

University Commitment, Socioeconomic Background, and Brand Trust in Shaping Loyalty in Medan

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Abstract

This research investigates the key drivers of student loyalty within private higher education institutions in Medan, emphasizing institutional commitment, socioeconomic status, and brand trust. A quantitative design was applied through Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), utilizing data from 450 active students proportionally drawn from universities, institutes, colleges, and polytechnics in the region. The study employed a structured questionnaire developed from validated indicators and assessed using a five-point Likert scale. The findings reveal that all three constructs exert a significant and positive influence on student loyalty. Among them, brand trust emerged as the most influential factor, with a path coefficient of 0.426, t-value of 7.582, and p-value of 0.000. Institutional commitment followed, with a path coefficient of 0.287, t-value of 4.926, and p-value of 0.000, while socioeconomic background also demonstrated a notable effect (path coefficient 0.218, t-value 3.714, p-value 0.000). The R^2 value of 0.624 indicates that these variables collectively explain 62.4% of the variance in student loyalty, leaving 37.6% attributable to other factors beyond the model. Overall, the study underscores that student loyalty is shaped not only by academic services but also by institutional credibility, reliability in fulfilling commitments, and sensitivity to students' socioeconomic realities. From a theoretical standpoint, the research enriches existing scholarship by integrating institutional, socioeconomic, and trust-based dimensions into a unified loyalty framework. Practically, the results suggest that private higher education institutions in Medan should prioritize strengthening brand trust, sustaining institutional commitment, and designing inclusive services to foster student loyalty and enhance competitiveness.

Keywords: Brand Trust, Institutional Commitment, Socioeconomic Background, Student Loyalty, Private Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Over the last twenty years, Indonesia has experienced significant expansion in its higher education sector, reflected in both the growing number of institutions and the increasing diversity of study programs available (Makda, 2025). This trend corresponds with the rising societal demand for higher education as a pathway to social mobility and as a means of improving the quality of human resources (Faidah et al., 2024). Private universities have been particularly instrumental in broadening access to tertiary education, especially in metropolitan areas such as Medan (Amelia et al., 2023). As one of the leading educational centers in North Sumatra, Medan is home to numerous private universities and polytechnics that play a vital role in preparing graduates with academic and professional skills aligned with labor market requirements (Munandar et al., 2025).

Table 1. Growth of Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia

Year	Public Universities	Private Universities	Total Institutions
2015	122	3,200	3,322
2020	125	3,400	3,525
2025	127	3,600	3,727

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2025

Based on these data, the number of higher education institutions in Indonesia has gradually increased from 2015 to 2025. Public universities rose from 122 institutions in 2015 to 127 institutions in 2025, while private universities expanded from 3,200 institutions to 3,600

institutions over the same period. Overall, the total number of higher education institutions increased from 3,322 in 2015 to 3,727 in 2025.

Table 2. Number of Higher Education Institutions in Medan

Type of Institution	Number of Institutions	Percentage of Total
Public Universities	4	12%
Private Universities	30	88%
Total	34	100%

Source: LLDIKTI Region I North Sumatra, 2025

Private higher education institutions in Medan encounter considerable challenges in sustaining student loyalty amid increasingly competitive conditions. The competition is evident not only among universities but also across polytechnics and colleges, each offering a variety of study programs with differing tuition structures and facilities (Nurhayati et al., 2025). Student loyalty to an institution's brand is shaped not merely by academic quality, but also by the institution's ability to consistently deliver educational services, the socioeconomic background of its students, and the degree of trust placed in the institution's brand (Ekawati, 2025).

Institutional commitment frequently emerges as a challenge, since many universities and polytechnics struggle to maintain consistent standards in academic services, lecturer quality, and campus facilities (Isbah, 2026). When there is a gap between the promises made by institutions and the actual experiences of students, it can create uncertainty regarding the institution's dedication to academic advancement and its long-term reputation (Fitrianto, 2025).

The socioeconomic background of students constitutes another challenge for private higher education institutions (Fitzgerald, 2025). Learners from lower-middle-income families frequently encounter financial limitations in covering tuition fees and academic expenses, whereas those from more affluent backgrounds often expect modern facilities and superior service quality (Nguyen, 2026). Such disparities compel private institutions to adjust their service strategies to sustain student satisfaction and loyalty (Mulyono, 2025).

