

Public versus Private School Perspectives

A Mixed-Methods Study

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INTRODUCTION

An important topic of conversation for all students, parents, teachers, and administrators is the ongoing debate between public and private education. Many first-time parents find themselves asking the question of which educational system will provide the best opportunities for their child. First year teachers ask themselves which atmosphere do they feel reflects their teaching style the best. In addition to these yearly newcomers, veteran teachers and parents of public or private schools find themselves making the switch to the alternative school option as a result of the lack of their needs being fulfilled (Bracey, 2008). Due to the fact there are a variety of contrasting reasons between what resources, morals, and quality of education are being provided between public and private schools, the question remains as to why parents, teachers, and administrators choose one over the other.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the perspectives of public and private school parents, teachers, and administrators regarding the benefits of the private versus public school setting?

OBJECTIVES

- To identify common perspectives in past literature
- To examine the degree to which first-year parents, teachers, and administrators agree with these common perspectives
- To evaluate the differences and similarity between public and private education
- To provide insight in the decision-making process of prospective public and private school parents, teachers, and administrators



PURPOSE/SIGNIFICANCE

- This study intends to add additional research on the topic of private versus public schools with regards to the perspectives of parents, teachers, and administrators on school settings. The purpose and significance of this study is that the results can give insight to prospective first-year parents, teachers, and administrators as to why others may have previously chosen to enroll or work for these particular schools. This type of research is different from previous research on the subject as it focuses on expanding on the common perspectives of public and private schools found throughout past literature. Rather than simply asking the participants what are their perspectives of their schools with regards to any category, the study focuses on the common characteristics of *test scores*, *success rate*, *cost*, and *location*.

METHODOLOGY

- The type of method used in this particular study will be a mixed-methods approach to research. This consisted of an electronic single survey produced by Qualtrics that was answered by the different teachers, parents, and administrators of both the public and private school. A mixed methods approach combines both qualitative and quantitative methods within a single study (Mertler, 2022). Through the use of this method, its potential effectiveness will show a correlation between key variables in why parents, teachers, and administrators choose to attend or work for the public or private schools.
- The population of the participants are all first-year parents, teachers, and administrators from two individual schools, one being private, and the other being public. The parents of the schools will consist of each one kindergarten class, 35 parents for private school and 24 for public school. The teachers involved will include five first year private school teachers and three first year public school teachers. Lastly, the study will also include four first year private administrators and two first year public school administrators. The surveys were sent home electronically to be filled out anonymously by these groups of participants. The questions asked will be based upon a Likert scale, rating particular aspects with regards to the quality of education, resources, and experiences received from each type of school. The questions will be on a one-five scale; strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, agree, and strongly disagree. Then the survey will conclude with open-ended questions that allow the participants to enter their responses and share their personal experiences in their own words. Upon receiving the results of the survey, the data was analyzed to determine commonalities and differences between the various answers. The results were first compared within each individual school to see if private or public schools had various similarities. Then lastly, the two schools were examined against one another, to compare and contrast for final data gathering.

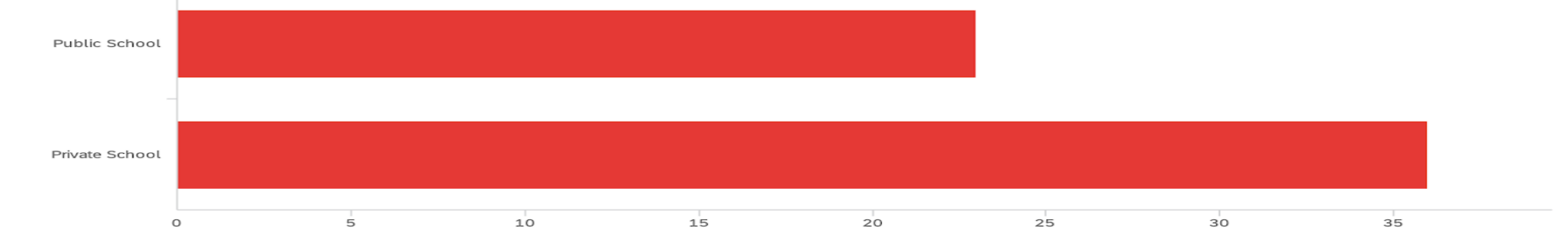
qualtrics^{XM}

RESULTS

The data analysis looked at both the public and private school survey responses in comparison to one another. The findings aligned with the common themes found in past literature including test scores, success rate, cost, and location.

The survey was sent to 73 first time parents, teachers, and administrators (public- 29 and private-44) with a total of ten questions. Of the 73 participants provided with the survey link, 60 completed informed consent forms, and a total of 58 online surveys were fully submitted.

