



An Assessment of Academic Commitment in Higher Education Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the academic commitment of higher education students, examining its relationship with satisfaction, perceived alternatives, investment, and meaningfulness, as conceptualized within the Investment Model of Commitment. Conducted at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) across four departments, the research aims to assess differences in academic commitment and its contributing factors among a sample of eighty students. The study addresses the growing need to understand students' academic dedication, which significantly influences their educational outcomes and future success. Employing a quantitative approach, the study utilized a random sampling technique and collected data through a structured questionnaire. Findings indicate that students exhibit a high level of academic commitment ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.77$), primarily driven by high satisfaction ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.80$) and a strong sense of meaningfulness ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.83$). The presence of fewer attractive alternatives ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.10$) and moderate investment levels ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.76$) further reinforce this commitment. These results suggest that satisfaction and meaningfulness play a central role in fostering academic dedication, while limited alternatives and moderate investments sustain students' persistence. Based on these insights, the study recommends strategies to enhance students' academic experiences, including the development of supportive and engaging learning environments, the promotion of meaningful educational opportunities, and the mitigation of external distractions. Such interventions may strengthen students' academic commitment, thereby benefiting both individual learners and educational institutions.

Keywords: Academic commitment, student satisfaction, higher education, perceived alternatives.

Introduction

Every student enters the education sector with a common aspiration: to achieve success in life. They view education as a pathway through which their hidden potential can be discovered and nurtured. Through this process, they aim not only to become successful individuals but also responsible and productive citizens. Parents, too, envision a future where their children thrive and progress across multiple dimensions. This aligns with the contemporary and holistic definition of education, which emphasizes the comprehensive development of an individual.

Quality education is characterized by its focus on the development of all aspects of a person, including physical, psychological, emotional, intellectual, cultural, and moral domains. Although many students aspire to succeed academically, in reality, only those with strong academic commitment (AC) are likely to achieve meaningful educational outcomes.

Academic commitment refers to the determination, perseverance, and sustained effort students invest in achieving their academic goals. It is influenced by students' perceptions of their educational experiences, the sacrifices they make, the availability of alternative paths, and their satisfaction with their current academic journey. According to Human-Vogel and Robe (2020), academic commitment stems from students' sense of fulfillment and the value they assign to their academic pursuits, as well as their perceived costs of disengaging from them. Similarly, Damian et al. (2021) emphasize that self-regulated learning and the ability to persist in long-term educational goals are closely linked to higher levels of academic commitment.

In higher education, academic commitment serves as a critical predictor of student success. It plays an essential role in sustaining motivation, engagement, and goal-directed behavior. In today's complex and competitive academic environment, characterized by rapid technological change, increased student mobility, and shifting societal expectations, understanding what drives student commitment has become more vital than ever. The theoretical foundation of this construct is grounded in Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model of Commitment, originally developed to explain commitment in interpersonal relationships. When applied to academic settings, the model comprises three central elements: satisfaction with educational experiences, investment of time and resources, and the perceived availability of alternatives.

The role of academic commitment continues to gain prominence in contemporary higher education, particularly as institutions strive to enhance student

performance, engagement, and retention. Universities are increasingly challenged to accommodate diverse student populations while maintaining high academic standards and responding to external demands such as globalization and digitization.

While prior studies have examined student motivation and engagement, the multidimensional nature of academic commitment as defined by the Investment Model has not been sufficiently explored. This study seeks to address that gap by examining the behavioral, psychological, and contextual factors that shape academic commitment among higher education students. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers seeking to foster improved academic outcomes and institutional retention.

Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model identifies three primary determinants of commitment: satisfaction, investment, and alternatives. Among these, satisfaction plays a particularly influential role. Students who report high levels of satisfaction with their academic experience, encompassing instructional quality, institutional facilities, and social integration, tend to demonstrate higher levels of commitment. A positive sense of satisfaction enhances students' academic self-efficacy and sense of belonging, which in turn reinforces their engagement and persistence (Li & Wang, 2022; Chen et al., 2023; Kim & Lee, 2024). Moreover, academic and social support systems significantly contribute to sustained commitment and achievement (Johnson & Lee, 2024; Gonzalez & Thompson, 2021).

The second factor, investment, encompasses the time, financial resources, and cognitive effort students devote to their education. Higher levels of perceived investment are positively associated with academic commitment, as students become more reluctant to abandon the progress and sacrifices they have already made (Damian et al., 2021). Although concerns about the return on investment are increasingly salient, particularly given rising tuition costs, students who perceive their education as aligned with future career goals remain committed despite these challenges.

