Beyond the Classroom: Exploring Teacher Loyalty in Vocational Education

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Abstract

Vocational education is distinct from general education, with vocational high schools emphasizing the development of practical skills and career-specific learning. Within this context, teachers play a pivotal role, and their loyalty is a crucial factor influencing the attainment of school objectives. This study examined teacher loyalty in a vocational high school setting through qualitative research methods. Data were gathered via in-depth interviews with 12 teachers, providing comprehensive insights into their perspectives and experiences. Guided by loyalty theory, the study employed a systematic approach to data collection and analysis, encompassing three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The findings revealed that teacher loyalty in vocational high schools is generally strong, as evidenced by teachers' dedication, identification with the school, and sense of attachment. This study diverges from prior research, which primarily focused on elementary and general high schools using quantitative methodologies, by shedding light on the unique context of vocational education. The results underscore the importance of fostering teacher loyalty as a means to enhance school performance. To this end, school management is encouraged to actively engage teachers in developmental initiatives, as such involvement can strengthen their loyalty and contribute to overall improvements in school quality.

Keywords: Loyalty; teachers; vocational education.

Introduction

Teachers hold a pivotal role in shaping the education system in Indonesia, directly influencing the success and quality of education. They serve as mediators of the curriculum, tasked with

interpreting and imparting its values to students throughout the learning process (Pristiwiyanto, 2022). Within formal educational settings, teachers are responsible for facilitating teaching and learning activities, as well as managing and regulating student behavior. Beyond these formal interactions, teachers are also expected to engage in informal interactions, such as playing and building rapport with students. Regardless of the context, teachers must uphold their dignity and integrity in the presence of their students (Arifin, 2020).

One of the critical levels of education in Indonesia is vocational high school, where teachers play a significant role in preparing students for competitive participation in the labor market. To enhance the quality of vocational education, teachers are encouraged to pursue opportunities for professional development both within and outside of school (Zhou et al., 2022). The demands of the profession, coupled with the resources available to teachers, can substantially influence a school's capacity to retain skilled educators (Admiraal & Kittelsen Røberg, 2023). Teachers' roles are closely tied to their engagement with the educational institutions they serve. High levels of work engagement foster a sense of belonging and alignment with the organization's values and norms, which teachers internalize. This internalization ensures that teachers consistently represent their institutions in a positive manner, regardless of context (Susandi, 2022).

To retain competent and committed educators, school management must play an active role, particularly by addressing teacher welfare, which significantly enhances loyalty (Oktafiana et al., 2020). Additionally, research indicates that fostering healthy relationships between school principals and teachers further strengthens teacher loyalty (Af'idah, 2022). Loyalty, as defined by Sitompul et al. (2022), encompasses a loyalty to remain within the organization, achieve productivity beyond expectations, demonstrate altruistic behavior, and engage in reciprocal relationships where loyalty is mutual between the individual and the organization. This concept is further elaborated by Haya and Wapa (2024), who describe loyalty as a reflection of daily attitudes and behaviors, including enthusiasm and adherence to duties and responsibilities. Mandagi et al. (2020) define loyalty as an employee's involvement in and commitment to their work and organization, influenced by positive organizational factors. Similarly, Meschke (2021) views loyalty as encompassing both cognitive and affective components, representing an attitude

toward loyalty objects within the organization.

Meschke (2021) identifies three dimensions of loyalty: identification, attachment, and dedication. Identification involves relational ties developed over time through shared experiences. Loyalty does not emerge instantly but grows through meaningful connections with specific reference objects. Attachment refers to the emotional and behavioral expressions of loyalty, while dedication is characterized by pride in and support for the organization and its members.

According to Suwardi et al. (2015), loyal teachers fulfill their roles as educators with a strong sense of responsibility. High loyalty translates into recognition, satisfaction, and motivation in their work, ultimately leading to professional performance and enhanced competence. Several factors influence teacher loyalty, including discipline (Dewi & Windiarti, 2024; Syahrizal & B, 2023), job satisfaction (Cahyani & Izzati, 2023; Fitria & Nio, 2020), organizational climate, compensation (Rahman et al., 2023), empowerment, trust (Zainudin & Retnowati, 2019), and organizational commitment (Lertpanyawiwat et al., 2022). Leadership style, particularly that of school principals, also significantly impacts loyalty (Wang, 2023; Sitanggang et al., 2022; Mahaputra & Saputra, 2021; Robin et al., 2023). In vocational high schools, factors such as organizational justice and conflict management are particularly relevant (Fredy et al., 2020). Sulfemi (2019) highlights additional determinants, including work ethic, motivation, school culture, work environment, regulations, and self-confidence. Meschke (2021) underscores that job satisfaction, employee engagement, involvement, and organizational commitment are the most influential factors in fostering loyalty.

