

## From school to state university: The role of teachers in building high school students' motivation for further education

Hanifa Intan Desiga<sup>1</sup>, Indah Puspita<sup>2</sup>, Poniman Poniman<sup>3</sup>

1. Universitas Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

2. Universitas Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

3. Universitas Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

Corresponding Email: hanifaintan@ubb.ac.id

### Article Information:

Received : January 19, 2026

Revised : April 25, 2026

Published : June 1, 2026

### Keywords:

teacher roles; motivation for higher education; senior high school students; public universities

### Abstract

Higher education plays an important role in improving human resource quality and social mobility. However, participation in higher education among Indonesian high school graduates remains relatively low, particularly in peripheral regions such as South Bangka Regency. This study aimed to explore the role of teachers in fostering Grade XII students' motivation to pursue public universities. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed involving 14 participants, including principals, homeroom teachers, guidance counselors, and students from senior high schools in South Bangka Regency. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis based on the Miles and Huberman model. The findings revealed that students' motivation to continue to public universities was generally fragile and unstable. Although many students aspired to pursue higher education, their decisions were often constrained by financial limitations, parental influence, limited access to information, and socio-cultural norms that prioritized immediate employment. Teachers, counselors, principals, and school programs played significant roles in strengthening motivation through encouragement, guidance, and exposure to higher education opportunities. In this context, schools functioned as strategic institutions that helped bridge gaps in information and educational access. The study concludes that increasing higher education participation requires more than financial assistance alone. Strengthening structured career guidance, teacher capacity, parental involvement, digital information access, and collaboration between schools and universities is essential to support students' transition to higher education, particularly in underserved and peripheral regions.

## Introduction

Higher education plays a vital role in improving human resource quality and expanding individuals' social and economic mobility. It equips individuals with advanced knowledge, professional skills, critical thinking, and social competencies needed in the labor market and society. At the national level, higher education supports economic growth, innovation,

competitiveness, and social cohesion, while at the individual level it increases employment opportunities, income potential, and upward mobility. In an era of global competition and rapid technological change, higher education is also important for reducing social inequality (OECD, 2019).

For senior high school students, the transition to higher education is an important stage of development and decision-making. Many students consider public universities (PTNs) the ideal option because they are seen as offering better academic quality, stronger reputation, better career prospects, lower tuition through government subsidies, and wider access to scholarships and financial aid. These factors make PTNs attractive for SMA graduates seeking long-term success (OECD, 2019). However, participation in higher education among Indonesian high school graduates remains relatively low. Data from Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) in 2024 shows that the Angka Partisipasi Kasar (APK) in higher education is only around 32–33%, indicating that many graduates do not continue to university (Andina, 2025). This highlights the ongoing challenge of equitable access, especially in non-urban and rural areas where structural, economic, and information barriers still limit students' opportunities and aspirations to pursue higher education (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2023; Trahar et al., 2020; Byun et al., 2012; Dynarski et al., 2023).

This phenomenon persists despite government efforts to widen higher education access through financial aid programs such as KIP Kuliah for economically disadvantaged students. However, only about 22.1% of Program Indonesia Pintar (PIP) recipients registered for KIP Kuliah in 2025, indicating that financial support alone has not been sufficient to significantly increase participation (Mulyaningsih, 2025). Regional disparities further worsen the issue. In Bangka Belitung Islands Province, higher education participation remained low at around 14.85% in 2022 and 18.19% in 2023, far below the national average (ANTARA Babel, 2024). The same news report also stated that out of 13,023 SMA/SMK graduates in 2023, only 2,593 students (19.91%) continued to higher education within the province and 1,783 students (13.69%) studied outside the province. Overall, fewer than 34% of graduates entered higher education, while most directly entered the workforce or other activities after graduation (ANTARA Babel, 2024).

These statistics show the difficulty of motivating students to pursue higher education, especially in peripheral and non-metropolitan areas. Low participation is influenced by economic, socio-cultural, and psychological factors. Financial constraints remain a major barrier, while social norms that prioritize immediate work over further study often discourage university enrollment. Limited access to information, low self-confidence, family educational background, and perceptions that admission to PTNs is difficult also reduce students' motivation and planning for higher education (Sari & Widodo, 2018). These challenges are particularly relevant in South Bangka Regency. Students' aspirations are shaped not only by personal ability and interests, but also by local labor market conditions, family expectations, and community norms. The availability of jobs that do not require university qualifications may further weaken motivation, as immediate income is often seen as more practical than long-term educational investment.

Motivation for further education is an important psychological factor influencing students' decisions to continue to higher levels of study. It includes internal factors such as interests, aspirations, self-efficacy, and the value of education, as well as external factors such as parental support, teacher encouragement, social expectations, and career rewards (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023; Ryan & Deci, 2020). These factors shape students' future orientation and readiness for higher education. In schools, teachers play a key role in strengthening this motivation. Through support, guidance, feedback, and mentoring, teachers help students build confidence, clarify goals, and see higher education as an achievable pathway. Positive teacher–student relationships are also associated with higher motivation, engagement, and aspirations (Hattie, 2015).

The role of teachers becomes more important at the SMA level, when students are in late adolescence and facing key educational and career decisions (Santrock, 2019). At this stage, students are highly responsive to feedback from significant adults, including teachers. Supportive behaviors such as encouragement, realistic high expectations, and recognition of students' efforts can strengthen students' sense of purpose and direction. Research shows that teacher support significantly contributes to academic motivation and educational aspirations. High teacher expectations are linked to better academic progress and later attainment, helping students build confidence and persistence toward higher education. In contrast, limited support or low expectations may weaken students' transition to postsecondary pathways, especially among disadvantaged students (Wang et al., 2024).

