The Effect of Employment Prospects, Parental Socioeconomic Status, and Career Motivation on Students' Higher Education Intentions

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Abstract
Higher education intentions play a crucial role in preparing students to navigate the digital transformation and the demands of 21st-century industry. This quantitative explanatory study was employed to examine the effects of employment prospects, parental socioeconomic status, and career motivation on the higher education intentions of students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh. A saturated sampling technique was applied, involving all 53 regular and distance learning senior high school students enrolled during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. Primary data were collected through a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The data were analyzed using inferential statistical techniques with SPSS version 23. The findings indicate that employment prospects, parental socioeconomic status, and career motivation simultaneously exert a significant effect on students' higher education intentions. Partially, employment prospects emerged as the most influential predictor, followed by career motivation, in fostering students' intentions to pursue higher education, whereas parental socioeconomic status did not have a significant effect on such intentions. These findings imply that scholarship programs should be sustained, while schools should strengthen career guidance services and implement systematic career interest mapping. Parents are encouraged to focus on providing psychological support regarding their children's future educational and career plans without allowing financial concerns to become the primary consideration. Future research is recommended to investigate additional variables beyond those examined in the present study using larger and more diverse samples, thereby contributing to the advancement of knowledge in this area.

1. Introduction

In the era of digital transformation and the 21st-century industrial landscape, higher education intentions have become a key indicator of students' readiness to transition to tertiary education. Many occupations that require advanced competencies and specialized skills generally necessitate the completion of tertiary education (Solihat et al., 2020). Findings from the 2023 Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) revealed that only approximately 26% of young adults whose parents had not completed upper secondary education attained higher education qualifications (OECD, 2025), suggesting that decisions and opportunities to pursue tertiary education continue to be influenced by family socioeconomic conditions. Furthermore, Statistics Indonesia reported that the 2025 Open Unemployment Rate (OUR) in Indonesia remained highest among upper secondary school graduates, ranking second at 6.88%, while graduates holding Diploma IV to doctoral degrees ranked third at 5.39%. These findings indicate that the current labor market has a limited capacity to absorb upper secondary school graduates. Consequently, upper secondary school graduates are increasingly encouraged to pursue higher education to enhance their competencies. At the same time, the relatively high unemployment rate among university graduates may shape students' perceptions of future employment prospects. Therefore, fostering higher education intentions among students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh is essential for developing future talent capable of addressing global challenges while contributing to the shared aspirations of Golden Indonesia 2045 and Saudi Vision 2030.

As Third Culture Kids (TCKs), students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh experience diverse forms of international and transnational mobility (Cruz et al., 2023), placing them in the unique position of navigating multiple options for pursuing higher education in Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, or a third country. Preliminary observations conducted at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh revealed considerable demographic diversity among students, including those who have resided in Saudi Arabia for more than ten

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years, students who have never returned to Indonesia, and those who have transferred from various educational settings including schools in Indonesia, international schools, local Saudi schools, and Indonesian schools abroad in countries other than the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia following the professional assignments of their parents or family members. In addition, the temporary nature of expatriate employment contracts, characterized by employment termination and permit-related transitions, creates complex family expectations regarding future educational and career pathways across both the formal and informal sectors. Consequently, both students and their parents must carefully evaluate employment prospects across three potential destinations Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and a third country within an increasingly competitive global labor market. The costs associated with pursuing higher education in any of these destinations also represent a substantial financial burden for migrant families, who already face the high cost of living in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia (Oryza & Listiadi, 2021). Students from families with low- or middle-level parental socioeconomic status may demonstrate strong intentions to pursue higher education but encounter financial constraints that limit their educational opportunities. Conversely, students from families with higher parental socioeconomic status generally possess greater financial resources to support further education (Che et al., 2025). Therefore, higher education intentions are shaped by migrant family dynamics, access to educational information, and cross-national contexts. Hence, it is essential to examine the key determinants of students' higher education intentions, particularly employment prospects, parental socioeconomic status, and career motivation.

