

The Effect of School Gangs and School Image on The Interest in New Student Admission at Vocational High School

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of school gangs and school image on student enrollment interest in Vocational High Schools (SMK). School gangs are often associated with negative stigma regarding safety and discipline, while school image serves as a crucial factor influencing parents and students in school selection. Using a quantitative survey method, data were collected from 150 tenth-grade students in Yogyakarta through a Likert-scale questionnaire. The analysis was conducted with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Partial Least Squares (PLS). Results indicate that school image has a positive and significant impact on enrollment interest (path coefficient = 0.555), while school gangs also show a significant effect (path coefficient = 0.367). Together, both variables explain 71.1% of the variance in enrollment interest, with school image emerging as the dominant factor. These findings highlight the need for schools to strengthen their positive image by improving achievements, facilities, and discipline, while simultaneously managing and guiding students to minimize the adverse effects of school gangs. The study contributes to educational management strategies by emphasizing the dual importance of fostering a strong institutional image and addressing social dynamics among students. This is an open access article under the [CC-BY-SA](#) license.



Introduction

Vocational High Schools (SMK) have a strategic role in preparing a skilled workforce that is competitive in the industrial and entrepreneurial world (Prihanto et al., 2024; Rojaki et al., 2021;

Suherman et al., 2024). Vocational education prepares resources that are ready to contribute to economic development at both the regional and national levels (Bidol, 2024; Nurmalasari et al., 2020). Ideally, vocational high schools are the preferred choice for junior high school graduates because they offer competency-based advantages and clear employment pathways (Murniati and Usman, 2021; Pristi et al., 2023; Safira and Azzahra, 2022). Prospective students and parents prefer Vocational High Schools based on the quality of learning, facilities, teacher competence, majors, safety, and the school's positive image in the community. High enrollment reflects the community's trust in school quality and safety (Kisker et al., 2023; Moore and Williams, 2022; Stronge and Xu, 2021; Umi, 2023). However, the reality on the ground shows that challenges still hinder the realization of these conditions. One of the problems is the presence of school gangs associated with deviant behavior TOIB (2022). This phenomenon often creates a bad stigma about schools that are less safe, less conducive, and have discipline problems. This condition can certainly affect the image of the school in the community. The impact is that parents' trust in schools decreases, which can also reduce interest in accepting new students, so the number of students accepted will become increasingly limited in both quantity and quality Susanto (2021). This can affect the quality of education organized in Vocational High Schools. Given these conditions, it is important to identify the relationship among the presence of school gangs, school image, and interest in new student admissions. School gangs can be seen as an inhibiting factor that reduces public trust in schools, while school image is a driving factor that increases public interest in choosing the school (Chen, 2011; ElSherief et al., 2021; Phan et al., 2020). In other words, the existence of school gangs and a good school image are opposites. This research examines the influence of school gangs and school image on new student enrollment, particularly in Vocational High Schools. Previous research has focused more on school image as the main factor in choosing a school and school gangs as a perspective on juvenile delinquency. It is still rare for research to combine these two variables quantitatively in the context of Vocational High Schools, so this study was conducted. School gangs are a form of peer group that develops in an educational environment, characterized by strong social ties among its members ZULKARNAIN (2018). School gangs can be a place for adolescents to seek self-identity, but often develop into deviant behavior such as violence, brawls, and bullying Sarwono (2011). These conditions can disrupt the school climate, reduce a sense of security, and affect community perceptions of schools. Conceptually, the presence of school gangs in this study is measured using three indicators: gang activity, influence on the school environment, and students' sense of security. Gang activity indicators include student involvement in activities on behalf of a

particular group, both inside and outside of school. The indicator of influence on the school environment reflects the extent to which gang activities affect the school's social conditions, including the learning atmosphere and the school's image in the community. Meanwhile, the indicator of students' sense of security describes the level of comfort and safety students feel when engaging in school activities Sarwono (2011).

