



Study Interest of Senior and Vocational High School Graduates in the Family Welfare Education Program

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ABSTRACT - This study aims to identify the differences in learning interest between students who graduated from general senior high schools (SMA) and vocational high schools (SMK) in compulsory foundational courses within the Family Welfare Education Study Program. It also aims to describe the level of learning interest within each group. This research employs a descriptive-comparative approach. The population consists of active students in the Family Welfare Education Study Program who graduated from SMA, SMK specializing in Culinary Arts (Boga), and SMK specializing in Fashion (Busana), with a total sample of 80 respondents. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive hypothesis testing and a t-test, which was preceded by non-parametric statistical testing to determine whether there was a significant difference in scores between groups within the same sample. The results showed that SMA graduates had an average learning interest score of 147.65 (categorized as moderate), SMK Boga graduates had an average of 145.20 (categorized as low to moderate), and SMK Busana graduates had an average of 146.95 (categorized as moderate). The t-test results showed a $t\text{-value} = 0.831 < t\text{-table} = 1.66$ and a $\text{Sig. (2-tailed)} = 0.409 > 0.05$, indicating that there is no significant difference in learning interest between SMA and SMK graduates in the compulsory foundational courses of the study program. These findings suggest that educational background does not significantly influence students' interest in learning during lectures. This research provides important insights into how prior educational background affects student interest in core courses and may serve as a valuable reference for curriculum developers in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Learning interest, senior high school, vocational high school, core compulsory courses.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in the era of globalization is required to produce graduates who are not only excellent in academic aspects but also equipped with practical skills relevant to the needs of the labor market. This is particularly important in the fields of tourism and hospitality, which continue to grow rapidly, considering Indonesia's vast potential as an international tourist destination. Recognizing this opportunity, the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality at Universitas Negeri Padang (FPP UNP) is committed to producing competent, creative, and adaptive graduates who can keep up with industry developments. According to Ariani Ulfah et al. (2024) the success of vocational education depends on the institution's ability to connect theoretical learning with practical applications. Yulias et al. (2024) further emphasize that learning in culinary arts and tourism management requires a contextual approach that enables students to directly understand the demands of the industry. Meanwhile, Wannur et al. (2025) explain that learning discipline and work attitude play a significant role in students' success in achieving vocational competencies. Therefore, FPP UNP aims to produce graduates who are not only ready to enter the workforce but also capable of becoming entrepreneurs in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

One of the newly established programs within FPP UNP is the Bachelor of Family Welfare Education (Pendidikan Kesejahteraan Keluarga – PKK), which was officially opened in 2024. This program integrates theory and practice, focusing on skill development in culinary arts, fashion design, family management, and entrepreneurship. The

curriculum is designed comprehensively, combining foundational courses with applied skill-based subjects. The main goal is to produce graduates with strong academic knowledge and vocational competence. According to (Jaedun et al., 2024), the development of vocational curricula should focus on strengthening interpersonal skills and readiness for Industry 5.0. Yoto et al. (2024) assert that collaboration between educational institutions and industry is crucial for optimizing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in vocational schools. Similarly, Kreisman (2020) state that vocational education emphasizing depth of skills is more effective in preparing learners than programs that are broad but shallow.

The first cohort of PKK students consists of 125 individuals with diverse educational backgrounds: 40 high school (SMA) graduates, 70 vocational high school (SMK) graduates, 10 Islamic senior high school (MA) graduates, and 5 international school graduates. This diversity brings implications for students' readiness and learning styles. SMA graduates are generally accustomed to theoretical and academic learning, while SMK graduates are more familiar with practice-based and competency-oriented learning. According to Anggoro, Achmadi, Didik Rohmantor, et al. (2020), students from vocational education backgrounds tend to possess stronger technical skills applicable in practical activities compared to those from academic tracks. Chit (2020) also found that vocational interests among secondary school students are influenced by hands-on experiences and the relevance of their field of study. In addition, Türk & Özhan (2024) identified that SMK graduates' choice of university major is largely determined by their interests and perceptions of career prospects. These differences in educational background can lead to variations in students' learning interest in core compulsory courses. Learning interest is a crucial factor in determining academic success. Achmadi et al. (2020b) highlight that soft skills and learning interest play an essential role in shaping students' character in the 21st century. Apriyani et al. (2020) add that these elements are fundamental for vocational students to be competitive in the industry, while Fitri Anggraini et al. (2025) explain that students' learning interest has a significant relationship with their academic achievement.

