



The Relationship of Parents' Economic Level with Junior High School Students' Interest in Choosing Culinary Skills Competencies at Vocational School

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the importance of student interest in determining the choice of skill competencies in Vocational High Schools (SMK), which is thought to be influenced by the economic level of parents. This research aims to describe the economic level of parents, describe the interests of junior high school students in choosing Culinary Skills Competencies at SMK Negeri 1 Painan, and analyze the relationship between the economic level of parents and the students' interests. This research uses a quantitative approach with a correlational type of research. The research population was 663 class IX students of State Middle Schools in IV Jurai District, with a sample of 87 respondents determined using the Slovin formula and proportional random sampling technique. Data was collected via questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment correlation. The research results show that the parents' economic level is in the medium category with an average score of 31.32, while students' interest in choosing Culinary Skills Competencies is in the high category. The results of the correlation test show a value of $r = 0.678$ with a significance of $0.000 < 0.05$, which means there is a strong and significant positive relationship between the economic level of parents and students' interest in choosing Culinary Skills Competencies at SMK Negeri 1 Painan. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.460 indicates that 46.0% of the variation in student interest can be explained by the economic level of parents. Thus, the higher the parents' economic level, the higher the student's interest in choosing the Culinary Skills Competency at SMK Negeri 1 Painan.

Introduction

Vocational education plays a strategic role in developing a skilled workforce capable of responding to the changing demands of the labor market and supporting sustainable national development. In Indonesia, Vocational High Schools are specifically designed to equip students with occupational competencies, practical skills, and professional attitudes that enable them to enter employment immediately after graduation or pursue higher education. The importance of vocational education has continued to increase alongside industrial transformation, technological advancement, and the growing demand for competent human resources across various economic sectors. In line with this objective, Permendikbudristek Number 9 of 2022 concerning the National Standards for Vocational High Schools/Madrasah

Aliyah Kejuruan emphasizes that vocational education should produce graduates who possess competencies that meet the needs of industry, business, and national development. Furthermore, the government continues to strengthen vocational education through curriculum improvement, enhancement of educational facilities, teacher competency development, and stronger collaboration between schools and industry as stipulated in Permendikbudristek Number 17 of 2022. These initiatives demonstrate the government's commitment to improving the quality and competitiveness of vocational education in Indonesia.

Among the various vocational study programs offered by SMKs, the Culinary Skills Competency has become one of the most promising educational pathways because it combines technical expertise with entrepreneurial capabilities. Students enrolled in this competency are prepared to master food processing techniques, food service management, sanitation and hygiene practices, menu planning, and culinary entrepreneurship. The rapid growth of Indonesia's tourism, hospitality, restaurant, and creative industries has significantly expanded employment opportunities for graduates with culinary expertise. Consequently, culinary education has become increasingly relevant as it not only prepares graduates for employment but also encourages entrepreneurship and small business development. In Pesisir Selatan Regency, West Sumatra Province, the Culinary Skills Competency is currently offered only by SMK Negeri 1 Ranah Pesisir and SMK Negeri 1 Painan (BPS West Sumatra Province, 2025). The limited availability of this competency highlights the importance of understanding the factors influencing students' decisions to choose this educational pathway, particularly because vocational education is expected to contribute to regional economic development by producing competent graduates who meet local workforce demands (Aidoo et al., 2022; Madjid et al., 2023; Munangatire et al., 2024).

The decision to continue education after completing junior high school represents an important developmental milestone for adolescents. Junior High School (SMP) serves as a transitional stage during which students begin to identify their academic interests, career aspirations, and educational preferences. According to Syah (2017), middle school represents a period of transition from primary to secondary education characterized by rapid cognitive, emotional, and social development. During this developmental stage, students gradually become more capable of evaluating their abilities, recognizing their interests, and considering future educational opportunities. Similarly, Hurlock, as cited in Desmita (2018), explains that early adolescence is marked by the emergence of more specific interests that align with individuals' perceived abilities and future expectations. Therefore, educational decisions made during junior high school, including the selection of vocational education and specific skill competencies, are strongly influenced by students' developmental characteristics, self-perceptions, family environment, and broader social conditions (McGrath & Yamada, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023; Belando et al., 2025).

