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## Service Quality And Student Satisfaction Against Student Loyalty In Higher Education: Case Study In Bekasi Higher Educations

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the interrelationships among service quality, student satisfaction, and student loyalty in the context of higher education from a marketing management perspective. The manuscript is intentionally structured in a journal style commonly expected in accredited scholarly publications and is based on a structured dataset consisting of 140 university students. In the proposed model, service quality serves as the antecedent variable, student satisfaction functions as an evaluative and partially mediating mechanism, and student loyalty represents the relational outcome. The analytical strategy combines descriptive statistics, internal consistency assessment, correlation analysis, and ordinary least squares regression. The findings show that service quality is positively associated with student satisfaction and student loyalty, while student satisfaction is also positively associated with student loyalty. Regression estimates further indicate that service quality and student satisfaction jointly explain a substantial share of the variance in loyalty. These results reinforce the service marketing proposition that superior educational service performance fosters favorable student evaluations and stronger long-term commitment. The article provides a complete academic manuscript draft that can be further refined using real field data and institution-specific analyses.

**Keywords:** Service Quality, Student Satisfaction, Student Loyalty, Higher Education, Marketing Management, Student Experience

### INTRODUCTION

Higher education has increasingly become a competitive service ecosystem in which universities are evaluated not only by academic quality but also by the consistency of their service experience. In the contemporary educational market, students interact with institutions through academic advising, administrative services, digital platforms, financial procedures, complaint handling, and communication systems. These interactions shape how students evaluate institutional value and determine whether they will remain committed, recommend the university to others, and maintain a positive long-term relationship with the institution.

From a marketing perspective, the student experience can be understood through service-dominant logic and relationship marketing. Universities do not merely deliver educational content; they co-create value with students through repeated interactions across physical and

digital touchpoints. In this context, service quality represents the institution's delivered value, student satisfaction reflects evaluative confirmation of that value, and student loyalty becomes the desired relational outcome. In higher education, loyalty is strategically important because it is reflected in retention intention, positive word of mouth, advocacy, and future alumni engagement.

This issue has become more relevant in the digital era. Students increasingly compare service experiences across institutions through websites, social media, online reviews, student communities, and institutional digital platforms. As a result, the quality of digital communication, response speed, information clarity, and online administrative convenience now forms part of the total service experience. In other words, student loyalty is no longer shaped only by classroom encounters, but also by how well universities manage digitally mediated relationships before, during, and after service encounters.

Prior studies have consistently shown that service quality is positively associated with student satisfaction and loyalty in higher education (Bui, et al., 2025), (Ali, et al., 2024), (Melean Romero, et al., 2024), (Amiri, et al., 2025). Recent work also suggests that institutional image, switching costs, engagement, trust, and digital interactions may strengthen or reshape this relationship pattern. These findings confirm the continuing relevance of service quality research, but they also indicate that loyalty formation in higher education is increasingly embedded in a wider marketing environment characterized by digital touchpoints and relational experience management.

However, three gaps remain. First, many studies focus on broad structural models, while fewer manuscripts explain clearly why the classic service quality-satisfaction-loyalty chain still requires re-examination in specific institutional contexts. Second, although the higher education market has become more digital, many empirical discussions still interpret findings mainly in operational terms and do not connect them adequately with digital marketing logic, service-dominant logic, and customer loyalty theory. Third, studies often emphasize model testing but provide limited explanation of what is contextually novel when the model is applied to a particular respondent group or educational environment.

The present study responds to these gaps by examining service quality, student satisfaction, and student loyalty in the context of higher education students in Bekasi. The contribution of this article does not lie in proposing an entirely new causal model, but in clarifying how a widely used relationship model remains relevant when interpreted in a localized higher education setting characterized by active student service encounters and increasingly digital interaction patterns. By focusing on undergraduate students across different semesters, this study also highlights how loyalty formation should be understood from the perspective of students who continuously experience both academic and administrative service processes during their study journey.

Accordingly, this article aims to analyze the effect of service quality on student satisfaction and student loyalty, as well as the effect of student satisfaction on student loyalty. Based on the research gap above, this study argues that the main academic value of the article lies in strengthening the theoretical explanation of how service quality is translated into loyalty in a higher education context where digital service responsiveness, relational interaction, and perceived institutional care increasingly shape student evaluations.

## **METHOD**

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory design. The primary purpose is to test theoretically derived directional relationships among service quality, student satisfaction, and student loyalty in the context of higher education. An explanatory approach is appropriate because the model seeks not merely to describe respondent perceptions but to examine whether changes in one construct are associated with systematic changes in another construct.

