



A STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING PARENTAL CHOICE ABOUT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS FOR THEIR CHILDREN AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN DISTRICT BAHAWALPUR

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Abstract

This study examines the complex factors influencing parental choice between public and private secondary schools in District Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Using a descriptive survey design with a validated instrument, data were collected from 196 parents selected through random sampling. The research employed sophisticated statistical analyses including Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Independent Samples t-test, One-Way ANOVA, and Multiple Linear Regression to identify key predictors and patterns in school selection.

EFA revealed four reliable dimensions guiding parental decisions: Academic Quality & Reputation, Socio-Economic Factors, Physical & Extracurricular Facilities, and Parental Involvement & Safety. Regression analysis demonstrated that Academic Quality & Reputation ($\beta = .481, p < .001$) was the strongest predictor of private school preference, while Socio-Economic Factors ($\beta = -.298, p < .001$) served as a significant negative influence, emphasizing financial constraints as a major consideration. Parental education level and physical infrastructure quality also emerged as important positive predictors.

Demographic comparisons showed significant variations in perceptions, with female parents demonstrating stronger agreement across all factors compared to male respondents. Additionally, higher parental age and educational attainment correlated with increased emphasis on academic standards and facility quality. The findings underscore the tension between academic aspirations and economic realities in educational decision-making. The study recommends targeted interventions including quality enhancement in public schools and financial assistance programs in private institutions to promote educational equity and accessibility in the region.

Keywords: Parental Choice, Public Schools, Private Schools, Factor Analysis, Academic Quality, Socio-Economic Factors.

Introduction

A nation's socioeconomic progress depends heavily on education. Since not all human abilities are innate, they enhance human potential. Education speeds up economic progress by fostering the growth of knowledge and skills. It boosts people's self-assurance, awareness, and activity. Education is viewed as a valuable resource. Similarly, it meets the child's needs and serves as an input in manufacturing other services (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). It cultivates the human capital necessary for advancement in the economic as well as social realms. The practical side of learning encourages investment from the public and commercial sectors. The government supports education by spending on it and making it easier to carry out. At the same



time, parents share their children's educational costs through things like fee schedules and other factors (Mavisakalyan & Rommohan, 2021).

Most parents want to give their kids the finest learning environment possible. Several social, economic, and cultural aspects influence their decision to invest in children's education. In Pakistan, there are two private and public educational systems. In public schools, it is free, while in private schools, the parents are responsible for the costs. Over the past thirty years, the private sector has become a major education supplier in Pakistan at all levels. Private schools have raised their standards in recent years by enticing talented individuals with cost reductions that range from a percentage to a whole fee reduction. These schools are both educating young people and becoming a significant industry for investors looking to make investments in this field. Numerous facets of Pakistan's educational system have been covered in previous studies. However, more research has to be done to determine what drives parents to choose the private sector. When families are wholly unsatisfied with the educational system, they typically decide to send their children to private schools. Parents' school choice is influenced by various aspects such as the academic the environment, teacher-to-student ratio, parents' occupation and level of education, and smaller class sizes in private schools. For the same student and parent population, schools that are private are more effective than public educational institutions, primarily because of the learning atmosphere Kim (2022).

Statement of the Problem

It is critical that parents select the best school for their children's education. Parents' satisfaction becomes a deciding factor because they are the ones who actually choose the school for their kids. Most parents desire to provide their kids with the greatest educational environment available. The social, economic, and cultural aspects of their decision to invest in children are considered. Both governmental and private educational institutions provide education in Pakistan. Families are liable for the cost in private schools; it is complimentary in public institutions. For the past thirty years, the private sector has contributed significantly to ensuring the provision of education in Pakistan. It provides instruction for all skill levels. Several studies have already addressed various aspects of Pakistan's educational system. Nevertheless, more research needs to be done to determine what influences parents' decisions about the private sector.

The availability of options is a concern for parents in the context of a competitive educational environment. The coexistence of public and private school systems has given parents access to various educational options for their kids. In practically all urban and rural areas, parents have both alternatives open to them. The inequality in enrolment indicates parents consider criteria other than school type while selecting schools. For the education of their kids, certain families prefer public schools, while other parents choose private ones. As a result, it was decided to conduct a study to learn more about the factors that affect parents' school choices. The study is not only an attempt to find out positive factors affecting parental choice but also an effort to see the factors that negatively affect parents' choice of public and private schools for their children. This study aims to investigate factors affecting parental choice about private and public institutions for their children at secondary school in Bahawalpur District.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of studying factors affecting parent's decision over the wishes of their kid's intuition, both in public and privately at secondary school in District Bahawalpur includes to:

1. To investigate the factors affecting parental choice about public and private intuitions for their children.
2. To examine the reason behind parents' preference for public and private intuitions.
3. To evaluate parental choice for physical facilities in public and private intuitions.
4. To analyse the problems faced by the children at secondary School level.
5. To recommend the ways to motivate parents to choose educational intuitions for their children.

Research Questions

Some possible research questions related to research of factors affecting parent's decisions about public and private intuitions for their children at secondary school in Bahawalpur District:

1. What factors affect parents' wishes of their kids' intuition, both in public and privately?
2. What is the reason behind parent's preference for public and private institutions?



3. What are the mechanisms for evaluating parental choice for physical facilities in public and private institutions?
4. What are the problems faced by the children at the secondary school level?
5. What are some recommended ways to motivate parents to choose educational institutions for their kids?

Significance of the study

The outcomes of this research projects will be helpful to parents in choosing the best schools for their kids. Furthermore, it would be extremely helpful for both public and private organizations in structuring their schools to meet the demands of both parents and pupils. The educational choices made by parents, especially when enrolling their children in public or private institutions, significantly impact how their future turns out. This decision is important because it allows parents to match expectations, values, and beliefs with the educational setting. Government-funded public schools provide a varied and welcoming environment that promotes social integration and exposes kids to various backgrounds and viewpoints.

Conversely, private schools frequently provide more specialized courses, smaller class numbers, and better resources to meet individual students' learning requirements. The flexibility to select from these alternatives allows parents to particular their child's education to suit their individual interests and learning styles better. Additionally, this decision encourages constructive rivalry between institutions, promoting ongoing public and private development. Ultimately, parents' decision over the wishes of their kid's intuition, both in public and privately is crucial to raising well-rounded people who can make significant contributions to society. School administrators also find it significant since the increased rivalry between public and private education institutions ought to improve teaching standards overall and make classrooms more adaptable to the demands of modern culture through improved workforce readiness for pupils.