Finally, the presence of attractive alternatives, such as employment opportunities or different educational pathways, can undermine academic commitment. Students who perceive viable alternatives may question the value of continuing their current studies, especially in the context of economic uncertainty and competitive job markets (Zhang & Wang, 2022). However, institutions can counteract this effect by offering clear academic and career trajectories, mentorship opportunities, and practical learning experiences that reinforce the long-term value of academic persistence (Hatcher et al., 2022).

Rationale of the Study

In order to improve students' academic performance and overall success in higher education, it is imperative to understand the underlying factors that contribute to their continued commitment to academic goals. In today's fast-paced, highly competitive, and increasingly complex academic landscape, students encounter numerous challenges that can threaten their persistence. These include difficulties maintaining motivation, balancing academic demands with personal responsibilities, coping with financial pressures, and resisting external temptations such as entering the workforce prematurely. As such, developing effective strategies to sustain academic dedication requires a nuanced understanding of the psychological and contextual variables influencing students' decision-making and goal adherence.

The Investment Model of Commitment, originally formulated in social psychology, offers a compelling theoretical framework for analyzing these issues (Rusbult et al., 1983). According to the model, three interrelated components influence commitment: (a) satisfaction with the experience, (b) the amount of investment one has made, and (c) the perceived attractiveness of alternatives. Each of these dimensions provides a distinct lens through which to examine academic commitment in higher education.

In this context, satisfaction refers to students' overall appraisal of their academic experiences, including the quality of instruction, perceived learning outcomes, institutional support, and the extent to which education contributes to their personal and intellectual development. When students feel academically fulfilled, engaged, and supported, their sense of satisfaction increases, which in turn strengthens their academic commitment. Research has shown that students who perceive their academic journey as meaningful and rewarding are more likely to remain engaged and persist through difficulties (Rusbult et al., 1983).

Investment, in the academic sense, encompasses the time, effort, financial resources, and emotional energy that students dedicate to their studies. This includes tuition payments, long hours spent studying, sacrifices in social life, and the psychological resilience required to persist in the face of academic challenges. High levels of perceived investment increase the cost of withdrawal, thereby fostering greater commitment. This principle is particularly relevant in light of the rising costs of higher education, where students often weigh the return on their educational investments against potential alternatives (Damian et al., 2021).

The third component, the attractiveness of alternatives, involves students' perception of available options outside of their academic pursuits. These may include immediate employment, vocational training, or other life pathways that appear more accessible or less demanding than continued academic study. When such alternatives are perceived as more viable or rewarding, students may experience diminished commitment to their current academic path. This is particularly concerning in contexts where job markets are unstable or where educational experiences are perceived as disconnected from future career opportunities (Zhang & Wang, 2022). However, institutions can counterbalance these perceptions by offering career-oriented curricula, internship programs, and clear post-graduation pathways (Hatcher et al., 2022).

By investigating how satisfaction, investment, and perceived alternatives interact to shape students' academic commitment, this study aims to address a critical gap in the literature. While considerable research has explored student motivation and engagement, the application of the Investment Model in academic settings remains underexplored. This study therefore seeks to provide a more integrated understanding of the motivational and contextual determinants of commitment in higher education.

Understanding these connections is essential for designing effective institutional interventions that foster student engagement, improve the quality of the academic experience, and reduce dropout rates. As noted in a recent meta-analysis by Lee and Martinez (2022), integrating commitment-based frameworks into educational research has the potential to transform student support systems, making them more responsive to diverse learner needs. Similarly, Johnson et al. (2022) emphasize that focusing on predictors of academic commitment can enable educators to create individualized and data-driven retention strategies tailored to varied student demographics.

By positioning this research within the framework of the Investment Model and expanding upon current empirical findings, the present study contributes to both theoretical advancement and practical application. It offers valuable insights for stakeholders in higher education, including educators, policymakers, and administrators, who seek to cultivate environments that nurture persistence, performance, and long-term student success.

Statement of the Problem

This study is designed to assess the level of academic commitment among university students. It aims to explore the extent to which students in higher education remain dedicated and persistent in pursuing their academic goals and career aspirations. In the contemporary academic environment, students encounter numerous challenges that may affect their commitment, including maintaining motivation, balancing academic and personal responsibilities, and resisting external pressures such as entering the workforce prematurely. These obstacles are increasingly common in today's fast-paced, competitive world. Therefore, it is essential to examine how students navigate these difficulties and to what extent they remain committed to their educational objectives. By investigating students' academic persistence in the face of these challenges, this study seeks to generate insights that can inform the development of effective strategies to foster and support sustained academic dedication in higher education contexts.

Literature Review

A number of researches have been carried out in relation to the topic under study.

