

# An Analysis of Inter-Departmental Integration towards Organizational Development

Asna Mubashra<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Ali Ammer Saleemi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Incharge, Department of Textile Design, College of Art & Design, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup>Managing Director, Utility Stores Corporation of Pakistan.

Correspondence: [asna.cad@pu.edu.pk](mailto:asna.cad@pu.edu.pk)<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** The study was conducted to address one of fundamental issues to the theory and practice of human resource management. A quest to find solutions to organizational challenges was a focal point to organizational development and has been researched as a dominant context. This study explored the interdepartmental integration within Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU) Rawalpindi.

**Methodology:** Interdepartmental integration was explored via 30 self-administered structured questionnaires. To proceed with the investigations a qualitative methodology which was interpretive in nature was used. The self-administered structured questionnaires probed how interdepartmental integration was practiced in organization. The study data was organized on SPSS; and finally the data was analyzed for the findings.

**Findings:** The findings showed that interdepartmental integration was modeled by practices of interaction and collaboration.

**Conclusion:** Finally, the contributions of the combined effect of interaction and collaboration in shape of interdepartmental integration were taken as the most significant aspects within the organization. Hence, presence of partial interdepartmental integration against Interdepartmental differentiation was found.

**Keywords:** Interdepartmental Integration, Collaboration, Interaction.

## Introduction

### *Interdepartmental Integration*

Improved interdepartmental integration yields improved performance. For any organization better performance is vital for its progress hence holds great importance. All the factors which positively enhance the overall performance of any organization become the avenue of common concern. The interdepartmental integration holds a huge impact towards the enhancement of the overall performance of organization. It is a complex phenomenon, thus a general meaning for “integration” is deficient. It is being understood in diverse manners. The existing relevant literature has indicated three categorizations that encompass interrelationship of integration with the mutual communication happenings as well as well as interrelationship of integration with collaborative activities between departments (Michael, 2008).

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Conclusively it can be stated that integration is an amalgamation of interdepartmental interaction and interdepartmental collaboration. All three approaches try to define the basic dimensions encompassing it. Adopting this composite view, integration is a multidimensional process. Different situations are outcome of various scales of integration obtained through collaboration and interaction. Integration is a complex process consisting of multiple dimensions. Organizational Integration is a fusion of interdepartmental interaction and interdepartmental collaboration (Charls, Marie-Helene, Gary, Fred, & Pilino, 2002). Collaboration means willingness of all departments in an organization to work together to achieve the objectives of the organization. The term interaction represents the communication aspects. Interaction is easily estimated due to its tangible nature. These significant dimensions are positively correlated for performance improvement. In addition to it the collaboration intervenes to boost association between performance and interaction (Daniel, Jerom, & Van, 1997).

Interactions among the organization members are often an integral part of interdepartmental integration, thus these must be given priority. The phenomenon of interaction is reflected as an effective communication approach, and this is a base line tool to be emphasized to enhance information sharing among component departments. On the other hand the approach of collaboration is different from interaction. Collaboration emphasizes long term continuous relationship among various departments of an organization. (Michael, 2008).

Existing literature brings into limelight that the organizational management in its quest to enhance interdepartmental integration, must assess existing levels of the firm's. There is also variation in the degree of interdepartmental integration in terms of its departmental interaction and departmental collaboration (Gomes, Weerd-Nederhof, Pearson, & Cunha, 2003). Enhanced interdepartmental integration acts as intra organizational power as tool for performance improvement because every organization comprises of interdependent subunits. Building integration across departments is a multifaceted complex phenomenon that is predominantly affected by organizational culture and organizational structure, its reward mechanisms and upward and downward communication channels, the structure of formal subsystems along with clarity of goal orientation, focused time management, and healthy interpersonal relationships (Kahn & Mentzer, 1996). The demand of the differentiation is highly related to cater to the unique needs of the particular component systems which prevail in the organization to achieve its goals. Organizational culture and its perceived economic performance mark the relationship of degree between the states of differentiation and integration among the organization. This is an inverse relationship between the degree of integration and degree of differentiation across systems of any organization. For the enhancement of strategic requirements an organization must focus on the improvement of interdepartmental integration. In this manner the firm may achieve its perceived agility in responding to expansion of its market and expansion of its proposed customers (Paul & Jay, 1967).

