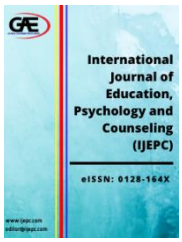
International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATION, PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELLING (IJEPC)
www.ijepc.com

SOCIAL INFLUENCE AND INTENTION TO PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION AMONG ASNAF STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

.

Ahmad Zulhusny Rozali[1*], Wan Nurulasiah Wan Mustapa[2], Nur Zafirah Aqilah Zaiyadur Rashad[3], Wan Norsyafawati W. Muhamad Radzi[4], Nor'izah Ahmad[5], Muhammad Ahmar Ali[6]

[1] Faculty of Business & Communication, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia
Centre of Excellence for Social Innovation and Sustainability (CoESIS), Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia
Email: zulhusny@unimap.edu.my
[2] Faculty of Business & Communication, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia
Centre of Excellence for Social Innovation and Sustainability (CoESIS), Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia
Email: wannurulasiah@unimap.edu.my
[3] Faculty of Business & Communication, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia
Email: nurzafirah@studentmail.unimap.edu.my
[4] Faculty of Business & Communication, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia
Email: izah@unimap.edu.my
[5] Faculty of Business & Communication, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia
Email: norsyafawati@unimap.edu.my
[6] Faculty of Business & Communication, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia
Email: ahmar@unimap.edu.my
[*] Corresponding Author

Article Info:

Article history:
Received date: 24.06.2025
Revised date: 17.07.2025
Accepted date: 14.08.2025
Published date: 01.09.2025

To cite this document:

Rozali, A. Z., Mustapa, W. N. W., Rashad, N. Z. A. Z., Radzi, W. N. W. M., Ahmad, N., & Ali, M. A. (2025). Social Influence And Intention To Pursue Higher Education Among Asnaf Students In Malaysia. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling, 10* (59), 49-62.

Abstract:

This study aims to examine the influence social influence (family and peer) factors on the intention to pursue higher education among Asnaf students in Perlis. It addresses the need to understand how social influences shape educational aspirations among students from low-income backgrounds. The study uses a quantitative approach based on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze survey data collected from 418 Asnaf students in 27 listed secondary school in Perlis. The model tests two hypotheses relating to the impact of family influence and peer influence on students' intention to further their education. The results show that family influence has a significant and positive effect on students' intention to pursue higher education, while peer influence does not show a statistically meaningful impact. These findings highlight the critical role of family in shaping students' educational decisions within this demographic group. This study contributes to the limited body of research focusing on Asnaf students and provides evidence on the different roles that family and peer relationships play in influencing their higher education intentions. The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers and educators to design support strategies that strengthen family engagement in educational planning.

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004

DOI: 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004

Keywords:

Family Influence, Peer Influence, Intention, Higher Education, Educational Intention

Introduction

Pursuing higher education is a key step toward improving personal growth, career opportunities, and long-term socioeconomic mobility (Rothon et al., 2011). Understanding the factors that influence students' intention to continue their studies beyond secondary school is essential, especially among low-income populations such as Asnaf students (Jalil et al., 2024). These students often face financial and social barriers that may affect their motivation and access to higher education (Holland, 2011). While there is increasing attention on educational inequality in Malaysia, empirical research specifically targeting Asnaf students, particularly those in rural area such as Perlis remains limited (Rahim et al., 2022; Shukor et al., 2023). This gap highlights the need to explore the unique challenges faced by this group to support inclusive education efforts.

Therefore, identifying the social factors that support or hinder their educational choices can help to inform policies and programs aimed at promoting equitable access (Mundt and Mundt, 2020). Among the various factors that shape students' educational intentions, social influence (family and peers) play important roles (Flashman, 2011). Families often influence values, aspirations, and decisions related to education through emotional support, expectations, and cultural norms (Raabe & Wolfer, 2018). Prior research has shown that family support can significantly affect students' motivation and belief in their ability to succeed in higher education (Bania et al., 2015). Similarly, peers can affect academic behavior and attitudes through encouragement, shared goals, or peer pressure. The school environment, social circles, and community networks together contribute to shaping students' intentions and future plans. (Omar et al., 2024)

This study focuses on examining the influence of family and peer factors on the intention to pursue higher education among Asnaf students in Perlis. Using a structural model approach, the study aims to assess whether these two social dimensions significantly predict educational intention. The findings provide insights into how family and peer relationships influence decision-making and highlight the importance of targeted support for students from low-income backgrounds. The findings of this study not only contribute to academic on educational aspiration but also to provide practical insights for educators, zakat institutions, and policymakers. These insights are aligned with Malaysia's national agenda to improve access and reduce educational inequality through inclusive and targeted interventions (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2021; Zainal et al., 2021). The next section will present a review of the existing literature to further explore the role of family and peer influence in shaping students' educational aspirations.