1. Understanding Academic Commitment

Academic commitment (AC) refers to the sustained perseverance, emotional engagement, and purposeful dedication that students demonstrate in pursuit of their academic objectives. It is not merely a reflection of goal-setting but a dynamic and multi-dimensional process that encompasses students' motivation, their cognitive beliefs about academic success, and their behavioral consistency in academic tasks. AC plays a central role in determining students' long-term academic performance, persistence, and psychological resilience in the face of academic and non-academic pressures. It is influenced by several interrelated factors, including perceived educational investments, the level of satisfaction derived from academic experiences, and the availability or attractiveness of alternative paths (Human-Vogel & Rabe, 2020).

Students who perceive their academic journey as meaningful and congruent with their personal values and aspirations are more likely to remain committed, even when confronted with setbacks such as academic failure, personal hardship, or competing social demands. In this regard, academic commitment is not a fixed trait but a context-sensitive response to internal motivations and external stimuli. Human-Vogel and Rabe (2020) emphasize that commitment is sustained when

students derive psychological fulfillment from their educational experiences and when the perceived cost of disengagement is high.

From a theoretical perspective, academic commitment can be dissected into three distinct yet interconnected components, affective, continuance, and normative commitment, adapted from organizational psychology models, particularly the three-component model proposed by Allen and Meyer (2000).

- Affective commitment is rooted in emotional attachment to one's academic pursuits. Students who enjoy learning, experience a sense of academic belonging, and feel aligned with institutional values are more likely to exhibit this form of commitment. Affective commitment is closely linked to intrinsic motivation and plays a significant role in promoting self-regulated learning and academic engagement. According to Human-Vogel and Rabe (2020), positive learning experiences and alignment with academic goals enhance students' emotional connection to their educational journey.
- Continuance commitment is driven by students' recognition of the tangible and intangible costs associated with abandoning their academic path. These costs may include time already invested, tuition paid, potential career setbacks, and social or emotional sacrifices. Students high in continuance commitment may persist in their studies not necessarily because of enjoyment, but because the perceived losses of withdrawal are too great to justify disengagement (Allen & Meyer, 2000).
- Normative commitment reflects a sense of duty or moral obligation to persist, often influenced by familial, cultural, or societal expectations. In many cultural contexts, education is regarded as a means to elevate family status or fulfill collective aspirations, thereby creating external motivational pressures that sustain students' academic involvement (Allen & Meyer, 2000). This dimension is especially prevalent in collectivist societies where academic success is closely linked to familial honor and social responsibility.

Recent empirical research underscores the situational and developmental nature of academic commitment. For instance, Shafait et al. (2021) highlight that students transitioning from secondary to tertiary education often struggle with identity formation, social integration, and self-efficacy. In such transitions, supportive learning environments, mentoring relationships, and peer networks significantly enhance affective commitment by providing psychological safety and academic reassurance. This suggests that academic commitment is not solely an internal

disposition but one that is nurtured, or eroded, by environmental and institutional factors.

Moreover, academic commitment should be understood within the broader context of student well-being. Emotional resilience, defined as the ability to adapt and recover from academic stressors, interacts with commitment levels. Students with high resilience tend to maintain their academic goals even in the face of adversity, reinforcing the notion that AC is closely tied to emotional regulation and psychological coping strategies.

Another important dimension is goal clarity; students who have a well-defined academic and career path are more likely to display sustained commitment. Ambiguity regarding educational purpose or institutional relevance can lead to disengagement or passive learning behaviors, particularly among first-generation or underrepresented student populations. Thus, institutions must ensure that students are not only academically supported but also guided through career planning and identity development.

In sum, academic commitment is a multifaceted construct that integrates emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components. It evolves over time and is shaped by both internal dispositions and external contexts. Ensuring high levels of academic commitment requires institutions to foster inclusive, emotionally safe, and intellectually stimulating environments that affirm students' identities, minimize disengagement risks, and strengthen the alignment between academic pathways and personal aspirations.

2. Student Satisfaction and Academic Persistence

Student satisfaction is widely recognized as a cornerstone of academic commitment and a significant predictor of academic persistence. It serves not only as an outcome of institutional effectiveness but also as a critical mediating variable that links students' educational experiences to their motivation and long-term engagement. According to Hayat et al. (2020), students who perceive their academic environments as supportive, intellectually stimulating, and conducive to personal growth are more likely to remain committed to their studies, even in the face of academic or personal challenges.

Satisfaction in the academic context is shaped by multiple interacting elements. Key contributors include the quality of instructional delivery, the availability of academic resources, curriculum relevance, emotional support, and the accessibility of faculty. When students build meaningful relationships with educators, feel intellectually challenged, and receive consistent guidance, their sense

of belonging and academic self-efficacy is enhanced. These psychosocial and institutional factors collectively increase academic satisfaction, which in turn fosters a greater willingness to persist (Hayat et al., 2020).

