

MS Research Thesis

**PARENTAL PREFERENCES IN SELECTION OF PUBLIC
AND PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A COMPARATIVE
STUDY**



Researcher

Ansar Ghafoor

Reg: 33-FOE/MSEDU/S23

Supervisor

Dr. Azhar Mahmood

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP &
MANAGEMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD
PAKISTAN
July 2025**

**PARENTAL PREFERENCES IN SELECTION OF PUBLIC
AND PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A COMPARATIVE
STUDY**



Ansar Ghafoor
33-FOE/MSEDU/S23

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
MS in Educational leaderships and management

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP &
MANAGEMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD
PAKISTAN
2025**

SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATE

The thesis titled “Parental Preferences in Selection of Public and Private Primary Schools: A Comparative” submitted by Ansar Ghafoor Reg:33-FOE/MSEDU/S-23 is partial fulfilment of MS degree in Education, has been completed under my guidance and supervision. I am satisfied with the quality of student’s research work and allow him to submit this for further process as per IIUI rules and regulations.

Date: _____

Supervisor: _____

Dr. Azhar Mahmood

APPROVAL SHEET

PARENTAL PREFERENCES IN SELECTION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

By

Ansar Ghafoor

Reg:33-FOE/MSEDU/S-23

Accepted by the Department of Educational leaderships and management, Faculty of Education, International Islamic University Islamabad, in the partial fulfilment of the award of the degree of “**MS EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIPS AND MANAGEMENT**”.

Viva Voce Committee:

Supervisor: _____

(Dr. Azhar Mehmood)

Internal Examiner: _____

External Examiner: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson: _____

**Department of Educational
Leaderships and Management, Faculty
of Education, International Islamic
University Islamabad.**

Dean: _____

**Faculty of Education,
International Islamic University
Islamabad.**

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, Ansar Ghafoor, Reg. No: 30- FOE/MSEDU/S23 as a student of MS in Educational Leaderships and Management at International Islamic University, Islamabad do hereby declare that the thesis entitled “Parental Preferences In Selection Of Public And Private Primary Schools: A Comparative”, submitted for the partial fulfilment of MS in Educational Leaderships and Management is my original work, except where otherwise acknowledged in the text and has not been submitted or published earlier and shall not in future, be submitted by researchers for obtaining and degree from this or any other university or institutions.

Ansar Ghafoor

Acknowledgment

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah Almighty, whose boundless mercy, guidance, and blessings have enabled me to embark upon and complete this research endeavor.

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to my respected supervisor, Dr. Azhar Mahmood, Associate Professor and Chairman, Department of Educational Leadership and Management, International Islamic University Islamabad. His insightful mentorship, scholarly guidance, and consistent encouragement played a pivotal role in shaping the direction and depth of this study.

I would also like to pay heartfelt tribute to the late Professor Dr. Nabi Baksh Jumani, a distinguished educationist and visionary whose enduring legacy continues to inspire scholars and educators across generations. May Allah (SWT) elevate his status and grant him the highest place in Jannah. Ameen.

I extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Sheikh Tariq, Dr. Sufi Amin, and Dr. Asad Abbas Rizvi of the International Islamic University Islamabad for their generous academic support, constructive suggestions, and valuable insights, all of which greatly enriched the quality and rigor of this research.

With heartfelt gratitude, I would like to thank my beloved parents for their prayers, sacrifices, and unwavering faith that have been my greatest strength. My sincere appreciation goes to my devoted wife for her patience, encouragement, and constant support throughout this journey.

To my dear children, Eshal Fatima, Muhammad Faris, and Umaima Fatima, your love and joy inspired me every day and gave meaning to my efforts.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my dear friend Muhammad Saif Ali, Dr. Naeem Abbas Malik, and Dr. Mubashir Altaf, whose constant encouragement, guidance, and companionship have been a great source of support throughout this academic endeavor. To all my friends and colleagues who stood by me with their kind words, support, and encouragement, thank you for making this journey more enriching and meaningful.

May Allah (SWT) reward all those who contributed whether directly or indirectly, to the successful completion of this research. Ameen.

Ansar Ghafoor

Abstract

This study aims to explore the reasons why parents in Islamabad, Pakistan, prefer either public or private primary schools for their children. It looks closely at what matters most to them when making this important decision. Specifically, the study focuses on four key areas: (1) understanding how financial considerations shape parental choices, (2) examining the influence of a school's academic reputation, (3) comparing the co-curricular activities offered in public versus private schools, and (4) evaluating the school facilities that attract parents to one type of school over another. To achieve this, the study employed sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, utilizing surveys and interviews to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The target population included parents of primary school children in Sector F-8, Islamabad, from which a sample of 150 parents (75 from public and 75 from private schools) was selected for the survey. Additionally, qualitative interviews were conducted with five parents and four school principals to gain deeper insights. Data from the surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent sample t-tests, while the interview data were examined through thematic analysis. The findings revealed clear differences in parental preferences based on school type. For parents choosing public schools, financial factors such as affordability and access to free education were most important. In contrast, parents selecting private schools were more influenced by the school's academic standing, availability of co-curricular activities, and quality of facilities. These patterns were supported by both statistical results and interview responses, with private schools commonly perceived as offering better discipline, use of technology, structured extracurricular programs, and stronger safety measures. The study concludes that parents make school choices by weighing economic realities against the quality of education they aspire to provide for their children. While private schools are often seen as offering greater overall value, their cost can be prohibitive for many families. Public schools, therefore, remain essential for ensuring educational access, though they require targeted improvements particularly in infrastructure, teacher performance, and extracurricular programming. To address these disparities, the study recommends several policy measures: introducing voucher or subsidy programs for low-income families, upgrading public school infrastructure, increasing transparency in private school fee structures, expanding co-curricular opportunities in public schools, and developing centralized academic performance databases to help parents make more informed decisions. These efforts can help bridge the quality gap between public and private education and promote more equitable access to quality primary schooling.

Keywords: *Parental preferences, academic reputation, extracurricular activities, School facilities, mixed-methods approach, decision-making processes*

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Chapter 1	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of Study	2
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Significance of Study	4
1.4 Objectives of the Study.....	4
1.5 Research Questions	4
1.6 Null Hypotheses.....	5
1.7 Delimitation of the Study.....	5
1.8 Operational Definitions.....	5
CHAPTER 2	9
LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1 INTRODUCTION	9
2.2 Historical Background of Public vs. Private Education.....	10
2.3 Theoretical Frameworks	14
2.4 Conceptual Framework.....	16
2.5 Fiscal Factors Influencing Parental Choice in Islamabad, Pakistan	18
2.6 Role of Academic Reputation in School Selection.....	20
2.7 Comparison of Co-Curricular Activities in Public and Private Schools in Islamabad, Pakistan.....	25
2.8 Facilities That Influence Parental Preference in Islamabad, Pakistan	29
2.9 The Role of Marketing and School Branding in Influencing Parental Preference for Schools in Islamabad	32
2.10 Challenges Specific to Islamabad in Influencing Parental Preference for Schools ...	35
2.11 Research Gaps.....	39
2.12 Summary of Literature Review.....	40
CHAPTER 3	42
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	42

3.1 Research Design.....	42
3.2 Population and Sample of the Study.....	43
3.3 Validity	44
3.4 Pilot Testing.....	45
3.5 Reliability.....	45
3.6 Data Collection	46
3.7 Data Analysis	47
3.8 Ethical Considerations	47
3.9 Work Plan	47
CHAPTER 4	48
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	48
4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis: Parental Preferences in School Selection	48
4.2 Qualitative analysis.....	56
4.3 Summary of Chapter Four: Integrated Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings.....	67
CHAPTER 5	70
SUMMARY, FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	70
5.1 Summary.....	70
5.2 Findings.....	71
5.3 Discussion.....	79
5.4 Conclusions.....	81
5.5 Recommendations.....	82
5.6 Limitations of the Study.....	84
5.7 Areas for Future Research	85
REFERENCES	87
APPENDIX.....	98

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The future of individuals and the welfare of society are significantly shaped by education. Children's academic growth, social mobility, and prospects for a lifetime can all be significantly impacted by the standard and accessibility of elementary education (UNESCO, 2023). The growing variety of school types from public to prestigious private institutions has created an educational environment in which parents are being asked to make more important decisions regarding their children's education in many emerging nations, including Pakistan. A complicated interaction between financial ability, academic standing, school reputation, extracurricular activities, and proximity frequently influences these choices (Shulgina, 2023; Smith & Lee, 2023).

Public and private primary schools coexist in Pakistani cities like Islamabad, each with unique benefits and difficulties. Private schools have high tuition rates and other related expenses that many families cannot afford, even though they are frequently thought to have superior academic results, contemporary facilities, and orderly settings. On the other hand, despite being more affordable, public schools frequently have drawbacks like inadequate funding, packed classrooms, and antiquated teaching strategies (Andrabi et al., 2020; Malik, 2022). Many parents are forced to make challenging trade-offs between affordability and quality because of these disparities.

But choosing a school isn't always a matter of parental freedom. Many families have little to no access to high-quality educational opportunities, particularly those from marginalized or low-income backgrounds. Even when parents are unhappy with their present options, they are unable to "choose" a school due to socioeconomic hurdles, geographic limitations, the absence of close private schools, and unreliable transportation (Srivastava, 2021; Cortez, 2023). In this situation, decisions that seem like choices are frequently restricted or coerced, which raises important concerns regarding educational access and equity.

Thus, it is crucial to comprehend the factors that influence school choice to identify systemic obstacles that impede equal access to high-quality education as well as to record parental opinions. This study is especially significant for Islamabad, a city where

educational inequality and socioeconomic diversity coexist. This study intends to support institutional improvement and educational policy reform by investigating the reasons behind and methods used by parents in making decisions about their children's education, as well as the constraints they face.

Most Pakistan's previous studies on school choice have either concentrated on enrollment trends generally or have only employed quantitative or qualitative approaches, which has limited our understanding of the topic (Asad, 2020; Rehman et al., 2021). To effectively inform policy decisions, there is an urgent need for context-specific, mixed-method research that combines statistical data with parental voices and lived experiences. To close that gap, this study compares the preferences of parents in Islamabad for public and private schools. It does this by employing both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to provide a comprehensive picture of the problem.

1.1 Background of Study

Choosing the right basic education is a decision that weighs heavily on the minds of parents. Their child's future abilities will be shaped by this foundation, which will serve as the basis for their educational journey. The landscape of basic and primary education has recently changed dramatically, highlighting the importance of providing quality education that is adapted to childrens' various needs. This transition has brought parental preferences to the forefront when choosing between public and private primary schools. Researchers have identified several elements that influence parental decision-making and behavior toward it. Jackson and Jonson (2019) underline the importance of affordable tuition and financial aid packages in making education accessible to students from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Smith et al. (2020) underline the importance of creative teaching methods, current curriculums, and faculty development in improving educational quality.

Furthermore, researchers like Brown and Garcia (2018) have underlined the need to provide a well-rounded educational experience through a variety of academic programs and extracurricular activities. Foster and Jenkins (2021) emphasize the necessity of building close relationships with parents through open communication and participation in school activities. Another key feature is accessibility, with appropriate campus sites and

transit alternatives providing students with simple access, as mentioned by Lee and Patel (2017). Furthermore, Liu et al. (2019) investigated the reputation and prestige of elementary schools as they relate to academic success and community engagement. Wang and Chen (2021) argue that maintaining ideal class sizes is crucial for individualized attention and student variety. In this context, understanding parental preferences while selecting primary schools is an important topic to investigate. By doing a comparative analysis on these parameters, we hope to provide insights that might improve educational policy and school practices, thereby increasing the quality and accessibility of primary education.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

When deciding between public and private primary schools for their children, parents in Islamabad must make a difficult choice. Private schools are far more expensive even if they are thought to provide better facilities, extracurricular activities, and academic success. On the other hand, public schools are often criticized for their overcrowding, poor infrastructure, and less competitive academic results, despite offering more inexpensive education. The precise factors influencing school selection in urban Pakistan are still not well understood in empirical, context-sensitive research, despite the growing significance of parental involvement in educational decision-making (Shulgina, 2023; Smith & Lee, 2023).

While prior research has looked at school choice in a variety of national and international contexts, most of these studies either provide descriptive qualitative insights or only use quantitative metrics (Asad, 2020; Cortez, 2023). Comprehensive mixed-method studies that reflect the complex desires of Pakistani parents in an urban school environment that is changing quickly, like Islamabad's, are scarce. Furthermore, the process of selecting a school has become even more complicated due to growing privatization, socioeconomic inequality, and the growing demand for holistic education (Verger et al., 2016; Srivastava, 2013).

To fill this research gap, this study aims to identify the main financial, academic, extracurricular, and infrastructure factors that affect parents' choices between public and private primary schools in Islamabad, as well as how these preferences differ depending

on socioeconomic status. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, this study examines the underlying perceptions and motives of parents through interviews in addition to determining the statistical significance of these elements. This will give school administrators and educational officials useful information to enhance quality, access, and equity in the public and private sectors.

1.3 Significance of Study

This study aims to investigate and analyze the elements and social behaviors that influence parental decision-making while choosing elementary schools for their children in Islamabad, Pakistan, including both public and private institutions. By analyzing parental choices, the study hopes to identify the complex interplay of socioeconomic, cultural, and educational factors that influence these decisions. The research uses a mixed-method approach, including surveys and interviews, to provide a complete understanding of the various elements that influence school choosing procedures. Finally, the findings aim to inform policymakers, educators, and parents, to assist in the development of inclusive and successful solutions that address the many needs and preferences of families in Islamabad's educational landscape.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate the fiscal factors influencing parental preference between public and private primary schools
2. To analyze the role of academic reputation in the process of selecting primary schools between the public and private sectors.
3. To compare the co-curricular activities of primary schools in the public and private sectors.
4. To evaluate the facilities that attract parents to select primary schools in the public and private sectors.

1.5 Research Questions

Q 1: What roles do tuition fees and associated costs play in parents' considerations when choosing between public and private primary schools?

Q 2: How do parents perceive the academic reputation of public and private primary schools, and how does this perception influence their decision-making?

Q 3: What types of co-curricular activities are offered in public and private primary schools, and how do they differ in terms of variety and quality?

Q 4: What specific facilities do parents consider important when selecting a primary school for their children, and how do these preferences differ between public and private schools?

1.6 Null Hypotheses

H⁰¹ Tuition fees and associated costs do not significantly influence parents' decisions when choosing between public and private primary schools.

H⁰² There is no significant difference in the perceived academic reputation between public and private primary schools among parents making a school selection decision.

H⁰³ There is no significant difference in the variety and quality of extracurricular activities offered.

H⁰⁴ There is no significant difference in the attractiveness of facilities (such as infrastructure, classroom resources, sports facilities, and technology resources) between public and private primary schools in influencing parental school selection.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

This study is restricted to Islamabad, Pakistan, to give a concentrated and in-depth analysis within a specific urban context. It does not include parental preferences for primary school selection outside of this region. The study especially investigates factors impacting parental decisions linked to the choosing of public and private primary schools in Islamabad, focusing basic education at the primary level.

1.8 Operational Definitions

1.8.1 Parental Preferences

This includes the school's academic reputation in society, the facilities offered by the school, its location, its focus on extracurricular activities, class strength, quality of education, educational philosophy, and fees.

1.8.2 Selection of Schools

It involves parents gathering information for choosing the school, evaluating different options, and making better decisions based on their choices and the needs of their child.

1.8.3 Public Primary Schools

These are government-funded schools that are accessible to all students, and these schools are mostly under the supervision of the government and adopt the policies suggested by the government

1.8.4 Private Primary Schools

These are independent institutions, often run by organizations, religious sectors, or private companies, and they charge tuition fees.

1.8.5 Comparative Study

This type of study aims to examine and compare two or more groups or variables to find similarities, differences, patterns, or relationships between them. In this context, the study will compare how parents' preferences differ when selecting between public and private primary schools for the betterment of their child.

1.8.6 Tuition Fee

Measured through parents' responses regarding the affordability and reasonableness of the tuition fee structure compared to the public and private schools.

1.8.7 Transportation

Measured through parental assessment of the transportation expenses associated with the school, including convenience, distance, and availability of transport facilities.

1.8.8 Additional Cost

Measured by the extent to which other school-related expenses (e.g., uniforms, books, examination charges) influence parents' school preference.

1.8.9 Results

Measured by parents' perceptions of the school's academic performance based on exam results, board outcomes, or overall achievement of students.

1.8.10 Student Evaluation

Measured by the methods used by the school to assess student progress and learning outcomes, such as tests, assignments, and report cards, and how parents perceive their effectiveness.

1.8.11 Feedback

Measured by parents' experiences of communication from the school regarding their child's academic progress, including teacher-parent meetings and performance reports.

1.8.12 Sports

Measured through parents' satisfaction with the variety, quality, and availability of sports programs provided by the school.

1.8.13 Arts

Measured by the school's engagement in cultural and art-based programs, and parents' perception of their contribution to holistic child development.

1.8.14 Study Tours

Measured by the organization and frequency of educational visits or excursions and parents' opinions about their educational value.

1.8.15 Infrastructure

Measured through parental assessment of the physical condition and environment of the school, including buildings, classrooms, and playgrounds.

1.8.16 Classroom Resources

Measured by the availability and quality of learning materials and teaching aids used within classrooms to support instruction.

1.8.17 Technological Resources

Measured through the presence and usage of modern digital tools in the school for teaching and learning purposes.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Education has a huge influence on a child's development and prospects. Parents must pick between public and private primary schools for their children. This literature review investigates the factors that influence parental decisions when choosing between various options, with a focus on comparing both sectors.

Numerous studies have been conducted on parents' choice of schools, highlighting its significance in both individual family decision-making and educational policy. This literature review looks at recent studies on parental preferences for public and private schools, highlighting factors that influence these decisions and identifying gaps in existing data.

Several research have highlighted the complicated, multifaceted character of school selection. For example, Shulgina's (2023) research in Georgia demonstrates that a variety of factors influence parents' decisions, including academic quality, school environment, and socioeconomic status. The study emphasizes the challenge of defining schools as either public or private, citing the existence of hybrid models such as charter schools that blur these distinctions.

According to a study on how parents select schools (Balter & Dunlop, 2023), academic achievement, safety, and religious orientation are important considerations. This study offers a nuanced perspective of parents' decision-making processes by utilizing experimental methodologies to comprehend the trade-offs they make. Other important factors are proximity, school reputation, and perceived educational quality. According to a mixed-method study done in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, parents favor private elementary schools because of the resources offered, the school environment, and the high caliber of instruction (Asad, 2020). In order to meet their children's requirements, many parents actively seek out better educational environments, making parental engagement in their children's education a crucial component.

A comparative study of public and private schools (Smith & Lee, 2023) reveals notable variations in the caliber of instruction, the accessibility of resources, and the general results of education. One such study found that private schools frequently offer superior facilities and more qualified instructors, which contributes to their popularity among parents. However, these advantages are offset by greater expenses and limited accessibility for low-income families.

Cortez's (2023) research in the Philippines focuses on the viewpoints of parents as well as children on school selections and educational paths. This study reveals several elements that influence these decisions, including parental motivation, educational environment, employment options, and socioeconomic status. It emphasizes the importance of parental influence in determining students' educational courses and future goals.

