



The Influence of Educational Background and Learning Interest on Academic Performance in Higher Education

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the influence of educational background and learning interest on students' academic achievement in higher education. Student interest is a strong predictor of academic success, while educational background contributes to academic readiness, although their impact varies across contexts. However, the combined effects of these factors remain underexplored, particularly in non-Western educational settings. Using a quantitative correlational design, this study collected data through questionnaires and conducted statistical analyses using Pearson correlation and multiple regression. The study sample consisted of students enrolled in the Intensive Arabic Language Program at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. The findings reveal a moderate correlation between learning interest, educational background, and academic performance, with an overall R-value of 0.541. Regression results show that learning interest significantly predicts academic achievement ($\beta = 0.541$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher interest strongly enhances performance. Conversely, educational background demonstrates no significant effect ($p = .821$), suggesting limited predictive value in this context. The model explains 27.6% of the variance, indicating that other factors also shape student outcomes. This study contributes to understanding how motivational and contextual variables interact in language learning and recommends that educators prioritize strategies that strengthen student engagement.

Key Words: *Educational Background, Learning Interest, Academic Performance, Higher Education*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh latar belakang pendidikan dan minat belajar terhadap prestasi akademik mahasiswa di pendidikan tinggi. Minat mahasiswa merupakan prediktor kuat keberhasilan akademik, sementara latar belakang pendidikan berkontribusi terhadap kesiapan akademik, meskipun dampaknya bervariasi di berbagai konteks. Namun, efek gabungan dari faktor-faktor ini masih kurang dieksplorasi, terutama dalam lingkungan pendidikan non-Barat. Dengan menggunakan desain korelasional kuantitatif, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui kuesioner dan melakukan analisis statistik menggunakan korelasi Pearson dan regresi berganda. Sampel penelitian terdiri dari mahasiswa yang terdaftar dalam Program Bahasa Arab Intensif di UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Temuan tersebut mengungkapkan korelasi sedang antara minat belajar, latar belakang pendidikan, dan kinerja akademik, dengan nilai R keseluruhan sebesar 0,541. Hasil regresi menunjukkan bahwa minat belajar secara signifikan memprediksi prestasi akademik ($\beta = 0,541$, $p < .001$), yang menunjukkan bahwa minat yang lebih tinggi sangat meningkatkan kinerja. Sebaliknya, latar belakang pendidikan tidak menunjukkan efek yang signifikan ($p =$

.821), yang menunjukkan nilai prediktif yang terbatas dalam konteks ini. Model ini menjelaskan 27,6% varians, yang menunjukkan bahwa faktor-faktor lain juga membentuk hasil belajar siswa. Studi ini berkontribusi dalam memahami bagaimana variabel motivasi dan kontekstual berinteraksi dalam pembelajaran bahasa dan merekomendasikan agar para pendidik memprioritaskan strategi yang memperkuat keterlibatan siswa.

Kata Kunci: *Latar Belakang Pendidikan, Minat Belajar, Prestasi Akademik, Pendidikan Tinggi*

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving world, education plays a critical role in shaping individuals who can meet the challenges of a globalized society. Education serves not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a process to develop intellectual, moral, and emotional capacities (Sahid et al., 2021; Sanjani, 2024; Thalgi, 2024). However, despite the broad recognition of education's importance, there exists a gap between the theoretical goals of education and its real-world outcomes. In many educational systems, while the aim is to equip students with the skills necessary to succeed in the modern world, the actual achievements often do not align with these objectives (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Sadiyah, 2022). This discrepancy raises critical questions about the effectiveness of current educational methods in fostering the skills that students need to thrive.

Educational background has long been recognized as a significant predictor of academic success, as it provides students with the foundation necessary for understanding complex concepts (Diab & Green, 2024; Rahmawaty & Narsa, 2022). Meanwhile, learning interest is a more individualized factor that reflects a student's intrinsic motivation to engage with their studies. Previous literature suggests that students with a strong interest in learning are more likely to perform well academically, as they tend to invest more time and effort into their studies (Fitri, 2022). However, the interaction between these two variables—educational background and learning interest—has not been extensively researched, leaving an opportunity for further exploration into how these factors together influence student performance.

Students from more privileged educational backgrounds tend to outperform their peers from less privileged backgrounds, due to better access to resources and educational support (Junejo & Waheed, 2024; Khoo & Kang, 2022; Thottoli et al., 2024). Polk (2022) found that learning interest is a strong predictor of academic success, particularly in students who are highly motivated and self-directed. The role of socio-economic factors in shaping both educational background and learning interest, demonstrating that these elements significantly affect student outcomes (Henry et al., 2023; Khokhlova et al., 2021; Seesai et al., 2024). However, despite these studies, the combined impact of educational background and learning interest remains underexplored in many contexts, particularly in non-Western settings.