Literature Review

Understanding what drives students to pursue higher education has been the focus of many studies across different cultural and socioeconomic contexts. Among the most commonly examined factors are family and peer influences, which are known to shape students' academic aspirations, motivation, and decision-making. These social influences often begin early in a

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004
student's life and continue to affect educational outcomes as they progress through school. For students from low-income backgrounds, such as those classified as Asnaf, these influences may be even more critical due to limited access to financial and institutional support. This section reviews past research that highlights how family support and peer relationships contribute to students' intentions to continue their education at the tertiary level.

Family Influence and Intention to Pursue Higher Education

Research indicates that family influence is one of the most significant predictors of a child's intention to pursue higher education. Parents who articulate high educational aspirations and foster an environment that values education tend to have children who perform better academically and are more likely to aspire to higher education (Fang et al., 2023). For instance, findings in the study by Tan et al. (2023) underscore that family capital, especially in terms of economic stability, plays a more prominent role in encouraging female students to access higher education compared to their male counterparts. This disparity highlights the intricate ways in which family dynamics and socio-economic status intersect, particularly in the context of gender expectations and educational aspirations.

Furthermore, socio-economic of family acts as a critical determinant of educational access. Families with higher income levels can often provide their children with better educational resources, including access to extracurricular activities and private tutoring, which collectively enhance educational outcomes (Li et al., 2023). Pearce (2006), illustrating various demographic factors, including parental income and education level, significantly correlate with academic attainment. This suggests that the material and cultural resources available within a family substantially impact a child's educational aspirations.

Additionally, the qualitative dimensions of family influence, such as parental involvement and emotional support, are vital. Studies highlight that the emotional and informational support provided by families can significantly shape students' educational intention. For example, Sengsouliya and Vannasy (2024) argue that parental involvement is a crucial factor in minority students' academic persistence. This indicates that the psychosocial reinforcement offered by parents can bolster a child's intention to pursue higher education, showcasing a positive family influence. Thus, this study posits the hypothesis below:

H1: Family influence has a positive and significant effect on intention to pursue higher education among asnaf students.

Peer Influence and Intention to Pursue Higher Education

Smith (2022) highlight the crucial role peer influence plays in the educational decisions of students, particularly those from lower socioeconomic statuses (SES), illustrating how school context and peer preferences correlate with students' aspirations to pursue higher education. This aligns with the work of Cabrera (2014), which identifies family, peers, and educators as integral factors influencing students' decisions regarding higher education, emphasizing the necessity of supportive relationships in navigating educational paths. Furthermore, the efficacy of peer mentoring programs within higher education settings has been documented extensively.

Research by Lane (2018) suggests that peer mentoring is a important strategy for enhancing students' social and academic integration and acts as a buffer against the stresses associated with transitioning to college life, positively influencing retention rates. This is supported by Collings et al.,(2014), who found that peer mentoring significantly affects student well-being

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004

and integration, ultimately reinforcing students' intentions to remain in higher education. The findings indicate that peer support can create a sense of belonging, crucial for those transitioning into college environments, contributing to their overall success and retention (Smith et al., 2022).

Additionally, social norms supporting educational advancement are influenced by peer interactions over time, as highlighted by Patacchini et al. (2017). Their study demonstrates that long-term relationships among peers are essential for fostering a collective academic ethos. This perspective is reinforced by Helland et al.,(2002), who elaborate on the influence of meeting educational expectations on students' social integration, another factor pertinent to their sustained engagement in higher education environments. Thus, positive reinforcement from peers not only affects immediate educational decisions but shapes long-term academic goals. Thus, this study posits the hypothesis as below:

H2: Peer influence has a positive and significant effect on intention to pursue higher education among asnaf students.

