Original Article

Negative Customer Engagement Behavior Intention in Higher Education Under the Lens of Theory of Planned Behavior: A Structural Equation Model

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Abstract: The current literature focuses mainly on the positive valence of customer engagement (CE), hence it still lacks studies on negative CE. Studies from a marketing perspective in higher education also pay attention to promoting students' satisfaction and keeping them positively engaged with their higher education institute (HEI). This study aims to examine the negative CE behavior intention of students within the HEI community under the impact of academic aspect quality, which is one of the core elements in HE service quality. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) is used as a new lens to measure the effects of the attitudinal components of negative CE behavior. The empirical results confirm the negative impact of academic aspect quality on student intention to negatively engage with school. It also reveals the positive impact of dissatisfaction on negative CE behavior intention within HEIs. It suggests that dissatisfaction derived from perceived academic aspect quality is a remarkable predictor of student negative engagement behavior intention within HEIs. Some practical implications for practitioners are also presented in this paper.

Keywords: Academic aspect quality, satisfaction, negative valence, customer engagement behavior, higher education.

1. Introduction

Following the implementation of the financial autonomy mechanism of public universities since 2006, public higher education institute's (HEI's) operation and development in Vietnam have totally relied on their effort in student recruitment. The opened and globally integrated economy policy also brought about the rise in numbers of domestic private HEIs and

some other types of international-related HEIs. From the beginning of 2020 to July 30, 2021, 562 new programs have been opened, of which 413 are opened by financial autonomic HEIs, and 149 were opened by the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training (2021). This has led to increasingly fierce competition among HEIs. HEIs in Vietnam have considered themselves as service provider firms with students as "customers" and have been increasingly applying marketing theories and concepts to gain value, effectiveness, and potential benefits, which have been effective in the business world for their objectives (Le et al., 2021). HEIs in Vietnam have also aggressively adapted to digital transformation to implement blended learning since the pandemic Covid 19 and to build an HEI brand community on social media.

Students are now treated as not only the product of HEIs through the education process in school but also as customers for whom HEIs are trying to improve service quality to make them more satisfied and more positively engaged with their HEI (e.g. Gong, 2018; S. Singh & Jasial, 2021; Štimac & Šimić, 2012) to help HEIs recruit more students-customers for growth objectives. However, based on their experience with the service, customers can be either positively or negatively engaged (Naumann et al., 2017). As now customers have more choices, they consider and evaluate alternatives more thoroughly from many reference sources such as testimonials from other consumers/alumni (Patti & Chen, 2009) and social media (e.g. Murray, 1991; Obermeit, 2012). How former and current customers evaluate and spread their evaluation by word of mouth to others is more and more important to firms, including HEIs (Molesworth et al., 2011). When customers are satisfied, they may positively engage with firms but if they are dissatisfied, whether they are likely to negatively engage or not, is not clearly examined in the current literature on customer engagement. Especially with the typical characteristics of HE, students might consider the costs of negative engagement behaviors with HEIs, such as the effect on their study results (as they need good

marks in their transcript) and the impact on the relationship with their teachers. As in Asian countries like Vietnam, degrees are highly promoted and considered a must to ensure the possibility to secure future employment, and furthermore, teachers are highly respected, and thereby students are supposed to show their respect for their teachers (Evans et al., 2014).

For the above-mentioned reasons, this study aims at exploring and examining whether students as current customers of HEIs have the intention to have negative engagement behavior within their HEI based upon their perception of academic aspect quality and their dissatisfaction with this important element of HEI service under the lens of Theory of Planned Behavior.

