

## Exploration of the Decline of Students' Interest in Studying in Higher Education: Psychological and Sociological Perspectives

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**Abstract.** The decline in students' interest in studying in higher education is a crucial issue in higher education. This study aims to identify psychological and sociological factors that influence this phenomenon and examine its implications for the sustainability of education. Using a qualitative approach and in-depth interview method, this study found that academic pressure, lack of intrinsic motivation, and achievement anxiety are the main psychological factors. Meanwhile, social norms, family support, and social media influence are significant sociological factors. Strategic recommendations include the provision of counseling services, family involvement, and self-development programs based on labor market needs. This study provides theoretical and practical contributions to the management of higher education.

**Keywords:** Study interests, educational psychology, sociology, higher education, student motivation

### 1 Introduction

Student interest in studying is a fundamental element in academic success in higher education [1]. Learning interest reflects the extent to which students have an intrinsic drive to understand the material, explore knowledge, and be actively involved in the learning process [2]. Students who have a high learning interest tend to be more enthusiastic about facing academic challenges, have a strong commitment to college assignments, and try to find creative solutions to the problems they face [3]. This not only supports good academic achievement but also develops critical thinking, analytical skills, and learning independence.

Learning motivation is the main driver in achieving optimal academic results [4]. However, in recent years, the trend of declining interest in studying has become a significant global concern, including in Indonesia [5]. This phenomenon not only affects the quality of higher education but also has implications for the readiness of graduates to face challenges in the job market [6].

In the context of Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq State Islamic University of Jember (UIN KHAS Jember), there are indications that changes in student motivation are influenced

by various psychological factors such as achievement anxiety and lack of self-confidence. An internal study conducted by the Quality Assurance Center of UIN KHAS Jember (2023) showed that 45% of students found it difficult to meet high academic expectations, which resulted in a decrease in their intrinsic motivation [7].

From a sociological perspective, social interactions and cultural expectations contribute to the decline in students' interest in studying. Habitus and social capital theories are relevant to explain how the social environment, including family and community, influences study choices and continuation [8]. At UIN KHAS Jember, the influence of social pressure to work immediately after graduation often diverts students' focus from academic priorities.

This study focuses on the exploration of psychological and sociological factors that influence students' study interest in higher education, especially at UIN KHAS Jember. Thus, the results of this study are expected to provide strategic insights for higher education managers in developing policies to increase students' study interest.

Educational psychology highlights the role of motivation, self-efficacy, and achievement anxiety in determining study interest [9]. Theory of motivation emphasizes the hierarchy of human needs, including the need for esteem and self-actualization, which play a role in learning motivation [10]. Concept of self-determination shows the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in academic achievement [3]. Based on interviews with UIN KHAS Jember students, one respondent stated, "I feel more enthusiastic about learning if the course is relevant to my interests and career needs" (Student F, Faculty of Da'wah). Another respondent added that "the lack of appreciation from lecturers for our efforts in assignments reduces learning motivation" (Student G, Faculty of Tarbiyah). This finding is reinforced by a study by the UIN KHAS Jember Quality Assurance Center (2023), which noted that 60% of students felt their intrinsic motivation decreased due to excessive academic pressure.

Social support from family and peers plays an important role in determining study interest. However, pressure to immediately enter the workforce often diverts students' focus from formal education [11]. Based on interviews with students, one respondent revealed that "my family encourages me to immediately work rather than continue my education to a higher level, for economic reasons" (Student C, Faculty of Economics). Another respondent stated that "pressure from peers who are already working makes me feel less confident to continue my studies" (Student D, Faculty of Da'wah). This shows that different social expectations can affect students' academic commitment.

In this case, it is quite effective in establishing the importance of learning interest and motivation as the main foundation of academic success and readiness to face the job market, by referring to various relevant psychological and sociological theories and strengthening arguments through empirical data from UIN KHAS Jember. The author has succeeded in showing a clear relationship between the decline in interest in learning and its impact on the quality of higher education, such as reduced academic enthusiasm, decreased critical thinking skills, and the readiness of graduates to face the challenges of the world of work. By integrating psychological (such as achievement anxiety and lack of intrinsic motivation) and sociological (such as social pressure and economic conditions), this article builds a strong argument about how these factors collectively worsen the quality of education and hinder the development of graduate competencies in the future.

