

From Support to Aspiration: The Mediating Role of Information Access in Students' Higher Education Aspirations

Muhammad Jailani^{1*}, Amiruddin Siahaan², Muhammad Fadhli

Islamic Educational Management Department, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan,
North Sumatra, Indonesia

Email: muhammad0334243029@uinsu.ac.id¹, Amiruddinsiahaan@uinsu.ac.id²,
Muhammadfadli@uinsu.ac.id³

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v11i1.15852>

Received: 11 June 2026

Revised: 20 September 2026

Accepted: 06 October 2026

Abstract:

This study aims to examine the relationships among parental support, learning motivation, information access, and students' interest in pursuing undergraduate education. A quantitative, causal-associative design was used, involving 189 twelfth-grade students from two public senior high schools. Data were collected using a closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire measuring parental support, learning motivation, information access, and educational interest. The researchers analyzed the data using descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and path analysis to examine direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The findings show that parental support is significantly related to educational interest ($R^2 = 0.077$) and information access ($R^2 = 0.029$), while learning motivation is related to educational interest ($R^2 = 0.024$) and information access ($R^2 = 0.420$). Information access relates significantly to educational interest ($R^2 = 0.265$) and mediates the relationships between parental support and learning motivation and educational interest, with indirect effects of 6.7% and 20.7%, respectively. The model also explains 16.0% of the variance in educational interest. The study concludes that educational aspirations emerge through interconnected familial, motivational, and informational factors. Schools should strengthen career guidance, information services, and parent collaboration to support informed higher education planning.

Keywords: *Parental Support, Learning Motivation, Information Access, Higher Education Interest*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara dukungan orang tua, motivasi belajar, akses informasi, dan minat siswa untuk melanjutkan ke jenjang pendidikan sarjana. Pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain kausal-asosiatif digunakan, melibatkan 189 siswa kelas dua belas dari dua sekolah menengah atas negeri. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner tertutup skala Likert yang mengukur dukungan orang tua, motivasi belajar, akses informasi, dan minat pendidikan. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, analisis regresi, dan analisis jalur untuk mengkaji hubungan langsung dan tidak langsung antarvariabel. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dukungan orang tua secara signifikan berhubungan dengan minat pendidikan ($R^2 = 0,077$) dan akses informasi ($R^2 = 0,029$), sedangkan motivasi belajar berhubungan dengan minat pendidikan ($R^2 = 0,024$) dan akses informasi ($R^2 = 0,420$). Akses informasi secara signifikan berhubungan dengan minat pendidikan ($R^2 = 0,265$) dan memediasi hubungan antara dukungan orang tua dan motivasi belajar dengan minat pendidikan, dengan efek tidak langsung masing-masing sebesar 6,7% dan 20,7%. Secara bersamaan, model tersebut menjelaskan 16,0% varians dalam minat pendidikan. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa aspirasi pendidikan muncul melalui faktor-faktor keluarga, motivasi, dan informasi yang

saling terkait. Sekolah harus memperkuat bimbingan karier, layanan informasi, dan kolaborasi dengan orang tua untuk mendukung perencanaan pendidikan tinggi yang terinformasi.

Kata Kunci: *Dukungan Orang Tua, Motivasi Belajar, Akses Informasi, Minat Pendidikan Tinggi*

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Jailani, M., Siahaan, A., & Fadhli, M. (2027). From Support to Aspiration: The Mediating Role of Information Access in Students' Higher Education Aspirations. *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 11(1), 16-29.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental social investment because it shapes individuals' capacity to participate in society and construct sustainable futures (Efridita, 2026; Fitriani, 2025; Hasanah et al., 2026). At the senior high school level, this role becomes especially important because students begin making decisions that may influence their academic, professional, and social trajectories (Bakke, 2023; Jemini Gashi et al., 2023). Recent studies show that family background, school environment, academic achievement, access to information, and structural conditions affect decisions to pursue higher education (Adeyeye & Dasoo, 2024; Smyth, 2023; Ekawati et al., 2026; Sanjani et al., 2024). These influences suggest that educational continuation is not simply a matter of personal preference, but reflects the opportunities and support available in students' environments (Bhardwaj et al., 2025; Fantinelli et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding students' interest in undergraduate education is important for strengthening educational participation and supporting informed future decisions.