2. Literature review on customer engagement (CE) and CE in higher education

In the marketing literature from the early 2000s, the concept of engagement was introduced, and it is associated with the level of an active relationship with a firm shared by a customer and is termed CE (Bowden, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011; Kumar et al., 2010; Palmatier et al., 2018; van Doorn et al., 2010). During the theory development on customer engagement in the marketing discipline, various approaches have already evolved which have led to the various definitions of CE. Up to now, there are four main perspectives, primarily examining customer engagement: (1) as a behavioral manifestation (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; van Doorn et al., 2010); (2) as a psychological state (e.g. Brodie et al., 2011); (3) as a disposition to act (e.g. Storbacka et al., 2016); and (4) as a process including several steps or stages of the customer decision-making process (e.g. Maslowska et al., 2015). The current literature shows that customer engagement can diversify in different situational conditions and times. Literature focusing on behavioral manifestations commonly refers to "customer engagement behaviors" (CEB). Van Doorn et al. specify CEB as behaviors that "go beyond transactions and

may be specifically defined as a customer's behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers" ((van Doorn et al., 2010), p. 254). While Kumar et al. (2010) argue that CE should include transactional behaviors, most scholars (e.g. Bijmolt et al., 2010; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Verhoef et al., 2010; Verleye et al., 2014) concur with van Doorn et al. (2010) and the Marketing Science Institute (*Marketing Science Institute*, 2010), that customer engagement only involves behavior that extends beyond transactions, and thus beyond purchase. Since behaviors can be easily observed and measured, this conceptualization is often utilized by industry practitioners in measuring CE, for example, customer activities such as online word of mouth, customer reviews, peer-to-peer information sharing, and customer-initiated activities with firms (Bolton, 2011).

From the perspective considering HEIs as private service providers since the application of marketization policies and market-type processes all over the world (e.g., Dill, 2003; Huisman & Currie, 2004; Naidoo, 2018; Pringle & Huisman, 2011), in the face of rising competition for both domestic and international students, many universities have dramatically applied marketing theories and concepts, which have been effective in business (Hemsley, Brown & Oplatka, 2006). Current literature shows just a few HE marketing scholars use the exact term "customer engagement" (e.g., Kaushal & Ali, 2020; Peruta & Shields, 2018; J. Singh et al., 2014). Otherwise, terms like brand engagement, customer-brand engagement, online brand engagement, customer/student satisfaction and customer/student advocacy and student loyalty are used in related CE research (e.g., Abdelmaaboud et al., 2021; Calma & Dickson-Deane, 2020; Dollinger et al., 2018; Martirosyan, 2015; Pham et al., 2019; Pringle & Fritz, 2019; S. Singh & Jasial, 2021; Wilkins & Stephens Balakrishnan, 2013).

In the service sector, Bowden et al. (2009) and Rissanen & Luoma-Aho (2016) argued that service relationships are multifaceted, and

customers can be positively and negatively engaged with different aspects of a service relationship. While certain negative or neutral types of involvement - such as passive engagement, non-engagement, and disengagement - have been identified (e.g., Bergdahl et al., 2020; Heinonen, 2018; Naumann et al., 2017), there are still sparse studies examining this valence of CE. Similarly, studies on CE in higher education also focus on the positive valence of CE (e.g., Dollinger et al., 2018; S. Singh & Jasial, 2021).

It is critical to better understand how negative customer engagement and disengagement emerge as argued by Chebat et al. (2005) and Dolan et al. (2019). Once customers commit to this viewpoint, a negative confirmation bias can develop and it is difficult to reverse. Naumann. et al (2017), hence, presented a conceptual model of customer engagement valence ranging from positive engagement, disengagement, and negative engagement. The focal actors in this model are the current customers of public service organizations. These authors present 4 components of disengagement including cynicism, frustration, distrust, and neglect; and 4 components of negative CE including coping, anger, complaining, and sharing. This model suggests the non-positive valence of CE toward service organization focal objects only such as other staff and the organization's community.

