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Journal of Management and Marketing Review (JMMR)
Vol. 2 (3) Jul-Sep 2017

Content

Is Financial Reward Still an Important Motivator for the Indonesian Multi-Generational Workforce?

Abstract | 🔒 PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

Experimental Research: BASO Model-Based Strategic Planning Training Mediated by Training Follow up Sessions and Moderated by Transformational Leadership Impact on Mosque Organizational Effectiveness

Abstract | 🔒 PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

The Relationships between Personal Values, Institutional Values and Affective Commitment (A Case of Graduate Students at A FaithBased Institution in Indonesia)

Abstract | 🔒 PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

Examine the Effect of Organizational Justice on Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

Abstract | 🔒 PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

Gender Differences of Latvian Males and Females at the Stage of Adulthood

Abstract | 🔒 PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

Individual Motives or Organisational Support? Exclusive Breastfeeding Behaviour Among Women Workers in Indonesia

Workers in Indonesia
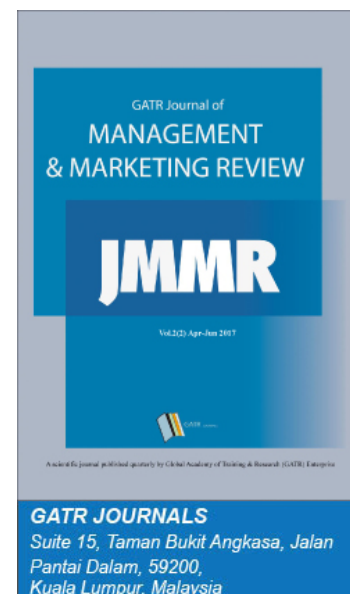
Author(s): Riani Rachmawati and Mega Indah Cinderakasih

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Abstract | 🔒 **PDF** | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

---

Contribution of Work and Family Demands on Job Satisfaction Through Work-Family Conflict

Author(s): Endang Dhamayantie

Affiliation: Tanjungpura University, Indonesia

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---

Women, Climate Change and Economic Problems in the Family

Author(s): Mientje Ratoe Oedjoe and Rolland Epafras Fanggidae

Affiliation: Nusa Cendana University, Indonesia

Abstract | 🔒 **PDF** | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

---

Green Practices in Northern Region Hotels of Malaysia

Author(s): Noor Afza Amran, Natrah Saad and Norhani Aripin

Affiliation: Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

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---

The Influence of the Dimensions of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction at Hotels in Batu City, Indonesia

Author(s): Ludfi Djajanto

Affiliation: State Polytechnic of Malang, Indonesia.

Abstract | 🔒 **PDF** | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

---

Establishing Local Wisdom Values to Develop Sustainable Competitiveness Excellence

Author(s): Tjokorda Gde Raka Sukawati

Affiliation: Udayana University, Indonesia

Abstract | 🔒 **PDF** | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

---

Green Purchase Behavior: The Role of Religiosity, Environmental Attitude, and Environmental Knowledge

Author(s): Julina, Dwi Kartini, Popy Rufaidah3 and Martha Fani Cahyandito

Affiliation: UIN Suska Riau, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia.

Abstract | 🔒 **PDF** | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

---

FMCG Product Endorser Advertising Variable Affect the Purchase Decisions and Brand Loyalty in the Community in the Korwil Jember

Author(s): Nanik Hariyana, Raden Andi Sularso and Diana Sulianti K Tobing

Affiliation: University of Jember, Indonesia

Abstract | 🔒 PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

---

Analysis of The Effect of Digital Word of Mouth (WOM) Marketing To Customer Purchase Decision

Author(s): Bunga Indah Bayunitri, Fitri Nuraeni and Nenden Desi

Affiliation: Widyatama University, Indonesia

Abstract | 🔒 PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

---

Digital Video as a Promotional Media and Brand Equity of a Product That has an Influence on Consumer Buying Interest (A Research of Social Media Active Users)

Author(s): Ayuningtyas Yuli Hapsari

Affiliation: Universitas Widyatama, Indonesia

Abstract | 🔒 PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

---

Exploring Consumer Decision-making Processes Regarding the Adoption of Mobile Payments: A Qualitative Study

