

Educational Policy Analysis in Increasing Postgraduate Study Interest of Education Students: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This study is motivated by the relatively low interest among education students in pursuing postgraduate studies, despite their strategic role in improving the quality of human resources and supporting sustainable educational development. This study aims to analyze the factors influencing students' interest in postgraduate study and to examine the role of education policy in strengthening such interest. The research employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach based on the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Data were collected from 15 peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2025 and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that students' interest in postgraduate study is influenced by three main factors: internal, external, and policy-related factors. Internal factors, including motivation, self-efficacy, academic aspirations, and career orientation, serve as the primary drivers of students' intentions. External factors, such as economic conditions, social support, institutional environment, and access to information, may either facilitate or hinder students' decisions. Meanwhile, education policies, including scholarship provision, program flexibility, affordable tuition, and the quality of academic services, play a significant role as enabling factors that improve access and participation in postgraduate education. These findings also highlight the importance of strengthening collaboration among universities, policymakers, and students to create sustainable postgraduate education opportunities. In conclusion, increasing students' interest in pursuing postgraduate studies requires an integrated approach that combines individual motivation, supportive environments, and adaptive, inclusive, and student-centered education policies.

Keywords: Education Policy; Higher Education; Postgraduate Study Interest; Systematic Literature Review

Introduction

Postgraduate education plays a strategic role in improving the quality of human resources, particularly in producing professional, adaptive, and research-oriented educators. At this level, students are required not only to deepen their academic competencies but also to develop critical and analytical thinking as well as research skills relevant to the advancement of science and technology. Therefore, postgraduate education serves as an important instrument in enhancing the quality of national education (Wulansari et al., 2023)

However, participation in higher education in Indonesia remains relatively low, especially at the postgraduate level. (Data Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025) indicate that the gross enrollment rate (GER) of higher education reached only 32.89%, meaning that approximately one-third of the college-age population is enrolled in higher education. Although this figure has shown gradual improvement, it remains below

national targets and lags behind several Southeast Asian countries. This condition highlights persistent challenges in access to and interest in higher education, including postgraduate studies.

At the postgraduate level, participation is even lower due to a combination of structural and individual factors. The perception that a bachelor's degree is sufficient for entering the workforce, along with the high cost of further education, often discourages students from continuing their studies. This indicates that students' interest in pursuing postgraduate education is not determined solely by academic considerations but is also shaped by economic constraints and career expectations.

Theoretically, students' decisions to pursue postgraduate studies are influenced by the interaction of internal and external factors. Internal factors such as learning motivation, perceived benefits of further education, academic readiness, and self confidence serve as primary drivers of students' intentions (Wang et al., 2024). However, these factors do not operate independently, as their influence is often mediated by external conditions. External factors, including economic conditions, family support, academic environment, and access to information, can either facilitate or hinder students' decisions (Cagliesi and Hawkes, 2023). This suggests that strong individual motivation alone is insufficient when structural barriers are present.

From a policy perspective, higher education policies are expected to play a significant role in increasing participation in postgraduate studies. Policy interventions such as scholarships, program flexibility, and academic support have been shown to improve access and participation (Cagliesi and Hawkes, 2023). Nevertheless, in practice, these policies are often not fully responsive to students' needs. Limited dissemination of programs, perceptions of high education costs, and unequal access to financial assistance remain significant barriers (Castulo et al., 2025). This indicates a mismatch between policy design and the actual challenges faced by students.

In addition to financial factors, non-financial aspects also play a crucial role in shaping students' interest in pursuing further studies. Access to information, social support, career guidance, and prior work experience can strengthen students' intentions (Wang et al., 2024). However, these enabling factors are frequently counterbalanced by academic challenges, such as research complexity, scientific writing skills, and workload management. In some cases, these challenges contribute to psychological pressures, including stress and anxiety, which may reduce students' persistence in postgraduate education (Castulo et al., 2025).

