

A Study on Factors Influencing Parents' Choice of School and Its Impact on The Institution

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Abstract—Selecting an educational institution for a child is a complex process driven by a blend of functional, economic, and emotional factors. This research, titled "A Study on Factors Influencing Parents' Choice of School and Its Impact on the Institution," examines the primary determinants behind parental school selection and evaluates how meeting these parental expectations shapes enrollment trends, institutional reputation, and operational sustainability. Utilising a descriptive and analytical research design, primary data was gathered from 70 parents via a structured questionnaire and processed using percentage analysis and descriptive evaluation tools. The empirical findings reveal that academic reputation (54.3%), safety and security measures (48.6%), and fee affordability (45.7%) serve as the decisive benchmarks for families. Notably, word of mouth remains the primary discovery driver (42.9%), while digital avenues remain underutilised at 15.7%. Conversely, teacher competence emerged as the top priority for institutional improvement (60%). The study highlights a substantial gap between parent expectations and delivery, as evidenced by a modest 54.3% recommendation rate. Ultimately, the research confirms that aligning institutional initiatives with parent preferences significantly impacts an organization's performance and market standing. The study recommends that schools prioritize continuous faculty development, optimize multi-channel communication strategies, and upgrade digital visibility to maintain a distinct competitive edge in an increasingly crowded educational marketplace.

Index Terms—Parental Choice, Academic Excellence, Institutional Performance, Educational Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Teacher Competence, Stakeholder Satisfaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

The academic ecosystem serves as a fundamental pillar of national progress, forging a country's socio-economic and cultural identity. In India's highly competitive educational environment which accommodates roughly 250 million students across more than 1.5 million facilities the primary school sector has undergone a massive paradigm shift over the past two decades. Rapid economic liberalization, structural urbanization, and the expanding aspirations of the middle class have generated an unprecedented surge in the demand for high-quality private education. This dynamic has shifted the traditional academic paradigm into a hyper-competitive, consumer-oriented landscape. Modern parents are significantly more educated, socio-economically mobile, and deeply involved in their children's development than previous generations. Consequently, choosing a school has shifted from a routine localized decision into a long-term strategic investment. Families meticulously evaluate a wide array of criteria, balancing academic quality against safety, infrastructure, financial transparency, and holistic growth. Understanding these decision-making frameworks is crucial for institutional survival. When a school aligns its operational model with the evolving expectations of parents, it cultivates community trust, drives sustainable enrollment, and achieves healthy long-term institutional growth. Conversely, institutions that fail to recognize or communicate their alignment with these parental priorities risk losing their market share to more responsive, modern competitors. This study explores the core dynamics of parental choice, focusing on the specific factors that

guide families in selecting a school and evaluating the direct impact of these choices on institutional performance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic foundation of this study is grounded in established frameworks of consumer behavior and institutional choice within education:

- Chapman (1981) introduced a core structural model demonstrating that school selection is a multi-layered journey governed by objective institutional characteristics like location and cost alongside subjective peer influences from family and friends.
- Bosetti (2004) identified that academic outcomes, internal school culture, and student safety form the absolute baseline of parental expectations during the evaluation process.
- Schneider, Teske, & Roch (1998) focused on information processing, demonstrating that parents rely heavily on direct physical observation of facilities and transparent performance data to guide their ultimate enrollment decisions.
- Oplatka (2007) emphasized the critical role of experiential marketing, demonstrating that interactive campus events like open houses significantly reduce parental anxiety and build initial institutional trust.
- Weiher & Tedin (2002) validated that high structural discipline and documented academic success act as primary institutional differentiators.
- Bell (2009) explored the socio-cultural aspect, proving that value systems and school environment often eclipse raw testing outcomes depending on a family's socioeconomic background.
- Burgess et al. (2015) highlighted that public metrics, standardized exam performance, and long-term future career opportunities remain major driving factors for educational consumers.
- Lubienski & Lubienski (2014) exposed a industry paradox, finding that public perceptions driven by active institutional marketing and brand reputation frequently carry more weight than validated performance analytics.
- James, Baldwin, & McInnis (1999) established that a school's perceived long-term value directly dictates a parent's willingness to commit financial resources.

