

Between Interest, Career Risk, and Learning Experience: Explaining Students' Reluctance to Choose a History Education Program - A Case Study of Students at MA Mu'allimat NWDI Pancor

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ABSTRAK

Rendahnya minat terhadap Program Studi Pendidikan Sejarah tidak cukup dijelaskan sebagai akibat ketidaksukaan siswa pada masa lalu. Pilihan program studi dibentuk oleh pertemuan antara minat personal, keyakinan atas kemampuan diri, proyeksi pekerjaan, pengaruh keluarga, informasi tentang perguruan tinggi, dan pengalaman belajar sejarah di sekolah. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi faktor internal dan eksternal yang memengaruhi minat siswa memilih Pendidikan Sejarah, menjelaskan persepsi mereka terhadap program studi dan prospek karier lulusannya, serta menganalisis hubungan pengalaman belajar di sekolah dengan pembentukan minat tersebut. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif-eksploratif dengan strategi studi kasus di MA Mu'allimat NWDI Pancor. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif selama tiga hari, kuesioner terbuka kepada 59 siswa kelas XI IPS dengan

40 respons lengkap, wawancara semi-terstruktur terhadap tiga siswa yang merepresentasikan tingkat minat berbeda, percakapan dengan guru sejarah, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis secara interaktif melalui pengumpulan, kondensasi, penyajian, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa minat memilih Pendidikan Sejarah terbentuk melalui konfigurasi empat mekanisme: kesesuaian minat-bakat dan cita-cita; penilaian atas utilitas serta risiko ekonomi; mediasi keluarga dan citra program studi; serta pengalaman belajar sejarah yang cenderung berpusat pada guru dan hafalan. Siswa mengakui nilai moral sejarah, tetapi tidak selalu menikmati pembelajarannya. Kesenjangan informasi juga membuat karier lulusan dipersepsikan terbatas pada guru, dosen, dan peneliti. Pergeseran minat setelah sosialisasi menunjukkan bahwa preferensi siswa belum sepenuhnya tetap, meskipun temuan ini tidak dapat dibaca sebagai bukti kausal karena sosialisasi menyatu dengan proses penelitian. Studi ini menegaskan perlunya sinergi antara pembelajaran sejarah yang kontekstual, layanan bimbingan karier, dan komunikasi program studi yang berbasis bukti.

ABSTRACT

Low interest in History Education cannot be adequately explained as students' dislike of the past. Degree choice emerges from the intersection of personal interest, perceived competence, career expectations, family influence, access to higher education information, and prior classroom experience. This study explores the internal and external factors shaping students'

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interest in choosing a History Education program, examines their perceptions of the program and its graduates' career prospects, and analyses how school history learning contributes to those preferences. An exploratory-descriptive qualitative case study was conducted at MA Mu'allimat NWDI Pancor. Data were generated through three days of participant observation, an open-ended questionnaire distributed to 59 eleventh-grade social science students, of whom 40 provided complete responses, semi-structured interviews with three students representing different levels of interest, an informal conversation with a history teacher, and documentary materials. Data were analysed interactively through collection, condensation, display, conclusion drawing, and verification. The findings reveal four interconnected mechanisms: alignment among personal interest, perceived ability, and future aspirations; assessment of utility and economic risk; family mediation and program image; and learning experiences dominated by teacher-centred explanation and memorisation. Students recognised the moral and civic value of history but did not necessarily enjoy learning it. Limited information also narrowed their understanding of graduate careers to teaching, lecturing, and research. A shift in interest following an information session suggests that preferences were not fully fixed; however, it should not be interpreted causally because the session was embedded in the research process. The study calls for coordinated interventions involving contextual and inquiry-oriented history teaching, systematic career guidance, and evidence-based program communication.

INTRODUCTION

For secondary-school students, choosing a degree program involves more than identifying a preferred school subject; it is a process of weighing multiple interests and relating them to their self-concept and perceived future possibilities (Vulperhorst, 2020). This appraisal involves beliefs about one's abilities, intrinsic and identity-related value, usefulness for future goals, and perceived costs or risks (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2020a). Employment and income prospects also interact with personal preferences and perceived ability rather than operating as isolated economic factors (Wiswall & Zafar, 2015). Moreover, prior experiences and social influences from family, peers, and teachers help shape aspirations before students enter higher education (Mckenzie & Bennett, 2022). Consequently, when History Education is absent from a student's list of options, this does not necessarily indicate rejection of history as a discipline. The program may be eliminated before it is adequately explored, particularly when students have limited access to information about the curriculum, university learning experiences, and graduates' career pathways (Mckenzie & Bennett, 2022).