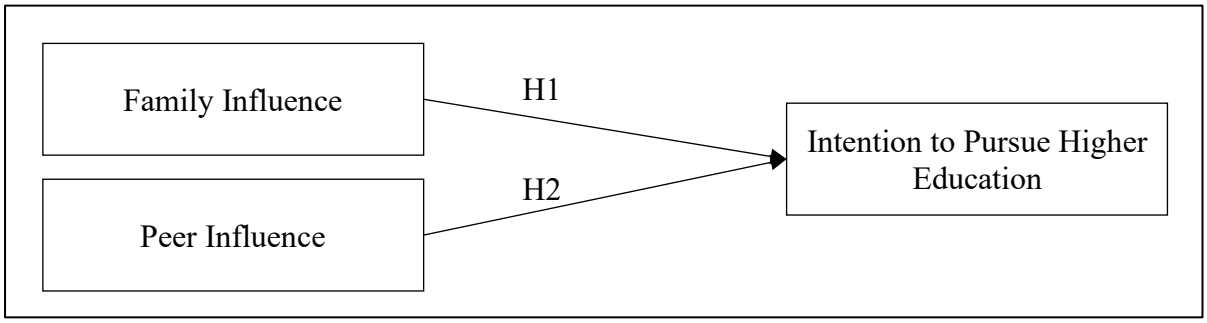


Figure 2.1: Research Model

Methodology

This study uses a cross-sectional design and quantitative data collected through structured interview of asnaf students in Perlis, Malaysia. Perlis was chosen for this study because it is the smallest state in Malaysia, making data collection more manageable and efficient. The sampling frame for this study was made up of Asnaf students in 27 secondary school in Perlis, Malaysia. The population of sample selected for this study is B40 students in 27 secondary school in Perlis. According to the Kementerian Pendidikan Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Perlis (2024), there are 3674 total numbers of students' category as B40 in 27 secondary school in Perlis, thus 418 students are selected by adopting purposive sampling method to identify potential respondents (Table 1).

The focus on Asnaf students is particularly critical, as Malaysia data indicate that approximately 62.5% of the B40 group in Malaysia qualify as Asnaf, entitling them to zakat assistance due to financial constraint, single-parent households, or insufficient access to education (DOSM, 2023). In Perlis, reports from local zakat authorities show that more than 60% of B40 students are also registered under the Asnaf category (Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Perlis, MAIPs, 2023). These figures highlight a particularly vulnerable group facing multidimensional disadvantages which is poverty, limited educational support, and often lower academic aspirations. By choosing on Asnaf students in Perlis as a samaple of the study, this study addresses a significant research gap. Previous literature (Rahim et al., 2022) has largely neglected this specific population, especially in the context of rural or smaller

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004

states. The context-specific findings of this study are expected to provide meaningful input for targeted interventions by educational stakeholders, zakat institutions, and policymakers. This aligns with Malaysia's national policy agenda to reduce educational inequality and promote inclusive development for disadvantaged communities (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2021).

Table 1: Number Of Questionnaire Distribute

No	Name of Secondary School	Number of B40 Students	Calculation for Questionnaire Distribution	Questionnaires distribute
1	Kolej Vokasional Arau	216	216/3674x418	24
2	Kolej Vokasional Kangar	268	268/3674x418	31
3	SMA Al Madrasah Al Alawiyah Ad Diniah	89	89/3674x418	10
4	SM Sains Tuanku Syed Putra	93	93/3674x418	11
5	SMK Tuanku Lailatul Shahreen	98	98/3674x418	11
6	SMK Abi	147	147/3674x418	17
7	SMK Beseri	47	47/3674x418	5
8	SMK Dato' Ali Ahmad	68	68/3674x418	8
9	SMK Dato' Sheikh Ahmad	130	130/3674x418	15
10	SMK Dato' Jaafar Hassan	97	97/3674x418	11
11	SMK Derma	122	122/3674x418	14
12	SMK Guar Nangka	74	74/3674x418	8
13	SMK Kuala Perlis	130	130/3674x418	15
14	SMK Mata Ayer	88	88/3674x418	10
15	SMK Padang Besar Utara	74	74/3674x418	8
16	SMK Perlis	268	268/3674x418	31
17	SMK Putra	200	200/3674x418	23
18	SMK Raja Puan Muda Tengku Fauziah	125	125/3674x418	14
19	SMK Sanglang	27	27/3674x418	3
20	SMK Syed Ahmad	93	93/3674x418	11
21	SMK Syed Alwi	261	261/3674x418	30
22	SMK Syed Hassan	119	119/3674x418	14
23	SMK Syed Hussein	147	147/3674x418	17
24	SMK Syed Saffi	105	105/3674x418	12
25	SMK Syed Sirajuddin	243	243/3674x418	28
26	SMK Tengku Budriah	99	99/3674x418	11
27	SMK Tengku Sulaiman	246	246/3674x418	28
	Total	**3674**	**418**	

With only 27 secondary schools, the study can cover all schools, ensuring comprehensive representation of Asnaf students. Focusing on one state allows for better control over data quality and minimizes logistical challenges. Additionally, Perlis has a well-identified Asnaf population within its school system, making it easier to access the target respondents. The findings from this study can provide valuable insights for improving educational support for Asnaf students in Perlis and serve as a model for future research in other states.

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004

Measurement

The questionnaire is designed using simple and unbiased wordings whereby respondents could easily understand the questions and provide answers based on their perception. Questions are adopted from earlier studies with minor modifications where needed. Details of each section, what it measures and from whom the study adopted the questions are presented below. The seven-point Likert Scale (strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, agree and strongly agree) is used for the independent and dependent variables.

The first independent variables is family influence, which refers to the impact and support provided by family members especially siblings in shaping an individual's values, attitudes, and decisions. The family plays a crucial role in personal development, self-confidence, and choices related to education and career paths (Harris & Halpin, 2002). Four items are adopted from the study conducted by Harris and Halpin (2002) with minor modification based on the scope of this study.