- Masaiti et al. (2021) verified that urban parental selection models prioritize high teacher qualifications alongside rich extracurricular ecosystems.

III. BENEFITS

Understanding the dynamics of parental school choice yields several strategic benefits for educational organizations. For the institution, it enables optimized strategic marketing, enhanced enrollment retention, target-driven resource allocation, and sustainable brand equity. For the parents and students, it results in higher stakeholder trust, safer learning environments, value-driven financial outlays, and holistic child development.

IV. KEY PROMOTERS IN INDIA

The expansion of choice within the Indian education sector is driven by multiple institutional actors. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (ICSE) establish rigorous educational frameworks that reassure parents of academic quality. Concurrently, state-level educational departments manage regional delivery systems. A major milestone in this ecosystem occurred with the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act in 2009, which guaranteed free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14. This legislation altered enrollment trends and forced both public and private sectors to focus heavily on structural accountability, institutional accessibility, and baseline quality standards across the nation.

V. FUTURES, GROWTH, & PROSPECTIVES

Core Operational Features

Modern private schooling centers on providing a blend of robust curriculum delivery, rigorous student safety protocols, modern learning facilities, and active communication portals that link home and campus life seamlessly.

Industry Growth Drivers

The sector's growth is primarily fueled by rising disposable household incomes, the professionalization of administrative practices, steady investments in

educational technology, and an increasing focus on integrated frameworks that balance scholastic achievement with competitive examination readiness such as NEET, JEE, CET, and CA preparation.

Future Strategic Horizons

The next phase of educational delivery will be defined by hybrid learning designs, data-driven assessment models, localized pricing strategies, and cross-border institutional partnerships that ensure global readiness for students.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilizes a descriptive and analytical research design. Primary data was sourced via a structured questionnaire administered to parents and guardians using Google Forms. Secondary insights were compiled from academic journals, institutional brochures, and trusted web sources. The research implemented convenience sampling to gather a final sample size of 70 validated field respondents. Data analysis tools included percentage analysis alongside tabular and chart-based comparative interpretations.

Hypotheses

H₀: The core factors that guide parental school selection do not have a significant impact on subsequent institutional performance or parent satisfaction outcomes.

H₁: The core factors that guide parental school selection exert a significant impact on subsequent institutional performance and parent satisfaction outcomes.

VII. RESEARCH GAP

While substantial research addresses the macro-level choice between public and private educational networks, a distinct research gap exists regarding how parents navigate options within localized, mid-tier private markets. Specifically, there is limited insight into the exact disconnect between what parents prioritize during initial admission evaluations and their post-enrollment satisfaction regarding day-to-day administrative performance. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the operational friction point where transactional school marketing meets actual institutional delivery.

VIII. NEED FOR THE STUDY

This research is essential to help educational administrators move past speculative marketing strategies and ground their planning in verified consumer data. By identifying the exact triggers that guide school selection, this study enables institutions to allocate resources efficiently, design effective parent engagement initiatives, and implement targeted retention frameworks to mitigate student attrition.

IX. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To isolate and evaluate the core criteria that determine parental school selection.
2. To analyze the relative importance parents place on academic standing, physical safety, fee scales, and infrastructure.
3. To assess post-admission parent satisfaction relative to their initial expectations.
4. To pinpoint primary operational areas requiring administrative intervention.
5. To provide actionable operational strategies to enhance long-term student retention and institutional advocacy.

X. SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The analytical boundaries of this study are focused on active parents and legal guardians whose children currently attend primary or secondary institutions within the Davangere region of Karnataka and its surrounding areas. The study explicitly evaluates perceptions regarding school board variations (CBSE, ICSE, and State Board), communication channels, infrastructure value, and administrative responsiveness.