Author(s): Raden Agoeng Bhimasta and Budi Suprapto

Affiliation: Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Abstract | 🔒 PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

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Resistance to Change (RTC): A Taxonomical Perspective

Author(s): Ahmad Syahmi Ahmad Fadzil, Syed Jamal Abdul Nasir Syed Mohamad and Roshidi Hassan

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---

Power Distance as A National Culture Observed in Organizational Scope

Author(s): Arief Noviarakhman Zagladi

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---

External and Internal Factors Influence to the Return on Equity and Risk Investment in Jakarta Islamic Index (JII)

Author(s): Diana Dwi Astuti

Affiliation: STIE Mandala, Indonesia

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---

Happiness in Higher Education Leader

Author(s): Ninik Setiyowati and Irtaji

Affiliation: State University of Malang, Indonesia.

Abstract | 🔒 PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

Abstract | PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

Inter-Governmental Relation in City Bus Public Transportation Service in Surakarta in Indonesia

Author(s): Kristina Setyowati and Tya Astriyani

Affiliation: Sebelas Maret University, Indonesia.

Abstract | PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

The Analysis of Community Empowerment Process through Poor Community Group (The Comparative Study of Pilot and Replication Areas)

Author(s): Izza Mafruhah and Nurul Istiqomah

Affiliation: Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia.

Abstract | PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

Border Communities Understanding on The Human Trafficking in Indonesia-Malaysia Border Region: Case Study in Sambas District, West Kalimantan

Author(s): Muhammad Iqbal and Yuherina Gusman

Affiliation: Universitas Mercu Buana Jakarta National Chengchi University, Taipei

Abstract | PDF | Share   SSRN   Academia   LinkedIn   Mendeley   Orcid   ResearchGate

Hey Stress, I Stress to De-Stress Me from Distress: A Study on Indian Police Constables

Author(s): Vijayadurai J. and Subburaj A

Affiliation: Madurai Kamaraj University, India.

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The Relationships between Personal Values, Institutional Values and Affective Commitment (A Case of Graduate Students at A Faith-Based Institution in Indonesia)

Martinus Parnawa Putranta *

Graduate School, Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

ABSTRACT

Objective – This research aimed at sketching personal values of graduate students at a faith-based institution in Indonesia. It also investigated the possible influence of these personal values and the students' perceptions towards the values of their institution on their emotional attachment (affective commitment) to the institution.

Methodology/Technique – A cross-sectional survey was employed as the primary method in the collection of the data. The fieldwork comprised the distribution of a self-administered questionnaire to potential respondents through direct contact. A convenience sampling was used to invite respondent participation. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed of which 143 were usable, representing an overall response rate of 53 %.

Findings – Results derived from the research suggested that the students, in general, embraced religious and intellectual values in their personal life. These dominant values seemed to be congruous with the demands of academic life in a faith-based educational institution as well as the demand of business worlds in the future. Likewise, a high level of affective commitment was exhibited by the students. Findings of the research also showed perceived institutional and personal values of students were more strongly predictors of students' affective commitment than either one alone.

Novelty – There has been little research on the relationships between personal values, institutional values and affective commitment in the Indonesian higher education institution contexts. Thus, this research fills this gap.

Type of Paper: Empirical

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1. Introduction

All organisations desire their employees commit to the organisations. Employees who commit to their organisations tend to be more deeply engaged in their work and more likely to stay with the organisations compared to those who are uncommitted.

Organisational commitment has been conceptualised in many ways. However, common to all these conceptualisations is a close relationship between the individual and the organisation (Bouarif, 2015) that reduces the likelihood that the individual will leave the organisation (Rego, & Cunha, 2008). Allen and Meyer

(1990) maintained the likelihood that individuals will remain in an organisation is determined by their emotional attachment to the organisation (affective commitment), perceived costs associated with leaving the organisation (continuance commitment) and feelings of obligation towards the organisation (normative commitment). Affective commitment is considered as the most advantageous form of commitment as it has the most potential benefits for organisations as affectively committed employees tend to devote their time and energy to the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer et al., 1990).

