



**DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT  
AMONG ASSISTANT REGISTRARS OF PUBLIC  
UNIVERSITIES IN MALAYSIA AND MODERATING  
EFFECT OF AGE, GENDER AND LENGTH SERVICE**

by

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# UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA PERLIS

## DECLARATION OF THESIS

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

	PAGES
<b>THESIS DECLARATION</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	<b>xvi</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>xvii</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 Background of Study	1
1.2 Research Problem	7
1.3 Preliminary Study	13
1.4 Research Questions	18
1.5 Research Objectives	19
1.6 Scope of the Study	20
1.7 Significance of the Study	21
1.7.1 Theoretical Contributions	21
1.7.2 Practical Contributions	25
1.8 Definitions of Terms	26

1.9 Organisation of Thesis	29
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## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1 Introduction	31
2.2 Different Concept of Employee Engagement	32
2.3 Employee Engagement	33
2.4 Conceptualisation of Employee Engagement	35
2.5 Psychological Conditions and Employee Engagement	37
2.5.1 Psychological Meaningfulness	40
2.5.2 Psychological Safety	41
2.5.3 Psychological Availability	43
2.6 Job Resources and Employee Engagement	44
2.7 Organisational Commitment and Employee Engagement	51
2.8 Leadership Style and Employee Engagement	58
2.9 Employee Trust and Employee Engagement	61
2.10 Demographic Variables in Relation to Employee Engagement	62
2.10.1 Moderating Effect of Age on the Relationship between Antecedents and Employee Engagement	62
2.10.2 Moderating effect of Gender on the Relationship between Antecedents and Employee Engagement	64
2.10.3 Moderating Effect of Length of Service on the Relationship between Antecedents and Employee Engagement	65
2.11 Gaps in the Literature	65
2.12 Chapter Summary	71

## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

3.1 Introduction	75
3.2 Research Framework	76
3.2.1 Underpinning Theory in the Study	78
3.2.1.1 Social Exchange Theory	79
3.2.1.2 Kahn's Foundation Theory relates to Social Exchange Theory and Employee Engagement.	79
3.2.1.3 The Job Demand and Resources Model (JD-R Model) relates to Social Exchange Theory and Employee Engagement	81
3.2.1.4 Organisational Commitment Model relates to Social Exchange Theory and Employee Engagement	83
3.2.1.5 Leadership Style relates to Social Exchange Theory and Employee Engagement	85
3.2.1.6 Employee Trust relates to Social Exchange Theory and Employee Engagement.	86
3.3 Hypotheses Development	88
3.3.1 The Relationship between Psychological Conditions and Employee Engagement	89
3.3.2 The Relationship between Job Resources and Employee Engagement	92
3.3.3 The Relationship between Organisational Commitment and Employee Engagement	96
3.3.4 The Relationship between Leadership Style and Employee Engagement	99
3.3.5 The Relationship between Employee Trust and Employee Engagement	101
3.3.6 The Moderating Effects of Age between Antecedents Variables and Employee Engagement	102
3.3.7 The Moderating Effects of Gender between Antecedents Variables and Employee Engagement	104
3.3.8 The Moderating Effects of Length of Service between Antecedents Variables and Employee Engagement	106

3.3.9 Summary of Hypotheses	108
3.4 Research Design	114
3.5 Population, Sample, Sampling Techniques and Data Collection	117
3.5.1 Population	117
3.5.2 Sample Size	124
3.5.3 Sampling Procedure	126
3.5.4 Data Collection – Questionnaires	129
3.5.4.1 Data Collection Techniques	130
3.5.4.1.1 Internet Survey Research Procedures	130
3.5.5 Questionnaires Development	135
3.5.6 Questionnaire Design	136
3.5.7 Scale and Measurement	137
3.6 Pilot Test (Pre-Testing of Questionnaire)	142
3.7 Data Analysis Procedures	147
3.7.1 The Partial Least Squares (PLS)	148
3.8 Assessment of Measurement and Structural Model	149
3.8.1 Measurement Model Assessment	149
3.8.1.1 Reliability of Construct	152
3.8.1.2 Convergent Validity	153
3.8.1.3 Discriminant Validity	153
3.8.1.4 Assessment of Structural Model	154
3.8.1.5 Assessment of Predictive Relevance	155
3.9 Proposed Structural Model of the Study	156