Moreover, satisfaction is not a passive response to environmental stimuli, it is dynamically linked with students' active engagement in learning. One of the most influential predictors of academic satisfaction is educational investment, the time, effort, emotional labor, and cognitive resources students contribute to their academic pursuits. This reciprocal relationship is well articulated by Damian et al. (2021), who found that students with higher levels of academic satisfaction also demonstrated increased use of self-regulated learning strategies such as goal setting, time management, self-monitoring, and adaptive learning behaviors. These strategies not only enhance academic performance but also serve as feedback loops that reinforce satisfaction and commitment.

This cyclical interaction between investment and satisfaction suggests that students who perceive their efforts as meaningful and fruitful are more likely to remain committed to their academic trajectory. In other words, the psychological rewards of academic progress strengthen students' intrinsic motivation, thereby increasing the likelihood of persistence. This cycle becomes particularly significant during academically vulnerable periods, such as the first year of university, when students are adjusting to new demands and may be more susceptible to disengagement.

Additionally, the rise of online and hybrid education models in recent years has introduced new dimensions to how student satisfaction is shaped. While flexible access and autonomy can enhance satisfaction for some, others may experience reduced satisfaction due to limited social interaction, unclear course expectations, or technological barriers. This highlights the need for pedagogical responsiveness, where institutions continually adapt teaching strategies and support services based on evolving student needs and satisfaction indicators.

3. Perceived Alternatives and Retention Challenges

Perceived alternatives are defined as students' subjective evaluations of external opportunities or pathways that may appear more appealing than their current academic trajectory. These may include transferring to another institution, entering the workforce, enrolling in vocational or technical training programs, or temporarily withdrawing from education due to personal, financial, or professional obligations. The presence and perceived attractiveness of such alternatives can significantly undermine academic commitment, particularly when students question

the value, relevance, or return on investment of their current academic program (Human-Vogel & Rabe, 2020).

When students begin to doubt the utility of their educational experience, whether due to low engagement, poor academic performance, unsupportive learning environments, or lack of future career prospects, the perceived appeal of alternatives tends to increase. As Human-Vogel and Rabe (2020) explain, students who view external options as viable or superior are at a heightened risk of disengagement or dropout. This phenomenon becomes particularly critical in higher education settings where program quality, institutional support, and academic advising vary substantially.

Al-Khresheh (2023) draws attention to the experiences of non-traditional students, such as working adults, caregivers, or first-generation college students. These individuals often face compounded challenges, including time constraints, financial responsibilities, and emotional labor, making them more susceptible to alternative pursuits. The rigid structure of traditional academic programs, characterized by fixed schedules, in-person attendance requirements, and limited support services, can act as a barrier to persistence. When the educational system fails to accommodate the lived realities of diverse learners, alternatives begin to appear more practical and attainable.

To counteract the impact of perceived alternatives, institutions must proactively enhance the perceived value proposition of academic participation. This involves a strategic and student-centered approach that addresses both structural barriers and motivational factors. One key solution is the implementation of flexible learning modalities, such as online, hybrid, and asynchronous course formats, which allow students to balance education with other life responsibilities. These modalities have proven effective in increasing retention rates among adult learners and those managing multiple roles (Al-Khresheh, 2023).

Program relevance and specialization also play a vital role. When curricula are aligned with emerging industry trends and societal needs, students are more likely to perceive their education as meaningful and future-oriented. Additionally, fostering an inclusive and supportive campus culture, one that affirms diverse identities and values students' unique circumstances, can foster a sense of belonging and reduce the psychological allure of alternatives.

It is also essential for institutions to implement early identification systems that can detect signs of disengagement linked to perceived alternatives. This may include monitoring academic performance, class attendance, or responses on student

satisfaction surveys. Once identified, students can be provided with targeted support, such as financial aid counseling, academic mentoring, or flexible course planning, to address the specific factors increasing their vulnerability to alternative pathways.

4. Cultural Influences on Academic Commitment

Cultural norms and societal expectations play a pivotal role in shaping how students perceive, interpret, and express academic commitment. Cultural values influence students' motivational frameworks, goal orientations, and decisions regarding persistence in higher education. As Hayat et al. (2020) point out, these values can determine the dominant type of commitment students develop, depending on whether their cultural context leans toward collectivism or individualism.