As in employee – employer relationship, developing affective commitment is important in the relationship between students and universities. Students who are affectively committed to their universities will be proud of being a part of the universities and will talk up the universities to their friends as a great place to study. This, in turn, help the universities become attractive institutions of choice which attract and retain talented students (Lawrence & Lawrence, 2009). Given the importance of affective commitment in student – university relationship context and the lack of such research in Indonesian setting, investigating determinants of university students' affective commitment is deemed necessary.

Becker (1960) recommended that researchers should take values into account in order to fully understand commitment. Rokeach (1973) describes values as stabilised beliefs about personally or socially acceptable behaviour. All individuals have their own personal values, which serve as a guidance to make decisions in their daily and organisational life. The values of individuals may be similar to or different with the values of other people at work or to those of the organisation of which they are a part.

In higher education institution contexts, students may hold specific personal values that they believe to be worthy and desirable. On the other hand, universities may also hold institutional values that they express through their mission statements. Students will be affectively committed when they perceive the compatibility of the two sets of values (Lawrence & Lawrence, 2009). The misalignment between these two sets of values will negatively influence student learning outcomes and their affective commitment and may lead to loss of talented students or failure to attract students in the future (Lawrence & Lawrence, 2009).

With these points in mind, this research aimed to sketch the personal values profiles of graduate students at a faith-based university in Indonesia. In addition, it assessed the students' perceptions toward the institutional values and the level of their affective commitment to the institution. Furthermore, it also examined possible relationships between the three variables under study.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

2.1 Organizational Commitment

While previous studies (Becker 1960; Kanter 1968; Porter et al., 1974; Wiener 1982) have viewed organisational commitment as a singular construct, recent studies reveal the multi-dimensional nature of the construct (Allen & Meyer 1990). This view appears to be widely accepted within the literature because it offers a deeper or more specific understanding of organisational commitment. Of the various multi-dimensional conceptualisations, the three-component model of Allen and Meyer (1990) has been considered as superior because of the psychometric stability of its scale (McMurray et al., 2004). The model holds that the employees' attachment to their organisations can be characterised by three different mindsets, namely, (1) affective: based upon employee's emotional attachment, identification with, and, involvement in an organisation, (2) continuance: based upon perceived cost of leaving the organisation, and, (3) normative: that characterises an employee's sense of moral obligation to remain within the organisation. Typically, the degree of work experience, (Mathieu & Zajac 1990), organisational characteristics (Fritz et al., 1999; Valentine et al., 2002) and employee's personal characteristics (Elizur & Koslowsky, 2001) determine the nature of affective commitment. This research attempted to investigate whether there is a relationship between personal values, perceptions towards institutional values and affective commitment of graduate students at a faith-based higher education institution in Indonesia. The first research question of this study is:

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of personal values, institutional values and affective commitment among the sample of the respondents?

2.2 Personal Values

There is no generally accepted definition of the term 'value' (Lan et al., 2009). Rokeach (1973) defined values as stabilised beliefs regarding personally or socially acceptable behaviour end-states of existence. To asses values a number of methodological approaches have been used, such as rating and ranking according the importance (Suar & Khuntia, 2010). Although there has been no agreement on the definition of values, it is generally the case that the individual's behaviour is shaped by his/her personal values (Lan et al., 2009). At individual level, values are enduring beliefs representing relatively stable characteristics of an individual that influence the individual's beliefs, attitudes and behaviours (Ferrari & Cowman 2004; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). A number of scholars have proposed different underlying domains in which personal values are organised (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). Scott (1965) developed the Personal Values Scale to measure personal values using 12 subscales with four to six items per scale. The subscales measure the following: intellectualism, kindness, social skills, loyalty, academic achievement, physical development, status, honesty, religiousness, self-control, creativity, and independence. In this research, four subscales of interest from the 12 scales, namely, intellectualism, honesty, religiousness and self-control were used.

Meyer and Allen (1991) maintained that personal characteristics have a direct impact on affective commitment and individuals have natural tendency to become affectively committed (Pohl, 2002). Cohen and Shamai (2010) state that some individuals may have a personal value system that is more commitment-oriented than others. This is to say that personal value system of these individuals better fit the nature of commitment in general and organisational commitment in particular. Specifically, the values of intellectualism, honesty, religiousness and self-control are assumed to be relevant to the conception of affective commitment. Hence, the first hypothesis of this research was formulated as follows:

H1: Personal values held by students will positively influence their affective commitment to institution.

