

Lecturers' Perception on Employee Loyalty in Faith-Based Institution

Mandey, C.¹
Universitas Klabat

*carmenmandey@unklab.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Employees are the assets of the organization. They have a big influence on the institution where they work. Their loyalty affects the success of the organization. Increasing employee loyalty may result in an increase in various areas of the organization. Thus, this study aims to explore lecturers' perceptions of employee loyalty to find out what causes the decrease and improvement in employees' loyalty in faith-based institutions. This study uses a qualitative method and a case study as research the research design. The participants of this study are lecturers in faith-based institutions who have been teaching for more than a year. The sampling method follows the purposive sampling technique. The data were gathered using in-depth interview and observation. This study found leaders' understanding as one of the factors that influence employee loyalty. Employee loyalty was also found to help increase organizational performance. This study provides insights into the causes of the decrease and improvement of employee loyalty in faith-based institutions. The results of this study can be used to offer suggestions on how to retain and improve employee loyalty. Therefore, the institution can increase its organizational performance by maintaining and improving employee loyalty. Employees' loyalty can be improved by giving proper rewards and training.

Keywords: Employee loyalty, Faith-based institution, Lecturer's perception.

INTRODUCTION

One of the important factors that support organizations is the people factor. People, or employees, possess knowledge (Fahey & Prusak, 1998). They set, organize, run, and control the system in organizations (Kulkarni et al., 2007). Employees are the assets of organizations; thus, it is vital for organizations to have high employee loyalty.

Shweta et al. (2016) defined employee loyalty as a worker's commitment to their organization, which is shown by being actively involved in the work and having an emotional attachment to the organization. In short, loyalty is having a sense of belonging. Research shows that organizational culture and leadership style significantly affect employee loyalty (Khoa et al., 2024; Abbas, 2017). In fact, Khoa et al. (2024) emphasized that a positive organizational culture could improve work performance and productivity, which leads to efficient and effective teaching and learning quality. Therefore, there is an urgent need to find out the factors that decline and improve employee loyalty in order for organizations and institutions to design suitable organizational cultures and leadership styles.

Employee loyalty is one of several aspects that affect the success of an organization. The sense of loyalty must come from both top management and employees. When top managements and leaders treat employees well, employees are more likely to give loyalty in return. As a result, employees are more likely to choose to remain and grow in the institution rather than move to other institutions. A study by Chen et al. (2016) found some major contributing factors that may increase employee loyalty: Proper monetary reward, opportunity to learn, career development, and communication with supervisors.

However, based on the researcher's experiences and observations, there is a tendency for employees to move to other institution. If this continues, institutions may experience a decrease in the number of potential employees, which will impact the quality of the institution. Not to mention the time and resources needed to find and train new recruits. This is why it is urgent to interview faith-based institutions' employees to find out factors that can decline and improve employee loyalty to become suggestions and ideas for leaders in designing organizational culture and leadership style.

This study focused on finding out the perception of lecturers toward employees' loyalty in faith-based institutions. More specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What decreases employees' loyalty in a faith-based institution?
2. What improves employees' loyalty in a faith-based institution?

Through this study, leaders may know what causes decrease and improvement in employee loyalty. It is also hoped that this study may give suggestions and ideas on how to design organizational culture and leadership style that can retain employees in the organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Loyalty

Generally, being loyal is similar to being faithful or devoted. Dictionaries define loyalty as providing steadfast and continuous support to something or someone (Oxford Dictionary, 2008); loyalty is *the characteristic of unwavering commitment toward someone or something* (HarperCollins, 2006). In other words, someone loyal means someone who cannot be swayed, moved, or changed; one who is certain and determined of their choice.

Taking that into account, Hoek (2013) defined employee loyalty as the feeling and action of devotion or faithfulness toward the company by doing the job well, expecting the best outcome for the company, and not moving to another company. Due to these characteristics, employee loyalty is crucial for the success of organizations. A loyal employee can improve work productivity, organizational success, and the organization's image (Barandun, 2022). Therefore, there is a need for organizations to focus on maintaining or even increasing employee loyalty.