3. The conceptual framework and hypothesis development

3.1. Academics aspect quality and student dissatisfaction

In response to the fact that more and more higher education institutions are adopting market-oriented strategies to differentiate themselves from their competitors to attract students, the concept of satisfaction has been thoroughly explored in the past 30 years and has been employed for various purposes. Elliott & Healy (2001) define students' satisfaction as a

short-term attitude that results from an evaluation of students' educational experiences. It is a positive antecedent of student loyalty (Navarro et al., 2005), and is the result and outcome of an educational system (Zeithaml, 1988). The current review explores 13 satisfaction models used in investigating student satisfaction (Weerasinghe et al., 2017). The dominant purpose in numerous studies on student satisfaction is to identify the factors influencing student satisfaction in higher education. Findings proved that student satisfaction is a critical element of university performance and can enhance perceived service efficiency (Abdullah, 2005). Apart from that, Griffith (1996) analyzed parental satisfaction with an educational institution. Casidy and Wymer (2016) investigate the influence of satisfaction on the formation of a brand. A research in Spain shows that student-university identification, student satisfaction, and student trust are key influential factors in determining students' advocacy intentions (Abdelmaaboud et al., 2021). Research of Elliott and Healy (2001) and DeShields et al. (2005) explore key factors influencing student satisfaction related to recruitment and retention.

Many studies have dealt with the theme of service quality in HEIs by the adaptations of the SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988) and SERVPERF (Cronin & Taylor, 1992) scales, as well as the development of new instruments such as the HEdPERF (Abdullah, 2005) and HEDQUAL (Icli & Anil, 2014) scales and other scales developed by individual authors. For Abdullah (2005), the generality of the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF scales is still hazy when they are replicated to evaluate perceived HEI quality, as even with studies on service quality, there remain unresolved questions, mainly in regards to the most proper measurement instrument for evaluating each type of service. Thus in 2005, Abdullah created a new measurement scale named HEdPERF based on the SERVPERF scale. This model considers the specific determinants of service quality in higher education as: non-academic

aspects, academic aspects, reputation, access, program issues and understanding. Icli and Anil (2014) stated that HEdPERF is the most developed scale in the literature to measure service quality in higher education. It is observed the roles of teaching staff have become more stressful in the increasingly fierce competition contexts of HE among domestic and international-related HEIs, and even within an HEI. The teaching staff in HEIs is multi-tasking staff in an education service business purposed to serve the "customer" for HEI's objectives in competition and growth, and also to provide respectful educators for their students. Hence, this research raises the question of how do the students perceive the academic aspect quality, which is under the responsibility of teaching staff, and are they dissatisfied at any level? Does their perception of the academic aspect quality and dissatisfaction relate to their intention to have negative engagement behavior toward focal objects within an HEI? The focal objects within an HEI that students may complain to or share their reviews with are HEI staff, HEI digital communication channels with students, and HEI social media pages and community that are administered by the HEI. Three hypotheses are proposed accordingly as below:

H1: Perceived academic aspect quality negatively relates to customer dissatisfaction.

H2: Perceived academic aspect quality negatively impacts negative customer engagement behavior intention within an HEI.

H3: Dissatisfaction positively relates to negative customer engagement behavior intention within an HEI.

3.2. Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) proposed that behavioral intentions could be explained by "attitudes" towards a particular behavior and "subjective norms" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). This theory explains that individuals' behavioral intention will increase if their attitudes toward the behavior become more favorable. Subjective norms denote the

perceived social pressure to perform a behavior or not. Accordingly, individuals' intention to perform a certain behavior will increase if their subjective norms toward that behavior become more favorable. Extending from TRA, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) explains that consumers are supposed to behave in a rational manner and adds "perceived behavioral control" into the theoretical model. Perceived behavioral control is reliant on beliefs about the existence of those factors that are likely to encourage or discourage the behavior. From the perspective of TPB, individuals are supposed to be typically motivated by weighting expected costs and benefits of alternatives. More specifically, attitudes, social norms and perceived behavioral control will shape the behavioral intention of an individual, which in turn tends to be a strong predictor of behavior.