Preliminary research on the 2024 cohort shows that some students demonstrate low interest in core compulsory subjects. Several students admitted that they chose the PKK program not out of personal interest but due to external pressures during the program selection process. This aligns with Putri & Yulastri (2022) who state that entrepreneurial interest and learning motivation are positively correlated with learning success in entrepreneurship courses. Low learning interest can directly affect students' academic performance. Early findings indicate a noticeable difference in the grades of core compulsory courses between SMA and SMK graduates. Shahida et al. (2024) emphasize that PKK students' interest in pursuing teaching careers is influenced by field practice experience and their perception of the teaching profession. Similarly, Maiyandra & Elida (2023) found that teaching practice experience enhances students' learning motivation and interest in their field of study. Previous studies have mainly focused on learning interest differences based on gender, intrinsic motivation, or environmental factors. However, research comparing learning interest among students with SMA and SMK backgrounds at the university level remains very limited. Therefore, this study is essential to contribute scientifically to the development of education in the PKK program.

According to Yulias et al. (2024), understanding students' characteristics is the key to designing effective and contextual learning strategies. Wannur et al. (2025) suggest that lecturers should adjust their teaching methods according to students' diverse backgrounds and learning readiness. Hence, the results of this study are expected to enrich lecturers' and program administrators' understanding of PKK students' characteristics from various educational backgrounds, enabling them to apply more effective, adaptive, and student-centered learning strategies in the modern education era. Several previous studies have examined students' learning interest, but most have focused on gender differences, intrinsic motivation, or environmental influences. For instance, a study conducted by Vinari & Elida (2023) on differences in learning interest between male and female students in the culinary arts program at SMK N 6 Padang found that male students' learning interest was generally high, with 26% (11 students) categorized as very high, 38% (16 students) high, 24% (10 students) moderate, 12% (5 students) low, and 0% very low. Meanwhile, female students showed higher interest, with 40% (17 students) categorized as very high, 38% (16 students) high, 7% (3 students) moderate, 10% (4 students) low, and 5% (2 students) very low. The average learning interest score for male students was 187.43, while female students scored 193.12, with 42 participants in each group. These results indicate that female students have a higher learning interest than male students, and the difference is statistically significant in the culinary competence area at SMK N 6 Padang. However, studies specifically comparing learning interest between SMA and SMK graduates at the university level are still rare. Therefore, this research is crucial as a new study that contributes to the development of education in the PKK program, particularly in understanding student characteristics.

METHOD

This research is a quantitative study with a descriptive comparative approach, aimed at comparing the learning interest of students based on their educational background senior high school (SMA) and vocational high school (SMK) in compulsory foundational courses of the Family Welfare Education (PKK) Study Program at Universitas Negeri Padang. The research population consists of all 2024 cohort students, totaling 110 individuals (40 SMA graduates and 70 SMK graduates). The sample was selected using a purposive quota sampling technique, comprising all SMA graduates (40 students) and a randomly selected portion of SMK graduates (40 students) to ensure balance, resulting in a total sample of 80 students.

Data were collected through the distribution of a closed-ended questionnaire using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, which reflected levels of learning interest from very low to very high. The questionnaire instrument was tested for validity using Pearson's Product Moment correlation and for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. Only valid and reliable items were included in the main research to ensure that the data obtained were accurate and consistent.

Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the assistance of SPSS software. Descriptive analysis was applied to categorize students' learning interest into specific levels, while inferential analysis was carried out using an independent sample t-test to determine whether there were significant differences in learning interest between SMA and SMK graduates. Prior to hypothesis testing, prerequisite analyses such as normality and linearity tests were also performed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

Classification of Data Categorization of Learning Interest Variables of Senior High School Graduates in Compulsory Basic Courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program

Table 1 below shows the results of the categorization of the learning interest level of Senior High School graduates in compulsory basic courses in the Family Welfare Education study program. The grouping was carried out based on statistical intervals obtained from the calculation of the mean and standard deviation.

TABLE 1. Description of learning interest data of senior high school graduates in compulsory basic courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program.