There are many factors that affect employee loyalty. Some of the factors that are more likely to have high effects on employee loyalty are as follows:

1. *Job satisfaction* (Khalid & Khalid, 2015). Job satisfaction affects employees' commitment and leads to employee loyalty and good customer service (Esmaeilpour & Ranibar, 2017).
2. *Organizational culture*. This factor affects employee loyalty and boosts employee satisfaction with the organization (Anitha & Begum, 2016; Khoa et al., 2024).
3. *Company performance*. This factor affects employee loyalty significantly. This is because employees, as the *people factor*, are one of the most important aspects of an organization (Tomic et al., 2018).
4. *Job satisfaction, organizational justice, and trust in leaders*. Organizational justice leads to job satisfaction, which results from employees' trust in their leaders (Herminingsih, 2017).

Faith-Based Institution

In general terms, a faith-based institution is an institution or organization founded on a certain faith. It has its own faith, values, and beliefs and is strongly related to them (Banda, 2006). Faith-based institutions, mostly known as religious organizations, have three most common types: Church, megachurch, and sect and cult (Ramirez et al., 2022). The faith-based institution discussed in this study refers to the Seventh-day Adventist organization and belongs to the church type.

Church is a religious organization consisting of ecclesia and denomination (Ramirez et al., 2022). They are large, well-established, and well-organized (Ramirez et al.). They also have a hierarchy of leaders who operate within a formal bureaucratic structure (Ramirez et al.). As an international organization, the Seventh-day Adventist church “reflects a democratic process of election and formation;” the highest leader is the General Conference (Casanova, 2018, para. 28).

Employee Loyalty in Faith-Based and Secular Institutions

A committed, loyal, and dedicated employee is an asset to all institutions and organizations (Joseph et al., 2024; Shangze, 2024). This is because the more committed the employees, the more productive they become (Joseph et al., 2024; Shangze, 2024). Apparently, there is not much difference in how secular and faith-based institutions view employee loyalty. They also find similar factors affecting the decrease and increase in employee loyalty.

For example, Balila et al. (2024) found that in Adventist higher educational institutions, leaders hold a vital role in ensuring that the institution is aligned with its vision, mission, and policy. The authors also found that good policy management can predict employee satisfaction. This means that when an institution has a good policy and leader, its employees are more likely to be satisfied and remain in the institution.

This is similar to how secular institutions view employee loyalty. Khoa et al. (2024) highlighted that organizational culture, which includes the organizations' “principles, codes of conduct ... form standards, beliefs and assumptions that guide the behavior and interactions” of all the organization's personnel (Khoa et al., 2024, p. 120). In other words, an institution

with a good and positive organizational culture will have a good and positive impact on its employees.

In both secular and faith-based institutions, organizational culture was found to be one of the factors that impact employee satisfaction and employee loyalty (Khoa et al., 2024). This is because a good organizational culture could increase employee loyalty and foster positive and supportive relationships between employees and co-workers, employees and supervisors, and employees and leaders (Khoa et al., 2024; Okolie & Egbon, 2024). A good organizational culture creates a good and positive work environment, leading to employee satisfaction and commitment.

It can be seen that both secular and faith-based institutions accentuate their policy, organizational culture, and leaders as factors that affect employee loyalty. This is because employees who are committed to their jobs often lead to high organizational performance and work productivity (Okolie & Egbon, 2024; Shangze, 2024). In addition, when employees are content and happy with their jobs, they are more likely to be dedicated and focused on their work (Balila et al., 2024; Shangze, 2024).