On the other hand, administrators in public schools need to understand what keeps parents from sending their kids to private schools when they can send them for free. With this information, administrators of public schools will be better equipped to evaluate and, if necessary, incorporate some of these qualities to improve student performance and overall popularity. A policy agenda placing greater emphasis on parents can reverse the public school's declining popularity and, as a result, guarantee better value for the government's money on education. These study contributions to parents as individuals. Most parents want the best education possible for their kids, so they frequently invest a lot of time and energy in investigating and weighing the benefits and drawbacks of various schools, both public and private. This study aims to help parents in Bahawalpur understand the reasons behind their choice of public and private schools, improve their selection criteria, and select schools that are the most cost-effective by offering valuable insights.

Limitation and delimitation

Owing to temporal and resource constraints, the study only included the viewpoints of a subset of households. My prior meeting is about to end, so I'm operating a few moments behind schedule. Parents were taken. The study was delimited only selected families and parents in public and private secondary schools of districts Bahawalpur.

Literature Review

Every parent view schooling differently and has distinct interests (Dahari & Ya, 2011). The variety of educational approaches has made it challenging to determine which learning environment is best for students, as some schools will suit them better than others. Different categories of students (Green-DalCortivo, 2025). Parents can use their right to select the schools for their children through the school choice procedure (Lawrence & Mollborn, 2013). Parents explore all of their options and conduct as much research as possible before deciding on the best school for their children. (Gyeltshen, 2024; Chianese, 2018).

Parents will weigh a variety of considerations while making a decision. When selecting a school for their child, parents should consider six factors, according to Piggott et al. (2021): the school's location, operating hours, educational philosophy, the caliber and styles of the teachers, the facilities, and their own intuition. According to studies by Dahari and Ya (2011) and Eboh, Abba, and Fatoye (2018), branded, private, English-medium, and religion-based schools are generally better for Malay parents when it comes to the aspects that influence their choice of secondary school education. Aside from these, the quality of instruction,



cleanliness, and safety and security are additional important variables that affect parents' decision regarding schools. Furthermore, several parents thought that since kids have the right to voice their opinions about the school their parents chose for them, their perception of the institution should be considered (Nobanee, 2018).

Parents describe their preferred schools by mentioning factors like the teacher's education level, play-based curriculum, and teacher qualities (warmth, trustworthiness, and support), according to research by Rose and Elicker (2008) and Gamble et al. (2009) on parental decision making about child care elements. Alsaudi (2016) found that parental decision-making was influenced by the quality of education, the student-teacher interaction, and small class sizes. The majority of studies have demonstrated that parental choice of school is influenced by a variety of characteristics, including the parents' geographic location and history at the discretion of their parents (Asif et al., 2025; Posey-Maddox et al., 2021).

Research Methodology

Research is a scientific process that involves examining facts, generating new knowledge, and applying systematic procedures to reach valid conclusions. It begins with identifying a problem, formulating hypotheses, collecting data, and analysing the findings to draw meaningful results. For this study, a descriptive research approach was selected, as it best suited the nature of the problem by focusing on exploring the existing situation without altering or influencing it.

The population of the study comprised parents and guardians who had enrolled their children in public and private secondary schools of District Bahawalpur. The district had a total of 641 secondary schools, of which 206 were public and 435 were private. Public schools included 108 for boys, 88 for girls, and 10 co-educational institutions, while private schools included 141 for boys, 93 for girls, and 201 co-educational. This large and diverse population provided the basis for selecting participants for the study. Questionnaires were distributed among parents with their consent to ensure cooperation during data collection.

A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure fairness and representativeness. From the total 641 schools, 20% (128 schools) were selected. Based on this, the researcher targeted 200 parents as the sample size. This method ensured that every parent had an equal chance of participation, reducing bias and increasing reliability of the findings.

The research instrument used was a self-developed questionnaire designed after a careful review of literature. The questionnaire contained 25 items framed in a five-point Likert scale format, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." It was divided into two parts: the first gathered demographic information such as gender, age, location, and academic qualification, while the second included the 25 closed-ended items addressing factors influencing parental choice between public and private schools.

To ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts for face and content validity, followed by a pilot test on 10 parents. Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha, which produced a value of 0.859, indicating a high level of internal consistency among items.

Data collection was personally carried out by the researcher. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed, and 196 were returned, giving a strong response rate of 98%. The collected data was analysed using SPSS (version 20). Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, percentage, and frequency were applied, while an independent sample t-test was used for group comparisons.

Ethical considerations were strictly followed. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential, with respondents free to withdraw at any stage. The data collected was assured to be used solely for academic purposes.

Finally, the use of Cronbach's Alpha further validated the reliability of the instrument, and the value of 0.859 confirmed strong consistency, making the findings trustworthy and credible.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed in two ways (Nassaji, 2015). First, the mean score and measure of dispersion (Standard Deviation) were tabulated to know the overall opinions of the respondents. The inferential statistics were applied by using the independent t-test on the data to calculate the difference in views of gender, qualification, locality, and age. Then, the t-value and its significance pointed out how much groups agreed with each other and on which points they differed.