Despite the increasing recognition of vocational education as a viable educational pathway, student interest in selecting particular vocational competencies remains uneven (Billett et al., 2022; Huang, 2025; Imdorf et al., 2025). Preliminary observations conducted by the researchers indicate that not all junior high school students demonstrate strong interest in choosing the Culinary Skills Competency as their preferred field of study. Although the culinary sector offers diverse career opportunities, some students remain uncertain about pursuing this specialization because their educational decisions are influenced by multiple personal, social, and economic considerations. These conditions suggest that understanding students' educational preferences requires examining not only their individual interests but also the contextual factors surrounding their decision-making process.

Table 1. Pre-Research Results of Student Interest in Culinary Skills Competencies

Student Interest Indicators	Number of Students
Interested in continuing education to vocational school	34
Interest in cooking/culinary	29
Desire to learn cooking skills professionally	29
Perception that Culinary Skills Competency has good job opportunities	32
Interest in choosing Culinary Skills Competency at SMK Negeri 1 Painan	30
Parental support for the choice of culinary major	32
The influence of school costs on the choice of major	29

Source: Researcher's Pre-Research Data, 2026

The pre-research survey involving 40 junior high school students in District IV Jurai revealed that students' interest in Culinary Skills Competency had not yet reached an optimal level. Only 29 students expressed interest in cooking and culinary activities, while the same number indicated a desire to study culinary skills professionally. Furthermore, only 30 respondents expressed interest in selecting the Culinary Skills Competency at SMK Negeri 1 Painan. Although 32 students acknowledged that culinary education provides promising employment opportunities and another 32 students reported receiving parental support for choosing the culinary major, the influence of educational costs remained a significant concern, with only 29 students indicating that financial considerations would not hinder their educational choice. These findings suggest that students' educational decisions are shaped by various interconnected factors, among which family economic conditions appear to play an important role (Syakhrani & Aslan, 2024; Madeeha et al., 2024; Zhou & Shirazi, 2025). Consequently, further investigation is needed to examine how parents' economic circumstances influence students' interest in pursuing Culinary Skills Competency.

Educational interest has long been recognized as an essential determinant of students' learning behavior and educational decision-making. Interest refers to an individual's tendency to experience positive feelings, attention, and willingness toward a particular object, activity, or field of study (Sari, 2021). Students with strong interest generally demonstrate higher levels of motivation, persistence, participation, and commitment in pursuing educational goals. Previous literature suggests that educational interest is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors include aptitude, personal motivation, self-confidence, and individual aspirations, whereas external factors encompass family environment, school climate, peer influence, socioeconomic background, and educational opportunities (Slameto, 2020; Suryani & Ramadhan, 2021; Santika, 2023). Because educational choices result from interactions between personal preferences and environmental conditions, understanding the determinants of student interest requires considering both psychological and socioeconomic dimensions.

Among the external factors affecting educational choices, parents' economic level has consistently been identified as one of the most influential determinants (Jonathan et al., 2023; Rehman & Mia, 2024; Costa et al., 2024). The economic level of parents reflects the family's socioeconomic status, including educational attainment, occupation, household income, and ownership of educational resources and household assets (Muhammad, 2017). Families with stronger economic conditions generally possess greater capacity to provide educational facilities, learning resources, transportation, school equipment, and financial support required throughout the educational process. According to Sucininggrum and Rahayu (2015), economic support becomes particularly important within vocational education because practical learning activities frequently require additional expenditures for uniforms, laboratory equipment, practice materials, and industrial training. Therefore, family financial capability may substantially influence students' confidence and willingness to enroll in vocational programs that require relatively higher practical learning costs.

Previous empirical studies have consistently demonstrated the influence of parents' socioeconomic conditions on students' educational aspirations and school selection. Windarto (2013) reported that parents' economic level significantly affected junior high school students' interest in continuing their education at vocational schools. Similarly, Fiades, Fadila, and Nafrial (2023) found that family economic conditions significantly influenced students' decisions regarding further educational pathways. These findings indicate that socioeconomic status remains an important consideration in students' educational decision-making processes. Nevertheless, despite the growing body of literature on educational choice and socioeconomic influences, empirical evidence specifically examining the relationship between parents' economic level and students' interest in choosing the Culinary Skills Competency at SMK Negeri 1 Painan remains limited. This contextual gap is particularly important considering the unique characteristics of culinary education, which requires practical learning experiences and financial support that may differ from other vocational competencies (Woodhouse & Rodgers, 2024; Sathatip et al., 2025; Lu et al., 2026).

