Indonesian Journal Of Psychology ISSN 3163-2556

Vol.1, No. 2, September 2026

Organizational Commitment among Student Organization Leaders: A Qualitative Case Study of a Supervisory Board Chair in a Regional Student Association

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Abstract

Student organizations are voluntary, non-profit settings whose continuity depends on members' willingness to invest time and effort, yet few qualitative studies show how organizational commitment is lived by student leaders. This study described the organizational commitment of the chair of the supervisory board of a regional student association, using Steers' three aspects of commitment (identification, involvement, and loyalty) as a sensitizing framework. A qualitative single-case design was used. One purposively selected participant, a 21-year-old male undergraduate who had held several board positions, took part in a 30-minute semi-structured interview that was audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed through meaning units and thematic analysis. Thirty-eight codes were organized into eleven themes. Identification appeared as low-burden acceptance of rules, motivation grounded in responsibility rather than enthusiasm, pride, and a protective defense of the organization's image that included a stated willingness to conceal true negative information. Involvement was characterized by self-attributed underperformance, a strategy-oriented rather than reflective style, trust-conditioned acceptance of demanding tasks, relational leadership, and collaborative, mediating problem-solving. Loyalty was expressed through sacrificed class attendance and grades, role-contingent prioritization, and an intention to remain after leaving office. The case portrays a commitment that is affective–normative, sacrificial, and academically costly. Implications for mentoring, workload governance, and ethical reflection in student organizations are discussed. Because the data were collected in 2016, the findings are historically situated and hypothesis-generating rather than generalizable.

Keywords: *organizational commitment; student organization; Steers' framework; identification, involvement, and loyalty; qualitative case study*

1. Introduction

Student organizations are among the most visible arenas in which university students practice leadership, teamwork, and social responsibility outside the classroom. Because membership and office-holding in these organizations are typically unpaid and voluntary, their continuity depends heavily on organizational commitment, that is, the strength of individuals' identification with, and involvement in, a particular organization (Mowday et al., 1979; Steers, 1977). Quantitative studies in Indonesia and elsewhere in Asia have begun to document correlates of commitment among student association members, for example self-leadership (Permatasari et al., 2024) and the breadth of extracurricular involvement (Boy et al., 2022). What such designs cannot easily show is how commitment is experienced, justified, and paid for by an individual leader over the course of an organizational career.

The question is particularly pressing for student leaders. Qualitative evidence from the Philippines suggests that academic pressure, emotional fatigue, and a lack of preparedness can erode the commitment of student leaders and lead to withdrawal from leadership roles (Tacbobo et al., 2025). Studies of extracurricular involvement similarly indicate that its relationship with academic outcomes is not uniform: the number of organizations a student joins has been associated with lower academic competence even as it indirectly strengthens commitment (Boy et al., 2022), and the relationship between organizing extracurricular

activities and grade point average varies by type of activity (Leksuwankun et al., 2023). Commitment, in other words, is not only a resource for the organization; it can also be a cost borne by the individual, a concern recently raised for affective commitment in general (Johnson, 2024).

A further, less studied moment is the end of an office term. In the regional student association examined here, former executive officers may elect to join the Supervisory Board (*Dewan Pengawas Pengurus*, DPP) once their term ends, or return to ordinary membership. Because staying is optional at this point, the transition offers a naturally occurring window onto what keeps a leader attached when formal obligations loosen. Yet the experience of leaders at this threshold has seldom been described. The commitment literature has relied mainly on survey measures of commitment components (Meyer & Allen, 1991) and has only recently begun to examine, through interviews, how components such as normative commitment are subjectively experienced (Oh & Sawang, 2021).

Steers' conceptualization offers a behaviorally concrete lens for such a portrait. It describes commitment through identification with the organization's values and goals, willingness to exert effort on its behalf (involvement), and the desire to maintain membership even at personal cost (loyalty; Mowday et al., 1979; Steers, 1977; Steers et al., 1985). These aspects translate readily into interview questions and, as shown below, into the language participants use to account for their own commitment.

