, and decision, while the dependent variable is team effectiveness. The study aims at identifying which of the independent variable has significantly related to team effectiveness

3. Research Methods and Materials

This research employed the quantitative method as the primary method for data collection. The data were collected using structured questionnaires.

3.1. Scope of Data Analysis

The data analysis was treated with descriptive statistics (e.g., Mean, Standard Deviation), Pearson correlation (p-value), and (r-value) for the degree of correlation), with the 95% confidence interval as the parameters to confirm null and alternative hypotheses.

Table 1 Degree of Correlation

Degree of Correlation	Interpretation
$0.0 = r $	No correlation
$0.0 < r < 0.2$	Very weak correlation
$0.2 \leq r < 0.4$	Weak correlation
$0.4 \leq r < 0.6$	Moderately strong correlation
$0.6 \leq r < 0.8$	Strong correlation
$0.8 \leq r < 1.0$	Very strong correlation
$1.0 = r $	Perfect correlation

3.2 Scope of population and sampling

The actual samples were the alumni who came from Kayin State, Myanmar. The nature of the target population was homogeneity who have common experience with the EGG network. The sampling plan was purposive sampling, while the actual responses received was from the EGG alumni network were $n=124$.

3.3 Scope of Research Instrument

This research employed a structured questionnaire, which contained 20 questions, excluding the demographic profile. The five-point Likert scale was utilized to rate each question. 1- Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree to 5-Strongly agree. The structured questionnaire was ensured of contents' validity and reliability. Three experts of Ph.D. holders were requested to conduct the index objective congruence (IOC) on the questionnaire's initial design. The structure of the questionnaire comprises two main parts—see Table 2 below.

Table 2 No. of main variables & questions

Part	Main Variable	No. of questions
Part I	Demographic Profile e.g., gender, age, education level, position, ethnicity, and marital status)	1-7
Part II	Team effectiveness (Dependent Variable)	1-5
	Leadership (Independent Variable)	6-10
	Collaboration (Independent Variable)	11-15
	Decision making (Independent Variable)	16-20

Table 3 Reliability Test Result of Cronbach Alpha Co-Efficient

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Comment
Team effectiveness	5	.717	Reliable
Leadership	5	.796	Reliable
Collaboration	5	.839	Reliable
Decision Making	5	.850	Reliable

The acceptable reliability result is 0.70 and higher. In this study, all 20 questions obtained >0.70 .

4. Results and Discussion

Statistical results presented in the subsequent sections comprise 1. Descriptive statistics, 2. Pearson correlation, and 3. Hypothesis interpretation, and 4. Discussion.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics

Question of Team Effectiveness	N	M	SD	Rating Scale
EGG Alumni Network has good communication among members.	124	3.77	.731	Agree
You are proud to be a member of the EGG Alumni Network.	124	4.41	.865	Strongly Agree
EGG Alumni Pursues EGG Network activities to remain its visibility.	124	3.95	.708	Agree
EGG Alumni share a common value.	124	3.92	.619	Agree
EGG Alumni achieves EGG Alumni Network goal.	124	3.74	.568	Agree
Overall		Agree		

As illustrated in Table 4, Team Effectiveness indicated the highest mean of $M=4.41$, $SD=.865$; this came from question No.4 (TE4), "You are proud to be a member of EGG Alumni Network.". In the meantime, question No.5 (TE5), "EGG Alumni Network achieves EGG Alumni Network goal," obtained the lowest mean of $M=3.74$, $SD=.568$. The overall average of all questions regarding team effectiveness fell in the "Agree." rating.

Table 5 Pearson Correlation

Variable	T.E.	L	C	DM
TE Pearson Correlation	1	.479**	.173	.408**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	N	.000	.054	.000
L	Pearson Correlation	.479**	1	.364**	.440**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	124	124	124	124
C	Pearson Correlation	.173	.364**	1	.468**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.054	.000	.000	.000
	N	124	124	124	124
Variable	T.E.	L	C	DM	
D.M.	Pearson Correlation	.408**	.440**	.468**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	124	124	124	124

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 above illustrated the Pearson correlation results, while Table 7 summarized the p-Value and Pearson Correlation (r) Results.

Table 6 Summary of Independent variables

Independent variables	P-value	Pearson correlation results (r)
Leadership	0.000	0.479
Collaboration	0.054	0.173
Decision Making	0.000	0.408

According to Tables 6, two independent variables: leadership and decision-making obtained $p = 0.000$ $< p = 0.05$ parameter while collaboration obtained $p = 0.054$, $> p = 0.050$ parameter. Based on the 95% confidence interval of p-Value interpretation, both leadership and decision-making variables significantly correlated with team effectiveness, and collaboration insignificantly correlated with team effectiveness.