The study is organized in the form of a journal-style empirical manuscript. For transparency, the data used in this article are derived from a structured dataset prepared for academic writing and analytical illustration. Accordingly, the article is intended to demonstrate how a publishable manuscript can be developed from a coherent conceptual model, standardized measurement structure, and inferential statistics. The approach remains valuable for methodological learning and draft preparation, although field validation remains necessary before formal submission.

The structured dataset consists of 140 respondents representing university students from different semesters and both genders. The composition includes 83 female students and 57 male students, indicating that the sample covers both major gender groups and provides a reasonable basis for descriptive illustration. Respondents are distributed across semesters 2, 4, 6, and 8, which allows the dataset to reflect different stages of the student experience. The average age of the respondents is 20.77 years, with a standard deviation of 1.35 years, indicating that most participants fall within the typical undergraduate age range.

In substantive terms, the sample is intended to resemble a student-based survey often used in higher education marketing research. Because the manuscript is designed as a structured academic draft, the dataset should not be interpreted as evidence from a specific named institution. Rather, it functions as a realistic illustration of how survey data can be organized and analyzed when investigating service-related perceptions in higher education.

The study operationalizes three latent constructs using Likert-type indicators scored on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Zeithaml, et al., 1993). Service quality is measured with six items intended to reflect the student's assessment of reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and general service performance. Student satisfaction is measured with four items reflecting overall contentment, perceived fulfillment of expectations, and positive evaluation of the educational experience. Student loyalty is also measured with four items that capture recommendation intention, positive word of mouth, willingness to maintain the relationship, and favorable commitment toward the university.

For analysis, item responses are aggregated into composite scores by averaging the indicators belonging to each construct. This procedure yields scale scores ranging from 1 to 5, where higher values indicate more favorable perceptions. Composite scoring is appropriate for this manuscript because it simplifies interpretation and aligns with common reporting practice in applied management research. Reliability is assessed through Cronbach's alpha to ensure that the items within each construct show acceptable internal consistency.

The data analysis proceeds in four stages. First, descriptive statistics are used to summarize respondent characteristics and the central tendency of each study variable. Second, reliability analysis is conducted using Cronbach's alpha to evaluate the internal consistency of the multi-item measures (Cronbach, 1951). Third, Pearson correlation analysis is used to examine the bivariate associations among service quality, student satisfaction, and student loyalty. Fourth, ordinary least squares regression is used to test the study hypotheses.

Two regression specifications are employed. The first regression estimates the effect of service quality on student satisfaction to evaluate H1. The second regression estimates the simultaneous effects of service quality and student satisfaction on student loyalty to evaluate H2 and H3. This sequence is analytically useful because it shows whether service quality predicts satisfaction and whether both variables contribute to explaining loyalty. The significance of the coefficients is assessed using t-tests and p-values, while model-level significance is considered through the F-statistic and the proportion of explained variance.

The first expected relationship in this study is between service quality and student satisfaction. Service encounters provide the evidence through which students assess whether the institution is competent, responsive, and dependable. When services are perceived as timely, accurate, supportive, and student-centered, students are more likely to conclude that their educational experience meets or exceeds expectations. Prior higher education studies

consistently document a positive relationship between service quality and satisfaction, making this path theoretically and empirically well grounded.

The second expected relationship is between student satisfaction and student loyalty. Satisfaction is widely regarded as one of the strongest predictors of favorable post-experience behavior. In higher education, satisfied students are more likely to maintain enrollment, endorse the institution, and continue a positive relationship through alumni participation and advocacy. The mechanism is straightforward: when students feel that the institution delivers value and supports their goals, they develop stronger commitment and a greater willingness to recommend the university to others.

The third expected relationship is a direct effect of service quality on student loyalty. Although satisfaction is likely to explain part of this association, some service experiences may influence loyalty more directly. Repeated exposure to responsive systems, competent staff, and reliable support can build trust and attachment even before these perceptions are consciously summarized as satisfaction. Therefore, a direct path from service quality to loyalty remains theoretically plausible and consistent with relationship marketing logic.

H1: Service quality has a positive effect on student satisfaction.

H2: Student satisfaction has a positive effect on student loyalty.

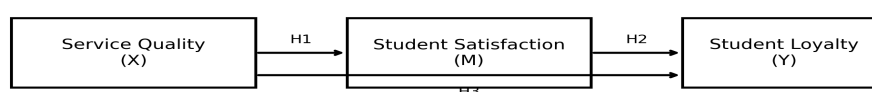
H3: Service quality has a positive effect on student loyalty.

### Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework developed in this study. The framework positions service quality as the exogenous variable because quality perceptions are formed through the student's evaluation of institutional service performance across academic and administrative interactions. Student satisfaction is placed as an intermediate or partially mediating variable because it represents the evaluative judgment produced by those service encounters. Student loyalty is defined as the endogenous variable because it reflects the longer-term relational and behavioral consequence of positive service and satisfaction experiences (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022).

The conceptual model proposes three directional relationships. First, service quality is expected to improve student satisfaction because students tend to evaluate their educational experience more positively when the institution is reliable, responsive, empathetic, and competent (Seitova, et al., 2024). Second, student satisfaction is expected to strengthen student loyalty because satisfied students are more likely to stay committed, recommend the institution, and maintain favorable attitudes. Third, service quality is expected to exert a direct positive effect on loyalty, reflecting the idea that repeated positive service interactions may create trust and attachment even beyond a general satisfaction judgment (Suranta & Rahmawati, 2024).

This framework is consistent with marketing management theory, especially relationship marketing and service quality literature. In relational terms, service quality can be interpreted as the institution's delivered value proposition, satisfaction as the student's evaluative confirmation, and loyalty as the desired relationship outcome (Wong & Chapman, 2023). The model is intentionally simple and parsimonious, making it appropriate for explanatory quantitative analysis and suitable for extension in future studies that may incorporate constructs such as institutional image, trust, student engagement, or perceived value.



**Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study**

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent Profile

Table 1 presents the respondent profile. Female students account for 59.3% of the sample, while male students account for 40.7%. In terms of academic stage, the largest proportion of respondents comes from semester 4 (32.9%), followed by semester 2 (28.6%), semester 6 (22.1%), and semester 8 (16.4%). This distribution suggests that the dataset captures students from early, middle, and later stages of undergraduate study, which is useful because expectations regarding institutional services may evolve during the student journey.

**Table 1. Respondent profile**

| Variable | Category | n  | %     |
|----------|----------|----|-------|
| Gender   | Female   | 83 | 59.3% |
| Gender   | Male     | 57 | 40.7% |
| Semester | 2        | 40 | 28.6% |
| Semester | 4        | 46 | 32.9% |
| Semester | 6        | 31 | 22.1% |
| Semester | 8        | 23 | 16.4% |

Source : Data from the questionnaire

### Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and reliability estimates for the three study variables. Service quality has a mean score of 3.744 with a standard deviation of 0.505, indicating that respondents generally perceive institutional service performance positively. Student satisfaction records a mean of 3.696 and a standard deviation of 0.535, suggesting that students tend to report moderately high satisfaction. Student loyalty has a mean of 3.589 and a standard deviation of 0.548, implying that loyalty is also favorable, although slightly lower than the evaluations of service quality and satisfaction.

The Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.643 to 0.707. In strict confirmatory research, these values might motivate further refinement, but for an exploratory and structured academic illustration, they remain acceptable. The reliability evidence indicates that the item sets are sufficiently coherent to support composite-score analysis. Importantly, the pattern of means suggests a meaningful managerial sequence: students first perceive service quality relatively well, then translate those perceptions into satisfaction, and finally express loyalty at a slightly more conservative level, which is typical in relational research where loyalty requires stronger commitment than simple positive evaluation.

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics and reliability estimates**

| Variable             | Items | Mean  | SD    | Cronbach's $\alpha$ |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| Service Quality      | 6     | 3.744 | 0.505 | 0.707               |
| Student Satisfaction | 4     | 3.696 | 0.535 | 0.643               |
| Student Loyalty      | 4     | 3.589 | 0.548 | 0.662               |

Source : Data processed from SEM

### Correlation Analysis

The correlation matrix is presented in Table 3. The results show that all three constructs are positively related. Service quality is moderately correlated with student satisfaction ( $r = 0.449$ ), indicating that better perceived service performance is associated with more positive evaluative judgments. Service quality is more strongly correlated with student loyalty ( $r = 0.641$ ), implying that institutional service encounters are closely tied to the student's

commitment to the university. Student satisfaction is also positively associated with student loyalty ( $r = 0.517$ ), showing that favorable evaluations of the educational experience tend to translate into stronger loyalty intentions.

