



European International University, EIU-Paris

Doctoral Thesis

Title:

Exploring Factors Influencing Parents' Choice of Private and International Schools in Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.

Submitted by:

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**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Professional Doctorate in Education Administration & Leadership**

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JULY, 2025

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out following the regulations of the Asian College of Teachers and the European International University of Paris which are original except for those indicated by specific references in the text. No portion of the thesis has been turned in for credit toward any other degree. The thesis has not been presented to any other educational institution. Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

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Abstract

This study explores the factors influencing parents' choices of private and international schools in Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia, using Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as the theoretical framework. Employing a convergent parallel mixed methods design, both quantitative data ($n = 109$) and qualitative ($n = 15$) insights from semi-structured interviews were analysed to gain a comprehensive understanding of parental decision-making. Constructs examined included Attitude Toward Behaviour (ATB), Subjective Norms (SN), and Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC), all of which were found to significantly influence Behavioural Intention (BI) in school selection. The findings highlight key influencing factors such as school fees, location, teacher quality, syllabus, environment and policy clarity, with nuanced variations based on socio-economic background and parental priorities.

The quantitative analysis, conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), confirmed that ATB and PBC were the strongest predictors of BI, while SN showed a moderate influence. Qualitative results further contextualised these findings, uncovering themes such as academic reputation, teacher retention, parental involvement, and concerns about governance and transparency. The study not only confirms the applicability of TPB in a non-Western urban educational context but also contributes practical recommendations for school leaders and policymakers to improve school competitiveness and parental satisfaction.

This research offers significant theoretical and practical contributions by linking behavioural constructs with real-world school selection behaviours. Limitations of the study and directions for future research are discussed, with emphasis on broader demographic sampling, multilingual survey instruments and the inclusion of longitudinal data. The findings provide valuable insights for educational institutions, government agencies, and researchers seeking to understand or influence school choice behaviour in Subang Jaya's evolving educational landscape.

Keywords: School choice, Theory of Planned Behaviour, private education, international school, parental decision-making, Malaysia, PLS-SEM, Subang Jaya.

Disclaimer

This thesis, titled “*Exploring Factors Influencing Parents’ Choice of Private and International Schools in Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia,*” is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Professional Doctorate in Education Leadership and Administration with the Asian College of Teachers and the European International University of Paris.

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this research are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asian College of Teachers, the European International University of Paris, or any affiliated institutions.

This research complied with ethical guidelines, and all necessary approvals were obtained. Participation in this study was voluntary, with informed consent secured from all respondents. All data collected has been anonymised to protect participants' privacy, and any resemblance to real individuals or institutions is purely coincidental.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information presented, the author assumes no responsibility for how third parties interpret or use the research findings. Any errors or omissions are the sole responsibility of the author.

Wendy Gan Ai Ling

July 2025

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Tamogni Das, my supervisor, for her invaluable guidance, unwavering support, and insightful feedback throughout this research journey. Her expertise and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping this thesis, and I am truly grateful for her patience and dedication.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all the parents who participated in the surveys and interviews for this study. Their willingness to share their experiences, insights, and perspectives has been crucial in enriching the findings of this research. Without their contributions, this study would not have been possible.

A special thanks to my family and friends for their continuous support, patience, and encouragement throughout this journey. Their unwavering belief in me has been my source of strength and motivation, helping me navigate the challenges of this academic pursuit.

Last but not least, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those whose names might not appear in these lines but have played an essential role throughout this doctoral journey. Your kindness and encouragement have made this achievement possible.

With sincere appreciation,

Wendy Gan

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List of Abbreviations	
Abbreviation	Meaning
ATB	Attitude Toward Behaviour
BI	Behavioural Intention
PBC	Perceived Behavioural Control
SN	Subjective Norms
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modelling
MOE	Ministry of Education (Malaysia)
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SD	Standard Deviation
R ²	Coefficient of Determination
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
T-stat	T-statistics
p-Value	Probability Value
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RM	Ringgit Malaysia
GLC	Government-Linked Company

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Malaysia's education system, governed by the Ministry of Education (MOE), provides free public schooling from ages 7 to 18, comprising six years of primary and five years of secondary education (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020). Public schools in Malaysia follow a standardised national curriculum, which includes Malay-medium national schools, Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools at the primary level, and Islamic religious or vocational schools. At the secondary level, vernacular streams are discontinued, and Malay becomes the main medium of instruction, while English is taught as a second language and other languages are offered as electives (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2021).

In addition to public schools, Malaysia has a diverse range of private and international schools. Private schools may follow the national curriculum, often with enhancements, the international IGCSE syllabus, or the independent Chinese curriculum used by Chinese independent high schools. International schools typically offer foreign curricula such as Cambridge, IB, American, or Australian systems. Homeschooling and special education are also available for students with specific needs. Despite the uniformity of the public-school curriculum, increasing parental preference for private and international options reflects a perceived value in alternative education paths (UNESCO, 2019).

In Malaysia, international schools were initially designed for children from other countries, but in 2006, the government opened them to Malaysian pupils. This policy change sought to keep middle and upper-class Malaysians who were previously sending their children to private schools or overseas, lessen the brain drain, and offer more varied educational options. The growing demand for private and international schools outside the public school system has propelled the growth of Malaysia's private education sector over the last few decades. Private and international schools in Malaysia now provide a variety of syllabi, giving students choices that meet international standards and facilitate international university admissions. These schools also provide culturally varied environments, encouraging global awareness and social flexibility, which are highly valued by expatriate parents (Lee & Teng, 2019).

Malaysia has established itself as a major educational hub in Southeast Asia, attracting local and international students in response to the rising need for private and international educational opportunities. Initiatives such as Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H), Special Economic Zones (SEZ), and Special Financial Zones (SFZ) which grant students and their guardians long-term visas, have been instrumental in drawing in international families and bolstering Malaysia's standing as safe and stable educational destination (Tan & Lee, 2021). To align with this ambition, Malaysia's significant investment in its educational infrastructure, which supports both public and private institutions, demonstrates its broader goal of becoming an educational hub. With more families choosing Malaysia for their children's education from nations like China, Indonesia, Middle East and others, the recent relaxation of MM2H regulations further demonstrates Malaysia's dedication to facilitating foreign student enrolment. Table 1.1 shows the distribution of international schools across different states in Malaysia as of February 2025.

Table 1.1: International schools across different states in Malaysia.

Source: International School Database (February 2025), Ministry of Education Malaysia

State	Number of International Schools
Kuala Lumpur	118
Selangor	50
Johor	25
Penang	12
Perak	9
Sarawak	6
Malacca	4
Kedah	3
Pahang	5
Sabah	4
Terengganu	1
Kelantan	1
Labuan	1

According to the Ministry of Education Malaysia, Selangor has more private and international schools than any other state in Malaysia, with 50 in total. Subang Jaya, Shah Alam, and Petaling Jaya are home to most of these institutions, and their numbers are still increasing (Education Destination Malaysia, 2024).

Subang Jaya has developed into a thriving metropolitan hub, known for its diverse amenities, thriving residential areas, and strong emphasis on quality education (Education Destination Malaysia, 2024). The city has seen significant growth and has become a popular destination for both locals and foreigners. The presence of famous higher education institutions such as Monash University Malaysia, Taylor's University, and Sunway University, which further contributes to its position as Malaysia's major urban region. Furthermore, Subang Jaya hosts a wide array of academic institutions, including prestigious private and international schools, all offering diverse curricula to meet varied educational needs. This makes it an appealing option for families looking for a globalised education for their children. Students may easily transition from secondary school to college and postgraduate courses directly in the city, making it a one-stop location for a complete education.

Table 1.2 presents a comprehensive list of international and private schools currently operating within Subang Jaya, Selangor, as of May 6, 2025. This compilation includes both smaller and prominent institutions, specialised schools offering various curricula. The data was obtained from official school websites and reputable education directories to ensure accuracy and applicability for this study.

Table 1.2: Private and International School in Subang Jaya, Selangor.

Source: Education Destination Malaysia 2025, Edarabia 2025, School Advisor 2025, WikiMili

No	School Name	Curriculum(s)	Levels Offered	Website
1	Maple Leaf Kingsley International School	British, IGCSE	Preschool to Secondary	kingsley.edu.my
2	UCSI International School	British, IGCSE, IPC, IB	Preschool to Pre-University	ucsiinternationalschool.edu.my

3	Fairview International School	International Baccalaureate (IB)	Primary to Secondary	fairview.edu.my
4	Sunway International School	Canadian, IB	Secondary to Pre-University	sis.sunway.edu.my
5	Asia Pacific International School	British, IGCSE	Preschool to Secondary	apschools.edu.my
6	Sri Kuala Lumpur International School	British, IGCSE	Primary to Secondary	srikl.edu.my
7	Sri KDU International School,	British, Cambridge, A-Levels	Preschool to A-Levels	srikdu.edu.my
8	Eagles Grammar International School	Cambridge, IGCSE	Primary to Secondary	eagles.edu.my
9	Oakbridge International School	Cambridge, IGCSE	Preschool to Secondary	oakbridge.edu.my
10	Pine Hills International School	Cambridge, IGCSE, A- Levels	Preschool to A-Levels	pinehills.edu.my
11	HIS International School	British, IGCSE	Primary to Secondary	his.edu.my
12	Rafflesia International School	Malaysia Syllabus, British, IGCSE	Preschool to Secondary	ris.edu.my
13	Taylor's International School	British, IGCSE	Preschool to Secondary	www.tis.edu.my
14	Regent International School	British, IGCSE	Primary to Secondary	www.regent.edu.my
15	Inspiros International School	British, IGCSE	Primary to Secondary	www.inspires.edu.my
16	British Circle Scholar	British, IGCSE	Primary to Secondary	www.britishcircle.edu.my
17	Axcel International School	British, IGCSE	Primary to Secondary	axcel.edu.my
18	Right Bridge Academy	British, IGCSE	Secondary to O-Level	www.rightbridge.edu.my
19	Aletheia Resource Centre	British, IGCSE	Primary to Secondary	www.aletheia.edu.my

20	Prinz International	British, IGCSE	Primary to Secondary	www.prinz.edu.my
21	At-Tamimi International Islamic School	Cambridge (IGCSE) Islamic Curriculum	Primary to Secondary	attamimi.wixsite.com/website
22	Brainy Bunch International Islamic Montessori School	Cambridge (IGCSE), Islamic Curriculum	Preschool to Secondary	www.brainybunch.com
23	Prime International Secondary School	British, IGCSE	Primary to Secondary	www.prime.edu.my
24	Campus Rangers International School	British, IGCSE	Preschool to Secondary	www.campusrangers.edu.my
25	Collinz International School	British, IGCSE	Preschool to Secondary	www.collinz.edu.my
26	Victory Academy	British, IGCSE	Primary to Secondary	victory.org.my
27	Sri Leo International School	British, IGCSE	Preschool to Secondary	leointernational.edu.my
28	Sunnybank Hills International School	British, IGCSE (Special Needs)	Primary to Secondary	www.sunnybank.edu.my
29	Beaconhouse International School	Cambridge, IGCSE, A Levels	Preschool to Pre-University	beaconhouse.edu.my

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Parents' preference for private and international schools in Subang Jaya, Selangor, has become a significant phenomenon in recent years. There are many compelling factors for this tendency that demand more research. Between 2019 and 2024, Malaysian students' enrolment in private schools increased by 34%, with local students accounting for more than 67% of all enrolled pupils in private and international schools nationally (Straits Times, 2024). The sector grew in reaction to perceived limitations in public education, including curriculum modifications and legislative changes that frequently interrupt educational continuity.

Over the past ten years, Subang Jaya has seen a rapid increase in private and international schools. This growth increases school competition by giving parents access to more educational

options. School administrators can adjust their offers to match parental expectations and preserve competitive advantage by better understanding the elements influencing parents' decisions (Ismail et al., 2018). Although studies on parents' school preferences have been carried out in other areas, Subang Jaya has not yet seen a thorough investigation of this topic. The metropolitan location, multicultural population, and high socioeconomic standing of the locals make the place unique and may have a particular impact on parental preferences. Examining this context-specific behaviour closes a research gap and adds to the body of knowledge on Malaysian educational choices (Tan, 2017a).

For schools seeking to differentiate themselves in a competitive market, knowing how they handle this complexity while taking into account elements like curriculum, school reputation, academic achievement, extracurricular activities, and fee structures can be beneficial (Cheah & Abu, 2020). The awareness of international education standards among parents has increased due to globalisation. In the eyes of many parents, private and international schools offer higher-quality education and better preparation for the future world. It is important to investigate how these attitudes affect school choice, especially in a place like Subang Jaya, where local parents with an international mindset coexist with expatriate families (Lee & Teng, 2019).

Parental goals, affected by socioeconomic position, have an important effect on school choice. Higher-income families may prefer schools that provide comprehensive education, foreign curriculum, or cutting-edge facilities. Middle-income families, on the other hand, may seek the most cost-effective solutions. Understanding these patterns allows for more efficient market segmentation (Mokhtar and Ahmad, 2021). Government education policies, such as the liberalisation of private education and the promotion of international schools, significantly influence family decisions. Examining the influence of these policies on parents' decision-making processes leads to a better understanding of the relationship between policy and consumer behaviour (Yusof & Choo, 2016).

