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Student Engagement Strategies in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Their Impact on Customer Loyalty at MTsN 1 Kediri

A'an Yusuf Khunaifi,[1] Sulistyorini[2]
[1] Islamic Educational Management, UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah, Tulungagung, Indonesia)
[1]aankhunaifie@gmail.com , [2]sulistyorini@uinsatu.ac.id

ABSTRACT :
This study explores how active student engagement within the framework of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) contributes to their loyalty toward educational institutions, with a particular focus on MTsN 1 Kediri. The background of this research stems from the growing importance for modern educational institutions to establish long-term relationships with students and parents—not merely as service recipients, but as strategic partners. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing data collection techniques such as observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Data validity is reinforced through source and method triangulation. The findings reveal that student involvement in the learning process, organizational activities, and interpersonal relationships plays a significant role in shaping their satisfaction and loyalty to the school. Strategies implemented include participatory learning methods, empathetic two-way communication between teachers and students, and the strengthening of collective identity through extracurricular and religious activities. Teachers serve as central figures, functioning both as facilitators of engagement and as CRM agents who foster sustained emotional and academic connections. Student loyalty is reflected in the low transfer rate and the increasing number of new student enrollments each year. This study affirms that well-managed student engagement within a CRM framework can serve as a solid foundation for the sustainability of Islamic educational institutions amid a dynamic and competitive landscape.

Key words: *Customer Relationship Management (CRM); Customer Loyalty; Students.*

INTRODUCTION

Modern educational institutions are facing increasingly complex challenges, including demands for higher learning quality, rising societal expectations, and rapidly evolving technological developments. Amid these pressures, it is no longer sufficient for schools or madrasahs to merely provide standard academic services. Educational institutions must also be capable of building and maintaining long-term relationships with their key stakeholders—namely, students and parents. This situation has given rise to a new approach in educational management, one that emphasizes customer experience and student satisfaction. One such approach is the implementation of Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

CRM is a managerial approach used to build, maintain, and optimize long-term relationships with customers. In the context of education, CRM is reflected in institutional efforts to deeply understand students' needs, design responsive services, and establish open and continuous communication[1]. Educational CRM is not solely technology-driven; it also involves interpersonal

[1] Kamaludin Kamaludin, Irpan Ilmi, and Yayat Hidayat, "Implementasi Customer Relationship Menejemen Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Jumlah Peserta Didik Di SD

strategies that recognize students as unique individuals with diverse needs, aspirations, and backgrounds[2].

One of the key aspects of educational CRM is student engagement. Research indicates that students who are actively involved in academic, social, and religious activities tend to exhibit higher levels of satisfaction and loyalty toward their educational institutions [3]. This engagement encompasses cognitive dimensions (enthusiasm for learning), emotional dimensions (relationships with teachers and peers), and behavioral dimensions (participation in extracurricular and organizational activities). These three dimensions must be strategically managed to ensure that students are not only physically present but also mentally and emotionally engaged in their learning environments [4].

MTsN 1 Kediri, as an Islamic secondary educational institution, possesses unique characteristics and potential in developing student engagement–based CRM. Rooted in Islamic values, the school adopts a distinctive approach in nurturing relationships with students, including character education, religious activities, and community-based cultural practices. Nevertheless, challenges remain—particularly in maintaining student loyalty and parental trust amid the growing number of alternative educational institutions.

Internal data from the madrasah indicate that high student satisfaction tends to correlate with their involvement in organizational activities such as Scouts, Literacy programs, Youth Red Cross (PMR), and religious events, as well as intensive two-way communication with mentoring teachers. This suggests that consistently implemented CRM can enhance loyalty, reflected in students' desire to remain enrolled until graduation, active participation in activities, and positive recommendations from parents to the surrounding community [5].

By exploring student engagement practices at MTsN 1 Kediri and linking them to the CRM framework, this article aims to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of modern Islamic educational management that is relationship-based and sustainability-oriented.