Second independent variable is peer influence, refers to the extent to which an individual's decision to pursue higher education and choose a specific field of study is shaped by their friends' advice, educational pathways, positive perceptions of a profession, and expectations regarding career choices (Zandi et al., 2013). Five items are adopted from the study conducted by Zandi et al., (2013) with minor modification based on the scope of this study.

The dependent variable of this study is intention to pursue higher education among asnaf students. Intention to pursue higher education refers to an individual's commitment and willingness to enroll in university or other tertiary institutions based on personal motivation, career aspirations, social influence, and perceived benefits of higher education (Tan-Kuick & Ng, 2011). Five items are adopted from the study conducted by Tan-Kuick and Ng (2011) with minor modification based on the scope of this study.

Details of all the questions used to measure the four items of family influence and the items codes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Items Measurements

Code	Items
FI1	My siblings encourages me to go for higher education.
FI2	My siblings are positive about higher education.
FI3	My siblings believe that higher education can lead to my future success.
FI4	My siblings allowed me to pursue higher education.
PEI1	Most friends are attending in university.
PEI2	Advices from friends to continue their studies in university.
PEI3	My friends are positive about higher education.
PEI4	My friends think that higher education can help in getting a good job.
PEI5	My friends would think that I should further my studies to higher education.
IPHE1	Pursue higher education is my first choice.
IPHE 2	I want to pursue higher education.
IPHE 3	I have a strong desire to continue my studies.
IPHE 4	I need higher qualification to enable me to get a good job.
IPHE 5	I hope higher education will help me to gain self-confidence.

Notes:, FI- Family Influence, PEI- Peer Influence, IPHE-Intention to Pursue Higher Education

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004

Data Analysis Method

Partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) is a causal modeling approach, which explains the variance of the latent constructs (Hair et al., 2011). PLS was developed by Wold (1975) for studies where data could not meet the limiting rules of covariance-based SEM techniques. Moreover, in PLS, a construct is perceived as a formative construct in case the concerned items cause the latent variable, where the items are not expected to be correlated (Chin, 2010). PLS is also able to estimate a complex model that comprises many items or constructs. Furthermore, if the data of a study does not meet the normality criteria, PLS can still effectively be used for a larger number of indicators (Chin, 2010). As this study is exploratory in nature with non-normality issue that comprehending a complex model comprising large number of constructs, variance-based PLS-SEM was employed. The analysis was reported according to Hair et al. (2013). The analysis included indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), effect size, path coefficient estimates, and predictive relevance.

Common Method Bias

This study followed some of the procedural remedies suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003) to safeguard against common method bias. Specifically, we protected respondents' anonymity to reduce evaluation apprehension; we created simple, specific and concise items; respondents were not aware of our conceptual model; the dependent variables were placed after the independent variables in the survey. To assess the impact of common method bias, we performed Harman's (1967) single-factor test. The result showed that no single factor emerged from a factor analysis of all survey items. The nonrotated solution EFA produced five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 that accounted for 76% of the total variance. The first factor only accounts for 36.7% of the variance. This result suggested that CMB is not likely an issue in this study.

Results and Discussion

Demographic

The demographic table shows the breakdown of 418 Asnaf student respondents based on gender, ethnicity, and age. For gender, 160 students are male, representing 38.3% of the total, while 258 students are female, making up 61.7%. In terms of ethnicity, 382 students (91.4%) are Malay, 12 students (2.9%) are Chinese, 6 students (1.4%) are Indian, 10 students (2.4%) are Bumiputera, and 8 students (1.9%) belong to other ethnic groups.For age, 102 students (24.4%) are 15 years old, 146 students (34.9%) are 16 years old, and 170 students (40.7%) are 17 years old.

Table 3: Summary of Demographic

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	160	38.3%
	Female	258	61.7%
	Total	418	100%
Ethnicity	Malay	382	91.4%
	Chinese	12	2.9%
	Indian	6	1.4%
	Bumiputera	10	2.4%
	Others	8	1.9%

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004

	Total	418	100%
Age	15 Years Old	102	24.4%
	16 Years Old	146	34.9%
	17 Years Old	170	40.7%
	Total	418	100%

Measurement Model

The model illustrates the relationship between family influence, peer influence, and students' intention to pursue higher education using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Three main constructs are involved in this model: Family Influence, Peer Influence, and Intention to Pursue Higher Education. Family Influence is measured by four indicators (F1 to F4), with outer loadings ranging from 0.729 to 0.843. Peer Influence is measured by four items (PE2 to PE5), with loadings ranging from 0.718 to 0.818. Intention to Pursue Higher Education is represented by five indicators (IPHE1 to IPHE5), with all loadings above 0.780. These values suggest that each item is a strong and reliable measure of its respective construct, as all loadings exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7.