Students' higher education intentions may be shaped through the interplay of external and internal factors. Within the framework of the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) proposed by Lent et al. (1994), parental socioeconomic status functions as a background contextual affordance by providing financial capital, early learning experiences, and access to informational resources. These foundational factors interact with students' perceptions of favorable employment prospects, which represent rational outcome expectations. When these external factors are internalized in the form of strong career motivation reflected in self-efficacy and career goals, they simultaneously contribute to the development of students' higher education intentions (choice goals).

The literature on employment prospects suggests that positive perceptions of graduate employment opportunities can enhance individuals' higher education intentions. Consistent with Human Capital Theory, employment prospects are regarded as a rational consideration that encourages investment in higher education as a means of securing future returns on investment (Becker, 1964). The more positive students' perceptions of graduate employment opportunities, the greater their likelihood of selecting a particular higher education institution or academic program (Hamouche et al., 2026). Although most empirical studies have reported a positive effect of employment prospects on higher education intentions, the evidence remains inconsistent. Future job opportunities have been identified as one of the key factors influencing university choice (Tsai et al., 2017). In contrast, Armeilia et al. (2019) found that employment prospects did not significantly influence students' decisions in selecting an academic program.

Parental socioeconomic status plays an important role in supporting students' higher education intentions. According to Bourdieu (1986) theory of The Forms of Capital, parental socioeconomic status fundamentally integrates income (economic capital), educational attainment (cultural capital), professional networks (social capital), and occupational prestige (symbolic capital). Several studies have demonstrated that parental socioeconomic status significantly influences students' higher education intentions (Blossfeld et al., 2024; Khairinal et al., 2022; Subarkah & Nurkhin, 2018; Wang & Wu, 2023; Widodo et al., 2023; Xie & Ma, 2019). However, empirical findings remain inconsistent. Several studies have reported that parental socioeconomic status has no significant effect on students' higher education intentions (Abduh et al., 2023; Agupusi, 2019; Philipp, 2023; Qiu & Ye, 2023; Solihat et al., 2020), exerts a significant negative effect (Putri et al., 2022), or functions as a moderating variable influencing higher education intentions rather than as a direct predictor (Ayuni & Wahjudi, 2021).

Career motivation among students is shaped by their confidence in their own abilities and the clarity of the outcomes they aspire to achieve. Consistent with the framework of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), career motivation serves as a cognitive driver that encourages individuals to establish career goals (Lent et al., 1994). Suharto et al. (2025) found that self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, and decision-making skills also influence students' career decision-making. Several empirical studies have further confirmed that a high level of career motivation effectively enhances students' higher education intentions (Öncü, 2025; Rosida & Rochmawati, 2023; Shin et al., 2018).

Although numerous studies have examined students' higher education intentions, the existing literature has largely focused on senior high school and vocational students, as well as domestic university students in Indonesia groups whose educational trajectories tend to be relatively linear and situated within a single national context. Consequently, these research models have not adequately captured the dual challenges faced by Indonesian expatriate students in Saudi Arabia, including the instability of expatriate parents' employment contracts, strict labor regulations, migrant family dynamics, extensive access to information, and the broader transnational context, all of which may shape their higher education intentions. Furthermore, previous studies

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have paid limited attention to integrating employment prospect variables. The existing literature has typically examined employment prospects from a domestic perspective, which contrasts with the circumstances of transnational students who consider career opportunities across three different countries. Recent literature also reveals a geographical gap, indicating that research on cross-national educational motivation in the Arabian Gulf and Southeast Asia remains considerably more limited than that conducted in China and the United Kingdom (Che et al., 2025). Therefore, this study on the higher education intentions of students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, seeks to address this gap in the existing literature.

The objective of this study is to examine the effects of employment prospects, parental socioeconomic status, and career motivation on the higher education intentions of senior high school students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh, both simultaneously and partially. Based on the theoretical framework and empirical evidence discussed above, the proposed relationships among the study variables are illustrated in Figure 1. The findings are expected to provide an empirical basis for the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh to strengthen students' higher education intentions and serve as a reference for the school, the Education and Culture Attaché of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Riyadh, parents, students, and other relevant stakeholders.