### **Components of Interdepartmental Integration**

For achieving cohesiveness across multiple departments in an organization interdepartmental integration is a key factor that works on interdepartmental collaboration and interdepartmental interactions. (Charls, Marie-Helene, Gary, Fred, & Pilino, 2002).

#### ***Collaboration***

Interdepartmental collaboration addresses the extent of the commitment of various departments of an organization to work together for a common goal by holding mutual vision and understanding by sharing common resources. Collaborative activities indicate a higher degree of interrelationship, but these dimensions are usually not tangible thus difficult to be regulated and to be sustained (Charls, Marie-Helene, Gary, Fred, & Pilino, 2002).

### ***Interaction***

Interdepartmental interaction activities involve a network of better formed communication channels within the organization. These channels are predominantly tangible and can be easily estimated and regulated (Michael, 2008).

### ***The Selected Organization***

The organization selected is Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan, since the team conducting the research has comfortable level of access to the current employees of this organization.

### ***Snapshot of the Organization***

As a commemorative effort the Fatima Jinnah Women University is named to value efforts made by "Madr-e-Millat" to promote and initiate women empowerment. Old presidency was selected as an ideal venue for this University. It has been continuously contributing for provision of state-of-the-art education of Pakistani women to prepare them well for the next millennium. This university is a national symbol of prioritizing a well-developed platform of learning dedicated to the daughters of the nation. (About FJWU , 2010).

Fatima Jinnah Women University provides an excellent academic environment to the daughters of Pakistan for acquiring excellence in higher education and participate in contemporary research. Female students across Pakistan come for admission at all academic levels to become part of the rising Pakistan. This university has been extending its services since December 1998, and hold a long-term vision to continue to do so to strengthen national research. The University aims for holistic development of the students and strives to develop the professional, academic, physical, moral, and spiritual capabilities (About FJWU , 2010).

### ***Statement of the Problem***

The study is proposed to analyze the trend of interdepartmental integration in Fatima Jinnah Women University and to explore its existing impact on the overall environment of the organization. Specific trend shown by the findings of this research may further guide to suggest some recommendations and implications.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

The broad objectives of this study are to:

- Analyze the present mode of interdepartmental integration in FJWU.
- Identify the components that tend to influence the interdepartmental integration within the FJWU.
- Analyze the trends of interaction and collaboration.
- Recognize the impact of present mode of interdepartmental integration in FJWU on the overall environment of the organization.

### ***Significance of the Study***

Interdepartmental integration is referred to as an essential component of any successful organization. In every organization, Interdepartmental integration from all kinds of functioning departments is vital. The extent to which the accurate amount of information is shared for interaction and synchronization of collaborated activities performed for interdepartmental integration has implications both for organizational decision making and overall performance of employees as well as institute. Examples of problems with information exchange for interaction are easy to find. However, the antecedents of poor information transmission among departments are more difficult than merely pointing out their existence. There is sufficient research examining interdepartmental integration in organizations to suggest that there are certain factors which consistently relate to this aspect of enhanced performance. This study intended to examine the factors which might influence the interdepartmental integrated behavior.

### ***Delimitations***

- The study was conducted in only one organization.
- Because of the time constraint, in-depth investigations were not possible.
- Only employees of teaching departments were taking part in data collection.
- Responses only were collected from 8-10 teaching departments.
- Only structured questionnaires were used as means of data collection for this study.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Review of the Related Literature***

While the basic concept of interdepartmental integration may be familiar to most research the actual operationalization of the construct vary a great deal. Two representative studies most related to interdepartmental integration and operationalization of construct used in this research are selected. In its essence the entire concept of organizational performance can be predicted on interdepartmental integration. A well performing organization is one which has complete synchronization among all its departments. Poorly performing organizations will have evidence of some of its departments working at cross-purpose to the others. Underlying all of this is a supposition that higher levels of integration will lead to higher level of performance, a supposition that finds some empirical support (Michael, 2008).

#### ***Magnitude of Interdepartmental Integration***

Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) has emphasized that the co-alignment within an organization can be sensed at two primary levels: (1) How the component sub-units of the organization are structured; and (2) the variation or approach of interdepartmental integration. Larger organizations should have such subunits which have structural features and inter department relationships that are suited to the overall complexity in the environment in which the organization must operate. Large scale organizational set ups should have such subunits which have structural features and inter department relationships that are a good fit for the overall environment of the operations of the organization.