History occupies a distinctive position of tension. On the one hand, history education serves epistemic and public purposes: it trains students to formulate questions, evaluate source credibility, construct evidence-based arguments, and understand causation, change, and continuity within their temporal contexts (Seixas, 2015). The concept of historical consciousness likewise frames learning history as a process of meaning-making that connects interpretations of the past with orientations toward the present and future (Popa, 2022). Document-based instruction has been shown to improve historical thinking, reading

comprehension, and the transfer of reasoning strategies to contemporary issues, although the ability to connect history with the future does not emerge automatically and must be explicitly designed into instruction (Barsch, 2025; Reisman, 2012). On the other hand, degree choice is increasingly shaped by employability, the visibility of career pathways, and earning potential (Quadlin, 2020). Pressure to demonstrate economic outcomes is particularly acute in the humanities, arts, and social sciences (McCormack, 2023). Yet humanities education develops research, analytical, communication, creative, and adaptive skills; the problem is that students and institutions often fail to recognise or articulate concretely how these skills relate to a range of occupations (Ashton & Bulaitis, 2023; De Dijn et al., 2023).

Research on degree choice indicates that students' decisions are multidimensional. Studies in Indonesia have identified personal interests and potential, motivation, self-concept, family, institutional image, promotion, and employment prospects as factors considered jointly when selecting a program (Aryani & Umar, 2020; Fahriannur et al., 2022). However, most of these studies surveyed university students who had already made their choice and therefore captured recalled reasons after the decision more readily than the process through which it developed. Research involving secondary-school students outside Indonesia shows that higher education choice proceeds through orientation, exploration of the self and environment, comparison of alternatives, and commitment formation (Germeijs & Verschueren, 2015). Students do not simply match a single interest to a single program; they weigh multiple interests, compare them with available programs, and assess the possible futures offered by each alternative. Information about a program may also lead students to reinterpret or change the interests they intend to pursue (Vulperhorst, 2020). Interest is therefore better understood as part of a dynamic appraisal involving the self, the environment, and perceived opportunities rather than as a single fixed variable (Draijer et al., 2025).

Situated Expectancy-Value Theory (SEVT) provides a productive framework for explaining degree-choice processes. According to (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2024), academic choices and engagement are influenced by individuals' expectations of success and the subjective value they attach to an activity. Subjective value encompasses intrinsic value in the form of interest or enjoyment, attainment value associated with personal and social identity, utility value for present and future goals, and perceived cost (Gong et al., 2023). These appraisals develop through previous experiences of success, messages and expectations from parents and teachers, the school environment, and the sociocultural context. Research on higher education choice also shows that motivational beliefs, particularly utility value, play a strong role in choosing social science and humanities fields (Jugović et al., 2024). Within this framework, students may intrinsically enjoy history yet decide against History Education if they doubt their ability to succeed or perceive its career benefits as lower than its anticipated costs and risks.

The SEVT framework moves beyond a simple division between internal and external factors. Interest, competence beliefs, identity, and aspirations are experienced personally, but they develop through experiences and interactions within family, school, social, and cultural environments. Conversely, parental advice, teacher evaluations, and a program's image do not operate mechanically. Their influence depends on how students perceive and interpret these messages and experiences (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2020a, 2024). Research involving humanities and social science undergraduates indicates that high study value and low cost can, to some extent, compensate for low expectations of success. Conversely, low study value combined with low expectations of success, or low expectations combined with high cost, is associated with stronger intentions to withdraw (Breetzke & Bohndick, 2024). Although the latter findings were obtained from enrolled university students, the mechanism offers a relevant hypothesis for explaining how prospective students may eliminate a program before applying.

In addition to expectations about the future, school learning experiences are a major source of students' familiarity with a discipline. In history classes, teaching methods have been reported to shape students' enjoyment and engagement more strongly than the topics taught; teachers' methods at school may also have lasting effects on attitudes toward and interest in history in subsequent years (Haydn & Harris, 2010). School history learning may therefore serve as an initial reference point when students imagine what studying history at a higher level would be like, although its specific relationship with choosing a university History Education program requires more direct evidence. Instruction dominated by monotonous lectures, note-taking, reproduction of content, and memorisation may reduce motivation and reinforce the image of history as a tedious subject (Henkaline, 2023). By contrast, primary-source use, discussion, and evidence-based inquiry invite students to pose questions, evaluate information, compare perspectives, and construct interpretations, presenting history as an analytical practice rather than a collection of facts (Claravall & Irey, 2022). Contextual learning through local history, digital mapping, cultural heritage, and virtual visits may also produce more meaningful experiences and improve engagement or learning outcomes (Alazmi & Alemtairy, 2024; Doorsselaere, 2025). School pedagogy therefore shapes not only learning outcomes but also perceptions of a discipline's value and character; these perceptions may, in turn, influence students' willingness to pursue history at university (Haydn & Harris, 2010; Wassermann et al., 2018).