Socio cultural factors further influence students' educational aspirations. Family background, particularly parents' level of education and economic status, significantly affects students' opportunities to pursue higher education (Quecano, Rincon and Mareno, 2024). Social support strengthens both intrinsic motivation, such as self-development, and extrinsic motivation, such as career advancement (Vinitchagoon, Kriengsinyos and Prachansuwan, 2025). However, discrepancies between expectations and the reality of academic life, as well as unclear educational goals, may reduce students' interest in continuing their studies.

Despite the growing body of research, most studies examine these factors in isolation, focusing separately on individual, social, or economic dimensions. Such fragmented approaches limit a comprehensive understanding of how internal factors, external conditions, and education policies interact in shaping students' decisions. Moreover, studies employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to systematically map research trends while identifying policy gaps in postgraduate education remain limited, particularly in the context of education students.

Based on these limitations, this study formulates the main research problem of how internal and external factors interact and how education policies contribute to shaping education students' interest in pursuing postgraduate studies. Accordingly, this study aims to comprehensively analyze the factors influencing

postgraduate study interest and to examine the role of education policy through a Systematic Literature Review approach.

Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions:

- (1) What internal factors influence education students' interest in pursuing postgraduate studies?
- (2) What external factors influence education students' interest in pursuing postgraduate studies?
- (3) How do education policies contribute to increasing students' interest in postgraduate studies?
- (4) How do these factors interact within a comprehensive framework?

This study is expected to contribute theoretically by providing an integrative understanding of postgraduate study interest and practically by offering insights for policymakers in designing more adaptive, inclusive, and student-centered higher education policies.

Literature Study

Concept of Postgraduate Education

Postgraduate education is widely recognized as an advanced level within the higher education system that aims to strengthen academic, professional, and research competencies. Beyond knowledge transfer, it increasingly functions as a platform for developing higher order thinking skills, including critical analysis, problem solving, and evidence based decision making, which are essential in the context of 21st-century education (OECD, 2024). Overall, modern postgraduate education not only transfers knowledge but also shapes critical and creative thinking skills that are essential for students' academic and professional success (Kareem, 2022).

However, scholars emphasize that the value of postgraduate education lies not only in its cognitive outcomes but also in its structural and pedagogical characteristics. Compared to undergraduate education, postgraduate learning adopts a more andragogical approach, positioning students as independent learners who actively construct knowledge through research and academic engagement (Hashim et al., 2023). This shift indicates that postgraduate education requires a higher level of self-regulation and academic readiness, which may not be equally accessible to all students.

Furthermore, while postgraduate education is often associated with improving human resource quality and national competitiveness (Anh, Anh and Duong, 2025), its role as a driver of career advancement is not uniformly experienced. Although advanced qualifications are increasingly required in academic and professional sectors (Kotsur, 2024), access to postgraduate education remains uneven due to structural constraints such as financial limitations and institutional support. This suggests that the benefits of postgraduate education are contingent upon both individual capacity and systemic support.

From a policy perspective, governments have introduced various initiatives such as scholarships, quality assurance mechanisms, and research capacity development to increase participation (Mislay and Anania, 2025). Nevertheless, existing literature indicates that these policy interventions often fail to fully address the diverse needs of students, particularly in terms of accessibility and relevance. This highlights a gap between the intended outcomes of postgraduate education and the actual conditions experienced by students.

Therefore, postgraduate education should not be understood merely as an advanced academic level, but as a complex system shaped by the interaction of individual readiness, institutional practices, and policy frameworks. This perspective is essential for analyzing students' interest in pursuing postgraduate studies in a more comprehensive manner.

Student Interest in Further Studies

Interest in pursuing postgraduate studies is not a static individual attribute but a dynamic construct shaped by the interaction of psychological and contextual factors. While motivation, self-potential, and future expectations are often identified as key internal drivers, their influence varies depending on external conditions (Rahayu et al., 2025).