The study investigates parental school selection decisions, focusing on the implications for educational planners, administrators, and policymakers. By investigating local preferences and trends in Subang Jaya, the study provides insights into how parents navigate educational choices, which can be used to design responsive policies, enhance school marketing strategies, and improve educational results.

1.3 Problem Statement

In recent years, Subang Jaya, Selangor, has experienced a surge in the number of private and international schools as shown in Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2. This rapid increase is largely driven by high parental demand for alternative educational options, highlighting a significant shift away from local public schools (Ismail et al., 2018). The Malaysian education system has undergone numerous changes and reforms since the nation's independence, driven by the evolving needs of the country, including economic development, social integration, and global competitiveness. These reforms range from curricular adjustments to major policy shifts, most notably outlined in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 - 2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2021).

While general school choice dynamics have been studied, there is limited research focusing specifically on the preferences of parents in the context of Subang Jaya. Growing dissatisfaction with the local public school system and its teaching methods has led many parents to question its effectiveness. Although educational reforms are often introduced to improve academic quality, the frequent and sometimes abrupt nature of these changes has raised concerns about the stability and long-term viability of the national education system. Parents worry that constant reform may leave their children ill-prepared for the future, prompting them to seek more stable and globally recognised educational alternatives (Straits Times, 2024). These concerns stem from changes such as the removal of standardised examinations, rigid curricula, rote learning methods, and a lack of focus on critical thinking skills (Tan, 2017b). Consequently, many perceive public schools as overly reliant on memorisation and spoon-feeding, raising doubts about their ability to prepare students for the demands of modern society. This declining confidence has driven parents to consider private and international schooling options.

Figure 1.1: The increasing number of private and international schools in Subang Jaya from 2020 to 2025.

Source: Education House Homeschool, Education Destination Malaysia and Edarabia.

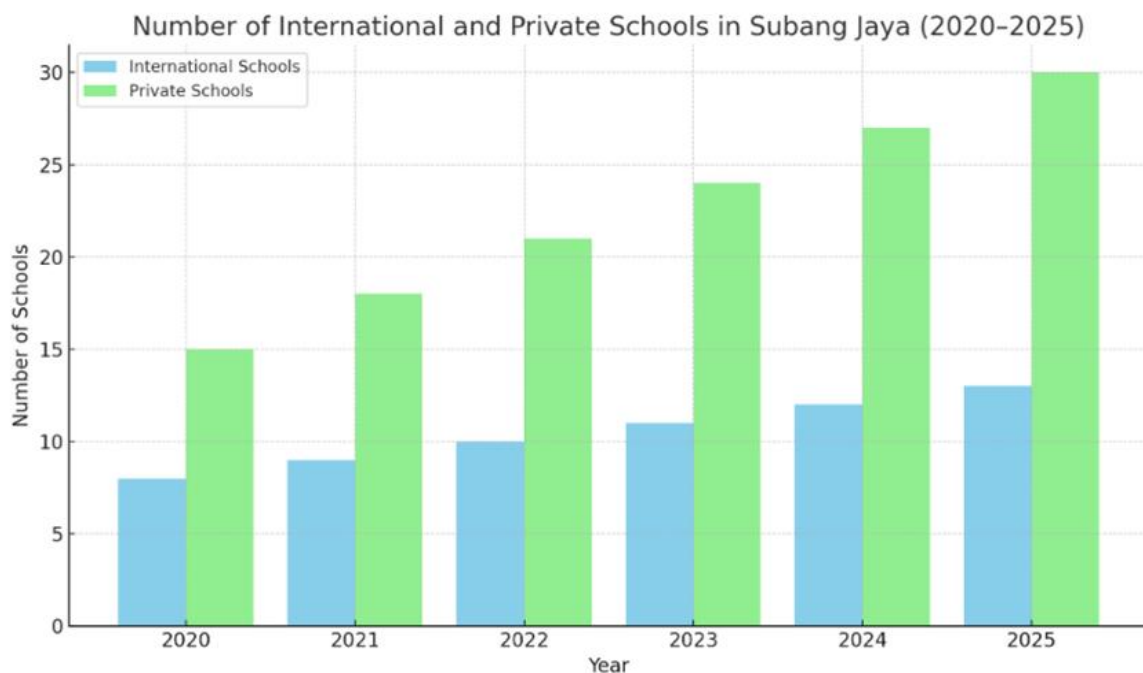


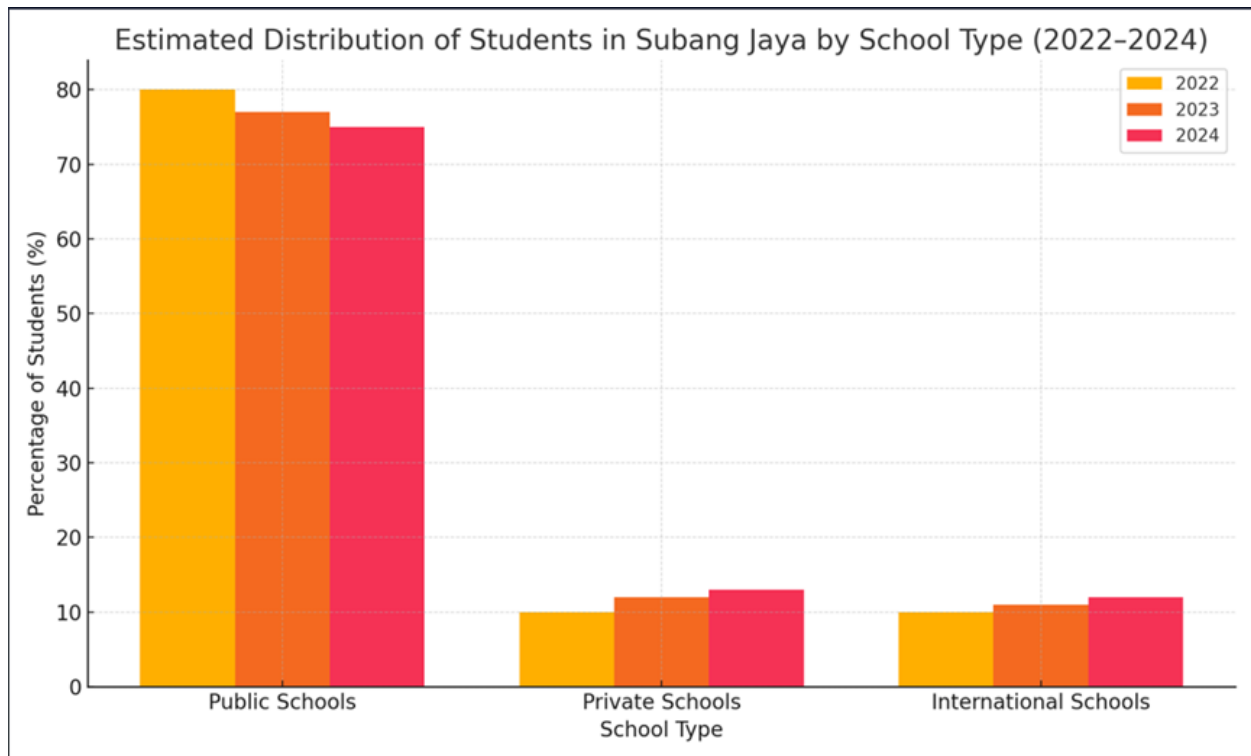
Table 1.3: National Trends in Student Enrolment (2022 – 2024)

Source: The Edge Malaysia 2024

National Trends in Student Enrolment (2022 – 2024)			
Year	Public Schools	Private Schools	International Schools
2022	Majority	Growing	58,300 students
2023	Majority	Increasing	~ 80,000 students
2024	Majority	Increasing	88,951 students

Figure 1.2: Estimated distribution of students in Subang Jaya by school type for year 2022 to 2024

Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia 2024, The Edge Malaysia 2024, Malay Mail 2024



In contrast, private and international schools are seen to provide more adaptable and student-centred learning methodologies. These schools often offer customised grade placement depending on students' ability, allowing for personalised education that addresses individual learning requirements. Additionally, they provide a condensed curriculum that includes fewer but more relevant topics, allowing students to focus on areas critical to their future university education and career pathways. This flexibility is especially appealing to parents who want a well-rounded education that emphasises academic performance and holistic development (Mokhtar & Ahmad, 2021).

1.4 Research Questions

1. How do parents' attitudes toward private and international schools influence their intention to enrol their children in these schools over public education?
2. To what extent do subjective norms, such as social pressures or expectations from family, peers, or community, affect parents' decision to choose private or international schools?

3. How does perceived behavioural control, including financial capacity and access to educational information, impact parents' ability and intention to select private or international schools?
4. How well do the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control) predict parents' behavioural intention to enrol their children in private or international schools in Subang Jaya?

1.5 Research Aim and Objectives

To achieve the aim of this study and to provide a structured approach to the investigation, the following research objectives have been formulated:

1. To examine how parents' attitudes toward private and international schools influence their intention to choose these schools over public education.
2. To analyse the influence of subjective norms on school choice, such as the role of family, peers, and societal expectations in shaping parental decisions.
3. To assess how perceived behavioural control, including financial ability and access to information, affects parents' intention and ability to enrol their children in private or international schools.
4. To evaluate the overall predictive power of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on parents' behavioural intention to select private or international schools in Subang Jaya.

1.6 Significance of the research

This study has important implications for stakeholders in Malaysia's education landscape. Despite free public education, many parents opt for private and international schools due to a range of influencing factors. Understanding these preferences can inform future research, policy, and institutional practice.

For policymakers, the findings shed light on why parents perceive limitations in public education, prompting a shift toward alternative schooling. This insight can guide improvements to national schools and policy reforms aimed at raising their competitiveness and appeal

(Morshidi, 2010). For private and international school administrators, the research offers valuable market intelligence. Recognising parental expectations can help refine marketing strategies, academic offerings, and admission practices. Institutions that align more closely with parent priorities, such as academic quality and holistic development, are more likely to sustain enrolment and growth (Cheng et al., 2024; To, 2014). The research aids parents in making more informed school choices by elucidating the reasons and values that shape the decisions of other families in comparable urban environments (Oliveira et al., 2014; Rowe & Windle, 2012). This can support more intentional, value-aligned decisions that suit their children's needs.

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to the literature on school choice by applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) in a Malaysian context. While existing research is robust, few studies have used TPB to explore Malaysian parents' decisions regarding private and international schools (Ali & Mustapha, 2021), especially in areas like Subang Jaya. This enriches both theoretical understanding and its cross-cultural application.

Finally, the expansion of private and international schools has broader economic and societal implications. These institutions generate local economic benefits such as job creation, property development, and increased service demand as seen in Penang (The Edge Malaysia, 2025). Moreover, they foster global competencies, multilingualism, and critical thinking, contributing to a globally competitive workforce, and enhancing Malaysia's human capital development (OECD, 2020).

1.7 Scope and Limitation

This study examines parents living in Subang Jaya, Selangor, who have made educational decisions for their children throughout a specified timeframe. Participants for both the quantitative and qualitative surveys consist of parents who have enrolled their children in public, private, or international educational institutions. Incorporating parents from diverse educational institutions provides a more comprehensive understanding of school choice dynamics, however the major focus continues to be on decisions related to private and international schools.

The opportunity to contact a bigger pool of participants was limited by the short time frame in which the data collection was carried out. As a result, while the findings offer meaningful insights, they may not fully capture the diversity of parental perspectives in the area. Furthermore, the scope is geographically restricted to Subang Jaya and may not reflect trends in other regions of Malaysia. A more detailed discussion of these limitations is presented in Chapter 5.4.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a valuable framework for understanding the decision-making processes behind parents' school choices. According to TPB, parental decisions are guided by three key components: attitudes (personal evaluations of the behavior), subjective norms (perceived social pressure), and perceived behavioral control as shown in Figure 1.3 (the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior) (Ajzen, 1991). In the educational context, this translates to parents forming plans to select a specific school type, such as private or international, depending on their perceptions of educational quality, social norms, and their personal ability to afford such options.