2.2 Historical Background of Public vs. Private Education

2.2.1 Primary Education

The development of human capital depends heavily on education. A nation's level of education determines the caliber of its people resources. Education is the sole way to increase individual productivity and efficiency, which is necessary for skilled labor, which is needed for sustainable economic development (Z. Nasir and H. Nazli 2010). One of the biggest obstacles to economic growth is illiteracy. In developing nations, primary education is seen as one of the primary means of fostering economic expansion and raising living conditions (D. Suryadarma et al. 2006).

However, it is likely that incorporating new information and adequate technical training at the primary level will increase educational quality. Expanding access to basic education is widely recognized as a top objective in the fight against poverty (H. Alderman et al. 2001). It is the initial level of obligatory education, laying the academic basis for students and regarded as a fundamental right of all humans. Primary education is significantly associated with institutions, which are divided into public and private schools. The globe has gotten increasingly competitive.

The world's education system revolves around pupils' academic achievements. Parents want their children to acquire high levels of schooling. These desires put pressure on both public and private schools, making them more competitive. The question is, which sector is more effective and efficient in this competition, and where?

2.2.2 Public VS Private Primary Schools –Which one is performing better

Numerous studies have been conducted to compare the effectiveness of public and private schools. Several studies have been undertaken around the world to examine the different characteristics of public and private schools. The researchers attempted to create a sense of superiority for either by focusing on distinct metrics of performance. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a national assessment of American students' knowledge in various subject areas, private schools outperformed public schools in all major subject areas, including mathematics and science (U.S. Department of Education 2012).

Another study of American kids' mathematics achievement found that private schools outperformed in the majority of cases, although public schools fared well after accounting for facts (C. Lubienski 2006, P. E. Peterson, and E. Llaudet 2006). However, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) produced a study evaluating the NAEP 2003 data that revealed shocking facts: public school pupils outperformed private school students. However, this study relied on a causal association (public school attendance leads to higher academic achievement) and had insufficient data.

The NAEP data is insufficient to assess the success of public or private schools based on school attendance (S. Watkins 2006). As with the comparative study, the researchers compared the performance of public and private schools using several indicators and criteria related to school performance. Student performance is influenced by factors such as school facility quality and instructor absence. The quality of school facilities has a beneficial effect on school performance, whereas teacher absenteeism has a negative impact. School administration and management also have an impact on school performance. Effective administration improves both school efficiency and teacher teaching skills (H. Begum and M. M. Sadruddin 2013). Professionalism, leadership styles, resource management and development, and parent-school collaboration are examples of

school administration elements that positively affect school success. Private school principals have a greater vision for improving their schools' performance in these areas than public school leaders (M. N. Tariq et al. 2012; A. Khan 2012).

The teacher's job satisfaction influences his or her teaching character and plays a part in the true link between what one wants from teaching and what one perceives when proposing to a teacher. Job happiness is one of the aspects that influence a teacher's performance. More pleased teachers perform better (Alimi Baba Gana, 2011). At the kindergarten level, private schools have an edge in job satisfaction because they are more content with their standing and reputation than public kindergarten instructors, despite their relatively modest salary (E. C. Papanastasiou and M. Zembylas 2005). Private schools outperform public schools in rich countries, as well as in poor developing countries. A survey was done in a disadvantaged part in Lagos State, Nigeria, and it was discovered that 75% of children were enrolled in private schools, with private schools having higher teaching activities than state schools (J. Tooley et al., 2005).

In most underdeveloped nations, the public sector is responsible for the majority of education provision; even education is mostly provided by the government. Arjun S. Bedi et al. conducted a study in Indonesia to compare the efficacy of public and private schools, using labor market earnings as a measure of success while adjusting for personal characteristics and school choice. According to the statistics, private schools outperform public schools in terms of student performance.

2.2.3 Historical Factors Influencing Parental Preferences in School Selection

Parental preferences in selecting between public and private primary schools are shaped by various historical factors, including school funding policies, educational reforms, and privatization trends. These essentials have played a crucial role in determining the approachability, quality, and reputation of schools, at the end of the day influencing parental decision-making.

2.2.3.1 School Funding and Its Impact on Parental Preferences

Historically, one of the main factors influencing educational chances has been school funding. Public schools are generally funded by government allocations, which are

frequently dependent on taxes, whereas private schools rely on tuition fees and individual contributions (Lubienski & Lubienski, 2014). Funding disparities have resulted in variations in resource availability, teacher quality, and infrastructure development, all of which influence family preferences. In nations where public school financing is inadequate, parents may choose private schools to provide a better learning environment for their children (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015). Historically, legislation such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 in the United States gave significant federal money to public schools in order to bridge educational gaps (Spring 2018). Still, continuous funding challenges in various regions have led to concerns over public school performance, encouragement an increased preference for private education.

2.2.3.2 Educational Reforms and Their Influence on School Choice

Educational innovations have also influenced parental preferences. Major reforms, such as curriculum modifications, standardized testing, and teacher training efforts, have had an impact on the quality of education provided in both public and private schools. The emergence of school vouchers and charter school programs in the late twentieth century gave parents more options than the traditional public school system (Chubb & Moe, 1990). These regulations stimulated school rivalry, which shifted parental choices toward institutions with superior academic achievement and creative teaching approaches.

Parental decisions and educational practices have been impacted by international tests like the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Parental preferences for STEM education and critical thinking abilities have shifted in countries that have reorganized their education systems in response to PISA rankings (OECD, 2018).

2.2.3.3 Privatization Trends and Their Effect on School Selection

Parental preferences have historically been significantly influenced by the growth of education privatization. Since the 1980s, neoliberal privatization practices have changed global education systems (Ball, 2012).

This trend has resulted in the expansion of private schools, low-cost private education models, and public-private collaborations in education (Tooley and Dixon, 2006).

Countries such as India, Pakistan, and many African nations have seen an increase in private schooling due to the government's inability to provide the demand for quality education through public institutions (Srivastava, 2013). In such cases, parents see private schools as a better option due to smaller class sizes, improved discipline, and expanded curriculum options.

Privatization has enhanced the perception of quality gaps between public and private institutions, increasing parental decisions to choose fee-based education models (Verger, Fontdevila, and Zancajo, 2016). The growth of international and bilingual private schools in urban areas has broadened parental options, particularly among middle and upper-class families. The historical history of school finance, pedagogical changes, and privatization trends has had a considerable impact on family preferences when picking elementary schools. While public schools remain a viable alternative, concerns such as financial constraints, reform-induced performance variations, and the expansion of private education have prompted many parents to view private schooling as a more appealing option. Understanding these historical influences sheds light on modern educational settings and the dynamics of parental decision-making.

2.3 Theoretical Frameworks

Academic reputation, co-curricular activities, facilities and resources, and financial considerations all have an impact on parental school choosing preferences. These elements influence decision-making processes and correspond to significant theoretical viewpoints on why parents choose specific schools for their children. This study's conceptual framework categorizes these determinants and links them to Parentocracy Theory, Social Capital Theory, Rational Choice Theory, and Human Capital Theory, providing a multidimensional approach to understanding parental choices when choosing between public and private primary schools.

According to the Parentocracy Theory (Brown, 1990), parental financial resources—rather than merit-based selection or state-provided access—are increasingly influencing educational prospects. Tuition fees, other charges, and transportation expenses are among the fiscal components in the conceptual framework that have a direct connection to this theory. Higher-income parents are more likely to select private schools because they

provide better facilities, more extracurricular activities, and better faculty. Families with little money, on the other hand, might choose public schools because they are less expensive, although there may be compromises in terms of facilities and academic standing. This is in line with the goal of the study, which is to look into the financial aspects that affect parents' choice of school.

According to Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988), social capital theory describes how communities, relationships, and social networks affect school choice. This theory is especially pertinent to the conceptual framework's categories for extracurricular activities and academic reputation. Academic reputation, which is influenced by school selection, is frequently disseminated through social networks and is affected by student evaluation, results, and family feedback. Similarly, extracurricular pursuits like clubs, sports, and the arts enhance a school's appeal and reputation. When assessing a school's academic reputation and extracurricular programs, parents usually rely on referrals from their friends, extended family, and professional networks. Through networking benefits and well-informed decision-making, parents with strong social capital can access superior educational possibilities.

Parents choose schools based on a cost-benefit analysis, according to the rational choice theory (Becker, 1976; Coleman, 1990), which aims to minimize financial burdens while maximizing educational quality. Every category in the conceptual framework can benefit from this idea. Before picking the best choice, parents consider a variety of variables, including academic reputation (student outcomes and feedback), co-curricular possibilities (sports, arts, and clubs), facilities and resources (transport and infrastructure), and financial considerations (tuition fees and other charges). For instance, if a family feels that a little more expensive private school has superior facilities and extracurricular activities, they can decide to enroll their child there in order to give them a more well-rounded education. According to this argument, some parents are prepared to forgo financial gain in order to send their kids to schools that share their values.

According to the Human Capital Theory (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964), investing in education increases future economic performance and productivity. The conceptual framework's facilities and resources, extracurricular activities, and academic reputation are

all directly tied to this theory. By enhancing students' abilities, knowledge, and future employment opportunities, schools with high academic achievement, robust extracurricular programming, and state-of-the-art facilities offer a greater return on investment. Institutions that provide better learning settings, access to global connections, and improved career preparation chances may be preferred by parents who place a high value on long-term advantages. This is in line with the goal of the study, which is to assess the amenities that draw parents to particular schools.

This study offers a thorough theoretical framework for comprehending parental preferences in school selection by combining these four ideas. Human capital theory emphasizes the long-term benefit of education, rational choice theory explains how decisions are made, social capital theory emphasizes the influence of social networks, and parentocracy theory discusses the role of financial resources. When combined, these ideas provide a comprehensive understanding of the variables impacting parents' decisions between public and private elementary schools, thereby bolstering the conceptual framework.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

2.4.1 Parental Decision-Making

Parents research the various primary school possibilities while taking all the variables into account. The first consideration set is influenced by a number of factors, such as socioeconomic level, family values, cultural background, and prior educational experiences (Pong, Hao, & Gardner, 2005). Parents evaluate different schools based on different criteria, including their academic output, the facilities, their location, their extracurricular activities etc. (Holland, 1993). Considering all the factors, Parents make a final decision based on the perceived value and alignment of the school's characteristics with their preferences and priorities (Hoxby, 2000).

2.4.2 School Characteristics

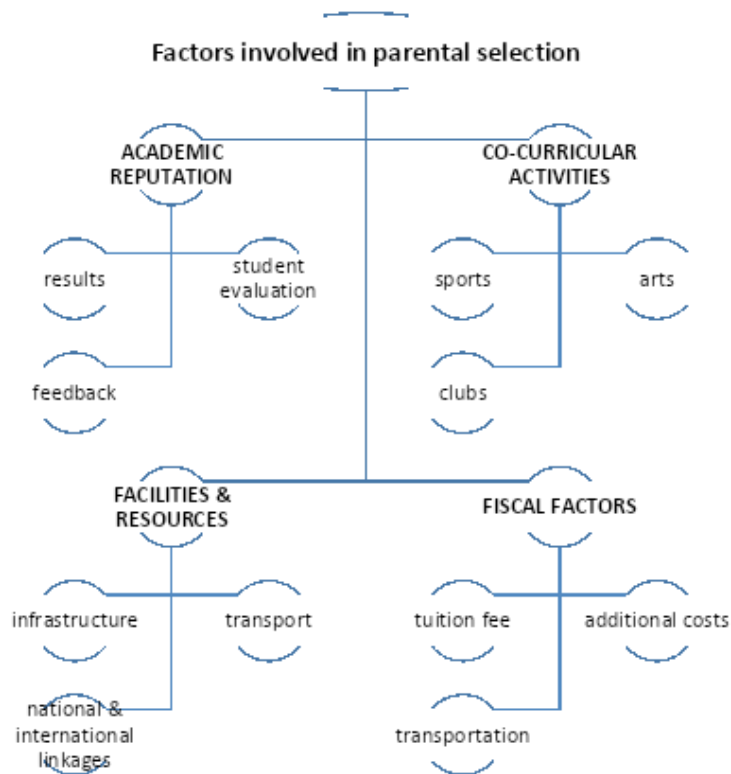
The perceived quality and performance of the school in academic area and standardized tests (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2009). The physical attributes and infrastructure, resources and management, and facilities available at the school (Gronn, 2003). The

proximity of the school to the family's residence or workplace, transportation options, and safety considerations (Schneider, 2010). The availability of sports and extracurricular programs, clubs, teams, and enrichment activities (Hill & Tyson, 2009). The average number of students per section and their exclusiveness (Rockoff, 2014). The qualifications, experience and quality teaching methods (Kain, 2005). The underlying values, pedagogical approach, curriculum design, and school culture (Levin, 2012). Factors such as income, education level, occupation, and social capital (Reardon, 2011). Cultural norms, values, beliefs, and preferences (Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1986).

2.4.3 Comparative Analysis

The study compares parental preferences between public and private primary schools to identify differences and similarities in the importance assigned to various school characteristics. The study intends to offer insights into the factors that influence school choice and possible ramifications for educational policy and practice by analyzing how academic reputation, facilities, location, extracurricular activities, class size, teacher quality, and cost affect parental decisions in each context.

Figure 01



2.5 Fiscal Factors Influencing Parental Choice in Islamabad, Pakistan

The choice of school is heavily influenced by financial considerations, including parents' socioeconomic status, financial help, tuition costs, and hidden fees. However, although though economic limitations are commonly recognized in educational literature, little is known about how they interact with attitudes, goals, and coping mechanisms, especially in Pakistani cities like Islamabad.

2.5.1 Cost of Tuition and Other Expenses

Tuition costs continue to be the biggest obstacle to obtaining private education, according to numerous international studies. According to Bifulco et al. (2009), even in the presence of voucher programs, tuition remained the main barrier for low-income families in the United States. Low-cost private schools are becoming more and more popular in Pakistan, however their affordability is sometimes exaggerated, according to Andrabi et al. (2008). When hidden expenses like uniforms, books, transportation, and tests mount up, even "affordable" solutions may become unaffordable for working-class families. This is supported by our data, which show that while some parents were initially attracted to private schools because of their perceived quality, they eventually encountered unaffordable expenses and, in a few instances, transferred their kids to public schools. These results are consistent with those of Aslam & Kingdon (2011), who contend that hidden costs, which are frequently overlooked in cost comparisons, can account for 20–30% of the overall educational burden.

Crucially, value perception also matters. Citing "better discipline" or "advanced teaching," several parents defended exorbitant tuition even in cases when the facilities were mediocre. This is consistent with Becker's Rational Choice Theory, which holds that families choose expensive education because they think it will increase their future returns, even though this may not always be the case.

2.5.2 Financial Aid, Scholarships, and Affordability

The dynamics of access are drastically changed by the existence (or lack thereof) of financial aid programs. More educational choices are made possible in industrialized nations by organized aid frameworks (NAIS, 2020). However, the majority of financial aid

in Pakistan is competitive, dispersed, or limited. Only parents with high levels of literacy and social capital were aware of the assistance programs provided by prestigious private schools such as Roots International or Beaconhouse, according to our qualitative research.

Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986) holds that knowledge availability and institutional navigation are unequally distributed. This is reflected in this. Not because they were indifferent, but rather because they were ignorant of or deterred by the difficult application process, parents from lower-income or less educated families seldom looked into scholarship opportunities. This is in line with the findings of Cowen et al. (2012), who discovered that even in cases where merit-based aid is ostensibly accessible, economic downturns (such as those that occurred after 2008 or the recent inflationary cycle in Pakistan) lower private school enrollment.

Furthermore, the systemic disparities in urban school access cannot be addressed by the narrow scope of charitable programs like TCF and CARE Foundation, despite their significant influence. According to our research, in order to actually increase possibilities for the underprivileged, policy-level scholarship programs with streamlined application processes and school-level outreach initiatives are required.

2.5.3 Socioeconomic Status of Parents

The choice of school and the authority to make decisions are closely linked to parental income, educational attainment, and work status. Reardon (2011) emphasizes how educational stratification is increasingly reflecting income disparities. This pattern was supported by our research: parents in the government or professional sectors tended to favor expensive private schools and indicated a desire to send their children to school abroad, whereas parents in the unorganized sector placed more importance on cost, accessibility, and perceived "value for money."

Interestingly, despite financial constraints, many families, including those with lesser incomes, desired to send their children to private schools. This is consistent with the Parentocracy Theory (Brown, 1990), which holds that financial resources, rather than merit or equitable access, increasingly dictate educational success. An ethical conundrum is also raised by this: are parents "choosing" private schools voluntarily or under duress from the alleged shortcomings of public education? According to a number of parents in our survey,

public schools would be preferred if they provided more consistent academic engagement or greater teacher discipline.

Another class marker that surfaced was the cost of transportation. While lower-income parents considered transportation as a limiting constraint and occasionally chose less desirable schools based only on walkability, wealthier families frequently saw it as a convenience issue ("traffic is a problem"). These trends should guide municipal planning and school placement initiatives since they are indicative of larger urban inequality.

Our qualitative and quantitative data confirm that economic issues play a major influence in determining students' selections for schools in Islamabad. Our findings, however, show active parental choices and compromises such as requesting aid, alternating children between the public and private sectors, and reducing household expenses in contrast to previous research that approach financial limits as passive limitations. These facts highlight the necessity of expanding need-based aid in private institutions, providing targeted education subsidies, and reforming the way public schools are delivered in order to make them appealing and viable. Restoring trust in public services and leveling the playing field for all families are more important goals of removing financial barriers than merely lowering costs.

2.6 Role of Academic Reputation in School Selection

Academic reputation remains one of the most important elements influencing parental school selection decisions in a variety of socioeconomic circumstances. In cities like Islamabad, where both elite private and resource-constrained public schools coexist, academic ranking frequently serves as the primary indicator of educational excellence. While existing literature emphasizes its importance, few studies critically analyze how reputation is constructed, perceived, or constrained by socioeconomic factors.

Several experts contend that parents frequently associate academic quality with standardized test results and national/international rankings. For example, Hanushek and Woessmann (2008) and Morse et al. (2021) argue that test scores and college placement rates influence institutional prestige. However, Ravitch (2010) challenges this viewpoint, claiming that an overreliance on standardized measures can lead to "teaching to the test" and disguise shortcomings in creativity, critical thinking, and student well-being. This topic

is particularly significant in Pakistan, where rote memorization dominates evaluation techniques (Malik & Malik, 2011). Our qualitative data confirmed this worry, as some questioned parents from both sectors expressed displeasure with an overemphasis on exam preparation in both public and private schools.

Teacher quality is another cornerstone of reputation. Studies by Darling-Hammond (2000) and Clotfelter et al. (2007) show a clear link between teacher credentials and student achievement. However, these findings do not apply universally. While private schools in Islamabad frequently stress faculty qualifications in marketing campaigns, research such as Aslam and Kingdon (2011) show that even highly educated professors can provide mediocre instruction in poorly managed settings. This nuance was repeated in our interviews: one parent stated that despite their child's teacher having a master's degree, the learning was "mechanical" and boring. Thus, academic reputation may be based on pedagogy, leadership, and classroom involvement rather than credentials.