In addition to motivating students, teachers also serve as important sources of information about further education. Guidance on PTN admission pathways, academic requirements, entrance examinations, and preparation strategies is essential for students planning to continue to higher education. Thus, teachers play not only a motivational role but also a strategic role in helping students make informed educational decisions. Clear and comprehensive information is especially important for students from families with limited social capital or little experience with higher education. Wanti et al. (2022) found that inequalities in access to higher education are influenced not only by economic and academic factors, but also by the availability of school-based guidance and information. In this context, teachers act as key intermediaries who bridge information gaps and promote greater equity in access to higher education.

Furthermore, teachers' effectiveness as sources of higher education information depends on their competence in career guidance. Teachers with specialized training are better able to provide systematic, accurate, and relevant information about postsecondary pathways that match students' interests and abilities (Bersan et al., 2024). Without such training, their role often remains limited to general motivation, while students' informational needs for educational planning are not fully met. Therefore, strengthening teachers' capacity to guide students is an important strategy, especially for those from families with limited higher education experience. Homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and school counselors play key roles in helping students understand admission processes, identify their interests and abilities, and set realistic goals. Continuous career guidance programs have been shown to improve goal clarity, career readiness, and motivation to pursue higher education (Gysbers & Henderson, 2016).

However, several studies in Indonesia indicate that guidance and counseling services in SMA schools remain suboptimal. Career guidance is often sporadic, unsystematic, and focused mainly on high-achieving students, leaving many others without adequate support (Radiansyah et al., 2025). As a result, many students lack the information, confidence, and guidance needed to make informed decisions about higher education, which may contribute to low participation rates. Most previous studies on students' motivation to pursue higher education have used quantitative approaches that examine variables such as motivation, socioeconomic status, and academic achievement. Although useful statistically, these studies often fail to capture students' lived experiences and subjective perceptions of teacher support. How students interpret teacher encouragement, communication, and guidance can strongly shape their motivation and aspirations, particularly within specific social and cultural contexts (Bersan et al., 2024).

While many studies have examined students' intentions to continue to higher education, limited attention has been given to how teacher roles are experienced in archipelagic and peripheral areas where access to information, parental support, and educational resources is uneven. Most Indonesian studies also rely on quantitative methods, which often overlook students' lived experiences and perceptions of teacher support. Therefore, this study addresses

this gap by exploring how teachers foster Grade XII students' motivation to pursue public universities in South Bangka Regency through a qualitative approach.

Qualitative research enables a deeper understanding of how students perceive teacher support in shaping their motivation and educational decisions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It can reveal contextual influences such as socio-cultural norms, family expectations, and regional educational conditions, which strongly affect aspirations and access to higher education (Byun et al., 2012). South Bangka Regency provides an important context due to its relatively low higher education participation and distinct socio-economic conditions. In this setting, teachers play a crucial role in providing motivation, guidance, and information about university opportunities. This study is expected to contribute to guidance and counseling, educational management, and educational psychology by explaining how teachers influence students' motivation to continue to public universities. The findings may help teachers, schools, counselors, policymakers, and higher education institutions develop more effective strategies to increase participation, especially in underserved and peripheral regions.

## Methods

### Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine teachers' roles in fostering students' motivation for higher education. The design was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives and lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study was conducted in three senior high schools in South Bangka Regency, Bangka Belitung Islands Province, an archipelagic area with structural challenges and relatively low participation in state universities.

### Participants

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance and experience related to the research focus (Palinkas et al., 2015). They included school principals, homeroom teachers, guidance counselors, and Grade XII students from three senior high schools. A total of 14 participants were involved, all of whom met the inclusion criteria as active participants in educational processes or final-year students. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institution, and informed consent was secured from all participants.

### Instruments

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews designed to explore participants' perspectives on students' motivation, access to higher education information, and the role of educators in supporting further education decisions. This method allowed flexibility while maintaining focus on key research topics (Kallio et al., 2016).

### Procedure

Data collection was conducted face-to-face in school settings. Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study prior to the interviews, and confidentiality of responses was ensured. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

### Data Analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis based on the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2013), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim, organized, and coded to identify meaningful units related to students' motivation, socio-economic barriers, family and socio-cultural influences, and the role of educators. The data were then presented in matrices and thematic groupings to support interpretation, followed by the development and

verification of overarching themes based on recurring patterns across participants. The analysis was conducted manually due to the manageable size of the dataset.

To ensure rigour and trustworthiness, credibility was strengthened through source triangulation across principals, teachers, and students, as well as member checking to validate interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). An audit trail was also maintained to document analytical decisions throughout the research process.

## Results and Discussion

The findings indicate that students' motivation to pursue higher education is shaped by a complex interaction of internal and external factors, including economic constraints, family influence, access to information, and the role of teachers and counselors. The findings are presented in Table 1, which summarizes the initial codes and final thematic categories derived from the interview data.

