

MULTIDIMENSIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS INTENTION TO PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION: A STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING APPROACH

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the determinants that influence senior high school students' intention to pursue higher education by integrating motivational, familial, institutional, and social dimensions into a structural model. A quantitative, correlational research design was employed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The sample consisted of 438 grade-12 students from senior high schools (SMA/SMK) in Central Java, Indonesia, selected through proportional random sampling. Data were collected using validated Likert-scale instruments measuring six constructs: self-motivation, family support, social influence, institutional perception, and intention to pursue higher education. The results revealed that family support significantly influences institutional perception ($\beta = 0.617, p < 0.001$), which in turn positively predicts students' intention to continue to higher education ($\beta = 0.347, p < 0.001$). Self-motivation also emerged as a strong direct predictor of intention ($\beta = 0.330, p < 0.001$). However, social influence did not significantly impact students' intentions ($\beta = 0.121, p = 0.106$). Moreover, institutional perception was found to mediate the relationship between family support and intention ($\beta = 0.214, p < 0.001$). This study contributes to the educational literature by incorporating institutional perception as a key mediating variable and by applying a theoretically grounded structural model within a developing country context. The findings underscore the need for educational policy to strengthen family engagement, personalize student motivation strategies, and enhance institutional branding to foster equitable access to higher education.

Keywords: Higher education intention, Family support, Self-motivation, Institutional perception, PLS-SEM, Educational aspiration

1. Introduction

The increasing global demand for higher education reflects a fundamental shift in labour market requirements, knowledge economy competitiveness, and human capital development strategies. In many developing countries, including Indonesia, transitioning from secondary to tertiary education is not merely a personal aspiration but a structural pathway toward upward social mobility and national economic advancement. (UNESCO, 2022). Despite the Indonesian government's commitment to expanding access through programs such as Indonesia Smart Card for College and Education Fund Management Institution Scholarships, disparities remain. The gross enrolment rate for higher education is still below the ASEAN average (World Bank Group, 2023). Particularly in regions with lower socioeconomic conditions. Structural inequality, regional disparities, and the digital

divide are persistent barriers that hinder equal access to higher education. Previous studies have explored multiple determinants of educational intention, including psychological, social, and institutional variables. The Expectancy-Value Theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002), the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2020), and Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), provide frameworks for understanding how individual and contextual factors interact to shape educational goals. However, studies employing integrative models that capture these relationships holistically, particularly in emerging economies like Indonesia, are limited. This study, therefore, seeks to fill that gap by examining how self-motivation, family support, social influence, and institutional perception interact in shaping the intention of high school students to pursue higher education. The research provides empirical insight using a structural model tested through PLS-SEM.

2. Theoretical Framework

The estimated findings show that cultural and economic capital both partially moderate the association between social capital and the inclination to seek a higher education overseas. Cultural capital exerts a greater mediating influence than economic wealth. These findings enhance and expand the previous interacting multiple capitals model, showing the mechanism that drives disparity in the intention to seek a higher education overseas (Y. Guo, 2025). Eighty-seven percent of the students showed a strong desire to pursue postsecondary education. Female students demonstrated somewhat greater levels of intention. Parental support and peer influence had a substantial impact on male students' intentions. For female pupils, family support, locus of control, and school atmosphere were all important predictors. Jamaican senior high school pupils are very motivated to seek postsecondary education. Parental support appears to be a key element in determining students' intentions to seek higher education (Saifuddin, 2015a). Gender-role orientation was also significant, while gender-related factors did not function as predicted. Furthermore, contradictory findings on contextual factors of social support and obstacles provided additional insight into the process. Additionally, an alternate split-group technique was used to evaluate how the model predictors and interactions vary by gender. Gender variations in model predictors revealed a contrasting and engaging tale about men's and job decisions made by women in a traditional, authoritarian South Asian community. The results suggest that Bangladeshi women architecture students are defying stereotypes about gender by choosing high-tech careers, whereas males adhere to stereotyped roles and expectations (Saifuddin, 2015b). Meanwhile, negotiating relatability and responsibility highlighted the specific difficulties African American leaders have in maintaining Genuineness and efficacy are both important. Individual growth extended on these concepts through highlighting the related subjects and importance about getting involved with leadership development initiatives, mentorship, and networking, all of which provided crucial resources toward performance. The overall focus of voices that have been there featured perspectives about knowledgeable African American management, including supplementary topics such as genuine management, improving inclusiveness, equity, and diversity (DEI), and the importance of awareness of oneself and contemplation whereas also providing concrete guidance, which means when developing economical security protocols, preparing the next generation for a lifetime of achievement, a combination of several topics and their subtopics provided a complete picture concerning the multifaceted

