



## **Students' Motivation Factors in Choosing English Department at UIN Jambi**

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**ABSTRACT.** *This study explores the motivational factors influencing students' choice to major in the English Department at Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sultan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. In the era of globalization, English proficiency is an essential skill for career success and academic achievement. The English Education Department at UIN Jambi plays a crucial role in preparing students to compete in the global job market while integrating Islamic values. Despite its significance, the English Department faces challenges in attracting students compared to other popular fields such as Islamic Religious Education and Sharia Economics. This qualitative case study examines the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of students, using semi-structured interviews with ten sixth-semester students. The findings reveal that personal interest in English, career aspirations, family and teacher recommendations, prior educational experiences, and the institution's religious identity significantly influence students' decisions. Additionally, the availability of academic resources and the role of passionate lecturers contribute to students' academic satisfaction and persistence. This study emphasizes the importance of understanding motivational dynamics to enhance student engagement and success in English education programs.*

*Keywords: Student Motivation, English Education, Islamic University*

**ABSTRAK.** Penelitian ini mengkaji faktor-faktor motivasi yang memengaruhi pilihan mahasiswa untuk mengambil jurusan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sultan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. Di era globalisasi, kemahiran berbahasa Inggris merupakan keterampilan penting untuk kesuksesan karier dan prestasi akademik. Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di UIN Jambi memainkan peran penting dalam mempersiapkan mahasiswa untuk bersaing di pasar kerja global sambil mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Islam. Meskipun penting, Jurusan Bahasa Inggris menghadapi tantangan dalam menarik mahasiswa dibandingkan dengan bidang populer lainnya seperti Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Ekonomi Syariah. Studi kasus kualitatif ini meneliti motivasi intrinsik dan ekstrinsik mahasiswa, menggunakan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan sepuluh mahasiswa semester enam. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa minat pribadi dalam Bahasa Inggris, aspirasi karier, rekomendasi keluarga dan guru, pengalaman pendidikan sebelumnya, dan identitas keagamaan institusi secara signifikan memengaruhi keputusan mahasiswa. Selain itu, ketersediaan sumber daya akademik dan peran dosen yang bersemangat berkontribusi pada kepuasan dan ketekunan akademik mahasiswa. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya memahami dinamika motivasi untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan dan keberhasilan mahasiswa dalam program pendidikan Bahasa Inggris.

**Kata Kunci:** Motivasi Siswa, Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Kampus Islam

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the era of globalization, English proficiency has become a crucial skill for individuals seeking success in the global labor market. English serves not only as a medium for communication with diverse communities but also as a gateway to vast academic resources and higher education institutions worldwide (Sri Andayani, 2022). Speaking and writing fluently in English allows individuals to navigate complex international interactions and make meaningful contributions to their fields. Thus, the importance of English proficiency in education, communication, and career advancement cannot be overstated.

As the global lingua franca, English is a fundamental requirement for employment in multinational corporations and international organizations (Sri Andayani, 2022). Mastery of English enables students to access scientific research, as most scholarly publications are in English, and participate in international exchange programs (Mauliska & D'Angelo, 2024). Consequently, fluency in English enhances both academic and professional opportunities, bridging cultural divides and fostering global collaboration. English has thus evolved into an indispensable tool for achieving academic excellence and professional success.

In Indonesia, the significance of English education has expanded with the shift towards student centered learning approaches in schools (Boy Jon et al., 2021). The Ministry of National Education supports early English instruction starting from primary education, reflecting the growing social demand for global communication skills (Meisani, 2020). Despite these efforts, challenges such as inadequate teacher training, resource shortages, and disparities in teaching quality across regions still hinder optimal learning outcomes (Rahmayani et al., 2018). Therefore, consistent improvements are necessary to enhance English language teaching and learning nationwide.

Islamic universities, including Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Jambi, recognize the strategic importance of English by integrating it into their curricula (Sulaiman, 2015). These institutions aim to balance global competencies with Islamic values, preparing graduates who are both academically proficient and ethically grounded. Innovative teaching approaches, research integration, and international collaborations enrich the learning environment. However, persistent issues related to resource limitations and varying teacher competence continue to challenge the overall effectiveness of English education at these institutions.

The English Education Department at UIN Jambi plays a vital role in producing graduates proficient in both English language skills and Islamic principles. The department's curriculum combines linguistic competence with moral and prophetic education, preparing students to become qualified English educators with strong ethical foundations. Courses such as Introduction to English Language, Language Skills, Curriculum Development, and Classroom Assessment are designed to support this mission. Through this approach, UIN Jambi aims to develop educators capable of competing in the global job market.

Despite the strategic importance of the English Department, it remains less popular compared to other majors such as Islamic Religious Education and Sharia Economics. Enrollment statistics from 2019 to 2023 show relatively moderate growth in the number of students

choosing English Education. Many students perceive that English can be learned independently without pursuing a formal degree, while others lack the desire to pursue careers in English teaching. These perceptions contribute to the department's lower popularity relative to other fields.

