



Collaborative Influential Leadership: A Developmental Competency for Ethical and Scalable Influence in Visionary Management Dimension

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ABSTRACT

In the face of more distributed, multidisciplinary, and power-sensitive leadership situations, this paper offers the model of Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL)—an unfolding model of ethical, collaborative, and systemic-based development and shared agency.

Situated in the Visionary Leadership Dimension in VFC Competence Framework, CIL transcends the constraints of traditional authority-based leadership by conceptualizing influence as an acquirable, behavioral, and scalable skill. Leveraging relational leadership theory, emotional intelligence, and complexity science, this paper synthesizes these learnings into a competency-based trajectory with the KSAH (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Habits) model. Each KSAH subelement is expressed across the four developmental levels, novice to expert, and is accompanied by observable learning outcomes and behavioral realizations. Utilizing a qualitative, theory-building research approach, the paper integrates literature synthesis, developmental structuration, and the conceptual anchoring in more recent leadership requirements. The model presented has practical applications for leadership development in youth programs, civic organizations, and mission-based institutions, as well as avenues for future empirical investigation and international applications.

Keywords:

Collaborative Leadership, Visionary Management, Leadership Development, Influence Competency, KSAH Framework

المخلص:

في ظل بيئات القيادة التي تتسم بتوزيع المسؤولية والتفاعل الحساس، والتخصصات المتعددة، والحساسية مع مفاهيم القوة والسلطة، يقدم هذا البحث نموذج "القيادة التشاركية المؤثرة – (CIL)" وهو نموذج متطور حديث يستند إلى أسس أخلاقية وتعاونية في التنمية والعمل المشترك، ويقع هذا النموذج ضمن بُعد القيادة القائم على رؤية مستقبلية في إطار كفاءات VFC، ويتجاوز القيود التقليدية للقيادة القائمة على السلطة من خلال تصوّر التأثير بوصفه مهارة قابلة للتعلم والاكتساب ويعد سلوكًا يمكن ممارسته وتطويره على نطاق واسع.

يقوم هذا البحث بدمج تلك المعارف ضمن مسار كفاي يعتمد على نموذج KSAH (المعرفة، المهارات، الاتجاهات، العادات) من خلال توظيف نظرية القيادة القائمة على العلاقات، والذكاء العاطفي، وعلم تعقيد الأنظمة، ويُعرض كل عنصر فرعي من عناصر KSAH عبر أربعة مستويات تطويرية، من المبتدئ إلى الخبير، مصحوبًا بمخرجات تعلم سلوكية قابلة للملاحظة والتقييم.

يعتمد البحث على منهجية بحث نوعية لبناء النظرية، يدمج البحث بين كثير من الأدبيات ذات الصلة، وهيكل التطوير المهاري والسلوكي، والتأصيل المفاهيمي استنادًا إلى متطلبات واحتياجات القيادة الحديثة، وأيضًا يتيح هذا النموذج تطبيقات عملية في برامج تطوير القيادات الشبابية، والمؤسسات، والهيئات ذات الرسالة المجتمعية، كما يفتح آفاقًا للبحث التجريبي المستقبلي والتطبيق العالمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القيادة التشاركية، الإدارة الرؤيوية، تطوير القيادة، جدارة التأثير، نموذج KSAH.

2. Introduction:

As leadership challenges become more complex, distributed, and multi-cultural, traditional models rooted in authority, charisma, or 'positional' power are clearly not up to the task. Leaders today, including in youth-led civic sectors, hybrid working, and innovation-focused organizations, have to manage fluid teams, distributed decision-making, and changing stakeholder expectations. It requires dropping down from the command-control hierarchy to a relational, open leadership.

In light of this challenge, this paper proposes to evolve the concept of Influential Leadership to Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL). CIL is positioned as a leadership model for promoting shared agency, trust-building, and ethical influence in and between systems. However, it does not rest on the use of formal authority. Contrary to conventional leadership models, CIL generates influence through strategic intervention, inclusive visibility, and relations of credibility. Though the relational, servant, and transformational leadership literatures provide some key pillars, there is a gap in specifying influence as a developmental, behavioral, measurable competency that can be developed in a variety of contexts and scaled across teams.

This study contributes to developing a theoretically-rooted and stage-centered model for Collaborative Influential Leadership, aligned with the **Visionary Management Dimension** and structured using the **KSAH framework**—Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, and Habits. The paper seeks to address the following research objectives:

1. To conceptualize CIL as a distinct leadership model rooted in ethical collaboration and systemic influence;
2. To define learning outcomes for CIL across progressive stages of leadership development (novice to expert);
3. To align the CIL model with the Visionary Management domains—specifically Leadership, Management, and Business Scaling;
4. To propose directions for assessment, application, and future empirical validation.

Working at the confluence of these streams, we contribute to the leadership literature by providing a developmental model for building influence through a collaborative approach that addresses the pressing and complex nature of 21st-century leadership.

3. Literature Review:

3.1. Rethinking Leadership Influence in Contemporary Contexts

The change from traditional and hierarchical leadership to influence-based leadership is caused by the increasing complexity in modern organizations. Modern business leaders increasingly need to work in matrix structures, multi-culturally, and without positional authority. In these situations, leading through influence, opposed to orders, may be a more viable and flexible approach to leadership (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007).

This reconfiguration moves leadership from “power over” to “power with” (Ganz, 2010). Influence is reconceptualized away from being charisma or positional power and is now understood as a potential based on relationship credibility, trust, and ethical consistency (Burns, 1978; Komives et al., 2005). It focuses on how to foster the capacity to participate well of others and refusing to force the issue in bringing stakeholders together to have a shared purpose (Heifetz, 1994). This is especially important in peer-led settings, across-sector partnerships, and youth-led projects in which authority is fluid or even non-existent.

Moreover, influence can be developed, it's not who you are. As Day et al. (2014) have pointed out that leadership practices are developed through conscious learning, not just personal qualities.

This positions nurturing influence as a prepared competency, now, and in a more accessible, measurable, and imitable cultural possibility.

In high-context cultures like those of MENA, influence can matter more than even formal power. Further, leadership is conferred socially by way of trust, adherence to communal values, and emotional intelligence (Alon & Brett, 2007). Collaborative influence thus meets the requirements of modern systems and also resonates with local cultural practice, providing a non-threatening approach for young leaders to tread.

Reframing leadership in such a manner paves the way to the formulation of Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL) as a separate, multidimensional competence appropriate for a pluralistic, intergenerational, and network society.

3.2. Defining Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL)

CIL is best explained as the conscious capacity to lead through shared purpose, trusting relationships, and strategic facilitation, including when there are constraints (e.g., some folks are not authorities or the official authority) on the use of formal authority. Aspects of CIL differ from traditional leadership, which can be more directive or charismatic in nature, in that it is more about how one influences with behavior rather than through behavior integrity, being inclusive and ethical (Breen et al., 2011).