Consider some addressed characteristics of the education sector and of Gen Z students in the digital age such as: (i) HEIs increasingly use digital online channels like websites and social media platforms to build brand community and interact with students (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2016; Peruta & Shields, 2018); (ii) the ease for students in connecting with other students in the same HEI and other stakeholders within the HEI; (iii) Gen Z customers are considered the first generation of true digital natives for whom searching for the truth is the root of their behavior (Francis & Hoefel, 2018) and they promote unveiling the truth behind all things (Chohan, 2017). As a result, they search and trust 'reviews' from former customers. They then consider making a review based on self-experience with the service as normal and obvious behavior as a customer (Islam & Rahman, 2016). Furthermore, in the role of the learner, students are supposed to still think of complaining directly to the teacher when perceiving low academic teaching quality as talk-back and showing disrespect to their teacher. This behavior is considered bad behavior in Asian culture. As a result, they may choose to complain to other staff of the HEI, or

other feedback channels offered by the HEI such as surveys, email, or to share the review on the HEI social media community.

Accordingly, the authors apply the TPB, which has not been used in previous CE studies, as a new lens for examining the impact of attitudinal factors on negative CE intention within HEIs. This study aims at exploring the negative behavioral dimension of CE, which are complaining and sharing as adapted from Naumann et al. (2017). Below are the remaining three proposed hypotheses and Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework of this study.

H4: Attitude toward negative CEB within an HEI positively influences student intention to have negative CEB within the HEI.

H5: Subjective norm toward negative CEB within an HEI positively influences student intention to have negative CEB within the HEI.

H6: Perceived behavioral control toward negative CEB within an HEI positively influences student intention to have negative CEB within the HEI.
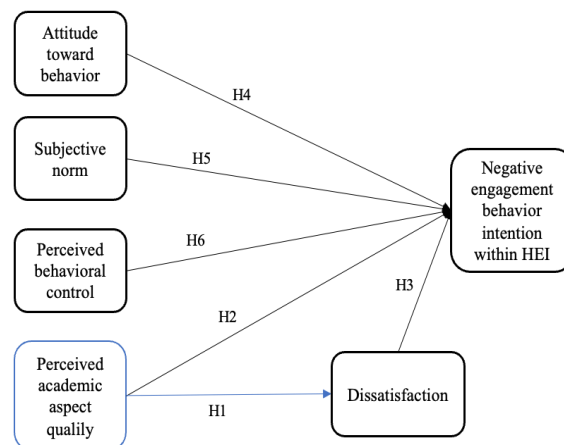

Figure 1: Theoretical framework
Source: Developed by research team (2022).

4. Methodological approach

Questionnaire and measurement

The survey questionnaire is composed of two sections: the first section collects

demographic information, and the second measures items associated with the hypotheses. All questionnaire items employed in this study are from well-established measurements with necessary adjustments to fit the context of higher education.

Pilot test

Prior to the official distribution of the survey questionnaire, the authors conducted two pilot tests. The first one was for face validity. Two experts were asked to read and provide feedback in terms of terminology. From these scholars' readings, further adjustments to the terminology were made. Second, 50 students were asked to answer the survey and provide feedback in terms of terminology. The survey questionnaire was then adjusted for official distribution based on this feedback.

Participants

Respondents to the research were current undergraduate students from the first year to final year from 4 universities in Hanoi, Vietnam. The students were asked about their perception of the academic aspect quality of their school, their dissatisfaction, their negative engagement behavior intention, their attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control toward the negative engagement behavior.

Data collection

An online survey was selected to obtain data. Data collection was undertaken during the two months from 02/2022 to 04/2022. The link to the online questionnaire was posted in the student Facebook groups of universities in the study sample, which are administered by respective universities' person in charge and by students after granting the administrators' permission. According to Hoogland and Boomsma (1998), 200 is the minimum sample size for a study to use the structural equation model (SEM). 503 valid responses were eventually collected. The demographic and basic information of current undergraduate students in the research sample is shown in Table 1.

