DIJEFA: Dinasti International Journal of Economics, Finance & Accounting
E-ISSN: 2721-303X
P-ISSN: 2721-3021
https://dinastipub.org/DIJEFA dinasti.info@gmail.com +62 811 7404 455
DOI: https://doi.org/10.38035/dijefa.v6i4

The Influence of Education Service Quality on School Selection Interest with School Image as a Mediating Variable at SMA X Bandung

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the effect of educational service quality on school choice interest with school image as a mediating variable at SMA X in Bandung City. The quality of education services is measured based on the dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. School image is assessed through personality, reputation, value, and corporate identity. School choice interest includes attention, interest, need, enjoyment, and motivation. A quantitative approach was applied using a survey method involving 238 respondents consisting of students and parents. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that: (1) educational service quality has a positive and significant effect on school image; (2) educational service quality has a positive and significant effect on school choice interest; (3) school image has a positive and significant effect on school choice interest; and (4) school image significantly mediates the relationship between educational service quality and school choice interest. The findings highlight the importance of enhancing educational service quality to build a strong school image and attract student and parent interest in choosing a school.

Keywords: Educational Service Quality, School Image, School Choice Interest, PLS-SEM.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a lifelong part of human life experienced to shape, direct, and enhance the quality of human resources to align with societal aspirations. Generally, individuals go through formal education school starting from primary, secondary, and up to higher education. Beyond developing academic intelligence, formal education also functions to build character and skills necessary for daily life (Tilaar, 2016). An article by Siti Afifiyah (2020) indicates there are 10 skills essential needed by individuals in the workplace, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Ten Skills in the Workplace

These skills include critical thinking, innovation, problem-solving, technology usage, and various other skills that support success in the modern era. In this regard, Senior High Schools (SMA) play a crucial role in developing academic intelligence, character, and the necessary skills to prepare students for higher education and the professional world. Therefore, selecting a good quality high school (SMA) is an important aspect for both students and parents.

In the school selection process, various factors can influence the decision of students and parents, including the quality of educational services and the school's image (Kotler & Fox, 2021). Research shows that schools with superior educational service quality tend to have higher student and parent satisfaction, which ultimately impacts the decision to choose a school (Putra & Rahmawati, 2023). A good quality educational services encompass effective counseling services, good communication, and complete facilities (Dunggio, 2023). Effective counseling services can assist students with both academic and psychological aspects. The support provided by counseling helps students resolve personal issues, enchance learning motivation, and provide guidance in making future academic and career choices (Prayitno, 2020). Research by Sari et al. (2023) indicates that schools providing good counseling services have higher levels of student psychological well-being, which impacts their comfort in learning and performing.

Good communication between the school and parents plays a significant role in supporting student's academic and non-academic development. A harmonious relationship between both parties can increase parental involvement in their children's education, create a more conducive learning environment, and help the school understand student's needs and potential more deeply (Epstein, 2011). According to research conducted by Kraft and Dougherty (2013), good communication between schools and parents contributes to improving student's academic achievement, strengthen learning motivation, and reducing negative behavior in the school environment. Furthermore, digital technology increasingly facilitates interaction between schools and parents through various communication platforms, such as email, school applications, and social media, making information delivery easier and increasing active parental involvement (Olmstead, 2013). With open and effective communication, schools and parents can collaborate to create a better learning experience for students and build a more supportive and collaborative educational environment.

According to research conducted by Yulianto (2020), facilities such as well-equipped laboratories, libraries, comfortable classrooms, and adequate sports facilities contribute significantly to student's learning motivation and academic achievement. Additionally, a study by Uline & Tschannen-Moran (2008) shows that schools with adequate facilities tend to create a more conducive learning environment, enhance social interaction, and strengthen student's skills in various aspects. Thus, investing in the procurement and maintenance of quality school

facilities should be a priority for educational institutions to ensure student success in facing the challenges of the modern world.

In addition to the quality of educational services, the school's image is a crucial factor influencing the interest of students and parents in choosing a school. A school's image is formed from its academic and non-academic reputation, discipline, and good relations between the school and the community (Supriyadi, 2021). Schools with a positive image more easily gain trust from prospective students and parents. Factors such as academic achievement, level of discipline, and participation in various national and international competitions can enhance the school's reputation (Nugroho, 2020). Therefore, building and maintaining a good school image is an important strategy to increase the interest of students and parents in choosing a school.

