

BUILDING STUDENT LOYALTY THROUGH STUDY PROGRAM COMMITMENT

Hendra Riofita¹⁾, Annisa Dwi Khai Yasmin²⁾, Muammar Syarqawi³⁾, Nabila Maharani⁴⁾,
Rahma Dinda Annis⁵⁾

¹⁾ State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

²⁾ State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

³⁾ State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

⁴⁾ State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

⁵⁾ State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to determine the effect of study program commitment on student loyalty since student loyalty can determine the sustainability of higher education study programs. This is conducted through a survey. Data are taken from students of the Economics Education Study Program, Teacher Training and Education Faculty of the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim, Riau, using a questionnaire in the form of a Google Form link and analyzed with SPSS program. The results show that study program commitment has a significant effect on student loyalty. The finding also indicates that the study program commitment and student loyalty can be developed based on social exchange theory.

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Corresponding Author:

Hendra Riofita, Indonesia

Email-address : hendrariofita@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the competition for private and public higher educations in recruiting quality prospective students is getting higher (Riofita, 2022; Riofita & Dimasadra, 2022). Gaining quality prospective students is important to produce quality alumni; therefore, the existence of higher education can be recognized by the government, industries, society, and others. Therefore, higher education must be able to empower its resources to recruit prospective students (Riofita, 2023).

Students are the higher education resources that can be empowered to invite prospective students to join. The recommendations they deliver to prospective students are effective in increasing the number of prospective students (Riofita, 2023). Therefore, higher education through study programs must be able to build student loyalty since only loyal students can be empowered as spearheads for recruiting prospective students.

Student loyalty can determine the sustainability of higher education study programs. Student loyalty can be viewed through their good behavior displayed for the benefit and sustainability of the study program (Atsnawiyah et al., 2021). Since they are loyal, students will be moved to provide information about the study program to those who need it, especially prospective students. Since they are loyal, students will be eager to recommend the study program as a choice of study for friends, relatives, and those closest to them. In other words, loyalty will encourage the students to make study program products and services as quality products and services that

can be referred to others (Arwani et al., 2011).

Student loyalty is student behavior to maintain good relations with the study program on an ongoing basis, manifested by providing information, recommending, and referring to relatives and others to join the study program (Arwani et al., 2011 and Riofita & Dimasadra, 2022). To gain the student loyalty, the study program must meet the student needs to create the emotional behavior that produces liking and love for the program (Fullerton, 2003). Student loyalty is built through the experience the students gain by fulfilling their needs while studying in the study program (Widyawati, 2008). Student loyalty will encourage student behavior to maintain good relations with the study program and is manifested by referring the study program brand to others, recommending study program products and services to others, and consuming all products and services provided by the study program (Setiawan & Ukudi, 2007; and Arwani et al., 2011). Student loyalty will be able to provide more than expected by the study program (Auh & Johnston, 1997).

Given the important role of student loyalty, higher education study programs must establish close interactions with students. This way, the study program can explore the needs desired by the students. Meeting the needs is a factor that can encourage student to be loyal to the study program (Ndubisi et al., 2004). To create high student loyalty, fulfilling student needs must be a strong commitment (Ou et al., 2011). In other words, a strong study program commitment to meeting student needs is a predictor for

creating student loyalty to the study program (Holtschlag et al., 2020; Valentine et al., 2017).

Many previous research findings reveal that commitment affects customer loyalty (Valentine et al., 2017; Lapasiang et al., 2017; Fikri et al., 2016). Institutions that commit to customers will encourage loyal customers to promote the institution and the institution's business sustainably (Japutra, 2009). The findings indicate that since the study program also requires student loyalty for promotion on an ongoing basis, achieving student loyalty deserves to be a study program commitment (Izogo, 2015). However, the findings of Mulyana & Ayuni (2017) reveal that institutional commitment does not directly affect customer loyalty. Even in the studies conducted by Safitri (2019) and Anggoro (2021), institutional commitment has no significant effect on customer loyalty. The discrepancy in the findings regarding the effect of institutional commitment on customer loyalty is indicated by the differences in the development of the indicators carried out by researchers on the two variables (Setiawan & Ukudi, 2007). Therefore, the indicators of institutional commitment that should be developed are the indicators that can encourage customers to be loyal and willing to realize the goals of the institution, such as openness, dependability, and accountability to students (Arwani et al., 2011).