Nevertheless, empirical studies on the implementation of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in Islamic educational institutions—particularly at the madrasah level—remain very limited. Most previous research has focused on CRM applications in higher education, emphasizing information technology and general service satisfaction. Few studies have examined how direct student engagement can serve as an integral component of CRM strategies in secondary-level educational institutions grounded in Islamic values.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to explore how students' academic, emotional, and socio-religious engagement can be managed within a CRM framework to foster student loyalty at MTsN 1 Kediri. This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions

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Negeri 4 Mekarsari Cimerak," *J-STAF: Siddiq, Tabligh, Amanah, Fathonah* 4, no. 1 (2025): 98–106.

[2] Andri Kurniawan et al., "Manajemen Kelas" (PT Global Eksekutif Teknologi, 2022).

[3] Najwa Auliyatul Faizah et al., "Branding Sekolah: Pendekatan Manajemen Pemasaran Di Era Kompetitif," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Kearifan Lokal* 4, no. 6 (2024): 827–42.

[4] Hariyono Hariyono et al., *Perkembangan Peserta Didik: Teori Dan Implementasi Perkembangan Peserta Didik Pada Era Digital* (PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia, 2024).

[5] Ifni Oktiani, "Peningkatan Mutu Lulusan Di Madrasah Aliyah Muhammadiyah Pekuncen Banyumas" (IAIN, 2019).

to the expansion of CRM implementation in modern Islamic educational institutions that prioritize relational quality and sustainability.

Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with the primary objective of describing and analyzing student engagement strategies within the framework of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and their impact on educational customer loyalty at MTsN 1 Kediri. This approach was chosen due to the nature of the problem, which involves complex social phenomena requiring an in-depth understanding from the perspectives of stakeholders such as teachers, students, and parents[6].

Data were collected using three main techniques: participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis [7]. To ensure data validity, this study applied source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing data from students, teachers, and parents, while technique triangulation entailed cross-verifying findings from observations, interviews, and documentation [8]. Consequently, the results provide a comprehensive and valid portrayal of student engagement strategies and their impact on customer loyalty at MTsN 1 Kediri.

Result

Student engagement strategies within the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system at MTsN 1 Kediri demonstrate the institution's concrete efforts to center educational services around students as the "primary customers." This approach positions students not merely as recipients of learning but as strategic partners who need to be understood, involved, and nurtured both personally and collectively. The following discussion elaborates on several key aspects of engagement and their correlation with educational customer loyalty.

a. Academic and Personal Engagement

Interactive teaching and learning activities serve as the starting point for student engagement. At MTsN 1 Kediri, this strategy is implemented through participatory learning methods, group discussions, problem-based learning projects, and the integration of technology such as the use of online learning applications. Students who feel actively involved in the learning process and receive excellent service tend to demonstrate higher commitment to the institution (interview with Vice Principal of Curriculum, Mrs. Sugiarti, M.Pd.I, March 20, 2025).

Personal engagement is also fostered through supportive teacher-student relationships. Teachers act not only as instructors but also as character builders and emotional companions. Those who know their students' names, interests, and potentials on a personal

[6] Hengki Wijaya, *Analisis Data Kualitatif: Sebuah Tinjauan Teori & Praktik* (Sekolah Tinggi Theologia Jaffray, 2019).

[7] M Syahran Jailani, "Teknik Pengumpulan Data Dan Instrumen Penelitian Ilmiah Pendidikan Pada Pendekatan Kualitatif Dan Kuantitatif," *IHSAN: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 2 (2023): 1–9.

[8] Muftahatus Saadah, Yoga Catur Prasetiyo, and Gismina Tri Rahmayati, "Strategi Dalam Menjaga Keabsahan Data Pada Penelitian Kualitatif," *Al-'Adad: Jurnal Tadris Matematika* 1, no. 2 (2022): 54–64.

level can provide appropriate interventions and foster a sense of being valued[9]. This is crucial, interpersonal trust forms the foundation of loyalty in education [10].

b. Student Activities

Extracurricular activities such as Scouts, Literacy programs, Youth Red Cross (PMR), and religious events serve as important platforms for students to build self-confidence and develop soft skills. At MTsN 1 Kediri, students are given opportunities to design, lead, and implement madrasah activities independently yet within a structured framework. This fosters authentic experiences that strengthen students' attachment to MTsN 1 Kediri, especially supported by achievements earned by students in extracurricular activities up to the international level (interview with Vice Principal of Student Affairs, Mrs. Siti Nurfarida, M.Pd, March 20, 2025).