The results of initial interviews with the principal and staff revealed several notable insights. Teachers expressed pride in their school, often speaking positively about it during meetings with colleagues from other institutions or when discussing their work with family and close friends. The principal highlighted that some teachers remain committed to serving the school despite receiving limited salaries. This dedication is further reflected in their commitment to shaping students' academic goals, as teachers not only deliver classroom instruction but also strive to help students understand lessons deeply and serve as role models in their daily interactions.

While some teachers continue their service to the school despite financial constraints, it is crucial to recognize the need for additional strategies to ensure sustained teacher loyalty. Without adequate support from the school, there is a risk that some teachers may reconsider their commitment in the future. In an era of rapid technological and educational development, schools must adapt to the evolving needs of their environment. Specifically, identifying changes in the teaching and learning process is essential for ensuring that vocational high school teachers are equipped to serve their schools and students effectively.

To explore these dynamics, interviews were conducted with teachers from various programs within the school, with four teachers representing each program. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of factors influencing teacher loyalty. For instance, Medina et al. (2023) examined the impact of teacher empowerment on loyalty among 84 teachers in prominent public and private schools in Jakarta. Their findings revealed that teacher loyalty was moderate and significantly influenced by teacher empowerment, accounting for 41.2% of the variance. Similarly, JenaAbadi and Mobasheri (2014) investigated the role of organizational trust and transparency on teacher loyalty among 328 elementary school teachers in Iran, concluding that organizational transparency and loyalty are shaped by organizational dimensions. Another critical factor influencing teacher loyalty is the quality of work life, as demonstrated by Kurnia et al. (2018), who found that quality of work life could predict teacher loyalty with a 44.5% effective contribution in a study involving 63 high school teachers in Samarinda City.

In the context of vocational high schools, the current student demographic predominantly consists of Generation Z, who are adept at utilizing digital media as an effective tool for learning. This generation benefits from teaching methods that integrate both theoretical and practical knowledge in engaging and applicable ways (Hiim, 2017). As vocational education aims to prepare students for the workforce and respond to industrial advancements (Rongmin et al., 2024), teachers must be equipped with the necessary resources and training to meet these demands. The increasing complexity of teachers' roles underscores the importance of institutional support, such as professional development and training programs. Research by Pratama et al. (2021) demonstrates that education and training have a significant and positive impact on teacher loyalty,
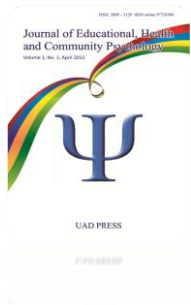
highlighting the importance of school-led initiatives to enhance teacher retention and satisfaction. In summary, fostering teacher loyalty in vocational schools requires a multifaceted approach that addresses financial, professional, and organizational needs. By supporting teachers through empowerment, organizational transparency, quality work environments, and targeted training, schools can ensure sustained commitment and effectiveness in the evolving educational landscape.

The purpose of this study is to explore the dynamics of loyalty among Vocational High School teachers more comprehensively. In addition to providing a deeper understanding of teacher loyalty, this research seeks to explain specific phenomena observed in the field. The primary research question guiding this study is: "What are the dynamics of loyalty among Vocational High School teachers?"

This study differs from previous research, which primarily focused on quantitatively testing the influence of specific factors on teacher loyalty. Instead, this research adopts a qualitative approach to describe the complex dynamics of teacher loyalty in Vocational High Schools. The rationale for this approach lies in the unique criteria and demands of vocational education. If school administrators or stakeholders fail to support teachers' specific needs—particularly in meeting the requirements of vocational training—teacher loyalty may be compromised. Moreover, in vocational education, teacher loyalty extends beyond teaching to include the development of students equipped with industry knowledge and practical skills. Vocational High School teachers play a dual role: educating students and preparing them for competitive professional environments. Consequently, teacher loyalty is crucial for maintaining the quality of education that aligns with industry demands. Loyal teachers are more likely to establish and sustain relationships with businesses, facilitating internship and employment opportunities for students.

A qualitative approach is particularly relevant for this study because it allows for a deeper exploration of the personal experiences and contextual realities of Vocational High School teachers. Through in-depth interviews, the study aims to uncover how teachers perceive their loyalty to their schools, as well as the challenges and needs they encounter in their professional

roles. Unlike quantitative techniques, which may overlook nuanced perspectives, qualitative methods provide the opportunity to capture richer, more intimate insights into the factors influencing teacher loyalty.

This research aims to identify a range of factors that support teacher loyalty in Vocational High Schools, rather than limiting the scope to a few antecedents, as is common in quantitative studies. Additionally, existing studies have predominantly focused on teachers at the elementary and general high school levels. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, limited attention has been given to Vocational High School teachers as a specific subject group, further underscoring the significance of this study.