No	Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	$X > 161.83$	Very High	3	7.5
2	$152.04 \leq X \leq 161.83$	High	4	10.0
3	$142.26 \leq X < 152.04$	Medium	21	52.5
4	$132.47 \leq X < 142.26$	Low	10	25.0
5	$X < 132.47$	Very Low	2	5.0
TOTAL			40	100.0

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the level of learning interest of Senior High School graduates in compulsory basic courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program is dominated by the medium category, with a total of 21 students (52.5%). This indicates that most students have a fairly stable and positive interest in attending the compulsory basic courses, which serve as the scientific foundation of the study program.

A total of 4 students (10%) fall into the high category and 3 students (7.5%) into the very high category, indicating that a small proportion of students have a strong learning drive and enthusiasm in understanding the fundamental concepts of these courses. Meanwhile, 10 students (25%) have low interest, and 2 students (5%) are in the very low category.

This distribution suggests that although most students show a reasonably good level of learning interest, there are still groups of students who lack a deep interest in basic courses. This may be due to differences in educational background, initial study interests, or perceptions of the relevance of the course material to their chosen field of expertise.

The data visualization in Table 1 is presented in Figure 1 below. The graph shows that the medium category occupies the highest position, followed by low, high, very high, and very low categories. This further reinforces the finding that the learning interest of Senior High School graduates in compulsory basic courses tends to fall within the medium level.

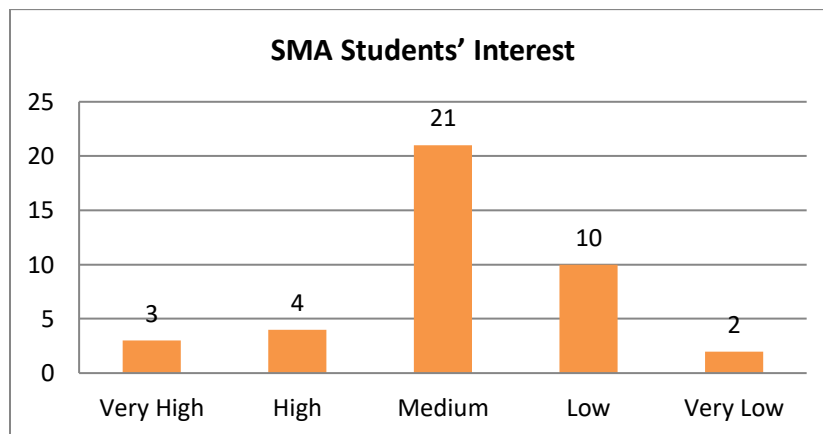


FIGURE 1. Graph of learning interest variable data of senior high school graduates.

Classification of Data Categorization of Learning Interest Variables of Vocational High School (Culinary Department) Graduates in Compulsory Basic Courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program

Table 2 below shows the results of the categorization of the learning interest level of Vocational High School (Culinary Department) graduates in compulsory basic courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program. The grouping was carried out based on statistical intervals obtained from the calculation of the mean and standard deviation.

TABLE 2. Description of learning interest data of vocational high school graduates in compulsory basic courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program

No	Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	$X > 155.40$	Very High	2	10.0
2	$148.60 \leq X \leq 155.40$	High	3	15.0
3	$141.80 \leq X < 148.60$	Medium	7	35.0
4	$135.00 \leq X < 141.80$	Low	8	40.0
5	$X < 135.00$	Very Low	0	0.0
TOTAL			20	100.0

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that the level of learning interest of Vocational High School (Culinary Department) graduates in compulsory basic courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program is dominated by the low category, with a total of 8 students (40%). This indicates that most vocational school graduates have a rather limited level of interest in attending basic courses that are theoretical and conceptual in nature.

A total of 7 students (35%) are in the medium category, indicating that some students show a fairly good interest in the learning process of compulsory basic courses. Meanwhile, 3 students (15%) fall into the high category and 2 students (10%) into the very high category, showing that only a small proportion of vocational students have a strong interest in learning the fundamental scientific material at the university level. Interestingly, no students were classified into the very low category (0%), which means that all respondents demonstrated at least a minimum level of interest in learning.

Overall, these data indicate that the learning interest of Vocational High School (Culinary Department) graduates in compulsory basic courses tends to vary, with the largest concentration in the low category. This condition may be

influenced by the vocational education background, which places more emphasis on practical skills, so students tend to require a longer adaptation period to understand the conceptual material taught in basic courses.