2.3 Organizational Values

Values are believed to play important roles at both individual and organisational levels. At individual levels, they are influential to persons' attitudes and behaviours. Values inherent in the organisation's mission statement are viewed as organisational values. These values are incorporated in rules, policies and serve as guidelines for day-to-day activities (Ferrari & Velcoff, 2006) and are indicative of how employees are expected to act or live in the organisation (Suar & Khuntia, 2010). The organisational values, when shared by all members of organisation will result in positive attitudes and organisational outcomes (Posner, 2010).

With regard to organisational values, a distinction need to be made between "espoused" and "enacted" values. (Kreitner & Kinicky, 2014). The former relates to values that explicitly written in the organisation's mission statement. The later refers to values that are actually used to guide work activities of the organisation members that reflect the real practices of the organisational. In some cases, these two values may coincide. In other cases, it is also likely they contradict (Kabanoff & Daly, 2002).

Within higher education contexts, the enacted values are conveyed through the practices of their administrative operations, academic programmes and policies and student services (Ferrari & Cowman, 2004). These "values in actions" are more likely to predict actual behaviours of people within the institutions. Therefore, while an investigation of students' understanding of the mission statement of their universities is important, an assessment of their perceptions to the actual mission-driven activities of the universities is foremost.

To tap perceived institutional values in this research students were asked to assess both the espoused as well as the enacted values of the institution, namely institutionalist written values (espoused values), emphasis on diversity, pro-social general altruistic atmosphere, life-long commitment to values (enacted values).

Situational factors, including perceived institutional values, are also believed to have potential to develop affective commitment (Van Dyne & Graham, 1994). Humanistic organisational values tend to generate employees' positive emotion toward the organisation which in turn is translated into enhanced affective commitment (Rego & Cunha, 2008). When the written mission statement of the institution is clear and students feel the institution promote diversity, altruistic atmosphere and life-long commitment to value it is expected they will reciprocate with positive attitude toward the institution hence their affective commitment develops. In light of this, the following hypothesis was developed:

H2: Perceived institutional values of students will positively influence their affective commitment to institution.

In some cases, the values of an organization and its members may overlap. In other cases, they may conflict with each other. It can, however, be assumed that employees would be more comfortable to work in an organisation the values of which are aligned with theirs. The alignment between these two sets of values will lead to positive work-related attitudes and behaviours of employees, including their emotional attachment to the organisation or affective commitment (Behery, 2009; Finegan, 2000; Huang et al., 2006). Put similarly, a choice made by students to become part of a university may also be influenced by the similarity of students' perceptions towards their personal and the university's values (Lawrence & Lawrence, 2009). Following this logic, either personal or institutional values alone will not be better predictor of students' affective commitment. This issue led to the development of the following third hypothesis:

H3 : Perceived institutional and personal values of students are more strongly predictors of students' affective commitment to institution than either one alone.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Sample

Respondents of this research comprised graduate students from a faith-based university in Central Java, Indonesia. A purposive sampling was used to identify and invite respondent participation. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed of which 143 were usable, representing the overall response rate of 53%. The sample consisted of 90 (62.9%) male and 53 (37.1%) female students. With regard to whether they worked while enrolled, the majority of the respondents (105 or 73.4%) stated that they were traditional students with no job whereas 38 (26.6%) claimed they had work.

3.2 Measures

A measure called DePaul Inventories Scale originated by Ferrari and Cowman (2004) was used to measure students' perceptions of institutional values. The original measure is comprised of 22 items with 4 sub-scales including institutional values (nine items) which assess perceptions that the institutional academic values and mission are apparent to students, emphasis on diversity (three items); the perceptions that the institution provides access and opportunities for "minority"; pro-social general altruistic atmosphere (seven items) which assesses perceptions the institution's operation tries to create a friendly helping environment; and life-long commitment to values (three items) which assesses the institution's goals to instil the pursuit for knowledge across the lifespan of students. Two items of this scale were eliminated for their excessive number of missing values (more than 50%).

Scott's (1965) personal values scale, adapted by Akaah and Lund (1994) was utilised to tap personal values. The scale consists of a 16-item questionnaire with a 5-point scale response ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5). The scale has four subscales, namely, religiousness, self–control, honesty and intellectualism. Each scale consists of four items.