Empirical findings suggest that motivation and future expectations significantly influence students' intentions to continue their studies. However, these factors do not always translate into actual decisions, indicating the presence of mediating variables such as financial constraints and perceived barriers (Putra and Elysa, 2025). This implies that students' interest in postgraduate education is not solely determined by internal willingness but also by the feasibility of pursuing further studies.

Thus, interest in postgraduate study can be better understood as the result of a complex interaction between individual aspirations and structural opportunities, rather than as an isolated psychological factor.

Factors Influencing Interest in Postgraduate Studies

Interest in pursuing postgraduate studies is shaped by multiple interrelated factors that operate at both individual and contextual levels. These factors cannot be viewed independently, as their effects are often interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

a. Internal Factors

Internal factors, such as motivation, psychological needs, self-perceived competence, and career aspirations, are frequently identified as dominant determinants of students' decisions (Purnomo and Gunaningrat, 2022). However, their influence is not absolute. Students with high motivation may still be unable to pursue further studies if external constraints are significant.

b. External Factors

External factors including family support, institutional reputation, economic conditions, and access to resources play a critical role in shaping students' perceptions and decisions (Roselawati and Suryaningsih, 2025). In many cases, these factors function as enabling or limiting conditions that determine whether internal motivation can be realized. This suggests that interest in postgraduate studies is the result of an interaction between internal readiness and external support systems.

The Role of Education Policy in Increasing Interest in Further Studies

Education policy plays a strategic role in influencing students' interest in pursuing postgraduate studies by shaping both access and learning environments. Policies that integrate academic relevance with real-life applications have been shown to enhance students' engagement and interest in further education. In addition, collaboration between educational institutions, families, and communities strengthens students' motivation to continue their studies.

From a theoretical perspective, interest is closely linked to cognitive and motivational processes that influence engagement and persistence (Renninger and Hidi, 2020). Therefore, policies that are responsive to students' socio economic contexts and supported by empirical evidence are more likely to be effective in increasing participation.

However, the effectiveness of education policy is not uniform. While initiatives such as technology-based learning and career counseling have been shown to increase students' interest in certain contexts (Iskandar et al., 2023), their impact depends on the extent to which they address students' actual needs. This indicates that policy effectiveness is contingent upon its alignment with both individual and contextual factors.

In this regard, education policy should be viewed not merely as a regulatory instrument but as an adaptive mechanism that mediates the relationship between student motivation and structural opportunities.

Framework of Thinking

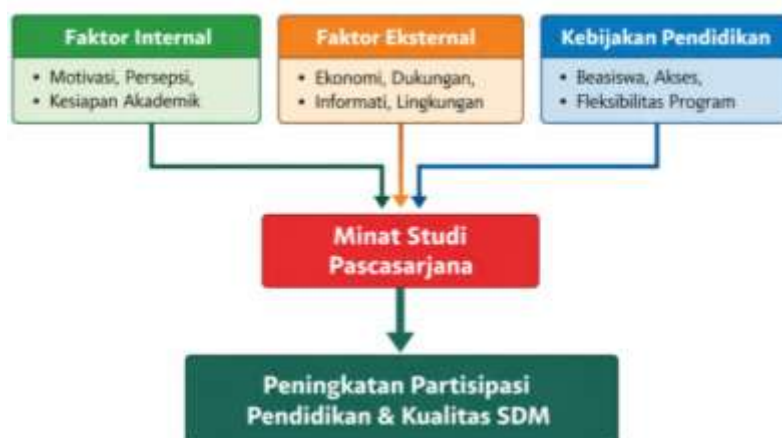


Figure 1. Framework of Thinking

The conceptual framework in this study is not merely used to classify variables but to explain the dynamic relationships among factors influencing education students' interest in pursuing postgraduate studies. Based on the literature review, these factors are categorized into three main dimensions: internal factors (motivation, perception, and academic readiness), external factors (economic conditions, social support, access to information, and environment), and education policy (scholarships, access, and program flexibility). Rather than operating independently, these variables interact in a hierarchical and interdependent manner. Internal factors serve as the primary drivers that shape students' initial intentions to pursue postgraduate studies. However, the strength of these intentions is highly dependent on external factors, which function as enabling or constraining conditions. For instance, strong motivation and positive perceptions may not lead to actual decisions when students face financial limitations or lack of social support. This indicates that external factors can moderate the influence of internal factors.