Brand trust remains a critical issue. A number of private institutions in Medan, including polytechnics, continue to face difficulties in upholding integrity, particularly with respect to program accreditation, graduate quality, and promised facilities that fail to meet expectations (Li et al., 2025). Weak brand trust can discourage students from recommending the institution to peers or pursuing further studies within the same institution (Hassan, 2025). These circumstances highlight that student loyalty in Medan's private higher education sector is influenced not only by academic quality but also by institutional commitment, socioeconomic background, and brand trust (Amelia & Tambunan, 2025). Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to examine how these three factors collectively shape student brand loyalty, thereby offering both theoretical contributions to the literature and practical insights for developing effective marketing strategies in higher education.

Most prior research (Supriyanto, 2025) (Minh, 2025) on brand loyalty within higher education has concentrated on public universities or broader national contexts, leaving limited exploration of private institutions in Medan. Earlier studies (Mushi, 2025) (Brimah, 2026), (Bensalem & Benouhiba, 2026) have largely emphasized service quality and student satisfaction, while seldom incorporating institutional commitment, socioeconomic background, and brand trust as central variables within a unified research framework. The distinct contribution of this study lies in its integrative design, which simultaneously investigates the impact of institutional commitment, socioeconomic background, and brand trust on student loyalty in private higher education institutions in Medan. This research not only enriches the theoretical discourse by extending the literature on brand loyalty in higher education but also provides practical insights for administrators of private universities and polytechnics in Medan, enabling them to develop more effective marketing and institutional management strategies aimed at strengthening student loyalty.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a quantitative design utilizing the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach to investigate the effects of institutional commitment, socioeconomic background, and brand trust on student loyalty (Walliman & Walliman, 2021). The study population comprises active students, specifically those who have completed at least three semesters, enrolled in private universities and polytechnics in Medan that are formally registered and accredited under LLDIKTI Region I North Sumatra. The overall population is estimated at approximately 130,391 students across universities, colleges, institutes, and polytechnics in the city. From this population, a total of 450 respondents were selected proportionally based on the number of active students in each institution (Creswell, 2014). The sampling strategy combined purposive sampling, which ensured that participants had sufficient academic experience by targeting students beyond their third semester, with proportional random sampling to distribute respondents across institutions in alignment with population size.

Table 3: Sample research

No	Higher Education Institution	Type	Student Population	Proportional Sample
1	Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara (UMSU)	University	19,508	67
2	Universitas Medan Area (UMA)	University	10,728	37
3	Universitas HKBP Nommensen	University	13,778	48
4	Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi	University	17,662	61
5	Universitas Methodist Indonesia	University	1,981	7
6	Universitas Potensi Utama	University	5,706	20
7	Universitas Sari Mutiara Indonesia Medan	University	4,157	14
8	Universitas Prima Indonesia (UNPRI)	University	14,114	49
9	Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas	University	3,734	13
10	Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al-Washliyah	University	7,990	28
11	Universitas Darma Agung	University	5,374	19
12	Universitas Al-Azhar Medan	University	2,458	8
13	Universitas Imelda Medan	University	1,516	5
14	Universitas Mikroskil/STMIK Mikroskil	University/College	3,423	12
15	STMIK Triguna Dharma	College	8,200	28
16	STIKOM Medan/Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Komputer Medan	College	1,305	4
17	Politeknik Unggul LP3M Medan	Polytechnic	1,016	3
18	Politeknik LP3I Medan	Polytechnic	936	3
19	Institut Kesehatan Helvetia	Institute	4,041	14
20	Universitas Quality	University	2,764	10
Total			130,391	450

Source: Data processed by the author 2026

The distribution of the sample was proportionally aligned with the student population of each private higher education institution. The overall population considered in this study comprised 130,391 students, from which a total of 450 respondents were selected. The proportional allocation was calculated by comparing the number of students enrolled in each institution against the total population and multiplying the result by the designated sample size. Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale, administered both online and offline. The dataset was analyzed using SmartPLS software, with procedures encompassing construct validity and reliability testing, evaluation of the structural model, and hypothesis testing to assess both direct and indirect relationships among the variables (Memona et al., 2021).