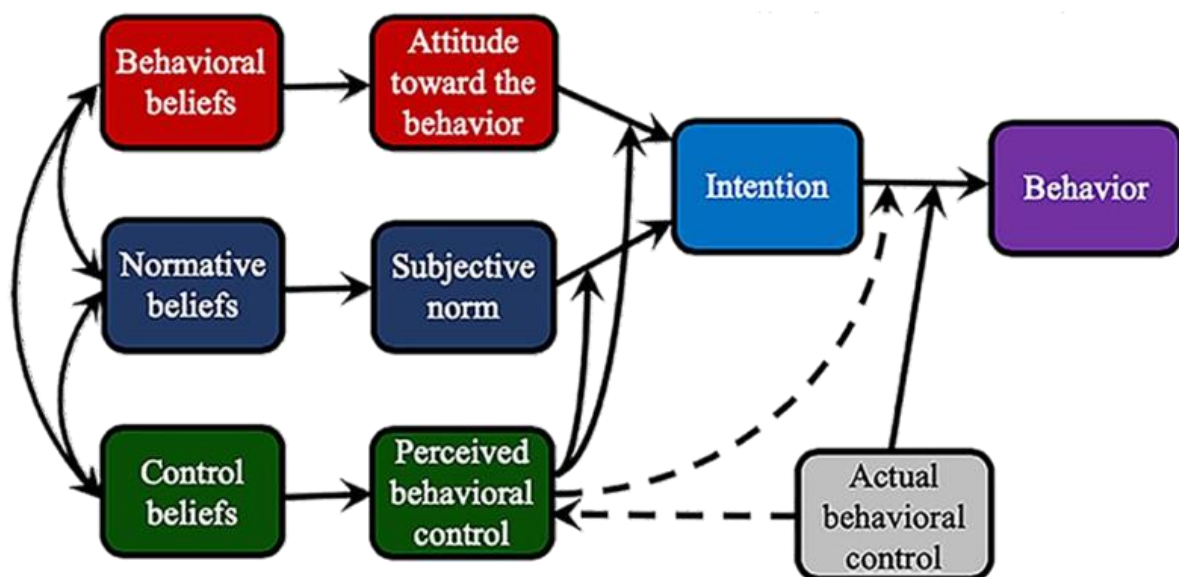


Figure 1.3: Theory of Planned Behaviour Model of Ajzen 1991.

Source: <https://people.umass.edu/aizen/tpb.diag.html>

While TPB has been applied in various fields, its specific application to parental school selection in Subang Jaya remains underexplored. Though socioeconomic and demographic

factors undoubtedly influence these decisions, the degree to which attitudes, norms, and perceived control shape behaviour in this particular context is still not well understood. Moreover, parental decision-making is further complicated by evolving educational policies, economic fluctuations, and the increasing competition among private and international schools. These external pressures may interact with internal beliefs, further influencing parental intentions and behaviours.

Unlike previous studies that relied on descriptive or atheoretical approaches, TPB offers a more structured and theory-driven method for eliciting beliefs and understanding behavioural intentions. This makes it particularly suitable for examining the psychological mechanisms underlying school choice decisions. This study adopts the TPB framework (Figure 1.3) to investigate the relative importance of these psychological and contextual factors in shaping school choice behaviour among parents in Subang Jaya. By doing so, it seeks to address gaps in the literature and provide empirical insights into the motivations behind parental preferences for private and international education in Malaysia.

In this study, the Theory of Planned Behaviour provides the theoretical basis for examining the factors that influence parents' intention to select private and international schools. The three TPB constructs, attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control are used to organise and interpret the factors identified in the literature and examined empirically in this study. Attitude toward the behaviour reflects parents' evaluation of the outcomes and characteristics associated with private and international school selection; subjective norms reflect the perceived influence of significant others and the wider social environment; while perceived behavioural control reflects parents' perceptions of the resources, opportunities, and constraints associated with school choice. Collectively, these constructs provide a theoretically grounded framework for examining how parents form intentions regarding private and international school selection in the context of Subang Jaya.

1.9 Organisation of the Remaining Chapters

This thesis is structured into five chapters, each contributing to the overall objective in examining the variables influencing parents' choice of international and private schools in Subang Jaya, Selangor. Chapter Two reviews key literature on school choice, focusing on socioeconomic and demographic factors, parental decision-making, and the Theory of Planned

Behaviour (TPB). Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, detailing the mixed-methods design, data collection tools, sampling, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents and analyses the quantitative and qualitative findings based on TPB constructs and contextual insights. The final Chapter Five discusses the findings, concludes the study, and provides practical recommendations, limitations, and future research directions.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

There has been a growing number of Malaysian parents choosing private and international schools for their children during the last ten years, especially in urban areas like Subang Jaya. Although the majority of students nationwide still attend public schools, the educational landscape has changed due to the growing accessibility and presence of private and international institutions. According to recent statistics, Malaysian students' enrolment in private and international schools increased by 34% between 2019 and 2024, with Bumiputera students' enrolment rising by almost 50% (Malay Mail, 2024b). These changes reflect a change in the priorities and perceptions of parents on the curriculum, quality of education, and their children's future.

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the body of research relevant to parental school choice, with a focus on the Malaysian and comparable foreign contexts. There are three objectives of this review:

1. To synthesize empirical findings on variables influencing parental preferences for private and international education;
 2. To investigate the application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in educational research;
 3. To determine any gaps that currently exist that support and direct the current investigation.
- The theoretical and methodological choices taken in subsequent chapters are supported by this review, which also places the study within the context of previous research.

Theoretical viewpoints, empirical studies, and pertinent school choice policy documents were synthesized through a structured literature review process. The review comprised both qualitative and quantitative research investigations to ensure comprehensive coverage.

Academic databases and scholarly platforms, including Google Scholar, ERIC (Education Resources Information Centre), JSTOR, and Research Gate were used to retrieve peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, and policy documents. The key search terms included combinations of “school choice,” “parental decision-making,” “private schools,”

“international schools,” “parental school choice Selangor”, “Theory of Planned Behaviour,” “Malaysia,” and “urban education.”

During the evaluation process, relevant literature published primarily between 2014 and 2025 was screened and selected. The inclusion criteria were centred on research examining Malaysian urban education trends, school choice behaviours, and educational theoretical frameworks. To support the systematic review process, a matrix was developed to summarise key studies that informed this research. Table 2.1 outlines the focus, methodology, findings, and relevance of selected empirical and theoretical literature on parental school choice and the application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in educational contexts.

Table 2.1: Literature Review Matrix – Key Studies on Parental School Choice and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

Author(s) & Year	Study Focus	Methodology	Key Findings	Relevance to Current Study
Ajzen (1991)	Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)	Theoretical	Behaviour is predicted by intention, shaped by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived control	Foundation for TPB application
Fishbein & Ajzen (2010)	Reasoned Action Approach; TPB elaboration	Theoretical	Expanded TPB by integrating broader decision-making elements	Framework for behaviour prediction in education
Ahmad & Tan (2020)	Parental school decision-making in Malaysia	Quantitative survey	Decisions are influenced by socio-economic status, parental values, and school reputation	Local context on parental school preferences
Roslan et al. (2021)	TPB application in Malaysian school choices	Mixed methods	Attitudes and perceived behavioural control significantly predicted enrolment behaviour	Demonstrates TPB utility in Malaysian education

Tan & Lee (2022)	Motivations for international schooling in Malaysia	Qualitative interviews	Cultural capital, global exposure, and curriculum flexibility were influential	Informs qualitative aspects of school motivations
Lim (2023)	Urban parental preferences for private schools	Quantitative survey	Affordability and academic quality are top drivers	Supports trend analysis in urban Malaysia
Workman (2014)	TPB applied to digital textbook adoption in education	Quantitative survey	TPB effectively predicts tech-related behavioural intentions	Validates TPB in educational settings

The main theoretical framework for this research is Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour. In several fields, including education, TPB has been used extensively to comprehend behavioural intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011; Workman, 2014). It provides a structured and predictive model that pertinent to intricate decision-making processes like school choice. Although TPB has gained traction globally, there is limited use of it in Subang Jaya educational research, especially when it comes to private and international education.

The remainder of this chapter is organised around several thematic areas. Section 2.2 provides an overview of school choices in Malaysia, emphasising changes in educational preferences. Section 2.3 explores the attitude toward the behaviour in selecting private and international schools, including academic standards, facilities, instruction language, and religious consideration. Section 2.4 examines subjective norms, including peers and community influence, reputation, geographic location and accessibility, while Section 2.5 investigate the perceived behavioural control including affordability, logistic, availability of school options, awareness and information accessibility which are examined through the TPB framework. In Section 2.6, research gaps are finally identified and position the current study as a timely contribution to the field.

2.1.1 Literature Review Process and Timeline

This research focuses on studies published between 2014 and 2025 to ensure that the literature review is relevant to current educational trends and policy. The selection process took into account the empirical studies' methodological rigour, the validity of the sources, and the

studies' relevance to the research participants. The literature was carefully reviewed to identify significant findings, trends, and gaps in parental choice in private and international schools.

The literature review was conducted over six months in three key stages:

1. Search and Collection (3 months):

Relevant studies on parental school choice and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) were identified through systematic searches of academic databases and reputable sources.

2. Review and Categorisation (1 month):

The selected literature was analysed and grouped into key themes such as socioeconomic status, educational quality, cultural influences, and TPB constructs (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control).

3. Synthesis and Writing (2 months):

Findings were synthesised to establish the study's theoretical grounding and highlight research gaps, particularly the limited application of TPB in the Malaysian school choice context.

2.2 Overview of School Choice in Malaysia

Malaysia's educational landscape has been increasingly diverse over the last ten years. According to ISC Research 2024, more than 90,000 pupils are enrolled in Malaysia's more than 200 international schools, up from just 60,000 in 2015. Bumiputera enrolment at international schools has increased by over 50%, suggesting a change across social and ethnic divides (Malay Mail, 2024a). The enrolment has seen a notable surge after policy liberalisation in 2012, which enhanced Malaysian students' access to the private education sector, especially international schools. As was already mentioned in the earlier chapter, traditionally, public or government-funded schools have accounted for the majority of national enrolment data. In Malaysia, government schools account more than 95% of students' enrolment nationwide, according to the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2024).

This change is particularly evident in Subang Jaya, a Selangor suburban township renowned for its large concentration of private school providers and middle-to upper-class residents. According to Tan & Lee (2022), parents' growing concerns about the perceived quality, competitiveness, and global relevance of public education are the main cause of the demand for alternative schooling models in these locations.

Parents are drawn to private and international schools largely due to the perceived advantage of English-medium instruction, globally recognised curricula (e.g., IGCSE, IB, A-Levels), and modern pedagogical approaches. These institutions are often viewed as offering better learning environments, smaller class sizes, and enhanced co-curricular opportunities (Lim, 2023; Tan & Lee, 2022). In addition to greater accessibility and affordability, this transformation builds on earlier shifts in parental expectations and educational values. It also reflects evolving societal views towards education in terms of educational values, aspirations, and trust in public institutions. The main driving forces behind these decisions will be examined in the following sections, which will frame them in the framework of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour.

2.3 Attitude Toward the Behaviour

As per Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (1991), an individual's attitude toward a behaviour is defined as their level of positive or negative assessment of that behaviour. In the context of school choice, this refers to the individual opinions and views of parents regarding what makes a "good" school for their children. These attitudes are shaped by factors such as academic standing, the language used for instruction, the teaching quality, learning environment, extracurricular activities, and the alignment of school values with family expectations.

In a multicultural and competitive city like Subang Jaya, where there are many different educational alternatives, including private, international, and national institutions, parents develop opinions based on what they believe as best support their kids' academic achievement and personal development. Modern teaching methods, perceived academic superiority, and conformity to international standards are factors that contribute to a positive attitude toward private and international schools.

2.3.1 Academic Quality and Curriculum

One of the main factors influencing parents' choices of schools is academic quality. Private and international schools are perceived by many parents in Subang Jaya as providing stronger academic outcomes, modern teaching approaches, and a curriculum that better equips children for future opportunities (Lim, 2023; Roslan et al., 2021). Programs like the International Baccalaureate (IB), International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), and A-Levels are well known for encouraging critical thinking, global knowledge, and university readiness. Furthermore, some institutions provide families with various academic options by offering both the Malaysian national curriculum and the IGCSE on the same campus. In order to comply with local university admission criteria and professional careers in sectors like law and medicine, parents frequently select the national syllabus (Azlan & Chong, 2022).

Moreover, by incorporating international teaching components like inquiry-based learning, project work, and continuous assessment, certain private schools have enhanced the Malaysian national curriculum. By incorporating global instructional practices with national content, this blended approach enhances student engagement and fosters a better conceptual understanding (Tan & Lee, 2022). Private and international schools typically keep class numbers at 25 or below, which enables more individualized instruction and interaction. In contrast, Malaysian public schools frequently struggle with class sizes surpassing 35 students and short lecture periods (usually 45 minutes per session) that could concentrate on rigid, examination-focused instruction and rote learning. As a result, many parents have enrolled their children in additional private tutoring, which increases time and financial commitments (RinggitPlus, 2023; The Sun Daily, 2024).

2.3.2 Medium of Instruction and Global Recognition

The medium of instruction plays a pivotal role in shaping parental attitudes toward school selection. In Malaysia, while English is a compulsory subject in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination, it is not a mandatory pass subject. Whereas Bahasa Melayu and History are required to pass in order to obtain SPM certificate since 2013. This policy has raised concerns among parents who believe English proficiency is necessary for access to foreign higher education options and global competitiveness. Offering English as a first, second, or

supplementary language to pupils with different proficiency levels is a common way that private and international schools approach this issue.

Immersion English-language environments are commonly used in these schools, which improve language proficiency while preparing students for further education in English-speaking nations. The emphasis on English instruction in these institutions is in line with parents' desires for their children to thrive in a globalised world. Furthermore, these schools' implementation of foreign curriculum, such the international Baccalaureate (IB) and the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), further reinforces their global orientation. These programs, which are frequently taught in English and are recognised globally, give students credentials and facilitate admission to universities abroad. Consequently, the medium of instruction and the global recognition of the curriculum are significant factors influencing parents' school choices.