In collectivist societies, such as those in South Asia, East Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Africa and Latin America, normative commitment often becomes the prevailing motivational force. Here, students frequently experience education not solely as a personal journey but as a collective obligation to their families, communities, or cultural groups. Education is viewed as a tool to enhance family reputation, uphold traditional values, or fulfill moral duties imposed by elders or societal expectations. As a result, even in the absence of personal interest or satisfaction, students may persist in their academic paths out of a strong sense of duty and loyalty (Hayat et al., 2020).

Understanding these cultural distinctions is essential for educational institutions, especially those with diverse or international student populations. Uniform interventions may fail to resonate across cultural lines and may even undermine students' motivations. As such, institutions must design culturally inclusive strategies that account for the multiplicity of student identities and the social frameworks within which they operate.

For instance, institutions serving multicultural cohorts can adopt dual-level interventions that support both personal autonomy and community-oriented responsibilities. These may include culturally responsive mentoring programs, advisory services that include family or community members when appropriate, and inclusive curricula that reflect students' cultural backgrounds and identities. Culturally responsive pedagogy, which acknowledges the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and learning styles of diverse students, can also foster academic commitment by validating students' cultural identities and experiences in the learning process.

5. Institutional Implications and Practice

The Investment Model of Commitment offers a robust and practical framework through which institutions can develop strategies aimed at enhancing student retention, academic engagement, and long-term success. Rooted in the work of Rusbult et al. (1983) and later expanded in educational settings, this model emphasizes three key predictors of commitment: satisfaction with academic experiences, investments made in education, and the perceived availability of attractive alternatives. By focusing on these domains, institutions can create more targeted, evidence-based interventions to strengthen students' academic persistence.

One of the most effective institutional practices is the implementation of programs that enhance student satisfaction and perceived investment. These include mentorship programs, which provide emotional and academic support; career counseling services, which help students connect their academic pathways to professional aspirations; and student engagement initiatives, such as research opportunities, clubs, and co-curricular activities that deepen students' connection to campus life. According to Damian et al. (2021), such initiatives increase students' perceived value of their academic involvement, reinforcing their motivation to continue.

Finally, as the body of research on academic commitment expands, institutions are encouraged to implement evidence-based retention policies grounded in psychological theory and student development models. The Investment Model provides a conceptual structure to assess institutional strengths and gaps in promoting commitment. By evaluating how well they support satisfaction, investment, and alternative management, institutions can develop more strategic interventions to retain students, enhance performance, and promote educational equity.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework: Adapted Investment Model of Commitment

This research adopts Caryl Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model of Commitment as its foundational theoretical framework. Originally conceptualized within the domain of social psychology to explain commitment in interpersonal relationships, the model has since been adapted to various contexts, including education. In this study, the model is modified to examine the complex, multidimensional nature of academic commitment among university students.

Together, these four dimensions form the conceptual basis for assessing the commitment of higher education students in this study.

Key Components of the Adapted Investment Model

1. Satisfaction

Satisfaction reflects the degree of positive academic experiences students derive from their learning environment. These experiences may include academic achievement, supportive interactions with faculty, institutional encouragement, and opportunities for intellectual and personal development. A higher level of satisfaction typically enhances commitment by reinforcing students' belief that their academic path is rewarding and worth pursuing (Rusbult, 1980).

2. Investment

Investment encompasses the time, effort, emotional involvement, and financial resources students contribute to their educational pursuits. As students invest more in their academic progress, whether through long study hours, tuition expenses, or sacrifices in other life domains, their commitment tends to increase. This is because walking away would entail a loss of the value already accumulated through these efforts (Rusbult, 1980).

3. Quality of Alternatives

This dimension refers to students' perceptions of the desirability and availability of alternative options, such as transferring to a different institution, pursuing employment, or disengaging from education altogether. If students view these alternatives as more attractive or feasible than their current academic trajectory, their level of commitment may decline. Conversely, if such alternatives seem less beneficial, students are more likely to remain invested in their current studies (Rusbult, 1980).

4. Meaningfulness (Extended Dimension)

The inclusion of **meaningfulness** addresses a critical internal factor: the **personal relevance and intrinsic value** students associate with their academic work. When students perceive their education as aligned with their personal values, long-term goals, and sense of purpose, they are more emotionally and cognitively engaged. Meaningfulness enhances not only intrinsic motivation but also resilience during challenging academic phases, reinforcing commitment to learning.

Visual Representation: Adapted Investment Model of Academic Commitment

Below is an improved diagram of the adapted model, presenting the interaction between the four key components and overall academic commitment:

Rusbult's Investment Model of Commitment



Rationale for Model Adaptation

While Rusbult's original model has been instrumental in explaining commitment behavior, it primarily emphasizes external and relational factors. However, in the context of modern education, especially within higher education institutions that serve increasingly diverse and self-directed learners, intrinsic motivation and a sense of meaning are essential. Today's students often seek alignment between their academic experiences and their personal identities, aspirations, and societal roles.