Conceptual Framework

Ravitch and Carl ([2021](#)) emphasize that a conceptual framework establishes the importance and relevance of research, demonstrating how the design, including data collection and analysis techniques, can rigorously and effectively address research questions. In line with this theoretical foundation, the conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the loyalty variables articulated by Meschke ([2021](#)). The researcher has identified three key aspects of this theory as essential for formulating clear and focused research questions. This framework will guide the exploration of the factors influencing loyalty among Vocational High School teachers, providing a robust structure for analyzing the qualitative data collected in this study.
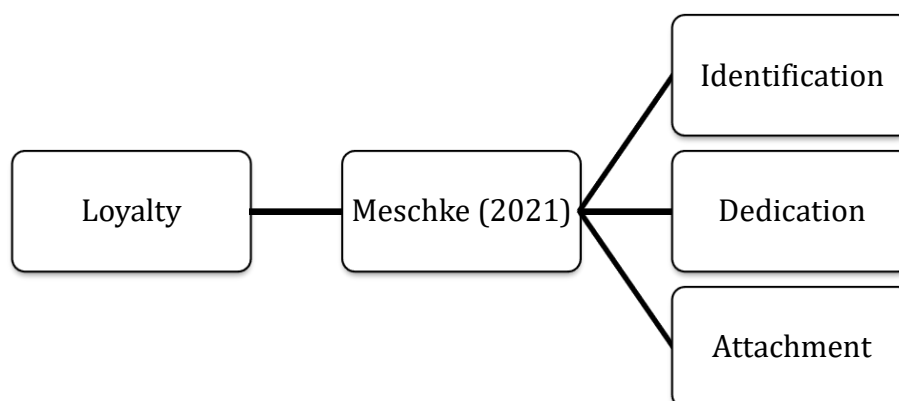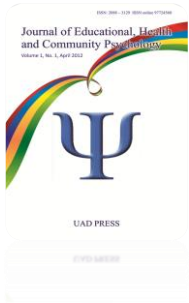

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
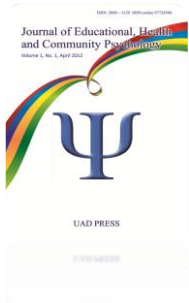
Method

Design

This study utilized a Heideggerian phenomenological approach, employing in-depth interviews to explore the intricate dynamics of teacher loyalty from the participants' perspectives. This method was chosen for its capacity to reveal the deeper meanings underlying individual experiences and to provide participants with a platform to share their narratives freely and without external influence. Phenomenology prioritizes the collection of unfiltered and authentic data through direct experiences (Cheeli, 2024). In this context, the study sought to understand the interplay of individual factors influencing teachers' commitment to their institution. Cropley (2022) underscores the essence of qualitative research in uncovering subjective "realities," emphasizing how individuals construct and interpret their lived experiences, including their social interactions. Yin (2016) highlights the value of qualitative methods in integrating and presenting data from diverse sources of evidence, thereby enhancing the richness and credibility of the findings. Furthermore, Rutledge and Hogg (2020) point out that in-depth interviews are particularly effective for capturing detailed, nuanced data, enabling researchers to delve into, reflect upon, and gain profound insights into complex phenomena. These interviews also allow for the observation of participants' tone, body language, and responses, facilitating adaptive and deeper inquiry during the interaction.

Participants

The participants in this study were teachers from a private vocational high school managed by a foundation overseeing various levels of education. Located in an economically disadvantaged community, the school faces significant challenges, including limited financial resources for both the institution and the students' families. As vocational high schools require strong technical skills aligned with industry demands, sufficient facilities are critical. Despite these constraints, the school has continued to operate, prompting an investigation into the factors motivating teachers to remain loyal to the institution.

A total of 12 teachers participated in the study, all of whom met specific criteria: they had been employed at the school for at least eight years and held permanent staff positions. The

participants represented three academic departments—Office Management (MP), Visual Communication Design (DKV), and Accountancy (AK)—with each department contributing one program head and three teachers. This selection ensured comprehensive representation of the school's core academic programs. Notably, these departments are considered the school's strongest and include teachers recognized for their long tenure and demonstrated loyalty. Program heads were chosen for their deep understanding of the school, as well as their dedication, identification, and attachment, which enriched the data and strengthened the study's findings.

Procedure

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were selected for their flexibility and depth, allowing researchers to gather detailed insights while maintaining a focused alignment with the study's objectives. This method also provided the adaptability to modify questions based on the flow of conversation (Ruslin et al., 2022). Interviews were conducted over a three-week period, with each session lasting 2–3 hours, and each participant completing the process within a single day. To minimize distractions, interviews were held in a quiet meeting room at a prearranged time, with prior permission obtained from the school principal and other teachers to ensure uninterrupted sessions.