The short-version of Mowday et al. (1979) Organisational Commitment Questionnaire modified by Lawrence and Lawrence (2009) was used to assess the students' affective commitment.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

The fieldwork comprised the distribution of a self-administered questionnaire to potential respondents through direct contact. A covering letter ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation in the research was included in the questionnaire.

4. Results

4.1 Reliability

Table 1 presents the descriptive and inter-correlation between personal and institutional values subscales with affective commitment. As shown in the table, values of Cronbach's alpha for all constructs are greater than the recommended value of 0.70, indicating that the reliability of all constructs used in this research were assured.

The pattern of bivariate correlation for all sub-scales of institutional values, personal values are positively and significantly related to affective commitment. Hence, hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 were supported.

To determine whether affective could be explained by personal values and institutional values multiple regression analysis was employed to examine. In this analysis, mean score of affective commitment was entered as the dependent variable whereas the means scores of total personal values and total institutional values were used as predictors. As shown in Table 2, these two variables, significantly predict the affective commitment of students to their institution.

Table 1. The inter-correlation coefficients of the variables used in the research

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Institutional values									
2. Life-long Commitment to Value	0.596**								
3. Pro-social General Altruistic Atmosphere	0.506**	0.353**							
4. Emphasis on Diversity	0.241**	0.274**	0.181**						
5. Affective Commitment	0.468**	0.592**	0.408**	0.238**					
6. Religiousness	0.380*	0.257**	0.307**	0.306*	0.337**				
7. Self-control	0.326**	0.251**	0.284**	0.288**	0.314**	0.167**			
8. Intellectualism	0.268**	0.321**	0.278**	0.304**	0.373**	0.159**	0.320**		
9. Honesty	0.323*	0.263**	0.195**	0.329**	0.316**	0.221**	0.394**	0.315**	
Mean	3.99	4.08	4.00	3.80	4.12	4.15	3.62	3.96	3.76
Standard deviation	0.48	0.58	0.50	0.60	0.47	0.61	0.72	0.52	0.65
Cronbach's alpha	0.855	0.817	0.709	0.609	0.846	0.797	0.787	0.695	0.696

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2. Regression analysis for predicting affective commitment from institutional values and personal values

	b	SE	β	t	Sig
1. Constant	1.070	0.342		3.130	0.002
2. Institutional values (total)	0.580	0.094	0.481	6.155	0.000
3. Personal values (total)	0.196	0.078	0.196	2.501	0.014

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

To examine whether perceived institutional and personal values of students are more strongly predictive of their affective commitment to institution than either one alone a stepwise regression was used. Table 3 shows the results of stepwise regression analysis of personal and institutional values on affective commitment. As demonstrated in the table, the R of the first model 0.337 which means that institutional values account for.7% of the variation in affective commitment. However, in the second model (the last model) this value increases to 0.366 or 36.6% of the variation in affective commitment indicating that perceived institutional values together with personal values of students are better predictors of students' affective commitment. Therefore, hypothesis 3 of this research that perceived institutional and personal values of students are more strongly predictive of students' affective commitment than either one alone was supported.

Table 3. Stepwise regression analysis of personal and institutional values on affective commitment

	b	SE b	β
Step 1			
Constant	1,355	0,328	
Institutional values	0.700	0.083	0.581 *
Step 2			
Constant	1,070	342	
Institutional values	0.580	0.94	0.481*
Personal values	0.196	0.78	0.196**

Note: $R^2 = 0.337$ for step 1 and $R^2 = 0.366$ for step 2 or $\Delta R^2 = 0.29$ (p<0.05) *p<0.01 **p<0.05

These findings indicated that not only institutional values but personal values also might be predictors of the desire of students to stay in an educational institution. Furthermore, the concept of person – organisational values fit (P-O) that is widely accepted in business organisation may be applied in the context of educational institutions. Although further research on these issues need to be done, it was beyond the scope of this research

Research question 1 sought to determine the respondents' perceptions of personal values, institutional values and affective commitment among the sample of respondents. The mean score was used as the primary indicator. As shown in table 1., the means scores for religiousness, intellectualism, honesty and self-control were: 4.15; 3.96; 3.76 and 3.62, respectively, indicating students placed more importance on religiousness and intellectualism values than on honesty and self-control values.