Two gaps remain in the literature. First, many studies of degree choice use quantitative surveys of university students who have already selected a major. Although effective for mapping the strength of associations among factors, this approach is less able to capture how undecided students make sense of doubt, family pressure, or classroom experience. Second, research specifically addressing interest in History Education remains limited, even though this field faces a dual challenge: the image of school history and students'

uncertainty about graduates' careers. Studying eleventh-grade students provides access to a phase in which preferences have begun to form but have not yet fully solidified.

On the basis of these gaps, this study addresses three questions. First, what internal and external factors shape students' interest in choosing a History Education program? Second, how do students perceive the program and its graduates' career prospects? Third, how are school history learning experiences related to the formation of that interest? The study does not seek to measure the magnitude of each factor's influence or to generalise its findings to all students. Rather, it aims to develop a contextual explanation of the mechanisms through which History Education enters, remains within, or is excluded from students' 'choice radar.'

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach and a case-study method. This approach was selected because the study did not seek to test causal relationships or statistically rank factors, but to develop an in-depth understanding of how students explained their choices, doubts, and experiences. A qualitative descriptive design enables researchers to produce a comprehensive account that remains close to the data and participants' everyday language while allowing interpretation at a level appropriate to the study's aims (Kim et al., 2017). A case-study strategy was used because students' choices and experiences were examined in depth as phenomena bounded by a particular school context (Yin, 2017).

The study was conducted at MA Mu'allimat NWDI Pancor, Selong District, East Lombok Regency, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The school was selected because it has historically supplied graduates to the History Education Program at Hamzanwadi University and is located in the same geographical area as the university. This proximity made the school a relevant setting for examining how a program that is physically accessible can nevertheless remain outside students' range of choices.

The primary participants were eleventh-grade students in the social sciences track. They were at an exploratory stage of further education: they had begun to envisage university majors and occupations but still had time to consider alternatives. A history teacher was included as a supporting informant to provide contextual information about classroom practices. To protect confidentiality in the article, the three interviewed students were assigned the codes S1, S2, and S3, representing high, moderate, and low levels of interest in History Education, respectively.

Data were collected using four techniques. First, participant observation was conducted over three consecutive days in eleventh-grade social science history classes. Observations focused on patterns of teacher-student interaction, instructional methods, lesson timing, supporting facilities, and students' affective responses, including enthusiasm, boredom, and engagement. Second, a 16-item open-ended questionnaire was distributed to 59 students

in two classes. Because the questions required narrative answers, students were permitted to complete the questionnaire at home. Forty questionnaires were returned complete and constituted the main corpus used to map the range of students' reasons.

Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three students selected to reflect variation in interest. The selection was not intended to represent population proportions, but to provide contrasting experiences: a student already committed to history, a student still considering it, and a student who rejected it as an option. Fourth, documentation in the form of field notes and photographs was used to supplement the observational context. The conversation with the history teacher was treated as contextual information rather than as a source equivalent to the in-depth student interviews. As part of the research process, the researcher also conducted an interactive information session on the curriculum, university learning activities, and possible careers for History Education graduates. The session elicited responses from several students before and after exposure to the information. Methodologically, the session constituted an informational intervention embedded in the data-collection process. Changes in responses after the session were therefore treated as indications of perceptual flexibility rather than evidence of intervention effectiveness or a causal relationship.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by (Miles et al., 2014), comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification; these activities were iterative and interacted continuously with data collection. Questionnaire responses, observation notes, and interview transcripts or notes were read repeatedly to identify units of meaning, which were then condensed and organised into codes, categories, and themes (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Initial themes included interest and perceived ability, aspirations, employment prospects, family, learning experiences, program image, and information availability. These themes were subsequently compared across participants and data sources and interpreted using the concepts of expectations of success, intrinsic value, utility value, attainment value, and cost within Situated Expectancy-Value Theory (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2020a).

Interpretive trustworthiness was pursued through source and method triangulation by comparing questionnaire, interview, and observation data (Carter et al., 2014). Individual questionnaire statements were not immediately treated as general patterns; pattern identification considered their recurrence and consistency across responses and data sources. Data that diverged from the dominant pattern were nevertheless retained as deviant or negative cases because they could clarify the limits of interpretation and reduce confirmation bias (Johnson et al., 2020). In this study, S1's experience of remaining interested in history despite the absence of similar choices in the surrounding environment was retained as a contrasting case.

This study has several limitations. It was conducted in a single school, and only three students participated in the in-depth interviews; consequently, the range of represented experiences was limited, although qualitative sample adequacy also depends on participants' information power (Malterud et al., 2016). Not all questionnaires were returned, creating the possibility of nonresponse bias if nonrespondents held different characteristics or views. In addition, the information session conducted before or during data collection may have signalled the study's purpose and influenced student responses through demand characteristics, although the magnitude of this influence cannot be established from the research design (Mccambridge et al., 2012). The findings are therefore not intended to be statistically generalised to all students, but to generate contextual understanding and analytical propositions that can be examined in other settings (Yin, 2017).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Interest as a Configuration Rather Than a Single Factor

The data show that students' decisions were not shaped by any single, isolated reason. When expressing a lack of interest in History Education, students connected several considerations, including perceptions of their own ability, aspirations in other fields, employment prospects, family guidance, and experiences of learning history. This pattern is consistent with research showing that the choice of history is shaped by the intersection of personal interest, instrumental considerations, future aspirations, family and school influences, and the subject's social image (Cairns & Garrard, 2024; Wassermann et al., 2018).