Demographic Analysis



Figure 1

Demographic graphical presentations

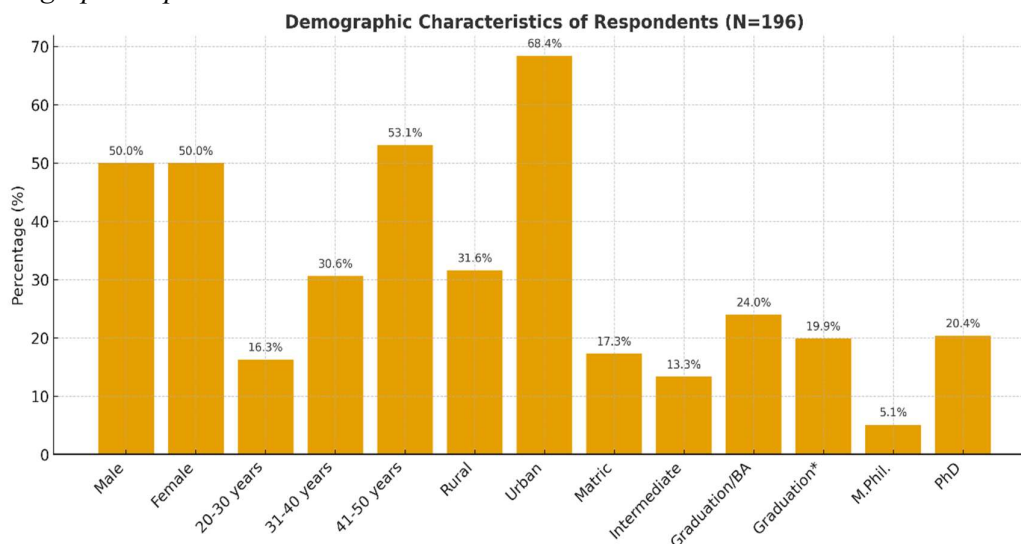


Table 1

Demographic Profile of the Respondents (Parents) (N=196)

Demographic Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	98	50
	Female	98	50
Age	20-30 years	32	16.3
	31-40 years	60	30.6
	41-50 years	104	53.1
Location	Rural	62	31.6
	Urban	134	68.4
	Matric	34	17.3
	Intermediate	26	13.3
Academic Qualification	Graduation/BA	47	24
	Graduation*	39	19.9
	M.Phil.	10	5.1
	PhD	40	20.4

The table shows that the number of male and female parents in the study is exactly the same, with 98 men and 98 women, making it a balanced sample. Parents were from different age groups, where 32 parents (16.3%) were aged between 20–30 years, 60 parents (30.6%) were between 31–40 years, and the largest group, 104 parents (53.1%), were between 41–50 years, which means most parents of secondary school children fall in the middle-aged category. In terms of location, 134 parents (68.4%) were from urban areas while 62 parents (31.6%) came from rural areas, showing that city-based parents made up a larger part of the study. The education level of parents was quite diverse as 34 parents (17.3%) had completed Matric, 26 (13.3%) had done Intermediate, 47 (24%) had Graduation/BA, 39 (19.9%) had another Graduation-level qualification, 10 parents (5.1%) had M.Phil., and 40 (20.4%) were PhD holders, which indicates that the study included parents with both basic and higher levels of education, many of whom were highly educated.

Objective 1

Table 2

Factors Influencing School Choice (N=196)



No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	A child's gender affects their parent's decision to make a choice about school.	43.9% (86)	32.7% (64)	8.2% (16)	12.2% (24)	3.1% (6)
2	Parents choose private schools according to their rank, quality, and discipline.	39.3% (77)	47.4% (93)	5.1% (10)	4.1% (8)	4.1% (8)
3	The reputation of private schools is higher than that of public schools.	36.7% (72)	36.2% (71)	15.8% (31)	5.1% (10)	6.1% (12)
4	The better academic environment and quality of education in private schools attract parents.	52.0% (102)	31.1% (61)	7.1% (14)	3.6% (7)	6.1% (12)
5	Public schools have more educated and well-experienced teachers than private schools.	34.7% (68)	40.3% (79)	8.2% (16)	9.2% (18)	7.7% (15)

The results in this table explain the factors that influence how parents decide on schools for their children. A large number of parents, 43.9% strongly agreed and 32.7% agreed, that the gender of a child affects their school choice, while only a small percentage disagreed, showing that gender still plays a role in decision-making. When asked about private schools, most parents, 39.3% strongly agreed and 47.4% agreed, that they prefer them because of their rank, quality, and discipline, and very few disagreed, which means the majority value these features in private institutions. Similarly, 36.7% strongly agreed and 36.2% agreed that the reputation of private schools is higher than public ones, while only a small percentage opposed this idea, proving that reputation has an important impact on parental choice. The strongest opinion appeared in the statement regarding the academic environment, where 52% strongly agreed and 31.1% agreed that private schools provide better academic quality and environment, showing that this is one of the main reasons parents are attracted to private schools. However, when it came to teachers, 34.7% strongly agreed and 40.3% agreed that public schools have more educated and experienced teachers compared to private ones, though some parents disagreed or stayed undecided, showing mixed perceptions about the teaching staff in both systems. Overall, the table shows that factors like quality, reputation, and academic environment in private schools are highly valued, while public schools are seen as strong in terms of teacher qualification and experience.

Objective 2

Table 3

Reasons for Parental Preferences (N=196)

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean (M)	SD
1	Parents working status affects their choice to select a school for their children.	49.0% (96)	38.3% (75)	7.7% (15)	1.5% (3)	3.6% (7)	1.7	0.874
2	Home location influences choosing a school for your children.	25.0% (49)	50.5% (99)	12.2% (24)	6.1% (12)	6.1% (12)	2.18	1.069
3	Income level affects the decision of parents to choose a school for their child.	46.9% (92)	36.2% (71)	7.7% (15)	4.6% (9)	4.6% (9)	1.84	1.059
4	Family background and family size affect the choice of school for their children.	26.5% (52)	46.9% (92)	12.8% (25)	7.1% (14)	6.6% (13)	2.21	1.124
5	Parents prefer to get admission in public schools than in private schools because there is no charge.	33.7% (66)	35.7% (70)	12.2% (24)	7.7% (15)	10.7% (21)	2.23	1.238



The table highlights the main reasons behind parents' preferences in selecting schools for their children. Almost half of the parents, 49% strongly agreed and 38.3% agreed, that their working status affects the choice of school, showing that employment conditions and schedules play a strong role in decision-making. Location of the home was also seen as an important factor, as 25% strongly agreed and 50.5% agreed that the school's distance from home influences their choice, which reflects how convenience and accessibility matter for families. Income level appeared as another major reason, with 46.9% strongly agreeing and 36.2% agreeing that financial status affects their decision, proving that affordability is a deciding factor for many households. Family background and size also influenced parents' choices, with 26.5% strongly agreeing and 46.9% agreeing, indicating that the overall family situation shapes their decisions. Lastly, many parents admitted that the absence of tuition fees motivates them to prefer public schools, as 33.7% strongly agreed and 35.7% agreed that free education in public schools is a strong attraction, though some parents disagreed and still leaned toward private schools. Overall, the findings show that working status, location, income, family background, and cost of schooling are key reasons behind parents' school preferences.