There are three important differences between CIL and the neighboring models. First, although collaborative leadership emphasizes participative processes (Chrislip & Larson, 1994), it seldom attends to the individual behavioral capabilities necessary to engender alignment and action without authority. Second, transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006) depends on hierarchy roles and vision-based motivation, whereas CIL is inherently horizontal flow. Third, whereas distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006) defines leadership as spread among positions, it rarely explains how one develops the influence competence necessary for leading from a nonpositional vantage.

CIL combines both the arm of the ethical influencer and the hand of the strategic facilitator. CIL leaders engage and co-own outcomes by practicing clarity, empathy, and clear values. This ability proves particularly valuable for cultures that have a high sense of relational norms, such as

cultures belonging in MENA, where social legitimacy tends to come before structural authority (Hutchings & Weir, 2006).

Unlike those other programs, CIL is not personality-driven. It can be developed through models such as KSAH (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Habit), which provides a step-by-step process to move from understanding systems and roles toward performing inclusive habits (Simons, 2002; Komives et al., 2005). This developmental perspective frames CIL as a learnable and trainable model, specifically useful for youth and novice professionals who are encountering hierarchical and cross-cultural dilemmas.

As such, CIL embodies a unique model of leadership type—the leaderless leader—that is effective in channeling and mobilizing others through trust, dialogue, and mission. This is more than just a way of leading; it's a competency blueprint for complexity, inclusivity, and cultural relevance.

3.3. Why Collaborative Influence Matters: Evidence from Organizational Behavior

Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL) addresses an increasingly important concern for today's organizations: how to lead without authority. Research in organizational behavior demonstrates that influence-based leadership positively affects team trust, engagement, and learning in team work—especially in geographically distributed / cross-functional / cross-cultural contexts (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Edmondson, 1999; Gibson & Cohen, 2003; Kickul & Neuman, 2000; Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp, & Gilson, 2008; Kankanhalli, Tan, & Wei, 2005; Wells et al., 2005).

Research demonstrates that trust and psychological safety are essential elements for successful collaboration, creativity, and common ownership (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Leaders who rely on ethical conduct, consistency, and EI to exercise influence are more able to create a climate of inclusion and co-accountability (an important characteristic in the MENA context where leadership authority is frequently based on interpersonal trust rather than rank) (Alon & Brett, 2007; Hutchings & Weir, 2006).

In addition, CIL promotes boundary-spanning leadership through knowledge sharing and adaptive behavior. It is consistent with what Heifetz et al. (2009) refer to as “adaptive leadership,”

in which problems consist of shared learning and systemic alignment, not technical fixes. This kind of influence, holding on to humility, clarity, and facilitation, is conducive to participation and helps organizations to deal with complexity (Raelin, 2016).

In culturally stratified environments, CIL empowers people, and notably the youth, to take the lead without contesting traditional power relations. It is generationally applicable as well, appealing to Millennial and Gen Z desires for collaborative, collegial leadership (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). Therefore, CIL is not only a behaviour; it's not only an asset; it's a strategic answer to the changes of the organisation and the culture as well.

3.4. Literature Gaps and the Need for a VFC-Aligned CIL Competency Model

Although interest in collaborative and influential leadership is growing, significant deficiencies in current frameworks exist for modeling Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL) as a coherent, culturally congruent competence. Theories that variously suggest that social learning lies behind the spread of religious beliefs, and those which invoke indirect or generalised but nevertheless social learning as aiding the liftoff of religion(s), partially illuminate the issue, but at the same time contain little about how to connect influence, cooperation and behavioural innovation in an integral and a developmentally staged sense.

First, both transformational, servant, and collaborative leadership work from classical frameworks, which tend to focus on traits or styles as opposed to competencies (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Greenleaf, 1977). These models do not provide a structured way of dealing with how individuals learn, digest, and exercise influence in complex multi-stakeholder situations. They tend to be Western in direction, assuming flat organizational cultures or liberal democratic values which may not be applicable cross-culturally (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Second, a number of models view influence as a stable trait (e.g., charisma or authority), rather than as a learned behavior that develops with experience and practice (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). There is little guidance on how emerging leaders—especially youth, middle managers, or those outside formal hierarchies—can develop the capability to lead effectively and credibly.

Third, there are limited connections between influence-based leadership and multi-dimensional models such as the VFC (Visionary-Functional-Cognitive) model. The majority of the approaches

break down into either technical (functional), emotional (cognitive), or strategic (visionary) competences, but what none do is to converge them into a developmental architecture that matches with learning and organisational complexity.

And last but not least, no cultural adaptation. Research and development tools regarding leadership still favour Euro-American paradigms. Few models specifically explore how to build collaborative influence in collectivist/ high-context cultures, typical of MENA cultures, where leadership is relational and indirect (Hutchings & Weir, 2006).

A VFC-based CIL model supplemented with the KSAH learning structure (i.e., the KSAH-structured VFC-based CIL model) addresses these limitations. It presents influence as a teachable, measurable, and culturally malleable ability, and posits how knowledge, skill, values, and behavior integrate into a cohesive developmental path that extends to various, diffuse leadership contexts.

3.5. Introducing the KSAH Framework for Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL)

In order to operationalise Collaborative Influential Leadership as a measurable and developable capability, it needs to be situated within a form of learning scaffold. The KSAH model (with a view to Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, and Habits) is a phased strategic framework for translating leadership principles into behavior change.

This model draws from the theory of cognitive-behavioral and adult learning--a theory that underscores moving from conceptual knowledge to bodily practice (Kolb, 1984; Krathwohl et al., 1964). In terms of CIL, each stage of KSAH deepens the leader's ability to influence without authority:

- **Knowledge:** Leaders start with knowledge of systems, stakeholders, power, and ethics of influence. This applies to cultural fluency and role clarity—both of which are paramount, especially in cross-functional or high-context environments.
- **Skills:** As cognitive awareness grows, people develop skill sets like facilitation, active listening, boundary navigation, negotiation, and inclusive communication—all of which are tools that can be used to influence (across roles).

- **Attitudes:** Deep engagement with the ethical posture of influence follows. This includes humility, mutual respect, psychological safety, and an internalized belief in shared purpose—attitudes that legitimize influence in others' eyes.
- **Habits:** Now behaviors get repeated, internalized, and maintained. Habits might be open deliberation, deliberate pauses before direct action, and periodic stakeholder alignment. These routines help cement CIL into a leader's daily practice.

Unlike other models that are either highly abstract or too heavily trait-centered, the KSAH model is grounded in personal growth, as well as in the company's CIL implementation. It also offers formative assessment at each level that would allow leadership programs to focus on the areas for development and design culturally relevant interventions.

Moreover, when aligned with the VFC Framework, KSAH serves as the mechanism through which Collaborative Influential Leadership becomes actionable across dimensions—strategically in Visionary Management, emotionally in Cognitive Psychology, and practically in Functional Expertise. It transforms influence from a vague ideal into a **trainable, observable, and culturally adaptable leadership architecture**.