XI. LIMITATIONS

- The geographic sample is centered primarily around the Davangere district, which may restrict the generalization of findings to highly metropolitan or purely rural markets.
- The sample size is limited to the cohort that actively participated in the online form, meaning individual unique experiences could skew the aggregate data.

- The time available for data collection was compressed, with the survey field responses gathered on a single specific date.

XII. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Gender Demographics of Respondents

Understanding which household members primarily drive educational choice helps administrators tailor institutional communication effectively. The gender distribution consists of 44 male respondents (62%) and 27 female respondents (38%), arriving at a total count of 71 participants (100%).

The data shows a distinct male majority (62%) among active survey participants. This indicates that fathers or male guardians continue to take a highly prominent role in managing the formal administrative, financial, and enrollment stages of school admission within this regional cohort. However, final school selection typically reflects a collaborative domestic decision.

Age Cohort Analysis

The generational profile of parents heavily shapes their expectations around educational technology, modern campus amenities, and institutional transparency. The age distribution reveals that 19 respondents are below 30 years old (26.8%), 24 respondents are between 30 and 40 years old (33.8%), 18 respondents are between 40 and 50 years old (25.4%), and 10 respondents are above 50 years old (14.1%), totaling 71 participants (100%).

The data highlights that the primary decision-making engine is concentrated within the 30–40 age bracket (33.8%), closely followed by parents under 30 (26.8%). This means over 60% of the target consumer base consists of younger, career-focused individuals who naturally value modern educational tools, continuous innovation, clear accountability, and a quantifiable return on their educational spending.

Respondent Relationship Profile

Verifying the immediate relationship of the survey respondent ensures that data reflects the perspectives of primary caregivers. The relationship profile shows that 49 respondents are direct parents (69%), 5 respondents are legal guardians (7%), 6 respondents are grandparents (8.5%), and 11 respondents fall under other caregiving categories (15.5%), totaling 71 participants (100%).

Direct parents make up the vast majority of the study population at 69%. This high concentration confirms that the study accurately captures the direct financial and emotional priorities of primary household decision-makers.

Board Affiliation of Current School

Analyzing how families are currently distributed across academic boards provides valuable insight into localized educational preferences. The curriculum board distribution consists of 28 students enrolled in CBSE (40%), 28 enrolled in State Board (40%), and 14 enrolled in ICSE (20%), representing a total baseline of 70 respondents (100%).

The regional landscape shows an even split between CBSE and State Board institutions (40% each), while ICSE maintains a smaller 20% market niche. This even balance indicates a highly competitive local market where national curriculum boards battle directly against cost-effective regional options.

Primary Triggers Driving School Selection

Parents were asked to select the key operational dimensions that directly guided their final enrollment decisions. The frequency metrics indicate that safety and security measures received 43 mentions (48.6%), affordability and fee structure received 32 mentions (45.1%), quality of extracurricular activities received 30 mentions (42.9%), infrastructure and facilities received 30 mentions (42.9%), academic reputation received 29 mentions (40.8%), proximity to home received 19 mentions (26.8%), recommendations from peers received 18 mentions (25.7%), and the teacher-to-student ratio received 10 mentions (14.3%).

The structured frequency evaluation indicates that physical student safety and comprehensive campus security serve as the absolute baseline priority for modern families, leading with a 48.6% mention rate. Structural affordability and pricing clarity follow closely behind at 45.1%. Interestingly, holistic institutional factors such as robust extracurricular programs and high-end infrastructure (42.9% each) rank slightly above pure academic reputation metrics (40.8%). This shift indicates that the modern consumer defines educational quality through a multi-dimensional lens rather than relying solely on raw test scores.

Post-Admission Institutional Delivery Performance

A critical indicator of structural alignment is measuring how effectively an institution fulfills the expectations it establishes during the initial admission phase. The metric tracking if admission expectations were met shows that 5 respondents rated it 1 or Very Low (7.1%), 8 rated it 2 or Low (11.4%), 22 rated it 3 or Moderate (31.4%), 15 rated it 4 or High (21.4%), and 20 rated it 5 or Very High (28.6%), totaling 70 respondents (100%).