Sari (2020) in her research revealed that consumer decisions in purchasing a product are influenced by various factors, such as product quality, packaging design, brand, seller service, product availability, product size, and sales time. Before making a purchase, consumers tend to consider these aspects to ensure their satisfaction. The same principle applies to school selection by students and parents. The interest in attending an institution depends not only on the quality of education offered but also on other factors such as the quality of educational services (counseling services, available facilities, communication effectivity between the school and parents) and the school's image. If there is no interest in a particular school, students and parents will certainly not choose that school as a place to continue their education. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the influence of educational service quality on the decision to choose SMA X in Bandung City, with school image as a mediating variable.

In the context of school competition, understanding the factors that influence selection interest is essential for schools to enhance competitiveness and attract more students. Therefore, the quality of educational services and the school's image are two key factors believed to have a significant influence on the interest of students and parents in choosing SMA X in Bandung.

Conceptual Framework

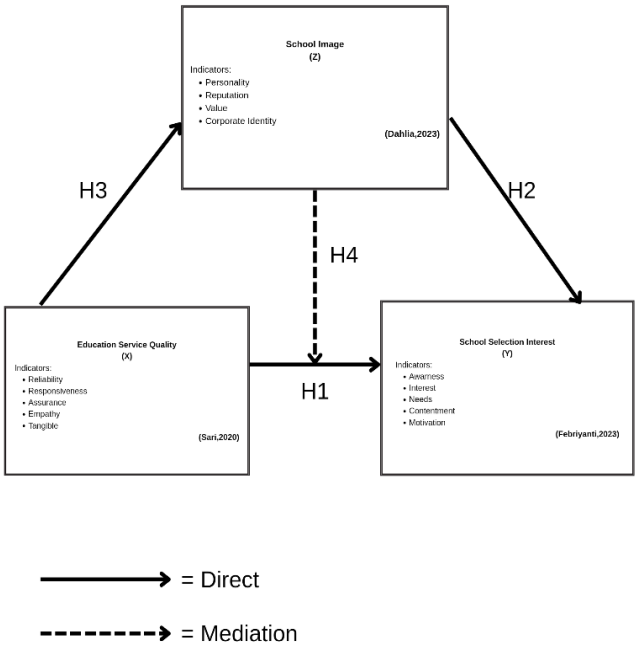

Figure 2. Research Model

Research Hypotheses

H_1: There is a significant influence of educational service quality on school choice interest.

H_2: There is a significant influence of school image on school choice interest.
H_3: There is a significant influence of educational service quality on school image.
H_4: There is a significant influence of educational service quality on school choice interest with school image as a mediating variable.

METHOD

Research Method

The research method refers to the systematic approach carried out by researchers through specific stages, aiming to solve problems or obtain answers to research questions (Prastowo & Sandra, 2020). In this study, the researcher applied a verificative method because there are several variables whose relationships will be analyzed, and it aims to present data systematically and factually regarding facts and relationships between variables. According to Djollong (2014), quantitative research emphasizes the use of quantitative data in data collection methods in the field with the aim of testing established hypotheses. Therefore, this research is categorized as quantitative research with a verificative approach.

Research Object

This research was conducted at SMA X Bandung, which is the location of the research population, through a series of processes, starting from phenomenon or problem discovery, thesis preparation, research instrument creation, data collection, data processing, to reporting of results, carried out from January to June 2025.

Research Population

A population is a group of people, institutions, events, or other subjects to be described or generalized (Vogt & Johnson, 2015). According to KBBI, a population is a group of people, objects, and others that serve as a source for sampling or a collection that meets certain criteria related to the research problem. According to Roflin, Liberty, and Pariyana (2021), a population is the subject or object to be studied. From this, it can be concluded that a population is a group that can be described because it shares one or more simillarities. The population in this study consisted of 582 individuals, comprising 291 students and 291 parents of students at SMA X in Bandung City.