The visualization of this categorization result can be seen in Figure 2, which shows the comparison of frequency distribution across each category of learning interest level of vocational school graduates.

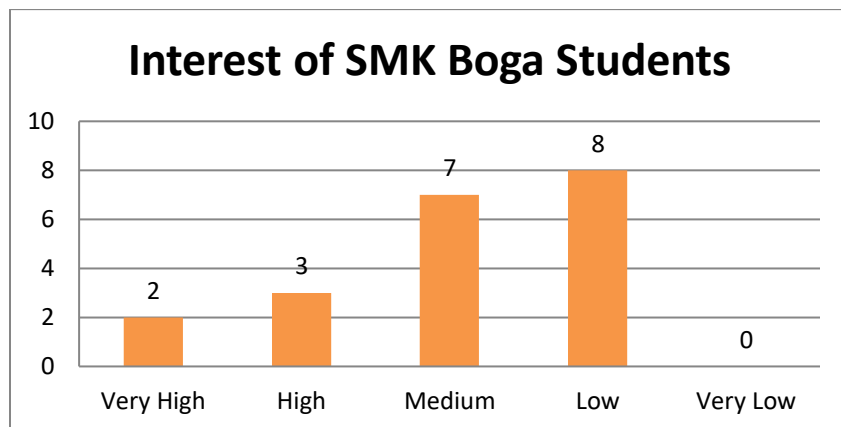


FIGURE 2. Graph of learning interest variable data of vocational high school culinary graduates.

Classification of Data Categorization of Learning Interest Variables of Vocational High School (Fashion Department) Graduates in Compulsory Basic Courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program

Table 3 below shows the results of the categorization of the learning interest level of Vocational High School (Fashion Department) graduates in compulsory basic courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program. The grouping was carried out based on statistical intervals obtained from the calculation of the mean and standard deviation.

TABLE 3. Description of learning interest data of vocational high school (fashion department) graduates in compulsory basic courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program

No	Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	$X > 158.20$	Very High	2	10.0
2	$150.03 \leq X \leq 158.20$	High	3	15.0
3	$141.87 \leq X < 150.03$	Medium	9	45.0
4	$133.70 \leq X < 141.87$	Low	5	25.0
5	$X < 133.70$	Very Low	1	5.0
TOTAL			20	100.0

Based on Table 3, it can be seen that the level of learning interest of Vocational High School (Fashion Department) graduates in compulsory basic courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program is dominated by the medium category, with a total of 9 students (45%). This indicates that most Fashion Department vocational students have a fairly good and consistent level of interest in attending compulsory basic courses, which serve as the main foundation of their field of study.

A total of 5 students (25%) fall into the low category, indicating that some students still have limited interest in theoretical basic courses. Meanwhile, 3 students (15%) are in the high category, and 2 students (10%) are in the very high category, showing that a small group of students has a strong learning motivation. Additionally, 1 student (5%) falls into the very low category, which suggests that although most students show a fairly positive interest, there are still individuals who are less enthusiastic about learning basic courses.

Overall, these data indicate that the learning interest of Vocational High School (Fashion Department) graduates in compulsory basic courses is quite varied, but generally falls within the medium category. This condition may be

influenced by their vocational education background in fashion, which emphasizes practical skills and design, meaning students require time to adapt to conceptual and theoretical material taught in lectures.

The visualization of this categorization result can be seen in Figure 3, which shows the frequency distribution of each category of learning interest among Fashion Department vocational students, with the medium category appearing to dominate compared to the other categories.

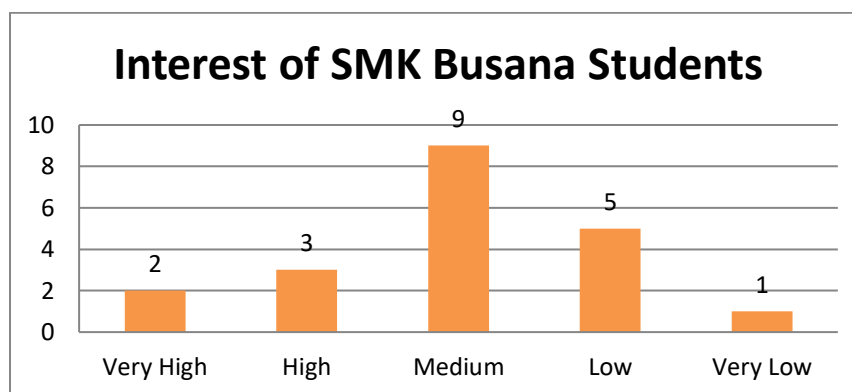


FIGURE 3. Graph of learning interest variable data of vocational high school fashion graduates.