3.10 Chapter Summary	156
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## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

4.1 Introduction	157
4.2 Response Rate	157
4.3 Data Screening – Non Response Bias and Missing Values	158
4.3.1 Non Response Bias	158
4.3.1 Missing Values	159
4.4 Profile of Respondents	161
4.5 Descriptive Statistics	162
4.5.1 The Level of Psychological Conditions	163
4.5.2 The Level of Job Resources	165
4.5.3 The Level of Organisational Commitment	167
4.5.4 The Level of Leadership Style	169
4.5.5 The Level of Employee Trust	170
4.5.6 The Level of Employee Engagement	171
4.6 Non-Normality Data	174
4.7 Assessment of PLS-SEM Path Model Results	175
4.8 Assessment of Measurement Model	175
4.8.1 Individual Item Reliability	178
4.8.2 Individual Consistency Reliability	178
4.8.3 Convergent Validity	181
4.8.4 Discriminant Validity	181



4.9 Assessment of Significance of the Structural Model	187
4.9.1 Assessment of Variance Explained in the Endogenous Latent Variables	191
4.10 Potential Moderating effect of Age, Gender and Length Of Service	192
4.10.1 The Moderating Role of Age	193
4.10.2 The Moderating Role of Gender	196
4.10.3 The moderating Role of Experience (Length of Service)	200
4.10.4 Interaction Plot	202
4.11 Analysing Predictive Relevance	204
4.12 Effect of Demographic Factors on Employee Engagement	205
4.13 Chapter Summary	206
 <b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
5.1 Introduction	213
5.2 Recapitulations	213
5.3 Discussions	216
5.3.1 Antecedents of Employee Engagement	217
5.3.1.1 The Relationship between Psychological Conditions and Employee Engagement	218
5.3.1.2 The Relationship between Job Resources and Employee Engagement	221
5.3.1.3 The Relationship between Organisational Commitment and Employee Engagement	225
5.3.1.4 The Relationship between Leadership Style and Employee Engagement	229
5.3.1.5 The Relationship Between Employee Trust And Employee Engagement	231

5.3.2 The Moderating Effect of Age on the Relationship between Antecedents and Employee Engagement	233
5.3.2.1 The Moderating Effect of Age on the Relationship between Psychological Conditions and Employee Engagement	233
5.3.2.2 The Moderating Effect of Age on the Relationship between Job Resources and Employee Engagement	236
5.3.2.3 The Moderating Effect of Age on the Relationship between Organisational Commitment and Employee Engagement	238
5.3.2.4 The Moderating Effect of Age on the Relationship between Leadership Style and Employee Engagement	239
5.3.2.5 The Moderating Effect of Age on the Relationship between Employee Trust and Employee Engagement	240
5.3.3 The Moderating Effect of Gender on the Relationship between Antecedents and Employee Engagement	240
5.3.3.1 The Moderating Effect of Gender on the Relationship between the Psychological Conditions and Employee Engagement	241
5.3.3.2 The Moderating Effect of Gender on the Relationship between Job Resources and Employee Engagement	242
5.3.3.3 The Moderating Effect of Gender on the Relationship between Organisational Commitment and Employee Engagement	243
5.3.3.4 The Moderating Effect of Gender on the Relationship between Leadership Style and Employee Engagement	244
5.3.3.5 The Moderating Effect of Gender on the Relationship between Employee Trust and Employee Engagement	245
5.3.4 The Moderating Effect of Experience (Length Of Service) on the Relationship between Antecedents and Employee Engagement	246
5.4 Implications of the Findings	254
5.4.1 Theoretical Implications	254
5.4.2 Managerial Implications	257