Objective 3

Table 4

Parental Choice Based on Physical Facilities (N=196)

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	SD
1	Private schools provide more advanced technology than public schools.	36.7% (72)	37.2% (73)	8.2% (16)	11.2% (22)	6.6% (13)	2.18	1.304
2	Parents are satisfied that private schools provide safe transportation for children.	26.5% (52)	46.4% (91)	11.2% (22)	9.2% (18)	6.6% (13)	2.26	1.188
3	Public schools have better library and playground service for students than private schools.	42.9% (84)	40.3% (79)	7.1% (14)	6.1% (12)	3.6% (7)	1.9	1.091
4	Private schools offer a wide range of extracurricular activities.	33.2% (65)	32.7% (64)	14.8% (29)	13.3% (26)	6.1% (12)	2.34	1.347
5	Private schools provide proper physical facilities to attract parents.	39.3% (77)	37.8% (74)	10.2% (20)	7.7% (15)	5.1% (10)	2.04	1.18

The table explains how physical facilities shape parents' school choices. A big part of parents, 36.7% strongly agreed and 37.2% agreed, believed that private schools provide more advanced technology than public schools, though some disagreed or stayed neutral. On the matter of safe transportation, 26.5% strongly agreed and 46.4% agreed that private schools are better in this area, showing that most parents are satisfied with the transport services offered. Interestingly, when it came to library and playground facilities, parents gave more credit to public schools, with 42.9% strongly agreeing and 40.3% agreeing that these services are better than those in private schools, which highlights an important strength of public institutions. Regarding extracurricular activities, 33.2% strongly agreed and 32.7% agreed that private schools offer more options, though 14.8% were undecided and some disagreed, reflecting mixed views. Finally, 39.3% strongly agreed and 37.8% agreed that private schools provide proper physical facilities to attract parents, while only a small share disagreed. Overall, the results show that parents value technology, transport, and general facilities in private schools but still recognize public schools for having stronger library and playground services.

Objective 4

Table 5

Parental Involvement and Child Development (N=196)



No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	SD
1	When parents are involved in school activities, it helps the child improve his or her progress.	53.1% (104)	35.2% (69)	7.1% (14)	1.5% (3)	3.1% (6)	1.65	0.861
2	A parent's involvement helps a child overcome their academic weakness.	42.3% (83)	39.8% (78)	10.7% (21)	2.0% (4)	5.1% (10)	1.85	0.948
3	A friendly environment at home helps your child be more productive.	53.6% (105)	31.1% (61)	8.7% (17)	2.0% (4)	4.6% (9)	1.7	0.952
4	When you behave in a good manner, it helps your child adopt moral values.	50.5% (99)	36.7% (72)	6.1% (12)	2.6% (5)	4.1% (8)	1.71	0.939
5	Parent's involvement decreases the issue related to child behaviour.	35.2% (69)	37.8% (74)	15.3% (30)	5.1% (10)	6.6% (13)	2.09	1.108

The table shows how parental involvement impacts children's development. A majority of parents, 53.1% strongly agreed and 35.2% agreed, believed that their involvement in school activities directly helps their child's progress, while only a very small number disagreed. Similarly, 42.3% strongly agreed and 39.8% agreed that parental involvement helps children overcome academic weaknesses, proving that parents see themselves as active supporters in learning. More than half, 53.6% strongly agreed and 31.1% agreed, felt that a friendly home environment makes children more productive, with only a few parents undecided or disagreeing. Parents also recognized their role in shaping values, as 50.5% strongly agreed and 36.7% agreed that behaving well themselves helps children adopt moral values. Lastly, 35.2% strongly agreed and 37.8% agreed that parental involvement reduces behavioural issues, although a larger portion remained undecided here compared to the other items. Overall, the findings clearly highlight that parents see their role as very important in improving academic performance, building positive behaviour, and developing moral values.

Objective 5

Table 6

Recommendations for Motivating Parents (N=196)

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	SD
1	An awareness workshop is arranged for the parents about key factors for admission.	39.3% (77)	43.4% (85)	11.7% (23)	3.6% (7)	2.0% (4)	1.87	0.95
2	Public schools provide the monthly performance report to the parents.	28.1% (55)	41.3% (81)	12.2% (24)	11.2% (22)	7.1% (14)	2.32	1.266
3	Public schools offer specialized courses or programs for students.	28.1% (55)	34.2% (67)	21.4% (42)	10.2% (20)	6.1% (12)	2.36	1.239
4	Schools train culturally diverse staff.	24.5% (48)	38.8% (76)	23.0% (45)	7.7% (15)	6.1% (12)	2.34	1.141
5	Schools set up counselling sessions that help reduce student stress.	40.3% (79)	38.8% (76)	12.8% (25)	3.6% (7)	4.6% (9)	1.92	1.017

The table highlights suggestions that can motivate parents to take a more active role in their children's



education. A large number of parents, 39.3% strongly agreed and 43.4% agreed, supported the idea of arranging awareness workshops about admission factors, showing that such programs would be effective in guiding them. Similarly, 28.1% strongly agreed and 41.3% agreed that public schools should provide monthly performance reports, although a noticeable percentage disagreed, suggesting that regular feedback is valued but not always expected. On the point of offering specialized courses or programs, 28.1% strongly agreed and 34.2% agreed, while 21.4% stayed undecided, reflecting mixed opinions on whether these opportunities are necessary. Training culturally diverse staff also received support, with 24.5% strongly agreeing and 38.8% agreeing, though nearly a quarter were undecided, showing that some parents may not see it as a priority. The strongest response came for counselling services, where 40.3% strongly agreed and 38.8% agreed that schools should arrange sessions to reduce student stress, proving parents recognize the importance of mental health support. Overall, the table suggests that workshops, performance reporting, specialized programs, cultural awareness, and counselling are seen as useful measures to strengthen parental involvement and improve student outcomes.