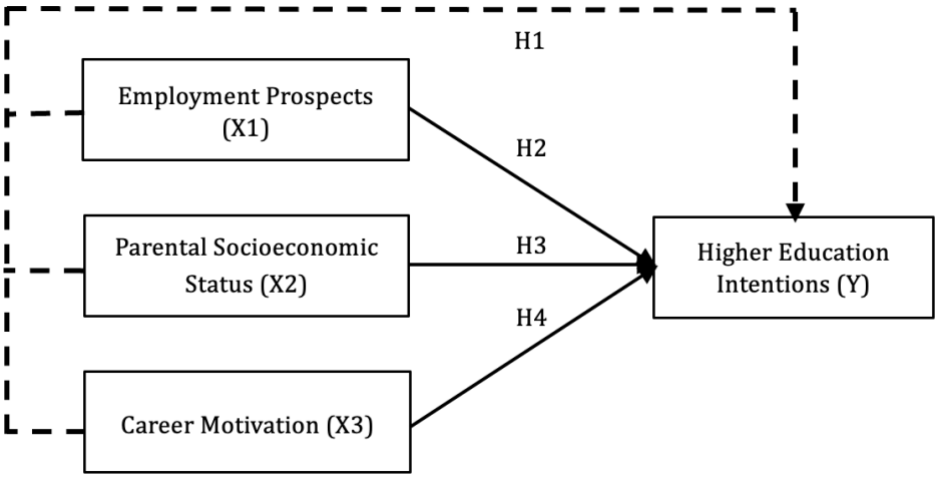


Figure 1. Research Hypothesis

H1: Employment prospects, parental socioeconomic status, and career motivation simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on the higher education intentions of senior high school students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh.

H2: Employment prospects have a positive and significant effect on the higher education intentions of senior high school students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh.

H3: Parental socioeconomic status has a positive and significant effect on the higher education intentions of senior high school students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh.

H4: Career motivation has a positive and significant effect on the higher education intentions of senior high school students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh.

2. Method

A quantitative research approach with an explanatory research design was employed to examine the causal relationships among variables through hypothesis testing. The independent variables in this study were employment prospects (X1), parental socioeconomic status (X2), and career motivation (X3), while higher education intentions (Y) served as the dependent variable.

The participants in this study consisted of 53 senior high school students enrolled at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, who met the following criteria: (1) Grade 10, Grade 11, and Grade 12 students in the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year; (2) students enrolled in both the regular and distance education programs; and (3) students who intended to pursue higher education, either domestically or abroad. The distribution of the participants is presented in Table 1.

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Table 1. Research Population

Class		Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total
	Regular	10	13	8	31
	Distance Education	4	7	11	22
	Total	14	20	19	53
Gender	Male	8	6	12	26
	Female	6	14	7	27
	Total	14	20	19	53

The study was conducted between May and June during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year at one of the Indonesian schools abroad, namely the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which implements a hybrid learning system combining face-to-face instruction for regular students and online learning for students enrolled in the distance education programs. A saturated sampling (total sampling) technique was employed because all members of the target population were included as research participants. The use of this sampling technique was intended to enhance internal validity, ensure comprehensive population representation, and minimize selection bias (Slater & Hasson, 2025).

The research instrument consisted of a digital questionnaire employing a closed-ended survey format (Riyanto & Oktariyanda, 2023). The questionnaire was developed using a five-point Likert scale to measure respondents' levels of agreement with each statement item (Robinson, 2023). The research instrument was developed based on the indicators of higher education intentions (Oryza & Listiadi, 2021), employment prospects (Armeilia et al., 2019), parental socioeconomic status (Widodo et al., 2023), and career motivation (Shin et al., 2018), as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Variable Indicators

Variable	Indicators	N of Items	Source
Higher Education Intentions (Y)	Positive feelings towards higher education	12	(Oryza & Listiadi, 2021)
	Attention to higher education		
	Intention to pursue higher education		
	Interest in higher education		
	Expectations of studying in higher education		
	Perceived need for higher education after completing secondary education		
Employment Prospects (X_1)	Employment opportunities	6	(Armeilia et al., 2019)
	Job-education match		
	Ease of obtaining employment		
Parental Socioeconomic Status (X_2)	Parents' education	10	(Widodo et al., 2023)
	Parents' income		
	Parents' occupation		
	Social status		
	Facilities and infrastructure		
Career Motivation (X_3)	Educational experience	14	(Shin et al., 2018)
	Career value		
	Academic self-efficacy		
	Career self-efficacy		
	Career interest		
	Parental support		
	Goal setting		

The data for this study were collected using a cross-sectional survey method. This approach enabled the collection of data on all research variables at a single point in time through the Google Forms platform. The digital questionnaire link was distributed online to respondents through personal communication channels, allowing for greater efficiency in data collection and broader respondent coverage. The primary data collected were subsequently tabulated and analyzed using inferential statistical techniques with SPSS version 23.