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence regarding the relationship between parents' economic level and junior high school students' interest in selecting Culinary Skills Competency at SMK Negeri 1 Painan. Specifically, the study aims to describe the economic level of students' parents, identify the level of students' interest in choosing Culinary Skills Competency, and analyze the relationship between these two variables. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of educational policies and school strategies aimed at increasing student participation in vocational education while providing valuable information for schools, parents, and policymakers in promoting equitable access to quality vocational education.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a correlational research design to examine the relationship between parents' economic level and junior high school students' interest in choosing the Culinary Skills Competency at SMK Negeri 1 Painan. A correlational design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to identify the strength and direction of the relationship between two naturally occurring variables without manipulating the research setting. This design enables researchers to determine whether changes in one variable are statistically associated with changes in another variable while maintaining the natural characteristics of the respondents. The study did not seek to establish causal

relationships but rather to provide empirical evidence regarding the degree of association between parents' economic conditions and students' educational interests. The research was conducted during the 2026 academic year in the IV Jurai District, Pesisir Selatan Regency, West Sumatra Province, Indonesia. The selection of this location was based on the fact that students from this district constitute one of the primary recruitment areas for SMK Negeri 1 Painan, particularly for the Culinary Skills Competency program. Consequently, the study area provided an appropriate context for examining factors influencing students' educational preferences before entering vocational secondary education.

Population and Sample

The target population consisted of 663 Grade IX students enrolled in seven public junior high schools located in the IV Jurai District. Grade IX students were selected because they were in the final year of junior high school and actively preparing to determine their educational pathway at the secondary education level. At this stage, students generally begin evaluating their academic interests, career aspirations, and preferred vocational or general education programs, making them the most appropriate respondents for this study.

The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 10%, resulting in a total sample of 87 respondents. To ensure that every school within the population was fairly represented, the study employed Proportional Random Sampling. Through this sampling technique, the number of respondents selected from each school was proportional to its student population, thereby minimizing sampling bias and improving the representativeness of the sample. Subsequently, respondents within each school were selected randomly, ensuring that every Grade IX student had an equal opportunity to participate in the study.

Research Variables and Operational Definitions

The independent variable (X) was parents' economic level, which represents the socioeconomic conditions of students' families. This variable was measured using four indicators adapted from previous literature: parents' educational attainment, parents' occupation, household income, and ownership of educational facilities and household assets. These indicators collectively describe the family's capacity to provide financial support, educational resources, and learning opportunities for their children.

The dependent variable (Y) was students' interest in choosing the Culinary Skills Competency at SMK Negeri 1 Painan. Student interest refers to the psychological tendency that encourages individuals to feel attracted to, pay attention to, and become actively involved in a particular educational choice. This variable was measured through four indicators, namely feelings of enjoyment toward culinary education, personal interest in culinary activities, attention to culinary-related learning opportunities, and willingness to become involved in culinary education and future careers. These indicators reflect both the affective and behavioral dimensions of students' educational interests.

Research Instrument and Data Collection

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on the conceptual indicators of each research variable identified from relevant literature. The questionnaire consisted of statements measuring parents' economic level and students' interest in choosing the Culinary Skills Competency. Each statement was assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), allowing respondents to express the extent of their agreement with each statement.

Before being administered to the research participants, the questionnaire underwent instrument validation to ensure that each item accurately measured the intended construct. Instrument reliability was also evaluated to determine the consistency of responses across all questionnaire items. The finalized questionnaire was distributed directly to Grade IX students in the participating schools after obtaining permission from school authorities. During the data collection process, respondents received explanations regarding the objectives of the study and were informed that their participation was voluntary and that all responses would remain confidential and be used solely for academic research purposes.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27. Data analysis consisted of descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. Descriptive statistics were first employed to summarize the characteristics of each research variable by calculating the minimum score, maximum score, mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution, and percentage. These statistics were used to describe the overall economic level of parents and the level of students' interest in choosing the Culinary Skills Competency.