Educational background plays a role in academic achievement, it is the student's motivation that ultimately determines their level of engagement and success (Ridlo & Yanti, 2024; Springstein & English, 2024). Zakiy (2021) found that a lack of interest in learning was often linked to lower academic performance, regardless of the student's background. The role of parental involvement in education, highlighting its influence on both the learning environment and student motivation (Anggraeni & Hina, 2024; Yulianti et al., 2021). Students with a strong interest in their studies tend to perform better academically, even when their educational background is not particularly strong (Arsul et al., 2021; Ataman et al., 2024). Omirzak et al. (2022) explored how technology and digital tools impact student engagement and academic performance, particularly in relation to students' learning interests.

The existing literature reveals a gap in understanding the combined influence of educational background and learning interest on academic achievement. While individual factors have been widely studied, few studies have explored how these two elements interact and impact student outcomes in various cultural and educational settings. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on a specific demographic or educational context, providing new insights into the dynamics between background education and learning interest that have not been sufficiently addressed by previous studies.

This study aims to answer the question of how educational background and learning interests influence the achievement of intensive Arabic language students at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. The study will provide valuable insights into how these factors interact to shape students' academic achievement. Furthermore, it will explore potential differences in this relationship across educational contexts and socioeconomic backgrounds, contributing to a deeper understanding of how diverse factors combine to influence student success. The study will help educators and policymakers design more effective strategies for improving student performance, especially by considering the individual and environmental factors that influence learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

Students enrolled in the Intensive Arabic Language program at the Faculty of Tarbiyah, Sunan Ampel State Islamic University, Surabaya, served as the research subjects. The study adopted a quantitative correlational design (Duckett, 2021), aiming to measure the relationship between the independent variables—educational background and learning interest—and the dependent variable—academic performance in Intensive Arabic Language. A quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for objective measurement of variables using numerical data, which can be statistically analyzed to draw conclusions about the strength and direction of the relationship. This design is suitable for determining whether there is a statistically significant correlation between the two factors and their impact on student performance.

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire, including both closed-ended and open-ended questions, distributed to students. This questionnaire focused on two main aspects: educational background (type of school attended) and level of interest in learning Arabic. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with some students to gain a deeper understanding of their personal experiences and attitudes toward the language learning process. The use of mixed methods ensured the comprehensiveness of the data collected.

The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using quantitative methods. Descriptive statistics were first used to summarize and describe the data, including measures such as frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation. To analyze the relationship between the independent variables (educational background and learning interest) and the dependent variable (academic achievement), the Pearson correlation coefficient was used. This statistical method is suitable for measuring the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis will be used to assess the relative impact of educational background and learning interest on students' Arabic language achievement.

The analysis will be conducted using SPSS software, which provides a robust framework for handling large data sets and conducting complex statistical tests. Regression analysis will be applied to test the relationship between the independent variables and academic achievement. A linearity test will be conducted to ensure the relationship between the variables is linear, which is a crucial assumption in regression analysis (Mulisa, 2022). Scatterplots and correlation tests will be used to visually inspect and statistically confirm linearity of the data. Once linearity is established, multiple regression analysis will be used to evaluate the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis

The research findings suggest a moderate correlation between academic achievement and two independent variables student interest and educational background, with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.541. This indicates that student interest and educational background are somewhat related to academic achievement, although the relationship is not exceptionally strong. The R-squared value of 0.293 implies that these two variables collectively explain 29.3% of the variability in academic performance. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.276, which corrects for the number of predictors in the model, reveals that these independent variables explain approximately 27.6% of the variance in academic achievement, considering the model's complexity.

The findings demonstrate that student interest and educational background are positively correlated with academic achievement, but only moderately so. The R-value of 0.541 reflects a moderate relationship between the

predictors (student interest and educational background) and academic achievement. While this is statistically significant, it is not a very strong association, indicating that other external or unmeasured factors also play a crucial role in determining academic success. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.276 refines this further, showing that even with the complexity of the model, a significant portion of academic achievement remains unexplained.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.541 ^a	.293	.276	4,922

a. Predictors: (Constant), Student Interest (X2), Background (X1)

Table 1 summarizes the key statistical measures from the model summary. The R-value of 0.541 indicates a moderate positive correlation between the independent variables (student interest and educational background) and academic achievement. The R-squared value of 0.293 means that 29.3% of the variation in academic achievement is explained by these predictors. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.276 accounts for the complexity of the model, explaining 27.6% of the variance, and the standard error of the estimate, 4.922, quantifies the average deviation of the predicted academic achievement from the actual values.