In this study, the "school gangs" variable does not refer to formal criminal organizations, but rather to students' perceptions of gang-related social activities occurring within or around the school environment. The construct was operationalized through three dimensions: gang activities, influence on the school environment, and students' sense of security. These dimensions were measured using Likert-scale items assessing respondents' awareness of gang activity, perceived impact on school climate, and feelings of comfort and safety at school.

Several previous studies have also confirmed that the existence of school gangs has serious consequences for the educational climate. School gang activities increase the risk of conflict between students and negatively affect the school's reputation Yuliyanto (2022). Similarly, Gunarsa emphasized that a sense of security is an important factor in supporting the learning process, and that the presence of school gangs tends to reduce students' comfort in learning Gunarsa (2014). Thus, the existence of school gangs can be seen as an inhibiting factor in the school's efforts to build a positive image and increase public trust. School image is the public perception of an educational institution's quality and excellence (Nurohman, 2024; Nurohman et al., 2025; Riyanto and Kharisma, 2024; Wahid, 2023). According to Kotler and Keller, an image is a set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of an object, including a school Keller (2016). A good school image is indicated by a positive reputation, academic and non-academic achievements, adequate facilities, and consistent application of discipline. In this study, school image is measured using four indicators: school reputation, achievement, facilities, and discipline. Previous research supports the importance of school image. Fitriani stated that a positive image has a significant effect on parents' decisions in choosing a school Fitriani (2021). Nurhayati added that school achievement and facilities are the dominant factors that increase public interest Nurhayati (2022). Therefore, school image is an important variable in shaping public trust and attracting new students. The interest of new students refers to the level of interest and motivation of the community to enroll their children in a school. According to Kotler, public interest in choosing an educational institution is influenced by internal factors such as personal motivation and interest in learning, as well as external factors such as recommendations from parents, the community, and school image Kotler (2009). This study

measures interest in new student admissions through three indicators, namely: motivation to choose a school, recommendations from parents/community, and level of interest in Vocational High School. Several studies have shown that interest in new student admissions is influenced by community perceptions of school quality. Nurhayati emphasized that school promotion, achievement, and recommendations from the social environment are factors that strengthen the decision to choose a school Nurhayati (2022). This shows that interest in new student admissions is an outcome inseparable from the school image and social factors that develop within the educational environment, including the presence of school gangs. Based on the theoretical review that underlies the variables of the existence of school gangs, school image, and interest in new student admissions, there is a relationship between the research variables. For easy reading, the relationship can be illustrated with the following Figure 1.

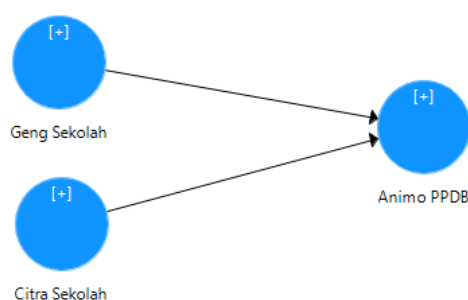


Fig 1: Research Mode

Based on the framework as shown in Figure 1, the proposed research hypothesis is as follows:

- H1: The existence of school gangs has a negative effect on the interest of new student admissions at Vocational High Schools.
- H2: School image has a positive effect on the interest in new student admissions at Vocational High Schools.
- H3: The existence of school gangs and school image simultaneously has a significant effect on the interest in new student admissions at Vocational High Schools.