Another factor that both secular and faith-based institutions agree to have an impact on employee loyalty is the reward system. Reward is among the most influential elements in elevating employees' commitment and work productivity (Okolie & Egbon, 2024; Vacalares & Chavez, 2024). It can also be used to predict employee commitment (Okolie & Egbon, 2024). Mwangi and Mary (2024), as well as Vacalares and Chavez (2024), stressed that the one factor that can be used to increase job satisfaction is the reward system. However, a reward system must be adapted to the needs and conditions of the employees in the workplace in order to motivate and increase employee loyalty (Mwangi & Mary, 2024; Okolie & Egbon, 2024).

There are several forms of reward. The term that most people are accustomed to is monetary reward. However, it does not have to always mean a financial reward. Reward can also be conveyed through verbal acknowledgment and gratitude toward employees' achievement, performance, effort, and behavior (Mwangi & Mary, 2024). Another form of reward is a career development opportunity (Mwangi & Mary, 2024). Career development does not only improve employees' knowledge and skills as well as their commitment toward the organization but also increases productivity in the workplace (Mwangi & Mary, 2024). Therefore, it requires good quality management and leaders to decide which reward systems are most suitable for their employees in order to boost the productivity of their employees (Joseph et al., 2024)

METHODS

This is a qualitative descriptive study. The qualitative method is used since the researcher wants to find out about the *how* or *why* of a phenomenon or action. In this case, the researcher aims to discover problems related to employee loyalty in faith-based institutions in Manado, Indonesia, and how to deal with it (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Using a case study design, the researcher may discover the causes of improvements and declines in employee loyalty in faith-based institutions in Manado, Indonesia.

The participants of this study were chosen purposefully to have the highest probability of data accuracy and detail (Sargeant, 2012; Statistics Solutions, n.d.). The participants were chosen based on years of experience teaching in a faith-based institution and were divided into two groups: Settle and Transfer. The Settle group is lecturers who have worked and still working in the same faith-based institution for years. The Transfer group consists of lecturers who have been working in the same faith-based institution for a period of time but have decided to move to other institutions, quit, or become non-active lecturers. The participants generally have been teaching in a faith-based institution for 2-15 years. They are within the age range of 24-47 years. There were five participants in total: Three males and two females. Table 1 below presents a summary of the criteria that are used to select the participants.

Table 1
Participants Criteria

Group		
Settle (2 participants)	(2 participants)	Transfer (1 participant)
Have been working in the same faith-based institution for 2 or more years	Worked in the same institution for more than 2 years before deciding to quit the job	Worked in the same institution for more than 2 years before deciding to move to another institution
Have 2-15 years of experience working in a faith-based institution		
Age 24-47		
Full-time employees	Part-time employees and non-active lecturers	Long-term lecturer

Table 1. Criteria for choosing the participants

This study used in-depth interview and observation as instruments to collect data. The in-depth face-to-face interview was used to find out about participants’ perceptions, ideas, suggestions, and experiences. The observation compared the researcher’s experiences with the participants’ interview results. During the process of this study, researcher strictly followed the ethical consideration. This study maintained the anonymity and confidentiality of each participant as well as the institution where this study took place. Researcher also ensure that participants understood the consent form before signing it. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and their role in it. The researcher applied thematic analysis steps by Mortensen (2020) in analyzing the data: 1) familiarize oneself with the data, 2) assign

preliminary codes to the data to describe the content, 3) search for patterns or themes in the codes across the different interview, 4) review themes, 5) define and name themes, and 6) report.

Based on Mortensen’s steps, the researcher studied the data through thorough reading and careful transcription after data were collected. Next, codes and categories were cautiously described and constructed (Saldana, 2011). After that, codes from each category were made into themes. The themes were then reviewed, defined, and named. Finally, results were produced and presented from the most answers to the least.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data analysis, the result showed three themes of lecturers’ perception:

1. *Definition*: Participants’ view on employee loyalty.
2. *Causing factor*: Participants’ view on factors that decrease and improve employee loyalty.
3. *Effect*: Participants’ view on the effects of decrease and improvement in employee loyalty.