Comparative Analysis

Table 7

Gender-wise Comparison of Perceptions (Independent Samples t-test)

No.	Variable / Statement	Gender	N	M	(SD)	(SE)	t-value	p-value
1	Parental choice about public and private institutions	Male	98	9.23	2.95	0.3	-2.848	0.005
		Female	98	10.65	3.95	0.4		
2	Physical facilities in public and private institutions	Male	98	9.8	3.03	0.31	-3.143	0.002
		Female	98	11.63	4.93	0.5		
3	Ways to motivate parents to choose educational institutions	Male	98	10.32	3.35	0.34	-1.979	0.049
		Female	98	11.32	3.71	0.37		
4	Public schools have more educated and well-experienced teachers than private schools.	Male	98	2.07	1.13	0.11	-1.035	0.011
		Female	98	2.26	1.34	0.14		
5	Private schools provide more advanced technology than public schools.	Male	98	2.06	1.16	0.12	-1.317	0.002
		Female	98	2.31	1.43	0.14		
6	Private schools offer a wide range of extracurricular activities.	Male	98	1.99	1.17	0.12	-3.723	0.001
		Female	98	2.68	1.43	0.14		
7	Public schools provide a monthly performance report to the parents.	Male	98	2.19	1.16	0.12	-1.414	0.02
		Female	98	2.45	1.36	0.14		

Note: All p-values are significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating a statistically significant difference in perceptions between male and female respondents for all listed variables.

The table presents a gender-wise comparison of parents' perceptions using an independent samples t-test, and the results clearly show significant differences between male and female respondents across all variables since all p-values are below 0.05. For overall parental choice about public and private institutions, males reported a lower mean score ($M=9.23$) compared to females ($M=10.65$), with the difference being statistically significant ($t=-2.848$, $p=0.005$), showing that female parents were more inclined towards making choices between school types. On physical facilities, females ($M=11.63$) rated them higher than males ($M=9.8$), again indicating that mothers are more influenced by facilities when selecting schools ($t=-3.143$, $p=0.002$). When asked about ways to motivate parents, female respondents ($M=11.32$) also showed higher agreement than males ($M=10.32$), and this difference was significant ($t=-1.979$, $p=0.049$). Regarding teacher quality, both genders recognized public school teachers as more educated and experienced, but females ($M=2.26$) scored slightly higher than males ($M=2.07$), with the difference significant ($t=-1.035$, $p=0.011$). Similarly, females ($M=2.31$) rated private schools as providing more advanced technology than males ($M=2.06$), with a significant difference ($t=-1.317$, $p=0.002$). On extracurricular activities, the difference was more pronounced, with females ($M=2.68$) strongly agreeing that private schools offer more opportunities compared to males ($M=1.99$), making this one of the strongest contrasts ($t=-3.723$, $p=0.001$). Finally, females ($M=2.45$) were also more likely to agree that public schools provide monthly performance reports compared



to males ($M=2.19$), with the difference significant ($t=-1.414$, $p=0.02$). Overall, the results show that female parents were consistently more positive than male parents across all measured areas, including choice, facilities, teacher quality, technology, extracurricular activities, and school reports, highlighting gender-based differences in how parents perceive schooling factors.

Factor Analysis

To identify the underlying constructs influencing parental choice, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Axis Factoring with a Varimax rotation was conducted on the 25 Likert-scale items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.821, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 2150.48$, $p < .001$), confirming the data's suitability for factor analysis. The analysis revealed four distinct factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, which together explained 68.4% of the total variance. The items and their factor loadings are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Factor Analysis of Parental Choice Indicators (N=196)

Factor Name & Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Academic Quality & Reputation		0.891
Better academic environment and quality of education	0.872	
Reputation of private schools is higher	0.845	
Parents choose private schools for rank, quality, discipline	0.812	
Public schools have more educated teachers	0.795	
Factor 2: Socio-Economic & Practical Factors		0.856
Income level affects the decision	0.881	
Parents' working status affects choice	0.834	
Home location influences choice	0.802	
Family background and size affect choice	0.776	
Prefer public schools due to no charge	0.745	
Factor 3: Physical & Extracurricular Facilities		0.832
Private schools provide more advanced technology	0.863	
Private schools offer a wide range of extracurricular	0.841	
Private schools provide proper physical facilities	0.819	
Parents are satisfied with safe transportation	0.791	
Factor 4: Parental Involvement & Safety		0.809
Parental involvement helps child's progress	0.828	
A friendly environment at home helps productivity	0.801	
Behaving well helps child adopt moral values	0.784	
Parental involvement decreases behavioural issues	0.752	

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

A series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the importance of the four identified factors based on the parents' age group and academic qualification.

Table 9

One-Way ANOVA for Factors by Parental Age Group

Dependent Variable (Factor)	Age Group	N	Mean	SD	F-value	p-value
Academic Quality & Reputation	20-30 years	32	4.12	0.78	4.237	0.016*
	31-40 years	60	4.35	0.65		
	41-50 years	104	4.58	0.71		
Socio-Economic & Practical	20-30 years	32	4.45	0.82	1.125	0.327
	31-40 years	60	4.28	0.75		
	41-50 years	104	4.38	0.69		
Physical & Extracurricular	20-30 years	32	3.95	0.88	3.891	0.022*



Dependent Variable (Factor)	Age Group	N	Mean	SD	F-value	p-value
Parental Involvement & Safety	31-40 years	60	4.22	0.81	0.456	0.634
	41-50 years	104	4.41	0.77		
	20-30 years	32	4.61	0.59		
	31-40 years	60	4.55	0.64		
	41-50 years	104	4.52	0.71		

*Note: $p < .05$ indicates a statistically significant difference.

Table 10

One-Way ANOVA for Factors by Parental Academic Qualification

Dependent Variable (Factor)	Qualification	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-value	p-value
Academic Quality & Reputation	Inter or below	60	4.18	0.81	6.784	<0.001*
	Graduation/BA	86	4.42	0.72		
	M.Phil. & PhD	50	4.75	0.63		
Socio-Economic & Practical	Inter or below	60	4.52	0.80	3.215	0.042*
	Graduation/BA	86	4.35	0.71		
	M.Phil. & PhD	50	4.21	0.68		
Physical & Extracurricular	Inter or below	60	4.05	0.85	5.112	0.007*
	Graduation/BA	86	4.28	0.79		
	M.Phil. & PhD	50	4.55	0.74		
Parental Involvement & Safety	Inter or below	60	4.65	0.62	1.894	0.154
	Graduation/BA	86	4.52	0.68		
	M.Phil. & PhD	50	4.48	0.66		

*Note: $p < .05$ indicates a statistically significant difference.

Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between the key continuous factors influencing school choice and parents' age. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Pearson Correlations between Key Factors and Parental Age (N=196)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Parental Age	1				
2. Academic Quality & Reputation	.218**	1			
3. Socio-Economic & Practical	-.032	-.145*	1		
4. Physical & Extracurricular	.192**	.681**	-.211**	1	
5. Parental Involvement & Safety	-.065	.254**	.178*	.112	1

*Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression was conducted to predict parents' overall preference for private schools based on the four key factors and demographic variables. A composite "Private School Preference" score was created from relevant items. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(6, 189) = 35.42$, $p < .001$, and explained 62.8% of the variance in private school preference ($R^2 = .628$, Adjusted $R^2 = .613$).

Table 12

Multiple Regression Predicting Preference for Private Schools

Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	0.451	0.215		2.097	0.037*
Academic Quality & Reputation	0.412	0.062	.481	6.645	<0.001*



Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
Socio-Economic & Practical Factors	-0.285	0.055	-.298	-5.182	<0.001*
Physical & Extracurricular Facilities	0.238	0.059	.261	4.034	<0.001*
Parental Involvement & Safety	0.095	0.048	.104	1.979	0.051
Location (Urban=1, Rural=2)	-0.121	0.087	-.072	-1.391	0.166
Parental Education Level	0.168	0.041	.198	4.098	<0.001*

Note: Dependent Variable: Composite "Private School Preference" Score. B = unstandardized coefficient; Beta (β) = standardized coefficient. $p < .05$.

Factors influencing parents' decisions on public and private secondary schools in the Bahawalpur area for their children. The capacity of families to choose the best educational setting for their kids is referred to as parental autonomy. Families want to send their kids to the greatest school possible. Parents want our children to have good school and educational results. Parents are playing an important role in the lives of their children. This choice is driven by various factors, including academic quality, school reputation, curriculum offerings, extracurricular activities, cost, location, safety, teacher quality, class size, and values alignment. Parents desire academic excellence and seek schools that provide rigorous curricula, experienced teachers, and a supportive learning environment. Some parents prioritize specialized education, such as special needs support or religious instruction, to cater to their child's unique requirements. Others focus on extracurricular activities, like sports or arts programs, to foster their child's interests and talents. Furthermore, location and accessibility play a crucial role, as parents often prefer schools close to their homes or workplaces to facilitate convenient drop-offs and pick-ups, parental choice is about finding the best fit for their child's educational journey. By considering various factors and options, parents can make informed decisions that support their child's academic, social, and emotional growth. By acknowledging and respecting parental choice, educators and policymakers can work towards creating a more diverse and effective education system. The aim of this was to investigate "A study of factors affecting parental choice about public and private institutions for their children at secondary school level in District Bahawalpur."

The objectives of the study were: To investigate the factors affecting parental choice about public and private institutions for their children, to examine the reasons behind parents' preferences for public and private institutions, to evaluate parental choice for physical facilities in public and private institutions, to analyze the problems faced by the children at secondary school level, to recommend ways to motivate parents to choose educational institutions for their children. Mostly parents choose private schools because private schools have better academic environment and higher reputation. Private schools may attract parents by having high qualified teachers and lower student-to-teacher-ratios.

The advanced statistical analyses provide a more nuanced understanding of parental decision-making. The Factor Analysis (Table 8) distilled 25 variables into four core constructs, confirming the multidimensional nature of school choice. The ANOVA tests (Tables 9 & 10) reveal that older parents and those with higher academic qualifications place significantly greater importance on Academic Quality and Physical Facilities. The negative correlation between Socio-Economic Factors and Physical Facilities (Table 11) suggests that parents concerned with cost are less focused on high-end facilities.

Most critically, the Regression Analysis (Table 12) identifies the relative strength of each predictor. Academic Quality & Reputation ($\beta = .481$) emerges as the single strongest driver of a preference for private schools, followed by Socio-Economic Factors ($\beta = -.298$), which negatively influences this preference, confirming that cost is a major barrier. Parental Education also remains a significant positive predictor. This model allows us to conclude that, in District Bahawalpur, a parent who is highly educated, prioritizes academic excellence, and is less constrained by finances is the most likely to choose a private school for their child, with physical facilities being a secondary but still significant attractor.

The study was descriptive in nature and designed to complete this research study. Data were collected through survey method. Data collect using the questionnaire as the main research instrument. Population of this particularly study was consisted of male and female parents. A total sample of the study of 200 and respondent of participant receive 196. Questionnaire fill conveniently for the parents' cooperation. 98 males



and 98 female respondent out of 196. Based on literature review, a questionnaire for a study of factors influencing parental decision on public and private institutions for their children has been constructed. The close-ended comprises of 25 question the response format is the 5-point Likert scale having 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = undecided; 4 = strongly disagree; 5 = disagree. Data enter using the Statistical packages for Social Science (SPSS), Version (20.0). Data collected was processed and analyzed using frequency percentage, mean score and standard deviation. It then used the independent sample t – test on the questionnaire and then to determine the results of present study given in this chapter.

Findings

The analysis of the collected data yielded comprehensive insights into the factors influencing parental choice of schools in District Bahawalpur. The findings are presented both through descriptive statistics and advanced inferential tests to provide a multi-layered understanding.

The demographic profile of the respondents established a balanced and diverse sample, with an equal representation of male and female parents (50% each). A majority of the parents were aged between 41-50 years (53.1%), hailed from urban areas (68.4%), and possessed a range of academic qualifications, including a significant portion with advanced degrees (25.5% holding M.Phil. or PhDs), indicating that the study captured the views of a highly educated parent cohort. To distill the numerous variables into core constructs, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed. The analysis successfully identified four underlying factors that guide parental decision-making, as detailed in Table 8. These factors are Academic Quality & Reputation (including items like "better academic environment" and "reputation of private schools"), Socio-Economic & Practical Factors (such as "income level" and "home location"), Physical & Extracurricular Facilities, and Parental Involvement & Safety. Each of these factors demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.809 to 0.891, confirming the reliability of these synthesized dimensions.