The important role of educational background and student interest in shaping academic achievement, but it also underscores the complexity of academic success. While these two variables explain a meaningful portion of the variance in academic performance, there are many other factors—such as teaching quality, student motivation, and external support—that could influence academic outcomes. The findings suggest that educators, policymakers, and researchers should consider a broader range of factors when developing strategies to improve academic performance. The study’s results provide valuable insights into the interplay between student background, interest, and achievement, encouraging further research to explore the other contributing factors that might account for the remaining unexplained variance in academic achievement.

Regression Model

The analysis depicted in the provided ANOVA table reveals the relationship between the dependent variable, Achievement Score (Y) and two independent predictors: Student Interest (X2) and Background (X1). The overall significance of the regression model is tested using the F-statistic. The table shows that the regression model has an F-value of 17.597 with a significance value less than 0.001 (Sig. < .001). This indicates that the model as a whole is statistically significant and that the independent variables (student interest and

background) significantly explain the variance in the dependent variable (achievement scores).

The model is divided into two components: the regression and residuals. The regression model has a Sum of Squares (SS) value of 852,754, with 2 degrees of freedom (df), resulting in a Mean Square (MS) of 426,377. This suggests that the regression model explains a significant portion of the variance in achievement scores. In comparison, the residual component has a higher Sum of Squares (2,059,610), which reflects the unexplained variance by the model, with 85 degrees of freedom and a Mean Square of 24,231. The large difference between the Mean Squares (426,377 for regression vs. 24,231 for residuals) indicates that the model is effective in explaining the variance in the dependent variable. The highly significant F-statistic further emphasizes the model's effectiveness.

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	852,754	2	426,377	17,597	<,001 ^b
	Residual	2059,610	85	24,231		
	Total	2912,364	87			

- a. Dependent Variable: Achievement Score (Y)
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Student Interest (X2), Background (X1)

Table 2, summarizes the components of the ANOVA, showing the significant role of the regression model in explaining the variance in student achievement, with a p-value below the commonly used threshold of 0.05, indicating statistical significance. The ANOVA results confirm that the regression model, which includes student interest and background as predictors, explains a significant portion of the variation in academic achievement. The F-statistic of 17,597 with a p-value less than 0.001 indicates that the independent variables are highly significant predictors of the dependent variable. The mean square for regression is much larger than that for residuals, further supporting the effectiveness of the model in capturing meaningful relationships.

The findings from this regression analysis can be generalized to suggest that student interest and background are important factors influencing academic performance. Given that both variables significantly contribute to the explanation of achievement scores, educational strategies targeting these aspects may be beneficial. Institutions looking to improve student performance could consider fostering greater interest in academic subjects and providing support based on students' backgrounds.

Correlation Analysis

The result shows both unstandardized and standardized coefficients for each predictor, along with their respective standard errors, t-values, and significance levels. The unstandardized coefficients represent the raw change in

the dependent variable for a one-unit change in the predictor variable. Meanwhile, the standardized coefficients, or Beta values, allow for comparison between the predictors to see which one has a greater influence on the outcome. The t-value tests the significance of each predictor, and the significance (Sig.) column indicates whether each predictor's effect is statistically significant.

The unstandardized coefficient for Background (X1) is -0.251 with a standard error of 1.107, resulting in a t-value of -0.227. This predictor has a significance value of 0.821, which is well above the typical threshold of 0.05, indicating that the background factor does not significantly contribute to explaining the variation in achievement scores. On the other hand, the unstandardized coefficient for Student Interest (X2) is 0.360 with a standard error of 0.061. The corresponding t-value is 5.926, and the significance value is less than 0.001, indicating that student interest has a statistically significant positive effect on achievement scores.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	72,075	3,468		20,780	<,001
	Latar Belakang (X1)	-,251	1,107	-,021	-,227	,821
	Minat Mahasiswa (X2)	,360	,061	,541	5,926	<,001

a. Dependent Variable: Achievement Score (Y)

This table presents the key results of the regression analysis, highlighting the differences in significance between the two predictors. While background (X1) has a non-significant effect, student interest (X2) shows a strong, significant positive relationship with the achievement score. The analysis indicates that student interest (X2) is a significant predictor of achievement scores, with a positive unstandardized coefficient of 0.360 and a Beta value of 0.541. This suggests that for each unit increase in student interest, achievement scores increase by 0.360, and the effect is robust. The statistical significance of this variable (Sig. < .001) confirms that student interest is a key factor influencing academic performance. In contrast, background (X1) shows no significant effect (Sig. = 0.821), indicating that this variable does not meaningfully explain the variation in achievement scores in this particular analysis.

As student interest is a significant predictor, educational institutions could benefit from developing programs and initiatives that increase students' engagement and enthusiasm for their studies. On the other hand, the lack of significance of the background variable implies that it may not be as impactful in predicting academic achievement in this case, and future interventions may place more emphasis on increasing student interest. Overall, the results emphasize the importance of engaging students in their academic work to enhance achievement.