Method

The research method used is a quantitative survey and descriptive analysis, with internet-based interview data collection via Google Form links, to test the effect of the presence of school gangs and school image on interest in new student admissions at Vocational High Schools. The study population comprised all grade X students of Vocational High Schools in Yogyakarta, with a

purposive sample of 150 respondents. Primary data were collected through a Google Forms-based questionnaire with a 1-5 Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), aligned with the research variable indicators. The school gangs construct was measured through three dimensions: gang activities, influence on the school environment, and students' sense of security. The indicators were adapted from adolescent social behavior and school climate literature.[A2.1] School image was measured through reputation, achievement, facilities, and discipline, while enrollment interest was measured through motivation to choose the school, parental/community recommendation, and interest in vocational education. Data analysis was carried out quantitatively through descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of respondents, as well as inferential analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) with the help of SmartPLS software to test validity, reliability, and direct and simultaneous effects between research variables. Variable Measurement Indicators presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Variable Measurement Indicators

VARIABLES	INDICATOR	QUESTION
THE EXISTENCE OF SCHOOL GANGS	GANG ACTIVITIES	1. I am aware of gang activity in the school environment. 2. The existence of school gangs affects students' daily interactions.
	SCHOOL REPUTATION	1. My school is known to have a good reputation in the community. 2. I feel proud to go to school here because of the school's positive image.
SCHOOL IMAGE	DISCIPLINE	3. The school applies rules and regulations consistently. 4. Student discipline at this school is well maintained
	LEVEL OF INTEREST IN VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL	1. I am interested in attending a VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL because of the job opportunities after graduation. 2. I am confident that this school will improve my skills.
INTEREST IN ADMISSION OF NEW STUDENTS		

Result and Discussion

Convergent Validity

Convergent Validity Table 2 shows that there are several indicators that have a value below 0.7, which indicates that the indicator is invalid, namely the AP2 and GS6 indicators. Therefore, it is necessary to remove these invalid indicators so that they can meet the requirements for obtaining

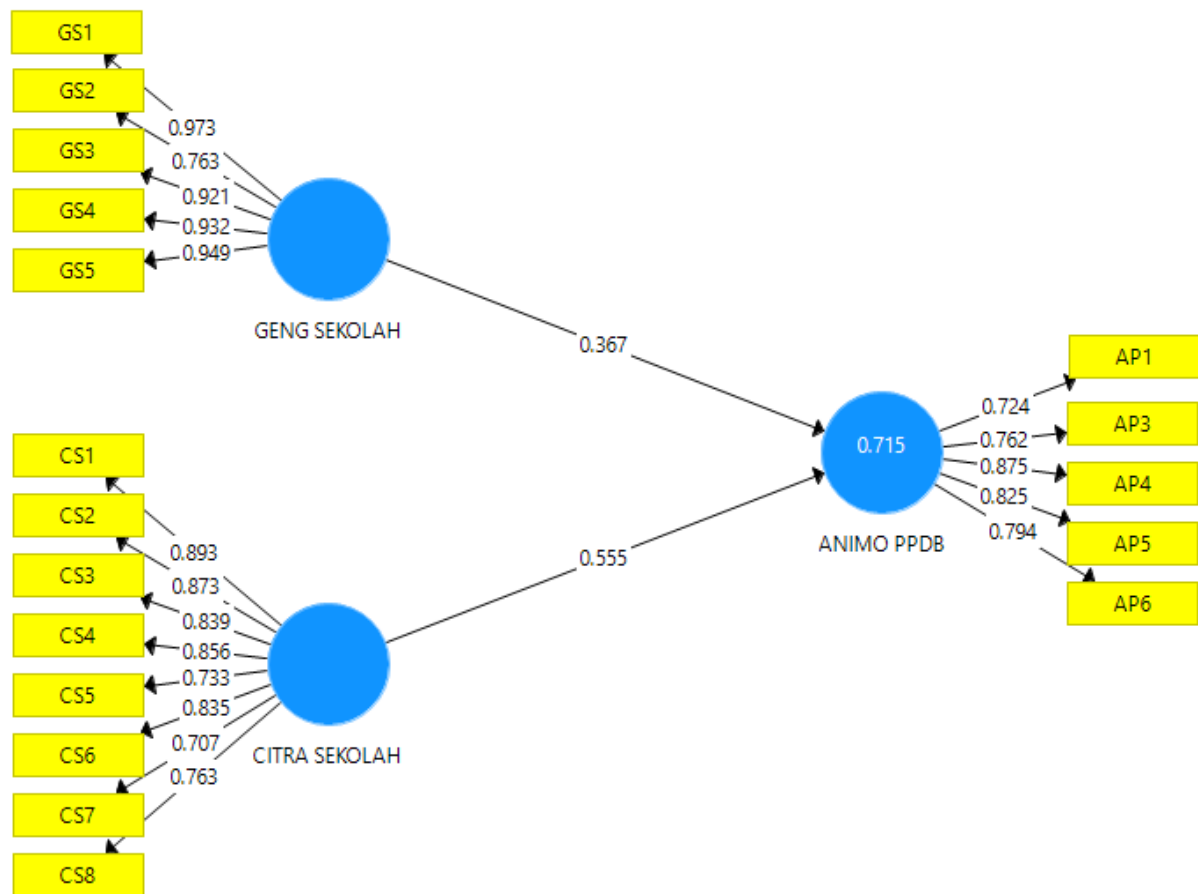
valid outer loadings values and can be continued for further analysis. Results of Outer Loadings Analysis 1 explain in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Outer Loadings Analysis 1