Figure 1. This is Student Achievements of MTsN 1 Kediri at the Provincial and International Levels

At MTsN 1 Kediri, efforts are also made to enhance relational value with customers through two strategies: up selling and cross selling (Fadillah & Ibrahim, 2023). Up selling (Enhancement of Educational Services) involves offering specialized or supplementary classes for students with particular achievements or interests, such as literacy classes, bilingual classes, or Olympiad preparation programs. Cross selling (Offering Relevant Additional Services) refers to the institution's response to the surrounding environment—dominated by pesantrens—by adding Arabic language materials and supplementary kitab kuning (traditional Islamic texts) courses using the amsilathi method.

[9] Khoiruddin Bashori, *Pengembangan Kapasitas Guru* (Pustaka Alvabet, 2015).

[10] Gusti Nyoman Budiadnyana, "Strategi Sukses Inovasi: Kepercayaan Interpersonal Dan Berbagi Pengetahuan Di Lingkungan Pendidikan," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Manajemen, Akuntansi Dan Bisnis* 1, no. 01 (2024): 1–8.

Figure 2. Student Publications from MTsN 1 Kediri: 15 ISBN-Registered Books under the Four-Language Literacy Program

Participation in activities such as "Madrasah Bersholawat", Islamic holiday commemorations, and social initiatives (such as community service programs) further strengthens the collective identity of the school as a learning community with religious and social missions. This identity enhances student loyalty, as they feel part of something greater than themselves.

Figure 3. Madrasah Bersholawat Event in Commemoration of the Birth of Prophet Muhammad (Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW)

c. Effective Communication

Two-way open communication between the madrasah and students, as well as between the madrasah and parents, is a key element of CRM. MTsN 1 Kediri utilizes digital communication platforms such as WhatsApp groups for homeroom teachers and parents. This communication is not only technical in nature but also empathetic—providing motivation, care, and even emotional support when students face challenges (interview with homeroom teacher Mr. Hendrik Budi Setiawan, S.Pd., M.Pd.I, March 10, 2025).

Figure 4. a Document from the MTsN 1 Kediri Homeroom Teachers' WhatsApp Group

A study by Purwowidodo & Zaini found that educational institutions that successfully establish responsive and human-centered digital communication tend to earn greater trust from both parents and students—an aspect that directly correlates with increased loyalty[11].

d. The Role of Teachers as CRM Agents

Teachers serve as the frontline in CRM implementation. At MTsN 1 Kediri, teachers are involved in mapping student needs, providing constructive feedback, and fostering discipline through non-repressive approaches. Every teacher is expected to internalize CRM

[11] Agus Purwowidodo and Muhamad Zaini, "Teori Dan Praktik Model Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar," *Yogyakarta: Penebar Media Pustaka* 65 (2023).

as an integral part of their role—not merely as curriculum instructors. They are encouraged to deliver excellent service not as a formality, but as an act of genuine, heartfelt teaching (interview with the Vice Principal for Curriculum, Ms. Sugiarti, M.Pd.I, March 20, 2025).

Teachers who are trained in empathetic communication and basic counseling skills can act as a vital bridge between students and the institution. The commitment and trust built through these teacher-student relationships become a critical factor in strengthening student loyalty [12].

e. Satisfaction and Loyalty as Measurable Outcomes

Indicators of educational customer loyalty at MTsN 1 Kediri are evident in several aspects: the low rate of student transfers, the high interest in new student enrollment driven by recommendations from alumni or parents, and the active participation of students and guardians in madrasah activities. Satisfaction is also reflected in positive responses from internal surveys and students' willingness to remain engaged as active alumni. This is demonstrated by a student transfer rate as low as 1.15% of the total, alongside consistently high enrollment interest that exceeds the institution's capacity year after year (interview with Vice Principal for Student Affairs, Ms. Siti Nurfarida, M.Pd, March 20, 2025).