Based on the data analysis regarding the learning interest levels of Senior High School (SMA), Vocational High School Culinary (SMK Boga), and Vocational High School Fashion (SMK Busana) graduates in compulsory basic courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program, it can be concluded that each group shows different characteristics and tendencies in learning interest.

Senior High School graduates tend to have learning interest in the medium category, with a small proportion in the high and very high categories. This indicates that students from an academic background have relatively stable interest in conceptual and theoretical basic courses, as they are accustomed to theory-based learning approaches during secondary education.

Vocational High School Culinary (SMK Boga) graduates show learning interest dominated by the low category, followed by the medium category. This condition indicates that students with vocational education in the culinary field have a greater interest in practical activities than in theory. They require a longer adaptation period to understand the conceptual material taught in university-level basic courses.

Meanwhile, Vocational High School Fashion (SMK Busana) graduates mostly have learning interest in the medium category, with a fairly even distribution among the high, medium, and low categories. These results indicate that SMK Busana students have a fairly good learning interest, although some still show low interest in theory-oriented basic courses.

Overall, the study results show that SMA graduates have a higher level of learning interest compared to SMK Boga and SMK Busana graduates. This difference can be associated with differences in curriculum characteristics, where SMA emphasizes academic and theoretical aspects, while SMK focuses more on practical skills according to each field of expertise.

Thus, it can be concluded that educational background affects students' learning interest in compulsory basic courses. Therefore, adaptive and contextual learning strategies are needed in higher education to bridge differences in learning styles and interests between students from academic (SMA) and vocational (SMK) backgrounds, particularly to strengthen motivation and conceptual understanding in the Family Welfare Education Study Program.

To ensure that the research data follow the assumptions of statistical analysis, a normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test. This test aims to determine whether the students' learning interest data in compulsory basic courses are normally distributed. The test results are presented in Table 4 below.

TABLE 4. Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test results.

Parameter	Value
<i>N</i>	40
<i>Mean</i>	0.000000

Parameter	Value
<i>Std. Deviation</i>	7.21602182
<i>Most Extreme Differences - Absolute</i>	0.138
<i>Most Extreme Differences - Positive</i>	0.138
<i>Most Extreme Differences - Negative</i>	-0.067
<i>Test Statistic</i>	0.138
<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0.053

Based on Table 4 above, it can be seen that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.053, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the students' learning interest data in compulsory basic courses are normally distributed. Therefore, the normality assumption is met, and the data are considered suitable for further analysis. These results show that the data distribution from the three groups SMA, SMK Boga, and SMK Busana falls within a relatively balanced range, with no significant deviation from the normal distribution.

Next, after the data were confirmed to be normally distributed, a homogeneity test was conducted to determine whether the variances of the data among respondent groups were equal. This test aims to ensure that the spread of learning interest scores in each student group has a similar level of variability, allowing for more accurate comparative analysis.

The results of the homogeneity test are presented in Table 5, which contains the Levene Statistic values and significance levels (Sig.) to assess the equality of variances among SMA, SMK Boga, and SMK Busana student groups in terms of learning interest in compulsory basic courses.

TABLE 5. Results of variance homogeneity test using Levene's test.

Basis of Calculation	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
<i>Based on Mean</i>	0.422	1	78	0.518
<i>Based on Median</i>	0.353	1	78	0.554
<i>Based on Median and with adjusted df</i>	0.353	1	65.334	0.555
<i>Based on trimmed mean</i>	0.363	1	78	0.548

Based on Table 5 above, the significance value (Sig.) from the Levene's Test based on the mean is 0.518. This value is greater than 0.05, indicating that there is no significant difference in variances among the data groups. Therefore, it can be concluded that the learning interest data of SMA, SMK Boga, and SMK Busana graduates are homogeneous, or have a relatively similar level of variability.

The consistency of the significance values across the four calculation bases (mean, median, adjusted df, and trimmed mean), all above 0.05, shows that the test results are stable and reliable. This means that the data distribution among groups has a strong degree of similarity, so the homogeneity assumption is met.