**Table 1.** Results of Interviews with the Principal, Class Teacher, Guidance Counselor and Students

No	Informant	Key Findings	Initial Codes	Final Category
1	KS1	Student interest in higher education exists, but participation remains low due to family decisions, economic concerns, and the need for stronger school intervention	Low continuation rate, parental influence, school support, institutional motivation	Structural and Socio-Economic Barriers
2	KS2	Schools have implemented programs such as parenting day, campus visits, literacy activities, and university partnerships, but student motivation remains constrained by external factors	School programs, partnerships, outreach, limited impact	Teachers, Counselors, and School Support Programs
3	G1	Students' interest in higher education is low because many are already working and helping their families economically	Economic factors, working students, low interest	Structural and Socio-Economic Barriers
4	G2	The surrounding environment tends to encourage students to work rather than continue their education	Work-oriented environment, local culture, employment preference	Parental and Socio-Cultural Influence
5	BK1	Guidance and counseling services are not optimally utilized because students rarely seek consultation voluntarily	Limited counseling, low participation, passive students	Teachers, Counselors, and School Support Programs
6	BK2	Counselors need to proactively approach students individually to provide guidance about further education	Individual guidance, proactive approach, counseling support	Teachers, Counselors, and School Support Programs
7	S1	Students have intrinsic motivation to continue to higher education in order to achieve their aspirations	Aspirations, intrinsic motivation, future goals	Unstable Student Motivation toward Higher Education
8	S2	Higher education is perceived as a pathway to gain knowledge and improve future prospects	Future goals, education, aspirations	Unstable Student Motivation

No	Informant	Key Findings	Initial Codes	Final Category
				toward Higher Education
9	S3	Students experience uncertainty about continuing education due to financial limitations and lack of confidence	Doubt, financial constraints, uncertainty	Unstable Student Motivation toward Higher Education
10	S4	Lack of parental support leads students to choose work instead of pursuing higher education	Low parental support, family decision, work choice	Parental and Socio-Cultural Influence
11	S5	Students' intention to continue to university depends on economic conditions and available opportunities	Conditional decision, financial factors, opportunity	Structural and Socio-Economic Barriers
12	S6	Students who are already working tend to prefer employment, although some still wish to study if scholarships are available	Working students, employment preference, scholarship interest	Structural and Socio-Economic Barriers
13	S7	Students are interested in higher education but uncertain about scholarship access and afraid of burdening parents	Scholarships, uncertainty, family burden	Parental and Socio-Cultural Influence
14	S8	Educational decisions are strongly influenced by family conditions and household readiness	Family influence, shared decision-making, household condition	Parental and Socio-Cultural Influence

The findings show that Grade XII students in South Bangka Regency have relatively unstable motivation to continue their studies at public universities. Their motivation is influenced not only by personal aspirations, but also by external factors such as financial constraints, parental support, access to educational information, and the role of schools in shaping educational choices. Based on interview data analysed using the Miles and Huberman model, participants shared their experiences and views, which were then organized into several major themes as follows:

#### Theme 1: Unstable Student Motivation toward Higher Education

The findings indicate that the motivation of Grade XII students in South Bangka Regency to continue their education at public universities remains unstable. Although many students expressed interest in pursuing higher education, their aspirations were often accompanied by doubt and uncertainty. This hesitation was mainly related to family financial constraints, limited parental support, and a lack of understanding of public university admission pathways. These findings are reflected in student narratives such as *"I want to go to college to achieve my dreams"* (S1) and *"I want to continue college to broaden my knowledge and improve my future"* (S2), indicating a strong aspiration for higher education. However, this aspiration was often accompanied by doubt, as seen in statements such as *"I actually want to go to college, but I'm still confused about the financial situation first"* (S3), *"The cost issue, my parents didn't encourage me, I was told to go straight to work"* (S4), and *"If my finances are good, I can continue college"* (S5). Other students expressed similar uncertainties, such as, *"I'd like a scholarship, but I'm still unsure whether to continue"* (S6), *"I'm afraid of adding to my parents'*

*burden"* (S7), and *"If everything goes smoothly... I'll see where my livelihood is going first"* (S8).

Teachers and guidance counselors also confirmed this situation. One teacher explained that student interest in continuing on to higher education is still relatively low, stating, *"In social studies classes, only about 30% are interested in continuing"* (G1). Another teacher added that while some students want to continue their studies, many ultimately choose to work after graduation. *"Some students do want to continue, but many end up choosing to work"* (G2). The guidance counselor also noted that many students require active encouragement because their motivation is often inconsistent, requiring the guidance counselor to call students individually to provide guidance. As stated, *"Students rarely come directly to the guidance counselor for consultations"* (BK1), and this sentiment was reinforced by BK2, who stated, *"We usually have to call students individually to provide guidance."*

At the institutional level, principals reported that student interest in higher education was quite visible, but was often hampered by family decisions and economic issues. Principals explained that some students successfully entered college, but others declined the opportunity because their parents preferred their children to help manage the family farm or go straight into the workforce (KS1). Other principals also stated that low student motivation was related to weak communication between schools, students, and families, as well as low interest in continuing education, which remained below 30 percent (KS2).

Both principals emphasized that while many students are enthusiastic about continuing their studies, parental mindsets and concerns about the cost of education often act as obstacles. According to the principal, *"There are many people here who are enthusiastic about continuing, but sometimes their parents..."* (KS1). Furthermore, schools have attempted to encourage students through various programs such as parenting days, campus visits, literacy studies, and collaborations with various universities, but the results have been less than optimal due to strong external barriers (KS2).