Q2-School Affiliation

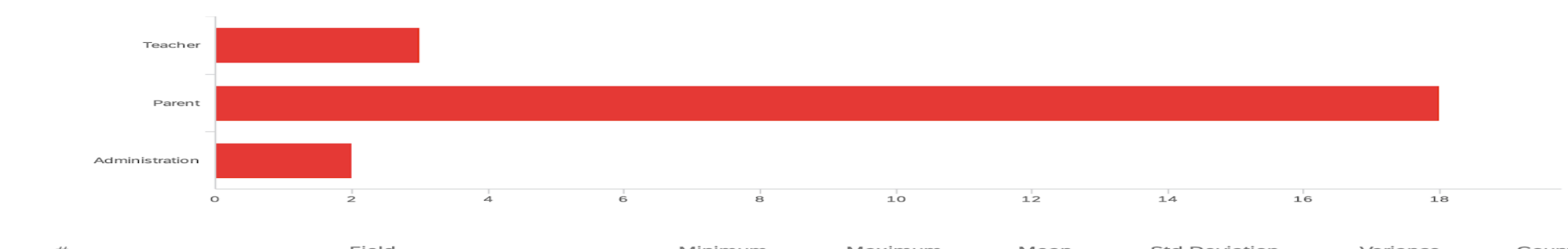


#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What school do you affiliate with?	1.00	2.00	1.61	0.49	0.24	59

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Public School	1.00	2.00	1.61	0.49	0.24	23
2	Private School	1.00	2.00	1.61	0.49	0.24	36

- 23 out of 59 or 38.98% of the participants came from public schools. On the other hand, 36 out of 59 or 61.02% were from private schools. Overall, approximately 80% or 59 out of 73 total prospective participants were surveyed.

Q3-School Association



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Teacher	1.00	3.00	1.96	0.46	0.22	23
2	Parent	1.00	3.00	1.96	0.46	0.22	23
3	Administration	1.00	3.00	1.96	0.46	0.22	23

- Participant responses show that the smallest percentage of participants surveyed were administrators, 11.11% (n=4) for private and 8.70 % (n=2) for public. However, of the administrators available to survey, 100% (n=6) completed the survey. The next group of participants were teachers, 13.89% (n=5) private and 13.04% (n=3) public. Again, with 100% participation rate of the first-year teachers available to survey (n=8). Lastly, the largest group of respondents were parents, 75% (n=27) private and 78.26% (n=18) public. Of those prospective parents, 77.14% or 27 out of 35 responded for private school while 75% or 18 out of 24 responded for public school.

Question	School Choice	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Strongly Agree/Agree	Mean Score
Q4-My school is affordable to attend.	Private School	8 (22%)	3 (8%)	25 (69%)	3.72
	Public School	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	21 (95%)	4.59
	Both				4.05
Q5-My school is close in proximity to where I live.	Private School	3 (8%)	4 (11%)	29 (80%)	3.97
	Public School	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	21 (95%)	4.59
	Both				4.21
Q6-I feel that my school prioritizes academic achievement.	Private School	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	34 (94%)	4.44
	Public School	2 (9%)	2 (9%)	18 (81%)	3.95
	Both				4.26
Q7-I believe students who attend my school will have an advantage in success rate over the alternative school.	Private School	1 (2%)	9 (25%)	26 (72%)	4.14
	Public School	6 (27%)	9 (40%)	7 (32%)	3.09
	Both				3.74
Q9-I am satisfied with my school choice.	Private School	1 (3%)	4 (11%)	31 (86%)	4.47
	Public School	1 (5%)	4 (18%)	17 (77%)	3.91
	Both				4.26

RESULTS (CONT.)

Finding #1- Affordability

From the results in the table, the results indicate that most participants of public and private schools agree that their school choice is affordable. The same results are shown for public-school while for private schools, although they lean towards agreeing are less certain with their answer.

Finding #2- Proximity

From the results in the table, the results indicate that most participants of public and private schools agree that their school choice is close in proximity. The same results are shown for public-school while for private schools, although they lean towards agreeing are less certain with their answer.

Finding #3- Academic Achievement

From the results in the table, the results indicate that most participants of public and private schools agree that their school choice prioritizes academic achievement. The same results are shown for private schools while for public schools, although they lean towards agreeing are less certain with their answer than the opposing school.

Finding #4-Success Rate

From the results in the table, the results indicate that most participants of public and private schools either agree with or are indecisive in their belief that their school has a higher success rate over the opposing school. The same results are shown for public schools, while for private schools, they are high in agreement with the statement and believe their school does have a higher success rate than the public schools.

