Choosing the 'Right' School: A Sociological Introspection of the Parental Perspectives in an Indian City

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment

for the Award of Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

By

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PS18-001 2023

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Dedicated To

MY BELOVED PARENTS

Mr. Ifham Ullah & Mrs. Shamshun Nisha

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Though a thesis is the work of a solitary researcher, it is never possible to complete one without the assistance of institutions and individuals who pave the road for you. This thesis' completion has been a tremendous learning experience for me. I am appreciative of many people who have supported me in various ways. I would like to use this moment to extend my heartfelt appreciation to everyone who has contributed to the thesis, without whom it would not be close to being completed. I sincerely hope this acknowledgement does fair to all of the encouragement and support I have received from many sources.

First and foremost, I bow down to Almighty Allah for showering me with his bountiful blessings during this protracted voyage. Thank you for empowering me to confront every challenge, burden, discomfort, and sadness in my life by progressively strengthening me. You blessed me with a lovely family; without their support, I would be nothing. I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to my family for their encouragement during my Ph.D. I salute my father, Mr. Ifham Ullah, and my mother, Mrs. Shamshun Nisha, for their love, dedication, passion, hard work, and sacrifice in raising and educating me. Their unwavering love and support inspired me to believe that I could succeed in all of my endeavours. I am honoured to have them as my parents.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my Ustaad (Guru), mentor, and supervisor Dr. Anirban Mukherjee for providing me with the opportunity to work under his guidance so that I could successfully complete my thesis. I would like to express my profound appreciation to him for his academic contributions, compassion, cooperation, invaluable guidance, and insightful recommendations throughout my research work that prompted me to reconsider my notions and sharpen my arguments. He was available whenever I needed his counsel and support. His unwavering support throughout the whole research process gave me the strength to proceed. The progress of this thesis would not have been possible without his direction, counsel, and suggestions. It has been a true honour to work under his guidance. He has inspired me and will always continue to inspire me with his approach and commitment towards research. Sir, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude, respect, and thanks to you from the bottom of my heart. I shall be eternally grateful to you, not only for this thesis but also for developing my future academic interests and involvement.

I am thankful to the Director of RGIPT, Prof. A.S.K. Sinha, the Dean of Academic Affairs, Prof. Chanchal Kundu, and the Head of the Department of Sciences and Humanities, Prof. A.K. Choubey, for providing the necessary resources and support for carrying out my research work. Additionally, I want to extend my profound gratitude to the members of my Research Progress Evaluation Committee (RPEC), Dr. Saurabh Mishra, Dr. Jaya Srivastava, and Dr. Kavita Srivastava, for their invaluable advice in carrying out this research in a meaningful manner. I would like to thank my committee members for the Comprehensive Seminar and upgradation to Senior Research Fellow (SRF). I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Amritanshu Shukla, Prof. Chanchal Kundu, and Dr. Vinita Chandra (Associate Professor, IIT-BHU) for their insightful comments, encouragement, and support.

I'd like to thank all of my teachers, from primary school to graduate school. I owe a debt of thanks to the faculty of the Department of Social Work, CSJM University Kanpur, Prof. Sandeep Singh, Dr. Ajay Pratap Singh, Dr. S.P. Verma, Mr. Satendra Chauhan, Ms. Urvashi, and Ms. Deepa Gautam (former faculty member) for enlightening me and igniting my spirit of inquisitiveness. They taught me valuable lessons and inspired me to focus on the field of research during my MSW days. I am also grateful to my senior cum mentor, Mr. Rahul Pratap, for his encouragement and support in getting into the field of research. I also thank the fieldwork coordinator Mr. Sujit Singh for his cooperation in the department. Additionally, I would like to express my appreciation to my senior cum-friend cum-motivator Mrs. Deepali Bhadauria for her constant support and encouragement in my personal and professional life. I will always cherish my friendship with my MSW cohorts for all the amusing, jovial conversations and the positive atmosphere that inspired this study as well.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to my superiors and fellow employees from the HCL Foundation, my previous employer. I extend my gratitude to my seniors, Mr. Santosh Dwivedi, Mr. Faiq Alvi, Mr. Ankur Sadana, Mr. Praveen Naidu, Mr. Mohd. Azam (a former employee), and others, for their encouragement and support for my research career. My special gratitude goes to my senior, Dr. Saurabh Tiwari (HCL Foundation), for his help in assisting me to enter the world of research. I treasure the time I spent with my fellow colleagues and value the moments when we had many wonderful experiences and shared a great deal of knowledge.

I want to express my gratitude to my family for their ongoing support—both material and emotional. Thanks to my parents for igniting and nurturing my academic zeal and for motivating me to do the PhD in the first place. I am indebted to my father, Mr. Ifham Ullah, for giving me the opportunity to follow my passion, and my mother, Mrs. Shamshun Nisha, who is my first guru in every way. I have no words to adequately convey my thanks to them. They are the driving force behind all of my accomplishments to date. Without their invaluable counsel and direction throughout my life, I would have been destined to arrive somewhere else. I firmly believe that all your prayers are a blessing for me. I am grateful to my younger brother, Mr. Tasleem Ullah, and my sisters, Ms. Safiya Khanam and Ms. Asifa Khanam, for being a continuous source of light relief, providing me moral strength, taking care of me, and supporting me in all of my endeavours. I am indebted to all of my family members, especially my elder fathers and mothers, uncle and aunty, and cousins, for their encouragement, love, and support during the journey. In addition, I am thankful to all of my relatives, nephew & niece, and neighbours for their affection and well wishes. I am appreciative of all my friends from Kadaura, my hometown where I grew up, as well as my classmates from school and college, for accompanying me on this incredible journey. I would like to say a special thanks to my precious friends Mubeen, Imran, Saket, Nawaz, Mohit, Adeel, Rahul, and many more for listening, providing advice, and being there for me whenever I needed it.

I'd also like to convey my gratitude to the study's participants for their generous contribution. I am appreciative to everyone who made the time to respond to my questions throughout the course of the research. Thank you for making such an important contribution and sharing your own experiences. The thesis wouldn't exist without them. I am very grateful for my interview subjects' candour, frankness, and thoughtfulness. In light of this, I am extremely thankful to the teachers and headteachers of the government schools, correspondents from private schools, and local government officials who not only replied to my requests, but frequently went out of their way to assist me in recruiting participants and providing information. Additionally, I especially want to thank Mrs. Nasreen Fatima, the headmistress of the Basic Vidyalaya, Dr. Saroj Kumar Verma, the headmaster of the Kendriya Vidyalaya, and Mr. D.P. Singh for their assistance and support in meeting parents to gather data.

I'd also like to thank a number of fellow scholars for their contributions to making this the most exciting and enjoyable time of my academic career. I appreciate the company of

my doctoral cohorts, Satish Kumar Shukla and Satish Kr Gupta, during the research journey. I also value the concourse of my fellow batchmates Shadab and Ajeet, as well as my lab mates Deepak, Angana, Rajesh, and Shashank. Despite the lengthy list of names, I still treasure the times I spent with my seniors, Dr. Praveen, Dr. Belal, Dr. Somendra, and Dr. Mukarram, and my juniors Abul, Aash, Jyoti, Gargi, Parvez, and many more.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the University Grants Commission (UGC), India, for awarding me a doctoral grant (JRF and SRF) that helped me to complete my research work. I would particularly like to thank Mr. T. P. Joshi for his assistance in academic concerns and for helping me obtain timely fellowships during my PhD journey. I would like to express my gratitude to all non-teaching personnel for their assistance, support, and regard shown to me in the department and institute throughout my research period.

……Athar Ullah

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
MDM	Mid-day Meal
RTE	Right to Education
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
SC	Scheduled Castes
ST	Scheduled Tribes
OBC	Other Backward Class
EWS	Economically Weaker Sections
BPL	Below Poverty Line
PWD	Persons With Disability
UP	Uttar Pradesh
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental organization
PA	Private aided
PUA	Private unaided
LFP	Low Fee Private
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CISCE	Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination
JNVST	Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Selection Test
CTET	Central Teacher Eligibility Test
ICSE	Indian Certificate of Secondary Education
ISC	Indian School Certificate

CVE	Certificate in Vocational Education
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
HSSC	Higher Secondary School Certificate
RCT	Rational Choice Theory
SRCT	Sociological Rational Choice Theory
DBED	District Basic Education Department
KVS	Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan
KV	Kendriya Vidyalaya
CMS	City Montessori School
LPS	Lucknow Public School
MUNs	Model United Nations
LCD	Liquid Crystal Display
USA	United States of America
EPSI	Education Promotion Society for India
IIT-JEE	Indian Institute of Technology- Joint Entrance Exam
NEET	National Eligibility cum Entrance Test
IMO	International Mathematical Olympiad
NSO	National Science Olympiad
CCA	Co-Curricular Activities
SUPW	Socially Useful Product Work
NSS	National Service Scheme
PTM	Parent-Teacher Meeting

PREFACE

Individuals in modern society are expected to make their own decisions about how to live their lives. One of the most important decisions people make in life is selecting the "right" schooling. It is unsurprising that parents thoroughly investigate several schools to choose the 'right' (most suitable one) school for their children. This research explores the engagement of parents in school choice decisions and the rationale that they use in selecting a particular school, with special reference to Lucknow city. The study examines the information-gathering process and the strategies used by parents to identify the ‘right’ school for meeting their aspirations for their children. Additionally, the thesis also examines whether the children’s needs (that are learning, attitudes, and capacity) are considered in such selection. In addition, the participation of parents in the process of choosing a school and their engagement in their children's education, as well as interaction with school administration regarding their children's progress, were highlighted. Moreover, the process and context of decision-making are examined as well.

The thesis consists of 6 chapters followed by a lengthy reference section.

The Introductory Chapter focuses on the educational scenario and the school system in India, the types of schools and educational boards in India, the importance of quality education and medium of instruction, and the rationale of the study.

Chapter 2 deals with the extensive Literature Review. Existing studies (both from India and abroad) relating to the school choice decisions of the parents are discussed here. Literature Review is divided into two sections: a) International Studies; and b) Studies in India. The chapter also identifies the knowledge gaps, and the research questions are formulated. The objectives of the study are also addressed in this chapter. Furthermore, the middle class is also highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the theoretical framework of the study. To comprehend and calibrate the parental perspectives, the Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieusian conceptions of Habitus, Cultural Capital, and Social Capital have been used. Furthermore, the connection between the Bourdiesian conception of the Habitus and Rational Choice Theory is also discussed.

Chapter 4 entails the research methodology that was used to address the research questions. The study follows a qualitative research approach and the schools in Lucknow were chosen using the purposive sampling method. Thus, both government and private schools of different educational boards were identified for the study based on the representativeness of the concerned educational boards. Observation and open-ended semi-structured interviews were the main tools of data collection. The idea was to provide a positive space for the parents of school-going children to freely share their school selection process.

Chapter 5 deals with the findings and discusses the conception of a good school from the perspective of middle-class parents, the information-gathering process that they engage in, children's needs in the selection process, parental involvement in school choice, and parental interaction with the school administration regarding their children's progress. Additionally, the study highlights a comparative understanding of the choices made by upper and lower-middle-class parents and examines the findings from the Bourdieusian conceptions of Habitus, Cultural Capital, and Social Capital and Rational Choice Theory.

Finally, in Chapter 6, we summed up and discussed the various findings obtained, and some of the proposed solutions and the future scope of the work were also contemplated.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Education is an important factor in the socioeconomic mobility of a person. It is a pillar of growth, development, and social progress that has gained widespread acceptance over the years. In other words, education has a positive impact on the overall well-being of individuals (Tilak, 2008). Elaborately speaking education plays an important role in individuals' well-being in two ways: both externally, through rising income and living standards, and internally, through expanding potential and personal freedom (Agrawal, 2013). In the words of Durkheim (1961), education teaches individuals the necessary skills that are important for their future occupation. Education leads to empowerment and enhances individual agency in the domains of the social, economic, and political arena. People who are educated can avoid violations of their existing civil rights because they have a better understanding of the methods and means available to them (Scotto & Rosato, 2014). Moreover, the education of women plays a determinant role in the fertility decline of a country and women can use their independent agency in various domains (Drèze and Murthi, 2002). Further research, both in developed and developing nations, indicates that those with more years of education are thought to be in better health. This is because people with a higher level of education are more likely to see the value and necessity of modern health technologies, and as a result, they are more likely to change their behavior (Scotto & Rosato, 2014).

The biggest challenge in developing countries is to improve learning and provide cost-effective education to students. Towards this aim, the government of India has implemented various reform strategies and policy interventions namely, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA, 2002), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV, 2004), Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDM, 2007), Right to Education Act (RTE, 2009), and Beti Bachao, Beti

Padhao (2015) over the last two decades. Though these are concrete towards universalizing basic education, there has been the question raised over the quality of education imparted in some of the schools of the country.

1.1 Educational Scenario in India

With around 1.49 million schools, over 9.5 million teachers, and nearly 265.2 million students spanning from pre-primary to higher-secondary education, the Indian education system ranks among the largest globally (UDISE+, 2021-2022).

Historically, from 1700 until the independence, the Indian education system was under the British rule. These years were marked by an increase in inequality in terms of caste and class dimensions. In the post-independence era, new educational policies were adopted and by 1960, it was anticipated that all kids in the age range of 6 to 14 would get a free primary and upper primary education. However, the target was not reached within the time frame and a new education policy was drafted in 1968 (Scotto & Rosato, 2014). For the federal and state governments, one of the highest priorities was to increase consequently educational opportunities, and government expenditure towards the same has steadily grown since the early 1990s (ibid).

India has one of the world's highest concentrations of impoverished people. Around 35% of the country's population is poor, and over one-third of the overall population is illiterate, a figure that is close to 49 percent for women (Central Intelligence Agency, 2006; Wolf, Egalite, and Dixon, 2017). According to research, parents with low incomes are unable to give their kids a high-quality education, which has a negative impact on the economy's ability to generate money for the next generation. This process, also called the ‘poverty trap’, does not permit disadvantaged households to be free from the vicious circle. (Galor and Zeira, 1993; Bhattacharya, et. al, 2015).

1.1.1 Enrollment

The Constitution of India aimed to provide free compulsory education to children between the ages 6-14 years by 1960. The goal was not met, and the government implemented the policy Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) to create an environment that raises educational quality and teacher accountability. Good schooling infrastructure and adequate facilities positively affect the chances of the students being enrolled in schools despite the spatial hindrance (Huisman and Smits, 2009; Vasconcellos, 1997). A study by Dostie and Jayaraman (2006) suggested that land ownership has a positive impact on the student enrollment for both genders. In a similar vein, it was noted that the student's enrolment was significantly impacted by the lengthier commute time to school and the lack of road access. In this context, Dreze and Kingdon (1999) observed that teacher's attendance, infrastructural quality, and pupil-teacher ratio have a positive impact on the attainment of school. Moreover parents-teacher cooperation, Mid-day Meal (MDM) played a positive role in enhancing the enrollment of students in government or government schools, particularly in rural areas (Mehrotra, 2006; Drèze and Kingdon, 2001). Since the 1990s the government of India has undertaken certain concrete steps namely, the implementation of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in it attain to universalize primary and upper primary education in India (Scotto & Rosato, 2014).

1.1.1.1 District Primary Education Programme

The DPEP was established in 1993 to achieve universal primary education in India with an emphasis on quality, accessibility, and teacher accountability (Kumar et. al. 2001). States must have lower rates of female literacy than the national average to be chosen for

the scheme. By 2001, US $ 1500 million was committed for 50 million children across 18 states and 272 districts of the country. However, the program had little effect on the enhancement of girl's registration in India (Scotto & Rosato, 2014).

1.1.1.2 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) – Education for All Movement

SSA replaced DPEP in 2001 and the aim was to universalize elementary education with an emphasis on community control of the school system. By 2010, it was intended to offer students between the ages of 6 and 14 a worthwhile and meaningful primary education. The program was reinforced by the Right to Education Act (RTE, 2009), in 2010 which emphasizes upon adoption of minimum norms and standards for the enhancement of supply and quality of education (Scotto & Rosato, 2014).

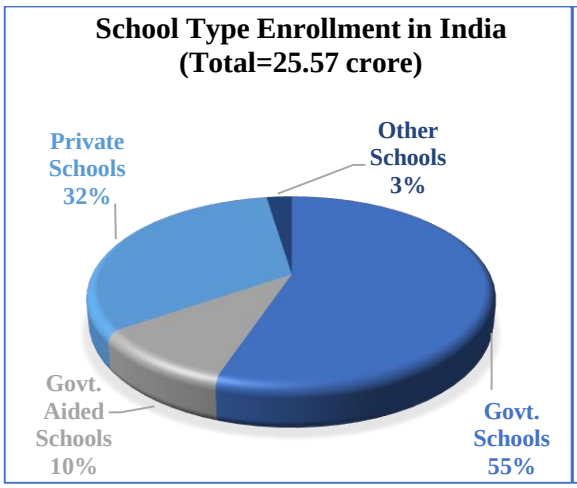
1.1.1.3 Current Status of School Enrollment

In India, the total enrollment from primary to senior secondary level of school education in 2021–22 was slightly more than 25.57 crore. The enrollment figures showed 132.8 million boys and 122.8 million girls, marking an increase of over 1.9 million compared to the 2020–21 period. In 2020–21, the enrollment of girls was 12.2 crore, and the enrollment of boys was 13.17 crore. When the study focused on school-type enrollment in 2021-22 at the country level, it was found that there were approximately 14.04 crore students enrolled in government schools, 2.6 crores in government-aided schools, 8.2 crores in private unaided recognized schools, and 61.43 lakh in other schools. Furthermore, the study also focused on student enrollment at the primary and upper primary levels, finding that 12.18 crore students were enrolled at the primary level and 6.67 crore students at the upper primary level in the academic year 2021-22 (UDISE+, 2021-2022).

In the academic year 2021–22, 4.67 crore students were enrolled in schools from primary to higher secondary level in Uttar Pradesh. Where the enrollment of boys was 2.46 crore, and the enrollment of girls was 2.21 crore. While study concentrated on school type enrollment in Uttar Pradesh, and found that there were around 4.67 crore students enrolled in the academic year 2021–22; 1.9 crores of them were in government schools, 48.86 lakh in government-aided schools, 2.07 crore in private unaided recognised schools, and 21.35 lakh in other schools. Moreover, it was also found that in the academic year 2021–22, 2.4 crore students were enrolled at the primary level and 1.15 crore students were enrolled at the upper primary level (UDISE+, 2021-2022).

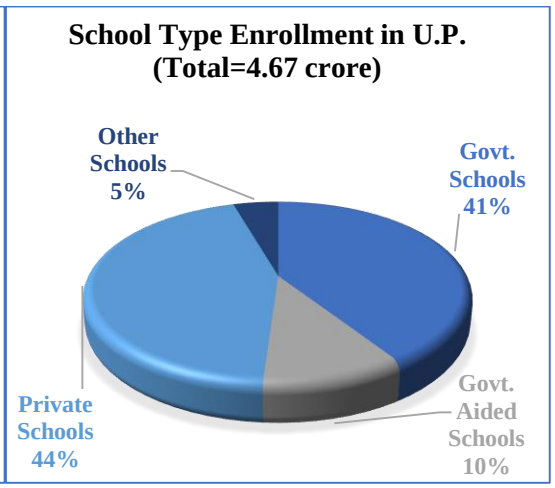
Figure 1.1 Percentage of School-Type Enrollment in India (2021-22)
Figure 1.2 Percentage of School-Type Enrollment in Uttar Pradesh (UP) (2021-22

Figure 1.1



Source: (UDISE+, 2021-2022)

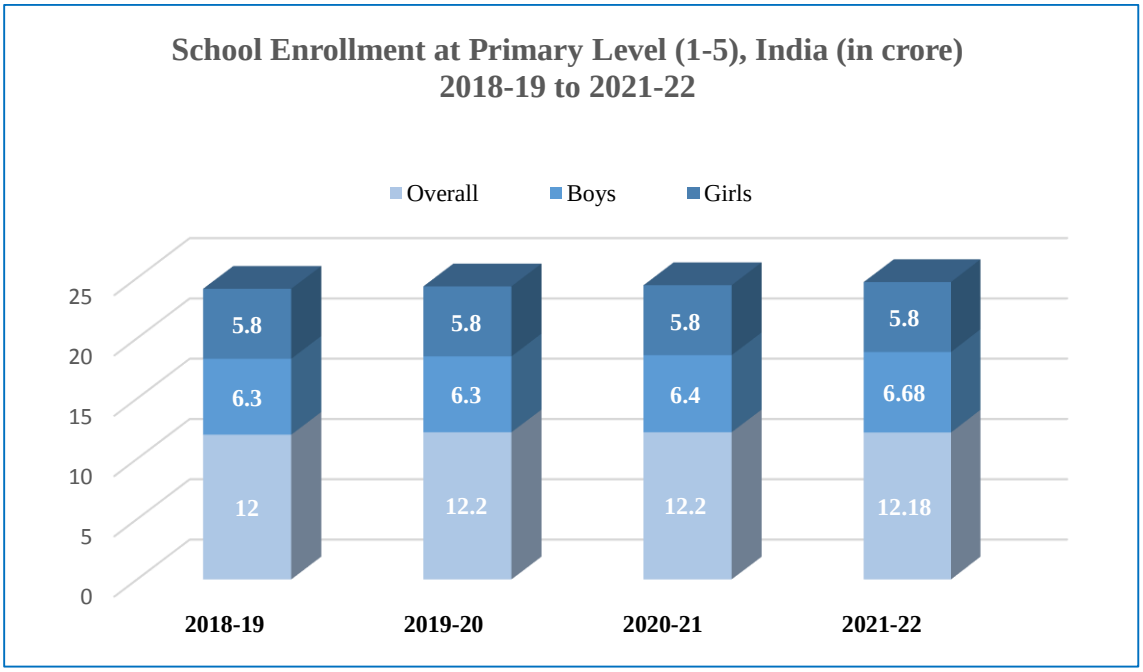
Figure 1.2



Source: (UDISE+, 2021-2022)

Figure 1.3 Academic Year Wise School Enrollment at Primary Level (1-5), India, (2021-22)

Figure 1.3



Source: (UDISE+, 2021-2022)

1.1.2 School Dropouts or Out of Schools

India has a high proportion of illiterate and out-of-school students. It is reported that 80 million children in the country do not complete the full cycle of elementary education. The alarming rate of dropout in the country is revealed by the fact that 40% of kids leave school before finishing primary schooling, and 56% leave before finishing lower secondary level schooling (Scotto & Rosato, 2014). One of the key reasons for the high dropout rate of children is that schools cannot provide high-quality education. Furthermore, differences are observed between schooling in the rural and urban areas – in many of the rural areas' schools are not physically or socially accessible or the parents are too poor to send their wards to school (Scotto & Rosato, 2014). Moreover, the dropout rates are skewed for girls and dropout rates are higher in rural areas in comparison to the

urban areas. Finally, the perception of people regarded low expected returns from continuing schools is an important hindrance (Thakur and Mukherjee, 2016).

It's interesting to note that attitudes regarding enrollment and attendance are influenced not just by economic position but also by the social standing of groups (Jha and Jhingran, 2002; Ramachandran, 2004). Social status starts with the caste system. Gender issues about schooling in India are also articulated through macro measures of gender variations in dropout rates and enrollment figures among students from different categories (Goswami, 2015). It was observed that the dropout rates of the girls were higher than the boys. This is based on the belief that once married girls are considered to be a part of their husband's family and hence investment in their education is a form of no-return investment (Scotto & Rosato, 2014).

1.1.3 School System in India

Modeled after the UK system, grades 1 to 5 are labeled as primary school and grades 6 to 8 as upper primary school. According to the 2011 Indian census, there are approximately 1.21 billion people in India, and 32% of them are children under the age of five (Scotto & Rosato, 2014). Therefore, the government is making an active effort to enhance the number of primary and upper primary schools from the present count of about 8 million primary schools and 2 million upper primary schools (UNESCO, 2003).

A positive set of schooling infrastructure encourages higher attendance of students and greater commitment from them. According to the latest report, the student-teacher ratio for primary schools is 1:45 (ASER, 2013) and 1:34 for secondary schools (UNESCO, 2003). Furthermore, it was found that only 45.3% of the schools met the prescribed student-teacher ratio of 1:30. Toilets were available in 92.8% of the schools, yet in 32% of the schools, they were not usable (Scotto & Rosato, 2014). Similarly, 81.4% of the

schools have separate toilets for girls, however, 27.55 of the schools' toilets were either closed or unusable (ibid). 77% of the schools have a library and 64.2% have a playground. The majority of the (87.2%) schools did serve mid-day meals (MDM) and facilities for drinking water were available in 73.8% of the schools (ibid).

1.1.3.1 Inequalities in the Educational Sector

The distribution of educational institutes in India is grossly uneven, with a higher concentration of secondary schools situated in urban areas (Bunhia et al., 2012). Thus, students in rural areas suffer from a shortage of proper infrastructure and a decline in quality education. This uneven distribution of infrastructure adversely affects educational outcomes across states. These educational disadvantages in infrastructure are compounded by inequality in terms of caste, religion, and ethnicity. Thus, Sedwal and Kamat (2008) found how the intersectionality of gender and tribal background enhanced the disadvantage for tribal girls in rural areas. Additionally, the Muslim community represents another form of vulnerable group, and they fare worse than the SCs and STs (GoI, 2006).

1.1.3.2 Reservation in the Educational System

A scheme of reservation was implemented to uplift the backward castes and communities. This scheme is intended to guarantee seats in government jobs and universities, particularly for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Castes (OBCs), and Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) (Scotto & Rosato, 2014). Despite such reservations, the children of these disadvantaged groups encounter persistent prejudice in their schools.

1.1.3.3 Teacher's Accountability in Educational System

The role of teachers in enhancing educational quality is immense. However, the fact remains that more experienced teachers and headmasters, despite having more pay, remain absent from school very often (Kremer et al., 2003). The Indian government is striving to make improvements in teachers' quality in a variety of ways, namely by implementing teacher training programs, introducing new requirements, and encouraging local community engagement (ibid).

1.1.3.4 Para Teacher or Contractual Teacher in the School System

To offer free and obligatory education to children up to the age of 14, the government has implemented a scheme for recruiting para or contractual teachers (Pandey, 2006). In comparison to the regular teacher, the para teacher requires little or no professional qualification and has different working conditions, unless paid more than the regular teacher. The idea behind recruiting para teachers is that they serve as replacements for the problem of teacher shortages and absenteeism. It is functional in the sense that it enhances the student-teacher ratio at a lower cost and offers employment to rural youths (Dubey et al., 2009).

1.2 Types of Schools in India

India's recent economic growth is often attributed to its strong educational policies (Thangkhiew, 2013). Even among some of the most impoverished households, a desire for quick economic progress, social mobility, and high expectations has been related to discontent with the caliber and efficacy of government schools, which has fueled demand for private schools (James and Woodhead, 2014). Since the 1990s, the Indian primary or elementary school system has seen considerable expansion of the government-school system's accessibility, growth, and the concurrent development of private schools. However, the fact remains that government schools are still the primary providers of

education for marginalized and socially disadvantaged groups (Lahoti and Mukhopadhyay, 2019).

Provisioning primary education for children on a universal basis has been a continuing challenge for the Indian government. In this regard, the government has undertaken several concrete steps over the last few decades (Narayanan, 2013). India's premier primary education initiative, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), has effectively contributed to the influx of children towards primary education in the country and thus played its part in universalizing education (UNICEF, 2014; Gurney, 2017). There has also been an accompanying proliferation of government and private schools. Thus, since the early 1990s, the large-scale increase in the total number of government and private schools in the country has been an important development, and there has been a commendable improvement in the literacy and school enrollment rates in India (Ramachandran, 2004; Hill et. al, 2011).

Nonetheless, the declining condition of government schools has triggered the prevalence of private schools, particularly in metropolitan areas, in India. Private schools are considered to be the alternative options for parents who are dissatisfied with the quality of government schools. Although private schools offer better-quality education, their hefty fees often stand hindrance to enrollment in such schools. Therefore, admission to private schools may be segmental and may not benefit children from economically backward and socially disadvantaged groups (Sahoo, 2016). Further, rural sections of the nation have limited access to private schools (Narayanan, 2013). Finally, the organization, standards, and accessibility of private schools for low-income households vary (James and Woodhead, 2014).

With oversight and financing coming from the local, state, and central levels, education is offered in India through both government and private institutions.

1.2.1 Government or Public School

These schools are established, financed, operated, and administered by the government, and the school does not enjoy much often autonomy at the school level (Harma, 2010). Government schools may come under both the governments at the central and state levels. The structure of the school is almost the same at the primary and upper primary levels. Government or government schools are available in most of the places in the country. According to the Census (2011), there are 3,95,621 government primary schools and 2,63,250 government upper primary schools in India providing education to children and covering most of the area of the country. In government schools, there is a liberal environment in the form of employees (staff), teachers, and the head of the institution, which is under the control of the government (Thangkhiew, 2013).

1.2.2 Private School

A school established, run, and administered by any person or any non-government organization without any financial aid or assistance from the government is called a private school. The schools are available in most parts of the country and are mainly concentrated near the cities and towns. Private schools may reflect considerable diversity in terms of their structure and means of education. But in most cases, school administration and management follow a very strict code of conduct. Since these schools are run by individuals, control over the employees and faculties is very much in the hands of the administrator (Thangkhiew, 2013). UNESCO defines a private school as one that is *'owned, controlled, and administered by a non-governmental organization (e.g., a religious group, association, or enterprise)'* (UNESCO, 2005, cited in Rose, 2007: 2).

Private or non-state provision of education can be driven by a wide variety of actors, including *'NGOs, faith-based organizations, communities, and professionally oriented private entrepreneurs ('edupreneurs'), each with various motivations for their engagement in education'* (Rose, 2007: 2; Harma, 2010).

A major reason behind the rise of private schools is associated with the prevailing competitive market in education. Private schools offer the parents the option to withdraw from the public school system when parents do not have the influence to enhance its quality and they feel that education is not up to the mark. Thus, this possibility of shifting from private schools to government schools or other private institutions provides the impetus for private schools to continually evolve and impart better quality education (Mehrotra, 2006; Narayanan, 2013).

In India, private schools are grouped into two categories: private aided (PA) schools and private unaided (PUA) schools.

1.2.2.1 Private Aided (PA) School

Private-aided (PA) schools are the ones that get government funding and are recognized by both the central and state governments. These schools belong to the quasi-government category as they started as private schools and currently receive grants from the government. These schools started as privately operated and funded schools and are now supported by government funds. Thus, they enjoy limited autonomy in their operation (Harma 2011; Mousumi and Kusakabe, 2017). These are governmentally operated with governmental control over operational areas like teacher selection. They are technically private schools but share similar features as governmental schools (Sasaki, 2004). Teachers employed by private management and having equivalent qualifications as government schoolteachers are paid directly by the government (Kingdon, 2008).

1.2.2.2 Private Unaided (PUA) School

Private unaided (PUA) schools have acquired government recognition but do not receive government financing. They fulfilled the governmental requirement for infrastructural facilities and course material (Sasaki, 2004). When it comes to administration, hiring, and education, they are entirely private and enjoy full autonomy (De et al, 2002; Harma, 2010). Although it is forbidden to operate schools for profit in India (Unnikrishnan versus the State of Andhra Pradesh, Supreme Court of India, 1993), it does not deter many of the private unaided schools from conducting their operation under the guise of 'rhetoric of social service' (Srivastava, 2007: 172). Private unaided (PUA) schools operate independently and rely primarily on tuition fees for their operation; they are further classified as recognized and unrecognized (Kingdon 2007, as cited in Harma 2011; Mousumi and Kusakabe, 2017).

Recognized Private School

Recognized private schools have the provision for students to take advantage of government stipends, and the schools have the discretion to issue transfer credentials (Kingdon 2007, as cited in Harma 2011; Mousumi and Kusakabe, 2017). This government recognition is a form of official permission for the school to carry out its operation (Kingdon, 2007: 183; Harma, 2010). The private school may receive recognition from the state and central government. It shows that the state government's decision to utilize Hindi as the primary language of teaching in schools has little impact on the curricula offered by schools that have earned recognition from other government agencies. (Sasaki, 2004). It is stipulated that private schools should adhere to state standards for teachers' salaries and infrastructural availability. Private recognized schools are numerous and believed to outnumber other types of schools. They are more often

managed by nonprofit organizations and are usually located in urban and semi urban areas (Desai et al., 2008).

Unrecognized Private School

Unrecognized private schools are not included in official statistics and hence exact numbers of schools and students are unknown (Kingdon, 2007: 183; Harma, 2010). Since these schools fail to meet the government's prescribed minimum standards, they are classified as unregistered and unrecognized (Mehrotra and Panchamukhi, 2006). According to Tooley and Dixon (2003), many private schools are unrecognized because children do not need recognition of their schools at this stage to take examinations. Hence no central or state examination cannot be given by students from private unrecognized schools (Goyal and Pandey 2009; Mousumi and Kusakabe, 2017). These private unrecognized schools are located mostly in rural areas and towns and operate with inadequate facilities. The quality of unrecognized private schools is not inferior to that of recognized schools (Scotto & Rosato, 2014). A comprehensive survey of 20 states conducted by Muralidharan and Kremer (2006) found that 51 percent of private schools in rural areas were unrecognized (Harma, 2010).

In addition to a well-established government education system, India boasts a thriving private education sector that has long catered to the country's wealthy and privileged classes (Little, 2010; James and Woodhead, 2014). However, the unaided private sector is now quite diverse and varies widely in breadth and quality (De et al, 2002). Thus, there are prestigious private schools catering to the elites and cheapest low fee private schools serving the children of the underprivileged (Harma, 2010).

From the above discussion, we may drive that students have four types of school options: government or government schools; private aided schools; private unaided schools

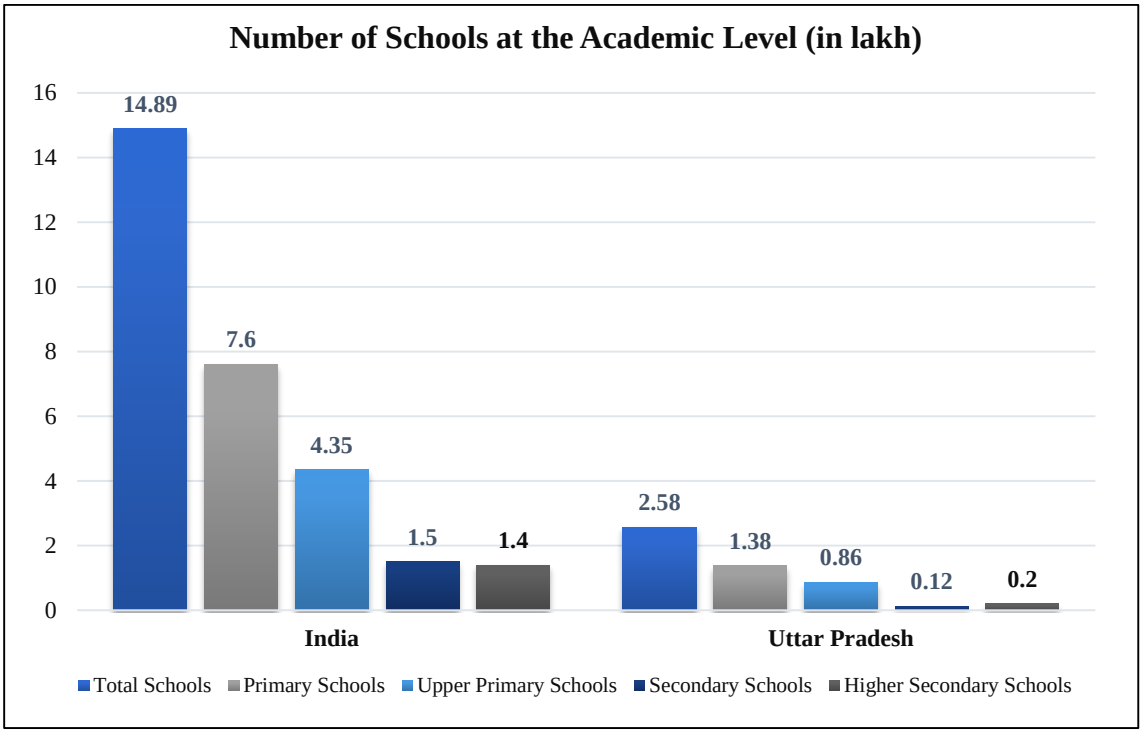
(recognized); and unrecognized private schools. Since government schools and private-aided schools are subjected to strong governmental or government control for receiving funds, their educational program is relatively standardized. On the other hand, there is no standardization of quality in private unaided schools and private unrecognized schools. In the case of unrecognized private schools, that are totally unregulated, thus, it is not uncommon to find a broad variety of educational quality offered by unrecognized private schools, even among schools charging the same tuition (Sasaki, 2004).