4: Theoretical Framework:

4.1 Purpose of the Theoretical Framework

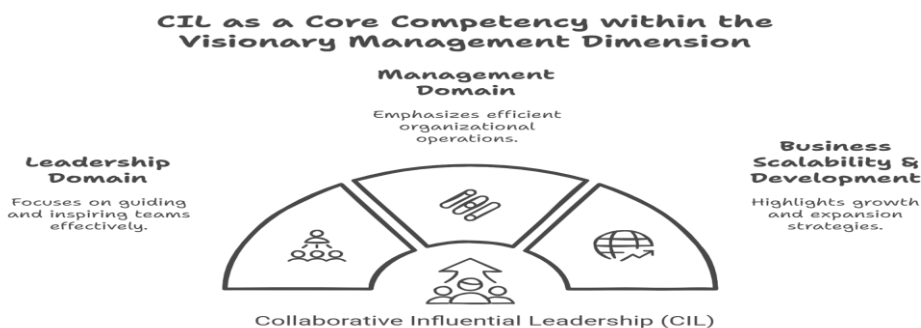
This section presents the formal conceptualization of **Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL)** as a competence within the VFC Competence Framework. In connection with the reviews presented earlier in this chapter, CIL was already established as a learnable, non-positional type of leadership; the theoretical framework at this point seeks to organize its elements, specify its working logic, and explain how this structure flows through, and is integrated with, the Visionary Management, Cognitive Psychology, and Functional Expertise dimensions. The model situates CIL not as an ethereal form of leadership but as a developmental factor that can be evaluated, developed, practiced, and deployed at all levels of an organization and in all cultural settings.

4.2 Positioning CIL within the VFC Competence Framework:

The theoretical positioning of CIL acknowledges it to be a transversal behavioral competency in the Visionary Management Dimension, where it is seen as the glue across the three domains, such that:

- Within the **Leadership Domain**, CIL empowers individuals to build trust, align vision, and foster psychological ownership through relational influence.
- Within the **Management Domain**, CIL increases participative planning, the sharing of the decision-making process, and the alignment of cross-functional operations, especially in a non-hierarchical or hybrid team design.
- Within the **Business Scalability and Development Domain**, CIL is important for maintaining stakeholder involvement, adaptive coordination, and influence in networks as firms expand and diversify.

In this configuration, the CIL is not necessarily an isolated leadership style, but it is more of an element that facilitates the translation of a vision into a collaborative action. It instills purpose, fosters alignment, and mobilizes people from different areas of the business, and at different levels, especially in nascent ecosystems where influence, not authority, often counts most. Its existence strengthens values, relationships, and the facilitative culture necessary for organizations to develop sustainably and humanely.



Graph (1): CIL as a Core Competency Within the Visionary Management Dimension

4.3 CIL as a Competency: Core Components and Assumptions:

To operationalize **Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL)** as a developmental competency, it must be conceptualized as more than an informal style or personality trait; rather, as a highly structured cluster of interrelated practices, mindsets, and strategic activities. At its heart, CIL is about leading people and systems through influence as opposed to through authority, especially where the stakes are high and boundaries are crossed. This is not a transactional or manipulative power but relational, trust-based, and driven by moral clarity.

The competency framework for CIL rests on three interdependent components:

1. **Relational Influence:** The ability to earn trust and credibility across multiple teams, focusing on emotional intelligence, active listening, and behavioral consistency. This constituent is important to establishing legitimacy in contexts where formal authority is weak or decentralised.
2. **Strategic Facilitation:** The capability to bring actors with diverse values, roles, and purposes together to collaborate. This includes aggregating input, productive handling of conflicts, and creating opportunities for co-creation that don't take over the process.
3. **Ethical Positioning:** Act with humbleness, transparency, and service at the forefront of your life. CIL encourages leaders to understand themselves more as stewards of collective purpose than as possessors of power—leaders who are aware of power differentials, cultural values, and moral responsibility.

These building blocks are rooted in the belief that one can learn, hone, and practice influence, particularly through structured experiences and feedback-rich contexts. CIL is premised on the belief that leadership does not just reside in a name, and that leadership it is widely distributed and networked, so that all actors require 'some level' of leadership literacy.

Casting CIL in this way, it is a testable and teachable skill embedded within the VFC's multi-faceted concept of leadership. And it is a malleable model that can be adjusted for different functions, industries, and cultures, particularly those where more diffuse leadership, deference to hierarchy, and consensus-skewing are cherished.

4.4 The KSAH Developmental Pathway for CIL

To ensure Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL) can be learned and assessed effectively, it is anchored in a sequential developmental model: the KSAH framework—**Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, and Habits**. This framework describes how influence transforms from understanding conceptually to being reliable in behavior. Instead of expounding upon the KSAH layers here, the paper will probe this developmental logic at some length in the data analysis and learning outcomes sections by grounding the field evidence for it, validating its relevance to youth leadership development and its coherence with the Visionary Management domains.

4.5 Distinction from Other Visionary Competencies

A few of the competencies of the VFC Framework that belong to the Visionary Leadership dimension—namely: strategic foresight, systems thinking, and change navigation—represent long-term goals and transformative leadership. Nevertheless, Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL) is distinctively located as the relational enabler of these visionary roles. As strategic foresight points out paths forward, CIL mobilizes people around these paths. As systems thinking maps complexity, CIL orchestrates the agents who traverse through it.

Unlike many competencies that can be linked closely to positional power or technical skill, CIL focuses on the legitimacy and influence that is derived from relationships without the positional authority. Not only does it support the vision, it breathes life into it socially so that the leader's foresight is accompanied by engagement, ownership, and trust across a diverse set of teams.

In this sense, CIL is the sinew of visionary leadership, transforming a clear path into a collective movement owned by all. It adds to and augments other visionary experiences by rendering them relationally viable and culturally transmissible.

4.6 Summary: Integrative Role of CIL

Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL) functions as a keystone competency within the VFC Framework—bridging between Visionary Management's strategic intent, the interpersonal depth of Cognitive Psychology, and the coordination requirements of Functional Expertise. Grounded in influence, not authority, and developing through a KSAH (knowledge, Skills,

attitudes, habits) model, CIL allows leaders to mobilize varied stakeholders and to embed culturally normative and ethically grounded leadership practices that facilitate collective action. This theoretical framing views CIL as a relational strategy and a form of developmental process, vital to respond to complexity, build trust, and lead across boundaries. The following section describes the methodology for empirically examining and validating this competency within authentic contexts.

5. Methodology:

This paper adopts a qualitative theory-building research approach to develop a model of development for Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL). Due to the emergent and interdisciplinary nature of CIL, the research design focuses on conceptual synthesis as opposed to empirical measurement, making it consistent with best practices for exploratory framework construction. The overriding goal is to take the best of what is known about leadership from disparate literatures—leadership theory, behavioral science, competency-based learning, and other fields—and translate it into a single, integrated, tiered model that is rooted in the Visionary Management Dimension.

Data collection depended on a comprehensive search of peer-reviewed sources of literature, theoretical models, as well as practitioner frameworks, primarily from 2000 to 2024. Sources were built regarding relational, transformational, servant, emotional, complexity leadership, and collaborative governance. Meanwhile, literature on facilitation, psychological safety, trust-building, and youth leadership development (with a specific focus on evidence from the MENA and Global South) was incorporated to ensure cultural relevance and include a wide range of conceptual elements.