The present study therefore asks: how are identification, involvement, and loyalty experienced and expressed by the chair of the supervisory board of a regional student association at the point of transition from active officer to ordinary member? Using a single-case qualitative design, the study (a) describes the case in the participant's own words, (b) organizes the material into themes under Steers' three aspects, and (c) interprets these themes in light of recent research on commitment, student leadership, and the potential costs of strong attachment. The contribution is idiographic: not to estimate how common this pattern is, but to show in detail how it can look and which questions it raises for research and for the mentoring of student leaders.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Commitment: Steers' Framework and Contemporary Conceptions

Steers (1977) defined organizational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. Mowday et al. (1979) elaborated this view into three characteristics: belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, willingness to exert considerable effort on its behalf, and a strong desire to maintain membership. In the framework adopted for the interview guide of this study, these ideas are expressed as three aspects (Steers et al., 1985). *Identification* refers to shared values and goals, acceptance of organizational policies, and pride in belonging. *Involvement* refers to a strong desire to work for the organization, including accepting assigned duties, cooperating with colleagues, and taking part in decisions. *Loyalty* refers to the willingness to sustain the relationship with the organization, if necessary at the expense of personal interests.

Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model offers a complementary vocabulary, distinguishing affective commitment (desire), normative commitment (obligation), and continuance commitment (perceived cost of leaving). The two frameworks overlap but are not identical: identification and pride resemble affective commitment, willingness to stay despite sacrifice touches both affective and normative components, and involvement is partly behavioral rather than attitudinal. Recent qualitative work indicates that these

components interact in more complex ways than survey profiles suggest. In semi-structured interviews with 16 employees, Oh and Sawang (2021) found that normative commitment was experienced either as a moral imperative or as an indebted obligation, depending on the relative strength of affective and continuance commitment, and that all participants were committed to multiple foci. These findings motivate close attention to how a leader narrates why he stays and to what else he is committed to besides the organization.

2.2 Commitment, Involvement, and Their Costs in Student Organizations

Student organizations differ from workplaces in that their members are simultaneously students whose primary role is academic. Survey evidence from Indonesia indicates that self-leadership, which includes behavior-focused strategies, natural rewards, and constructive thought patterns, is positively related to organizational commitment among student association members ($r = .475$, $N = 98$; Permatasari et al., 2024). Servant-type leadership has been linked to young volunteers' citizenship behavior in non-profit organizations through affective commitment, with role identity moderating the link between leadership and affective commitment (Ngah et al., 2023). Among employees of higher-education institutions in Vietnam, helping behavior showed the strongest effect on organizational commitment among several citizenship behaviors (Nguyen et al., 2022). Together, these studies suggest that commitment in voluntary and educational settings is nurtured by self-regulation, relational leadership, and everyday helping, dimensions that an interview can illuminate from the inside.

The same involvement can be costly. In a structural model of 365 Filipino college students, the number of organizations a student joined had a small indirect positive effect on commitment but a direct negative effect on academic competence (Boy et al., 2022). A retrospective study of medical students found positive linear, negative linear, and curvilinear relationships between organizing extracurricular activities and grade point average, depending on activity type (Leksuwankun et al., 2023). Former student leaders interviewed in the Philippines pointed to academic pressure, emotional fatigue, and lack of preparedness as pressures that undermine leadership commitment (Tacbobo et al., 2025). At a conceptual level, Johnson (2024) reviewed literature suggesting that high affective commitment can carry negative consequences such as stress, burnout, work–life imbalance, and guilt, and can prompt behaviors that put organizations at risk.

2.3 Identification, Loyalty, and the Protective Side of Commitment

Strong identification can also shape how members respond to threats to the organization's image. Umphress and Bingham (2011) introduced the concept of unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB), unethical acts carried out with the intent to benefit the organization, its members, or both. They proposed that positive social exchange relationships and organizational identification may lead to such acts indirectly through neutralization, the process by which the moral content of an act is overlooked. A systematic review of the first decade of research organizes its antecedents, consequences, and boundary conditions (Mishra et al., 2022). Later studies have examined organizational embeddedness (Lee et al., 2022), the double-edged relationship between UPB, citizenship behavior, and work effort (Jiang et al., 2023), and the way in which giving employees the trust they want can lead to unethical pro-supervisor behavior (Mignonac et al., 2025).