The model shows two direct relationships. The path coefficient from Family Influence to Intention to Pursue Higher Education is 0.315, while the path from Peer Influence to Intention to Pursue Higher Education is 0.500. Both relationships are positive, indicating that as family and peer influences increase, so does the intention to pursue higher education. Among the two, Peer Influence has a stronger effect on students' intention compared to Family Influence. The R-squared (R^2) value for Intention to Pursue Higher Education is 0.316. This means that 31.6% of the variance in the intention to pursue higher education can be explained by the combined influence of family and peers. In summary, the model shows that both family and peer influences play meaningful roles in shaping students' educational aspirations, with peer influence being the more dominant factor. The measurement indicators are reliable, and the model provides useful insights into how social factors relate to educational decision-making.

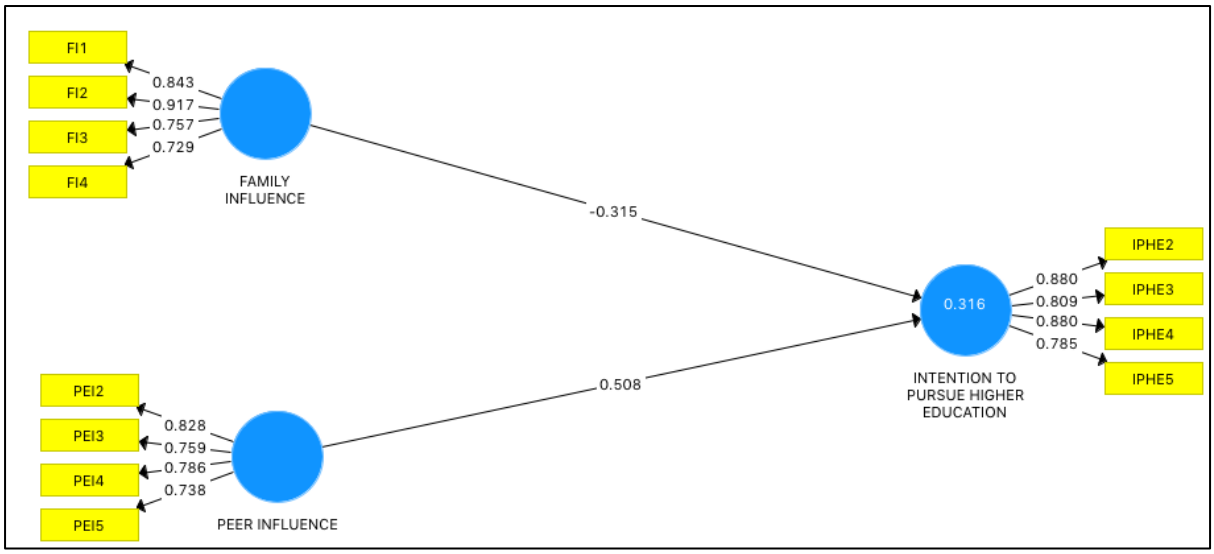


Figure 4.1: PLS Algorithm

Source: Author's Data Analysis

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004

The Table 2 presents the results of the measurement model analysis for three main constructs which are Family Influence, Peer Influence, and Intention to Pursue Higher Education. Several statistical measures are reported for each variable, including the number of items, mean, standard deviation (SD), Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Dijkstra–Henseler's rho (DG rho), Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). For Family Influence, the construct consists of four items, with a mean score of 0.888 and a standard deviation of 0.010. The reliability indicators are all high, with Cronbach's Alpha at 0.913, Dijkstra–Henseler's rho at 0.936, and Composite Reliability at 0.785. The AVE is 0.785, indicating strong convergent validity. The VIF value is 1.301, which is below the threshold of 5, suggesting no multicollinearity issue.

Peer Influence is measured using five items. The mean is 0.847 with a standard deviation of 0.012. The Cronbach's Alpha is 0.777, while DG rho and Composite Reliability are 0.812 and 0.529 respectively. The AVE is 0.529, which meets the minimum acceptable level of 0.5 for convergent validity. The VIF for this construct is 1.717, also indicating no multicollinearity concern. The construct of Intention to Pursue Higher Education includes five items. It has a lower mean of 0.589 and a standard deviation of 0.023. Cronbach's Alpha is 0.668, with DG rho at 0.785 and Composite Reliability at 0.782. The AVE is 0.592, which suggests adequate convergent validity. The VIF is not reported, because this construct is the dependent variable in the model. In summary, the table shows that all three constructs meet the acceptable criteria for internal consistency reliability and convergent validity. The VIF values are all below the critical level, confirming that multicollinearity is not a concern in the model.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity of Construct

Variables	Items	Mean	SD	CA	DG rho	CR	AVE	VIF
Family Influence	4	0.888	0.010	0.909	0.913	0.936	0.785	1.301
Peer Influence	5	0.847	0.012	0.810	0.777	0.812	0.529	1.717
Intention	5	0.589	0.023	0.668	0.785	0.782	0.592	-