The total mean scores for subscales: institutional values, life-long commitment to values, pro-social altruistic atmosphere and emphasis on diversity were 3.99, 4.08, 4.00 and 3.80 out of the 5-point Likert scale, respectively which mean they were slight above the midpoints of the scales. This means that overall students in this study relatively understood the written mission statement of the institution. From an organisational perspective, these results also suggested that the mission of the institution was well-implemented actualised by the administrators.

The mean score for affective commitment scale is 4.12 indicating students demonstrated their high level of emotional attachment to the institution.

5. Discussion

Findings of the research suggested the concept of person – organisational values fit (P-O) fit may exist in the institution under investigation. This is also in line with another finding in this study that students reported their strong affective commitment to the institution but they felt that their personal values were not fully matched with those of the institution (not shown in this article). This was perhaps because they were not aware that the two values in fact were similar. The lack of the institutional values socialisation seemed to contribute to this feeling. Therefore, the institution needs to be more active in socialising the institutional values and more importantly shaping their values so that student – institution values fit develop. As shown in the findings, in general, students understood the institutional values that written in the mission statement of the institution Therefore, all current attempts to continuously introduce and socialise these values to the students through ceremonial and academic events, such as student orientation, public lectures, seminars, programmed extra-curricular activities and graduation should be kept. The inclusion of the mission in various medias such as in the student handbook and in the programme brochures should also be kept. The use of any kinds of electronic medias may also help. This indeed requires much efforts including assurance that the internal organisation system and process are supportive.

Religiousness was ranked on the top list of the values followed by intellectualism, honesty and self-control respectively. The stronger emphasis on religiousness and intellectualism values may be explained in part by the general nature of Indonesian culture where society put religions above any other aspects of culture in their life. Compared against their undergraduate counterparts, graduate students are expected to be more critical and curious to scholarly issues. This demand is perhaps an explanation of why the intellectualism value was put on the second top list of their personal values. However, further examination on individual items of the questionnaire (not shown in this paper) indicated the students reported relatively lower scores on their interests and curiosity of scholarly activities. This requires the institution to be active in developing more programmes in this area, such as holding regular internal and external scientific discussion forum, encouraging the students to attend and present papers in scientific seminars externally as well as writing and publishing articles in reputable journals. The students' primary values of religiousness and intellectualism values are aligned with the learning outcomes desired by the Indonesian National Qualification Framework (IQF). These will be instrumental for the institution in developing learning objectives in its educational programmes such as ethical behaviour, integrity and pluralism that are also demanded by business sectors. A relatively lower score of self-control values was shown in the aspect of the ability of students in controlling their temper (not shown in this paper). A similar score was also seen in the honesty values, particularly in the ability to speak their minds truthfully. This was perhaps due to the nature and the demand of local culture. Irrespective of these culturally determined outcomes, graduate students always should be objective in assessing any kinds of phenomena. This is to say that shaping these values to fit that requirement is deemed necessary. Developing an appropriate soft-skill programme is one alternative.

These indeed require much efforts including assurance that the internal organisation system and process are supportive.

6. Conclusions

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there has been little research on the relationships between personal values, institutional values and affective commitment in the Indonesian higher education institution contexts. The most recent research addressing such an issue was perhaps that of Lawrence and Lawrence (2009). Thus, this research fills this gap.

The foremost limitation of this concerned the use of a single institution and socially desirable responses considering the sensitive nature of the topic. However, great efforts have been made to mitigate this possibility by means of assuring the confidentiality and withdrawal from the participation was not prejudiced. To balance the limitation of using a single institution, similar research to the alumni may help provide a more precise

description of the effectiveness of the mission-driven values of the institution. Replications with other groups such as other denominational, non-denominational higher education institutions or other non-faith-based educational institutions also would be desirable. This would help the future studies gain better understandings of possible relationships among the three variables.

The findings of this research indicated the students' personal values; their perceptions of institutional values are possible predictors of their affective commitment. A positive correlation between the personal values of students and the institutional values was also found. A further investigation of the congruence between these two type values as a possible predictor of affective commitment in a higher education context is deemed necessary in Indonesia.

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