Considering that the commitment of study programs is necessary to present student loyalty, this study is interesting to conduct by employing the suggestions proposed by Setiawan and Ukudi (2007) and by employing the indicators as intended by Arwani et al. (2011). Since student

loyalty is manifested from study program commitment (Valentine et al., 2017; Lapasiang et al., 2017; and Fikri et al., 2016), this study also develops the variables based on social exchange theory (Homans, 1961; and Riofita & Iqbal, 2022). In other words, based on the theory, this study aims to determine the effect of study program commitment on student loyalty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Exchange Theory

The commitment of study programs to student loyalty is related and even influences each other (Valentine et al., 2017). The creation of student loyalty is triggered by the study program's commitment to creating emotional behavior and maintaining good relationships that foster a sense of liking and love in students for the study program (Lataruva et al., 2014). If the study program is highly committed to meeting student needs, student loyalty will grow and vice versa. The facts are linear with social exchange theory since the theory reveals the exchange of behavior between two or more parties where the behavior that occurs (student loyalty) is to respond to another behavior (student commitment) (Yao et al., 2019; Homans, 1961; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, and Riofita & Iqbal, 2022).

Student Loyalty

Student loyalty is student behavior to maintain good relations with the study program on an ongoing basis which is manifested by providing information, recommending, and referring to relatives and others to join the study program (Arwani et al., 2011 and Riofita & Dimasdara, 2022). To gain student loyalty, the study

program must meet the student needs to create the emotional behavior that produces liking and love for the study program (Fullerton, 2003). Student loyalty is built through the experiences the student gains through fulfilling the needs while studying in the study program (Widyawati, 2008). Student loyalty will encourage the student behavior to maintain good relations with the study program and is manifested by referring the study program brand to others, recommending the study program products and services to others, and consuming all products and services provided by the study program (Setiawan and Ukudi 2007 and Arwani et al., 2011). Thus, student loyalty will be able to provide more than expected by the study program.

Study Program Commitment

The commitment of the study program is the promise of the study program to explore and meet student needs while studying in the study

program (Kurniawan & Susita, 2020; Hilton, 2015). The high commitment of the study program makes the students loyal and willing to realize the goals of the study program (Sundari et al., 2020). The high commitment of the study program can even encourage the students to promote the study program on an ongoing basis (Japutra, 2009). The actions taken by the students are the manifestation of the student's loyalty to the study program (Zopiatis et al., 2014). The condition is supported by the results of the studies conducted by Azzam & Harsono (2021), Valentine et al. (2017), Lapasiang et al. (2017), and Fikri et al. (2016), which reveal that commitment affects customer loyalty. The hypothesis put forward is:

H: Study program commitment has a significant effect on student loyalty.

Based on the literature review and hypothesis development, this study develops a conceptual framework as follows:

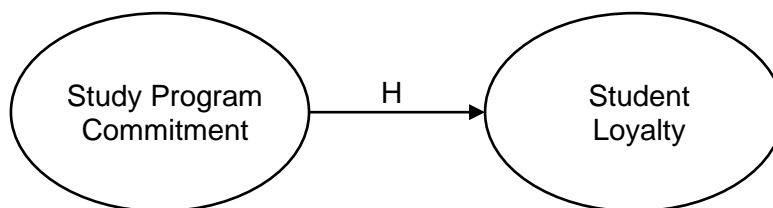


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
 Source: Data Processed by Author (2022)

RESEARCH METHODS

This study is a survey research. Respondents are the students of the odd semester of the 2022/2023 Academic Year, studying at the economic education study program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim in Pekanbaru, Riau Province, Indonesia. They are

taken through a multi-stage sampling technique since they are from the first, third, fifth, and seventh semester levels. The questionnaire in the form of a Google Form link is distributed to them through the head of each class. The students at each semester have the opportunity to complete the questionnaire. Therefore this study also uses a

simple random sampling method to take the respondents.

The questionnaire contains closed questions; therefore the respondent's answer is based on a Likert scale of 1-5, where one represents strongly disagree and five represents strongly agree. The questionnaire is prepared based on the indicators of variables. The indicators adapted from Lapasiang et al. (2017) for the study program commitment variable, namely openness, dependence, and responsibility. Meanwhile, the indicators for the student loyalty variable are adapted from Arwani et al. (2011), namely providing information, participating outside the learning process, contributing to study program activities, and disseminating study program brands.

The research data is processed using the SPSS program. The validity test is analyzed by comparing the value of R statistics and the R table at the significance level of 0.05. If the R statistics are greater than the

R table, the validity will be reached, and vice versa. Meanwhile, the reliability test is carried out by analyzing Cronbach's Alpha value. If the minimum Cronbach's Alpha value is equal to 0.5, reliability will be achieved, and vice versa (Lopiyoadi, 2013). If validity and reliability are achieved, the data is feasible to be processed to determine the effect of study program commitment on student loyalty. The influence analysis compares the value of t statistics and the t table. If the t statistics are greater than the t table, the study program commitment is declared to have an effect on student loyalty, and vice versa. Meanwhile, this study analyzes the R-value to find out the magnitude of the influence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents participating in this study are 109 students. Based on gender, 66.9% of the respondents are female and 32.9% are male.