From the perspective of situated expectancy-value theory, these findings can be interpreted through four interrelated mechanisms. First, students assess the alignment among their interests, abilities, identity, and aspirations. Second, they consider the program's utility value and its perceived costs and risks. Third, family, school, and the social environment provide information and evaluative frames for these choices. Fourth, learning experiences shape intrinsic value, attitudes toward history, and expectations of success (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2020b). These mechanisms need not operate sequentially. In theoretical terms, negative learning experiences may weaken interest and competence beliefs; together with perceived costs and limited employment prospects, these conditions may make History Education increasingly unattractive to students.

Alignment Among Interests, Perceived Ability, and Aspirations

The most consistent personal consideration was alignment with students' interests and perceived talents. Students believed that choosing a field aligned with their interests would make university study more enjoyable and reduce feelings of compulsion. At the same time, the term 'talent' was often used not to denote objectively assessed ability but to express

self-evaluations based on school learning experiences. S3, who was not interested in the program, stated:

'I am not interested in the History Education Program because it is not consistent with my interests or talents, and I do not feel very capable in history.' (S3)

This statement illustrates the overlap between intrinsic value and expectations of success. S3 not only did not enjoy history but also doubted their ability. In SEVT, expectations of success and subjective value are proximal determinants of academic engagement, persistence, and choice. Low intrinsic value combined with low expectations of success makes an option progressively less attractive and increases the likelihood that it will neither be selected nor sustained (Breetzke & Bohndick, 2024; J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2020a). In the present context, the label 'not my talent' may be interpreted as a subjective summary of experiences of difficulty, boredom, and low confidence in meeting the demands of study. This interpretation should be treated as an analytical possibility rather than an established causal relationship.

Academic achievement is one consideration for Generation Z students when selecting a major, while research on interest development shows that interest also guides educational choices (Aryani & Umar, 2020). The present data add nuance by showing that interest is not necessarily formed before students learn about a program. Interest develops through interaction with available content, experiences, and information. If History Education is represented only as the memorisation of events and a pathway to teaching, students are evaluating an unduly narrow image of the discipline. Research indicates that history instruction centred on memorisation and textbooks is associated with negative attitudes, whereas broader information about the purposes and value of history can alter students' perceptions (Nuttall, 2021).

S1 presented a different pattern. The student described history as a passion and interpreted the scarcity of peers choosing the program as a source of pride:

'Few people around me, if any, have chosen a History Education Program. That actually makes me want to enrol even more; I am proud to be different from my friends.' (S1)

For S1, history had intrinsic value because it provided enjoyment and interest, as well as attainment value because it formed an important part of the student's identity (J. Eccles, 2009; J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2024). In this case, being 'different' from the surrounding environment was not reported as a social cost but was interpreted as part of the student's self-image. This finding shows that environmental influence does not invariably produce conformity. An unsupportive environment may weaken some students' interest, whereas students who view a choice as aligned with their identity may interpret obstacles as confirmation that the choice matters (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). Nevertheless, this single

case is insufficient to conclude that environmental disapproval generally strengthens interest.

Degree choice is also not simply a matter of matching a fixed interest to a program. Students consider several interests both by moving from interest to program and from program to interest. Available programs provide feedback that may reinforce, narrow, or alter how students understand their interests and themselves (Vulperhorst, 2020). Career aspirations subsequently function as a filter. Programs that do not appear connected to the occupations students envisage tend to receive lower utility value and may be removed from consideration (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2024). Research on choosing history indicates that students may enjoy and recognise the value of history yet abandon it because they perceive it as irrelevant to their desired career pathway (Cairns & Garrard, 2024). Acknowledging that history is important to the nation does not, therefore, automatically translate into choosing History Education. For students oriented toward particular professions, abstract moral or national messages are unlikely to be persuasive unless accompanied by concrete explanations of the relationship among the degree program, the competencies developed, and possible careers.

Employment Prospects as Utility Value and Perceived Cost

Employment prospects were the most frequently cited contextual factor. Most students could identify schoolteacher, university lecturer, and researcher as possible occupations but struggled to name other forms of work that draw on historical competencies. This limited awareness produced the practical conclusion that graduates had 'some opportunities, but only a narrow range.' S3, for example, acknowledged that opportunities existed but rejected the program because those pathways did not align with the prospects sought.