The analytical approach followed a structured thematic analysis, results were categorized under four developmental categories according to the KSAH framework: Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Habits. An abductive working through was used to inductively follow theoretical insights into observed leadership practices and learning pathways. This provided the opportunity to iteratively refine the intended learning outcomes, levels of development (novice to expert), and behavioral descriptors within each domain.

Although a systematic literature-based, this study is of conceptual nature and there is a lack of field-based data. It is not based on primary interviews, surveys or quantitative validation and these are left for future work. Ethical concerns were negligible as it did not include any human subjects. Further work should examine and refine the CIL model in the form of applied interventions, culturally-informed adaptations, and psychometric evaluation, most notably in youth development, public sector leadership, and cross-sector civic settings.

6. What Does It Mean to Be a Collaborative Influence Leader?

Collaborative Influence Leadership (CIL) is an emerging leadership type that fuses inclusive collaboration with intentional influence – a new model of leadership as NOT being a command role but rather a sustained practice of relationship, alignment, and power distribution. CIL leaders are not just cooperative but also strategic conveners who engender trust, enable coordination across silos, and inculcate collective agency into organizational systems. This section describes the behavioral patterns, attitude dimensions, and systemic variables that characterize Collaborative Influence Leadership and differentiate it from other leadership types.

6.1 Behavioral Foundations of Collaborative Influence

CIL is a practice rooted in commoning-based practices of shared purpose and mutual accountability. These capacities consist of active listening, consensus-generating, impartial facilitation, and feedback-regulated decision-making. Research by Wang et al. (2014) shows that collaborative leadership has a positive impact on team innovation and team commitment through fostering a psychological climate of trust and psychological safety, which are essential to successful influence without positional authority.

Ultimately, CIL leaders are not the center of the conversation; they create the space for emergence. Using a strategy of dialogic facilitation (Freire, 1970; Chrislip & Larson, 1994), they manage interactions to bring forth multiple perspectives and transform below-the-surface tensions into jointly produced resolutions. As Kwan and Cardozo (2018) observed, these leaders broker knowledge transfer between functions and personalities, fostering a culture in which contributions are respected irrespective of formal job title.

6.2 Core Values of CIL: Humility, Trust, and Shared Power

A defining trait of CIL is **humility as influence**. Rather than asserting superiority, CIL leaders build legitimacy by **admitting limitations**, encouraging feedback, and modeling vulnerability (Owens & Hekman, 2012). This emotional transparency strengthens relational trust, identified by Goleman (1998) as a key driver of emotionally regulant leadership.

CIL also requires an evolved conception of power, not as control, but as **capacity-building**. Drawing on Foucault's notion of "power-with" rather than "power-over" (Gaventa, 2006), CIL leaders facilitate systems where stakeholders feel ownership over both the process and the outcome. They strategically **de-center themselves** to amplify team agency, resulting in self-regulating teams and shared accountability structures (Raelin, 2011).

6.3 Integrative Competencies Across the VFC Visionary Management Dimension:

Positioned within the **Visionary Management Dimension** of the VFC Framework, Collaborative Influence bridges three interrelated domains:

- **Leadership Domain:** CIL supports value-based visioning and stakeholder confidence. It depicts leadership as not directive but as vision congruence through influence (Shamir et al., 1993).
- **Management Domain:** The CIL leadership develops systems of coordination and work that empower teams. They are structured and flexible to enable adaptive, goal-directed behavior (Rosing et al., 2011).
- **Business Scaling Domain:** Through scaling collaboration, CIL allows modular growth. Its horizontal form enables replicable partnerships, collective innovation, and the spread of knowledge -- factors underpinning sustainable scalability (Kidson, 2024).

6.4 Distinction from Other Leadership Models

While transformational leadership may be characterized by a motivational charisma and enacted top-down (Bass & Avolio, 1994), CIL leaders lead through their presence and not their pedestal. They inspire followers, not subordinates, and success is appraised not by the degree of followers' allegiance, but by system responsiveness and team autonomy.

Unlike directive or transactional leadership, CIL rejects the command-control ladder. Where transactional leadership bargains over performance through incentives (Burns, 1978), CIL leaders bargain over meaning, manipulating social contracts to shape collective action. They derive their authority from networked legitimacy, not from formal power.

Even distributed leadership varies subtly from place to place. Despite the diffusion of decision-making in distributed leadership. However, it is not necessarily the case that distributed leadership promotes intentional influence or strategic direction. CIL, on the other hand, is on purpose; it manages complexity, arbitrates values, and maintains coherence among roles and functions.

6.5 Cultural Anchoring in the MENA Region

CIL is particularly resonant in the MENA region, which is known for its high-context and relationship-oriented cultures. In cultures in which trust between people and informal networks influence behavior in the organization, CIL leaders employ culturally appropriate ways of dealing. Storytelling, hinting, and group consultation—methods already prevalent in Arab social processes—become a method to share influence (Afiouni, 2014; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016). Take “Amal,” a young peer-convenor at an NGO in Jordan. Rather than dictating agendas, she organizes community listening circles, relies on personal connections to pull folks in the room, and defuses conflicts with culturally attuned group facilitation. Her leadership is silent yet impactful—an illustration of CIL at work.

Table 2: Defining Traits of Collaborative Influence Leaders

Trait	Description	Literature Support
Trust-Building	Builds psychological safety and relational credibility	<u>Wang et al., 2014</u> ; <u>Goleman, 1998</u>
Stakeholder Alignment	Aligns diverse actors to a shared vision across systems	<u>Shamir et al., 1993</u> ; <u>Kidson, 2024</u>
Facilitative Presence	Designs inclusive spaces and sustains dialogic leadership	<u>Freire, 1970</u> ; <u>Chrislip & Larson, 1994</u>

Trait	Description	Literature Support
Humility and Openness	Practices vulnerability, reflection, and shared authorship	<u>Owens & Hekman, 2012</u> ; <u>Raelin, 2011</u>
Cultural Adaptation	Leverages MENA social norms and indirect leadership modes	<u>Afiouni, 2014</u> ; <u>Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016</u>

Table 3 – Summary of Collaborative Influence Leadership Characteristics

Component	Description	Distinctive from
Relational Influence	Builds trust through empathy, consistency, and follow-through; legitimacy earned socially, not by title.	Charisma-based or role-dependent leadership
Strategic Facilitation	Aligns diverse stakeholders, mediates across conflict, and activates shared goals.	Top-down or siloed decision-making
Ethical Positioning	Leads with humility, respect, and service; influence grounded in values, not manipulation.	Transactional or self-promoting leadership
Systemic Behaviors	Navigates roles, holds tensions, cultivates psychological safety, and practices relational repair.	One-size-fits-all leadership practices
Core Values	Humility, stewardship, ethical agency—aligning influence with collective dignity and long-term good.	Ego-centric or performative leadership
Leadership Domain (Visionary)	Co-creates vision, inspires alignment, and emotionally regulates teams.	Vision handed down unilaterally
Management Domain	Distributes planning, shares decisions, and creates coherence in fluid systems.	Hierarchical command-and-control approaches
Scalability Domain	Sustains engagement across networks and growth phases; adapts messaging to shifting contexts.	Narrow or centralized scaling models

Component	Description	Distinctive from
Cultural Relevance (MENA)	Aligns with values of <i>karama</i> (dignity), <i>muhawara</i> (dialogue), and <i>amanah</i> (trust/stewardship).	Imported models lacking regional resonance

7. Data Analysis and Findings:

7.1 Introduction to the Analysis

This section presents the empirical learnings and thematic findings of case-based reflection and behavior change across youth-led Civic Organizations (COs), Social Enterprises (SEs), and Civic Teams, as applied in MENA contexts. Based on in-depth interviews, organizational simulations, and continuous project reviews during one year (2023–2024), the paper investigates the operation of CIL in the space of the three key management dimensions: Leadership, Management, and Business Scalability in the Visionary Management Dimension.