Furthermore, curriculum design and instructional methods are frequently disregarded in parental assessments. International curricula (such as Cambridge and IB) are usually regarded as superior due to their alignment with global norms. However, Klopfenstein (2004) and Trilling & Fadel (2009) point out that curricular labels alone do not ensure good implementation. While schools like Roots and ISOI emphasize project-based learning and STEM programs, the evidence of their effectiveness is mostly anecdotal and market-driven. In contrast, public schools that adhere to the national curriculum are rarely associated with innovation, despite recent government initiatives. This disconnect reveals a reputational divide that is not necessarily based on academic merit, but rather on perception and marketing.

Crucially, the role of social capital must also be acknowledged. As per Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1986), school reputations are often socially constructed through networks of trust and peer recommendation. In our study, many parents, especially from middle-income backgrounds, relied heavily on word-of-mouth reviews from neighbors or coworkers when judging a school's academic strength. This indicates that academic reputation is not only formed by hard indicators (like test results), but also by informal, community-level discourse.

This study's findings support and challenge existing literature. Quantitative findings indicated that academic reputation is a statistically significant determinant in school choice, especially among private school parents. However, qualitative interviews indicated a more complicated picture: parents frequently misread or exaggerate academic performance based on marketing rather than actual learning outcomes. This identifies a major gap in informed decision-making and highlights the necessity for public access to clear performance measures, which this study advises solving through centralized databases.

2.6.1 Standardized Test Scores and Rankings

Standardized test results and school rankings are frequently the most obvious markers of a school's academic reputation. High results on standardized examinations like the SAT, ACT, or state-mandated assessments are commonly linked to academic success. Parents and legislators frequently use these indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of schools and compare them (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2008). Critics counter that a narrow focus on test preparation at the expense of more general educational objectives can result from an over-reliance on test scores (Ravitch, 2010). School rankings, like those from Niche or U.S. News & World Report, emphasize the significance of academic reputation even more. These rankings frequently take into account variables that are thought to be indicators of quality, such as student-teacher ratios, graduation rates, and college preparation (Morse et al., 2021). Although rankings can offer valuable insights, they have the potential to oversimplify the intricacies of educational quality and overlook the distinct advantages of specific institutions.

Standardized test results and school rankings are frequently utilized in Islamabad to assess the caliber of education. Schools that score highly in board exams, such the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) or the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE), are frequently seen as more respectable. For example, schools with high matriculation (grade 10) and intermediate (grade 12) test pass rates and distinctions are in great demand (Malik & Malik, 2011). Furthermore, because of their international recognition and demanding academic standards, foreign schools that offer

programs like the International Baccalaureate (IB) and the foreign General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) are frequently ranked higher (Khan, 2018).

Views are also greatly influenced by rankings released by regional education forums and media sources. For instance, schools such as Beaconhouse School System and Islamabad Model College for Girls (IMCG) are regularly commended for their constant board exam achievement and academic excellence (Dawn, 2021). According to Andrabi et al. (2017), critics of the Pakistani educational system point out that a restricted focus on rote learning could result from an excessive reliance on test scores.

2.6.2 Teacher Qualifications and Student Performance

The academic reputation of a school is also significantly influenced by the professional qualifications of its teachers. Research continuously demonstrates that one of the most important indicators of student accomplishment is the quality of the teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2000). More respect is frequently accorded to schools with highly trained instructors, those with advanced degrees, certifications, and subject-matter knowledge.

For example, Clotfelter et al. (2007) discovered that children taught by teachers with greater qualifications, such as National Board Certification, outperformed their peers on standardized tests. Furthermore, the link between teacher competence and student achievement goes beyond test scores. Effective teachers may develop critical thinking, creativity, and a passion for learning, all of which are necessary for long-term academic and personal success (Hattie, 2009). Schools that engage in professional development and retain competent teachers are more likely to establish a solid academic reputation. Teacher qualifications play a significant role in shaping a school's academic reputation in Islamabad. More prominent schools are sometimes thought to have highly skilled and experienced instructors, especially those with advanced degrees and certifications. For example, Roots Millennium Schools and Froebel's International School prioritize employing instructors with international qualifications and training, which improves their reputation (Khan, 2018). Research conducted in Pakistan has indicated that teacher quality has a substantial impact on student achievement. According to Aslam and Kingdon (2011), children in Pakistan who were taught by more qualified teachers performed better in

school. This is especially important in Islamabad, where parents frequently choose schools with excellent staff to ensure their children obtain a high-quality education. Furthermore, schools that engage in teacher training and professional development are more likely to have a positive academic reputation.

2.6.3 School Curriculum and Pedagogical Approach

A school's curriculum and pedagogical approach are also important in determining its academic reputation. A rigorous and well-rounded curriculum that combines STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), humanities, and arts is frequently regarded as a sign of a high-quality education (National Research Council 2012). Schools that provide Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, for example, are typically considered as more academically difficult and distinguished (Klopfenstein, 2004).

The reputation of a school is also influenced by pedagogical strategies like inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, and individualized learning. These methods emphasize critical thinking, cooperation, and real-world application of knowledge, which are all 21st-century abilities (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Schools that implement innovative and student-centered teaching approaches are frequently regarded as pioneers in education reform, attracting families looking for a modern and effective learning environment.

The academic reputation of schools in Islamabad is also greatly influenced by their curricula and instructional methods. Schools with internationally recognized curricula, such as the Cambridge system or the IB program, are sometimes seen as more demanding and renowned. Schools like as the International School of Islamabad (ISOI) and Headstart School, for example, are noted for their innovative curricula that emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving abilities (Khan, 2020).

Modern teaching strategies including inquiry-based learning, STEM education, and project-based learning have gained popularity recently, especially at private and foreign schools. These strategies are consistent with worldwide educational trends and are considered as educating pupils for the problems of the twenty-first century (Malik, 2019). Public schools in Islamabad, including those in the Islamabad Model Schools system, have begun to incorporate technology and interactive teaching approaches to improve learning

outcomes, however obstacles persist in terms of resource allocation and teacher training (Dawn, 2020).

Academic reputation is an important component in school selection in Islamabad, Pakistan, and is influenced by standardized test results and rankings, teacher qualifications and student performance, as well as the curriculum and pedagogical style of the school. While these indicators provide useful information about a school's quality, parents and students must also examine the larger context of their educational objectives and ideals. The competitive educational landscape in Islamabad provides a wide choice of possibilities, but it also necessitates careful consideration to ensure that the chosen school meets the student's needs and objectives.

2.7 Comparison of Co-Curricular Activities in Public and Private Schools in Islamabad, Pakistan

Sports, the arts, and extracurricular activities are examples of co-curricular activities that are essential to students' overall development. These activities enhance academic learning by encouraging creativity, collaboration, physical fitness, and social skills. However, the availability, quality, and perception of these activities vary significantly between public and private schools. Students' complete development requires co-curricular activities such as athletics, arts, and extracurricular programs. The availability, quality, and perception of these activities in public and private schools in Islamabad, Pakistan, differ significantly. This section investigates these disparities, concentrating on sports, arts, extracurricular programs, parental perceptions, and the availability and quality of these programs in the setting of Islamabad.

2.7.1 Sports, Arts, and Extracurricular Programs

2.7.1.1 Public Schools in Islamabad:

Many public schools in Pakistan, including Islamabad, experience serious budgetary difficulties. These limits can limit the scope and quality of extracurricular activities. While some public schools provide basic sports and arts programs, the funding for these activities is generally restricted. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2020) discovered that public schools in low-income communities are less

likely to have well-funded sports teams or arts programs than their private counterparts. Furthermore, extracurricular activities like debate clubs, robotics teams, and music ensembles may be underfunded or rely significantly on volunteer labor. According to research conducted by the Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE, 2022), just 40% of Islamabad's public schools have specialized sports facilities, and even fewer have well-equipped art or music programs. Extracurricular activities like debating clubs, science fairs, and robotics teams are uncommon and frequently rely on the initiative of individual teachers or community members.

2.7.1.2 Private Schools in Islamabad:

Private schools have greater funding available to devote to extracurricular activities. They frequently have a variety of extracurricular activities, well-equipped art studios, and cutting-edge sports facilities. Private schools are more likely to provide specialty programs, including theater plays, international exchange programs, and equestrian sports, according to research by the Council for American Private Education (CAPE, 2021). Additionally, these institutions typically have smaller class sizes, which enables more individualized attention in extracurricular activities. Eighty percent of Islamabad's private schools provide specialty activities like tennis, swimming, theatrical performances, and music ensembles, per a report by the Private Schools Network (PSN, 2023). Additionally, these institutions typically have smaller class sizes, which enables more individualized attention in extracurricular activities. Furthermore, private schools frequently take part in interschool contests and activities, giving pupils a chance to display their skills on bigger stages.

2.7.2 Parental Perception of Holistic Development

2.7.2.1 Public Schools in Islamabad:

Co-curricular activities are valued by parents of students attending public schools because they contribute to a well-rounded education. Parental satisfaction, however, may be impacted by worries regarding the availability and caliber of these initiatives. According to a 2019 Pew Research Center survey, only 40% of parents of children enrolled in public schools believe their school provides sufficient chances for extracurricular activities, despite 65% of them believing these activities are crucial for holistic development. This

impression is frequently linked to the financial and resource constraints of the institution. Additionally, a Sustainable Development Policy Institute poll (SDPI, 2021) found that whereas 60% of parents of public school students think extracurricular activities are crucial for their overall development, just 30% think their school provides enough opportunity for them to participate.

2.7.2.2 Private Schools in Islamabad:

One of the main reasons given by parents for selecting private schools is the focus on overall development. Co-curricular activities are often promoted by private schools as a key component of their educational philosophies. A National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS, 2022) poll found that 85% of parents of children attending private schools think their school does a great job of offering extracurricular activities like athletics and the arts. This high degree of satisfaction is frequently attributed to the school's capacity to provide varied and excellent programs. Another research conducted by the Islamabad Private Schools Association (IPSA, 2022) found that 90% of parents of children attending private schools think their school does a great job of offering extracurricular activities like sports and the arts. This high degree of satisfaction is frequently attributed to the school's capacity to provide varied and excellent programs.

2.7.3 Availability and Quality of Programs

2.7.3.1 Public Schools in Islamabad:

The financing and priorities of the school district have a significant impact on the availability and caliber of extracurricular activities in public schools. Financial limitations may make it difficult for public schools, especially those in urban and rural areas, to offer a variety of activities. Only 30% of public schools in underprivileged communities offer advanced arts programs, compared to 70% in wealthy districts, according to a research by the Education Trust (2021). Similar to this, these schools' sports programs might not have the right facilities, coaching staff, or equipment.

The location and financial resources of Islamabad's public schools have a significant impact on the availability and caliber of extracurricular activities offered. Compared to schools in less fortunate locations, those in more affluent communities could

have more programs and better facilities. According to an Education Foundation Pakistan report (EFP, 2023), just 25% of Islamabad's public schools provide advanced arts courses, and even fewer have access to adequate sports facilities. Extracurricular activities like debate teams or science clubs are sometimes restricted to a small number of schools with strong community support or parent-teacher groups.

2.7.3.2 Private Schools in Islamabad:

Private schools are excellent at providing a wide range of excellent extracurricular activities. Higher tuition costs and more donations allow these institutions to make investments in first-rate facilities, knowledgeable coaches, and specialized teachers. For example, according to research conducted by the Independent School Management (ISM, 2023), 80% of private schools have specialized arts facilities such as theaters and music rooms, and 90% of them provide at least five distinct sports programs. Students will have access to enriching activities that support their overall development thanks to this level of investment.

A wide range of excellent extracurricular activities are often provided by private schools in Islamabad. These institutions are able to make investments in first-rate facilities, knowledgeable coaches, and specialized teachers thanks to increased tuition costs and additional donations. According to research conducted by the Beaconhouse School System (BSS, 2023), 95% of private schools in Islamabad offer at least five distinct sports programs, and 85% have dedicated arts facilities like theaters and music rooms. This level of funding guarantees that students have access to meaningful experiences that will benefit their overall development.

There are notable differences in terms of availability, quality, and parental impression between Islamabad's public and private schools' extracurricular offerings. Private schools frequently have the resources to offer a diverse choice of high-quality programs, but public schools suffer funding constraints. However, both types of institutions understand the value of extracurricular activities in promoting overall development. Addressing these discrepancies, particularly in underfunded public schools, is critical to ensuring that all Islamabad students benefit from a comprehensive education.

2.8 Facilities That Influence Parental Preference in Islamabad, Pakistan

When choosing educational institutions for their children, parents' preferences are greatly impacted by the facilities that schools provide. These amenities include infrastructure, safety measures, transportation, and accessibility, all of which contribute to students' overall learning experience and well-being. Parents' preferences for schools in Islamabad, Pakistan, are greatly impacted by the amenities provided, such as transportation, safety precautions, and infrastructure. As the capital city, Islamabad has a diverse population from various socioeconomic backgrounds, and parents frequently favor schools that offer a positive learning environment, modern amenities, and strong security. The following is a full explanation of these elements, with a focus on Islamabad and references from both locally and internationally.

2.8.1 Infrastructure, Classrooms, and Technology Integration

These days, parents give preference to schools with well-planned facilities, large classrooms, and cutting-edge technology integration. A study by Higgins et al. (2012) found that the physical environment of schools, including classroom architecture and lighting, has a direct impact on student engagement and academic success. Parents are increasingly drawn to institutions that provide cutting-edge facilities like smart classrooms, science labs, and digitally equipped libraries.

Another important consideration is the incorporation of technology. Schools that successfully incorporate technology into their curricula are thought to be better prepared their pupils for the digital age (Zheng et al., 2016). Institutions that give students access to gadgets like computers and tablets, as well as e-learning and virtual collaboration platforms, are valued by parents. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the role of technology in education, making it a top consideration for parents when selecting schools (UNESCO, 2021).

Parents in Islamabad want schools with modern infrastructure and well-equipped classrooms. Khan et al. (2020) state that parents in cities such as Islamabad give preference to schools that have large classrooms, science labs, libraries, and sports facilities. Because of the city's harsh weather, schools with air-conditioned classrooms and clean, sanitary settings are chosen, according to the report. Integration of technology is yet another

important component. Schools in Islamabad that use digital resources like smart boards, tablets, and e-learning platforms are perceived as more progressive. According to a report from Pakistan Education Statistics (2021), private schools in Islamabad, such as Beaconhouse and Roots Millennium, have made significant investments in technology to improve the learning experience. The COVID-19 epidemic has expedited the adoption of online learning systems, making technology an important concern for parents (Ministry of Federal Education, 2021).

2.8.2 Safety and Security Measures

When it comes to selecting a school, parents are most concerned about safety and security. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2020), schools with strong safety standards, such as monitoring systems, regulated entry points, and emergency response plans, have a higher chance of gaining parental trust. Parents also search for schools that combat bullying and foster a positive social climate by offering anti-bullying programs and counseling services. There is a growing need for mental health help in schools, according to recent trends. According to the CDC (2021), schools that provide mental health resources and foster a supportive environment are preferred by parents, particularly in light of increased mental health difficulties among kids following the epidemic.

Given Islamabad's geopolitical importance and sporadic security issues, parents in the city have serious concerns about safety and security. Schools that use tight security methods, such as CCTV surveillance, guarded entrance points, and emergency response plans, are chosen. According to an Islamabad Police (2022) poll, parents are more confident in sending their children to schools that work with local law enforcement organizations to safeguard their safety. Schools that deal with bullying and support mental health are also becoming more and more well-liked. For example, Froebel's International School and The City School in Islamabad have adopted anti-bullying rules and counseling services to provide children with a safe and supportive atmosphere (Dawn, 2023).

2.8.3 Transportation and Accessibility

Parental decision-making is heavily influenced by accessibility and transportation, especially for families in urban or rural settings. Schools that provide reliable and safe

transportation are highly regarded. McDonald et al. (2019) discovered that parents favor schools with well-organized bus systems, GPS tracking, and qualified drivers to assure their children's safety while commuting. Additionally, the school's actual location is accessible. Parents like institutions that are easily accessible and situated in safe neighborhoods. Furthermore, schools that provide ramps, elevators, and other accessible amenities for students with disabilities are becoming increasingly popular (UNICEF, 2020).

For parents in Islamabad, transportation is important because long commutes and traffic jams are frequent problems. Schools that offer dependable and safe transportation services, such as GPS-tracked buses with qualified drivers, are highly regarded. Ali et al. (2021) discovered that parents in Islamabad prefer schools that provide door-to-door pickup and drop-off services, particularly for younger children. Another crucial factor is accessibility. Schools in secure and well-connected regions, such as the F-6, F-7, and E-7 sectors, are preferred since they are close to residential communities. Furthermore, schools that include ramps, elevators, and specific facilities for disabled students are becoming increasingly popular (Pakistan Today, 2022).

An intriguing case study is the Federal Directorate of Education's (FDE) Islamabad Model Schools system. These schools provide inexpensive education while focusing on infrastructure development and safety. However, according to The Express Tribune (2023), many parents still prefer private schools because of their superior facilities, which include air-conditioned classrooms, advanced technology, and better transportation services. Facilities like dependable transportation, safety precautions, and contemporary infrastructure have a big impact on parents' preferences for schools in Islamabad. Schools that invest in these areas are better positioned to attract and retain students. As Islamabad's educational landscape evolves, institutions must prioritize these characteristics in order to meet parents' expectations and provide students with a complete learning environment.

It is also critical to address the disparity in adaptive facilities for special needs students, which is almost completely absent in both sectors. International guidelines emphasize the necessity of ramps, elevators, and accessible classroom design (UNICEF,

2020), however our observations revealed that these were mostly absent. This demonstrates a systemic overlook in educational planning that disadvantages kids with impairments.

A statistically significant difference in parental satisfaction with amenities between public and private schools was supported by our quantitative data. Perception, however, frequently prevails over objective quality, according to the qualitative findings. Parents were more likely to trust a well-advertised private school with flashy infrastructure even if usage was poor than a modest but functionally adequate public school. This implies that the upkeep and promotion of facilities need to be done with more openness, equity, and community involvement. To prevent overstatement of facilities, our study suggests increasing evidence-based marketing regulations in the private sector and stepping up oversight and infrastructure upgrades in public schools.

2.9 The Role of Marketing and School Branding in Influencing Parental Preference for Schools in Islamabad

Marketing and school branding are crucial in influencing parental preferences in Islamabad, where there is fierce competition among educational institutions. Schools, particularly private and elite universities, make significant investments in marketing efforts to attract students and build a solid reputation. With examples, citations, and references to back it up, the following analysis examines how branding and marketing affect parental decision-making in Islamabad.

2.9.1 Building a Strong Academic Reputation

Academic achievement is a major branding technique that schools in Islamabad frequently use. Beaconhouse School System and Roots Millennium School are two examples of elite private schools that heavily promote their honors, university placements, and high board exam scores. For example, schools that frequently generate high scorers in the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) or the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) exams can leverage these accomplishments to attract parents who value academic achievement. For example, Froebel's International School and City School Islamabad tout their alumni's achievement in gaining admission to major universities such as Harvard, MIT, and Oxford. This develops a sense of academic supremacy, which is important for parents (Khan, 2020).