Before conducting hypothesis testing, several classical assumption tests were performed to ensure that the data satisfied the assumptions required for parametric statistical analysis. The normality test was conducted using the One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test to determine whether the data were normally distributed. The linearity test was performed through the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Test for Linearity to examine whether a linear relationship existed between the independent and dependent variables. Because the study involved correlation analysis using parametric statistics, these preliminary tests were necessary to verify the suitability of the data for further analysis.

The research hypothesis was tested using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation technique to examine the strength, direction, and statistical significance of the relationship between parents' economic level and students' interest in choosing the Culinary Skills Competency. The correlation coefficient (r) was interpreted according to commonly accepted correlation strength criteria, while statistical significance was determined using a significance level of 0.05. The null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected when the probability value (p -value) was less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated to estimate the proportion of variance in students' interest that could be explained by parents' economic level, thereby providing a clearer understanding of the practical contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study are presented systematically to describe the parents' economic level, students' interest in choosing the Culinary Skills Competency at SMK Negeri 1 Painan, and the relationship between these two variables. Data obtained from 87 respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics, followed by normality, linearity, and homogeneity tests to confirm that the data met the assumptions for further analysis. Pearson Product–Moment correlation and the coefficient of determination were subsequently applied to determine the direction, strength, significance, and contribution of parents' economic level to students' interest in selecting the Culinary Skills Competency.

Description of Parents' Economic Level

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis Results

Statistics	Students' Interest in Choosing the Culinary Skills Competency at SMK Negeri 1 Painan	Parents' Economic Level
Valid (N)	87	87
Missing	0	0
Mean	83.25	31.32
Standard Deviation	10.46	6.70
Minimum	48.00	20.00
Maximum	111.00	51.00

Source: SPSS Version 27 Data Processing Results

Based on the results of descriptive analysis measurements from table 4.1 above, the economic level of parents of junior high school students has a minimum score of 20 and a maximum score of 51. The average (mean) score is 31.32 with a standard deviation of 6.70. This shows that the economic level of parents of junior high school students tends to be in the medium category, with relatively homogeneous data variations, as shown by the standard deviation value which is not too large. Next, it can be illustrated using the following curve histogram:

Figure 1. Frequency Distribution of Students' Interest in Choosing the Culinary Skills Competency at SMK Negeri 1 Painan

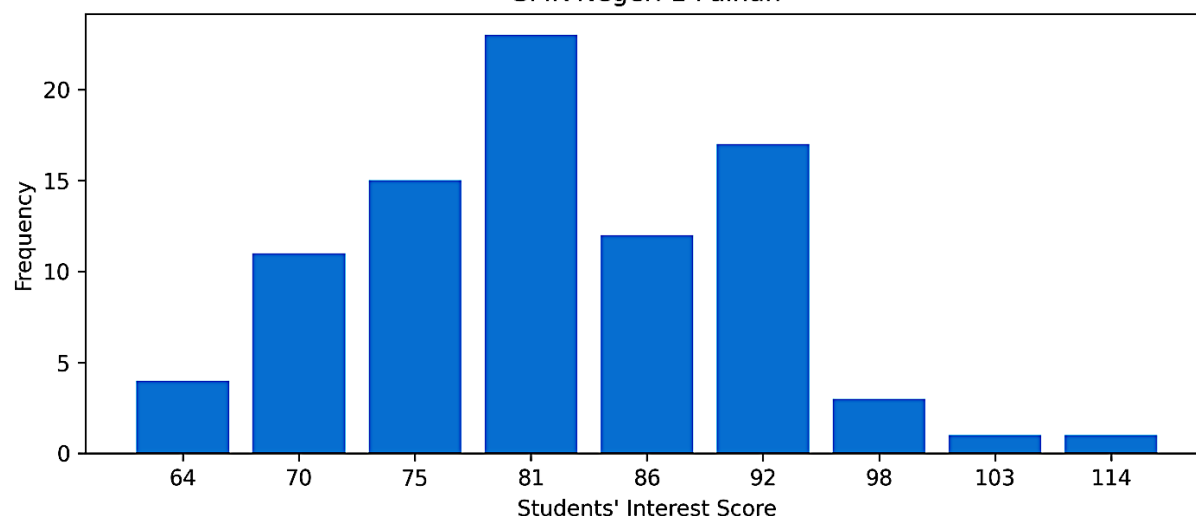


Figure 1. Frequency Distribution Histogram

Interest of Middle School Students in Choosing Culinary Skills Competencies at SMK Negeri 1 Painan

