



The Role of Sustainability in Improving Service Quality, Trust, Commitment, Performance, and Student Loyalty

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Abstract

The sustainability of student loyalty is crucial for institutions seeking to create a resilient ecosystem and make a positive contribution to society. This quantitative study investigates the key factors that shape students' sustainability loyalty and performance in the university environment using student surveys. A Likert-scale structured questionnaire was used as the main instrument, and the data were analyzed using PLS-SEM to validate the complex causal relationships among latent variables. The analysis shows that student commitment, perceived service quality and trust in the institution significantly contribute to the sustainability of higher education, while student performance and sustainability increase student loyalty. These findings underscore the urgency of integrating sustainability principles across the institution's operational and academic aspects, with improving service quality and building trust as important keys to increasing student loyalty. This empirical insight is beneficial to higher education stakeholders, enabling them to design effective strategies to achieve optimal university sustainability, performance and student loyalty.

Keywords: Sustainability, Service Quality, Trust, Commitment, Performance, Student Loyalty

1. Introduction

Loyalty to institutions, especially in the context of sustainability, is an important foundation for addressing global challenges, such as climate change. Institutions that build stakeholder loyalty not only retain members (students or customers) but also contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In higher education, student loyalty is a key indicator of an institution's success in providing meaningful learning experiences (Wilczewski, et. al., 2022). Therefore, identifying factors that affect the sustainability of student loyalty is crucial for institutions seeking to create a resilient ecosystem and make a positive contribution to society.

The COVID-19 pandemic has driven significant changes in higher education, where the online learning experience (SOLE) and quality of service are key in shaping student loyalty. Wilczewski, et. al. (2022) found that SOLE improved academic adjustment, performance, satisfaction and loyalty through effective teacher-student interactions, whereas Bhutto, et. al. (2024) emphasizes the role of service quality and trust in policies, management and staff as the main factors in building loyalty. In line with that, Dabija, et. al. (2023) show that students' perceptions of campus sustainability initiatives, including green campus management and responses to COVID-19 challenges, improve the university's image and student loyalty. These findings affirm the importance of investing in interactive online learning platforms, improving service quality and implementing sustainability practices to strengthen student loyalty in the post-pandemic era.

Finally, Ngo, et. al. (2025) provide contextual insights from Vietnam on how the quality of university services affects student engagement, motivation, satisfaction, academic performance and loyalty. Integrating SERVQUAL and Social Exchange Theory (SET), the study found that physical evidence, reliability, reassurance and empathy significantly affect student engagement, motivation and satisfaction. Academic performance proved to be the strongest predictor of institutional loyalty. The implication is that higher education institutions need to provide high-quality services and attend to students' needs and expectations to increase their loyalty.

Overall, these studies provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence loyalty in higher education, including online learning experiences, quality of service, trust and sustainability practices. This understanding is invaluable for higher education institutions that want to build strong, lasting relationships with their students and contribute to a sustainable future.

2. Background and conceptual framing

Sustainable performance loyalty, a new concept in business and management, measures the extent to which a customer's attachment to a brand not only generates financial gains but also encourages responsible and sustainable business practices. Smith (2020) defines sustainable performance loyalty as the level of customer loyalty reflected through repeat purchases and brand advocacy that supports a company's environmental, social and economic performance.

Jones (2021) defines sustainable performance loyalty as the cumulative impact of customer loyalty on an organization's sustainability goals, reflected in resource efficiency, emission reductions and positive contributions to

local communities. The main difference between Smith (2020) and Jones (2021) lies in their focus: Smith highlights aspects of customer behavior (a micro approach), while Jones emphasizes the company's sustainability outcomes (a macro approach).

H1. Service Quality affects Student Trust

Various studies show that service quality positively affects commitment across global contexts. Trivellas & Santouridis (2016) found that the quality of service improved the commitment of teaching and administrative staff at the Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly, Greece, while Pooja, et. al. (2024) show that loyalty also increases along with service satisfaction. Similar findings were put forward by Dandis, et. al. (2023), which shows that customers of fast-food restaurants in Jordan with a perception of high quality of service tend to have greater commitment. Overall, the results confirm the important role of service quality in strengthening commitment and building long-term relationships (Pedro, et. al., 2021).