2.9.2 Showcasing Facilities and Infrastructure

As the world becomes more digitalized, schools must update and modernize on a daily basis. Modern facilities and cutting-edge infrastructure are essential components of educational branding. To attract parents, schools in Islamabad frequently advertise their campuses, labs, libraries, sports facilities, and technology-enabled classrooms. Schools such as Headstart School and International School of Islamabad (ISOI), for instance, highlight in their marketing materials their state-of-the-art science labs, swimming pools, and auditoriums. In order to compete with private institutions, Islamabad Model College for Girls (IMCG) and Islamabad Model College for Boys (IMCB), for instance, have lately improved their facilities. Their marketing efforts highlight these advancements (Dawn, 2021).

2.9.3 Highlighting Co-Curricular and Extracurricular Activities

Parents in Islamabad are increasingly looking for schools that offer a holistic education, including sports, arts, and leadership programs. Schools use their co-curricular achievements as a branding tool to differentiate themselves. For instance, schools like Lahore Grammar School (LGS) and Bloomfield Hall market their debate teams, robotics clubs, and sports teams that have won national or international competitions. For Example, Roots Millennium School frequently advertises its students' participation in international Model United Nations (MUN) conferences and robotics competitions, appealing to parents who value experiential learning (Ali & Raza, 2021).

2.9.4 Emphasizing Qualified Faculty and Teaching Methodologies

The quality of teachers and teaching methodologies is a significant factor in school branding. Elite schools in Islamabad often highlight their faculty's qualifications, including international certifications and advanced degrees. Schools like Beacon house and Froebel's market their use of innovative teaching methods, such as project-based learning and STEM education, to attract parents seeking modern educational approaches. like International School of Islamabad (ISOI), which appeals to both local and expatriate families looking for an international standard of education by promoting its American curriculum and instructors who have received training in the United States (Malik, 2019).

2.9.5 Leveraging Digital Marketing and Social Media

As digital platforms become more prevalent, schools in Islamabad have implemented aggressive digital marketing methods. Social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are utilized to highlight school events, student accomplishments, and campus life. Schools also utilize targeted advertising to reach out to specific populations, such as parents in affluent areas like F-6, F-7, and E-7. For example, The City School Islamabad often broadcasts recordings of its annual celebrations, sports days, and science competitions on social media, promoting a positive image and engaging prospective parents (The Express Tribune, 2023).

2.9.6 Community Engagement and Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Word-of-mouth remains one of the most influential forms of marketing in Islamabad. Schools with strong reputations benefit from positive reviews and recommendations from existing parents and alumni. Schools often organize open houses, parent-teacher meetings, and community events to build trust and engage with the local community. For Example, Beaconhouse School System hosts annual open houses where parents can interact with teachers and students, creating a sense of community and transparency (Khan, 2020).

2.9.7 Cultural and Religious Branding

In a culturally diverse city like Islamabad, some schools use cultural and religious alignment as part of their branding. Islamic schools, such as International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) School System, emphasize their Islamic studies curriculum and values-based education to attract parents seeking a religiously aligned education. For Example, Hira Foundation School markets its focus on Quranic education and Islamic values, appealing to conservative families (Dawn, 2023).

2.9.8 Competitive Fee Structures and Financial Incentives

While elite schools in Islamabad are known for their high fees, many institutions use competitive fee structures and financial incentives as part of their marketing strategy. Scholarships, sibling discounts, and flexible payment plans are often advertised to attract middle-income families. For Example, Roots Millennium School offers merit-based

scholarships and discounts for siblings, making it more accessible to a broader range of families (Ali & Raza, 2021).

2.9.9 Safety and Security as a Branding Tool

Given the security concerns in Islamabad, schools often highlight their safety measures as part of their branding. To reassure parents, features like skilled security guards, safe perimeters, and CCTV surveillance are heavily promoted. To attract both local and foreign families, International School of Islamabad (ISOI), for instance, highlights its regulated access to the site and round-the-clock security (Islamabad Police, 2023).

2.9.10 Alumni Networks and Success Stories

The success stories of their former students are frequently used as a branding tactic by schools with robust alumni networks. Highlighting graduates who have achieved remarkable achievements in industries such as business, health, and technology helps to improve a school's reputation. For example, Lahore Grammar School (LGS) and Beaconhouse routinely showcase their graduates in marketing materials, highlighting their successes in a variety of professional disciplines (Khan, 2020).

Marketing and school branding are important elements in determining parental preferences in Islamabad. Schools attract students through a combination of academic repute, modern facilities, co-curricular achievements, qualified professors, digital marketing, community participation, and safety measures. In a competitive educational market, effective branding enables schools to identify themselves while also appealing to parents' unique demands and goals. By implementing these tactics, schools in Islamabad can improve their reputation and recruit a larger student body.

2.10 Challenges Specific to Islamabad in Influencing Parental Preference for Schools

The capital of Pakistan, Islamabad, is well known for its state-of-the-art infrastructure and excellent educational institutions. However, the city has a number of specific issues that have a considerable impact on family preferences and decision-making when it comes to school choice for their children. These obstacles are the result of growing urbanization, socioeconomic inequality, infrastructure limitations, security concerns, and

systemic issues in the education sector. The following is a full study of these difficulties, supported by local data and sources.

2.10.1 Urban-Rural Divide and Access to Quality Education

The urban-rural difference in Islamabad influences parental preferences significantly. While the city center has premium private and international schools with cutting-edge facilities, the rural outskirts (such as Bhara Kahu and Tarlai) lack access to high-quality educational institutions. Families in these communities frequently have to pick between unregulated private schools that can fall short of their expectations for academic success and subpar public schools. The difference limits parental choice and fosters educational inequality, especially among low-income households.

2.10.2 Socioeconomic Disparities

Rich regions such as F-6 and F-7 coexist with destitute villages in Islamabad, a city of contrasts. These contrasts reflect the city's social and economic divides, as affluence and poverty coexist. The contrast between affluent areas and impoverished ones acts as a sharp reminder of the difficulties many individuals endure in their quest for a better life. The educational system reflects this socioeconomic disparity, with high-end private schools catering to the wealthy and public and low-cost private schools serving middle- and lower-income families. According to Ali and Raza (2021), low-income parents usually struggle to finance a good education because top institutions charge high tuition plus additional expenses for transportation, uniforms, and extracurricular activities. This difference restricts parental choices and fosters educational inequity.

2.10.3 Inflation and Economic Instability

Families in Pakistan are finding it more and more difficult to pay for private education due to rising inflation and unstable economic conditions. According to the State Bank of Pakistan (2023), inflation has risen to more than 30%, having a substantial impact on household budgets. This economic pressure drives many parents to choose low-cost private or public schools for their children, even if they would prefer elite institutions. The cost of schooling is a significant element determining parental preferences in Islamabad.

2.10.4 Rapid Urbanization and Overcrowding

Schools are overcrowded as a result of Islamabad's recent fast urbanization, particularly in well-known areas like F-6, F-7, and E-7. A Capital Development Authority report (CDA, 2022) states that the city's population has increased dramatically, placing strain on the facilities currently in place for education. Many schools are running above capacity, resulting in greater class sizes and less individual attention for children. To retain quality, parents have turned to other options like private schools in less congested locations or those with stricter admission standards.

2.10.5 Security Concerns

Islamabad faces security issues even though it is one of the safest cities in Pakistan. Parents are particularly anxious about their children's safety, especially in light of periodic terrorist occurrences and crime. Schools located near sensitive places, such as diplomatic zones, frequently suffer increased security hazards. According to an Islamabad Police report (2023), parents prefer schools with strong security measures, including armed guards, CCTV surveillance, and guarded perimeters. There is a gap between schools with adequate resources and those with inadequate ones, nevertheless, because not all schools can afford such measures.

2.10.6 Inadequate Public Transportation

Transportation is a major issue for parents in Islamabad. The city lacks a dependable and efficient public transit infrastructure, making it difficult for pupils to go to school. According to Ali et al. (2021), many parents use private school buses or personal vehicles, which can be expensive and time-consuming. Traffic congestion, especially during peak hours, exacerbates the situation. Schools that do not provide transportation or are located in difficult-to-access places are frequently less popular, regardless of academic reputation.

2.10.7 Limited Access to Quality Public Schools

While Islamabad has a network of public schools managed by the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), many of them struggle with insufficient financing, antiquated infrastructure, and a shortage of trained teachers. According to an article by The

Express Tribune (2023), parents frequently regard public schools as inferior to private institutions, resulting in a preference for private education. However, the high cost of private schooling restricts access for low- and middle-income families, resulting in a disparity in educational prospects.

2.10.8 Teacher Shortages and Quality Concerns

There is a significant shortage of trained educators in Islamabad, particularly in public schools. Many public schools rely on underqualified or contract-based teachers, which affects the quality of education and student performance (Aslam & Kingdon, 2011). Even in private schools, the high turnover rate of teachers due to low salaries and lack of professional development opportunities is a persistent issue. This disparity in teacher quality between elite private schools and public or low-cost private schools exacerbates the gap in academic reputation.

2.10.9 Curriculum Disparities and Rote Learning Culture

The Pakistani education system, including schools in Islamabad, is often criticized for its reliance on rote learning and outdated curricula. While elite private and international schools have adopted modern, student-centered curricula (e.g., Cambridge, IB, or STEM-focused programs), many public and low-cost private schools continue to follow traditional, exam-oriented approaches (Malik, 2019). This creates a divide in the quality of education and limits opportunities for students in public schools to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

2.10.10 Environmental Challenges

Islamabad's rapid development has led to environmental issues, such as air pollution and deforestation, which can impact the health and well-being of students. Schools located near busy roads or construction sites are particularly affected. A report by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, 2022) highlighted that poor air quality in some areas of Islamabad poses health risks for children, making parents more cautious about school locations.

2.10.11 Cultural and Religious Preferences

Islamabad is a diverse city in Pakistan, and parents frequently look for schools that reflect their cultural and religious traditions. Some parents, for example, choose schools that include Islamic studies in the curriculum, whereas others emphasize secular institutions. This diversity of choices can make it difficult for schools to serve all segments of the population, resulting in a fragmented educational system (Dawn, 2023).

2.10.12 Government Policies and Implementation Gaps

While the government has launched efforts like the Prime Minister's Education Reform Program, implementation in Islamabad has been delayed. The city's public schools continue to face difficulties such as teacher absenteeism and poor infrastructure. According to a report issued by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT, 2023), just 10% of Islamabad's public schools have fully adopted the National Education Policy's requirements for co-curricular activities. This lack of policy execution exacerbates the disparity between elite and non-elite institutions.

Rapid urbanization, socioeconomic differences, security concerns, poor transportation, limited access to quality public education, and systemic flaws within the education sector all have an impact on parental preferences for schools in Islamabad. To address these difficulties, the government, corporate sector, and civil society must work together to ensure that all children have access to a safe, affordable, high-quality education. Islamabad can better address the requirements of parents and kids by investing in infrastructure, upgrading public transportation, strengthening security measures, and enacting effective regulations, providing fair access to education for everyone.

2.11 Research Gaps

A growing number of national and international studies have examined the dynamics of school choice, emphasizing the importance of various factors to parents' decision-making, including academic performance (Shulgina, 2023; Smith & Lee, 2023), co-curricular offerings (Ali & Raza, 2021), infrastructure quality (Malik, 2022), and affordability (Srivastava, 2021). Although Pakistani studies (e.g., Rehman et al., 2021; Asad, 2020) have shed light on parental preferences, the majority have only examined

public or private education separately, with little comparison. Furthermore, a large portion of the work now in publication prefers to use quantitative or qualitative approaches separately, which limits the depth of interpretation required to comprehend the intricate interactions between variables affecting school choice. Studies that examine school choice in the particular urban environment of Islamabad, where stark socioeconomic divides, diverse infrastructure, and differing access levels influence parental experiences in unique ways, are also conspicuously lacking (Andrabi et al., 2020; Khan, 2023).

Furthermore, while many studies stress parental agency, few recognize that access, price, and availability especially for low-income families often limit the choice of school. Studies showing forced decisions because of institutional, economical, or geographic constraints are challenging the notion that all parents have several viable options (Srivastava, 2021; Cortez, 2023).

2.12 Summary of Literature Review

The studied literature emphasizes how a complex interaction between financial limitations, academic reputation, extracurricular activities, and infrastructure quality shapes parental preferences when choosing a school. Private schools are typically thought to provide better academic settings, more engaging extracurricular activities, and better-maintained facilities, according to both international and regional surveys. These benefits, however, frequently come with high financial expenses that limit access, especially for families with low and moderate incomes. When analyzed critically, the literature shows gaps in context and discrepancies. For instance, some academics contend that standardized test scores may promote memorization over deeper skills, even though they are frequently used as a gauge of academic excellence (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2008). This calls into question how academic "reputation" is created in Pakistan and if it accurately represents high-quality educational experiences.

In a similar vein, research on the value of facilities (Higgins et al., 2012) frequently ignores how parents use or understand these resources, particularly when the information is influenced by peer pressure or school branding. This points to a perception-performance gap, which is a trend that has been mentioned in the literature on educational marketing (Ali & Raza, 2021), but empirical research in Islamabad has hardly ever examined it.

Additionally, despite the fact that financial obstacles are commonly acknowledged (Aslam & Kingdon, 2011), there isn't much critical analysis in the literature regarding how parents deal with or plan around them. This includes their reliance on partial help, piecemeal enrollment in private institutions, and utilization of informal networks factors that this study's mixed-methods strategy captures. The intersections of socioeconomic position with gender, transportation accessibility, and cultural expectations all of which are extremely pertinent in the urban setting of Islamabad are also underrepresented in the literature. Although theoretical models like Parentocracy, Social Capital Theory, and Rational Choice Theory offer helpful frameworks, the majority of earlier research uses them in a descriptive or selective manner. In a comparable metropolitan situation such as Islamabad, very few combine these theories with empirical analysis.

The current study is justified by this gap. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, it captures the lived justifications and limitations for parental preferences in addition to quantitatively measuring them. This study allows for more grounded conclusions since, in contrast to most previous research, it analyzes public and private school selection within the same geographic sector. By strengthening the depth of interpretation, the incorporation of qualitative insights helps to close the gap between theory and practical decision-making.

CHAPTER 3

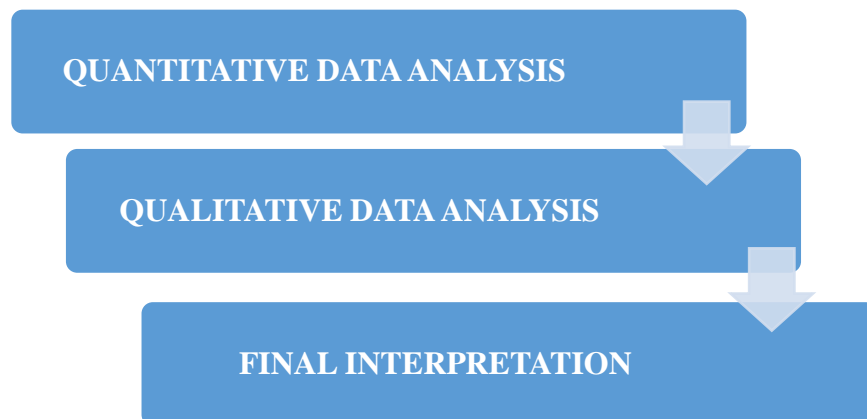
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, which was well-suited to the research goal of investigating factors that influence parental preferences in choosing between public and private primary schools in Islamabad. The design entailed gathering and evaluating quantitative data via questionnaires, followed by qualitative interviews to explain and supplement the statistical findings. This method allowed the researcher to first uncover broad trends, such as the importance of academic reputation or affordability and then learn why parents valued these aspects through in-depth interactions. The mixed-method strategy was especially appropriate since it combined the strengths of numerical generalization with contextual awareness, providing a more comprehensive and trustworthy picture of parental decision-making. It was also consistent with the study's theoretical framework, which recognizes both rational choices and social impacts.

Figure 02

Sequential Explanatory Design



3.2 Population and Sample of the Study

The study's target group included parents of children enrolled in public and private primary schools in Islamabad, Pakistan's federal capital. This population is both diverse and contextually significant due to Islamabad's distinct mix of socioeconomic classes, educational institutions, and public-private educational divide.

The broader population included:

- Parents of students enrolled in government (public) primary schools under the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE).
- Parents of students enrolled in private primary schools, including low-fee and elite institutions affiliated with national and international boards (e.g., FBISE, Cambridge).

This demographic was chosen because parents are the primary decision-makers in school selection and are heavily influenced by characteristics such as price, academic quality, extracurricular offerings, and infrastructure, which are the study's main focal areas. Furthermore, Islamabad is a representative metropolitan context with access to both well-funded public schools and high-performing private institutions, making it ideal for a comparison study.

Sample of Study

From the broader population, a sample of 150 parents was drawn using stratified purposive sampling:

- 75 parents from public primary schools
- 75 parents from private primary schools

The sample was stratified by school type (public vs. private) to guarantee comparative balance and enable significant statistical examination of differences between these two educational sectors. Participants in each stratum were purposefully chosen to represent differences in socioeconomic position, gender, and occupation, representing the demographic diversity of Islamabad's schooling population. In addition, five parents and four school principals were chosen for qualitative interviews, utilizing maximum variation sampling to gather varied opinions based on income level, educational background, and

institutional affiliation. A total of 150 questionnaires were handed to parents of primary school students in both public and private schools in Sector F-8, Islamabad. However, only 116 fully completed responses were received, with a response rate of 77.3%. The remaining 34 responses were either incomplete or not returned and were thus removed from the final data analysis.

Table 3.1 Population & Sample (Public Schools)

Type of school	Name	No. of Students	No. of sample (parents)
Public Schools	IMSB(I-V) F.8/3	80	25
	IMS(I-V) F.8/2	85	25
	IMCB(I-XII) F.8/4	75	25

Table 3.2 Population & Sample (Private Schools)

Type of school	Name	No. of Students	No. of sample (parents)
Private Schools	Islamabad Convent School F.8/4	67	25
	OPF College (JUNIOR) F-8/2	78	25
	Islamabad Science School & College F-8/1	60	25

3.2.1 Justification for Selecting Sector F-8

Sector F-8 in Islamabad was chosen because it contains a balanced representation of both public and private primary schools, making it appropriate for comparison analysis. It also shows socioeconomic diversity within a manageable geographic area, allowing the researcher to account for regional differences while obtaining a variety of family perspectives. Furthermore, the sector's accessibility and concentration of schools made data collection possible given the study's time and resource constraints.

3.3 Validity

The first draft of the questionnaires, which had 30 items, was reviewed by experts and given supervisory input to guarantee the content validity of the research tools used in the quantitative phase. The items were trimmed down to 20 based on recommendations for

their applicability, clarity, and connection with the study's goals. A group of professionals in education then examined the questions. When comparing parental preferences between public and private elementary schools, they were asked to assess the items' language, formatting, and content accuracy. Their suggestions were carefully considered, and the study supervisor was consulted before the updated questionnaire was approved.

Semi-structured interview guidelines were created for the qualitative component based on major themes found in the quantitative data. Subject matter experts also examined these guides to make sure they were suitable, open-ended, and able to generate insightful answers that complemented the objectives of the study.