1.2.2.3 Number of Schools

According to the UDISE+ report, a total of 1489115 schools from primary to higher secondary level were found in India in the academic year 2021–22, out of which 760460 are primary schools (class 1–5), 435805 are upper primary schools (class 6–8), 150452 are secondary schools (class 9–10), and 142398 are higher secondary schools (class 11–12). The country has 1022386 total government schools, 82480 aided schools, 335844 private unaided recognized schools, 19965 recognized madrasa, and 28440 other schools. Whereas there are 258054 total schools in Uttar Pradesh. Which includes 137024 government schools, 8113 aided schools, 97808 private unaided recognized schools, and 15109 other schools. When the study concentrated on the number of schools at the educational level in Uttar Pradesh, it was found that there were 138078 primary schools, 86430 upper primary schools, 12783 secondary schools, and 20763 higher secondary schools in 2021–22 (UDISE+, 2021-2022).

Figure 1.4 Number of Schools at the Academic Level in India and Uttar Pradesh (2021-22)

Figure 1.4

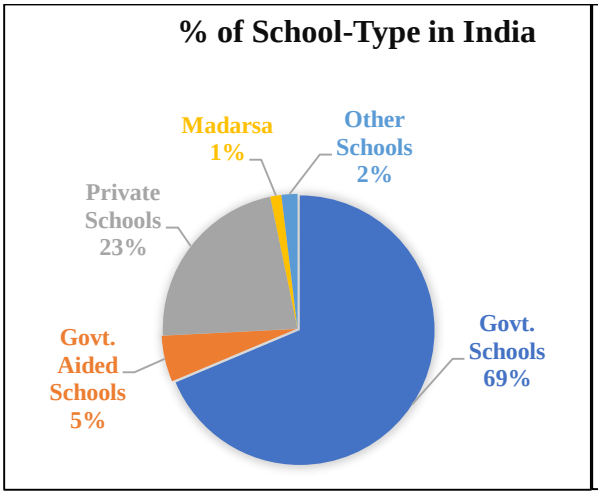


Source: (UDISE+, 2021-2022)

Figure 1.5 Percentage of School Type in India (2021-22)

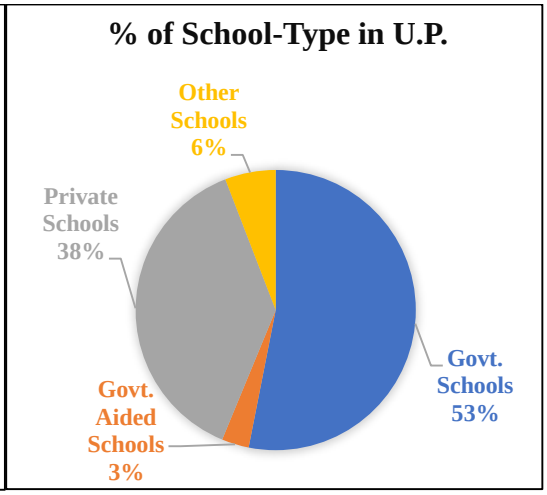
Figure 1.6 Percentage of School Type in Uttar Pradesh (2021-22)

Figure 1.5



Source: (UDISE+, 2021-2022)

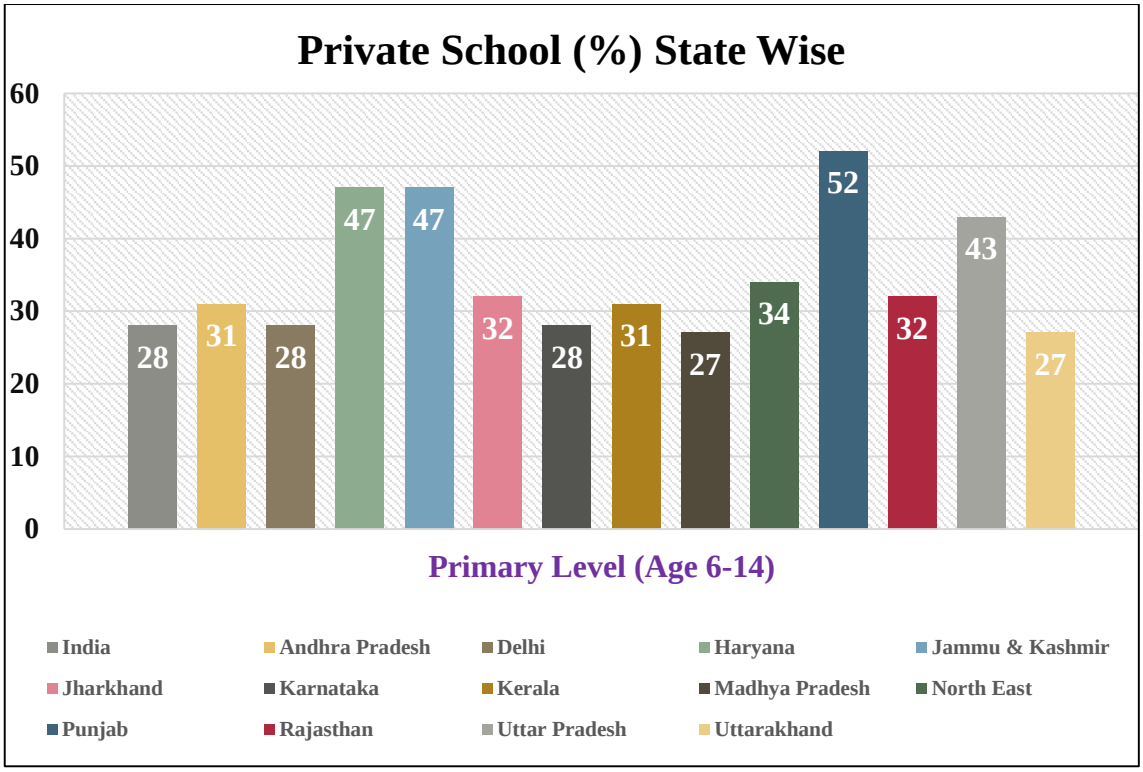
Figure 1.6



Source: (UDISE+, 2021-2022)

Figure 1.7 State Wise Percentage of Private Schools in India

Figure 1.7



Source: ESAG Report – 2018

1.3 Educational Boards in India

In India, different types of educational boards are functioning at the central and state level. Primarily three boards function in India: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE-ICSE/ISC), and state boards that provide education at both rural and urban levels. Each board has its own unique teaching methods, learning, curriculum, assessment criteria, and conduct of examinations which helps in the holistic development of the student (Virmani, 2021).

1.3.1 The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is India's most popular educational board and is under the Union or Central Government of India's administration and management. CBSE has succeeded in maintaining a unified educational standard in most

of the schools throughout the country because it is a national board that is widely accepted by both private and government schools around the country (Arora, 2018). One of the main objectives of the board is to implement student-centered, innovative teaching and learning in its various schools. CBSE thus aims to inculcate in students' job-oriented and job-related skills in students. It strives to meet the learning requirements of children whose families frequently relocate due to their parents' work commitments. Recent estimates suggest that around 20,299 schools in the country are affiliated with the CBSE board. CBSE also has a global presence and has around 220 schools in 28 countries affiliated with it across the world. Most schools accredited by the country's central government are associated with CBSE, including Kendriya Vidyalayas, Government/Aided schools, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, private schools, Central Tibetan schools, and most other schools (Virmani, 2021).

Each year in February/March, the CBSE administers board examinations to regular and private students in the 10th and 12th grades. Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET), Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Selection Test (JNVST), and others are some of the most prominent national-level entrance examinations conducted by CBSE (Shiksha, n.d.).

1.3.2 Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE-ICSE/ISC)

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) is a national-level school education board in India that is managed privately. As of 2019, 2247 schools in the country and abroad were affiliated with the board (Virmani, 2021). Every year, three examinations are conducted by the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE): the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE for Class X), the Indian School Certificate (ISC for Class XII), and the Certificate in Vocational Education (CVE - Year 12). Candidate preparation for certain professions is the goal of

the CVE course. The primary objective of ICSE is to provide students with an excellent education through a hands-on method. By giving equal weight to science, the arts, and language disciplines, notably English, it encourages pupils to choose from a range of streams and topics for Class 12. Generally, the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE)/the Indian School Certificate (ISC) conducts board examinations every year in February/March (Kaur, 2019).

1.3.3 State Boards

Each state has its own unique state educational board and follows a different curriculum and grading method. The educational methods used by each state board in India cause variations in the curricula from one state to the next. The board's major goal is to concentrate on topics at the state level and content with local applications to aid students in getting ready for entrance exams at the state level. Comparatively speaking to other boards, the state boards' curriculum is constrained. State boards' curricula place a strong emphasis on learning about local languages and cultures. Some state boards have mandated that NCERT textbooks—which are crucial for students studying for pan-India examinations—be used exclusively in all schools. Every year the state board conducts the two main examinations for classes 10th and 12th. Students in Class 10^{th} take the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations, whereas students in Class 12^{th} take the Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSC) examinations (Kaur, 2019).

1.4 English as a Medium of Instruction

The English medium curriculum is viewed as a crucial historical and political aspect of education in India (Sarangapani & Winch, 2010). Imparting education in English started in the British days, and the aim was to train the Indian workforce in English so that they could assist colonial rule, particularly in its middle and lower levels. Under colonial

administration, the English language became intertwined with the Indian educational system. There are several clear reasons why English was preferred above any indigenous language as a preferred medium of education in the post-independence era. Thus, English became the language of national elites and became associated with status and prestige (Sarangapani & Winch, 2010). According to Faust and Nagar (2001), English education takes the shape of cultural capital, which bestows a higher economic and cultural standing, along with changing attitudes, lifestyles, ways of thinking, and ambitions (Narwana, 2017).

There lies an important difference between the functioning of English and Hindi medium schools: When compared to English medium schools, which have higher tuition fees and are associated with private administrative boards, Hindi medium schools are often inexpensive and are controlled by the government (LaDousa, 2005; Narwana, 2017). Johnson and Bowles (2010) came to the conclusion that parents "voting with two feet" and selecting quality is the key to private schools' success in India. The private sector takes advantage of the fact that low-income parents usually link English-medium education with "good education" and believe it to be of high quality (Nambissan, 2012). According to Ohara (2012), the parents placed a strong emphasis on the value of an education in English and thought that schools where instruction is given in English were superior to those where it is done in Hindi. In accordance with the preferences of the parents, instead of teaching in local languages, private educational institutions are offering classes conducted primarily in English (Baird, 2009).

Underscoring the competency that upper caste and class hold over English medium schooling, English-medium instruction, according to Rao (2008: 66), is the only prerogative of a caste and class's standing and chances in life. Therefore, students

educated in English-medium schools are expected to be extremely successful in life and become a part of the societal elites (ibid).

The 8th All India School Education Survey from 2016 shows that The percentage of schools offering English education is 15.49 % for primary schools, 21.08 % for upper primary schools, 28.73 % for secondary schools, and 33.06 % for higher secondary schools. In India, 17 percent of all students are enrolled in English-medium schools (Sharma, 2016; Narwana, 2017).

1.5 Importance of Quality of Education

It is often challenging for parents to decide which school is best suited for their children in the early stages of their education (Vij and Farhan, 2018). A good education is often the pillarstone of a person’s future life and becomes the basis of a child’s career. Therefore, the issue of quality offers formidable hurdles even though the educational system tries to increase access to every kid and supply school facilities and staff (Thangkhiew, 2013). The importance of a quality primary education for a person's long-term achievement is widely acknowledged. School quality has equal significance to the intelligence and socio-economic status of the pupils. Moreover, the fact remains that the proper choice of schools affects students' learning experiences and outcomes (Brandsma & Doolaard, 1999; Chen et al., 2016). The quality of primary school therefore plays a crucial role in distinguishing individual capabilities and academic achievement (Baykasoglu & Durmusoglu, 2014; Lohan et. al, 2020).

Parents in both developed and developing countries encounter dilemmas during the school selection process. The shortage of quality education in government or public schools and the absence of policy constraints have led to the rise of private primary schools in countries such as India, complicating the school selection process for parents

(Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2019). Parents are implicit in identifying the best option in available primary schools and are encouraged to choose the validity of the whole selection procedure for schools as a substitute for traditional public education (Erickson, 2017). Further, the varied backgrounds of the students make the school selection process even more difficult for Indian parents (Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2019). It is often argued that school selection is a way of communicating to society about the social identity and status of an individual (Gurney, 2017), and it is an important parental decision-making process. In place of these always considerations, the Indian government has endeavored to address these disparities by establishing a homogeneous atmosphere for education and growth in all schools across the country, which often vary physically, socially, and educationally (Bussel, 1998; Baykasoglu & Durmusoglu, 2014; Lohan et. al, 2020).

Researchers have considered that the quality of education is an influencing factor in students' learning gaps, due to this, there is a disparity in future incomes (Glewwe et al., 2014; Bhattacharya, et. al, 2015). Given that it is too noisy to predict future returns to education, people frequently make their decisions over which schools to attend on the standards of excellence that may be used to project future profits. However, in the absence of complete information about the school, perceptions about school quality often depend on subjective information/interpretation. The most obvious assumption about the quality of education in a school made by parents is that it is a private or public institution. The relative quality differences between private and public schools, which are determined by the class size, pay scale of teachers, student-teacher ratio, and experience of teachers, have been the subject of long-running debate (James and Woodhead, 2014; Bhattacharya, et. al, 2015).

Furthermore, although urban Indian parents continue to exercise volition in choosing a school for their children yet there hasn't been much research conducted to determine the

objective or subjective reasoning underlying these decisions (Pushkarna, 2016; 2017; Lohan et. al, 2020).

1.6 Choice: What is It?

Before delving into the discussion of school choice, let us first understand what 'choice' is. Choice involves deciding between two or more options and objects. Choice, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is the *"act of selecting one option from among two or more."* (Chahil, 2018). Let us now engage in a nuanced understanding of choice.

In our society, not everyone is granted the same degree of freedom to choose. For example, persons in higher social classes tend to have more influence in choosing their neighborhood and other aspects of daily life. Nonetheless, one could argue that an absolute choice does not exist and not all spheres of life are amenable to choice-making. The school uniform policy, for instance, is sometimes defended because it fosters fraternity even if it might be argued to violate the principle of choice (freedom). Similarly, the assignment of a stream (science/commerce/humanities) in standard XI is usually made on the basis of performance in the secondary examination. Although the procedure contradicts the idea of choice, it is justified on the basis of justice. The way that liberty, justice, and fraternity interact to define choice is brought to our attention by these examples (Chahil, 2018). The state defines the concept of freedom in large part. The dialectical tension between upholding individual freedom and imposing restrictions on it is enforced by the state. For example, Article 19 of the Indian Constitution grants individuals the rights to freedom of speech and expression, peaceful assembly, free movement, and other liberties, but it also specifies the circumstances in which the state may restrict these rights. For example, many public spaces have been completely closed to even nonviolent protests because of purported worries about state security and public

order. Similar to this, works like Salman Rushdie's (1988) novel Satanic Verses and Taslima Nasreen's (2003) novel Dwikhandito were outlawed.

Access to information is imperative in the choice making process. For instance, until a few years ago, it was thought that a consumer's taste and purchasing power determined what they ate. However, dietitians contend that calorie consumption is a specific area of expertise and ought to be customized for each person for healthy living. Thus, producers of edibles are required to disclose information about their products, including nutritional facts and the date of manufacturing and expiration. In the medical industry, a similar tendency is gaining traction: it is no longer thought sufficient for a medical expert to make one-sided decisions toward their patients. The ethics of their profession demand medical practitioners to tell patients and their families about diagnoses and potential treatment options, and this requirement is only growing. Similarly, it is imperative to scrutinize the correctness of decisions made by individuals about the education (schooling) of their children without access to adequate information (Schwatz, 2004). The excessive concern about the medium of instruction, curriculum, and pedagogy may make an individual overlook the child’s needs and his/her cognitive requirements.

Most people would acknowledge that a person is less free when he/she is under any kind of threat or duress. On the other hand, Marxists have formulated the idea of ‘false consciousness’ to criticize the choices made in a system characterized by bourgeois democracy (Lukas, 1968). Further, they posit that choices made under such conditions may be condemned as false, given that making the right decision requires a commitment to working-class interests and an understanding of class consciousness (Chahil, 2018).

The welfare function of the state has become problematic as a result of globalization, as the state is perceived to be abdicating its responsibility and turning the provision of

education to private entities operating in a competitive market. Consequently, individuals who were previously regarded as state citizens with claims to state resources are now seen as customers who are left to fend for themselves and are exploited by the hidden hands of the market. Nonetheless, the question remains as existentialists would have argued if the presence of schools in the proximity of a family is enough to prove the existence of choice. The situation is comparable to those in which the existence of stores and eateries filled to the brim with a variety of offers would not be sufficient to demonstrate that any random bystander has a realistic choice to purchase and eat anything that comes to mind. Theoretically, a person may be entitled to fly to their destination, but that right is powerless without the necessary economic resources.

1.7 The Rationale of the Study

India saw the rise of private schools during the 1990s as a result of both the privatization of schooling and the failure of public institutions. The change has been bolstered by the narrative that government institutions are inefficient, and the media has hailed the privatization of education, health, and transportation sectors towards offering better service (Chahil, 2018).

In reaction to this narrative and policy drive, several scholars have expressed concerns and have asserted that public institutions have been purposefully "destroyed" for private institutions to replace and thrive in place of their government counterparts. Proponents of the market, on the other hand, argue that the government should refrain from interfering in market decisions and individuals should have options and choices when it comes to making consumption or service selections, rather than being confined to the unaltered and fractured services supplied by government organizations (Chahil, 2018). In this light, it

becomes important to study the decision-making process of parents about private and public schools, as well as the method used to gather information about it.

In India, the focus of school choice research has usually been on private schooling, particularly the low-fee private (LFP) sector, with researchers seeking answers to the question 'Why do parents choose to enroll their children in private schools?' as well as 'how do private schools develop?'

In modern India, the selection of the "right school" has taken center stage on the agenda for parents. The current study focuses on socio-cultural factors, in addition to economic and political settings, for parents' school choice decisions and their information-gathering process for their children's elementary schooling. The study also tried to understand the difference between government and private school selection of middle-class parents. What factors are involved in the selection of schools?

Although some research has been done on the school choice decision of the parents in the urban Indian context, which is discussed in the literature review. The proposed research helps to understand the process and parental perspective in choosing a school for their wards and also focuses on how parents gather information while choosing a school for their children in modern society. Primarily, this research emphasizes middle-class parents' approach to choosing their wards' schools in a non-metropolitan Indian city. To put it another way, the study sought to comprehend the perception of middle-class parents about the "right school" in Lucknow, the capital of the state of Uttar Pradesh. Furthermore, the study also emphasizes the importance of word-of-mouth recommendations in the school selection process. Consequently, this research offers fresh information regarding the perspectives of urban middle-class parents on school choice with reference to the government and private schools.

This study is significant in many respects for the administrative practice in education. It will increase awareness and comprehension of the elements that impact middle-class parents' choices over which school their children should attend. It will highlight the pressing need to comprehend the factors that affect school choice to eventually be able to use those factors to draw students to both government-run schools and other private institutions to increase enrollment numbers to expected levels. The research looked at the role of school choice, the information-gathering process, and the needs of students in a transformational strategy to jointly meet the aims and objectives as well as to comprehend school choice theory, especially about the selection process and its influencing variables.

For the present study, I have used a grounded theoretical approach. To answer the research questions, I adopted an inductive logic of inquiry in conjunction with grounded theory. However, after collecting data, the study can identify the relevance of the Bourdieusian conception of the Habitus and Rational Choice Theory for the study. The aforementioned framework can be executed by exploring the deductive logic of inquiry that the researcher never expected to accomplish due to the researcher's decision to utilize grounded theory.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To set the stage and provide context for my research, I reviewed the history of school choice in both national and international contexts, contextually, I also examined the need for developing more schooling choices and its predominance in the educational landscape. A variety of studies have been undertaken to investigate the factors that influence parents' educational selections for their children. The key sources of data included in the study that contribute to both a practical and theoretical viewpoint on school choice and its effect on parental decision-making are primary and secondary literature. I meticulously combed through the school-choice literature to learn about academic assessments of how families select schools that are both government and private in urban India. A thorough review of prior research and ideas to help me explore parental choice in school selection, changes in the educational market, changes in learning patterns, etc. This chapter of the thesis addresses the majority of literature and finds out the knowledge gap.

The researcher reviewed various studies and concentrated on several aspects of the parents' decision-making process while choosing their ward's school. The emphasis of the study is mainly on literature based on elementary-level school education. It includes both primary and secondary data-based studies that focus on school choice, government and private school education, societal factors, academic factors, etc. In the following section, there are three major themes. 1) Socioeconomic Factors; 2) School Characteristics Influencing Choice; 3) Parental Preference and Decision-Making Processes.

2.1 Socioeconomic Factors

This section of the literature review highlights various socioeconomic, social, cultural, and gender factors influencing school choice. The findings underscore the complex interplay of income, wealth, social networks, cultural affiliations, and gender considerations in shaping parental decisions and educational opportunities.

2.1.1 Income and Wealth

Woodhead, Frost, and James (2013) aim to find out whether an increase in private schooling enhances educational opportunities for all. Their study revealed that the increase in private education among children in the urban areas of Andhra Pradesh between 2002 and 2009. Moreover, it was found that household wealth was a significant factor influencing school selection, and caste was an influencing factor for school enrollment. They also indicated that the wealthiest rural families are still less inclined to enroll their children in private schools compared to the poorest urban groups. They found that the caregiver's education and aspiration, birth order, and gender of the child influence the child's educational opportunities.

Goldring and Phillips (2008) examine the characteristics of parents who choose private schools for their wards over public schools. The study was conducted at Metropolitan Nashville Public School (MNPS or Metro), USA, and the findings were discussed in terms of push-pull factors. The study found that 'income' and 'high education of the family' influenced parental choice for private schools. The study found that the parents' dissatisfaction with the public schools did not inevitably result in the "pushing" of children from the schools. Moreover, 'parental involvement' with children, i.e., parents who regularly interacted with children about school and their progress had a greater likelihood of selecting private schools. Likewise, parents who perceived insufficient

collaboration between them and the teachers were more inclined to contemplate shifting their kids to private schools. Finally, the study highlighted the importance of 'informal networks' in determining private school choice and brokering information among parents.

Hill, Samson, and Dasgupta (2011) examine the factor that shapes parental choice of schools and the impact of individual household school choice on the structure of educational opportunity in the local area. This study based on primary and secondary data found that most of the parents send their wards to private schools. The choice was based on the quality of the schools, the cost of attending them, the supply or the presence of the school in the neighborhood, and consideration of the gender of the child. Regarding the quality of the school, the headmaster's personality, social networks, school facilities, test scores, instructional strategies, and teacher credentials are all discussed by the authors. Considering the importance of providing quality education for children, poor parents also attempted to send their wards to private schools. However, there were certain social barriers that the downtrodden sections of the society faced in availing quality education. Finally, it was found that parents made different school choices for their sons and daughters viz girls mainly enrolled in government schools and boys enrolled in private schools.

Galab et al. (2013) examine how parents' goals affect their decision to send their children to a private school in Andhra Pradesh. They found that high-status and high-income parents typically chose private schools for their wards, keeping in mind the career prospects and future success of their children. Other factors that influenced the preference for private schools were better course material, parental education, the birth order of the children, better quality education, cost, etc.

Moschetti and Verger (2019) explore the experiences of underprivileged families attending publicly subsidized low-fee private schools (S-LFPSs) in Buenos Aires. Analysis of the data revealed that parents make four types of choices of schools: inertial choice, default choice, choice as a safety net, and school choice as a tool for social mobility. Under the school choice, S-LFPSs were chosen by a significant percentage of families as a route of social mobility because of the better future promise that these schools ensure. They shunned public schools because they were not able to fulfill the promise of social mobility. Under the choice as a refuge, the choice S-LFPSs was based on the fact that schools offered shelters away from violence occurring in the neighborhood. This group of parents valued the specific security measures offered in the school and the specific guidelines provided regarding pupils' arrival and departure during school hours. Moreover, such parents selected the S-LFPSs closest to their homes. Under the default choice, families preferred S-LFPSs after being forced to discard the state-funded alternative schools. This group initially preferred public alternative schools for their promise of quality. However, they opted out of public schooling because of discrepancies between their choice made in the online enrollment system and the school ultimately assigned to them. Under inertial choice, the group of families did not involve themselves much in the process of school choice and network information influenced their choice. Such families use third-party recommendations and collect information from friends and relatives who have children of school-going age. Further, it was found that in this group children made the decision by themselves, and the parents confirmed their decision after verifying the cost and location.

Harma (2009) examined the accessibility of the poor in rural Uttar Pradesh to the private schools. This primary study, based on qualitative and quantitative data, examines the affordability and accessibility of the poor to the LFPs (low-fee private schools). The study

found that while parents were more satisfied with sending their children to LFPs, yet half of the respondents (low caste and Muslims were not able to afford the fees of LFPs). The situation was such that children from wealthier families attended private schools, while those from poorer families attended public ones. Their poverty inhibited them from attending better quality education in private schools.

Cooper (2007) discusses the peculiar school choice of working-class, low-income African American women. The study revealed that mothers criticized the public schooling system because of subpar facilities, slow student learning rates, uninterested administration and instructors, and safety and disciplinary concerns. Thus, they preferred quality schools with small classrooms, culturally affirming curriculums and settings, individual teachers, discipline, and safety. The volition that mothers displayed in choosing school for their wards entailed an element of power. However, mothers' lack of economic resources, insufficiency of social capital, and inadequacy of information impede the school choice process and restrict the implementation of their agency. Cooper (2007) recognized the value of mothers' contributions to the transformation of their children's lives and lauded their exhibition of active agency in the process.

Tooley and Longfield (2015) focus on the contribution of private schools to raising the educational standards of underprivileged students in developing nations. The study aims to find the answer to the research question, 'Can private schools enhance education for children in developing countries?' The study underlined the functionality of low-cost private schools in offering education in developing countries. It was revealed that when it comes to academic achievement and teacher commitment, private schools outperform public ones. In addition, low-cost private schools are superior to government schools in reducing achievement gaps for disadvantaged groups and improving education for women in developing countries. In terms of educational costs, research reveals that

private schools have lower education delivery costs than public schools. There are situations when the whole expense to parents of sending their child to a private school is surprisingly close to the total expense of sending the child to a public school. Furthermore, the research revealed that disadvantaged parents made well-informed decisions in the private school market and preferred them over public ones. Finally, the private schools display greater accountability by the way of charging tuition fees from the parents.

Dixon, Humble, and Tooley (2017) investigate how home circumstances and family choices influence school choice in a post-conflict scenario in Nigeria. The study revealed that financially stable families preferred non-governmental schools for their children, and elderly parents preferred government schools over non-governmental schools. Parents were more likely to choose NGO schools for their daughters because they offered a safe environment. Similarly, families with higher household education exhibited a preference for NGO schools. Such choice was made because of academic performance, school reputation, and strong discipline prevailing in an NGO or faith-based school.

Gupta (2019) provides a comparative examination of the educational status of parents in the empirical example of a homogenous economic subdivision of the modern urban middle class in Dehradun, India. Additionally, in this paper, she concentrates on three dimensions of the home-school interaction: how socioeconomic changes structure parents' ambitions for their children's future, the educational choices they make to fulfill those ambitions, and mothers' involvement in their children's daily schooling. Middle-class families in India leverage their class privilege to access substantial educational resources, despite sharing common educational objectives and methodologies with the general population, as evidenced by the tripartite analytical framework. She draws attention to the fact that families in the diverse middle class have unequal educational

advantages due to differences in how their resources are pooled together. Furthermore, she found that in the area of parental engagement in education, mothers hold a variety of positions based on their educational backgrounds. In contrast, mothers who possess higher educational degrees tend to be more engaged with their teachers and collaborate with them to mold their kids' school experiences, which in turn strengthens the bond between the home and school.

Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz (1996) attempted to portray the social class difference and the reproduction of class inequality in education. Based on social class, school selectors or choosers were differentiated into three categories: privileged/skilled choosers, newcomers or semi-skilled selectors, and disconnected choosers or working-class parents. Choosers who are privileged/skilled are typically from professional and middle-class backgrounds, and they tend to value their children's concerns and future in choosing a school for them. Thus, these goal-oriented parents chose the school based on their examination results, the strengths and weaknesses of the school in particular subject areas (like science, art, etc.), and the general qualities and characteristics of the school. Secondly, newcomers or semi-skilled selectors from different class backgrounds were influenced by their ‘own experience at schools’ and chose schools based on gossip, rumors, and media reports about the school. Third, ‘disconnected choosers’ or working-class individuals were influenced by the facilities offered at schools. Their cultural and social capitals were of limited relevance in making school choices; enhancing ‘child happiness’, school adjustment, and friendship development at school were the main considerations for them. Finally, good education, the proximity of school from home, the preference of family members for a particular school, and the safety infrastructure at school influenced the choice of disconnected parents.

Reay and Ball (1998) focus on the school choice decision among middle-class and working-class families and how the families get involved in the process of making decisions. They found social class, race, and gender to be influencing factors in the decision-making process, and mothers were the 'laborers of school choice' as they were much involved in it. Women had a major influence in shaping the children's minds, and interestingly, most working-class families adopted the mode of the ‘positional mode’ of choice, while middle-class families resorted to the ‘personal mode’ of interaction to make their school choice decisions. Further, working-class parents were found to consider the child's happiness, whereas middle-class parents made the decision to consider the child's future. Therefore, the working classes were mindful of variables like the residence of children’s friends, locality, and child preference. On the other hand, the middle-class values indicated that social, guidance, and class factors are included in the school selection process. Thus, sporting facilities, the peer group in school, the home-school distance, etc. were the influencing variables for the middle class.

2.1.2 Social and Cultural Factors

Bhattacharya et. al (2015) highlight how family characteristics and caste affiliation influence the school choice decision of the parents. They found that households from the general caste were less inclined to enroll their children in government schools and opted for private schools instead. Moreover, children in the urban areas were found to prefer private schools. The likelihood of attending a quality school was also affected by the number of school-age children in the family. Finally, the caregiver's education was also found to be an influencing factor.

Denessen, Driessena, and Sleegers (2005) examined the patterns of school choice within the Dutch educational system. They found that ethnicity, social milieu, and religion

influenced school choice decisions. Therefore, parents choose Islamic or Protestant schools for their children based on their religious affiliation. The study concluded that group-specific motives for school choice contributed to religion and ethnic segregation at schools.

Harinath and Gundemeda (2021) highlight the reaction of the Dalits toward government and private schools. Additionally, their investigation centers on defining school choice and examining how a family's socio-economic status influences the selection between public and private educational institutions for their children. They highlighted that the majority of the parents enroll their children in private schools. As one of the key determinants in choosing a school and influencing views of quality, parents' satisfaction with teachers' attitudes is also significant. They contend that the school choices made by this marginalized section are significantly influenced by caste, class, and gender. Although a working-class Dalit parent prefers a government school for daughters and a private school for sons, middle-class Dalit parents provide their daughters with the same opportunities as their sons. Moreover, they underlined that the feelings of embarrassment or honor linked to attending public or private educational institutions, respectively, shape their school choice decisions. By enrolling their children in private schools, the parents achieve a sense of pride.

Checchi and Jappelli (2004) draw their data from a 1993 survey of household income and wealth on a cross-section representative of the Italian population. They found that parental income and city size shaped the school choice decisions of the families. Thus, households having higher disposable earnings and the lack of quality public schools positively influenced enrollment in private schools. Likewise, the student-teacher ratio influences school choice as well, a higher student-teacher ratio in public schools made the parents opt for private schools. Educated parents were found to prefer private schools

over government schools. Older parents and those residing in the cities were found to prefer sending their children to private schools. Moreover, the religious affiliation of the parents also influences their school choice. Thus, in some, the quality of teaching, service offering, location of the school (schools available in or around the vicinity), and cultural and ideological factors encourage the parents to opt for private schools over government schools.

Nambissan (2009) found the privileges of the older generation in the form of higher family income, caste background, education of parents, etc. gave the younger generation a competitive advantage in education. This apart, social network and the involvement of middle-class parents in the education of their children helped their wards to stay at an advantage. Further maternal education and proficiency in English make school success easier for middle-class children.

Kar and Sinha (2021) attempt to answer questions like; how are students segregated in different types of schools based on their socio-economic status? How are the existing patterns of socioeconomic inequalities being reproduced through varied access to different kinds of schools? What are the factors that determine the selection of the type of school? The authors found school quality as a significant factor in making school choice decisions. The school quality is defined in terms of pupil-teacher ratio, classroom-teacher ratio, availability of separate toilets for boys and girls, availability of electricity, drinking water, all-weather roads, library facilities, number of working days, etc. Parents chose private schools based on their infrastructure provision and teacher availability. The authors also highlight the importance of cost and prevailing social norms (e.g., sending girls to government schools and boys to private schools) influence parental decisions regarding school selection. Interestingly, the study found that the majority of OBCs (other backward castes) and general categories of students attended private unaided schools, and

a large number of SC (scheduled caste) and ST (scheduled tribe) students attended government schools. Moreover, they found that the majority of Muslim students went to government schools when compared to their non-Muslim counterparts.

2.1.3 Gender Considerations

Goswami (2015) based her study on multi-vernacular schools located in a village of Sonitpur district in Assam and found factors like school quality, community identity, issues of marriage, work, and gender consideration were the influencing ones. For female students, proximity to the school is a primary consideration. Parents prioritize nearby schools to ensure the safety of their daughters, reducing the risks associated with long commutes. Cost also plays a significant role in the decision-making process. While private schools are often more expensive than public ones, many parents are willing to invest in their children's education, believing that the benefits outweigh the financial burden. For families with daughters, the assurance of a safe, disciplined, and high-quality educational environment justifies the additional expense.

Ball and Gewirtz (1997) focus on how parents and their daughters see, assess, and decide between mixed-sex and single-sex educational institutions. They found that school uniforms had an important influence on the choice of school. Moreover, the presence of art, dance, and music facilities in school played an important role in girl's schooling because many parents wanted their children to have training in such cultural skills at schools. Furthermore, traditionalism also influenced the parents' preference for single-sex schools. Some reasoned that single-sex schools allowed more independence for their daughters in making decisions, which was appreciable to them. Besides it was found that girls performed academically better in single-sex schools. On the other hand, few parents

opted for mixed schooling for their daughters as it allowed for holistic development of the child and the ability to manage things in a mixed environment.

Sahoo (2016) reveals that villages that are comparatively more prosperous witness a higher enrollment of boys than girls in private schools, especially in those with higher tuition fees. This trend highlights a gender disparity in educational opportunities, particularly in more affluent areas. Additionally, he observes that younger siblings in larger families are less likely to attend private schools, indicating that resource constraints often lead to prioritizing the education of older children.

Jackson and Bisset (2005) explore the elements that impact parents' decision to send their kids to a coed or single-sex school. Based on research in a boy's school, a girl's school, and a co-education school in the United Kingdom, the study revealed that reputation and exam results are important factors influencing school choice decisions. The study found that single-sex school education was preferred for girls, while co-educational schools were favored for boys. Further, parents of girl students tended to highlight 'academic reputation' and 'results'; and parents of boys focused more on 'good discipline' and 'traditionalism' for their wards.

Moreover, villages located farther from district headquarters show a greater demand for private schools over government schools. This increased demand is driven by the widespread belief that private schools offer higher quality education compared to their government counterparts. Parents in these areas are more inclined to invest in private schooling, despite the higher costs, to ensure better educational outcomes for their children. This preference underscores the perceived inadequacies in the government education system and the trust placed in private institutions to deliver superior academic performance.

