An investigation of Academic and Social integration in Private Higher Education Institution in Malaysia as a Moderating Variable in Relations to Satisfaction Toward Students' Retention.

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Abstract

Satisfaction is an antecedent to retention and students' retention is moderated by academic and social integration in private higher education institution in Malaysia. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between service delivery dimension that moderates satisfaction towards retention. The variable used in this study is academic and social integration as moderator between the variables of satisfaction and retention among undergraduate students' from Malaysian private higher education institutions. To accomplish the objectives proposed with hypotheses, a model reflecting the relationship between service delivery dimension of academic and social integration and satisfaction with retention is applied. The model is tested with pearson product-moment correlation, linear regression and PROCESS Procedure for moderating effect. This empirical study focused with probability stratified random sampling with final sample size of 309 students. In theoretical concentration, this study achieved statistically significant positive results by emphasizing academic and social integration as an important moderating variable to achieve students' retention by linking Perceived Performance Theory and Tinto's Interactionist Theory from satisfaction to retention.

Keywords: Service Delivery Quality Dimensions, Students' Satisfaction, Students' Retention, Perceived Performance, Academic and Social Integration.

Introduction

Higher education institution that hopes to gain competitive edge in its current and future business needs to search for effective and creative ways to attract, retain and develop stronger relationships with customers, particularly with students. As interpreted in Kimani et al. (2011), focusing on the customer (i.e. students) is an essential principle for service delivery with quality.

According to Lovelock and Wirtz (2007), service is an economic activity between two parties, implying an exchange of value between seller and buyer in the marketplace. They describe service as performances that are most commonly time-based, and they believe that purchasers buy services because they are looking for desired results. Service quality can essentially be indicated as a strategic force and it is a key issue in the current business environment (Raghavan & Ganesh, 2015; Eraghi & Atharinejad, 2012). It is no surprise that business practitioners as well as education institutions are making efforts to accurately measure and understand issues affecting service output for customer satisfaction. Education institutions and universities at large are driven towards commercial competition imposed by environmental challenges and private colleges, universities or university colleges. In this context, higher education institution has emphasised the increasing need to focus not only on what the society values in terms of the skills and abilities of their graduates, but essentially on how students feel about their learning experience as a whole, which has an effect on students' satisfaction and retention (Ibraheem, 2016; Talmacean & Domnica, 2013; Lai et al., 2011).

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this research is to examine the relationship of service delivery quality with student satisfaction towards retention. The specific objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To examine the relationship between academic and social integration with students' satisfaction towards retention.
2. To examine the relationship between students' satisfaction and retention.

Research Questions

The following research questions provide an overview of the area of concentration:

1. Is there a relationship between academic and social integration with students' satisfaction towards retention?
2. Is there a relationship between students' satisfaction and retention?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses provide the essential research cconcentration and the issues in focus:

Ha1: Academic and social integration positively moderates students' satisfaction towards retention.
Ha2: Students' satisfaction is positively related to students' retention.

Research Framework

The framework specifically presents an integration of the concepts relevant to the research objectives. It attempts to focus on integrating each of the concepts set out for the study which is satisfaction, moderated by academic and social integration, and finally retention. Accordingly, students' satisfaction and retention are considered as an assessment of service delivery quality in private higher education institutions in Malaysia based on the performance only paradigm with perceived performance theory which indicates that consumer satisfaction judgments are primarily determined by the perceived product performance and are independent from prior expectations, i.e. holding a position that only the perception of quality is important (Lawson et al., 2012). And that the critical determinant of satisfaction is a particular consumer's perceptions of the service delivery quality performance during consumption with academic and social

integration in the context of students' coping as a key moderator for students' satisfaction towards retention.