	INTEREST IN ADMISSION OF NEW STUDENTS	SCHOOL IMAGE	SCHOOL GANG
AP1	0.753		
AP2	0.662		
AP3			
AP4			
AP5	0.796		
AP6	0.762		
CS1		0.891	
CS2		0.871	
CS3			
CS4			
CS7		0.715	
CS8		0.768	
GS2			0.762
GS3			0.902
GS4			
GS5			
GS6			0.640
GS1			0.960

Table 3. Results of Outer Loadings Analysis 2

	INTEREST IN ADMISSION OF NEW STUDENTS	SCHOOL IMAGE	SCHOOL GANG
AP1	0.756		
AP2	0.666		
AP5	0.793		
AP6	0.760		
CS1		0.891	
CS2		0.871	
CS7		0.716	
CS8		0.768	
GS2			0.763
GS3			0.921
GS4			0.932
GS5			0.949
GS1			0.973

**Fig 2:** Outer Loadings 3 Results

Based on Table 3, it can be seen that after removing invalid indicators and recalculating, there is still one invalid indicator, namely the AP2 indicator. With the results of this first change, which still has invalid indicators, it is necessary to make a second change where the AP2 indicator is removed. Figure 2 shows the results of the outer loadings after deletion. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Results presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Results

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
INTEREST IN ADMISSION OF NEW STUDENTS	0.636
SCHOOL IMAGE	0.664
SCHOOL GANG	0.829

Based on Table 4, it can be seen that the variables of compensation, organizational culture, and motivation have each fulfilled the requirements of the AVE value, namely >0.5 .

Discriminant Validity**Table 5.** Cross Loading Results

	INTEREST IN ADMISSION OF NEW STUDENTS	SCHOOL IMAGE	SCHOOL GANG
AP1	0.724	0.668	0.566
AP3	0.762	0.597	0.504
AP4	0.875	0.691	0.682
AP5	0.825	0.636	0.596
AP6	0.794	0.591	0.582
CS1	0.731	0.893	0.640
CS2	0.688	0.873	0.578
CS3	0.641	0.839	0.498
CS4	0.676	0.856	0.583
CS5	0.579	0.733	0.439
CS6	0.624	0.835	0.582
CS7	0.601	0.707	0.469
CS8	0.661	0.763	0.555
GS2	0.649	0.573	0.763
GS3	0.667	0.600	0.921
GS4	0.661	0.594	0.932
GS5	0.674	0.633	0.949
GS1	0.705	0.644	0.973

Based on Table 5, it can be seen that the outer loadings for each indicator are higher than the cross-loadings. Therefore, it can be concluded that the values for each indicator meet the given criteria and can therefore proceed to further testing. The next step is to compare the values resulting from the correlation between variables.