5. Research results

5.1. Demographic and basic information of respondents

Table 1: Demographic and Basic Information of Respondents

Characteristic	Respondents	
	Frequency (n = 503)	%
Gender		
Not to disclose	2	0.4
Male	117	23.3
Female	384	76.3
Year		
First year	137	27.2
Second year	234	46.5
Third year	103	20.5
Fourth year	29	5.8
Affiliation		
East Asia University of Technology	117	23.3
VNU University of Business and Economics	333	66.2
National Economics University	33	6.6
Academy Of Policy and Development	20	4.0
Chosen school as desired		
Yes	260	51.7
No	243	48.3
Chosen field of major as desired		
Yes	324	64.4
No	179	35.6
Homeland		
Hanoi	213	42.3
Other cities/provinces	290	57.7

Source: Survey data of research team *(2022)*.

Table 1 represents demographic and basic information of our surveyed respondents. Specifically, among the 503 respondents, 117 are males (23.3%), 384 are female (76.3%), and the remaining 2 respondents (0.4%) do not want to disclose their gender. Regarding student's year at university, 137 are at their first year (27.2%). The respective figures for the second,

third, and fourth-year are 234 (46.5%), 103 (20.5%), and 29 (5.8%). Regarding affiliation, 117 (23.3%) are from the East Asia University of Technology, 333 (66.2%) are from VNU University of Business and Economics, 33 (6.6%) are students of the National Economics University, and 20 (4.0%) are from the Academy of Policy and Development. 260 (51.7%) claim that the current school is the school that they desire to study at, and 48.3% claim that it is not. In terms of the field of the major that they are studying, 324 (64.4%) answer that it is their desired option, and 179 (35.6%) claim that it is not. 213 (42.3%) are from Hanoi, and 57.7% are from other cities or provinces.

5.2. Measurement validation

The authors employ confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), using AMOS 24.0 to verify the validation of measurement. As shown in Table 2, all results of multiple fit indices are satisfactory with relevant indices such as CFI, NFI, IFI, TLI, RMSEA or Chi-square/degree of freedom and are with higher or lower respective acceptable levels. Next, factor loadings are examined with all items' factor loadings lower than 0.7 removed. As shown in Table 3, only items with factor loadings higher than 0.7 remain. The results of factor loadings partly ensure the convergent validity of our empirical data. In

order to further confirm the convergent validity, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) are also accessed. As shown in Table 4, all CR and AVE values are higher than respective acceptable levels (0.7 for CR and 0.5 for AVE). Apart from convergent validity, discriminant validity may be also a problem in CFA. To address this issue, we compare the values of AVE with the square of correlation coefficients. As shown in Table 4, all AVE values are higher than the respective squared correlation coefficient, so we may conclude that discriminant validity is not a problem in this study.

Table 2: Results of multiple fit indices

Index	Result	Acceptable level
Chi-square	1110.988	-
Degree of freedom	357	-
Chi-square/Degree of freedom	3.112	< 5
TLI	.952	> 0.9
IFI	.958	> 0.8
NFI	.940	> 0.9
RMSEA	.065	< 0.08
CFI	.958	> 0.9

Source: Data processing results of research team (2022).

Table 3: Results of factor loading for Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Items	Factor loading
PAAQ (Perceived academic aspect quality)	
(PAAQ1) The teaching staff is knowledgeable in answering my questions regarding course syllabi	0.89
(PAAQ2) The teaching staff assists me in a careful and polite manner	0.922
(PAAQ3) The teaching staff is never too busy to refuse my requests for assistance	0.798
(PAAQ4) When I have a problem, the teaching staff is sincerely interested in solving it	0.916
(PAAQ5) The teaching staff has a positive attitude toward students	0.929
(PAAQ6) The teaching staff communicates well in the classroom and online class	0.945
(PAAQ7) The teaching staff provides feedback on my progress	0.828
(PAAQ8) The time available for consulting with the teaching staff is sufficient and convenient	0.877