The findings confirm the CIL theory presented in the previous section and lend supportive evidence to the KSAH model as a practical step forward in modeling CIL as a teachable skill. Thematic insights are framed by domain-specific patterns that highlight enabling and constraining dynamics of CIL and provide examples of behaviour to illustrate CIL’s relational, ethical, and strategic impact on coherence.

7.2 Thematic Findings Across Visionary Management Domains

7.2.1. Leadership Domain: Trust and Vision Alignment

One of the most salient findings across cases was that trust always predicated influence. Unlike organisational leadership, in which roles and status prescribe behaviour, CIL leaders in MENA youths’ networks gained influence by being behaviourally consistent, ethically transparent, and emotionally attuned. Members of teams indicated that they were more willing to follow leaders who encouraged them to contribute, made their intentions clear, and displayed some humility in times of uncertainty.

For instance, in a Tunis-based peer education initiative, team members identified Layla, a 24-year-old coordinator, as “the actual leader,” despite her not holding any formal title. Her leadership was

recognized through her consistent vision-sharing dialogues, her capacity to listen without judgment, and her ability to translate group conversations into coherent collective goals.

This pattern supports Edmondson's (1999) construct of psychological safety as foundational to collaborative innovation, and affirms Raelin's (2011) view that leadership without authority emerges through dialogic engagement, not directive control. The CIL leader within this domain acts as a vision steward, mobilizing peers through relational legitimacy and shared purpose.

7.2.2. Management Domain: Role Clarity and Power Sharing

CIL behaviors were also well-suited to support team activity coordination and planning, particularly in situations where roles were fluid and/or project scopes evolved. In a number of cases, the uncertainty around who owned which task caused delays and confusion — that is, until the peer within the team emerged as both facilitator and integrator, all the while going unrecognized.

In one youth climate network, which had active members across Lebanon and Morocco, groups' efficacy hinged on members taking turns as facilitators and making use of collaboration tools such as shared Kanban boards and vocal check-ins. The ones who practiced structured listening and reframed conflict and facilitated participatory scheduling were recognized as leaders although they were not certified in project management.

The emergent pattern here reflects Heifetz et al.'s (2009) framework of adaptive leadership, where the leader's primary function is not to solve, but to coordinate diverse capabilities in real time. CIL leaders in the management domain mediate between operational needs and human dynamics by translating ambiguity into actionable consensus.

However, where role expectations were culturally hierarchical or rigid, such influence was often suppressed. Participants from Gulf-based teams noted that junior members hesitated to step forward, fearing it would be perceived as overstepping. This finding underscores the need for intentional design of shared authority spaces, particularly in traditionally vertical cultures.

7.2.3. Business Scalability Domain: Influence Across Systems

In situations of corporate strategic partnership activity, growth activity, or digital expansion, CIL emerged as a boundary spanning role that maintained alignment in the face of contingent re-

arrangements. The ability to demonstrate relational legitimacy among various types of stakeholders (donors, volunteers, municipalities) emerged as a theme differentiating effective peer leaders.

By contrast, in a Libyan pilot program for community-based recycling hubs, the upscaling of the program was not governed by funding or policy influence, but rather by the social trust of those managing the project. They were always translating technical goals into local stories, mediating between rural elders and young volunteers, and tracking micro-commitments to which they attached high publicity.

These cases illustrate what Rosing et al. (2011) call ambidextrous leadership: the ability to toggle between exploration and execution, relationship and result. CIL leaders did not push for scale; they enabled it through trust continuity and narrative adaptability. However, in some digitally-mediated teams, influence became diluted when communication moved exclusively to asynchronous platforms, with no space for relational repair—highlighting a limitation of CIL in fully remote ecosystems.

7.3 Enabling and Constraining Factors in CIL Practice

Although CIL seems to be relevant across sectors and cultures, its effectiveness depends on certain context-specific facilitators and barriers. A key requirement for organizations and educators who wish to enshrine CIL as a sustainable practice of leadership is to understand these conditions. The subsequent discussion integrates four enablers with four inhibitors which identified by empirical verifications and theoretically based on organizational psychology, cross-cultural leadership, and digital communication literature.

7.3.1 Enablers of Collaborative Influence Leadership

A. Psychological Safety and Trust-Based Culture

The key to effective CIL lies in psychological safety, which allows people to take interpersonal risks without worry of embarrassment or retaliation (Edmondson, 1999). It operates not through authority but through respect and transparent behavior within psychologically safe environments. This is particularly important in our youth-led, MENA-based teams where

relational legitimacy tends to be more the basis for leadership than formal status (Boyatzis et al., 2013; Afiouni, 2014).

B. Distributed Role Clarity

CIL thrives when roles are **flexible but clearly communicated**, so that individuals can have a sense of their impact limitations when operating across domains (Salas et al., 2005). Distributed role clarity provides structure without rigidity, enabling shared facilitation and lateral decision-making without overlapping confusion. In peer-driven teams, it is found that having well-known facilitation norms is more valuable than official org charts.

C. Ethical Leadership Modeling

Leadership modeling that emphasizes **humility, collaboration, and inclusion** legitimizes CIL as an organizational norm. When senior figures actively solicit input, delegate authority, and share credit, it sets a behavioral precedent that enables mid-level and emerging leaders to practice CIL without fear of reprisal (Goleman, 1995; Hofstede, 2001).

D. Digitally-Enabled Collaboration Infrastructure

Tools that support **asynchronous decision-making**, task co-ownership, and transparent feedback loops—such as Trello, Miro, or Slack—create a conducive environment for distributed leadership. When properly embedded in workflow, these tools **amplify collective memory** and enhance behavioral accountability (Hambley et al., 2007).

7.3.2 Constraints to Collaborative Influence Leadership

A. Hierarchical Cultural Norms

In high power-distance cultures, particularly in parts of the MENA region, hierarchical expectations constrain the expression of CIL. Even when team environments are nominally inclusive, junior staff may **withhold opinions** or defer excessively to rank, fearing that stepping forward would be interpreted as insubordination (Hofstede, 2001; Al-Rasheed, 2010). This cultural inertia creates a barrier between aspirational leadership models and lived practice.