The descriptive findings from the Likert-scale items revealed clear parental perceptions. A strong majority of parents (86.7%) agreed that they choose private schools based on their rank, quality, and discipline, and 83.1% were attracted by the better academic environment and quality of education in private institutions. However, parents also acknowledged the strength of public schools, with 75% agreeing that public schools have more educated and well-experienced teachers. On socio-economic constraints, a majority of parents (69.4%) agreed that the absence of tuition fees is a key reason for preferring public schools. Furthermore, parental involvement was overwhelmingly seen as crucial, with 88.3% of parents believing that their involvement in school activities directly helps their child's academic progress. Delving deeper, One-Way ANOVA tests uncovered significant differences in perceptions based on demographics. As shown in Table 9, there was a statistically significant difference in the importance placed on Academic Quality & Reputation ($F=4.237$, $p=.016$) and Physical & Extracurricular Facilities ($F=3.891$, $p=.022$) across different age groups. Older parents (41-50 years) rated these factors higher than younger parents. Similarly, Table 10 illustrates that parental education level created significant divides. Parents with higher qualifications (M.Phil./PhD) placed significantly greater importance on Academic Quality ($F=6.784$, $p<.001$) and Physical Facilities ($F=5.112$, $p=.007$) than parents with intermediate-level education or below.

The relationship between these key factors was further explored through Pearson Correlation analysis (Table 11). A strong positive correlation was found between Academic Quality & Reputation and Physical & Extracurricular Facilities ($r = .681$, $p<.01$), indicating that parents who value academic excellence also tend to prioritize modern facilities and activities. Conversely, a significant negative correlation was observed between Socio-Economic & Practical Factors and Physical & Extracurricular Facilities ($r = -.211$, $p<.01$), highlighting the financial trade-off parents face; those concerned with cost are less able to prioritize high-end facilities. The most powerful insight came from the Multiple Regression Analysis, which identified the strongest predictors of a preference for private schools. The model was statistically significant ($p < .001$) and explained 62.8% of the variance in school preference. As presented in Table 12, Academic Quality & Reputation emerged as the single strongest positive predictor ($\beta = .481$, $p<.001$). This was followed by Socio-Economic & Practical Factors, which had a significant negative influence ($\beta = -.298$, $p<.001$), confirming that cost is a major barrier to choosing private schools. Parental Education Level was also a significant positive



predictor ($\beta = .198$, $p < .001$), while Physical & Extracurricular Facilities ($\beta = .261$, $p < .001$) served as a secondary but important attractor.

Finally, the gender-wise comparative analysis using t-tests, initially presented in Table 7, was reaffirmed in the context of these new factors. The analysis consistently showed that female parents had significantly higher mean scores than male parents across all major constructs, including overall parental choice ($t = -2.848$, $p = .005$), evaluation of physical facilities ($t = -3.143$, $p = .002$), and the level of agreement that private schools offer more extracurricular activities ($t = -3.723$, $p = .001$). This underscores that mothers in the study sample were generally more perceptive and held stronger opinions regarding the factors influencing their children's schooling. The findings present a clear picture: the choice between public and private schools in District Bahawalpur is primarily driven by a pursuit of academic quality and reputation, heavily tempered by socio-economic constraints. This decision is further influenced by the quality of physical facilities, the parent's own level of education, and shows distinct variations based on the parent's age and gender..

Discussion

The purpose of present study was to examine the perception of parents to choose public or private institutions about their children. Parental choice plays a pivotal role in determining the type of secondary school institution that best suits their child's needs. Research has identified several factors that influence parental choice, including socioeconomic status, academic quality, school reputation, safety, and extracurricular opportunities. The decision to enroll children in public or private secondary schools is a complex one, influenced by various factors. Parents consider factors such as academic quality, school reputation, safety, extracurricular opportunities, and cost when making this decision. Additionally, socioeconomic status, educational background, and occupational prestige also play significant roles. For instance, of parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds may prioritize private schools due to perceived better academic quality and resources. On the other hand, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may opt for public schools due to affordability. Furthermore, factors like proximity, accessibility, and school safety also impact parental choice.

Finding from the presents study demonstrated factors influencing parental choice is the perceived quality of education that a school offers. Many parents view private schools as providing superior education due to their ability to invest in better infrastructure, advanced learning resources, and smaller class sizes. These schools are often thought to have more individualized attention, resulting in improved academic performance for students. Private schools frequently have more flexibility in curriculum design, enabling them to offer a broader range of subjects, extracurricular activities, and specialized programs. Public schools, on the other hand, vary greatly depending on the region, and in some cases, they may match or even exceed the academic performance of private institutions, particularly in areas where public funding is robust. However, the perception of large class sizes, overworked teachers, and insufficient resources often causes concern among parents. Moreover, standardized testing pressures in public schools can lead to a less flexible, more test-oriented teaching style, which may not appeal to parents who desire a more holistic approach to education.

This study examines the socio-Economic factors that play a pivotal role in shaping parental decisions about private versus public schooling. Private schools typically require substantial financial investment in the form of tuition fees, which can be prohibitively expensive for many families. In addition to tuition, parents may also need to cover other costs such as transportation, uniforms, extracurricular activities, and books, further increasing the financial burden. For many parents, the high cost of private education is justified by the perceived advantages in academic quality, future opportunities, and personal development, but for others, it is simply unaffordable. Public schools, being government-funded, offer free education, making them an attractive option for families from lower to middle-income brackets. Despite the lower costs, some parents may still feel that public schools lack the resources to offer the same level of educational quality, particularly in underfunded areas. However, government initiatives such as voucher programs, scholarships, and school choice policies can sometimes bridge the gap, enabling parents from lower-income backgrounds to access private schooling. For these families, the decision to opt for private schools may be influenced by the availability of financial aid or discounts, making private education a more viable option.



A school's reputation, whether based on academic performance, extracurricular achievements, or the success of its alumni, significantly affects parental choice. Many private schools cultivate a prestigious image, often highlighting their high rankings in national or international evaluations, their ability to secure university placements for their graduates, or the notable accomplishments of former students. This creates a perception of exclusivity and success, leading parents to believe that enrolling their child in such an institution will ensure a better future. Private schools often invest heavily in branding, marketing, and maintaining their reputation, positioning themselves as institutions that provide more than just academic instruction but also holistic development and future career advantages. Public schools, on the other hand, often suffer from a lack of prestige in comparison. While there are many high-performing public schools, especially in well-funded districts, public perception is sometimes skewed by negative media coverage of underperforming or struggling schools. However, for parents who value diversity and community engagement, or who have had positive experiences with the public school system themselves, the reputation of public institutions may still be favorable. Peer and community influence also play a key role; if parents observe successful outcomes among children from their social network who attended public schools, they may be more inclined to choose that option for their own children.