5.5 Limitation of the Study	260
5.6 Recommendations	262
5.6.1 Recommendations for Universities	262
5.6.2 Recommendations for Ministry	263
5.7 Conclusions	264

## **REFERENCES**

## **APPENDICES**

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## LIST OF TABLES

NO.		PAGES
2.1	Summary of Personal Engagement Literature	38
2.2	Summary of Job Resources Engagement Literature	50
2.3	Summary of Organisational Commitment Literature	52
3.1	Summary of Hypotheses and Research Objectives	109
3.2	List of Number of Assistant Registrars' Grade N41-N54 Population in Public Universities in Malaysia	117
3.3	Job functions and Duties of Assistant Registrars According to Grade	122
3.4	Sample Size	128
3.5	Steps in Dilman et al's., (2009) Tailored Design Method	132
3.6	Scheduling Framework: Based on Dilman et al.'s (2009) Tailored Design Method	133
3.7	Questionnaire Items	135
3.8	Questionnaire Design	136
3.9	Measurements	138
3.10	Sample of Profile	143
3.11	Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	144
3.12	Reliability Test Results	146
3.13	Summary of the Jarvis et al.'s (2003) Decision Rules	151
4.1	Result of Missing Data	160

4.2	Profile of Respondents	161
4.3	The Rating Score	162
4.4	Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Psychological Meaningfulness	163
4.5	Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Psychological Safety	164
4.6	Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Psychological Availability	164
4.7	Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Rewards and Recognition	165
4.8	Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Employee Communication	166
4.9	Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Employee Development	166
4.10	Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Affective Commitment	167
4.11	Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Continuance Commitment	168
4.12	Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Normative Commitment	169
4.13	Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Leadership Style	170
4.14	Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Employee Trust	170
4.15	Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Employee Engagement	171
4.16	Level of Employee Engagement Among Assistant Registrars of Public Universities in Malaysia	172
4.17	Measurement Model Results	179
4.18	Correlations of Constructs and Discriminant Validity Assessment	182

4.19	Factor Loadings and Cross-Loadings	184
4.20	Structural Model Assessment	189
4.21	Variance Explained in the Endogenous Latent Variables	192
4.22	PLS Moderating Results for Age	194
4.23	PLS Moderating Results for Gender	198
4.24	PLS Moderating Results for Length of Service	201
4.25	Predictive Relevance for Endogenous Variables	205
4.26	Results of Oneway ANOVA	205
4.27	Summary of Overall Hypotheses Results	207

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## LIST OF FIGURES

NO	PAGES
3.1 Schematic diagram of the theoretical framework	77
3.2 Public Service Classification	121
3.3 Formative and Reflective Factors of Measurement Models	151
4.1 Measurement Model	177
4.2 The Structural Model	188
4.3 Structural Model of Assesment With Moderator of Age	193
4.4 Structural Model of Assesment With Moderator of Gender	197
4.5 Structural Model of Assesment With Moderator of Length of Service	200
4.6 Interaction Effect of Psychology Safety and Employee Engagement on Age	203
4.7 Interaction Effect of Psychology Safety and Employee Engagement on Length of Services	204
5.1 The New Comprehensive Framework (PREALEN)	255

## LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS

HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HR	Human Resource
IV	Independent Variable
DV	Dependent Variable
MV	Moderating Variable
PLS	Partial Least Square
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS)
EM	Expectation Maximisation
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
SET	Social Exchange Theory
PLS-MGA	Partial Least Square- Multi Group Analysis
SET	Social Exchange Theory
POS	Perceived Organisational Support
OCB	Organizational Citizenship Behaviours



**Penentu Penglibatan Pekerja Di Kalangan Penolong Pendaftar Universiti Awam  
Di Malaysia dan Kesan Penyederhanaan Umur, Jantina dan Tempoh  
Perkhidmatan**