#### ***Dimensions of Interdepartmental Integration***

Kenneth B. Kahn and John T. Mentzer (1996) in their review article on “***Logistics and interdepartmental integration***” have given focus on drawing a proper and comprehensive definition of interdepartmental integration. The article addresses various approaches of the classifications and the perceptions that signify all the components guiding a beneficial explanation for interdepartmental integration to provide a better understanding to the managers and researchers. The author has proposed a conceptual model that is based on this to sketch the consequences correlated with different levels of integration. This article concludes with some workable directions for coming research.

Keeping the two factors of collaboration and interaction as baseline, authors have outlined a working model of integration of one department with other departments. Four constituencies of interdepartmental integration are indicated in this model. Situation one is described as having high interaction and low collaboration will represent those situations where high levels of documentation are needed but interdepartmental teamwork is not necessary. Situation two of low interaction and high collaboration will prevail in those situations where situations are ever-changing, there is limited reaction time, and documented information is unreliable and/or unavailable. High interaction and high collaboration characterize situations where critical products/orders are being shipped, products are customized to customer specifications, and/or many order exceptions can occur. While there is an implicit assumption that high integration is good, this article proposes that levels of interaction and collaboration should correspond to the needs of the situation. Within an interdepartmental context, logisticians need to consider a multidimensional perspective for integration, where interdepartmental integration encompasses interaction and collaboration activities Authors suggest that more logistics researchers should investigate this topic of interdepartmental integration and its components of interdepartmental interaction and

interdepartmental collaboration. They further believe that such consideration is particularly welcome in light of the current focus on horizontal management.

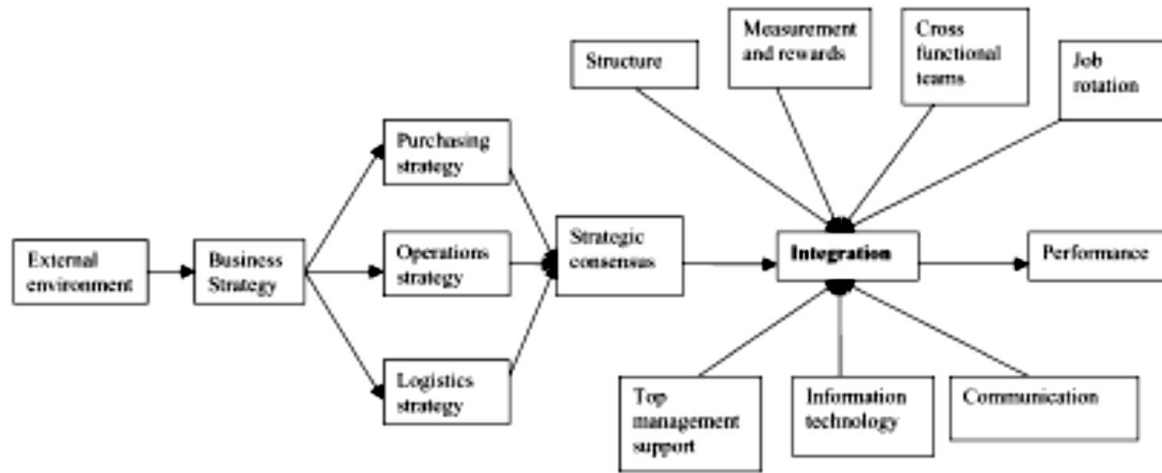
Another article **“Is more always better? An exploration of the differential effects of functional integration on performance in new product development”** by Jorge F. Gomes, Petra C. de Weerd-Nederhof, Alan W. Pearson and Miguel Pina e Cunha (2001) focuses on the need and effect of integration during the process of developing new product in any organization. The major concern raised in this research suggests that NPD is a progression and this necessitates the competence to attain, progress and understand large volumes of expected market, available technical assortments, financial picture and any other significant set of information, and this set of information provides a strong baseline to generate future ideas of products and these also assist to clearly evaluate the technical reliability of the new ideas, all the possibilities of the options of manufacturability and a clearer picture of proposed economic feasibility. Thus, the organizations and individuals become better able to take over any kind of inner conflicts and obstacles which might be caused during identified differentiation. This paper aims to search the correlation between working in NPD and integration of various scheduled tasks and actions as well as analyzing behaviors. Another objective of the study is to study how this relationship may work if conditions of project face some unforeseen uncertainty. 92 managers were given questionnaires who were engaged directly in NPD activities, the data collection was done from more than 40 companies which were British and Dutch by nature and there was diversity of selected industrial sectors.