Source: Author's Data Analysis

Table 3 displays the Fornell-Larcker Criterion results, which are used to assess discriminant validity among the constructs in the study which are family influence (FI), peer influence (PEI), and intention to pursue higher education (IPHE). Discriminant validity is achieved when a construct is clearly not overlap from the other constructs in the model. For family influence, the square root of AVE is 0.886. This value is higher than its correlation with peer influence, which is -0.109, and with intention to pursue higher education, which is -0.468. For peer influence, the square root of AVE is 0.727, which is greater than its correlation with family influence (-0.109) and with intention to pursue higher education (0.549). For intention to pursue higher education, the square root of AVE is 0.701, which is also higher than its correlations with both family influence (-0.468) and peer influence (0.549). The result presented in Table 2, Fornell-Larcker Criterion is satisfied. This indicates that each construct in the model is not overlap from the others and that discriminant validity has been established.

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	FI	PEI	IPHE
FI	0.886		
PEI	-0.109	0.727	
IPHE	-0.468	0.549	0.701

Source: Author's Data Analysis

Notes: FI- Family Influence, PEI- Peer Influence, IPHE-Intention to Pursue Higher Education

Structural Model

The model 4.2, presented is a structural equation model using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. It explores the influence of two independent variables, family influence and peer influence, on the dependent variable, intention to pursue higher education. The model includes t-values to assess the significance of each relationship. The details discussion as discussed in the next section.

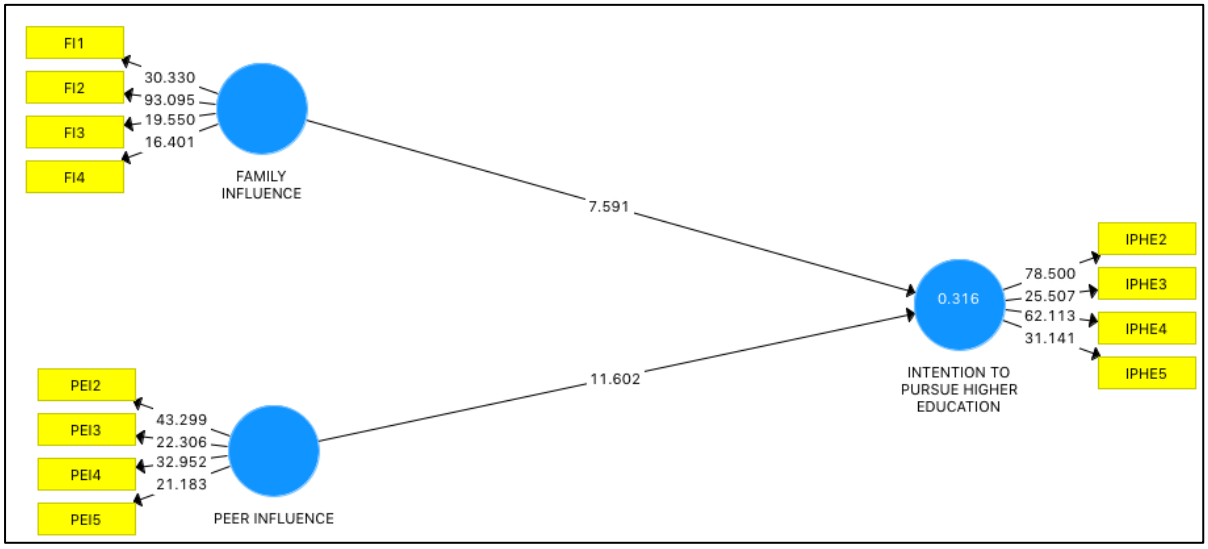


Figure 4.2: PLS Bootstrapping

Table 4 presents the results of hypothesis testing for the structural model, which examines the influence of family influence (FI) and peer influence (PEI) on students' intention to pursue higher education (IPHE). For Hypothesis 1 (H1), the relationship between family influence and intention to pursue higher education is supported. The path coefficient (β) is 1.860, with a t-value of 3.865 and a significance level (p-value) of 0.000. Since the t-value exceeds the critical threshold of 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05, this relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted, indicating that family influence has a positive and meaningful impact on students' intention to pursue higher education.

In contrast, Hypothesis 2 (H2), which tests the relationship between peer influence and intention to pursue higher education, is not supported. The path coefficient is 0.691, with a t-value of 1.470 and a p-value of 0.142. These results indicate that the relationship is not statistically significant, as the t-value does not exceed the threshold of 1.96 and the p-value is above 0.05. As a result, the hypothesis is rejected, suggesting that peer influence does not have a significant effect on students' intention in this model. In summary, the findings show that family influence plays a significant role in shaping students' intention to pursue higher

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004

education, whereas peer influence does not show a statistically significant impact within this analysis.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing and Discussion

Hypo	Relationship	*β*	*t*	Sig.	Decision
H1	FI ➔IPHE	1.860	3.865	0.000	Supported
H2	PEI ➔IPHE	0.691	1.470	0.142	Not Supported