Furthermore, education policy plays a mediating and facilitating role in bridging the gap between students' intentions and actual participation. Policy interventions such as scholarships and flexible learning systems can reduce structural barriers, thereby strengthening the effect of internal motivation and minimizing the constraints imposed by external factors. In this sense, education policy does not act as an isolated variable but as a strategic mechanism that shapes the interaction between individual and contextual dimensions. Within the SLR approach, these relationships are not tested statistically but are analyzed conceptually

through thematic synthesis to identify patterns, consistencies, and contradictions across studies. The findings suggest that students' interest in postgraduate studies emerges from the interaction between internal readiness, external conditions, and policy support, rather than from a single dominant factor.

Moreover, the framework assumes that increased interest in postgraduate studies leads to higher participation in higher education, which in turn contributes to the improvement of human resource quality. However, this relationship is not linear, as it depends on the extent to which supporting factors—particularly education policies are effectively implemented. Therefore, this conceptual framework provides a more integrative perspective by emphasizing not only the classification of variables but also the mechanisms through which these variables interact, thereby serving as the foundation for thematic analysis and interpretation in this study.

Research Methods

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize research findings related to the role of education policy in increasing education students' interest in pursuing postgraduate studies. The SLR approach is selected because it provides a systematic, transparent, and replicable framework for reviewing scientific literature, enabling the identification of research trends, research gaps, as well as theoretical and practical contributions in the field of higher education policy (Rifai et al., 2025)

The review process follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines, which emphasize transparency in the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of scientific article (Grimshaw et al., 2021).

1. Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using several academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and national journal portals indexed by SINTA. To ensure comprehensive and relevant results, a combination of keywords and Boolean operators (AND, OR) was applied. The main search strings used in this study include:

- 1 ("postgraduate study interest" OR "interest in further studies" OR "graduate study intention") AND ("education policy" OR "higher education policy" OR "policy analysis") AND ("students" OR "education students")
- 2 ("factors influencing postgraduate study" OR "determinants of graduate study intention") AND ("motivation" OR "economic factors" OR "social support" OR "academic environment")
- 3 ("scholarship" OR "program flexibility" OR "academic support") AND ("postgraduate participation" OR "higher education access")

The search was limited to articles published between 2020 and 2025 to ensure the recency and relevance of the data. This strategy was designed to capture studies that specifically examine the relationship between education policy and students' interest in pursuing postgraduate studies (Rifai et al., 2025)

2. Study Selection Process

The study selection process follows four main stages based on PRISMA guidelines:

1. Identification Stage

Relevant articles were identified through database searches using predefined keywords and search strings. All retrieved records were compiled and managed for further screening.

2. Screening Stage

Articles were screened based on titles and abstracts to assess their relevance to the research focus. Inclusion criteria were defined as follows: (1) studies discussing education policy or factors influencing postgraduate study interest, (2) published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, and (3) published between 2020 and 2025. Duplicate and irrelevant articles were excluded (Maryati et al., 2024).

3. Eligibility Stage

Full-text articles were further assessed to ensure their suitability for analysis. The eligibility criteria included: (1) direct relevance to the topic, (2) use of a clear research methodology, (3) availability of analyzable findings, and (4) publication in reputable journals (minimum SINTA 2 or equivalent). Articles lacking empirical data or full-text access were excluded to maintain the quality of the review (Maryati et al., 2024).

4. Inclusion Stage

Articles that met all criteria were included in the final dataset and used as the primary sources for analysis.