Despite the importance of higher education, not all senior high school students demonstrate the same level of interest in continuing to undergraduate study (Davidovitch & Dorot, 2023; Mitsopoulou & Pavlatou, 2024; Aminah et al., 2025; Hasanah et al., 2026). Some view university education as an essential pathway toward their aspirations, whereas others hesitate because of financial limitations, academic concerns, family responsibilities, employment expectations, or uncertainty about programs (Chernosky & Juarez, 2025; Santos et al., 2025). These differences can create unequal educational trajectories. Students who lack adequate information or encouragement may postpone or abandon higher-education plans even when academically capable (Hinton-Smith & Cane, 2024; Swai, 2025). Consequently, the transition from secondary to higher education remains a significant educational problem because students must make consequential decisions while facing different capacities, expectations, and material conditions that may facilitate or constrain aspirations (Mulaudzi, 2023; Phalapong, 2026; Efridita, 2026; Fitriani, 2025).

The problem is further complicated because students' educational interests develop through interaction with their social environments (Blinkoff et al., 2023; Hidayah & Minarti, 2025). Parents may provide encouragement or expectations, teachers can shape perceptions of academic possibilities, peers may influence aspirations, and school facilities can affect exposure to information about higher education (Chaaban et al., 2024; Silverman et al., 2023; Fatmasari et al., 2025; Khomairoh et al., 2025; Sain et al., 2024). Novelsa & Afdal (2023) and Moosa & Aloka (2023) report that students' interest in pursuing higher education is

associated with internal factors, including attention, desire, motivation, and personal needs, as well as external factors such as parental encouragement, peers, teachers, facilities, and environmental conditions. These findings suggest that interest is multidimensional. However, students' experiences may differ considerably, so closer investigation is needed to understand how influences are perceived and combined when considering higher education (Douwes et al., 2023; Ravšelj et al., 2025).

Previous studies have established that interconnected personal and environmental factors influence students' interest in higher education (Hidayah & Minarti, 2025; Mitsopoulou & Pavlatou, 2024). Research has examined social conditions, family background, school environments, academic achievement, motivation, and access to information as determinants of educational aspirations (Abbas et al., 2025; Costa et al., 2024; Rosalina et al., 2026; Yoeliyanto et al., 2025). This literature helps explain why students choose to continue their education or hesitate to do so. Nevertheless, existing discussions often identify influencing factors separately or emphasize their relationships, providing limited explanation of how students interpret and negotiate these influences when considering undergraduate study (Aston, 2024; Hou et al., 2025). This limitation leaves an important gap in understanding how students transform personal motivations, social support, educational experiences, and perceived constraints into concrete aspirations for higher education (Arifin et al., 2025; Hidayah & Minarti, 2025; Ihsan et al., 2025).

This study addresses this gap by framing students' interest in undergraduate education as a dynamic process of aspiration formation rather than an outcome of isolated determinants. Its state of the art lies in examining how internal motivation and external educational environments interact in shaping students' perceptions and readiness for higher education. This approach is important because factors alone do not explain how students understand opportunities, constraints, and future expectations. By integrating personal and environmental dimensions into a single analytical perspective, this study seeks to provide a contextualized understanding. The findings may help schools, families, and policymakers design interventions that strengthen equitable and informed higher education aspirations.