Reliability Test**Composite Reliability****Table 6.** Composite Reliability Results

	Composite Reliability	Information
INTEREST IN ADMISSION OF NEW STUDENTS (Y)	0.897	Reliable
SCHOOL IMAGE (X2)	0.940	Reliable
SCHOOL GANG (X1)	0.960	Reliable

In Table 6, it can be seen that the school gang variable with a value of 0.960, the school image with a value of 0.940, and enthusiasm for accepting new students with a value of 0.897 have met the requirements for a composite reliability value of >0.7 , so it can be concluded that each variable in this study is reliable.

Cronbach's Alpha**Table 7.** Cronbach's Alpha Results

	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
INTEREST IN ADMISSION OF NEW STUDENTS (Y)	0.856	Reliable
SCHOOL IMAGE (X2)	0.926	Reliable
SCHOOL GANG (X1)	0.947	Reliable

Based on Table 7 above, it can be concluded that each variable has a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.947 for school gangs, 0.926 for school image, and 0.856 for enthusiasm for accepting new students. Thus, it can be stated that all three variables used are reliable variables because they have values >0.7.

Inner Model**Coefficient of Determination (R²)****Table 8.** Results of the Coefficient of Determination (R²) Analysis

	R Square
INTEREST IN ADMISSION OF NEW STUDENTS	0.711

Table 8 shows that the motivation variable has an R² value of 0.711, which, when converted to a percentage, becomes 71.1%. Therefore, from these results, it can be concluded that the variable of enthusiasm for accepting new students is influenced by 71.1% of the independent variables, namely the existence of school gangs and school image, while the remaining 28.9% is influenced by other variables not included in this study.

Path Coefficient**Table 9.** Path Coefficient Results

	INTEREST IN ADMISSION OF NEW STUDENTS
INTEREST IN ADMISSION OF NEW STUDENTS (Y)	
SCHOOL IMAGE (X1)	0.555
SCHOOL GANG (X2)	0.367

Based on Table 9, the school image has a value of 0.555 for enthusiasm for accepting new students, indicating that the school image variable has a positive influence on this enthusiasm. The existence of school gangs variable shows a positive value of 0.367 for enthusiasm for accepting new students, so it can be concluded that the existence of school gangs has a positive influence on the enthusiasm for accepting new students. However, the value of the existence of school gangs variable is smaller than the school image variable.

t-statistics

The relationship between variables can be said to have a significant effect if the value of the t-statistic > t-table is 1.97, and vice versa is said to be insignificant if the value of the t-statistic < 1.97.

In Table 10. Above, it can be seen that the two variables of school image and school gangs have t-statistic values of 8.171 and 5.808 on the enthusiasm for accepting new students, it can be concluded that the image of the school has a significant effect on the enthusiasm for accepting new students, and the existence of school gangs has a significant effect on the enthusiasm for accepting new students. Results of t-statistics (Bootstrapping) presented in Table 10 below.

Table 10. Results of t-statistics (Bootstrapping)

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Val ues
SCHOOL IMAGE (X1)-> INTEREST IN ADMISSION OF NEW STUDENTS (Y)	0.555	0.558	0.068	8,171	0,0 00
SCHOOL GANGS (X2)-> ANIMOUS NEW STUDENT ADMISSION (Y)	0.367	0.368	0.063	5,808	0,0 00