(PAAQ9) The teaching staff is highly qualified and experienced in its respective field of knowledge	0.871
(PAAQ10) The teaching staff is always updated with latest knowledge in the respective field	0.91
DISSAT (Dissatisfaction)	
(DISSAT1) I am dissatisfied with the academic aspect quality of the school	0.93
(DISSAT2) The academic aspect quality of the school has not made me satisfied	0.976
(DISSAT3) The academic aspect quality of the school has not met my expectation	0.96
ATNEB (Attitude toward NEB)	
(ATDB5) I think posting negative reviews on academic aspect quality on my social media pages is normal	0.947
(ATDB3) I think using digital communication channels of the school to leave negative feedback about academic aspect quality is appropriate	0.852
(ATDB4) I think posting negative reviews on academic aspect quality on the social media community of students within the school is normal	0.924
(ATDB6) I think sharing negative reviews about teaching staff to people outside of the school is not wrong	0.93
(ATDB7) I think advising other people NOT to enroll in the school or a certain major of school is appropriate	0.859
SNNEB (Subjective norm to NEB)	
(SNNEB1) I think other students in class would likely send feedback or complaint of inadequate teaching quality to the school or other school staff	0.872
(SNNEB2) I think other students in the school would like me to share my bad experience with teaching activities on the social media channels of the school	0.922
(SNNEB4) People who connect with me on social media would support the idea that I share my review on inadequate teaching quality of my school	0.879
(SNNEB3) I think other students in the school would like me to share my bad experience with teaching activities on social media community of students within the school	0.927
NEBIW (Negative Customer Engagement Behavior intention within HEI)	
(NEBW1) I submitted negative feedbacks on academic aspect quality to school through digital communication channels of school	0.718
(NEBW2) I complained of academic aspect quality with other staff of HEI through digital communication channels	0.703
(NEBW3) I posted negative reviews on academic aspect quality on the social community of students within school	0.943
(NEBW4) I posted negative reviews on academic aspect quality on online school student communities not administrated by the school staff	0.934
PBNEB (Perceived behavioural control of NEB)	
(PBNEB1) It is easy and convenient for me to send feedback on inadequate teaching quality to the school through different digital communication channels	0.89
(PBNEB2) I can make a complaint about inadequate teaching quality of my school to other school staff in different convenient digital communication channels	0.955
(PBNEB3) I can easily use social media channels to share reviews on inadequate teaching quality of my school	0.772

Source: Research team adopted and developed based on (Abdullah, 2005),
Azjen (1991) and Naumann et al. (2017).

Table 4: Convergent and Discriminant Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	PAAQ	ATNEB	SNNEB	NEBIW	PBNEB	DISSAT
PAAQ	0.974	0.791	0.032	0.978	**0.890**					
ATNEB	0.957	0.816	0.802	0.964	-0.057	**0.903**				
SNNEB	0.945	0.811	0.802	0.948	-0.023	0.896***	**0.900**			
NEBIW	0.867	0.631	0.347	0.942	-0.114*	0.589***	0.529***	**0.795**		
PBNEB	0.907	0.766	0.428	0.939	0.180***	0.550***	0.654***	0.369***	**0.875**	
DISSAT	0.969	0.913	0.139	0.975	0.080	0.366	0.295	0.373	0.026	**0.955**

Source: Data processing results of research team (2022).

5.3. Results of structure equation model

Results of the structural equation model (SEM) are shown in Table 5 and Figure 2. Specifically, our empirical analysis computes that only a 2% variance of DISSAT is explained through PAAQ. Meanwhile, 37.5.1% variance of NEBIW is explained through PAAQ, ATNEB, PBNEB, and DISSAT.

Regarding path analyses, our empirical analysis reveals four out of six hypotheses are accepted while the two others are rejected.