The findings indicate that the motivation of Grade XII students in South Bangka Regency to continue to public universities is not simply low, but fragile and unstable. Many students expressed aspirations to attend university to achieve personal goals, gain knowledge, and secure a better future. However, these aspirations often weakened when they encountered financial difficulties, limited parental support, and uncertainty about admission procedures. This suggests that the main issue lies not in the absence of ambition, but in the difficulty of sustaining motivation when facing real-life barriers. Therefore, efforts to expand higher education access should emphasize continuous guidance and motivational support rather than one-time outreach programs.

This interpretation is supported by teachers, counselors, and school leaders. Teachers reported that only a minority of students consistently showed interest in higher education, while many eventually chose to work after graduation. Counselors noted that students rarely sought consultation independently, indicating limited readiness for academic planning. School leaders also explained that some students who had secured university admission later withdrew because of family or financial pressures. These findings show that educational decisions in lower-income households are often shaped by immediate economic realities, where employment is viewed as more practical than university study.

These results align with previous studies showing that higher education access is strongly influenced by socioeconomic inequality, family expectations, and structural barriers (Trahar et al., 2020). Motivation alone is insufficient without information and external support (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Family involvement also remains important in successful transitions to higher education (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Thus, educational motivation is shaped by the interaction of personal aspirations, family resources, and available opportunities. Financial barriers are not the only explanation. Immediate income needs, limited exposure to university graduates, cultural preferences for early employment, and weak

awareness of long-term educational benefits may also reduce motivation. Therefore, schools need broader interventions such as career literacy programs, alumni mentoring, parental engagement, intensive counseling, and clearer information on scholarships and career prospects. Such support is essential to transform students' aspirations into actual participation in higher education.

## Theme 2: Structural and Socio-Economic Barriers

Structural and socio-economic barriers are also key factors affecting students' motivation to pursue higher education at public universities. Although many students wished to continue their studies, financial constraints, family responsibilities, limited parental readiness, and local work-oriented norms often weakened these aspirations. In many cases, students viewed immediate employment as more realistic than entering higher education.

Economic constraints emerged as the most frequently mentioned obstacle in students' narratives. Several participants explicitly stated that family financial conditions prevented them from planning further study. One student explained, *"I don't want to go to college... my parents' condition, circumstances, and the economy"* (S6). Another student stated, *"It's a matter of cost, my parents don't force me"* (S4), while another participant said, *"If everything goes smoothly, I'll just go ahead... the economy, the bottom line is I'll see where my livelihood is going"* (S8). Similar concerns were also expressed by students who initially aspired to continue their education but remained doubtful due to economic uncertainty. One student admitted, *"I actually want to go to college, but I'm still confused... I'll have to look at the economy first"* (S3), while another explained, *"If the economy is going well, then I can continue to college"* (S5).

At the same time, several students demonstrated that economic barriers do not entirely eliminate educational aspirations. Some still expressed a desire to continue studying for self-development and future goals. For example, one participant stated, *"I want to go to college to achieve my dreams"* (S1), while another said, *"I want to go to college to increase my knowledge and future"* (S2). However, these aspirations remained vulnerable because they were not fully supported by available resources and family capacity.

Some students also viewed higher education as a potential financial burden for their families. One participant openly admitted, *"Afraid of adding to the burden on parents"* (S7), while another stated that even scholarship opportunities did not fully eliminate uncertainty, *"I want a scholarship... I'm just still confused about whether to continue or not"* (S6). This suggests that economic barriers were not only objective in nature, but also psychological, shaping students' confidence and expectations about the feasibility of university education.

Teachers strongly confirmed these patterns. One teacher explained that many students had already entered the workforce while still attending school, stating, *"On average, all the children are already working here... helping their parents garden"* (G1). The same teacher further noted that this situation made it difficult to redirect students toward higher education because they were already accustomed to earning income. Another teacher added that although some students initially intended to continue their studies, many eventually preferred employment after graduation. *"Some students do want to continue, but many end up choosing to work"* (G2).

At the institutional level, school leaders also emphasized that economic factors were closely linked to parental readiness and family priorities. One principal stated that several students who had obtained university admission opportunities ultimately declined because their parents preferred them to work first or manage family plantations. As stated, *"The boys weren't accepted... their reason was to let their children manage the palm oil plantation first, for work first"* (KS1). Another school leader similarly identified *"Cost/economic factors, parental encouragement, low student motivation, and unsupportive environmental factors"* as the main factors affecting students' motivation (KS2).

The findings indicate that economic pressure is one of the main factors influencing students' decisions to continue to higher education. Financial hardship affects not only the ability to pay tuition and living costs, but also students' views of future opportunities. Although many students wish to attend university, these aspirations often weaken when they consider their family's economic condition. For students from low-income households, higher education may be seen as too costly or uncertain, making immediate employment appear more realistic and responsible. Thus, low participation is shaped not only by motivation, but also by economic circumstances that limit confidence and available choices.

Participants frequently linked their educational plans to family finances, while teachers reported that some students were already working during school and many chose employment after graduation. These findings show that motivation alone is often insufficient when students face strong economic pressure. The results are consistent with previous studies showing that financial barriers remain a major obstacle to higher education participation, especially for disadvantaged students (Dynarski et al., 2023; Dissen, 2024). Students in rural or peripheral areas may also face additional barriers such as distance, limited educational resources, and fewer role models (Grant, 2022).

In South Bangka Regency, these challenges are reinforced by local conditions, including plantation-based livelihoods and expectations that children help support the family. This aligns with Perna's (2006) view that higher education decisions are shaped by individual, family, school, and socioeconomic factors simultaneously. However, financial concerns are not the only reason students do not continue their education. Local job availability, family expectations, limited examples of successful graduates, and weak school-parent communication may also influence decisions. Therefore, efforts to increase participation should combine financial assistance with family engagement, career information, and continuous encouragement so that university is seen as a realistic pathway.