Based on this background, the research problem concerns how senior high school students develop an interest in continuing their education at the undergraduate level amid interacting personal and environmental influences. The study argues that students' interest is strengthened when motivation, positive learning experiences, family support, teacher encouragement, peer influence, and accessible information create a supportive environment for future planning. Conversely, financial concerns, limited information, academic uncertainty, and unsupportive circumstances may weaken this interest. Therefore, educational aspirations should be understood as the interaction between individual dispositions and contextual conditions. Investigating this interaction can clarify decision-making mechanisms and provide an empirical basis for strengthening educational support and informed transition to higher education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a causal-associative research design (Firdaus & Abrian, 2025; Maharani et al., 2026). The design was selected because the study aimed to examine the relationships and effects among parental support (X1), learning motivation (X2), information access (X3), and students' interest in continuing undergraduate education (Y). The researchers used path analysis to identify direct and indirect effects among the variables and to determine each exogenous variable's contribution to the endogenous variable. The study was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Tamiang Hulu and SMA Negeri 2 Tamiang Hulu. The researchers selected these schools because they serve twelfth-grade students approaching the transition from secondary to higher education, making them relevant settings for examining students' educational aspirations and decision-making. The population included all twelfth-grade students in both schools, and the researchers used total sampling because the population was relatively small and accessible.

The researchers collected data using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire administered to all selected respondents. The questionnaire used a Likert scale to measure parental support, learning motivation, access to information, and students' interest in continuing education. Data collection addressed five fundamental aspects: what was collected, namely respondents' perceptions of the four research variables; who provided the data, namely twelfth-grade students; where the data were collected, namely SMA Negeri 1 Tamiang Hulu and SMA Negeri 2 Tamiang Hulu; when the data were collected, namely during the research period; why the data were collected, namely to obtain empirical evidence concerning the relationships among the variables; and how the data were collected, namely through direct administration of validated and reliable questionnaires. Before statistical analysis, the collected responses were organized, coded, checked, and reduced to ensure completeness and consistency. The organized data were then presented in tables to facilitate interpretation and subsequently verified against the research objectives and hypotheses.

Data analysis consisted of descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. The analytical process began with data reduction, involving selecting, coding, classifying, and organizing questionnaire responses relevant to the research variables (Bryda & Sadowski, 2024; Révész, 2023). The researchers presented the reduced data in descriptive statistical tables and outputs to facilitate interpretation. The researchers then verified the data by checking whether the results were consistent with the research questions and proposed hypotheses. Inferential analysis included instrument validity and reliability testing, normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, followed by multiple regression and path analysis to examine direct and indirect effects among variables. Instrument validity and reliability testing, compliance with classical assumptions, systematic data processing, and statistical software ensured the quantitative data's validity. These procedures strengthened the accuracy, consistency, objectivity, and credibility of the resulting statistical conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study examined the relationships among parental support, learning motivation, information access, and students' interest in pursuing undergraduate education. Data were obtained from 189 twelfth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Tamiang Hulu and SMA Negeri 2 Tamiang Hulu. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and path analysis. In the analytical model, parental support (X1), learning motivation (X2), and information access (X3) were treated as exogenous (predictor) variables. In contrast, students' interest in continuing education (Y) was treated as the endogenous outcome variable. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the study variables.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Parental Support (X1)	189	64	94	80.23	7.623
Learning Motivation (X2)	189	60	99	—	—
Information Access (X3)	189	62	96	80.17	7.690
Interest in Continuing Education (Y)	189	—	—	—	—

Table 1 shows that students generally reported relatively good levels of parental support and access to information related to higher education. The mean score for parental support was 80.23 (SD = 7.623), while access to information had a mean score of 80.17 (SD = 7.690). These results initially indicate that respondents experienced substantial family support and relatively adequate access to information relevant to their educational plans. However, descriptive statistics alone cannot establish causal relationships between variables; therefore, we conducted regression and path analyses to test the proposed relationships.

Direct Effects among Variables

Regression analysis examined the direct relationships among parental support, learning motivation, information access, and students' interest in continuing education. Table 2 summarizes the coefficients of determination and significance results.