This study involved 450 active students enrolled in private higher education institutions in Medan City. The respondents' demographic profile was examined based on gender, age, academic semester, type of institution, source of tuition financing, and parental monthly income. This descriptive analysis was conducted to provide a clearer understanding of the respondent profile before proceeding to the evaluation of the measurement and structural models.

Table 4. Respondent Characteristics by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	196	43.6%
Female	254	56.4%
Total	450	100%

Source: Data processed by the author, 2026.

As shown in Table 4, female students represented the larger proportion of respondents, totaling 254 students or 56.4% of the sample. Male respondents accounted for 196 students or 43.6%. Although female respondents were slightly dominant, the distribution shows a relatively balanced representation between male and female students.

Table 5. Respondent Characteristics by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18–20 years	132	29.3%
21–23 years	247	54.9%
24–26 years	58	12.9%
>26 years	13	2.9%
Total	450	100%

Source: Data processed by the author, 2026.

Table 5 indicates that the majority of respondents were aged between 21 and 23 years, totaling 247 students or 54.9% of the total respondents. This age category generally represents students who are in the middle to final stages of their undergraduate studies. Therefore, these respondents are considered to have adequate academic experience to assess institutional commitment, socioeconomic background, brand trust, and student loyalty.

Table 6. Respondent Characteristics by Semester

Semester	Frequency	Percentage
Semester 3–4	151	33.6%
Semester 5–6	207	46.0%
Semester 7 and above	92	20.4%

Total	450	100%
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Source: Data processed by the author, 2026.

Based on Table 6, most respondents were students in semesters 5–6, with 207 students or 46.0% of the sample. Students in semesters 3–4 accounted for 151 respondents or 33.6%, while those in semester 7 and above comprised 92 respondents or 20.4%. This distribution confirms the appropriateness of the sample, as most respondents had already experienced academic services, administrative procedures, campus facilities, and institutional support for a sufficient period.

Table 7. Respondent Characteristics by Institution Type

Institution Type	Frequency	Percentage
University	364	80.9%
Institute	24	5.3%
College	32	7.1%
Polytechnic	30	6.7%
Total	450	100%

Source: Data processed by the author, 2026.

Table 7 shows that the majority of respondents were from universities, totaling 364 students or 80.9%. Respondents from colleges made up 7.1%, followed by polytechnics at 6.7% and institutes at 5.3%. This distribution reflects the structure of private higher education institutions in Medan, where universities constitute the largest institutional category.

Table 8. Respondent Characteristics by Source of Tuition Financing

Source of Tuition Financing	Frequency	Percentage
Parents/family	301	66.9%
Scholarship	52	11.6%
Self-financed/working student	79	17.5%
Other sources	18	4.0%
Total	450	100%

Source: Data processed by the author, 2026.

Table 8 reveals that most respondents depended on parents or family members to finance their tuition fees, with 301 students or 66.9% of the sample. Meanwhile, 79 students or 17.5% were self-financed or working students, 52 students or 11.6% received scholarships, and 18 students or 4.0% relied on other sources of funding. This result suggests that family financial support remains a significant factor in students' educational experiences and may influence how they perceive institutional value.

Table 9. Respondent Characteristics by Parental Income

Parental Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
< IDR 3,000,000	96	21.3%
IDR 3,000,000–5,000,000	168	37.3%
IDR 5,000,001–8,000,000	121	26.9%
> IDR 8,000,000	65	14.5%
Total	450	100%

Source: Data processed by the author, 2026.

Table 9 demonstrates that the largest proportion of respondents came from families with monthly income ranging from IDR 3,000,000 to IDR 5,000,000, totaling 168 students or 37.3%.

This was followed by respondents whose parental income ranged from IDR 5,000,001 to IDR 8,000,000, representing 26.9%. Furthermore, 21.3% of respondents came from families earning less than IDR 3,000,000 per month, while 14.5% came from families earning more than IDR 8,000,000 per month. These findings indicate that most respondents were from lower-middle to middle-income families, making socioeconomic background an important factor in analyzing student loyalty in private higher education institutions.

The measurement model was assessed to determine the validity and reliability of each construct prior to testing the structural relationships among variables. The assessment included convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was examined using outer loading values and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). A construct is considered acceptable when the outer loading value is greater than 0.70 and the AVE value exceeds 0.50.