Observations were carried out outside the scheduled interview times by shadowing participants during their routine activities, such as teaching, learning, and participating in extracurricular events. Researchers maintained a discreet presence to respect participants' privacy while documenting authentic behaviors. The data from observations were triangulated with interview findings, serving both to confirm insights gained during interviews and to provide additional evidence for clarifying participants' statements.

An interview guide was developed based on Meschke's (2021) loyalty theory, which emphasizes identification, attachment, and dedication as key dimensions of loyalty. The instrument underwent validation through expert judgment, involving a senior vocational school

administrator and a teacher with 25 years of experience. The resulting validity and reliability tests confirmed that the instrument was robust and well-suited for data collection, ensuring the study's methodological rigor.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, as conceptualized by Lincoln and Guba (1985), serves as a critical standard for ensuring that research findings are credible and meaningful. Dodgson (2019) highlights that in qualitative research, trustworthiness is essential to establish credibility and reliability due to the inherently subjective nature of such studies. The key components of trustworthiness—credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability—are widely recognized in scholarly literature (Ahmed, 2024; Amin et al., 2020; Nowell et al., 2017). Credibility, which pertains to the authenticity of the findings, is enhanced through triangulating data from multiple sources (Ahmed, 2024). In this study, credibility was ensured by collecting diverse data through interviews with research subjects, observations, and cross-referencing information with the school principal, the foundation, and other relevant sources. The alignment of perspectives between the principal and the foundation with the teachers' statements further substantiated the credibility of the findings.

Transferability refers to the extent to which research findings can be applied to other contexts or situations (Kakar et al., 2023). This study enhances transferability by providing detailed, comprehensive descriptions, enabling readers to evaluate the applicability of its findings to similar settings. To support this, the researcher securely stored interview analyses and field notes, ensuring that critical data remains accessible for future reference. Reliability, which ensures that findings are consistent and replicable over time, was achieved by triangulating interview data and conducting three rounds of field observations to verify the consistency of categories and results (Kakar et al., 2023).

Confirmability, which relates to the objectivity of the findings, was maintained by minimizing researcher bias through a collaborative review process. Fellow research team members reviewed the findings to ensure neutrality, while interviews and observations conducted by various team members were cross-checked and collectively analyzed. This approach ensured that the results

were free from individual biases and reflected the true perspectives of the participants.

Researcher Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an essential process in qualitative research, requiring researchers to remain transparent and critically aware of their influence on the study (Dodgson, 2019). This research was inspired by observations at a vocational high school, where the loyalty and dedication of the teachers prompted further exploration. The researchers recognized the challenge of separating their own experiences from those of the participants but made conscious efforts to maintain objectivity and minimize personal biases. Observations of teachers' commitment to their students and school provided valuable insights, which resonated with the researchers' own experiences as long-serving university lecturers facing similar professional challenges.

Throughout the study, the researchers adhered to rigorous methodological standards to ensure the integrity of the findings. For example, interviews were conducted using open-ended questions, and no comments or interpretations were provided that could influence the participants' responses. This approach allowed for an authentic representation of the participants' perspectives while reducing the risk of researcher bias.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process in this study followed three systematic steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved organizing and simplifying the data to facilitate interpretation. This included summarizing interview findings, coding, identifying themes, grouping similar concepts, and constructing narratives to uncover patterns (Mezmir, 2020). Through this process, interview data were effectively condensed into meaningful summaries.

Data presentation aimed to enhance the readability and accessibility of the findings by summarizing the results into clear, concise statements (Yin, 2016). This ensured that readers could easily comprehend the data and its implications. The final step, drawing conclusions, involved synthesizing the findings and discussions to derive meaningful insights. Triangulation was
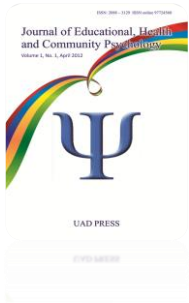
employed to validate the data by cross-referencing information from multiple sources, including the principal and foundation representatives (Supratiknya, 2015). For instance, questions posed to the principal regarding teachers' willingness to take on additional tasks and their collaborative efforts provided crucial corroborative evidence for the study's conclusions.
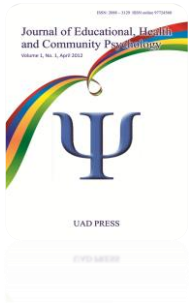
Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are of paramount importance in qualitative research, particularly when engaging directly with participants through in-depth interviews. Arifin (2018) emphasizes that such interactions, especially with potentially vulnerable groups, require careful attention to ethical practices. Before conducting interviews, the researchers thoroughly explained the study's purpose, methods, and procedures to participants, ensuring transparency and informed consent. Participants were assured that the study would not involve any medical procedures or cause physical harm.

Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing names and quotes used in the research. Participants were granted full autonomy to decide whether to participate, with the freedom to withdraw at any point without facing penalties or receiving incentives. The study was conducted solely for academic purposes, devoid of personal or organizational agendas, ensuring that the research process and outcomes upheld the highest ethical standards.

Result

The interview process spanned approximately three weeks and was conducted in a meeting room to minimize distractions and prevent unwanted noise. Observations were carried out by allowing the subjects to continue their usual activities while the researcher documented the observations discreetly from a distance to maintain the subjects' privacy. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using content analysis. The stages of content analysis in this study were conducted systematically as follows:

First, the research objectives were defined, with the primary aim being to examine and describe the loyalty of vocational high school teachers. The second stage involved selecting data sources,

which included interview and observation data from the research subjects, as well as triangulation with data gathered from school principals and foundation representatives. The third step entailed identifying categories and themes relevant to teacher loyalty. In the fourth stage, data coding was performed, incorporating the researcher's personal notes aligned with the interview and observation findings. The subsequent stage involved interpreting the data, focusing on analyzing themes related to teacher loyalty. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the analysis.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the loyalty exhibited by vocational high school teachers. The analysis revealed that the teachers demonstrated loyalty through behaviors reflecting identification, dedication, and attachment to their professional duties and their schools.

Identification

The aspect of identification pertains to the relational connections that teachers establish within the school community, including their interactions with students (Meschke, 2021). In some instances, teachers prioritize their commitment to the school and its community over their personal welfare. This is evident in their willingness to stay beyond operational hours to complete unfinished tasks, whether related to administrative duties or student needs. Teachers expressed feelings of discomfort if school responsibilities were left incomplete. During interviews, participants highlighted their efforts to uphold the school's reputation by emphasizing the supportive roles the school played in providing adequate facilities. Furthermore, the school principal noted that teachers often assist one another in managing tasks when a colleague is unavailable due to personal obligations. This cooperative spirit reflects a strong sense of loyalty within the school environment. Interview with B, one of the teachers from the Office Management department teacher represe1ntative said,

> *"If there is additional assignment from the principal, I will finish it first, ma'am, until it is finished before I go home. Because if not, I will think about it at home. I feel that even though there is additional assignment, it will give me experience that will certainly be useful for me."*

Interview with E, one of the representatives of the Accountancy department teachers explained,

> *"Sometimes if there is a task that I am not used to doing and I am trusted to complete it, I ask other teachers who may have done it, ma'am. So that the task entrusted to me can be completed well and not carelessly."*

Interview with A, a representative from the head of the Visual Communication Design department program said,

> *"In my opinion, the principal is quite good at providing assignments and guidance. If there are additional tasks, I will definitely be given guidance beforehand so that I can do them well."*

The development of the aforementioned dynamics was not instantaneous but rather the result of shared experiences over time (Meschke, 2021). Over time, teacher loyalty manifests through tolerance of mistakes made by administrators, colleagues, and students, offering support without expecting reciprocation, and maintaining a positive attitude by continuing to assist others (Akman & Özdemir, 2019). This commitment to helping colleagues is supported by the findings of Af'idah (2022), which suggest that social interactions among coworkers can mitigate conflict by fostering a familial atmosphere within the workplace. Positive relationships among teachers are also evident in the absence of complaints against colleagues or long-serving school employees.

In addition to fostering strong relationships among peers, teachers reported having a positive rapport with the school principal, whom they perceive as equitable in treating all school employees. This aligns with research by Meilando et al. (2023), which concludes that organizational justice positively and significantly influences teacher loyalty, demonstrating that effective implementation of organizational justice enhances teacher dedication to their school. Regarding the principal's role in advancing the school's vision and mission, teachers highlighted several supportive actions, including facilitating professional development opportunities, allocating

budget resources to enhance teacher competencies, fostering a conducive work culture, and displaying empathy by addressing teachers' challenges. Such behaviors exemplify the traits of servant leadership, as described by Salvabilla and Karwanto (2021). Research by Howladar and Rahman (2021) further supports this, indicating that servant leadership improves workplace morale by making employees feel valued. This, in turn, encourages unwavering dedication to leaders and voluntary participation in community service. Moreover, servant leadership contributes to a positive organizational climate.

Attachment

Attachment, an aspect reflecting the emotions and behaviors demonstrated by individual teachers toward colleagues and students (Meschke, 2021), was another key theme. Interviews revealed that teachers consistently exhibit a positive attitude by supporting the principal's decisions aimed at school welfare. They also actively contribute ideas and suggestions to advance the school's vision and mission. Teachers expressed a strong sense of belonging to their school, with little interest in seeking employment elsewhere. This sense of attachment drives their commitment to fostering a positive working and learning environment that meets the individual needs of students. Teachers emphasized that a conducive learning atmosphere enhances student focus and engagement in the learning process.