Sampling Technique

A sample is a part of the population that becomes the object of research and is used as a data source, where the sample is considered capable of representing the entire population, both in terms of number and characteristics (Asrulla, Jailani, & Jeka; 2023). According to Hutami (2024), a sample is a group of individuals selected from a population and serves as a representation of all members of the population. A sample is a portion of the population chosen as the object of research and is considered capable of representing the entire population, both in terms of quantity and characteristics. This study uses a sample determined using the Slovin formula and the Lemeshow formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{\left(1 + (N \times e^2)\right)}$$

$$n = \frac{582}{\left(1 + (582 \times (0{,}05)^2)\right)}$$

$$n = 237{,}07 \approx 238\ people$$

This study uses proportional random sampling technique as the sampling method, which is the random selection of samples based on the proportion of the population size without regard to existing strata (Riyanto, 2022). The sample was obtained from two groups, namely 119 students and 119 parents of students, as both are considered capable of providing data relevant to the research focus.

Data Collection Method

Data collection technique refers to the steps or methods used to obtain the data needed in a study. In this study, data was collected through questionnaires, which is a data collection technique carried out by submitting a number of written questions or statements to respondents (Rahman, 2019). Each question item will be assessed using a scoring system to determine the level or weight in the study. The determination of these weights refers to a commonly used model, namely a Likert scale with five answer options: strongly disagree (STS), disagree (TS), neutral (N), agree (S), and strongly agree (SS).

Data Processing Technique

1. Validity is a measurement of the accuracy of a test instrument in performing its measuring function. If a test instrument performs its measuring function accurately and according to its purpose, then its reliability or validity is high (Ramadhan, Siroj, & Afgani, 2024). A validity test is very important to ensure that the instruments used can measure what they intend to measure correctly. In this study, the validity tests used are convergent validity (outer loading test and average variance extracted test) and discriminant validity (heterotrait-monotrait ratio and Cross Loading) using the Smart PLS software.
   a. Outer Loading Test

      The outer loading test aims to see the extent to which indicators correlate with the measured construct. The outer loading test provides a more detailed picture because it examines the extent to which each indicator has a higher correlation with its original construct than with other constructs (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022). A good outer loading value is usually $\geq$ 0.7. If the loading value is below 0.4, it is recommended to consider removing the indicator (Hair et al., 2014).
   b. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Test

      According to Hair et al. (2014), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) functions to examine the convergent validity of constructs within the measurement model. AVE calculation is based on the average squared outer loading of indicators that contain the construct. A higher AVE value means that the construct can explain most of the variance of the indicators it uses. A good AVE value is usually $\geq$ 0.5.
   c. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Test

      The heterotrait-monotrait ratio test aims to show whether different constructs are indeed separate and unique from each other. This helps ensure that the indicators of one construct do not overlap with other constructs. HTMT is a recommended method for testing discriminant validity in SEM models, especially due to its higher sensitivity compared to other methods such as the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. An HTMT value below the threshold of 0.90 indicates that the tested constructs have good discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sastedt; 2015).
2. Reliability can be defined as the level of confidence or consistency of a measurement result (Ramadhan, Siroj, & Afgani, 2024). In this study, the reliability test used is Cronbach's Alpha with the help of Smart PLS software, which aims to measure the internal consistency or reliability of a series of survey items. A higher Cronbach's Alpha value indicates consistent responses to a series of questions. A variable is considered reliable if Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability exceed 0.70.

3. Multicollinearity test is a statistical technique used to detect the presence of multicollinearity among predictor variables. The multicollinearity test is performed to determine whether there is a high linear relationship between predictor variables that can lead to biased data. A good model should not have correlations in the predictor variables (O'Brien, 2007). In this study, the multicollinearity test is based on the tolerance and VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values using Smart PLS software, with a limit below or equal to 5.

Hypothesis Testing

1. Significance Test of Path Coefficient

   The significance test of path coefficient is a statistical analysis that functions to test the influence between variables, where a positive value indicates a direct relationship and a negative value indicates an inverse relationship (Marliana, 2020). The significance test of path coefficient is used to test direct effects (hypotheses 1 to 3) and indirect effects (hypothesis 4). The basis for testing the results is a confidence level of 95% or a significance level of 5% (α= 0.05), where the P-value $\leq$ 0.05 or t-statistic $\geq$ 1.96.