Motivation plays a critical psychological role in shaping students' academic performance and persistence in higher education (Johansen et al., 2023). According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the degree of autonomy experienced by students significantly influences their level of motivation and academic outcomes. Students who perceive their studies as meaningful and aligned with their personal values exhibit higher levels of engagement, vitality, and academic achievement. Thus, motivation is a key element in supporting students' success in their chosen fields.

Students' motivations for selecting their majors encompass both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation, such as a genuine interest in the subject, promotes deeper engagement and persistence (Patel et al., 2023). Extrinsic motivations, including career aspirations and external encouragement, also play a significant role. Aligning students' personal goals with their fields of study enhances their self efficacy and determination. Understanding the balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is essential for fostering student commitment and success.

Motivation also plays an orienting and energizing role, influencing students' behaviors and decision-making processes (Chapman et al., 2023). Internal factors, such as passion for language and learning, interact with external pressures, including parental expectations and societal norms. Recognizing these motivational influences can help educational institutions create supportive environments that enhance students' academic experiences. Therefore, understanding the motivational dynamics is crucial in guiding students toward fulfilling academic paths.

Choosing to major in English is influenced by a combination of internal and external motivations. Personal interests in language, culture, and literature are often internal drivers, while family support and perceived career opportunities serve as external motivators (Tong, 2022; Pertiwi et al., 2015). The interplay between these factors affects students' commitment and satisfaction with their studies. Thus, the decision to pursue English Education reflects both individual aspirations and broader societal influences in today's globalized environment.

Research conducted by Ramadhani (2023) identified three major categories of motivation among English majors: altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic motives. The findings indicated that

74% of students chose the major to make positive societal contributions, while 67% cited personal interest in English. Extrinsic motivation, such as career prospects, was recognized by 51% of respondents. Understanding these motivational factors provides valuable insights for developing strategies to increase student engagement and academic performance in English education programs.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research design, which allowed the researcher to explore the motivations behind students' choice of the English Department at UIN Jambi in depth (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2023). A case study approach was utilized to understand students' experiences within their real-life academic environment (Mills et al., 2015). Semi-structured in-depth interviews and thematic analysis were used to gather rich, detailed data reflecting the complexity of students' motivations (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

The population of this study consisted of sixth-semester students from the English Language Education and English Literature programs at Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select 10 participants based on specific criteria, such as GPA above 3.0 and active involvement in English-related extracurricular activities (Morrison, 2018; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This sampling ensured that the participants had relevant academic experiences to contribute meaningful insights.

Data collection was conducted through online interviews using a video conferencing platform. Open ended questions were used to encourage participants to share detailed responses regarding their motivation for choosing the English major (Seidman, 2019). Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was recorded with the participants' consent. The recorded interviews were then transcribed for further analysis to capture the participants' perspectives accurately.

Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the interview data systematically. The process involved familiarization with the data, initial coding, identification of potential themes, and refinement of themes into final categories (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Two major themes emerged from the coding: "Motivation and Interest" and "Career Aspiration and Expectation," which reflected the intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing students' decisions.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, member checking was conducted. Participants were given the opportunity to review the preliminary findings to confirm whether the interpretations accurately represented their views (Yin, 2018). This validation process strengthened the credibility of the research findings and minimized researcher bias.

Overall, this qualitative case study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the motivational factors influencing students' choice to major in English at UIN Jambi. By focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, educational environment influences, and career aspirations, this study contributes valuable insights into improving student engagement and academic success within English education programs.

## **RESULT**

The data were collected through interviews with ten students and are structured according to the research questions.

### ***Personal Interest***

One of the main factors influencing students' decisions was their personal interest in English. Student 10 stated, "I've loved English since elementary school," showing a long standing passion. Similarly, Student 5 mentioned, "I liked English since I was in elementary school," reinforcing the role of early positive exposure. Student 8 added, "When I see people speaking English, I think they're cool, and I want to be cool too," highlighting how admiration and fascination shaped motivation.

### ***Career Aspirations***

Career goals were a strong external motivator. Student 1 explained, "I want to be a teacher and the curriculum at UIN really helps me reach my goals." Meanwhile, Student 3 shared, "I want to be an entrepreneur, and my English skills could help me attract customers from different countries." Student 10 stated, "I need English education to succeed in the TOEFL test required by the company I want to work for," indicating the importance of English for future employment prospects.

### ***Family and Teacher Recommendations***

Family support significantly influenced students' choices. Student 9 said, "When I was confused about what I should choose, my mother told me to choose English Education because

she thinks I have competence with English.” Teacher recommendations were also important. Student 8 recalled, “My English teacher told me that the English Language Education program wouldn’t involve any calculations. This led me to choose Tadris Bahasa Inggris (TBI).” This shows that external encouragement helped students solidify their decisions.

### ***Prior Learning Experiences***

Students’ previous educational experiences shaped their interest in English. Student 9 noted, “My elementary school English teacher had a very enjoyable teaching style, which made me feel comfortable.” Student 4 mentioned, “Since Junior and Senior High School, my English teachers were engaging and dynamic, which motivated me to aspire to be like them.” Student 7 shared, “During High School, which coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, we studied entirely online. I then decided to learn English independently, and yes, I fell in love with English education.”