2.3.3 School Environment and Facilities

Parents' opinions are greatly influenced by the standard of the school environment and the facilities that are offered while selecting a school. Parents typically believe that contemporary, well-maintained campuses enhance learning experiences, safety, and professionalism (Ali & Yusof, 2020). It is believed that amenities like air-conditioned classrooms, laboratories, libraries, computer rooms, sports facilities, and creative arts areas demonstrate a school's dedication to offering a holistic education. As part of their value proposition, private and international schools in cities like Subang Jaya frequently highlight their cutting-edge amenities. Parents believe that such environments foster better academic performance, participate in extracurricular activities, and overall student well-being (Kaur & Wong, 2021). These impressions support positive sentiments about these establishments, particularly in contrast to overcrowded or underfunded public schools. A well-equipped and secure learning environment creates a positive impression and reinforces the decision to choose a particular school.

2.3.4 Co-curricular Activities and Holistic Development

The variety and accessibility of extracurricular activities are important considerations for parents. Private and international schools typically offer a more comprehensive education, emphasizing leadership development, sports, and the arts aspects that contemporary parents are coming to appreciate more (Lim, 2023). These schools frequently offer organised settings where students can engage in a variety of extracurricular and co-curricular activities that promote holistic development.

In Subang Jaya, private and international schools typically provide a wide variety of extracurricular activities, such as public speaking, science and robotics clubs, sports teams, music and drama clubs, and community service projects. These opportunities align with the expectations of middle to upper-class parents who believe that such experiences might help their children develop their portfolios for college admissions, particularly when applying to international universities (Chong & Cheah, 2022).

According to Denault and Poulin (2019), involvement in structured extracurricular activities is linked to enhanced social development, increased school engagement, and improved academic achievement. Private and international schools perceived worth of extracurricular activity is strengthened by the inclusion of international benchmarks like the Duke of Edinburgh's Award program or the Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) component of the International Baccalaureate. Furthermore, schools usually encourage students to participate in academic competitions in addition to clubs and athletics in order to improve their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. The prominent examples are Kangaroo Math Competition which recognised as the world's largest mathematics competition, and Kancil Science Competition Malaysia. Parents believe that participating in extracurricular activities fosters essential life skills such as time management, discipline, collaboration, and self-confidence, skills that are positively linked to students' academic and behavioural development (Fredricks & Eccles, 2018). They also believe that these activities are essential to prepare their children for a changing and unpredictable future when teamwork, creativity, and flexibility will be just as valued as academic credentials.

2.3.5 Cultural and Religious Considerations

Parental attitudes toward school selection are also shaped by the alignment of a school's ethos with the family's cultural and religious values. In Malaysia's multicultural society, families often prioritise schools that reflect their own moral beliefs, traditions, and religious practices. For instance, Muslim parents may prefer schools that incorporate Islamic studies, offer halal food, and observe gender-sensitive policies (Ismail & Mahat, 2021). Similarly, families from Buddhist backgrounds may be inclined towards schools that promote mindfulness, compassion, and community service, such as those inspired by Buddhist humanitarian values. While institutions like Soka Gakkai and Tzu Chi schools may not be located specifically in Subang Jaya, they serve as examples of how religious-based education can appeal to parents seeking values-based or spiritually oriented learning environments (Soka Schools Foundation, 2022; Tzu Chi International School Malaysia, 2023). Likewise, Christian families could favour educational institutions that include character education and biblical values. Christian principles are included in the curriculum and extracurricular activities of schools like Eagle Grammar School and ACE EdVenture in Subang Jaya, providing a faith-based learning environment that supports the ethical and spiritual goals of Christian parents (ACE EdVenture Group, n.d.; Eagles Grammar International School, n.d.).

In a broader context, international schools that prioritise diversity, global citizenship, and inclusive cultural traditions appeal to certain parents. According to Tan and Lee (2022), these settings are thought to be ideal for instilling in children the virtues of tolerance, open-mindedness, and cross-cultural awareness—values that are becoming increasingly crucial in today's globalised society. Furthermore, the literature review highlights the need to include a cross-cultural perspective on how religious and cultural traditions influence parental choices in Southeast Asia. For example, in Singapore, faith-based schools such as Christian and mission schools remain highly attractive to parents who value moral and religious instruction alongside academic excellence (Tan, 2017). In Indonesia, Islamic schools and pesantren are often chosen by parents seeking strong integration of religious values with mainstream education (Rahman & Syahrani, 2020). Similarly, in Thailand, Buddhist-oriented schools that incorporate mindfulness practices and moral education appeal strongly to families who view cultural preservation as integral to their children's upbringing (Fry & Bi, 2013). This cross-cultural lens underscores the importance of recognising regional variations in values and beliefs that shape parents' educational preferences. The emphasis on religious and cultural alignment

demonstrates how parents' opinions—whether positive or negative—about a school's culture contribute to their overall mindset, as conceptualised in the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

2.4 Subjective Norms

According to Ajzen (1991), subjective norms are the social constraints parents perceive from significant individuals or groups in their lives when making decisions about their children's education. Parents frequently take into account the expectations of peers, extended family, religious communities, and society at large in addition to their own preferences while choosing a school. These social factors have the power to support or influence parental decisions in ways that go beyond affordability or academic excellence.

2.4.1 Influence of Family and Peers

Parents' choices of schools are greatly influenced by family members, especially spouses, grandparents, and elder siblings. The opinion of the extended family is highly valued in many Malaysian homes, particularly in collectivist cultures where making decisions for a child's future is viewed as a shared responsibility. Perceptions are also shaped by social circles and peers. Parents frequently experience social pressure to follow suit when they see friends or coworkers enrolling their kids in particular private or foreign schools, believing that such decisions are a reflection of status and quality (Tan & Lee, 2022). Perceived norms regarding what is desirable or acceptable are reinforced by these combined factors.

2.4.2 Community and Societal Expectations

Parental choices may also be influenced by popular culture and community norms. There is a common expectation in Subang Jaya, where urban middle-class families place a high value on education, to pursue the best educational alternatives available, which is frequently translated as enrolling children in private or international schools that use English as their primary language. These educational institutions are linked to future preparation, social prestige, and academic quality. Parents may feel inadequate or under pressure to defend their decisions if they do not fit these social norms (Roslan et al., 2021). As a result, decisions are frequently

motivated by a desire to adhere to current educational norms or a fear of social rejection in addition to being personal.

2.4.3 Reputation and Branding

Reputation is a significant aspect that is frequently spread through word-of-mouth referrals. While weighing their alternatives, parents frequently consult social media groups, friends, or other parents' evaluations of the school. Since this informal criticism is based on actual experiences, it frequently has greater weight than official marketing materials. Even a school with little brand awareness is more likely to draw students if it is renowned for its discipline, academic prowess, or compassionate professors. Conversely, negative reputations might discourage interest, regardless of a school's actual quality. Such influence highlights the significance of subjective norms, whereby collective narratives and shared experiences mould parental behaviour (Lim, 2023).

Through their branding strategies, schools that market their modern facilities and global linkages, display student accomplishments, and keep up a professional internet presence are often seen more favourably. This marketing-driven dynamic perpetuates the idea that certain schools are of higher calibre than others, even when their academic results might not be substantially different from those of less well-known institutions.

Schools with a large percentage of foreign pupils and expatriate teachers are distinct preferred by many upper-class families because they are seen as more elite and globally minded. This demographic of Subang Jaya frequently sees enrolling in such institutions as a sign of elevated social positioning as well as an educational choice. Attending a renowned international school with a multicultural atmosphere is regarded as a sign of prestige and a means of gaining access to esteemed international higher-education pathways abroad (Tan & Lee, 2022).

2.4.4 Geographic Location and Accessibility

Proximity to school remains a significant factor in cities like Subang Jaya, where traffic congestion and scheduling conflicts are daily concerns. According to Chan and Azmi (2018), parents typically favour schools that are conveniently located or offer reliable transportation options. Accessibility improves family logistics, eases stress, and increases convenience. It is

also mentioned that some parents are prepared to send their children to schools that are further away if they believe the education would be of higher quality or better fit their cultural or personal beliefs (Roslan et al., 2021). In these situations, adherence to family customs or peer expectations can outweigh practical concerns.

2.5 Perceived Behavioural Control

The term "perceived behavioural control" (PBC) describes how easy or difficult a person believes a certain behaviour to be. It is impacted by prior experiences, potential obstacles, and the resources that are accessible (Ajzen, 1991). PBC has the potential to directly influence behaviour as well as influence behavioural intentions, according to the Theory of Planned Behaviour. When parents are choosing a private or international school for their children in Subang Jaya, PBC captures a number of internal and external elements that either facilitate or hinder their decision making. Important aspects of PBC aspects that are pertinent to school choice are examined in this section.

2.5.1 Affordability and Financial Resource

The perception of control over school choice is greatly influenced by affordability. The expenses of tuition, enrolment deposits, uniforms, and extracurricular activities that come with private and international education are frequently significantly greater than those of public education (OECD, 2020). Although public education in Malaysia is free, many parents in Subang Jaya deliberately select private or international schools that charge significant tuition fees. Families with higher socioeconomic status (SES) often possess greater financial capacity, social capital, and informational resources, allowing them to consider a wider array of schooling options, including premium international schools that offer globally recognized curricula (Nadzri & Abdullah, 2021). In contrast, middle-income families might weigh tuition fees, scholarship availability, or long-term return on investment more heavily, even within the context of private schooling.

This behaviour implies that financial factors are beyond the mere ability to pay; they also represent expectations for future academic or global opportunity, perceived worth, and ambitions for higher quality education. According to a Malaysian study, perceived behavioural control is measured by parents' confidence in their ability to pay school fees, is the strongest

predictor of their intention to send children to Chinese-medium schools (Lee, S. M., 2021). Conversely, regardless of how favourably parents perceive the quality or reputation of a school, financial burden can act as a significant deterrent.

2.5.2 Availability of School Options

Perceived behavioural control is also shaped by the availability and diversity of educational options in a given area. For instance, Simon Boone (2020) discovered that students who expect access to many academic programs, serving as a proxy for choice, report markedly elevated levels of perceived control and engagement compared to those with restricted possibilities. In environments where private or international schools are limited, parents may experience constraints and diminished empowerment if their preferences, values, or practical needs are unmet. Therefore, the dense concentration of varied school types in Subang Jaya can meaningfully enhance parents' perceived control and influence their school-selection behaviour.

2.5.3 Access to Information and Parental Awareness

The ability to obtain timely, reliable, and transparent information is essential for making well-informed decisions about education. Academic achievement, curriculum design, instructor credentials, facilities, and extracurricular activities are all included in this. Parents with higher education and greater digital literacy are often more adept at understanding school differences and guiding their children's learning. For example, a UK-wide survey by Zhang and Livingstone (2021) found that "parents with a higher degree of digital skills provide their children with more support for e-learning," and those with more education tend to offer safer, better-structured online environments. On the contrary, information asymmetry or unfamiliarity with the education system can reduce perceived behavioural control, leading to decisions based on incomplete knowledge, especially among foreign nationals or first-time school choosers. As an illustration of how information gaps may result in less empowered choices, a 2023 study on school social media usage discovered that inadequate disclosure of crucial school information, such as resource availability, might lead to poor parental decisions (Zhang et al., 2023)

2.5.4 Transportation and Logistical Factors

Another significant demographic determinant is the distance to the school. Due to time constraints and traffic congestion, the location of schools in Subang Jaya frequently affects urban families. According to Chan and Azmi (2018), parents typically choose schools that offer dependable transportation or are within a manageable commute. Accessibility is therefore essential to striking a balance between quality and convenience.

However, some parents in Subang Jaya are willing to bypass proximity in favour of the perceived syllabus of the institution. These parents prioritise on specialised programmes, academic achievement, school reputation, or alignment with their values than on location, even if it means longer commutes or more logistical challenges (Lee, 2020). This demonstrates that although geographic proximity plays a significant factor, when parents believe that the advantages of a certain school outweigh the drawbacks, other preferences may take precedence.

2.6 Research Gaps

Although research on school choice has expanded substantially over the past two decades, important gaps remain in understanding parental decision-making within the Malaysian private and international education sector. Malaysia presents a distinctive context in which educational choices are influenced not only by academic considerations but also by parental aspirations, cultural expectations, social networks, household resources, school reputation, and perceptions of future educational opportunities. However, much of the existing literature has examined school choice through individual determinants or general parental preferences, with comparatively limited attention to how these factors interact within an established behavioural framework.