The results of descriptive analysis of junior high school students' interest variables in choosing culinary skills competencies at SMK Negeri 1 Painan showed a minimum score of 48 and a maximum score of 111. The standard deviation obtained was 10.46. This indicates that in general students' interest in choosing culinary skills competencies is in the high category. Apart from that, based on the data distribution which looks close to normal, the majority of students

have a fairly good level of interest in culinary skills competencies. However, the standard deviation shows that the level of student interest has differences or diversity between respondents, although overall student interest remains in the good category and tends to be positive towards the culinary skills program at SMK Negeri 1 Painan.

Classic Assumption Test

Normality Test

Table 3. Normality Test Results

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			
			Unstandardized Residual
N			87
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean		.0000000
	Std. Deviation		10.45781419
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute		.059
	Positive		.046
	Negative		-.059
Test Statistic			.059
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)			.200 ^d
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed)	Sig.		.643
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.631
		Upper Bound	.655
a. Test distribution is Normal.			
b. Calculated from data.			
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.			
d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.			
Source: SPSS Data Processing Version 27 (2026)			

Based on the table above, the Asymp value is obtained. Sig (2-tailed) = 0.200. Because the significance value is greater than the significance level $\alpha=0.05$, it can be concluded that the residual data is normally distributed. Furthermore, it can be depicted using a curve histogram as follows:

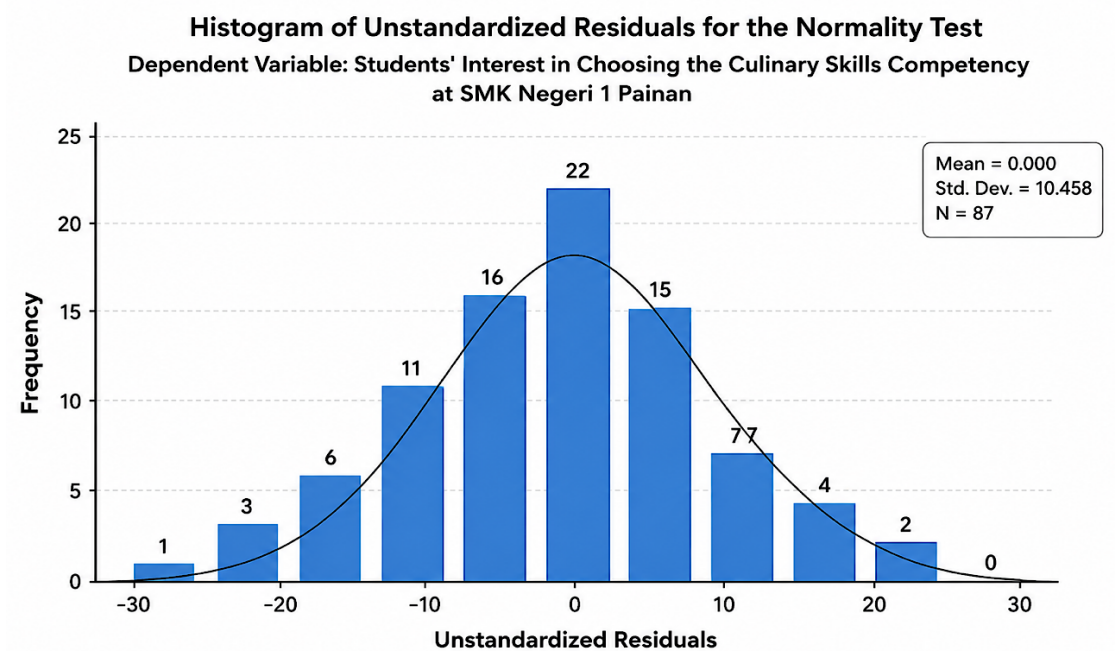


Figure 2. Histogram of Unstandardized Residuals for the Normality Test
Source: Processed research data using SPSS Version 27 (2026).