Although UPB research has focused on workplaces, its logic is pertinent to student organizations, where attachment is typically affective, the organization is often described in familial terms, and reputational concerns are salient. This study treats the participant's statements about defending the organization as an

entry point to that literature, while recognizing that talk about hypothetical rumors is not behavior. Taken together, the literature suggests three sensitizing questions that guided the analysis: how identification is expressed and justified; how involvement is enacted and evaluated, and what leadership style accompanies it; and what loyalty costs and how it is sustained after office.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study used a qualitative single-case design with a descriptive–interpretive orientation. A single case was chosen because the aim was to portray, in depth and in the participant's own language, how commitment was experienced by a leader at a specific transition point, rather than to estimate its prevalence. Data were analyzed with thematic analysis in the reflexive tradition (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2021b), combining a deductive step, in which material was organized under Steers' three aspects, with an inductive step in which codes and themes were derived from the transcript. Following Braun and Clarke (2021a), themes are treated as patterns of shared meaning produced through the analyst's interpretive work, and coding reliability statistics are not reported because they are not coherent with this approach.

3.2 Participant and Setting

The participant (pseudonym: Dimas) was a 21-year-old male undergraduate engineering student at a public university in West Sumatra, Indonesia. He was selected purposively as an information-rich case. At the time of the interview he was chair of the Supervisory Board (DPP) of Organization X, a regional student association whose purpose, in his words, is to serve as a gathering place for students from the same home city who study at the university. In this association, executive officers who have completed their term may choose to continue as members of the DPP, so continued membership at this stage is a matter of choice and therefore of commitment. Before chairing the DPP he had held several offices, including head of the human resources division and chair of an event committee. He also belonged to a second student organization (Organization Y). The selection criteria were (a) having held leadership positions in Organization X and (b) being at the transition from active officer to supervisory board member and, subsequently, ordinary member. Only this one participant was interviewed.

3.3 Interview Guide

The interview guide was derived from Steers' three aspects. For each aspect, one or two indicators were translated into open questions: identification (acceptance of organizational rules; pride in belonging), involvement (task execution; cooperation with other members), and loyalty (willingness to make sacrifices; persistence in the organization). The guide comprised an opening phase (greeting, self-introduction, explanation of purpose, request for consent, and a light warm-up question), a main phase of 20 open questions grouped by aspect, and a closing phase (summary of the main points and thanks). Following common practice in semi-structured interviewing (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021), the guide served as a flexible aid rather than a script: the interviewer followed the participant's lead, asked follow-up probes, and varied the order of questions.

3.4 Data Collection

The interview was conducted by the author, who was at the time an undergraduate psychology student and knew the participant as a fellow student. It took place on a weekday afternoon in May 2016 at a public venue and lasted 30 minutes (15:15–15:45). It was audio-recorded with a mobile phone. The participant's verbal consent to be interviewed was requested and given at the start of the session. The language was colloquial Indonesian mixed with regional expressions. The recording was transcribed verbatim, producing a 270-line transcript. Quotations in this article were translated into English by the author, favoring literal meaning over idiom and retaining hedges where they carry meaning. The interview was conducted as part of an interview practicum course; the analysis reported here was carried out later.

3.5 Data Analysis

Analysis followed five steps. First, the transcript was read repeatedly while listening to the recording. Second, meaning units were marked and condensed; the initial practicum analysis had identified 15 meaning units, which were retained and expanded to 38 codes through a second, line-by-line pass over the full transcript. Third, codes were allocated deductively to Steers' three aspects and clustered inductively into themes within each aspect. Fourth, themes were checked against the full transcript and revised, including by searching for disconfirming statements (for example, the participant's refusal of an additional role despite his general willingness to accept tasks). Fifth, themes were interpreted in relation to the literature. Transcript line numbers (L) are given for traceability. The author's positionality as a peer of the participant was considered during analysis (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

3.6 Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Credibility was supported by verbatim transcription, line-referenced quotations, retention of disconfirming statements, and explicit reporting of interviewer probes that may have been leading. Member checking, independent coding, and data triangulation were not carried out. Empirical work on saturation indicates that interview studies aiming at thematic generalization usually require substantially more than one interview (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022); accordingly, no claim of saturation or statistical generalization is made. Verbal consent to be interviewed and recorded was obtained at the start of the interview. To protect confidentiality, the participant is identified by a pseudonym, and the names of the organizations, the home city, and other persons mentioned have been removed or generalized.