Analysis of the data through *T-tests* revealed that there was no statistically significant difference among the two selected groups for most of the variables. Except for product innovativeness all the other variables of the study were measured by using 5-point Likert scale. It was seen that on an average scale the respondents were able to score higher on the collaboration sub-scales than the respondents were able to score on the interaction ones. Results obtained from study clearly showed that the dimension of collaboration correlated on a higher degree with the dimension of interaction but it was observed only in the initial stages of the NPD than the output of results shown in the later stages. In general, the results of the study indicated that the correlation coefficients as output of study were weak to medium, and it was also brought into limelight that this was seen along with the interaction scales when these were scoring the highest values. On the other hand the study revealed that the association of collaboration scales with the performance measures was very weak or even nonsignificant. The results of the study also highlighted that the Quality is found to be meaningfully correlated with the dimension of interaction, but it was more prominent in the preliminary phases of the NPD process, on the other hand the dimension of time seems to hold major importance for interaction but in the final stages. Conclusively current study also indicates that the scale of product innovativeness is very important, and this dimension is significant to understand how the intra-organizational collaboration during NPD is beneficial.

### ***Fusion to Present Study***

Deficient in the renowned research is any direction as to how much is the importance of interdepartmental integration to the educational organizations and how to assess and improve existing level of integration among different departments. There is evidence that presence of some factors enhance integration. The identified key drivers for integration centered on the current literature are mentioned below in Fig. 1

Figure 1: Key drivers of Integration centered on current literature



The purpose of the present research is to assess the level of interdepartmental integration present in a university. The only way to truly assess the level of interdepartmental integration is by collecting data from respondents working in different teaching departments of the same educational organization. Therefore our sample was limited to staff of 5 different departments of the selected university.

We suggest that the knowledge and importance of interdepartmental integration for educational institutes should be realized in order to improve the overall performance. The model in Fig.2 below is derived from the diverse literature. The model provides a basis for analysis of interdepartmental integration as to how each of the contributing components, interaction and collaboration are causative in overall integration.

In addition, we were interested in assessing contribution of the previous circumstances of integration, so an effort was made to ensure that the information collected clearly identifies the levels of both the interaction and collaboration. We also made some effort to analyze the results to the model presented in Fig. 2 in light of existing literature to assess the level of interdepartmental integration in selected university. Finally, we were limited to geography and time. The end goal was to have multiple respondents from heterogeneous departments within our geographic scope.

Fig. 2: *Model for Interdepartmental Integration level*

		<b>Interdepartmental Collaboration</b>	
		Low	High
<b>Interdepartmental Interaction</b>	Low	LOW INTEGRATION HIGH DIFFERENTIATION	PARTIAL INTEGRATION PARTIAL DIFFERENTIATION
	High	PARTIAL INTEGRATION PARTIAL DIFFERENTIATION	HIGH INTEGRATION LOW DIFFERENTIATION

## Methodology

This was a survey study; an effort was made to get an in-depth knowledge of how interdepartmental integration was practiced in this organization. Data was collected and analyzed to conclude the factors contributing to main objectives of the study and how this issue correlates to the rest of organizational concepts within the proposed organization.

### Population of the Study

All teaching departments of Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), Rawalpindi.

### Sample Size for the Study

30 study participants filled the questionnaire

### Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling method was adopted for selection of study participants. Participants were selected from 8-10 departments; their consent was sought, and they were assured of the confidentiality of their input.

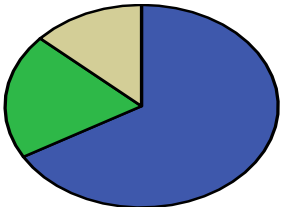

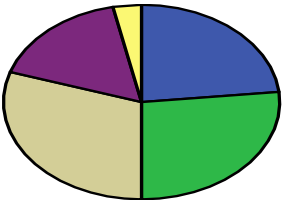
### Method of Data Collection and Analysis