Figure 2. Normality Test Histogram

Linearity Test

Table 4. Linearity Test Results

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups (Combined)	3608.914	25	144.357	1.518	.094
Linearity	2.971	1	2.971	0.031	.860
Deviation from Linearity	3605.943	24	150.248	1.580	.077
Within Groups	5799.523	61	95.074	—	—
Total	9408.437	86	—	—	—

Source: SPSS Data Processing Version 27 (2026)

Based on the results of the linearity test in the ANOVA table, a significance value for Deviation from Linearity was obtained of 0.077. This value is greater than the significance level of 0.05 ($0.077 > 0.05$), so it can be concluded that the relationship between parents' economic level and junior high school students' interest in choosing culinary skills competencies at SMK Negeri 1 Painan is linear.

Apart from that, the significance value for Linearity is 0.860, indicating that the relationship between the two variables has a linear relationship direction and there is no significant deviation from the linearity line. Thus, the requirements for the linearity test in this study have been fulfilled so that the correlation and regression analysis can be continued.

Homogeneity Test

Table 5. Homogeneity Test Results

Test Method	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	2.454	18	61	.066
Based on Median	1.672	18	61	.070
Based on Median and with Adjusted df	1.672	18	38.252	.090
Based on Trimmed Mean	2.387	18	61	.106

Source: SPSS Data Processing Version 27 (2026)

Based on the table above, the homogeneity test results show that all significance values obtained are above 0.05. In fact, the highest significance value was shown by the based on trimmed mean approach of 0.106, which further strengthens the conclusion that the variance of student interest data is consistently homogeneous in all testing approaches. Fulfilling the assumption of homogeneity of variance indicates that the data has equal diversity between groups, so that the analysis can proceed to the next statistical test, namely ANOVA without violating the basic assumptions of the test.

The Relationship between Parents' Economic Level and Middle School Students' Interest in Choosing Culinary Skills Competencies at SMK Negeri 1 Painan

Table 6. Correlation Test Results

Variables	1	2
Students' Interest in Choosing the Culinary Skills Competency	1.000	.678
Parents' Economic Level	.678	1.000

Source: SPSS Data Processing Version 27 (2026)

Based on the results of the Pearson correlation test, there is a significant positive relationship between parents' economic level and junior high school students' interest in choosing Culinary Skills Competencies at SMK Negeri 1 Painan, with a correlation value of $r = 0.678$ and sig. $0.000 < 0.05$. The strength of the relationship is 0.678, which is included in the strong correlation category, so it can be concluded that the economic level of parents is one of the factors that contributes importantly and significantly to students' interest in determining skills competency choices at the vocational secondary education level.

Furthermore, it can also be depicted with a scatter diagram as follows:

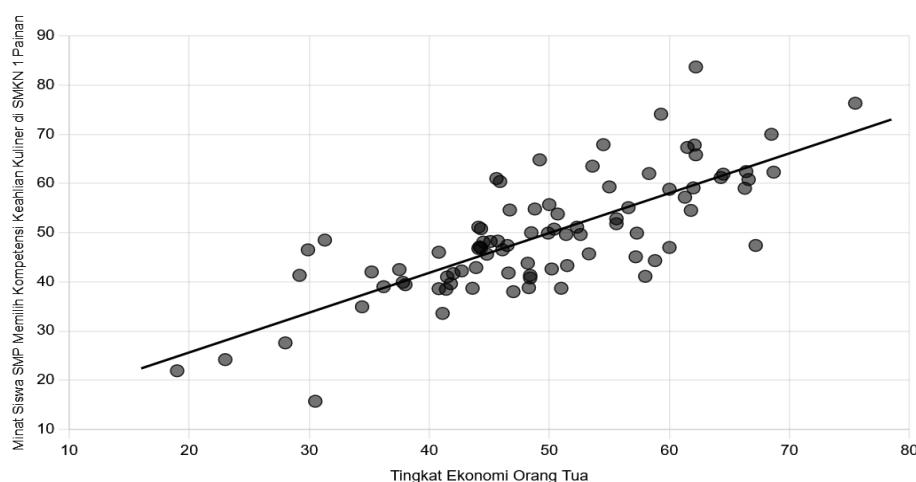


Figure 3. Correlation Test Diagram

Parents' Economic Level

The research results show that the economic level of the students' parents is in the medium category with an average score of 31.32. The high indicator of ownership of educational facilities (2.49) shows that the majority of parents have been able to provide learning facilities that support their children's educational needs. This condition indicates that even though parents' income levels and types of work vary, attention to children's educational needs remains a priority. This finding is in line with the opinion of Nurwati & Listari (2021) who state that the family's economic conditions influence parents' ability to provide learning facilities that support the child's education process.