These results also reinforce that comparative analysis between groups can proceed to the hypothesis testing stage, since both primary assumptions normality and homogeneity have been fulfilled. Therefore, the next step is to perform hypothesis testing (T-Test) to determine whether there are significant differences in learning interest levels between SMA, SMK Boga, and SMK Busana graduates in compulsory basic courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program.

TABLE 6. Results of hypothesis testing (T-Test).

Mean Difference	1.575
VAR 1/N1	0.024
VAR 2/N2	0.023
Koef Correlation	0.422
2 Koef Kor	0.844
Simp Standard/Root D1	1.896
Simp Standard/Root D2	1.896
t count	0.831
t table	1.66
t count < t table	No significance differentiation

Based on Table 6 above, the calculated t-value is 0.831 with a t-table value of 1.66 at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. Since the calculated t-value is less than the t-table value, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the average learning interest levels of students based on their educational background (SMA, SMK Boga, and SMK Busana).

The mean difference value of 1.575 indicates that the difference in average scores between groups is very small, so it is statistically insignificant. This is further supported by the variance values of the first group ($\text{VAR } 1/N_1 = 0.024$) and the second group ($\text{VAR } 2/N_2 = 0.023$), which are almost identical, showing that the data from both groups have similar dispersion levels.

Additionally, the correlation coefficient of 0.422 indicates a positive but weak relationship between the compared variables. Thus, these results reinforce the conclusion that differences in learning interest levels among students from different educational backgrounds are not statistically significant.

Conceptually, this indicates that after entering higher education, students from both SMA and SMK backgrounds (whether Culinary or Fashion) have relatively balanced adaptation abilities and learning interest in compulsory basic courses. This occurs because the learning process in higher education provides equal opportunities for all students to develop theoretical understanding and academic skills, regardless of their previous educational background.

Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted, meaning there is no significant difference in students' learning interest levels based on educational background. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis (H_a), which states that there is a difference in learning interest levels, is rejected.

These results suggest that the difference in curriculum orientation between academically focused SMA and vocationally focused SMK does not significantly affect students' interest in attending compulsory basic courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program.

Discussion

Learning Interest of SMA Graduates in Compulsory Basic Courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program

The research results indicate that the learning interest of high school (SMA) graduates in core compulsory courses falls mostly into the moderate category (52.5%), followed by high (10%) and very high (7.5%) categories. This shows that the majority of SMA students have a relatively stable interest in attending core compulsory courses. They tend to be more interested in conceptual and theoretical material because, during their time in high school, they were accustomed to an academic learning model oriented toward theory and logical reasoning.

The fairly good learning interest of SMA students also reflects their readiness to adapt to the university learning system. According to Anggoro, et al. (2020), students with strong academic preparedness are generally better able to adapt to new learning systems, particularly those that require understanding of fundamental theories and concepts. Furthermore, Achmadi et al. (2020a) emphasize that learning interest is closely related to the mastery of soft skills and critical thinking abilities required in the 21st century. This aligns with Apriyani et al. (2020), who explain that mastery of soft skills can enhance students' enthusiasm for participating in academic activities, including core compulsory courses.

However, a small portion of students showed low interest, which may be caused by a mismatch between their expectations of the program and the content of the basic courses, which they consider less practical. Nevertheless, overall, SMA students tend to have higher learning interest compared to students from vocational education backgrounds. Yulias et al. (2024) suggest that students' motivation and learning interest can be influenced by their perception of the relevance of the courses to their future career goals. Therefore, it is important for lecturers to connect theory with practical applications to maintain and stimulate students' learning interest.

Learning Interest of SMK Graduates in Compulsory Basic Courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program

Students graduating from vocational high schools (SMK), particularly from SMK Culinary (Boga) and SMK Fashion (Busana), exhibit varying levels of learning interest. In the SMK Boga group, learning interest is dominated by the low category (40%), whereas in the SMK Busana group, the majority of students fall into the moderate category (45%). These results indicate that some SMK students still have limited interest in core compulsory courses that are theoretical and conceptual in nature.

This condition can be explained by the characteristics of the SMK curriculum, which emphasizes vocational education, namely practice-oriented learning and job readiness. According to Jaedun et al. (2024), vocational education focuses on developing interpersonal skills and preparing students for Industry 5.0, so academic aspects are often not prioritized. Additionally, Yoto et al. (2024) emphasize that collaboration between educational institutions and industry is crucial for SMK graduates to develop theoretical knowledge that is relevant to professional practice.