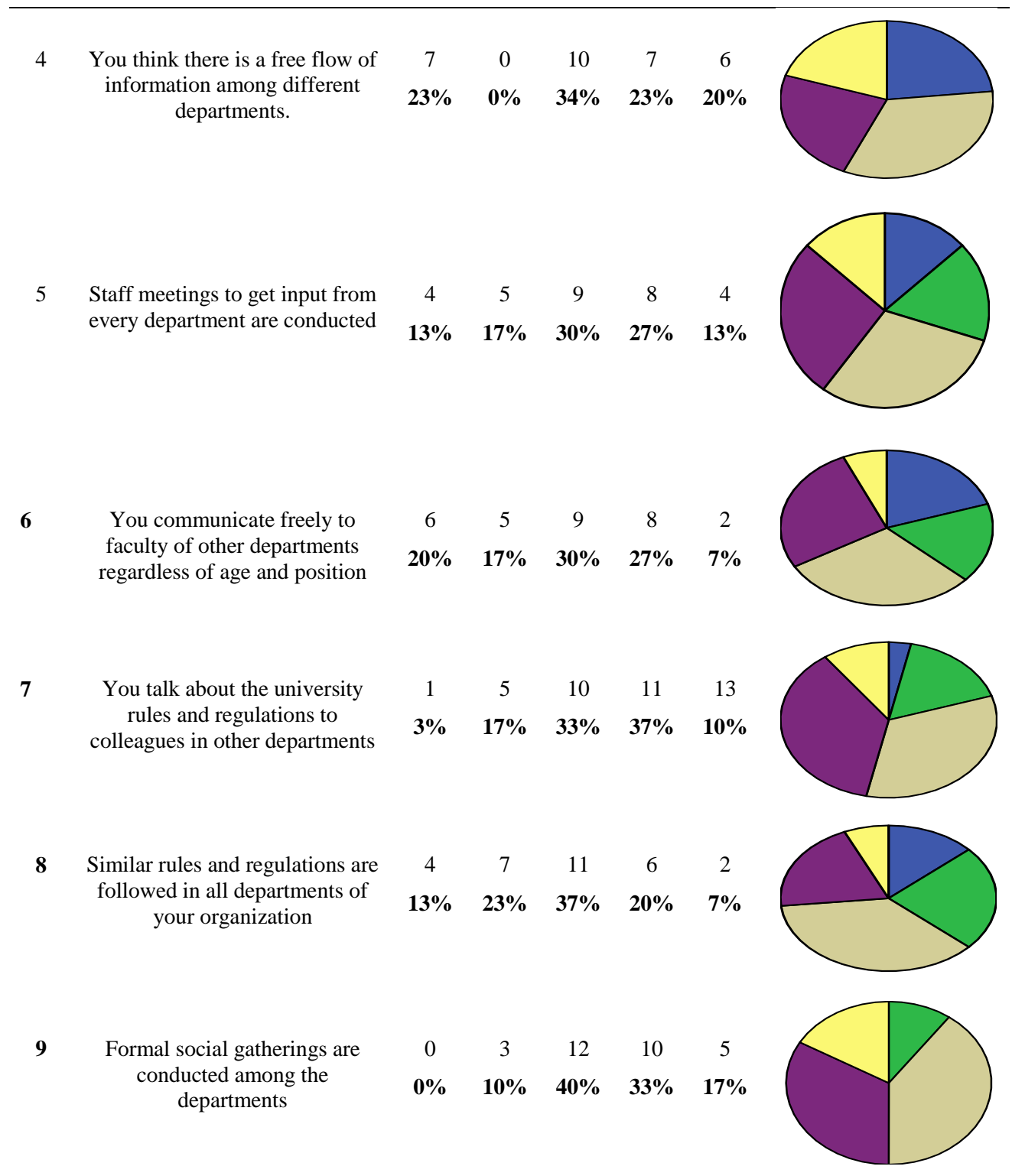
The survey was conducted through 30 self-administered questionnaires. Data collected was statistical analyzed by SPSS for frequencies and percentages shown as pie charts.

## Analysis and Findings

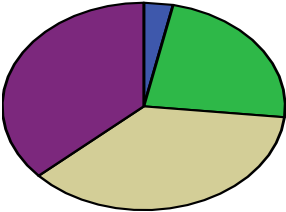
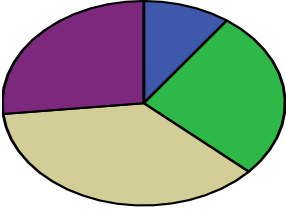
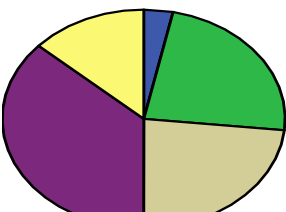
Table 1: *CATEGORY 1 (INTERACTION)*