2. Effect Size Test (f-squared)

   The effect size test (f-squared) is a statistic test used to measure the strength of the relationship between variables in a structural model. The effect size (f^2) test is used to complement the significance test (path coefficient) because a significant effect is not necessarily large. In this study, the test was performed using Smart PLS software. The limitation of the Effect Size (f^2) test is that it can only test the magnitude of the direct effect (hypotheses 1 to 3). The interpretation of f^2 values is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Interpretation of f^2 Values

Coefficient Interval	Effect
< 0.14	Small
0.15-0.34	Medium
> 0.35	Large

3. Mediating Effect Size Test (upsilon v)

   The mediating effect size test (upsilon v) is a statistic used to test the magnitude of the mediating variable's influence at the structural level (Yamin, 2023). The mediating effect size test (upsilon v) is used to complement the significance test (path coefficient) because a significant effect is not necessarily large. In this study, the test was performed using Smart PLS software. The Mediating Effect Size test (upsilon v) complements the effect size test (f^2) to examine the magnitude of the indirect effect (hypothesis 4). The interpretation of upsilon v values is shown in Table 2 (Yamin, 2023).

Table 2. Interpretation of Upsilon v Values

Coefficient Interval	Effect
< 0.074	Small
0.075-0.174	Medium
> 0.175	Large

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Description by Gender

There were 125 female respondents (53%) and 113 male respondents (47%). This indicates that more female respondents participated in this study compared to male respondents. Figure 3 below shows the respondent data based on gender.

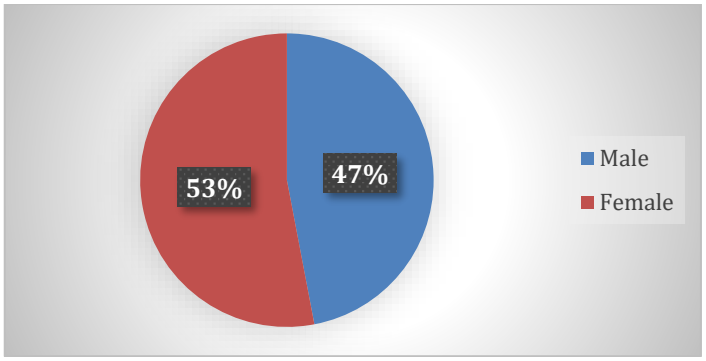

Figure 3. Distribution of Respondent Data by Gender

Respondent Description by Age

There were 119 respondents (50%) in the 15-18 age group, 23 respondents (10%) in the 35-45 age group, 79 respondents (33%) in the 45-55 age group, and 17 respondents (7%) in the 55-65 age group. The 15-18 age group was the most dominant, accounting for 50%. This dominance is due to the primary focus of questionnaire distribution being directed towards students. Meanwhile, the oldest age group, 55-65 years old, only represented about 7%. Figure 4 below shows the respondent data based on age.

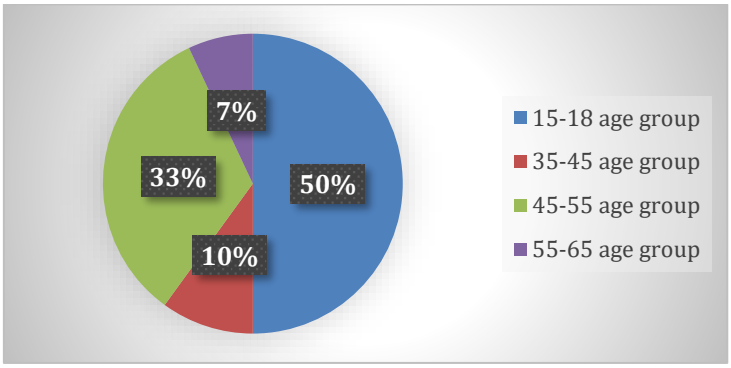

Figure 4. Distribution of Respondent Data by Age

Respondent Description by Occupation

There were 119 respondents (50%) who were students, 63 respondents (26%) were entrepreneurs, 38 respondents (16%) were private employees, and 18 respondents (8%) were housewives. The composition of respondents was dominated by students, at 50% or 119 people. Figure 5 below shows the respondent data based on occupation.