It is important to note that even though the research framework covers various independent, dependent and moderating variable, as for this research the satisfaction, moderated by academic and social integration, and finally retention is selected for discussion purposes. The research framework is presented in Figure 1.
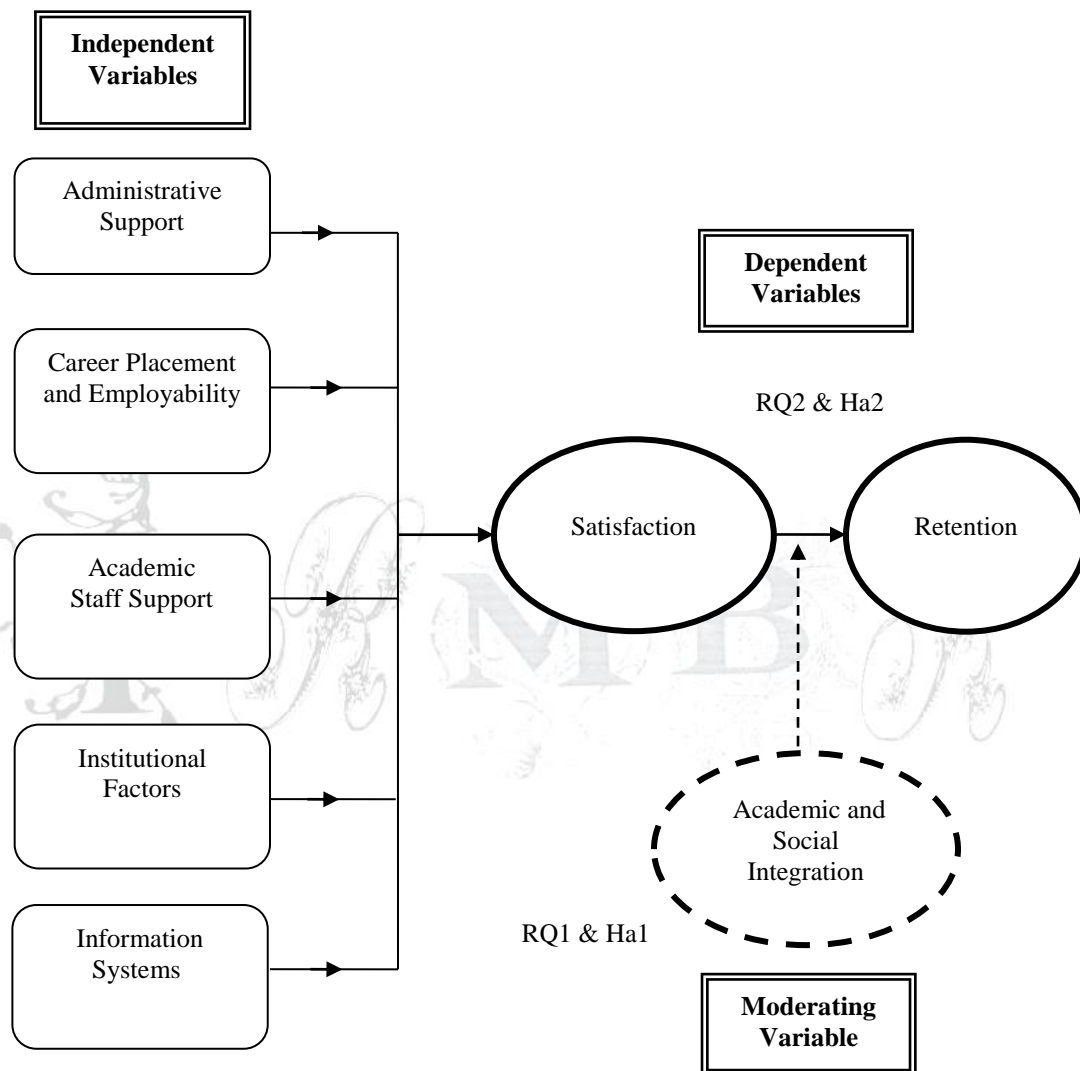

Figure 1: Research Framework Model - The Relationship Between Service Delivery Quality Dimensions and Students' Satisfaction and Retention Moderated by Academic and Social Integration

Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a very important element in the formation of customers' desires for future purchases (Lai et al., 2011; Syed et al., 2011; Mittal & Kamakura, 2001). In addition, satisfied customers will probably talk to others about their good experience, which is regarded as positive word of mouth and is

a common practice in all cultures, as social life has been shaped in such a way that social communication with other people improves the society (Jamal & Naser, 2002).

In respect of education institutions, students' retention is important, as satisfied students are likely to be committed to their studies and to make greater effort to complete their programmes compared to unsatisfied students (Tessema, Ready & Yu, 2012).

Similar to a normal business environment, in the academic field, customer or student satisfaction is a key focus of concentration (Ibraheem, 2016; Sheikh & Moodi, 2013, Lee, 2013; Tuan, 2012; Danjuma & Rasli, 2012; Akhtar, 2011; Cengiz, 2010; Ling et al., 2010; Giese & Cote, 2002) There are large bodies of literature on customer satisfaction in many academic disciplines. Consumer satisfaction is a major research area and the central concept in modern business marketing thought and practice for companies' long-run survival (Krishna, 2013; Ardabili & Daryani, 2012; Choy et al., 2012).

In the evaluation of satisfaction, it is essential to primarily define customer satisfaction in reference to the prevailing nature of customer satisfaction, and in reference to the education sector, students are referred to as customers. In this correlation, the discussion of theories that are considered as antecedents and their effects on customer satisfaction are emphasised. As mentioned earlier, in the context of higher education institutions, students are the primary customers (Abdullah, 2005a) and their satisfaction is crucial for the institution's survival. It is also apparent that if they are dissatisfied, they may tend to withdraw from the respective higher education institution or even transfer to another institution (Danjuma & Rasli, 2012). This will lead to low student retention. Alternatively, if dissatisfied students stay in an institution because no alternative is available, they might not speak positively about the institution: this will affect the positive word of mouth referrals to future students, which in turn will affect the long-run survival of the institution (Anim & Mensah, 2015; Danjuma & Rasli, 2012).