In the study conducted by Ishak & Luthfi, student satisfaction acts as a significant mediator in the relationship between engagement and loyalty. The higher the level of satisfaction, the stronger the tendency toward loyalty[13].

The student engagement strategy within the framework of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) at MTsN 1 Kediri is not merely an administrative initiative, but an integral part of the institution's educational management system. It positions students as key partners in the educational ecosystem. CRM is practiced here as a relational process that cultivates trust, emotional attachment, and sustained loyalty between students and the institution.

Similar to how SMP Al-Huda in Kediri applies CRM principles to foster relationships among the school, community, parents, and students[14], MTsN 1 Kediri demonstrates how CRM rooted in student involvement can significantly enhance educational outcomes. Active participation in academic, organizational, and socio-religious activities plays a direct role in strengthening student loyalty.

In the academic domain, students are engaged through collaborative learning approaches such as group discussions, problem-based learning, and the integration of digital tools. These methods foster inclusive and meaningful learning experiences, leading to stronger student commitment. Emotional involvement is further supported by teachers who act not only as instructors but also as character mentors and emotional guides. This personal approach aligns view that strong interpersonal relationships are vital for long-term loyalty in education[15].

Extracurricular activities—including scouting, literacy clubs, Red Cross units, and religious programs—offer students opportunities to develop leadership and soft skills while reinforcing their collective identity as members of a spiritually and socially driven school community. This sense of shared identity fosters pride and deepens student loyalty.

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[12] Elfi Rimayati, *Cyber Counseling: Inovasi Layanan Bimbingan Dan Konseling Di Era Digital* (Asadel Liamsindo Teknologi, 2023).

[13] Asmai Ishak and Zhafitri Luthfi, "Pengaruh Kepuasan Dan Kepercayaan Konsumen Terhadap Loyalitas: Studi Tentang Peran Mediasi Switching Costs," *Jurnal Siasat Bisnis* 15, no. 1 (2011).

[14] Eko Agus Suwandi, Prim Masrokan Mutohar, and Agus Eko Suijianto, "Implementasi Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Dalam Meningkatkan Pelayanan Dan Loyalitas Pelanggan," *JMPI: Jurnal Manajemen, Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran Islam* 1, no. 1 (2023): 13–26.

[15] Jamal Ma'mur Asmani, *Tips Efektif Cooperative Learning: Pembelajaran Aktif, Kreatif, Dan Tidak Membosankan* (Diva Press, 2016).

A critical element in CRM implementation is the establishment of effective two-way communication. MTsN 1 Kediri utilizes digital platforms, such as WhatsApp groups for class guardians and parents, to enhance responsiveness and emotional connection. This empathetic communication nurtures trust and transparency among students, parents, and the institution.

Teachers serve as key agents in realizing CRM principles. With training in basic counseling and empathic communication, they go beyond teaching to create meaningful, personal relationships with students. This sincere engagement, delivered from the heart rather than through formal routines, serves as a powerful foundation for student loyalty[16].

The tangible impact of these CRM strategies is evident in both quantitative and qualitative indicators: a low student transfer rate (approximately 1.15%), high demand for new admissions, and frequent recommendations from alumni and parents. This confirms that student-centered CRM strategies, implemented consistently and with personal sensitivity, are highly effective in cultivating deep and lasting educational loyalty.

Discussion

Research findings indicate that the implementation of CRM at MTsN 1 Kediri has been carried out comprehensively, encompassing the dimensions of operational CRM (learning services and digital communication), analytical CRM (mapping student needs and feedback), and relational CRM (emotional and social connections between teachers and students). This aligns with the CRM framework proposed by Seeman & Hara[17], which emphasizes that CRM serves to build long-term relationships through the management of information and personalized interactions.

The implementation of student engagement strategies in both academic and extracurricular activities enhances relationship quality, which, according to Roopchund, R. and Alsaid, is a key determinant of educational customer loyalty. Actively engaged students demonstrate high levels of emotional and cognitive satisfaction, which in turn fosters loyalty toward the institution[18].

At MTsN 1 Kediri, student engagement fosters not only academic satisfaction but also affective fulfillment derived from religious and social interactions. Consequently, the CRM implementation at this madrasah embodies a spiritual–relational character, where relationships are cultivated through Islamic values and empathetic communication between teachers and students.