Research by Anggraeni and Dewi (2023) corroborates this, showing that work climate has a significant positive impact on teacher loyalty, with an effective contribution of 57.6%. Wahyono (2019) also highlights that the work climate is a tangible factor that influences the behavior of individuals within the school environment. Elements such as mutual agreement, recognition of human dignity, and teamwork are crucial for creating a positive school climate. Interviews further revealed that teachers recognize the importance of continuous learning to enhance communication with students, which helps them better understand student dynamics. This aligns with findings by Sabrifha and Darmawati (2022), who argue that positive emotional relationships between teachers and students foster a supportive and safe environment, contributing to students' mental well-being. Similarly, Priadi (2020) highlights that positive teacher-student

communication provides students with more opportunities to express their opinions, whether related to learning or personal matters.
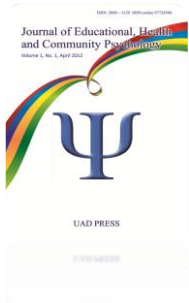
Interview with G, a representative of the head of the Office Management program said,

> *"I enjoy working at this school because the school climate is good. My coworkers and leaders can work together well so I feel at home and comfortable working at this school. I used to get a job offer from another school but I didn't take it because I was happy working at this school. In addition, here they also emphasize paying attention to the learning process and student development."*

Interview with D, one of the representatives of the Accountancy department teachers explained,

> *"I feel very comfortable working in this school because the culture here pays attention to religious values that are applied to teachers and students, for example there are congregational prayer activities, there are routine religious activities. So I don't want to move to another school. This school also has a group between teachers and students who can monitor student activities while at school or when participating in extracurricular activities at school."*

Based on the results of interviews, it was revealed that teacher attachment to their school and students is manifested through various efforts aimed at fostering meaningful connections. Teachers consistently monitor students, both during and outside learning activities, to understand and address their needs effectively. They demonstrate a commitment to meeting these needs by recognizing individual differences, maintaining high expectations for students' potential, and instilling confidence in their abilities. Teachers also offer necessary guidance and adopt optimal teaching strategies in the classroom. As Leeuwen (2023) highlights, monitoring students involves using diverse sources of information or cues to assess their performance accurately. This assessment allows teachers to determine the type of support students require, such as tailored instruction or selecting appropriate collaboration partners. Similarly, Megawaty et al. (2020) note

that monitoring academic progress not only helps teachers communicate student performance to parents but also facilitates the school's ability to report on students' overall activities.
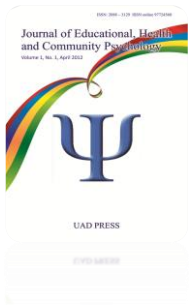
Dedication

Dedication, in this context, refers to an attitude of pride and commitment to the organization and its members (Meschke, 2021). Within the educational sector, teachers' efforts reflect not only their pride in their institution but also their responsibility and behavior towards their students. As Elitasari (2022) suggests, teachers must fulfill their responsibilities with high dedication, adhering to professional guidelines to ensure their duties are performed effectively. At the school where this study was conducted, teachers exhibit a strong willingness to participate in training programs facilitated by the institution. This proactive approach underscores their determination to continually enhance their skills and provide the best possible learning experience for students. Teachers actively seek to refine their knowledge of various teaching methodologies and adapt these approaches to the unique needs of their classrooms. Kurt and Sezek (2021) assert that innovative teaching methods, such as multiple intelligence strategies, peer instruction, and problem-based learning, significantly enhance students' interest and engagement. These methods positively impact students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement, thereby enriching the overall educational experience.

Interview with C, a representative of the head of the Accountancy program said,

> *"Several times the principal offered training to teachers here. The teachers were very happy to be asked to participate in training, especially about making teaching media. Now technology is getting more sophisticated, so we can't lose to children (students). If the teaching media is fun, children can also better accept the teaching materials. These things make me proud of this school because it gives all teachers the opportunity to advance."*

Interview with K, one of the representatives of the Visual Communication Design department teachers explained,

"I personally was once given advice by the principal about the way I teach in class so I tried to change the way I teach. This makes me feel proud because the principal pays attention to teachers."

Dedicated teachers continuously strive to recognize and leverage their strengths for the benefit of the schools where they work (Simatupang, 2022). While some teachers may occasionally experience boredom in fulfilling their professional responsibilities, they often find constructive and wise ways to overcome this challenge. Teachers aspire to set positive examples for their students, such as adhering to class schedules with discipline, respecting the learning process by avoiding immediate criticism of incorrect answers, and encouraging open and respectful communication. Discipline has been shown to have a positive impact on teachers (Dewi & Windiarti, 2024), and many believe that modeling such behavior can foster a strong work ethic among students. A positive work ethic, in turn, enhances understanding of work as a duty, obligation, and moral value (Kusnadi & Prijono, 2023). Supporting this notion, Kurniawan (2023) found that work ethic significantly influences employee loyalty.