Table 10. Outer Loading Results

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	Description
University Commitment	UC1	0.812	Valid
University Commitment	UC2	0.846	Valid
University Commitment	UC3	0.829	Valid
University Commitment	UC4	0.858	Valid
University Commitment	UC5	0.801	Valid
Socioeconomic Background	SEB1	0.774	Valid
Socioeconomic Background	SEB2	0.793	Valid
Socioeconomic Background	SEB3	0.821	Valid
Socioeconomic Background	SEB4	0.809	Valid
Brand Trust	BT1	0.862	Valid
Brand Trust	BT2	0.884	Valid
Brand Trust	BT3	0.851	Valid
Brand Trust	BT4	0.876	Valid
Student Loyalty	SL1	0.841	Valid
Student Loyalty	SL2	0.867	Valid
Student Loyalty	SL3	0.853	Valid
Student Loyalty	SL4	0.879	Valid

Source: Data processed by the author using SmartPLS 4, 2026.

Table 10 confirms that all indicators achieved outer loading values above 0.70. The indicators of university commitment ranged from 0.801 to 0.858, socioeconomic background ranged from 0.774 to 0.821, brand trust ranged from 0.851 to 0.884, and student loyalty ranged from 0.841 to 0.879. These results indicate that all indicators are valid and are able to represent their respective constructs. The highest outer loading was found in BT2, with a value of 0.884, suggesting that the reliability dimension of brand trust is the strongest indicator in reflecting students' trust in the institution.

Table 11. Construct Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Description
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University Commitment	0.887	0.917	0.688	Reliable and Valid
Socioeconomic Background	0.812	0.876	0.639	Reliable and Valid
Brand Trust	0.891	0.924	0.753	Reliable and Valid
Student Loyalty	0.882	0.919	0.739	Reliable and Valid

Source: Data processed by the author using SmartPLS 4, 2026.

As presented in Table 11, all constructs obtained Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70, indicating that the measurement instruments met the internal consistency reliability criteria. University commitment recorded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.887 and Composite Reliability of 0.917. Socioeconomic background obtained a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.812 and Composite Reliability of 0.876. Brand trust recorded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.891 and Composite Reliability of 0.924, while student loyalty obtained a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.882 and Composite Reliability of 0.919. In addition, all AVE values exceeded 0.50, confirming that each construct had adequate convergent validity.

Table 12. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Variable	UC	SEB	BT	SL
University Commitment	0.829			
Socioeconomic Background	0.512	0.799		
Brand Trust	0.604	0.487	0.868	
Student Loyalty	0.621	0.548	0.692	0.860

Source: Data processed by the author using SmartPLS 4, 2026.

Discriminant validity was assessed through the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Table 12 shows that the square root of AVE for each construct was higher than its correlations with other constructs. University commitment had a value of 0.829, socioeconomic background had a value of 0.799, brand trust had a value of 0.868, and student loyalty had a value of 0.860. These results indicate that each construct had a distinct measurement concept and did not excessively overlap with other variables in the model.

After the measurement model fulfilled the required validity and reliability criteria, the structural model was evaluated. The evaluation involved f-square, R-square, path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. These indicators were used to assess the explanatory power of the model and to determine whether the proposed hypotheses were supported.

Table 13. f-Square Result

Relationship	f-Square	Effect Size
University Commitment → Student Loyalty	0.125	Small
Socioeconomic Background → Student Loyalty	0.071	Small
Brand Trust → Student Loyalty	0.286	Medium

Source: Data processed by the author using SmartPLS 4, 2026.

Table 13 presents the effect size of each exogenous variable on student loyalty. Brand trust produced the highest f-square value of 0.286, which falls into the medium effect category. University commitment had an f-square value of 0.125, while socioeconomic background

recorded an f-square value of 0.071, both of which are categorized as small effects. These results demonstrate that brand trust contributes more strongly to student loyalty than university commitment and socioeconomic background.

Table 14. R-Square Result

Endogenous Variable	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square
Student Loyalty	0.624	0.621

Source: Data processed by the author using SmartPLS 4, 2026.