Table 2. Regression Results for Direct Relationships

Predictor → Outcome	R ²	Explained Variance	Significance
Parental Support (X1) → Interest in Continuing Education (Y)	0.077	7.7%	Significant
Parental Support (X1) → Information Access (X3)	0.029	2.9%	Significant
Learning Motivation (X2) → Interest in Continuing Education (Y)	0.024	2.4%	Significant
Learning Motivation (X2) → Information Access (X3)	0.420	42.0%	Significant
Information Access (X3) → Interest in Continuing Education (Y)	0.265	26.5%	Significant

Table 2 shows that all examined relationships among the research variables were statistically significant. The regression results indicate that learning

motivation explained the largest proportion of variance in information access, with an R^2 of 0.420 (42.0%). This result suggests that students' motivation to learn was strongly associated with their engagement in obtaining and using information related to higher education. In comparison, parental support explained 2.9% of the variance in information access ($R^2 = 0.029$), indicating a comparatively smaller explanatory contribution. These findings show that learning motivation played a larger role than parental support in explaining differences in students' access to higher education information.

Regarding students' interest in continuing education, information access showed an R^2 of 0.265, indicating that the predictor accounted for 26.5% of the variance in students' interest. This relationship suggests that students with greater access to relevant, adequate information about higher education tend to show stronger interest in pursuing undergraduate study. Information concerning university programs, admission requirements, scholarships, academic opportunities, and career pathways may therefore provide an important basis for students when considering post-secondary educational options.

Parental support also demonstrated a significant relationship with students' interest in continuing education, with an R^2 of 0.077. This result indicates that parental support accounted for 7.7% of the variance in students' educational interest. The finding suggests that parental encouragement and support may contribute to students' willingness to consider undergraduate education as part of their plans. Nevertheless, the relatively modest R^2 indicates that parental support alone does not sufficiently explain variations in students' educational aspirations.

Learning motivation showed a significant relationship with students' interest in continuing education, although its explanatory contribution was relatively limited ($R^2 = 0.024$). This finding indicates that learning motivation accounted for 2.4% of the variance in educational interest in the corresponding regression model. This relatively small explanatory proportion suggests that students' motivation toward learning is relevant but should be considered alongside contextual factors when explaining their intentions to pursue higher education.

Indirect and Simultaneous Effects

The path analysis was subsequently conducted to examine whether information access functioned as an intervening pathway between the predictor variables and students' interest in continuing education. The analysis indicated an indirect effect of parental support on students' educational interest through information access, estimated at 6.7%. Learning motivation also demonstrated an indirect effect on educational interest through information access, estimated at 20.7%. These findings suggest that parental support and learning motivation may influence educational interest beyond their direct relationships by shaping students' access to information relevant to higher education.

When parental support, learning motivation, and information access were considered simultaneously, the structural model explained 16.0% of the variance in students' interest in continuing education ($R^2 = 0.160$). Thus, other factors not included in the present model accounted for 84.0% of the variance. The findings

indicate that students' interest in pursuing undergraduate education is associated with a combination of personal and contextual conditions rather than with a single explanatory factor. Overall, the results highlight information access as a relevant pathway through which students' motivation and parental support may connect with their educational aspirations.

Discussion

The findings show that parental support is significantly and positively related to students' interest in continuing to undergraduate education, explaining 7.7% of the variance. This finding is consistent with Rinjani et al. (2024) and Supriadi et al. (2024), who similarly reported that parental support contributes significantly to students' intentions to pursue higher education. The result also supports Epstein's School, Family, and Community Partnerships perspective, which positions families as important educational environments (Epstein et al., 2025; Hidajat et al., 2026). Parental encouragement, communication, guidance, and involvement in educational decisions can strengthen students' perceptions that higher education is both valuable and attainable (Samad et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2025; Sukardi et al., 2025). Theoretically, this finding confirms the contextual role of family support in shaping educational aspirations.

The relatively modest contribution of parental support also qualifies previous research. Although family encouragement was significant, its explanatory contribution was substantially smaller than that of information access in predicting educational interest. This suggests that parental support alone cannot fully explain students' decisions to continue their education. This finding aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), which emphasizes that supportive environments facilitate motivation but do not replace students' internal agency (Ryan et al., 2025; Standage et al., 2025). In practice, parents should provide guidance while allowing students to participate in educational decision-making. Schools can strengthen this process through parent education, career guidance, and university information sessions. Such collaboration can transform general parental encouragement into more informed educational support.