3. Validation of the Selection Process

To ensure the reliability and validity of the article selection process, a validation procedure was applied during the screening and eligibility stages. The selection of articles was independently reviewed by two evaluators based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Any discrepancies in the selection results were discussed and resolved through consensus.

This process was conducted to minimize subjectivity and ensure consistency in the selection of relevant studies. The application of consistent criteria across all stages enhances the transparency and replicability of the review process.

4. Data Analysis

The selected articles were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns, similarities, and differences across studies. The analysis focused on three main themes: internal factors, external factors, and the role of education policy in influencing postgraduate study interest.

The findings were synthesized into a summary table containing key information such as authors, publication year, research context, methods, and main findings. In addition, a narrative synthesis was conducted to explain relationships, trends, and research gaps comprehensively (Rifai et al., 2025)

5. Research Rigor

By applying the SLR framework and PRISMA guidelines, this study ensures methodological rigor through systematic procedures, transparent selection criteria, and validated analysis processes. This approach strengthens the credibility and scientific accountability of the findings, contributing to the development of

higher education policy, particularly in increasing education students' interest in pursuing postgraduate studies.

Result

The literature selection process was conducted through several stages in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) procedure, which includes the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of articles.

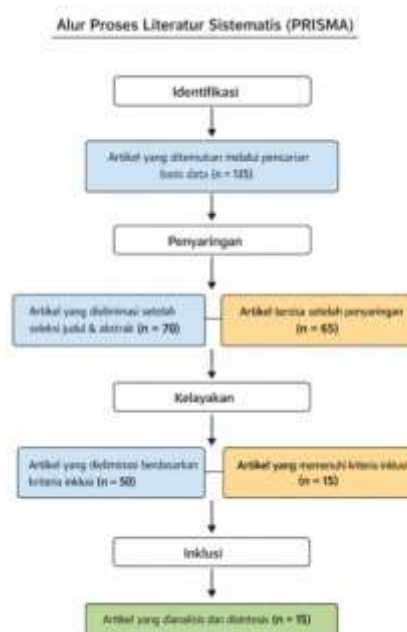


Figure 2. Literature Selection Process Using the PRISMA Method

Stages of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

1. Identification Stage

At the identification stage, the researcher conducted a search for scientific articles through several academic databases such as Google Scholar, Garuda, and national journals indexed by SINTA. The search was carried out using keywords such as interest in further studies, postgraduate study interest, higher education intention, postgraduate study interest, education policy, and education policy. The initial search results showed a total of 135 articles potentially relevant to the research topic.

2. Screening Stage

At this stage, an initial selection was conducted based on the titles and abstracts of the articles. Articles that were not related to students' interest in further studies, postgraduate education, or education policy were eliminated from the analysis process. In addition, duplicate articles were also removed. Based on this process, a total of 70 articles were eliminated, leaving 65 articles considered relevant for further analysis.

3. Eligibility Stage

Next, a comprehensive review of the article contents was conducted to ensure alignment with the research focus. The inclusion criteria in this study include:

- The article is a scientific research study published in a journal.
- The article discusses interest in further studies, postgraduate education, or education policy.
- The article is published within the period of 2020–2025.
- The article contains complete research information that can be analyzed.

Based on these criteria, a total of 50 articles were eliminated, resulting in 15 articles that met the inclusion criteria and were used as the main sources in the systematic literature review analysis.

4. Inclusion Stage

Based on the synthesis of the 15 selected articles, several main themes influencing students’ interest in postgraduate studies were identified, namely:

- Internal factors such as motivation, perception, and career orientation.
- External factors such as family support, economic conditions, and academic environment.
- The role of education policy in increasing access and interest in further studies through scholarship programs, academic services, and the dissemination of postgraduate education.

To obtain a comprehensive understanding, the selected articles were then analyzed in depth and summarized in the form of a synthesis table describing the main findings of each study.

