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Self-Efficacy Mediating the Influence of Social Support on Interest in Continuing Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Developing superior human resources through higher education is crucial for national progress. However, interest in pursuing higher education in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), particularly Central Lombok, remains a challenge that requires empirical study. This study aims to examine the impact of social support on interest in pursuing higher education, as well as the mediating role of self-efficacy in this relationship. This quantitative study, using a survey approach, involved 100 active university students in Central Lombok Regency as a sample, selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling - Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS). The results showed that social support had a positive and significant effect on interest in pursuing higher education and self-efficacy. A key finding was that self-efficacy fully mediated the effect of social support on interest in pursuing higher education (R^2 = 60.9%). Theoretically, this indicates that social support must first be internalized into self-efficacy to effectively increase interest. Policy implications highlight the importance of intervention programs that not only provide social support, but also strategically focus on strengthening individual self-efficacy to encourage higher education participation in the region.

Keywords: Human Resource Development; Interest in Continuing Higher Education; Self-Efficacy; Social Support.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The progress of a nation in the future is largely determined by the quality of human resources (HR) born from the education system, especially higher education (Žalėnienė & Pereira, 2021). Higher education serves as a crucial long-term investment, not only to enhance an individual's career potential, but also to advance the nation socially, economically, and intellectually (Trinh, 2023). This is in line with the mandate Law No. 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education which aims to develop individuals who master Science and Technology for the national interest and increasing the nation's competitiveness (Article 5b).

In the era of globalization full of increasingly complex competition, continuing education to higher education level is becoming increasingly relevant for individuals to face increasingly complex challenges in the era of society 5.0, especially in developing competencies and effectively contributing to community life (González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2022). In addition, the role

of universities in producing human resources that are adaptive to technological disruption and social change is becoming increasingly crucial in supporting sustainable development at the national and global levels (Purcell & Lumbreras, 2021). Therefore, higher education is not merely an option, but rather a strategic necessity to equip oneself with adaptive and innovative knowledge, skills, and mindsets to face the challenges of the Society 5.0 era (Nguyen, 2024). However, amidst growing awareness of the importance of access to higher education in this era of globalization, Indonesia still faces complex challenges related to public interest and participation in pursuing higher education.

The literature shows that various factors, including social, economic, and psychological factors, contribute to low participation. Socioeconomically, the main barriers are family income levels, tuition costs, and social pressure to work quickly to support the family economy (Bülbül, 2021; Tompsett & Knoester, 2023). Geographically, accessibility to higher education institutions is also a significant obstacle (Bülbül, 2021). Meanwhile, from a psychological and social support perspective, Self-Efficacy and Social Support (especially from parents) play a crucial role in shaping an individual's aspirations and decisions to continue their studies at university (Descals-Tomás et al., 2021; Singh & Ishrat, 2025)**.** This concept of interest is in line with the Expectancy Theory developed by Vroom, which consists of Valence, Expectancy, and Instrumentality, which function as initial energy that provides high valence to the goals of higher education, thereby increasing hope and confidence in the instrumentality of efforts towards success (Permzadian & Shen, 2024)**.** Self-Efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her ability to complete tasks and face challenges (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021; Waddington, 2023). Bandura emphasized that self-efficacy in this context includes magnitude, strength, and generality (Mulu et al., 2023). High self-efficacy in an educational context encourages learning motivation and persistence (Bhati & Sethy, 2022). Individuals with high self-efficacy view challenges as opportunities, not threats, and tend to be persistent in achieving their goals (Dahri et al., 2023). Factors that form self-efficacy (past experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and psychological conditions are closely related to the social environment (Gale et al., 2021; Narayanan et al., 2021).

In this case, social support plays a crucial role in motivating and facilitating an individual's decision to pursue higher education. Similarly, social support emerges as crucial for gaining broader access and equality in opportunities to pursue higher education (Wanti et al., 2022). Support from the surrounding environment, such as family, friends, and community, is believed to play a crucial role in influencing educational aspirations. This is reinforced by findings showing that interest in continuing education to a higher level is also influenced by family factors (Wulansari et al., 2023). Furthermore, social support in the form of emotional, informational, and appreciative provides the motivation and resources individuals need to overcome the obstacles they face in achieving their hopes (Lin & Ayob, 2024).

The high level of awareness of the urgency of higher education in the era of Society 5.0 contrasts with the reality of Indonesian public participation in pursuing higher education. As seen from the Higher Education Database (PDDikti) in 2024, it was noted that the percentage of the Indonesian population actively pursuing higher education only consisted of 8,761,406 (3.1%) of the total population of Indonesia which reaches 282,477,584. This figure indicates significant systemic and individual barriers to achieving higher education aspirations, suggesting that Indonesia has very low human resources compared to neighboring countries. This is reinforced by the results of a 2024 national census conducted by the Statistics Indonesia, which recorded that only 10.2% of Indonesia's population graduated from college. This figure reinforces the wide

gap between the ideal role of higher education and the reality of community participation in continuing studies to higher education levels (Welch & Aziz, 2024).