Generally, satisfaction is defined as an attitude, similarly to the order of judgment which interprets a purchase act or a series of consumer product interactions or a person's feeling of pleasure (Fararah & Al-Swidi, 2013; Guo, Ling & Liu, 2012; Ardabili & Daryani, 2012; Orsingher, Marzocchi & Valentini, 2011; Bose & Sarker, 2012; Tudoran, Olsen & Dopico, 2012, Syed et al., 2011; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007). There is wide variance in the definition of satisfaction but a detailed analysis reveals that it encompasses three common components: one, satisfaction is a judgment response based on an emotional or cognitive feeling; two, the response is related to a particular focus, i.e. product performance, consumer value experiences in consumption and expectations or desires, or even some other norm of performance; finally, the occurrence of a response to concentration at a given time (Kayabasi et al., 2013; Vazquez et al., 2013; Hunt et al., 2012; Ardabili & Daryani, 2012 ; Syed et al., 2011; Giese & Cote, 2002).

Service Delivery Quality and Satisfaction in Education Institutions

Most of the empirical studies in education institutions have produced evidence that service delivery with quality leads to students' satisfaction (Anwowie & Abrefa, 2015; Long et al., 2014; Talmacean et al., 2013; Lee & Ryu, 2013; Odeh, 2012; Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012; Bergamo et al., 2012; Nesset & Helgesen, 2009) but a review of the literature highlights that there is a lack of consensus on the definition of satisfaction as a concept with service quality and generally there are no clearly accepted instruments to measure customer satisfaction in higher education institutions (Danjuma & Rasli, 2012; Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012).

Basically, most of the models of satisfaction compare students' expectations to the observed service quality encounter – referred to as the service quality gap – but evidence has shown that the application of the performance only paradigm without considering expectation has a positive effect on students' perceptions of service quality and that satisfaction directly affects students' intention to evaluate the education institution favourably (Tuan, 2012; Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012; Abdullah, 2005a, 2006). Regardless of which focus is applied, higher education institutions should seek to provide high service delivery quality in every

part of their process in order to be favoured by students as their primary fulfilment response, as satisfaction is indicated as the consumer's fulfilment response and service quality is considered as the key performance measurement for excellence in the education industry (Talmacean & Domnica, 2013; Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012; Ferguson & Phau, 2012; Iuliana & Mihai, 2011; Wei, 2011; Oliver, 1996; Tuan, 2012).

Some studies has shown satisfaction as mediator or moderator to reveal the possible linkage between independent and dependent variables for students perceived trust, loyalty and image of the institution (Mohamed, 2009; Ryu, Han & Kim, 2008). In looking into the position of satisfaction, it is emphasised that, perceived service quality is an antecedent to satisfaction, and it is also a major prerequisite for establishing and sustaining students' satisfaction and retention (Vatta & Bhatara, 2013; Talmacean & Domnica, 2013; Zabadi, 2013; Danjuma & Rasli, 2012; Lawson et al., 2012; Hanaysha et al., 2011; Ling et al., 2010; Nadiri et al., 2009; Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

In concentration of this study the satisfaction construct is focused as having relationship to retention as put forward in the research framework to reveal the research findings indicating the relationship of service delivery quality, satisfaction, academic and social integration with retention in Malaysian private higher education institutions. This will show the effect that when students are satisfied or dissatisfied with the institution, they will display positive or negative attitudes and behaviour in related to the particular institution's service delivery quality offered.

Students' Retention in Education Institutions

Entering an education institution to earn a qualification is a major process of transition and sadly some students are not able to complete their studies and complete their qualifications because of their inability to adjust and cope with the academic system and the institution's social environment (Raghavan & Ganesh, 2015; Hsu & Bailey, 2011). Studies have indicated that students' involvement, good social fit between the student and the education institution and the quality of students' interaction with the academic staff make key contributions to student retention as well to the institution's success (Hsu & Bailey, 2011; Habley, 2004).

Customer retention is the key factor in business and it is defined as a particular firm's capability to provide a customer not only with the purchased product, but also with a relationship pattern in a specific period of time (Bergamo, et al., 2012). As competition increases in the current turbulent education business environment and with the emergence of knowledge as a driver of economic development, higher education institutions and the industry worldwide encounter slower growth rates and price pressures, which have brought serious attention to customer satisfaction and retention (Danjuma & Rasli, 2012; Vedadi, Kolobandi & Pool, 2013; Rahman et al., 2012; Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012).

Retention of customers will have a strong effect on the particular education institution's profitability (Sheikh & Moodi, 2013, Lee, 2013; Tuan, 2012; Danjuma & Rasli, 2012; Lawson et al., 2012; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Johnson & Fornell, 1991).

