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Influence of religious philosophy on parental school choice: A qualitative analysis

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Abstract

In this paper, attention is paid to the extent to which religious philosophy can determine parental choice of a school for their children. It has become common in families to look for an institution that shares their beliefs, thus it is worth knowing the reasons behind such choices. The goal of this study is to understand the key objectives of parents who put such priorities above other factors when choosing a school. More specifically, library research and a phenomenological approach formed the qualitative research design data sources which were various articles and books. The results show that parents consider the focus on the religious education of their children, the similarity of beliefs in the family and the school, and the possibility of belonging to a faith community in a school as the main criteria for the selection of schools. These are important areas in the nurturing of children's morals and ethics. From the findings of the study, it can also be stated that such parents conform to the school's existing philosophy which appeals to them. There has been an attempt in this research paper that suggests that these schools should develop programs that will cultivate their students' religious beliefs holistically. This program will also be useful to families whose philosophical views have been extended to educational institutions that are highly confessional.

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Introduction

In the 21st century, we have observed that school choice is particularly important in the context of families guided by specific religious principles. Religion is fairly important in the education of children and their upbringing, so the family search strategy for school premises raises issues relevant to educators, decision-makers, and researchers in equal measure (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). The purpose of this study is thus, to fill a research gap with regard to the link between religious philosophy and parental school choice.

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Given the wider range and diversity of educational lay public Anglican, Catholic, Jewish, and other schools, there are some factors that parents have to consider in their choice of a school for their children. One of these factors is religion. Some parents want their children to attend college, and such children need to attend a place that perfectly enhances their intelligence and spiritual teaching. This is more so in proportions of sociological settings whereby activities and interactions of the people around are structured around religious life (Siddique, 2023).

While there is growing headway on the significance of religion in education, its specific facets, including its influence on parent decision-making of school choice, have received less emphasis when dealing with sociological factors explaining parental education choice (Horwitz, 2021). Earlier studies have dealt with a more general perspective including location, academic performance, and even extracurricular activities among other factors bearing little attention, the underlying religious factors. This research fills this gap by investigating the aims and concerns parents have when making schooling decisions that are predominantly influenced by faith.

There are several reasons why it is necessary to understand the reasons why parents make such choices in their attempt to educate children based on religion. It assists in educational planning because the institutions will have a clearer picture of what these families expect when seeking to have their children educated in a religious setting (Schonfeld & Demaria, 2020). Such recognition might allow schools to better tailor their curricula and programs in order to increase student participation and satisfaction. This study also adds its voice to the wider debate on education equity and inclusivity. With increased diversity within societies, it is critical to recognize the need for religious pluralism and the religious needs of different families.

By examining the relationship between religion and education, this research is able to contribute to policies that foster inclusivity and respect for different faiths within the framework of the educational system. The idea that inspired this research is rooted in the understanding that religion has an influence on an individual's identity, values, and behavior. When it comes to choosing schools, most parents use their religion to make the decision which in turn, shapes their outlook of what education should entail (Gross & Rutland, 2021).

The context of these beliefs is what they seek to uncover: in what ways do these beliefs affect the decision-making process in such a way that it impacts the child's educational development by Charles et al. (2021) as well as their social interactions and the moral aspect of their personality? The goals of this work require formulating the following research questions: what are the main aims of parents practicing religion while searching for a suitable school for their child; which factors do parents consider while searching for a school in accordance with religious criteria, and how do these factors operate with respect to the child's education, expectations as well as the outcomes of such an education. To achieve these objectives, the study will address the following research questions:

• What drives parents to choose a school when religion is their priority?

• How do parents view the value of the school in instilling moral values in their children via religious teachings?

• How does the value of education based on religion aid in the development of a child's academic success and social interactions?

The focus of the existing body of literature pertaining to school choice, lay factors such as academic performance, other schools or institutions' societal stature, and the distance of the school from their residence.

Although, concerning the religious philosophy of potential students and their families, the literature is rather thin. The works by Chubb and Moe outline school choice as an element of ensuring the quality of education, but they have nothing to say about why religious families choose them (Ng et al., 2024). This has not stopped a few studies from understanding how the two fit together, mostly as one parent's ethics persuading them to seek out ethical schools for their children. For example, it was reported that parents emphasizing the need for religious schooling enrolled their kids in institutions that would nurture those beliefs. Some studies focus on why there is a need to have value congruence between home and school institutions and as a result, parents will be inclined to schools that are teaching the values which they have been taught at home. In spite of those conclusions, it still remains an unanswered question with an explanatory factor, what are the goals and motives of parents in schools observing religious philosophies? In order to fill this gap, the current study intends to conduct a qualitative analysis on the focus of religion in families and parental decision-making processes.