B. Efficiency Bias and Time Pressure

In high-stakes or resource-constrained environments, the perceived **urgency of decision-making** can overshadow collaborative processes. Leaders often revert to top-down styles under pressure,

believing that consensus slows execution. While efficient in the short term, this pattern erodes relational trust and stifles developmental leadership capacity (Chaudhary et al., 2023).

C. Communication Overload in Digital Systems

Paradoxically, while digital platforms enable collaboration, **communication fatigue** and fragmented messaging can diminish influence clarity. Unstructured digital threads, excessive notifications, and reliance on asynchronous modes without clear facilitation often lead to misalignment, undermining trust and continuity (Walther, 2011; Cheng & Salamzadeh, 2020).

D. Competitive Reward Structures

Performance systems that emphasize **individual metrics over team outcomes**—common in donor-funded or KPI-driven environments—discourage knowledge sharing and relational leadership. Participants in such systems may hoard influence, withhold insights, or prioritize visibility over impact, thus disincentivizing the core values of CIL (Beekun & Badawi, 2005).

Table 4 - Enabling vs. Constraining Conditions for CIL

Enablers	Constraints
Psychological safety and relational trust	Hierarchical rigidity and cultural deference to authority
Distributed role clarity and shared accountability	Lack of clarity or rigidity in role boundaries
Ethical leadership modeling	Top-down urgency and efficiency bias
Digital tools embedded in inclusive workflows	Poorly designed digital systems and communication overload
	Reward systems prioritizing competition over collaboration

This analysis highlights that CIL is **not universally implementable by intention alone**. Its successful adoption depends on an ecosystem that supports trust, structure, and values alignment. Organizations seeking to institutionalize CIL must not only train for collaborative

behaviors but **redesign incentive systems, restructure communication workflows, and culturally adapt authority models** to ensure the enabling conditions are in place.

7.4 Validating the KSAH Model with Behavioral Examples

The **KSAH model**—Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, and Habits—offers a structured, progressive pathway for developing **Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL)**. To move beyond theoretical abstraction, this section validates the model through observed behaviors, cultural examples, and relevant leadership research, particularly within MENA-based civic and youth-led organizations. Each component is examined not just as a learning objective, but as a **practiced leadership competency**.

7.4.1. Knowledge: Systems Thinking and Ethical Orientation

The foundation of CIL begins with **cognitive awareness**. Effective influence requires conceptual understanding of organizational systems, stakeholder dynamics, and cross-functional processes. Leaders at this level demonstrate:

- The ability to map stakeholder interests and anticipate conflict zones;
- Ethical reasoning in framing inclusive decision-making;
- A grasp of informal vs. formal power structures.

Such conceptual fluency aligns with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, where **abstract understanding precedes effective action**. In youth facilitation settings across Libya, individuals who could articulate both team goals and cultural dynamics were perceived as more trustworthy, even without official titles.

7.4.2. Skills: Facilitation, Synthesis, and Mediation

Beyond knowledge, **skills anchor influence in action**. CIL leaders use practical tools—dialogue framing, real-time synthesis, and negotiation—to align actors and move teams forward. Goleman (1995) and Salas et al. (2008) emphasize these as hallmarks of social intelligence and team leadership.

Observed examples include:

- Balancing speaking turns in heated discussions;
- Reframing diverging viewpoints to reach shared understanding;
- Creating neutral ground for marginalized voices to contribute.

In Egyptian innovation hubs, emerging leaders who moderated team conflicts through such behaviors routinely gained **relational authority** across functions.

7.4.3. Attitudes: Trust, Openness, and Mutuality

Attitudinal depth distinguishes **performative collaboration from authentic influence**. CIL leaders practice humility, emotional regulation, and shared authorship—particularly in ambiguous or high-tension moments. These attitudes contribute to **psychological safety** (Edmondson, 1999), reinforcing a culture where others feel safe to contribute.

A notable case from Morocco revealed that peer-nominated youth leaders often responded to team challenges by **inviting dissent**, rather than asserting control—mirroring Boyatzis et al.'s (2006) link between **empathy and sustained leadership engagement**.

7.4.4 Habits: Consistency, Rituals, and Embedded Influence

While knowledge, skills, and attitudes are situationally activated, **habits ensure sustainability**. CIL becomes embedded in culture when leaders:

- Consistently follow through on promises;
- Establish regular reflection or alignment check-ins;
- Share credit and solicit feedback as routine.

Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory highlights how such **micro-behaviors compound trust** and team resilience over time. For example, in a national oil sector mentorship initiative, mid-level professionals who regularly closed feedback loops and highlighted team wins were seen as **anchor points** for leadership—regardless of title.

In Conclusion, The **KSAH model proves valid and field-relevant** when tested against real-world leadership behavior. Each layer—when expressed through sustained, inclusive practice—reinforces the CIL competency as a learnable and assessable construct. From

conceptual orientation (knowledge) to behavioral repetition (habits), CIL becomes both a developmental path and a **pragmatic leadership style** for complex, high-stakes, and collaborative environments.

7.5 Synthesis: How Collaborative Influence Leadership Functions in Practice

The preceding analysis affirms that **Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL)** is more than a conceptual construct—it is a **behavioral system** that unfolds across interpersonal dynamics, structural enablers, and repeated leadership practices. Synthesizing across the Visionary Management domains, the CIL model functions in practice through the **activation of trust, strategic facilitation, and distributed legitimacy**.

Function 1: Influence through Relational Legitimacy

Rather than derive influence from authority or expertise, CIL leaders operate through **interpersonal credibility**. Their legitimacy stems from demonstrated care, follow-through, and ethical framing. These patterns emerged consistently across MENA-based teams, where hierarchical culture often coexists with strong informal peer networks. In such environments, CIL leaders earned followership by maintaining visibility during ambiguity and offering voice to underrepresented perspectives—thus reinforcing trust as currency.

Function 2: Facilitating Collective Direction in Ambiguity

CIL functions as a **coordination strategy** in adaptive environments. Unlike directive models that seek control, CIL mobilizes **multi-actor alignment** through structured dialogue and flexible planning. In civic teams and hybrid organizational structures, leaders using CIL approaches facilitated consensus not by simplifying complexity, but by distributing meaning-making. This aligns with complexity leadership theory (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007), which views leadership as an emergent function of interaction and sense-making, especially in volatile contexts.

Function 3: Sustaining Psychological Safety and Learning

Behavioral patterns tied to CIL—such as open feedback solicitation, collaborative check-ins, and visible accountability—collectively reinforce a climate of **psychological safety**. As highlighted by Edmondson (1999), this safety is not merely interpersonal, but instrumental for learning, innovation, and team resilience. Leaders who normalized feedback loops and shared

leadership rituals enabled teams to sustain coherence despite shifts in context or team composition.

Function 4: Transferring Influence Across Systems

Collaborative Influence Leadership extends beyond team boundaries through behaviors like follow-through, inclusive narration, and relational memory, enabling stakeholder alignment across systems. Such influence, grounded in trust and ethical co-creation, reflects relational leadership models that prioritize stakeholder interconnectedness (Maak, 2007; Pless, 2007). CIL fosters **horizontal accountability** by embedding shared ownership and coordination across decentralized networks (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). In youth-led and cross-sector contexts, it functions as a distributed influence model that adapts across power structures, consistent with leadership-as-practice paradigms (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2010).