The data analysis procedure began with validity and reliability testing to assess the adequacy of the research instrument. Classical assumption testing, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity (Glejser) tests, was then performed to ensure the suitability of the research model. The causal relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable were examined using multiple linear regression analysis and the coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2). Finally, hypothesis testing was conducted using the F-test and t-test to provide empirical and statistically supported evidence of the causal relationships among the variables.

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3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

The visualization of the research data indicates that the majority of students had resided in Saudi Arabia for less than five years, accounting for 28 students (52.8%). Meanwhile, 20 students (37.7%) had lived in Saudi Arabia for more than ten years, and 5 students (9.4%) had resided there for between five and ten years. Regarding students' preferred destinations for pursuing higher education, Indonesia was the most preferred country, selected by 22 students (41.5%), followed by Saudi Arabia with 12 students (22.6%). Six students (11.3%) had not yet decided on their preferred destination, while the remaining 13 students (24.6%) expressed multiple preferences, including Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, Türkiye, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada.

Based on parental occupation, the majority of students' fathers were classified within the high occupational category, comprising 37 students (69.8%), followed by the low occupational category with 12 students (22.6%) and the medium occupational category with 4 students (7.6%). In contrast, most students' mothers were classified within the low occupational category, comprising 39 students (73.6%), while both the high and medium occupational categories each accounted for 7 students (13.2%). With respect to educational attainment, the majority of fathers had completed education at the high category level, representing 36 students (67.9%), followed by the medium category with 11 students (20.8%) and the low category with 6 students (11.3%). Similarly, the highest educational attainment of mothers was predominantly classified within the high category, comprising 31 students (58.5%), followed by the medium category with 16 students (30.2%) and the low category with 6 students (11.3%). The economic condition of students' families was measured based on estimated monthly household income. Most families were classified within the medium-income category, representing 23 students (43.4%), followed by the high-income category with 22 students (41.5%) and the low-income category with 8 students (15.1%). Family profile characteristics were further examined based on the number of siblings, indicating that most students came from small families (22 students; 41.5%), followed by medium-sized families (21 students; 39.6%) and large families (10 students; 18.9%).

Following the collection of data from 53 respondents who met the established research criteria, inferential statistical analyses were conducted, including data quality testing, classical assumption testing, multiple linear regression analysis, and hypothesis testing. The validity test results indicated that all questionnaire items had Pearson correlation coefficients (r-values) ranging from 0.499 to 0.833, exceeding the critical r-table value of 0.279, with significance values of 0.000 (< 0.05). These findings indicate that all questionnaire items were valid. To further ensure the credibility of the data and the adequacy of the research instrument, a reliability test was subsequently performed, the results of which are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Standard	N of Items	Interpretation
Higher Education Intentions (Y)	0.900	0.70	12	Reliable
Employment Prospects (X1)	0.830	0.70	6	Reliable
Parental Socioeconomic Status (X2)	0.852	0.70	10	Reliable
Career Motivation (X3)	0.888	0.70	14	Reliable

The reliability test results presented in Table 3 indicate that all variables have Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.70. Therefore, it can be concluded that all variables are reliable.

Table 4. Normality Test Results

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstandardized Residual
N		53
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	3.28975480
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.098
	Positive	.069
	Negative	-.098
Test Statistic		.098
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200[c,d]
Test distribution is Normal. Calculated from data. Lilliefors Significance Correction. This is a lower bound of the true significance.		

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The results of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test presented in Table 4 indicate a significance value of 0.200, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the data are normally distributed and satisfy the classical assumption of normality.