### Theme 3: Family and Socio-Cultural Influence

Parental influence plays a significant role in shaping students' decisions to pursue higher education. Several students stated that the decision to attend college was highly dependent on parental approval, support, and readiness. One student stated emphatically, *"It depends on my parents... if my parents don't support me, it's difficult"* (S4). Similar statements emerged from other students, who emphasized that despite their desire to attend college, the final decision rests with their family. One participant stated, *"If everything goes smoothly... let's see how my parents' livelihood works first"* (S8), indicating that family approval and household conditions are primary considerations. Another student also expressed concern about being a burden on their family, stating, *"I don't want to burden my parents"* (S7).

Family influence was also evident in how students developed educational aspirations through family figures. One student stated that her desire to attend college was driven by her dreams, stating, *"My parents support my desire to go to college to achieve my dreams"* (S1). Furthermore, several students identified family as the most influential figure in developing educational aspirations. One student stated that she wanted to attend college because she was inspired by her older sibling who had successfully completed higher education. As expressed, *"Big brother... so I can be like my big brother"* (S2). This finding suggests that family can be not only a hindering factor, but also a source of motivation when there are educational role models within the family environment.

However, some students still experience hesitation because educational decisions are not entirely in their hands. One participant stated, *"I actually want to go to college, but I'm still confused... will my parents give me permission?"* (S3), while another student stated that their college plans would only be possible if their family's circumstances were supportive, *"If there's an opportunity and parental support, then I can continue to college"* (S5). This

statement confirms that student motivation is strongly influenced by family circumstances and parental support, not simply personal desires.

Similar views were also expressed by school officials. One principal emphasized that low student motivation often stems from parents' lack of preparedness to support their children's education outside the region. As stated, *"Parents don't seem ready to send their children out of town"* (KS1). The principal also added that parental motivation for higher education is still low, *"I think parents' motivation is lacking"* (KS1). Another principal also stated that the main factors influencing student motivation were *"Cost/economic factors, parental encouragement, low student motivation, and unsupportive environmental factors"* (KS2).

Furthermore, the principal highlighted the persistence of traditional gender views in society. According to him, some parents still believe that girls will ultimately become housewives, making higher education less important. As he stated, *"If it's a girl, you'll eventually become a housewife again"* (KS1). In response, the school continues to instill the belief that boys and girls have equal opportunities to succeed through education, *"Women and boys are the same"* (KS1).

Unlike financial barriers, family influence shapes students' higher education decisions through approval, encouragement, expectations, and daily interactions at home. The findings show that many students do not decide independently; instead, continuing to university is often negotiated within the family and influenced by parental views of what is safest or most realistic. As a result, some students who wish to study further still hesitate when family support is uncertain. Thus, low participation may reflect not only economic limits, but also limited family approval and confidence. Students' responses showed strong awareness of family circumstances. Some stated that university plans depended on parental support, while others worried about becoming a burden or felt they should wait until their parents were ready. However, family influence was not always restrictive. Several students described being encouraged by parents or inspired by siblings who had already entered university. In these cases, families became a source of confidence and direction.

These findings support Social Capital Theory, which emphasizes that families provide resources such as trust, guidance, emotional support, and information (Coleman, 1988). Previous studies also show that parental expectations and involvement strongly shape educational aspirations and college enrollment (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Perna & Titus, 2016; Schoon & Bynner, 2019). In South Bangka Regency, family influence may be stronger because university study often requires leaving the local area, creating concerns about distance, safety, and uncertainty. Therefore, increasing university participation requires involving parents as partners. Schools and policymakers should strengthen communication with families, provide clear information about scholarships and career opportunities, and involve alumni so that higher education is seen as an attainable and worthwhile pathway.

#### Theme 4: Teachers, Counselors, and School Programs as Key Motivational Agents

The findings indicate that teachers, guidance counselors, and school leaders played an important role in strengthening students' motivation to pursue higher education. When family support and financial readiness were limited, schools became key institutions providing encouragement, guidance, and exposure to higher education opportunities.

Students consistently identified teachers as the most influential figures in motivating them to continue their studies. One student stated, *"Teachers often encourage us to go to university... so we can broaden our knowledge"* (S6). Another participant explained, *"All teachers give motivation"* (S2), while another added, *"When teachers motivate us, we become more enthusiastic"* (S4). These statements suggest that teacher encouragement made a positive contribution to students' self-confidence and educational aspirations.

Students also viewed teachers as their main source of information regarding university admissions, scholarships, and career opportunities. One participant explained, *"The people*

*who most often provide information are the teachers*” (S3). Other students noted that such information usually came from principals, homeroom teachers, and subject teachers, while some mentioned receiving it directly from the school. This indicates that teachers and school leaders functioned not only as motivators but also as important connectors between students and educational resources that were not always available at home or in their surrounding communities.

Teachers themselves recognized this responsibility. One teacher explained that their role was particularly important because students in peripheral areas had limited direct exposure to university life. As the teacher stated, *“In cities, students can directly see universities and understand the environment... here we are far away, so teachers must actively explain and describe it to them”* (G1). This statement highlights how teachers were expected to bridge students’ informational gaps regarding higher education. Another teacher added that motivation was continuously delivered through classroom interaction and daily communication, stating, *“In class, of course, we always give motivation about higher education and students’ attitudes toward the future”* (G2), although final decisions still depended on student readiness and family support.