Discussion

The descriptive analysis reveals a moderate correlation between academic achievement and the combined influence of student interest and educational background, reflected by an R-value of 0.541. This indicates that while the relationship is statistically significant, it is not strong enough to suggest that these variables alone fully determine students' academic success. Student interest as a meaningful yet not exclusive contributor to academic outcomes (Annur et al., 2022). Educational background suggests that although socioeconomic status and academic history influence performance (Assa'idi, 2021), they often interact with numerous other school- and home-related factors. The academic performance should be understood as the result of an interplay between personal, environmental, and instructional elements rather than being shaped solely by student interest or background.

The moderate positive correlations reported in the descriptive statistics suggest that student interest and educational background contribute meaningfully to academic performance, but with noticeable limitations. The interest plays a key motivational role in learning but is also shaped by contextual supports, instructional practices, and peer environments (Ahmad et al., 2024). Educational background commonly highlights disparities linked to socioeconomic resources, parental involvement, and early learning exposure; however, these factors seldom act in isolation (Muluk et al., 2021). The moderate strength of the relationship found in this study therefore reinforces the broader scholarly consensus that academic achievement is influenced by a constellation of variables.

Student interests and educational background have a statistically significant influence on student achievement. The model reliably predicts academic outcomes better than chance (Halat et al., 2023). Substantial differences indicate that the model explains a significant portion of the variance. Motivation and background characteristics significantly predict academic performance (Busahdiar et al., 2023). This conceptualization supports the notion that these factors meaningfully influence achievement. Although the model does not capture all potential contributors, its significance aligns with previous research confirming that interests and background are fundamental elements in understanding student outcomes.

The significance of the regression model is consistent with theoretical frameworks emphasizing the importance of cognitive and motivational predictors of academic success. The results indicate that student interests and background together contribute substantially to predicting achievement. Students' motivation and prior experiences shape academic engagement and achievement (Al-Thani et al., 2021). Although the residual variance remains larger than the explained variance, this pattern is common in educational research, where human behavior is influenced by many uncontrolled factors.

Interest-driven engagement increases task persistence, comprehension, and achievement across subjects (Dietrich et al., 2021). The contribution of background reflects evidence suggesting that family, school environment, and prior knowledge moderate access to learning opportunities.

Background showed an insignificant relationship with academic achievement, indicated by a high p-value of 0.821 and a low t-value. Background did not significantly contribute to the model after accounting for student interest. The predictive power of socioeconomic background varies significantly depending on contextual factors such as school quality and community environment (Basori et al., 2023). Its impact diminished when motivation variables were included, highlighting the need to understand how background interacts with other predictors (Celik & Yilmaz, 2022; Safitri, 2024). The insignificant role of background in this study may also indicate that the sample had relatively homogeneous background characteristics, thus reducing its predictive variability. Although educational background is often cited as an important predictor, this finding reinforces the notion that its influence is not uniform or universally strong across all learning environments.

Interest is one of the most influential psychological variables contributing to student success. Intrinsic motivation promotes deeper engagement, greater persistence, and higher-quality learning outcomes (Nasucha et al., 2023). Interest enhances cognitive processing, making it easier for students to absorb and retain new information (Khoo & Kang, 2022). The positive unstandardized coefficient further indicates that each increase in student interest corresponds to a measurable increase in achievement scores. This consistency with previous research strengthens the argument that interest should be prioritized in curriculum design and teaching strategies. The significant role of interest also suggests that fostering a stimulating learning environment through engaging activities, relevant content, and supportive teacher-student interactions can significantly improve academic performance. This highlights student interest as a key factor that educators must cultivate to maximize learning outcomes.

The findings of this study have important implications for educational practice, policy, and future research. The strong influence of student interest suggests that schools should focus on designing learning experiences that are relevant, engaging, and meaningful for students. Although background did not significantly impact achievement in this sample, the broader literature suggests that it remains a relevant factor in many contexts. Therefore, policymakers should continue to address equity issues by providing support mechanisms for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The study underscores the importance of creating learning environments that not only support cognitive development but also foster student motivation and interest. By recognizing the multifaceted influences on academic achievement, educators can implement more holistic strategies to improve student outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Student interest plays a significant and positive role in influencing academic achievement, while educational background does not show a meaningful impact within the analyzed context. The overall model demonstrates statistical significance, indicating that the combination of student interest and background contributes to the prediction of achievement, although the explained variance remains moderate. This suggests that academic performance is shaped by multiple interconnected factors, with interest emerging as a central motivational driver. The results highlight the importance of fostering student engagement and designing learning environments that stimulate curiosity and intrinsic motivation. The nonsignificant effect of background implies that its influence may vary depending on contextual and demographic characteristics. Therefore, future efforts to improve academic outcomes should prioritize enhancing student interest while also considering additional variables—such as instructional quality, learning support, and psychological factors—that may account for the remaining unexplained variance in student achievement.

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