

Analysis of High School Students' Perceptions of Continuing Studies at State Universities

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Keyword

Internal Factors, External Factors, Interest, Higher Education

Abstract

This research aims to analyze high school students' perceptions of continuing their studies at state universities based on internal and external factors. This research employed a survey approach involving Grade XII students from public and private high schools in Karawang Regency. The research instrument consisted of a questionnaire with 40 statement items covering internal and external indicators, supported by interviews with selected respondents. Data were analyzed using descriptive percentage analysis to determine the level of students' interest and the influencing factors. The results of the study indicate that both internal and external factors fall into the "very low" category, showing that students' interest in continuing to higher education is generally weak. Internal factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and career planning were found to be low, while external factors including family economic conditions, parental support, peer influence, and limited access to information significantly affect students' decisions. Interview findings also reveal that many students prefer to enter the workforce immediately after graduation to support their families financially, although some still aspire to pursue higher education in the future. In conclusion, students' low interest in continuing to higher education is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors, with economic conditions being the most dominant. Therefore, it is recommended that schools, the government, and relevant stakeholders strengthen guidance programs, provide access to scholarships, and raise awareness of the long-term benefits of higher education to encourage students to pursue further studies.

INTRODUCTION

The path to success in pursuing education is not the same for every individual, as each student is unique and faces different inhibiting factors (Buckley et al., 2023; Irenchieva & Zhexembaeva, 2025; Larios & Zetlin, 2023; Magfud et al., 2023; Nurmaliyah et al., 2023; Tiwari & Fahrudin, 2024). This is particularly evident in the current era of technology and information, which dominates human life, compounded by fluctuating economic conditions and external cultural influences that may conflict with the values and dignity of the Indonesian nation. These circumstances have a significant impact on students' psychological development in their pursuit of education, especially when parents are unable to support their children's transition to higher education.

According to the 2024 People's Welfare Indicator report by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the dropout rate in the 2023/2024 academic year increased at all levels compared to the previous academic year, except for high school. The report also concludes that the percentage of high school graduates continuing to higher education remains very low (Amaral, 2022; Halabieh et al., 2022; Merayo & Ayuso, 2023; Nora, 2023; Wolfe, 2025). In the 2022/2023 academic year, the elementary school dropout rate reached 0.17%. This figure then increased to 0.19% this year. Meanwhile, at the junior high school level, the dropout rate reached 0.18% in the 2023/2024 academic year, up from 0.14% the previous year. Furthermore, the dropout rate at the high school level decreased from 0.20% in the 2022/2023 academic year to 0.19% the following year. At the vocational high school level, the dropout rate again increased from 0.23% to 0.28%. (Irfan, 2024)

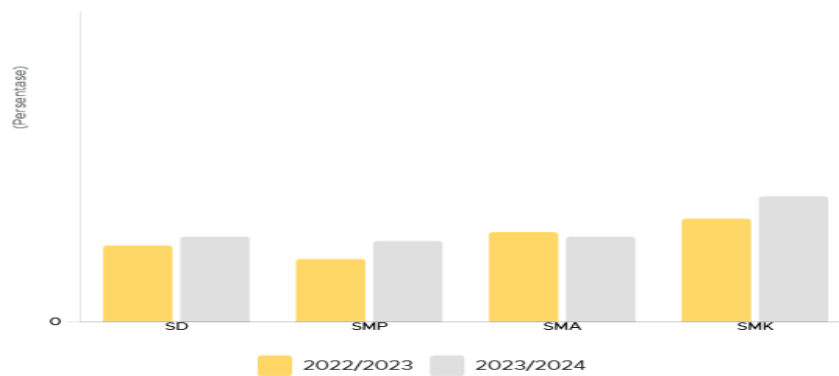


Figure 1. School Dropout Rate for the 2022/2023 – 2023/2024

Source: Central Statistics Agency (BPS), 2024 – Processed by the authors

Thus, it is evident that the dropout rate from the 2022/2023 to the 2023/2024 academic year increased across all levels of education (elementary, junior high, and senior high school). If this situation is allowed to persist without proactive efforts from relevant stakeholders, there is a strong possibility that the rate will continue to rise in the 2024/2025 academic year.