4. Results and Discussion

Thirty-eight codes were organized into eleven themes under Steers' three aspects (Table 1). The results are presented aspect by aspect, each set of themes followed by discussion in light of the literature, and then synthesized in Section 4.4. Quotations are translated from Indonesian and followed by transcript line numbers; square brackets mark anonymized or clarifying text.

Table 1. *Themes, Representative Codes, and Transcript Lines by Aspect of Commitment*

Aspect	Theme	Representative codes	Lines
Identification	T1. Low-burden acceptance of rules	Rules are minimal and amount to attending events and gatherings; agrees with them; feels unrestrained	L16–35

Aspect	Theme	Representative codes	Lines
	T2. Responsibility rather than enthusiasm, anchored in reciprocal trust	Works because of the responsibility that comes with the position; helping as a social duty; "they trust me, so why shouldn't we trust them back"	L51–65
	T3. Pride and protective defense of the organization's image	Pleased when the organization is widely known; defends it against false rumors; would conceal true negative information	L72–80
Involvement	T4. Unfinished work and self-attributed shortfall	Judges own performance as not yet good; attributes it to his own laziness; programs left unimplemented; notes the deputy's focus on internal matters	L83–95; L124–125
	T5. Strategy over self-evaluation	Not an "evaluator" but a "strategy" type; laziness persists; effort tracks perceived importance	L96–107
	T6. Trust-conditioned acceptance of demanding tasks	Takes on tasks he doubts he can do when members trust him; declined an extra role when overloaded; admits he needs help	L110–130; L199
	T7. Relational, face-to-face leadership	Prefers meeting to chatting; avoids acting like a boss; takes the initiative to approach members; builds comfort and trust first	L133–148
	T8. Collaborative and mediating problem-solving	Seeks causes and solutions through introspection; acts as go-between in interpersonal conflict; works to retain members who want to leave; decides together with trusted others; postpones rather than cancels events	L151–216
Loyalty	T9. Sacrificing class attendance and grades	Much time consumed; skipped classes and had a low GPA while head of human resources; now looks for strategies not to skip class	L218–226
	T10. Selective breadth and role-contingent prioritization	Avoided joining another association to avoid being overstretched; once in, wants to prove himself; prioritizes the organization where he holds the more important position, otherwise Organization X because of comfort	L226–245
	T11. Staying beyond office: comfort, kinship, and a tree to be watered	Wants to remain as an ordinary member; comfort and kinship as reasons; would help even after employment, "until death"; "kinship that is beginning to disappear"; wants to give 100% wherever he joins	L248–270

Note. L = line number in the verbatim transcript (270 lines). T = theme.

4.1 Identification

Theme 1: Low-burden acceptance of rules. The participant at first struggled to name any rules at all ("Does [the organization] even have rules?", L16–18) and then described them as minimal: "There is nothing like 'you have to do this, you have to do that' … at most the rule is following the whole series of events … so far it's just enjoyable, I don't feel restrained by rules" (L25–30). He agreed with the rules he did recognize: "none of them is wrong … so you just go along with it" (L35). Acceptance was thus not an act of submission but the near absence of felt constraint.

Theme 2: Responsibility rather than enthusiasm, anchored in reciprocal trust. Asked whether organizational activities made him more enthusiastic, the participant rejected the premise: "I can't really call it enthusiasm … but responsibility is here; I hold a position here, I can't play around. If there is a responsibility, it gets done; if there is a task, it gets done" (L51–55). Helping was framed as social: "if they need me, if it can be helped, then I help" (L55). He tied this sense of duty to a family metaphor, which he introduced himself (L51–55), and to the trust placed in him: "we have formed a family here … I'm the one

who's been made the elder, so whether I want to or not I have to be spirited; they trust me, so why shouldn't we trust them back" (L62–65).