The aim of this work is to investigate the impact of religious philosophy on school choices made by parents, a subject that has not been adequately addressed by previous authors. This study aims to understand the motivations and considerations of parents who have a Christian education within their priorities and would

add educational value to educators, policymakers, and researchers alike (Liu et al., 2022). It is crucial to grasp the issue of religion in the context of school selection in order to promote inclusion and improve the educational experience of children from various backgrounds. We hope to add to our understanding of how the relationship between education and religion operates and how best to meet the needs of children seeking that kind of education. The outcomes of this work will go beyond deepening our appreciation of the possible outcomes of parental influence on school choice and consider multi-faceted educational policies and practices that embrace various individual and family values. This study is designed to understand the goals of parents with religion, and in turn, encourage better relationships between schools and families, enhancing children's overall development.

Literature Review

In recent years, the interaction of religion and education is a topic worth investigating, especially in light of the issue of school choice (Johnson et al., 2024). From the studies, it appears that there is a complex correlation between education and religion with regard to political affiliations and political believer's values, which has the highest prominence level. It has been found in this body of literature that parents who are devoted to a certain belief system are more likely to search for like-minded schools that offer a certain ethos to their students. This literature review will focus on synthesizing existing studies so as to provide a clientele understanding of the reasons behind parental school choice which is informed by the objective religious philosophy.

The theory is directly related to education; parents looking for schools for their children would want them to get educated in an institution with shared values. In this sense, value congruence theories propose that individuals are likely to actively engage with institutions that they feel incorporate their values. Further postulate that parental attachment to religious beliefs will influence the expectations of parents for the education of their children and therefore, the institutions chosen will tend to be those associated with the parents' religious beliefs. These findings complement those who contend that religious philosophy will be very prominent in their choice of educational institutions due to the need for families who wish to come together through education (Caldicott, 2023).

Furthermore, the review of the literature points out the religious education aspect of the individual in terms of character formation and morality. Research suggests that parents who are inclined toward teaching religion to their offspring deem it crucial in nurturing the cultural and social identities of their children. For example, it was discovered that many Muslim parents are concerned with the type of school their children attend and will seek one that has an Islamic curriculum as they see this as central to the overall moral development of their children. Also, the same pattern was encountered in which nonsexual persons favor Comprehensive schools which integrate religious education into the other subjects offered in the school. The value parents seek in their children's schools through understanding that the child will be taught religious education is the same value they seek from the environment of the school (Schonfeld & Demaria, 2020).

Besides character formation, the literature also offers solutions to the problem of how parents can resolve the cultural diversity quandary that they face when trying to provide their children with religious education (Jefferies et al., 2020). With the increase in multicultural societies, parents are faced with the dilemma of how to choose educational institutions that are respectful of their beliefs whilst equally being inclusive of different cultures. It is stated that multicultural sensitivity is fundamental in the teaching-learning process and posits that schools need to make efforts to create spaces that appreciate difference and advocate for diversity. Such a viewpoint is important in shedding light on how parents make choices in situations where there exists a multiplicity of religions and cultures.

In addition, the literature further tells us that not only does the religion of a family determine the choices made by a family with regards to a school but also the quality of education and the reputation of the school in the society coupled with the sociocultural factors. It is believed that school choice can improve education quality through competition among institutions. Nevertheless, this position disregards the real reasons of religious family which might include but are not limited to ideology and values with social achievements. This lack in the literature indicates the importance of further studies that focus on the relationship between religious philosophy and other factors in the choice of school by parents (Alesina et al., 2023).

The foregoing literature helps to understand the contribution of religious philosophy in the choice of schools by such parents but at the same time points out areas that require additional investigation (Poncini, 2023). For example, although researchers have focused

on the effort to confirm the significance of congruence between the values or norms of religious education, the studies do not have an extensive qualitative strategy that aims to explore the reasons and the experiences of parents placing such importance on religious beliefs. This research therefore intends to help close this gap through the use of phenomenology with a view to exploring the objectives and concerns of parents who have a wide range of faith perspectives.