2.2 School Characteristics Influencing Choice

This section highlights how parental choice is influenced by a complex interplay of various school facilities including educational quality, affordability, language of instruction, infrastructure, safety, and proximity. Private schools are often preferred for their perceived advantages in these areas, although challenges such as cost and limited availability in rural areas persist.

Diwakar (2016) revealed some of the reasons why parents choose private schools over government schools for their wards. The parents appreciated the personal attention the students receive at private schools. They admired the fact that children are holistically judged based on academic and co-curricular activities. Finally, the study found parents' concerns about quality education, curriculum-based learning, the exposure given to children, school goodwill, etc. as important parameters.

Lohan, Ganguly, Kumar, and Farr (2020) identify the factors shaping urban Indian parents' selection of educational institutions for their children. They found that the educational quality, reputation of the schools, school infrastructure, tuition fees, and distance were other influencing variables. Finally, the authors reveal that parents in urban India prioritize their wards' comfort and learning environment above anything else.

Lahoti and Mukhopadhyay (2019) discuss the influence of factors like 'perceptions of teaching-learning', 'discipline', and 'safety of children' influencing the parents' decision to enroll their wards in a particular school. Among these factors, the 'perception of teaching-learning' was supposedly the most significant factor in making school choice decisions. Additionally, other factors like 'language of instruction', 'school expenses', and 'quality of teachers' were also underlined by the authors. However, the authors

narrate that at times there is disillusionment among parents about the educational quality and English not being the medium of instruction in certain schools.

Sasaki (2004) focuses on the school choice decisions of parents and analyses their agency in making the choice. It was revealed that ‘English as an instructional language’ strongly influenced the parents' choice of schools. Additionally, poor quality of government schools, availability of educational material in private schools, the child's future in private schools, and personal expenses influence the parents' school choice decisions. Interestingly, the study also revealed that the ‘degree of expectation from children's education’ and ‘educational background’ of parents shape the choice of school by parents.

Kingdon (2020) examines the size, growth, wages, per-pupil expenses, student success levels, and cost-effectiveness of private schools and contrasts these with the government school system. She pointed out that official figures show a sharp increase in private schooling and a matching quick decline in the size of India's government school sector, implying parental desertion of government schools. Additionally, data demonstrate that comparing private school costs to state per capita income, government education spending per student, and the legally required rural minimum wage rate for daily wage employment, the great majority of private schools in most states are considered "low-fee." She revealed that affordability is a major element driving the migration to and expansion of private schools. She further noted that the major reason private schools are able to operate on cheap fees - or lower per-student expenses than those of government institutions - is because their teachers are paid a tiny fraction of what teachers at government schools are paid. Private schools are notably more cost-effective than government schools due to their significantly lower per-student costs as well as their pupils' somewhat greater levels of academic accomplishment.

Alderman, Orazem, and Paterno (2001) examine how household income, cost of schooling, location, and the academic excellence of private vs government schools in the neighborhood influence parental choice. They further revealed that the attributes of the school and instructional expenditures contribute to the decision-making process. The findings further reveal that higher achievement in mathematics and language among the students of private schools enhances their demand among the parents. Moreover, the 'distance of the school', 'school fees', 'parental education', and 'household income' also influenced the choice of school.

Kimelberg and Billingham (2012) examine the attitude of middle-class parents towards diversity in the Boston area, USA. They revealed that parents 'prefer their children to have quality education and classrooms provide the opportunity to receive education in a diverse environment. The rationale behind sending the child to a heterogeneous school was based on three factors: (a) the aim to provide children with an educational environment that differs greatly from their own childhood's homogenous schooling experience; (b) the idea that the classroom environment in heterogeneous schools is an imagery reflection of the 'real world'; and (c) the notion that a varied learning environment offers practical benefits. Moreover, it was found that parents had a strong preference for local school because of the availability of transportation facilities. Furthermore, it was found that going on a walk to school offered a significant chance for fostering and deepening community bonds.

Narayanan (2013) examines the school choice decisions of parents (government vis a vis private schools) using quantitative methods. In an attempt to get quality education for their children, parents often consider sending their wards to private schools. Yet the limited presence of private schools in rural areas halts such a possibility. Therefore, she

found that instead of selecting schools based on management styles, parents are usually more interested in the particular characteristics of schools.

Mousumi & Kusakabe (2017) examine the school choice preference of low-income parents in the Ocala and Badarpur areas of Delhi. The problems that the parents faced were the absence of government schools in the vicinity and the exorbitant tuition fees imposed by private schools. Furthermore, they were found to send their wards to the nearest private school in consideration of security reasons. Moreover, they were found to be dissatisfied with the school fees, teacher credentials, and teaching pedagogy in private schools. Muslim parents were found to prefer an Islamic environment for the education of their children.

Hoxby (2003) examines the connection between school choice and school productivity in American schools. She examines the influence of school choice on productivity and provides evidence suggesting that the impact of school choice on productivity deserves additional research. Additionally, she focused on three recent choice reforms and discovered that, in each case, regular public schools increased their productivity when faced with competition. She noted that these schools boosted their productivity by enhancing student achievement rather than reducing spending while still maintaining success.

Erickson (2017) investigated the question of whether parents are motivated and incentivized to engage in school marketing efforts. She underlined the fact that the school choice processes help achieve a better alignment between the school and the specific needs of the students. However, the school choice program was conceived to be biased against low-income families. Parents were found to prioritize academic rigour, safety, extracurricular activities, teachers' quality, class size, religious or moral instruction, and

overall fit for their children. Erickson also found that though the parents valued academic quality, it was not the most prized feature of the school. In her sample, she found that safe schooling options were prioritized over academic quality. She also revealed that parents often do trade-offs between the religious schools, schools having diverse environment, school reputation, extracurriculars, safety, and overall satisfaction with the school. Finally, the study revealed that parents prioritize high-performing schools that are near their residence over any other schools.

Dostie and Jayaraman (2006) focus on the factors affecting school enrollment in the villages of UP & Bihar. The primary variables identified by the study were individual, household, and village characteristics. In general, the study found that parental education was an important determinant of a child's school enrollment, yet mothers' education exerted considerable influence on the girls' child enrollment decision. Interestingly, the study found that the 'village road access' was an important determinant encouraging school enrollment, and the 'caste composition of the village' influenced the enrollment of the older age group (i.e. 11–14 years). The enrollment of students was found to be high in situations where school infrastructure was adequate and free uniforms were distributed.

Tooley and Dixon (2006) review the availability of private schools for the poor in developing countries. In urban and peri-urban areas, private schools were found to serve the majority of school children. In rural areas, the situation was different, most of the children were enrolled in government schools. Private schools were found to be better than government schools in terms of offering better education and the children outperformed those studying in government schools. Tooley and Dixon found that parents choose private schools because of their cheaper fees, better teaching activities, low absenteeism, and better academic performance of students. Some of the private schools

were found to offer informal scholarships to some of the poorest students. In this way, they enhanced the enrollment of the students.

2.3 Parental Preference and Decision-Making Processes

Drawing on a wide range of studies, the section illustrates the interplay of various factors that influence the parental preference and decision-making process. The following studies elaborates on the practical concerns of parents and the broader socio-economic and cultural contexts that shape their decisions.

James and Woodhead (2014) discuss the school choice decisions among rural and urban families of Andhra Pradesh. The school choice decision was shaped by school availability, quality of education, accessibility, and most importantly affordability of school fees. Moreover, it was found that urban parents could easily change the school of their children because of the greater availability of schools in the neighborhood but in rural areas such options are not available to the parents. The migration from the government to private schools in urban areas was triggered by the belief that private schools offer better educational quality. On the other hand, the migration from private to government schools in rural areas was influenced by the high fees charged by the private schools and not being able to live up to the promise of offering 'English education'.

Bosetti (2004) highlights the logic, values, and parents' concerns while selecting a school for their wards. She found that meetings with teachers, principals, and/or guidance counsellors; interaction with friends, neighbours, and other parents; and visits to the school were major factors that influenced the decision of the parents to choose a school. Besides, 'school information meetings', 'student achievement scores', and 'school newsletter' shaped parental choice. Most parents were found to choose private schools for their wards, considering common principles and beliefs, teaching style, smaller class size,

and solid academic record. The study finally revealed ‘academic excellence,’ ‘moral growth,’ ‘critical thinking abilities, and establishing self-esteem,’ along with ‘excellent work habits and self-discipline’ were valued highly by the parents.

Vij and Farhan (2018) highlight several factors that determine the school choice, of which ‘distance of school from the house’, ‘regular information provided by the school about child academic performance’, ‘child’s need and ability to perform in a particular school’, ‘individual attention to the child’, ‘discipline of the school’, ‘admission process’ were found to be the most influencing factors.

Hastings and Weinstein (2008) examine how parental school choice is influenced by school test scores. They found that providing direct information about school test scores to parents influenced the probability of choosing high-performing schools. It was also found that low-income families put less emphasis on school test scores because their children are less likely to reap higher benefits from education. Interestingly, it was revealed that proximity to high-performing schools was an influencing factor in determining the likelihood of parents reacting to information about high-scoring schools. Finally, the study suggests that the availability of a list of good schools improves the academic success of students, especially the disadvantaged ones.

Narwana (2017) found that most of the parents initially preferred schools that have English medium instruction. However, judging by the quality of education, parents prefer to send their wards to private schools over government schools. Interestingly, it was found that the government school teachers preferred private/aided schools for their children. Better results in board examinations and the engagement of government school teachers in non-academic activities like conducting surveys, issuing election cards, and conducting health surveys made parents choose private schools. Narwana also found that private

schools were preferred by upper caste and socially privileged sections of the community owing to better quality education, better discipline, a convenient location, transport facilities, preprimary facilities, etc.

Bowe, Gewirtz & Ball (1994) locate the parental choice decision of school in political, cultural, and economic contexts. School choice decisions were influenced by place, content, and social conditions, known as the 'landscape of choice'. Apart from the rational reflections, the study also narrated how wider forces like environment, geographic, and socio-economic factors shape the parental school choice decision. Finally, they also found that social networking also influenced parental school choice.

Reay (1996) explores the school choice decisions taken by working-class and middle-class mothers at the primary school level in London. She found geography played an important role in shaping school choice decisions and parents preferred schools that followed a formal curriculum. ‘Geography’ or ‘the distance from home’ was a more important factor for working-class women than middle-class women. Reay also studied how mothers involved themselves in the information-gathering process before making decisions. Their social networks provided them with the platforms to collect information and make informed decisions. In this decision-making process factors like ‘good exam results’, ‘proximity from home’, ‘children’s happiness’, and ‘educational environment’ were the main considerations.

Reay (1998) focuses on the centrality of women in school choice decisions of their children. By involving themselves in the education of their children, women influence the social reproduction of status and class among the children. She revealed that mothers were passionate about the education of their children and spent considerable time and energy in supporting their children's schooling. Mothers took the personal responsibility

to ensure the children's educational success and offer the required cultural capital in this regard. The study further revealed that parental social expectations about schooling were influenced by the student's social class and portrayed the involvement of the mothers in the schoolwork of their children and engaging in discussions with teachers.

Donner (2005) examined the preference for English medium schools among the middle class in Kolkata. She found that the majority of the parents opted for state schools for the elementary education of their children and switched them to English medium schools because of their greater reputation and capacity to teach kids English language abilities. Parents were also found to be engaged in the lookout for private tuition and computer education for their children. The main purposes of sending the children to private schools were for status conservation and for the future hope of achieving upward social mobility. She also found that the mother's education was an important factor in influencing the proper upbringing of the child, better health of the child, and better education of the child. It was found that mothers planned their daily activities according to the dropping and picking time of their children from school.

Ball and Vincent (1998) focused on the structures and social relations that influence the school choice decision of the parents. School choice according to them is based on hot and cold knowledge, whereby hot knowledge refers to the direct experiences about school and cold knowledge is the official knowledge that is used for public dissemination of information by the school. Hot information, also known as grapevine information, is dispersed unevenly among various social groups and is socially integrated into networks and locales. Ball and Vincent also found that grapevine knowledge was preferable and authentic than official knowledge because of the extensiveness of the information that they provided. The study further reveals that school choice decision is a stressful process and the parents have varied levels of acceptance of grapevine knowledge. Finally, it was

revealed that peer pressure is a significant aspect that affects parents' decisions about which school to send their children to.

Altenhofen et. al. (2016) examine the process of choosing charter schools by parents in the socio-economically advantaged, suburban area of Colorado, USA. The finding revealed that 'social network' is the main factor that influences parental decision-making. It was found that conversation and consultation with other family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and other parents influence the parental choice of charter schools. Apart from social networks, parents belonging to socioeconomically advantaged backgrounds engaged in 'research' before making the final decision. Moreover, the parents focused on factors like school quality, curriculum, and mode of instruction at the time of making the school choice decision. Other important variables that influence the choice of parents include the presence of effective teachers in school, academic rigor, safe and disciplined climate, distance from home, etc.

Gurney (2017) explores the intricate connection between parents' selection of a certain educational institution and the formation of personal identity. She contains the act of choosing the school is also cited with identity construction for the parents. Thus, parents select schools for their wards based on their personal biography, caste & class backgrounds. If they choose good schools for their children, they could be labeled as ideal parents. As parental experience towards government schools has been negative, they will refrain from sending their wards to government schools. Similarly, the choice of private schools by parents is a mark of social status. Interestingly, she found out that Tamil migrants to Delhi prefer to send their wards to schools that offer instruction in Tamil. Such acts of the migrants helped in the maintenance of ethnic ties and community socialization.

Knowledge Gap

The literature review provided outlines various dimensions of school choice research, emphasizing the myriad factors influencing parents' decisions to enroll their children in specific schools. Most of the existing studies, both within and outside India, have focused on private schools and predominantly utilized quantitative methods for data collection to present parental school choice decisions. Indian studies, in particular, often rely on secondary data to explain the motivations behind parents' school choices. There is a notable scarcity of school choice research in India that employs qualitative research methods.

After an exhaustive review of the literature, a significant knowledge gap was identified: the substantial middle-class population in India's urban areas has not received adequate attention in school choice studies. Specifically, there is a lack of detailed understanding and calibration of the perspectives of upper and lower-middle-class parents regarding school choice. More detailed exploration is needed into how parents perceive various school attributes and how these perceptions influence their decision-making. The reviewed studies do not sufficiently investigate the information-gathering methods used by Indian middle-class parents before selecting a school. Thus, this qualitative study delves into the thought processes and priorities of parents across different socio-economic backgrounds.

While academic factors are well-studied, non-academic factors such as extracurricular activities, school culture, and student well-being are less frequently addressed. This research explores the importance of these factors in school choice and therefore offers a holistic understanding. Finally, the role of informal networks (friends, family, community members) in shaping school choice is acknowledged but not extensively studied. This

research attempts to understand how information spreads through these networks and influences the decision-making process.

This research aims to address these gaps by exploring the rationale behind middle-class parents' choices of government or private schools in Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh, India. The study investigates the decision-making process and context, examining how parents gather information and the strategies they employ to identify the 'right' school that aligns with their aspirations for their children. Furthermore, the research considers whether the children's needs (such as learning, attitudes, and capacity) are factored into the school selection process. In other words, it seeks to uncover the criteria parents use to choose the "right" school.

By focusing on the school choice decisions of middle-class parents in urban India, this thesis aims to bridge the existing knowledge gap in the literature. The study addresses the following four specific research questions or objectives:

2.4 Research Questions or Objectives of the Study

1. What factors influence the school choice decisions of middle-class parents in Lucknow?
2. How do middle-class parents in Lucknow gather information and what strategies do they use to identify the 'right' school for their children?
3. To what extent are the children's needs considered in the school selection process?
4. How do Rational Choice Theory and the Bourdieusian perspective explain the school choice decisions of middle-class parents in urban India?

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This study makes use of the Rational Choice Theory and the Bourdieusian perspectives to tackle the aforementioned research challenge and analyze the findings. Let us focus on these theories as they will help us to better understand the aspects that parents took into account when making their school choice decision.

3.1 Rational Choice Theory

The core ideas of rational choice theory stem from neoclassical economics (as well as utilitarianism and game theory; Levi et al., 1990; Lindenberg, 2001; Simpson, 2007; Ritzer, 2011: 417). The term "rational choice theory" (RCT) refers to concepts prevalent in economics in most social science discourse. Over the last several decades, the rational choice theory has gained momentum and recognition in a wide range of social sciences as well as in related disciplines such as philosophy and law.

Although economics served as the inspiration for sociological rational choice theory (SRCT) (Friedman & Hechter, 1988; Hechter & Kanazawa, 1997; Voss & Abraham, 2000; Hedström & Stern 2008), sociologists often use a version of RCT that differs markedly from the ones utilised in economics. (Baron & Hannan, 1994; Kroneberg & Kalter, 2012). Even the manner RCT is employed is distinct: Sociologists focus more on empirical applications and place far less attention on formal model construction. Therefore, in sociological research, the rational-choice assumption typically serves as a guide for determining the appropriate story to use when interpreting scientific facts, rather than assuming or postulating a formal model (Goldthorpe, 1996). Furthermore, sociologists frequently give considerably greater attention to how factors like social norms, networks, and socialisation processes that impact people's behaviour through

forming their preferences, beliefs, and opportunities than do political scientists with an emphasis on RCTs or even economics (Hedström and Ylikoski, 2014).

The phrase "rational choice" refers to two connected parts of a sociologically related deeper philosophical challenge. The term "choice" suggests that we regard social processes as the product of individual activity and that every action is viewed as a choice, in a counterfactual view, in light of its potential alternatives. To call these decisions "rational" implies that they may be inferred from actor traits other than the action itself (Scholtz, 2015). The selection of a certain action is determined by how the individual scenario is defined. In relation to this description, a threefold heuristic is constructed. This trio arises from the viewpoint that action is a decision made while feeling insecure, an unease that is pervasive but is mostly caused by the unpredictability of interpersonal interactions. Choice requires that (1) several possibilities are evaluated, and the options that are offered may be summed up as the actor's initial attribute. The second feature (2) is how these alternatives are contrasted. They are, however, dependent in many situations on the many states the world may take, thus (3) stating what actors think about the possibilities for these various states of the world must be included (Scholtz, 2015).

Rational choice theory was often on the periphery of mainstream sociological theory, even if it had an impact on the development of exchange theory (Hechter and Kanazawa, 1997). James S. Coleman played a substantial role in the advancement of rational choice theory, which is now regarded as one of the "hot" ideas in modern sociology (Lindenberg, 2000; Heckathorn, 2005). James S. Coleman is widely acknowledged for elevating rational choice theory to a prominent position among the prevailing ideas in modern sociology. The theory is built on two fundamental components: actors and resources. Resources are the items that actors have power over and are interested in. Actors are the center of attention in the rational choice theory. The rational choice theory contends that

actors' aims are governed by their utility-maximizing pursuit of self-interest (Coleman, 1988). The fundamental tenet of Coleman's rational choice theory is that *"people (actors) behave purposefully towards a goal, and their behaviors are molded by values or preferences"* (Coleman, 1990b: 13). It is significant that action is performed to accomplish goals that are compatible with an actor's preference hierarchy. Inherently, sociological rational choice is a multifaceted endeavor. It attempts to explain social outcomes by examining both the social situation and human behavior (Hechter & Kanazawa, 1997). At a lower level, its models include assumptions about individual cognitive capacity and values, among other things. At a higher level, rational choice models also include descriptions of social systems. These social structures work as both the social and material setting for individual activity as well as the source of new structures produced by people acting in ways that are consistent with the assumptions made at a lower level (Coleman, 1990: 1–23; Hechter and Kanazawa, 1997). In recent years, rational choice theory (RCT) has gained traction in empirical studies across a wide range of fundamental sociological disciplines, including political sociology, economic sociology, social stratification, and inequality, immigration and integration, crime and deviance, the sociology of religion, and the sociology of the family (for overviews see Hedstrom & Stern, 2008; Wittek et al., 2012). It is safe to claim that RCT has had a substantial impact on the mainstream in these many domains and has effectively helped to answer important conceptual issues (Kroneberg and Kalter, 2012).

While rational choice theory begins with the aims or intentions of the actors, it is essential to consider a minimum of two substantial limitations on the course of action. The first is a lack of resources. Actors have varying resources and varying access to other resources. The accomplishment of goals may be very simple for individuals with ample resources. However, for people with little, if any, resources, achieving goals may be challenging or

unattainable. Social institutions are an additional source of limitations on human behaviour (Ritzer, 2011: 417). According to Friedman and Hechter (1988),

> *"A person will normally find his or her actions checked from birth to death by familial and school rules; laws and ordinances; corporate policies; churches, synagogues, and mosques; and hospitals and funeral parlors. By limiting the viable set of courses of action accessible to individuals, enforceable rules of the game—including norms, laws, agendas, and voting rules—systematically affect social outcomes."* (Friedman and Hechter, 1988: 202)

These institutional restraints provide both advantages and disadvantages, encouraging certain actions and discouraging others.

Two further concepts are listed by Friedman and Hechter as being fundamental to rational choice theory. The initial aspect is an aggregation method, or the process through which *"In order to create social consequences, several individual actions are integrated"* (Friedman and Hechter, 1988: 203). The second factor to consider is the importance of information while making logical and rational decisions. Previously, it was believed that actors possessed perfect, or at least adequate, information to choose from the various options available to them with purpose. However, there is an increasing awareness that the quantity or quality of accessible information is very uncertain and that this variability has a significant impact on actors' decisions (Heckathorn, 1997, Ritzer, 2011: 420).

An individual's educational journey is viewed as a sequence of 'branching points' under the sociological rational choice theory (Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997). The sociological rational choice theory, which incorporates both an economic and a personal social return argument, holds that people choose their educational paths to maximize their own predicted value (Bridge & Wilson, 2016). Rational choice theory, which is based on behavioral psychology and has been applied to a variety of areas, it states that people arrange their behaviors to maximize their advantage. By considering the advantages and disadvantages of each choice, they succeed in doing this (Kelly, 2007).

Recent research in the rational choice tradition has highlighted the importance of information. An actor will react based on his or her views of potential action options and their effects if the information is not accurate, as it seldom is in real-life circumstances. Individual beliefs and belief formation processes have therefore become major topics of rational choice theorising. Individual actions should thus be viewed as the outcomes of three proximate causes: interests, beliefs, and opportunities (Hedstrim and Swedberg, 1996).

The correct application of rational choice theory only addresses the action mechanism that converts opportunities, interests, and beliefs into a choice of course of action. Rational choice theory as such does not include the relationship between the context of action and the beliefs, opportunities, and interests of actors, nor does it include the relationship between individual acts and group results. Rational choice theory is a sort of purposeful explanation that is analytic rather than concrete and achieves universality by attributing purpose to actors. Popper (1994) asserts that situational analysis begins with the creation of an analytical model of the social context that will be analyzed. This situational model includes components that depict the actors' interests (goals), beliefs, and surroundings where they make decisions. Merton (1968) and Granovetter (1978) presume that individuals act appropriately given their social circumstances. The mechanism that gives these studies their counter-intuitive appeal is the way they presume people's beliefs are created. More precisely, their suggested mechanism claims that an individual's perception of the need or worth of executing an act is a function of the number of other people who have already carried out the act (Hedstrim and Swedberg, 1996).

3.1.1 Rational Choice Theory and School Choice

Chubb and Moe (1990) were the pioneers in connecting rational choice theory (RCT) with the concepts of school choice. Two concepts evolved, which are similar to the rational choice theory described above. First, parents want their child to attend the best school possible, which many refer to as academic quality (ibid). Next, parents weigh all available options before making an informed choice. RCT posits that in the educational marketplace, parents and kids are consumers when it comes to selecting a school (Kelly, 2007). Most academics and policymakers interpret school selection patterns on the basis of the principles presented by Chubb and Moe (1990). Schneider et al. (2000) seek to extend Chubb & Moe's (1990) work by providing a more comprehensive decision-making process. They suggested that parents: 1) have a set of preferences regarding education and schooling; 2) collect information about the range of schools accessible to their children; 3) create trade-offs between the characteristics of these schools; 4) select the school that best meets their needs.

Furthermore, Bosetti & Pyryt (2007) also make an attempt to understand how parents choose schools using rational choice theory. They asked parents to rank their top reasons for choosing a school and then separated them based on school type. When looking for a school for their child, Bell (2009) suggested that parents conduct open or closed searches. Parents that use open choice analyze a variety of possibilities, restrict their options, and make a decision. This is comparable to the notions outlined by rational choice theory, which states that parents analyze all prospective schools, rate them, and choose the top-ranked alternative. A closed search, according to Bell (2009), is characterized as three or fewer schools.

Herrnstein (1990) explains the rational choice theory in relation to school choice and makes the argument that the theory requires parents to actively participate in the school selection process (Chubb & Moe, 1990). However, Goode (2007:22-41) criticizes rational choice theory by pointing out that Individuals may not always prioritize the optimization of just material possessions or financial wealth.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of school selection trends, the previous writers used rational choice theory in their research. Despite the issues expressed about the research mentioned above, the rational choice theory is extensively utilized and provides a fundamental framework for understanding how parents engage with the selection process. This research seeks to understand the elements that influence parents' decisions to send their kids to a specific school via this perspective. In addition, This study attempts to determine what elements parents think are most essential when selecting a school.

3.2 Bourdieusian Perspectives

The contentions presented by Pierre Bourdieu can be used to analyse parental school choice. Bourdieu was a French sociologist who proposed ideas such as "habitus," "social capital," "cultural capital," and so on to describe the class-based differences that exist in society. The ‘habitus’ is the first topic that we will be covering.

(a) Habitus

The study incorporates Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus is one of his most popular notions. Bourdieu's idea of habitus tries to investigate the relationship between socialization and individual behavior. Pierre Bourdieu offers a framework in *Outline of a Theory of Practice (1977)* for understanding how cultural contexts (re)produce the means of their own production and for examining

the impact of this (re)production on the specific subjects of a given "habitus." The collective entity by and into which dominating social and cultural circumstances are created and reproduced is referred to as the habitus in Bourdieu's theory.

Habitus is the "mental, or cognitive structures" that humans use to communicate with the social environment. People are prosperous with a set of internalized frameworks that allow them to see, comprehend, value, and assess the social environment. People construct their practices, as well as perceive and assess them, using such schemes. Dialectically, habitus is "the result of the internalization of the structures" of the social environment (Bourdieu, 1989: 18). Indeed, we can define habitus as "internalized, 'embodied' social structures" (Bourdieu, 1984a: 468; Ritzer, 2011: 531). Put differently, "habitus" is the term used to describe the acquired set of inclinations or behaviors that an individual employs to function in the social sphere. It is an enduring system of cognitive 'schemata or frameworks of perception, cognition, and action' that are interchangeable (Bourdieu, 2002: 27). Habitus is a product of one's social position and is deeply ingrained in the family's development (socialization within the family). Bourdieu called it 'socialized subjectivity,' or subjectivity influenced by structural causes. Habitus dictates the boundaries within which individuals experience a sense of agency and possibilities; it includes perceptual frameworks of which objectives and means are appropriate given that individual's specific place in a stratified society. As Swartz (1997) argues, '…habitus develops perceptions, desires, and practices that match to the structuring features of prior socialization' (Swartz, 1997: 103). Additionally, the dispositions of habitus form overarching patterns of behavior that encompass the cognitive, normative, and physical aspects of human conduct. They are reflected in nonverbal communication, values, human language, perceptions, tastes, and processes of reasoning' (Swartz, 1997: 108; Edgerton and Roberts, 2014).

A habitus is formed by long-term occupancy of a position in the social sphere. Thus, habitus varies according to one's role in that atmosphere; no two people have the same habitus. However, people who are in comparable positions in society tend to have similar habitus. In this regard, habitus may likewise be viewed as a group phenomenon. People can understand the social world through habitus, but the fact that there are so many different kinds of habitus suggests that the institutions and social environment do not exert equal pressure on each and every actor. However, habitus that are currently accessible have been established throughout the entirety of human history: *"The habitus, the result of history, develops individual and communal practises, and hence history, in line with the schemes created by history"*(Bourdieu, 1977: 82). Every person has an expression of habitus that they have developed during their personal history and that is contingent upon the specific moment in social history at which it transpires. Habitus is both long-lasting and transposable, meaning it may be transferred from one field to another. Although, it is conceivable for humans to develop an unsuitable habit, or to suffer from what Bourdieu referred to as hysteresis (Ritzer, 2011: 531).

The social world both creates and is generated by the habitus. On one side, habitus may be described as a "structuring structure," meaning that it is a framework that shapes the social surroundings. Nonetheless, it is a "structured structure," meaning that the social context shapes it. In other words, Bourdieu defines habitus as *"the dialectic of internalisation and externalisation of externality"*(1977: 72). It is practice that acts as a bridge between habitus and the social environment. The habitus is formed by practice on the one hand, and the social environment is formed as a result of practice on the other. When Bourdieu described the habitus as *"the system of structured and structuring dispositions which is constituted by practice and constantly targeted towards practical... functions,"* he articulated the mediating function of practice (cited in Wacquant, 1989: 42;

see also Bourdieu, 1977: 72). Although habitus tends to emerge via practice, habitus itself serves to generate and unify practice (Ritzer, 2011: 531).

As stated above, habitus functions as a "structured structure" as well as a "structuring structure". Similar to how one's social origins' circumstances—and related life chances—have a tendency to impact an individual's perception and behavioural inclinations, one's subsequent actions (practises) also tend to perpetuate or reinforce similar situations and life chances. The interplay between an individual's financial resources and their social and cultural background within a certain domain influences their behaviours and actions within that domain (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014).

The nature of habitus is persistent but not irreversible:

> *". . . Habitus, which is shaped by social conditioning and historical factors, undergoes constant transformation. This transformation can either reinforce the existing embodied structures of expectation when they align with objective opportunities, or it can lead to changes that raise or lower the level of expectations and aspirations" (Bourdieu, 1990b: 116).*

Bourdieu contends that the institutions of the habitus convey a feeling of the habitus and the values that are associated with it. This process usually starts in the family environment and is subsequently solidified by means of other institutions like education and work. These institutions continuously uphold, occasionally reorganize, and modify the subject's initial cultural and sociality templates i.e., the frameworks through which the subject interacts with the outside world and other people (Bourdieu, 1977).

(b) Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1983) uses the economic word "capital" to define capital. The term "capital" refers to cumulative labor that exists in physical or incorporeal form. Even while the actual labor of accumulation takes a long time, it is worthwhile since capital generates profits and even expands as it is replicated (Häuberer, 2011).

There are three ways in which cultural capital can exist: as an embodied condition, or as persistent mental and physical dispositions (knowledge and abilities); as an objectified form of cultural commodities (artworks, dictionaries, books, machines, and instruments); and as a form of objectification... [such as that which is granted by] academic credentials (officially recognized titles such as a diploma) in the institutionalized state (Bourdieu, 1986: 243). Bourdieu is also intrigued by how formal schooling, as well as informal, day-to-day cultural habits and experiences, might improve one's capacity for cultural competence. This competence encompasses the stylistic comfort and familiarity with which the person conducts themselves, whether at a party, in a fine restaurant, at an art gallery, or a football game, and exhibits a certain detached practical knowledge of what is cool (or "hot," "sick," or "wicked") (Dillon, 2014: 429-430).

The majority of the characteristics of cultural capital may be inferred from the fact that, in its most basic form, it is connected to and presumes embodiment. It requires an embodiment, or incorporation, process for cultural capital to grow in its embodied condition, that is, as what is known as culture, cultivation, or Bildung, which is time-consuming because it requires the investor's personal investment of time in the form of inculcation and assimilation labor. The most effective way to pass down capital via lineage is unquestionably through the transmission of cultural capital, which is why it is given a higher weight in the system of reproduction methods than more obvious and direct means of transmission, which are typically subject to more stringent censorship and control. Cultural capital has a variety of features in its objectified state that are only defined in connection to cultural capital in its embodied form. The materiality of the cultural capital objectified in tangible things and media, such as written works, visual arts, architectural structures, musical instruments, etc., makes it transmissible. For instance, a

collection of paintings may be transferred just as easily as economic capital (if not more effectively, given how well the capital transfer is concealed) (Bourdieu, 1986).

Individuals have a certain level of cultural competency regardless of their social class, and every social class (and class fraction) has its own distinctive culture. Upper-class culture, in particular, is highly respected - it is the legitimate culture. This is not because the goods and attitudes that the upper-class values are more valuable in and of themselves. Instead, it's because the upper class employs tactics of exclusion and inclusion made feasible by their privileged position in society (for example, membership in a country club or art museum, attendance at elitist institutions, etc.), ... which allow them to institutionalise hierarchical disparities between their culture and the preferences they don't appreciate (Bourdieu, 1984: 23–28; Dillon, 2014: 430).

High-level cultural capital parents make investments in their children's cultural capital before and after they complete their required schooling, for example, by enrolling them in preschool or sending them to university. In contrast, parents who lack cultural capital do not understand the value of early education and typically lack the financial resources to cover the cost of their kids' further schooling (Häuberer, 2011). The reality is that the scholastic output from the educational activity is dependent on the family's prior investment in cultural capital. Furthermore, the economic and social output of an educational certificate is dependent on inherited social capital that may be utilized to back it up (Bourdieu, 1986). The educational system accords the same value to all bearers of the same title. This allows the titles to be exchanged and ensures that cultural capital may be converted into money. While the title is a byproduct of the translation of economic capital into cultural capital as explained above, it is the certificate that enables the retransformation of it into economic capital (Häuberer, 2011).

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital encompasses the acquaintance with a society's dominant culture, particularly the capacity to comprehend and utilise 'educated' language. Despite the fact that cultural capital differs by socioeconomic status, the schooling system presupposes it. This makes it particularly challenging for students from lower socioeconomic classes to excel in the educational system. *'By foregoing overtly offering to everyone what it implicitly expects of everyone, the education system requires of everyone alike that they have what it does not offer. This mostly comprises of language and cultural proficiency as well as the acquaintance with different cultures that can only be developed by upbringing in a family that transmits the dominant culture'* (Bourdieu, 1977a: 494).

Bourdieu contends that because the education system presumes the ownership of cultural capital, which few students really possess, there is a tremendous degree of inefficiency in 'pedagogic transmission' (i.e., teaching). This is due to the fact that many pupils just do not comprehend what their teachers are attempting to convey (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990: 114). But despite the fact that students from lower socioeconomic classes face significant disadvantages in the race for academic success, the outcomes of this competition are accepted as legitimate since they are considered as the product of meritocracy. Furthermore, according to Bourdieu, the educational backgrounds of people in dominating positions serve to legitimise social disparities. Accordingly, a crucial part of upholding the status quo is played by the educational system.

> *'Education is really one of the most efficient ways to maintain the current social structure since it both offers social injustices an apparent rationale and acknowledges cultural legacy, which is a societal gift that is considered as a natural one'* (Bourdieu, 1974: 32).

In sum, Bourdieu's theory holds that cultural capital is instilled in upper-class homes and helps higher-class pupils to earn more advanced degrees than lower-class students. This

allows higher-class persons to preserve their class status and legitimizes the dominant position that higher-class individuals normally occupy. This shows that the educational advantage that higher-class parents provide their children may not be solely due to economic circumstances and that the concept of cultural capital is therefore deserving of serious consideration. However, it is essential to Bourdieu's notion that cultural capital genuinely does promote educational achievement and that educational success is truly linked to occupational advantage, even if this is only a way to justify class disparities (Sullivan, 2002).