The problem of low community participation in continuing education to a higher level, as depicted nationally, also occurs at the regional level, one of which is Central Lombok Regency. Initial observations indicate that there is a disparity between awareness of the importance of higher education and the actual participation rate among the people of Central Lombok. Based on observations in the databaseCentral Lombok Secondary Education Unit in 2021 shows that as many as 2,491 students from 12 sub-districts continued their education to higher education after completing their secondary education.Referring to this data, student interest in continuing their education to higher education is very low compared to the total number of students graduating from secondary education. This is confirmed by the 2024 percentage data cited by civil registry data quoted from Databoks (2025), where the proportion of the population continuing higher education at the undergraduate level was 37,220 people (3.36%) of the total population. This situation is consistent with the results of the identification of low motivation and obstacles to social support and psychological factors as the dominant factors inhibiting interest in continuing higher education (Gill, 2021). This figure also indicates a significant gap between the number of students pursuing secondary education and the number of students continuing on to higher education. This situation is certainly a serious and worrying concern, requiring in-depth analysis through empirical studies to identify the factors contributing to the low interest in pursuing higher education, both physically and psychologically.

Considering that in the era of society 5.0, which is characterized by close integration between physical space and cyberspace, it demands human resources that are adaptive, innovative and have a good mastery of science and technology (Mourtzis et al., 2022). Therefore, low interest in continuing higher education can be a significant obstacle in creating competent and globally competitive human resources (Kjellgren & Richter, 2021). Realizing the urgency of higher education that is capable of producing superior human resources in the era of society 5.0, self-efficacy in each individual must be developed and supported by social support (Suherman et al., 2025), considering the increasingly complex challenges facing the Indonesian generation in the era of Society 5.0. The low transition rate from secondary to higher education indicates a dysfunction in the human capital transmission mechanism (Guzmán et al., 2021). Empirical research on this matter can explore the complex interactions between psychological and physical factors to formulate effective policy interventions to increase community participation in continuing education to the tertiary level, in order to prepare a superior and competitive generation in the era of society 5.0 which is full of challenges.

Given the complexity of the interaction between social and psychological factors in influencing individual interest in continuing higher education, this study proposes to examine in depth and empirically psychological factors, such as the role of self-efficacy as a mediator of social support on interest in continuing higher education. A deep understanding of how self-efficacy and social support interact and influence the interest of the Central Lombok community in continuing their education to university is crucial, so that they can compete and contribute effectively in facing the challenges of the society 5.0 era. This phenomenon raises fundamental questions regarding the factors causing low community participation in continuing higher education.

The low participation rate of Indonesian society, especially in Central Lombok Regency indicates the influence of social and psychological factors, so that this can potentially hinder Indonesia in optimizing the potential of competent and adaptive human resources, which are important prerequisites in accelerating the nation's progress in the era of society 5.0, marked by

the integration of information and communication technology in all aspects of life. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the social and psychological factors that influence the interest in continuing higher education in Central Lombok Regency is very important to be carried out so that strong self-efficacy is needed in individuals, because it can have a positive impact in the educational context, including increasing learning motivation and perseverance (Bhati & Sethy, 2022; Waddington, 2023), influencing the selection of more challenging tasks and challenges (Bandura, 2023; Bhati & Sethy, 2022), as well as helping in managing academic stress (Hitches et al., 2022). Thus, self-efficacy has the potential to mediate the influence of social support on interest in pursuing higher education. Social support, whether from family, peers, or the environment, shapes an individual's self-efficacy in overcoming challenges (Allen et al., 2022), including confidence in pursuing higher education. Empirical studies confirm that self-efficacy has a positive influence on students' interest in pursuing higher education (Neroni et al., 2022). Simply put, individuals with high self-efficacy not only receive encouragement from social support, but also internalize validation of their abilities, which ultimately strengthens their interest and commitment to pursuing higher education (Liubana et al., 2025).

The problem of low participation in higher education in Central Lombok shows an urgent need to examine the interactionSocial Support and Self-Efficacy in Influencing Interest in Continuing Higher Education. Theoretically, this is strengthened by Vroom's Expectancy Theory, where social support acts as an external resource that increases Valence (goal value) and Instrumentality (belief in outcomes). Meanwhile, Self-Efficacy functions as Expectancy (self-confidence), which has been proven to be able to mediate the impact of social support on individual motivation and persistence. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that Self-Efficacy mediates the influence of Social Support on Interest in Continuing Higher Education in Central Lombok Regency, which is crucial for producing superior human resources in the Society 5.0 era. Based on this, this study formulates a hypothesis regarding the role of self-efficacy in mediating the influence of social support on interest in continuing higher education. The following are the hypotheses tested in this study:

H1: Social support has a direct, significant influence on students' interest in continuing their education at university.
H2: Social support has a significant influence on self-efficacy
H3: Self-efficacy has a significant influence on students' interest in continuing their education to higher education.
H4: Social support has a significant influence on interest in continuing education to higher education through self-efficacy as a mediator.

2. METHODS

This research uses a quantitative approach with an ex post facto design (Firdaus et al., 2021), which aims to investigate the causal relationship that has occurred between variables without any manipulation by the researcher. The study was conducted in Central Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. This design is in line with the research objective, which is to examine the impact of social support on the interest in continuing higher education mediated by self-efficacy. The conceptual framework of this study tests a causal relationship model involving an exogenous latent variable (Social Support), an intervening variable (Self-Efficacy), and an endogenous variable (Interest in Continuing Higher Education), as shown in Figure 1.