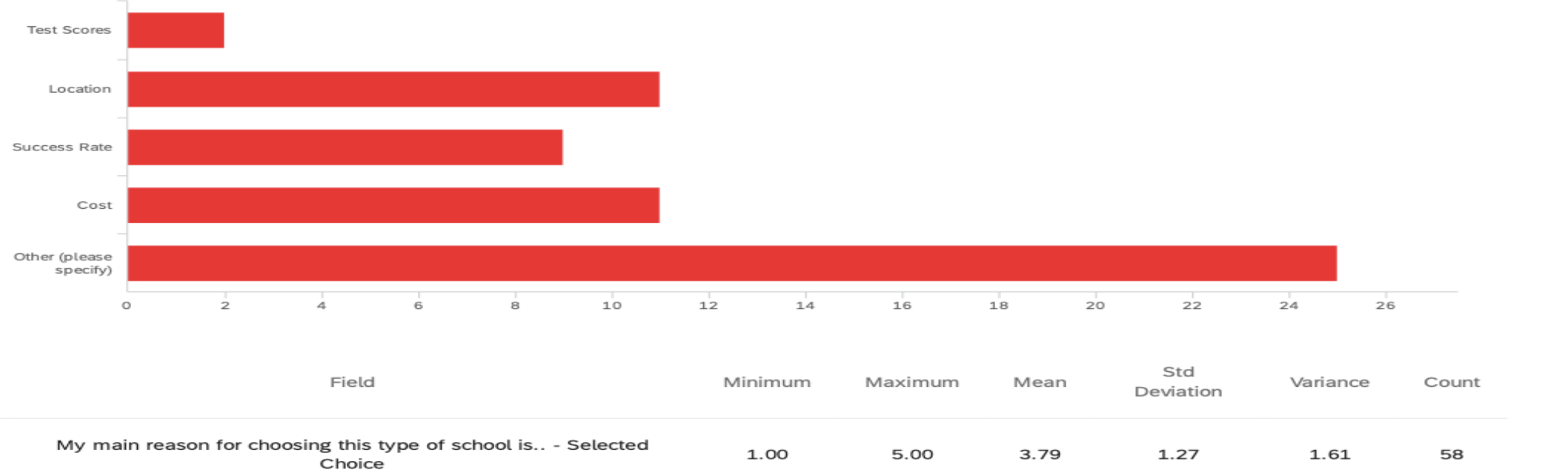
Finding #5-Main Reason

The results indicated that the option *other* was the number one response when looking at private schools, whereas *cost* was the main reason for the public school.

Finding #6-Satisfaction

The results shown in the table indicate that most participants of public and private schools are satisfied with their school choice. The same results are shown for the private school while for the public-school, although some are satisfied with their school choice, they are not overall nearly as satisfied as the private school participants.

Q8-Main Reason



- Of the 58 respondents, 3.45% chose *test scores* as their main reason for picking their school, 15.52% chose *success rate*, 18.97% chose *location* and *cost*, while a 43.10% majority chose the option of *other*. With regards to public school only, 43.38% chose *cost* as their main reason for picking their school, 34.78% chose *location*, 8.70% chose *test scores* and *other*, and 4.35% chose *success rate*. Private schools on the contrary had 63.89% as *other*, 22.22% as *success rate*, 11.11% as *location*, and 2.78% as *cost*.

Main reason for choosing school type (other options)

Other	
Religion	12
Community	4
Population Size	4
Politics	3
Staff Quality	2

Q10-Strengths and Weaknesses

Public School Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths (+):	Weaknesses (-):
Large community	
Location	Discipline
Cost	Enforced Curriculum
Diversity	Teachers Union
Resources	
Quality staff	

RESULTS (CONT.)

Private School Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths (+):	Weaknesses (-):
Small Community	Cost
Discipline	Location
Parental Involvement	Large Class Size
Quality Staff	Resources
Politics	
In-Person Teaching (Covid-19)	
Religious Education	

- Of the 58 surveys recorded, 48 responded to question ten, 16 who represented the public system and 32 who represented the private system. The factors of location, cost, discipline, and resources are highlighted. These four factors are shown to have been responses of the public and private school participants to have been contradictory of each other. Meaning, what one schooling system had listed as a strength the opposing school had as a weakness and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

- The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to answer the following research question: What are the perspectives of public and private school parents, teachers, and administrators regarding the benefits of the private versus public school setting? After analyzing the data from the survey results and separating the results in comparison to each schooling system, the results indicated that public schools have the advantage of lower cost and closer locations while private schools have the advantage of increased test scores and higher success rates. Overall, cost was determined as the main factor for choosing public school while neither of the common factors, cost, location, test scores, success rate, were deemed the main option for the private school. Rather alternative options were expressed more significantly such as religion, community, population size, politics, and staff quality. These results differ from previous research with regards to private schools but does agree with past research regarding public schools. It is important to take into consideration the limitations of a smaller sample size and lack of experience in participants. In conclusion, it is important to continue to question these perspectives and seek new ways to determine why people are choosing one educational system over the other.

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