This positive correlation is also confirmed in the context of e-commerce in India. Pooja, et. al. (2024) found, in two studies, that service quality significantly affects customer commitment. Nevertheless, poor service quality can trigger consumer dissatisfaction (Dandis, et. al., 2023). Furthermore, research by Pedro, et. al. (2021) in Portugal found that alumni of higher education institutions who received high-quality education and services during their studies showed a higher level of commitment to their alma mater.

Empirical evidence from studies across the education sector, the fast-food industry, and e-commerce platforms indicates that service quality has a positive and significant effect on commitment in various countries. Therefore, investing in improving service quality is an important strategy for organizations to build and maintain customer commitment through a positive, satisfying service experience (Trivellas & Santouridis, 2016; Pooja, et. al., 2024).

H2. Service Quality affects Student Commitment

Trust is a central element in the sustainability discourse and has been widely researched in various global contexts. Various empirical studies show that trust plays an important role in achieving sustainability goals (Blome, et. al., 2023; Chatterjee, et. al., 2021; Santos, et. al., 2024; Yuen, et. al., 2018). Chatterjee, et. al. (2021), for example, found that in India, the "Chalta Hai" culture, which reflects a disregard for standards, negatively impacts sustainability commitments, while the organization's internal beliefs increase employee engagement in sustainable practices. In line with this, Santos, et. al. (2024) show that trust between business partners in Portugal plays an important role in strengthening collaboration and information transparency, ultimately supporting supply chain sustainability.

Santos, et. al. (2024) emphasized that trust is a crucial foundation for building sustainable systems at various levels, from organizations to the wider community. Finally, Chatterjee, et. al. (2021) emphasized that this study provides important insights into how trust, as a social and psychological factor, can drive the implementation of sustainability initiatives across various sectors.

H3. Student Trust affects Sustainability

Previous research has consistently highlighted the crucial role of commitment in realizing sustainability. Abbas, et. al. (2022) found that employees in Pakistan's higher education sector show a significant commitment to Sustainability. In line with these findings, Mwesigwa, et. al. (2024) observes that government officials and project employees on public-private partnership projects in Uganda demonstrate a commitment that contributes positively to sustainability. Thus, the studies by Abbas, et. al. (2022) and Mwesigwa, et. al. (2024) provides evidence of commitment as a determining factor in promoting sustainability across various settings in developing countries. These studies can strengthen the argument that individual commitment is essential to encouraging sustainable practices.

H4. Student Commitment affects Sustainability

Empirical research shows that sustainability positively affects performance. Hernandez-Diaz, et. al. (2024) found that implementing sustainability practices in private Colombian universities increases the motivation and productivity of students, lecturers and staff. Similar findings were reported by Mal, et. al. (2024), who showed that corporate sustainability in India positively affects managerial sales performance. Overall, effective sustainability integration has been proven to improve performance across various sectors.

In the hospitality industry, Haldorai, et. al. (2025) found a significant impact of sustainability on the performance of managers and employees in Thailand. These findings support the idea that focusing on sustainability practices creates a more positive and efficient work environment. Research in Spain by Pereira-Moliner, et. al. (2021) and López-Gamero, et. al. (2024) also corroborates the idea that sustainability can improve the performance of hotel managers. Studies from developed countries show that sustainability practices have positive implications across countries and sectors.

H5. Sustainability affects Student Performance

Research shows that sustainability has a positive, significant effect on student and customer loyalty across sectors. Jinliang, et. al. (2023) found that eco-innovation, green branding, and sustainable products increase insurance customer loyalty in Iran, while Tanveer, et. al. (2021) show that sustainability practices in retail businesses in Pakistan also strengthen customer loyalty. Research in developed countries has also shown a positive relationship between sustainability and loyalty. Lobato-Calleros, et. al. (2018) found that community sustainability initiatives using biodiesel in Canada increased user loyalty, while Yuen, et. al. (2018) noted that a commitment to sustainability in the shipping industry in Singapore strengthened shipper loyalty. Garrod, et. al. (2023) also shows that sustainability

practices in peer-to-peer accommodation in the United Kingdom increase customer loyalty. Therefore, organizations and educational institutions need to make sustainability practices a key strategy to increase stakeholder loyalty, especially through sustainable product and service development.