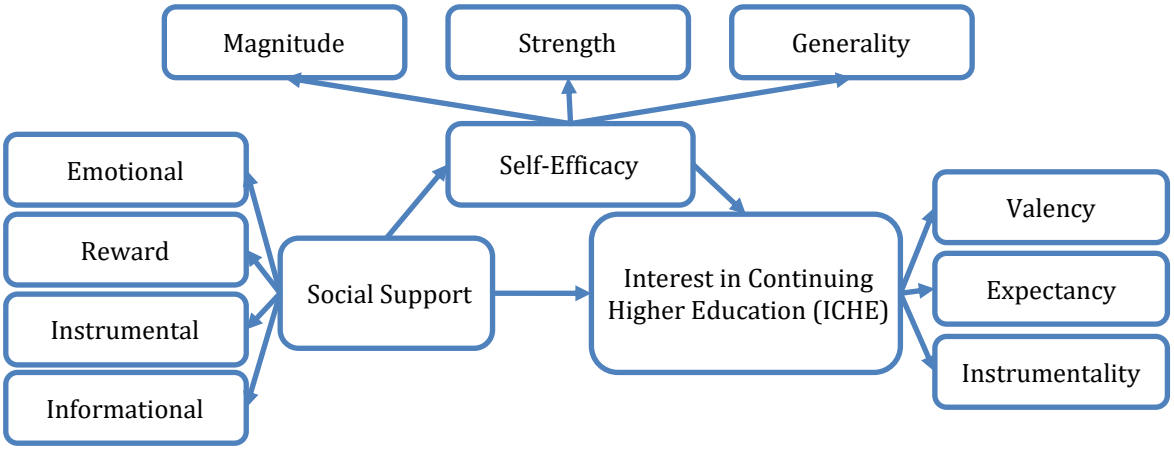

Figure 1. Research Model
Source: Research Framework processed by the author (2025)

This research design uses path analysis Harris & Gleason (2022), which is used to investigate the role of self-efficacy in mediating social influence implemented through the Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) technique. The selection of SEM-PLS is based on its superiority in analyzing second-order measurement models (Hair et al., 2017), using a questionnaire instrument compiled based on determining indicators, as shown in Table 1. The population of this study is Central Lombok residents who have active student status spread across various state and private universities, both at home and abroad.

Considering that the active student population in the Central Lombok region is not limited and the exact number is unknown, then sampling was carried out (Ahmed, 2024). The sampling technique used was Simple Random Sampling, where each element of the population has an equal chance of being selected, which is relevant for widely distributed populations. To determine the sample size, we used A-Priori Power Analysis (Lakens, 2022), by setting a significance level of 10% ($\alpha = 0.10$). Based on the power analysis calculation, the minimum sample size required to detect a significant effect was set at 100 students. The inclusion criteria for this study were Central Lombok residents who were registered as active students during the study period. The justification for selecting this technique ensures equal representation and valid conclusion-drawing for a large and dispersed population.

Data collection in this study used documentation studies and distribution of questionnaires (Khoa et al., 2023). We conducted this documentation study to obtain preliminary data on the lack of interest among the people of Central Lombok Regency in continuing their education. A questionnaire was used to survey active students to obtain information on factors that foster their interest in continuing their education at university. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale withCriteria point 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), point 2 = Disagree (D), point 3 = Neutral (N), point 4 = Agree (A), and point 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Similar to what was conveyed by Aybek & Toraman (2022), the 5-point Likert scale is used because it is superior in terms of information context and perspective, thus facilitating the response process. Similarly, the 5-point Likert scale is also more commonly used and appropriate for measuring a variety of responses in surveys (Li, 2013), so as not to confuse respondents when giving answers.

Based on a comprehensive literature review, the measurement items in this study were formed to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected in the study, as shown in Table 1. The development of measurement items on the variable of interest in continuing higher education is based on Vroom's theory which includes three dimensions, namelyvalence,

expectancy, and instrumentality (Permzadian & Shen, 2024). Meanwhile, the items in the social support variable include three dimensions, namely emotional support, appreciation, instrumental support, and informational support (Alberta et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2024). We developed the items in the self-efficacy variable based on the theory developed by Bandura, which also includes three dimensions: magnitude, strength, and generality (Mulu et al., 2023).

Table 1. Measurement Items

Dimensions	Sub Dimensions of Measurement
Variables of Interest in Continuing Higher Education	
Valence	1. The value of the results related to higher education
	2. The desire to achieve expectations related to higher education
Hope	1. Self-confidence in mastering skills or knowledge in higher education
	2. Optimalism in achieving higher education goals
Instrumentality	1. Understanding the relationship between learning efforts and educational outcomes
	2. Perseverance in the educational process for better results
Social Support Variable	
Emotional Support	1. Get affection and attention
	2. Gaining trust and acceptance
	3. Get a sense of comfort and moral support
	4. Feeling heard and understood
	5. Gaining emotional validation
Award Support	1. Get praise for your business process
	2. Get appreciation for achievements
Instrumental Support	1. Get physical or material assistance
	2. Get help solving problems
	3. Get access to services
Informational Support	1. Get advice and guidance
	2. Obtaining relevant information
	3. Get guidance
	4. Getting constructive feedback
Self-Efficacy Variable	
Magnitude	1. His confidence in facing the level of difficulty of tasks/challenges
	2. Tendency to choose more complex challenges
Strength	1. The strength of an individual's belief in their ability to succeed
	2. Resilience in facing challenges and viewing failure as a learning experience
Generality	1. Confidence in one's own abilities can be generalized across a variety of situations.
	2. Consistency of self-confidence over time