Specifically, PAAQ appears to have a significant negative impact on NEBIW (β = -0.147 p value < 0.005). Thus, H2 is accepted. ATNEB, PBNEB and DISSAT have significant positive impacts on NEBIW with β values and p values are 0.475 (p < 0.001), 0.188 (p < 0.001), and 0.27 (p < 0.001), respectively. Therefore, H3, H4 and H6 are accepted. The β values regarding the relationships PAAQ-DISSAT and SNDB-NEBIW are found as higher than 0.05. Thus H1 and H5 are rejected.

Table 5: Results of Structural Equation Model

	Beta coefficient	P	Hypothesis
Dependent variable: DISSAT			
PAAQ	0.048	0.298	H1 not supported
R^2	2%		
Dependent variable: NEBIW			
PAAQ	-0.147	***	H2 supported
ATNEB	0.475	***	H4 supported
SNNEB	-0.085	0.454	H5 not supported
PBNEB	0.188	0.001	H6 supported
DISSAT	0.270	***	H3 supported
R^2	37.5%		

Chi-square = 1212.635; degree of freedom = 360; Cmin/df = 3.368; normed fit index (NFI) = .943; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .069; The Tucker-Lewis coefficient (TLI) = .947 and Comparative fit index (CFI) = .953

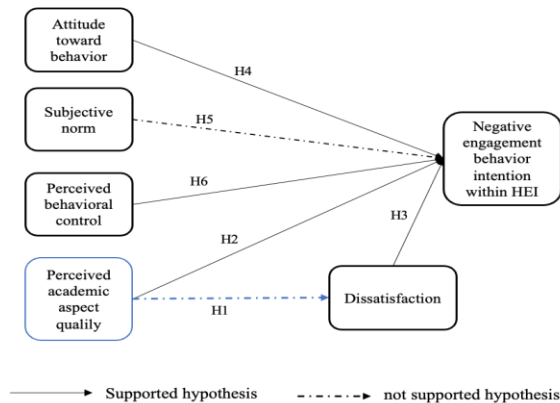*Source*: Data processing results of research team (2022).

Figure 2: Empirical results
Source: Data processing results of research team
(2022).

6. Discussion

For almost two decades, customer engagement has drawn the attention of many researchers, and current literature has shown not just a single emerging definition or conceptualization of customer engagement. It is suggested that four main streams of CE conceptualizations exist in the current literature - CE as a behavioral manifestation, psychological state, disposition, and process. However, the majority of studies focus on positive CE, and there have been few studies on the negative valence of CE. Discovering the causes and characteristics of non-positive CE may support service managers in designing methods to prevent consumers from becoming disengaged or even assist them to restore positive engagement in this group (Dolan et al., 2017). As a result, it is necessary to uncover CE's drivers, hallmarks, and outcomes and their implications for service organizations (Brodie & Hollebeek, 2011; Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; Van Doorn et al., 2010).

This study fills this gap by examining the antecedents of negative customer engagement behavior intention (CEBI) of 503 Vietnamese current undergraduate students. The effect of perceived academic aspect quality and student dissatisfaction on student negative CEBI is

tested using a structural model. Furthermore, this study applies the theory of planned behavior including attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to explain student negative CEBI within higher education institutes.

Theoretical implications

This empirical study contributes to the literature on customer engagement through a better understanding of the non-positive valence of CE. Our empirical data confirm the negative impact of academic aspect quality on student intention to negatively engage with their school. It also revealed the positive impact of dissatisfaction on negative CE behavior intention within HEIs. This finding is in line with other previous studies on student engagement within the context of higher education (e.g., Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016; Sharif & Sidi Lemine, 2021), and on employee engagement at the business-unit level (Harter et al., 2002), although the empirical data of this study does not support the negative impact of perceived academic aspect quality on dissatisfaction. The Confucian culture is a possible explanation for the insignificant relationship between PAAQ and DISSAT. Thus, as Vietnamese students inherit from the Confucian culture, they would always bear a relatively high respect toward their lecturers. Given this, even if they do not have high PAAQ, this does not lead to their dissatisfaction with their lecturers. Nevertheless, low PAAQ still leads to negative engagement behavior intention as found in the empirical analysis. Furthermore, the empirical data shows a significant effect of dissatisfaction on negative engagement behavior intention. It suggests that dissatisfaction derived from perceived academic aspect quality is a remarkable predictor of student negative engagement behavior intention within HEIs.