Karawang Regency, which is geographically positioned as a supporting area for Indonesia's capital city, Jakarta, plays a crucial role in human resource development (Arnu et al., 2025; Mulya & Hudalah, 2024; Rachmawati et al., 2024; Syaban & Appiah-Opoku, 2023; Talitha & Firman, 2026). It serves as an educational benchmark, particularly for students aspiring to continue their studies from high school to university. Therefore, research is needed to examine students' motivation both internal and external amid the rapid growth of business and industry in Karawang Regency. This development demands human resources equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed through higher education.

Learning motivation is a crucial factor in determining students' academic success. In Indonesia, despite the abundance of potential learners, survey results indicate that maintaining strong learning motivation remains a major challenge. A survey of students across Indonesia revealed several factors influencing student learning motivation, both internal and external, including monotonous and unpleasant teaching methods and methods, unclear curriculum and teaching objectives, the curriculum's lack of relevance to students'

needs and interests, students' economic and sociocultural backgrounds, and personal issues with parents, friends, and the surrounding environment (Hendrizar, 2020) .

As background for this study, based on the research team's experience as lecturers at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Singaperbangsa Karawang, it was observed that students admitted through the SBMPTN (Joint Entrance Selection for State Universities) and SNMPTN (National Invitation-Based Entrance Selection) pathways were predominantly graduates from outside Karawang Regency. This raises an important question: what are the obstacles or factors that influence students' ability to enter state universities?

Considering the above description, the FKIP research team of University of Singaperbangsa Karawang conducted a survey of grade XII students from public and private senior high schools in Karawang Regency to examine their interest in continuing their studies to higher education, viewed from both internal and external factors. This study aimed to obtain clear information from students based on these two indicators, so that the results could serve as recommendations for schools and local education offices in planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating programs according to students' interests and talents after graduating from high school particularly in relation to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed through the teaching and learning process. This aligns with the view expressed by Cecep Mulyawan in his speech at the Dissemination of Research Results event at Akshaya Hotel Telukjambe Karawang and the Mathematics Education Seminar organized by the MGMP Mathematics Association of Karawang Regency. He emphasized that the learning process should serve as a means of providing students with fundamental knowledge and skills, as most high school graduates in Karawang tend to seek employment rather than continue their education to the higher education level (Gelar Maulana, 2025).

Several previous studies have examined factors influencing students' interest in continuing their education. Hendrizar (2020) found that students' learning motivation is influenced by internal and external factors, including teaching methods, curriculum relevance, economic background, family support, peer environment, and personal problems. Ginanjar (2016) showed that students' perceptions of the world of work influence their interest in continuing to higher education, although other factors also play a significant role. Meanwhile, Solehudin (2016) revealed that interest in continuing studies is influenced by perceptions of job opportunities and parents' economic conditions. Rahmat et al. (2025) also found that economic limitations, environmental influence, and lack of information are among the main causes of adolescents' low interest in pursuing higher education.

Although these previous studies provide important findings, there is still a research gap that needs to be addressed. Most existing studies discuss students' interest in higher education in general contexts, while studies that specifically examine high school students' perceptions in industrial regions such as Karawang Regency remain limited. In addition, previous research often focuses only on economic factors or motivation, whereas this study examines both internal and external factors in a more integrated manner. Internal factors include students' motivation, confidence, academic readiness, aspirations, and career planning, while external factors include family support, peer influence, school environment, community views, financial conditions, and access to information about universities and scholarships.

Based on the problems outlined above, the research question of this study is: What are the internal and external factors that hinder high school students in Karawang Regency from

continuing their studies at state universities? This investigation employs a survey approach with a research sample selected through purposive sampling, which is considered representative of high school students in Karawang Regency.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on analyzing the perceptions of Grade XII high school students in Karawang Regency regarding their interest in continuing studies to state universities by considering both internal and external factors. This study is also distinctive because it is conducted in an industrial area where employment opportunities strongly influence students' educational decisions. Therefore, the findings are expected to provide a more contextual understanding of why many students prefer to work rather than continue their studies, despite the long-term benefits of higher education. By combining questionnaire data and interview findings, this study offers a more comprehensive description of students' perceptions and the realities they face.