3.4 Pilot Testing

Twenty people who were not included in the final study sample participated in a pilot study. Evaluating the questionnaire items' usability, clarity, and comprehension in practical settings was the goal. Participants offered input on the overall organization, unclear elements, and unclear wording. Additional improvements were made to improve the instruments' clarity and dependability in response to this input. This procedure made it more likely that responders would understand the items correctly and consistently. To assess the timing and flow of the questions, a small group of parents participated in an informal pilot of the interview technique. Their suggestions helped to streamline and improve the interview process for the qualitative stage.

3.5 Reliability

The Split-Half Method was used in this mixed-methods study to evaluate the quantitative instrument's reliability, and SPSS was used for analysis. Internal consistency between the two halves was assessed once the responses from the pilot phase were split in half. The findings showed a respectable degree of consistency, suggesting that the survey was a trustworthy instrument for comparing the preferences of parents in public and private school environments.

A structured interview guide and consistent data collection methods were used to guarantee reliability for the qualitative phase. Responses to the interviews were meticulously transcribed from the recordings. During the thematic analysis process, themes

were cross-checked by several coders to guarantee uniformity in interpretation, thereby enhancing reliability.

3.6 Data Collection

According to the sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the data for this study were gathered in two separate stages. The qualitative phase was carried out to obtain a deeper understanding of the findings once the quantitative phase was finished collecting general data.

3.6.1 Quantitative Data Collection

A total of 150 questionnaires were handed to parents of primary school students in both public and private schools in Sector F-8, Islamabad. However, only 116 fully completed responses were received, with a response rate of 77.3%. The remaining 34 responses were either incomplete or not returned, and were thus removed from the final data analysis. This amount of response is deemed acceptable for social science research (Babbie, 2010), especially in field studies with voluntary involvement. Care was taken to ensure that the 116 valid replies were demographically and proportionately divided throughout public and private schools, thereby maintaining analytical balance.

Table 3.3 data collection

Category	Count
Questionnaires distributed	150
Fully completed (analyzed)	116
Incomplete or not returned	34

3.6.2 Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative phase was carried out to investigate the underlying logic of the trends seen in the survey replies after the quantitative data had been analyzed. Five parents and four principals from public and private elementary schools participated in semi-structured interviews. The decision-making procedures, selection criteria, and participants' overall experiences with the school choice process were the main topics of these interviews. A more thorough grasp of parental preferences was made possible by the qualitative data, which gave the quantitative findings additional depth and context.

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

For the quantitative data, we preferred to go with descriptive statistics to summarize their choices and influencing factors reported by parents. We also focused on inferential statistics, such as t-tests, to compare the preferences between parents who chose public schools and those who preferred private schools for their child.

3.7.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved coding and categorizing the transcripts to identify common themes and patterns.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was secured from all participants, with steps taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The study complied with ethical standards as established by relevant institutional review boards or ethics committees.

3.9 Work Plan

After the literature review and formatting the questionnaires, data was collected in the time of twelve weeks. After that, the data analysis took 5–6 weeks approximately; then, the analyzed data was presented in the formal format of the thesis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis: Parental Preferences in School Selection

The study utilized descriptive and inferential statistics to examine various factors influencing parental preferences in selecting public and private primary schools. These factors included fiscal considerations, academic reputation, co-curricular activities, and school facilities. Responses were collected from 116 parents, and the findings are presented in Tables 4.1 to 4.7.

Table 4.1: Demographics of Respondent Parents (n=116)

Criteria	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	MALE	40	34.5
	FEMALE	76	65.5
Age	UNDER 25	1	.9
	25 – 34	35	30.2
	35 – 44	49	42.2
	45 – 54	23	19.8
	55 and above	8	6.9
Income	low income	11	9.5
	middle income	93	80.2
	high income	12	10.3
Education	no formal education	2	1.7
	primary/secondary education	37	31.9
	undergraduate degree	21	18.1
	postgraduate degree	56	48.3
Children	1 children	38	32.8
	2 children	49	42.2
	3 children	21	18.1
	4 children or more	8	6.9
Location	Urban	84	72.4
	Suburban	20	17.2
	Rural	12	10.3
Total	116	100.0	100.0

The table 4.1 demographic analysis of the respondent parents reveals a diverse but predominantly female participant group. Out of 116 respondents, 76 (65.5%) were female, while 40 (34.5%) were male. In terms of age distribution, the largest age group was 35–44 years, comprising 49 respondents (42.2%), followed by those aged 25–34 years at 30.2% (n = 35). Respondents aged 45–54 made up 19.8% (n = 23), while a smaller number were aged 55 and above (6.9%, n = 8). Only one respondent (0.9%) was under 25 years of age.

Regarding household income, a vast majority of respondents identified as middle-income earners (80.2%, n = 93), with only 10.3% (n = 12) identifying as high-income and 9.5% (n = 11) as low-income earners. Educational attainment among parents varied, with 48.3% (n = 56) holding a postgraduate degree, making it the most represented category. About 31.9% (n = 37) had completed primary or secondary education, while 18.1% (n = 21) held an undergraduate degree. Only 2 respondents (1.7%) had no formal education.

In terms of family size, most respondents had either one or two children. Specifically, 49 parents (42.2%) had two children, 38 (32.8%) had one child, and 21 (18.1%) had three children. A small portion (6.9%, n = 8) reported having four or more children. As for their residential location, the majority of parents resided in urban areas (72.4%, n = 84), while 17.2% (n = 20) lived in suburban settings and 10.3% (n = 12) in rural areas.

This demographic profile suggests that the study sample was predominantly composed of urban, middle-income, and well-educated mothers in their mid-30s to mid-40s, which may influence their school preferences and the factors they consider important in selecting a primary school for their children.

Table 4.2 Parental Perceptions of Fiscal Factors Influencing School Choice

Categories	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
		.res		
Fiscal Factors	The cost of tuition is a significant factor in my decision to choose a primary school.	116	3.4828	1.04243
	Private schools provide better value for the fees they charge compared to public schools.	116	3.3534	.95329
	I prefer schools with flexible payment plans or financial aid options.	116	3.8966	.88837
	The affordability of school-related expenses (e.g., uniforms, books) influences my choice of school.	116	3.7155	1.00266
	I would choose a public school if it meant avoiding costly private school fees.	116	3.5431	1.22575

The table 4.2 reveals that fiscal factors play a meaningful role in shaping parental decisions regarding school selection. The highest mean score ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.89$) was observed for the statement expressing a preference for schools that offer flexible payment plans or financial aid options, indicating that many parents value financial flexibility when considering a school for their children. The affordability of school-related expenses such as uniforms and books also received a relatively high mean ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.00$), suggesting that indirect costs are an important consideration for parents alongside tuition fees.

The cost of tuition itself was acknowledged as a significant factor, with a mean score of 3.48 ($SD = 1.04$), showing that many parents weigh tuition fees heavily when making decisions. In contrast, the statement that private schools provide better value for the fees they charge compared to public schools received the lowest mean score ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 0.95$), indicating that parents may hold mixed views on the cost-effectiveness of private education. The item “I would choose a public school if it meant avoiding costly private school fees” had a mean of 3.54 with the highest standard deviation ($SD = 1.23$), suggesting varied opinions among parents some leaning toward cost avoidance, while others may prioritize different aspects of schooling despite higher fees. These results show a clear emphasis on the financial practicality of education from the parental perspective.

Table 4.3 Parental Views on Academic Reputation in School Selection

Categories	Items	N	Mean	Std.
		.res		Deviation
Academic Reputation	The academic performance of a school is the most important factor in my decision-making process.	116	4.0345	.91301
	Public schools are as academically rigorous as private schools.	116	3.1034	.98139
	I would choose a school based solely on its academic rankings.	116	3.3966	.91252
	Teachers' qualifications are a key determinant of a school's academic reputation.	116	4.1552	3.79841
	Standardized test results are a crucial factor in my choice between public and private schools.	116	3.5948	1.00415

Table 4.3 shows how academic reputation influences parental decisions about primary schools. Among the items assessed, the statement on the importance of teachers' qualifications obtained the highest mean score ($M = 4.16$), showing that parents place a high value on the professional background and competency of teaching staff when evaluating a school's academic reputation. However, this question had an exceptionally high standard deviation ($SD = 3.80$), indicating variability in responses, which could lead to data input errors or outliers that require additional investigation.

With a high mean score ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.91$), the question "The academic performance of a school is the most important factor in my decision-making process" also demonstrated considerable parental agreement regarding the importance of overall academic achievement in school selection. The results of standardized tests were also deemed significant; the moderate to high mean score ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.00$) suggests that parents view these scores as a reliable gauge of the caliber of the school.

In difference, the statement "Public schools are as academically rigorous as private schools" obtained the lowest mean score ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.98$), indicating parental skepticism about academic parity between the two sectors. The idea of selecting a school exclusively based on academic rankings obtained modest agreement ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.91$),

demonstrating that while rankings are important, they are not the only element in the decision-making process.

Overall, the responses suggest that while academic reputation is a strong influence on school choice, parents evaluate it through multiple lenses—including teacher qualifications, school performance, and standardized assessments—rather than relying on rankings or assumptions of academic equality between public and private schools

Table 4.4 Parental Perspectives on Co-Curricular Activities in Public and Private Schools

Categories	Items	N.res	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Availability of a wide range of co-curricular activities is a key factor in my school selection.	116	3.3707	1.09965
	Private schools offer more diverse co-curricular activities compared to public schools.	116	3.8190	.95643
Co-curricular Activities	I prioritize schools that have strong sports programs for my child.	116	3.5000	1.06730
	Music, arts, and drama programs are important in my decision-making process.	116	3.4310	.97110
	Teachers' qualifications are a key determinant of a school's academic reputation.	116	3.6121	.92098

The table 4.4 shows parents' perspectives on the role of co-curricular activities in selecting primary schools. The statement “Private schools offer more diverse co-curricular activities compared to public schools” received the highest mean score (M = 3.82, SD = 0.96), suggesting that many parents perceive private schools as providing richer opportunities in this area. This perception may influence a preference toward private institutions, especially for parents seeking holistic development for their children.

The item “Teachers' qualifications are a key determinant of a school's academic reputation” also received a relatively high mean (M = 3.61, SD = 0.92), though this item may have been misclassified under the co-curricular activities category. If considered

relevant, it may imply that parents see qualified teachers as important for both academic and non-academic programs.

Other items showed moderate agreement. The availability of a wide range of co-curricular activities ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.10$), the importance of strong sports programs ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.07$), and the value placed on music, arts, and drama ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.97$) indicate that while these aspects are considered, they are not the primary drivers of school choice for most parents. However, the relatively consistent means above the neutral midpoint (3.00) show that co-curricular offerings do contribute meaningfully to parents' decision-making.

Overall, the data suggests that co-curricular programs, especially in private schools are seen as beneficial and may give these institutions an edge in attracting parents who value a well-rounded education for their children.

Table 4.5 Evaluation of School Facilities Influencing Parental Choice

Categories	Items	N .res	Mean	Std. D
	The physical infrastructure of the school is a major factor in my decision-making process.	116	3.5517	1.00732
	I believe private schools have better facilities (e.g., libraries, sports fields) than public schools.	116	4.0776	2.83810
School Facilities	Safety and security measures at a school greatly influence my choice.	116	3.7759	1.05572
	A school's technology resources (e.g., computers, smartboards) are important to me.	116	3.6724	.93971
	Availability of transportation services (e.g., school buses) plays a role in my choice of school.	116	4.0000	.89443

The table 4.5 highlights the significance of school facilities in parental decision-making when selecting primary schools. The item “I believe private schools have better facilities (e.g., libraries, sports fields) than public schools” received the highest mean score ($M = 4.08$), indicating a strong perception among parents that private schools are superior in terms of infrastructure. However, this item also shows an unusually high standard

deviation ($SD = 2.84$), which may suggest inconsistencies in responses or possible data entry errors that warrant closer examination.

The availability of transportation services also scored highly ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.89$), showing that logistical support such as school buses is a key factor influencing parental choice. Similarly, safety and security measures were rated as important ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.06$), reflecting parental concern for the well-being of their children during school hours.

The importance of physical infrastructure ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.01$) and technological resources ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.94$) also received moderate to high mean scores, suggesting that while not the top priorities, these elements still significantly influence parents' preferences. Parents appear to value modern, well-equipped schools with secure and supportive environments, especially when such facilities are perceived to be more available in the private sector.

Overall, the responses indicate that well-developed school facilities—particularly in terms of safety, transportation, and modern infrastructure—play a vital role in attracting parents toward a specific school, often giving private schools a competitive advantage in this regard.

Table 4.6 Descriptive Statistics of Parental Preferences in School Selection

Categories	N. responses	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fiscal Factors	116	3.5983	.63766
Academic Reputation	116	3.6569	.97973
Co-curricular Activities	116	3.5466	.57141
School Facilities	116	3.8155	.72671
Total	116		

Table 4.6 descriptive statistics of the study reveal insightful patterns regarding the factors that influence parental preferences in the selection of public and private primary schools. Among the four main categories evaluated, School Facilities emerged as the most influential factor, with the highest mean score of 3.8155 and a standard deviation of 0.72671, indicating that most parents rated this factor highly and with moderate consistency. Academic Reputation followed closely with a mean of 3.6569, though it displayed the highest variability in responses ($SD = 0.97973$), suggesting that parents

differed significantly in how much weight they placed on a school’s academic standing. Fiscal Factors also held considerable importance with a mean score of 3.5983 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.63766, showing a moderate but consistent concern for the financial implications of school choice. Co-curricular Activities, although still rated positively, had the lowest mean score of 3.5466 and the least variation (SD = 0.57141), indicating a general consensus among parents, albeit with slightly lower prioritization compared to other factors. Overall, these findings suggest that while all four categories are important in parental decision-making, school facilities are prioritized most, and perceptions around academic reputation are the most diverse.

Table 4.7 Comparison of Parental Preferences Between Public and Private Schools

Dimensions	School	N. RES	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value	Sig (p < 0.05)
F. Factors	Public school	45	3.8089	.57359	2.924	0.004	Yes
	Private school	71	3.4648	.64389			
A. Reputation	Public school	45	3.4356	.52620	2.279	0.025	Yes
	Private school	71	3.7972	1.16251			
C. Activities	Public school	45	3.2933	.60091	3.869	0.000	Yes
	Private school	71	3.7070	.49203			
S. Facilities	Public school	45	3.6578	.34278	2.224	0.028	Yes
	Private school	71	3.9155	.87614			

The table 4.7 compared the views of parents who chose public schools with those who opted for private schools across four important dimensions: fiscal factors, academic reputation, co-curricular activities, and school facilities. The findings revealed statistically significant differences in all areas, clearly showing that the type of school influences what parents value most in their decision-making.

When it comes to fiscal factors, parents who enrolled their children in public schools placed significantly more importance on affordability (M = 3.8089, SD = 0.57359) compared to private school parents (M = 3.4648, SD = 0.64389). With a t-value of 2.924 and a p-value of 0.004, this difference is statistically meaningful. This means that cost-related concerns play a greater role for families choosing public education. As such,

Hypothesis 1 which suggested that tuition fees and costs do not significantly influence school choice was rejected.

In contrast, academic reputation mattered more to parents of private school children ($M = 3.7972$, $SD = 1.16251$) than to those with children in public schools ($M = 3.4356$, $SD = 0.52620$). The t -value of -2.279 and p -value of 0.025 indicate a significant difference. This finding suggests that parents selecting private schools are more influenced by the school's perceived academic quality. Therefore, Hypothesis 2, which assumed no difference in perceived academic reputation, was also rejected.

A similar pattern emerged in the case of co-curricular activities. Private school parents gave higher ratings ($M = 3.7070$, $SD = 0.49203$) compared to public school parents ($M = 3.2933$, $SD = 0.60091$), with a t -value of -3.869 and a p -value less than 0.001 . This strong statistical significance indicates that private school parents tend to place greater value on extracurricular opportunities, leading to the rejection of Hypothesis 3.

School facilities including infrastructure, classroom resources, and technology were more highly appreciated by private school parents ($M = 3.9155$, $SD = 0.87614$) than public school parents ($M = 3.6578$, $SD = 0.34278$). The t -value of -2.224 and p -value of 0.028 confirm that this difference is significant. Consequently, Hypothesis 4, which proposed no significant difference in the importance of school facilities, was also rejected.

The findings highlight a clear divide in parental priorities: public school parents tend to focus more on affordability, while private school parents are more influenced by academic reputation, co-curricular offerings, and the quality of facilities. These preferences are not random but statistically significant, reflecting distinct values that guide school selection decisions among families.

4.2 Qualitative analysis

Thematic Analysis: *Parental Preferences in Selection of Public and Private Primary Schools*

The qualitative data gathered from parents were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher systematically reviewed participant responses, coded recurring ideas, and organized them into key themes aligned with the study's objectives. This section presents

the emergent themes, supported by direct quotations from participants, to illustrate how fiscal concerns, academic reputation, co-curricular activities, and school facilities influence parental decision-making.

Thematic analysis was carried out using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. After transcribing and extensively examining all interviews (Step 1: Familiarization), first codes were created based on recurring concepts and keywords in participant responses (Step 2: Generating first Codes). These codes were then categorized as probable elements influencing parental decision-making (Step 3: Theme Searching). The first themes were examined and developed by comparing them to raw data to guarantee consistency and accuracy (Step 4: Theme Review). Each theme was clearly defined and labeled according to its primary notion (Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes). Finally, the findings were organized and presented in a structured manner, complete with supporting quotations and interpretations (Step 6: Report Creation).

1. Fiscal Factors Influencing Parental Choice

Theme 1: Tuition Fees as a Major Determinant

During the coding process, a considerable number of replies raised concerns about school fees such as tuition, registration, and hidden charges. These were combined into a bigger category representing economic problems. Upon inspection, the most noticeable and continuous pattern was the topic of tuition fees as a primary predictor of school choice.

The interviews revealed that financial considerations are critical in how parents choose between public and private primary schools. While private schools are frequently associated with higher academic standards, many parents expressed concern about growing tuition fees, hidden expenditures, and additional expenses such as uniforms, books, activity fees, and transportation. These financial demands lead families to make difficult decisions, such as reducing vital household spending, taking out loans, or, in some circumstances, returning to public schools despite discontent. Parents frequently portrayed private schools as a necessary cost for their children's future, rather than a convenient or preferred option.

A parent explained:

“We simply cannot afford the monthly fee of private schools. Even if the education is better, it’s beyond our budget.”

Another parent added:

“Private schools in Islamabad demand fees that consume half our monthly earnings. While we desire quality education for our children, we are compelled to opt for government schools, despite their limitations.”

The financial burden forced some families to shift their children from private to government schools. One respondent shared:

“We shifted our daughter from an elite private school to a low-fee institution after her father’s salary was cut. The quality difference is noticeable, but survival comes first.”

The public school teacher/principal also supported this view, noting:

“Public schools provide quality education at no direct cost to parents, making it an attractive option. In today’s situation, people are facing much difficulty in bringing up their children. As inflation is there, public schools provide education free of cost.”

This highlights how public schools serve as a buffer against economic pressures, offering a lifeline to families who prioritize affordability over institutional reputation.