Furthermore, we also conducted data analysis to test our proposed hypotheses. The research framework, consisting of three constructs, was tested using the development technique.SEM-PLS model, because it shows excellent performance in statistical analysis (Hair et al., 2017), with a second-order measurement model. Furthermore, this technique has received considerable attention from researchers because it can handle small sample sizes and non-normal data (Hair et al., 2017). The research procedure began with the development and validation of a measurement instrument consisting of three constructs (Social Support, Self-Efficacy, and Interest in Continuing Higher Education) tested on 30 respondents to ensure validity and reliability. This

trial aims to ensure that all items used in this study meet the validity and reliability standards with the provision of a value of > 0.361. The results of the instrument validity test using product moment, of the 49 items in the Social Support variable, there are 41 items that are declared valid. Meanwhile, in the Self-Efficacy variable, there are 18 out of 21 items that are declared valid. Furthermore, in the Interest in Continuing Higher Education variable, there are 20 out of 28 items that are declared valid. The results of the reliability test using show that all research variables (Social Support = 0.972, Self-Efficacy = 0.999, and Interest in Continuing Higher Education = 959) are reliable. The primary data for analysis was then collected by distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents between August and September. The collected data were analyzed using SEM-PLS techniques to test the proposed hypotheses.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of data analysis, the three constructs of the research model consisting of social support, self-efficacy, and interest in continuing higher education in this study were developed based on high-level reflective and formative constructs, while their respective dimensions act as low-level constructs (Sarstedt et al., 2019). Therefore, we conducted a two-stage data analysis to test the quality of the external model. We also conducted an evaluation of the inner model and a mediation test to examine the relationships between the research construct variables to obtain empirical information for the proposed hypotheses.

3.1 External Model Evaluation and Scale

The quality of the constructs in this study was evaluated based on external model evaluation. Factor loading evaluation was the first quality criterion examined, followed by determining construct reliability and construct validity. Factor loading refers to the degree to which items in a correlation matrix are related to the identified principal components. According to Hair et al. (2011), the loading factor value is acceptable if it is greater than > 0.70. Hair et al. (2017), it also states that construct reliability testing is based on Composite Reliability and Cronbach's alpha values, with both thresholds being above 0.70. Convergent validity is indicated by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value being greater than 0.50 (Hair & Alamer, 2022), and discriminant validity is carried out by checking the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) which must be at a figure below < 0.85 (Hair & Alamer, 2022).

Considering that our type of analysis is second order, we carry out the evaluation of the outer model in two stages, namely testing the correlation of indicators with each dimension simultaneously in one model, followed by evaluating the outer model of the construct, as shown in Table 2. This analysis was followed by an evaluation of construct validity and reliability, as well as a multicollinearity check by ensuring the VIF value is less than 5 (Jony & Serradell-López, 2021). In addition to evaluating the correlation of dimensions with constructs indicated by the loading factor values, we also ensured the correlation of each dimension with each construct, which is also shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Loading Factors, Construct Validity, and Construct Reliability

Indicator	Loading Factor	Indicator	Loading Factor	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
ICHE1	0.844	ICHE11	0.893	0.859	0.913	0.777
ICHE2	0.864	ICHE12	0.857			
ICHE3	0.878	ICHE13	0.852			
ICHE4	0.855	ICHE14	0.898			

Indicator	Loading Factor	Indicator	Loading Factor	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
ICHE5	0.868	ICHE15	0.898			
ICHE6	0.868	ICHE16	0.803			
ICHE7	0.852	ICHE17	0.845			
ICHE8	0.823	ICHE18	0.854			
ICHE9	0.882	ICHE19	0.803			
ICHE10	0.805	ICHE20	0.821			
SE1	0.885	SE10	0.845			
SE2	0.887	SE11	0.891			
SE3	0.775	SE12	0.794			
SE4	0.906	SE13	0.832			
SE5	0.854	SE14	0.760	0.866	0.917	0.787
SE6	0.830	SE15	0.837			
SE7	0.864	SE16	0.836			
SE8	0.901	SE17	0.779			
SE9	0.921	SE18	0.801			
SS1	0.903	SS22	0.807			
SS2	0.866	SS23	0.892			
SS3	0.806	SS24	0.822			
SS4	0.835	SS25	0.802			
SS5	0.804	SS26	0.880			
SS6	0.731	SS27	0.749			
SS7	0.801	SS28	0.802			
SS8	0.804	SS29	0.784			
SS9	0.823	SS30	0.875			
SS10	0.887	SS31	0.882			
SS11	0.853	SS32	0.887	0.914	0.939	0.794
SS12	0.835	SS33	0.770			
SS13	0.855	SS34	0.908			
SS14	0.911	SS35	0.807			
SS15	0.740	SS36	0.890			
SS16	0.875	SS37	0.795			
SS17	0.880	SS38	0.847			
SS18	0.876	SS39	0.839			
SS19	0.818	SS40	0.869			
SS20	0.894	SS41	0.816			
SS21	0.833	-	-			