With the above it is thus important to explain in detail the differences and similarities of a range of terms used by various researchers in reference to retention, which is a key factor in the bottom-line and survival of institutions. Hagedorn (2005) highlighted that the words "persistence" and "retention" are often used interchangeably. The National Center for Education Statistics USA differentiates these terms by using "retention" as an institutional measure and "persistence" as a student measure (Hagedorn, 2005; Tinto 1975). This means that institutions retain and students persist (Hagedorn, 2005; Tinto 1975). One more term commonly used alongside retention is "attrition". Attrition is basically the diminution in students' numbers which results from lower student retention (Hagedorn, 2005). Closely used alongside persistence and attrition are terms like student dropout, student departure, and student withdrawal (Mannan, 2007; Tinto 1975; Hatos & Zoltan, 2011; Davidson, Beck & Milligan, 2009).

In addition, other terms which are used in reference to retention include customer attachment, repurchase intent/repeat purchase and consumer loyalty (Abubakar & Mokhtar, 2015; Bergamo, et al., 2012; Danjuma and Rasli, 2012; Curtis, Abratt, Dion & Rhoades, 2011).

Hagedorn (2005) has described four types of retention. The first is the institutional type, which is most commonly used by colleges and universities by calculating the percentage of students who return to the same education institution year after year.

The second is the system type, which basically involves tracking the students: i.e. a student who leaves one college but enrols at another and completes his/her studies there is considered retained in the "system" and is a difficult and costly effort.

The third type is academic discipline, which focuses on retention within an academic specialization, within a specific specialization discipline and finally by course, where by retention is measured at particular programme level.

Tinto's Interactionist Theory

Tinto's interactionist theory, which was developed in 1975, highlighted that persistence occurs when a student successfully integrates into the institution academically and socially (Bergamo, et al., 2012; Tinto, 1975). Generally, integration is influenced by pre-college characteristics and goals as well as interactions with peers and faculty in combination with out-of-classroom factors (Lawson et al., 2012; Bergamo et al., 2012; Tinto, 1975; Jensen, 2011).

Tinto's interactionist theory works through the application of Émile Durkheim's suicide theory, which states that suicide is a result of a person's breaking from society due lack of value integration, inability to cope and an inadequate sense of affiliation to become part of the collective society (Tinto, 1975; Hatos & Zoltan, 2011, Beard, 2011).

If withdrawal in the case of suicide is explained by lack of value integration, then the causal mechanism might be the same for students who drop out of education institutions (Hatos & Zoltan, 2011). In detail, Tinto's interactionist theory views withdrawal from post-secondary education as similar to suicidal behaviour and suggests that student attrition/dropping out is due to inadequate social and academic integration into the institutional culture.

Tinto interprets that students enter an education institution with background characteristics, particularly family background, individual character, aptitude, and motivation. These become the basis for the student's first stage of contact with the institution (Raghavan & Ganesh, 2015; Bergamo et al., 2012; Caison, 2007).

Further, the student interacts with the institutional environment and the experiences influence the student's commitments and intentions to stay, and the longer students persist, from one semester to the next, the more likely they are to continue in the future (Bergamo et al., 2012; Schee, 2011, Tinto, 1993, Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004). When students become more integrated into the institution's culture, their goal commitment increases: this will encourage them to continue with their registration and academic progress will lead to retention (Bergamo et al., 2012; Braxton et al., 2004).