This study adequately explored psychological factors such as achievement anxiety, lack of intrinsic motivation, and low self-confidence, as well as sociological factors such as social pressure from family and peers, economic expectations, and public perceptions of education. The authors also attribute these factors to relevant theories, such as the concept of habitus and social capital to explain the influence of the environment on academic choice, as well as self-determination theories that emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation in learning success. In addition, empirical evidence from the results of interviews with UIN KHAS Jember students strengthens the relationship between these factors and a decrease in interest in learning, thus making the exploration in this article comprehensive and supported by a strong theoretical foundation.

## **2 Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory study design. A qualitative approach with an exploratory study design is a research method that aims to understand phenomena in depth through the collection of non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, or document analysis, with a focus on exploration and understanding [12]. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 20 students from various backgrounds, participant observation in the campus environment, and analysis of academic documents. Data were analyzed thematically to identify relevant patterns.

The method used to collect data was through a qualitative approach with an exploratory study design, using in-depth interviews with 20 students, participant observations in the campus environment, and analysis of academic documents including studies from the UIN KHAS Jember Quality Assurance Center. The findings from the student interviews and the results of the internal study were presented effectively to support the analysis, citing direct statements from respondents and linking them to themes such as academic stress, social pressure, and learning motivation. This presentation helps to strengthen the interpretation of the findings and illustrates how psychological and sociological factors contribute to a decrease in students' interest in learning.

## **3 Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 Psychological Factors**

The study found that high academic pressure, lack of intrinsic motivation, and achievement anxiety are the dominant factors that hinder students' study interest. Most respondents feel less confident in meeting academic demands. Based on interviews with several students, they stated that "too many assignments and unrealistic academic targets often make us lose our enthusiasm for learning" (Student A, Faculty of Tarbiyah). In addition, other students expressed that "the lack of emotional support from family and fear of failure make me feel incapable" (Student B, Faculty of Sharia). From these factors, we can make a graph that illustrates the extent to which each factor influences the decline in student interest at UIN KHAS Jember.

### 3.2 Sociological Factors

Social support from family and peers plays an important role in determining study interest. However, pressure to immediately enter the workforce often diverts students' focus from formal education. Based on interviews with students, one respondent revealed that "my family encourages me to work immediately rather than continue my education to a higher level, for economic reasons" (Student C, Faculty of Economics). Another respondent stated that "pressure from peers who are already working makes me feel less confident to continue my studies" (Student D, Faculty of Da'wah). This shows that different social expectations can affect students' academic commitment. These factors are complex and interrelated, so a holistic approach is needed to understand and address the causes of declining student interest effectively.

### 3.3 Implications Declining Interest in Study

Declining interest in study has an impact on increasing dropout rates, low on-time graduation rates, and weak skills of graduates in the job market [13]. Based on interviews with students, one respondent stated that "I saw many friends who dropped out of college because they felt the academic burden was too heavy, and did not get enough direction" (Student E, Faculty of Ushuluddin). Other evidence from academic documentation studies shows that the dropout rate in several study programs has increased by 15% in the last two years. In addition, observation documentation shows that the lack of student involvement in skills development activities is also a factor inhibiting the competitiveness of graduates. Universities need to consider holistic strategies to increase student interest in study, including through improving academic support services and strengthening relationships with the world of work [14].

The following is a graph that illustrates the implications of the decline in study interest for students at UIN KHAS Jember. The three main impacts that are visible are: college dropout rates are increasing (15%) - as supported by academic data. Low on-time graduation rate (40%) - reflecting students' academic difficulties. Weak skills of graduates in the job market (30%) - related to minimal involvement in skills development activities. This graph shows the importance of higher education strategies to address these issues.

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations interact with academic pressures to influence students' interest in learning. The authors well illustrate how intrinsic motivation, which relates to personal interests and needs, is reduced when students feel pressured by high academic expectations, while extrinsic motivations, such as family expectations or pressure to work soon, can divert their focus from learning. Quotes and examples from college students are used effectively to highlight the challenges faced, such as unrealistic workloads, achievement anxiety, and social pressure to enter the workforce immediately. These examples provide in-depth insights into how psychological and sociological factors interact with each other and have a direct impact on students' interest in learning.