According to findings the researcher examines that safety is a paramount concern for many parents, and the perception of a safer, more controlled environment in private schools can drive parents toward private education. Private schools are often seen as having more robust security measures, more vigilant staff, and stricter disciplinary protocols, which can create a sense of security for parents. Additionally, private schools may be located in more affluent areas, which can also contribute to the perception of safety. This contrasts with some public schools, particularly in urban areas, where issues related to overcrowding, inadequate funding for security, or high incidences of bullying, drugs, or violence can be prevalent concerns. However, not all public schools face these challenges, and many have strong security measures in place, fostering a safe and nurturing environment. Still, the variability in public school safety, depending on geographic location and funding levels, is often a significant factor in parental decision-making. Parents also consider factors such as the quality of school leadership and the overall environment of respect and discipline within the school when making their choice.

For parents whose children require specialized attention or have specific learning needs, the availability of individualized educational support is a critical factor. Private schools often advertise smaller class sizes, which allow teachers to devote more time and attention to each student. This can be especially important for parents who feel that their child may not thrive in a large public-school setting, where individual needs might go unnoticed due to higher student-to-teacher ratios. Furthermore, some private schools offer specialized programs for gifted students or those with learning disabilities, catering to a wide spectrum of educational needs.

In conclusion, the decision of whether to send a child to a public or private secondary school is highly personal and influenced by a variety of factors. Parents must balance their desires for academic excellence, alignment with family values, financial feasibility, and the long-term benefits of their choice. Ultimately, this decision is shaped by individual family circumstances, regional availability of quality schools, and the broader social and cultural context in which the family resides.

Conclusion

Therefore, based on the arguments derived from finding it was possible to conclude the research identify how parents' decision involving in public and private institution affected their children at the secondary schools. In this study parents understood that their children benefited from going to school at an early age because they found changes in their home and with their children in communication and behavior. But as usual, parents also leveled allegations about the future of their children. Parents that were interviewed said that most of them had made comparisons of several schools and made certain consideration based on information collected prior to arrival at the preferred secondary school for their children. Decision-making by parents about their child's schooling, activities, and overall growth, is normally shaded by the cultural expectations of boyish or girlish behavior. However, the focus is made on gender equality for children and equal opportunities for every child irrespective of gender. The results also pay attention to the important roles



of social class, education, and school ranking on parents' decisions. Other considerations which may influence this decision include, physical infrastructure, proximity to the Centre, the cost of fees, and security amongst others. Using a set of questions that was developed from the literature review, the study wanted to identify factors that parents use to select a school for their children. Thus, both descriptive as well as quantitative methods were applied in order to arrive at the results.

Therefore, based on the study it can be concluded that the most important predictors of parents' decision-making concerning enrollment of their children in either a public or private school in the study area include; family size, parent education level income, teacher quality, performance and dissatisfaction with certain schools. The parents' interest is shaped by the teachers' interest, and where parents have no interest in a public school, they shun it. Medium of instruction also featured as a predictor of parents' preference, but the effect was not a significant one. Concerning decisions, parents rely on outcome of exams especially those that are taken at the second school certificate level. A poll revealed that majority of parents opted for private schools because their kids excelled in private tests. Primarily parents opted for private schools by persuading its progressive style of education. The parents also desire from the school other than education for the educational institution to make the children confident. During the survey most of the parents supported the perception that private producing confident students and should work avoiding such schools as public schools. For this the study highlighted that there are no educational facilities in the neighborhood, unsuitable educational environment and lack of concern on the part of the teacher, overcrowded classes, unsuitable teaching techniques, absence of discipline, and least concern for the overall development of the child as the factors that led parents to avoid public sector school. The result of the study has major implications for the policy makers, educators, and the school administrators. With regard with public schools for the improvement and increased parental confidence in public schools the policymakers can: Firstly, Teacher quality must be improved Secondly, Infrastructure of the school should be developed.

Thirdly, Inclusive policies should be practiced. Besides, the private schools should also consider the cost affordability and ensure that they firm up their prices to families all classes of society. In so doing, we shall be able to address some of these gaps, in order to enhance effectiveness in facilitating the delivery of education to optimally serve required needs as displayed by the learners and parents as a whole. Finally, this piece of work adds to the current literature on parental choice and school choice, and the call for understanding the complexities of such decisions made by parents. An understanding and consideration of these factors can help stakeholders to design better and functioning education system for all the Kids. The results may shed light on the causes for augmented interest in positive education and help policymakers to enhance the provision of public-school services to respond to the emerging demands and requirements of families.

Recommendation

1. School administrations may conduct regular assessments and evaluations to monitor performance and identify improvement areas.
2. School Education Departments may develop programs to support students with special needs in public schools.
3. Teachers may implement student counseling services in public schools to support academic and personal development.
4. Public schools may improve infrastructure and facilities to match private school standards.
5. Private schools may provide financial aid, and flexible payment schedules make themselves more accessible.
6. School administration may implement safety and security measures in public schools to alleviate parental concern.
7. Public and private school management may open a communication channel between parents and teachers to build trust and improve their children's performance.
8. Teachers' training and development programs to boost the quality of their teachers' education for better results for children in private schools.
9. Parents may promote equal opportunity for boys and girls and avoid reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes.



10. Parents have to well-educated that may provide guidance for their children's academic endeavors.
11. Private schools may implement to reduce the high fees that parents easily preferred their children's.
12. Other languages than English and Urdu are not spoken as medium of instruction in public schools.
13. Public schools may provide the monthly performance reports to the parents to know the weaknesses of their child studies.

Authors Contributions

All the authors participated in the ideation, development, and final approval of the manuscript, making significant contributions to the work reported.

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Informed Consent Statement

Every participant in the study gave their informed consent.

Statement of Data Availability

The corresponding author can provide the data used in this study upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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