Accordingly, this study is entitled "Analysis of High School Students' Perceptions in Karawang Regency Regarding Continuing Studies to State Universities Viewed from Internal and External Factors of Students." Based on the problems described above, this study aims to analyze the internal and external factors that influence high school students' perceptions of continuing their studies to state universities in Karawang Regency. Specifically, this study seeks to identify students' motivation, academic readiness, family support, financial constraints, peer influence, school guidance, and access to higher education information. The results of this study are expected to provide practical benefits for schools, guidance and counseling teachers, parents, universities, and local education offices in designing programs that encourage students to continue their education. In addition, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of educational guidance studies, especially in understanding students' decision-making processes regarding higher education in industrial regions.

METHOD

This research method used a survey approach involving grade XII students from public and private high schools in Karawang Regency during the 2024/2025 academic year. The survey sample was selected based on high school clusters categorized by geographical location, ensuring that the sample adequately represented the population with a sufficient level of confidence.

Table 1. Survey Research Sample Data

No	School name	Address	Information
1.	State Senior High School 5 Karawang	Jl. Jend. A. Yani, Karawang City	City Representative
2.	State Senior High School 2 Cikampek	Kosambi Dawuan Purwasari Cikampek Main Street	Western Region Representative
3.	State Senior High School 1 Rengasdengklok	Jl. Raya Pedes-Rengasdengklok Kutawaluya	Northern Region Representative
4.	State Senior High School 1 Pangkalan	Loji-Pangkalan Karawang Main Road	Southern Region Representative
5.	Harapan Umat Private High School, Karawang	Jl. Pakuncen Telukjambe Karawang	Private School Representative

Source: Research sample data compiled by the researchers, 2025

The survey research instrument consisted of 40 questions or statements, consisting of 20 questions or statements each for internal and external indicators. The survey was conducted online using the Google Form link: https://bit.ly/Motivasi_Studi_Lanjut

The survey instrument was piloted at SMA Negeri 1 Telukjambe Timur Karawang before use to assess the validity and reliability of the instrument. Of the 40 questions, 34 were found to be valid and reliable. The survey data processing technique used the percentage of respondents' answers with the following formula:

$$P = \frac{f}{n} \times 100\%$$

Information:

P = Percentage value of respondents' answers

F = number of respondents' answers

N = ideal number of respondents' answers

100% = constant percentage value

From the final percentage value of each survey question, it is converted to the following percentage criteria:

Table 2. Survey Percentage Criteria Table

Percentage of Answers	Criteria
0<P≤49	Very less
50<P≤59	Not enough
60<P≤69	Currently
70<P≤79	Good
80<P≤100	Very good

Source: (Mukhtar, 2010) , (Arikunto, 1998)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the questionnaire results from two indicators, namely internal and external indicators regarding students' interest in continuing their studies at university can be seen in the following table:

Table 3. Summary of Questionnaire for Internal Student Indicators

No	Statement	Percentage (%)	Criteria
1	I feel that continuing higher education is important.	54.90	Not enough
2	I am less interested in continuing because many college graduates are unemployed.	12.48	Very less
3	I want to continue my higher education to improve my abilities.	46.17	Not enough
4	I am interested in continuing my studies at university because graduates have a greater opportunity to obtain a better position in the workplace.	36.24	Very less
5	By continuing my studies I can improve my skills and experience.	44.43	Very less
6	I am more proficient in subjects that are based on calculations.	13.02	Very less
7	I am more proficient in subjects that are not based on numbers	Not Valid	
8	I have analytical and problem solving skills	25.50	Very less

No	Statement	Percentage (%)	Criteria
9	I have critical and logical thinking skills	33.15	Very less
10	I have the ability to communicate effectively	32.89	Very Poor
11	I made college my main goal after graduating from high school.	33.29	Very Poor
12	I often think and imagine life in college	26.98	Very Poor
13	I'm not sure my future will be better if I go to college.	7.65	Very Poor
14	I already have a career path plan after graduating from college.	13.12	Very Poor
15	I am not optimistic about being able to go to college because I have certain limitations.	4.16	Very Poor
16	I am preparing myself from now on to pass the college selection.	21.34	Very Poor
17	I have already decided on the study program I want to take at college.	25.91	Very Poor
18	I don't feel confident that I can compete in the college entrance selection.	11.81	Very Poor
19	I have a target to be accepted into my favorite college	24.16	Very Poor
20	I am willing to study harder in order to get into college.	38.52	Very less