and intricate situations faced by African Americans pursuing and moving to top administrative positions at four-year PWIs. The study used an analysis of themes inside the frameworks of resilience theory and critical race theory to identify significant themes that helped understand the issues and successes encountered among these specialists. A investigation summarized existing scholarship and made suggestions to strengthen African American involvement to establish environments that are more welcoming in higher education senior managerial positions. It also pointed out possibilities that require further investigations and considered the effects on practice(Allen, 2025). Demonstrates that attitude toward conduct, subjective standards, and perceived behavioural control all have a substantial impact on the intention to pursue additional research. The importance-performance map reveals that these variables belong to the "keep up the good work" quadrant. However, the moderating influence of information satisfaction is absent. The majority of graduate working adults have good attitudes, positive social influence, and think they have control over enabling elements for pursuing a postgraduate study at a higher education institution(Rethinam et al., 2018). Using the idea of planned behaviour, we performed qualitative research to investigate the determinants underlying female instructors' desire to seek a PhD degree at a Chinese institution. According to data acquired through semi-structured interviews, participants were evaluating their pursuit of a PhD degree in light of the confrontations between ingrained social-cultural notions about women's roles and the institutional expectation of a completely committed researcher. Thus, the theoretical and practical ramifications of our findings are examined(Dai et al., 2021).

3. Methods

3.1 Research Design

This research used a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design. The aim was to test a structural model that hypothesizes direct and mediated relationships among multiple latent constructs.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The population comprised 438 grade-12 students from both public and private SMA and SMK schools across Central Java. A proportional random sampling technique was applied to ensure representative participation across gender, school type, and geographic area. Sample size adequacy was validated using the 10-times rule and supported by power analysis.

3.3. Instrument Development

The instrument was constructed based on validated theoretical frameworks and included five latent variables: (1) Self-Motivation (4 items): indicators of goal-setting, personal drive, and academic resilience, (2) Family Support (3 items): perceived encouragement, material support, and parental expectations, (3), Social Influence (3 items): peer opinions, teacher encouragement, and community role models, (4) Institutional Perception (3 items): image of universities, perceived accessibility, and perceived quality, (5) Intention to Pursue Higher Education (3 items): likelihood of applying, desire to continue learning, and future orientation. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Content and face validity were ensured through expert review, while construct validity and reliability were assessed via PLS-SEM.

3.4.Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted offline with ethical clearance from the institutional board. Analysis was carried out in SmartPLS 4.0. The model evaluation comprised: (1) Measurement Model: tested for convergent validity (outer loading > 0.7, AVE > 0.5), discriminant validity (HTMT< 0.85), and reliability (CR > 0.7). (2) Structural Model: tested path coefficients, significance levels (bootstrapping 5000 samples), and mediation effects.

4. Results

4.1 Measurement Model

All constructs passed the validity and reliability thresholds: (1) Outer Loadings: all indicators > 0.70, (2) Average Variance Extracted (AVE): ranged from 0.546 to 0.743, (3) Composite Reliability (CR): all > 0.80, (4), HTMT Values: mostly < 0.85, though the relationship between Family Support and Institutional Perception was 0.965 suggesting a potential overlap to be addressed in future studies.