Source: Results of path coefficient and inner model evaluation using SmartSEM software

It can be seen from the results of the correlation evaluation of each dimension with each indicator in the external model, both the Social Support (SS), Self-Efficacy (SE), and Interest in Continuing Higher Education (ICHE) constructs, each of which has a loading factor value above 0.70. This indicates that each dimension represents its latent construct well. Convergent validity, which also indicates high validity, is all above the threshold of > 0.5. In addition, the reliability indicated by the Cronbach's alpha and Composite reliability values for each construct also exceed the threshold of 0.70, thus it is said to meet the criteria for reliability and convergent validity well. Next, a multicollinearity test was conducted as indicated by the VIF values of all constructs, starting from SS to SE obtained a value (VIF = 1.000), on SS to ICHE (VIF = 1.736), and on SE to

ICHE (VIF = 1.736). Thus, there is no problem of multicollinearity in this research model. We also conducted a discriminant validity test by examining the HTMT ratio, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity of HTMT

Dimensions	ICHE	SE	SS
ICHE			
SE	0.803		
SS	0.770	0.716	

Source: results of external model evaluation using SmartSEM software

The results of the HTMT discriminant validity analysis indicate that each construct in our research model is empirically distinct from one another. This can be seen from all HTMT values being below < 0.85, thus discriminant validity in our study has been met for all pairs of constructs in the model. Based on the results of the external model evaluation, high-level construct validity was also evaluated by validating the external weights and external loadings of its dimensions, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. High-Level Construct Validity

Construct	Dimensions	Outer Weight	T-Statistics	Outer Loading
ICHE	ICHE1	0.469	72,367	0.909
	ICHE2	0.323	33,544	0.887
	ICHE3	0.339	19,911	0.847
SE	SE1	0.358	31,309	0.886
	SE2	0.327	24,060	0.865
	SE3	0.440	57,337	0.910
SS	SS1	0.271	35,512	0.887
	SS2	0.313	34,747	0.886
	SS3	0.273	38,797	0.913
	SS4	0.266	32,485	0.879

Source: results of external model evaluation using SmartSEM software

The analysis results show that all dimensions that form a high-level construct have an outer weight value that has a different relative contribution from each dimension in forming a high-level construct. It is also seen from the T-statistics value which is far above the critical value of 1.96 (significance 0.05), which confirms that the contribution of each dimension to the construct is significant. Outer loading also shows that all dimensions exceed the threshold > 0.70, so it is said to be able to explain the variance of each construct strongly, so that the validity of the high-level construct is established (Sarstedt et al., 2019).

3.2 Inner Model

Structural equation modelling, also known as internal modelling, evaluates postulated relationships to verify hypotheses. Using bootstrapping, the weight of each path coefficient can be determined, thus determining the significance of the correlation between variables. The path analysis model of this study is also supported by the results of the F-square (F^2) analysis, which indicates the importance of the mediating role of self-efficacy in this research model. For the F^2 value, we used the recommended influence estimate. Hair et al. (2021), argues that there are three levels of interpretation of the F-square value, namely F^2 = 0.02 (low influence), F^2 = 0.15

(moderate influence), and F^2 = 0.35 (high influence). In addition, we also evaluate the 95% confidence interval which indicates an increase in the dependent variable when strengthening the independent variable. Table 5 presents the results of the hypothesis testing proposed in this study.

Table 5. Summary of Path Analysis Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Track	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	p-value	95% Confidence Interval		F^2
					2.5%	97.5%	
H1	SS→ICHE	0.704***	13,290	0.000	0.277	0.652	0.245
H2	SS→SE	0.651***	11,725	0.000	0.215	0.584	0.736
H3	SE→ICHE	0.460***	4,738	0.000	0.541	0.757	0.319

*sig 5%, **sig 1%, ***sig < 1%
Source: results of path coefficient and inner model evaluation using SmartSEM software

The path analysis results consistently support all three proposed hypotheses. Substantively, these findings indicate that Social Support (SS) has a strong positive and significant effect on ICHE (β = 0.704), which is the strongest path in the model. This aligns with various previous studies emphasizing the crucial role of social support in improving the quality of experiences or outcomes, particularly in the context of education, health, or the work environment. The practical implication is the need to develop intervention strategies that focus on strengthening social support networks to optimize ICHE. The 95% confidence interval column also shows that the influence of SS on ICHE ranges from 0.277 to 0.652. This indicates that a person's interest in continuing higher education will increase by up to 0.652 if they receive high social support. Furthermore, the F^2 value in hypothesis 1 also shows the effect of SS on ICHE by obtaining F^2 = 0.245, which indicates that the direct effect of social support on interest in continuing higher education is classified as moderate.

Furthermore, SS also showed a strong positive and significant effect on SE (β = 0.651), underscoring the important role of social support as a key predictor of self-efficacy. This finding reinforces the literature stating that a supportive environment fosters an individual's self-confidence and belief in their abilities. Practically, this suggests that an encouraging and supportive environment can be a foundation for building an individual's self-confidence and competence. The 95% confidence interval column also shows that the effect of SS on SE ranges from 0.215 to 0.584. This also indicates that the stronger the social support received, the greater the increase in a person's confidence in completing a task, up to 0.584. Furthermore, the F^2 value in hypothesis 2 also shows the effect of SS on SE, obtained by F^2 = 0.736, which indicates that the effect of self-efficacy on interest in continuing higher education is relatively high.