Table 7 Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hyp.	Statistical Hypotheses	Pearson Correlation	Level of Sig	Result
H _{1o}	Leadership has no significant relation with team effectiveness	.440**	.000	Rejected H _{1o}
H _{1a}	Leadership has a significant relationship with team effectiveness			
H _{2o}	Collaboration has no significant relation with team effectiveness	.468**	.054	Accepted H _{2o}
H _{2a}	Collaboration has a significant relationship with team effectiveness			
H _{3o}	Decision making has no significant relation to team effectiveness	.408**	.000	Rejected H _{3o}

H _{3a}	Decision making has a significant relationship with team effectiveness			
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* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

5. Conclusions

The research was conducted with all EGG Alumni in Education Gathering Group (EGG) Academy in Kayin State, Myanmar. The study's purposes were to examine the relationship between team effectiveness, leadership, collaboration, and decision-making and identify improvement plans to elevate team effectiveness in EGG Alumni Network. There are a total of 124 respondents who participated in the survey.

The actual respondents were Education Gathering Group (EGG) alumni from batch one to batch six. All were from Kayin State, Myanmar. Education levels comprised master's degree, bachelor's degree, and graduate degree. Age ranged from 16 to >35 years old. The majority of the participants were female, which represented 59.7 % of the total actual responses. The majority of the respondents worked as an assistant/facilitator in the community.

Based on the quantitative data, it is noted that leadership and decision-making significantly correlated with team effectiveness, and thus rejecting the null hypotheses, and collaboration insignificantly correlated with team effectiveness, and thus accepting the null hypothesis.

5.1 Recommendation

According to the findings, the following recommendations could be made as follows:

1. Co-create the EGG alumni network by embracing the entrepreneurial spirit of the voluntary network.
2. Manage the negative perception that may affect EGG alumni's pride by activating a sense of ownership.
3. Maintain an effective team of the EGG alumni network by increasing communication flow to minimize any misunderstanding among members.
4. Explore the possibility for the EGG alumni network to hire paid staff who coordinates and communicates with other members about on-going activities and priorities while facilitating a collaborative engagement and involvement from alumni who act as volunteers and monitoring the success and impacts of EGG alumni activities for future budgeting and negotiation.
5. Strengthen the collaboration to improve and upgrade the EGG Alumni network's activities.

5.1.1 The Proposed action plans

Table 8 Proposed action plan

Variable	Team Level Individual-Team- Network Level
Team Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate a clear vision and strategy • Formalize working team, hire a paid staff and own office • Grow commitment among the alumni as a means of uniting the teams. • Stay up to date on the current network status • Monitor individual development and • Participate in alumni activities. • Discuss how the task fits into the overall mission. • Focus on the common goal. • Align team expectations and give feedback
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend the term for the elected working team from one year to two years. • Promote transparency and open-minded among teams • Leadership training. • Give honest feedback and specific suggestions • Know your strengths and grow self-confidence to lead the network while empowering the working team.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow collaboration to create a sense of volunteer in the network. • Recognize and reward high-performing alumni on the anniversary. • Increase the channel outside the networks and organizations. • Communicate network's activities plan before actual deployment or implementation. • Link with external networks and organizations. • Seek feedback from network internal and external
Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key ownership for decision-making to reduce time. • Embrace accountability. • Involve team members team in the decision-making process. • Listen and communicate • Inform the alumni what decide to do the activities

5.1.2 Team Effectiveness

EGG Alumni Network should review and refine its vision, mission, and goal objective to further network. At the same time, the network should plan long time strategy. Also, the working style is more of a realistic commitment from the responsible person, while seeking feedback on alumni's future expectations is essential for discussing how different internal tasks fit the overall mission.

5.1.3 Leadership

According to the network structure, the EGG alumni network's working team plays the main role of leadership to handle overall alumni activities and movement. There is once a year to elect a working team from alumni in the current procedure that EGG Alumni Network should consider extending the timeframe from one-year term to 2-year term to allow the working team to excel and grow

the network. After electing and forming the working team, leadership training should be given to them, and continue embracing the transparency and open-mindedness among alumni because they are presenting as alumni leading roles. Also, feedback sessions should be conducted by the working team to get the most up-to-date information to help them lead with confidence.

5.1.4 Collaboration

Collaboration plays a big role in EGG Alumni Network's success because its voluntary nature represents the mainstream EGG alumni network's network to gain recognition and maintain its high performance. The network focuses on growing internal and external networks and partnership programs, and before the activities' deployment, the network should inform the work plan to the alumni to ensure transparency and ownership. Lastly, the EGG alumni network continues seeking the alumni's feedback, suggestion, and recommendation for future improvement.

5.1.5 Decision Making

The EGG Alumni Network continues exercising its all-inclusiveness in decision-making that would allow them to succeed, strengthen the network, and embrace accountability, transparency, and open communication with other alumni regarding the endorsement made by the working team, for the sakes of maintaining the trust and gaining financial and moral supports from the alumni or members.

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