This study justifies that the TPB model is quite sufficient to explain negative CE behavior despite subjective norms' effect on negative CE behavior not being supported. This finding is in contrast to some previous studies on student engagement in studying activities in HE (e.g., Lung-Guang, 2019) and some previous studies

in different settings such as online gambling (e.g., Procter et al., 2019). A plausible explanation for this is that students intend to negatively engage with their HEI for other reasons rather than considering what their important people think about that behavior, especially related to their own perception of academic aspect quality. This study also proves the key driver effect of attitude toward negative CE behavior on negative CE behavior intention.

This study also finds a significant impact of perceived behavioral control on negative CE behavior intention. It can be interpreted that once the students perceive that they are able to complain and give feedback conveniently through HEI digital communication channels with students, they would likely have the intention to act.

7. Practical implications and conclusion

Our findings suggest some implications for practitioners. First, as this study determined the negative impact of perceived academic aspect quality on negative CEB intention, we suggest that higher education institutes should keep on improving the quality of the academic aspect under the responsibility of teaching staff. Furthermore, based on the empirical data of this study, perceived academic aspect quality and dissatisfaction, as well as two attitudinal factors related to this element, explain up to 37.5% of the negative CEB intention within an HEI; hence, HEIs should pay higher attention to this element. However, this figure is also a good sign for HEIs that their students – the customer – is willing to leave feedback on the service quality, which enables HEI to capture the information and improve the service in a timely manner. HEIs should build convenient communication channels fitting students' media habits and establish an effective and consistent complaint handling procedure for students. It would encourage students to interact with HEI's focal objects rather than objects outside of the HEI. However, the fact is that academic aspects are not something that can be quickly fixed and

improved. Hence, HEIs can invest in and take advantage of digital tools and plugins such as social listening, chat-bot automation, etc. to support their involved staff to at least acknowledge and promptly respond to students' comments and feedback. In the case of Vietnamese universities, which are rushing to open more majors to recruit more students and to compete with other HEIs, these findings are considered a reminder of the necessity to balance recruitment objectives and quality assurance objectives for sustainable business growth.

Second, this study partly confirmed the appropriateness of the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) as a predictor of negative CE behavior within HEIs. The attitude factor is proven to positively impact negative CE behavior intention. As the respondents of this study are students in Gen Z, and nearly half and one third of them claim that the current HEI and field of major is not what they desired to choose, it is suggested that HEIs should pay attention to not only academic aspects but also to other support services as well to these students to make them more satisfied and positively engage with HEIs.

Limitations and future research

Like most other studies, a number of caveats for further amelioration might be found in this study. Though a limitation in CE literature that has been pointed out is the limitations in a methodological approach that heavily relied on surveys (Ng et al., 2020), this study still relied on an online survey. Accordingly, future researchers might use and analyze other secondary data such as records on student complaints, feedback, and reviews of students on social media using social listening tools etc. besides primarily perceived academics aspect quality surveyed data.

Second, among the multidimensional HE service quality, only the academic aspect quality is examined in this study. The impact of other elements of HE service quality on the non-positive CE behavior is open to exploration in the future.

Third, this study only focused on the behavioral component of negative engagement. As Naumann et al. (2017) suggest in their conceptual model, negative engagement valance also includes cognitive and affective (emotional) aspects aside from the attitudinal component. It is suggested future research should conceptualize and examine negative CE behavior from emotional and cognitive aspects.

Fourth, the sample of this study is from some universities in social-economic majors in Hanoi, Vietnam. A future attempt on this topic might overcome this limitation by including participants from various universities in different majors and trying to compare the different mechanisms leading to the negative engagement of students.

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