In contrast, if the student experiences unsuccessful integration into the academic and social communities of his/her institution, the consequences will be that that the student's goal and institutional commitments are diminished, which will lead to departure from the institution (Bergamo et al., 2012; Caison, 2007; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993, Tinto, 1993). Figure 2 illustrates the details of Tinto's interactionist model.
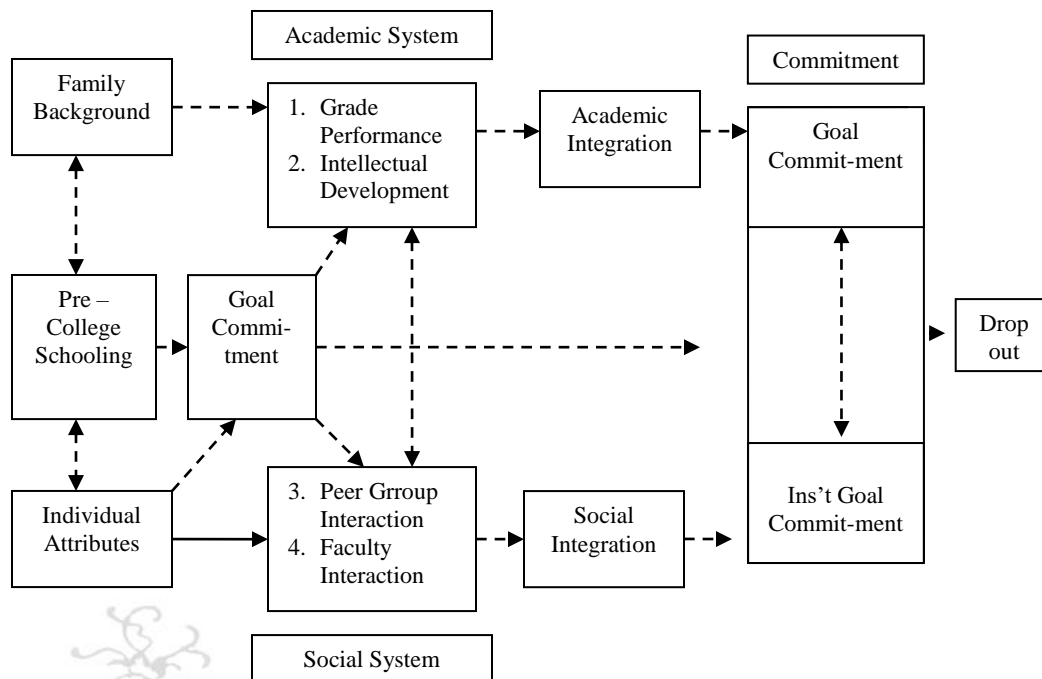
Figure 2: Tinto's Interactionist Model (Caison, 2007)

In strengthening Tinto's findings, Pascarella & Terenzini (1979) also demonstrated that the absence of sufficient contact with other members of the institution proves to be the single most important predictor of eventual student departure. These findings further confirm that coping socially in the context of students' integration will influence students' satisfaction and retention in the education institution.

Research also supports the need for social interaction, with students' perceptions of support from peers, participation in extracurricular activities and social approach behaviours all being significant (Gerber et al., 2013; Neuville et al., 2007; Kuh, et al., 2007, Tinto 1975; Berger & Milem, 1999; Eaton & Bean, 1995; Bergamo et al., 2012; Christie & Dinham, 1991; Danjuma & Rasli 2012). Tinto also pointed out that for students to feel a sense of social integration, they need not fit in with the campus community at large as long as they feel that they fit within a particular subculture, which is sufficient to create a sense of belongingness (Tinto, 1993; Beard, 2011).

Given the above findings, it is essential that higher education institutions be aware of the detailed reasons why students depart prematurely. They should focus on proper strategy implementation to address students' premature departure, as this will help students to overcome their barriers and ultimately to achieve their academic and career objectives with the institution (Bergamo et al., 2012; Lawson et al., 2012; Mannan, 2007).

Service delivery with quality is connected to retention. According to Ling et al. (2010), students' performance and retention are particularly influenced by the service quality provided by the respective higher education institution. It is thus important to classify and identify the determinants of the total service quality. In addition, Sultan and Wong (2010), in looking at the future development of their performance-based service quality model, indicated that future research should concentrate on other aspects that are relevant to student retention. This clearly shows that students' retention is an important element in the long run sustainable competitive advantage of education institutions.

Academic and Social Integration

Students' successful academic and social integration with the respective institution depends greatly on the extent to which they can cope with the demands and challenges faced during their course of study. In these contexts, coping is interpreted as constant changing of cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage goal-oriented processes and their specific external or internal demands through task, emotion and avoidance strategies (Ruus, Veisson, Leino, Ots, Pallas, Sarv & Veisson, 2007; Kausar, 2010; Heiman, 2008). In normal higher education institutions, the process of adapting and achieving university qualifications is generally stressful because students' demands, expectations and goals each have their own weight. As revealed by Kausar (2010), students experience emotional and cognitive reactions to stress, especially due to external pressures and self-imposed expectations.

Further to that, academic and social integration was identified as a moderating factor quite some time ago, while personal and situational factors are key moderating variables in effectiveness of coping which relates to social environment (Spiter, Bar-Tal & Golander, 1995). Spiter et al. (1995) also demonstrated that academic factors are closely related to education progress through students' adaptation, as well as the ability to search for information and the capacity for problem solving. Perception and discomfort in the university environment, academic enjoyment and motivation and psychological well-being were examined by Gavala and Flett (2005), who found that the moderating effect of perceived control in academic coping and the elements of high stress, greater perceived discomfort and lower sense of academic control led to a reduced sense of well-being and academic enjoyment and motivation, but that this was not the case under conditions where there was a high sense of academic control (Gavala & Flett, 2005).

This shows that a comfortable academic environment will increase perceived psychological well-being and academic enjoyment, which will contribute to motivation and will certainly have a positive effect on the institution's student satisfaction and retention. In addition, research supports that coping socially in the context of students' academic and social integration will influence students' satisfaction and retention in the education institution, interacting with students' perceptions of support from peers, participation in extracurricular activities and social approach behaviours (Gerber et al., 2013; Neuville et al., 2007; Kuh, et al., 2007, Tinto 1975; Berger & Milem, 1999; Eaton & Bean, 1995; Bergamo et al., 2012; Danjuma & Rasli 2012).