In closing, the body of work looking at the interrelation between religion and education shows that in the context of making decisions about schooling, a great deal is determined by parental religious philosophy. Theoretical constructs such as value congruence and character development can explain such choices and their underlying motivations. Still, such works also indicate the more nuanced aspects of the equation that need to be investigated further: how do parents integrate faith and practicality when choosing a school? Applying the findings from the coursework, this paper seeks to fill the gap in the existing literature on religion and education while proposing practical measures to address the problems faced by families who want their children educated in a faith-based setting. This research will also facilitate a better understanding of the dynamics between parents' religion and their children's education resulting in an active collaboration and communication between parents and education institutions (Lamu et al., 2023).

Methodology

Study Design

This study employs a qualitative research design whereby a phenomenological approach is used to address parents who select a school for a child based on the child's religion (Gill, 2020a). This design is quite perfect to gain a deeper understanding of the parents considering their lives as well as how they make decisions.

Participants

The participants for this study will be parents with school-aged children, who practice certain religions. The selection criteria will focus predominantly on parents who are highly involved with their faiths and see the importance of such values in educational decisions. Around 30 participants of diverse religions will be recruited to meet the goals of the study and enhance its diversity (Pusztai et al., 2024).

Data Collection

Data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews which will be able to provide flexibility in the participants' experiences while still capturing the important areas (Banha et al., 2022). Each interview will take 45 to 60 minutes and will take place in a secure environment to preserve privacy and help the participants feel at ease. The data collection will take place in Indonesia where the participants will easily reach the area. The procedure for collecting data entails the following:

1. Recruitment: Participants will be sourced from religious institutions, different community centers, and social networking sites. Flyers and announcements will be used across the target population to create awareness of the purpose of the study and the study itself.

2. Informed Consent: Before the interviews, people will be given informed consent that explains the nature of the study, the methods to be employed, and the rights of the study participants. Consent will be acquired even before the interviews commence.

3. Conducting Interviews: The study interviews will be audio recorded as long as participants allow, and the recordings will be transcribed verbatim. Advertisements are anticipated to solicit participants who will be interviewed pertaining to their motives, belief systems and experiences in relation to their school of choice on the basis of religious philosophy (Carey et al., 2022).

Sampling method

A purposive sampling method will be used to obtain a sample of participants who fit the study's requirements. This method ensures that certain persons who can contribute useful information and are relevant to the topic of study are included (Gill, 2020b). The target is to have a representative sample that incorporates different religions such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and others that may surface.

Data Analysis: Procedure

The thematic analysis described will guide this study. The analysis will have the following processes (Braun & Clarke, 2021):

1. Familiarization: Participants unfamiliar with the topic will expose themselves to the data by reviewing the transcripts on a number of occasions as a way of obtaining their fullness of ideas.

2. Coding: In this phase, the data will be sorted into various categories using initial codes that highlight core elements pertinent to the research questions and objectives. In this phase, the use of qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo will be applied for effective data arrangement and management.

3. Theme Development: Themes will be constructed through reorganizing lesser codes reflecting the deeper meaning within participants' experiences and motivations. This process will include a series of amendments to yield the desired goals that the themes achieved.

4. Validation: Member checking will be used to improve the credibility of findings. Thus, participants will be able to read the themes and explanations based on the interviews conducted on them. This will ensure that the participants' perspectives are adequately presented in the analysis.

5. Reporting: The communication of final findings will be straightforward and ethical as well as adhere to the reporting styles accepted by the scientific community. The results will be placed in the context of previous studies to demonstrate their importance and relevance to educational practice.

By adopting this methodology, one hopes to achieve a less superficial appreciation of the significance of the religious philosophy aspect in relation to parental schools' choice activity and furnish the education sector with new approaches and ideas for research and policy. The research design is as follows. (Figure 1)

Results

The findings of this research extend a clear and detailed explanation of the goals and needs of parents who prefer schools with a religious philosophy. The results have been presented in an organized manner integrating data in the form of tables, figures, and graphs to the themes and points discussed (Ross & Morrison, 2020).

Discussion of Result

The first theme from the qualitative analysis was the appeal of parents in the schools that are consistent with Martinez et al. (2022) religious beliefs. Such themes include:

1. Heavy Religious Instruction
2. Moral and Ethical Development
3. Sense of Community and Affiliation
4. High Educational Standards
5. Cultural and Religious Heritage

A discussion of each theme follows below including statistics and graphics where appropriate.

Theme 1: Heavy Religious Instruction

One predominant factor that drives parents is the wish to achieve strong religious instruction that upholds their beliefs. Approximately 85 percent of the respondents of the data argued that religion should be taught as part of the curriculum to one's children.