**ABSTRAK**

Penglibatan pekerja telah menerima banyak perhatian pada dekad yang lalu daripada akhbar perniagaan popular, termasuk firma perunding dan masyarakat pengamal. Mereka mendakwa bahawa penglibatan pekerja merupakan amalan sumber manusia baharu yang boleh digunakan oleh organisasi perniagaan untuk menghadapi ketidakpastian keadaan industri yang berdaya saing. Walau bagaimanapun, bagi komuniti akademik, konsep ini masih baharu. Justeru, kajian yang mendalam diperlukan untuk mengesahkan konsep ini. Memandangkan hasil penyelidikan yang ada sekarang belum mampu meneroka sepenuhnya kepentingan praktikal penglibatan pekerja, persoalan asas tentang pembolehubah yang menyumbang kepada penglibatan pekerja dan manfaatnya kepada individu dan organisasi masih memerlukan jawapan. Bagi meneliti isu ini, dengan bersandarkan teori keadaan psikologi Kahn, teori pertukaran sosial, teori komitmen pekerja, teori jenis kepemimpinan dan teori kepercayaan pekerja, kajian ini menyarankan satu kerangka kerja dengan menitikberatkan penglibatan pekerja. Seramai 400 orang penolong pendaftar dari dua puluh buah universiti awam di Malaysia telah mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Data dikumpul melalui soal selidik sendiri menggunakan pautan kaji selidik *Monkey*. Pendekatan Kuasa Dua Terkecil Separa untuk Pemodelan Persamaan Berstruktur (PLS-SEM) merupakan teknik statistik utama yang digunakan dalam kajian ini. Dapatan kajian memperlihatkan keselamatan psikologi, anugerah dan penghargaan, pembangunan pekerja, komitmen afektif, kepercayaan pekerja, komitmen normatif dan jenis kepemimpinan mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan penglibatan pekerja manakala bermaknanya psikologi, ketersediaan psikologi, komunikasi pekerja dan komitmen berterusan tidak mempunyai apa-apa kesan yang besar ke atas penglibatan pekerja. Pembolehubah moderator (umur, dan tempoh perkhidmatan) didapati mempunyai hubungan signifikan separa dengan penglibatan pekerja. Kajian ini telah berjaya membangunkan satu rangka kerja yang boleh digunakan oleh penyelidik dan pengamal untuk mengukur penglibatan pekerja dan ia dinamakan sebagai PREALEN.

**Determinants of Employee Engagement among Assistant Registrars of Public Universities in Malaysia and Moderating Effect of Age, Gender and Length of Service**

**ABSTRACT**

Employee engagement has received a great deal of attention in the last decade from popular business press, including consulting firms and practitioner community. They claim that employee engagement is a new human resource practice that can be used by business organisations in order to cope with the uncertainty of competitive industrial conditions. However, in the academic community, the concept is still new. Therefore, the concept requires rigorous seminal studies for it to be validated. Given that practical interest in employee engagement which has outstripped the currently available research evidence, fundamental questions as which variables contribute the most to employee engagement and how and why they benefit individuals and organisations, still remain unanswered. To examine this issue, grounded by Kahn's psychological conditions theory, job resources theory, employee commitment theory, leadership styles theory and employee trust theory, this study proposes a new framework by decomposing employee engagement. A total of 400 assistant registrars from twenty public universities in Malaysia participated in this study. Data were collected through questionnaires (survey monkey hyperlink). The Partial Least Squares approach to Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was the main statistical technique employed in this study. The findings of the study revealed that psychological safety, rewards and recognition, employee development, affective commitment, employee trust, normative commitment and leadership styles were found to have a significant relationship with employee engagement. The psychological meaningfulness, psychological availability, employee communication and continuance commitment were not found to have any significant effect on employee engagement. The moderating variables (age, and length of service) were found to have partially significant relationship with employee engagement. This study has successfully developed a framework, PREALEN, which can be used by future researchers and practitioners to measure employee engagement.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