A particular student will encounter different types of interaction factors during a semester or period of education, namely academic demands, social adjustment and student engagement (Lawson et al., 2012; Kausar, 2010; Gerber et al., 2013). This is clearly explained in Tinto's theory, which emphasises the need for students to cope and adapt to the academic and social demands, with a particular focus on the relationship of students' ability to integrate within the university environment, improves their likelihood of remaining at the university and obtaining a degree (Gerber et al., 2013; Kuh et al., 2007; Pike, Gary, Simpson & Ellen, 1997).

Coping academically and socially in terms of how well the student integrates will influence student satisfaction and retention in the education institution (Neuville et al., 2007; Kuh et al., 2007, Tinto 1975; Bergamo et al., 2012; Gerber et al., 2013; Gavala & Flett, 2005, Pike et al., 1997). In academic terms, it refers to satisfactory compliance with passing grades and intellectual development (Hatos & Zoltan 2011). Social aspects particularly refer to students' adjusting to university life, living apart from friends and family in a new environment within a short period of time and integrating with their peer groups and faculty. Studies have shown that students who are satisfied with their courses tend to score highly in social aspects as well (Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012; Hatos & Zoltan 2011). This is an important element to consider when managing students' retention.

In order for students to integrate well and for institutions to experience high levels of student retention, it is crucial for institutions to prioritised students' needs and provide commitment towards their students'

academic and social aspects. This is in line with Tinto's examination of retention from students' perspectives, which revealed that students' departure stems from two factors. The first is student goals, which are linked to background characteristics and intention for academic progress prior to and at the beginning of their study. The second is students' integration into the university community (Neuville et al., 2007; Kuh et al., 2007). This takes place when the students have begun their study in the education institution and it relies upon the students' ability to generate relationships with other institutional members, such as their classmates and faculty members, and also upon their ability to cope with the institution's culture and its academic challenges (Bergamo et al., 2012; Tinto, 1975). In order to manage the above, the institution's action to aid students' socialisation is important.

Similarly, Vatta and Bhatara (2013) argue that to overcome the difficulty of assimilating a great deal of content in a short period of time in the student's academic life, positive adaptation to the extensive formal and informal interaction with academic staff is important. When this association is applied, it will reduce stress in the student's life and it will certainly improve retention and increase student persistence (Kausar, 2010; Van-Rooijen, 1986; Hatos & Zoltan 2011).

Relationship between Academic and Social Integration and Students' Satisfaction towards Retention

Studies have shown that there is a significant relationship between academic and social integration in the context of students' coping as a key moderator for students' satisfaction towards retention or persistence in the education institution, and academic and social integration is also mentioned as a significant predictor. (Gerber, Mans-Kemp & Schlechter, 2013; Kausar, 2010; Braxton & Hirschy, 2004; Pike, Gary, Simpson & Ellen, 1997; Van-Rooijen, 1986; Tinto, 1975; Jensen, 2011; Hagedorn, 2005; Caison 2007; Ling et al., 2010; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2007; Spiter, Bar-Tal & Golander, 1995; Gavala & Flett, 2005). Social aspects and academic life are important elements for retention: it is seen that satisfied students tend to achieve high scores on social aspects and positive adaptation has a favourable effect if there is formal and informal contact with the academic environment of the institution (Braxton & Hirschy, 2004; Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012; Vatta & Bhatara, 2013; Danjuma & Rasli, 2012).

Previous studies have also revealed that social integration in the context of students' coping with support from peers, students' participation in extracurricular activities and social approach behaviours used in education institutions will influence students' perception and affect their satisfaction and retention in the education institution (Gerber et al., 2013; Neuville, Frenay, Schmitz, Boudrenghien, Noel & Wertz, 2007; Kuh, et al., 2007, Tinto, 1975; Berger & Milem, 1999; Eaton & Bean, 1995; Bergamo et al., 2012; Danjuma & Rasli 2012).

Relationship between Students' Satisfaction and Students' Retention

Findings have indicated that satisfaction is considered as a key factor in the retention of an organisation's customers, or students in reference to education institutions (Tessema et al., 2012; Tuan 2012; Rahman et al., 2012; Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012; Lawson et al., 2012, Wei, 2011; Thomas, 2011; Hanaysha, 2011). With satisfaction in place, retention of primary customers will have a strong effect on the particular institution's profitability (Sheikh & Moodi, 2013; Lee, 2013; Tuan, 2012; Danjuma & Rasli, 2012; Lawson et al., 2012; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Johnson & Fornell, 1991).