Theme 3: Pride and protective defense of the organization's image. The participant said he was glad when people outside the organization knew its name ("it has spread, that's good", L72) and, when asked directly, that he was proud (L74). Asked how he would react to negative talk, he answered spontaneously and protectively: "How can our family be badly talked about … if the news is wrong, we defend it; if it's true, as far as possible we cover it up, we back it up so that the organization's name doesn't look bad" (L76–80).

The three themes show identification expressed less through articulated values than through ease, duty, and kinship. The only goal the participant stated explicitly was the organization's social purpose, a place where students from the same home city can gather (L200–205), and his acceptance of the rules followed from that purpose rather than from the content of the rules. This is consistent with Steers' description of identification as acceptance of the organization's values and pride in belonging, but it adds that, for this leader, acceptance is embedded in a family frame: the participant introduced the metaphor himself (L51–55), and the interviewer echoed it only afterward (L56–60).

In Meyer and Allen's (1991) terms, the statements combine affective commitment (comfort, pride, kinship) with normative commitment (responsibility, reciprocal trust) and show little of the cost-based reasoning typical of continuance commitment. Oh and Sawang (2021) report that normative commitment is experienced either as a moral imperative or as an indebted obligation depending on the relative strength of affective and continuance commitment. With strong affect and little cost-based reasoning, the participant's "responsibility" resembles the moral-imperative form, yet his reasoning that "they trust me, so why shouldn't we trust them back" has the flavor of reciprocity. The two forms may thus coexist within one person, a possibility that merits closer study.

The protective stance in Theme 3 deserves separate attention. Willingness to cover up true negative information is an instance of what Umphress and Bingham (2011) call unethical pro-organizational behavior, which they proposed can follow from organizational identification and positive social exchange through neutralization, whereby the moral content of an act is overlooked. Describing the organization as "our family" may serve exactly that function: protecting a family seems a duty rather than a lapse of integrity. This is only one plausible reading, and several cautions apply. The statement concerned hypothetical rumors, not observed behavior; it may partly reflect rhetorical loyalty or social desirability in an interview with an acquaintance; and the stakes in a student association differ from those in a firm. Pride was confirmed in response to a closed prompt ("Are you proud?", L73), whereas the protective stance came in answer to an open question, so the latter is the more secure finding. Nevertheless, the finding matters for a role designated as supervisory. Reviews and recent studies link unethical pro-organizational behavior to antecedents such as identification, organizational embeddedness, and trust (Lee et al., 2022; Mignonac et al., 2025; Mishra et al., 2022), which suggests that supervisory bodies in student organizations may need explicit norms of transparency and accountability so that loyalty is not translated into concealment.

4.2 Involvement

Theme 4: Unfinished work and self-attributed shortfall. Asked whether he had performed his tasks well, the participant answered, "No, not yet" (L83). He attributed this partly to himself, "sometimes it's from me,

sometimes I'm lazy, hehe" (L85), and partly to unmet targets: as head of human resources, several programs "were not implemented … haven't reached their goal, so I'm not satisfied" (L85–90). He alluded to the deputy's preoccupation with the board's internal matters and, more obliquely, to the difficulty of managing people's inner feelings within the board (L88–90; L124–125). He confirmed the interviewer's summary that his performance was "less than satisfactory" (L91–95).

Theme 5: Strategy over self-evaluation. Asked whether he evaluated himself after finishing work, he replied: "I'm not really the evaluating type, but I'm the strategy type … I don't like evaluation, maybe it's not my type; what I would evaluate is my laziness … I stay lazy until tomorrow and the day after" (L99–104). Asked how he overcame laziness, he said that effort depends on placement: "if it's important, it has to be prioritized, but if it feels not yet [important enough], then I'm just lazy" (L106–107).

Theme 6: Trust-conditioned acceptance of demanding tasks. Asked what he would do if an important task exceeded his ability, he said, "If they trust me, I'll go through with it" (L112), and said the same of his present role as board chair, adding that he felt capable (L126–130). Acceptance was not unconditional, however. While head of human resources he refused to be appointed event coordinator because the human resources programs "were still running" (L115–120), and he described the coordinator role as heavier than the chair role (L120–125). He also acknowledged limits: "I'm not an expert either, I need help too" (L199).