Key insights:

- Even though persistent financial difficulties, parents believe that private education is expensive but necessary.
- Hidden fees in private schools undermine trust and accountability.
- When financial constraints arise, some families return to public schools, albeit reluctantly.

This theme demonstrates how economic status is not only a background factor, but also a direct predictor of school choice. The findings are consistent with quantitative statistics, which show that tuition fees are one of the most influential variables in school selection.

Theme 2: Hidden and Additional Costs

The initial categorization of interview transcripts revealed persistent complaints regarding additional expenses above the quoted tuition fees. These included fees for co-curricular activities, lab use, annual festivities, exams, and even informal "donations." Parents frequently expressed frustration and mistrust over unexpected or poorly explained costs.

As the coding progressed, these references were grouped into a bigger category called "non-transparent financial demands." After examining and revising, a clear trend emerged: hidden and additional costs as a separate factor influencing school choice.

Many parents explained that, while these expenditures were lower in comparison to tuition, they often added up to a major burden, especially when not discussed in advance. The perception of being "surprised" or "unprepared" by unexpected school demands contributed to a sense of financial insecurity and eroded parents' trust in private school administration.

A parent commented:

“Private schools ask for a new uniform every year, charge for books, even for small events. It becomes too much.”

A parent shared that the school requires new uniforms, branded shoes, and sports event costs each term.

"These 'hidden charges' force us to borrow money or forego necessities such as healthcare."

Even budget private schools were not immune to criticism:

"The school promoted 'cheap' fees but imposed forced costs for computer classes and annual festivities. We had no option except to withdraw our son."

Such stories demonstrate how indirect costs exacerbate the gap between parents' educational goals and budgetary realities.

Key insights:

- Parents care about cost predictability and transparency as well as total cost.

- Hidden or last-minute fees might undermine parental trust and lead to school switching.
- Inconsistent charges make financial planning more difficult for low- and middle-income families.

This theme emphasizes the importance of openness in school pricing arrangements, as well as affordability in general. It agrees with the study's policy suggestion for clear and regulated communication of all school-related costs to facilitate informed parental decision-making.

2. Academic Reputation as a Selection Criterion

One of the topics that came up most often during the interviews was academic concerns. References to student performance, exam preparation, teaching quality, and English-medium instruction were frequent throughout the coding process. Two separate but related sub-themes emerged from these responses: worries about academic deficiencies in public schools and opinions of academic superiority in private schools. When taken as a whole, these themes show how academic standing affects school choice in various industries.

Theme 3: Perception of Academic Excellence in Private Schools

Many parents associated private schools with higher academic achievement, professional teaching practices, and a focus on spoken English. These references were consistently coded across interviews, forming a clear pattern of perceived superiority in academic delivery.

A parent stated, "I want my children to speak fluent English and be confident. Private schools prepare students better for the future." Others commended private schools for their excellent teaching approaches.

A parent noted:

"I want my children to speak fluent English and be confident. Private schools train them better for the future."

Others praised private schools for professional teaching practices:

“Private school teachers hold professional degrees and use multimedia tools. They also provide regular feedback, which helps us track our child’s progress.”

Private schools, according to parents, provided a disciplined and closely watched learning environment. They frequently cited exam-focused preparation, contemporary teaching tools, and responsibility as major benefits. Many parents stated that they were willing to make compromises in order to give their kids access to what they believed to be a top-notch education, even in the face of financial hardship.

Key insight

- Academic excellence is a primary driver of private school preference.
- Parents value structured environments, English fluency, and accountability.
- Many are willing to bear financial burdens to ensure stronger academic futures for their children.

Theme 4: Concerns About Public School Academics

Public schools, on the other hand, were frequently attacked for their poor accountability, absenteeism, and antiquated teaching strategies. Many parents voiced concerns about uninspired employees, inadequate facilities, and subpar academic results during the coding process. Parent shared:

“Teachers in government schools are often absent. How will our children learn?”

Another added:

“Government schools lack basic facilities—no science labs, no libraries. Teachers are absent for weeks, leaving children idle.”

Some also raised concerns about unmotivated staff:

“Teachers in government schools are indifferent. My son’s English teacher has not completed the syllabus in two years.”

The public school teacher/principal, however, offered a counter-perspective, stating:

“Public schools provide equal opportunities for all students regardless of their financial background.”

They also mentioned that:

“Parents feel secure to send their children to public schools as highly qualified teachers are available.”

These divergent opinions demonstrate a gap between parental perception and institutional ideals. Parents are nonetheless worried about uneven delivery and poor academic follow-through, even as school authorities highlight fairness and staff qualifications.

Key insight

- Public schools are perceived as lacking in academic accountability and consistency.
- Facilities and teacher engagement are key areas of concern.
- Administrator perspectives highlight system strengths that parents may overlook or distrust.

Parental school choice is heavily influenced by this academic element, which combines perceived excellence and perceived deficiencies. It validates the quantitative results, which showed that one of the main factors influencing students' decision to attend a private school rather than a public one was academic reputation.

3. Co-curricular Activities in Public and Private Schools

Strong views regarding the importance of extracurricular activities in a child's educational journey were revealed by parent interviews. Two distinct sub-themes emerged from the responses' continuous differentiation between the private and public school contexts.

Theme 5: Limited Extracurricular Activities in Public Schools

In public schools, parents saw a widespread absence of extracurricular activity. Competitions, debates, and sports were either nonexistent or very rarely held. This restricted exposure was seen as detrimental, particularly to the self-esteem and overall development of the kids.

“In public schools, there is hardly anything beyond the textbook. No sports day, no competitions.”

(P1, Public School Parent)

“Our children are missing out on exposure and confidence-building activities that are standard in private schools.”

(P2, Public School Parent)

Key insights

- Public schools are perceived to neglect extracurricular programming.
- Parents worry this gap hinders children's personal development.
- Lack of resources and initiative are major concerns.

Theme 6: Variety and Frequency of Activities in Private Schools

Private schools were widely recognized for actively promoting co-curricular involvement. Parents praised the **frequency, variety, and organization** of these programs, noting their role in building confidence, creativity, and interpersonal skills.

“Private schools offer a full package — education plus personality building. They prepare kids for real-world competition.”

(P6, Private School Parent)

“My daughter participates in drama and debate competitions regularly. It has really boosted her self-confidence.”

(P4, Private School Parent)

“The debate club and football team help my daughter develop confidence. These opportunities justify the financial sacrifice.”

(P8, Private School Parent)

Key insights:

- Private schools are viewed as environments for both academic and social development.
- Regular activities strengthen student confidence and self-expression.

- Parents see co-curricular richness as a key justification for higher fees.

These sub-themes show that co-curricular offerings strongly influence school preference. For many parents, such opportunities are as important as academic reputation when selecting a school.

4. Evaluation of School Facilities

Another important topic that parents brought up in their interviews was the school environment, which includes resources, infrastructure, and student safety. Three separate sub-themes were identified from these perceptions.

Theme 7: Infrastructure and Cleanliness

The physical surroundings, general school maintenance, and cleanliness were all commonly cited as markers of school quality. For these reasons, parents tended to have a more positive opinion of private schools.

A parent remarked:

“When I visited the private school, it was clean, classrooms had good chairs, and there was a playground.”

(P4, Private School Parent)

In contrast, while public school administrators emphasized that they receive government funds for improvement, parents felt these were not always translated into visible outcomes.

“Public schools receive government funding, which can be used for facilities and technology.”

(P9, Public School Principal)

Key insights:

- Physical appearance impacts parental perception of quality.
- Cleanliness and classroom facilities were stronger in private schools.
- Parents found public school infrastructure inconsistent despite policy support.

Theme 8: Availability of Educational Resources

Parents stressed the value of modern teaching resources, especially access to new technology and multimedia aids.

“Private schools make use of multimedia. Children learn better through videos and pictures.”

(P6, Private School Parent)

“We chose a school that offers robotics labs and coding seminars. These abilities are crucial for future careers, even if the costs are too expensive.”

(P7, Private School Parent)

Parents believed that public schools were lagging behind in terms of making these resources available.

Key insights

- When it comes to parental choice, educational technology and lab access are crucial.
- Private schools provide cutting-edge resources that parents link to preparedness for the future.
- It is believed that public schools lack technological and digital resources.

Theme 9: Safety and Security Measures

Parents stressed the value of modern teaching resources, especially access to new technology and multimedia aids.

“Private schools make use of multimedia. Children learn better through videos and pictures.”

(P6, Private School Parent)

“We chose a school that offers robotics labs and coding seminars. These abilities are crucial for future careers, even if the costs are too expensive.”

(P7, Private School Parent)

Parents believed that public schools were lagging behind in terms of making these resources available.

Key insights:

- When it comes to parental choice, educational technology and lab access are crucial.
- Private schools provide cutting-edge resources that parents link to preparedness for the future.
- It is believed that public schools lack technological and digital resources.

The emphasis on a safe and disciplined atmosphere shows that physical security measures at a school are just as important to many urban families as its academic reputation.

The results of this theme analysis demonstrate the diverse nature of parental decision-making while choosing between public and private elementary schools. The testimonies of several participants, including parents from varied socioeconomic backgrounds and a public school principal, revealed a complex interaction of financial, academic, developmental, and infrastructural elements.

Above all, the most significant aspect was found to be financial affordability. Many parents mentioned financial constraints, demonstrating that public schools provide an important safety net for low- and middle-income families. Public schools provide free education, which helps to alleviate economic stress in the face of rising inflation and employment uncertainty. The principal of a public school acknowledged this position, stating that public schools provide equitable educational possibilities at no cost. Even with free education, there have been questions voiced regarding the quality and continuity of instruction in some public institutions.

Academic excellence has always been linked to private schools. Private schools were seen by parents as providing more modern, interesting, and rigorous teaching methods. These included English-medium education, timely feedback, and the use of technology—elements that parents associated with improved prospects for their children in the future. However, despite the apparent decline in quality, families were occasionally

forced to return to public schools due to the high and frequently rising cost of tuition and the burden of other fees (books, uniforms, and extracurricular expenses).

Parental decisions were heavily influenced by learning results and academic prestige. Public schools were frequently criticized by parents for their poor discipline, instructor absences, and curriculum coverage gaps. On the other hand, they commended private schools for rigorously monitoring student progress and upholding a disciplined learning atmosphere. Some families made large financial sacrifices to keep their children enrolled in private schools, demonstrating how this notion frequently prevailed over financial considerations.

4.3 Summary of Chapter Four: Integrated Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Chapter Four provided a thorough grasp of the elements influencing parents' preferences for public or private primary schools in Islamabad by presenting both quantitative survey findings and qualitative theme analysis.

The quantitative results showed that while choosing schools, parents give priority to elements such co-curricular activities, academic reputation, and cost. While public school parents prioritized affordability and accessibility, private school parents gave higher ratings on academic quality, extracurricular program availability, and safety measures.

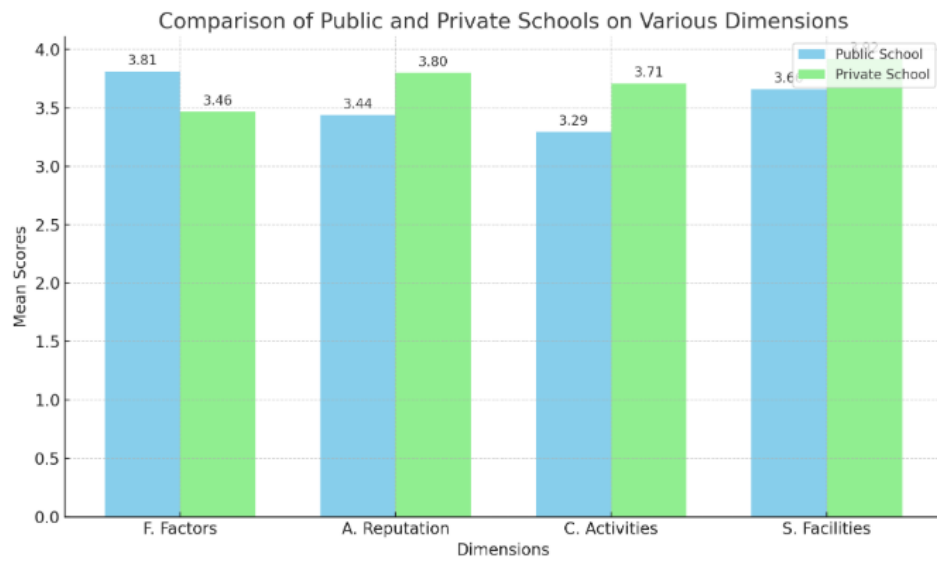
These findings were enhanced by the qualitative themes, which provided depth and context. Parents who opted for private schools talked about forgoing financial benefits in exchange for higher-quality education, more organized extracurricular activities, and safer, cleaner surroundings. On the other hand, parents who choose public schools frequently did so due to financial constraints, pointing to the burden of unstated expenses at private schools.

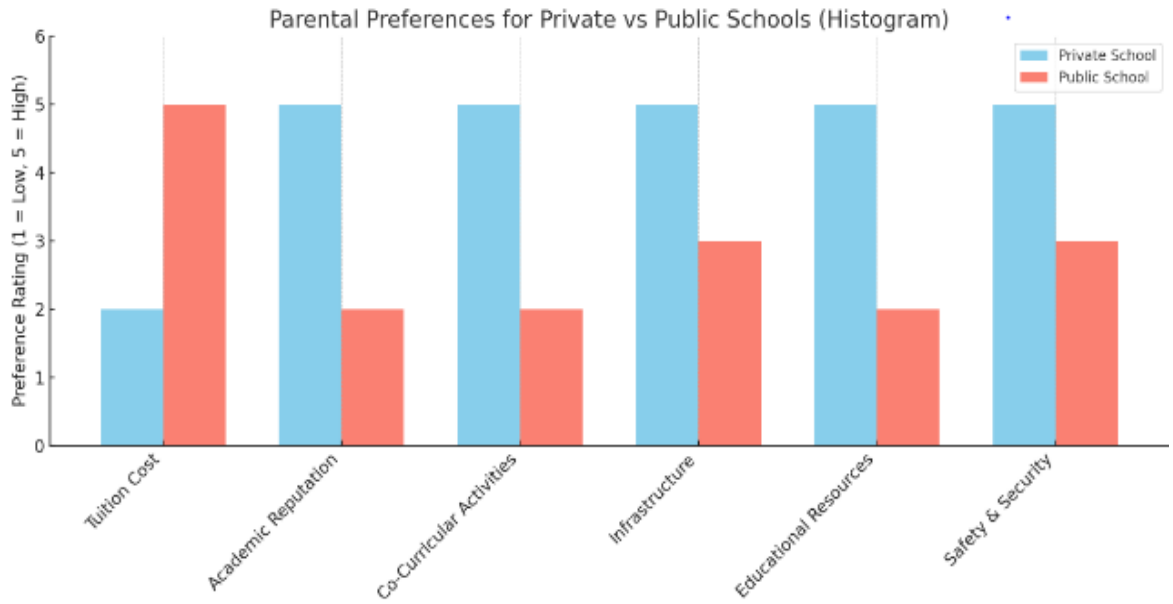
These findings were enhanced by the qualitative themes, which provided depth and context. Parents who opted for private schools talked about forgoing financial benefits in exchange for higher-quality education, more organized extracurricular activities, and safer, cleaner surroundings. On the other hand, parents who choose public schools frequently did

so due to financial constraints, pointing to the burden of unstated expenses at private schools.

The qualitative themes, which offered context and depth, improved these conclusions. Forgoing financial advantages in favor of better instruction, more structured extracurricular activities, and cleaner, safer environments were mentioned by parents who chose private schools. However, the burden of unreported costs at private schools was cited by parents who chose public schools, who often did so because of budgetary limitations.

Chart 1: comparing parental preferences for private vs public schools across six major factors





comparing parental preferences for private vs public schools across six major factors. It clearly shows:

- Stronger private school preference for academics, activities, and safety.
- Stronger public school preference for affordability.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

When it comes to the elementary education of their children, parents in Islamabad have had more options in recent years. With private schools expanding quickly and concerns about the state of public education continuing to rise, this study sets out to understand what influences parents' preferences between public and private primary schools in the city. The research focuses on several key areas that often factor into these decisions: financial considerations, academic reputation, the availability of co-curricular activities, and the overall quality of school facilities.

This problem was addressed using sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. The first part of the study involved distributing surveys to 150 parents from three public and three private schools in the F-8 sector of Islamabad. This quantitative phase helped identify general trends and patterns. The second phase involved follow-up interviews with selected parents, as well as teachers and school principals, to gain more in-depth understanding of the motivations and reasoning behind their choices.

The data clearly showed that cost plays a major role in school selection. Many parents acknowledged that while private schools are more expensive, they are often considered worth the extra money. This is because of the perception that private schools provide better academic services, learning environments, and resources. For families who can afford it, the investment in private schooling is seen as an investment in their children's future.

Academic quality was another top concern. Parents viewed private schools as more disciplined and effective in delivering education, particularly because of their English-medium instruction and consistently better examination results. These elements made them more appealing to those focused on their child's long-term academic performance.

The existence of extracurricular activities was a significant deciding factor in addition to academics. Private schools generally offer a wide variety of programs such as

sports, debate, music, and leadership clubs, which many public schools lack. Parents appreciated the way these activities contribute to students' confidence, social skills, and overall development.

The condition and quality of school facilities further shaped parental views. Private schools were often better equipped, with modern classrooms, functional science laboratories, libraries, and even reliable transportation services. Public schools, while more affordable, were often criticized for poor maintenance, lack of proper infrastructure, and overcrowded classrooms.

The study makes use of a number of theoretical frameworks, including the theories of human capital, rational choice, social capital, and parentocracy, in order to better explain these findings. Together, these theories help unpack how parents weigh their options based on what they can afford, what others in their community are doing, what benefits they expect from different schools, and how they perceive education as a long-term investment.

Above the all discussion the researcher concluded that parents who can manage the cost tend to prefer private schools, mainly due to the higher quality of services and opportunities they believe these schools provide. While public schools remain essential especially for families with limited resources—their declining preference among many parent's points to a deeper need for improvement. For public education to remain a competitive and viable option, policy reforms must address issues of quality, infrastructure, and extracurricular offerings. Ensuring all children have access to a well-rounded and effective primary education should be a national priority.

5.2 Findings

According to the sequential explanatory mixed-method design, the study's entire findings are presented in this section in two sections: quantitative and qualitative. The study's goal was to investigate and contrast the variables affecting parents' choices between Islamabad's public and private elementary schools. Data were collected through surveys (n=116) and semi-structured interviews with parents and school principals. The findings are aligned with the four main objectives of the study: (1) fiscal factors, (2) academic reputation, (3) co-curricular activities, and (4) school facilities.

5.2.1 Quantitative Findings

1. The table 4.1 demographic analysis of the respondent parents reveals a diverse but predominantly female participant group. Out of 116 respondents, 76 (65.5%) were female, while 40 (34.5%) were male. In terms of age distribution, the largest age group was 35–44 years, comprising 49 respondents (42.2%), followed by those aged 25–34 years at 30.2% (n = 35). Respondents aged 45–54 made up 19.8% (n = 23), while a smaller number were aged 55 and above (6.9%, n = 8). Only one respondent (0.9%) was under 25 years of age.