Students' Interest in Choosing the Culinary Skills Competency

Students' interest in choosing the Culinary Skills Competency should not be understood merely as an individual preference but as a multidimensional educational decision shaped by the interaction between personal aspirations, social influences, and perceived career opportunities. Vocational education differs fundamentally from general academic education because students are expected to commit to a professional pathway from an early stage of their educational journey. Consequently, students' interest reflects not only their attraction to culinary activities but also their confidence in the long-term value of vocational education as a mechanism for social mobility and career development (Stone et al., 2022; Ambad & Rafiki, 2025; De Guzman et al., 2025; Hu et al., 2025). The relatively high level of student interest observed in this study suggests that many junior high school students increasingly recognize culinary education as a viable educational pathway capable of providing employment opportunities, entrepreneurial prospects, and practical competencies required in contemporary labor markets.

However, educational interest should not be interpreted as a stable psychological characteristic that develops independently of the surrounding environment (Petric, 2022; Lopez & Abadiano, 2023; Fink et al., 2023). Rather, interest evolves through continuous interactions between individual experiences and external sources of information. Students frequently construct their perceptions of vocational education through exposure to family expectations, school guidance, peer discussions, and digital media. These multiple sources of information collectively shape how students evaluate the attractiveness, accessibility, and future benefits of particular

educational programs. In this regard, the findings reinforce the argument that educational interest is dynamic rather than static, supporting the proposition of Slameto (2020) that interest develops through the alignment between an individual's abilities, preferences, and meaningful experiences. Similarly, the increasing influence of digital media reflects broader transformations in educational decision-making, where students are no longer dependent solely on teachers or parents for career information but actively construct educational aspirations through online platforms, social networks, and digital content (Akour & Alenezi, 2022; Timotheou et al., 2023; Jacociunas et al., 2024). This changing information ecosystem requires vocational institutions to rethink how they communicate the value of vocational education to prospective students.

The findings also suggest that students evaluate vocational education through a broader perspective than simply considering academic achievement (Khasawneh et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2024; Hwang et al., 2022). Many students appear to associate culinary education with creativity, entrepreneurship, and employment flexibility, characteristics that distinguish it from conventional academic pathways. Such perceptions are particularly important within Indonesia's expanding hospitality, tourism, and food industries, where practical competencies increasingly determine graduate employability. Consequently, students' interest in culinary education reflects changing societal perceptions regarding vocational careers. Rather than being viewed as an alternative for academically weaker students, vocational education is gradually becoming recognized as an attractive educational choice capable of providing competitive professional opportunities. This shift represents an important transformation within vocational education and supports broader national policies promoting vocational schools as drivers of workforce development.

Parents' Economic Level and Students' Educational Interest

The relationship identified in this study demonstrates that family economic conditions continue to shape educational opportunities despite ongoing efforts to expand access to vocational education. Economic resources influence educational choices not merely because they determine families' capacity to finance schooling, but because they affect students' perceptions of educational feasibility and future security. Families with stronger economic resources are generally better positioned to reduce uncertainty associated with vocational education by providing financial support for tuition, practical learning materials, transportation, uniforms, industrial internships, and other educational expenses. Consequently, students from economically advantaged households may perceive vocational education as an achievable investment rather than a financial burden (Wang & Wang, 2023; Paramole & Adeoye, 2024; Antunes et al., 2026).

Nevertheless, the influence of parents' economic level should not be interpreted as a purely financial phenomenon. Economic capital frequently interacts with informational and social resources that shape educational aspirations. Families with relatively stable socioeconomic conditions often possess greater access to educational information, wider professional networks, and stronger familiarity with career planning processes. Such advantages enable parents to provide more comprehensive guidance regarding educational opportunities and occupational prospects. Therefore, economic level functions not only as material support but also as a mechanism through which educational expectations, career aspirations, and future planning are transmitted across generations (Valdés, 2022; Li et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). This broader interpretation provides a more comprehensive understanding of why socioeconomic conditions remain consistently associated with students' educational decisions

across different educational contexts. These findings reinforce previous evidence demonstrating the importance of socioeconomic conditions in educational decision-making. Windarto (2013) reported that parents' economic level significantly influences junior high school students' intentions to continue their education at vocational schools. Similarly, Fiades et al. (2023) concluded that family economic status represents one of the principal determinants of students' educational choices. The present study extends this body of knowledge by demonstrating that the influence of family economic conditions is equally relevant when students evaluate specific vocational competencies rather than vocational education in general. This distinction is particularly important because individual vocational competencies differ substantially in terms of learning requirements, practical costs, equipment needs, and perceived employment prospects. Consequently, educational decision-making should be understood at the level of specific vocational programs rather than solely at the institutional level.