Theme 7: Relational, face-to-face leadership. He preferred to meet members in person: "when it comes to communication I prefer meeting; chat isn't enjoyable; I'm the type who's lazy to type" (L133–137). He described his approach as deliberately non-hierarchical: "as much as possible don't act like a boss just because you've been entrusted … we have to pick up the ball first, we go to them first with light things; the important thing is that they are comfortable with me, that they trust me" (L137–148).

Theme 8: Collaborative and mediating problem-solving. Faced with a member's problem with the organization, he would look for causes and solutions: "what went wrong is reflected on, reviewed again, what is the cause, what is the solution" (L156–160). In conflicts between individuals he saw himself as a go-between: "I'm kind of a mediator, not leaning toward either side … in the end the ones who can solve it are the two of them" (L162–175). For a member who wanted to leave he said, "personally, I would keep them" (L191), consulting people he trusts for solutions, because "we are family … how can we reduce the number of our family" (L193–205). Given a hypothetical venue crisis days before an event, he would seek a solution together with the committee and, if necessary, postpone: "the important thing is that the event still happens" (L211–215).

Involvement in Steers' framework implies going beyond minimum standards and taking part in shared decision-making (Steers et al., 1985). The case shows a leader who is relationally generous and collaborative, who consults, mediates, retains, and postpones rather than cancels, while judging his own task performance harshly and declining to examine it. This coexistence of strong relational involvement and modest perceived output is the first of two paradoxes in the case. Three observations follow.

First, the limited self-evaluation (Theme 5) is notable because self-leadership, including behavior-focused strategies and constructive thought patterns, correlates positively with commitment among Indonesian student association members (Permatasari et al., 2024). The present case cannot test that association, but it hints at a mechanism: when shortfalls are attributed to a stable trait ("I'm lazy") and not examined, the

feedback loop that would turn dissatisfaction into improved performance may be weak. Strategy talk without reflective review may keep goals in view without clarifying why programs stalled.

Second, the relational style (Themes 7 and 8) resembles servant-type leadership, which among young Malaysian volunteers has been linked to citizenship behavior through affective commitment (Ngah et al., 2023), and the emphasis on helping ("if it can be helped, we help") resonates with the finding that helping behavior had the strongest effect on commitment among Vietnamese higher-education employees (Nguyen et al., 2022). Because members' views were not collected, these parallels remain interpretive. They suggest that, in this association, commitment may be sustained less by formal structure than by personal relationships between members and the leader.

Third, trust-conditioned acceptance of tasks (Theme 6) indicates that involvement was tied to being trusted: the relationship, rather than perceived capability, was decisive ("if they trust me, I'll go through with it"). This echoes the reciprocity logic of Theme 2. It also carries risk, since accepting tasks one doubts one can do, without evaluation, may help explain unfinished programs. At the same time, the refusal of the event-coordinator role shows a capacity for boundary-setting that complicates a simple image of unconditional acceptance and illustrates why disconfirming statements were retained in the analysis.

4.3 Loyalty

Theme 9: Sacrificing class attendance and grades. Asked whether the organization consumed his time, the participant answered, "Very much … a lot of sacrifice" (L218–219). He explained that in his third semester, as head of human resources, he skipped classes ("I skipped class, that's for sure", L221–222) and that his grade point average was low as a result (L224). He reflected on this with some regret and a change of plan: "now I try again; there has to be a strategy; how can I keep skipping class, for what?" (L224–226).

Theme 10: Selective breadth and role-contingent prioritization. The participant limited the number of organizations he joined. He did not join the department association, although his housemates did, "because I want [Organization X] … I don't like having too many, later I'll be overwhelmed … once I'm in, I prove I can; it's not that I want to disappear" (L226–232). He belonged to one other organization and prioritized Organization X "because people say people stay when they are comfortable; I'm already too comfortable" (L238–240). Priority also depended on role: "it depends how urgent … if in [Organization X] I'm not the chair and at [Organization Y] I am the chair, I put first where I'm the chair" (L242–245).