Source: Author's Data Analysis

Notes: FI- Family Influence, PEI- Peer Influence, IPHE-Intention to Pursue Higher Education

This result highlights the critical importance of familial support in Asnaf communities, where parents and family member play a more meaningful role in shaping educational aspirations. In many low-income households, family often serves as the main source of support, guidance, and encouragement, especially when external resources or role models are limited. Their influence is crucial in shaping students' motivation and confidence to continue their studies. In contrast, the lack of significant influence from peers may be due to shared limitations within the same social group. Peers from similar backgrounds may not offer strong encouragement or serve as positive academic examples, reducing their overall impact on educational decisions. These results imply that strategies to improve higher education participation among Asnaf students should prioritize family engagement and parental awareness, as strengthening support at the family level may lead to more effective outcomes than peer-focused approaches.

Conclusion

The findings from this study consistent with earlier studies that have shown about the role of family and friends in shaping students' plans to continue their education. The results show that family influence does play an important role in encouraging students to pursue higher education. This supports past research such as Pimpa (2005), who explained that family has a strong effect on students' choices, especially in international education. Similar support comes from Kusumawardani and Richard (2020), who found that family background, together with education on business and careers, helps build students' confidence and goals. Kampmane et al. (2022) also found that a family's economic situation affects how children see themselves, while Windiarti et al. (2022) reported that family support helps build motivation and interest in learning and career choices. All of these findings agree with the result of this study, showing that the family plays a strong and positive role in helping students aim for higher education.

However, this study does not show a strong link between peer influence and students' intention to continue studying. This is different from many earlier studies. For example, Moradi and Mardani (2023) found that close friendships with peers increase motivation to study. Welsch (2018) also showed that students are often influenced by their friends when deciding on education, especially among boys. Istiqomah et al. (2018) discussed how students tend to follow their friends when choosing study programs, while Trivedi et al. (2021) suggested that peer influence even affects how students use social media for learning. Riegle-Crumb et al. (2017) found that having confident and supportive friends can lead students to choose more challenging subjects like science and engineering.

Because of this, the result of this study does not fully support what earlier research has said about peer influence. One possible reason is that in this group of students, such as those from Asnaf families in Perlis, the opinion of the family may matter more than that of friends. Another reason could be that the way friends influence each other is more hidden or indirect, such as

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004
through online platforms, which was not included in this study. To conclude, this study supports the idea that families play an important role in shaping students' decision to continue their education. On the other hand, the role of friends does not seem to be strong in this group. Future studies could explore why peer influence is less noticeable here and whether it works in different ways depending on the student's background, age, or environment. Based on the analysis and finding, this study contributed on the theoretical and managerial contributions as discussed below:

Theoretical Contributions

This study enhances the body of knowledge in educational motivation and behavioural intention by confirming the strong role of family influence in students' decision-making about higher education. The result supports existing theories within the social influence and motivation literature, which highlight the importance of familial support in shaping young people's aspirations. In contrast, the finding that peer influence is not a significant predictor challenges some assumptions in previous studies that have emphasised the peer group's role in shaping academic intentions. This contradiction suggests that cultural and socioeconomic contexts may affect how peer relationships influence educational goals. Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature by applying structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to test these relationships among a vulnerable and underserved population. The methodological approach also adds value by confirming that the measurement and structural models are reliable and valid, with acceptable levels of internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Managerial Implication

The findings offer important practical implications for policymakers, educators, school counsellors, and social development agencies. The significant impact of family influence suggests that interventions aimed at increasing the intention to pursue higher education among Asnaf students should be family-centered. Educational campaigns, counselling programs, and financial aid awareness should not only target students but also actively engage parents and guardians. Programs such as family education workshops, parent-student goal-setting sessions, and home-based learning support initiatives could be beneficial in reinforcing students' aspirations .On the other hand, while peer influence was not statistically significant in this study, schools and community organizations should still consider how to create a positive peer learning environment, as peers may still play an indirect motivational role even if not strongly predictive in this model. Providing peer mentoring programs and promoting student-led academic support groups could still contribute to a supportive academic culture.

Limitation and Future Research

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. First, the sample is limited to Asnaf students in a specific geographic location, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other student populations or regions. The demographic context, such as the high percentage of Malay students and female respondents, may also have influenced the results. Secondly, the study only examined two influencing factors, family and peer influence, while other potential determinants such as self-efficacy, teacher support, school environment, financial constraints, and cultural norms were not included. Future research should consider expanding the model by incorporating additional variables that may affect students' educational intentions. Longitudinal studies could also help assess how these influences evolve over time. Moreover, qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups could provide deeper insight into the personal experiences and motivations of students, particularly how they perceive support from family

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004

and peers. Future studies could also compare the findings across different income groups, school types (urban vs. rural), or educational streams (science vs. humanities) to better understand variations in influence.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge and extended special gratitude to the Faizuddin Centre of Educational Excellence (FCoEE) who granted the Research Grant Scheme for this project.