(c) Social Capital

According to Bourdieu, social capital is *"the sum of all the resources—real or potential—that are connected to having a long-lasting network of more or less institutionalised connections of mutual recognition and acquaintance - or, to put it another way, membership in a group - that gives each of its members with the support of collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' that entitled them to credit in multiple senses... The amount of social capital that a certain agent [person] possesses... relies on the extent of the network of connections he can successfully mobilise and the amount of capital (economic, cultural, or symbolic) that each of those to whom he is linked possesses in his or her own right"* (Bourdieu 1986: 248–249; Dillon, 2014: 430). It follows that, while social capital is not solely determined by an individual's economic and cultural resources, it is still influenced by them. This is because the exchanges that establish mutual recognition require a certain level of shared characteristics, which in turn affects the individual's existing capital (Bourdieu, 1986)

The term "social capital" therefore refers to a person's social relationships, social networks, and alliances that connect them to opportunities that can increase their stock of

capital (whether it be economic, social, or cultural capital or any combination of these). These opportunities can be found both directly and indirectly, as well as through formal and informal relationships. The amount of social capital you have depends not only on how many people you know but also on how important they are to you. This is the amount of social, cultural, and financial capital that you know and that people are prepared to utilise on your behalf, which you can then use to increase the amount of economic, cultural, and social capital you have. The building up of social and cultural capital takes time, much like the building up of economic capital, and while each is unique, there are numerous connections between all three (Dillon, 2014: 431-432)

Social capital is a relational intangible asset that offers helpful assistance when required. Stable relationships foster honor and reputation among its participants, making them the most efficient means of establishing and sustaining trust (Bourdieu 1984: 204; Häuberer, 2011). Adopting a common name to show affiliation with a particular group (as one of the bridal pair does during a wedding to show the connection with the family he/she enters) is one potential method of institutionalizing social capital. The institution's actions (e.g., wedding ceremony) are used to construct the group (e.g., to extend the family) and to notify the members who participate in them about the makeup of the group (e.g., the family and the bridal pair) (Bourdieu, 1986: 249). The tangible and symbolic facets of the social environment are connected via exchange ties. To establish and nurture connections, they must remain visible (Bourdieu 1983: 191; Häuberer, 2011).

To put it another way, the network of ties is the result of individual or group investment strategies that intentionally or unintentionally seek to create or reproduce social relationships that are immediately useful in the short- or long term. The amount of social capital that results from a relationship increases to the extent that the individual who is the subject of it is wealthy in the capital (primarily social capital, but also cultural capital,

and even economic capital); people who have inherited social capital, symbolized by a great name, are able to turn all casual relationships into long-lasting relationships (Bourdieu, 1986).

Although people can have social capital, it is also true that any specific neighborhood or community can leverage the social networks and connections that exist within their neighborhood/community to improve the community's economic, social, and/or cultural, capital. However, it is obvious that economic resources are crucial, a community's economic growth does not, and indeed should not, rely just on economic capital. Bourdieu emphasizes the analytical independence of social (and cultural) capital from economic capital. Therefore, groups (and people) with limited economic capital can strategically use their social capital - which is abundant in small-scale rural communities - to promote economic growth (and so turn their social capital into economic capital) (Dillon, 2014: 431).

In direct proportion to the amount of social capital, social capital accumulation work is more profitable (Bourdieu 1986: 150; 1983: 193). Profits are only possible because belonging to a community creates the foundation for solidarity, even when they are not intentionally sought (Bourdieu 1983: 192). The group's gains cannot be obtained by outsiders (for example, no one in the community feels a sense of solidarity with an outsider and wouldn't lend that person anything) (Häuberer, 2011). Additionally, every group has an institutionalised form of delegation that enables the concentration of all of the social capital of a group in the hands of a single person (such as the head of a family or the organisation's president) or a small group (such as the executive committee of an association). To speak or act on the group's behalf, a representative is chosen (Bourdieu, 1983: 193; Häuberer, 2011). The institutionalised delegation, which assures the centralization of social capital, also has an impact of limiting the repercussions of

individual failures by clearly defining roles and empowering the recognised spokespeople to protect the group as a whole from undermining by removing or banishing embarrassing individuals (Bourdieu, 1986).

3.2.1 Bourdieusian Perspectives and School Choice

Although habitus functions as an internalised framework that constrains cognition and decision-making, it does not definitively dictate these processes (Myles, 1999). The habitus only "suggests" what individuals should think and decide to do. People actively consider their alternatives, even though their decision-making process is influenced by their habitus. The habitus provides individuals with the fundamental principles that guide their decision-making and influence their selection of strategies within the social domain. "People are not fools," wrote Bourdieu and Wacquant in a beautiful way. However, Individuals do not always exhibit complete rationality; rather, they tend to behave in a manner that is considered "reasonable"—they have common sense. What individuals do have a rationale; this logic is known as the "logic of practice" (Bourdieu, 1980/1990; Ritzer, 2011: 532). Nash (2002a) alludes to the positive attitude towards schooling that Bourdieu refers to as the 'educated habitus'. The term "educated habitus" refers to both the desire to identify and be acknowledged as an educated person, as well as to have an instrumental understanding of education. Numerous of the advantageous benefits of the educated habitus on educational performance are connected to non-cognitive characteristics such as having ambitious goals, a confident perception of one's academic abilities, and favourable opinions of school and instructors (Nash, 2001; Edgerton and Roberts, 2014).

Academic achievement and the benefits of greater cultural capital have a favourable impact on students' aspirations and attitudes towards school (habitus), which in turn

influences their performance and practices. In this way, habitus can be modified... by the impact of a social trajectory leading to different living situations than before (Bourdieu, 1990b: 116). The habitus acts mostly in the backdrop until the actor is confronted with conditions - a significant amount of habitus-field disjunction - that may cause conscious deliberate action to emerge (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014).

> *The distinction between individual habitus is based on the uniqueness of their social paths, which are characterised by a set of temporally arranged factors that cannot be reduced to each other. The habitus, through its continuous structuring of new experiences based on past experiences, is shaped by the influence of new experiences within certain boundaries determined by their ability to be chosen. This results in a distinct integration, primarily influenced by early experiences, of the experiences that are commonly shared among individuals of the same social class (Bourdieu, 1990a: 60)*

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social and cultural reproduction is widely seen as a significant attempt to elucidate the enduring nature of social inequality across successive generations. According to Bourdieu, one of the main reasons socioeconomic inequality persists is because the formal education system contributes to the legitimacy of the current social structure by portraying it as a seeming ranking of abilities or quality (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Edgerton and Roberts, 2014).

On the contrary, they contend that cultural capital includes adaptable cultural and social abilities, such as familiarity with pertinent institutional frameworks, norms, and expectations, as well as possession of appropriate social and cognitive skills. (e.g., "cultural knowledge" and "vocabulary"); as well as a more "strategic understanding of agency". In the subject of education, these abilities work together to improve parents' capacity to positively influence their children's educational results by instilling these abilities in their offspring at an early stage and proficiently interacting with educational institutions. Second, they contend that cultural capital and academic/technical skills or 'capacity' are interdependent and cannot be separated (Lareau and Weininger, 2003).

The concept of cultural capital has often been employed synonymously with Bourdieu in studies on school choice. The idea relates to private ownership of cultural assets including artefacts and customs. Researchers have used it to explain why and how picking a school has turned into a significant conflict over the cultural domain of the institution, where kids get a specific sorts of education or attributes that match the socioeconomic positions and goals of their families. Parents actively participate in school choice because they recognise that schools are crucial institutions for class reproduction, even if researchers highlight that diverse resources, artefacts, and customs are considered cultural capital in specific local and national contexts (Roda, 2017; Yoon, 2020).

The notion of cultural capital, in particular, has shed light on the selection of value-added educational alternatives. Socially advantaged parents, for example, prefer schools that offer academic and/or extracurricular enrichment in language, arts, music, athletics, and/or giftedness. These parents take this action to ensure that their kids develop the kind of cultural capital necessary to succeed academically and to pursue careers and lifestyles that are often associated with the upper- or upper-middle class (Roda, 2017; Bereményi & Carrasco, 2018). One intriguing development is how school choice makes it possible to acquire cultural capital by learning a specific type or style of language or languages. One key factor in choosing, for example, is the languages that kids are exposed to or study in school, especially in societies that are stratilingual, certain languages are held in higher regard than others (Yoon & Gulson, 2010).

To get further insight into how school choice contributes to the building of cultural capital that enriches individuals who can attend prestigious schools, Bourdieu's notions have proven very helpful. Indeed, his ideas can shed light on the significance of parents' cultural capital, as it enables them to interpret what constitutes changing, contextually specific cultural capital in a particular local or national system of education. According

to Yoon (2020) and other studies (see Rowe & Windle, 2012; Reinoso, 2008), parents may encourage their children to acquire status-acquiring cultural symbols by selecting schools, and this is made possible by the concept of cultural capital (ibid).

Another concept proposed by Bourdieu that has had a substantial influence on studies about school choice is social capital. The concept draws attention to the fact that socially advantaged families have access to social networks that provide them with timely information, highlighting "a key dynamic in the workings of all markets," particularly in the field of education (Ball, 2003: 100). According to Bourdieu, social capital is the end result of individual or group investment strategies that are intentionally or subconsciously intended to create or reproduce social ties that can be immediately useful short or long duration (Bourdieu, 1986b: 249; Ball, 2003: 79). It takes constant sociability and a continuous flow of interactions in which recognition is perpetually reinforced and refreshed in order to reproduce social capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Ball (2003) uses this idea in England to theorize that middle-class families' success in the educational market is a result of their access to "hot knowledge" from social contacts who can provide them first-hand guidance and information about various school kinds and their long-term possibilities (Ball, 2003: 85). Similarly, in the United States, Lareau, Evans, and Yee (2016) observe that the significance of social capital is more prominent in the present system, in which selecting a school is getting more and more fragmented. Numerous schools or districts need a particular application, which may only be successfully performed with in-depth expertise that is not always accessible to everyone (Lareau et al., 2016). Parallel to this, Rowe and Windle (2012) find that Australian middle-class parents choose their kids' schools more on recommendations from their social networks than from the material on the official "My School" website. Sherfinski's (2013) research found that middle-class households that have just transitioned to the

lower middle-class families still choose their children's schools based on their long-standing social networks, the persistence of social capital is underlined (Yoon, 2020).

Bourdieu's theories and concepts may be used to examine how school choice functions as a mechanism that exacerbates inequality across schools and families, depending on their social and geographical characteristics and capabilities. To put it another way, Bourdieu's sociological notions of capital and habitus—which were already mentioned— offering a methodical and creative structure for constructing a comprehensive analysis that utilizes spatial notions, such as localization and location, in the examination of school choice.. In addition, Bourdieu's theories are effective in assisting us in understanding how school choice practices turn into a crucial component of class reproduction in educational systems where parents have an increased responsibility to personally choose one school above another in order to secure their kids' success (Reay, 2004).

Moreover, Bourdieu's viewpoint enables us to understand what lies behind a system of school choice that encourages individuals—including educators—to contribute to maintaining competition, yielding the optimal outcome vs the least favourable, or the "victors and the vanquished" (Coldron et al., 2014: 399). Bourdieu offers a robust conceptual framework with interconnected concepts that aids in the assembly of the many components of school choice practices and the creation of an incisive examination of how those components are intertwined, not isolated (Yoon, 2020).

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

A methodical endeavor to discover new knowledge is research. The most important trait of a research process is the methodical approach. Hence, in order to draw meaningful conclusions, a researcher must define in advance what he or she hopes to accomplish, what research tool will be utilised, and how the data collected from the participants will be analysed. This chapter entails a description of the research methodology that was employed (Thangkhiew, 2013).

This study intended to gain a more comprehensive knowledge of parents' motivations for selecting a specific school for their children. Furthermore, the study primarily focused on parents' perspectives on choosing a government school vis a vis a private school. The study also looked at the various reasons that parents gave for sending their children to a particular school. This may be addressed especially by employing the qualitative approach, which requires a detailed description of social activity and sheds light on the individual's experience and interpretation. The research was primarily carried out in Lucknow's educational institutions. Lucknow is a heritage city and the capital of Uttar Pradesh, famed for its Nawabi culture, Tahzeeb, and legacy. There are numerous government and private schools in Lucknow that offer students a top-notch education. There are several subcategories in both government and private schools. These schools are affiliated with various educational boards, and the medium of instruction differs as well.

This chapter outlines the study and describes the research methodology. To identify the answer to the research objectives, the design includes sample characteristics, sampling methods, data collection techniques, storage and tools.

4.1 The Problem of the Study

The study seeks to elicit the viewpoints of Indian middle-class parents about sending their children to a particular school in an urban context. The parents of children who are in elementary-level school are essentially the subject of the study. The study's fundamental premise is that it calibrates and comprehends parents' perspectives around decisions about which school their children should attend. Identifying the factors that impact middle-class parents' school choice decisions, especially in urban areas. In addition, attention is given to the factors that parents find most appealing when choosing a school in an urban area. Besides, it is also necessary to determine how the parents gather information about the school and the channels they use to do so. Moreover, the research examines whether parents take their children's needs into account while selecting a school. The involvement of parents in their children's education is a subject of research as well.

Stated differently, we investigated the school decisions of parents whose underaged children do not have the maturity to choose school on their own.

4.2 Universe of the Study

The study is based on Indian middle-class parents in an urban setting. For the purpose of the study, we took into account both government and private schools in Lucknow. The universe of this study is the parents who send their children to school for elementary-level (i.e., class 1-8) education in Lucknow.

The relevance of any research work's conclusions cannot be assessed until the method used to collect data is known. I employed a qualitative research approach for this study, utilizing observation and interviews as the primary data-gathering tools. The tools and techniques utilized are thoroughly discussed in the sections that follow.

I first discuss how my research question and qualitative methods relate to one another, then I go into why I decided to use observation and interview technique for my study and give a general description of the setting in which it was conducted. In a later section, I provide a detailed outline for carrying out my study, outlining how I chose participants, how I collected data, how I analysed it, and how I protected those who took part in it. Lastly, I provide a schedule for undertaking and finishing my research.

4.3 Research Design and Data Collection

4.3.1 Method Used for the Present Study

Parental choice of schools is a complex, multifaceted decision influenced by a variety of factors including personal values, socio-economic status, cultural expectations, and perceptions about the school quality. Qualitative research methods allow researchers to delve deep into these factors and understand the nuances of how parents make these decisions.

Qualitative research is adept at capturing personal and subjective experiences. Parents' reasons for choosing certain schools can be deeply personal and influenced by their unique experiences and perspectives. Through qualitative methods, researchers can gather rich, detailed narratives that provide insights into the motivations and thought process behind school choice.

The choice of school is often influenced by the broader social, cultural, and economic context. Qualitative research enables deeper exploration of these contextual factor. By using methods such as participant observation, researchers can examine how local contexts, such as neighborhood characteristics or community values, shape parental choices.

Qualitative methods help us to uncover new insights and develop deeper understanding of the topic. Unlike quantitative methods that require predefined variables and hypothesis, qualitative research is open-ended and exploratory. This approach is beneficial for studying parental choice of schools, as it allows parents to express their thoughts and feelings without being constrained by predetermined responses options. Open-ended questions in interviews and discussions can reveal unexpected insights and provide a fuller-picture of the decision-making process.

Qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews enable researchers to probe deeply into the reasons behind parental choices. They can ask follow-up questions, seek clarifications, and explore the complexities of parents' reasoning. The depth of inquiry is essential for understanding the intricate dynamics of school choice.

Moreover, choosing a school for one's children is often an emotional decision, influenced by hopes, fears, and aspirations for the child's future. Qualitative research can capture these emotional and psychological dimensions providing a holistic view of the decision-making process. Techniques such as narrative analysis can help uncover these emotional undercurrents.

In sum, qualitative research is highly suitable for studying parental choice of schools for their children because it allows for an in-depth, nuanced exploration of the complex, personal, and context dependent factors that influence this decision.

Thus, the research adopted qualitative approach in analysing the factors that impact Indian middle-class parents' school choice decision-making process for their children. Furthermore, it highlighted the information-gathering process of middle-class parents while making school choice decisions for their children. The primary factors that affect parents' decisions on which elementary school to enroll their children were examined in

the study. The study intended to provide parents from various socioeconomic backgrounds the opportunity to voice their thoughts and experiences regarding the education delivered at the research school. Denscombe (1995) refers to this type of study as empowerment since it permits a less powerful group to express experiences openly that would otherwise remain buried. This study was primarily qualitative, and interviews were used to collect data.

Qualitative Research

I selected a qualitative approach because of its capacity for careful and in-depth study in order to calibrate and comprehend the parents' perspectives in the school choice decisions. According to Berg (2001: 6), qualitative research is the preferred approach for social science studies because it enables researchers to better understand *"how people organise themselves and their surroundings, and how residents of these habitats make meaning of their circumstances via social roles, rituals, symbols, and social structures"*. Maxwell (2005: 23) outlined the benefits of qualitative research in social contexts and identified five intellectual aims that are appropriate for qualitative research. Their objectives included giving participants' activities in a real-world situation "context," "meaning," "unanticipated phenomena and influences," "casual explanations," and "process". Merriam (1998: 6) defined "emic" to describe an insider viewpoint and explained, *"the primary objective of qualitative research is to comprehend the phenomena of interest through the lens of the participants, rather than the researcher's viewpoint "*.

The qualitative approach usually makes use of words, visuals, and in-depth descriptions of things like biographies to evaluate something's quality. The purpose of the qualitative research approach is to conduct an in-depth and thorough description of a single

occurrence or process in its natural setting rather than to objectively generalize the findings to other study groups (Patton, 2015).

Consequently, the data of qualitative research consists of words, tales, observations, and documents. In a nutshell, qualitative data is descriptive in nature. As stated by Berg (2007: 3):

"Qualitative research pertains to the interpretation, ideas, explanations, qualities, analogies, symbols, and depictions of phenomena".

In qualitative research, the goal is to comprehend the subject's experience and perspective. Hence, the intention is to include subjective experiences. Fieldwork data is crucial in qualitative research. Researchers obtain direct expertise in the field by spending time in the field and engaging with participants. The qualitative reports describe and interpret whatever was investigated in the study field. Qualitative research employs three sorts of tools: 1) in-depth, open-ended interviews, 2) direct observations, and 3) written communications (Patton, 2002).

Researchers were able to explore trends in parental decisions because of the qualitative study. "Social life follows very consistent patterns, and these patterns make a lot of sense when closely investigated" (Berg, 2001: 15). I used the interview method to learn more about participants' perspectives on choosing the best elementary school choice for their children and their information-gathering process in the school choice process since it enabled me to conduct a thorough examination of parental choices. The researchers utilize verbatim quotations from the interview data to highlight the subject's experiences, feelings, opinions, and knowledge. When observing, the researcher gathers data on individuals' behavior, activities, actions, and interpersonal relationships with other people. The subject's conduct, as well as the social situations, are observed. Moreover,

governmental and non-governmental records, personal diaries, and images are studied as part of the qualitative investigation.

Interviews and observation were used to collect the data for this particular study. The interviews were unrestricted and open-ended. 44 respondents (40 parents and 4 school administrators) were chosen based on purposive sampling, and they all participated in face-to-face interviews. The lengthy duration of the interviews, however, led to a variety of deductions and conclusions.

4.4 Procedure of Data Collection

4.4.1 Stepping into the Field

The research field is crucial to any qualitative study. The researcher gets near to the respondents in the research field, the situation is studied directly, and meticulously studies the facts and details of the respondents' everyday lives in great detail. Before initiating fieldwork, the researcher sought permission to conduct the study by visiting the District Basic Education Department (DBED). The researcher submitted a formal request letter to the department to obtain permission to conduct the research work at the state government school i.e., Basic Vidyalaya (Primary School). The researcher began the study activity after receiving formal clearance from DBED to conduct the research work (attached in Appendix: 1).

The population or universe for the study will consist of all the parents who send their children to elementary-level school in Lucknow.

4.4.1.1 Sampling

(a) Planning the Inquiry

After taking into account the research questions and the amount of time available, it was determined that it might not be possible to conduct research in all of the schools in the region. So, four (4) schools, in particular, have been included in the study, which was chosen using purposive sampling. They consist of two (2) government schools and two (2) private schools. The study sought to analyze the factors that influenced parents in an urban context to send their children to a certain school in that area.

Owing to the previously established research limits, this study used a non-probabilistic, purposive sampling strategy. A purposive sample is defined as *"participants who have encountered the core occurrence or key idea being investigated"* (Creswell & Clark, 2018: 176); in this study, parents of school-aged children were selected. This study employed purposive sampling to pick the sample schools and used snowball sampling, also known as chain sampling, to select the parents who enroll their wards to these schools. Snowball or chain sampling enables previously identified, purposefully selected participants to discover others who, like them, give rich material for future interviews and advise their recruitment for the research (Patton, 2015).

Table 4.1 Government Schools of Lucknow

Table: 4.1

Sr. No.	**Name of the School**	**Location**	**Affiliation**	**Run By**
1.	Basic Vidyalaya (Primary School)	Lajpat Nagar	State Board	Basic Education Department
2.	Kendriya Vidyalaya	Aliganj	Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)	Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KBS)

Source: Field Data

Table 4.2 Details of School InCharges

Table: 4.2

Sr. No.	School Name	Place	Name of the School In-charge (Pseudonym)
1	Basic Vidyalay (Primary School)	Lajpat Nagar, Lucknow	Mrs. Samreen Fatima
2	Kendriya Vidyalay	Aliganj, Lucknow	Mr. Manoj Kumar Verma

Source: Field Data

Table 4.3 Private Schools of Lucknow

Table: 4.3

Sr. No.	Name of the School	Location	Affiliation	Run By
1.	City Montessori School (CMS)	Rajendra Nagar (1st Campus)	Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE).	CMS Society
2.	Lucknow Public School (LPS)	Sec-F Jankipuram	Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)	Avadh Educational Society

Source: Field Data

(b) Recruitment and Selection of Participants

Participants who represented the research were selected through third-party contacts who were familiar with the participants, in accordance with the purposive and 'snowball sampling'[1] strategy discussed previously in this chapter (Patton, 2002). The researcher's many networking opportunities allowed for contact with every participant. I reached out to parents who had enrolled their children in elementary school and specifically chose a minimum of ten (10) parents/guardians from each school to include as participants in my research. The sample included 40 parents (both male and female) and a few (four) school

[1] "Snowball sampling" is the term used in social sciences to describe a non-probability sampling technique (which also includes purposive sampling) in which a researcher starts with a small population of people they know and asks those initial participants to recommend other people who should be included in the study (Crossman, 2019).

administrators from Lucknow city. After making contact with each participant, a mutually convenient time and venue for the interview were decided upon based on the participant's proposal. According to Merriam (1998: 85), ideal participants are "individuals who are capable of expressing their thoughts, emotions, and viewpoints—that is, offering a viewpoint—on the subject matter under investigation." The purpose of my research was to interview a diverse group of parents and guardians whose children attended these particular elementary schools.

4.5 Research Setting

The study's primary focus is on middle-class parents in urban surroundings. With this in mind, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, was chosen as the research area. As is well known, there are a number of schools accessible for education in an urban context. Furthermore, parents had more alternatives to choose from.

Lucknow

Lucknow, the state capital of Uttar Pradesh, was previously known as the Awadh region. It lies about in the middle of the state, and the Gomti River passes through the city. Historically, it was the capital of Awadh Pradesh and was governed by the Delhi Sultanate during Mughal rule. Later on, it was handed up to the Nawabs of Awadh.. In 1920, Lucknow was designated as the provincial capital of the United Provinces, subsequently known as Uttar Pradesh. Presently, it serves as the administrative centre of the Lucknow District and Division. It has always been a city with a variety of cultures, affectionately known as the "City of Nawabs" or the "City of Tehzeeb." “Shiraz-i-Hind”, “The Constantinople of India”, and “The Golden City of the East” are just a few of the numerous titles given to the city (Gaurav, 2013).

Lucknow's culture has a wonderful vibe and is a synthesis of total elegance, warmth, politeness (etiquette), civility, and a superb taste in the level of life. Numerous cultural aspects of the city have become the monuments of 'Tehzeeb'. Here, dance, music, literature, Urdu poetry, and theatre are all given a lot of attention. Given their interest in all facets of life, the Nawabs of Awadh deserve credit for this. They valued perfection in everything. The food of Lucknow, commonly referred to as Awadhi cuisine, has a distinctive Nawabi flair. The kebabs, biryanis, and certain breads, such as nahari-kulchas, roomali rotis, and warqi parathas, are the main attractions (Gaurav, 2013).

Lucknow is renowned for producing the Chikan and Lucknavi Zardozi. These are two different styles of elegant and delicate Indian embroidery. A sizeable portion of the city's income comes from the export of these valuable commodities. Both of these handcrafted embroideries are in great demand not just in India but also in other international markets (Gaurav, 2013). Nowadays, it is regarded as one of the most significant cities in the nation and is rapidly growing in a variety of industries, including manufacturing, retail, and business. Lucknow, one of India's top ten fastest-growing non-major metropolises, is a thriving city that is now experiencing an economic boom. It is the second-largest city in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The most encouraging aspect of it that portends well for the future is the distinctive fusion of its refined elegance and recently acquired velocity. It keeps being an important centre of governance, administration, business, aerospace, finance, education, technology, culture, pharmaceuticals, music, design, tourism, and poetry (Lucknow, n.d.).

There are 254 (197 primary and 57 upper primary schools) state government schools (Lucknow, n.d.) and 11 central government schools (Targetstudy, n.d.) in Lucknow city. Apart from that, there are nearly 263 private schools (Scribd, n.d.) in Lucknow City.

4.5.1 Government Schools

(a) Basic Vidyalaya Lajpat Nagar, Lucknow

Basic Vidyalaya, Lajpat Nagar, Lucknow is a state government school administered by the Uttar Pradesh government's Basic Education Department (Basic Shiksha Parishad). Established in 1965, the objective of the school is to ensure that each and every student receives an education of the highest possible standard. It is close to the iconic Rumi Darwaza and Ghanta Ghar in Lucknow. Government and private transport are available to reach the school. The curriculum and syllabus of the State Basic Shiksha Parishad Department, Uttar Pradesh, are followed by the school, and Hindi is the language of instruction. Encouraging students from diverse backgrounds, the school does not charge tuition until the eighth grade and complies with the stipulations of the Rights to Education (RTE) Act. The process of admission to the school is very easy and students are only required to have their Aadhaar card to verify/certify their age. Aside from free education, the school provides free uniforms, books, shoes, socks, and other items to the students. The school has adequate toilet and drinking water facilities, as well as separate restrooms for boys and girls. There is a drinking water tank from which all of the children drink.

Additionally, the school offers instruction to the kids using audio-video technology so that they may learn more quickly. Furthermore, the school offers computer education and has a library for the benefit of the students' education. Every Saturday, the school conducts a quiz competition for the pupils to better comprehend social knowledge.

Table 4.4 Demographic profile of the parents - Basic Vidyalaya Lajpat Nagar, Lucknow

Table: 4.4

Sr. No.	Pseudonym	Age	Educational Qualification	Occupation
1	Mr. Ramesh Tiwari	46	Secondary Level (Class 10th)	Private job
2	Mrs. Shabeena	30	Secondary Level (Class 10th)	Housewife (Wife of a Daily Wage Worker)
3	Mrs. Sumbul	25	Illiterate	Housewife (Wife of an Auto Rickshaw Owner and Driver)
4	Mr. Mohammad Rafeeq	41	Illiterate	Embroidery Work
5	Mr. Mohit Trivedi	25	Secondary Level (Class 10th)	Private Job
6	Mr. Rajesh Kumar	46	Upper Primary Level (Class 8th)	Grocery Shop
7	Mrs. Vijata Saxena	32	Primary Level (Class 1 or 2nd)	Grocery Shop
8	Mrs. Rahimun Nisha	30	Primary Level (Class 5th)	Embroidery Work (Zari Work) and Sewing Work
9	Mrs. Rubiya	35	Upper Primary Level (Class 8th)	Embroidery Work and Sewing Work
10	Mr. Mohd. Safaque	62	Illiterate	E-Rickshaw Owner and Driver

Source: Field Data

(b) Kendriya Vidyalaya Aliganj, Lucknow

Kendriya Vidyalaya Aliganj is a Central Government school run and administered by the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan. The school was opened in 1963 for civil employees but Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) Aliganj has been running since 1984, the school's objective is to serve the educational requirements of the offspring of Central Government

employees working in transferable jobs, including those in the Defence and Paramilitary services, by offering a single educational course. The school is located in Sector-A locality of Aliganj, Lucknow, and is close to Sitapur Road. The CBSE board mandates that the curriculum be based on the NCERT syllabus, with English serving as the primary language of instruction. The education pattern of all the schools of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan is the same all over India. The school fully complies with all the provisions given in the Right to Education (RTE) Act at the time of student admission. For standards 1st and 2nd, the school charges a tuition fee of Rs. 1500 every quarter; for standards 3rd onward, the fee is Rs. 1800 per quarter. The school is running in two shifts.

For admission to Kendriya Vidyalaya, parents have to fill out an All-India-level online form. The admission is done based on criteria laid by the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) at the all-India level. Children are admitted here in accordance with the parent's job category. KVS also provides reservations for SC, ST, PWD, and disabled students. Additionally, there is a space reserved in every class for a single girl child. Under the RTE Act, 25% of seats in each KVS school are reserved for children from all categories, including BPL, SC, ST, OBC, and non-creamy-layer students.

The school also features a playground where kids may engage in physical activity, along with the necessary sporting goods.

Table 4.5 Demographic profile of the parents - Kendriya Vidyalaya Aliganj, Lucknow

Table: 4.5

Sr. No.	Pseudonym	Age	Educational Qualification	Occupation
1	Mrs. Kavita Gautam	38	Upper Primary Level (Class 8th)	Working in Irrigation Department (State)
2	Mrs. Pavitra	28	Post-graduation	Police Department (State)
3	Mr. Nayan Kumar	28	Higher Secondary Level (Class 12th)	Photography work
4	Mr. Sunil Kumar Sharma	38	Higher Secondary Level (Class 12th)	Indian Army (ITBP)
5	Mrs. Shabiya	30	Graduation	Housewife (Wife of a Readymade Sector Employee)
6	Mrs. Harsha	30	Graduation	Clerk in the Secretariat (State)
7	Mrs. Reena Arya	38	Post-graduation	School Teacher
8	Mr. Sudesh Kumar Tripathi	42	Post-graduation	Computer Instructor
9	Mr. Raman	37	Post-graduation	School Teacher
10	Mr. Anand Kishor Singh	45	Post-graduation	School Teacher

Source: Field Data

4.5.2 Private Schools

(c) City Montessori School (CMS) Campus I, Rajendra Nagar, Lucknow

City Montessori School (CMS) is a privately owned educational institution that conducts classes in the English language. It was established in 1959 by Dr. Jagdish Gandhi and Dr. Bharti Gandhi with the slogan ‘Jai Jagat’ ('victory to the globe'), based on the ancient

knowledge of Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam (the entire planet is my family) and inspired by the teaching of Mahatma Gandhi and social reformer Sant Vinobha Bhave. CMS is a co-ed, day school running across 21 campuses in Lucknow city. With more than 58,000 students and 4,500 staff members spread over 21 campuses in the Lucknow city. The school is affiliated with the Delhi-based Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), which delivers the ICSE (class 10) and ISC (class 12) certificates. The school prioritizes the holistic development of students through art, music, dance, drama, sports, debates, MUNs, international exchange with students abroad, the Junior Youth Empowerment Programme, etc. In 2002, CMS was granted the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education, making it the sole institution worldwide to receive this honor. This honor is for "promoting the values of education for peace and tolerance". CMS was recognized as the largest school in a city in the world by the Guinness Book of Records in 2013 (CMS, n.d.).

City Montessori School, Rajendra Nagar (1st Campus) was established in 1959 and since its inception has been the building block for children's overall growth and high-quality education. The Campus is a cutting-edge structure with an indoor swimming pool, science labs, well-stocked libraries, an activity centre for kids, Astroturf, basketball court, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Computer, Biotech labs, and spacious classrooms fully outfitted with Smartboards for incorporating technology into classroom teaching. The CMS Rajendra Nagar Campus I, also known as the Peace Building campus, stands out as an example of peace and growth because of its high academic standards and quick advancement in a variety of sectors of knowledge, music, art, and dance. The campus imparts education from Formative Pre-Primary to ISC level and students participate in co-curricular and sports activities along with academics. The monthly tuition fee of the school starts from Rs 3700 and goes up to around Rs 10,000 per month (CMS, n.d.).

Table 4.6 Demographic profile of the parents - City Montessori School, Lucknow

Table: 4.6

Sr. No.	Pseudonym	Age	Educational Qualification	Occupation
1	Mr. Virendra Pratap Singh	43	Post-Graduation	Physical Education Instructor
2	Mrs. Vibha Srivastava	53	Post-Graduation	School Teacher
3	Mrs. Arti	41	Graduation	Instructor in Government Primary School
4	Dr. Neeraj Kumar Verma	42	Doctorate	School Teacher
5	Mr. Naman Kumar	47	Post-Graduation	Executive Engineer in Water Department
6	Mrs. Vindhya	37	Post-Graduation	School Teacher
7	Mrs. Malika Malik	40	Post-Graduation	Computer Instructor
8	Dr. Swati Dwivedi	44	Doctorate	Assistant Professor
9	Dr. Seema Chhabra	48	Doctorate	Assistant Professor
10	Mrs. Palak Zaidi	40	Graduation	Housewife (Wife of a Lawyer)

Source: Field Data

(d) Lucknow Public School, Sec-F Jankipuram, Lucknow

Lucknow Public School (LPS) is also a private school. The late Shri C.P. Singh laid the foundation of the first Lucknow Public School in the year 1983 with the objective of providing quality education to the people of Lucknow within affordable means. His diligent efforts quickly yielded positive results at several Lucknow Public Schools both

inside and outside of Lucknow. Currently, almost 14,000 students get a top-notch education from these schools (LPS, n.d.).

Lucknow Public School, Sec-F Jankipuram was founded in 2006. LPS is a co-ed school providing education to children from KG to class 12th. English is the language that is used in the classrooms of this school, which is affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in New Delhi. The school has Modern Laboratories for Physics, Chemistry, and Biology, spacious and well-ventilated classrooms with smart boards, a well-stocked library, and fully functional computer laboratories with internet connectivity. In addition, the school has reading rooms, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, arts and crafts rooms, music and dance rooms, and activity rooms. The school uses the latest technology like LCD, Computers, and Internet/Wi-Fi facilities for effective teaching and learning. The institution adheres to the proverb "A healthy mind dwells in a healthy body." Students are encouraged to participate in all kinds of sports, yoga, and extra-curricular activities. The school hosts a variety of sporting events, such as volleyball, table tennis, badminton, and others, to keep pupils intellectually and physically active. The school provides a lot of opportunities to the students by encouraging them to participate in various competitions at the interschool, state, and national levels. The school has a spacious campus and playground to ensure the social and mental well-being of every student. The monthly tuition fee of the school starts from 2680 rupees and goes up to around 6,000 rupees per month (LPS, n.d.).

Table 4.7 Demographic profile of the parents - Lucknow Public School, Lucknow

Table: 4.7

Sr. No.	Pseudonym	Age	Educational Qualification	Occupation
1	Mrs. Reema Singh	48	Post-Graduation	Instructor in Government Primary School
2	Mrs. Noor Fatima	44	Graduation	Housewife (Wife of a Businessman)
3	Mrs. Sonam Lata	28	Post-Graduation	Sports Instructor
4	Mrs. Suchi Awasthi	44	Post-Graduation	School Teacher
5	Mrs. Pratibha Shukla	36	Post-Graduation	School Teacher
6	Mrs. Zareen Fatima	56	Post-Graduation	Housewife (Wife of a Lawyer)
7	Mrs. Amrita Srivastava	31	Graduation	Private Job (NGO Sector)
8	Dr. Smriti Tiwari	34	Doctorate	Music Teacher
9	Mr. Vimlesh Yadav	40	Graduation	Private Job (IT Sector)
10	Mr. Sumit Kumar	41	Post-Graduation	Clerk in a Central Government Institute

Source: Field Data

4.5.3 Middle Class

The global economy has been primarily fueled by the middle classes throughout the past century in all nations (Brosius, 2012). The increase in consumption among the middle classes in the United States, Europe, and other developed nations has been a major factor in the recent decades' global economic expansion. It has long been believed that this class serves as a resilient and dynamic catalyst for economic growth (ibid). It provides a strong

foundation that promotes profitable investment and is a critical component in the advancement of other social initiatives that also boost growth and facilitate the spread of components that support a healthy society (Roy, 2018). For the majority of goods and services, the middle classes are a crucial market. These individuals contribute significantly to any nation's tax revenue, either directly or indirectly, and they play a crucial part in whatever relative political stability that a nation may have. Lester Thurow, a distinguished MIT economist, eloquently explained the importance of this class when he said, *"a strong middle class is vital to have a functioning political democracy. In a society made up of rich and poor, there is no middle group either politically or economically"* (Thurow, 1984; Roy, 2018).