In the context of higher education, teacher (or lecturer) loyalty can be cultivated by providing opportunities for professional development. Lecturers who feel a sense of involvement and belonging within their institutions are less likely to consider leaving their roles (Limgiani, 2015). This aligns with findings from related studies and reinforces the conceptual framework presented in the methodology. Meschke's (2021) theory of loyalty offers a robust foundation for understanding the dynamics of teacher loyalty and serves as a basis for further exploration in this area.

Discussion

The identification aspect reveals that positive relationships with colleagues and principals, as well as effective leadership, significantly influence teacher loyalty. According to Meschke (2021), identification is a relational process that emerges through shared experiences, ultimately fostering loyalty. Teachers may even prioritize the school's interests over their own. This finding aligns
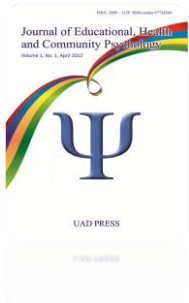
with Hkung and Than (2021), who concluded that teacher loyalty increases when principals listen to and value teachers' suggestions, offer sincere praise, and demonstrate respect for their professional competence.

This finding aligns with previous research showing that positive relationships among colleagues foster collaboration, where teachers share experiences, resources, and moral support. Such relationships enhance reflective practices and beliefs about teaching and learning (Petro & Gega, 2023). Additionally, investing in continuous improvement such as improving communication between teachers and students, and encouraging teacher initiative through democratic decision-making, transparency, openness and collaboration benefits teachers, their peers, and students, ultimately strengthening teacher loyalty (Huang & Chang, 2024; Schleifer et al., 2017).

Positive relationships between principals and teachers significantly influence job satisfaction, cohesion, and commitment. These relationships help shape the school climate, which is vital for teacher loyalty (Price, 2012). Effective instructional supervision by principals creates a conducive teaching environment, boosting teaching effectiveness and fostering lasting positive relationships (Ting & Chuang, 2024). Principals who demonstrate empathy, confidence, and emotional competence build trust and loyalty through strong personal connections with teachers (Qian & Walker, 2021).

Secure base leadership positively affects teachers' innovative behavior and affective commitment, essential for cultivating a loyal and committed teaching workforce (Bao, 2024). Effective instructional leadership encourages teamwork, improving relationship quality and loyalty within educational institutions (Widtayakornbundit & Phinaitrup, 2020). In summary, fostering positive relationships with colleagues and principals, combined with effective leadership, plays a pivotal role in enhancing teacher loyalty. These factors create a supportive and collaborative environment, boost job satisfaction and commitment, and promote innovation and proactive behaviors among teachers.

This study found that teachers' attachment to their profession fosters a positive attitude toward their responsibilities. Meschke (2021) describes loyalty as a unique bond that reflects commitment
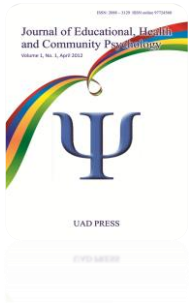
to the beliefs and goals of individuals, groups, or organizations. This attachment is evident in the mutual commitment and responsibility shared between employees and organizations (Lai, 2021; Ikechukwu et al., 2019). Such attachment underscores the relational foundation of loyalty, fostering a deeper connection between teachers and their institutions.

Interviews revealed that teachers consistently exhibit positive attitudes by supporting their principal's decisions aimed at enhancing school welfare. They also actively contribute ideas and suggestions to advance the school's vision and mission, reflecting their commitment and sense of belonging. Teachers expressed a strong connection to their school, with little inclination to seek employment elsewhere.

Teachers' positive attitudes toward school leadership and their support for principals' decisions play a pivotal role in fostering a cohesive and supportive school environment. This support strengthens the overall school climate and facilitates the effective implementation of policies and initiatives (Beets et al., 2008; Buskila & Chen-Levi, 2021). A sense of belonging and commitment to the school's vision and mission is often influenced by the principal's leadership style. Principals who demonstrate emotional intelligence and effective relationship management significantly enhance teachers' well-being and professional satisfaction (Buskila & Chen-Levi, 2021).

Teachers' active involvement in contributing ideas and suggestions highlights the presence of a collaborative school culture. Such a culture fosters continuous improvement and innovation, while teachers' participation in decision-making processes cultivates a sense of ownership and commitment to the school's goals (Beets et al., 2008). From an interaction rituals perspective, teachers derive pride and satisfaction from their students' achievements and feel fulfilled by providing additional support to underachieving students. This shared sense of purpose and success reinforces a positive school environment (Valenti & Briseño, 2020).