Within Situated Expectancy-Value Theory (SEVT), students' attention to employment and income should not automatically be read as materialism. Such considerations reflect assessments of utility value, namely the extent to which a degree supports future goals, and perceived costs, such as the time and effort required, foregone alternatives, and emotional consequences. In the context of higher education choice, financial risk and uncertain employment outcomes may be understood as contextual consequences that students also take into account (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2024).

This appraisal may represent a reasonable decision based on the information available to students, but that information is not necessarily complete or accurate. Conlon and Patel, for example, show that students tend to associate a field of study with the few occupations that most readily come to mind and overestimate the likelihood that graduates enter those occupations (Conlon & Patel, 2026). Thus, if participants knew only three occupations related to History Education, their assessment of the program's utility was probably shaped by a

narrow representation of career options. The figure of 'three occupations' must be identified as a finding from the present data rather than attributed to the literature.

Research on higher education choice shows that employment opportunities and career development are important motives for some secondary-school students (Maringe, 2006). In Indonesia, employment prospects and costs have also been identified as considerations in university, degree, or career choice (Nelafan & Sulistiyanti, 2022). However, the evidence is not entirely uniform. Aryani and Umar, for example, found no significant effects of employment opportunities or financial support in their sample (Aryani & Umar, 2020). The more accurate formulation is therefore that these considerations have been 'identified in several studies,' rather than 'consistently demonstrated.'

The data indicate that perceptions of 'limited employment prospects' operated at two levels. Cognitively, students lacked information about career pathways. Socially, the humanities were positioned below programs associated with economics, business, technology, or licensed professions. This image transformed uncertainty into risk. Students asked not only, 'What work could I do?' but also, 'Could I justify this choice to my family?' Employment prospects thus did not operate independently of family influence and social image. The relationship among study value, cost, and expectations of success is also important. Among university students, high study value or low cost may, to some extent, compensate for low expectations of success. Conversely, study value and expectations of success that are both low, especially when combined with high cost, are associated with substantially stronger withdrawal intentions than would be explained by the separate effects of each factor (Breetzke & Bohndick, 2024). Other longitudinal research similarly indicates that declining intrinsic and attainment values and increasing costs are associated with stronger intentions to withdraw from university (Schnettler et al., 2020).

Although these studies involved students already enrolled at university, their pattern can be used cautiously as an interpretive lens for the present case. S1's choice may represent a condition in which high intrinsic value helped sustain interest despite other doubts or obstacles. Conversely, S3's elimination of History Education may be interpreted as the convergence of low intrinsic value, low competence beliefs, and high perceived career costs. This interpretation is an inference from the case data, not evidence that the compensatory mechanism identified among university students operates identically among secondary-school students.

A practical implication is that program promotion should do more than present a list of occupations. Career information should be connected to concrete learning experiences, competencies to be developed, and examples of graduates' pathways. Intervention research shows that helping students identify personal connections among learning content, their lives, and future goals can increase perceived value, interest, and even confidence in success (Hulleman et al., 2016). This is relevant to History Education because students are often

unaware of how historical competencies contribute to work and their futures (Cairns & Garrard, 2024). Alumni stories may help make these pathways concrete, although the effectiveness of alumni-based strategies specifically for attracting prospective History Education students remains to be tested.

Family: Conditional Support and Negotiating the Future

Family was a principal reference point in discussions of further education. Several students stated that their parents ultimately left the decision to them, while still recommending fields perceived to offer greater economic security. In this study, this pattern was interpreted as conditional support: formal autonomy was granted, but family preferences and risk appraisals continued to define the boundaries of choices considered reasonable. This interpretation is consistent with evidence that adolescents may feel they have made their own decisions while simultaneously acknowledging the strong influence of parental views on educational choice (Hegna, 2017)..

S1's case illustrates this negotiation. The student's parents wanted their child to become an entrepreneur and recommended economics, whereas S1 wished to choose History Education. Although the final decision was left to the student, family advice remained a benchmark. Family influence in such situations need not take the form of a direct prohibition. It may be communicated through information, financial support, expectations, and values and beliefs about occupations considered desirable or secure (Fouad et al., 2010). Repeated questions about employment, income, and future security may therefore be understood as a mechanism for interpreting risk, provided that this conclusion is supported by the interview data.

This finding is consistent with Indonesian research identifying parental expectations and adolescent-parent career congruence as important elements in adolescents' career aspirations and exploration (Sawitri et al., 2013). A study of secondary-school students in South Sulawesi also found that family significantly influenced choice of major (Aryani & Umar, 2020). However, the results were not uniform: in the same study, financial support and employment opportunities were not significant after comparison with other factors. This variation indicates that 'family influence' is not a unitary construct; it may encompass emotional support, information provision, financing, expectations, family values, occupational role models, or pressure to select a particular field (Fouad et al., 2010).