The "middle class" has always been a nebulous but well-liked group. Although most recent writings by Indian economists have focused on the size of the economy in terms of income and consumption levels, the term has a longer sociological and conceptual history, both in the context of the West and in India. As a contemporary sociological category, it arose in Western Europe with the growth of industrial capitalism in the 18th and 19th centuries, and it proceeded to expand theoretically and empirically during the 20th century. By utilizing his notions of capitalism and class, Karl Marx was potentially the first social scientist to offer a thorough analysis of a growing industrial society. Although Marx also discussed pre-capitalist cultures using the concept of class, the phrase "middle class" is most often employed when analyzing capitalist countries. Marx believed that capitalism, or the bourgeois society, was a class system built on the connection between two main classes, the bourgeois and the proletariat. The proletariat, or working class, were exploited by the bourgeoisie, who controlled the means of production and the capital. To exist, the working classes were forced to sell their labor to the capital owners (Jodhka and Prakash, 2016).

Some people had not yet been absorbed by the capitalist system, despite the fact that the two main classes were bound to one another through an exploitative system. They neither hired anybody else, nor were they wage labourers who were employed by someone else. They included proprietors of shops, small-scale farmers, self-employed workers, artisans, and other persons of a similar kind. These folks are now referred to as the "old middle classes," a residual category in social science literature. While some of these old middle classes did actually experience a fall with the rise of capitalist economies, others persisted and thrived within the capitalist production system. More significantly, fresh categories of professionals with respectable wages who either worked independently or were hired in supervisory services, such as physicians or doctors, teachers, bankers, public administrators, architects, engineers, and managers, grew over time. Although technically speaking, the owners of capital paid them salaries, but despite this, they did not consider themselves to be part of the "working classes", nor did they support the interests of the proletariat class (Jodhka and Prakash, 2016).

Marx referred to them as "ideological classes" that created "false consciousness" and the dominant cultural structure for the bourgeois dictatorship in power. Later, Marxists investigated this "new middle class" as well, and they attempted to conceptualize them in a number of ways. While some saw them as cultural capital holders (Gouldner, 1979) and new petty-bourgeoisie (Poulantzas, 1975), others saw them as occupying 'contradictory class locations,' benefiting from the capitalist mode of production while also being a member of the proletariat because they had to sell their intellectual labor for a wage (Wright 1978: 61–3). Modern Marxist literature acknowledges that the middle classes have not only endured the expansion of capitalism but have actually grown in number throughout time (Wright 1978: 64–82).

Pierre Bourdieu, another fellow sociologist, has significantly improved our knowledge of the social dynamics of the class. He emphasises the necessity to consider the range of resources people have, including social networks, education, and other cultural practices in addition to economic resources, rather than focusing just on economic interactions or market condition of individuals. They too function for people who hold them "as truly usable resources and powers" (Bourdieu 1984: 114). For instance, social networks and educational attainment are important factors in determining a person's economic prospects or opportunities in today's culture. This is beneficial for the empirical study of the middle class and how it manifests itself in daily life (Jodhka and Prakash, 2016). The middle class is a class of people who are designated as having 'contradictory class location' (Wright, 1978). Wright describes the middle class as one having "one foot in the bourgeois & one foot in the proletariat" (ibid).

The middle class in India originated during the colonial period to act as a bridge between the foreign colonizers and the indigenous people, and its history can be traced back to that time. As a result, the class got instruction in English and Western education. Since white-collar occupations have historically been linked with the middle class, having English as the primary language of teaching would appear to make such access possible. Therefore, the middle class pursues education as a means of planning a separation from manual labour, to secure employment and advance in the social order (Jha, 2023). The middle class can also be described as an ideological class. The middle-class man typically gains with his association with capital, but it's the portrait by virtue of selling his intellectual level. They consider educational success to be the only way to achieve upward social mobility (Biswas, 2017).

Most scholars agree that the Indian middle class is mostly composed of well-established, affluent families who have had social advantages over generations. This group is

predominantly from the upper castes and has been self-reliant. They have played a crucial role in the economic development of the nation since its independence (Deshpande, 2003), and a recently formed, heterogeneous, aspirational, upwardly mobile, consumerist social group that profited greatly from the expanded market economy and its employment requirements (Fernandes 2006). The second segment of the "new" middle class is further segmented according to income levels, family members' educational backgrounds, the main source of income for households, as well as their patterns of expenditure (Baviskar and Ray, 2011). It can at times be a representation of IT workers who work in large cities and contribute to the world economy (Mathur, 2010; Gupta, 2020). Other times, it comprises of families with a consistent source of income, but they often struggle to ensure their financial future (Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase 2009; Gupta, 2020).

Most organizations, including the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), consider anyone living on less than US $2 per day to be poor. Middle-class incomes are normally in the range of US $10 to $100 per day, as represented in 2015 purchasing power parities (Lopez-Calva and Ortiz-Juarez, 2014). Birdsall (2010) proposed a $10 per capita per day (at 2005 PPP) minimum for achieving middle-class status in the current global economy.

According to Jha (2023), India's class structure can be equated metaphorically to a 'McMaharaja,' with the top and bottom layers of bread representing the upper and lower classes, respectively, and the middle layer of bread, which contains a variety of vegetables, meat, and dressings, symbolizes the heterogeneity and sub-divisions within the middle class (ibid). The middle class is thus diverse in terms of position and privilege, as well as in terms of money and income. Depending on factors like wealth, education, employment, etc., the middle class is sometimes subdivided into the "upper middle" and "lower middle" classes. Their earning per day is as follows: lower middle ($2–$4 per

person per day) and upper middle ($6–$10 per person per day) (Biswas, 2017). The increase in population has been driven by the lower middle class. A significant number of them are employed in occupations such as agriculture and construction, which have historically been the responsibility of the impoverished (ibid). Many people from the lower classes may easily "move up" to this category as most of these industries have low entrance restrictions. After deducting costs for food and shelter, the lower middle classes have around a third of their income available for discretionary expenditure. This enables them to pay for their children's education, health care, and consumer goods. Professionals in the service sector, particularly those in the information technology (IT) industry, as well as those in the administrative, finance, insurance, health, and education sectors, make up the upper middle class. (Roy, 2018).

In the 1990s, there were around thirty million middle-class individuals or fewer than 1% of the overall population. The proportion of people in the middle class started to increase gradually, reaching roughly 5% of the population in 2004 (Varma, 2007). The middle class increased in size from 300 million to 600 million people between 2004 and 2012, an eight-year span. In 2005, the average per capita household spending was only US $3.20 per day, with relatively few households earning more than US $5 per day. Nonetheless, by 2015, half of the population had crossed this line. Half of the Indian population is anticipated to earn more than $10 per day by 2025 (Farrell and Beinhocker, 2007).

The middle-class individual is the epitome of a consumer as an economic agent. Because of its purchasing power, the middle class is what keeps the modern bourgeois economy alive. The middle class is assumed to be fascinated with consuming given its position. For the middle class, consumption serves as both a source of identity and economic decency. Shopping centres, cell phones, and the expanding media landscape are all symbols of the growing importance of the middle class. The middle-class customer is the

target audience for a large portion of the advertising business (Jodhka and Prakash, 2016). Middle-class parents are in a position to choose their children's schools from a logical and consumerist standpoint since they have access to financial resources and prominent social status. In this research, we explore the school selection decisions made by Lucknow's middle class and investigate the extent to which hearsay and gossip impacted their choices.

4.5.4 Working Class

"Working class" is a socio-economic phrase used to characterize individuals from a social class who are marked by employment that provides low wages, minimal expertise, or demands manual labour. Working-class employment usually has lower educational requirements (Kenton, 2021). While there is no general definition of "working class," the word typically refers to service sector workers with less than a four-year college degree. Restaurant personnel, auto mechanics, construction workers, factory workers, and other service-type jobs are common working-class vocations (Marticio, 2022).

The working class is defined by Marxists and Socialists as individuals who have only their labor and skill to sell. In that sense, the working class comprises both white and blue-collar workers, as well as manual and menial laborers of all sorts, while excluding only those who earn their income via company ownership and the labor of others. Compared to the 1950s and 1960s, working-class occupations now are very different. The majority of working-class employment nowadays is in the services sector and includes desk jobs, jobs in the food industry, retail sales, manual labor jobs requiring little ability, low-level white-collar jobs, etc. (Kenton, 2021). However, when it comes to constructing a nation's economy, the working class is critical (Vishnu, 2023). The working class often has to deal

with issues including stagnating wages, dwindling labor force participation, and keeping up with growing living expenses (Marticio, 2022).

The definition of the working class is very subjective and varies depending on the analyst. Certain amounts of yearly household income, net worth, and education are all common indications of working-class membership. Many researchers consider education level as a measure of working-class membership since educational qualifications do not vary as frequently as income. As previously stated, the working class is not universally defined. Measuring the number and characteristics of the working class can be challenging since individual differences exist in education, income, employment, and other factors. Researchers may decide in some circumstances to categorise people according to lower, middle, and higher classes rather than using the phrase "working class" at all (Marticio, 2022).

According to the Consumer Pyramid Household Survey, the majority of India's working population has a minimum educational qualification of secondary education (10th-12th grade). Graduates and others with higher qualifications made up just about 12% of the workforce (Rathore, 2023).

A diverse range of service workers who work for small companies or as "self-employed" constitute the bulk of the unorganized sector. Numerous of these small businesses, such as stores and eateries, employ a limited number of people, many of whom are employed on a daily basis and paid in cash. A significant portion of the workforce also engages in direct labour sales to customers. Workers such as rickshaw pullers, mechanics, electricians, load carriers, auto drivers, and domestic helpers are included in this category. Many of them work many jobs, and most of them don't have a permanent job or employer. The statistics on Indian laborers are unreliable. The official unemployment rate is 8%,

although other estimates place it far higher. At around 40%, the labor participation rate is still low, and the average income of an Indian worker is Rs 10,000, which is less than the minimum wage (Yadav, 2023).

4.6 Data Gathering Process

The initial stage of data gathering entailed visiting the schools and getting in touch with the administration. Moreover, the researcher visited the schools during its operational hours to meet the parents. Interviews were therefore typically conducted at a time and location that suited the parents, sometimes before and after school hours when parents arrived to drop off and pick up their children. With the respondents' permission, all interviews were conducted. To ensure the results were presented objectively, I kept a certain distance from the subjects. I maintained a calm and composed attitude throughout the study.

I chose a day and time for the interview with the participant's permission after the respondents showed an interest in taking part. Before getting consent and starting the interviews, I went through the study's voluntary nature, its safeguards, and any security measures put in place for the data. This was how I started the interview process. To identify any biases, perspectives, or presumptions I could have, I looked into my own knowledge of school choice patterns before gathering data (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998). Reflexivity, as defined by Creswell (2013: 216), refers to the writer's conscious recognition of their own biases, values, and personal experiences that they bring to a qualitative research study.

I paid close attention to my beliefs so that they wouldn't obstruct my studies. *"All researchers shape the writing that develops, and qualitative researchers need to embrace this interpretation and be transparent about it in their writings"* (Creswell, 2013: 215).

To establish a connection and make sure they were aware of my background and the goal of the study, at the beginning of the interview process, I made a deliberate effort to provide a thorough and detailed account of my background to the participants (Berg, 2001).

4.6.1 Data Gathering Tools

A semi-structured interview schedule (attached in appendix: 2) was developed to elicit deliberate and detailed replies on the parent's thoughts on school choice while permitting follow-up with spontaneous, probing questions when required and appropriate (Flick, 2014; Roulston, 2010). The interview was facilitated and organized using this semi-structured interview schedule.

The researcher developed an interview schedule for the study. There are two sections to the schedule. The respondents' demographic profile is in the first part, while parental choice is in the second. The first section entailed questions seeking information regarding the demographic profile (i.e., personal information about the respondents that are thought to be relevant to the current study, such as Name, Age, Gender, Number of Children, Nationality, Community, Locality, Educational Level, Family Income (Annual), and Occupation). The second section of the questionnaire was made up of a variety of descriptive types of questions, in which the respondents were questioned in-depth about their decision to send their children to school, how they gathered information, how they took into account their children's needs, how involved they were as parents in their children's education, how they interacted with the school administration about their children's progress, and how they felt about technology-based learning and online education.

To ensure the interview's success, the supervisor gave specific guidelines and advice beforehand. Subsequently, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the parents. The data collection phase of the study extended for more than two months, during which the researcher invested significant time with the respondents.

4.6.2 Data Gathering Techniques

4.6.2.1 Observation

When I arrived at my study area, I attentively studied even the smallest details. The observation was a critical component of my research since it provided me with a deeper grasp of the research subject. Observation is a fundamental and time-honored methodology in qualitative research, serving as one of the key research procedures. This approach involves the systematic and pertinent accumulation of data through the utilization of one's senses, notably "gazing and hearing" (McKechnie, 2008: 573). Marshall and Rossman (1989) describe observation as the methodical description of activities, actions, and artifacts in the social milieu selected for research. When describing comprehensive descriptions of study phenomena that are supported by interviews, qualitative researchers praise the merits of observation. Observations necessitate lengthy involvement and consistent observations in the field as well as the researcher's competence, which is frequently filtered by prejudice and the lens through what is familiar or understood (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Werner and Schoepfle (1987) define three observational strategies for seeing, as follows: (a) descriptive observation involves seeing everything, and the researcher adopts a newbie mindset by making no assumptions and not taking anything for granted; (b) focused observation, in which certain phenomena are thought to be unimportant and may thus be disregarded, and the researcher generally focuses on clearly defined, observable entities;

and (c) selective observation, in which the researcher zeroes focus on a certain kind of generic things. Only making descriptive observations, as opposed to the other two observational techniques, raised field awareness. Researchers can benefit from observation methods in several ways. They give researchers resources to look for nonverbal cues of emotion, identify relationships between people, understand how participants interact with one another, and gauge how much time is allocated to various activities (Schmuck, 1997). DeWalt & DeWalt (2002) feel that the purpose of the design of research that uses participant observation as a technique is to build a comprehensive picture of the phenomena being studied that is as objective and accurate as is practical given the method's constraints.

An institution or program never shares its advantages and disadvantages with the researcher in equal measure. As a result, involvement in the field and observation assisted me in understanding the complexities of any institution. During the data collection, I visited the schools regularly, at different times, and observed the environment of the staff room, the attitude of the teachers, school premises and infrastructure, classrooms, the playground, and school assemblies, making extensive field notes and never suspecting anything odd. Initially, before the commencement of my fieldwork, I decided to delay doing guided discussions or interviews until I felt at ease asking teachers and the school administrator about their institution. My extended involvement and constant observations in the field enabled the finding of unexpected events (McKechnie, 2008: 575), with the assistance of the research participants. Some interviews began as casual chatter and discussion, and in those instances, I kept an eye out for the respondents' informal demeanor. As qualitative researchers, we need to prioritize the insights shared by study participants and be open to learning from them as we carry out our scholarly work (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2013). In addition to observing the subject's activity, observers

also pay attention to the social context. Moreover, just by monitoring the respondents' activity, I learned a lot of latent knowledge that they were eager to offer.

As a result, my observational data was rich and detailed. Such descriptive information helped me to comprehend what happened and how it happened. According to Patton (2015), the observer's notes act as the reader's eyes, ears, and constant senses.

4.6.2.2 In-depth, Open-Ended Interviews

The main source of data was semi-structured interviews with the parents or guardians (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). To gather in-depth details on parental choice, satisfaction, and the information-gathering process, I intended to conduct in-depth and open-ended interviews with at least ten (10) participants from each school. However, the 'saturation'[2] criteria were used to establish the total number of interviews that would be done. A total of forty (40) parents and a few (4) school administrators were interviewed by the researcher. However, the in-depth quality of the interviews led to a variety of insights and derivations. Only parents and/or guardians who have at least one enrolled son or daughter in the school were permitted to take part voluntarily.

In-depth interviews typically last for a fair amount of time. They frequently entail face-to-face, one-on-one communication between an interviewer and informants and aim to create the type of closeness needed for mutual self-disclosure. In-depth interviewing varies from other types since it entails a higher participation of the interviewer's self. A particular type of social and interpersonal connection is necessary for in-depth interviewing. In-depth interviewing is frequently used by researchers who are looking for "deep" information and expertise, typically more in-depth information and knowledge

[2] The criterion used to decide when to stop sampling the various groups that are relevant to a given category is known as its theoretical saturation. When no new information is found that allows the sociologist to create characteristics for the category, saturation occurs (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 61).

than is sought in focus groups, surveys, or casual interviews, for example. This information frequently pertains to extremely private topics including a person's identity, experiences, beliefs, and decisions as well as professional ideologies, cultural knowledge, or perspective. In-depth interviewing is frequently an excellent method to utilise in qualitative research, life story research, the collection of oral histories and personal narratives, and the application of grounded theory methodology to the analysis of the experiences of individuals of a particular social milieu (Johnson, 2001).

When a researcher conducts an in-depth interview, he or she acts in a polite and involved manner to help create trust and excellent rapport. Starting slowly, with small talk (chitchat), explaining the purpose of the research, and often beginning with straightforward planned questions (commonly called icebreakers), an in-depth interviewer aims to "get the ball rolling" without rushing into the subject of the main interview questions and jeopardizing personal information (or trust). Good rapport is indicated by feelings that feel harmonic and cooperative. Trust can typically be determined by eye contact, facial expression, and physical posture (Johnson, 2001). I gained the trust of the participants by using effective communication techniques such as listening techniques (Merriam, 1998), to motivate them to reflect on and truthfully express their initial decision-making process when selecting the school for their children's primary school experience. Berg (2001: 87) emphasized the need of developing rapport with participants, adding that *"rapport... must be actively sought and worked out"*. Echoing McCracken, I tried to establish a *"benign, welcoming, inquiring (but not nosy) someone who is eager and willing to listen to nearly any statement with attention"* (McCracken, 1988: 38).

Furthermore, I demonstrated attributes of a good listener and read the respondents' concerns and inhibitions in response to several of the questions. Koocher (1974: 20) stated

that *" A researcher cannot separate himself from other people's and his own emotions of grief and fear."* In short, the objective was to interact with the respondents compassionately while being aware of emotions interfering with listening and the interview process (Rowling, 1999). Discussions were conducted in an open-ended manner, allowing participants to comfortably articulate their decision-making and information-gathering processes when choosing a specific school for their children.

Although a researcher's acceptability by the subjects of their research is seen to be crucial, in this case, it proved difficult because the researcher did not belong to the respondents' social circle. Therefore, gaining the respondents' confidence and credibility was critical. Therefore, the initial questions served as icebreakers to kick off the process. This involved introducing myself to the respondents, outlining the purpose of the study, getting their permission to do the interview, getting to know the interviewees, and getting permission to use a voice recorder to capture their responses, among other things (Johnson, 2001). Following the formal introduction, I discussed the purpose of the study and my understanding of school choice. I then gave a detailed explanation of the procedure and the details of the participant's voluntary involvement and allowed participants to ask any further questions. Sometimes the interviews began with an extensive introduction session to make the respondents feel at ease and to help them shed their inhibitions. Furthermore, the session aided the researcher in developing trust with respondents.

Each interview commenced with a few introductory questions to establish rapport, such as "Tell me about yourself and your family" and "What is education according to you?" These warm-up questions helped set the tone for a deeper discussion. To gain a thorough understanding of how parents chose their children's primary schools and their information-gathering process, I asked participants to respond to open-ended questions about their decision-making.

Merriam (1998: 76) identified four types of questions researchers might ask during interviews: "hypothetical," "devil's advocate," "ideal stance," and "interpretive." Following Merriam (1998), I used "interpretive" questions to "validate my understanding and provide opportunities for additional facts, ideas, and feelings to be shared" (Merriam, 1998: 78).

Throughout the interviews, I employed both planned and flexible cues (McCracken, 1988) to seek further clarification. This approach allowed me to diverge from my script and "delve deeper beyond participants' responses to my planned and standardized questions" (Berg, 2001: 70).

Interviews do have their limitations, even though they can provide insight into participants' worldviews. The replies from the participants were nevertheless restricted to what they were willing to and able to divulge to the researcher, with whom they frequently have minimal interaction (Prosser, 2013). Also, because of the hyper-individualized viewpoint attained through qualitative investigation, the findings are subjective and cannot be applied to a broader population (Flick, 2014). Participants were given the choice of being interviewed separately or with their partners. Participants had the option of not responding to any questions they were uncomfortable responding to, and they also had the freedom to ask for an end to the interview process at any point for whatever justification they saw fit.

Moreover, I recorded the individuals' feelings while I conducted in-depth interviews in the field log. The idea was to "walk alongside" the respondents while they described their experiences and then, after the interview, to participate in the reflective analysis. This is essential since reflexivity is the cornerstone of ontological comprehension (Johnson, 2001). To collect verbatim records of in-depth interviews, interviews were tape-recorded.

Capturing informants' words and perspectives has long been a primary objective of qualitative research, or, in the words of Bronislaw Malinowski (1922: 25), "to comprehend the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his visions of his world".

It was critical to protect the respondents' privacy during the interview procedure. The researcher must take all necessary steps "to protect research subjects," according to a long-standing ethical precept. There are numerous methods by which this principle can be comprehended. This ethical rule might be interpreted to mean that the researcher must take all necessary precautions to ensure the personal safety of any specific persons who have supported them in the research (Johnson, 2001). Consequently, an effort was made to interview the person separately in a distinct setting. This made it possible to benefit from the respondents' uninhibited answers. Furthermore, interviewing the parents in their preferred location increased the respondents' convenience and comfort (Johnson, 2001). Respondents were given the assurance before the interviews even started that their confidentiality would be respected by using pseudonyms to report findings. Moreover, participants had the opportunity to skip any questions they didn't feel like responding to and to terminate the interview without giving a reason at any moment.

4.6.2.3 Field Note

Field notes are frequently recommended in qualitative research as a way to record necessary contextual data. It is presently believed that thorough qualitative research requires qualitative field notes as a fundamental element. Most qualitative research techniques advise taking field notes to enrich the data and offer a rich context for analysis (Creswell, 2013). Field notes were the first tool used to "record" interview information. In terms of technology, there were no alternative ways to preserve a lasting record of the

event before the advent of portable recording devices (Davidson, 2009). Despite the availability of new approaches, field notes remain popular due to their simplicity. Researchers can (a) utilize the on-site paper and pencil approach to identify and code data as the interview continues, and (b) supplement these notes once the interview is completed (Kieren & Munro, 1985).

Interviews can be video, or audio recorded, but data from observations is typically collected using field notes. Field notes are the researcher's documenting of activities, discussions, and behaviors seen in the field, as well as his or her thoughts on them. To avoid forgetting or omitting crucial information, I have recorded my observations in the field notes. In other words, the field notes contained a description of what was observed. These notes assisted me in the analysis of the data, so I made a note of the occasion's date, location, surroundings, goings-on, and attendees. As I was listening to the respondents' narration, fresh research questions sprang to me, and I included them in the field notes. Additionally, having field notes offered me assurance in case the recorder malfunctioned, or conversations were inadvertently destroyed.

Moreover, I reviewed the audio recording once each interview was over. I referred to my field notes to interpret the data in the event of any recording errors, such as unsteady voice, excessive noise, or interruption. I documented my thoughts, experiences, feelings, and the importance of the things I saw in the field in the field notes.

4.7 Mechanic Tools of Data Collection

4.7.1 Recording the Data

Under the naturalistic (qualitative) paradigm, interviews are frequently utilized as a technique of data gathering (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006), and this has been the case in the social sciences for a very long time (Fasick, 1977). Making decisions on how to

"record" the data during an interview is necessary. One may opt to utilise a recording device, just field notes, or a combination of the two. If the interview is electronically recorded, the interviewer has the option of transcribing the interview, working from the tape recording, or doing both. To some extent, this decision has developed in tandem with technological advancements (Davidson, 2009). Using tape recordings and transcripts is a practical way to get the data, which is a naturally occurring discussion that is a feature of social life, and make it available for in-depth research (Button and Lee, 1987).

According to Kieren and Munro (1985), this method's key benefit is that it is the least expensive in terms of both time and money. Additionally, field notes are crucial since it's possible that later on in the research process, concepts and recollections from interviews may be forgotten. The mind will start rearranging the information and forging connections both inside and outside of the interview shortly after the interview (Wengraf, 2001). Recording recollections and thoughts from interviews is therefore crucial for later analysis (Wengraf, 2001). Taking field notes was the sole approach accessible to scholars for a considerable amount of time. With the introduction of portable recorders, this situation has been altered. The development of portable recorders may be divided into two temporal phases: (a) portable cassette recorders, and (b) portable digital recorders (Tessier, 2012).

It is not practical to take notes on every quotation throughout the data collection procedure because of the time constraints and the potential for respondent attention loss. The interviews were recorded because of this. The exact quotes from the interviewees' replies make up the interviews' raw data. Quotations are significant because they include the actual words of real people. Data won't be useful if the respondents' exact words aren't recorded. Recording helps the interviewer to pay more attention to the interviewee rather than being preoccupied with collecting field notes for data correctness. One major benefit

of video or audio interview recording is that it allows the interviewer to concentrate on the conversation instead of writing notes, which can divert attention from the interviewee and the person(s) conducting the interview. This therefore frequently results in a disconnected interview where crucial information may be ignored, forgotten, or overlooked (CSR- Center for Strategy Research Boston, 2006). Audio and video recording enhance the quality and transparency of the material presented in addition to encouraging a more pleasant, participatory, and educational discussion with interviewees. Therefore, an audio or visual record offers an unbiased and accurate recital of the interview, which provides better context and a comprehensive picture of the circumstance (Sullivan, 2010).

Sometimes it is impossible to record the interviews due to the delicate nature of the information or to protect the subject's privacy. So, I obtained permission from my study subjects before recording the interviews. A few respondents during the fieldwork objected to having their interview recorded, therefore they were not recorded. In those situations, I took field notes.

4.7.2 Camera

The camera is a crucial piece of equipment for getting precise visual data. Our ability to see holistically and accurately is aided by its acute concentration and capacity to record minute information. Thus, if we utilize photography well and appropriately, it may be a useful study instrument with a linked methodology that broadens our views (Collier and Collier, 1986: 5). The camera is more than just a "mirror of reality," according to Oliver Wendell Holmes, who famously said that it is also a "mirror with a memory"(Davidson & Lytle, 1986: 217). It is an honest medium, therefore the photographer is far more likely

to approach nature in a spirit of inquiry, of connection, rather than with the swaggering arrogance of self-proclaimed "artists" (Sontag, 1977: 186).

A fundamental instrument for gathering qualitative data is a camera. So, I took pictures of actual occurrences using my camera and afterward transcribed those pictures. Furthermore, photographic depicts were used to verify the data. It verified the veracity of the data acquired on the ground. I was also able to recollect the field's environmental and situational background with the aid of photographs. Since the act of looking at an image cannot be isolated from it, a photograph is a construct of reality. The second crucial and "subjective" part of what was observed is always the observer, not the techniques or apparatus used to do the observation in this situation (English, 1988).

I took pictures of the school premises, including the school infrastructure, the classrooms, the playground, the computer lab, and the teaching-learning materials (books, wall art, classroom décor, etc.). Additionally, I also took pictures of the responders after obtaining their permission.

4.8 Data Interpretation

4.8.1 Transcription

Transcription, at its most basic level, is the process of turning recorded audio (often spoken word) into a written form that may be used to analyze a specific occurrence or event (Duranti, 2006). Simply, transcription is the procedure of producing a written record of spoken words. Individual or group interviews are often transcribed and reported verbatim (precise word-for-word) in qualitative research. It may seem like a simple technological chore to transcribe. Nevertheless, the transcribing procedure may change depending on how it will be used. Transcripts that are primarily utilized to choose quotations and sound bites might not require as much detail as those that will be

systematically assessed, sorted into themes (typically through a process of coding), and examined for content (Mondada, 2007).

I manually transcribed all of the audio-recorded interview data since I found that it was more accurate for my study. However, instead of using written text, some qualitative data analysis software enables users to code audio recordings. While keeping in mind that if the recording calls for translation, this won't function. Since the majority of the interviews in this study were conducted in Hindi, qualitative analysis software did not play a significant part in the study. Furthermore, for convenience of use or as a backup in case of a technological issue, researchers use written transcripts while doing analysis.

Transcription is a complicated, time-consuming process, especially when done effectively. It is quite easy to under-budget time and resources. One hour of recording can be transcribed in three to ten hours, depending on numerous factors such as the degree of information necessary, the expertise of the transcriber, and the quality and intricacy of the recording. It is advisable to first transcribe an interview into the original source language (in my case, Hindi) before translating it into the target language, as I did in this study. This approach allowed me to consistently compare the translated versions with the original transcripts during the analysis.

4.8.2 Data Entry and Developing Category

With the respondents' consent, the responses were documented and recorded during the interview. In the initial step, the recorded data was transcribed, meaning that the interviews with the participants were detailed in a Word document. The questions addressed during the interview were followed while compiling the transcription. They also read the notes that were taken on the spot during the interview. The information from the notes and transcription was then put together and typed. The typed data were carefully

reviewed line by line, sorted into useful analytical units, and given codes. Verbatim comments from the interviews were highlighted during the data coding process so they could be used as direct quotes in the study.

4.8.3 Analysing and Processing the Data

It's critical to fully use and be aware of interactions with study participants while reviewing interviews. An in-depth transcript of each interview was necessary to analyze the interactions with the participants. The transcripts were created as faithfully as feasible to what was said during the interviews, notwithstanding the claim that a tape recording cannot be perfectly translated (Silverman, 1993). Without transcription, any analysis attempts will lose a lot of the data's depth and run the danger of being selective and shallow (Bloor et al., 2001). Although transcribing took time, it aided the researcher in analyzing the interviews. The researcher was conscious that when doing the analysis, it needed to be *"systematic and rigorous, representing the opinions of all cases, not, for example, merely those that match the agenda of the researcher, the most fascinating, or the most often stated issue"* (Bloor et al., 2001: 62).

The researcher indexed the data after hearing the recordings and typing up the interviews. Indexing's objective is to compile all data extracts relevant to a certain theme, topic, or theory (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, cited in Bloor et al. 2001). The indexing process entailed the researcher reading and rereading the text and assigning index codes to pertinent material. The index codes were initially extremely broad, but as the analysis progressed, they became more targeted.

4.9 Validity and Reliability

According to Maxwell (2005: 106), validity is the process through which a qualitative researcher determines the *"correctness or believability of an explanation, description,*

interpretation, conclusion, or other type of account". Merriam (1998: 206) claimed that dependability in qualitative research is unattainable; rather, the objective should be to guarantee that *"the outcomes are consistent with the data obtained"*. To offer a coherent explanation of the data, I attempted to make derivations out of the data collected.

In order to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative research, Merriam (1998) argued that careful consideration should be given to the conceptualization of a study as well as the procedures used for data collection, processing, interpretation, and presentation (p. 200). Maxwell (2005: 108) identified two validity risks, "researcher bias" and "reactivity", that qualitative researchers should plan for. These difficulties focus on how the researcher's perspectives and experiences *"influence the validity of the conclusions [the researcher] might draw from the interview"*. I was therefore conscious to not allow my own presumptions and prejudice affect the data collection and interpretation process. While listening to the respondents, I put my opinions about school choice aside and listened to the participants' stories. These, according to Creswell (2013: 250-251) constitute the “validation strategies” that helped to maximize the validity and reliability of their research.

Furthermore, offering detailed, comprehensive descriptions of the respondents, their surroundings, and their words establishes a "narrative account" that makes the scenario described as vivid as possible for readers, which in turn lends credibility to the author (Creswell and Miller, 2002: 129). I offer my readers ample information to independently verify the credibility of my account, going beyond merely presenting brief, summarized facts or limited descriptions of my participants, their lives, and their comments.

4.10 Research Ethics

According to Creswell's (2013: 174) description of the ethical challenges that arise during research, *"a qualitative researcher encounters several ethical dilemmas that surface during data collecting in the field as well as in analysis and presentation of qualitative reports"*. Before formally initiating my study, I carefully assessed the proposed study's ethical and legal implications, and I kept doing so throughout the duration of my thesis work.

The parents were asked for their consent before the study could be conducted. Before beginning each interview, I explained the study's objectives, and the chosen research methods were explained to the parents. After getting approval to conduct the study, the researcher approached the parents who sent their kids to these specific schools. All participants were assured of their privacy, and the names of those who took part in the study process were kept anonymous. By giving each participant a pseudonym, I made sure that they were all completely anonymous. Personalized attention was given to each participant to explain the study's objectives, methodology, and to address any questions they had.

Chapter 5: Findings of the Study

The chapter attempts to understand the parental choice of schools (government vis-a-vis private) and examines the decision-making process. The main goal was to uncover the factors that appeal to the parents. The responses of the parents collected from two government schools and two private schools are classified and presented under various thematic headings.

The major goal of this procedure was to uncover the characteristics that influence parents' choice of a school for their children. In this study, some of the parents' most noteworthy responses to certain themes are presented. These themes have been found from the variety of answers given in response to the inquiry about the basis for their selection of the school.

Starting every December, most newspapers are filled with stories and images related to school admissions. Parents often have to spend an entire day in line to collect or submit admission paperwork for their children. There are also instances where parents queue up for interviews to secure their children's admission. The process of getting into school can be challenging and stressful, regardless of the applicant's financial status, and this applies to both public and private institutions.

5.1 Government Schools

5.1.1 Basic Vidyalaya Lajpat Nagar, Lucknow

Basic Vidyalaya, Lajpat Nagar was established in 1965. The school is affiliated to the Uttar Pradesh State Board and run by the Basic Education Department (Basic Shiksha Parishad), Government of Uttar Pradesh. Students are admitted to the school starting at age five, and most of them are from "Anganwadi" backgrounds. It is situated in the

lower/lower-middle class neighborhood of Lucknow's Hussainbad region, with a teacher-student ratio of 1:106. Explaining the admission process of the school, the principal, Mrs. Samreen Fatima, pointed out:

> *There is no denial of admission at the school, as it adheres to the RTE Act in its entirety. Annually, we get around 150 applications. The majority of pupils that enter this school come from low-income backgrounds and have previously attended an 'Anganwadi' center. Admissions had a significant increase during the COVID-19 epidemic due to the financial difficulty individuals encountered.*

It was found that the instructors tour the surrounding communities before the start of each academic session to raise awareness of the school and the range of resources it provides. In other words, the school is actively campaigning to increase enrollment. Moreover, one may also contend that a lack of proactive awareness on the part of the people to know about the school and the facilities offered in it, made the school reach out to its neighborhood areas. As the principal pointed out:

> *Every year in March and April, the teachers conduct outreach efforts in the surrounding communities to motivate parents to enroll their children in our institution. To be more precise, we raise awareness of the significance of education and the amenities provided by our schools. In turn, this generates parental interest, which leads to an increase in enrollment. The school's midday meal facility and computer laboratory are additional attractions for the students.*

5.1.1.1 Parents Perspectives

The research attempted to find out the perspective of lower-middle-class parents about school choices for their children and understand the factors that appeal to them. It was observed that the majority of parents enrolled their children in the school out of compulsion. They engaged in utilitarian decision-making and enrolled their children in government schools because of their constrained financial condition. They were engaged in the struggle for daily living and attempted to rationalize their expenses by sending their children to a government school. As Mr. Ramesh, who works a daily wage job in the private sector, revealed:

> *Due to my financial circumstances, I was compelled to enroll my children in a government school. Before this, my children attended a private school that was situated nearby. Nevertheless, the fees were excessive, and I was compelled to exit. Here, the only expense is the cost of school supplies, which typically ranges from Rs. 250 to Rs. 300 per month. The school does not impose any tuition fees…. Apart from the school fees, I have additional expenses like housing rent, family maintenance, etc. I have to rationalize my expenses to run my family.*

Parents pointed out that they chose this specific school because of their 'majboori' (forced circumstances) and accessibility to the home. As Mrs. Rubiya highlighted:

> *The fact that we cannot enroll the kids at another (private) school because of our financial condition. Although there are numerous government schools in the city, this one is the one that is closest to our home.*

Apart from the financial constraints, larger family sizes forced parents to choose government schools for their wards. For instance, Ms. Shabeena pointed out:

> *Because of financial constraints, I couldn't send my children to a private school. I have four children and I cannot send one to a private school and the rest to a government school.*

Parents reported that because of the Covid-19 lockdown, many businesses failed and people faced job loss, which made their financial situation worse. Similarly, Mr. Mohammad Rafeeq tacitly replied:

> *We selected this school since my business stopped during the covid lockdown, and my financial situation became worse.*

Parents claimed that they had to manage everything in line with their budget and that this prevented them from enrolling their children in private schools. Parents' decision to manage their expenses within a budget and thus forgo enrolling their children in private schools can be understood through rational choice theory. According to this theory, people make decisions by weighing the costs and benefits of the available options (Kroneberg and Kalter, 2012). In this case, parents prioritize financial stability and other potential benefits of budget management, making a rational assessment of their resources and outcomes. This behavior illustrates rational actors making decisions within

constraints, balancing their desire for a potentially better education against financial limitations. Hence, constrained economic conditions limited the horizon of choice for lower-middle-class parents. As Mrs. Rahimun Nisha posited:

> *We came to know that since it is a government school, there are no tuition fees. We chose this school as we do not have money. We would have sent our children to private schools if we had the means.*

It was revealed that most parents found it challenging even to send their wards to low-fee private schools and their options were limited to government schools. Thus, they choose the Government Primary school because of the spatial proximity.