Table 5. Multicollinearity Test Results

Coefficients[a]			
Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	X1	.649	1.541
	X2	.636	1.573
	X3	.555	1.800
Dependent Variable: Y			

The multicollinearity test results presented in Table 5 indicate that all variables have tolerance values greater than 0.10 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below 10. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data are free from multicollinearity and meet the classical assumption test.

Table 6. Heteroscedasticity Test (Glejser) Results

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	14.360	2.867		5.009	.000
	X1	-.178	.091	-.291	-1.955	.056
	X2	-.005	.066	-.013	-.083	.934
	X3	-.116	.059	-.316	-1.965	.055
Dependent Variable: ABS_RES						

The heteroscedasticity test results presented in Table 6 indicate that all independent variables have significance values greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data are free from heteroscedasticity and meet the classical assumption test.

Table 7. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis and Partial t-Test Results

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.134	5.180		1.377	.175
	X1	.963	.165	.578	5.849	.000
	X2	.025	.119	.021	.211	.834
	X3	.336	.106	.338	3.163	.003
Dependent Variable: Y						

Based on the results of the multiple linear regression analysis presented in Table 7, the following multiple linear regression equation was obtained.

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + e = 7.134 + 0.963 X_1 + 0.025 X_2 + 0.336 X_3 + e \quad (1)$$

The constant coefficient was 7.134 and was positive, indicating that the variables of Employment Prospects (X1), Parental Socioeconomic Status (X2), and Career Motivation (X3) have a positive relationship with Higher Education Intentions (Y). This finding suggests that as the values of the independent variables increase, Higher Education Intentions (Y) also increase, with the baseline value of the dependent variable remaining positive at 7.134.

The beta coefficient for the Employment Prospects variable (X1) was 0.963. Holding the other variables constant, a 1% increase in Employment Prospects (X1) is associated with a 96.3% increase in Higher Education Intentions (Y). Conversely, holding the other variables constant, a 1% decrease in Employment Prospects (X1) is associated with a 96.3% decrease in Higher Education Intentions (Y).

The beta coefficient for the Parental Socioeconomic Status variable (X2) was 0.025. Holding the other variables constant, a 1% increase in Parental Socioeconomic Status (X2) is associated with a 2.5% increase in Higher Education Intentions (Y). Conversely, holding the other variables constant, a 1% decrease in Parental Socioeconomic Status (X2) is associated with a 2.5% decrease in Higher Education Intentions (Y).

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The beta coefficient for the Career Motivation variable (X3) was 0.336. Holding the other variables constant, a 1% increase in Career Motivation (X3) is associated with a 33.6% increase in Higher Education Intentions (Y). Conversely, holding the other variables constant, a 1% decrease in Career Motivation (X3) is associated with a 33.6% decrease in Higher Education Intentions (Y).

Table 8. Coefficient of Determination Test (Adjusted R^2)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.830	.689	.670	3.38897
Predictors: (Constant), X3, X1, X2				

As presented in Table 8, the Adjusted R^2 value is 0.670. This coefficient of determination indicates that the independent variables, namely Employment Prospects (X1), Parental Socioeconomic Status (X2), and Career Motivation (X3), jointly explain 67% of the variance in Higher Education Intentions (Y), while the remaining 33% is explained by other variables not included in the present research model.

Table 9. Simultaneous F-Test Results

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1249.117	3	416.372	36.253	.000[b]
	Residual	562.769	49	11.485		
	Total	1811.887	52			
Dependent Variable: Y Predictors: (Constant), X3, X1, X2						

The effect of X1, X2, and X3 on Y. The F-statistic was 36.253, which exceeded the F-table value of 2.794, with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05). Therefore, H_0 was rejected, and H_a was accepted, indicating that Employment Prospects (X1), Parental Socioeconomic Status (X2), and Career Motivation (X3) simultaneously have a significant effect on Higher Education Intentions (Y), as presented in Table 9.