4.2. Structural Model

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Significance
H1	Family Support → Institutional Perception	0.617	< 0.001	Significant
H2	Institutional Perception → Intention	0.347	< 0.001	Significant
H3	Self-Motivation → Intention	0.330	< 0.001	Significant
H4	Social Influence → Intention	0.121	0.106	Not Significant
H5	Family Support → Institutional Perception → Intention	0.214	< 0.001	Significant

These results confirm the presence of partial mediation via Institutional Perception and the non-significant direct effect of Social Influence.

5. Discussion

The findings reveal a multi-layered pattern in the formation of students' educational aspirations. Family support was the strongest external factor, consistent with cultural norms in collectivist societies where family is central in decision-making(Q. Guo et al., 2024). This support directly enhances students' perception of higher education institutions, which in turn encourages intention formation. Self-motivation proved to be a vital internal driver, validating the assumptions of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2023). Students who exhibit greater personal agency and goal orientation are more likely to aspire to post-secondary education, regardless of external validation. Interestingly, social influence had no statistically significant impact. This may indicate a paradigm shift, where decisions about

higher education are becoming more individualized and less subject to peer or societal pressure, aligning with trends noted in studies (Zhu & Han, 2022). A poll was circulated to all members of the Louisiana School Nurses Organization, and the findings showed that 65% of them were eager to return to school. Incentives and challenges to pursue higher education were identified, and solutions were presented (Broussard & White, 2014). The amplitude and directional association between SQ and trust validated that they are the major factors of establishing a good attitude toward the institution, improving the desire to promote it among peer groups (Singh & Manohar, 2024). Other research that Data analysis reveals that students' views about overseas study and perceived control over overseas study were significant predictors of overseas study intentions, which in turn influenced study conduct. Furthermore, social norms and the dependability of information sources for abroad study played key roles in influencing students' overseas study intentions and conduct, either directly or indirectly. The findings broaden our knowledge of normative impact by discriminating between different types of norms at both the interpersonal and group levels, which have been shown to play distinct roles. This study also contributes to the international study literature by expanding our understanding of not just which information sources are considered more reliable, but also the variables that determine source trustworthiness (Lin, 2019). Students anticipate higher education to provide them with more knowledge and better career opportunities, which might lead to future social mobility and a greater standard of living. Recognizing the importance of higher education, students proposed that timely measures like as scholarships, housing, reduced tuition fees, and so on be implemented to aid the underprivileged, particularly women. This article concludes that social mobility is a powerful motivator among youngsters. However, social mobility should be somewhat aided and strongly fostered by family, state, society, and individuals themselves (Dom, 2019). In line with other research, when reinforced by an accounting career picture, work-life balance has a favourable and considerable impact on the desire to follow an accounting profession. Accounting students are motivated to pursue professions in accounting because they have a good opinion of the field. Accounting students say that striking a balance between work and personal life might boost their favourable opinions of accounting occupations, motivating them to continue a career in accounting. Work-life balance is an important topic since it can influence, both directly and indirectly, the inclination to pursue accounting jobs. Furthermore, a good image of the accounting profession has been shown to improve the beneficial effect of work-life balance on those pursuing accounting jobs (Hatane et al., 2022). The majority of students want to continue their studies in Malaysian higher education institutions. Furthermore, the value of education and physical facilities is likely to affect the student's decision. To decrease brain drain in Malaysia, the government should focus on these aspects (Ng et al., 2024)

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that students' intention to pursue higher education is determined predominantly by family support, self-motivation, and institutional perception. Family not only provides direct encouragement but also enhances how students perceive higher education institutions. The role of peers and broader social influence appears to be diminishing, suggesting greater autonomy among students in educational decision-making. Recommendations: (1) Policy Level: Initiate family-engagement programs and community education to enhance awareness about higher education opportunities, (2)

Institutional Level: Improve branding, transparency, and support services at tertiary institutions to positively shape institutional perception, (3) School Level: Strengthen career guidance programs that emphasize self-exploration, goal-setting, and autonomy support (4) Further Research: Examine additional moderators (e.g., socioeconomic status, urban-rural location) and use longitudinal designs to capture long-term intention dynamics.

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