Theme 1: Definition

Most participants defined employee loyalty as employees’ commitment to doing the job well and showing devotion. As mentioned by P1, “I think it’s how employee shows commitment to organization, specifically in how they work, how they do things in a perfect way.” P5 defined employee loyalty as “the faithfulness of somebody, abiding in the principles or law of the organization, what to do, how to do, how to acts and do things in institution.” In other words, a loyal employee is an employee who devotes to the institutions’ principles, law, vision, and mission.

Table 2
Definition

Participant		Definition
Settle	Transfer	
P1	P4	Commit to the organization by showing faithfulness to doing the job
P3	P5	Faithful to the vision, mission, principles, and law of the organization
	P2	Do not move to other institutions

Table 2. Participants’ perception on the definition of employee loyalty

Definitions of employee loyalty presented in Table 2 show three categories: Commitment, faithfulness, and loyalty. Hence, according to the participants, employee loyalty is a total commitment, faithfulness, and loyalty that an employee demonstrates toward their institution and its vision, mission, principles, and law. This loyalty is validated by the determination of the employee to stay in the institution and dedicate themselves to work for it.

Theme 2: Factors that Decrease and Improve Employee Loyalty

Most participants stated that employee loyalty improvements were affected by how the institution fulfilled employees’ expectations and needs. According to P1, “when organization create something and when it is aligned with what employee expectation it could be a motivation for employee and then when employee is happy, satisfy, their loyalty will be increase.”

Other factors that more likely contribute to improvement in employee loyalty were “recruitment process” (P3). As stated by P3, “Leadership should put the right man in the right place. . . . the right man in the right place is more likely to be loyal in supporting the vision and mission of the institution.” Hence, leaders who make employees feel a part of the institution, give chances for employees to develop, give examples on how to support vision and mission, and choose the right person for the right job are exemplary leaders who influence the increase of employee loyalty.

Table 3
Improving Factors

Participant		Factor (most to least answer)	Focus
Settle	Transfer		
P1, P3 P5	P2	Organization aligned with the expectations and needs of the employee	Institution
P3	P2, P4	Feeling part of the institution	Leaders
P3	P5	Religious environment and activity	Institution
P3	P5	Relationship with God	Employee
P3		Leaders in line with the vision and mission of the organization	Leaders
	P2	Feeling being part of greater things	Leaders
	P2	Opportunity for self-development	Leaders
P3		Leaders put the right man in the right place	Leaders
	P4	Salary and incentives	Institution
	P4	Employee family background	Employee
P2		When you like to give work and collaborate with people	Employee

Table 3. Factors that can improve employee loyalty

Table 3 answers Research Question 1 regarding factors that improve employee loyalty. The table presents three focuses: Institution, leader, and employee. The categories that emerged from the *institution* were environment, reward, and support. In other words, to improve employee loyalty, the institution could increase rewards, provide a positive work environment, and support employees by meeting their needs and expectations.

The categories that emerged from the *leader* were a sense of belonging, alignment, purpose, growth, and competency. The result showed that among *institution*, *leader*, and *employee*, expectations toward leaders were mentioned five times, while others were only three

times. This exhibited that the role of leaders is a vital factor that can improve employee loyalty. Hence, to improve employee loyalty, leaders are responsible for nurturing a sense of belonging in their employees, aligning with the institution’s vision and mission, giving purpose to their employees, providing room for growth, and exercising the competency of their employees.

Lastly, the categories that emerged from *employee* were spiritual relationships, personal relationships, and social relationships. This indicates that employees are more likely to stay loyal to the institution when there is a balance between the employee’s personal, spiritual, and social life.

However, there are also factors that can contribute to the decrease in employee loyalty. Most participants said that employee loyalty decreases when “the expectations of employees are not met by leaders” (P3). Other factors that significantly decrease employee loyalty are leaders who are not aligned with the organization’s vision and mission. As P3 stated, “When the employee is not part of the institution, like only use them in certain times when the leaders want, or only take for granted, that maybe can decline the employee loyalty because they also don’t care about me, what should I care about the institution.” In summary, employee will lose their loyalty to the institution when the institution fails to let employees develop professionally, fails to socialize the organization’s procedures and rules, shows injustice, oppresses employees, and takes advantage of its employees.