A first gap concerns the limited application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to parental school choice in the Malaysian context. Ajzen's (1991) TPB provides a structured framework for explaining how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence behavioural intentions and subsequent behaviour. While the theory has been widely applied across different areas of behavioural research, its application to school choice in Malaysia remains relatively limited. Existing Malaysian studies have tended to examine specific aspects of school selection, such as academic quality, school reputation, affordability, language of instruction, or parental preferences, rather than examining these considerations

collectively through the TPB framework. In the Malaysian context, parents' decisions regarding Chinese-medium school choice may be understood through the Theory of Planned Behaviour, particularly in relation to their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. This provides support for the applicability of TPB while also indicating the need to examine whether its explanatory value extends to parents choosing private and international schools in different Malaysian urban contexts.

A second gap concerns the predominantly quantitative orientation of existing school-choice research. Quantitative approaches are useful for identifying relationships among variables and assessing the predictive contribution of behavioural constructs. However, parental school choice is also a complex and context-dependent process in which parents may attach different meanings to factors such as school reputation, curriculum, affordability, safety, school leadership, peer influence, and perceived educational outcomes. These meanings may not be fully captured through predetermined survey constructs. Consequently, there is a need for mixed-method evidence that can identify measurable relationships while also providing qualitative insight into how and why parents interpret and prioritise particular considerations when selecting a school. The limited integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence therefore represents an important methodological gap in Malaysian parental school-choice research.

A third gap relates to the limited empirical attention given to Subang Jaya as a specific urban educational context. Subang Jaya is a highly developed metropolitan township in Selangor with access to a range of private and international educational institutions. The concentration of alternative schooling options provides parents with greater opportunities to compare schools based on curriculum, academic expectations, school environment, language, reputation, fees, accessibility, and perceived long-term educational benefits. At the same time, the availability of multiple alternatives may make the decision-making process more complex. Despite these characteristics, parental school-choice behaviour in Subang Jaya has received limited empirical attention through the lens of TPB. Examining this setting can therefore provide context-specific evidence on how behavioural intentions and perceived constraints operate when parents have multiple private and international schooling options available to them.

A fourth gap concerns changes in parental expectations following the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid expansion of digital technologies in education. The pandemic altered parents' experiences and perceptions of schooling, including expectations concerning communication,

learning continuity, digital learning capability, student wellbeing, flexibility, and the responsiveness of school management. At the same time, increased access to digital platforms and online information has changed how parents obtain information about schools, compare educational options, communicate with school representatives, and evaluate institutional reputation. These developments suggest that contemporary school-choice decisions may involve considerations that were less prominent in earlier studies. However, there remains limited empirical evidence examining how these post-pandemic and digitally mediated considerations intersect with attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control in the Malaysian private and international school sector.

A further theoretical gap arises from the recognition that TPB may not fully capture the contextual, emotional, and cultural dimensions of educational decision-making. Although attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control provide an established explanation of intentional behaviour, parents' decisions may also be influenced by family aspirations, cultural expectations, emotional perceptions of school environments, trust in school leadership, and beliefs about their children's future. Scholars have therefore suggested that behavioural models may require contextualisation or extension when applied to complex real-world decisions (Conner, 2020; Venkatesh et al., 2021). Rather than treating these factors as direct replacements for the TPB constructs, the present study recognises them as contextual influences that may help explain findings that cannot be fully understood through quantitative TPB relationships alone.

Taken together, these gaps indicate that the existing literature provides an incomplete understanding of how Malaysian parents make decisions when selecting private and international schools. Previous research provides useful evidence regarding individual determinants and demonstrates the potential applicability of TPB, but there remains limited integrated evidence combining behavioural theory, quantitative modelling, and qualitative explanations within a specific Malaysian urban context. There is also insufficient attention to the changing educational expectations and information environments that emerged following the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing digitalisation of education. This study addresses these gaps by applying TPB within a convergent mixed-methods framework to investigate parental school-choice decision-making in Subang Jaya. By combining quantitative examination of the relationships among TPB constructs with qualitative exploration of parents' experiences, perceptions, and contextual considerations, the study seeks to provide a more

comprehensive explanation of contemporary parental school choice and contribute contextually grounded evidence to the Malaysian education literature.

2.7 Summary of the Literature Review

This chapter reviewed the literature on parental school choice with particular emphasis on Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The review established that parents' intentions to select private or international schools may be influenced by attitudes towards educational quality and school characteristics, subjective norms arising from family and social networks, and perceived behavioural control associated with affordability, accessibility, and other practical considerations. The literature therefore provides a strong theoretical basis for examining school-choice intentions through the TPB framework.

At the same time, the review identified several limitations in the existing body of research. First, the application of TPB to parental school choice remains relatively limited within the Malaysian context, particularly in relation to private and international schools. Second, existing research has frequently relied on quantitative approaches that are useful for identifying relationships between variables but may provide limited insight into the meanings and experiences underlying parents' decisions. Third, there is limited empirical attention to Subang Jaya, despite its urban setting and the availability of multiple private and international schooling options. These gaps are particularly relevant because parents making school choices in such an environment may need to evaluate a wider range of educational, financial, social, and institutional considerations.

The review further highlighted the changing nature of parental expectations following the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing use of digital technologies in education. Parents now have greater access to online information, school reviews, digital communication, and virtual engagement with educational institutions. These developments may influence how parents form attitudes, respond to social influences, assess school reputation, and perceive their ability to make and implement a particular school choice. However, relatively limited research has examined these contemporary influences alongside the established TPB constructs in the Malaysian private and international school context.

The review also recognised the limitations of applying TPB as a complete explanation of complex educational decision-making. Cultural expectations, family aspirations, emotional considerations, trust in school leadership, and contextual circumstances may influence parental choices in ways that are not fully represented by the three core TPB constructs. A mixed-methods approach can therefore provide complementary evidence by identifying statistical relationships while also exploring the contextual meanings behind parents' reported choices.

Based on these findings, the present study adopts a convergent mixed-methods design to investigate parental school-choice decision-making in Subang Jaya. The quantitative component examines the relationships among attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and parental intention, while the qualitative component provides deeper insight into the contextual, cultural, emotional, and practical considerations underlying these decisions. In doing so, the study seeks to extend the application of TPB to an underexamined Malaysian educational context while providing a more comprehensive account of contemporary parental decision-making in the private and international school sector.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In the pursuit of comprehending the intricate dynamics that govern parents' behaviour towards choices of private and international schools in Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia, Chapter 3 provides an in- depth explanation of the research methodology employed to address the five research questions as outlined in chapter 1. This research adopts a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative insights gathered through interviews exploring parents' perceptions of school choice in Subang Jaya, with quantitative data collected via surveys on the same topic.

To build upon the secondary findings identified in the literature review, a convergent parallel mixed-methods design is employed as the core methodological framework. This design involves the simultaneous collection and separate analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, with integration occurring during the interpretation phase. As supported by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) and Venkatesh, Brown, and Bala (2021), this approach enhances the validity of findings by enabling statistical patterns to be interpreted alongside rich, contextual narratives, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of the complex behaviours and motivations influencing parental school choice.

This chapter explains the approach used detailing research design, research philosophy, research strategy, research subjects, validity and reliability of the research process, research procedure, methodology for data collection, methodology for data analysis, and ethical considerations, establishing a clear foundation for the study. The findings of the pilot test are presented, and the methodology's restrictions are investigated.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The pragmatic research philosophy serves as the foundation for this investigation. It recognises the complexity of educational decision-making and uses methodological pluralism to investigate both observable behaviours and underlying meanings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). There are four philosophical research paradigms at this layer, including positivism, realism, interpretivism, and pragmatism. These stances are connected to methodology (research approach), epistemology (nature of knowledge), ontology (nature of reality), and axiology (role of value).

Pragmatism, in particular, focusses on what is most effective in addressing the research issues rather than strict adherence to any one philosophical perspective. The coexistence of various realities and kinds of knowledge is embraced, and the application of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies is encouraged. This flexibility allows the research to examine both the statistical patterns of parental school choice and the individual motivations and meanings underlying those choices. The pragmatic paradigm, therefore, ensures a balanced strategy that values practical outcomes while also recognising the researcher's role and interests in shaping the investigation.

3.3 Research Approach

This study adopts an abductive research approach, which combines elements of both deduction and induction to provide a deeper understanding of the research problem. The deductive component is reflected in the application of Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which directs the development of hypotheses on the connections between attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and behavioural intentions.

In parallel, the inductive element arises from qualitative insights drawn from parents' narratives, allowing the identification of additional, context-specific factors influencing school choice in Subang Jaya. This dual-pathway enables flexibility in exploring both theory-driven and emergent themes. According to Saunders et al. (2019), abduction is particularly suitable for studies that seek to test existing frameworks while remaining open to new patterns in data. In keeping with the pragmatic approach of the study, this method facilitates the production of practical, actionable results for educational stakeholders.

3.4 Research Strategy

This study adopts a mixed-methods research strategy, incorporating quantitative survey data and qualitative semi-structured interviews. Abduction is particularly suitable for mixed methods research, as it facilitates both the testing of existing frameworks and the discovery of new insights (Saunders et al., 2019). By combining structured survey data with open-ended

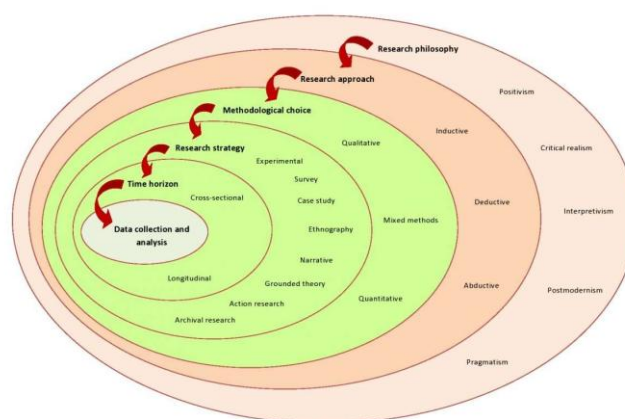
responses, the strategy enables the integration of quantitative generalisations with qualitative depth. This approach aligns with the pragmatic philosophy, which prioritises practical solutions to complex research problems and values both objective measurement and subjective interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The strategy ensures that the research remains flexible and responsive to emerging patterns while remaining grounded in the study's objectives.

3.5 Research Design

According to Ghauri, Gronhaug & Strange (2020), a research design is a master framework that maps the procedures and methodologies used to gather and assess the crucial data. The Research Onion model, as shown in Figure 3.1, was created by Saunders et al. (2019) and serves as the basis for this investigation. The six sequential layers—research philosophy, approach, strategy, methodological choice, time horizon, and data collection techniques and procedures—provide a systematic framework for organising and planning the research (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 114). Melnikovas (2018) points out that the Research Onion is a practical tool for creating comprehensive research designs in a methodical manner. Similarly, Muranganwa (2016) affirms that the model provides a strong framework for developing a rational and cohesive research plan, while Raithatha (2017) highlights its effectiveness in assisting researchers in evaluating research problems and developing well-founded methodologies.

Figure 3.1: Research Onion - A systematic approach of research methodology

Source: Aesanetwork.org- research onion



This research is grounded in a pragmatic research philosophy, which supports the integration of both positivist and interpretivist perspectives. This philosophical stance aligns with the study's mixed methods approach, endorsing methodological pluralism to draw on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data. The abductive research strategy allows for both hypothesis testing and the exploration of emerging themes, reflecting a balance between inductive and deductive reasoning.

Quantitative data are collected using a structured questionnaire grounded in Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), measuring constructs such as attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and behavioural intention as shown in Table 3.1. Complementing this, the qualitative data are gathered through semi-structured interviews, which capture personal narratives and deeper contextual influences on school selection decisions.

Overall, this methodology combines the conceptual rigor of TPB with the structural clarity of the Research Onion model to systematically investigate the behavioural, social, and environmental factors that influence school choice in Subang Jaya. The mixed methods approach enhances the study's ability to not only measure theoretical constructs but also explore the lived experiences that shape parental decisions.

Table 3.1: Constructs in the Theory of Planned Behaviour Model

Variable	Description	Theory of Planned Behaviour Component
Attitude Toward Behaviour	Parents' evaluations of private and international school selection, including perceptions of educational quality, school characteristics, and expected benefits or outcomes.	Attitude towards the behaviour
Subjective Norms	Perceived social influence from significant others, including family, friends, peers, and the wider community, concerning private and international school selection.	Subjective norms
Perceived Behavioural Control	Parents' perceptions of the resources, opportunities, and constraints affecting their ability to select a private or international school, including affordability, accessibility, and location.	Perceived Behavioural Control

3.6 Sampling Procedure

This section outlines the steps taken to identify and recruit suitable participants for the study. A precise and systematic sampling process is important to ensure that the data collected are relevant, reliable, and aligned with the objectives of the study.

3.6.1 Target Population

The target population for this research comprises parents and guardians residing in Subang Jaya, Selangor, who are currently or have previously enrolled their children in private, international, or public schools (see Table 3.2 and Table 3.3). These individuals are directly involved in educational decision-making and are therefore well-positioned to provide meaningful insights into the factors influencing school choice. To participate, respondents were also required to be willing to engage in a detailed discussion or survey concerning their school selection preferences and behaviours.