Further to that, Danjuma and Rasli (2012) also posit that satisfaction is an essential element which will lead to retention and labelled it as customer attachment, leading to continuity of the students in the respective education institution. Tessema et al. (2012) also mentioned that satisfaction is a relevant measure for students' retention, as it demonstrates the extent to which satisfied students are willing to exert more effort in comparison with unsatisfied students.

Sampling Methods and Sampling Techniques

This study used a probability stratified random sampling design with guidance from the participating education institutions to obtain an effective way to target respondents.

The process of selecting the respondents was based on the total size of the population (students of private higher education institutions) was identified as N = 460,145. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970, cited in Sekaran, 2005), the population size decision indicates that a sample of 384 respondents is appropriate for a study involving a population of more than 100,000. In addition, with an increase of 30% to achieve a large sample size without errors, the total sample size was adjusted to 500 students. This similarly argued by Delice (2010) indicating that it is important and sufficient to emphasise a sample size of 500 at 5% confidence level and in addition, according to Cohen (2000) it is advisable to always overestimate the sample size.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods used for this correlational study were collected via a structured questionnaire which was distributed to students of private higher education institutions, irrespective of whether they were full-time or part-time, local or international, male or female. The questionnaire is the research instrument and the units of analysis are the responses to the questions or statement posed to the students in relation to the study. The survey was handled with close supervision.

Data Analysis Techniques

The total number of questionnaires received was 358, from 406 students approached. This sample yielded 309 fully completed questionnaires, of which 152 were from colleges/institutions, 46 from university colleges and 111 from universities. Thus, a sample size of 309 was used for the final analysis and the findings were analysed accordingly and systemically interpreted with justification. Factor analysis and normality testing were first conducted to identify the structure within the observed variables.

Results and Discussions

Moderation analysis and finding on the relationship between academic and social integration and students' satisfaction to towards retention

Moderation analysis was used to determine whether academic and social integration affects the relationship between satisfaction and retention. The interaction effect of academic and social integration with the context of coping focuses on the link between satisfaction and retention through the application of this research framework and its theoretical identification of the perceived performance view and Tinto's interactionist view on students' academic and social integration.

The model summary shown in Table 1 reveals that R = .88 and R^2 = .77. This clearly indicates that the model is predicting 77% of the variance in retention. The F, dfs, and p-values indicate that academic and social integration and satisfaction significantly predicts retention (F (3, 305) = 337.76, p < .001). This indicates that the moderator (academic and social integration) is moderating the relationship between satisfaction and retention. According to Cohen (1988), this is considered as a large effect size and demonstrates a statistically significant positive relationship between satisfaction and retention. The interaction effect is highly significant, at b = 0.0064, 95% CI [0.0034, 0.0095], t = 4.13, p< .001 (Table 1).

When academic and social integration is low, there is a statistically significant positive relationship between satisfaction and retention (b = .26, 95% CI [.18, .35], t = 6.06, p< .001). This significant positive

relationship also holds when academic and social integration is at the mean (b = .33, 95% CI [.24, .41], t = 7.59, p < .001) and when it is high (b = .39, 95% CI [.30, .49], t = 8.11, p < .001). These findings indicate that the relationship between students' satisfaction and retention is moderated by academic and social integration in Malaysian private higher education institutions. It is thus possible to accept Hypothesis 1 – Academic and social integration positively moderates students' satisfaction towards retention.

This finding is conceptually and empirically consistent with previous studies indicating that increasing the coping factors in academic and social integration as a dimension of education institutions' service delivery quality will increase students' retention and control dropouts. A comfortable academic environment will increase students' perceived psychological well-being and academic enjoyment, which will produce a positive effect on the institution's student satisfaction and retention. Interaction with peers, participation in extracurricular activities and social approach behaviours in the context of students' social integration will also influence students' satisfaction and retention (Gerber et al., 2013; Neuville., et al 2007; Kuh, et al., 2007, Tinto 1975; Berger & Milem, 1999; Eaton & Bean, 1995; Bergamo et al., 2012; Danjuma & Rasli 2012).

Table 1: PROCESS Procedure - Moderation Effect

PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Release 2.13.2
Documentation available in Hayes (2013)

Model = 1
  Y = TOTRETEN
  X = TOTSATIS
  M = TINTSOC
Sample size :309

Outcome: TOTRETEN
Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.8767	.7685	23.7232	337.7617	3.0000	305.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	32.8666	.3310	99.2946	.0000	32.2152	33.5179
TINTSOC	.4699	.0603	7.7932	.0000	.3513	.5886
TOTSATIS	.3296	.0434	7.5914	.0000	.2442	.4150
int_1	.0064	.0016	4.1255	.0000	.0034	.0095

Interactions:
int_1   TOTSATIS   X   TINTSOC
Conditional effect of X on Y at values of the moderator(s):