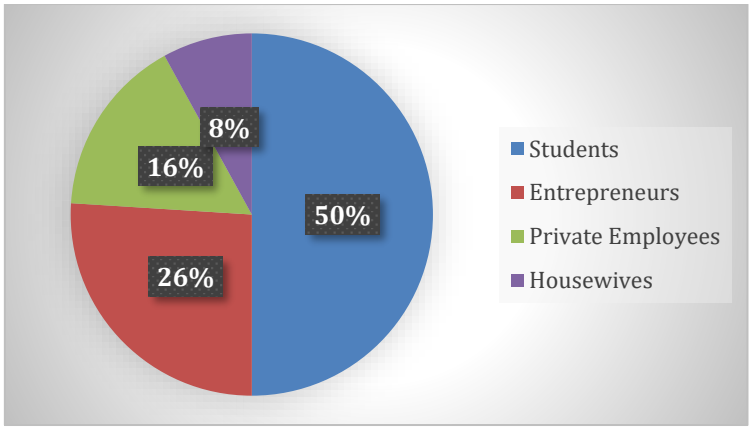

Figure 5. Distribution of Respondent Data by Occupation

PLS Model Program Scheme

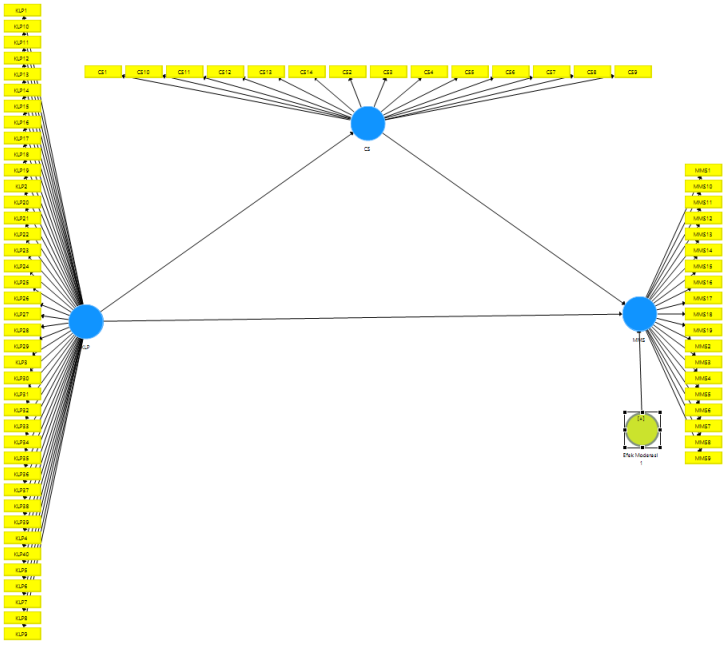

Figure 6. PLS Model Program Scheme

Validity Test

1. Outer Loading Test

The outer loading test aims to assess the extent to which indicators correlate with the measured construct. Table 3 below shows the outer loading results for each item.

Table 3. Convergent Validity Test Results with Outer Loading Test

Latent Variable	Manifest Variable	Outer Loading	Significance
Education Service Quality	KLP1	0,704	Valid
	KLP2	0,763	Valid
	KLP3	0,705	Valid
	KLP4	0,723	Valid
	KLP5	0,743	Valid
	KLP6	0,753	Valid
	KLP7	0,727	Valid
	KLP8	0,728	Valid
	KLP9	0,576	Sufficient
	KLP10	0,601	Sufficient
	KLP11	0,768	Valid
	KLP12	0,700	Valid
	KLP13	0,751	Valid
	KLP14	0,746	Valid
	KLP15	0,598	Sufficient
	KLP16	0,608	Sufficient
	KLP17	0,814	Valid
	KLP18	0,771	Valid
	KLP19	0,763	Valid
	KLP20	0,766	Valid
	KLP21	0,621	Sufficient
	KLP22	0,738	Valid
	KLP23	0,738	Valid
	KLP24	0,773	Valid
	KLP25	0,737	Valid
	KLP26	0,606	Sufficient
	KLP27	0,682	Sufficient