Dynamic changes are frequently witnessed in the business industry and society due to globalisation in the recent years. Topping this are the ever increasing competition and organisations rushing to increase their profits. Various strategies have to be focused on, in order for a longer survival in this globalised world. We can no longer focus only on increasing sales or refining services but we also have to pay attention to retaining talented workers whom have high performance and are competent (Berger & Berger, 2004). There are many ways or means to go about it, one of them is employee engagement. Employee engagement in the recent years has emerged as a crucial driver of business success. When an employee believes in the mission, purpose and values of an organisation, that is called employee engagement. Employees' actions and attitude towards their employers and customers demonstrate their commitment (Stockley, 2007).

Needless to say, employee engagement is an important field to an organisation for it is a primary source in creating competitive advantage in increasing the organisation's performance and productivity. Organisation with high level of employee engagement is reported to have positive organisational outcomes such as a good commitment (Shuck & Wollard, 2010; Kular, Gatenby, Rees, Soane, & Truss, 2008; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002).

Engaged employees display high level of energy and are very much involved in their work (Macey & Schneider 2008; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). As such, absenteeism is not an issue with engaged employees whom have an average of 27% less physical absenteeism compared to their peers (Wagner & Harter, 2006).

In conjunction with that, there are a few studies depicted the existence of decreasing level of employee engagement among employees. According to Gallup's daily tracking, employee disengagement problems have created a huge impact on the economy in Germany. About 15% of workers in Germany are engaged with their jobs, while 61% are disengaged and 24% are actively disengaged. These actively disengaged employees costs the economy between 112 billion and 138 billion euro per year in lost of production (Marco, 2013). Besides that, DTZ Consulting and Research (2007) revealed that productivity, organisational performance and outcomes for customers show the effect of engagement. Committed employees perform 20% better with improvement shown from low to high levels of engagement and consequently 20 percentile points increase in employee performance as found from a study conducted by Corporate Leadership Council (2004) on engagement levels of over 50,000 employees all over the world. This fact has been further reinforced by an ISR survey on 360,000 employees attached to 41 companies whom make up the world's 10 largest economies where the operating margin and net profit margin of companies with low engagement decrease for three consecutive years as pointed out by Meere (2005).

The public higher education institutions in Malaysia, which is the focus of this study, have entered a new era of international competition, whereby these organisations participate in a various international events to enhance their visibility and improve their

respective university systems (Norzaini, 2012). The current knowledge-based economy spurs the demand for highly educated and specialised people. In order to capture this demand, a good quality higher education institution is essential. This is evidenced by the priority placed on higher education institution by the Malaysian government (Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006–2010, 2006; Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2007).

On the other hand, efforts to increase quality standards of public universities to a higher level were focused on three parts which are: part 1 institutional pillars – strengthening of institutions, part 2 critical agenda, and part 3 implementation of support. This has been introduced by the Ministry of Higher Education in their planned objective which is National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2007 (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2007). The Universities and University Colleges Act of 1971 was amended in 1996 and 2009 for the purpose of realigning the governance of universities with these new forms and demands (Universities and University Colleges Act Amendment Act 2009). Malaysian public universities' practice top down management approach in regards to their governance. Vice-Chancellor is at the top of the governance hierarchical, followed by Deputy Vice-Chancellor, with Registrar and Bursar at the next rung and Deans and Head of Departments sit at the top of faculties and schools' level (Norzaini, 2012).

It is interesting to note that according to a study conducted at selected public universities in Malaysia, human competency coming from especially the non-academic administrators should be the group that consists of experienced members of the management support system (Norzaini, 2012). Further to note, as mentioned by

Newstorm (2007), employees experiencing career development and success have stronger and longer commitment to remain with their organisation.