Discussion

The results showed that school image has a positive and significant effect on the interest of new student admissions. This finding is consistent with Fitriani and Nurhayati's research, which states that reputation, achievement, facilities, and school discipline are the dominant factors in attracting parents and students to choose a school. (Fitriani, 2021; Nurhayati, 2022) The positive image projected by Vocational High Schools through academic and non-academic achievements, adequate learning facilities, and consistent discipline can increase public trust. This is evidenced by the path coefficient of 0.555, which is greater than other variables, confirming that school image is a key factor in increasing the interest in new student admissions. Meanwhile, the presence of school gangs was also found to have a positive and significant effect on new students' interest, with a path coefficient of 0.367. This finding is interesting because, theoretically, the existence of school gangs is seen as an inhibiting factor (Sarwono, 2011). However, in the context of this study, the interpretation that emerges is that the existence of school gangs is not fully perceived negatively by grade X students. Students may see school gangs as part of the social dynamics that are "commonplace" among teenagers, or the school manages the existence of gangs so that they do not fully harm the school's image. Another possible influencing factor is the strong sense of solidarity and group identity among students, which does not reduce their interest in attending a particular Vocational High School. Simultaneously, the presence of school gangs and school image contributed 71.1% to the interest in new student enrollment, suggesting these two variables are important for

schools to consider in their strategy to increase new student enrollment. However, the school image remains the dominant and more decisive factor. Thus, schools need to prioritize efforts to build and maintain a positive image by increasing achievement, improving facilities, strengthening discipline, and providing guidance to students to reduce the negative impact of school gangs. This finding has practical implications for school management. Several strategies can be implemented to address these issues, as follows:

a. Early detection and supervision

Schools should establish early detection systems through counseling units, homeroom teachers, and peer-monitoring programs to identify gang-related activities before they escalate into violence or intimidation (Gita, 2025; Nafis et al., 2025).

b. Character and extracurricular programs

Providing structured extracurricular programs, leadership training, and collaborative student projects can redirect students' need for group identity into positive organizational activities (HS, 2025; Nurjanah et al., 2025).

c. Parents-community partnership

Schools should strengthen communication with parents and local communities through periodic meetings, social campaigns, and collaborative supervision of student activities outside school hours Mukti et al (2025).

d. Digital branding and reputation management

Schools can also improve their institutional image through social media publication of achievements, industry partnerships, student success stories, and disciplinary transparency Anggraini et al (2024).

Student learning styles represent an additional variable warranting attention in future WBL research. Within Kolb's ELT framework, students differ in their preferred entry points into the learning cycle: some engage most readily through concrete, hands-on experience, while others benefit more from structured reflection or abstract problem-solving. In the production unit context, students who prefer experiential entry points are likely to thrive immediately, whereas those with more reflective or conceptual learning preferences may require additional instructional scaffolding to fully benefit from WBL activities. Future studies should examine whether tailored pedagogical support for different learning style groups strengthens the overall effectiveness of production unit-based WBL in developing both technical and psychological work readiness.

The current sample is drawn exclusively from SMK YPPT Garut, which limits the external validity of the findings. Schools with different resource levels, supervision structures, and instructor qualifications may produce different R^2 values. Future research using multi-school designs would allow examination of how production unit quality moderates the WBL-work readiness relationship across different SMK contexts.

Additionally, 85% of respondents in this study reported that WBL was very helpful in improving their technical skills in vehicle service and repair, while 78% stated that hands-on production unit experience made them better prepared for real work demands. These perceptions align with the statistical findings and confirm that the impact of WBL is meaningful not only in quantitative terms but also in how students subjectively experience their own preparation for the workforce. This dual-level confirmation statistical significance alongside high rates of perceived relevance strengthens the practical implications of the findings for school administrators and policymakers.

Conclusion

This study shows that school image has a positive and significant effect on new students' interest. Meanwhile, the existence of school gangs also has a significant effect, though to a lesser extent than school image. Simultaneously, the two variables explain 71.1% of the variation in interest in new student admissions at Vocational High Schools. This confirms that school image is the dominant factor in attracting new students, while the presence of school gangs remains an important consideration in school management.

Although this study focuses on vocational high schools in Yogyakarta, the findings may also be relevant to other vocational school contexts with similar social and cultural characteristics. However, differences in regional culture, school management systems, and student demographics may influence the relationship between school gangs, school image, and enrollment interest. Therefore, further studies involving broader geographical areas are recommended to strengthen the generalizability of the findings.

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