Latent Variable	Manifest Variable	Outer Loading	Significance
	KLP28	0,743	Valid
	KLP29	0,740	Valid
	KLP30	0,638	Sufficient
	KLP31	0,668	Sufficient
	KLP32	0,778	Valid
	KLP33	0,789	Valid
	KLP34	0,801	Valid
	KLP35	0,840	Valid
	KLP36	0,779	Valid
	KLP37	0,697	Sufficient
	KLP38	0,809	Valid
	KLP39	0,768	Valid
	KLP40	0,729	Valid
School Image	CS1	0,824	Valid
	CS2	0,842	Valid
	CS3	0,869	Valid
	CS4	0,853	Valid
	CS5	0,848	Valid
	CS6	0,871	Valid
	CS7	0,854	Valid
	CS8	0,846	Valid
	CS9	0,803	Valid
	CS10	0,855	Valid
	CS11	0,836	Valid
	CS12	0,816	Valid
	CS13	0,808	Valid
	CS14	0,816	Valid
School Selection Interest	MMS1	0,780	Valid
	MMS2	0,786	Valid
	MMS3	0,798	Valid
	MMS4	0,854	Valid
	MMS5	0,856	Valid
	MMS6	0,718	Valid
	MMS7	0,841	Valid
	MMS8	0,855	Valid
	MMS9	0,904	Valid
	MMS10	0,919	Valid
	MMS11	0,897	Valid
	MMS12	0,875	Valid
	MMS13	0,870	Valid
	MMS14	0,878	Valid
	MMS15	0,839	Valid
	MMS16	0,836	Valid
	MMS17	0,484	Sufficient
	MMS18	0,614	Sufficient
	MMS19	0,602	Sufficient

From the data in Table 3, 60 items have an outer loading value above 0.70, indicating that these indicators are valid and contribute strongly to the measured construct. Meanwhile, 13 items have outer loading values between 0.40 and 0.69. Although their values are below the ideal standard, these items can still be retained because the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and overall construct reliability are still within high limits, making them acceptable as conveyed by Hair et al (2021).

2. Average variance extracted (AVE) Test

Based on Table 4, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct meet the minimum criteria of above 0.50. This indicates that the proportion of variance successfully explained by the indicators in each construct is high, thus the convergent validity in this model can be categorized as very good.

Table 4. Convergent Validity Test Results with AVE Test

Latent Variable	AVE Value
Education Service Quality	0,529
School Image	0,704
School Selection Interest	0,653

3. Discriminant Validity Test

Based on Table 5, the discriminant validity values measured using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) test show results below the threshold of 0.90. Thus, all constructs in this model are declared discriminantly valid. This means that each construct in the model truly measures a different concept from each other, and there is no overlap in meaning between constructs.

Table 5. Discriminant Validity Test Results using HTMT Test

	School Image (Z)	Education Service Quality (X)
Education Service Quality (X)	0,342	
School Selection Interest (Y)	0,845	0,374

Reliability Test

In this study, the reliability test used was Cronbach's Alpha with the help of Smart PLS software, aiming to measure the internal consistency or reliability of a series of survey items. A higher Cronbach's Alpha value indicates a consistent response to a series of questions. Table 6 below shows the reliability test results and is declared very reliable because $\alpha > 0{,}8$.

Table 6. Reliability Test Results using Cronbach's Alpha

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Criteria
School Image (Z)	0,968	0,971	Very Reliable
Education Service Quality (X)	0,977	0,978	Very Reliable
School Selection Interest (Y)	0,969	0,972	Very Reliable

Structural Model Test

Table 7 below shows that there is no multicollinearity between variables because the VIF value is <5.