8. Learning Outcomes – KSAH Model for Collaborative Influence Leadership

Collaborative Influence Leadership (CIL) is not an innate trait but a **progressive learning process**. It matures through deepening layers of **Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, and Habits (KSAH)**—each representing a distinct dimension of growth. Drawing from developmental leadership science, the KSAH model reflects how learners evolve from **novices** who rely on external models and guidance to **experts** who embody CIL values as second nature. The following subsections outline how each layer of KSAH unfolds across the four core progression stages.

8.1 Knowledge

Collaborative Influence Leadership (CIL) requires a distinct knowledge base that blends **systems thinking, relational mapping, and ethical complexity**. At the novice level, individuals must first internalize the theoretical underpinnings of leadership models that prioritize interdependence over authority. Foundational concepts such as *relational leadership theory* (Maak & Pless, 2006) and *transformational leadership* (Bass, 1985) help learners understand the importance of influence embedded in social exchange and trust-building. These theories

shift the locus of leadership from a top-down directive style to a co-constructed, participatory model in which knowledge is not merely possessed but shared.

Progressing toward the intermediate level, learners deepen their knowledge through structured engagement with **stakeholder mapping**, **power dynamics**, and **collaborative governance**. These concepts derive from network leadership and boundary-spanning literature (Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Uhl-Bien, 2006), and provide learners with frameworks to decode complex organizational ecosystems. Systems thinking in particular becomes vital here, enabling leaders to understand feedback loops, emergent patterns, and interdependencies across functional units (Senge, 2006; Jackson, 2003)

At the advanced level, CIL knowledge matures into **ethical systems reasoning**—the cognitive capacity to anticipate consequences, align diverse values, and manage paradoxes across multiple stakeholders (Maak, 2007; Muff et al., 2020). This involves integrating ethics with systems thinking, recognizing that influence must be exercised with accountability and humility in fluid environments. The leader's ability to conceptualize complex adaptive systems while sustaining legitimacy and inclusivity marks expert-level understanding (Heifetz et al., 2009; Muff, 2020).

Importantly, the knowledge dimension of CIL does not evolve in isolation. It is deeply interlinked with the other KSAH components—skills, attitudes, and habits—through what Vygotsky (1978) described as **scaffolded learning**: an iterative process in which conceptual understanding is reinforced through social interaction and experiential feedback. This relational scaffolding is particularly critical in multicultural and high-context environments such as the MENA region, where tacit knowledge, cultural norms, and informal influence patterns play an outsized role (House et al., 2004; Afiouni, 2014).

Thus, from novice to expert, the knowledge foundation for CIL moves from understanding key leadership theories and collaborative models, toward internalizing system-level reasoning, ethical complexity, and cross-cultural sensitivity as the scaffolding for long-term, sustainable influence.

8.2 Skills

Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL) is deeply anchored in a robust skill set that goes beyond traditional task execution. It emphasizes interpersonal acumen, facilitation, and shared meaning-making—capacities essential in complex and adaptive systems. The development of these skills follows a continuum from novice to expert and is grounded in established frameworks of leadership development and communication theory.

Foundational Skills (Novice–Emerging)

At the novice level, leaders begin by cultivating core interpersonal abilities such as active listening, open-ended questioning, and basic facilitation of discussions. These skills are foundational for establishing trust and psychological safety, which research identifies as prerequisites for effective team collaboration (Edmondson, 1999). Active listening, in particular, enhances relational quality and trust formation in early stages of leadership learning (Brownell, 2012).

Emerging collaborative leaders also begin practicing “dialogic leadership,” which prioritizes openness, curiosity, and the co-construction of meaning over directive communication (Isaacs, 1999). This facilitates the kind of reflective dialogue necessary for fostering inclusion and insight in diverse teams (Raelin, 2006).

Intermediate Skills (Competent–Proficient)

As leaders grow in competence, their skillset expands into more advanced group facilitation, consensus-building, and conflict mediation. According to Schwarz (2002), effective facilitators learn to manage group dynamics, recognize hidden conflict, and encourage divergent viewpoints to surface constructively. Consensus-building at this level demands that leaders balance competing interests while aligning team members around shared values and objectives (Kaner et al., 2014).

Leaders also begin to demonstrate adaptive communication across diverse settings, integrating verbal, non-verbal, and culturally sensitive messaging. The ability to shift registers between

formal and informal, hierarchical and horizontal interactions reflects both communication agility and social intelligence (Walther, 2011; Goleman, 2006).

Digital facilitation becomes increasingly vital at this stage. With the rise of remote and hybrid collaboration, skills in digital empathy, asynchronous engagement, and virtual meeting facilitation become core to collaborative leadership (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017). Leaders proficient in these areas maintain team cohesion across time zones and cultures, mitigating the “digital drift” that often undermines trust in virtual contexts.

Advanced Skills (Expert)

At the expert level, CIL leaders embody “transformative facilitation”—the capacity to not only guide discussions but to catalyze shifts in group perspective and co-create new possibilities. These leaders act as “meaning makers” who help teams reframe challenges, embrace complexity, and craft shared narratives (Kahane, 2010). This form of narrative co-leadership is especially critical in multi-stakeholder environments, where power and perspectives are distributed.

Experts also excel in **horizontal influence skills**, enabling them to bridge across silos and mobilize action without formal authority. This includes stakeholder mapping, alliance-building, and meta-leadership—leveraging influence through relationships, rather than directives (Marcus et al., 2015).

Finally, expert collaborative leaders mentor others in the art of facilitation and negotiation, effectively distributing leadership capacities throughout their organizations. They use reflective practice and systems thinking to align skills with evolving contexts, enabling adaptive performance over time (Senge et al., 2004; Schön, 1983).

8.3 Attitudes

Attitudinal development in Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL) entails the cultivation of intrinsic values and beliefs that underpin interpersonal trust, moral grounding, and shared purpose. These attitudes are not merely psychological states but are behavioral dispositions that shape how leaders interact with others, especially in complex, multi-stakeholder environments.

Progression from Novice to Expert

- **Novice** leaders may express basic openness and cooperation but often rely on external validation and exhibit discomfort with ambiguity.
- **Competent** leaders begin internalizing values such as humility, accountability, and inclusivity, displaying greater comfort in decentralized leadership.
- **Proficient** leaders demonstrate systemic orientation, actively listening across hierarchies, sharing credit, and promoting team learning.
- **Expert** leaders embody reciprocal influence, showing moral courage, self-decentering, and consistent alignment between espoused values and practice.

Core CIL Attitudes.

1. **Humility and Self-Decentering:**

Humility in leadership involves recognizing the limits of one's knowledge and sharing authority with others. It is foundational to enabling collaborative dialogue and mutual learning (Owens & Hekman, 2012). Leaders who practice self-decentering move from ego-centered control to role-fluidity, making space for others to contribute influence across the system (Maak & Pless, 2006).