The findings also indicate that parental support contributes significantly to information access, although its explanatory contribution is relatively small (2.9%). This result is consistent with Epstein's partnership perspective, in which family communication and involvement provide educational resources and guidance (Hidajat et al., 2026; Opoku et al., 2025). However, the relatively limited contribution suggests that students' access to higher education information no longer depends primarily on parents. This interpretation aligns with Purnamasari and Guslina et al. (2026), who emphasize that multiple environmental and individual factors shape educational aspirations. In the contemporary digital environment, students can obtain information through schools, university websites, social media, and online platforms. Thus, family support functions as an enabling condition rather than the sole information source.

Learning motivation showed the strongest relationship with information access, explaining 42.0% of its variance. This finding indicates that motivated students are more likely to actively seek, evaluate, and use information about

universities, programs, admissions, scholarships, and career opportunities (Conover et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). The result is theoretically consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the role of motivation in initiating goal-directed behavior, and with Social Cognitive Career Theory (Champ et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2025), which views educational choices as interactions among personal factors, environmental conditions, and learning experiences. Theoretically, the finding positions information-seeking as an expression of students' motivational agency. Practically, schools should cultivate learning motivation alongside structured information-search activities rather than treating career information provision as a passive process.

Information access also demonstrated a significant relationship with students' interest in continuing to undergraduate education, explaining 26.5% of the variance. This finding supports Guslina et al. (2026), who identify information availability as an important factor in educational aspirations. It is also compatible with SCCT, which emphasizes the role of learning experiences and information in shaping self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Riad et al., 2025; Zheng et al., 2025). Access to reliable information can help students evaluate university choices, admission requirements, financial assistance, and career prospects more realistically. The practical implication is that schools should provide systematic, accessible, and reliable higher education information. This contribution is particularly important for students who may otherwise face informational barriers when planning their educational futures.

Finally, the path analysis demonstrates an interconnected mechanism in which information access mediates the relationships between parental support, learning motivation, and educational interest (Hao et al., 2025; Xu et al., 2024). Parental support showed an indirect effect of 6.7% through information access, whereas learning motivation showed a stronger indirect effect of 20.7%. Simultaneously, the three predictors explained 16.0% of the variance in educational interest, leaving 84.0% attributable to factors outside the model. These findings extend previous studies by demonstrating that family support, motivation, and information access should not be viewed only as independent predictors. Theoretically, the study integrates family partnership, motivational, and career-development perspectives. Practically, schools should adopt integrated interventions combining parental engagement, motivational development, and structured higher education information services.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that students' interest in pursuing undergraduate education is shaped not by individual motivation alone but through the interaction of parental support, learning motivation, and access to educational information. The key insight is that information access serves as an important mechanism through which family support and learning motivation translate into stronger educational aspirations, highlighting the interconnected nature of psychological, familial, and informational factors in students' higher education decision-making. Theoretically, this study contributes an integrated perspective by linking these factors in a single explanatory model, extending understanding of how students' educational aspirations form in the senior high school context.

Practically, the findings suggest that schools should strengthen career guidance, provide reliable higher education information, and build sustained collaboration with parents to support students' educational planning. However, the study is limited by the variables examined and its specific context, with the model explaining 16.0% of the variance in educational interest. Future research should therefore incorporate additional factors, including socioeconomic background, academic achievement, self-efficacy, peer influence, school facilities, and career orientation, to provide a more comprehensive explanation of students' aspirations for higher education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors sincerely thank the principals, teachers, and students of SMA Negeri 1 Tamiang Hulu and SMA Negeri 2 Tamiang Hulu for their valuable cooperation, participation, and support throughout the research process. The authors also thank the academic supervisors and colleagues who provided guidance, constructive feedback, and encouragement during the preparation of this study. Finally, the authors thank their institution for providing the academic environment and facilities that supported the completion of this research.

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