H6. Sustainability affects Student Loyalty

3. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative, survey-based approach to test the hypothesis regarding Sustainability Loyalty Performance (SLP). This type of research is explanatory in nature. Purposive sampling was used, with a total of 848 students from the postgraduate program at the Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test complex causality models with latent variables in exploratory research. Convergent and discriminant validity were tested to assess the suitability of the indicators, and reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. Significance criteria were set at $p < 0.05$ and $t > 1.96$.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on the data, most respondents were male (62.1%), while women accounted for 37.9%. In terms of age, the largest group was 36–45 years (52.5%), followed by > 46 years (29.5%), 26–35 years (17.6%) and 0.5% were < 25 years old. Based on occupation, most respondents were ASN/TNI/POLRI (75.6%), followed by private employees (14%), self-employed (3.1%), housewives (1.3%) and others (6%). In terms of study programs, the most respondents came from the Master of Management (40.4%), followed by the Master of Public Administration (19.1%), Master of Basic Education (18.8%), as well as other programs with a smaller proportion such as Fisheries Management (5.4%), Mathematics Education (5.5%), Environmental Studies (5.2%), English Language Education (4.5%) and Early Childhood Education (1.1%).

Table 1. Internal Consistency Reliability Testing

Variabel	Cronbach Alpha	Keterangan
Commitment	0.9527	Excellent
Service Quality	0.9141	Excellent
Student Loyalty	0.9483	Excellent
Student Performance	0.9186	Excellent
<i>Sustainability</i>	0.9493	Excellent
Trust	0.9433	Excellent

The internal consistency of the variables was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with a value > 0.70 indicating acceptable reliability and an ideal range of 0.80–0.90. Although the results show a value above 0.90, indicating high reliability, a value of > 0.95 needs to be interpreted carefully because it may indicate indicator redundancy. Thus, even though the construct's reliability is relatively strong, the potential for overlap among indicators should still be monitored.

Table 2. Convergent Validity Testing

Variabel	Indikator	Faktor Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE
Service Quality	SQ1	0.7616	0.9362	0.7467
	SQ2	0.8575		
	SQ3	0.8840		
	SQ4	0.9269		
	SQ5	0.8819		
Student Performance	SP1	0.8252	0.9392	0.7558
	SP2	0.8218		
	SP3	0.8867		
	SP4	0.8898		
	SP5	0.9189		
<i>Sustainability</i>	Sus1	0.9060	0.9611	0.8317
	Sus2	0.9225		
	Sus3	0.9345		
	Sus4	0.8856		
	Sus5	0.9106		
Commitment	C1	0.8869	0.9637	0.8415
	C2	0.9184		
	C3	0.9342		
	C4	0.9474		
	C5	0.8983		
Trust	T1	0.9020	0.9592	0.8547
	T2	0.9283		

Variabel	Indikator	Faktor Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE
	T3	0.9394		
	T4	0.9277		
Student Loyalty	SL1	0.9305	0.9627	0.8657
	SL2	0.9371		
	SL3	0.9322		
	SL4	0.9219		

The validity of the convergence was evaluated using the outer loading value and all indicators showed values > 0.7 , indicating a strong representation of the latent construct. For example, the SQ4 indicator has an outer loading of 0.9269 and an SL2 of 0.9371, which confirms the significant contribution of both. All indicators are considered valid and consistent and nothing needs to be eliminated because of low loading (< 0.4) or because it has the potential to increase reliability inappropriately (0.4–0.7). These results confirm that all indicators make a strong contribution to the measure being constructed.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Testing

Variabel	1	2	3	4	5	6
Service Quality	0.8641					
Student Performance	0.6990	0.8694				
<i>Sustainability</i>	0.8140	0.7425	0.9120			
Commitment	0.8350	0.7295	0.8672	0.9173		
Trust	0.8387	0.6789	0.7594	0.8485	0.9245	
Student Loyalty	0.6993	0.7134	0.7554	0.7633	0.7058	0.9304

Validation of instruments in quantitative research is important to ensure measurement accuracy, including discriminant validity, which confirms that constructs such as sustainability, loyalty and performance can be empirically distinguished (Hair, et. al., 2019). Although it was initially often tested using the criteria through AVE root comparison and correlation between constructs, this method was later judged to have limitations in detecting violations of discriminant validity, so it was considered less than optimal for accurate.

The Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) method is recommended as a more robust approach to testing discriminant validity. However, evaluating external loading remains important because it reflects the strength of the relationship between indicators and latent constructs. Indicators with outer loadings below 0.4 are considered invalid and must be eliminated (Hair, et. al., 2019), so this test is a crucial step in ensuring the feasibility of research instruments.

Table 4. HTMT Discriminant Validity Testing

Variabel	1	2	3	4	5
Service Quality					
Student Performance	0.7621				
<i>Sustainability</i>	0.8713	0.7946			
Commitment	0.8917	0.7790	0.9114		
Trust	0.8999	0.7290	0.8014	0.8946	
Student Loyalty	0.7490	0.7636	0.7952	0.8027	0.7451

Discriminant validity is important to ensure that each construct is independent and does not overlap with the others (Hair, et. al., 2019). One of the recommended methods is the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), which measures the correlation between different constructs relative to the correlation within the same construct. HTMT values above 0.90 indicate potential validity issues for conceptually similar constructs, while a threshold of 0.85 applies to more dissimilar constructs.

Table 5. R² Improvement Results

Dependent	R ²	R ² Adjusted	Status*
Commitment	0.6972	0.6968	Substantial
Student Loyalty	0.6224	0.6215	Moderate
Student Performance	0.5513	0.5507	Moderate
<i>Sustainability</i>	0.7540	0.7534	Substantial
Trust	0.7035	0.7031	Substantial

Specifically, the Commitment variable shows an R^2 of 0.6972, indicating that 69.72% of the variance is explained by the model's predictive variables. Furthermore, the predictor variables explained 62.24% of the variance in Student Loyalty, as indicated by the R^2 value of 0.6224. For Student Performance, the predictor variables accounted for 55.13% of the variance, as evidenced by the R^2 value of 0.5513. Meanwhile, Sustainability achieved the highest R^2 value of 0.7540, indicating that the proposed model explains 75.40% of the variance in Sustainability. Finally, Trust has an R^2 value of 0.7035, indicating that the predictor variables explain 70.35% of the variance.

According to Chin (2008), the R^2 value is categorized as substantial (0.67), moderate (0.33) and weak (0.19). Based on this classification, the variables Commitment, Sustainability and Trust show substantial explanatory power, while Student Loyalty and Student Performance are in the moderate category. A slightly lower Adjusted R^2 value indicates a change in the number of predictors, but overall, these results confirm that the model has sufficient validity and explanatory power in describing the relationships among variables in the context of Sustainability Loyalty Performance (Hair, et. Al., 2019).

Hypothesis Testing

This study uses SEMinR to test structural models. A Bootstrapping procedure with 1000 iterations was performed to test the influence between constructs; the results of this model can be interpreted through hypothesis testing.