Theme 11: Staying beyond office: comfort, kinship, and a tree to be watered. Asked whether he would remain once he held no position, the participant answered, "Of course I'm still willing, it's pleasant, you just gather, laugh, have fun" (L248–250). His reason was comfort, expressed in a metaphor: "it's like a tree, still small, it needs watering and fertilizing continuously; even when many others give fertilizer we keep watering, keep tending it … even when I'm already working, if the board needs help … even until death I'll stay" (L254–260). When the interviewer summarized this as comfort and kinship, he answered with a laugh, "the kinship that is beginning to disappear" (L262). In closing, he said that whenever he joins an organization he wants to give "100%" (L264–270).

The academic costs described in Theme 9 are consistent with quantitative findings that broader extracurricular involvement is associated with lower academic competence even as it indirectly strengthens commitment (Boy et al., 2022), and with evidence that the relationship between organizing activities and

grades depends on activity type (Leksuwankun et al., 2023). The case adds a first-person account of how such costs arise in practice: a demanding office coincided with skipped classes and lower grades, and the participant later framed the trade-off as one he would not repeat ("for what?"). These are self-reports, and grade data were not verified. Steers et al. (1985) associate high involvement with low voluntary absenteeism from the focal organization. The case shows the mirror image: high involvement in the focal organization coexisted with voluntary absence from a competing role. Commitment frameworks built on workplace data therefore need to be read in a multi-role setting such as university life, in which commitment to one role can be financed by withdrawal from another.

Theme 10 shows that heavy commitment was not indiscriminate. By declining a second association, the participant practiced a form of breadth control that, given the negative association between breadth and academic competence reported by Boy et al. (2022), may be protective. His rule of prioritizing the organization where he holds the more important position suggests that commitment is tied to role responsibility and not only to the organization as such. This resonates with evidence that role identity conditions how leadership relates to affective commitment among young volunteers (Ngah et al., 2023), and with his earlier statement that responsibility, rather than enthusiasm, moves him (Theme 2).

Theme 11 depicts a commitment that is predominantly affective, framed by comfort and kinship, and projected far beyond the office term ("even until death", "even when I'm already working"). These are intentions voiced in 2016 and cannot be taken as evidence of later behavior. Read alongside the sacrifices in Theme 9 and the wish to give "100%" wherever he joins, they illustrate the possible downside of strong affective commitment discussed by Johnson (2024): a willingness to absorb costs for the organization. No burnout or distress was reported, and the participant explicitly planned to manage his time better, so the case should not be read as pathology. It does, however, align with the qualitative finding that academic pressure and emotional fatigue can undermine student leaders' commitment over time (Tacbobo et al., 2025), and it raises the question of how sustainable such commitment is without structures that protect academic functioning.

The participant's retort that the kinship was "beginning to disappear" is a reminder that the family frame was not simply celebratory. It may signal perceived erosion of cohesion in the association, which in turn may be one reason he cast himself as a gardener who must keep watering. This interpretation is tentative: the remark was brief, accompanied by laughter, and made in reply to an interviewer's summary. Follow-up interviews would be needed to clarify what was meant and whether the perceived decline was related to the leadership transition itself.

4.4 Integrative Interpretation

Across the three aspects, the case suggests a commitment that is anchored in responsibility, sustained by relationships, and financed by the leader's own time and academic standing. Table 2 summarizes the alignment between Steers' aspects, the closest Meyer–Allen components (an interpretive mapping, not a measurement), and the tensions identified. Two paradoxes stand out. First, strong relational involvement and strong loyalty coexist with a negative self-assessment of performance and with limited self-evaluation (Themes 4 and 5). Second, the family frame that motivates loyalty and defense (Themes 2, 3, and 11) co-occurs with sacrifice (Theme 9), a stated willingness to conceal (Theme 3), and a perception that kinship is waning (Theme 11).