Finally, Self-Efficacy (SE) was shown to have a positive and significant influence on ICHE (β = 0.460). Despite having a more moderate path coefficient than the other two paths, this significance remains crucial. This confirms the possible mediation hypothesis in the model, namely that increased individual self-efficacy contributes directly to better outcomes or experiences. This result is consistent with Social Cognitive Theory, which positions SE as a central psychological mechanism mediating between experience and performance. Practically, developing programs aimed at improving SE, such as mastery-experience-based training or modelling, would have a positive impact on ICHE. It can also be seen in the 95% confidence interval column which shows that the influence of SE on ICHE shows an influence between 0.541 to 0.575, which means that the

higher a person's confidence in their ability to complete something, the higher their interest in continuing higher education will increase by up to 0.757. Furthermore, the F^2 value in hypothesis 3 also shows the effect of SE on ICHE, obtained $F^2 = 0.319$, which also indicates a moderate effect, but higher than SS on ICHE. This indicates a very substantial mediating role of self-efficacy in the path analysis, indicating that the mediating effect has significant explanatory power in the model.

Evaluation of the estimated Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and NFI values was also conducted to assess the fit of the model used in this study. According to Schermelleh-Engelett, a research model is considered fit if the SRMR value is between 0.08 and 0.10 (Okan et al., 2024). Based on the analysis results, the SRMR value is 0.096, indicating that the model is considered good in this study because it is below the acceptance threshold and above the minimum value. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) evaluation of this research model also shows a value between 0.70 and 0.90 (Hair et al., 2014), so that the model can be considered to have an acceptable level of Goodness of Fit, so it is said that this research model can be said to be a marginal fit, as shown in Figure 3.

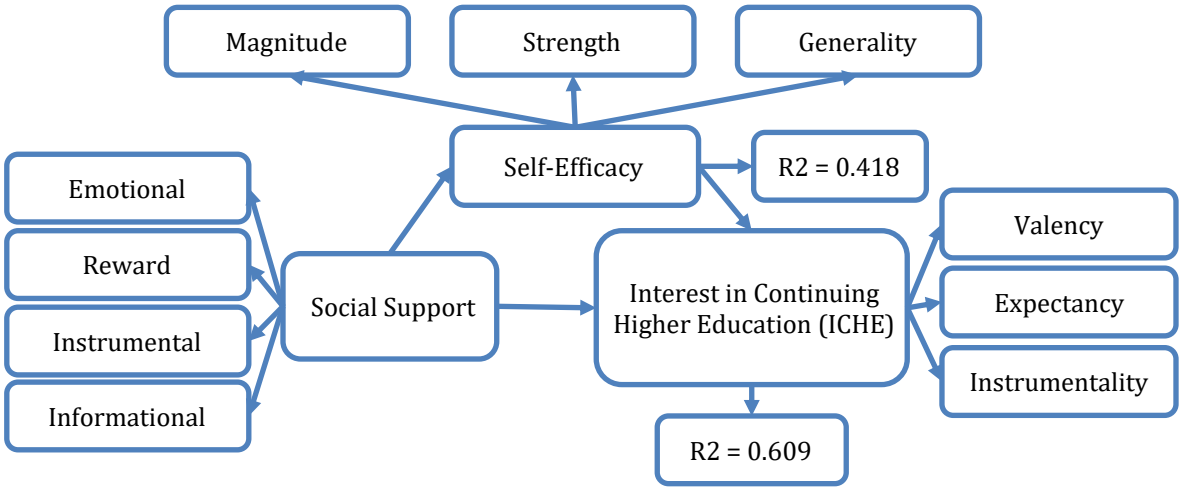

Figure 3. Standardized Path Coefficients and Significance of Inner Model
Source: results of path coefficient and inner model evaluation using SmartSEM software

The strength of this research model is supported by the results of the R-square (R2) evaluation, which is generated from the path analysis in the model as shown in Figure 3. The interpretation of R^2 that we use is in accordance with Chin's recommendation which states that the value of $R^2 = 0.19$ (low influence), $R^2 = 0.33$ (medium influence), and $R^2 = 0.66$ (high influence)(Fauzi, 2022). The analysis results in the model show that the proportion of variance in the SE variable has a moderate effect. This is indicated by the R^2 value = 0.418, so it is said that the SE variable can be explained by the SS variable by 41.8%. Meanwhile, the proportion of variance in the ICHE variable has a moderate effect that is close to high, as seen from the R^2 value = 0.609. This indicates that the proportion of variance in the ICHE variable can be explained by the SS variable directly and through SE by 60.9%.