At the leadership level, principals also emphasized that motivating students to continue to university was an institutional priority. One principal stated that teachers played “a very important role” because they were often the first people able to introduce students to campus life and future opportunities, adding that *“teachers are the ones who actively explain and describe these possibilities”* (KS1). Another principal reported that the teachers at the school strongly supported efforts to raise students’ motivation, explaining that *“most teachers here studied outside the region, have broad experience, and pass that knowledge on to students”* (KS2).

Guidance and counseling teachers also held a meaningful role, although their services were not yet fully optimal. One counselor explained, *“Students rarely come directly to the counseling office on their own”* (BK1). Another stated, *“We usually have to call students one by one to provide guidance”* (BK2). These statements indicate that counseling services tended to be reactive and relied more on teacher initiative than student self-awareness. Counselors also reported using individual counseling, classroom guidance, and student observation to identify those who needed additional motivation.

Beyond individual encouragement, schools also implemented several programs to increase students’ motivation toward higher education. Students frequently mentioned campus visits as one of the most memorable and effective activities. One student said, *“Yesterday we had a field trip to campus... it made me want to go to university even more”* (S6). Another student emphasized that schools should provide “more visits” to universities because such experiences increased interest in continuing education. Another participant also recommended “field trips and outreach sessions” as effective strategies for motivating students (S4).

School leaders confirmed these initiatives. One principal explained that the school organized parenting days, literacy programs, campus visits, and collaborations with universities (KS2). Another principal stated that campus visits were intended to help students imagine university life, broaden their perspectives, and realize that entering university was an achievable goal. As expressed, *“The students already start forming a mindset... they begin to understand what a campus is like”* (KS1). However, some school support systems, such as structured tutoring and career planning services, were still limited and not yet comprehensive. Although many positive efforts had been made, their impact was not felt equally by all students. Some responded enthusiastically, while others remained hesitant because of financial problems, parental restrictions, or a preference to work immediately after graduation. This suggests that school-based interventions alone may be insufficient when strong barriers exist outside the school environment.

The findings show that teachers, counselors, principals, and school programs play an important role in encouraging students to pursue higher education. When family support is weak and economic pressure is strong, schools often become the main source of encouragement, information, and confidence about students' futures. Thus, schools do more than provide academic learning; they can also help reduce educational inequality, particularly in rural areas. Students frequently described teachers as the people who most motivated them to continue their studies and as important sources of information about admissions, scholarships, and career opportunities. This role is especially significant for students with limited guidance at home.

These results are consistent with previous studies showing that supportive school environments increase motivation and college participation (Wang & Eccles, 2013; Bryan et al., 2011; Engberg & Wolniak, 2010). In South Bangka Regency, teachers often filled the gap left by limited family guidance and low exposure to university life. Therefore, programs such as campus visits, parent engagement, and university partnerships can strengthen students' aspirations.

Nevertheless, school support alone is not always enough. Some students still hesitate because of financial constraints, parental influence, low self-confidence, or the immediate appeal of employment. For this reason, increasing higher education participation requires a combination of school support, family involvement, career guidance, and financial assistance so that motivation can translate into actual educational decisions.

## Implications

This study offers important implications for educational practice and policy, particularly in regions with low higher education participation such as South Bangka Regency. First, the findings show that students' motivation to pursue higher education is shaped not only by financial constraints, but also by psychological uncertainty, limited access to information, and parental support. Therefore, efforts to widen participation should move beyond financial aid alone by integrating motivational support, accessible information services, and school-based guidance. This supports previous evidence that financial assistance is less effective when informational and motivational barriers remain unresolved (Bettinger et al., 2012). Second, the study highlights the central role of teachers, counselors, and school leaders as key agents in fostering students' aspirations. Schools should therefore strengthen teacher capacity through professional development in career guidance, university admission pathways, and motivational strategies. A more systematic and inclusive guidance framework is needed to ensure that all students receive adequate support in planning their educational futures (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Dodd et al., 2022; Nadya & Farozin, 2021).

Third, schools need sustainable programs that integrate motivational support, academic guidance, higher education information, and parental involvement. Initiatives such as campus visits, scholarship outreach, career planning, alumni mentoring, and parent forums can reduce inequalities in students' access to opportunities and information. Access to career-related information and structured guidance also improves career maturity, aspirations, and educational decision-making (Tantu & Astuti, 2025). At the policy level, increasing higher education participation in underrepresented regions requires a holistic strategy combining financial support, school counseling, teacher development, information campaigns, and stronger family and community engagement. Such an approach is important to address structural, psychological, and socio-cultural barriers and to promote equitable and sustainable access to higher education (Widiastuti, 2025).

## Limitations and future directions

This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted in a limited number of schools in South Bangka Regency, which may reduce the transferability of the findings to regions with different socio-economic and educational contexts. Second, the study relied mainly on self-reported interview data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias and subjective interpretation, despite the use of triangulation and member checking. Third, the research focused primarily on students and school personnel, while other important stakeholders such as parents, higher education institutions, and policymakers were not directly included.

Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples across different regions, including comparisons between rural and urban contexts. Quantitative or mixed-method approaches may help examine the relationships among motivational, socio-economic, and institutional factors more systematically. Further studies should also explore the influence of parents, communities, and digital information access, as well as use longitudinal designs to understand how students' motivation changes over time and how interventions such as career guidance programs affect transitions to higher education.