By introducing meaningfulness into the model, this framework accounts for both external reinforcements (e.g., satisfaction, investment, and available alternatives) and internal motivational factors, making it more suitable for exploring academic persistence in contemporary higher education settings.

Significance of the Study

This study carries considerable significance for various stakeholders in the field of education, including educators, institutional leaders, policymakers, and students themselves. By applying Caryl Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model of Commitment to the academic context, the research offers both theoretical innovation and practical strategies to enhance students' commitment and persistence in higher education.

The findings of this study can inform evidence-based educational policymaking. Understanding how students' satisfaction, perceived alternatives,

personal investments, and the meaningfulness of their academic journey influence their level of commitment provides essential insights for shaping strategic interventions at the systemic level. Policymakers and educational authorities can use these insights to design programs that support academic resilience, such as investing in student support services, revising funding models, or expanding scholarship opportunities for underrepresented groups. Evidence from this research may also guide decisions regarding resource allocation, particularly in initiatives aimed at improving retention and promoting inclusive student success.

By enriching the model with this additional dimension, the study aligns with recent findings in motivation and learning theory, such as those proposed by Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (2000), that emphasize the role of intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and goal alignment in fostering sustained engagement. As such, this research not only fills a gap in the literature but also contributes to the ongoing evolution of commitment theory in educational contexts.

At the institutional level, academic commitment plays a pivotal role in shaping student outcomes, particularly in relation to retention, graduation rates, and academic achievement. The study offers actionable insights for university administrators and academic support staff seeking to improve student performance through targeted interventions. By understanding how commitment is influenced by demographic variables, such as age, gender, or cultural background, institutions can design tailored mentoring programs, peer support networks, and engagement strategies that better align with the needs and motivations of their student populations.

Incorporating the findings into student development programs can enhance the effectiveness of institutional support services. For instance, if data reveal that students with high perceived alternatives (e.g., job offers or alternative academic programs) are more likely to disengage, institutions can respond with stronger career guidance, clearer academic pathways, and experiential learning opportunities that increase the perceived value of staying enrolled. Similarly, understanding that meaningfulness and personal relevance are key drivers of commitment can lead to curricular innovations that allow students to pursue projects, courses, or specializations aligned with their passions and career goals.

Importantly, the study also offers strategies to reduce educational inequities. By identifying commitment barriers that disproportionately affect non-traditional, first-generation, or underrepresented students, institutions can adopt more inclusive practices and support structures. Flexible scheduling, accessible mental health

services, culturally responsive teaching, and inclusive campus environments are among the interventions that can be informed by this research to enhance commitment and, ultimately, academic equity.

Research Objectives

This study aims to explore and assess the level of academic commitment among university students in higher education. Guided by Caryl Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model of Commitment, the research investigates how key psychological and contextual factors, namely satisfaction, investment, perceived alternatives, and meaningfulness, shape students' commitment to their academic paths.

Through this inquiry, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics that influence students' perseverance, engagement, and long-term academic success. It also aims to provide actionable insights for institutions, enabling them to implement targeted strategies that foster student commitment and improve educational outcomes. Furthermore, the research examines how commitment may vary across academic disciplines, offering a broader and more nuanced view of students' academic experiences within higher education.

Methodology

Research Approach

A quantitative research approach was employed to systematically measure and analyze students' academic commitment. This approach allows for the collection of numerical data that can be analyzed statistically to identify trends, relationships, and patterns across a large sample.

Given the study's focus on assessing specific, measurable variables such as satisfaction, investment, perceived alternatives, and meaningfulness, quantitative methods provide the most appropriate framework for generating reliable, generalizable findings. The use of objective, structured survey instruments enables a data-driven exploration of how these variables interact and contribute to students' academic commitment, in line with Rusbult's (1980) theoretical model.

Research Design

This research is based on a **descriptive design**, which is suitable for studies aimed at capturing and interpreting the current status of a phenomenon without manipulating any variables. As the study focuses on identifying and understanding existing levels of academic commitment among students, the descriptive design provides a robust framework for presenting an accurate picture of students' attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions.

By describing the nature and degree of academic commitment, this design facilitates a deeper understanding of how students engage with their studies and what factors support or hinder their persistence.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises 4,065 students enrolled in the Departments of Psychology, International Relations (IR), Pakistan Studies, and Education within the Faculty of Social Sciences at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad.

These departments were selected to ensure disciplinary diversity and to represent a wide range of academic experiences within the social sciences. Including students from various programs allows for a more comprehensive exploration of academic commitment and helps uncover potential differences across fields of study.