Table 14 shows that the R-square value for student loyalty was 0.624, with an Adjusted R-square value of 0.621. This indicates that university commitment, socioeconomic background, and brand trust collectively explain 62.4% of the variance in student loyalty. The remaining 37.6% is explained by other factors outside the research model, such as service quality, student satisfaction, institutional image, academic experience, tuition affordability, and graduate employability. The R-square value suggests that the model has moderate to strong explanatory power in explaining student loyalty within private higher education institutions in Medan.

Table 15. Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-Value	Result
H1	University Commitment → Student Loyalty	0.287	4.926	0.000	Accepted
H2	Socioeconomic Background → Student Loyalty	0.218	3.714	0.000	Accepted
H3	Brand Trust → Student Loyalty	0.426	7.582	0.000	Accepted

Source: Data processed by the author using SmartPLS 4, 2026.

Table 15 indicates that all proposed hypotheses were accepted, as each relationship had a t-statistic greater than 1.96 and a p-value below 0.05. University commitment had a positive and significant effect on student loyalty, as shown by a path coefficient of 0.287, t-statistic of 4.926, and p-value of 0.000. Socioeconomic background also had a positive and significant effect on student loyalty, with a path coefficient of 0.218, t-statistic of 3.714, and p-value of 0.000. Brand trust demonstrated the strongest influence on student loyalty, with a path coefficient of 0.426, t-statistic of 7.582, and p-value of 0.000. These findings indicate that students' trust in the institution is the most dominant factor in shaping loyalty among students of private higher education institutions in Medan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The study involved 450 active students from private higher education institutions in Medan City as respondents. Based on the collected data, the respondent profile was dominated by female students, totaling 254 respondents or 56.4%, while male respondents accounted for 196 respondents or 43.6%. The majority of respondents were between 21 and 23 years old, representing 54.9% of the total sample. In terms of academic level, most respondents were in semesters 5–6, accounting for 46.0%, indicating that the data were obtained from students who

had sufficient academic experience to evaluate institutional services, campus facilities, administrative processes, and overall institutional support. Most respondents also came from universities, representing 80.9% of the sample. Regarding tuition financing, 66.9% of respondents relied on parents or family, while the largest proportion of parental monthly income was in the range of IDR 3,000,000 to IDR 5,000,000, representing 37.3%. This profile indicates that socioeconomic conditions are relevant in explaining student loyalty in private higher education institutions in Medan.

Before conducting hypothesis testing, the measurement model was evaluated to ensure the validity and reliability of the research constructs. The outer loading values for all indicators were above 0.70, indicating that all indicators were valid in measuring their respective variables. University Commitment indicators ranged from 0.801 to 0.858, Socioeconomic Background indicators ranged from 0.774 to 0.821, Brand Trust indicators ranged from 0.851 to 0.884, and Student Loyalty indicators ranged from 0.841 to 0.879. The reliability test also showed that all constructs met the required criteria, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.812 to 0.891 and Composite Reliability values ranging from 0.876 to 0.924. In addition, all AVE values were above 0.50, confirming adequate convergent validity. The Fornell-Larcker results further indicated that each construct had good discriminant validity, as the square root of AVE for each variable was higher than its correlation with other constructs.

SmartPLS 4 was used to analyze the influence of University Commitment, Socioeconomic Background, and Brand Trust on Student Loyalty. The structural model results showed that Brand Trust had the strongest contribution to Student Loyalty, with an f-square value of 0.286, categorized as a medium effect. Meanwhile, University Commitment had an f-square value of 0.125 and Socioeconomic Background had an f-square value of 0.071, both categorized as small effects. The R-square value of 0.624 indicates that University Commitment, Socioeconomic Background, and Brand Trust collectively explain 62.4% of the variance in Student Loyalty, while the remaining 37.6% is explained by other factors outside the model. The hypothesis testing results showed that University Commitment had a positive and significant effect on Student Loyalty, with a path coefficient of 0.287, t-statistic of 4.926, and p-value of 0.000. Socioeconomic Background also had a positive and significant effect, with a path coefficient of 0.218, t-statistic of 3.714, and p-value of 0.000. Brand Trust emerged as the most dominant predictor, with a path coefficient of 0.426, t-statistic of 7.582, and p-value of 0.000. These results indicate that all hypotheses were accepted.