Nonetheless, the parents wished to send their kids to private schools, but they were unable to do so due to budgetary limitations. The desire stemmed from the conviction that students attending private schools have better chances of mobility. The parents' desire to enroll their children in private schools, even with financial limitations, reflects Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Their belief that private schools provide better opportunities for social mobility illustrates an awareness of Bourdieu's concept that education acts as a form of cultural capital, which can be transformed into economic and social benefits (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The aforementioned quotation makes it clear that the mother wants to send her children to a private school but is unable to do so because of her limited financial resources. As Mrs. Vijata argued:

> *I don't have enough to pay for a private school; therefore, my daughter will have to attend a public school. Being a poor lady, I am unable to accomplish much. The desire to send my children to a private school arises when we observe other kids attending one and becoming successful in life, but I am financially unable to do so.*

However, parents convinced themselves that children can learn in a conducive environment and that school type does not matter. They asserted that government schools have made significant improvements. Nowadays, government schools provide top-notch

education alongside all the necessary infrastructure and amenities. Mr. Mohammad Safaque, who drives an E-rickshaw, said:

> *We have also enrolled our daughter in this school because of the good quality education that is offered here. Other parents have also endorsed the quality of education that is offered here.*

Another parent, Mrs. Rubiya, stated differently:

> *Private schools have an entirely different admissions procedure than public schools; they require enormous documentation, among other things. It is a tiresome process.*

Echoing Chahil (2018), it was found that the parents engaged in 'defensive rationalisation' and self-assuring behavior and convinced themselves that children can learn anywhere, be it private or public school, provided that they had the 'willingness' to learn. As Mr. Mohammad Rafeeq pointed out:

> *Talent is not dependent on the type of school (public vis-à-vis private school) a student attends, but rather on how diligently they work towards their objectives and how motivated they are to do so.*

Another parent, Mr. Rajesh, explained differently:

> *My expectations are reasonable. I don't expect that my son would draw a six-figure salary every month…I expect him to join some government office and earn a decent salary suitable for a middle-class living.*

Thus, parents also believe that because there is less pressure in government schools and children are allowed to develop naturally, the learning environment at government schools is superior to that in private institutions.

However, the irony is that in government schools, children have to fend for themselves and this fact is perceived as a positive by the parents in selecting government schools over low-cost private schools. As Mr. Rajesh explained:

> *Private schools have no value. Therefore, why should we select private schools? The government school certificate will be the first thing employers ask when people apply for jobs. I believe that those who attend government schools and colleges are preferred in government jobs.*

When it comes to selecting a school, teachers' academic and professional qualifications are equally important. They believed that government schools recruit well-qualified teachers, and the recruitment is done through proper procedures. As Mr. Ramesh justified his choice in the following words:

> *When I was a student, the teachers at my school (government school) were always on time for class and did a good job of teaching. Recruitment (of teachers) is done through a transparent procedure…. The academic standards and level of teacher engagement are quite high in this government school.*

It is a state government primary school that provides free and compulsory education to students up to class 8 or 14 years of age. They appreciated the fact that students are not charged any form of school fee by the school. In addition, the school provides pupils with various educational facilities (e.g., a computer centre, library, etc.). Interestingly, they underlined the fact that the school was compatible with their living standards and did not impose excessive demand or exorbitant expenditure on the parents. The parents believed that by enrolling their children in a school of compatible socio-economic standards, they have averted the risk associated with enrolling the children in an expensive, private school. Mrs. Sumbul, whose kid is enrolled in the third standard, highlighted:

> *At this school, instruction is delivered via audio-visual technology. In addition, the school provides computer education and I have been informed about the presence of a well-equipped computer laboratory on campus. In addition, the school arranges weekly examinations on Saturdays to review the teachings that pupils have learned during the week. Although there is sufficient athletic equipment at the school, it does not have a sports ground. All the sporting events are therefore held at the nearby Ghanta Ghar ground…We have chosen a school based on our socio-economic standards and we don't to get into trouble by enrolling the child in an expensive private school, where there are a lot of hidden expenses, regular fee hikes, and the requirement of extra supplies on a regular basis.*

Likewise, Mr. Mohit highlighted:

> *This school provides all kinds of facilities for the children. The school also arranges for the children's books, school uniforms, school bags, shoes, socks, and meals. However, parents do have to purchase the notebooks. Moreover, the*

education of the children is complete in the school itself and we don't have to monitor them much at home.

In comparison to other neighborhood government schools, the study found that this particular school had the highest enrolment. Also, it was found that there are currently 847 children enrolled at the school, 477 of them are boys, and 370 of them are girls. The student-teacher ratio is not met by the school since it does not deny admission to students. The school uses Hindi as the primary language of instruction.

The students at this school receive an education in Hindi medium. In the words of Mrs. Vijata:

It is a Hindi medium school, however, English is taught here as well.

However, it was also found that the parents emphasized English teaching and learning as they considered it beneficial for future prospects. The thinking closely resonates with Bourdieu's conceptualization of cultural capital. Parents recognize that being proficient in English is a valuable skill that can be seen as a form of cultural capital. According to Bourdieu, this linguistic capital can be converted into economic and social benefits, helping individuals gain advantages in education, employment, and social mobility. While the majority of parents mentioned "padhai" (education) in school, they did not elaborate on what they mean by "achchi padhai" or its quality. As Mrs. Rahimun Nisha pointed out:

English education is preferable considering the future employment prospects. Moreover, it is the language of communication in the present day. I wish my son to be not like me and unable to make out a piece of information or read a signboard written in English.

Parents have also remarked that English education makes it easier for pupils to get employment and removes their children's inhibition in communicating with others. In the same vein, Mrs. Rubiya posited:

> *The medium of instruction in the school is Hindi. In my opinion, children should receive an education in the English language because it has become more important than before. People exclusively communicate in English these days, therefore youngsters having an education in English will be more confident in speaking with others.*

The school is affiliated with the state board and run by the Basic Education Department (Basic Shiksha Parishad), Government of Uttar Pradesh. The study found that during the school selection process, parents did not lay much importance on the educational board; their primary goal was to educate their children. Parents wanted their children to be educated and considered that education was essential to their children's future success. They emphasized that education is important to earn respect in society. Mrs. Rubiya emphasized:

> *My husband is uneducated, but he thinks that his children should be educated at any cost. An uneducated person is worthless and people don't respect him/her. We want our children to do better than us, hence education is imperative.*

Mr. Mohammad Safaque argued along the same lines:

> *Education is highly valued in today's world as there is no respect for the uneducated. Education is more important than attaining literacy. For instance, I am literate and know only how to sign. It has no meaning as I am unable to read a single letter. Thus, there is no use in my signing as I am unable to decipher anything.*

Another parent, Mr. Ramesh, reflected:

> *I literally slog for my living. My task is physically demanding and the earnings are very little. I would not expect the same kind of future for my children. I would therefore want my children to be educated and succeed in their lives.*

It was found that parents did not discriminate between the education of girls and boys. They believed that education enables a girl to become independent, stand on her own feet, and advance in life. As Mrs. Vijata said:

> *Education is the only way to mobility. Nowadays single-income households struggle to make ends meet. If the girl gets a good education, she will be able to contribute to the family income by giving tuition to children at home. At least she will be able to support her expenses and will not be dependent on her parents. When she gets married, she will no longer be dependent on her spouse to provide for her expenses.*

It contributes to giving girls equal chances and propelling them ahead in the future. As Mrs. Rahimun Nisha described:

> *Boys and girls are working shoulder to shoulder in today's world, and girls are working in every pitch, therefore I believe there should be no distinction in selecting a school for girls.*

Interestingly, the 'dream' school for most of the parents was a 'private, English medium' school. Their financial restraints, however, prevented them from realizing their aspirations. In the words of Mr. Rajesh:

> *Something is better than nothing. It is good that my children are attending this school instead of sitting idly at home. My wish was to educate my children in a private school, but my income does not support my dream.*

The parents thus enrolled their children in government schools that provided some amenities similar to those found in their desired private schools. This denotes that despite having limited resources, they choose the school that best meets their needs. For instance, Mr. Rajesh, a small grocery store owner with a modest monthly income of Rs.15000-16000, believes that the most significant benefit of enrolling children in private schools is the opportunity to achieve proficiency in the English language. Due to the school's emphasis on English education, he enrolled his son in Basic Vidhyalaya, Lajpat Nagar. In his narration:

> *We indeed comprehend the significance of education. In today's world, proficiency in English is indispensable. Consider the following scenario: when we are travelling, we are unable to discern any English-language signboards, necessitating the assistance of others. This is the moment when we come to understand the importance of English education. This is the exact reason I enrolled my ward in this school, which prioritizes English instructional content.*

In the modern world, technology plays a critical role in education. Considering how much technology has permeated education today, it seems unlikely that kids will be able to obtain an education without it in the near future. Technology has advanced in every other area of life in the modern era just as swiftly as it has in education. Since the implementation of COVID-19, the significance of technology has increased daily.

The study found that while choosing a school for their kids, parents gave special consideration to computer-based education. In addition to imparting knowledge, parents claimed that computer education is essential for the modern era since it also develops pupils' skills. Mr. Mohammad Rafeeq discovered an additional aspect that influenced the selection of this specific school. He expressed his opinion:

> *The school provides computer education facilities. Proficiency in computer literacy is very advantageous in the contemporary day.*

The majority of parents considered themselves fortunate that they have been able to enroll their children in a nearby government school. Nonetheless, when their own (lower middle-class parents) lives have always been insecure, they appeared to be less concerned about the comfort and security (sending the children to the closest school) of their children attending school. They seemed contented that their children were gaining an education. However, Mrs. Shabeena justified the choice of the closest school in the following words:

> *Distance from house to school shouldn't be much. Long commuting distance not only tires the children but also makes the parents wary…Also, for the neighborhood school, the children can come home early and help us with our business.*

It was observed that the families engaged in small household industries (e.g., small grocery shops, embroidery and sewing work, etc.) preferred children returning home early and assist them with household chores or sibling upbringing. Furthermore, distance is a barrier for working-class or lower-middle-class families since it incurs higher travel expenditures.

One of the key factors in choosing a school is taking the requirements of the children into account. This is important as schools are places where children develop, learn various skills, and form their social groups. The study found that in the majority of cases, parents choose school based on socio-economic compatibility. Children's learning capacity and aptitude were almost overlooked while considering school for them. The parents enrolling their kids in this school do not appear to have specifically considered or articulated criteria like the school's playground, medium of instruction, kid-friendly atmosphere, etc. As Mr. Ramesh stated:

> *I am a daily wage worker and I struggle to make ends meet. We cannot afford the luxury of considering the child's aptitude and capacity while choosing the school.*

5.1.1.2 Information Gathering Process

The study focused on the information-gathering process parents use to decide the schools for their children and the methods used by them to gather the information. It was found that during the school visit, parents gathered information about the educational quality of the school and chose the school based on it. This according to Bell (2009) constitutes a 'closed search'[3], referring to an information-seeking process confined to about three or fewer schools. Likewise, Mr. Mohit stated:

> *I had initially shortlisted two schools for my children's schooling. I visited such schools and obtained information from the office. I focused on school fees, facilities provided by schools, and the distance from home. Apart from this, I also emphasized the standard of other students because, as parents, we also have to take care that our children can keep pace with other children. It is important to choose a school according to one's socioeconomic standing.*

The study found that these lower middle-class parents did not visit the school website to gather information as many parents did not have access to a medium (e.g. smartphones,

[3] A closed search is a procedure when the parent considered two or even three schools. Instead of looking into other schools, parents take the time to learn more about those two to three options and make the required arrangements to enroll their child. Preparations involve strategies such as completing admission examinations, organizing funds, and planning transportation (Bell, 2009).

laptops, computer systems, etc.) to do so. Also, they did not consider the school's rating during the information-gathering process. Likewise, Mr. Mohammad Safaque said:

> *While choosing a school, I did not pay much attention to the school's rating. I don't have a smartphone or computer, and I don't even know how to use them.*

Parents were discovered to be impacted by the 'neighborhood effect' as well. The presence of neighborhood children attending a specific school affected their decision to choose the same school. In this case, "locality" refers to a "habitus" of people with comparable financial means and socioeconomic origins. Residing in the same area also facilitated the exchange and sharing of information. It may be argued that socio-economic similarity encouraged the homogeneity of school choice among the residents of a neighborhood. In the words of Mr. Ramesh:

> *A significant number of students in my vicinity (neighborhood) are enrolled in this school, which is how I became acquainted with it.*

Another parent, Mrs. Shabeena pointed out:

> *There can be no doubt that we are influenced by how our friends and neighbors choose schools. You often find neighborhood children attending the same school. Such behavior is an act of validation; individual choice can be wrong, but group choice cannot be.*

In the same vein, Mrs. Sumbul, another parent, responded:

> *My children attended a private school before the Covid-19 lockdown. The pandemic increased the school fees, which we were unable to afford. My husband is an auto-rickshaw driver who frequently visits this region of the city. He learned about this school, and we subsequently sought the advice of others in our community before enrolling our child.*

In addition, the study also found that parents valued word-of-mouth recommendations and chose their children's schools accordingly. The parents' dependence on word-of-mouth recommendations for choosing schools illustrates the role of social capital in educational decision-making (Coleman, 1988). This idea aligns with Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital, which views it as a network of relationships that can be

leveraged to access information and resources. The parents' use of their social connections to make informed school choices reflects what Lin (2001) describes as utilizing social resources to achieve benefits in practical actions. Mrs. Shabeena pointed out:

> *I was unaware of this school and got to know about it only from others, which is why, in my opinion, word of mouth has a significant influence.*

Similarly, Mr. Mohammad Safaque stated:

> *Word of mouth is crucial when choosing a school because if something is good, then everyone will agree. Whenever someone asks me about the school, we inform him about it and tell him about the amenities available, making it easier for the individual to pick the school. The rest is up to that person's choice, which school he enrolls his child in and which school he does not.*

Sometimes they were unaware of the presence of other nearby schools. These parents' primary priority is getting their children admitted to a school. It is quite possible that such complete ignorance about school choice is shown by individuals coming from communities historically deprived of education. The limited awareness of school options among certain parents, reflects Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital and its uneven distribution across social classes (Bourdieu, 1986). This scenario illustrates what Lareau and Weininger (2003) describe as the differential possession of cultural capital, where families from historically marginalized communities may lack the specific knowledge and skills needed to navigate the educational system effectively. The parents' focus on mere admission, rather than strategic school selection, aligns with Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) argument that cultural capital influences educational trajectories and perpetuates social inequalities. Therefore, it is clear that such unwavering confidence does not represent a dedication to public education or the offerings of its institutions, but rather is a harsh denial of information and other fundamental rights (Chahil, 2018).

Furthermore, it was found that few parents sought information and advice from their established relatives (sound socio-economic standing) in making school choice decisions

for their children. The parents' reliance on relatives for school choice advice illustrates Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which shapes individuals' perceptions and actions based on their social position (Bourdieu, 1990). The tendency to seek advice from relatives with higher socio-economic status demonstrates how habitus operates within family networks, potentially reproducing social hierarchies through educational choices (Reay, 2004). This practice is in line with Bourdieu's (1977) assertion that habitus generates strategies that are adapted to the objective situation, in this case, leveraging family connections to navigate the educational field. Importantly, it was revealed that parents typically sought advice from relatives associated with the government sector. As Mrs. Vijata explained:

> *My relatives have been relatively helpful in terms of providing financial support, and as a result of their support, my children are now able to attend school. One of my relatives also works in the government sector. According to me, it is important to have a relative in the government sector because, through this, we get good advice from them for the education of our children. Now I have realised the value of education and jobs, and I am also encouraging my children and relatives to get an education and focus on government jobs.*

5.1.1.3 Parental Involvement and their Interaction with the School Administration

The study found that the majority of parents from the lower middle class decided on their children's schools together. It denotes that the parents actively participated in the process of choosing the school. As Mr. Rajesh pointed out:

> *My wife is uneducated; she stays at home and looks after the kids rather than going out much. My wife visited the school with me before making the decision, and she decided to enroll our child there.*

Most parents were not found to be overtly involved in the education of their children. They met the teachers when they were asked to by the school administration. Attending the school meeting allows one to have an understanding of how the school operates and the state of the quality of education delivered by the teachers. However, owing to their

busy schedule, the majority of parents found it challenging to meet the teachers. Mrs. Shabeena replied:

> *I do not frequently meet with the school administration because I believe that if there is any problem, I will meet with them. There has been no complaint from the school yet regarding children's education and other activities, so I feel that children's education and other things are going well there; therefore, there is no need for me to meet the school administration.*

This scenario reflects what Lareau (2011) terms as the "accomplishment of natural growth," where working-class and poor parents tend to be less involved in school matters, contrasting with middle-class parents' "concerted cultivation" approach. The limited engagement in school meetings and quality assessment demonstrates a potential lack of what Lareau and Weininger (2003) describe as the ability to comply with institutional standards of evaluation, a key aspect of cultural capital in educational settings. This pattern of involvement (or lack thereof) can influence children's educational trajectories, potentially reinforcing social inequalities through the education system (Dumais, 2006).

5.1.2 Kendriya Vidyalaya, Aliganj, Lucknow

Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) Aliganj has been in operation since 1984. It is a central government school that is affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), New Delhi. All Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan schools follow the NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) curriculum. Children, whose parents are "government officials," are generally given admission preference in school and the school starts admitting students at the age of 5 and above. As the headmaster of the school stated children are admitted here in accordance with the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan's guidelines (KVS). The school has 25% of its seats allocated under RTE for children of all categories, including BPL, SC, ST, PWD, OBC, and non-creamy-layer pupils.

The KVS admissions procedure is quite straightforward; parents have to fill out an online application form to enroll their children. The list of selected students is then released based on the suitability of the children to study in the school. The parents' employment categories are taken into consideration while enrolling the children.

Talking about the facilities and strengths of his school, the headmaster of the school, highlighted:

> *The biggest reason for taking admission of children here is the result of the school. The facilities that children get in Kendriya Vidyalaya is hardly available in any other school. Student-centered pedagogy is implemented, and our educators participate in periodic in-service training. No surprise that our students are eligible to participate in the Olympiads and a variety of aptitude assessments. The facilities that are offered here complementarily, are charged separately in private schools.*

5.1.2.1 Parents Perspectives

The children attending the school mostly belong to the middle class. It was found that these middle-class parents took a lot of things into account while making their school choice decisions.

KV was picked by many parents because it is a "central government" school, and that tag signifies quality. A convincing point for the parents is that the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) oversees and monitors the school. For example, justifying her choice for KV, Mrs. Kavita argued:

> *People strongly prioritize and emphasize the term "government" tag. Government employment, transportation, and other public amenities are selected by individuals based on the same rationale. They are particularly attracted to KV due to its status as a central government institution that has worldwide recognition.*

Parents argued that strong study habits that students acquire at KV will lead them to become very successful adults. Thus, Mrs. Pavitra reasoned:

> *My decision to send my child to KV is based on a different factor. My family has several members who attended KV and went on to achieve great success in life. KV will always be listed among the premiere schools in the nation whenever a count is done.*

Also, KV was favored by parents who had transferable government positions. They chose the school because they had the guarantee that their children's education would not suffer if they were transferred elsewhere. Further, for those transferring to a new school, the transition process was made easier as KV branches were similar in terms of the curriculum, syllabus, and rules and regulations. Likewise, Mr. Sunil narrated:

> *If you have a transferable job, KV is the best option for you. Consider my case: I relocated with my family from Panchkula to Bareilly due to a job transfer, and I had no trouble enrolling my daughter in school—even though she was in the tenth grade. My daughter would have repeated 9th grade if she had attended another school.*

The study found that in the school choice decision-making process, parents emphasized the educational quality of the school. This resonated with the middle-class ethos that education is the way to achieve high socio-economic status in society. As Mrs. Kavita stated:

> *This school was selected for the child because of the good education quality and the children are well cared for at the school. In addition to academics, the extracurricular activities organized in the school make education more interesting.*

Parents claimed that the KV delivers superior education at a competitive price and all the modern facilities are offered in the school. As Mrs. Pavitra said:

> *Government schools, in my opinion, offer better education. My son used to study in a private school and we transferred him here because he was not comfortable with the pressure of studies in the school. Kendriya Vidyalayas, in my opinion, provide a superior education to private and convent schools.*

Parents contended that because of their excellent education, KV students regularly achieved top rankings in class 10^{th} and 12^{th} CBSE board exams. As Mr. Sudesh tacitly posited:

> *When it comes to educational quality, Kendriya Vidyalaya and Navodaya Vidyalaya are the only government schools that have consistently produced high rankers in the board examinations.*

The study found that the KV offers affordable, high-quality education. According to the sociological rational choice theory, individuals make educational selections to maximize their own predicted value, which includes both an economic and an individual social return argument (Bridge & Wilson, 2016). Parents said that they couldn't receive a better education at the price charged by the KV.

Parents also stressed that the quality of teachers is an important aspect in school selection. Teachers must not only have the necessary qualifications, but they must also have the 'proper' pedagogy and 'patience' to educate the youngsters. To educate the students, the teachers used several pedagogical strategies such as chalk and talk, demonstration, discussion, and storytelling. Additionally, classroom instruction was supplemented by teaching-learning activities, including projects, assignments, models, charts, and conversations. Mrs. Kavita emphasized her satisfaction with the quality of instruction at KV:

> *To teach at a central government school, you must have particular qualifications. Teachers, for example, must hold a B.Ed degree (with a minimum of 50% marks) and be CTET test qualified. Moreover, the recruitment process is fair and transparent... The sincerity of the teachers at the school pleasantly surprised me. I noticed that during the online sessions, the instructors kept questioning the students if they had understood the explained topic or not.*

Another parent, Mr. Raman remarked:

> *This school's board results are outstanding. The teachers and infrastructure are up to the mark. It is no surprise that KV students compete at the national level.*

KV is one of the nation's most prominent central government schools. Other schools, even some of the private schools, barely have access to the amenities offered by this school. The study found that the school offers sports, a computer lab, a well-equipped library, a playground, and laboratories, and well-furnished classrooms for the kids. In addition, the

school also has highly qualified teachers and an updated curriculum. The school provided ample opportunities for the students to participate in extracurricular and co-curricular activities. The research revealed that the student-teacher ratio in the school is 1:40, and children from a distance of about 7 to 8 kilometers come to study in this school.

KV is an English medium school that follows the NCERT curriculum. The study found that one of the reasons parents cited for choosing KV was the availability of English-medium education. Parents favor English-medium instruction for their children's education top priority in the present situation. In their opinion, it is of utmost importance in the modern day. The parents' view of English as crucial in the modern day demonstrates what De Mejía (2002) terms as the perceived convertibility of linguistic capital into economic and social capital. This preference illustrates how cultural capital, particularly in its linguistic form, is strategically accumulated to gain advantages in various social fields (Sullivan, 2001). Likewise, Mrs. Reena pointed out:

> *This school offers English-medium instruction. Because English is so important in the modern world, we want our children to attend an "English medium school" for their education.*

The school is affiliated with the CBSE board. The Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan manages and operates the school. Parents preferred the CBSE board education as they believed its curriculum to be useful in preparing the students for competitive examinations. As Mr. Anand stated:

> *The school is affiliated with the CBSE board. I had planned from the outset to educate my kids at a school affiliated with the CBSE board. The school's syllabus is appropriate for competitive examinations like medicine, engineering, and other fields.*

In a similar spirit, another parent, Mr. Sudesh remarked:

> *I feel that the CBSE curriculum aptly suits the syllabus of the IIT-JEE and NEET examinations. Thus, considering the future of my child, I have enrolled in a governmental CBSE board school.*

Some parents considered KV to be their ‘dream’ school. The study also found that even though they had the financial means to enroll their wards in private schools and could afford to do so, they preferred sending their wards to KV over other schools. This parental preference can be understood through the lens of Bourdieu's theory of habitus. According to Bourdieu, habitus encompasses the deeply rooted patterns of behaviour, abilities, and attitudes that people develop over the course of their life experiences, which influence their perceptions and choices (Bourdieu, 1977). These parents' preference for KV over private schools can be seen as a reflection of their habitus, shaped by their social and cultural background. Their decision aligns with their ingrained values and dispositions, which prioritize the cultural capital and social benefits associated with KV, such as its reputation, standardized curriculum, and perceived quality of education. In the words of Mrs. Pavitra:

> *Before enrolling my child in KV, I enrolled him in a private school in Lucknow. That school's educational policy was always a mystery to me, I never understood it. The studies were ordinary, the holidays were more frequent, and everything depended on the parents. All of these factors influenced my decision to enroll my child at KV.*

The media also frequently reports dramatic incidents of phony, fraudulent, and unrecognized institutions, especially in the private school category. Such broadcasts create an impression in the minds of the parents that private institutions are unreliable. It is difficult to determine if the confidence expressed in the efficacy of public schools is only a consequence of misgivings about the legitimacy of private institutions or if it is grounded in people's experiences, observations, and knowledge. Importantly, apart from the facilities offered by the school, parents emphasized that the students experience less academic stress in KV.

Moreover, the school offered several opportunities for the children to appear in various aptitude tests, like the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) and the National Science Olympiad (NSO). In the words of Mr. Anand:

> *At first, Kendriya Vidyalaya wasn't my dream school, but once I managed to enroll my kids there, they began to do well. The students regularly have the opportunity to appear in national aptitude tests like the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) or the National Science Olympiad (NSO). The teaching pedagogy and curriculum are commendable. Thus, I can now confidently state that Kendriya Vidyalaya is my 'dream' school.*

Interestingly, it was found that parents use their "own" subjective criteria for choosing schools for their children. These parental notions were in line with the rational choice theory. The rational choice theory asserts that people are driven by self-interest when making decisions. Thus, their choice reflects a calculated decision to select the option they perceive as most advantageous for their children's future. Stated differently, in the decision-making process, individuals are driven by their own self-interest (Herfeld, 2009). Therefore, families had different notion of 'dream' school. For instance, Mr. Nayan narrated:

> *Yes, of course, KV is our dream school, and we are pleased that we were able to enroll our ward in the school. My idea of a good school is slightly different from others. Teachers must be competent, and there must teach the students with dedication.*

Another parent, Mr. Anand narrated out:

> *I believe that private schools have too many limitations. Healthy childhoods are denied to students. Everything is planned and routinized. Conversely, at KV, students have the freedom to independently discover and express their true selves within the school environment.*

One of the most important considerations when choosing a school is the distance between the school and the home. KV does not offer transportation services and parents are responsible for organizing their children's transportation. Interestingly, the study found

that KVS admits kids into their schools based on how far away their homes were from the schools. In the words of the headmaster of the school:

> *As a criterion of admission at the school, students are admitted based on the distance of the school from their homes. In adherence to the RTE act, the school prefers admitting students who reside in a radius of 7 km around the school.*

The majority of parents emphasized the importance of the distance between home and school. Parents stated that the distance from home to school should be less. The closer the distance between home and school, the better it is for the children. If the school is far away, it adds to the discomfort of the children and the parents' transportation costs. If the school is closer, then the parents will have the option to pick up and drop off their kids. As Mr. Nayan stated:

> *The distance between home and school is the most crucial consideration in the school selection process. It is very difficult for small children to go far because it increases their tiredness. Children will face inconveniences while traveling to school, which will hamper their studies. Someday if the children are late, parents will experience anxiety. Because of this, the distance between home and school ought to be shorter.*

The findings of the study revealed that the school costs Rs. 1500 for a quarter semester. However, the fees rise in accordance with the class standard. Starting from standard 3rd, the all-inclusive school fee is enhanced to Rs 1800 for every quarter. Underscoring the benefit of moderate school costs in KV, Mrs. Pavitra elaborated:

> *The KV charges around Rs. 1500 every quarter on average. In addition, students are to participate in a variety of projects and activities. Such activities cost around Rs. 500-600 each month. In comparison to the expenses at other schools, this is very reasonable.*

Mrs. Pavitra, another parent, had a different explanation:

> *I believe that school fees are an important factor to consider when deciding on a school. It is more significant if a family is from the middle class.*

Parents emphasized the importance of schools having reasonable fees. Less fees create doubts in the minds of the parents about the quality of education imparted in the school. Another parent, Mr. Sudesh pointed out:

> *School fees, according to me, should be reasonable. It should not be too low or too high. If the monthly school fees are too high, e.g. Rs. 5000 per month, we will have some problems paying it. If it is too low, then we will be skeptical about the quality of education imparted in the school. Thus, school fees should be reasonable, neither too high nor too low. It should be like it is in KV.*

In addition to curricular activities, the school places a strong emphasis on co-curricular activities. The school offers a diverse array of activities, such as academic, cultural, sporting, etc. In the words of the school headmaster:

> *The school curriculum entails various extra-curricular activities for the holistic development of the child. For instance, the school is currently celebrating 'Amrit Mahotsav', and therefore activities like speeches/dialogues about freedom fighters, patriotic poetry recitation, film shows on freedom fighters and unsung heroes, and quizzes on freedom fighters and unsung heroes are being organized. Through such activities, the school tries to inculcate nationalistic fervor among the children.*

Mr. Anand, a parent, further elaborated:

> *Children participate in co-curricular activities like music, dancing, arts & crafts, and many more. The school also employs teachers for extracurricular activities. A plan for co-curricular activities (CCA) for the entire academic year is distributed among the students.*

Parents believed that such extracurricular activities are helpful in reducing the monotony of the children. As Mrs. Pavitra exemplified:

> *KV is renowned for its spacious, opulent campus. There is a large field at the school, as well as a basketball court, table tennis equipment, etc. Besides, an emphasis is placed on dance, arts, and crafts, SUPW (Socially Useful Product Work), NSS (National Service Scheme), and other creative endeavors. The school now introduced yoga and classes on personal hygiene. Such activities are organized throughout the year and are useful in making the monotonous routine exciting.*

It was also observed that the school has a well-established sports infrastructure. There are sports teachers or coaches at the school and a sizable playground for the pupils. Parents

emphasized that sports relieve stress and aid in physical and mental development. They also believed that sports activities help the students to socialize and focus on their studies.

Furthermore, the needs of the children are one of the most important factors in the school selection process. It is connected to a child's development. The study found that most of the time, parents made their school choice based on their convenience as well as the learning capacity and aptitude of their children. Mrs. Pavitra pointed out:

> *While choosing a school, we take into account both the child's learning capacity and our convenience. As the kid is still very young and lacks the necessary comprehension, we took into account the child's capability and aptitude while selecting a school for her.*

In the same vein, another parent, Mrs. Reena, explained:

> *She expressed interest in studying at KV. She studied at an English-medium private school until class 2 and then joined KV. After coming to KV, she found that these books are simple and make learning fun, and she enjoys it. We observed that she is studying with a free mind because there is less pressure on her, and as a result, she is performing well here (KV).*

Nonetheless, the choice of school was primarily a parental decision, and the needs of the children were not considered.

5.1.2.2 Information Gathering Process

In this portion, the study focused on the information-gathering procedure parents go through while choosing a school. Apart from focusing on the information-gathering process, the section also focuses on the kinds of information that are used by the parents for making a choice.

The study revealed that before choosing the school, the majority of parents visited a few schools, including KV. As admittance to KVs is not always simple to come by, parents kept a few options on stand-by. Mrs. Shabiya explained:

> *I visited a few schools and talked to the school teachers there. Earlier, my daughter studied at Kids Camp School while she was a member of the playgroup and I shortlisted a few schools based on my interaction with other parents. Getting admission to KV is not an easy task, as many apply for admission for their children. It is not wise to apply to just one school.*

It was found that parents typically focused on a few criteria while selecting schools for their children. As Mr. Anand pointed out:

> *For the admission of my elder daughter, I visited two or three schools. When I visited the school, I concentrated on a few areas. First, I focused on the brand and board of the school; among the CBSE board schools in the country, KV ranks very high. Second, I concentrated on the school infrastructure, for example, the classroom should be airy and big and there should be a playground. Third, I concentrated on academic personnel; instructors should be well-educated and have an understanding of educational psychology.*

The study's findings revealed that the parents gathered much information about the school from the school's website. This behavior reflects the parents' use of cultural capital, specifically their technological literacy and ability to navigate digital resources to make informed educational decisions for their children (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Such access to and utilization of online information sources can be seen as a form of embodied cultural capital that influences educational choices and potentially reproduces social advantages. As Mrs. Kavita stated:

> *We gathered a lot of information about the school while filling out the online application form. My eldest daughter thoroughly investigated all the details of the school and informed us. She submitted an online application for the admission of her younger brother.*

The majority of parents did not take the school ratings into account while choosing their child's school. As Mr. Sudesh explained:

> *While selecting the school, I did not pay much attention to the rating of the school because Kendriya Vidyalaya is a school whose quality is known to most people, which is why I did not pay much attention to the rating of the school.*

According to the findings of the study, word-of-mouth did not have a significant impact on the school choice decision-making process. Since Kendriya Vidyalaya is a well-known brand, word-of-mouth did not have much effect. Likewise, Mrs. Reena highlighted:

> *It is beneficial to talk to people when you want to know about something. However, KV is a brand and everyone knows about it. So, word-of-mouth did not have much effect on us.*

5.1.2.3 Parental Involvement and their Interaction with the School Administration

Parental participation is equally important to a child's success as a school is. In the contemporary educational environment, parents must take an active role in their children's education if they want them to succeed academically.

The study found that, in many instances, both the mother and the father participated equally in the decision-making process and reached the school choice decision together. In the words of Mrs. Harsha:

> *The decision on the school was made jointly by my husband and me, and it was finalized when we both agreed on it. The decision-making process does not include other family members because we are a nuclear family.*

Due to the nuclear nature of the majority of urban middle-class households, the entire family was seldom involved in decision-making. Interestingly, this study shows how middle-class urban households are becoming more democratic as both the husband and wife participate in the decision-making process. This shift in family dynamics can be understood through Bourdieu's theory of habitus, which suggests that social practices and perceptions are shaped by internalized dispositions that evolve in response to changing social contexts (Bourdieu, 1990). The increasing involvement of both spouses in decision-making reflects a transformation in the habitus of middle-class urban families, adapting to contemporary social norms and expectations of gender equality. While Mrs. Reena argued:

> *Before deciding on this school, both of us (my husband and I) visited the school before making the decision. I believe visiting the school personally is a crucial step in making the choice and we (I and my husband) made the decision together.*

The study found that parents showed considerable participation and involvement in knowing about their children's academic progress. They were frequently found interacting with the school administration about the progress of their children. This active engagement demonstrates the parents' deployment of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Bourdieu's theory, cultural capital includes knowledge, skills, and attitudes that provide advantages in social settings, particularly in educational institutions (Bourdieu, 1986). This involvement allows them to better navigate the educational system, understand its expectations, and potentially advocate for their children more effectively. Such practices can contribute to the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital, potentially leading to improved educational outcomes for their children (Lareau, 2003). As Mrs. Pavitra stated:

> *I interact frequently with the school's administration and teachers to know about my son's progress. I attend the PTMs (Parent-Teacher Meeting) and interact with all his teachers individually.*

Likewise, Mr. Anand said:

> *Grades often don't tell the entire story. Interacting with the teachers helps me to know whether the child is happy in school, is he making friends? is he involved in co-curricular activities?....My involvement does not end here, I regularly monitor his studies at home.*

5.1.3 Having Faith in Government Schools

A large portion of the population associates government institutions with gloomy hues, which quickly leads to a situation in which anyone who could afford to send their kids to a private school or access private healthcare facilities would prefer to do so. Even worse public institutions have been displaying behavior that supports and corroborates the accusation. However, the responses reveal that for a sizable portion of the middle class,

the faith in government institutions has not been completely shaken. This might suggest a sense of ownership, in which individuals still think and feel that government institutions are their own. It might also be linked to an existential inability/reluctance to think outside the boundaries of public institutions (Chahil, 2018). One may argue that this is due to the fact that they are unable to pay for private healthcare or education, leaving them with no choice but to maintain their confidence in the public system. The majority of the sample's lower middle-class parents appear to believe that government schools provide a "good education".