By focusing on students currently pursuing higher education, the study captures the lived experiences of individuals actively engaged in academic work. This focus enhances the relevance of the findings and ensures that they reflect the realities of contemporary student life in a university setting.

Table No. 1.1 Population of the Study

S.No	Social Sciences Students	N
1	Psychology	1196
2	International Relation	1814
3	Pak- Study	360
4	Educational Study	695
	Total	4065

Sampling Technique

This study employed a random sampling technique to ensure that every student within the target population had an equal chance of being selected. The sample was drawn from students enrolled in four departments within the Faculty of Social Sciences at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad. These departments include Psychology, International Relations, Pakistan Studies, and Education. By using random sampling across multiple departments, the study aimed to achieve a representative distribution of participants, thereby enhancing the validity and generalizability of the findings.

Sample Size

A total of 80 students were selected as the sample for this study. The sample included 46 male and 34 female students, reflecting gender diversity within the selected departments. All participants were invited to complete a structured questionnaire designed to assess various components of academic commitment, based on Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model. The data collected from these 80 respondents formed the empirical foundation for the analysis and interpretation of academic commitment among students in higher education.

Table No. 1.2
Sample of the Study (n=80)

S.No	Faculty	Departments	n
1.	Social Sciences	1. Psychology	30
2.	International Relation		18
3.	Pak-Study		21
.		4. Edu Sciences	11
Total			80

Table 1.2 illustrates that a total of 80 students were selected for data collection from various BS programs within the Faculty of Social Sciences at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad. These students were chosen to serve as a representative sample of the overall population. Importantly, all 80 selected students responded to the questionnaire, ensuring a 100% response rate, which strengthens the reliability of the dataset and enhances the accuracy of the results.

Instrumentation

For the purpose of data collection, the study utilized an adapted questionnaire originally developed by Salomé Human-Vogel and Piet Rabe (1988). This tool served as the primary research instrument to assess students' academic commitment, based on the Investment Model of Commitment (Rusbult, 1980). The questionnaire comprises five key indicators aligned with the theoretical model: satisfaction, investment, perceived alternatives, meaningfulness, and overall commitment. In total, the instrument includes 24 items, each rated on a Likert-type scale to capture the strength of students' attitudes and perceptions.

Validity

To ensure the face and content validity of the adapted instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed by a colleague with expertise in educational research and psychological measurement. The validation process involved a thorough

comparison of the questionnaire items with the study's objectives, research framework, and the title of the topic to confirm alignment and relevance (see Appendix B). The expert feedback supported the appropriateness of the tool for assessing academic commitment in the context of higher education.

Reliability

The reliability of the Academic Commitment Scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The calculated reliability coefficient was $\alpha = 0.920$, indicating excellent internal consistency. This high reliability score suggests that the instrument is statistically sound and capable of producing consistent results across different student populations. A reliability value above 0.90 is considered very good for descriptive research purposes, as it indicates that the items on the scale measure the same underlying construct effectively.

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected in person by the researcher, using the validated questionnaire as the primary tool. The target participants were students enrolled in various BS-level programs within the Faculty of Social Sciences at NUML, Islamabad. The personal administration of the survey ensured clarity of instructions, minimized missing data, and helped maintain a high response rate, thereby increasing the overall quality and reliability of the collected data.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. These methods were chosen to summarize and describe the basic features of the dataset, including measures of central tendency (such as means) and measures of variability (such as standard deviations). Descriptive analysis enabled the researcher to observe general trends and patterns in students' academic commitment levels across the five dimensions of the Investment Model. The results of the analysis are presented in the subsequent tables and discussed in light of the study's objectives.

Table and Results

Table 1.3

Indicators	Minm	Maxim	Mean	SD	Remarks
Level of Commitment overall	1.60	5.00	4.1	0.77	High commitment
Satisfaction	1.50	5.00	3.99	0.80	High satisfaction
Alternatives	1.00	5.00	2.70	1.1	Fewer attractive alternatives
Investment	1.60	5.00	3.82	0.76	Moderate investment levels
Meaningfulness	1.60	5.00	3.99	0.83	High perceive meaningfulness

Table 1.3 summarizes the descriptive statistics, specifically the mean scores and standard deviations, for the five key indicators of academic commitment assessed in this study. These indicators include Level of Commitment, Satisfaction, Perceived Alternatives, Investment, and Meaningfulness.

The Level of Commitment reported a mean score of 4.10 (SD = 0.77), indicating that students, on average, demonstrate a high level of academic dedication and persistence in their educational pursuits.

For Satisfaction, the mean score was 3.99 (SD = 0.80), reflecting that students generally feel highly satisfied with their academic experiences, including their interactions with faculty, course content, and learning environments.