Table 1. Respondent Gender

No.	Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Male	36	32,9%
2	Female	73	66,9%
	Total	109	100%

Source: Data Processed by Author (2022)

The age of the respondents is in the range of 17-24 years old. The respondents at 22-24 years old are

14 or 12.9%, at 19-21 years old are 81 or 73.3%, and at 17-18 years old are 15 or 13.8%.

Table 2. Respondent Age

No.	Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	17-18	15	13,8%.
2	19-21	81	73,3%.
3	22-24	14	12,9%.
	Total	109	100%

Source: Data Processed by Author (2022)

18 or 16.5% of respondents in this study are 7th semester students, 21 or 19.3% are 5th semester students,

33 or 30.3% are 3rd semester students, and 37 or 33.9% are 1st semester students.

Table 3. Respondent Semester Level

No.	Semester	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	1	37	33,9%
2	3	33	30,3%
3	5	21	19,3%
4	7	18	16,5%
Total		109	100%

Source: Data Processed by Author (2022)

The profiles above statistically show that most respondents are female, aged 19-21 years, and from 1st semester.

Based on the analysis, the research data is valid since the value of R statistics is greater than the R table at a significance level of 0.05. Meanwhile, the value of Cronbach's

Alpha for study program commitment is 0.808, and for student loyalty is 0.816. The research data is considered reliable since the values are greater than 0.05. Therefore, the validity and reliability indicate that the data can be further analyzed to find the effect of study program commitment on student loyalty.

Tabel 4. Construct Validity and Reliability

No	Constructs and Indicators	Validity		Reliability Cronbach Alpha
		R Statistics	R Table	
1	Study Program Commitment			0.808
	a. Openness	0.781	0.188	
	b. Dependence,	0.794	0.188	
2	c. Responsibility	0.719	0.188	0.816
	Student Loyalty			
	a. Providing information	0.801	0.188	
	b. Participating outside the learning process	0.784	0.188	
	c. Disseminating study program brands.	0.809	0.188	
d. Contributing to study program activities	0.832	0.188		

Note: Level of Significance: 0.05

Source: Data Processed by Author (2022)

Based on data analysis, at a significance level of 0.05, t statistics (5,278) is greater than the t table (1,661). Thus, the study program commitment has a significant effect on student loyalty. Referring to the R-value, the magnitude of the influence is 0.749 or 74.9%. Thus, the commitment of the study program

has an influence of 74.9% on student loyalty, while the rest is influenced by other variables.

The findings show that study program commitment has a significant effect on student loyalty.

A strong study program commitment encourages students to be loyal to

the study program. The findings support the findings of Valentine et al. (2017), which reveal that commitment has an effect on loyalty. The findings also support the finding of Arwani et al. (2011), which reveals that the openness, dependability, and responsibility which are employed as the indicators of the study program commitment in this study can encourage study program commitments to make students loyal and willing to realize the goals of the study program. In other words, the findings show that study program commitment can trigger student loyalty. With a large influence of the commitment of 74.9%, the study programs that want to achieve student loyalty must pay attention to their commitment to providing educational services, for example, by paying attention to the quality of student facilities and infrastructure for learning and providing efficient and friendly administrative services.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to determine the effect of study program commitment on student loyalty. The development of research variables is carried out based on the social exchange theory, considering that the theory reveals the exchange of behavior between two or more parties where behavior occurs (student loyalty) to respond to other behavior (student commitment) (Homans, 1961; Ajzen, & Fishbein, 1980, and Riofita & Iqbal, 2022). The findings of this study indicate that study program commitment has a significant effect on student loyalty. The findings also reveal that study program commitment and student loyalty can be developed based on social exchange theory. The results

are expected to encourage study programs to increase commitment in a responsible way; therefore, student loyalty can be achieved. In this way, students will provide their best to advance the study program, one of which is by recommending it as a choice of study that is highly committed to meeting the needs of students, family, relatives, and friends.

The findings of this study must encourage study programs to build student loyalty through study program commitment. Therefore, study programs must be: (1) open, namely study programs must provide quality information openly for students (Riofita, 2022); (2) dependent, namely the study program must be able to make students dependent; (3) responsible, namely the study program is responsible for trying to improve work performance properly, through improving the quality of facilities (Mulyana & Ayuni, 2017) and infrastructure as well as providing easy and friendly administrative services (Fikri et al., 2016).

This study shows that study program commitment has a significant effect on student loyalty. However, the results of previous research indicate that loyalty is not only influenced by commitment but can also be influenced by other variables, such as satisfaction since a high sense of satisfaction can make students loyal in providing good information about the study program (Mulyana & Ayuni, 2017); service quality, since it is an element of the quality competition that can increase student loyalty through the desire to recommend study programs to those closest to them (Anggoro, 2021);

communication, since the existence of communication link can make students more comfortable and loyal to the study program (Kartini & Greekngsih, 2020); trust, since it is an introduction to building long-term relationships between study programs and students (Setiawan & Ukudi, 2007). Therefore, for further research, predicting student loyalty through the variables is recommended.

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