Table 7. Multicollinearity Test Results based on VIF values

	School Image (Z)	School Selection Interest (Y)
School Image (Z)		**1,166**
Education Service Quality (X)	**1,000**	**1,135**

Path Coefficient Significance Test

The results of the path coefficient significance test to examine the direct effect (hypotheses 1 to 3) are shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Path Coefficient Significance Test Results for Direct Effect

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
School Image (Z) -> School Selection Interest (Y)	0,794	0,796	0,032	24,559	**0,000**
Education Service Quality (X) -> School Image (Z)	0,341	0,345	0,052	6,603	**0,000**
Education Service Quality (X) -> School Selection Interest (Y)	0,109	0,112	0,038	2,871	**0,004**

The results of the path coefficient significance test to examine the indirect effect (hypothesis 4) are shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Path Coefficient Significance Test Results for Indirect Effect

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
School Image (Z) -> School Selection Interest (Y)					
Education Service Quality (X) -> School Image (Z)					
Education Service Quality (X) -> School Selection Interest (Y)	0,271	0,275	0,043	6,371	**0,000**

Based on these provisions, the hypothesis testing results for direct and indirect effects can be seen in Table 10 below.

Table 10. Hypothesis Testing Results

No	Hypothesis	Path			t value	t table	p value	Decision
		From	Via	TO				
1.	Hypothesis 1	X (KLP)	-	Y (MMS)	2,871	1,96	0,004	Ho Rejected
2.	Hypothesis 2	Z (CS)	-	Y (MMS)	24,559	1,96	0,000	Ho Rejected
3.	Hypothesis 3	X (KLP)	-	Z (CS)	6,603	1,96	0,000	Ho Rejected
4.	Hypothesis 4	X (KLP)	Z (CS)	Y (MMS)	6,371	1,96	0,000	Ho Rejected

1. Hypothesis 1 (H1): Assesses the effect of Educational Service Quality on School Selection Interest. Based on the test results, educational service quality shows a significant direct effect on school selection interest. This confirms that good educational services directly influence prospective students' preferences in choosing a school.
2. Hypothesis 2 (H2): Assesses the effect of School Image on School Selection Interest. The test results show that school image has a significant direct effect on school selection interest. This finding indicates that a positive perception of school image encourages prospective students/parents to choose that school.
3. Hypothesis 3 (H3): Assesses the effect of Educational Service Quality on School Image. The results show that educational service quality also has a positive and significant effect on school image, indicated by a positive path coefficient and a t-statistic value above the critical value ($\geq$ 1.96 for $\alpha = 0.05$). This indicates that an improvement in service quality will enhance the school's image.
4. Hypothesis 4 (H4): Assesses the effect of Educational Service Quality on School Selection Interest with School Image as a Mediating Variable. These results indicate that school image mediates the relationship between educational service quality and school selection interest, meaning that a positive perception of service quality will form a good school image, and that positive image will ultimately encourage an increase in interest in choosing the school.

Effect Size (f^2) Test

Table 11. f^2 Test Results for Direct Effect

	School Image (Z)	School Selection Interest (Y)
School Image (Z)		**1,724**
Education Service Quality (X)	0,132	0,033

Table 11 shows the effect size (f^2) values for each relationship between constructs as follows:

1. The effect of Educational Service Quality on School Selection Interest shows an f^2 value of 0.033, which falls into the small category. This indicates that the direct contribution of educational service quality to school selection interest is quite limited.
2. The effect of School Image on School Selection Interest has an f^2 value of 1.724, which is a very large effect and far exceeds the large category threshold. This indicates that school image is the most influential construct on school selection interest.
3. The effect of Educational Service Quality on School Image shows an f^2 value of 0.132, which is still in the small to moderate category. Nevertheless, this finding still shows that educational service quality contributes to forming a school's image, although not dominantly.

Mediation Effect Size (upsilon v) Test

Based on the calculations in Table 12, the role of school image in mediating the indirect effect of educational service quality on school selection interest at the structural level is categorized as a moderate effect.

Table 12. Upsilon v Test Results

No	Effect	Upsilon (v) Statistic	Description
1	Educational service quality -> school image -> school selection interest	$(0,341)^2$ x $(0,794)^2$ = 0,073	Influence towards moderate

Discussion

Hypothesis 1: The Effect of Educational Service Quality on School Selection Interest

The analysis results show that educational service quality has a direct and significant effect on school selection interest with a t-statistic value of 2.871 (>1.96) and a p-value of 0.004 (<0.05). However, the effect size (f^2) value of 0.033 indicates that the magnitude of this effect is relatively small. This finding is consistent with research by Erinawati & Syafarudin (2021), which confirms that educational service quality has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose a school. This means that the better the perceived service (such as facilities, teacher responsiveness, administrative reliability, and empathy), the greater the likelihood of students (and parents) choosing that school. Research by Azkiyah et al. (2020) proves that the quality of academic services has a significant effect on the interest of new students with a contribution of 40.2%. This is in line with the findings of this study that perceptions of service quality influence the tendency of prospective students to choose an educational institution.