## Conclusion

This study shows that the motivation of Grade XII students in South Bangka Regency to continue their education at public universities remains fragile and unstable. Although many students aspire to pursue higher education, their decisions are often constrained by economic limitations, low parental support, limited access to information, and socio-cultural environments that encourage immediate employment after graduation.

The findings also highlight that teachers, counselors, principals, and school programs play an important role in strengthening students' motivation through encouragement, guidance, and the provision of information about higher education opportunities. In peripheral areas with limited resources, schools become strategic institutions that help bridge gaps in information and educational opportunities.

Strengthening structured and sustainable career guidance programs, enhancing teachers' capacities particularly school counselors, optimizing digital information dissemination, increasing parental engagement, and reinforcing collaboration between schools and public universities are essential strategies for improving equitable access to higher education. These findings provide valuable references for schools, counseling practitioners, policymakers, and higher education institutions in designing contextual and sustainable programs that encourage senior high school students to continue to higher education.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the principals and teachers at the three senior high schools in South Bangka Regency for their support throughout the data collection process. Appreciation is also extended to the students who participated as informants and to the research assistants who assisted with data entry and analysis. The authors are also grateful to Universitas Bangka Belitung for the sponsorship, academic support, and facilities provided, which enabled this research to be completed successfully.

## Author Contribution Statement

HID contributed to the concept, design of the study, provided technical or material support, and drafted the manuscript, IP gave final approval of the version to be published, data analysis and interpretation, instrument validation, and performed data analysis. P contributed to data processing, validated the study, interpreted the results, and final approved the manuscript.

## References

- Andina, E. (2025). More inclusive access and participation in higher education. *COMMISSION X: Education, Sports, Science, and Technology*, 17(4), 1–5. [10.21831/progcouns.v2i1.39906](https://doi.org/10.21831/progcouns.v2i1.39906).
- ANTARA Babel. (2024, June 19). *Wajah pendidikan Bangka Belitung sudahkah menggambarkan Indonesia sentris*. ANTARA News Kepulauan Bangka Belitung. <https://babel.antaraneews.com/berita/414651/wajah-pendidikan-bangka-belitung-sudahkah-menggambarkan-indonesia-sentris>
- ANTARA Babel. (2024, May 2). *Peningkah pendidikan tinggi bagi masyarakat Bangka Belitung*. ANTARA News Kepulauan Bangka Belitung. <https://babel.antaraneews.com/berita/414705/peningkah-pendidikan-tinggi-bagi-masyarakat-bangka-belitung>
- Bersan, O. S., et al. (2024). Training teachers for the career guidance of high school students. *Education Sciences*, 14(3), 289. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14030289>
- Bettinger, E. P., Long, B. T., Oreopoulos, P., & Sanbonmatsu, L. (2012). The role of application assistance and information in college decisions. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 127(3), 1205–1242. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjs017>
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.
- Breen, R., & Goldthorpe, J. H. (1997). Explaining educational differentials: Towards a formal rational action theory. *Rationality and Society*, 9(3), 275–305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104346397009003002>
- Bryan, J., Moore-Thomas, C., Day-Vines, N. L., & Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2011). School counselors as social capital: The effects of school counselor ratios on college application rates. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 89(2), 190–199. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2011.tb00077.x>
- Byun, S., Meece, J. L., & Irvin, M. J. (2012). Rural-nonrural disparities in postsecondary educational attainment. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49(3), 412–437. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312111416344>
- Cabrera, A. F., & La Nasa, S. M. (2000). Understanding the college-choice process. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2000(107), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.10701>
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95–S120. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228943>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Dissen, A., & Tomé, D.F. (2024). *Finances and Future Health: Understanding Barriers to First-Generation Student Utilization of Federal Work-Study*. *Metropolitan Universities*, 35(2), 39–63. <https://doi.org/10.18060/27706> (<https://journals.indianapolis.iu.edu/index.php/muj/article/view/27706/25673>)
- Dodd, V., Hanson, J., & Hooley, T. (2022). Increasing students' career readiness through career guidance: measuring the impact with a validated measure. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 50(2), 260–272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2021.1937515>
- Dynarski, S., Nurshatayeva, A., Page, L. C., & Scott-Clayton, J. (2023). *Addressing non-financial barriers to college access and success: Evidence and directions for future research (Working Paper No. 30054)*. National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w30054>
- Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (2020). From expectancy-value theory to situated expectancy-value theory. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 61, 101859. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101859>