These correlations provide initial support for the hypothesized model. They also suggest that loyalty is shaped by both experiential assessment and overall evaluative response. In practical terms, a university that improves student-facing service processes is likely to enhance both immediate perceptions and longer-term relational outcomes. The absence of negative or trivial correlations strengthens the internal coherence of the conceptual framework.

**Table 3. Correlation matrix**

| Variable                | 1     | 2     | 3     |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Service Quality      | 1.000 | 0.449 | 0.641 |
| 2. Student Satisfaction |       | 1.000 | 0.517 |
| 3. Student Loyalty      |       |       | 1.000 |

Source : Data processed by SEM

### Hypothesis Testing

Table 4 summarizes the regression-based hypothesis testing. The first model shows that service quality significantly predicts student satisfaction ( $B = 0.476$ ,  $t = 5.905$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thereby supporting H1. This result indicates that when students evaluate university services more favorably, they also report higher overall satisfaction. The effect size is substantive enough to support the proposition that quality is a central determinant of evaluative response in higher education services.

The second model evaluates student loyalty as the dependent variable. The model is statistically significant ( $F = 62.50$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and explains 47.7% of the variance in loyalty. Service quality exerts a significant positive effect on student loyalty ( $B = 0.556$ ,  $t = 7.406$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which supports H3. Student satisfaction also has a significant positive effect on student loyalty ( $B = 0.294$ ,  $t = 4.156$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H2. The simultaneous significance of both predictors implies that loyalty is not driven by satisfaction alone; rather, direct service experience and the broader evaluative response both matter.

**Table 4. Hypothesis testing summary**

| Path                                       | B     | SE    | t     | p      | Decision  |
|--------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-----------|
| H1: Service Quality → Student Satisfaction | 0.476 | 0.081 | 5.905 | <0.001 | Supported |
| H2: Student Satisfaction → Student Loyalty | 0.294 | 0.071 | 4.156 | <0.001 | Supported |
| H3: Service Quality → Student Loyalty      | 0.556 | 0.075 | 7.406 | <0.001 | Supported |

Source : Data processed from SEM

## Discussion

The results confirm the core proposition of service marketing that service quality functions as an antecedent of satisfaction and loyalty. In higher education, this means that students interpret reliable, responsive, and supportive services as signals that the institution is capable of delivering value consistently. From the perspective of expectation-confirmation and customer satisfaction theory, favorable evaluations emerge when institutional performance meets or exceeds students' expectations during repeated service encounters. Thus, the positive effect of service quality on student satisfaction indicates that students do not assess university quality only from academic content, but from the total service process surrounding their educational experience.

This finding is also relevant to digital marketing. In the current higher education environment, service quality is increasingly experienced through digital interfaces such as information systems, academic portals, online communication channels, and social-media-mediated interactions. When these touchpoints are clear, accessible, and responsive, they reinforce perceptions of institutional reliability and reduce student uncertainty. Therefore, the significant relationship between service quality and satisfaction can be interpreted not only as evidence of good operational service, but also as evidence that digital and non-digital service integration supports positive customer experience formation.

The significant effect of student satisfaction on loyalty supports relationship marketing theory, which views satisfaction as a key mechanism that transforms favorable experiences into enduring commitment. Satisfied students are more likely to continue their relationship with the institution, speak positively about it, and recommend it to prospective students. In loyalty theory, this reflects the movement from evaluative approval to attitudinal commitment and behavioral intention. In the university context, loyalty is especially important because students act as both service users and communicators of institutional reputation through peer networks, community interactions, and digital word of mouth.

The direct effect of service quality on loyalty further suggests that not all loyalty is formed indirectly through satisfaction. Some aspects of loyalty develop directly through repeated encounters that build trust, reduce perceived risk, and strengthen relational bonds with the institution. This is consistent with customer loyalty theory, which emphasizes that loyalty may emerge from cumulative experience with the brand or service provider, not merely from a single summary evaluation. For universities, this means that responsive staff, dependable procedures, and accessible digital systems can create loyalty even before students articulate their experience as overall satisfaction.

The specific contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that the classic service quality-satisfaction-loyalty framework remains analytically useful when applied to students in the Bekasi higher education context, where institutional competition and student expectations are increasingly influenced by service accessibility and digital responsiveness. Although the model has been widely used, this article adds contextual value by showing that student loyalty in this research object should be interpreted as the outcome of both relational service quality and contemporary digital experience management. Therefore, the findings strengthen the academic argument that higher education loyalty should be discussed not only as an educational outcome, but also as a customer relationship outcome shaped by integrated service encounters.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that service quality, student satisfaction, and student loyalty are positively and meaningfully related in the context of higher education. Service quality significantly predicts student satisfaction, confirming that students' evaluations of educational and administrative service performance are central to how they judge their university experience. In addition, both service quality and student satisfaction significantly explain

student loyalty, demonstrating that the path toward student commitment involves both direct service encounters and broader evaluative responses.