**Responses:** A: Always F: Frequently O: Occasionally R: Rarely N: Never

Questions		A	F	O	R	N	
1	You think inter department contacts are important	20 67%	6 20%	4 13%	0 0%	0 0%	
2	You have informal contacts with other departments	3 10%	11 37%	13 43%	1 3%	2 7%	
3	You think inter departmental contacts must be situational or lasting.	7 23%	8 27%	9 30%	5 17%	1 3%	





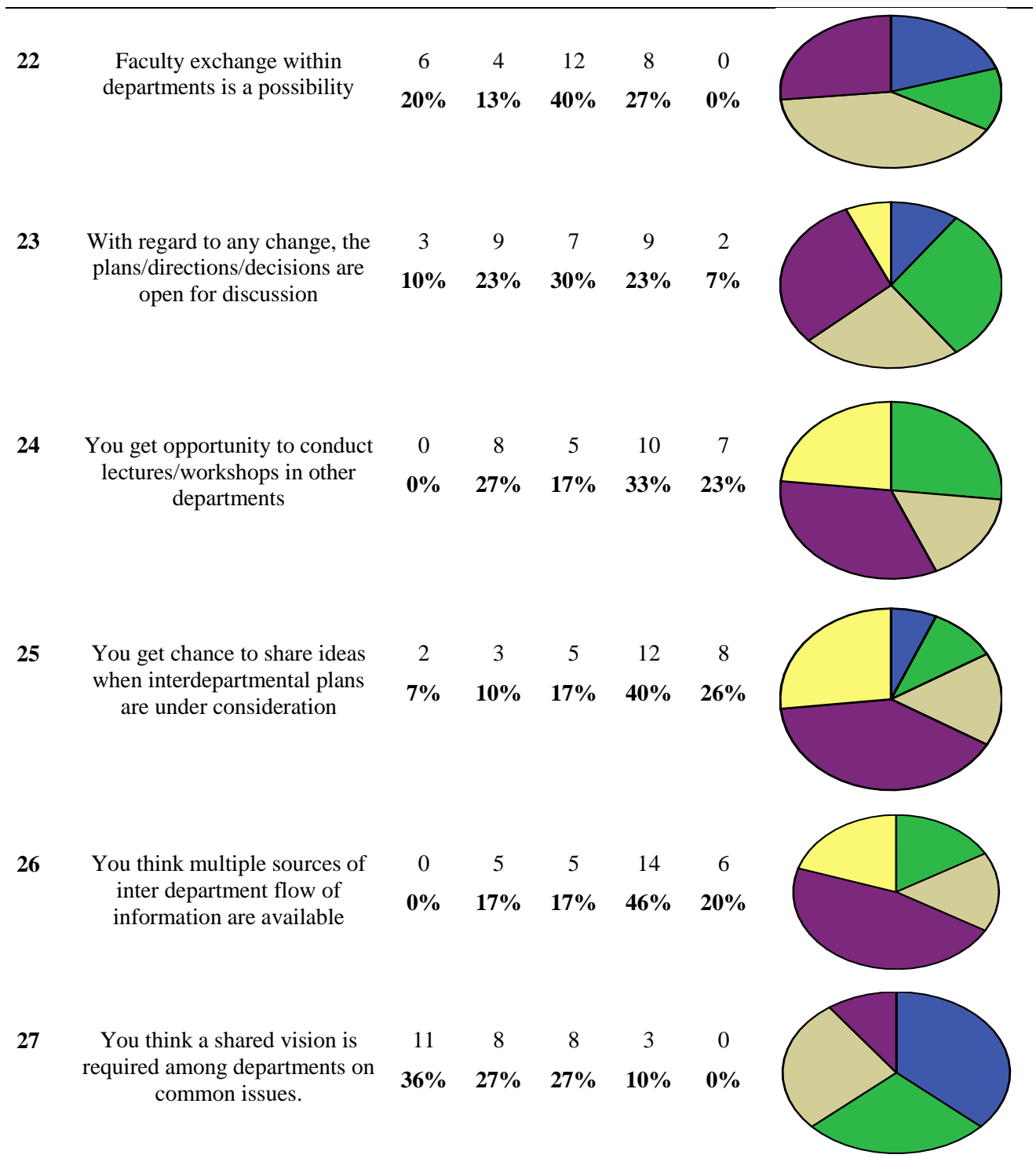
<b>10</b>	Management recognizes the difference of opinion among different departments	1 <b>3%</b>	7 <b>23%</b>	11 <b>37%</b>	11 <b>37%</b>	0 <b>0%</b>	
<b>11</b>	You feel flexibility in communication across the departments	3 <b>9%</b>	8 <b>27%</b>	11 <b>37%</b>	8 <b>27%</b>	0 <b>0%</b>	
<b>12</b>	There exist a mutual trust between management of all departments	2 <b>7%</b>	1 <b>3%</b>	11 <b>37%</b>	11 <b>37%</b>	5 <b>16%</b>	
<b>13</b>	Suggestions from all departments are welcomed for some in-house activity	6 <b>20%</b>	5 <b>17%</b>	12 <b>40%</b>	7 <b>23%</b>	0 <b>0%</b>	
<b>14</b>	You are satisfied with the present system of communication among different departments	1 <b>4%</b>	7 <b>23%</b>	7 <b>23%</b>	11 <b>37%</b>	4 <b>13%</b>	
<b>15</b>	You get opportunity to express your views on points of conflict among departments	0 <b>0%</b>	5 <b>17%</b>	12 <b>40%</b>	4 <b>13%</b>	9 <b>30%</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>		65 <b>15%</b>	84 <b>17%</b>	142 <b>32%</b>	107 <b>24%</b>	52 <b>12%</b>	450 <b>100%</b>