Table 1. Summary of Selected Studies on Postgraduate Study Interest

No	Author&Year	Research Title	Method	Research Findings
1	(Zhou et al., 2024)	Factors that influence the intent to pursue a master’s degree: evidence from Shandong Province, China	Quantitative (OLS regression, survey of 417 students)	The intention to pursue a master’s degree is positively influenced by attitudes and subjective norms, and negatively by risk perception. These factors vary by gender, region of origin, and type of university. Policy implications emphasize the need for educational approaches tailored to student characteristics.
2	(Bergann et al., 2025)	Intrinsic and extrinsic motives of undergraduate students for pursuing a master’s degree: Applying the Eccles et al.	Quantitative (SEM, survey of 3,044 students)	Expectancy of success is the strongest predictor of intention to pursue further studies; intrinsic value (scientific interest) is as important as utility value. Psychological costs also significantly influence decisions. Self-belief plays a

No	Author&Year	Research Title	Method	Research Findings
3	(Vinitchagoon, Kriengsinyos and Prachansuwan, 2025)	expectancy-value model Factors influencing intention to pursue postgraduate studies in nutrition and dietetics among Thai dietitians: a qualitative study	Qualitative (in-depth interviews with 30 dietitians)	role in shaping these expectations and values. Main motivations include self-development, career advancement, and knowledge enhancement; main barriers are time constraints, cost, and language challenges. Social support and program flexibility are highly needed to increase interest in further studies.
4	(Wang et al., 2024)	Factors influencing nursing undergraduates' motivation for postgraduate entrance: a qualitative inquiry	Qualitative (semi-structured interviews with 15 nursing students)	Main barriers include study pressure, internship fatigue, self-doubt, work pressure, and lack of information. Main drivers include the desire to improve academic/professional qualifications and social support. Recommendations emphasize the importance of policy intervention and institutional support.
5	(Smirnov and Tarasova, 2025)	Motivation matters: How enrollment motives shape doctoral experiences and career aspirations	Qualitative (FGD & interviews with 47 participants in Tanzania)	Students with academic orientation show higher satisfaction and stronger intentions to pursue research careers; non-academic motivation is associated with lower satisfaction and weaker intentions for further research. Admission policies and program structures need to consider the diversity of doctoral student motivations.
6	(Amani, Myeya and Mhewa, 2022)	Understanding the Motives for Pursuing Postgraduate Studies and Causes of Late Completion: Supervisors and Supervisees' Experiences	Qualitative (FGD & interviews with 47 participants in Tanzania)	Main reasons for pursuing further studies include job prospects, salary increases, personal development, and prestige; delayed completion is caused by institutional factors (unsupportive learning environment) and personal factors (social/financial problems). Institutional policy improvements are recommended to support postgraduate study completion.

No	Author&Year	Research Title	Method	Research Findings
7	(Qianqing, 2025)	Push–Pull Determinants of Chinese Undergraduates’ Intentions and Decisions to Study in Asia: Evidence from Anhui Province	Quantitative (SEM survey of 513 students from 25 universities)	“Push” factors such as domestic postgraduate competition pressure and employment challenges, and “pull” factors such as the quality of destination universities significantly influence cross-country study intentions in Asia; intention acts as a mediator between internal/external factors and final decisions.
8	(Prianggita and Ghofur, 2021)	Analysis of Variables Affecting High School Students’ Interest in Continuing Education to Higher Education	Quantitative, multiple linear regression	Parents’ socioeconomic status, self-efficacy, learning motivation, and academic achievement positively influence interest in pursuing higher education both partially and simultaneously. Students from middle- and upper-class families with high motivation and achievement show stronger interest.
9	(ILTER, 2021)	Lisansüstü Eğitime Yönelik Farkındalığın Lisans Öğrencilerinin Lisansüstü Eğitim Niyetlerine Etkisi	Quantitative (SEM, 350 students)	Awareness of postgraduate studies has a significant positive effect on intention to continue studies. Increased information, understanding of academic and career benefits, and knowledge of application procedures strengthen study plans.
10	(Dewantara, Rustiyarso and Afandi, 2022)	Survey of Interest and Motivation of Social Science Teachers to Pursue Further Study... Master of Sociology Education FKIP Untan	Quantitative survey (254 teachers, ANOVA)	Interest (25%) and motivation (47.24%) of teachers for master’s study are relatively low. Interest and motivation explain only about 38% of study decisions, indicating the dominance of other factors such as policy, institutional support, and working conditions.
11	(Muttahida, Pardiman and Haridjanto, 2022)	The Significance of Mindset and Job Functionalization in Shaping Work Motivation and Interest in Further Study among Educational Staff	Quantitative SEM-PLS (88 educational staff)	Mindset, job functionalization, and work motivation have a significant positive effect on interest in further study. Clear job regulations and career opportunities encourage readiness to continue education.