Hypothesis 2: The Effect of School Image on School Selection Interest

School image is proven to have a very significant effect on school selection interest, with a t-statistic value of 24.559 and a p-value of 0.000. The effect size (f^2) value of 1.724 indicates a very large effect. Research by Rosha et al. (2017) shows that school image has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose SD Islam Al-Azhar 32 Padang. A strong image, reflected by A accreditation, academic reputation, and national partnerships, is proven to be an important determinant in attracting public interest. Research by Alifiah (2018) shows that

school image has a significant effect on parents' interest in choosing a school, with a significance value of 0.001. A positive image makes it easier for schools to build public trust, thereby encouraging parents' decisions to enroll their children.

Hypothesis 3: The Effect of Educational Service Quality on School Image

The results show that educational service quality has a positive and significant effect on school image ($t = 6.603$; $p = 0.000$). The effect size for this relationship is 0.132, categorized as small to moderate. Research by Habibah and Bayu (2020) shows that service quality has a significant effect on school image with a relationship of 0.78. This strengthens the notion that public perception of a school is formed through services directly experienced by students. Similarly, research by Budiarti et al. (2018) shows that service quality has a significant effect on institutional image with a coefficient of 0.206. This indicates that an increase in the quality of educational services will strengthen the public's positive perception of the school's reputation.

Hypothesis 4: The Indirect Effect of Educational Service Quality on School Selection Interest through School Image

The indirect effect test shows that the indirect effect of educational service quality on school selection interest through school image is significant ($t = 6.371$; $p = 0.000$). The upsilon v value of 0.073 indicates that the mediating effect is in the moderate category. This finding supports the mediation theory by Baron & Kenny (1986), which explains that mediation occurs when an intermediary variable bridges the relationship between two other variables. In this context, school image becomes an important channel in transforming service perception into concrete interest in choosing. Research by Kusumawati, Yanamandram, & Perera (2010) in the context of Indonesian universities shows that school image acts as a mediator between service quality and the decision to choose an educational institution.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and hypothesis testing using the Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) method, the following conclusions are obtained:

1. Educational service quality has a direct and significant effect on school selection interest, but with a relatively small contribution ($f^2 = 0.033$). This indicates that although the effect is significant, its impact on students'/parents' interest in choosing a school is still limited if based solely on service quality.
2. School image has the most dominant effect on school selection interest, as evidenced by an f^2 value of 1.724, which falls into the very large effect category. This means that a positive perception of school image is the main factor influencing the decision of students and parents in choosing a school.
3. Educational service quality also has a significant effect on school image, although its effect is categorized as moderate with an f^2 of 0.132. This confirms that good service can shape the public's positive perception of the school.
4. School image is proven to mediate the relationship between educational service quality and school selection interest, with an upsilon v value of 0.073, which falls into the moderate effect category. This indicates that the indirect impact of educational service quality on school selection interest through school image is stronger than its direct impact.

Based on these conclusions, the researchers provide the following suggestions:

1. Schools are advised to continuously improve their image, both through promotional media, school achievements, and involvement in social and educational activities. This is because school image is proven to be a key factor in increasing the interest of prospective students.

2. Improving the quality of educational services remains important, especially in aspects such as reliability, responsiveness, and empathy towards the needs of students and parents. Although its direct impact is small, service quality forms the foundation for a positive school image.
3. Optimizing external communication strategies, so that positive perceptions of the school are not only known by internal parties (students) but also reach prospective students and parents outside the school environment. Social media, testimonials, and public information disclosure activities can be maximally utilized.
4. Future research is suggested to explore other factors that may influence school selection interest, such as educational costs, school location, excellent programs, or religious values, to broaden the understanding of school selection behavior.

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