Source: Questionnaire data processed by the researchers, 2025

Table 4. Summary of Questionnaire for External Indicators of Students

No	Statement	Percentage (%)	Criteria
21	Parents play a big role in supporting continuing studies at university.	38.66	Very less
22	I am motivated to go to college so I can help my family in the future.	49.40	Very less
23	My parents have high hopes that I can continue my higher education.	41.07	Very less
24	How often do your parents monitor your study progress?	17.05	Very less
25	Parents provide motivation and encouragement to continue studying	26.98	Very less
26	The learning atmosphere at my house is conducive	11.95	Very less
27	Family decisions do not influence my decision to continue my studies at higher education.	INVALID	
28	My friends' opinions had a big influence on my decision to continue my studies at university.	INVALID	
29	I chose this major because the majority of my group mates chose that major.	INVALID	
30	I often discuss college with my friends.	31.68	Very less
31	The school environment supports me to continue my studies at university.	29.40	Very less
32	The people around me think that it is important for me to continue my studies at university.	19.06	Very less
33	The views of the surrounding community have a big influence on your decision to continue your studies.	11.41	Very less
34	My family's financial capacity is sufficient to support my studies.	11.68	Very less
35	I am worried that my tuition fees will not be enough to cover the cost of my studies.	INVALID	

No	Statement	Percentage (%)	Criteria
36	I want to study while working because my family's finances are limited.	INVALID	
37	The guidance counselor helped me understand my choice of major and campus.	26.98	Very less
38	I don't know what types of scholarships there are for college.	INVALID	
39	I lack information for college admission registration and selection.	INVALID	
40	The government's scholarship policy makes me more optimistic about going to college.	28.09	Very less

Source: Questionnaire data processed by the researchers, 2025

To strengthen the survey results obtained through the questionnaire, supporting data were collected from interviews with several students. A summary of the interview findings is presented in the following table:

Table 5. Summary of Questionnaire for External Indicators of Students

No.	Name	Which school are you from	Interview Activities
			What do you want to do after graduating from school? College or work?
1.	Muhammad Fachrizal Alif Fahrezi	State Senior High School 5 Karawang	After graduating from college, I want to work first. Because job opportunities are abundant in Karawang, companies usually prioritize Karawang residents. Karawang is known for its numerous industries and high Regional Minimum Wage (UMR). As a supporting factor, I also possess skills , which enhance my potential.
			Why do you want to work first?
			I originally wanted to go to college, but when I was in 10th grade, my family's finances declined, so I switched from wanting to go to college to working first. The main factor was my financial situation (although I wasn't the breadwinner) as I am the third of four children. My parents work, and my older sibling also works, but it's not enough to cover my daily needs.
			What percentage of companies are accepted? And where are the companies?
			75% at PT Denso, because I also participated in a basketball competition held there, and thank God I won.
			Do school subjects support preparation for work?
			It is enough because learning mathematics can be a basis for thinking, but it must be developed further in an autodidactic way.
			Does the environment also support your work?

No.	Name	Which school are you from	Interview Activities
			<p>Yes, my parents were very supportive of my career. Most of my friends wanted to work, and my basketball coach also provided information about salaries and how to apply to companies for jobs.</p>
			<p>Are you ready to compete with other school graduates and even university graduates?</p> <p>Ready to compete, if one company fails, there are always others. Although the chances are slim, I want to continue working because of pressing family needs.</p>
2.	Hendra Prayoga Yunita Sri Ayuningsih	State Senior High School 1 Pangkalan	<p>What are your views on continuing college after graduating from high school?</p> <p>It was good, but I didn't go to college because of the cost and my parents' financial situation. My parents are laborers, so they couldn't afford my college needs.</p>
			<p>Where do you plan to work?</p> <p>The plan is to work at Yamaha or go with my brother to the ice cream factory.</p>
			<p>Are you ready to compete in the world of work?</p> <p>Yes, because I have a big chance to be accepted in the company because I have an ID card domiciled in Karawang.</p>
			<p>Apart from economic reasons, what convinces you to work?</p> <p>I was also attracted by the high salaries, and the ease with which Karawang natives can be hired by these companies. This creates a privilege for Karawang residents. Then there's peer influence; in Hendra's class, 90% of the students will not continue their studies because they want to work in factories.</p>
			<p>If you already have your own money, do you still think about going to college?</p> <p>Yes, if you have a job and have money, you want to go to college because you still have the ambition to become a lawyer.</p>
			<p>Is it okay if the money you have collected is used for college?</p> <p>It's okay, the important thing is that it doesn't bother your parents.</p>
			<p>Are there any obstacles to continuing your studies at university?</p>