- Engberg, M. E., & Wolniak, G. C. (2010). Examining the effects of high school contexts on postsecondary enrollment. *Research in Higher Education*, 51(2), 132–153. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9150-y>
- Eric P. Bettinger, Bridget Terry Long, Philip Oreopoulos, Lisa Sanbonmatsu. (2012). The role of application assistance and information in college decisions: results from the h&r block fafsa experiment, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 127, Issue 3, August 2012, Pages 1205–1242, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjs017>
- Grant, C. A. (2022). Rural students and higher education aspirations: Barriers, belonging, and pathways to university participation. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 91, 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2022.02.011>
- Gysbers, N. C., & Henderson, P. (2016). *Developing and managing your school guidance and counseling program (5th ed.)*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Hattie, J. (2015). The applicability of visible learning to higher education. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology*, 1(1), 79–91. <https://doi.org/10.1037/stl0000021>
- Hossler, D., & Gallagher, K. S. (1987). Studying student college choice: A three-phase model and the implications for policymakers. *College and University*, 62(3), 207–221. <http://journal.staihubbulwathan.id/index.php/alishlah/article/view/6803>  
<https://www.medcom.id/pendidikan/news-pendidikan/GbmP0BLN-apk-pendidikan-tinggi-miris-hampir-70-siswa-sma-tak-lanjut-kuliah>
- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A. M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 72(12), 2954–2965. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13031>
- Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi. (2023). *Indonesia educational statistics in brief 2022/2023*. Pusat Data dan Teknologi Informasi.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2016). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/naturalistic-inquiry/book842>
- Meriyanti, & Jasmina, T. (2022). Access of information, communication, and technology (ICT) and learning performance of junior high school students in Indonesia: Analysis at the district level. *Jurnal Perencanaan Pembangunan: The Indonesian Journal of Development Planning*, 6(3), 304–326. <https://doi.org/10.36574/jpp.v6i3.267>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook (3rd ed.)*. Sage. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/qualitative-data-analysis/book246128>
- Mulyaningsih, T., Miranti, R., Dong, S. *et al.* (2025). Why are low-income eligible students reluctant to apply for financial aid? An empirical study from Central Java, Indonesia. *Asia Pacific Educ. Rev.* 26, 247–261. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-024-09973-2>
- Nadya, Aisha & Farozin, Muh. (2021). Career guidance conceptualization to improve career adaptability for generation z. *ProGCouns: Journal of Professionals in Guidance and Counseling*. 2.
- OECD. (2019). *Education at a glance 2019: OECD indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*, 42(5), 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Perna, L. W. (2006). Studying college access and choice: A proposed conceptual model. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 21, pp. 99–157). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-4512-3\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-4512-3_3)
- Perna, L. W., & Titus, M. A. (2016). The relationship between parental involvement as social capital and college enrollment: An examination of racial/ethnic group differences. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 76(5), 485–518. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2005.11772296>

- Puslapdik Kemdikbud. (n.d.). *Giat: Ayo lanjut kuliah*. Pusat Layanan Pembiayaan Pendidikan, Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi. <https://puslapdik.kemendikdasmen.go.id/giat-ayo-lanjut-kuliah/>
- Putra, I. P. (2024, February 23). *APK pendidikan tinggi miris, hampir 70% siswa SMA tak lanjut kuliah*. *Medcom.id*.
- Radiansyah, R., et al. (2025). Student awareness, utilization, and satisfaction with school guidance and counseling services in Indonesian high schools. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*. <https://journal.scadindependent.org/index.php/jipeuradeun/article/view/2080>
- Ravulo, J. (2020). Social value and its impact through widening participation: A review of four programs working with primary, secondary & higher education students. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 6(1), 1722307. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2020.1722307>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 61, 101860. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>
- Santrock, J. W. (2019). *Adolescence (17th ed.)*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Sari, D. P., & Widodo, S. (2018). Faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi motivasi siswa melanjutkan pendidikan ke perguruan tinggi. *Jurnal Pendidikan*, 19(1), 45–54.
- Savickas, M. L. (2021). *Career construction theory and counseling model*. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (3rd. ed., pp. 165-199). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Schoon, I., & Bynner, J. (2019). Young people and the Great Recession: Variations in the school-to-work transition in Europe and the United States. *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*, 10(2), 153–173. <https://doi.org/10.1332/175795919X15468755933396>
- Shebani, Z., et al. (2025). The effect of parental involvement on academic passion. *Journal of Youth Studies*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2025.2467109>
- Tantu, D. S., & Astuti, B. (2025). Development of career information guidance media to improve students' career maturity. *Jurnal Inovasi Pembelajaran*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.22219/jinop.v11i2.36392>
- Tim Penyusun. (2021). *Statistik pendidikan tinggi 2021 (PDF)*. Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia. <https://repositori.kemendikdasmen.go.id/25511/1/9772626835008.pdf>
- Trahar, S., Timmis, S., Lucas, L., & Naidoo, K. (2020). Rurality and access to higher education. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 50(7), 929–942. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2020.1810895>
- Unverferth, A. R., Talbert-Johnson, C., & Bogard, T. (2012). Perceived barriers for first-generation students: Reforms to level the terrain. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 21(4), 238–252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105678791202100402>
- Urhahne, D., Wijnia, L. (2023). Theories of Motivation in Education: an Integrative Framework. *Educ Psychol Rev* 35, 45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-023-09767-9>
- Wang, H., Sun, Y., Zhao, X., Wang, W., & Xue, J. (2024). Enhancing academic engagement through students' perceptions of teacher expectations: The mediating role of intentional self-regulation in middle school. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1456334. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1456334>
- Wang, M. T., & Eccles, J. S. (2013). School context, achievement motivation, and academic engagement: A longitudinal study of school engagement using a multidimensional perspective. *Learning and Instruction*, 28, 12–23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2013.04.002>

- Wang, S. X., et al. (2025). Testing a parent support intervention to improve success of college students. *Frontiers in Education*, 10, 1584908. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1584908>
- Wanti, M. W., et al. (2022). *Determining factors of access and equity in higher education*. SAGE Open, 12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/27526461221092429>
- Widiastuti, I. (2025). Assessing the impact of education policies in Indonesia: Challenges, achievement, and future direction. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 17(2), 1955–1964.

**Copyright Holder**

© Desiga, H. I., Puspita, I., Poniman, P.

**First Publication Right**

COUNSENEsia: Indonesia Journal of Guidance and Counseling

This Article is Licensed Under