References

Bania, E., Eckhoff, C., & Kvernmo, S. (2015). The influence of mental health, psychosocial factors, and educational skills on the educational aspirations of indigenous sámi and non-indigenous adolescents in the arctic. Scandinavian Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology, 3(3), 169-179. https://doi.org/10.21307/asjcapp-2015-017

Cabrera, A. (2014). First generation minority students: understanding the influential factors that contributed to their preparation and decision to pursue higher education. Psu McNair Scholars Online Journal, 8(1), 1-20. https://doi.org/10.15760/mcnair.2014.1

Collings, R., Swanson, V., & Watkins, R. (2014). The impact of peer mentoring on levels of student wellbeing, integration and retention: a controlled comparative evaluation of residential students in uk higher education. Higher Education, 68(6), 927-942. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-014-9752-y

DOSM, (2023). Household income and basic amenities survey report 2022. https://www.dosm.gov.my

Fang, X., Luo, Y., & Qian, Y. (2023). The impact of family economic situation and parents' educational expectations on academic performance of junior high school students. Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media, 6(1), 379-386. https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/6/20220370

Flashman, J. (2011). Academic achievement and its impact on friend dynamics. Sociology of Education, 85(1), 61-80. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040711417014

Helland, P., Stallings, H., & Braxton, J. (2002). The fulfillment of expectations for college and student departure decisions. Journal of College Student Retention Research Theory & Practice, 3(4), 381-396. https://doi.org/10.2190/99fw-aht1-k1l9-73cf

Holland, N. (2011). The power of peers. Urban Education, 46(5), 1029-1055. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085911400339

Jalil, M., Awang, A., Adnan, A., & Mokhtar, W. (2024). Dependence of zakat assistance among asnaf students in east coast, malaysia. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 14(5). https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v14-i5/21606

Lane, S. (2018). Addressing the stressful first year in college: could peer mentoring be a critical strategy?. Journal of College Student Retention Research Theory & Practice, 22(3), 481-496. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025118773319

Li, X., Xie, W., Wang, L., & Zou, T. (2023). Can impoverished family nurture rich sons any more? the effect of household income on intergenerational transmission of education: evidence from china. Frontiers in Psychology, 14. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1116217

Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Perlis (MAIPs). (2023). Statistik Penerima Bantuan Zakat Asnaf Pendidikan. https://www.maips.gov.my

Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2021). Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (Annual Report 2021). https://www.moe.gov.my

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 10 Issue 59 (September 2025) PP. 49-62
DOI 10.35631/IJEPC.1059004
Mundt, S. and Mundt, M. (2020). The role of peer groups in adolescents' educational expectations: a stochastic actor-based model. International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 25(1), 1009-1021. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2020.1828109

Omar, A., Arshad, R., & Isa, R. (2024). A tie strength framework for improving the poor asnaf students' normative commitment and behaviour. Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research. https://doi.org/10.1108/jiabr-07-2022-0185

Patacchini, E., Rainone, E., & Zénou, Y. (2017). Heterogeneous peer effects in education. Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 134, 190-227. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2016.10.020

Pearce, R. (2006). Effects of cultural and social structural factors on the achievement of white and chinese american students at school transition points. American Educational Research Journal, 43(1), 75-101. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312043001075

Raabe, I. and Wölfer, R. (2018). What is going on around you: peer milieus and educational aspirations. European Sociological Review, 35(1), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcy048

Rahim, N. A., Hassan, N. A., & Ismail, R. (2022). Addressing educational inequality through targeted zakat programs: A case study of Asnaf students. Journal of Islamic Social Finance and Education, 4(1), 45–58. https://doi.org/10.12345/jisfe.v4i1.678

Rothon, C., Goodwin, L., & Stansfeld, S. (2011). Family social support, community "social capital" and adolescents' mental health and educational outcomes: a longitudinal study in england. Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 47(5), 697-709. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-011-0391-7

Sengsouliya, S. and Vannasy, V. (2024). Minority dropouts in higher education: the influence of family factors. Indonesian J. Adult. Community. Educ., 5(2), 114-132. https://doi.org/10.17509/ijace.v5i2.67692

Smith, E. (2022). Peer preferences and educational decisions: heterogeneous associations across student socioeconomic status. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 44(2), 374-393. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2022.2154641

Smith, J., Hughes, G., & Spanner, L. (2022). The role of student peers in the student mental health and well-being. Mental Health and Social Inclusion, 28(3), 195-207. https://doi.org/10.1108/mhsi-11-2022-0070

Tan, Q., Li, C., Wu, P., Abbas, S., & Teng, L. (2023). Family capital, social stratification, and access to higher education: an empirical study in mainland china. Frontiers in Psychology, 13. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1035715