No	Author&Year	Research Title	Method	Research Findings
12	(Masrukhin, Uke and Jawawi, 2024)	The Effectiveness of Ginzberg Career Guidance Services in Increasing Interest in Higher Education	Quantitative experimental (one group pretest–posttest)	Career guidance services based on Ginzberg’s theory significantly increase high school students’ interest in further study. Factors such as reality, education, emotions, and personal values strengthen study decisions.
13	(Sivasankari and Venkateshwaran, 2024)	A Study on Graduate Students Advertnce and Expertise towards Higher Education in Chennai City	Quantitative survey (chi-square, regression)	Interest in further study is related to the level of knowledge and awareness of higher education. Variables such as awareness, knowledge, and intention are interrelated and shape readiness to continue studies.
14	(Stark, Daniel and Twardawski, 2022)	Social Disparities in Students’ Intention to Enter Higher Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic	Quantitative survey (596 German students)	Differences in intention to enter higher education are more explained by secondary factors (evaluation of benefits, costs, and chances of success) than academic achievement. Evaluation of career prospects and personal meaning becomes the main determinant of social disparities.
15	(Konyana, 2023)	Postgraduate student recruitment strategies South Africa	Qualitative study (managerial & marketing interviews)	Recruitment policies & strategies: personal marketing, program differentiation, internal systems to encourage staff & students to continue to Masters/Doctoral degrees, important to increase enrollment

Discussion

This study demonstrates that students’ interest in pursuing postgraduate studies is shaped by the interaction of internal factors, external conditions, and education policy. These findings suggest that decisions to continue to higher levels of education cannot be explained by single variables, but rather emerge from a complex and interdependent system.

Internal Factors as Primary Drivers

Internal factors such as motivation, self-perception, and career orientation consistently emerge as primary drivers of postgraduate study interest. Empirical evidence (Bergann et al., 2025), indicates that positive attitudes, expectancy of success, and intrinsic values significantly enhance students’ intentions to pursue further education. This aligns with motivational perspectives, which emphasize that individuals are more likely to engage in advanced learning when they perceive both competence and value in the activity.

In addition, motivation related to self-development and career advancement is also a major driving factor. A study by (Vinitchagoon, Kriengsinyos and Prachansuwan, 2025), revealed that the desire to enhance knowledge, expand competencies, and achieve career advancement are the main reasons individuals pursue postgraduate education. Similar findings were reported by (Amani, Myeya and Mhewa, 2022), showing that factors such as job prospects, salary increases, and social prestige also influence decisions to pursue further studies. However, not all motivations lead to the same decisions. (Smirnov and Tarasova, 2025) found that students with strong academic orientation tend to have higher satisfaction and commitment compared to those driven solely by non-academic motivation. This suggests that the quality of motivation also affects the sustainability of interest in further studies.