A mixed trend is observed from the faculty and staff of FJWU in response to their experiences regarding their interdepartmental interaction. Inclination is more towards negative response when it comes to an overall view of the situation.

Table 2: *CATEGORY 2 (COLLABORATION)*

**Responses:** A: Always    F: Frequently    O: Occasionally    R: Rarely    N: Never

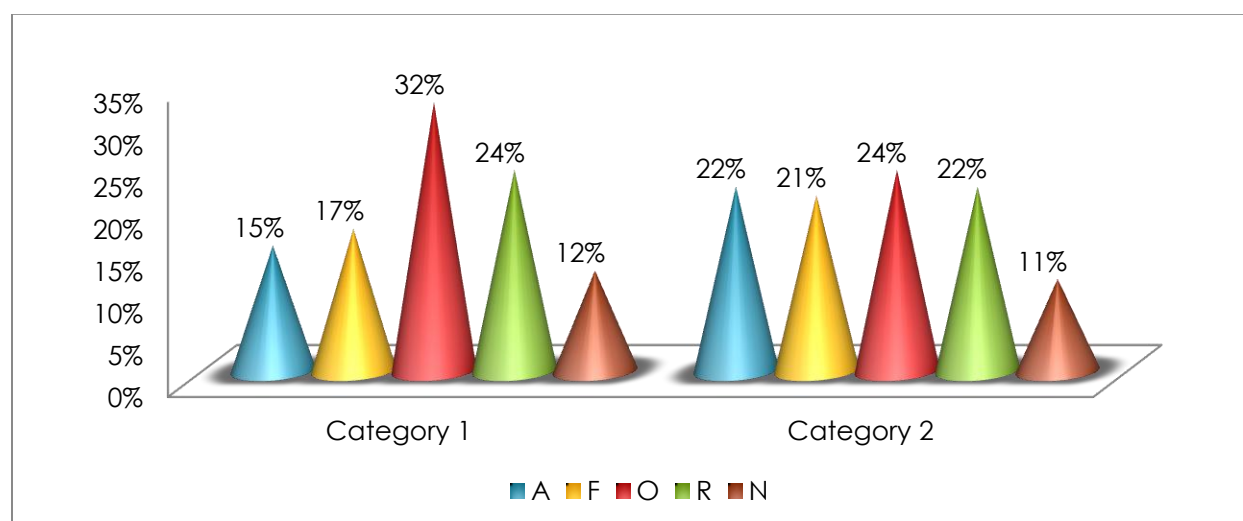
Questions		A	F	O	R	N	
16	You think management gives equal opportunities to all departments	5 17%	9 30%	9 30%	4 13%	3 10%	
17	You think change is possible in how the interdepartmental tasks are done	13 43%	6 20%	7 23%	3 10%	1 4%	
18	All departments share same facilities in the central library	15 50%	7 24%	4 13%	4 13%	0 0%	
19	Exams and other related activities are conducted simultaneously across all departments	24 80%	1 3%	4 14%	1 3%	0 0%	
20	You welcome feedback of other departments while planning in house activities	10 33%	8 27%	4 14%	5 16%	3 10%	
21	Your experiences for solving classroom problems are heard in interdepartmental meetings	1 3%	7 23%	11 37%	5 17%	6 20%	