Regarding household income, a vast majority of respondents identified as middle-income earners (80.2%, n = 93), with only 10.3% (n = 12) identifying as high-income and 9.5% (n = 11) as low-income earners. Educational attainment among parents varied, with 48.3% (n = 56) holding a postgraduate degree, making it the most represented category. About 31.9% (n = 37) had completed primary or secondary education, while 18.1% (n = 21) held an undergraduate degree. Only 2 respondents (1.7%) had no formal education. In terms of family size, most respondents had either one or two children. Specifically, 49 parents (42.2%) had two children, 38 (32.8%) had one child, and 21 (18.1%) had three children. A small portion (6.9%, n = 8) reported having four or more children. As for their residential location, the majority of parents resided in urban areas (72.4%, n = 84), while 17.2% (n = 20) lived in suburban settings and 10.3% (n = 12) in rural areas.

This demographic profile suggests that the study sample was predominantly composed of urban, middle-income, and well-educated mothers in their mid-30s to mid-40s, which may influence their school preferences and the factors they consider important in selecting a primary school for their children.

2. The Table 4.2 descriptive statistics showed that fiscal concerns significantly influence school selection. The statement “I prefer schools with flexible payment plans or financial aid options” had the highest mean (M = 3.90), followed by “The affordability of school-related expenses (e.g., uniforms, books)” (M = 3.72). A t-test comparing responses between parents of public and private school children revealed a statistically significant difference (p = 0.004), confirming that affordability was more important to parents choosing public schools.

3. The Table 4.3 Parents showed strong agreement with the importance of academic performance ($M = 4.03$) and teacher qualifications ($M = 4.16$) in selecting schools. However, the statement “Public schools are as academically rigorous as private schools” received a low mean ($M = 3.10$), indicating skepticism about the quality of public school academics. The t-test showed a significant difference between public and private school parents ($p = 0.025$), suggesting that academic reputation holds greater weight for private school parents.
4. The Table 4.4 Private school parents rated co-curricular offerings more highly ($M = 3.71$) compared to public school parents ($M = 3.29$), with a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$). The results support that extracurricular activities are an important, yet less prioritized, factor in school choice, especially among public school parents.
5. The table 4.5 school facilities had the highest overall influence ($M = 3.82$). Key items such as “I believe private schools have better facilities” ($M = 4.08$) and “Availability of transportation services” ($M = 4.00$) received strong ratings. The t-test results ($p = 0.028$) showed that private school parents significantly preferred institutions with superior infrastructure.
6. The table 4.6 descriptive statistics of the study reveal insightful patterns regarding the factors that influence parental preferences in the selection of public and private primary schools. Among the four main categories evaluated, School Facilities emerged as the most influential factor, with the highest mean score of 3.8155 and a standard deviation of 0.72671, indicating that most parents rated this factor highly and with moderate consistency. Academic Reputation followed closely with a mean of 3.6569, though it displayed the highest variability in responses ($SD = 0.97973$), suggesting that parents differed significantly in how much weight they placed on a school’s academic standing. Fiscal Factors also held considerable importance with a mean score of 3.5983 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.63766, showing a moderate but consistent concern for the financial implications of school choice. Co-curricular Activities, although still rated positively, had the lowest mean score of 3.5466 and the least variation ($SD = 0.57141$), indicating a general consensus among parents, albeit with

slightly lower prioritization compared to other factors. Overall, these findings suggest that while all four categories are important in parental decision-making, school facilities are prioritized most, and perceptions around academic reputation are the most diverse.

7. The table 4.7 compared the views of parents who chose public schools with those who opted for private schools across four important dimensions: fiscal factors, academic reputation, co-curricular activities, and school facilities. The findings revealed statistically significant differences in all areas, clearly showing that the type of school influences what parents value most in their decision-making.

When it comes to fiscal factors, parents who enrolled their children in public schools placed significantly more importance on affordability ($M = 3.8089$, $SD = 0.57359$) compared to private school parents ($M = 3.4648$, $SD = 0.64389$). With a t -value of 2.924 and a p -value of 0.004, this difference is statistically meaningful. This means that cost-related concerns play a greater role for families choosing public education. As such, Hypothesis 1 which suggested that tuition fees and costs do not significantly influence school choice was rejected.

In contrast, academic reputation mattered more to parents of private school children ($M = 3.7972$, $SD = 1.16251$) than to those with children in public schools ($M = 3.4356$, $SD = 0.52620$). The t -value of -2.279 and p -value of 0.025 indicate a significant difference. This finding suggests that parents selecting private schools are more influenced by the school's perceived academic quality. Therefore, Hypothesis 2, which assumed no difference in perceived academic reputation, was also rejected.

A similar pattern emerged in the case of co-curricular activities. Private school parents gave higher ratings ($M = 3.7070$, $SD = 0.49203$) compared to public school parents ($M = 3.2933$, $SD = 0.60091$), with a t -value of -3.869 and a p -value less than 0.001. This strong statistical significance indicates that private school parents tend to place greater value on extracurricular opportunities, leading to the rejection of Hypothesis 3.

School facilities including infrastructure, classroom resources, and technology were more highly appreciated by private school parents ($M = 3.9155$, $SD = 0.87614$) than public school parents ($M = 3.6578$, $SD = 0.34278$). The t -value of -2.224 and p -value of

0.028 confirm that this difference is significant. Consequently, Hypothesis 4, which proposed no significant difference in the importance of school facilities, was also rejected.

The findings highlight a clear divide in parental priorities: public school parents tend to focus more on affordability, while private school parents are more influenced by academic reputation, co-curricular offerings, and the quality of facilities. These preferences are not random but statistically significant, reflecting distinct values that guide school selection decisions among families.

5.2.2 Qualitative Findings (Thematic Analysis)

The qualitative phase involved thematic analysis of interviews with five parents and four school principals. Thematic coding revealed nine prominent themes grouped under the study's objectives.

1. Fiscal Factors Influencing Parental Choice

With a high mean score ($M = 4.21$), quantitative data showed that affordability and tuition costs had the greatest influence on students' choice of school. This suggests that parents' decision-making is heavily influenced by economic factors.

This conclusion was strengthened by qualitative interviews, in which parents talked about the emotional strain and sacrifices they had to make in the home in order to pay for private schooling. Numerous others pointed out unstated expenses that were not previously revealed, such as fees for uniforms, digital programs, and transportation.

A parent explained:

“We simply cannot afford the monthly fee of private schools. Even if the education is better, it's beyond our budget.”

Another parent added:

“Private schools in Islamabad demand fees that consume half our monthly earnings. While we desire quality education for our children, we are compelled to opt for government schools, despite their limitations.”

These results are in line with those of Shaukat & Ghazal (2017), who found that middle-class households frequently place a higher priority on education than on necessities.

In a similar vein, Rahman (2019) emphasized that parental discontent with private institutions is exacerbated by opaque fee structures.

This theme supports the Rational Choice Theory theory that underpins this study by confirming that financial stress is more than just a barrier; it also influences how parents view the value and reliability of the school.

2. Academic Reputation as a Selection Criterion

Academic reputation was ranked among the top three preferences for school choice, according to survey results. Parents thought private schools had higher academic standards, more regimented instruction, and better exam preparation. Data from interviews confirmed this opinion. Parents emphasized that private schools had more robust accountability procedures, daily homework inspections, and regular testing systems.

A parent stated, "I want my children to speak fluent English and be confident. Private schools prepare students better for the future." Others commended private schools for their excellent teaching approaches.

A parent noted:

"I want my children to speak fluent English and be confident. Private schools train them better for the future."

Others praised private schools for professional teaching practices:

"Private school teachers hold professional degrees and use multimedia tools. They also

"Teachers in government schools are often absent. How will our children learn?"

Another added:

"Government schools lack basic facilities—no science labs, no libraries. Teachers are absent for weeks, leaving children idle."

Some also raised concerns about unmotivated staff:

"Teachers in government schools are indifferent. My son's English teacher has not completed the syllabus in two years."

The public school teacher/principal, however, offered a counter-perspective, stating:

“Public schools provide equal opportunities for all students regardless of their financial background.”

They also mentioned that:

“Parents feel secure to send their children to public schools as highly qualified teachers are available.”

According to research like Alcott & Rose (2016), private schools in South Asia frequently perform better on standardized tests than public schools, in part because of improved oversight. These views are consistent with these findings. This superiority, however, can be more perceived than real, particularly when linked to parental expectations and financial status.

The conversation demonstrates that school preferences are influenced by academic image and outcome orientation, particularly for parents who are making large financial investments in their kids' futures.

3. Co-curricular Activities in Public and Private Schools

In both data strands, discipline received great marks. Parents quantitatively assessed behavior control and discipline as having a significant impact on their choice. They qualitatively characterized private schools as having more tranquil settings, better instructor monitoring, and more stringent regulations.

“There is hardly any activity beyond books in public schools. No sports, no competitions.”

This limited exposure was viewed as a disadvantage, particularly when considering the child’s holistic development.

Private schools, in contrast, were seen as nurturing creativity and confidence through frequent extracurricular programs.

A parent shared:

“My daughter participates in singing and drawing contests every month. It builds her confidence.”

Another stated:

“The private school’s debate club and football team help my daughter develop confidence. These opportunities justify the financial sacrifice.”

This is consistent with research by Ali & Bashir (2018), who discovered that parents, particularly in early education, associate discipline with moral growth and learning effectiveness. In contrast, public schools were frequently perceived as having inadequate supervision, which had an impact on students' learning and emotional health. This theme demonstrates how discipline is important for character development as well as academic control, which parents view as crucial during the primary years.

4. Evaluation of School Facilities

Theme 7: Infrastructure and Cleanliness

Cleanliness and physical infrastructure emerged as key differentiators between public and private schools. A parent remarked:

“When I visited the private school, it was clean, classrooms had good chairs, and there was a playground.”

The public school teacher/principal mentioned:

“Public schools receive government funding, which can be used for facilities and technology.”

Despite the potential for improved infrastructure through government support, many parents felt that these improvements were not consistently visible.

Theme 8: Availability of Educational Resources

Educational tools and modern teaching aids were also a major consideration. A parent enlightened:

"Private schools make use of multimedia. Children learn better through videos and pictures."

Another added:

"We chose a school that offers robotics labs and coding seminars. These abilities are crucial for future careers, even if the costs are too expensive."

On the other hand, it was commonly believed that public schools lacked these tools, which hurt kids in the digital age.

Theme 9: Safety and Security Measures

Security was the most frequently mentioned decision factor by parents.

"There is a guard at the gate, and they don't let children out without parents," stated one response. That is important to us.

"Private schools maintain clean, well-guarded campuses and enforce strict anti-bullying policies," another stressed. My child feels safe, which is uncommon in public schools.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data reveals a notable difference in the priorities of parents when deciding between private and public schools. While private school parents placed more importance on academic quality, extracurricular variety, infrastructure, and safety, public school parents focused on affordability and accessibility. In addition to being statistically significant, these preferences had a strong foundation in the economic reality and life experiences of the parents.

5.3 Discussion

The results of this study offer a detailed look at the factors influencing parental preferences while selecting primary schools that are both public and private in Islamabad. This study confirms, as previous research has shown, that parents are strongly influenced by a school's academic reputation, availability of co-curricular activities, infrastructure, and the financial cost of education. These findings are consistent with those of Asad (2020), who did a similar mixed-method study in Rawalpindi and discovered that parents chose private schools for academic excellence, improved school settings, and better facilities. The current study confirms these preferences, since the majority of parents in Islamabad believe private schools are superior in terms of educational performance and general environment. The current survey supports these choices, since most parents in Islamabad

believe private schools are superior in terms of educational performance and general environment.

Smith and Lee's (2023) research further confirms these findings, demonstrating that private schools frequently have more qualified teachers, improved learning settings, and a more structured academic curriculum, all of which have a substantial impact on parental decisions. In this study, private schools were consistently assessed as delivering better-structured co-curricular programming, well-maintained classrooms, and up-to-date technology resources, supporting the link between perceived quality of education and parental choice shown in Smith and Lee's work. The study conducted by Shulgina (2023) in Georgia highlights the significant influence of a school's socio-cultural environment and perceived safety on the decision-making process regarding school choice. While not the primary focus in this study, several parents mentioned the importance of school discipline, environment, and reputation within the community—factors that reflect social capital and align with Shulgina's emphasis on non-academic determinants in parental decision-making. Similarly, the theoretical grounding of this study in Social Capital Theory finds further support in Balter and Dunlop's (2023) research, which demonstrated that parents heavily rely on peer networks and community perceptions when evaluating school choices.

This study finding also highlights international trends regarding the rising popularity of private education, especially among middle- and upper-income families, as previously observed by Tooley et al. (2005) in their comparative research in Nigeria. They found that even in economically disadvantaged areas, private schools were preferred for their teacher commitment and structured programs. This is comparable to Islamabad, where parents expressed dissatisfaction with teacher absenteeism and resource limitations in public schools, leading them to favor private options despite higher costs. Furthermore, the role of fiscal factors in shaping school choice aligns with the observations made by Bifulco, Ladd, and Ross (2009), who identified financial affordability and value-for-money as central to parental decision-making in education markets. Parents in Islamabad echoed this concern, frequently balancing the desire for quality education with their financial constraints. This supports the application of Rational Choice Theory in your study, where parents are shown to weigh perceived educational benefits against economic burdens.

Unlike the positive performance reports from private schools, the research results of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2003) presented a more sophisticated view, showing that after adjusting for student demographics, public school students in the United States sometimes outperformed private school students. However, such distinctions were less noticeable in the Islamabad environment, where parents generally judged private schools to provide a greater return on educational expenditure. This mismatch can be linked to variations in public-sector spending, governance, and accountability between Pakistan and America.

The findings of this study correspond with those of Cortez (2023), who explored educational choices in the Philippines and emphasized that long-term academic and career opportunities heavily influence parental preferences. In this study, Islamabad parents also associated private schools with enhanced prospects for higher education and employment, supporting the relevance of Human Capital Theory in framing their decisions.

The above all discussion and comparisons confirm that the parental preference for private schools in Islamabad is not only a local trend but part of a broader global pattern, influenced by perceptions of quality, socioeconomic status, and long-term benefits. However, the study also highlights systemic challenges in public education that, if addressed, could shift these preferences toward a more equitable balance.

5.4 Conclusions

After the findings of this study the researcher lead to several major conclusions that directly align with the stated research objectives. First, with respect to the objective of investigating the fiscal factors influencing parental choice, the study concludes that tuition fees, transportation costs, and the overall affordability of education are crucial in shaping parental decisions. Parents acknowledged that while private schools offer more attractive facilities and educational quality, their high cost often limits access for low- and middle-income families. Nevertheless, many parents expressed willingness to make financial sacrifices for what they perceive to be better educational outcomes, confirming the significant impact of fiscal considerations on school selection.

The second objective of this study focused on the role of academic reputation in school choice, the study concludes that parents place a high value on schools with proven

academic success, qualified teachers, and strong board exam performance. Private schools, in particular, were seen as institutions that consistently deliver superior academic outcomes and maintain discipline, which substantially boosts their reputation. This perception strongly influences parental preference and is often based on word-of-mouth recommendations, alumni performance, and public rankings.

The third objective of the study is about evaluating co-curricular activities offered by schools, the study concludes that private schools are perceived to provide a broader range of extracurricular opportunities, including arts, sports, debate clubs, and leadership programs. These activities are viewed by parents as essential for the holistic development of their children. Public schools, while offering basic programs, were generally found lacking in both diversity and quality of co-curricular engagement, which diminishes their appeal for parents seeking a well-rounded education for their children.

The last and four objective regarding the facilities that attract parents to specific schools, the study concludes that infrastructure, including classroom environments, access to technology, safety measures, and transportation plays a pivotal role in school selection. The private schools in Islamabad were frequently praised for their modern infrastructure, air-conditioned classrooms, multimedia support, and well-kept buildings. On the other side, many public schools were reported to be overcrowded, with outdated facilities and insufficient resources. It had a considerable impact on parental perceptions and preferences.

The study concluded that parental decisions in Islamabad are influenced by a combination of financial abilities, academic standing, extracurricular activities, and the physical and technological infrastructure. These findings show the current need for governmental action to increase public school standards and promote educational equity for all social groups.

5.5 Recommendations

After the findings and conclusions, the researcher recommended numerous specific recommendations to address the important issues impacting parental preferences for public and private primary schools in Islamabad.

The first objective of the study focused on investigating the fiscal factors influencing parental choice, so after the conclusions, the study suggested that the government introduce subsidy programs or voucher-based financial support schemes for low- and middle-income families to access private schooling options. This may help alleviate the financial burden on these families and promote greater equity in educational opportunities. By ensuring that all children have access to quality education, the government may foster a more inclusive and competitive society. Concurrently, public schools should get higher budgetary allocations to improve quality while not increasing the financial burden on families. Regulatory frameworks may enforce transparency in school pricing structures among private institutions, ensuring that fees remain within reasonable limits.

The study's second purpose was to investigate the role of academic reputation in public and private school selection. The researcher suggested that both public and private schools prioritize ongoing teacher training and professional development to ensure high-quality instruction. particularly public schools, may employ performance monitoring methods and academic benchmarking to restore parental trust in their educational standards. Furthermore, establishing a unified database of school performance, including exam scores and teacher certifications, may allow parents to make better-informed judgments based on confirmed academic indicators.

The study also compared co-curricular activities; therefore, the researcher suggested that public schools extend and improve their recreational and enrichment programs by incorporating structured sports, arts and debate opportunities into the academic day. Partnerships with NGOs, community organizations, or local sports academies to give technical and financial support may help to accomplish this. Private schools may also make sure that their extracurricular activities are welcoming and available to all students, regardless of socioeconomic status.

The fourth objective assessing facilities that appeal to parents – rely on public schools making huge infrastructure investments like clean classrooms, science and computer labs, libraries and digital learning materials. Standardization may also be implemented for safety and security standards like CCTVs, Security guards and Disaster

management plans. Finally, both sectors may need to support reliable school transportation networks that facilitate accessibility, particularly for families in rural or poorly served urban areas.

All these suggestions are to eliminate the gap between public and private schools so that every child in Islamabad has access to high quality, affordable and holistic primary education. Policy making, school administration and community partnership should implement these changes together in a sustained and interconnected approach.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

Although this survey provides insightful information about the preferences of parents when choosing between Islamabad's public and private elementary schools, it should be noted that it has several drawbacks.

- 1.** The study's geographic coverage was limited to the F-8 sector of Islamabad, which may not fully represent the population of parents in other locations, particularly rural or less urbanized areas in Pakistan. As a result, the findings may not be applicable to other districts with varying socioeconomic conditions or educational infrastructures.
- 2.** The sample size was appropriate for modest comparative study but still limited. With only 150 parents questioned and fewer participants in interviews, the range of perspectives, particularly those of underrepresented groups such as parents of special needs children or those attending low-cost private schools, may not have been completely captured.
- 3.** The sample size was appropriate for a small comparative study but still limited. With only 150 parents questioned and fewer participants in interviews, the range of perspectives, particularly those of underrepresented groups such as parents of special needs children or those attending low-cost private schools, may not have been completely captured.
- 4.** Due to time and resource constraints, the study's mixed-methods approach did not fully integrate qualitative and quantitative data. A more thorough longitudinal or ethnographic approach would have resulted in richer, more nuanced data over time.