The effect of X1 on Y. The results presented in Table 7 show that the t-statistic for Employment Prospects (X1) was 5.849, exceeding the t-table value of 2.008, with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05). Therefore, H_0 was rejected, and H_a was accepted, indicating that Employment Prospects have a significant effect on Higher Education Intentions. The effect of X2 on Y. The t-statistic for Parental Socioeconomic Status (X2) was 0.211, which was lower than the t-table value of 2.008, with a significance value of 0.834 (> 0.05). Therefore, H_a was rejected, and H_0 was accepted, indicating that Parental Socioeconomic Status does not have a significant effect on Higher Education Intentions. The effect of X3 on Y. The t-statistic for Career Motivation (X3) was 3.163, exceeding the t-table value of 2.008, with a significance value of 0.003 (< 0.05). Therefore, H_0 was rejected, and H_a was accepted, indicating that Career Motivation has a significant effect on Higher Education Intentions.

3.2. Discussion

Employment prospects, parental socioeconomic status, and career motivation simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on the higher education intentions of senior high school students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh. Consistent with the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) proposed by Lent et al. (1994), these findings indicate that the higher education intentions of students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh are significantly shaped by positive perceptions of employment prospects, adaptive parental socioeconomic status, and global career motivation stimulated by the dynamic economic environment of the host country. This study contributes to addressing the global research gap identified by Che et al. (2025) by providing the first empirical evidence on how the Southeast Asian expatriate community in the Arabian Gulf responds to an evolving transnational education and employment landscape, thereby fostering transnational educational motivation that strengthens students' higher education intentions. This simultaneous effect was not influenced by gender differences, indicating that it is universal across male and female students. Accordingly, students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh demonstrate comparable access to educational opportunities, career aspirations, and responses in planning for higher education. Likewise, differences in the length of residence in Saudi Arabia did not influence students' higher education intentions to pursue better employment prospects. The combined influence of parental socioeconomic status and global career motivation also contributed to the diversity of students' preferred destinations for higher education. Students with strong career motivation and adequate financial resources tended to prefer developed countries such as Singapore, Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada, whereas those with lower or moderate levels of career motivation and financial resources tended to choose developing countries such as Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Türkiye, without diminishing their strong intentions to pursue higher education.

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Employment prospects have a positive and significant effect on the higher education intentions of senior high school students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh. Employment prospects emerged as the primary determinant influencing students' higher education intentions. Positive perceptions of the expansion of future employment sectors and increasing workforce opportunities, both in Saudi Arabia and Indonesia, significantly enhance students' positive perceptions of graduate employment opportunities, which in turn strengthen their intentions to pursue higher education. These findings are consistent with Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) and the study by Tsai et al. (2017), which identified future job opportunities as one of the key factors influencing university choice.

Parental socioeconomic status has a positive but insignificant effect on the higher education intentions of senior high school students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh. In the era of economic diversification and technological disruption, students no longer perceive financial constraints as the primary determinant of pursuing higher education and are instead motivated to seek global scholarship opportunities in Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, or a third country. Regardless of whether expatriate parents belong to low-, middle-, or high-socioeconomic groups, most emphasize the importance of higher education, resulting in a consistently high level of educational awareness among students. This finding is further supported by the socioeconomic characteristics of the students' families, in which the majority of parents were classified within the medium to high occupational categories, had high levels of educational attainment, belonged to medium- to high-income households, and had relatively small to medium-sized families. These findings are consistent with Bourdieu (1986) theory of The Forms of Capital and further supported by Jin et al. (2022), who highlighted the roles of cultural capital and social capital in fostering students' higher education intentions. The present findings are also consistent with previous studies reporting that parental socioeconomic status does not significantly influence students' higher education intentions (Abduh et al., 2023; Agupusi, 2019; Ayuni & Wahjudi, 2021; Philipp, 2023; Putri et al., 2022; Qiu & Ye, 2023; Solihat et al., 2020).

Career motivation has a positive and significant effect on the higher education intentions of senior high school students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh. Career motivation operates in tandem with the dominant influence of employment prospects. Empirically, students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh demonstrate a high degree of independent thinking and a strong future-oriented mindset. They perceive higher education as an investment in their future and as the primary pathway to achieving their desired careers, making it a key driving force behind their intentions to pursue higher education. These findings are consistent with the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) proposed by Lent et al. (1994) and with previous studies demonstrating that career motivation significantly influences students' higher education intentions (Öncü, 2025; Rosida & Rochmawati, 2023; Shin et al., 2018).