TINTSOC	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-10.1264	.2644	.0436	6.0622	.0000	.1786	.3502
.0000	.3296	.0434	7.5914	.0000	.2442	.4150
10.1264	.3948	.0487	8.1130	.0000	.2991	.4906

In short, the finding of a positive significant role of academic and social integration as a moderating variable between satisfaction and retention not only support other previous empirical findings (Beard, 2011; Gavala & Flett, 2005) but also lends credence to Tinto's Interactionist theory in the view of recognising the interaction effect of academic and social integration with students' experience in education institutions. This finding also lends evidence to the argument on the importance of integrating both academic and social factors for students' satisfaction and retention in private education institutions (Gerber

et al., 2013; Neuville. et al 2007; Kuh, et al., 2007, Tinto 1975; Tinto 1993; Berger & Milem, 1999; Eaton & Bean, 1995; Bergamo et al., 2012; Danjuma & Rasli 2012).

In addition, most importantly, this research finding clearly highlights that despite the experience of satisfaction, it is the conditional effect of academic and social integration which will determine the students' retention level in private higher education institutions. Thus, from this research framework, it can be interpreted that the relationship between satisfaction and retention will be greater for students who have experienced the coping of academic and social integration as a service delivery quality compared to those who have not experienced it. This indicates that private higher education institutions should give primary importance to academic and social integration service delivery quality to achieve a high level of students' retention.

Overall, this finding not only supports other previous empirical findings but also lends credence to Tinto's interactionist view and reaffirms that when students cope successfully and integrate academically and socially into education institutions, student retention is achieved. This research further reveals that even though students' pre-college or background characteristics are not considered, retention can be improved through exercising the perceived performance view of service delivery. The relationship between satisfaction and retention will be greater for students who have experienced academic and social integration in their respective institutions.

Finding on the relationship between students' satisfaction and students' retention the relationship between satisfaction and students' retention was investigated using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient. Table 2 highlights a strong, positive correlation between satisfaction and retention ($r = 0.91$, $n = 309$, $p < 0.01$), with high levels of satisfaction being associated with high levels of retention. As for the variance shared between the two variables, the coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 82.81$) indicates that satisfaction helps to explain nearly 82% of the variance in retention.

Table 2: Correlation Between Satisfaction and Retention

		total satisfaction	total retention
Total satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.914**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	309	309
Total retention	Pearson Correlation	.914**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	309	309

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

In order to strengthen the findings on the relationship between satisfaction and retention, simple linear regression was used, and the model was able to explain 83.5% (Table 3) of the variance in satisfaction ($F (1, 307) = 1562.00$, $p < 0.001$: see Table 4). As shown in Table 5, satisfaction is statistically significant, with a beta value of 0.91 ($p < 0.001$). This finding supports Hypothesis 2**:** Students' satisfaction is positively related to students' retention.

Table 3: Model Summary[b] – Satisfaction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.914[a]	.836	.835	4.16519

a. Predictors: (Constant), total satisfaction
b. Dependent Variable: total retention

Table 4: ANOVA[a] – Satisfaction

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	27098.845	1	27098.845	1562.003	.000[b]
	Residual	5326.074	307	17.349		
	Total	32424.919	308			

a. Dependent Variable: total retention
b. Predictors: (Constant), total satisfaction

Table 5: Coefficients[a] – Satisfaction

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.884	.790		3.649	.000
	total satisfaction	.663	.017	.914	39.522	.000

The significant positive relationship between satisfaction and retention in Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients and the simple linear regression model results are not unexpected, and support the conceptual findings of other previous studies, such as the works of Singh and Singh (2006), Abdullah (2005a), Nesset and Helgesen (2009), DeShields, Kara and Kaynak (2005), Danjuma and Rasli (2012), and Jensen (2011). In addition, Rahman et al. (2012) argue that the performance of service quality dimensions leads to satisfaction, and satisfaction has an impact on retention or dropout and on the academic accomplishment of the particular student.

These findings are similar to that of Suhre, Jansen and Harskamp (2007), who examined 186 degree students. They found that academic ability, satisfaction with degree program, motivation, study habits and tutorial attendance all had significant positive effects on academic accomplishment and these factors explained about 49% of the variance in the total number of credits students acquired and 31% of the variance in student retention. With the support of other previous empirical findings, this study also provides credibility for the perceived performance view on the significant relationship between students' satisfaction and retention in private higher education institutions in Malaysia.

Conclusion

Satisfaction and retention among students in private higher education institutions are essential and will critically determine the education institution's survival in the Malaysian education industry as Asia's education hub. The performance of service delivery quality dimensions in relation to satisfaction and retention in private higher education institutions, with academic and social integration as a moderator, can effectively produce the required focus as to where each private higher education institutions should place its value proposition for a favourable outcome on its students' satisfaction and eventually students' retention for its business success.

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