As no centralised database or official listing of such parents exists, a practical sampling frame was constructed using accessible contacts, including friends, family members, school teachers and administrators, and community referrals. Participants were identified through personal networks, school-related communication channels, and digital platforms. This reflects a non-probability sampling approach, combining convenience and purposive sampling strategies in line with the study's mixed methods design. Clearly defining the target population and sampling frame enhances the relevance, contextual appropriateness, and richness of the data collected.

Table 3.2: Targeted Population (Quantitative)

Question	Description	Data
1. Age	20 – 29 30 – 39 40 – 49 50 and above	Ordinal
2. Gender	Male Female Prefer not to say	Nominal
3. Education Level	High School Diploma Bachelor Master PhD / Doctorate	Ordinal
4. Monthly Household Income	Below RM5,000 RM5,001-RM10,000 RM10,001-RM15,000 Above RM15,000	Ordinal
5. Number of Children	1 2 3 or more	Ordinal
6. Number of School-going Children	1 2 3 or more	Ordinal
7. Type of School Attending	Private & International School Public School Mixture of Both	Nominal

Table 3.3: Profile of 15 selected Interview Participants (Qualitative)

Parent Code	Gender	Ethnicity	Age range	Language Used	Education Level	Household income	No. of school-going children	School type
P1	Female	Chinese	30-39	Mandarin	Bachelor	RM10,001-RM15,000	2	Private
P2	Female	Chinese	30-39	Mandarin	High school	RM10,001-RM15,000	2	Public
P3	Male	Malay	Above 50	Malay	High school	Above RM15,000	2	International
P4	Female	Chinese	40-49	English	Master	Above RM15,000	1	International
P5	Female	Indian	30-39	English	Diploma	RM10,001-RM15,000	3	Private
P6	Female	Korean	30-39	English	Bachelor	RM10,001-RM15,000	1	International
P7	Female	Malay	40-49	Malay & English	Diploma	RM10,001-RM15,000	2	Public
P8	Female	Chinese (China)	20-29	Mandarin	High school	RM5,001-RM10,000	1	Private
P9	Male	Chinese	40-49	Hokkien & English	Bachelor	Above RM15,000	2	Public
P10	Male	Chinese (Hong Kong)	40-49	English & Cantonese	Master	Above RM15,000	1	International
P11	Female	Indian	Above 50	English	High school	RM5,001-RM10,000	1	International
P12	Male	Chinese	30-39	Mandarin	Diploma	RM5,001-RM10,000	1	Private
P13	Female	Chinese	40-49	English	Master	Above RM15,000	1	Public
P14	Female	Chinese	20-29	Cantonese	Bachelor	Above RM15,000	1	International
P15	Male	Chinese	Above 50	English & Cantonese	Doctorate	Above RM15,000	2	International

3.6.2 Sample Size

This study collected two types of data using a convergent parallel mixed methods approach: quantitative data from questionnaire surveys and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews. The sample size was determined by evaluating both methodological suitability and practicality, assuring adequate depth and breadth of data.

A total of 109 valid questionnaire responses were obtained from parents living in Subang Jaya for the quantitative phase. The surveys were disseminated using digital platforms including WhatsApp, email, and school community networks, facilitating extensive distribution and a varied array of responses. According to Hair et al. (2019), Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) requires a minimum sample size of 100–150. This is particularly true when the model has less than five components and indicators have high loadings. As such, the sample size of 109 is appropriate for the current study's use of SmartPLS 4.0.

For the qualitative phase, 15 parents from diverse ethnic backgrounds were selected for in-depth interviews using purposive sampling. Participants in the interviews were parents whose children currently attend or have previously attended private, international, or public schools in Subang Jaya. Detailed notes were recorded during and after each session, however audio recordings were avoided due to privacy concerns. The 109 survey responses and 15 interviews provided the quantitative and qualitative datasets for the mixed-methods analysis.

3.6.3 Sampling Techniques and Procedures

The study adopted a non-probability sampling approach, combining convenience and purposive sampling techniques to find participants who were relevant to the research objectives. This strategy worked well with the mixed-methods design, which required selecting participants who could meaningfully reflect on the decision-making factors related to school selection.

Participants for both the quantitative and qualitative phases were recruited through a mix of community networks, school-related communication channels, and personal referrals. The non-probability sampling strategy enabled the study to gather a variety of viewpoints from parents

in public, private, and international schooling environments, but it also depended on participant accessibility and willingness to respond.

3.6.3.1 Quantitative Sampling

Responses to the questionnaire survey were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 denoted "strongly disagree" and 5 denoted "strongly agree" as shown in Appendix A1. This format facilitated quantifiable comparisons among respondents and enabled statistical examination of the relationships between theoretical constructs, particularly those derived from Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour. Prior to full distribution, the questionnaire underwent a pilot test with a small group of parents to check for clarity, consistency, and relevance. Minor adjustments were made based on feedback received, ensuring the reliability and comprehensibility of the items. To enhance accessibility and outreach, the survey was distributed digitally via Google Forms. Initial dissemination occurred through personal networks, including, family members, friends, school teachers and administrators, using platforms such as WhatsApp, email, word-of-mouth and informal community groups. The quantitative phase employed convenience and snowball sampling, while purposive sampling was used for the qualitative interviews.

3.6.3.2 Qualitative Sampling

A total of fifteen parents whose children were either currently enrolled in or had previously graduated from public, private, or international schools in Subang Jaya were purposefully selected to participate in the qualitative interviews. This selection ensured a diverse and balanced representation across various school types, allowing for richer comparative insights into school selection behaviour. Participants were recruited via direct messaging through platforms such as WhatsApp, with further referrals made through personal and professional networks. A series of prepared interview questions in Microsoft Word format (Appendix A3) was sent prior to the scheduled date to allow participants time for reflection and preparation.

To accommodate participants' preferences and availability, a range of interview modes were employed via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp video or voice calls, and in-person at cafés

or participants' homes. In total, nine interviews took place online and the remaining six interviews were conducted face-to-face. Interviews were typically held on weekday evenings or during weekends, depending on participant convenience. Multilingual communication was conducted to enhance participant comfort and encourage authentic engagement. The languages used during the interviews were in English, Mandarin, Malay and dialects in Cantonese, and Hokkien, depending on participants' language preferences. This multilingual approach not only promoted inclusivity but also allowed more natural self-expression.

However, the nuanced meanings embedded in certain dialects presented challenges in transcription and interpretation, which were mitigated by careful note-taking and post-interview clarifications. In respect of cultural sensitivities and privacy concerns, the majority of participants refused to be recorded on audio or video. As a result, detailed notes were taken during the interviews, and efforts were made to cross-check meanings and interpretations through follow-up clarifications when necessary. Interviews lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to two hours, depending on the participant's availability and depth of engagement. Despite following a semi-structured strategy, participants frequently offered extra unstructured insights during the interviews. These spontaneous narratives enhanced the dataset by providing unexpected yet significant viewpoints, which aligns with the exploratory objectives of qualitative research. This flexible and participant-centred approach to data collection enhanced both the depth and authenticity of the qualitative findings.

3.7 Data Analysis Tools

Given the mixed methods approach of this study, distinct tools and techniques were applied for analysing quantitative and qualitative data to ensure methodological rigor and coherence with the objectives of the investigation.

3.7.1 Data Quality Assessment

Data quality assessment was undertaken prior to the interpretation of the quantitative findings to ensure that the dataset was suitable for statistical analysis and that the measurement instruments demonstrated adequate reliability and validity. The assessment considered the

completeness of the collected responses, the suitability of the data for PLS-SEM, and the quality of the measurement model.

First, the completeness of the quantitative dataset was considered. Only completed questionnaire responses from eligible participants were included in the final dataset. A total of 109 valid responses from parents residing in Subang Jaya were retained for the quantitative analysis. The dataset was subsequently examined for completeness before being imported into SmartPLS 4.0 for further analysis.

Second, potential common method variance was considered because the quantitative data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire from the same respondents. The questionnaire was designed to obtain responses relating to the independent constructs and behavioural intention within the Theory of Planned Behaviour framework. Attention was given to maintaining clear and concise item wording and ensuring that the questionnaire was administered consistently to all participants. These procedural measures were intended to reduce the potential influence of common method variance on the observed relationships among the constructs.

Third, the suitability of the data for PLS-SEM was considered in relation to the characteristics of the study. PLS-SEM was selected because the study focuses on examining relationships among latent constructs within a theoretically informed model and because the approach is appropriate for exploratory and predictive research. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0, following the procedures described in Section 3.7.2.

The quality of the measurement model was then assessed through internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, including ρ_A and ρ_C . Values above 0.70 were considered indicative of acceptable internal consistency. Convergent validity was assessed using indicator loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE), with an AVE value of 0.50 or above considered evidence of adequate convergent validity. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings to determine whether the constructs were empirically distinct from one another.

These data quality and measurement assessments provided the basis for subsequent evaluation of the structural model. The results of the reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity,

model fit, coefficient of determination, collinearity, path coefficients, hypothesis testing, bootstrapping, and effect size analyses are presented in Chapter 4.

3.7.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were analysed using SmartPLS 4.0, a software application designed for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). According to Hair et al. (2022), PLS-SEM is particularly well-suited for exploratory research, predictive modelling, and studies involving complex frameworks, especially when the data distribution is non-normal or when sample sizes are relatively small.

The initial phase of analysis included descriptive statistics to summarise the demographic characteristics of the respondents and identify patterns and central tendencies across the primary constructs. This descriptive overview laid the foundation for further model testing.

The measurement and structural models were evaluated using the path weighting scheme under standardised results. The algorithm settings included an initial weight of 1, a maximum of 3000 iterations, and a stop criterion of 10^{-7} . Lohmoeller settings were not applied. Additionally, the model allowed variation of copula by binary categories to enhance convergence stability and model robustness.

Overall, the application of PLS-SEM provided a robust analytical platform for identifying and understanding the key predictors of school choice among parents in Subang Jaya. It enabled not only the statistical validation of latent constructs but also supported the theoretical interpretation of their interrelationships within the framework of behavioural intention. This comprehensive approach ensured that both the reliability of the measurement instruments and the significance of hypothesised relationships were thoroughly evaluated.

3.7.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method was adopted for the qualitative data. This approach provides an organized, yet flexible framework for finding, evaluating, and summarising patterns (themes) in the interview data. The procedure consists of six stages:

familiarization with the data, creating preliminary codes, searching for themes, evaluating themes, defining and labelling themes, and producing the report.

Due to resource limitations, computer-assisted tools such as NVivo were not used to analyse qualitative data. As an alternative, thematic development and manual categorization were carried out by closely examining in-depth interview notes. Following the TPB's constructs, themes were developed both inductively and deductively, remaining open to emerging insights shared by parents. By staying in close proximity to the data, this practical method enhanced the researcher's contextual awareness and interpretive depth.

3.8 Researcher Reflexivity and Methodological Limitations

In qualitative and mixed-methods research, the researcher plays an integral role in the generation and interpretation of data. Reflexivity is the process by which researchers critically examine their own positionality, biases, and influence throughout the research process (Jager, 2017). The creation and interpretation of data are crucial tasks for the researcher in mixed-methods research. A number of methodological decisions, including sampling, data collection methods, and response interpretation, may have been influenced by prior beliefs and expectations, as the researcher in this study was personally involved in the educational and local context of Subang Jaya. Measures were taken to reduce the impact of subjectivity, including adhering to the thematic analysis principles of Braun and Clarke (2006), making sure that the coding process was transparent, and cross-checking notes after the interview to ensure authenticity and accuracy.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that in qualitative research, complete objectivity is neither possible nor the goal. Rather, awareness and transparency around the researcher's involvement enhances credibility (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). Methodologically, the study design has a number of built-in constraints. First, the generalizability of results is restricted by the use of non-probability sampling, particularly convenience and snowball approaches (Taris et al., 2021). Although this method made it possible to reach a wide demographic of parents in Subang Jaya, it also raised the possibility of sample bias because participations were largely dependent on respondents' willingness and access to the researcher's networks.

Secondly, only 15 people were able to participate in the in-depth qualitative interviews. Although Braun and Clarke (2013) noted that qualitative research does not necessarily require large samples when the research question is focused, the findings remain context-specific and may not be generalisable to broader populations. Additionally, because of participant privacy concerns, the majority of interviews were not audio recorded. Even though thorough notes were kept, there remains a chance that some subtleties were overlooked or misunderstood.

On the quantitative side, the moderate sample size (N=109) aligns with minimum requirements for PLS-SEM analysis, yet it restricts broader inferential power. Furthermore, there is a chance that respondents will misinterpret items or carry risk of social desirability bias due to the self-reported nature of questionnaire data (Hair et al., 2022).