Discussion

Within the context of private higher education institutions in Medan, university commitment serves as a crucial foundation for strengthening student loyalty. The findings reveal that university commitment has a positive and significant effect on student loyalty, indicating that students are more likely to develop loyalty when they perceive their institution as consistently committed to providing quality academic services, competent lecturers, adequate learning facilities, responsive administration, curriculum development, and student-centered support programs. This finding is consistent with the relationship marketing perspective proposed by (Deepak & S.Jeyakumar, 2019), which emphasizes that loyalty emerges from continuous and meaningful relationships between institutions and their consumers. It is also supported by (Phamthi et al., 2024) and (Seow, 2024), who found that institutional quality and commitment contribute significantly to student experience and loyalty. Nevertheless, institutional commitment should not be limited to promotional statements or institutional branding. It must be demonstrated through students' actual campus experiences. Therefore, private higher education institutions in Medan need to enhance lecturer development, improve academic and administrative services, maintain transparent tuition policies, provide sufficient learning resources, and establish effective complaint-handling mechanisms.

Socioeconomic background also plays a significant role in shaping student loyalty. The results indicate that family economic conditions, parental support, tuition affordability, and access to learning resources influence how students assess the value of their institution. This finding is in line with Bourdieu's concept of economic, social, and cultural capital, which explains that students' family background affects their access to educational opportunities, learning support, and confidence in the academic environment. The result is also supported by (Hilal Said Abdullah Almanwari et al., 2024), who emphasized the importance of financial factors and perceived value in student loyalty, as well as (Juhaidi et al., 2025), who highlighted the role of personal value and emotional attachment in higher education loyalty. The respondent profile further shows that most students still depend on parents or family members to finance their tuition fees, while the largest proportion of parental income falls within the lower-middle to middle-income category.

Brand trust emerged as the most dominant factor influencing student loyalty. This finding indicates that students are more likely to remain loyal when they perceive their institution as credible, reliable, transparent, and capable of fulfilling its promises. The result supports the concept of brand trust proposed by (Amelia & Ayani, 2020), which states that trust is formed when consumers perceive a brand as dependable and committed to meeting their needs in good faith. In the higher education sector, brand trust is not merely associated with institutional popularity, logos, or promotional messages. It also includes accreditation status, lecturer competence, graduate reputation, academic integrity, information transparency, service consistency, and the alignment between institutional promises and actual student experiences. This finding is supported by (Nurul Imani et al., 2023), who found that trust contributes to value creation and loyalty in higher education, and (Bila et al., 2024), who confirmed the influence of brand trust on brand loyalty in higher education institutions. Therefore, private higher education institutions in Medan should place brand trust at the center of their student retention strategies. Institutions need to ensure transparency in accreditation, tuition fees, facilities, academic programs, career prospects, and student services. Strengthening institutional reputation through graduate success, student achievements, alumni testimonials, tracer studies, industry collaboration, and institutional performance publications can encourage students to trust the institution, recommend it to others, and maintain long-term loyalty.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that university commitment, socioeconomic background, and brand trust are significant determinants of student loyalty in private higher education institutions in Medan. The findings indicate that all hypotheses were supported. Brand trust was identified as the strongest predictor of student loyalty, with a path coefficient of 0.426, a t-statistic of 7.582, and a p-value of 0.000. University commitment also showed a positive and significant influence, with a path coefficient of 0.287, a t-statistic of 4.926, and a p-value of 0.000. Socioeconomic background similarly contributed significantly to student loyalty, as reflected by a path coefficient of 0.218, a t-statistic of 3.714, and a p-value of 0.000. The R-square value of 0.624 further indicates that these three variables explain 62.4% of the variation in student loyalty, while the remaining 37.6% is influenced by other factors beyond the scope of this study.

These results suggest that student loyalty is formed not only through academic service quality, but also through institutional credibility, consistency in delivering promises, and the institution's ability to respond to students' socioeconomic conditions. From a practical perspective, private universities and polytechnics in Medan need to prioritize strategies that strengthen brand trust, enhance institutional commitment, and provide inclusive services that support students from diverse financial and social backgrounds. By ensuring transparency, aligning promotional claims with actual campus experiences, and showing genuine concern for

student success, private higher education institutions can strengthen sustainable student loyalty and improve their competitiveness in Indonesia's higher education sector.

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