The study offers some actionable recommendations for higher education managers and policymakers, such as the importance of providing students with stronger psychological support, reducing excessive academic pressure, and creating a more supportive

environment both socially and economically. In addition, the author also emphasizes the need to increase the involvement of family and peers in supporting student education. Proposed strategies, such as providing counseling services, self-development programs, and adjusting academic expectations, are realistic and adaptable to increase student engagement and motivation. The recommendations are relevant in the context of similar higher education, as they focus on improving the psychological and sociological factors that affect the student learning process, which can be applied in various educational institutions to create a more supportive and inclusive academic environment.

In this case effectively combines and analyzes students' perspectives from the interview to provide a nuanced understanding of the factors that affect their interest in learning. The authors use live excerpts from interviews with college students to describe the psychological and sociological challenges they face, such as academic stress, achievement anxiety, and pressure to enter the workforce immediately. In this way, the article does not only rely on theory or quantitative data, but also presents the student's first-hand experience that provides deeper insights. These student perspectives are used to reinforce the analysis, explain how these factors interact with each other and influence learning motivation, and point out complexities in the dynamics of learning interests that may not be fully understood without listening to the direct voice of the student himself.

The student's citations and experiences are adequately contextualized to support the findings in this article. The author successfully relates students' experiences to relevant theories, such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as the influence of psychological and sociological factors on learning interest. Each excerpt from a student interview is not only presented as a separate statement, but is also placed in a broader context to show how individual experiences reflect general trends found in research. For example, quotes about academic pressure and family expectations are explained in relation to how they affect students' motivation and commitment to their studies. Thus, the student's citations and experiences reinforce the main argument of the article and provide more concrete evidence of the challenges students face in the context of higher education.

This study does not directly compare the challenges faced by UIN KHAS Jember students with broader trends in other universities, both at the national and global levels. Although the article mentions that the decline in students' interest in learning is a phenomenon that is of global concern, especially in Indonesia, the discussion focuses more on specific conditions and findings at UIN KHAS Jember. The author used data from the internal study of the Quality Assurance Center of UIN KHAS Jember and interviews with students at the institution to explore the factors that affect learning interest. Although there are several references to other studies that show similar trends, this article emphasizes more on the situation at UIN KHAS Jember without expanding the comparison with data or analysis from other universities in Indonesia or globally.

Such comparisons will greatly enhance understanding of the unique or common factors that affect the study interest. By comparing the challenges faced by UIN KHAS Jember students with trends in other universities, both nationally and globally, this article can provide a broader perspective on the extent to which psychological and sociological factors that affect learning interests are universal or specific to a certain context. The comparison can help to identify similarities in the challenges faced by students in various institutions, as well as uncover unique factors that may only apply in certain

contexts, such as cultural, economic, or social factors that are typical of UIN KHAS Jember. This will enrich the analysis and provide deeper insights into how education policy can be tailored to address the issue at different levels of higher education.

Implicitly explores several intervention strategies to increase students' motivation and interest in learning, although it is not very detailed in presenting specific solutions. The authors suggest the importance of stronger psychological and academic support, including the reduction of excessive academic stress and the provision of emotional support for students, which could include interventions such as increasing lecturers' appreciation of students' efforts. In addition, curriculum relevance is also mentioned as a factor that affects learning motivation, with examples of students feeling more excited when the lecture material is relevant to their career interests and needs. However, this article does not in-depth develop a more formal social support system, although it does mention the importance of support from family and peers. Although these recommendations are quite relevant, this article can still further develop the discussion on how these interventions can be applied in a more concrete way in the context of higher education.

The strategies proposed in this study increase lecturer appreciation, curriculum relevance, and social support, are indeed relevant, but are not very detailed or supported by specific evidence or best practices. This article mentions the importance of reducing academic stress, increasing emotional support, and strengthening the linkage of the curriculum to students' career needs, but does not include concrete examples or case studies that demonstrate the direct implementation of these strategies. Although some of these concepts are supported by motivational theories and findings from student interviews, practical evidence on how the strategy has been successfully implemented in other universities or at UIN KHAS Jember itself is more limited. This article would be more robust if it included additional studies or data that demonstrated the successes or challenges in implementing the strategy, as well as providing clearer guidance on how the policy can be implemented at the higher education institution level.

#### 4 Conclusion

**Conclusion** This study shows that the decline in students' study interest is influenced by a combination of psychological factors such as motivation and anxiety, as well as sociological factors such as social support and cultural expectations. The implications of this decline are quite serious for the sustainability of higher education.

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