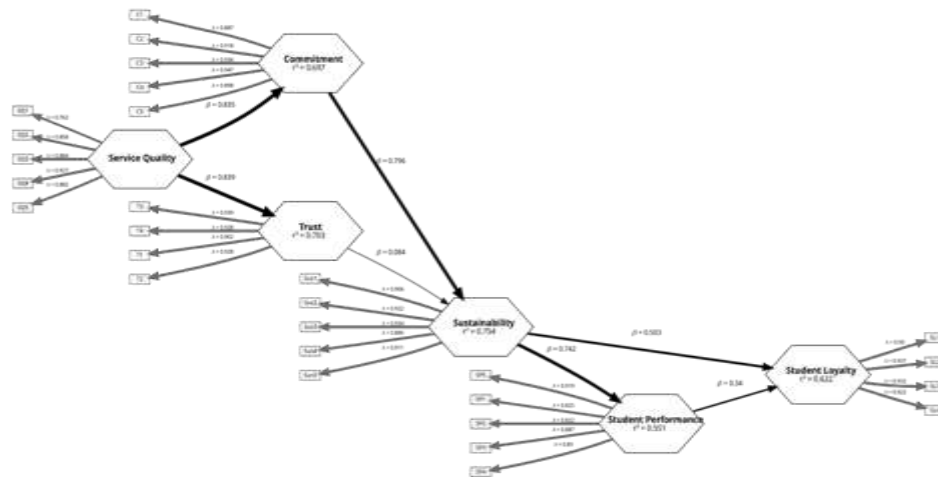


Figure 1. Calculation Result Model

Based on Figure 1, it shows that Commitment has a positive and significant effect on Sustainability with an original sample value = 0.7956 and $t = 20.7661$, which indicates that a strong Commitment encourages real actions, innovation and investment in environmentally friendly practices and technologies that strengthen Sustainability overall (Abbas, et. Al., 2022; Mwesigwa, et. Al., 2024). In addition, Service Quality has also been shown to have a significant effect on Commitment (original sample = 0.8350, $t = 54.8607$), showing that good service creates positive experiences, strengthens customer engagement and builds long-term relationships that reflect the organization's attention to customer needs (Pooja, et. Al., 2024; Pedro, et. Al., 2021; Trivellas & Santouridis, 2016; Dandis, et. Al., 2023), as well as having a positive and significant effect on the Trust with an original sample value = 0.8387 and $t = 60.2266$, it is also emphasized that consistent and reliable service can reduce risk perception and increase customers' willingness to establish long-term relationships (Ghobehei, et. Al., 2019; Bhutto, et. Al., 2024; Singh & Manohar, 2024; Tessema, et. Al., 2024). Furthermore, Student Performance had a significant positive effect on Student Loyalty with the original sample = 0.3400 and $t = 7.3520$, which shows that academic achievement increases student satisfaction, confidence and motivation to actively participate in the campus environment (Ngo, et. Al., 2025; Dabija, et. Al., 2023; Chikazhe, et. Al., 2023; Wilczewski, et. Al., 2022).

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hipotesis	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T-Test	Status
Commitment → Sustainability	0.7956	0.0383	20.7661	Significant
Service Quality → Commitment	0.8350	0.0152	54.8607	Significant
Service Quality → Trust	0.8387	0.0139	60.2266	Significant
Student Performance → Student Loyalty	0.3400	0.0462	7.3520	Significant
Sustainability → Student Loyalty	0.5029	0.0442	11.3666	Significant
Sustainability → Student Performance	0.7425	0.0239	31.0759	Significant
Trust → Sustainability	0.0844	0.0422	2.0003	Significant

Sustainability has also been shown to positively and significantly affect student loyalty (original sample = 0.5029, $t = 11.3666$), because students tend to be more loyal to institutions that implement sustainable practices that reflect social and ethical responsibility and create a healthy learning environment (Garrod, et. al., 2023; Yuen, et. al., 2018; Jinliang, et. al., 2023; Tanveer, et. al., 2021), as well as improving student performance (original sample = 0.7425, $t = 31.0759$) through an innovative learning environment that encourages their involvement in real projects related to environmental and social issues (Pereira-Moliner, et. al., 2021; Haldorai, et. al., 2025). Finally, trust also has a positive effect on Sustainability (original sample = 0.0844, $t = 2.0003$), confirming that a high level of trust between parties strengthens cooperation in achieving Sustainability goals, reduces conflicts and increases transparency, which is important for successful program implementation (Blome, et. al., 2023; Yuen, et. al., 2018; Santos, et. al., 2024; Chatterjee, et. al., 2021).

Discussion

The study's findings show that Commitment has a substantial influence on Sustainability (original sample = 0.7956, $t = 20.7661$), with strong Commitment driving concrete action to support sustainable practices through green investment and innovation (Abbas, et. al., 2022). In addition, Service Quality also had a significant positive effect on Commitment (original sample = 0.8350, $t = 54.8607$), showing that quality service creates a positive experience that strengthens student commitment. Good service quality not only builds positive perceptions and long-term relationships (Pedro, et. al., 2021) but also reflects institutions' value and concern for students' needs (Trivellas & Santouridis, 2016).

The results showed that Service Quality had a positive and significant effect on Trust (original sample = 0.8387, $t = 60.2266$), where consistent and reliable service builds trust and reduces risk perception, thereby strengthening long-term relationships (Ghobehei, et. al., 2019; Bhutto, et. al., 2024; Singh & Manohar, 2024). In addition, Student Performance has been shown to have a positive effect on Student Loyalty (original sample = 0.3400, $t = 7.3520$); good academic performance increases student satisfaction with their learning experience and strengthens loyalty to the institution (Ngo, et. al., 2025).