External Factors Influencing Interest in Further Studies

In addition to internal factors, external factors also have a significant influence on interest in postgraduate studies. One of the most dominant factors is economic condition. Studies by (Vinitchagoon, Kriengsinyos and Prachansuwan, 2025) and (Wang et al., 2024) show that financial limitations and economic pressure are major barriers to continuing studies. This confirms that even when students have high motivation, financial constraints can hinder the realization of their decisions. Besides economic factors, social support also plays an important role. Research by (Wang et al., 2024) indicates that support from family and the surrounding environment can increase students' confidence in pursuing further studies. This is supported by (Prianggita and Ghofur, 2021), who state that family socioeconomic status and environmental support positively influence interest in continuing education.

Another influential factor is access to information and the level of student awareness regarding postgraduate education. Research (ILTER, 2021) shows that awareness of advanced study programs significantly affects the intention to pursue further studies. This means that lack of information can be one of the causes of low interest in further studies, even when students potentially have sufficient ability. (Stark, Daniel and Twardawski, 2022) found that decisions to continue education are more influenced by considerations of benefits such as job prospects and success opportunities rather than purely academic factors. These findings indicate that students tend to make rational decisions by considering cost-benefit aspects.

The Role of Education Policy in Increasing Interest in Postgraduate Studies

The synthesis results also show that education policy plays an important role in facilitating and increasing interest in postgraduate studies. Policies related to access to education, such as the provision of scholarships, have been proven to reduce economic barriers faced by students. In addition, policies that support program flexibility are also important factors. (Vinitchagoon, Kriengsinyos and Prachansuwan, 2025) emphasize that flexibility in time and learning systems is highly needed, especially for working students. This shows that policies that are adaptive to students' needs can increase participation in further studies.

On the other hand, academic services also play a role in increasing study interest. (Masrukhin, Uke and Jawawi, 2024) found that career guidance services significantly increase interest in further studies. These services help students understand their potential and plan their academic and professional futures. (Dewantara, Rustiyarso and Afandi, 2022) found that interest and motivation only explain a small portion of the decision to pursue further studies, indicating that other factors such as institutional policies and working conditions also play a role. This shows that education policies need to be designed comprehensively and not focus on a single aspect. Furthermore, (Wang et al., 2024) emphasize the importance of institutional interventions in the form of academic and psychological support to overcome various challenges faced by students, such as academic pressure and lack of information. Thus, education

policy functions not only as a regulatory tool but also as a supporting mechanism in creating a conducive environment for students.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that interest in postgraduate studies is the result of an interaction between internal factors, external factors, and educational policies. Internal factors act as the primary drivers, external factors serve as the context that reinforces or inhibits, while educational policies serve as facilitators that can bridge the two. These findings indicate that efforts to increase interest in postgraduate studies cannot be undertaken in isolation but require an integrated approach that includes strengthening individual motivation, environmental support, and policies that are responsive to student needs.

Conclusion

Based on a systematic literature review of 15 selected articles, it can be confirmed that education students' interest in continuing their education to the postgraduate level is influenced by various interrelated factors. Internal factors, such as motivation, perceptions of the benefits of further education, and career orientation, are the primary drivers in shaping their desire for further study. On the other hand, external factors, including economic conditions, family support, the academic environment, and the availability of information, also play a role in strengthening or limiting this interest. Education policy plays a crucial role in linking these two factors through various interventions, such as providing educational assistance, improving the quality of academic services, and expanding access to information about postgraduate studies. However, current policies are deemed inadequate to fully address the specific needs of students, particularly in the context of education.

The results of this study indicate that efforts to increase interest in postgraduate study need to be carried out comprehensively, simultaneously considering individual, environmental, and policy aspects. Therefore, the formulation of more contextual, adaptive, and student-oriented policies is needed to encourage increased participation in postgraduate education. Academically, this research contributes to broadening understanding of the factors influencing interest in further study through a systematic literature synthesis approach. Practically, these findings can be used as a basis for consideration by policymakers and educational institutions in designing more effective strategies to increase student interest in continuing their studies.

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