While exactly half of the parent cohort (50%) experiences a high or very high level of delivery alignment (Ratings 4 and 5), a significant 31.4% adopt a neutral stance. More importantly, 18.6% report that the institution fell short of its initial promises. This structural gap highlights a common operational risk: marketing messages during admissions often outpace the institutional capacity for day-to-day educational delivery.

Perceptions of Administrative Responsiveness

Institutional communication represents the true foundation of stakeholder trust. The survey measured parental sentiment regarding how effectively school leadership responds to direct feedback. The rating of administrative responsiveness shows that 6 respondents rated it 1 or Very Low, 11 rated it 2 or Low (11.4%), 26 rated it 3 or Moderate (31.4%), 8 rated it 4 or High (21.4%), and 20 rated it 5 or Very High (28.6%), out of a total of 71 respondents (100%). The data indicates that while 50% of families find administration generally responsive, a substantial 31.4% remain neutral, and 18.5% feel ignored or underserved. In an educational setting, administrative responsiveness is a direct driver of long-term reputation. When minor parent grievances are handled poorly, they quickly transform into public dissatisfaction, damaging enrollment health through negative community sentiment.

Parent Identifications of Core Institutional Issues

Respondents were asked to isolate the structural areas within their current school that required the most immediate improvement. The metrics show that teacher quality and competence received a frequency of 42 (60.0%), infrastructure and facilities scored 32 (45.7%), academic reputation and results received 30 (42.9%), safety and discipline received 30 (42.9%), fee affordability received 28 (40.0%),

extracurricular activities received 18 (25.7%), and proximity/location received 10 (14.3%).

The data reveals a critical priority: 60.0% of the parent cohort identifies internal teacher quality and classroom instructional competence as their primary area of concern. This clear consensus signals that regardless of advanced infrastructure or attractive campus design, an institution's long-term value is ultimately determined by the performance of its faculty. Physical infrastructure upgrades (45.7%) and baseline academic results (42.9%) represent secondary operational priorities for improvement.

Primary Discovery Channels Driving School Awareness

Analyzing how families first become aware of an educational brand highlights which communication strategies yield the highest return on investment. The distribution shows that word of mouth led with 30 respondents (42.9%), pamphlets/brochures accounted for 18 (25.7%), newspaper advertisements brought in 10 (14.3%), social media drew 7 (10.0%), and Google search accounted for 4 (5.7%), arriving at a total of 70 respondents (100%).

The data underscores the power of organic localization: 42.9% of all enrollment leads are generated directly via peer-to-peer word of mouth. Print flyers and brochures remain relevant locally, driving 25.7% of institutional awareness. Conversely, digital presence remains a major missed opportunity, with social media channels (10.0%) and search engine visibility (5.7%) combining for a minimal 15.7% share of discovery.

Aggregate Parent Advocacy and Retention Potential

The likelihood of a parent recommending their current school to external networks serves as a proxy metric for long-term enrollment stability. The advocacy matrix shows that 38 respondents said Yes to recommending the school (54.3%), while 32 respondents said No (45.7%), out of a total cohort of 70 participants (100%).

This metric exposes a critical operational risk for local schools: only 54.3% of current clients are willing to actively recommend the brand to peers. With a substantial 45.7% refusing to provide positive word-of-mouth validation, the institution faces a major barrier to organic growth. Because peer recommendations serve as the school's primary

discovery channel (42.9%), improving this advocacy rate is vital for long-term financial health.

Perceived Strategic Importance of Modern Educational Technology

The study measured parental sentiment regarding the integration of modern digital learning tools within the classroom. The scale rating shows that 8 respondents rated it 1 or Not Important (11.4%), 4 rated it 2 or Low (5.7%), 16 rated it 3 or Moderate (22.9%), 18 rated it 4 or High (25.7%), and 24 rated it 5 or Very High (34.3%), totaling 70 respondents (100%).