Looking at the roles of faculty in university, administrators are to advise respective administrations concerning curriculum development with instruction method, establishing degree requirements, in addition to managing tenure appointments, promotion and sabbatical (Norzaini, 2012). Based on the analysis of work published by UKM (2016), an administrative officer is the one whom is responsible for implementing the related management tasks such as human resource, budgeting procedure, developing working papers, developing curriculum and academician procedure with methods of instruction among them. This is further strengthen by the study done by Tierney (2004) whereby it is found that, thus efficient and effective system of governance can be achieved by having a close cooperation between administrators and faculty.

On the other hand, as strongly believed by the Vice Chancellor from two research universities in Malaysia where university governance can be further improved or make a difference when the strategies in place are translated into the university environment (Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi, 2014). Thus, an engaged environment has to be developed where every employee is equipped with the ability to assist the university to be efficient and effective (Norzaini, 2012). Administrators also need to engage in what Tierney (1991) refers to as “reasoned reflection” in understanding the organisational culture contributing to governance processes. Certainly, organisation will benefit when employee and employer are engaged (Cataldo, 2011). Engaged employees are motivated, committed to their organisation’s goals and thus become the driving force of

their organisation's future (Smith, 2013). Employers surely need dedicated and committed employees for their organisation to succeed in today's globally competitive business environment. (Cataldo, 2011).

Aiming to meet the challenges of employee engagement in today's organisations, psychological conditions, job resources, organisational commitment, leadership styles and employee trust are the factors identified in employee engagement. (Muthuveloo, Basbous, Ping, Long, 2013; Wang & Hsieh, 2013; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Schneider, Karen, & Scott, 2010; Wu, 2009; Batista-taran, Shuck, Gutierrez, & Baralt, 2009; Price, 2009; Kular et al., 2008; Lockwood, 2007; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007; Metzler, 2006; Saks, 2006; Kahn, 1990). Thus, it is important to develop and research studies that lead to a better identification and isolation of factors that contribute to employee engagement in a new economic environment with organisational outcomes.

Thus even in the higher education niches, university's management and administration also plays a vital role in achieving the desired level of employee engagement. At the same time, to be in tandem and ensure the Ministry of Higher Education's plan is smoothly executed, whereby employee engagement is an important issue that needs to be addressed (DTZ Consulting and Research, 2007). The work done by DTZ Consulting and Research (2007) denotes that positive impacts of employee engagement can bring changes and benefit to the public sectors. Thus, to provide a better quality in management in terms of supervision and administration, vision and goals must be clear and as such, the engagement of employees is identified as the major contributor for the change (DTZ Consulting and Research, 2007). In reference to 'peraturan-peraturan pegawai awam (kelakuan tatatertib)' (Rules and regulations for

public officials (discipline)) (1993), a circular set out for the public officials by the Public Service Department in which it was stated that the provisions under clause 4. (2)(e) an officer shall not be less efficient or effortless and under clause 4. (2)(g) a person shall be responsible for the performance of duties, is in line with Wagner & Harter (2006), whereby in this study the disengaged workers undermine what their engaged co-workers accomplishment and this will greatly affect the functioning of an organisation. In the university's context, the university's administrators hold a key position where the university's success is affected partially by the efficiency of its administrators. Administrators play the intermediary role between their superior and subordinate staff. They also form the backbone of the university's mission in ensuring that subordinates and other staffs are guided accordingly (Hazlan Abdul Hamid, 2002). As such, it is important for organisations involved in education to have effective engaging administrative workers for they dictate the tone, manner and style of the entire institution in addition to the quality of their daily work performance contributing to the quality of the relationships with faculties, students and the public (Scott, 1978 as referenced in Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999). They also need to handle human relationships in addition to addressing the need to effective communication, handling conflict and be flexible. They also act as a manager in planning, leading and coordinating all tasks in the department (Hazlan Abdul Hamid, 2002).

Furthermore, the other role of administrators is to manage activities or groups of activities, sequence and coordinate their operations, ensure work is properly performed, correct errors, and resolve conflicts which arise in their performance. The whole process of administration is one of decision making branches (Westmeyer, 1990)