Table 2. *Alignment of Findings with Steers' Aspects and Meyer–Allen Components*

Aspect (Steers)	Core finding	Closest Meyer–Allen component (interpretive)	Tension or risk
Identification	Low-burden rule acceptance; responsibility rather than enthusiasm; pride; protective defense of the organization's image	Affective (pride, kinship) combined with normative (responsibility, reciprocal trust)	Protective loyalty that extends to a stated willingness to conceal true negative information
Involvement	Strategy-oriented, trust-conditioned acceptance of tasks; relational, collaborative leadership; negative self-assessment	Normative (felt duty) with strong behavioral involvement; limited reflective self-regulation	High relational investment, yet unfinished programs and no routine self-evaluation
Loyalty	Sacrificed classes and grades; role-contingent priority; intention to stay beyond office	Affective (comfort) with sacrificial normative overtones; little continuance reasoning	Academic cost; sustainability of commitment; "kinship that is beginning to disappear"

Note. The mapping to Meyer and Allen's (1991) components is the author's interpretation of qualitative material; no component was measured.

4.5 Limitations and Reflexive Considerations

Several limitations qualify these findings. First, the study rests on one interview with one male participant in one association; it describes a case and cannot indicate how common these patterns are (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Second, the data are self-reports gathered in a 30-minute interview; neither the participant's grades or performance nor members' perceptions were verified, and stated intentions to remain were not followed up. Third, the data were collected in 2016. Student associations, communication practices (the participant's dislike of chat is a case in point), and campus conditions have changed since, so the findings are historically situated.

Fourth, the interviewer knew the participant, a familiarity that probably encouraged candor but may also have encouraged socially desirable answers or a casual register. Fifth, some interviewer probes were suggestive: "Is it because the context is family?" (L56–60), "Are you proud?" (L73), "So you find it less than satisfactory?" (L91), and "So comfort and kinship?" (L261). The participant had introduced the family metaphor himself (L51–55), and his answer to the last prompt qualified rather than echoed it, but the pride and dissatisfaction themes rest partly on closed prompts and should be considered less secure than the protective defense, which was volunteered. Sixth, analysis was conducted by a single analyst without member checking or independent coding. In reflexive thematic analysis this is consistent with the approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021a), but it limits opportunities to challenge the author's interpretation, and the author's positionality as a psychology student and peer should be borne in mind (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Finally, translation from colloquial Indonesian into English inevitably flattens nuance; the original wording is preserved in the line-numbered transcript.

5. Conclusion

This study described the organizational commitment of the chair of a student supervisory board through Steers' aspects of identification, involvement, and loyalty. The portrait that emerged is of a leader whose commitment is moved less by enthusiasm than by responsibility and trust; who leads through personal relationships, collaboration, and mediation; who judges his own performance as unsatisfactory without systematically reviewing it; who has paid for his commitment in class attendance and grades; and who intends

to remain attached long after his term ends, while remarking that the kinship anchoring this attachment is fading. The case illustrates how affective and normative commitment can combine with sacrificial loyalty, and how this combination can be both a resource for the organization and a cost for the individual.

The findings carry several practical implications for the mentoring of student leaders. Student affairs staff and organization advisors could (a) introduce simple, structured routines for reviewing performance and turning unmet targets into revised plans, for instance end-of-term reviews and self-leadership training, given the positive association between self-leadership and commitment in Indonesian student associations (Permatasari et al., 2024); (b) establish workload and attendance safeguards that protect leaders' academic standing, in line with evidence on the academic costs of heavy involvement (Boy et al., 2022; Leksuwankun et al., 2023); (c) provide ethics and transparency guidance for supervisory bodies so that loyalty to the organization's image does not become concealment (Mishra et al., 2022); and (d) clarify the purpose and functions of post-tenure roles such as supervisory boards, whose holders may carry strong attachment as well as strong protective instincts. Counseling services may also use the notion of responsibility-based commitment to help leaders distinguish healthy dedication from self-sacrifice.

Future research should extend this single case in several directions. A follow-up interview with the same participant, about a decade later, could test whether the stated intentions to remain and to manage time better were realized, turning the case into a longitudinal one. Studies with several leaders, including women and members of different kinds of organizations, with interviews reaching thematic saturation (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022), would show which themes recur. Triangulating interviews with members' perspectives, organizational documents, and academic records would test the interpretations offered here, and quantitative studies could examine whether self-evaluation moderates the relationship between commitment and academic outcomes.

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