Education at government schools was fine, but they were quick to clarify that they didn't mean to suggest it wasn't up to standard now; rather, it wasn't up to par when compared to their time.

Echoing Chahil (2018), some parents believe that government schools offer children a supportive environment and that their development is better in such schools. Private schools place a greater emphasis on discipline and pressurize children to do better; as a result, the child simply cannot succeed. Government schools, on the other hand, provide kids the freedom to do anything they choose. They learn better in this method in contrast to the environment they experience in a private school where students are put under a lot of pressure to achieve.

It was also observed that some parents from the middle class believed government schools were more successful in terms of helping their children find employment. They shared the opinion that a government school certificate or diploma carries greater weight and "value" when applying for jobs. Consequently, they also tend to think that the accreditation of private schools has little "value." It is still possible to argue that the government institutions are successful in keeping people's faith in the system, especially

those from the working class. Or one may contend that individuals are unable to quit the public system or shift towards private players because of their pressing dependence on it for obtaining welfare and other essential rights. In other words, a large portion of the middle class has no social security or options outside of the public system (Chahil, 2018).

5.2 Private Schools

5.2.1 City Montessori School (CMS), Rajendra Nagar, Lucknow

City Montessori School (CMS), Rajendra Nagar (1st Campus) was founded in 1959 and has served as a model for high-quality education. It is a coeducational institution that is affiliated with the Council for the Indian School Certificate Exams (CISCE), New Delhi. The school places a strong emphasis on a child's holistic development through extracurricular activities including debates, international exchange with students from other countries, junior youth empowerment programs, art, music, dance, and sports. The campus offers education from the foundational pre-primary to Standard XII (ISC level).

Rated among the academically elite schools of the city, CMS has a distinctive admissions process; students must face an entrance examination and interview (alongside their parents) to be admitted to the school. Moreover, the school also mandates the submission of documents like birth certificates, residence verification, Aadhaar numbers, bank account details, etc. during the time of admission. In the words of Mrs. Vibha, a mother of a child:

> *In CMS, parents and children are both interviewed as part of the admissions process. The idea is to check the compatibility between the standards of the school and the families. We believe that parents should be educated so that they can assist their children in their studies. The idea behind the interview is to check whether the students are prepared for the academic standard of the school and whether parents believe in the ethos of the school.*

Another parent, Mrs. Arti, stated:

It was really difficult for us to get admission to this school. That is why we enrolled our child here; if we had not been able to enroll our child here, our child would have missed quality education.

Therefore, the above-mentioned quotation illustrates that it is not only the parents who choose schools for their children, but schools at times are also exclusivists and choose those families according to their standards.

5.2.1.1 Parents Perspectives

In accordance with the school's philosophy of peace and progress, the CMS campus of Rajendra Nagar is known as the Peace Building campus. CMS was chosen by many parents since it is one of Lucknow's most well-known and reputable private schools. The school enjoyed a distinct identity in the city. In the words of Mrs. Vindhya:

CMS not only features among the most renowned schools in the city, and it offers extremely high-quality education. So, we chose this school. Other than this, there are several other good schools, but they are all a bit distant from my house, and I do not want to send my child away.

Another parent, Dr. Swati stated:

Brand value is a basic criterion to choose schools. It is a yardstick used by the parents for primary shortlisting. For middle-class parents like us, we use the term 'brand value' to refer to the quality of education imparted in the school….You must understand that it takes years for a school to build its brand value. If a school is known for its academic rigor and board results, you can trust the quality of education imparted and the effectiveness of teaching methods.

Talking about the reputation of the school, it should be noted that each school has built its reputation over the years. For instance, some schools are known for their academics while others are known for their co-curricular activities. As Mr. Naman aptly illustrated:

Every school has its own reputation. Some are famous for academics while others are famous for co-curricular activities or sports. Schools built such reputations over the years. We are middle-class families and academics matter the most to us. We have chosen the school accordingly. We have not gone after the most elite or expensive school in the city.

The brand value of a school is also influenced by the alumni members of the institution. As Mr. Virendra explained:

> *CMS school boasts of many illustrious alumni. Most of its alumni are well-established in their lives. I personally know a few of them. This gives us the confidence to send our wards to this school.*

The school's global recognition was another point emphasized by the parents. In addition, CMS assists its students in getting a variety of scholarships. Likewise, Mrs. Palak pointed out:

> *In addition to being an international-level school, the institution also assists students in getting various scholarships. This school has developed its own brand value and distinct identity in the marketplace. The teaching pedagogy is excellent. The school has designed a curriculum such that the youngsters are not overburdened and yet their grasp of the subjects is commendable.*

The study found that parents give high importance to the educational quality of the school. This prioritization aligns with rational choice theory (Becker, 1993), which suggests that Parents make well-informed decisions regarding the education of their children based on perceived costs and benefits, aiming to maximize educational outcomes and future opportunities. Parents remarked that CMS is an established institution that offers higher-quality instruction than other institutions. As Mr. Naman said:

> *CMS offers a quality education compared to other institutions, it is a well-established school in the city and hence people have faith in the institution.*

The study found that while choosing a school, parents valued the quality of the teachers as well. In a similar vein, Mrs. Vibha stated:

> *I observed the quality of the teachers and admired it. I observed that my child was happy, and he was well cared for at the school.*

Another parent, Mr. Virendra, argued differently:

> *Teachers typically join government schools to earn secured income, and they take classes only to complete the syllabus, they are unconcerned about whether or not the students understand the subjects, which is why educational standards in government schools have gradually declined.*

It was also discovered that the school's board performance was a significant aspect of the school selection process. Parents claimed that they chose CMS mainly based on its strong board results and the reason why the school is much in demand. As Mrs. Malika remarked:

> *A school's board performance is a crucial factor in selecting the school. See, there are two or three things to consider while picking a school. First, what is the teaching pedagogy, how are the board results, and how is the overall development of the child?*

We found that school choice decisions are influenced by the cultural capital and socio-economic backgrounds of the parents. It may be contended that school choice decisions closely reflect class-based strategies of consumption. Echoing Lane (1991), we contend school choice may be perceived as an act of establishing differences with others and expressing solidarity with one's class and community. As Mr. Virendra aptly reflected:

> *If you ponder a while, you will realize that parents choose a school based on their class. Both LPS and CMS are middle-class schools and are attended by students belonging to this class. Now if you go to schools like La Martiniere or Loreto, these schools are attended by elites, and their curriculum, pedagogy, and fees all adhere to the ethos of the privileged class. You will always find compatibility between the class of the parents and the profile of the school they choose…. Thus, most middle-class parents are influenced by the academic rigor of the school.*

The campus is a cutting-edge structure with an indoor swimming pool, science labs, well-stocked libraries, an activity center for kids, an astroturf, a basketball court, physics, chemistry, biology, computer, biotech labs, and spacious classrooms fully equipped with smartboards for incorporating technology into classroom teaching. Parents appreciated the fact that the school prepares the students for competitive examinations like IIT-JEE, and NEET from 6th standard onwards. This emphasis on advanced facilities and early preparation for elite examinations reflects the school's role in reproducing and enhancing cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), as it provides students with the knowledge, skills, and credentials valued in higher education and professional fields. Additionally,

they take this action to ensure that their children acquire the cultural capital necessary for success in school and in securing upper-middle-class or upper-class professions and lifestyles (Roda, 2017; Bereményi & Carrasco, 2018). Underlining the facilities offered by the school, Mrs. Vibha remarked:

> *CMS boasts well-equipped classrooms, computer-based instruction, and a variety of sporting facilities. The school is spacious and recently they have added a playground on the roof and a swimming pool. Besides, there is a bunch of indoor activities and games for the students.*

Ihuoma (2008) notes that "schools exist for the goal of teaching and learning. To that end, both material and human resources are used. School facilities refer to the tangible assets provided to faculty and students to enhance their effectiveness in the educational process. The realization that knowledge transfer from the teacher to the students does not only occur within the four walls of the classroom, but also occurs through exploration, discovery, and the connection with the internal and external environment has prompted the creative and inventive construction of learning and teaching facilities that reflect these developments (2008, p.11). Indeed, pupils cannot focus on their studies during class hours if the school complex does not have a conducive environment. Even the 2010 Right to Education Act makes it clear that schools must have the appropriate infrastructural facilities for the students (Harinath, 2016).

The study showed that the school's infrastructure was adequate for technology-based education. There is a well-established computer-based classroom for children. In addition to traditional methods, the school is delivering teaching in fresh ways by leveraging cutting-edge technologies. Projectors and audio-video equipment are used in schools to instruct students.

Parents also appreciated the teaching pedagogy followed in the schools. They emphasized computer-aided education in the age of digital learning and considered it important for success in their lives. This parental emphasis on digital literacy and technology-integrated education reflects an understanding of evolving forms of cultural capital in the information age (DiMaggio & Hargittai, 2001). The concept of technological capital, an extension of Bourdieu's cultural capital, has emerged to describe the competencies and resources related to digital technologies that can be converted into educational and occupational advantages (Selwyn, 2004). By valuing computer-aided education, parents recognize that digital skills and knowledge have become crucial components of cultural capital in contemporary society. These skills are increasingly essential for academic success, future employability, and social mobility (van Dijk, 2005). As Dr. Neeraj contended:

> *Computer-aided teaching and learning with smart classrooms form an essential part of the school's curriculum. As you know knowledge of computers is imperative in today's world and I am glad that it is introduced in class I itself. The use of interactive modules helps students in understanding complex topics and aids retention as well.*

According to the findings of the study, the student-teacher ratio in the school is around 1:40, and the fact that the school was an English medium school added to the edge of it. The study revealed that parents placed a high value on English mode of education for their children. They outlined the various benefits of sending kids to an English-medium school. In the words of Mr. Naman:

> *English is the mode of instruction at CMS. English medium education is deemed vital in today's society, and it is the language of employment and livelihood.*

> *Though Hindi is our mother tongue, I often interact with my son in English at home to enhance his proficiency.*

They posit that English education is imperative for the prospective future and hence the strong foundation of English is essential from the initial years of schooling. Further, they opined that the mother tongue (Hindi vernacular) can be learned at home through daily conversation, and hence emphasis should be placed on learning English. The trend closely resonates with the findings of Yoon and Gulson (2010) who posited that in a multilingual society, some languages are valued more than others. Bourdieu (1991) conceives of 'linguistic capital' as a form of 'cultural capital' and the possession of linguistic skills predetermines the access to influential positions in society. It is no wonder that colonial languages and cultures continue to determine power access and dominance in the social, economic, and political spheres of society. Likewise, Dr. Swati argued:

> *English is a global language. Mastery of the English language is imperative for future success. It is a requirement both for higher education and workplace functioning. Moreover, knowledge of English offers children self-confidence. It is no wonder that the demand for English-medium education has steadily increased over the years. When I admitted my son to the school, I was glad to see that considerable emphasis is laid on English learning in the curriculum.*

Some parents emphasized on the discipline inculcated in the students by the school. Another parent Mrs. Arti stated:

> *Apart from getting a good education, they also learn to be obedient. Private schools are known for instilling discipline among the students, CMS is one in that league.*

The school is affiliated with the ICSE board. Parents sending their wards to CMS believed that the curriculum is particularly suitable for success in competitive examinations. For instance, Mrs. Malika pointed out:

> *I chose the ICSE board for my child because I want her to succeed in a competitive examination. I believe that if the child is to have a strong educational foundation, then the ICSE board is the best.*

Furthermore, the study revealed that CMS is the dream school of the parents and that they send their children to CMS because it meets most of the criteria that they desire. As Mrs. Vibha stated:

> *If we talk about our dream school, then we can say that CMS is our dream school because everything is good here and the child is doing well. We also thought of Loreto School and wanted to send the child there, but it is not easy to send a child so far. The main thing is that we have seen the safety of the child and admitted the child to the CMS.*

Home-school proximity is regarded as one of the most significant factors to consider while selecting a school. In this regard, the study found that CMS offers transportation services to students, so they do not experience any difficulties while commuting. The study's findings also imply that one of the reasons given by parents for selecting CMS was its proximity to their residence. Parents pointed out many reasons why they prefer schools closer to their homes. In the words of Mr. Naman:

> *I believe that the distance between a home and a school is important because, if the school is close enough, a child can get home early, saving time and experiencing less fatigue. Nearby schools are particularly preferable for working parents like us.*

The tuition fee for playgroup at CMS is Rs 3700 per month and the cost steadily rises as the standard of the class rises. Further, additional fees are levied if the children participate in extracurricular activities.

Likewise, parents believed that higher fees for private schools are justifiable as they have to offer their qualified teachers respectable salaries. They considered standardized fees to be the charge that they paid for quality education. Such parental beliefs were in line with Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital. Bourdieu defines cultural capital as the non-financial social assets that individuals possess, such as education, that contribute to their social mobility (Bourdieu, 1986). In this context, paying higher fees for private education is seen as an investment in cultural capital, as it is perceived to provide children with access

to superior educational resources and opportunities compared to public schools. As Mr. Naman pointed out:

> *A private school charges higher fees because it has to maintain its infrastructure and pay its teachers. Qualified, efficient teachers come for a price. I consider education to be an investment and hence do not hesitate to pay higher tuition fees.*

Interestingly, the study revealed that parents believed in the notion that quality comes with a price. As Mr. Naman said:

> *When we pay hefty school fees, we feel that our students are getting a quality education. Everything comes for a price, and so does education.*

Furthermore, they asserted that private schools charge higher tuition fees because they offer superior facilities than those offered by government schools. This follows Krull's (2016) idea of rational choice theory, which suggests that individuals evaluate each thing based on the information given, choose the one that meets their needs, and ultimately make the purchase at a viable overall cost. In a similar vein, Mrs. Vindhya stated:

> *Although private schools can be very expensive to attend, I believe that they also offer high-quality education, which translates into academically focused coursework for the students. When we visit a government school, we find that there is inadequate infrastructure, no water system, and a lack of provisions for cleanliness and hygienic conditions. Private schools, on the other hand, have all favorable conditions facilitating good education.*

To aid pupils in their academic endeavors, the school has a well-stocked library. Moreover, the students are required to accomplish various projects and assignments. The school also offers a wide choice of short-term courses for children, such as classes for foreign languages and personality development. As Mrs. Vibha stated:

> *CMS has a rich curriculum with various co-curricular activities. Apart from regular co-curricular activities like art, music, singing, and dancing, the school actively pursues personality development initiatives. Such initiatives prove helpful for the children in the long run. CMS, for instance, recently hosted 'the 23rd International Conference of Chief Justices of the World' which was attended by delegates from 57 countries. Such events offer necessary exposure to the students.*

It was also found that the school has a sports infrastructure and provides a range of sports facilities for the kids. Parents stated that participation in sports fosters a sense of teamwork and engagement among kids, which is good for both their physical and mental well-being. As Mrs. Arti said:

> *Children benefit greatly from the sports facilities at their schools since practicing sports promotes both their physical and mental development. Children develop their ability to get along via playing games, and when they play together, they have more chances for conversations and engagement. For example, if a new student is accepted into the class, no one will talk to him for a few days, but through sports, people start interacting and striking up conversations.*

Mrs. Vindhya resonated:

> *Apart from co-curricular activities, the school attempts to offer a nurturing environment for the students. For instance, the focuses on 'child well-being', and towards this end it organizes individual counseling sessions and training on life skills for the students. It strives for the child's happiness in school and aims for their holistic development. It is no wonder that this year three graduates of the school have been admitted to Ivy League schools like Harvard, Yale, and Brown.*

One of the most crucial considerations when choosing a school is to keep the children's needs and concerns in mind since it is directly tied to the educational performance of the children. Children's needs are also important in their holistic development since schools are where they begin their formal education and whatever they learn there will stick with them for the rest of their life.

The findings of the study revealed that the majority of parents considered their children's needs as well as their personal convenience while making school choice decisions. In other words, parents evaluate all of the available options and subsequently choose the one that best aligns with their preferences and requirements. This parental preferences were in line with the principle of rational choice theory (RCT). RCT assumes that individuals carefully consider the pros and cons of several choices, form expectations about the outcomes, and ultimately choose the option that aligns most closely with their preferences (Kroneberg and Kalter, 2012). In the words of Mrs. Malika:

Both of these factors—our convenience and the child's learning capacity and aptitude—were taken into consideration when we enrolled the youngster in school. Considering both convenience and affordability (children and parents), we selected this school. I now believe that this school is appropriate for my child's learning style and aptitude. I believe this school is appropriate for the kid's abilities since the child is learning well, improving, developing well, and getting good results.

5.2.1.2 Information Gathering Process

According to the findings of the study, the majority of parents visited at least 5 to 6 schools, including CMS, before deciding on a particular school. This is similar to Kelly's (2007) explanation of rational choice theory, which argues parents look at a variety of schools and go through the information to identify and pick the best academic school for their children. Parents claimed that because CMS is one of Lucknow's most well-known schools, most parents are already familiar with the school. In the words of Mr. Virendra:

I initially had 4-5 schools on my wish list for my children's schooling. We visited St. Agnes School, Loreto School, and the Cathedral School before enrolling in this school. Throughout the school choice process, I concentrated on discipline, proximity, safety, and educational quality.

It was also observed that when parents visited the school, they concentrated on the educational quality, extracurricular activities, and school outcomes. Likewise, Schneider et al. (2000) also provide a more comprehensive decision-making process. They suggested that parents possess a collection of preferences about education and schooling; they collect information about the range of schools accessible to their children and select the school that best meets their needs.

However, it was found that grapevine was not taken at the face value of it. People compliment it with additional information. Since the middle class relies on education as the primary source of mobility, the parents were found to spend several days and weeks visiting schools in an attempt to check the infrastructure and teaching standards of the schools and then decide the best possible option for their children. This information-

gathering process of the parents is consistent with the rational choice theory (RCT). The theory points out that parents seek for the optimal educational institution for their kids, which they believe is determined by superior academic performance (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Keeping this objective in mind, parents examine a diverse array of schools and conduct an in-depth analysis of the information to determine and select the most suitable academic institution for their children (Kelly, 2007). The parents not only interacted with the school authorities but also with the enrolled students studying in the school. As one of the parents, Dr. Swati pointed out:

> *We read the prospectus, examined the board results of various schools, and then decided to visit the schools personally. We spoke to the teachers, parents, and students at the school. We continued this process for all the schools and then we made up our minds. Secondary information is not enough; physical verification is important.*

The study showed that the majority of parents visited school websites and focused on the school's ratings before making a school choice decision. Parents claimed that by focusing on school ratings, they knew about the schools' strengths and weaknesses. Likewise, Mrs. Arti pointed out:

> *There are many other branches of CMS close to our home, but the branch where we got the child enrolled had the best rating, so we did take it into consideration the rating when enrolling the child.*

Interestingly, it was found that though neighborhood had a limited effect on the school choice process, peer effect significantly influenced it. Parents were found to consult their networks and gain information about the school. This means parents collect information from their social networks that denotes the importance of social capital in the school choice decision. Bourdieu describes social capital as the final outcome of human actions and relationships within a social context or group investment strategies that are purposefully or unintentionally meant to develop or replicate social relationships that can

be instantly valuable in the short or long term (Bourdieu, 1986b: 249; Ball, 2003: 79). As Mr. Virendra argued:

> *My wife is a government servant who works in the educational field. She teaches at a government intercollege. She has many friends; some of them are teachers, and their children also go to school. When she talked to her friends and colleagues about her child's admission, they gave many suggestions regarding the child's admission to the school. When we talked to people whose children studied in CMS, they said that their children had performed commendably in board exams and other exams like civil, NEET, JEE, etc. They said that children studying in CMS perform well in competitive examinations because CMS starts preparing children in class 10 itself. It means they begin preparing the kids for the competition in addition to their regular studies.*

In the course of the study, it was observed that a few parents were influenced by such secondary information. For instance, Mrs. Palak reasoned the importance of hearsay in the following words:

> *Hearsay has some effect on school choice decisions. I was thinking about admitting my son to XX school in the primary section, but I dropped the idea when I heard that students are subjected to corporal punishment in that school.*

Nonetheless, in addition to word of mouth, parents also visited the school, gathered information, satisfied themselves, then made their own decisions, and ultimately enrolled their kids in a specific school.

Word-of-mouth, according to parents, has a significant influence on those who are new to the city or from outside when it comes to choosing a school. Also, they claimed that choosing a school is comparable to shopping for goods at a store. Parents weigh all available options before making an informed choice. The rational choice theory posits that parents and children are considered clients in the educational marketplace when making decisions about school choice (Kelly, 2007).

5.2.1.3 Parental Involvement and their Interaction with the School Administration

Parental involvement is equally crucial to a child's educational achievement in school. Parents were found to be actively involved in their wards' education because they want them to succeed both academically and in life. Parental involvement in a child's educational achievement is a critical aspect of cultural capital, as described by Bourdieu. Cultural capital encompasses the knowledge, skills, education, and other cultural assets that parents provide to their children to help them succeed academically and socially (Bourdieu, 1986). In the modern educational environment, parents' active involvement in their wards' education reflects their investment in cultural capital, aiming to enhance their children's educational outcomes and life prospects. It was also found that parents jointly selected the school for their wards during the school selection decision-making process.

The study showed that, in the majority of circumstances, both the mother and the father equally contributed to the decision-making process and came to the school choice decision jointly. This joint decision-making process reflects the mobilization of familial cultural capital, where both parents leverage their knowledge, values, and educational experiences to make informed choices about their children's education (Reay, 1998; Vincent & Ball, 2007). This joint parental involvement in school choice decisions demonstrates the collective deployment of cultural capital within the family unit. Moreover, joint decision-making in school choice can be seen as a form of 'concerted cultivation,' a parenting approach associated with middle-class families, where parents actively foster their children's talents, skills, and abilities through organized activities and educational opportunities (Lareau, 2011). Likewise, Mrs. Vindhya argued:

> *We both agreed on selecting CMS—my husband and I. To find out information about the child's admission to all three schools, both of us visited each of them. Other than that, we did not discuss this with any other family members. Together,*

> *we visited the school to observe, interact, and gather information before securing the child's admission.*

Additionally, parents also showed their involvement in the children's education. As Mrs. Palak stated:

> *I spend time with my children when they do their homework and studies. It is a form of encouragement for the children, and they see that their parents are also interested in their academics.*

The preponderance of urban middle-class homes is nuclear, hence there are very few instances where the whole family participates in decision-making.

Wankhede (1999) stated that the educational background of the parents is a significant factor in a child's education. Education promotes social mobility or, at the very least, status maintenance. Education contributes to the improvement of social and economic standing to achieve equality. While parental education contributes to achieving upward social mobility, the shift from traditional to contemporary white-collar occupations has only been made possible by formal education. The power of education served as a tool for upward social and vocational mobility. The subsequent generation reaps the advantages of their parents' education, as their wards surpass their fathers' level of education (1999, pp. 120-121).

Interestingly, it was found that mothers played an influential role in the school selection process of the children and fathers had limited access to grapevine information. The middle-class mothers had the education and cultural capital to contribute to the schooling of their children. Most of the mothers were homemakers and had the time and opportunity to participate in their children's schooling. They were responsible for transporting the children to school, interacting with the teachers, forming networks with other parents, attending PTMs, facilitating individual tutoring for their children, and assisting them with

homework tasks, etc. Dr. Swati described her role in the education of her child in the following words:

> *I believe mothers play a decisive role in the education of their children. Starting from school selection to graduation, she has a pivotal role. For instance, I regularly drop and pick up my son from school, and thereby I have acquainted myself with many parents of children studying in her class. We have formed a WhatsApp group to share information amongst ourselves. We share information about reference books, private tuition options, syllabi for examinations, school bus timings, home assignments, etc. I also make it a point to talk to his teachers regularly and monitor his studies daily….His father, being an engineer, helps him in Math and Science subjects.*

However, parents also emphasized private tuition for their children. They believed that it would aid in their education and prepare them for the upcoming task. As Dr. Neeraj explained:

> *Tuition is vital, and we must offer it to our children because it is critical in these competitive times; without it, a child cannot flourish. I believe that tutoring is becoming increasingly important in today's time because teachers are not able to concentrate or give special attention to each student in the class.*

The study revealed that these middle-class parents actively participated in their children's education and communicated with school administration to know about their children's growth. They routinely met with the school administration, particularly the class teacher, and attended parent-teacher meetings. Such parental notion reflects their investment in cultural capital to enhance their children's educational experiences and outcomes (Bourdieu, 1986). By maintaining close communication with educators and staying engaged in school activities, parents are better positioned to support their children's academic success and ensure that they receive the necessary resources and attention. This proactive approach is a strategic use of cultural capital, reflecting the parents' commitment to optimizing their children's educational trajectories. As Mrs. Arti remarked:

> *We frequently interact with the teacher about our child's progress during parent-teacher meetings, or we speak to the teacher when we pick up the child from*

school. I make it a point to meet all his subject teachers regularly…The teachers are also very cooperative and appreciate our concern for the child's education.

The success rate of children whose parents place a high emphasis on their education was found to be better than that of other children. Likewise, Dr. Swati pointed out:

I sincerely believe that the success of a child in school depends a lot on the parents. I regularly monitor my son's notebook to check his performance in school. I meet the teachers to see his examination answer sheets…If the parents are serious and involved in the education of the child, he/she is bound to do well. On the other hand, parents who are too busy with themselves and leave their children to the care of the school, find their children struggling in school. So, parental involvement is a must.

It was also found that CMS regularly monitors the academic progress of its students. In this regard, instructors routinely visit the homes of the children and speak with the parents about the students' progress, issues, and shortcomings. Similarly, Mrs. Vibha argued:

Teachers visit the student's home twice a year and inform the parents about the progress of the child and the areas in which improvement is needed. We also communicate with the teacher about the issues, if any, the child is facing at school.

In the monthly PTMs, parents mostly talk about the academic progress records of the students and the parents express their concerns, if any, with the respective class teacher and subject teacher.

5.2.2 Lucknow Public School, Jankipuram, Lucknow

Lucknow Public School (LPS) Sec-F Jankipuram was established in 2006 and is a private co-ed school that educates children from kindergarten to class twelve. The school is affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in New Delhi. The philosophy at LPS is to provide a holistic, learner-centered, comprehensive, and experiential education. More importantly, the school aims at the joyful deliverance of education to children in an equitable and inclusive manner.

As in CMS, Students applying to LPS must qualify for an entrance examination and interview. In the words of Mrs. Zareen:

> *When we talk about the school admission procedure, we mean that the child is admitted through a written entrance exam and an interview. Also, they interact with the parents a bit, trying to find out what the parents do, how far they live from school, what the parents think about the well-being of the children, etc.*

5.2.2.1 Parents Perspectives

The findings of the study revealed that many parents chose LPS because it is one of Lucknow's most famous and prestigious private schools. The school has carved out its own identity in Lucknow. In the words of Mr. Vimlesh:

> *LPS is a well-known school in Lucknow city and the board results of the school have regularly been excellent. Children are given care and attention in school. I wanted to get my child educated in a good CBSE board school and that's why I chose the school…The syllabus of the CBSE board is most compatible with competitive examinations.*

Parents favored schools with a formidable academic reputation and offering sound infrastructural facilities. These parental preferences were closely linked to the rational choice theory (RCT). In the process of making decisions, individuals are motivated by their own interests. In other words, they are endeavoring to identify the most exceptional service or product available (Herfeld, 2009). Furthermore, parents may perceive that better facilities contribute to a more effective learning environment, thus increasing the potential returns on their educational investment (Checchi, 2006). Similarly, Mrs. Sonam remarked:

> *After doing a preliminary screening, we shortlisted four or five schools based on academic reputation, infrastructural soundness, proximity to our home, etc. The schools were the same in terms of standard, my child was able to secure admission here and so we admitted him here.*

When parents were asked about expectations from school, most parents opined that schools should aim to provide a 'good education'. As Mrs. Vibha said:

> *A child should get an excellent education under the guidance of qualified teachers and have access to appropriate facilities and arrangements.*

It was observed that while choosing a school, parents placed a high value on the educational quality of the school. Thus, parents regarded the school as the best based on its educational excellence. In the context of school choice (rational choice theory) and the reasons given by Chubb and Moe (1990), individuals strive to maximize academic excellence. Parents expressed their satisfaction with the highly qualified and student-friendly teachers at school. The teachers at the school are committed to their tasks and often engage high school students with one to two hours of extra classes after school hours. Parents thus emphasized the importance of the teachers' qualities since they believed it had a direct effect on the standard of imparted education. As Mrs. Zareen pointed out:

> *A child needs a strong foundational education to succeed in life, and this education should not be compromised. In my opinion, basic education should be taught by the best-qualified teacher possible. A child who has solid foundations will not face difficulties in the future.*

Another parent, Mrs. Amrita, explained:

> *The teachers are amicable with the pupils and help them to resolve their worries. Students attend school regularly because there is a friendly atmosphere at school. So, students will become accustomed to attending school and it will result in their educational progress and overall development.*

Echoing Harinath (2016), the attitudes of the teachers within the school complex play an important role in molding brilliant minds. The issue emerges when students do not adopt the attitudes of the teachers. Teachers often act as role models for the students and motivate them toward their future careers. As Mrs. Pratibha stated:

> *A teacher is a role model for the students. He/She shapes the values and life of the student. When I was in school, my teacher motivated me to pursue mathematics. I was not very good at mathematics at that point in time but still, he was able to foresee my inclination. Today, I teach mathematics for a living….I have enrolled my son in this school with the dream that he will find his 'guru' and guiding light.*

The study also found that a school's board result reflects the educational quality of that institution. In the same vein, Mr. Sumit said:

> *The school board's result is significant in many ways: it reveals how effectively it is educating students, how the atmosphere is, and what's the standard of imparted education, etc. The school's result reveals all this information.*

Similarly, Mrs. Zareen justified:

> *While selecting a school, we emphasize the board results as it give an impression of the quality of education imparted at the school. For middle-class people like us, who depend on service sector jobs for a living, what can be more impactful than education?*

The school features state-of-the-art physics, chemistry, and biology laboratories, as well as large, well-ventilated classrooms with smart boards, a well-stocked library, and fully working computer labs with internet access. The school also features reading rooms, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, arts and crafts rooms, music and dance rooms, etc. From a security point of view, CCTV cameras are also placed both inside and outside the school.

Furthermore, echoing Harinath (2016), parents argued that in private schools, a competitive spirit is instilled in the classroom, and teachers urge the students to work hard, and even their family members assist them. If a student is struggling with a particular subject, the instructor will work one-on-one with him or her until the student masters the material. Such kind of one-to-one meeting with the students, helps them to perform adequately in the exam and also to gain self-confidence.

A major reason for the growth of private schooling and the demand for it is the medium of instruction. The desire to speak English is a major reason driving individuals to private schools, as most government schools in the region are still Hindi medium (Chahil, 2018). It was found that most parents desired that their wards should be proficient in spoken English and they enrolled their wards in private schools with such expectations. LPS is

an English medium school that follows the CBSE board curriculum. One key factor in choosing a school is the languages that kids are exposed to or study in school. The study revealed that in the current scenario, parents stress the importance of English-medium schooling. Parents believed that students' self-confidence is boosted by the availability of English-medium education in the school. Acquiring an education in the English language is also a form of cultural capital. Likewise, Mrs. Pratibha argued:

> *Acquiring proficiency in the English language is crucial for future achievements. It's interesting to note how many of us are literate in English but lack fluency in it. Speaking English fluently is essential in today's world. The rationale behind enrolling pupils in English-medium schools is that they ought to be fluent in the language. I agree with the school's initiative that requires students to speak English while on school premises. Since they don't use the language at home, this is the only way kids can learn it.*

While it is ideal for family members to communicate with one another in their mother tongue when at home, some parents make an effort to interact in English at home. This allows the children to pick up a second language in addition to their mother tongue. Learning multiple languages is essential for success in the multilingual world of today.

Likewise, parents cited several advantages of enrolling their kids in CBSE board schools. The study thus found that parents enroll their kids in CBSE board schools to get them ready for competitive examinations. Similarly, Mrs. Reema highlighted:

> *I always intended to educate my child in the CBSE board. My decision is based on the fact that the question pattern of CBSE is similar to that of competitive examinations. Additionally, the CBSE board's syllabus is concise and appropriate.*

Parents also indicated that the CBSE curriculum lucidly introduces the topics making it easier for the students to grasp, and provides in-depth information. As Mrs. Suchi stated:

> *I chose the CBSE board because it covers a broader range of topics and in-depth knowledge about various concepts. The textbooks are particularly well-suited for competitive examinations.*

Moreover, it was revealed that parents emphasized the lower teacher-student ratio in school. They believed that a higher teacher-student ratio impairs the connection between them. Most parents emphasized that they expect their students to receive adequate attention from their teachers. As Mrs. Zareen pointed out:

> *I believe that the teacher-student ratio should not be more than 1:40. A bigger ratio hinders effective learning and teachers are not able to pay attention and connect with the students.*

Similarly, Mrs. Sonam underlined the importance of the teacher-student ratio:

> *Typically, in a government school, we find fewer teachers and more students. There are at least 70 children per teacher in such schools. So, when we went for our son's admission, we checked the class size, the teacher-student ratio, etc. A child will not be able to learn effectively if the class size is too big.*

One may see that some parents do take into account the aggregate number of students registered in a school while making admissions decisions for schools. The school's strength is a clear and uncomplicated indicator of how good or poor a school is. As Mr. Sumit contended:

> *The fact that the neighborhood school (LPS) has a sizable enrollment of students implies that it is a good school.*

Furthermore, one of the most important variables to consider while choosing a school is the distance between home and school. In this regard, the study found that LPS provides transportation services to students, so the students do not have any commuting challenges. The majority of parents wanted their children to attend a reputable school closest to their home. As Mrs. Suchi reasoned:

> *Ideally, the home-school distance should be minimal. Nowadays in the urban environment, parents have plenty of good schools (to choose from) in the proximity of their homes…If the commuting distance is long, the child will be too exhausted to study in the evening. Moreover, working parents like us will find it difficult to adjust to the school timings.*

Similar concerns were resonated by Mrs. Amrita:

> *If the school is far away, parents have to rely on carpooling or school bus facilities. I am skeptical about the security of my child in such a public transportation system. I have heard of many incidents of students fighting amongst themselves on the school bus and suffer often from cuts, bruises, and serious wounds. Thus, I would prefer a school that is not more than 1 km away from my home and where I can personally drop my kid to school and ensure his safety.*

However, parents who select a school based on its brand value tend to give less consideration to distance; rather, they compromise the child's safety and health for the sake of the school's claimed excellence or brand value. To put it another way, these parental preferences indicated that they were actively engaged in decision-making and chose the best option for their children, which is in line with the notion of rational choice theory (RCT). RCT presupposes that individuals meticulously evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of numerous alternatives, establish expectations regarding their results, and ultimately select the option that corresponds most closely to their preferences (Kroneberg and Kalter, 2012). In this case, parents prioritize the perceived long-term benefits of a prestigious school, such as superior education and enhanced future opportunities, over the immediate costs, such as longer travel distances and potential safety concerns. As Mrs. Sonam emphasized:

> *When we talk about brand value and school distance, for me, brand value or excellence would be more important, and we would give it higher priority. In such a situation, distance will not matter much to me, and we will manage things somehow.*

For playgroups, LPS charges a tuition cost of Rs 2680 per month. For the higher classes, the monthly school expenses are approximately Rs 6,000 and increase based on the class grade. The school levies additional fees if parents want their children to participate in extracurricular activities and avail transportation facilities.