Table 4
Decreasing Factors

Participant		Factor (most to least answer)	Focus
Settle	Transfer		
P1, P3		Leadership is not aligning with employee’s expectation	Leaders
P1		When procedures or rules are not being socialized well to the employee	Leaders
P1		Employee treated unfairly	Leaders
	P2	Feel oppressed	Leaders
	P2	Feel not able to grow	Leaders
P3		Leaders not in line with the mission and vision of the organization	Leaders
	P4	Employee personal problem	Employee
	P4	Relationship with co-workers	Co-workers
	P5	Employees are being used for granted by leaders	Leaders

Table 4. Factors that can decrease employee loyalty

The decreasing factors presented in Table 4 answer Research Question 2. The factors focused on *leader*, *employee*, and *co-worker*. Similar to factors that improve employee loyalty, factors that decrease employee loyalty also mention *leader* as the most affecting factor. There were seven categories that emerged from *leader*: Disassociation, inconsistency, inequity,

oppression, unproductivity, discrepancy, and exploitation. In other words, employee loyalty decreases due to leaders’ inability to fulfill employees’ expectations. It also occurs due to leaders’ inconsistency with the institution’s regulations, vision, and mission. Not to mention the inequity in treating employees, including exploiting them, which leads to employees feeling oppressed and unproductive.

Although leaders contribute to many factors that can decrease employee loyalty, *employees* and their co-workers also decrease employee loyalty. Just as personal and social relationships may increase employee loyalty, they may also decrease it. This may happen due to the many differences among co-workers and various issues and problems outside of the workplace that influence employees’ productivity.

Theme 3: Effects of Improvement and Decrease in Employee Loyalty

Two new themes emerged from the data: The effects of improvement in employee loyalty and the effects of a decrease in employee loyalty. The result of the first theme showed that when employee loyalty improves, employees will automatically do what is best for the success of the institution, just as mentioned by P5: “If an employee is faithful the employee will do everything like he or she will give everything he or she can do to help the institution.”

Improvements in employee loyalty could also affect institutions and customers. When employee loyalty improves, turnover in the institution will decrease, the institution will have employees’ talents, human resources can be preserved, and employees can produce good quality goods and services. Below is a sample of one of the interview results:

You would be able to retain talents for the institution. Because you know it takes time to build employee capabilities, especially, for example in education institution, to become a mature lecturer or teacher, you need time. After cultivating certain employee for let’s say 10 years than because you did not maintain his loyalty properly and he moves to other place, I think that would be a lost to the institution (P2)

Table 5
Effects of Employee Loyalty Improvement

Participant		Factor (most to least answer)	Focus
Settle	Transfer		
P1		Increase employees’ job performance	Employee
	P2	Less turnover	Institution
	P2	Retain talents	Institution
	P2	Maintain human resources	Employee
P3, P5		Employee will do their best to help the organization	Institution
P3		Employee will produce good results	Employee
P3, P4		Give positive impacts to co-workers and the organization	Institution and co-worker
P4		Affect student’s performance	Students

P5	Improve teaching performance	Students
P5	Provide good influence to the students	Students

Table 5. Effects of Improvements in employee loyalty

As employee loyalty improves, it affects the institution and its personnel. The institution will experience less turnover and an increase in employee satisfaction and work performance. Employees become more motivated to do their jobs and to produce good results. Hence, students are also benefited from the good teaching performance and positive influence that the lecturers demonstrate.

Likewise, the decrease in employee loyalty has a negative influence on the institution and its personnel. P1 said that a decrease in employee loyalty “gives the company negative impact because when employee stop being loyal, and not hundred percent giving their efforts, of course it will be affect to the target or objective of the company.” P1 further emphasized that “the performance of the organization can suffer” as the result of a low employee loyalty. In other words, the decrease in employee loyalty can negatively affect co-workers and the institution.