Despite these limitations, the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches sought to strike a balance between breadth and depth, offering a deeper comprehension of the variables affecting parents' choice of school. Reflexivity and methodological transparency were prioritised throughout the research process to strengthen the validity and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was a paramount concern throughout the research process to ensure the protection, dignity, and rights of all participants. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. All information was communicated in the language or dialect that each participant understood, ensuring clarity and informed decision-making. Informed consent was obtained through signed forms (Appendix C & Appendix D), or verbal agreements, depending on the context and participants' preferences.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, all personal data were de-identified and securely stored on password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher. Data handling complied with institutional policies and the Malaysian Personal Data Protection Act 2010, with all data to be deleted upon completion of the research. Special care was taken to honour participants' wishes, such as declining audio recordings through detailed note-taking during interviews. The study posed minimal risk, but the researcher remained attentive to participants'

comfort and well-being throughout the process. By rigorously applying these ethical principles, the study upheld the trustworthiness of its findings and maintained respect for the participants' autonomy and well-being.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter described the study's methodological framework, which used a convergent parallel mixed-methods design and a pragmatic philosophy. Data were collected through a TPB-based questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with parents in Subang Jaya. Purposive and non-probability sampling were employed in the sample strategy, which focused on parents who had prior experience choosing schools for public, private, or international schools. While Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis was used to interpret the qualitative data, SmartPLS 4.0 and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data. Ethical considerations, researcher reflexivity, and potential limitations were also addressed to uphold research integrity. To consolidate the methodological choices, the following Table 3.4 summarises the core components of the research design:

Table 3.4: Research Design Methodology

Research Philosophy	Pragmatism- integration of positivist and interpretivist perspectives
Research Approach	Abductive - deductive and inductive
Research Strategy	Mixed-methods - surveys and semi-structured interviews.
Research Method	Quantitative and qualitative - TPB questionnaire and interviews
Sampling Method	Non-probability sampling - Targets specific group
Sampling Technique	Purposive sampling - Targets specific group
Research Instruments	Questionnaire and Interview Guide
Time Horizon	Cross-sectional - Data collected at one point in time

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter delineates the findings of the data analysis performed to fulfil the research objectives and evaluate the provided hypotheses. The analysis reflects the convergent parallel mixed-methods strategy used in this study by integrating both quantitative and qualitative findings. The quantitative information was examined to evaluate the measurement and structural models using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Thematic insights from the qualitative interviews are then added to these statistical results to emphasize deeper parental perspectives and to enhance the interpretation of the findings on school selection behaviour.

The structure of this chapter starts with an evaluation of the measurement model to verify its validity and reliability. This is followed by hypothesis testing and evaluation of the structural model. Finally, findings from the qualitative phase are presented to clarify important decision-making elements that parents in Subang Jaya highlighted, including fee structures, curriculum preferences, school environment, location, and academic results.

4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

4.2.1 Response Rate

A total of 109 completed responses (Table 4.1) were collected from parents residing in Subang Jaya for the quantitative phase of the study. The survey was disseminated online via WhatsApp, email, and various social media platforms. To ensure diversity, inclusivity, and broader reach, the questionnaire was distributed to parents of different age groups and ethnic backgrounds residing in the Subang Jaya area. The data collection period spanned 30 days, from April to May. The response rate was deemed sufficient for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), which requires a minimum sample size that varies with the number of predictors and model complexity. A sample size of 109 responses and three primary predictor factors determining behavioural intention is considered adequate for statistical analysis.

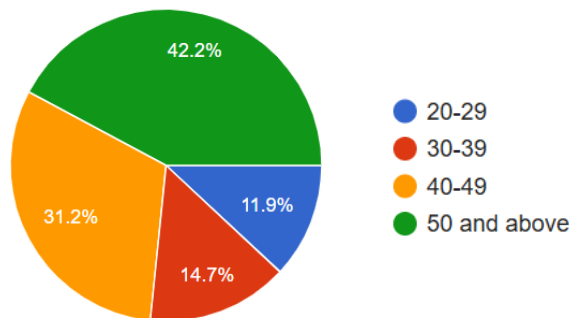
Table 4.1: Respondents Demographics Profile – Quantitative Survey

Respondents Demographics (109)		Percentage %	Frequency
Age Group	20 - 29	11.9	13
	30 - 39	14.7	16
	40 - 49	31.2	34
	50 and above	42.2	46
Gender	Male	34.9	38
	Female	64.2	70
	Prefer not to say	0.9	1
Education Level	High School	14.7	16
	Diploma	11	12
	Bachelor	54.1	59
	Master	16.5	18
	PhD / Doctorate	3.7	4
Monthly Household Income	Below RM5,000	17.4	19
	RM5,001-RM10,000	25.7	28
	RM10,001-RM15,000	18.3	20
	Above RM15,000	38.5	42
Number of Children	1	33	36
	2	34.9	38
	3 or more	32.1	35
Number of School-going Children	1	52.3	57
	2	26.6	29
	3 or more	21.1	23
Type of School Attending	Private & International School	63.3	69
	Public School	25.7	28
	Mixture of Both	11	12

4.2.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

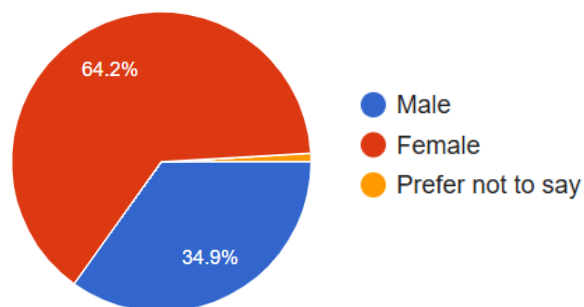
Several demographic factors were examined in order to guarantee the representativeness of the data and gain a deeper understanding of the respondents' backgrounds.

4.2.2.1: Age Group



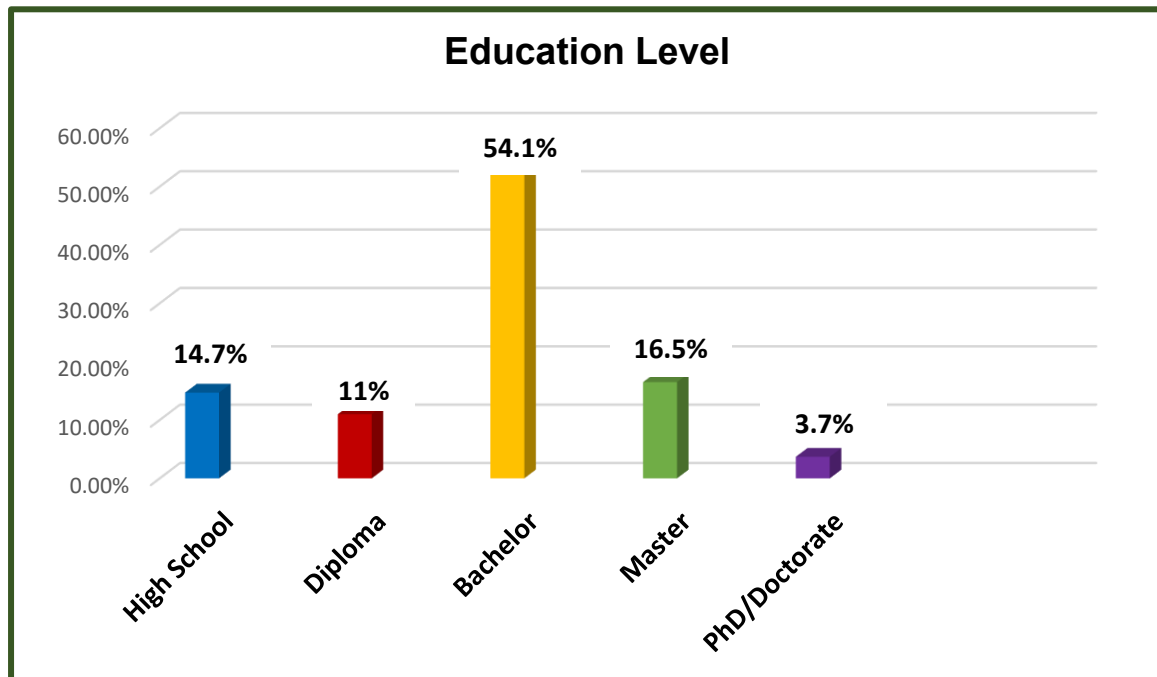
The majority of respondents (42.2%) were aged 50 and above, followed by those aged 40–49 (31.2%). This suggests that most participants are likely to be experienced parents with school-going children. Younger parents (20–39) made up a smaller proportion (26.6%), indicating that the study captured a mature demographic with potentially more defined school selection criteria.

4.2.2.2: Gender



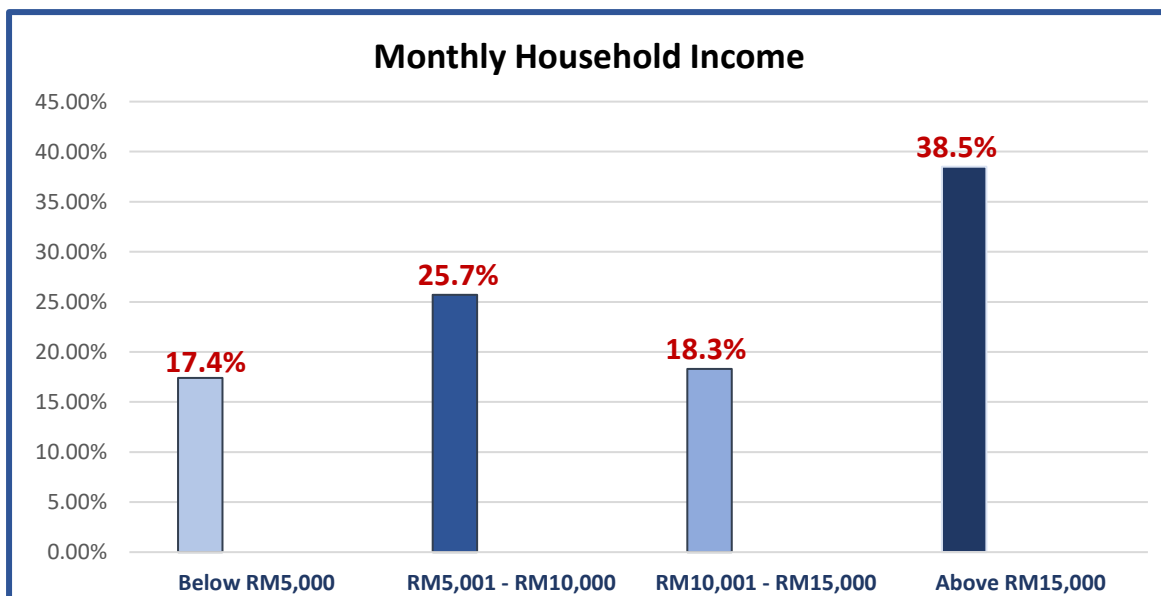
Female respondents dominated the sample, accounting for 64.2% of the total, while male respondents represented 34.9%. One respondent preferred not to disclose their gender. This reflects a common trend that mothers tend to be more involved in choosing schools, which is consistent with research on educational decision-making.

4.2.2.3: Education Level



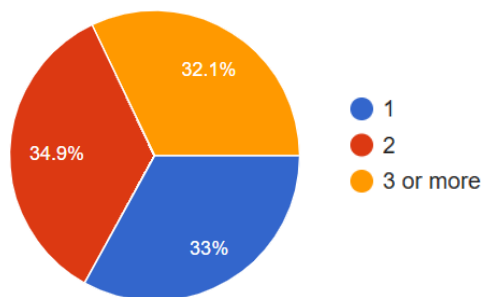
The majority of parents held at least a Bachelor's degree (54.1%), followed by Master's degree holders (16.5%). The majority of participants appeared to be highly educated, which may have affected their capacity to evaluate educational options critically. A smaller portion had a high school (14.7%) or diploma (11%) level education.

4.2.2.4: Monthly Household Income



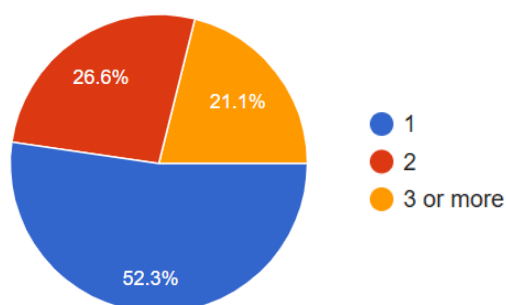
A substantial portion (38.5%) of respondents reported earning more than RM15,000 per month, followed by 25.7% within the RM5,001–10,000 range. Only 17.4% earned below RM5,000. This indicates that the respondents were comparatively well-off, which is consistent with the study's emphasis on choosing private and international schools, where a higher household income is usually required.

4.2.2.5: Number of Children



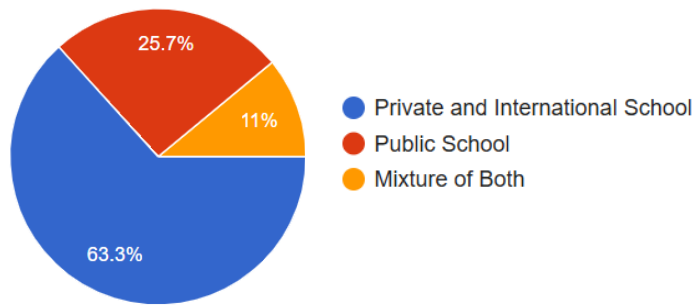
Respondents were almost evenly distributed among those with 1 (33%), 2 (34.9%), and 3 or more children (32.1%). This distribution provides a balanced view of family sizes and their influence on school decision-making dynamics.