Family background may also shape students' exposure to fields of study and occupations. The fact that some students had no family member working in a history-related field may be interpreted as limited access to concrete examples of career pathways, although causality cannot be established from the absence of such relatives alone. More generally, research indicates that the family social environment, parent-child communication, and cultural capital are associated with educational aspirations (Tan & Fang, 2023), whereas

encounters with occupational role models can expand aspirations toward the occupations introduced (Böhle et al., 2025). Conversely, local history stories shared by parents may represent the transmission of cultural familiarity. Interest in historical stories, however, does not automatically become commitment to a History Education degree. Family cultural capital may provide knowledge and initial familiarity, but its translation into academic choice continues to depend on expectations of success, utility value, perceived costs, and the futures students can imagine.

Information Gaps and the Flexibility of Students' 'Choice Radar'

Before the information session, most students were familiar with the name of the History Education Program but lacked a concrete understanding of its curriculum, teaching and learning methods, field activities, and graduate competencies. They tended to imagine university history as a continuation of their school experience: reading material, listening to explanations, and memorising figures or dates. Because these appraisals were based on limited information, students' attitudes are more appropriately interpreted as indications of an information gap than as fully formed rejection. Research shows that university students update their beliefs and degree choices after receiving more accurate information about disciplinary content and educational outcomes (Wiswall & Zafar, 2015). Exposure to topics that do not conform to initial stereotypes can likewise broaden understanding of a discipline's scope and increase the likelihood that it will be selected (Fricke & Steinmayr, 2018).

An information gap can prevent a program from entering the set of alternatives that students consider seriously. In higher education choice, awareness of an alternative does not necessarily mean that it has entered a student's consideration set (Dawes & Brown, 2008).. Proximity and information availability also influence major choice (Patterson et al., 2023), while images of majors are often simplified through the occupations considered most representative of them (Conlon & Patel, 2026). Students therefore find it easier to compare programs that are frequently discussed, supported by concrete information, or associated with immediately recognisable occupational labels.

A positive image of history, for example as a means of preserving culture or developing critical thinking, was not sufficient to generate an intention to enrol. Students may appreciate and acknowledge the importance of history yet still decide against it when they cannot see a concrete relationship with further study or their career goals (Cairns & Garrard, 2024). Departmental image is associated with major choice, but that image is also shaped by perceptions of practical orientation, academic demands, research, mentoring, and possible educational outcomes (Korfmann et al., 2021). A discipline's normative image should therefore be understood as one input into decision-making rather than as its sole determinant.

The change in S2's response after the information session was the most illustrative finding. The student had previously expressed little interest but reported increased interest after learning that the program included field visits to historical sites, an activity consistent with the student's enjoyment of travel:

'I was not very interested before. After the information session, I became fairly interested because I enjoy travelling. I learned that the history program includes learning outside the classroom and visits to historical places.' (S2)

The shift in S2's response shows that interest can be triggered when new information reveals a connection between a program's characteristics and a student's existing interests. The experiment by Piepenburg and Fervers demonstrated that providing degree information together with interest and ability assessments and individualised feedback can expand the range of majors students consider, particularly when their initial level of information is low (Piepenburg & Fervers, 2022). In the interest loop of Interest-Driven Creator theory, interest development involves triggering curiosity, deep engagement in an activity, and extending interest through personal meaningfulness (Wong et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, S2's positive response does not demonstrate the formation of enduring interest. The literature distinguishes momentarily triggered situational interest from maintained situational interest and more stable individual interest (Hidi et al., 2010). Triggering activities are also not always sufficient to sustain interest without opportunities for renewed engagement and personal meaning-making (Wong et al., 2021). Because S2's statement was obtained immediately after exposure to the information, the present study cannot determine whether the interest persisted, prompted further information seeking, or resulted in an actual degree choice.

The interpretation must also consider the researcher's position as the provider of information. In such a situation, participants' answers may be influenced by demand characteristics, namely a tendency to infer the researcher's expectations and adjust responses accordingly (Mccambridge et al., 2012). The additional attention received during the activity may also produce research participation effects, although evidence about the magnitude and consistency of such effects remains mixed (Mccambridge et al., 2014). Novelty, a desire to provide an answer pleasing to the researcher, and the appeal of a specific activity should therefore be treated as alternative explanations rather than effects shown to have occurred.

Given these limitations, the findings are insufficient to conclude that the information session demonstrably increased interest. A more accurate formulation is that students' preferences appeared flexible after the information gap was addressed. Evaluating the session's effectiveness would require pre- and post-intervention measurement, a comparison group, and delayed follow-up to distinguish temporary from sustained change (Shadish et al., 2002). In addition to intentions, future studies should measure behaviours

such as information seeking, participation in program activities, applications, and actual degree choices. In practical terms, degree programs can shift their communication from general promotion to verifiable information.

Such information may cover modules, examples of authentic assignments, field activities, competencies developed, student portfolios, and alumni pathways. Approaches combining program information, assessments of interests and abilities, information-search strategies, and university-student experiences have been used in major-choice counselling interventions (Piepenburg & Fervers, 2022). Information should also reach parents, teachers, and counsellors because they provide support and information during adolescents' career-choice processes (Marcionetti & Zammitti, 2025).