3.3 Mediation Test

Mediation analysis attempts to explore the consequences of mediation in order to determine whether the mediation model presented in this study is statistically sound or not. Mediation analysis allows for the investigation of crucial paths and the measurement of indirect effects (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). It provides a systematic approach to understanding how

independent variables influence dependent variables through one or more mediators (Walters, 2019). This analysis is also able to explain the problems of causality, assessment and intervention (Tofighi & Kelley, 2020). The results of the mediation analysis in this study indicate that the SE variable provides a full mediating effect between social support and ICHE, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Summary of Mediation Analysis Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Track	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	p-value	95% Confidence Interval		Results
					2.5%	97.5%	
H4	SS→SE→ICHE	0.300***	4,320	0.000	0.177	0.450	Full mediation

*sig 5%, **sig 1%, ***sig < 1%
Source: results of mediation evaluation using SmartSEM software

The results of Hypothesis 4 testing indicate that Social Support (SS) has a positive and significant influence on Intention to Continue Higher Education (ICHE), which is fully mediated by Self-Efficacy (SE). The mediation path coefficient (β = 0.069) confirms the significance of this finding, indicating that SE acts as an important bridge explaining how SS influences ICHE. Substantively, this means that strong support received from one's environment (family, friends, or community) does not directly increase interest in further study, but rather must first foster the individual's self-confidence or self-efficacy. This full mediation finding is consistent with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which highlights the central role of self-efficacy as a primary determinant of behavior and career or educational choices. Practically, these results provide strong relevance for educational and social interventions. Rather than simply increasing social support in general, programs should be designed to specifically internalize that support into increased self-efficacy (e.g., through mentoring programs, skills training, or constructive feedback). The 95% confidence interval (0.177 to 0.450) further strengthens the reliability of the findings and indicates that an increase in self-efficacy triggered by social support can increase the probability of further study intention by up to 0.45 points among the studied population. These findings fill a gap in the literature by providing a clear mediating mechanism, guiding the development of more effective strategies to encourage higher education participation.

Continuing higher education is a positive contribution to developing their competencies, which directly supports the development of superior human resources. This discussion examines in depth the interaction between social support and influencing individual interest in continuing higher education, both directly and through the mediation of self-efficacy, specifically in Central Lombok Regency. This study tests hypotheses and draws on collected literature review data. The analysis confirms that both social support and self-efficacy play a crucial, significant, and positive role in mediating the impact of social support on a person's interest in continuing their education to higher education. These findings clearly demonstrate that increasing a person's interest in continuing their education to higher education is not sufficient simply by providing social support. Self-efficacy, in this case, is a vital component that must be strengthened through social support (Allen et al., 2022; Kleppang et al., 2023). These findings not only enrich the existing literature, but also provide practical implications for public policy, particularly education policy.

H1: The Influence of Social Support on Interest in Continuing Higher Education

The results of this study consistently show that social support has a significant and positive influence on interest in continuing higher education. This finding demonstrates the importance of continuous and multidimensional social support, encompassing emotional, instrumental, informational, and reward support (Jolly et al., 2021; Zhang & Dong, 2022). This support serves as a psychological foundation and resource that helps individuals overcome obstacles and strengthen their motivation (Lin & Ayob, 2024). These findings indicate that individuals who feel supported in achieving education tend to have a greater interest in continuing their education to college. These findings support research Mitsopoulou & Pavlatou (2024), which revealed that social support contributed significantly to the interest in continuing education to higher education. This is reinforced by Liubana et al. (2025), which also highlights the central role of social support in individuals' decisions to pursue higher education. Social support, which comes from family, peers, and the school environment, provides a sense of security, confidence, and access to the information needed to make informed decisions about pursuing higher education (Chen et al., 2023; Liubana et al., 2025; Wulansari et al., 2023). Individuals who are supported in their educational aspirations tend to be more motivated, persistent, and willing to take academic risks (Barratt & Duran, 2021; Chiu et al., 2024). This condition is certainly very crucial for individuals in developing their potential, considering the complex challenges in the Society 5.0 era which demands adaptive and innovative human resources (González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2022; Mourtzis et al., 2022).

H2: The Influence of Social Support on Self-Efficacy

This study also shows that social support has a positive and significant influence on individual self-efficacy. Strong social support can increase an individual's confidence in completing tasks or facing challenges. Social support, which includes emotional, instrumental, informational, and reward support, plays a crucial role in fostering an individual's self-confidence. This research finding is consistent with Bandura's theory that self-efficacy arises from verbal persuasion (Bhati & Sethy, 2022), and vicarious experience (Nurmalisa, 2023), both of which are closely related to social support. Individuals who feel they receive encouragement and guidance will have increased confidence in their own abilities (Allen et al., 2022). Emotional support from the surrounding environment can foster self-confidence and reduce anxiety, this certainly encourages individuals to focus their attention and contribute greater effort in achieving their goals (Dahri et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2024).

H3: The Influence of Self-Efficacy on Interest in Continuing Higher Education

The analysis of this study also shows that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in increasing interest in pursuing higher education. This underscores the importance of self-efficacy in fostering individual interest in pursuing higher education. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to have a strong belief in their ability to face challenges, including academic tasks. This belief in their abilities serves as a powerful internal motivation for individuals to achieve their goals. When individuals feel confident in their abilities, they tend to be more willing to take risks, persist in the face of obstacles, and exhibit high resilience when faced with failure (Bhati & Sethy, 2022).

This finding is strongly supported by research Neroni et al. (2022), which found that self-efficacy plays a crucial role to fostering students' interest in continuing their education to higher education. Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in their ability to motivate themselves and take action to achieve their goals (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021), can shape individuals to be more

courageous in choosing more challenging tasks. This shows that individuals have greater perseverance in the face of difficulties and they focus more on solutions than obstacles (Bandura, 2023; Bhati & Sethy, 2022). This belief is certainly a major driving force for individuals in determining the direction of their journey to achieve their desires, namely continuing their education to college.