These findings are also consistent with the research by (Kreisman, 2020) which states that vocational education emphasizing depth of skills over breadth is more effective for job readiness but may result in limited mastery of academic theory. Meanwhile, Türk & Özhan (2024) explain that SMK graduates' choice of university major is often influenced by their perception of career prospects and the relevance of the courses offered. This suggests that SMK students require a learning approach that links theory to industrial context to increase their learning interest.

Nevertheless, this study also found a group of SMK students who have high and very high learning interest in core compulsory courses. This indicates that some SMK students can adapt well and have intrinsic motivation to understand theoretical knowledge related to their field. According to Wannur et al. (2025) a positive learning attitude and supportive academic environment can help vocational students enhance their motivation and academic performance. Furthermore, Ariani Ulfah et al. (2024) add that learning discipline is an important factor in fostering students' enthusiasm and interest in higher education learning.

Analyzing Differences in Learning Interest Between Students from SMA and SMK Backgrounds in Compulsory Basic Courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program

The hypothesis test using the Independent Samples t-Test showed that the calculated t-value was 0.831, which is smaller than the critical t-value of 1.66 at a significance level of 0.05, and the Sig. (2-tailed) value was $0.409 > 0.05$. Based on these results, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the learning interest of students from SMA, SMK Culinary (Boga), and SMK Fashion (Busana) backgrounds toward core compulsory courses.

Descriptively, it appears that SMA students have slightly higher learning interest compared to SMK students, but this difference is not statistically significant. This suggests that upon entering university, students from various educational backgrounds tend to have balanced adaptation abilities and learning motivation. Putri & Yulastri (2022) emphasize that learning motivation can grow when students feel a sense of purpose and interest in their field of study, regardless of their previous educational background.

This phenomenon can be explained through constructivist theory, which posits that new learning experiences in higher education can reshape students' perspectives and interests toward learning. Furthermore, Fitri Anggraini et al. (2025) explain that students' learning interest is significantly related to their previous major and academic achievement, but academic environment and learning approaches are also decisive factors. Similarly, Shahida et al. (2024) show that field practice experiences can increase students' interest in their area of expertise, while Maiyandra & Elida (2023) add that applied learning experiences strengthen intrinsic motivation to understand theoretical concepts.

Therefore, it can be concluded that educational background (SMA or SMK) does not significantly determine students' learning interest in core compulsory courses. These findings indicate that differences in learning interest can be balanced through adaptive learning strategies that integrate theory and practice. Chit (2020) emphasize that relevant practical experiences and contextual approaches can enhance vocational students' learning interest, while Kreisman (2020) highlight the importance of skill depth and material relevance to maintain students' engagement. Hence, study programs need to implement contextual, collaborative, and adaptive learning strategies so that all students, whether from SMA or SMK, can achieve optimal learning outcomes equitably.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study on differences in learning interest between SMA and SMK graduates in compulsory courses in the Family Welfare Education Study Program, it can be concluded that, in general, students' learning interest falls into the medium category. SMA graduates show learning interest classified as medium, with an average score of 147.65 and a standard deviation of 9.45, indicating a fairly high variation in individual interest. Most SMA students fall into the medium (55%) and low (22.5%) categories, suggesting that although they have a strong academic foundation, not all demonstrate high enthusiasm for basic courses.

Meanwhile, SMK graduates, both from Culinary (Boga) and Fashion (Busana) programs, also show learning interest in the medium category. The average learning interest of SMK Boga students is 145.20 (medium–low category), and SMK Busana students is 146.95 (medium category), indicating that SMK students have relatively similar learning interest levels but are more homogeneous compared to SMA graduates.

The hypothesis test results show that the calculated t-value (0.831) is less than the t-table value (1.66) with a significance level (Sig.) of $0.409 > 0.05$, indicating no statistically significant difference in learning interest between SMA and SMK graduates. This suggests that prior educational background does not significantly affect students' learning interest in compulsory basic courses.

Thus, upon entering higher education, students from various educational backgrounds exhibit relatively balanced levels of adaptation, motivation, and interest in the learning process. These findings highlight the importance of implementing adaptive and contextual learning strategies to support students' learning interest across different educational backgrounds in the Family Welfare Education Study Program.

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