<b>28</b>	Departments schedules their in house activities according to convenience of all departments	5 <b>17%</b>	7 <b>23%</b>	9 <b>30%</b>	6 <b>20%</b>	3 <b>10%</b>	
<b>29</b>	Team work is practiced among the departments	2 <b>7%</b>	9 <b>30%</b>	7 <b>23%</b>	10 <b>33%</b>	2 <b>7%</b>	
<b>30</b>	You get required information about activities in other departments well ahead of time	3 <b>10%</b>	3 <b>10%</b>	11 <b>37%</b>	7 <b>23%</b>	6 <b>20%</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>		100 <b>22%</b>	95 <b>21%</b>	108 <b>24%</b>	100 <b>22%</b>	47 <b>11%</b>	450 <b>100%</b>

A mixed trend is observed from the faculty and staff of FJWU in response to their experiences regarding their activities for interdepartmental collaboration. Inclination is more towards positive response. An average of 43% gave positive response for the above aspects in comparison to the rest 33% of negative responses. Interesting however, was to know that 24% of the responses were indicative of neither positive nor negative interdepartmental collaboration.

Table 4.3: Graphical representation of the distribution of data



## **Conclusion**

The present study was planned with a focus to observe and analyze the trends and perceptions of employees of different departments on the issue of interdepartmental interaction and collaboration, both components of interdepartmental integration in FJWU and to assess the level of integration in light of model presented in the literature review of this study. The findings bring into lime light the stronger strength felt by the employees about the interdepartmental collaboration, as there are many interdepartmental activities that are well synchronized. The trend assessed also indicates that activities regarding interdepartmental interaction are not visibly strong. Comparing the modes of both components found in this study to the model it is concluded that the nature of interdepartmental integration found in FJWU is low for interaction while the opportunities are high for collaboration; an overall cohesiveness to the broader organizational goals prevails. Conclusively in the FJWU the presence of partial integration and partial differentiation is sensed as the responses of the questionnaire of this study are analyzed.

## ***Recommendations***

The study however has sensed some issues which need more focus by the organization. The employees feel less participation on their part when it comes to the issue of interdepartmental communication. They believe that they do not have adequate communication across different departments. The researchers have the opinion and suggest this to the organization management that the need is to focus on weaker aspects so that higher levels of integration can be maintained. Because sometimes smaller issues become core issues so organization must intentionally focus on handling these matters and make their employees more integrated and confident about their organization. This can be achieved by strategically planning for higher levels of interdepartmental integration and removal of interdepartmental differentiation as much as possible.

## ***Implications of This Research in FJWU***

Human resource research is not a separate function. It pervades all HR functional areas. The outcome of this study is also helpful in planning of core HR functions, simultaneously. The organization can have a better view of the prevailing demand and better utilization of human resource across the departments; same applies to the planning for all human resource development activities across the organization. A healthy employee relation may evolve if the interdepartmental integration is monitored and if gaps are found these are properly addressed for the improvement of organization as a whole.

## ***Suggestions for Future Research***

This study focused only on the accumulation of perceptions of teaching departments about interdepartmental integration, it is recommended that another detailed research should be conducted which would gather perceptions of all departments, both administrative and teaching departments, this will be more helpful in creating a complete view of prevailing interdepartmental integration trends. It is also suggested that a longitudinal research conducted in 3 different educational institutes can be planned. The cross sectional analysis will provide a comparative assessment of different modes of interdepartmental integration being practiced in the participating organizations. Educational institutes must sense this more sensitively that they are different from any other business setup so they have to develop a much more confident and supportive environment for their enhanced performance.

## ***Culmination***

All the above discussed aspects are effective. But more important than any specific aspect for interdepartmental integration is the commitment by top management to the ongoing importance of interdepartmental integration by interaction and collaboration for the success of the organization mission. This must be implemented through regular, consistent effort by management at all levels.

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## Conflict of Interest

Authors declared no conflict of interest.

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## ORCID iDs

Asna Mubashra <sup>1</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0743-6846>

Muhammad Ali Ammer Saleemi <sup>2</sup> <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-8733-6070>

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