In addition to that, a decrease in employee loyalty can affect employees’ work. For example, employees “will not work in a good way. Lack of responsibilities, he will not do his work in a proper way” (P4). It may also significantly affect the institution and the customers. Since “human resource is most reliable assets the institution can have. Basically, if you don’t retain their loyalty, your assets just may walk out of your door” (P2). In summary, some of the impacts of low employee loyalty are poor performance, longer time and increased expenses on employees’ investment, and employee turnovers.

Table 6
Effects of Employee Loyalty Decrease

Participant		Factor (most to least answer)	Focus
Settle	Transfer		
P1,		Give negative impacts to other employees and the organization	Co-workers and institution
P3	P4	Employee produce poor performance	Institution
	P2	Reinvest human resources	Institution
	P2	Employees as organizational assets will leave the organization	Institution
	P5	Students will not get better service	Students

Table 6. Effects of decrease in employee loyalty

When employee loyalty decreases, the institution will start to notice a decrease in job performance. Gradually, capable and talented employees may begin to find other institutions, which will force the institution to reinvest in human resources. As a result, students will also get the negative impact of employee turnover.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

One of the most important assets in the institution is human resources. In general, employee loyalty toward the institution and employees' dedication to their work is highly expected. Therefore, it is necessary for leaders and the institution to know factors that can improve and decrease employee loyalty as well as what effects the improvement and the decrease may bring to the institution. By knowing these factors and effects, it is more likely for leaders and the institution to maintain the available human resources as one of the valuable assets of the institution.

This study showed that leaders and institutions who understand and can fulfill employees' expectations and needs are contributing factors to improve employee loyalty. This study also found that employee loyalty improves employees' devotion to doing their best to support institutional performance. Therefore, it is important for institutions to perform well and for leaders to consider the important aspects that can affect an organization: Employee loyalty.

Based on the result, the researcher offers recommendations to increase employee loyalty as follows:

1. Leaders maintain or improve employee loyalty by fulfilling employees' expectations. This could be done, for example, by conducting an annual meeting to relay and communicate each department's objectives and align them with the institution's vision, mission, and goals.
2. The institution, top management, and leaders strive to make employees feel like part of the institution by creating a religious environment that aligns with the institution's vision and mission. Each department or faculty could ensure that their staff and lecturers conduct daily routines and academic programs that reflect the institution's vision and mission. In doing so, students may also feel the impact and, therefore, be influenced to do the same.
3. The institution, top management, and leaders give chances to employees to self-develop. This could be done by providing opportunities to expand the employees' knowledge and skills through training, workshops, seminars, and educational upgrading. Another thing to do is provide employees with opportunities and support to conduct research.
4. The institution, top management, and leaders give salaries and proper rewards. Proper rewards could be incentives, bonuses, or special recognition for outstanding services and long-term services.
5. The institution, top management, and leaders put the right man in the right place. This could be done by stationing or promoting qualified employees to a certain position based on their performance, services, and commitment to the institution.

Avoid factors that can decrease employee loyalty. Some of these factors are failing to fulfill employees' expectations, not aligning with the organization's vision and mission, and failing to socialize the organization's procedures and rules to the employees. In other words, performing the opposite of what needs to be done to improve employee loyalty should be avoided. These include showing injustice toward employees regarding salaries, rewards, and

career development opportunities; oppressing employees through verbal or physical bullying; and taking advantage of the employees, for example, by requiring the employees to perform professional work or responsibilities without proper reward.

This study was a qualitative descriptive study; thus, it would probably be best if further study would be another qualitative study of the same topic but in a different institution, organization, or city to make it broader and more varied so that the topic could be generalized. Further research can also focus on different populations, such as young employees, older employees, or certain ages or generations.

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