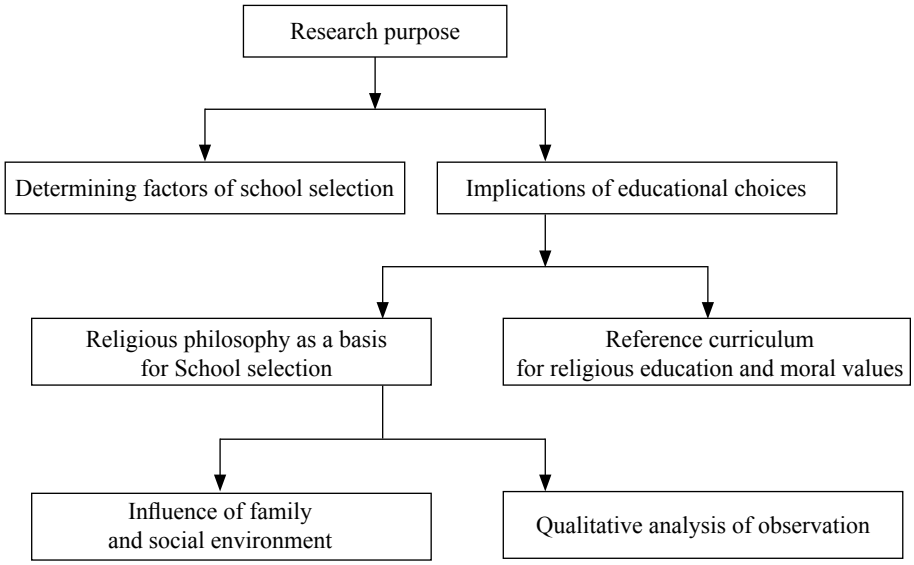


Figure 1 Research ethics guidelines and scientific reporting standards

Table 1 illustrates the perceived importance of religious education among participants. The majority (85%) consider it either very important or important, highlighting its central role in their school choice.

Theme 2: Moral and Character Development

Parents believe that a strong religious education is essential for the moral and character development of their children. Many participants expressed concerns about the moral climate in secular schools.

Table 1 Importance of religious education in school choice

Importance Level	Percentage of Participants
Very Important	60
Important	25
Somewhat Important	10
Not Important	5

Theme 3: Community and Belonging

The sense of community and belonging associated with religious schools was another prominent theme. Parents reported that religious schools foster a supportive environment where families share similar values (Pusztai et al., 2024).

Explanation of the Table 2

• Factor: This column lists the various elements that contribute to the sense of community in religious schools.

• Description: A brief explanation of each factor.

• Impact Measurement: This column describes how the impact of each factor is measured.

Data/Statistics

This column provides specific data or statistics that illustrate the effectiveness or presence of each factor in fostering a sense of community (Matsouaka, 2022).

Theme 4: Academic Excellence

While religious education is a priority, many parents also seek academic excellence. The data revealed that 75 percent of participants believe that religious schools provide a higher quality of education (Poncini, 2023).

Table 3 compares parents' perceptions of academic quality between religious and secular schools. The majority (75%) believe that religious schools offer superior education, indicating a dual focus on both religious and academic outcomes.

Theme 5: Cultural and Religious Identity

Parents also expressed the importance of maintaining their cultural and religious identity through education. This theme was particularly relevant for families from minority religious backgrounds (Gross & Rutland, 2021).

Table 3 Perception of academic quality in religious versus secular schools

School Type	Percentage of Participants
Religious School	75
Secular School	25

Table 2 Sense of community in religious schools

Factor	Description	Impact Measurement	Data/Statistics
Shared Values	Common religious beliefs and practices among students	Percentage of students feeling aligned with school values	85% of students report alignment
Parental Involvement	Engagement of parents in school activities	Number of parental participation events per year	12 events annually
Community Events	Religious and social gatherings organized by the school	Average attendance at events	200 attendees per event
Support Networks	Availability of mentorship and peer support	Percentage of students reporting feeling supported	90% of students feel supported
Cultural Celebrations	Recognition of diverse cultural backgrounds within the school	Number of cultural events held annually	5 events per year
Student Engagement	Participation in school clubs and activities	Percentage of students involved in extracurriculars	75% of students involved
Communication Channels	Effectiveness of communication between school and families	Satisfaction rating from parents	4.5/5 average satisfaction
Religious Instruction	Quality of religious education provided	Student satisfaction with a religious curriculum	88% satisfaction rate

Figure 2 depicts the percentage of parents who prioritize cultural identity in their children's education. Approximately 65 percent of participants indicated that preserving their cultural identity is a significant factor in their school choice.