The data reveals a clear mandate: a solid 60% majority of parents (Ratings 4 and 5) view the integration of digital learning tools as a highly critical factor. This shows that modern families increasingly view educational technology readiness as a baseline expectation rather than a premium luxury feature.

Parent Communication Channel Preferences

To optimize administrative efficiency, schools must align their outward communication with channels that parents naturally prefer. The channel breakdown shows WhatsApp/SMS alerts selected by 26 respondents (37.1%), face-to-face meetings chosen by 20 (28.6%), physical notices/circulars selected by 16 (22.9%), the school mobile app/portal preferred by 6 (8.6%), and email newsletters preferred by 2 (2.9%), bringing the total to 70 respondents (100%).

The data demonstrates that mobile text alerts and instant WhatsApp channels lead with a 37.1% preference share, driven by their convenience. However, a significant 28.6% of parents prioritize standard face-to-face academic check-ins, emphasizing that families still value highly personalized, direct contact with educators for meaningful milestones.

XIII. FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Key Findings

1. **Safety Trumps Academy:** Physical campus protection protocols rank as the primary enrollment driver for families (48.6%), outperforming pure academic reputation benchmarks.
2. **The Faculty Friction Point:** A significant 60% of parents prioritize systemic improvements in

teacher quality and classroom instruction over all other institutional updates.

3. **Digital Visibility Gap:** Although 60% of families demand advanced classroom technology, institutions heavily underutilize digital channels for outreach. Social media and Google search account for a minimal 15.7% of new parent acquisition.
4. **Organic Lead Domination:** Organic, word-of-mouth communication remains the dominant channel for brand awareness (42.9%), making local reputation the primary engine for new enrollments.
5. **Suboptimal Advocacy Rates:** The local educational landscape exhibits low organic advocacy, with 45.7% of active clients refusing to recommend their child's current school to their peer networks.
6. **Friction in Direct Communication:** Over 15% of parents feel ignored or underserved by current administrative feedback loops, creating a clear retention risk.

Actionable Strategic Suggestions

- **Human Capital Priorities:** Implement mandatory, continuous professional development workshops for teachers and establish student-outcome feedback loops to address the primary concern of 60% of parents. Publicise student board achievements and success stories to actively rebuild the school's academic reputation.
- **Marketing Realignment:** Redirect institutional capital from traditional print advertisements to optimized search engine optimization (SEO) and focused social media campaigns on platforms like Instagram and Facebook to increase digital visibility from the current 15.7%. Design an organic parent-referral incentive system to leverage the dominant word-of-mouth channel and improve the low 54.3% advocacy rate.
- **Operational Safety Enhancements:** Upgrade physical infrastructure safety measures such as advanced CCTV setups, secure entry boundaries, and bus GPS tracking and ensure these updates are clearly communicated to parents, as safety is their primary decision criterion. Simultaneously improve science labs and sports infrastructure to address the second-highest priority area for

improvement.

- Communication Automation: Streamline day-to-day administrative alerts, fee deadlines, and routine notices through instant WhatsApp broadcast lists, matching the 37.1% parental channel preference. Reserve highly personal face-to-face meetings specifically for critical academic milestones, student development issues, and counseling.

XIV. CONCLUSION

This research clarifies the complex decision-making framework that guides localized parental school choice, while highlighting its direct impact on institutional stability. The empirical data confirms that school selection is a multi-layered evaluation process where physical safety, teacher performance, structural affordability, and digital integration serve as primary benchmarks. The findings reveal a critical operational reality: an institution's long-term survival relies on its ability to minimize the gap between marketing promises and everyday classroom delivery.

In a regional market where word of mouth drives nearly half of all new enrollments, customer advocacy is a structural necessity rather than a minor goal. Educational institutions can no longer rely solely on legacy history or physical campus size. To achieve stable enrollment growth in a highly competitive regional market, schools must invest in comprehensive faculty development, build transparent and responsive communication systems, and optimize their online presence to align directly with the expectations of modern, technology-focused parents.

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