Furthermore, the CRM approach implemented by teachers aligns with the customer intimacy principle in CRM theory Payne & Frow, which emphasizes deeply understanding customers (students) and delivering personalized experiences[19]. Teachers at MTsN 1 Kediri act as CRM agents who not only manage data but also build emotional closeness grounded in heartfelt service. This approach has proven effective in increasing the retention rate (as reflected by the low student transfer rate) and the referral rate (evidenced by a rise in new enrollments through alumni recommendations).

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[16] Muhamad Anwar, *Menjadi Guru Profesional* (Prenada Media, 2018).

[17] Elaine D Seeman and Margaret O Hara, "Customer Relationship Management in Higher Education : Using Information Systems to Improve the Student-School Relationship Campus-Wide Information Systems Emerald Article : Customer Relationship Management in Higher Education : Using Information Systems to Improve the Student-School Relationship," no. January 2006 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1108/10650740610639714. 24-34

[18] L. Roopchund, R.* and Alsaid, "SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES CRM Framework for Higher Education in Mauritius" 25, no. 4 (2017): 1515–28.

[19] Adrian Payne and Pennie Frow, "A Strategic Framework for Customer Relationship Management," *Journal of Marketing* 69 (2005): 167–176.

Adrian Payne and Pennie Frow's strategic CRM framework outlines five cross-functional processes—strategy development, value creation, multichannel integration, information management, and performance assessment—that position CRM as a holistic, organization-wide approach rather than isolated tactics[20]. This theory emphasizes relational value over transactions, aligning directly with MTsN 1 Kediri's practices where student engagement in academic, extracurricular, and religious activities fosters emotional bonds and loyalty, evidenced by low transfer rates (1.15%) and rising enrollments.

Elaine D. Seeman and Margaret O'Hara extend CRM to higher education by advocating information systems to enhance student-school relationships, transforming students into partners through personalized interactions[21]. At MTsN 1 Kediri, teachers embody this as CRM agents via empathetic communication (e.g., WhatsApp groups for motivation) and need-mapping, mirroring Seeman and O'Hara's focus on data-driven personalization to boost retention. which MTsN 1 Kediri applies through up-selling (e.g., Olympiad classes) and cross-selling (e.g., kitab kuning courses), enhancing satisfaction and collective identity.

Thus, the findings of this study expand the classical CRM concept—originally centered on transactional interactions—into an emotionally and spiritually engaged CRM model within the context of Islamic education. This model demonstrates that CRM success is not solely determined by technological systems or administrative processes, but also by the quality of human relationships built through values, empathy, and active student engagement.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the student engagement strategy within Customer Relationship Management (CRM) at MTsN 1 Kediri plays a vital role in enhancing educational customer loyalty. The loyalty developed is not merely the outcome of marketing tactics but stems from consistently nurtured emotional, academic, and social relationships among the madrasah, students, and their parents.

Academically, student involvement through interactive learning methods makes them active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of instruction. On a personal level, the teacher-student relationship, grounded in respect, recognition, and emotional support, fosters a conducive and relational learning environment. Meanwhile, extracurricular activities aimed at building collective identity and Islamic values cultivate a strong sense of belonging to the madrasah.

The key to successful CRM implementation at MTsN 1 Kediri lies in the institution's ability to establish open and empathetic communication while positioning teachers as primary agents of change focused on excellent service. The involvement of teachers in mapping student needs, providing constructive feedback, and training in empathetic communication strengthens CRM's role as a strategic tool to build loyalty.

With a student-centered and value-based approach, MTsN 1 Kediri demonstrates that CRM is not solely a business concept but is highly relevant in modern Islamic education. This model serves as a valuable reference for other educational institutions aiming to sustainably

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[20] Payne and Frow.

[21] Seeman and Hara, "Customer Relationship Management in Higher Education : Using Information Systems to Improve the Student-School Relationship Campus-Wide Information Systems Emerald Article : Customer Relationship Management in Higher Education : Using Information Systems to Improve the Student-School Relationship."

enhance student loyalty and build a strong institutional reputation amid increasing competition in the education sector.

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