Findings showed that the school's fee is a crucial factor in selecting which school parents choose. It was also found that parents' school selections are influenced by their financial

situation. The majority of these middle-class parents said that the school's tuition fee shouldn't be too high or too low. As Mrs. Sonam stated:

> *In terms of school fees, it depends on the parents' financial condition and how much they are willing to pay. In my opinion, school fees should be just right—not too much and not too low. Standard tuition fees should be between 3,000 and 4,000 rupees per month.*

Mrs. Pratibha echoed in a similar vein:

> *I don't mind paying higher tuition fees for school provided my son has a good education and becoming successful in life. We, the middle class, always prioritize education and sacrifice other expenses for the sake of it.*

The findings indicated that the majority of parents had a strong preference for extracurricular activities in school. A diverse array of extracurricular activities, including athletics, arts and crafts, and cultural hobbies, are also offered by schools, the study revealed. Participation in such activities, parents believed enhanced the cultural capital needed to excel in life, achieve academically, and pursue occupations that align with upper-class lives.

Likewise, Mr. Sumit remarked:

> *The school provides an appealing range of extra-curricular activities for its pupils. Kids do everything; they watch educational documentaries, work on projects, prepare science models, etc. They also make charts related to holidays, festivals, and birthdays of well-known individuals. Together with these lessons, children are taught dancing, music, and singing by various teachers.*

Parents believed that such extracurricular activities not only enhance the academic acumen of children but also foster healthy competition among them.

Further, it was also found that the school has a sports infrastructure and provides a range of sports facilities to the kids. Such findings are in line with Bourdieu's notion of social capital. Participation in sports and extracurricular activities allows students to form valuable social connections with peers, coaches, and the community, which can enhance their social integration. These activities can also foster a sense of belonging and

community, which are important aspects of social capital. Children play many sports in school like cricket, football, volleyball, etc. In the same vein, Mrs. Reema argued:

> *Youngsters who participate in sports benefit from improved physical attributes, mental astuteness, mental growth, and active personalities. Sports breaks the monotony associated with schooling.*

The study found that parents were particularly concerned about the 'happiness' and 'adaptation' of the children in the school. The concept may appear to be subjective; it generally refers to the well-being and security of children and his/her ability to flourish in school. As a mother, Mrs. Suchi illustrated:

> *LPS ensures that education is never monotonous for children. Apart from academics, extra-curricular activities like science fairs, inter-branch elocution competitions, social outreach programs, art and craft exhibitions, clay modeling, inter-batch fancy dress competitions, etc. All these contribute to the holistic development of the child and enhance his/her adaptability in school.*

Furthermore, the needs and worries of a child should be kept in mind while selecting a school for him/her. As children start their formal education at school and retain what they learn there for the rest of their lives, meeting the requirements of children is crucial to their holistic development.

The findings of the study highlighted that the majority of these middle-class parents took their kids' aptitude and learning capacity into account when deciding which school to send them to. Likewise, Mrs. Reema stated:

> *While selecting the school, I kept in mind the aptitude and learning ability of the child. At the time of admission, an entrance examination was conducted, and my daughter was admitted to school only after qualifying for that examination. Therefore, this school was chosen based on the girl's ability to study.*

It was also found that parents kept a close observation of their children's requirements and made educational decisions for them based on their concern about not overburdening them. Similarly, Mrs. Suchi argued:

Before enrolling the child in school, we assessed his learning ability and aptitude. Our child is sentimental and gets upset quickly. I have studied in a reputed private school but preferred to not admit him to that school as there is excessive academic pressure. My son would have stressed easily. I, therefore, chose LPS for my child.

5.2.2.2 Information Gathering Process

The findings of the study revealed that most parents visited at least three to four schools, including LPS, before choosing a particular school. In the same spirit, Bell (2009) also highlighted the notion of open searches (choice), which argues that parents analyze a variety of possibilities (many schools), restrict their options, and make a decision. Parents claimed that because LPS is one of Lucknow's most well-known schools, the majority of parents are already acquainted with it. Furthermore, some parents stated that our relatives' children used to attend LPS, so we did know more about this school from them as well. This information gathering procedure emphasises the significance of the social capital that these middle-class parents possess. This informal exchange of information through family networks illustrates what Granovetter (1973) termed "the strength of weak ties." Even if these family connections are not close or frequent (weak ties), they still provide valuable information that influences decision-making. In this case, relatives' experiences with the school serve as a trusted source of information, potentially reducing uncertainty in the school choice process (Horvat et al., 2003). In the words of Mrs. Sonam said:

I shortlisted a few of Lucknow's reputed schools, visited 8–10 of them, and collected information about each of them. They are all of the same level: have excellent teachers, offer high-quality education, have enough facilities, and have a pleasant atmosphere. So, choice-making was difficult and finally, we settled for LPS because it is closest to our home and my child was selected there based on the admission test.

Mrs. Pratibha reflected differently:

These are five things that I take into account while choosing a school. I consider the educational facilities and pedagogy, accessibility, fees, the child's likelihood of adjusting, and the attitudes of the teachers.

Expressing their doubtfulness about cold information supplied by the school, a parent, Mrs. Amrita similarly reflected:

> *We are doubtful about taking all the information supplied by the school at face value. The schools will always project their positive aspects to attract more students. Therefore, it is important to do your research.*

Findings showed that parents pay most of their attention to the teachers when they visit their children's schools. They get information on the teachers from the school administration, and they take into consideration the teachers' educational and professional credentials. Furthermore, parents focus on the teachers' relationships with the children, such as how they speak to them and behave with them.

It was observed that before selecting a school, these middle-class parents looked at school websites and concentrated on the school's ratings. When a school achieves a desirable result, it advertises the achievement and post a note about it on its website. Likewise, Mrs. Noor Fatima elaborated:

> *Nowadays you can get a lot of information from the website of the school. You get to know the board results, the qualifications of the teachers, the infrastructure, co-curricular activities, the educational philosophy of the school, etc. Moreover, the school also publishes the names of the board toppers in the newspapers. So, you can get a lot of information over the internet.*

While selecting a school for their children, parents consult their friends, relatives, and neighbors and learn more about the institution. These findings denote the significance of social networks and social capital in the school selection process. Ball (2003) noted that socially advantaged families are more likely to have access to social networks that provide them with timely information, highlighting this as ‘a critical factor in the operation of all marketplaces’, with a particular emphasis on the realm of education. Parents claimed that during the school selection process, they consider the impression that word-of-mouth has created and choose the school based on it. Furthermore, parents highlighted that to

determine which school is the most suitable for their children and where to send them, they need to acquire recommendations from others. Mrs. Zareen argued:

> *The influence of hearsay cannot be ignored totally. We got to know about the advantages and disadvantages of the school from others. But these are opinions; the final decision was taken by us only.*

Nonetheless, it may be noted that personal disposition, community, and neighborhood all determine the grapevine available that is available to an individual. It is important to underline the role of habitus in the information-gathering process. As Bourdieu (1977) describes it, habitus is a term that describes the internalized patterns, perspectives, thoughts, and behaviors that are shared by persons who belong to the same group or social class. The grapevine, or informal communication channels, through which individuals gather knowledge and make decisions about various aspects of life, including education, is influenced by their habitus. For instance, individuals within close-knit communities or neighborhoods rely heavily on local knowledge and recommendations when making decisions about schools for their children. As Mr. Sumit explained:

> *Our primary source of information was our friends, office colleagues, and relatives. Also, we enquired from our neighbors about the schools that they were sending their wards to. The common source of information is newspaper advertisements, and social media marketing that the schools engage in. However, we tend to rely more on the information that is shared with us by our personal friends and relatives.*

5.2.2.3 Parental Involvement and their Interaction with the School Administration

A child's educational success depends just as much on parental participation as it does on school involvement. In the contemporary educational environment, parents are seen actively participating in their children's education because they want them to achieve in both academics and in life. This active parental involvement aligns with Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital. It encompasses the educational resources, knowledge, and support that parents provide to their children, which are crucial for their academic

achievement and broader life outcomes (Bourdieu, 1986). In contemporary educational settings, parents' active participation in their children's education reflects their investment in cultural capital, aiming to equip their children with the skills, values, and opportunities necessary for success. Research also revealed that when selecting a school, parents typically make this decision collaboratively (jointly) for their offspring.

The study found that both the mother and the father equally contributed to the decision-making process and jointly arrived at the school choice decision in the majority of cases. As Mr. Sumit stated:

> *My wife and I, together, had selected this school for the child's education. The choice to enroll the child in this school was made jointly by the two of us without the involvement of any other family members.*

Also, it was found that although the parents picked the school for their kids together, the mothers were mostly responsible for other aspects of the kids' education.

Parents were found to regularly monitor their child's progress in school. It was found that it was especially the mothers, who spent at least two to three hours helping the children with their studies. As Mrs. Amrita explained:

> *I also assist my daughter with her homework and answer any queries she may have about her subjects. Being employed in a demanding profession, my husband does not have time to look after the children's education. Thus, I play my part in helping my daughter with her studies.*

Another parent Mrs. Noor argued:

> *I graduated with a science background and hence have no issues in helping my daughter in her studies. When our daughter gets home from school, I check the school diary, class notes, and see what was taught in class and what sort of homework was assigned to her.*

The study found that these middle-class parents cared deeply about their kids' academic growth, were actively engaged in their education, and frequently kept in touch with the school administration to know about their kids' progress. They also regularly attended

parent-teacher meetings and had meetings with the school's administration, notably with the class teacher. In the words of Mrs. Zareen:

> *To stay updated about the child's academic progress, we maintain contact with the school's teachers and staff; they keep us aware of the child's progress. We meet them regularly during parent-teacher meetings. They keep us posted. Moreover, the class teacher interacts with the parents on the WhatsApp group.*

Similarly, Mrs. Suchi argued:

> *We interact with the course instructor and class teacher regarding the student's academic progress. The best part about LPS is that the teachers are always willing to assist us, should an issue arise. We receive so much help from the class teacher that we don't even need to meet the principal. We meet him if there is any specific grievance or suggestion.*

Parents in private schools are keen to participate in management meetings and provide ideas for the development of the institution. As Mrs. Pratibha asserted:

> *As a member of the Parent Teachers Association, I participate in events at the school like the school day celebrations and in other meetings that the administration of the school organizes for the parents.*

The parents who were a part of the school management committee provided suggestions regarding teaching pedagogy, students' achievements at school, curriculum development, growth of school infrastructure, etc.

Additionally, it has been observed that parents who send their children to government schools are less interested in attending school meetings than parents whose kids attend private schools. Such findings are in line with Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. Cultural capital includes the resources, knowledge, and behaviors that individuals possess and deploy in social settings (Bourdieu, 1986). In this context, attending school meetings can be seen as an expression of cultural capital, where parents actively engage with the school community to advocate for their children's educational interests and monitor their progress.

Furthermore, many parents appreciated the fact that LPS kept them informed about what was going on at school and provided them with frequent updates on their children. Parent-Teacher meetings, various school events are held on a regular basis, and the class teacher is well-aware of the progress of each child in his or her class. As Mr. Sumit highlighted:

> *I maintain regular communication with my child's educators to monitor their academic development... One day, my daughter skipped a class, and the school promptly contacted me. As a result, I am certain that I have enrolled my child in a good school.*

5.2.3 Having Faith in Private Schools

People trust not just government schools, but there is also another side to the coin. Some parents believe that private schools are helpful for their children and offer a quality education. Some argued that the very fact that there were high fees was what they regarded to be a sign of excellence. This argument is described and analyzed in Richard Thaler's (2015) 'Sunk Cost Fallacy,' in which he demonstrates that individuals find it more difficult to give up something in which they have invested more money. Likewise in his book "Predictably Irrational," Dan Ariely (2010, p. 240) states that "we make irrational judgments to the point of becoming predictable." For instance, let us suppose, a medication was available for one rupee and an identical medication was available at an expensive price. According to the irrationality principle, it will be observed that the majority of consumers will believe that the medication supplied at the higher price is more effective than the one offered at the lower price. This is the market principle used to create and present high-value branding based on exclusivity and price. While it makes sense in the market for consumer items, the rationale is applied to other spheres of social life, including schools, because high culture and segregation are associated with exclusivity and quality. The more expensive item is supposed to be superior to the less expensive

item. This adds credence to the widespread popularity of ‘unempirical rationalization’ (Chahil, 2018).

Chapter 6: Discussion & Conclusion

The study explored middle-class parents' school choice decisions in an urban Indian context. It aimed to investigate the connection between a parent's self-perception and their selection of an educational institution. In concordance with Giddens (1991) and Therkelsen and Gram, (2008), the findings revealed that selecting a school can be viewed as a type of 'consumption choice' that reflects and shapes parents' sense of who they are. Stated differently, we resonate the Bourdieusian (1977:72) contention that 'habitus' differs across the individuals from different socio-economic classes. Not only does habitus shape our cherished goals but also the means considered suitable for attaining them. Thus, an individual's attitude towards curriculum, pedagogy, examination shapes their school choice decisions. Thus, our research supports the idea that the middle class is a diverse socioeconomic group, and school selection patterns differ among its various segments. Four schools were included in the study: Basic Vidyalaya, Lajpat Nagar, Lucknow; Kendriya Vidyalaya, Aliganj, Lucknow; City Montessori School, Rajendra Nagar, Lucknow; and Lucknow Public School, Jankipuram, Lucknow.

The Basic Vidyalaya or Primary School was a free government school and children attending the school were mostly from lower-middle and working-class backgrounds. It was found that the majority of the parents enrolled their children in the school out of 'majboori' or compulsion. Their limited economic resources forced them to register their children at that particular educational institution. However, a few parents wished to send their children to non-government educational institutions, believing that these private schools offer better chances of mobility. This resonates with the observations made by Hill et al. (2011) and Narayanan (2013) that Indian parents perceive private schools to be the primary providers of quality education. Consequently, parents' own limited education

often motivated them to ensure their children's schooling. Moreover, their unfamiliarity with private institutions increased their eagerness to enroll their children in such schools.

When individuals do not have access to all the relevant information because of unawareness or cost constraints, they act on the basis of incomplete information or what Glaesser and Cooper (2014) refer to as 'satisficing'[4]. Rationality thus is 'subjective' as individuals do not always act on the best information but on the information available to them at a reasonable cost. Individuals engage in subjective rationality, which is shaped by their familial and institutional habitus.

Their inability to send children to private schools, makes parents to engage in 'defensive rationalization' i.e. the conviction that children can learn in any school provided that they have the willingness to learn and that the 'government school' tag has its credence and value in the job scenario. Parents also appreciated facilities like free uniforms, mid-day meals, free books, etc., provided by the school. Interestingly, some lower-middle and working-class parents were apprehensive about sending their children to the elite schools of the city, even if they were able to manage the expenses somehow. The reason being they were apprehensive of the success of their children in such kinds of schools. They believed that choosing a demanding school enhances the risk of failing and hence choosing a school of compatible socio-economic standards was seen as a safer option.

Though the medium of instruction in the school was Hindi, parents expressed satisfaction over the fact that English and Computer Science were taught to the students. Though they did not express much concern about the pedagogy, board, or curriculum followed by the school, they were contented that their children were gaining education. The lower-middle

[4] Actors often make decisions based on information that is reasonably priced and accessible to them, rather than necessarily acting on the finest knowledge possible. If they are uninformed that they do not possess access to all pertinent information, or if obtaining extra information would be too expensive, they may act based on partial knowledge, a mode known as 'satisficing' (Glaesser and Cooper, 2014).

and working-class parents had an instrumental view of education, a means for achieving social mobility and gaining access to a secured government sector job. Furthermore, parents rationalized their dreams and they believed that certain careers were beyond their reach and impossible for their children to achieve. The constricted dream was a result of the non-possession of enough economic resources to provide for the technical education of the children or allow their children the opportunity to pursue higher studies. In sum, they wanted their children to do better than them and lead a secure, middle-class lifestyle. We argue that school choice decisions are personal decisions and are heavily influenced by the biographies and personal histories of the parents.

Interestingly, parents appeared to be not overly conscious about sending their wards to the nearest school and were satisfied that their children were gaining education. Preference for closest schools was displayed in situations where parents expected children to return home early to assist in the household chores.

Typically, these parents engaged in ‘closed’ searches and did not explore many schools or visit the school websites before making a decision. Their choices were typically influenced by their neighbors. The neighborhood thus served as the aggregation of people having comparable socioeconomic resources. Residing in close proximity facilitated the flow and mutual sharing of knowledge. We contend that socioeconomic proximity promoted uniformity in the school preferences among the neighborhood members. Thus, when selecting a school, 'word of mouth' often exerts a stronger influence on lower-middle-class and working-class parents, who typically rely on guidance from their neighbors and relatives. These guardians can be described as 'indirect selectors', primarily influenced by their surroundings and community members. Therefore, the concentration of local children in specific schools isn't just a result of 'herding behavior', but also represents parents' efforts to build connections within their nearby families. It also saves

the parents' time and money as students attend school by carpooling or rickshaw pooling. These decisions are made within the community based on the belief that other members are 'better informed' (Baddeley, 2010). In summary, our findings indicate that school choice decisions are influenced by the personal identities of parents and the 'habitus' of the individuals involved. Finally, the children's background, learning capacity, and aptitude are not emphasized during the school selection process and the involvement of the parents with teachers and school administration was sporadic.

Kendriya Vidyalaya is a school run by the central government and it was mostly preferred by middle-class parents having government jobs. The school boasts of sound infrastructure and well-qualified teachers. Parents preferred this school as it follows the NCERT curriculum, which is particularly suited for competitive examinations like NEET, IIT-JEE advanced examination, etc. Parents underlined the fact that the textbooks are lucidly written and are activity-based. Further, parents stressed that overbearing academic pressure in private schools made them opt for KV. They appreciated the fact that children are given the scope to explore things on their own and be themselves in the school. Importantly, since KV is a well-known school brand, word-of-mouth seemed to have a limited impact on the parents. Interestingly, despite these middle-class parents having the financial capacity to enroll their children in private schools, they preferred sending their wards to KV over other schools. The choice of KV over private schools proves that for a sizeable section of the population, faith in government institutions have not been completely shaken.

It was found that the brand value of a school served as the initial shortlisting criteria. Nonetheless, by 'brand' they meant those schools that are academically reputed and are known for their educational rigor over the elite or fancy schools of the city. City Montessori School (CMS), Rajendra Nagar is a reputed private school in Lucknow,

following the ICSE curriculum. The school stipulates an entrance examination and interview for students seeking admission. Besides checking the knowledge and aptitude of students, the entrance examination comprehends the compatibility between the standard of the family and school. CMS is a school that is known for its academic rigor and hence it was a popular choice among middle-class parents. Being the 'dream' school for many, parents were willing to compromise on the 'home-school proximity' factor provided their children got admission to the school. The parents considered the excellent board results of the school (board toppers are frequently from the school), performance in competitive examinations (like medical and engineering degrees), and alumni of the school (e.g. high-ranking officials, reputed academicians, successful entrepreneurs, holders of professionally successful careers aboard, etc.) in making their decision. Additionally, parents emphasized not only on English medium of instruction in the school but also on English speaking skills of children. They considered English fluency to be a form of linguistic capital that directly contributes to the future success of the children.

In line with the Rational Choice Theory, parents considered education as a form of investment and did not mind paying hefty tuition fees for their children. They considered education as the means of attaining mobility and heavily invested in their children's education (e.g. by putting them in good schools, supporting them with private tuition, buying them reference books, etc.), and actively participated (e.g. teaching them, monitoring their progress, interacting with the teachers, helping them in the choice of career, etc.) in it. They did not put any restrictions on the dreams of their children and assumed the possibilities to be endless.

Further, word-of-mouth or grapevine did not have a major effect on the parents and they did not take it at face value. The parents made it a point to visit the school and interact with the school authorities and enrolled students before making a decision. They

consulted the school website and ratings to seek additional information about the school. Interestingly, 'peer influence' was greater than the 'neighborhood effect' for the parents whose children were studying in CMS. Parents were found to gain information about the school through their professional networks. The parental involvement, especially the mother's contribution, in the children's education was substantial and they were found to monitor the child's education at home. Mothers were responsible for transporting the children to school, interacting with the teachers, forming networks with other parents (for exchanging information about books, private tuition, special classes, home assignments, examination syllabus, information about competitive examinations, etc.), attending PTMs, arranging private tuition for the children, helping with studies and home assignments. While the middle-class parents did not display spatial propinquity in terms of residence or neighborhood, they formed a community in terms of what they know and value. Their network connections are less dense and yet they maintained strong ties and bonding networks. Their choice and association with the school aimed at maximizing the benefits for their children. Echoing Lareau (1987), we contend that middle-class culture fosters social connections among parents in the school community and gives them access to more information about education.

Lucknow Public School (LPS) is a reputed private school in Lucknow, adhering to the CBSE board. The parents chose the school because of the effective pedagogical techniques and impressive board results of the school. Moreover, because of the balanced teacher-student ratio, students get adequate attention from the teachers. Some parents opted for the school because of the curriculum that it follows; they considered CBSE board's syllabus and question paper to be particularly suited for competitive examinations. However, the choice of board (ICSE, CBSE, or UP State board) by parents was found to be subjective and parents adjudged the suitability of a board in terms of

helping their children to be successful in competitive examinations and in the foreseeable future.

Interestingly, most parents believed that the tuition fees of the school should be moderate not too high or low. Low school fees make parents skeptical about the standard of education imparted in school. Parents emphasized the inclusion of extra-curricular activities such as elocution, discussion and debate, cultural hobbies, arts and crafts, etc., in the curriculum. They believed that participation in such co-curricular activities enriches the cultural capital of the students and contributes to their holistic development. As observed in CMS school, parents did not solely rely on 'cold knowledge' (information shared by the school) in making school choices but complimented it with 'hot knowledge' (knowledge gathered by parents about school through their own endeavors). Parents contended that 'word-of-mouth' information helped in creating an initial impression about a school but they preferred to scrutinize it on their own. Importantly, some middle-class parents considered the needs of their children in choosing a school for them and they took into consideration the child's abilities, aptitudes, and emotional state in making such a decision.

In line with Rogosic and Baranovic (2016), the study found that there existed mutual expectations between the school and middle-class parents. Parents consider their expenses as investments in education and schools should offer their children the best possible infrastructure to learn. The teachers feel obligated to work in a professionally appropriate manner and cater to the expectations of the parents. Parents, on the other hand, felt responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly and monitor the studies of their children at home. Thus, parents formed a close-knit community amongst themselves, and they regularly interacted with each other on social media platforms. The middle class parents actively participated in school management

committees to offer suggestion regarding teaching pedagogy, curriculum development, and growth of infrastructure, etc. In sum, the parents maintained a rational relationship with the schools, whereby they attempted to maximize the educational gains for their children by sending them to the 'right' school. The school also treated the children rationally and equipped them with all the educational inputs and information required for educational success with the endeavor of attracting a larger number of children.

The research findings reveal a nuanced pattern of parental involvement in their children's education, particularly concerning school selection and ongoing academic support. In the majority of cases, the decision-making process regarding school choice was characterized by equal participation from both parents, with the final decision being reached collaboratively. However, beyond this initial joint decision, a distinct division of responsibilities emerged. Mothers were found to assume a more prominent role in the day-to-day aspects of their children's education. This maternal involvement manifested in several key areas: monitoring educational progress; involvement with school teachers; attending school meetings; and providing academic assistance. Notably, mothers typically dedicated a substantial amount of time, ranging from two to three hours, to aid their children with their studies on a daily basis.

The study further identified a correlation between maternal educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and level of involvement. Specifically, mothers with higher education or those belonging to the upper middle class demonstrated more active participation in both the school selection process and ongoing communication with school administration. These mothers were found to engage more frequently with school officials to obtain updates on their children's academic performance and overall progress. This pattern suggests a complex interplay between parental roles, educational background,

socioeconomic factors, and involvement in children's academic lives, with mothers often taking on a more hands-on role in the ongoing management of their children's education.

Furthermore, the research also find a notable disparity in maternal involvement and educational attainment between socioeconomic classes. In contrast to their upper middle-class counterparts, mothers from lower middle-class backgrounds demonstrated reduced engagement in their children's educational progress. This diminished involvement correlates with lower levels of educational attainment among these mothers. The study further illuminates a significant aspiration-resource gap among lower middle-class mothers whose children are enrolled in government schools. These mothers express a desire to provide private school education for their children, perceiving it as potentially more beneficial. However, this aspiration remains unfulfilled due to financial constraints. The economic limitations of these families effectively restrict their school choice options, compelling them to opt for government schools despite their preference for private institutions.

This finding underscores the complex interplay between socioeconomic status, parental aspirations, and educational opportunities. It highlights how financial resources can significantly influence not only the type of education a child receives but also the level of parental involvement in that education. The study thus reveals a multifaceted relationship between class, educational attainment, parental engagement, and educational aspirations, pointing to potential areas for policy intervention to address educational inequalities.

Moreover, the research findings highlight a significant gender disparity in the school selection process, with mothers assuming a predominant role. Notably, mothers were found to have superior access to informal, network-based information channels, often referred to as "grapevine" information, compared to fathers.

The study highlights that middle-class mothers, in particular, possessed the necessary educational background and cultural capital to actively contribute to their children's educational decisions. This advantage was further amplified by the fact that a majority of these mothers were homemakers, affording them both the time and opportunity to engage more deeply in their children's schooling matters. This heightened maternal involvement in the decision-making process is interpreted through the lens of familial cultural capital mobilization. Drawing on the work of Reay (1998) and Vincent & Ball (2007), the study posits that these mothers effectively leverage their accumulated knowledge, values, and personal educational experiences to make well-informed decisions regarding their children's education.

This phenomenon underscores the complex interplay between gender roles, social class, and educational decision-making within families. It suggests that cultural capital, particularly when wielded by mothers with the time and resources to apply it, can significantly influence educational choices and potentially impact children's academic trajectories. These findings contribute to our understanding of how social and cultural factors intersect with parental involvement in education, potentially informing future research and policy considerations in this domain.

In conclusion, we posit that parents engage in ‘subjective rationality’, shaped by their familial and institutional habitus while making school choice decisions for their children. Thus, in agreement with Glaesser and Cooper (2014), we contend that Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieusian conceptualization of ‘habitus’ are not mutually exclusive concepts but they complement each other in providing a holistic picture of the phenomenon under consideration. The occupational goals of the lower-middle and working class did not require the children to go for higher studies and hence the utility of higher education was not fully conceptualized. Parents were contented to send their wards

to a government school with sponsored amenities. On the other hand, middle and upper-middle-class parents were better informed and invested heavily in the education of their children. Since education was perceived as the only means of attaining mobility, parents preferred to enroll their children in schools that are known for academic achievements. We conclude that divergence in the school choice decisions of parents is shaped by their own habitus and 'subjective rationality.'

Finally, let us underline the interconnection between the Rational Choice Theory and the Bourdieusian perspective that was inferred in the course of this research. While RCT focuses on the individual decision-making process and the rational evaluation of options, the Bourdieusian perspective highlights the social context and the influence of social structures and capital on these decisions. While RCT assumes that parents have access to and can process all the relevant information. The Bourdieusian perspective acknowledges that access to information is uneven and is often mediated by social capital.

RCT suggests that parents aim to maximize their children's educational outcomes based on available information. The Bourdieusian perspective adds depth by explaining that parents' aspirations and perceptions of what constitutes a good outcome is shaped by their habitus and the cultural capital they possess.

From an RCT perspective, choosing a school is a strategic action aimed at maximizing benefits. The Bourdieusian perspective enriches this view by explaining that such strategies are about maintaining or improving social status within a particular field and perpetuating existing social inequalities.

RCT provides a platform for understanding the individual decision-making process based on cost-benefit analysis, while the Bourdieusian perspective contextualizes these

decisions within broader social structures and highlights the role of various forms of capitals.

Thus, integrating these perspectives can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of how and why parents choose certain schools for their children, recognizing the interplay between rational decision-making and sociocultural influences.

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Appendix: 1

कार्यालय जिला बेसिक शिक्षा अधिकारी, लखनऊ

पत्रांक–बेसिक/ 4216 /2021–22 दिनांक 7.10.21

खण्ड शिक्षा अधिकारी
जोन–4, नगर क्षेत्र,
लखनऊ

श्री अथर उल्लाह, पी0एच0डी0 छात्र, राजीव गॉधी इस्टीट्यूट ऑफ पेट्रोलियम टेक्नॉलिजी, जॉयस, अमेठी द्वारा अपने पत्र दिनांक 06.10.2021 के माध्यम से सम्बन्धित संस्थान का पत्र दिनांक 01.10.2021 इस कार्यालय में प्रस्तुत करते हुए परिषदीय विद्यालय, लाजपत नगर एवं अशासकीय सहायता प्राप्त विद्यालय त्रिलोकी सिंह जूनियर हाई स्कूल, बरावनकलां, लखनऊ में विभिन्न विषयों पर सर्वे करने की अनुमति प्रदान करने का अनुरोध किया गया है।

उक्त के सन्दर्भ में श्री अथर उल्लाह को सम्बन्धित विद्यालय में सर्वे करने की अनुमति इस शर्त पर दी जाती है कि यदि इससे विद्यालय के पठन–पाठन में कोई अवरोध उत्पन्न होता है तो प्रदत्त अनुमति वापस ले ली जायेगी।

अतः उक्त के सम्बन्ध में सम्बन्धित विद्यालय को अपने स्तर से भी सूचित करने का करें।

(विजय प्रताप सिंह)
जिला बेसिक शिक्षा अधिकारी
लखनऊ

पृ0सं0 एवं दिनांक उक्तवत्
प्रतिलिपि–निम्नांकित की सेवा में सूचनार्थ एवं आवश्यक कार्यवाही हेतु प्रेषित–

1. प्रबन्धक/प्रधानाध्यापक, त्रिलोकी सिंह जू0हा0स्कूल, बरावनकलां, लखनऊ
2. प्र0अ0/इंचार्ज प्र0अ0 परिषदीय विद्यालय, लाजपत नगर, लखनऊ
3. श्री अथर उल्लाह, पी0एच0डी0 छात्र, राजीव गॉधी इस्टीट्यूट ऑफ पेट्रोलियम टेक्नॉलिजी, जॉयस, अमेठी।

07.10.21
जिला बेसिक शिक्षा अधिकारी
लखनऊ

Scanned with CamScanner

Confidential: For Research Purpose

Appendix: 2

Interview Schedule

For Parents/ Guardians

Demographic Profile:

- What is your name?
- What is your age?
- What is your educational qualification?
- What is your occupation?
- How many children do you have?
- How many sons and daughters?
- What is their age?
- What is your Category?
  - GEN
  - OBC
  - SC
  - ST
- What is your monthly income?
  - Less than 20k
  - 21k-30k
  - 31k-40k
  - 41k-50k
  - More than 50k

School Information:

- What is the name of the school in which your wards study?
- What type of school is that:
  - Government
  - Private
- In which standard do your wards study?
- How far is the school from your house?
- What are the available transport facilities?

- What is the educational board affiliation (State Govt/CBSE/ICSE) of the school?
- What is the medium of the instruction in the school?
- What is the monthly tuition fee of the school? What are some of the additional expenses, if any? Can you give the detailed break up?
- Is the school co-educational?
- What is the teacher-student ratio in the school?
- What are the facilities offered by this school? Elaborately discuss.
- Discuss the admission process in the school?
- At what age does the admission take place?
- What are the some of the co-curricular activities offered by the school?

Parental Choice:

- Why did you choose this particular school?
- How did you get to know about this school? What was your source of information?
- How many schools did you initially shortlist for education of your children? Why did you pick up this particular school?
- How many schools did you visit before making the school choice?
- Did you compare the schools before selecting?
- Is this your dream school? If not, why?
- Why could not you send your ward to the dream school?
- According to you which is the best school in your neighborhood? Why?
- Do you think average marks that student score in the board examination should be an important criteria for school selection?
- Did you consider the child's learning capacity and aptitude in deciding the school for him/her?
- Do you think school choice criteria should be different for boys & girls? Why?
- Did you and your spouse jointly made the school choice decision for your ward? Were any other family members involved in the decision making process?
- Did you refer to the school rating in making the decision?
- How important is the word of mouth in school selection process?
- Do you think that distance of the school from home is an important consideration in this regard?

- Do you think that the reputation of school matters more than the distance?
- Is the fee of the school a consideration in making school choice?
- Do you think good school choice can influence chance of success in life?
- Would you prefer to send your younger son /daughter for the same school where their elder sibling studies? Why?
- Are you in touch with the parents of your son's/daughter's school friends? What are their occupations?
- How important is online education facilities in making school choice decision?
- Why did not you consider a private school over Government school? Give reasons.

(Either)

- Why did not you consider a Government School over private school? Give reasons.
- How important is availability of sporting infrastructure in school? Should that be criteria for school choice?
- How important is the class background of other students in making school choice decision?
- Do you think choice of school is immaterial (basic education) for success in life? Give reasons for your answer.
- Do you think that convent school offer better education in comparison to others? Why or why not?
- Are you in touch with school management/teacher of your wards to know about their progress in school?

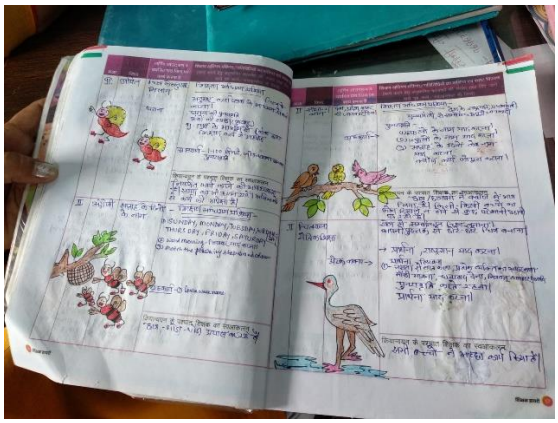
For School Administration

- Tell us about class background of the students who attend the school?
- Tell us about its history, mission etc.?
- What are the facilities offer by the school?
- How many teachers are there in your school and what is their educational qualification?
- What are the some extra curricular facilities offered by the school?
- Tell us about the board result of the school?
- Tell us about alumni of the school?

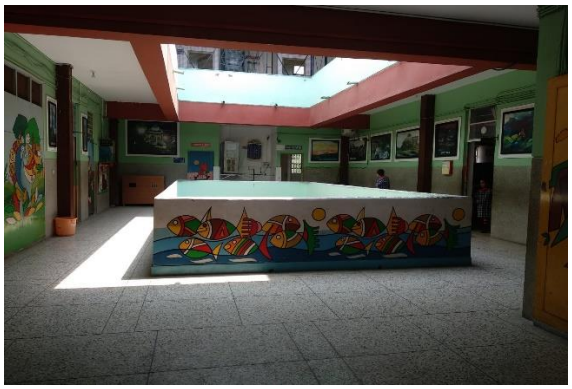
- What is the admission process of the school?
- Do you have provision for physically disabled students in your school?
- What do you look for in students during the admission process?
- Do your school follow the provisions made in Right to Education (RTE) Act in given admission to students?
- How many students study in your school?
- Tell us the distribution of students across various standards?
- How many students apply for admission in your school at the entry level?
- Why do you think the students are interested in taking admission in your school?
- Tell us about the fee breakup of the school?

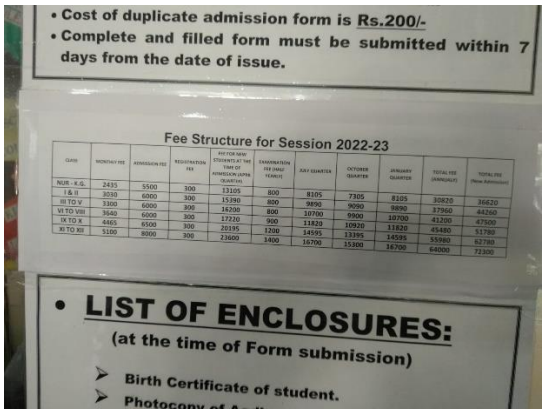
Some pictures of research field

Basic Vidyalaya



Kendriya Vidyalaya



City Montessori School

Lucknow Public School