The Cognitive-Affective Paradox in History Learning

Observations and questionnaire responses revealed a tension between students' cognitive appraisals and affective experiences. Cognitively, students acknowledged that history helped them appreciate historical figures' struggles, understand national identity, and learn lessons from the past. Affectively, many described history learning as boring, repetitive, text-heavy, and dependent on memorisation. This pattern indicates that recognising the moral value of history does not necessarily produce enjoyment of learning it. Previous research similarly shows that students may recognise history's relevance to the present and future yet still choose not to pursue it further (Cairns & Garrard, 2024).

The observed lessons were dominated by teacher explanation and storytelling, with limited opportunities for student interaction. The three informants evaluated the lessons differently, but all acknowledged the predominance of lecturing:

'History lessons involve too much writing, the material is repetitive, and the teacher lectures too much. I would prefer the lessons to focus directly on the core material.' (S2)

'There is a lot of material, and it all feels the same. Lectures make me bored and sleepy, especially because history is taught around midday.' (S3)

'The teacher's approach is quite lively and enjoyable, although it mostly involves telling stories and giving us answers to questions so that they are easier to remember for the examination.' (S1)

This finding is consistent with Issar's observation that text-based, content-heavy history instruction with little connection to students' experiences provides few opportunities to ask questions, construct arguments, and develop interpretations (Issar, 2021). A study of students' perceptions in France and Switzerland likewise found that students more often experienced didactic instruction even though they tended to prefer visits and debates (Audigier & Fink, 2016).

However, the responses of S1, S2, and S3 indicate that lectures or stories were not invariably evaluated negatively. S1 enjoyed the teacher's storytelling, whereas S2 and S3 experienced boredom. The central problem was therefore not the presence of explanation or narrative but its dominance as the sole mode of instruction and its orientation toward reproducing examination answers. Teacher explanation can still provide useful context when followed by document analysis, question formulation, evidence comparison, and interpretive discussion (Reisman, 2012).

Students also perceived the lesson time, approximately 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., as exacerbating fatigue. Research shows that dense sequences of classes and a lesson's position within the timetable can influence performance through cognitive fatigue (Williams & Shapiro, 2018). However, because this research does not establish that the period approaching midday is invariably worse, the role of scheduling in the present study should be framed as a student perception and a contextual factor that may have intensified boredom rather than as an established cause.

Monotonous instruction cannot be attributed entirely to the teacher. Pedagogical choices are made within constraints imposed by time, curriculum density, examination orientation, class size, school support, and resource availability. Boadu found that overloaded syllabi, limited learning resources, large classes, and weak administrative support were major constraints on history teaching (Boadu, 2016). The dominance of transmission-oriented methods is therefore better understood as both a pedagogical and a structural issue.

Within SEVT, these experiences may influence expectations of success and task value. Experiences of success or difficulty in completing tasks help shape students' beliefs about their ability; enjoyment or boredom is associated with intrinsic value; and the ability to connect history with life and future goals shapes utility value (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2024). Instruction perceived as memorisation may therefore reduce enjoyment and obscure the usefulness of history. However, the claim that students subsequently 'projected' this experience onto the degree program is an interpretation made in the present study and requires direct support from student responses.

Interest development requires experiences that provide students with competence and agency, including source analysis, family oral history, local-site mapping, interpretive debate, and digital archive creation. Document-based curricula have been shown to improve historical thinking, factual knowledge, and reading comprehension (Reisman, 2012), while Indonesian research indicates a need for more contextual, visual, and interactive history materials (Saripudin et al., 2022). Such activities present history as a process of asking questions and constructing evidence-based arguments rather than merely recalling information.

Program Image: Morally Positive but Instrumentally Weak

Overall, students did not regard History Education as a poor program. They associated it with education, cultural preservation, nationalism, and critical thinking. Recognition of these values, however, did not automatically produce an intention to enrol. Research shows that students may view history as important for understanding the present, learning from the past, and building the future, yet still discontinue it when its relationship with further study and employment is unclear (Cairns & Garrard, 2024).

Analytically, this pattern can be read as a gap between moral-symbolic image and instrumental belief. In SEVT, values associated with identity and the importance of an activity are distinguished from utility value, or the usefulness of that activity for future educational, occupational, and life goals (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2020a, 2024). The term 'moral-symbolic' is not fully equivalent to attainment value, but both refer to the importance of a choice to identity and a system of values. Degree decisions, by contrast, require more concrete information about course content, competencies developed, and possible educational outcomes.