2. **Emotional Attunement and Respect:**

Emotional attunement, grounded in emotional intelligence theory, is critical for perceiving and honoring the perspectives of others (Goleman, 1995). Respect, meanwhile, serves as a mediating attitude for trust-building, especially in culturally or professionally diverse teams (Boyatzis et al., 2013). Leaders who foster psychological safety signal that divergent views are not only accepted but necessary.

3. **Moral Courage and Value Alignment:**

CIL requires the courage to uphold inclusive and ethical values, even when they contradict dominant narratives or institutional inertia. Moral courage enables leaders to engage in uncomfortable conversations while protecting the dignity of all parties involved (Hannah

et al., 2011). In environments of shifting power, such alignment ensures credibility and long-term influence.

4. **Reciprocity and Inclusivity:**

Reciprocity reflects the belief that leadership is a co-constructed process, where giving and receiving influence are balanced. This aligns with relational leadership theory, which emphasizes co-creation, mutual commitment, and the dismantling of hierarchical exclusivity (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Inclusive leaders deliberately widen the circle of influence to historically marginalized voices, practicing what Pless and Maak (2005) call “stakeholder engagement through responsible leadership.”

5. **Hopefulness and Systemic Optimism:**

Influential collaboration is sustained by hope — a cognitive-affective stance that change is possible and that collective agency matters. Leaders who cultivate optimism enhance group efficacy and persistence in the face of institutional barriers (Luthans et al., 2007). Hopeful leaders model possibility thinking, motivating others to contribute toward shared aspirations.

8.4 Habits: Sustaining Collaborative Influence through Embedded Practices:

Leadership influence becomes sustainable only when behaviors are internalized as habits—those repeated actions that reflect deeply held values and reinforce a leader’s relational and ethical stance over time. In the context of **Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL)**, habits are not isolated traits but embodied patterns of behavior that continually signal inclusion, accountability, and value-based orientation. These include daily rituals of team check-ins, reflexive listening routines, inclusive storytelling, and intentional follow-through—each crucial for reinforcing the norms and expectations of trust-based leadership systems (Maak, 2007; Pless, 2007).

8.4.1 Novice Level: Cultivating Conscious Routines.

At the novice level, habits are consciously performed and often externally prompted. Leaders begin with **intentional role-modeling** through recurring, simple actions like scheduling consistent team debriefs or using inclusive language. These externally reinforced behaviors align with **Bandura’s**

Social Learning Theory (1977), which emphasizes how modeling consistent routines fosters internal motivation and observational learning. At this stage, habit formation relies on environmental cues and explicit reinforcement strategies such as reflection journals or 360-degree feedback (Duhigg, 2012; Boyatzis, 2013).

8.4.2 Intermediate Level: Transitioning from Conscious Action to Identity Alignment.

As leaders progress, habits become semi-automatic and aligned with an emergent leadership identity. At this level, “**relational rituals**” such as active engagement in peer feedback loops and follow-through on collective decisions become naturally embedded into how leaders think, act, and relate (Crevani et al., 2010). These practices are reinforced by emotional investments and group dynamics that reward horizontal influence and shared responsibility. The PERMA model's focus on meaning and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011) further underscores the psychological foundations required to maintain such behavioral alignment across changing contexts.

8.4.3 Advanced Level: Habits as Ethical Anchors in Dynamic Systems.

At the advanced or expert level, CIL habits operate as **behavioral anchors**—subconscious yet stable practices that regulate leadership decisions across complex ecosystems. These include the habitual inclusion of marginal voices in strategic decisions, storytelling that embeds shared purpose, and ongoing cultivation of “relational memory”—an individual's recall of collective histories that inform present influence. According to Küpers (2011), such habits signal **moral authority** and system-oriented responsibility. Additionally, **Pless (2007)** highlights how these deeply ingrained behaviors enable a leader to act as a societal change agent while maintaining ethical congruence under pressure. In this phase, behaviors are no longer reactive but **anticipatory**—a core marker of visionary leadership systems.

8.4.4 Embedding and Reinforcing Leadership Habits.

The long-term viability of CIL rests on the leader's capacity to embed these habits within organizational systems. This requires intentional structures: peer mentoring programs, feedback-rich environments, and norm-setting rituals that reinforce consistent action across distributed teams. The **Leader-Member Exchange Theory** (LMX) supports this by showing how consistent,

fair behavior from leaders shapes psychological safety and team performance over time (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Ultimately, **habits in the CIL model reflect the convergence of identity, relational intelligence, and systemic trust**, making them a cornerstone of sustainable, influential leadership within and beyond organizational boundaries.

9. Final Remarks and Future Research Directions

This paper introduced **Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL)** as a forward-looking leadership model rooted in the **Visionary Management Dimension**, situated between the **Leadership, Management, and Business Scaling** domains. Through the KSAH model—Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, and Habits—CIL was presented as a progressive, behavioral, and ethical approach to leading in complex, decentralized environments.

9.1 Contributions.

CIL addresses the need for leaders who influence through trust, shared purpose, and systemic awareness rather than positional authority. It provides a structured pathway from novice to expert, with observable learning outcomes that align with relational leadership, emotional intelligence, and collaborative governance, particularly valuable in youth-led, civic, and cross-functional settings.

9.2 Future Research.

Future research should focus on:

- **Assessment Design:** Developing CIL-specific rubrics or psychometric tools based on the KSAH progression.
 - **Cultural Validation:** Testing the model in varied sociocultural contexts, especially in Global South and MENA regions.
 - **Longitudinal Studies:** Evaluating the growth of CIL behaviors over time and their impact on trust, inclusion, and team performance.
- AI-Enhanced Evaluation:** Using NLP or digital tools to measure facilitation, influence, and behavioral consistency.

- **Pilot Programs:** Embedding CIL in leadership development tracks within VFC-aligned training or coaching initiatives.

CIL offers not just a model of leadership, but a **blueprint for cultivating influence as a shared, ethical, and developmental act**. Its integration into educational, civic, and organizational systems holds promise for more inclusive and visionary leadership in the decades ahead.

10. Conclusion:

In a world marked by distributed authority, cultural complexity, and urgent collective challenges, leadership must evolve beyond charisma and command. This paper has introduced **Collaborative Influential Leadership (CIL)** as a response to that evolution: a model designed to develop leaders who lead *with*, not *over*, others.

By situating CIL within the **Visionary Management Dimension**, the paper bridges relational ethics, adaptive facilitation, and scalable influence. The integration of the **KSAH model**—with clearly articulated progression levels—transforms CIL from a conceptual aspiration into a teachable, observable, and assessable leadership pathway.

CIL is particularly suited to the emerging realities of youth leadership, civic movements, public sector transformation, and cross-functional collaboration. Whether operating in NGOs, startups, or state institutions, collaborative influence represents not just a leadership style, but a **cultural orientation**—toward listening, alignment, and shared agency.

As leadership development efforts seek relevance in a dynamic and increasingly decentralized world, the CIL framework offers both a roadmap and a mandate: to **redefine influence as trust-based, inclusive, and deeply human**. Grounded in rigorous theory and adaptable in practice, Collaborative Influential Leadership holds promise not only for today's challenges but for the shaping of tomorrow's visionary leaders.

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