The results showed that Sustainability had a positive effect on Student Loyalty (original sample = 0.5029, $t = 11.3666$), with students' concern for environmental and social issues making them more loyal to institutions that implement sustainable practices (Garrod, et. al., 2023). In addition, Sustainability also has a significant effect on Student Performance (original sample = 0.7425, $t = 31.0759$), because the application of Sustainability principles creates an innovative learning environment that encourages improved academic performance (Haldorai, et. al., 2025). Furthermore, Trust also contributes to Sustainability (original sample = 0.0844, $t = 2.0003$), where strong trust between parties is the basis for collaboration in achieving Sustainability goals (Blome, et. al., 2023).

Overall, the study provides empirical evidence on the relationship between commitment, quality of service, trust, sustainability, student performance and loyalty, and highlights the importance of these factors in creating and maintaining sustainable loyalty. Further studies are needed to explore contextual factors that may moderate this relationship.

5. Conclusion

This research reveals the complex relationships among commitment, service quality, trust, student performance and sustainability in shaping Sustainability Loyalty Performance (SLP). The analysis shows that these factors interact significantly in creating sustainable loyalty. Commitment emerges as the primary foundation, with individuals or organizations with a strong commitment to sustainability values investing in environmentally friendly innovations and technologies and actively encouraging the implementation of sustainable practices within the institutional environment (Abbas, et. al., 2022; Mwesigwa, et. al., 2024).

The quality of service significantly shapes students' or customers' commitment. Students who feel the best service show a high level of satisfaction with the institution (Trivellas & Santouridis, 2016). Positive experiences with memorable service quality build long-term relationships and strengthen their commitment (Pedro, et. al., 2021). Thus, institutions need to focus on improving service quality to build stronger commitment from students and customers.

Trust is also a key factor in forming student loyalty that emphasizes sustainability. Students who place great trust in the institution will be happy to recommend it to others. High trust reflects the institution's positive reputation and integrity in students' eyes. Therefore, maintaining and increasing student trust is crucial to building loyalty. Student performance contributes positively to loyalty. Students who consistently achieve satisfactory grades tend to be satisfied with their choice of study program and university (Ngo, et. al., 2025). Good academic achievement builds students' self-esteem and confidence in the educational value they derive (Dabija, et. al., 2023). This shows that good academic performance increases student satisfaction and loyalty to the institution.

University sustainability has a direct impact on student loyalty. The university's efforts to apply environmentally friendly and responsible principles enhance its positive image among students (Garrod, et. al., 2023). Students expect universities to share their values regarding environmental and social concerns (Wilczewski, et. al., 2022). The application of sustainability principles in university operations can strengthen student loyalty.

This research provides strategic recommendations for the higher education sector to integrate sustainability principles in all operational and academic aspects. Institutions need to invest in green campus development by implementing novel, efficient management systems to create a sustainable campus environment with a transformative impact (Dabija, et. al., 2023).

Curriculum development is an important step to strengthen students' understanding of sustainability issues. Study programs should include relevant courses, field trips and collaborative projects with local communities to encourage

practical learning that increases students' awareness and engagement with environmental and social issues. Furthermore, improving the quality of service is the key to strengthening student commitment and trust, so that staff and lecturer training focuses on excellent service, effective communication and understanding of student needs. A responsive feedback system, as well as regular maintenance of physical and digital infrastructure, are also important to ensure a comfortable and efficient learning experience (Bhutto, et. al., 2024; Trivellas & Santouridis, 2016).

The active involvement of students in campus decision-making strengthens a sense of belonging and loyalty, so the university needs to provide a forum for discussion, conduct surveys and ensure student representation on strategic committees, while upholding transparency in information to build trust (Chatterjee, et. al., 2021). In addition, regular measurement and monitoring of sustainability, through measurable performance indicators and the publication of transparent reports, allow for progress evaluation and benchmarking with other universities to encourage sustainable improvement (Santos, et. al., 2024).

Further research is suggested to expand the sample and context to improve generalizability, conduct longitudinal studies to monitor changes in student behavior and loyalty, and integrate qualitative approaches to understand students' motivations and perceptions regarding sustainability. In addition, contextual factors such as organizational culture and government policies need to be considered to make the strategy to increase student loyalty based on Sustainability more effective (Yuen, et. al., 2018; Wilczewski, et. al., 2022; Garrod, et. al., 2023).

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