3.3. Implications

3.3.1. Theorical implications

The findings of this study provide both theoretical and empirical contributions to the application of the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) among diaspora students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh. The empirical evidence indicates that future-oriented rational considerations, particularly employment prospects and career motivation, play a more dominant role in shaping the higher education intentions of diaspora students or the children of migrant workers living abroad than current structural financial conditions, as reflected in parental socioeconomic status. Accordingly, the research model extends the existing literature by demonstrating the role of employment prospects in influencing higher education intentions among diaspora students.

3.3.2. Practical Implications

For the Education and Culture Attaché of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Riyadh. The Education and Culture Attaché may facilitate internship programs, organize industry visits to multinational companies in Saudi Arabia, and conduct sharing sessions with successful expatriate professionals to strengthen students' outcome expectations. In addition, the Education and Culture Attaché may organize a Higher Education Fair by inviting reputable Indonesian and international higher education institutions while expanding institutional partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to support the continuity of students' higher education and secure scholarship quotas for high-achieving students.

For the Management of the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh. The school management may focus on strengthening career guidance programs aligned with current labor market trends and global industry demands, invite professionals and successful alumni of the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh to participate in sharing sessions, and conduct objective mapping of students' academic major preferences regardless of differences in their parents' socioeconomic backgrounds.

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For Parents. Given that financial conditions do not limit students' higher education intentions, parents should place greater emphasis on providing consistent psychological support, including allowing students the autonomy to choose their preferred educational pathways, maintaining students' career motivation, fostering a supportive learning environment at home, and encouraging open discussions regarding students' career planning without undue concern over family financial constraints.

For Senior High School Students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh. A high level of rational and independent decision-making has been shown to strengthen students' higher education intentions. Therefore, students are encouraged to actively seek information on emerging industry trends and future occupations from an early stage of their secondary education. However, given the dominant influence of employment prospects, students may also be inclined to select academic majors primarily based on current salary and wage trends, potentially overlooking their personal interests and innate talents. Such decisions may increase the risk of academic stress resulting from an inappropriate choice of major. Hence, career literacy is essential to enable students to distinguish between short-term and long-term employment prospects in the context of economic diversification and technological disruption.

3.4. Limitations

Although this study contributes to the existing body of literature, several limitations should be acknowledged regarding the generalizability and validity of its findings. First, the scope of the study was limited to a single Indonesian school abroad with a relatively small sample size. Consequently, the characteristics of the students and their higher education intentions cannot be generalized to all students attending Indonesian schools abroad in the Arabian Gulf region, such as the Indonesian Schools in Jeddah, Makkah, and Cairo. Second, this study employed a cross-sectional research design and did not conduct comparative analyses involving domestic students in Indonesia or students from other Indonesian schools abroad.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the data analysis and discussion, the findings indicate that employment prospects, parental socioeconomic status, and career motivation simultaneously exert a positive and significant effect on the higher education intentions of senior high school students at the Indonesian Embassy School in Riyadh. A key finding of this study is that employment prospects and career motivation are the most dominant determinants shaping students' higher education intentions. Meanwhile, parental socioeconomic status continues to serve as an important facilitating factor; however, it is no longer an absolute barrier to students' higher education intentions given the increasing availability of educational information and global scholarship opportunities. Future studies are recommended to adopt longitudinal and comparative research designs involving domestic students in Indonesia and/or students from other Indonesian schools abroad investigating similar topics, extend the application of the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) by examining the choice goals and actions components of the model, broaden the sample to include a wider population of diaspora or expatriate students to improve the generalizability of the findings, and incorporate other potentially influential variables, such as academic self-efficacy, the school environment, the effectiveness of school counsellors, peer influence, and the availability of scholarship programs as moderating or mediating variables.

Author Contributions

Imelda Intan Ariezona: Conceptualization; Methodology; Investigation; Data curation; Formal analysis; Visualization; Writing - original draft. Amirul Arif: Supervision; Resources; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review & editing. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declaration on AI Use

AI were used only to improve readability and language under strict human oversight; no content, ideas, analyses, or conclusions were generated by AI.

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