In Indonesia, the competencies developed by History Education graduates can be applied in several fields, although the relationship between the degree and employment is not always direct. The most linear pathway is teaching history, subject to the academic qualification and educator-certification requirements established by professional regulations (Undang-Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2005 Tentang Guru Dan Dosen, 2005). Other pathways, such as archival work (Undang-Undang Nomor 43 Tahun 2009 Tentang Kearsipan, 2009), museums (Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 66 Tahun 2015 Tentang Museum, 2015), cultural heritage conservation (Undang-Undang Nomor 11 Tahun 2010 Tentang Cagar Budaya, 2010), cultural tourism, media, research, and government, generally require additional competencies, experience, certification, further education, or alignment with the qualifications specified for a particular post (Badan Nasional Sertifikasi Profesi, 2024). Archivists, for example, must possess archival competencies; Cultural Heritage Expert Team members require competency certification; and applicants for civil-service positions must satisfy the educational qualifications explicitly stated in vacancy announcements.

Degree programs need to explain graduate competencies in terms that can be substantiated. In addition to pedagogy, history students learn to locate and verify sources, interpret context, construct arguments, conduct interviews, write analytical narratives, manage information, and communicate findings to the public. These competencies may be relevant to education, research, archives, museums, heritage conservation, media, writing, cultural tourism, government, and community work. This list, however, must not be presented as a guarantee of employment. Claims become more credible when supported by alumni data, portfolio examples, internship partnerships, and explanations of the additional skills required for each pathway.

An Integrative Model of Interest Formation

The findings as a whole can be formulated as a multistage filtering process. This formulation adapts the view that educational choice develops through the stages of predisposition, information search, and final choice (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987), while integrating expectancy-value and social-cognitive mechanisms. In the first stage, students assess whether history interests them and whether they feel capable of studying it. This appraisal is related to intrinsic value and expectations of success (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2024; Lent et al., 1994). In the second stage, they assess the program's alignment with their identity and aspirations, which can be explained through attainment value and identity-based motivation (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2024). In the third stage, students compare the program's benefits, costs, and risks with those of other alternatives (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2024; Ersoy & Speer, 2025). In the fourth stage, family, teachers, and available information reinforce or weaken these appraisals (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2024). School learning experiences provide evidence at every stage because experiences of success and failure shape self-efficacy, outcome expectations, interests, and choice goals pilihan (Lent et al., 1994).

This model is not linear. Expectations of success and subjective values develop through interpretations of prior experiences, messages from parents and teachers, and changing social contexts (J. S. Eccles & Wigfield, 2024). Within Social Cognitive Career Theory, learning experiences, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, support, and contextual barriers are understood as interacting elements in the formation of interests and choices (Lent et al., 1994). Identity is likewise not entirely fixed, but is contextually formed and activated, thereby shaping how individuals interpret difficulty and determine action (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). Low interest is therefore better understood as the outcome of a configuration of personal and contextual factors than as a fixed student attribute.

First, schools should strengthen educational and career guidance before students reach their final year. The OECD emphasises that effective guidance begins early, is responsive to students' circumstances and interests, and provides direct experience of the world of work (OECD, 2026). Second, history learning should move from reproducing information toward investigating historical questions and sources because inquiry-based learning engages students in developing and evaluating interpretations of the past (Boxtel et al., 2025). Third, efforts to make History Education more attractive should be integrated with the development of competencies and career readiness through an institutional approach involving multiple stakeholders (Bridgstock & Jackson, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Eleventh-grade social science students' interest in the History Education Program at MA Mu'allimat NWDI Pancor was shaped by the relationship between personal and

contextual factors. Alignment among interests and perceived talents, beliefs about one's ability, and career aspirations formed an initial filter. This filter subsequently interacted with perceptions of employment prospects, family advice, program image, information availability, and school history learning experiences. Because these factors mutually shape one another, the internal-external dichotomy is useful only as an initial classification and cannot adequately explain the mechanisms of choice.

Students' career perceptions remained concentrated on schoolteacher, university lecturer, and researcher roles. Limited information made the utility value of History Education appear low and its economic costs appear high. Changes in responses after the information session suggest that some preferences remained flexible when the program was connected to relevant interests and experiences. These changes, however, cannot be interpreted as causal effects because the information session formed part of the research process and was not followed by longitudinal measurement.

Learning experiences revealed a paradox: students acknowledged the moral and national value of history, yet many did not enjoy the learning process. The predominance of lecturing, repetition, memorisation, limited activities, and midday scheduling created negative associations that students then projected onto university-level history. The challenge for History Education is therefore not merely to improve its image, but to demonstrate that history is an analytical, relevant, and intellectually demanding discipline with defensible competency pathways. Schools are advised to strengthen source-based learning, local-history projects, digital media, and reflection on contemporary issues while also providing systematic career guidance.

Degree programs should communicate their curricula, field activities, competencies, and alumni data to students and parents. Future research should involve multiple schools, extend interviews to parents and guidance counsellors, compare socioeconomic characteristics, and test informational interventions using pre-post designs with follow-up measurement. These steps are necessary if explanations of interest are to move beyond momentary perceptions and evaluate how interest develops into actual decisions.

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