A strong sense of belonging among teachers is linked to positive educational outcomes and a supportive school climate. Teachers who feel valued and respected are less likely to seek employment elsewhere, contributing to lower turnover rates and enhanced school stability

(Roffey, 2012; Bakchich et al., 2023). The quality of relationships within the school, particularly between teachers and students, plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging. Positive teacher-student relationships are associated with improved academic performance and overall satisfaction within the school (Arends & Visser, 2019; Scales et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2021).

Moreover, teachers' perceptions of the school climate and their self-efficacy are interconnected. A supportive school climate enhances teachers' self-efficacy, which, in turn, boosts their commitment to the school and willingness to contribute to its success (Meristo & Eisenschmidt, 2014). In conclusion, the findings underscore the significance of supportive leadership, a collaborative culture, and strong relationships in fostering teachers' positive attitudes, active contributions, and sense of belonging. These factors are essential for the overall welfare, stability, and success of the school.

This study found that dedication enhances teachers' productivity and enables them to make meaningful contributions to their organization. Dedication is a critical component of loyalty, as highlighted by Meschke (2021). Sharma (2019) found that leadership, training, and work climate significantly influence employee loyalty. Loyal individuals often exhibit emotional attachment and pride in their organizations, which translates into high levels of work discipline and commitment (Nawiyah et al., 2023). In educational contexts, teacher loyalty manifests through consistent attendance, completion of assigned tasks, and ethical behavior, even in the absence of direct supervision (Khan et al., 2015).

Teachers' professional commitment and dedication are strongly tied to their attitudes toward their profession. High levels of dedication and commitment predict positive attitudes toward teaching, which reflect loyalty to their schools and responsibilities (Turk & Korkmaz, 2022). Teachers who are deeply committed to their profession often go above and beyond, fostering enriching and effective learning environments that directly enhance the quality of education students receive (Werang et al., 2024)
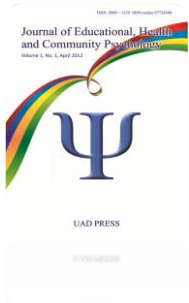
Job satisfaction plays a critical role in promoting teacher loyalty. Teachers who derive satisfaction from their work are more likely to remain committed to their profession and their schools (Zhang, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2024). Professional achievements and positive work environments further encourage teachers to invest personal time and effort into their duties, demonstrating their loyalty (Lauermann et al., 2017).

Professional identity and trust significantly influence teachers' loyalty. When teachers perceive themselves as capable professionals and feel trusted by their institutions, they exhibit loyalty through dedicated actions (Ma, 2022; Dulfer et al., 2023). This sense of trust and identity also helps teachers navigate challenges and maintain strong commitments to their schools. Involvement in school decision-making, particularly in instructional areas, enhances teachers' professional commitment and loyalty. Teachers who feel their voices are valued in important decisions show greater dedication to their roles and schools (Park et al., 2023).

A supportive work environment, including principal support and collaborative relationships with colleagues, is vital for fostering loyalty. Teachers who feel supported by their leaders and peers are more likely to remain committed to their schools (Vidic et al., 2022). Positive interactions and meaningful relationships within the school community further contribute to teachers' sense of belonging and loyalty (Nissilä et al., 2022). Intrinsic motivation and alignment with personal and professional values also play significant roles in fostering teacher loyalty. Teachers driven by a sense of vocation and personal responsibility for educational outcomes are more likely to demonstrate loyalty through their dedication to professional responsibilities (Sunley & Locke, 2010).

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the dynamics of teacher loyalty among vocational high school educators in a Surabaya-based foundation. Examining loyalty through three key aspects—identification, attachment, and dedication—it concludes that teacher loyalty in this context is generally strong. The school provides an environment conducive to teacher engagement and responsibility, enabling teachers to perform their roles effectively both in and beyond the classroom.

However, the study acknowledges its limitations, particularly potential researcher subjectivity and bias in data interpretation. To mitigate these, triangulation was conducted with input from the principal and foundation representatives.

Recommendations

To strengthen teacher loyalty, educational institutions and society must provide robust support and recognition for teachers' contributions. Schools can engage in open communication with teachers regarding their future aspirations and offer regular training opportunities to support their professional growth. Future research should delve deeper into the factors influencing teacher loyalty, considering variables such as demographic characteristics. Moreover, schools could explore strategies to foster a supportive and inclusive school climate, which is pivotal in cultivating an organizational culture that enhances positive relationships among staff.

Conflict of Interest
The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Author Contribution
All authors have contributed equally to the study's conceptualization, interpreting data, reviewing, and editing the manuscript.

Data Availability
Data can be provided upon request to the author.

Declarations Ethical Statement
The study followed the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Informed Consent Statement
Informed consent was obtained from all persons involved in the study.

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