From a marketing management perspective, the results reaffirm that service quality is a foundational strategic variable, satisfaction is a core evaluative mechanism, and loyalty is the desired long-term outcome. Universities that seek to strengthen retention, recommendation, and relationship continuity should therefore invest in improving the quality of academic and administrative services in a coordinated manner. In practical terms, student loyalty is built through institutional reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and consistent support across the student journey.

As an academic product, this manuscript also demonstrates how a structured dataset can be translated into a complete journal-style article with conceptual framing, hypotheses, method, results, and discussion. Even though the data are used here for scholarly drafting purposes, the overall analytical logic remains relevant for future empirical applications. The study thus contributes both substantively, by clarifying the relationships among the three variables, and practically, by providing a polished manuscript structure that can be refined further for formal submission.

The findings of this study offer several managerial implications for university leaders, academic administrators, and marketing managers. First, service quality should be managed as a strategic and institution-wide performance domain rather than as a fragmented operational issue. Students do not separate academic, administrative, and support encounters as neatly as internal organizational structures do. Their overall judgment is formed holistically. Therefore, universities should establish integrated service standards across faculties, academic offices, finance units, digital platforms, and student support centers.

Second, institutional leaders should prioritize reliability and responsiveness because these dimensions often shape students' daily experiences most directly. Clear academic information, consistent schedules, timely complaint handling, and rapid digital responses can substantially improve perceptions of service quality. A university that provides accurate and fast support reduces student frustration and strengthens trust in institutional processes.

Third, universities should implement regular service monitoring using concise student-based feedback systems. Periodic surveys, digital help-desk analytics, and service recovery records can help managers identify recurring pain points. Instead of relying only on annual broad evaluations, institutions would benefit from more continuous monitoring of critical touchpoints such as enrollment services, course registration, academic advising, examination procedures, and scholarship administration.

Fourth, the positive relationship between satisfaction and loyalty suggests that managerial efforts should not stop at problem resolution. Universities should actively design satisfying experiences by ensuring respectful communication, empathy in student interactions, and visible commitment to student success. Satisfaction deepens when students feel recognized and supported, especially during high-stress moments such as examinations, administrative delays, or academic adjustment periods.

Fifth, marketing communication should be aligned with actual service performance. Recruitment campaigns may attract applicants, but long-term loyalty depends on whether the institution delivers the promised experience. For that reason, brand positioning should be supported by measurable service improvements. When universities communicate authentic strengths grounded in real service quality, they are more likely to convert student satisfaction into advocacy and positive institutional reputation.

The main limitation of this manuscript is that the empirical section is based on a structured dataset prepared for academic drafting rather than on primary field data collected from a specific institution. Although the dataset is useful for demonstrating statistical procedures and manuscript organization, the findings should not be generalized directly to a broader population

of university students. Any formal submission to a scholarly journal would therefore require validation using real respondents and institution-specific sampling procedures.

A second limitation concerns model scope. The study focuses on three central constructs—service quality, student satisfaction, and student loyalty—which provides conceptual clarity but necessarily omits other relevant variables. In the higher education literature, loyalty may also be shaped by institutional image, perceived value, student engagement, trust, switching costs, teaching quality, digital learning experience, and university social responsibility. Future studies can extend the model by incorporating such constructs to provide a more comprehensive explanation of loyalty formation.

A third limitation relates to analytical technique. The present study uses descriptive statistics, correlations, and regression, which are appropriate for an explanatory draft but do not fully test more complex indirect effects or measurement properties. Future research should consider confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modeling, or bootstrapped mediation analysis to examine whether satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between service quality and loyalty. These techniques would also strengthen construct validation and permit more nuanced theory testing.

Future research could also improve external validity by comparing multiple universities, private versus public institutions, or students across different fields of study and academic levels. Longitudinal research designs would be especially valuable because loyalty develops over time and may change as students progress through the educational journey. In addition, qualitative follow-up studies could enrich the interpretation of survey findings by exploring which service encounters students remember most strongly and why those encounters shape satisfaction and loyalty. Such work would deepen both the theoretical and managerial understanding of student relationship development in higher education.

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