H4: Self-Efficacy Mediates the Effect of Social Support on Interest in Continuing Higher Education

Based on the results of this study, the mediation analysis clearly emphasizes that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in mediating the influence of social support on interest in pursuing higher education. This finding is consistent with mediation models frequently used in psychology and education literature. The data show that without adequate levels of self-efficacy, individuals tend to have low interest in pursuing higher education. This indicates that support not only directly influences interest, but its impact is substantially amplified when individuals internalize the support into higher self-confidence. This social support serves as a catalyst for the development of self-efficacy by providing a conducive environment and positive reinforcement (Allen et al., 2022; Liubana et al., 2025).

Individuals who experience strong social support tend to feel more capable and confident in facing academic challenges, which in turn increases their interest in continuing their education to higher education (Voisin et al., 2023). This is indicated by the results of the F^2 analysis, which confirms that social support has a relatively high influence on self-efficacy, and the influence of self-efficacy on interest in continuing higher education is moderate. This indicates that the mediating role of self-efficacy is very substantial, making it an important mechanism in bridging individual interest in continuing higher education. This finding is in line with research. Chen et al. (2023), which also found that social support influences students' academic engagement, both directly and indirectly through mediator variables, providing a broader context regarding how self-efficacy factors act as mediators.

3.4 Implications and Contributions of Findings

The findings of this study also have significant implications for the social sciences, particularly in understanding the factors influencing interest in pursuing higher education in Indonesia. Substantively, this study enriches the literature by confirming the crucial role of social support and self-efficacy as predictors of such interest, both directly and through substantial mediation. Its primary contribution lies in its confirmation that self-efficacy is not only a mediator but also a crucial catalyst for individuals to internalize social support into higher self-confidence, which in turn drives their interest in pursuing higher education (Allen et al., 2022). The practical implications point to the formulation of educational policies and intervention programs that focus not only on providing social support but also strategically strengthen individual self-efficacy, especially in areas such as Central Lombok, to increase participation in higher education (Liubana et al., 2025). This is in line with Bandura's social cognitive theory and strengthens the understanding of how psychosocial factors interact in shaping individual educational decisions (Bhati & Sethy, 2022; Nurmalisa, 2023), providing a more comprehensive framework for researchers and policy makers in education and the social sciences.

4. CONCLUSION

This study makes a significant contribution to the social science and educational psychology literature by integrating and expanding the understanding of the role of Social Support (SS) and Self-Efficacy (SE) as predictors of Intention to Continue Higher Education (ICHE). Theoretically, this study strengthens and extends Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory by confirming a full mediation mechanism, where SS not only directly influences ICHE but its impact is substantially internalized and reinforced through SE. Its primary contribution is to confirm SE as a central psychological catalyst, transforming external resources (Social Support) into higher internal self-efficacy, which in turn becomes a primary determinant of behavioral intention (Intention to Continue Higher Education). These findings firmly fill a gap in the literature by mapping a detailed causal pathway where support from the environment (family, community) must translate into a sense of personal efficacy before it can effectively increase higher education aspirations. The tested model with an R^2 of 0.609 for ICHE, indicating moderate-high predictive power, provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing postsecondary education decisions, especially in challenging socioeconomic contexts.

The consistent path analysis results supporting all hypotheses have specific practical and operational implications. These implications are particularly relevant to the context of Central Lombok Regency, the focus of this study, where efforts to increase higher education participation still require strategic intervention. Given that SE fully mediates (β= 0.300) and has a substantial effect on ICHE, policies should not only focus on providing social support alone. Programs must be designed to explicitly increase SE. The strength of this research model is also supported by the results of data analysis in the evaluation of the goodness of fit of the model which shows the SRMR value is in the range of 0.08-0.10, and the NFI is in the range of 0.70-0.90, so it is said that this research model is marginal fit and acceptable. In addition, seen from the R^2 value which shows the proportion of the self-efficacy variable explained by the social support variable of 41.8%, which is classified as a moderate effect. Meanwhile, the proportion of the variable of interest in continuing higher education can be explained by social support and self-efficacy of 60.9% which shows a moderate effect approaching high.

The significant implications of this research finding can enrich the literature by confirming that increasing interest in continuing education to higher education does not only depend on social support but is also significantly strengthened by self-efficacy as a catalyst. This means that educational policies and intervention programs need to focus not only on providing social support but also on strengthening individual self-efficacy, especially in areas with low educational attainment, such as Central Lombok. Because through social support, self-efficacy can be enhanced, effectively increasing their participation in higher education. Therefore, intervention programs must be designed explicitly to increase self-efficacy. For example, in the context of Central Lombok, the Self-Efficacy Mentorship (SEM) Program can be implemented.

Regarding the limitations of the study, it is important to note that the cross-sectional design limits the assertion of true causal relationships, where the existing path model only implies a theoretical sequence (SS→SE→ICHE). Furthermore, the focus on Interest (Behavioral Intention), rather than Actual Participation, ignores the potential influence of situational variables (e.g., tuition costs) as moderators. Therefore, future research is recommended to shift to Longitudinal Studies to test the true causal trajectory to Actual Participation. Future research should also examine contextual moderating variables such as Family Economic Status and incorporate qualitative methods to understand the process of internalizing social support into Self-Efficacy.

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