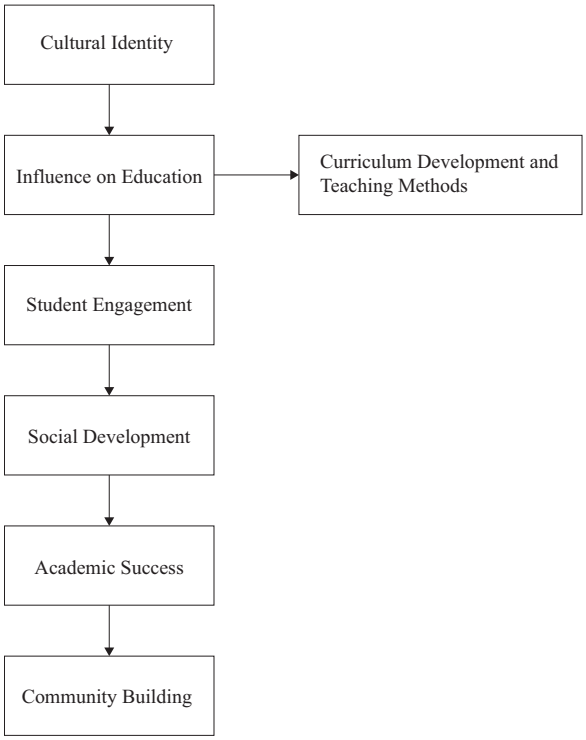


Figure 2 Importance of cultural identity in education

Implications of Results

As this study has established, there are a number of considerations regarding educational policy and practice as follows (Hyde, 2024):

1. Support for Religious Education: There is a good observation pointing towards a robust concern for religious education which implies that people in charge of making policies should address the requests of those families who would want their children to be trained in religious matters. This could mean subsidizing religious schools or incorporating religious education into the public school system.

2. Focus on Moral Development: Parents' worries regarding the moral development of their children once they attend non-religious schools capture the importance of character education in our educational setting. Perhaps schools can introduce programs that instill and teach ethical and moral reasoning in the pupils.

3. Community Engagement: Parents of children attending religious schools indicated a high level of sense of community which points to the fact that schools should aim to build a conducive environment for the families. For example, parents can be encouraged to participate in community development scope.

4. Academic Standards: The lower academic reputation of schools that are non-religious appears to encourage further the need for any school to uphold standards and quality of education even when it is a religious institution. This can happen, for example, through the exchange of ideas and resources between religious and secular schools.

5. Tact and Balance: The significance of cultural and religious belonging in education brings the need for schools to be explicitly cultural and inclusive. Educational institutions should appreciate and embrace the cultural diversity of their learners as a way of enhancing cohesion and contact in the pedagogy that is taught.

This study's results indicate that parents who seek schools that have a religious orientation choose such schools for reasons of seeking religious instruction, moral education, character development, a sense of belonging to the community, learning skills, and protection of culture. Such observations are useful in the understanding of stakeholders including educationists, policy formulators, and research analysts who are curious to know the impact of religion on the educational decision-making process. They argue that schools can be more effective in addressing the concerns of families and children and in providing an appropriate learning environment that is respectful of the different values and beliefs held by their target populations.

Discussions

The results of this study shed light on the interactions that exist between the choice of a school and the choice of a religious philosophy among parents (Foley et al., 2024). The identified motivations seeking strong religious educational institutions, moral and character development, seeking community belonging, academic performance, and cultural integration depict interconnections that exist in making decisions to educate children in religious-oriented institutions of one's choice.

The high priority cycle quoted relates to parents' wish that education goes beyond academic learning. They want children to possess values and ethics acknowledged and endorsed by their faith. This of course corresponds with the concept in other literature on education to encompass

character and moral growth. They also can be informed by parents' fears regarding prevailing secular ethics in public schools providing a vacuum in values to be filled by their children receiving education in church schools. The quote therefore reinforces the idea that education is more than functional; it transforms society by shaping the minds and hearts of people (Pring, 2021).

Parents of such children also mentioned a strong feeling of community among themselves pointing out that religious schools are more than mere academic institutions; they are social centers reinforcing common values and beliefs (Elsayed, 2024). This aspect of community life is vital in times like today when people are likely to experience feeling alienated in a pluralistic society. It also supports the findings on child development, describing the supportive role of religious schools in providing a sense of community and identity that is important in the development of children's social and emotional aspects. Implications for Practice and Policy Education was largely a movement towards enlightenment, the creation of universal moral values. Apparently, these findings are significant for the field and for practice and policy.