Furthermore, the findings are consistent with the argument proposed by Suciningrum & Rahayu (2015), who emphasize that family economic conditions influence educational interest through the provision of learning facilities, motivation, and educational support. However, the present findings suggest that this relationship extends beyond the availability of financial resources. Parents with stronger economic capacity are also more likely to encourage educational persistence by reducing psychological concerns regarding educational costs and employment uncertainty. This implies that socioeconomic inequality influences educational aspirations through both material and psychological mechanisms. Therefore, policies aimed solely at reducing tuition costs may be insufficient unless accompanied by interventions that strengthen students' confidence regarding vocational career prospects and long-term employability.

The educational implications of these findings extend beyond the relationship between family income and school choice. If students' educational interests remain strongly associated with socioeconomic circumstances, vocational education may unintentionally reproduce existing social inequalities despite its mission of expanding educational opportunity. Students from economically disadvantaged families may hesitate to pursue vocational programs requiring relatively high practical expenditures even when those programs offer substantial employment opportunities. Such conditions create a paradox in which vocational education is intended to enhance social mobility but may simultaneously become less accessible to those who could benefit from it the most. Addressing this challenge requires educational policies that move beyond expanding school capacity toward ensuring equitable participation across different socioeconomic groups.

Accordingly, strengthening students' interest in the Culinary Skills Competency should become a shared responsibility among schools, families, local governments, and industry partners. Schools should not rely exclusively on promotional activities emphasizing employment opportunities but should develop comprehensive career guidance programs that introduce students and parents to the long-term professional pathways available within the culinary industry. Partnerships with restaurants, hotels, culinary entrepreneurs, and vocational alumni may provide authentic evidence regarding career development and income potential, thereby reducing uncertainty surrounding vocational education. Simultaneously, scholarship schemes, financial assistance for practical learning materials, and targeted support for economically disadvantaged students would help reduce financial barriers that may discourage capable students from pursuing culinary education. Such integrated interventions would enable students to make educational decisions based primarily on their interests, abilities, and career aspirations rather than on financial limitations.

Ultimately, the present study contributes to a broader understanding of vocational education by demonstrating that educational interest emerges through the interaction of individual motivation and structural conditions. While personal talent and intrinsic motivation remain essential components of educational choice, they are realized within socioeconomic contexts that either facilitate or constrain educational opportunities. Recognizing this interaction shifts the discussion from a narrow focus on student motivation toward a more comprehensive perspective emphasizing educational equity, social inclusion, and institutional responsibility. In doing so, this study contributes to the growing literature advocating that the effectiveness of vocational education should be evaluated not only by graduate employability but also by its capacity to provide equitable access to meaningful educational opportunities for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Conclusion

Based on the research results, the economic level of parents of junior high school students is in the medium category with an average value of 31.32, where the most dominant indicator is ownership of educational support facilities (2.49) and the lowest is the parents' type of employment (1.85). Meanwhile, junior high school students' interest in choosing the Culinary Skills Competency at SMK Negeri 1 Painan is in the high category, with the most dominant indicators being talent and ability (2.95), followed by social media and technology (2.94), personal experience (2.91), and social and cultural environment (2.90). The results of the correlation analysis show that there is a strong and significant positive relationship between the economic level of parents and students' interest in choosing the Culinary Skills Competency at SMK Negeri 1 Painan, which is indicated by the value $r = 0.678$ with a significance of $0.000 < 0.05$. In addition, the R^2 value = 0.460 shows that 46.0% of the variation in student interest can be explained by the economic level of parents, while the remaining 54.0% is influenced by other factors outside the research. Thus, the higher the parents' economic level, the higher the student's interest in choosing Culinary Skills Competency as a further education option.

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