### ***Institutional Religious Identity***

The Islamic identity of UIN Jambi influenced several students’ decisions. Student 1 stated, “I wanted a university with a religious foundation.” Student 2 commented, “Since I had been educated in a religious environment since childhood, I still wanted an educational experience that incorporated religious elements.” Conversely, Student 5 admitted initial hesitation, saying, “I was unsure about a campus with such a strong Islamic environment, but later I found it was not as strict as I had thought.”

### ***Influence of Facilities and Lecturers***

Facilities and lecturers were crucial in shaping students’ satisfaction. Student 6 appreciated the Self-Access Center (SAC), saying, “The SAC makes it easier to complete assignments.” Student 3 emphasized the role of lecturers: “In the second semester, I attended a class where the lecturer explained that TBI graduates could also become entrepreneurs, which matched my goals.” Student 7 affirmed, “Especially the lecturers they are very impressive. Without them, I might have already transferred to another university.”

The findings confirm that students’ motivations are multifaceted, combining intrinsic factors such as personal interest and extrinsic factors such as career aspirations and family support. Students’ admiration for English and early positive learning experiences align with Self Determination Theory, which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation (Johansen et

al., 2023). Family influence and teacher advice validate the external motivational factors as discussed by Chapman et al. (2023).

Students' prior exposure to engaging English teaching significantly affected their academic preferences, indicating the importance of early educational experiences. Additionally, the religious character of UIN Jambi both attracted and initially deterred students, showing the influence of institutional identity on academic decisions. Lastly, facilities like the SAC and the support from passionate lecturers played a major role in maintaining students' motivation and retention within the English Department.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study indicate that students' motivation in choosing the English Language Education Study Program (TBI) at UIN Jambi is influenced by various intrinsic and extrinsic factors. These factors vary from personal interests, career aspirations, family and teacher support, previous learning experiences, the institution's religious identity, to facilities and the quality of lecturers. This finding confirms that students' academic decisions are not only influenced by a single reason, but rather the result of a complex interaction of various motivations.

First, personal interest in English emerged as one of the dominant motivations. Several students stated that their interest in English had existed since elementary school. This shows that positive early exposure to a subject can foster a sense of ongoing liking. This interest does not only come from the learning process alone, but also from psychological factors such as admiration for other people's English language skills. This is in line with the concept in Self-Determination Theory which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation in encouraging academic involvement and success.

Second, career goals are a strong external factor that encourages students to choose this major. Students see English language skills as important capital in the world of work, whether as teachers, entrepreneurs, or professionals in other fields. This shows that they have a clear future orientation and view the TBI study program as a strategic means to realize these aspirations.

Third, support from family and teachers also plays a major role in shaping academic decisions. Recommendations from parents, especially mothers, as well as teacher explanations about curriculum content, have a significant influence on students' choices. This shows that the role

of the closest social environment, especially in the context of education, is one of the external factors that greatly influences educational decision-making.

Furthermore, previous learning experiences, especially pleasant experiences with English teachers in elementary to secondary schools, are important catalysts in shaping their interest in this field. Teachers who are fun, creative, and inspiring leave a deep impression and become role models that students want to emulate. This finding reinforces the importance of teaching quality at the elementary and secondary levels of education in shaping students' academic direction in the future.

The religious identity of UIN Jambi also plays a unique role in decision-making. For some students, the Islamic background of the campus is actually an attraction because it is in line with their personal values and previous educational experiences. However, for others, this identity was a source of doubt, although they were finally able to adjust after experiencing the campus environment directly. This shows that institutional identity can be a supporting or inhibiting factor, depending on the student's initial perception of the institution.

Finally, campus facilities and lecturer quality have been shown to have an impact on maintaining student motivation during the lecture process. The existence of facilities such as the Self-Access Center (SAC) as well as support and inspiration from lecturers play an important role in maintaining students' enthusiasm for learning and preventing the desire to change majors. Students feel more confident and inspired by lecturers who provide broad insights into the prospects of TBI program graduates.

Overall, this discussion emphasizes that students' academic choices are the result of a combination of personal motivation, social environmental support, previous educational experiences, and the conditions and identities of the institutions where they study. Therefore, in an effort to improve the quality of education and student recruitment, higher education institutions need to consider these aspects holistically in order to create a learning environment that is not only attractive but also able to maintain students' motivation to learn sustainably.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that students' motivations for choosing the English Department at UIN Jambi are influenced by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivations, such as a deep personal interest in English and aspirations to master the language, were major drivers. Extrinsic factors, including career ambitions, family

encouragement, positive learning experiences, institutional religious identity, the availability of supporting facilities like the Self-Access Center, and the role of inspiring lecturers, also played crucial roles. These various motivational elements highlight that students' choices are shaped by a dynamic interplay of personal passions, external influences, and institutional support, emphasizing the importance of creating learning environments that nurture both intrinsic interest and professional aspirations.

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