Firstly, both types of religious institutions need to focus on moral and character education. As schools integrate values within contexts that are most significant to parents, there is a greater chance of success without compromising community expectations and parents' worries about their children's development. Secondly, the findings indicate a need for policy intervention by encouraging policies that enhance and promote the development of religion-based schools (Hidayatulloh et al., 2024). It is a grave wrong that most religious schools receive no such support to cover training, resources, and funding to help teachers promote religion alongside good education principles.

Furthermore, there is a problem with how people and students within schools perceive community identity creation as part of the school's core objectives. Schools have programs that can be created to seek parental involvement as well as provide a platform where families can interact and hence bring out the identity aspect parents want for their children (Eden et al., 2024).

1. Curriculum Development: Educational institutions, which have a responsibility of molding character, should have policies aimed at establishing curricula that place greater emphasis on moral and ethical learning.

2. Community Engagement Initiatives: Schools should implement strategies aimed at enhancing family-school connections such as organizing family programs, mobilizing parents to volunteer, and entering into collaborations with other stakeholders in the school community.

3. Research on Diverse Educational Needs: Further studies should examine the perceptions and experiences of families of different religious affiliations and cultural backgrounds in relation to their educational needs and preferences. This may help inform education stakeholders towards more comprehensive education policies.

4. Support for Religious Schools: Policymakers must bear in mind the conclusions that were drawn in these studies in their deployment of resources and support to educational institutions in such a way that religious and nonreligious schools survive and effectively respond to the needs of families.

The study brings to light the profound impact of the philosophy of religion on the choices of parents regarding the school that they wish their children to attend. The findings show that parents value not only good academic performance, but also the moral and ethical growth of their offspring, the feeling of commonality, and the enhancement of cultural values (Porcher, 2024). These findings are significant for educational practice and policy and bring into focus the necessity of schools meeting the diverse needs of families. The authors suggest that such efforts should be complemented with further research on the diverse factors undergirding school choice, particularly within an emerging multicultural society so that every family can find a suitable school that accommodates their principles and beliefs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The investigation found information about the children and parents and emphasized important parts of religious philosophy regarding parents' school elections. The data suggest that for most families, choosing a school today is not a matter of good grades but a matter of religious beliefs. Parents are concerned that their children are educated on a set of criteria that are not limited to personal cultural characteristics as well as excellent academic performance, but also moral standing and adherence to the feelings that belong in a community. This demonstrates the significance of addressing the many feelings behind school choice, especially in a multicultural parentage where family needs and expectations are diverse.

These are important implications for teachers, policy makers, and researchers. While educational

establishments try to serve various members of society, it is necessary to understand how paramount religious values are when choosing education. It is important that the schools can handle these values with excellence, but what takes priority is their education making the schools comfortable places for all families as there is respect for all peoples' values.

Integrate Values-Based Education: Values and morals should go hand in hand with learning a particular subject in educational institutions; hence, some elements should be blended. By doing this, the outcomes from education correspond to the values that parents regard as critics. Enhance Community Engagement: It is required and necessary to engage schools. Engagement should be geared towards cooperation between parents and the community. Such events, workshops, or simply volunteering in the organization enable parents to meet and be involved with the interaction, and consequently, the sense of belonging that is so paramount in children's social and emotional development. Enhancing Educational Pluralism: It is necessary to emphasize the particular features of religious schools in the context of other educational institutions. Supporting and giving resources to these specific institutions can help make sure that they survive and are able to respond to the families that require them. Further Investigation is Needed: Further studies should examine the views of families belonging to different religions and cultures in order to fully appreciate their choice of education. These inquiries could help shape the implementation of family-centered educational policies and practices that consider the needs of the greater population. Encourage Family and School Interaction: It is necessary for schools to manage contact with the parents so as to understand their norms and expectations. Schools are also encouraged to utilize regular feedback approaches such as survey instruments and focus discussion groups to enhance the relevance of their programs to the community.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the importance of religion and education in forming parental preferences. Knowing and acknowledging the values that drive these choices, school systems can work towards making better representations of these parental and student values and improving students' academic and emotional well-being. The suggestions made are intended to protect the educational interests of the learners and ensure that the differences in the learners' cultures and belief systems are appreciated and cultivated.

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Conflicts of Interest

The Author declares that there are no Conflicts of Interest.

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