No.	Name	Which school are you from	Interview Activities
			Academic obstacles, sometimes it's hard to understand the material, but I've solved it by continuing to study, because if I study hard, it turns out I can do it. My plan is to study abroad.
			When there is a scholarship, do you want to try college or continue working? Continue working first, as scholarships often don't cover all your needs, especially if your parents simply can't afford the financial assistance.
			Are you ready to compete in the job market? Because of the strong determination to help parents, so no matter how many obstacles will be overcome.
			Is what is learned in school relevant? Material that is relevant to school needs is that related to habits, such as time discipline, public speaking, and interview simulations.
			Does the hot environment of Karawang also affect learning conditions? Yes, because it makes the body tire easily.

Source: Interview data processed by the researchers, 2025

Based on the results of the survey data analysis on the perceptions of Grade XII high school students in Karawang Regency regarding internal and external indicators that influence students' interest in continuing their studies to higher education, it was found that all sub-indicators fall into the "VERY POOR" category. This indicates that students face numerous challenges in pursuing higher education. The most significant problems identified include:

1. Economic factors, most students come from lower-middle-income families; therefore, many prefer to work after graduation to support and help improve their family's economic situation.
2. Environmental factors, as Karawang Regency is an industrial area, local residents have a high potential to be employed in nearby companies, making immediate employment an attractive option.
3. Peer influence, many students are influenced by classmates who, after graduation, tend to seek employment rather than pursue higher education.

This finding aligns with the results of interviews with students who stated that after graduating from high school, they wanted to work first to help their parents' financial situation, even though their finances were not weak. Students then hoped to attend college after securing a job, aiming to avoid burdening their parents. This is in line with research by K. Gnana Gurdadevi and U. Vani from the Department of Commerce, PSG College of Arts and Science, India, who stated in their article that: "This result will help researchers

strengthen the literature review, where parents and financial status play a very major role in influencing students' decisions." (K. Gnana Durgadevi and U. Vani, 2024)

The results of this survey in general in Indonesia and abroad are almost the same on average that students after graduating from high school or equivalent are very low in interest in continuing their studies to higher education, and the biggest problem is almost the same, namely economic problems or limited costs and the environment where students are located, so students choose to look for work as a foundation to help their families in daily economic matters. Adjie Ginanjar (2016) presented the results of his research, the results showed a correlation between the x and y variables at 0.517 where the value entered the medium category. Its contribution of 26.73% is affecting where 73.27% is influenced by other factors. It can be concluded that there are students likely affected to continue to the workplace, but not a few students who want to go to the college. (Ginanjar, 2016).

Based on the survey data and interviews with high school students in Karawang Regency, it can be concluded that all components responsible for education—namely the government, schools, and the community—must make concerted efforts to motivate students by emphasizing that obtaining higher education qualifications significantly impacts their future. This is in line with the opinion of Simmon C. Kitto et.al. (2013) who conveyed based on the results of their research that The findings provide CE leaders with information about KT, QI, and PS leaders' (mis)perceptions about CE that can inform future strategic planning and activities. CE leaders can play an important role in building upon initial collaborations among the domains to enable their strengths to complement each other. (Simmon C. Kotti et.al, 2013), Furthermore, Amin Solehudin reported the results of his research that interest in continuing studies to higher education is influenced by perceptions of job opportunities and parents' economic conditions. (Amin Solehudin, 2016)

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this survey indicates that the majority of high school graduates in Karawang Regency prefer to seek employment immediately after graduation in order to help support their families financially. Many of them, however, express the intention to pursue higher education once they have achieved financial stability through work. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the government, schools, and the community collaborate to provide comprehensive information, guidance, and motivation to students regarding the importance and long-term benefits of continuing their education to the higher-education level.

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