In terms of Perceived Alternatives, the mean value of 2.70 (SD = 1.12) suggests that students do not strongly consider alternative options, such as transferring institutions or leaving academia, as viable or appealing. This relatively low score implies a low perceived attractiveness of alternatives, which typically reinforces commitment according to Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model.

The Investment indicator yielded a mean score of 3.82 (SD = 0.76), which indicates a moderate to high level of investment in academic activities. This suggests that students are dedicating substantial time, energy, and resources to their educational development, which contributes positively to their commitment.

Lastly, Meaningfulness recorded a mean score of 3.99 (SD = 0.83), highlighting that students perceive their academic journey as highly meaningful and personally significant. This result underscores the role of intrinsic value and personal relevance in sustaining student engagement and long-term educational persistence.

Findings

The analysis of the collected data provides meaningful insights into the factors influencing academic commitment among students in higher education, guided by the components of Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model of Commitment.

The Level of Commitment demonstrated a high overall mean of 4.10 ($SD = 0.77$), indicating that most students exhibit a strong sense of dedication to their academic pursuits. This finding reflects a consistent engagement with educational goals, suggesting that students are highly motivated and focused on achieving academic success.

In terms of Satisfaction, students reported a mean score of 3.99 ($SD = 0.80$), showing that they are generally pleased with their academic environment. Factors such as teaching quality, institutional support, peer interaction, and academic resources appear to contribute to this high level of satisfaction, which in turn positively affects their willingness to persist in their studies.

Regarding Perceived Alternatives, the mean score of 2.70 ($SD = 1.12$) suggests that students view fewer appealing alternatives to their current academic path. Most students appear to believe that other educational or career routes may not offer better opportunities than their current academic engagement, reinforcing their decision to remain committed to their degree programs.

The Investment dimension yielded a mean of 3.82 ($SD = 0.76$), reflecting a moderate but meaningful level of personal, emotional, and financial investment. Students recognize the considerable effort and time they have already dedicated to their studies, which acts as a motivating factor to stay committed and see their academic journey through to completion.

The component of Meaningfulness scored a high mean value of 3.99 ($SD = 0.83$), indicating that students perceive their academic experiences as personally significant and aligned with their long-term goals. This sense of intrinsic value not only enhances engagement but also deepens emotional commitment to their education.

Collectively, these findings highlight the intricate relationship between satisfaction, investment, perceived alternatives, and meaningfulness in fostering academic commitment. High levels of satisfaction and meaningfulness, combined with a low perception of attractive alternatives and moderate but substantial investments, appear to work synergistically in strengthening students' academic commitment in the context of higher education.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to the Faculty of Social Sciences at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad due to time and resource constraints. Data were collected exclusively from four departments: Psychology, International Relations, Pakistan Studies, and Education. Consequently, findings are specific to this subset of the student population and may not be fully generalizable to students from other faculties or institutions.

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of the components of the Investment Model of Commitment in shaping academic commitment at the university level. Specifically, high satisfaction and perceived meaningfulness emerge as powerful predictors of student commitment, illustrating how positive academic experiences and alignment with personal values enhance educational engagement. Furthermore, the low perception of attractive alternatives reinforces students' dedication by minimizing potential distractions or competing paths.

Although investment levels were rated as moderate, they nonetheless reflect a meaningful allocation of time, effort, and resources that motivate students to persist in their academic journey. These insights suggest that fostering satisfaction and meaningfulness, while reducing distractions and supporting students' investment, can lead to more committed, resilient, and successful students.

The study offers important implications for educational leaders and policymakers seeking to improve student retention, academic performance, and overall institutional effectiveness.

Recommendations

- Recognize and reward student commitment: Institutions should acknowledge students' academic efforts through incentives such as certificates of achievement, merit-based scholarships, or structured mentoring programs. Recognition reinforces satisfaction and fosters a sense of belonging and value.
- Support academic-life balance: Universities should provide time management resources and well-being services to help students balance academic responsibilities with personal commitments. Workshops, counseling, and digital planning tools can be particularly effective.
- Regularly assess student commitment: Institutions should implement periodic surveys or self-assessment tools to monitor academic commitment levels. This data can help identify areas where improvements in satisfaction, support, or curriculum relevance are needed.

- Enhance perceived meaningfulness: Academic departments should design programs and workshops that link course content to real-world applications, career outcomes, and social impact. Service-learning, internships, and alumni panels can help students see the long-term value of their studies.
- Minimize external distractions: Universities should create focused, supportive academic environments that minimize unnecessary stressors or competing obligations. This may include reducing administrative burdens, offering flexible deadlines where appropriate, and limiting non-essential distractions.

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