Considering these limitations, the study establishes a solid framework for future research and has practical implications for educational stakeholders looking to understand and resolve family expectations in school choice.

5.7 Areas for Future Research

This study opens a number of research directions while also offering insightful information about the preferences of parents while choosing public and private primary schools in Islamabad. First, the geographic scope of future research might be extended beyond the F-8 sector of Islamabad to encompass Pakistani provinces, other metropolitan districts, and rural areas. Such comparative studies would provide a more thorough knowledge of school choice patterns across various socioeconomic and cultural contexts and aid in capturing regional inequalities.

Second, it is advised to conduct longitudinal research to look at how parental preferences change over time, especially in reaction to shifting governmental policies, economic situations, or educational technology breakthroughs. A more thorough understanding of the long-term effects of school choice on student success and wellbeing might be possible by following parental decision-making across a number of years.

Third, to give a more comprehensive picture of the school selection process, future research may examine the viewpoints of various stakeholders, including students, teachers, school administrators, and legislators. For instance, incorporating student opinions may highlight significant elements associated with motivation, engagement, and school satisfaction that are sometimes missed in parent-centered research.

Future research should also look at how parents' choices are influenced by school branding and digital marketing, particularly in light of the growing competition among private schools. Researchers and practitioners may find it helpful to comprehend how parents perceive and react to school ads, social media campaigns, and online reputation.

The influence of parental education, work status, and cultural beliefs on their school preferences is another topic worth investigating. The impact of other elements, including price or academic standing, may be mediated or moderated by these sociodemographic characteristics, enhancing theoretical models of school choice.

Lastly, it is recommended that researchers examine certain solutions, such financial aid or infrastructure upgrades for public schools, using mixed-method or experimental designs and evaluate the effects of these modifications on enrollment trends and parental preferences. Pakistani educational systems can become more egalitarian and efficient by implementing evidence-based practices that can also influence education policy.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad & Sheikh, (2014). Determinants of school choice: Evidence from rural Punjab, Pakistan. *The Lahore Journal of Economics*, 19(1), 1–30
- Andrabi, T., Das, J., Khwaja, A. (2007). *Learning and educational achievements in Punjab Schools (LEAPS): Insights to inform the education policy debate*. World Bank, Washington, DC.
- Alter, D., & Dunlop, T. (2023). How do parents choose schools for their children? Experimental evidence. Retrieved from *ACSI*.
- Asad, N. (2020). Parental preferences and choices in selection of private primary schools. *Pakistan Administrative Review*, 3(3), 117-131. Retrieved from SSOAR.
- Aga Khan University (AKU). (2022). *Academic Pressure and Its Impact on Co-Curricular Participation in Islamabad*. AKU Research Report.
- Ali, S., & Raza, A. (2021). *Socioeconomic Disparities in Education: A Case Study of Islamabad*. *Journal of Educational Research*, 45(3), 123-135.
- Ali, S., Raza, H., & Khan, M. (2021). *Transportation Challenges for School-Going Children in Urban Areas: A Case Study of Islamabad*. *Urban Studies Journal*.
- Alif Ailaan. (2015). *25 Million Broken Promises: The Crisis of Pakistan's Out-of-School Children*. Retrieved from <https://www.alifailaan.org>
- Andrabi, T., Das, J., & Khwaja, A. I. (2008). A dime a day: The possibilities and limits of private schooling in Pakistan. *Comparative Education Review*, 52(3), 329-355.
- Andrabi, T., Das, J., & Khwaja, A. I. (2017). Report cards: The impact of providing school and child test scores on educational markets. *American Economic Review*, 107(6), 1535-1563.

- Andrabi, T., Das, J., & Khwaja, A. I. (2017). *Report on Learning and Educational Achievements in Punjab Schools (LEAPS)*. World Bank.
- Aslam, M., & Kingdon, G. (2011). What can teachers do to raise pupil achievement? *Economics of Education Review*, 30(3), 559-574.
- Aslam, M., & Kingdon, G. (2011). *What Can Teachers Do to Raise Pupil Achievement?* *Economics of Education Review*, 30(3), 559-574.
- Aurat Foundation. (2022). *Gender Barriers in Education: A Study of Islamabad*. Aurat Foundation Publications.
- Badri, M., & Mohaidat, J. (2014). Antecedents of parent-based school reputation and loyalty: an international application. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 28(6), 635-654.
- Belfield & Levin. (2007). *The price we pay: Economic and social consequences of inadequate education*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Brown, A., & Garcia, M. (2018). The role of extracurricular activities in student engagement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 110(4), 502–514.
- Ball, S. J. (2003). *Class strategies and the education market: The middle classes and social advantage*. Routledge.
- Ball, S. J. (2012). *Global education inc.: New policy networks and the neo-liberal imaginary*. Routledge.
- Beaconhouse School System (BSS). (2023). *Co-Curricular Programs in Private Schools: Trends and Insights*. Retrieved from <https://www.beaconhouse.net>
- Berliner, D. C., & Glass, G. V. (2014). *50 Myths and Lies That Threaten America's Public Schools: The Real Crisis in Education*. Teachers College Press.

- Bifulco, R., Ladd, H. F., & Ross, S. L. (2009). Public school choice and integration: Evidence from Durham, North Carolina. *Social Science Research*, 38(1), 71-85.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). *The forms of capital*. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241-258). Greenwood.
- Ceglowski, D., & Bacigalupa, C. (2002). Four perspectives on child care quality. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 30(2), 87–92.
- Cheong et al. (2016). *Parents' preferences on secondary school selection* (Doctoral dissertation, UTAR).
- Cortez, C. V. (2023). Parental perspectives, school choices, and track preferences of senior high school students of selected public secondary schools in the first district of Ilocos Sur. *International Journal of Education Research for Higher Learning*, 24(1). Retrieved from Philippine E-Journals.
- Chudgar, A., & Quin, E. (2012). Relationship between school inputs and student outcomes: Evidence from South Africa's post-apartheid school system. *Economics of Education Review*, 31(2), 254–267.
- Capital Development Authority (CDA). (2021). *Report on Urbanization and Infrastructure Challenges in Islamabad*. CDA Publications.
- Capital Development Authority (CDA). (2022). *Population Growth and Its Impact on Educational Infrastructure in Islamabad*. CDA Publications.
- CARE Foundation. (n.d.). *Our Schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.care.org.pk>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2021). *Mental Health and Well-being of Students*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

- Chubb, J. E., & Moe, T. M. (1990). *Politics, markets, and America's schools*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. L. (2007). Teacher credentials and student achievement: Longitudinal analysis with student fixed effects. *Economics of Education Review*, 26(6), 673-682.
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). *Social capital in the creation of human capital*. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120.
- Council for American Private Education (CAPE). (2021). *The State of Co-Curricular Programs in Private Schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.capenet.org>
- Cowen, J. M., Fleming, D. J., Witte, J. F., & Wolf, P. J. (2012). Going public: Who leaves a large, longstanding, and widely available urban voucher program? *American Educational Research Journal*, 49(2), 231-256.
- Dynarski, (2008). *Effectiveness of Reading and Mathematics Software Products: Findings from the First Student Cohort* (No. NCES 2009-045). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 8(1), 1-44.
- Dawn. (2020). Islamabad Model Schools to introduce smart classes. *Dawn News*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com>
- Dawn. (2021). Top schools in Islamabad: A comparative analysis. *Dawn News*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com>
- Dawn. (2021). *Overcrowding in Islamabad Model Colleges: A Growing Concern*. Retrieved from www.dawn.com.

- Dawn. (2023). *Cultural and Religious Preferences in School Selection: A Case Study of Islamabad*. Retrieved from www.dawn.com.
- Dawn. (2023). *Mental Health in Schools: A Growing Concern*. Retrieved from www.dawn.com.
- Education Foundation Pakistan (EFP). (2023). *Equity in Co-Curricular Opportunities: A Report on Public Schools in Islamabad*. Retrieved from <https://www.efp.org.pk>
- Education Foundation Pakistan (EFP). (2023). *Parental Involvement in Co-Curricular Activities: A Survey of Islamabad Schools*. EFP Publications.
- Education Trust. (2021). *Equity in Co-Curricular Opportunities: A Report on Public Schools*. Retrieved from <https://edtrust.org>
- Holland, (1993). *Catholic schools and the common good*. Harvard University Press.
- Hanushek, E. A., & Rivkin, S. G. (2009). Harming the best: How schools affect the black-white achievement gap. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 28(3), 366-393.
- Hoxby, C. M. (2000). *Peer effects in the classroom: Learning from gender and race variation*. NBER Working Paper, (7867).
- Hanushek, E. A., & Woessmann, L. (2008). The role of cognitive skills in economic development. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 46(3), 607-668.
- Hanushek, E. A., & Woessmann, L. (2015). *The knowledge capital of nations: Education and the economics of growth*. MIT Press.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. Routledge.

- Higgins, S., Hall, E., Wall, K., Woolner, P., & McCaughey, C. (2012). *The Impact of School Environments: A Literature Review*. Newcastle University.
- Islamabad Police. (2022). *School Safety Survey*. Capital Territory Police.
- Islamabad Police. (2023). *Security Concerns in Educational Institutions: A Report on Islamabad*. Islamabad Police Department.
- Islamabad Private Schools Association (IPSA). (2022). *Holistic Development in Private Schools: A Parental Perspective*. Retrieved from <https://www.ipsa.org.pk>
- Islamabad Teachers Association (ITA). (2023). *Teacher Training and Expertise in Public Schools*. ITA Report.
- Independent School Management (ISM). (2023). *Co-Cricular Programs in Private Schools: Trends and Insights*. Retrieved from <https://www.isminc.com>
- Jackson, (2019). *Addressing socioeconomic disparities in education: Strategies for promoting equity and inclusion*. Routledge.
- Khan, A. (2018). *Teacher Quality and Student Performance in Pakistan*. International Journal of Educational Development, 62, 1-10.
- Khan, A., Ahmed, R., & Hussain, S. (2020). *Parental Preferences in School Selection: A Case Study of Islamabad*. Journal of Educational Research.
- Khan, S. (2020). *The Cost of Elite Education in Islamabad: A Barrier to Access*. Pakistan Journal of Education, 37(2), 89-102.
- Khan, S. R. (2018). *Education in Pakistan: The Role of Private Schools*. Oxford University Press.
- Khan, T. (2020). The rise of international schools in Pakistan. *The Express Tribune*. Retrieved from <https://tribune.com.pk>

- Klopfenstein, K. (2004). Advanced Placement: Do minorities have equal opportunity? *Economics of Education Review*, 23(2), 115-131.
- Liu, Y., et al. (2019). Community engagement and school reputation: The role of public relations in primary education. *Public Relations Review*, 45(3), 345–355.
- Lubienski, C., & Lubienski, S. T. (2014). *The Public School Advantage: Why Public Schools Outperform Private Schools*. University of Chicago Press.
- Malik, F. (2019). STEM education in Pakistan: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Educational Research*, 22(1), 45-60.
- Malik, R. (2019). *Rote Learning vs. Critical Thinking: Challenges in Pakistan's Education System*. *Journal of Educational Policy*, 34(4), 567-582.
- Malik, R., & Malik, S. (2011). Determinants of academic performance in Pakistan: A case study of secondary schools. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 31(2), 387-397.
- Malik, S., & Malik, A. (2011). *Challenges in Public Education: A Case Study of Islamabad*. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 31(1), 45-60.
- McDonald, N. C., Brown, A. L., Marchetti, L. M., & Pedroso, M. S. (2019). *U.S. School Travel, 2009: An Assessment of Trends*. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.
- Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT). (2023). *Implementation of National Education Policy 2021 in Islamabad*. Government of Pakistan.
- Ministry of Federal Education. (2021). *Impact of COVID-19 on Education in Pakistan*. Government of Pakistan.
- Morse, R., Brooks, E., & Mason, M. (2021). How U.S. News Calculated the 2021 Best High Schools Rankings. *U.S. News & World Report*.

- National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). (2020). *NAIS Facts at a Glance*. Retrieved from. <https://www.nais.org>
- National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). (2022). *Holistic Development in Private Schools: A Parental Perspective*. Retrieved from <https://www.nais.org>
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2020). *Condition of Education: Co-Curricular Activities in Public Schools*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov>
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2020). *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*. U.S. Department of Education.
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2021). *Private School Universe Survey (PSS)*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov>
- National Research Council. (2012). *Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century*. National Academies Press.
- OECD. (2018). *PISA 2018 Results: What Students Know and Can Do*. OECD Publishing.
- Pong. & Gardner, (2005). The roles of parenting styles and social capital in the school performance of immigrant Asian and Hispanic adolescents. *Social Science Quarterly*, 86(4), 928-950.
- Pakistan Education Statistics. (2021). *Annual Status of Education Report*. Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training.
- Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (2022). *Impact of Air Pollution on Schools in Islamabad*. EPA Publications.
- Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE). (2020). *Education Expenditure and Household Welfare in Pakistan*. Retrieved from <https://www.pide.org.pk>

- Pakistan Today. (2022). *Inclusive Education in Pakistan: Challenges and Opportunities*. Retrieved from www.pakistantoday.com.pk.
- Pew Research Center. (2019). *Parental Perceptions of Co-Curricular Activities in Public Schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org>
- Private Schools Network (PSN). (2023). *The State of Co-Curricular Programs in Private Schools in Islamabad*. Retrieved from <https://www.psn.org.pk>
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster.
- Reardon, S. F. (2011). The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor: New evidence and possible explanations. In G. J. Duncan & R. J. Murnane (Eds.), *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children's Life Chances* (pp. 91-116).
- Shulgina, N. (2023). Factors influencing the choice of private or public schools: Evidence from Georgia. Retrieved from Wiley Online Library.
- Ravitch, D. (2010). *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. Basic Books.
- Reardon, S. F. (2011). The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor: New evidence and possible explanations. In G. J. Duncan & R. J. Murnane (Eds.), *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children's Life Chances* (pp. 91-116). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Reay, D. (2004). 'It's all becoming a habitus': Beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(4), 431-444.
- Spring, J. (2018). *American Education*. Routledge.

- Smith, J., & Lee, A. (2023). *Comparative analysis of public and private education*. Retrieved from ERIC.
- Srivastava, P. (2013). *Low-fee private schooling: Aggravating equity or mitigating disadvantage?* Symposium Books Ltd.
- State Bank of Pakistan. (2023). *Inflation and Its Impact on Household Budgets in Pakistan*. Annual Economic Report.
- Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). (2021). *Parental Perceptions of Co-Curricular Activities in Public Schools in Islamabad*. Retrieved from <https://www.sdpi.org>
- Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). (2021). *Socioeconomic Disparities in Access to Co-Curricular Activities in Islamabad*. SDPI Publications.
- The Citizens Foundation (TCF). (n.d.). *About Us*. Retrieved from <https://www.tcf.org.pk>
- The Express Tribune. (2023). *Islamabad Model Schools: A Comparative Analysis*. Retrieved from www.tribune.com.pk.
- The Express Tribune. (2023). *Perceptions of Public vs. Private Schools in Islamabad*. Retrieved from www.tribune.com.pk.
- Tooley, J., & Dixon, P. (2006). "De facto" privatization of education and the poor: implications of a study from sub-Saharan Africa and India. *Compare*, 36(4), 443-462.
- Trilling, B., & Fadel, C. (2009). *21st Century Skills: Learning for Life in Our Times*. Jossey-Bass.
- UNESCO. (2021). *Education in a Post-COVID World: Nine Ideas for Public Action*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

- UNICEF. (2020). *Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities*. United Nations Children's Fund.
- Verger, A., Fontdevila, C., & Zancajo, A. (2016). *The privatization of education: A political economy of global education reform*. Teachers College Press.
- Whitty, G., Power, S., & Halpin, D. (1998). *Devolution and choice in education: The school, the state, and the market*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Zheng, B., Warschauer, M., Lin, C. H., & Chang, C. (2016). *Learning in One-to-One Laptop Environments: A Meta-Analysis and Research Synthesis*. Review of Educational Research.

APPENDIX

Questionnaire

I am a student pursuing an MS in Educational Leadership and Management, conducting research on " **Parental Preferences in Selection of Public and Private Primary Schools: A Comparative Study**". Your participation is highly valued, and I kindly request that you fill out this questionnaire. Please be assured that your responses will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Researcher: Ansar Ghafoor

Education: MS Scholar, Educational Leadership and Management Department

University: International Islamic University Islamabad.

Demographic section:

NAME (Optional): _____

GENDER:

- Male
- Female

What is your age group?

- Under 25
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45–54
- 55 and above

SCHOOL NAME (Optional): _____

Type of School Preferred

- Public School
- Private School

Parental Income Level:

- Low Income (below average)
- Middle Income (average)
- High Income (above average)

Parental Education Level:

- No formal education
- Primary/Secondary education
- Undergraduate degree
- Postgraduate degree or higher

How many children do you have in primary school?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

Location of Residence:

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

Instructions: Please tick (√) the option that best reflects your opinion according to the scale below.

Scale:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A)
5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

Objective 1. To investigate the fiscal factors influencing parental choice between public and private primary schools.

NO.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	The cost of tuition is a significant factor in my decision to choose a primary school.					
2	Private schools provide better value for the fees they charge compared to public schools.					
3	I prefer schools with flexible payment plans or financial aid options.					
4	The affordability of school-related expenses (e.g., uniforms, books) influences my choice of school.					
5	I would choose a public school if it meant avoiding costly private school fees.					

Objectives 2. To analyze the role of academic reputation in the process of selecting primary schools between the public and private sectors.

NO.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	The academic performance of a school is the most important factor in my decision-making process.					
2	Public schools are as academically rigorous as private schools.					
3	I would choose a school based solely on its academic rankings.					
4	Teachers' qualifications are a key determinant of a school's academic reputation.					
5	Standardized test results are a crucial factor in my choice between public and private schools.					

Objectives 3. compare the co-curricular activities of primary schools in the public and private sectors.

NO.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	Availability of a wide range of co-curricular activities is a key factor in my school selection.					
2	Private schools offer more diverse co-curricular activities compared to public schools.					
3	I prioritize schools that have strong sports programs for my child.					
4	Music, arts, and drama programs are important in my decision-making process.					
5	Teachers' qualifications are a key determinant of a school's academic reputation.					

Objectives 4. To evaluate the facilities that attract parents to select primary schools in the public and private sectors.

NO.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	The physical infrastructure of the school is a major factor in my decision-making process.					
2	I believe private schools have better facilities (e.g., libraries, sports fields) than public schools.					
3	Safety and security measures at a school greatly influence my choice.					
4	A school's technology resources (e.g., computers, smartboards) are important to me.					
5	Availability of transportation services (e.g., school buses) plays a role in my choice of school.					

Please provide detailed responses to the following questions based on your personal experiences and opinions.

Open-Ended Questions:

1. How do financial considerations impact your decision making to choose a public or private primary school?
2. How does academic reputation influence the choice of parents in selecting between public and private primary schools?
3. How do you compare the co-curricular activities of public versus private primary schools?
4. What types of facilities are most important for you when choosing a primary school for your child?