4.2.2.6: Number of School-going Children



Over half of the respondents (52.3%) had one child currently enrolled in school, while 26.6% had two, and 21.1% had three or more school-going children. This indicates that the majority of school-related decision-making was focused on individual children rather than multiple concurrent enrolments.

4.2.2.7: Type of School Attending



Most children (63.3%) were enrolled in private or international schools, affirming the relevance of the research topic. About 25.7% of parents had children in public schools, while 11% had children in both types, indicating some overlap in school experiences.

4.3 Measurement Model Assessment

This section evaluates the measurement model to ensure the reliability and validity of the latent constructs used in the study. The assessment follows the guidelines suggested by Hair et al. (2019), focusing on three key areas: (1) internal consistency reliability, (2) convergent validity, and (3) discriminant validity. These checks are necessary to ensure that the constructs described in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) are consistently and accurately represented in the survey items.

4.3.1 Internal Consistency Reliability

Internal consistency reliability examines how well the indicators for each latent construct correlate with one another, confirming that the items are measuring the same underlying concept. As per Hair et al. (2019), Cronbach's Alpha (α) values above 0.7 indicate acceptable reliability, while Composite Reliability (CR) values (both ρ_A and ρ_C) should also exceed 0.7.

As shown in Table 4.2, all the four latent constructs which are Attitude Toward Behaviour (ATB), Subjective Norms (SN), Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC), and Behavioural

Intention (BI) have exceeded the minimum threshold values, confirming good internal consistency.

Table 4.2: Internal Consistency Reliability Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_A)	Composite Reliability (rho_C)
ATB	0.774	0.812	0.850
BI	0.787	0.807	0.855
PBC	0.786	0.803	0.768
SN	0.787	0.807	0.710

Note: All values meet the threshold of > 0.7 as recommended by Hair et al. (2019).

4.3.2 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed to determine whether items measuring the same construct are highly correlated (Hair et al., 2019). Three criteria were examined: factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE).

The measurement model was assessed using indicator loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). The composite reliability and AVE results presented in Table 4.3 met the recommended thresholds, supporting adequate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). The composite reliability (ρ_c) values for all constructs ranged from 0.71 to 0.855, surpassing the threshold of 0.70, thus confirming adequate internal consistency (Chin, 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, the AVE values were above the minimum acceptable level of 0.50, indicating sufficient convergent validity. The results confirm that the constructs used in the model meet the required standards for convergent validity, suggesting that the observed indicators adequately reflect the intended latent variables.

Table 4.3: Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Construct	Composite Reliability (ρ_a)	Composite Reliability (ρ_c)	AVE
ATB	0.812	0.850	0.543

BI	0.807	0.855	0.544
PBC	0.803	0.768	0.733
SN	0.807	0.710	0.705

4.3.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity determines the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs in the model, both conceptually and empirically. It ensures that each construct captures phenomena not represented by other constructs in the model (Hair et al., 2022). Two main methods were employed to assess discriminant validity including the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings.

4.3.3.1 Fornell-Larcker Criterion

According to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square root of the AVE of each latent construct should be greater than its highest correlation with any other construct. This condition was met for all constructs in the model, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity. Table 4.4 presents the Fornell-Larcker values and correlations among constructs. All diagonal elements (square roots of AVEs) exceed their corresponding horizontal and vertical inter-construct correlations, confirming discriminant validity according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Table 4.4: Fornell-Larcker Criterion and Inter-Construct Correlations

Construct	ATB	BI	PBC	SN
ATB	0.737			
BI	0.610	0.737		
PBC	0.502	0.648	0.856	
SN	0.558	0.574	0.476	0.839

4.3.3.2 Cross Loadings

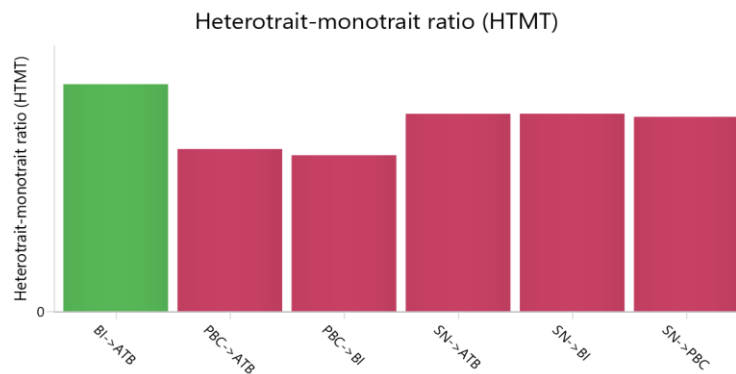
Discriminant validity was further assessed through cross-loadings. Each indicator should load more strongly on its intended construct than on any other. The cross-loading results in Table 4.5 confirm that this condition was met. For instance, item A10 loaded 0.799 on ATB, which is higher than its loadings on BI (0.532), PBC (0.300), and SN (0.560). Items A18 to A22 showed stronger loadings on PBC, while items A23 to A27 loaded highest on BI. Though some items, such as A12, approached threshold values, their highest loading remained on their designated construct.

Table 4.5: Cross Loadings of Measurement Items

CROSS LOADINGS				
Indicator	ATB	BI	PBC	SN
A10	0.799	0.532	0.300	0.560
A11	0.406	0.292	0.361	0.230
A12	0.784	0.541	0.483	0.481
A13	0.489	0.528	0.352	0.757
A14	0.379	0.433	0.263	0.775
A15	0.096	0.059	0.154	0.239
A16	0.400	0.206	0.293	0.510
A17	0.153	0.258	0.369	0.529
A18	0.354	0.291	0.685	0.408
A19	0.233	0.238	0.516	0.139
A20	0.137	0.082	0.454	0.191
A21	0.383	0.404	0.759	0.398
A22	0.205	0.278	0.721	0.279
A23	0.474	0.734	0.382	0.449
A24	0.450	0.750	0.128	0.315

A25	0.610	0.822	0.269	0.456
A26	0.314	0.580	0.457	0.422
A27	0.617	0.780	0.410	0.490
A8	0.813	0.544	0.236	0.364
A9	0.798	0.569	0.294	0.371

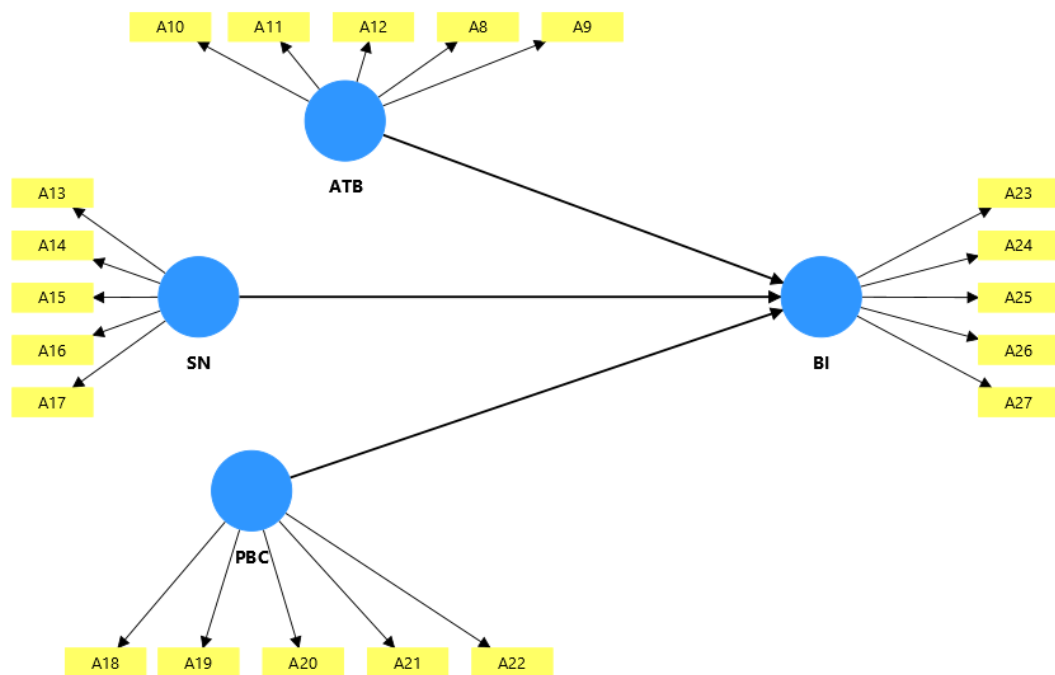
Figure 4.1: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)



4.4 Structural Model Assessment

The structural model assessment as shown in Figure 4.2 was conducted after the measurement model had established adequate reliability and validity. This phase of the analysis involved evaluating the relationships between the constructs based on Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The assessment included model fit indices, path coefficients, hypothesis testing, and effect size (f^2) to evaluate the overall model and the strength, significance, and practical relevance of the relationships among the latent variables.

Figure 4.2: PLS-SEM structural model diagram



4.4.1 Model Fit Assessment

Model fit was assessed using the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), d_{ULS} , d_G , Chi-square, and Normed Fit Index (NFI). The results are presented in Table 4.6. The SRMR value was 0.112, while the NFI value was 0.525. These values indicate that the model did not meet commonly used approximate fit benchmarks. Therefore, the model fit results should be interpreted cautiously. In this study, greater emphasis is placed on the measurement model, explained variance, path coefficients, and effect sizes when interpreting the PLS-SEM results.

Table 4.6: Model Fit Indices

Index	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.112	0.112
d_{ULS}	2.621	2.621
d_G	0.775	0.775
Chi-Square	429.716	429.716
NFI	0.525	0.525

4.4.2 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The R^2 value of 0.840 indicates that ATB, SN, and PBC jointly explain 84.0% of the variance in Behavioural Intention (BI) in the present sample. The adjusted R^2 of 0.827 indicates that the explanatory power remains high after adjustment for the number of predictors.

Table 4.7: Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Adjusted R^2

Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2
BI	0.840	0.827

4.4.3 Collinearity Assessment (VIF)

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were examined to assess potential collinearity among the predictor indicators. The values ranged from 1.13 to 2.13, as shown in Table 4.8. All values were below 5, indicating that there was no indication of problematic multicollinearity among the indicators included in the model.

Table 4.8: VIF Values for Indicators

Indicator	VIF
A10	1.78
A11	1.13
A12	1.66
A13	1.18
A14	1.30
A15	1.45
A16	1.65
A17	1.15
A18	1.25
A19	1.14
A20	1.27
A21	1.29
A22	1.40
A23	1.52
A24	2.02
A25	2.13
A26	1.25

A27	1.55
A8	1.99
A9	1.69

4.4.4 Path Coefficients and Power Analysis

Path coefficients were examined to assess the direction and strength of the relationships between the predictor constructs and Behavioural Intention (BI). The results are presented in Table 4.9. The path coefficient for ATB → BI was 0.496, while the coefficients for PBC → BI and SN → BI were 0.180 and 0.258, respectively. The results indicate that the required sample size varies according to the magnitude of the path coefficient, statistical power, and significance level. The observed ATB coefficient required a smaller sample than the PBC and SN coefficients under the reported conditions, while the smaller coefficients would require larger samples to achieve higher statistical power, particularly at more stringent significance levels.

Table 4.9: Path Coefficients and Minimum Required Sample Sizes for Power

Path	Coefficient (β)	Power 80% @ α = .01	Power 80% @ α = .05	Power 90% @ α = .01	Power 90% @ α = 0.05
ATB → BI	0.496	41	26	53	35
PBC → BI	0.180	846	521	1097	722
SN → BI	0.258	151	93	196	129

4.4.5 Hypothesis Testing and Bootstrapping Estimates

Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was used to assess the statistical significance of the structural paths. As presented in Tables 4.10 and 4.11, all three hypothesised relationships were statistically significant at the 5% level. ATB demonstrated the largest path coefficient, followed by SN and PBC. Therefore, H1, H2, and H3 were supported.

Table 4.10: Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β (Beta)	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	ATB $\rightarrow$ BI	0.496	5.960	< 0.001	Supported
H2	PBC $\rightarrow$ BI	0.180	2.010	0.045	Supported
H3	SN $\rightarrow$ BI	0.258	2.601	0.009	Supported

Table 4.11: Bootstrapping Summary

Path	Original Sample (O)	Mean Sample (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P-value
ATB $\rightarrow$ BI	0.496	0.487	0.083	5.960	< 0.001
PBC $\rightarrow$ BI	0.180	0.127	0.090	2.010	0.045
SN $\rightarrow$ BI	0.258	0.266	0.099	2.601	0.009

4.4.6 Effect Size (f^2) Analysis

Effect size (f^2) was examined to assess the relative contribution of each predictor to Behavioural Intention (BI). As shown in Table 4.12, ATB and PBC produced larger effect sizes than SN, while SN showed a smaller effect. The results indicate that the three predictors did not contribute equally to the explained variance in BI.

Table 4.12: Effect Size (f^2) Results

Predictor $\rightarrow$ BI	f^2 Value	Effect Size Interpretation
ATB $\rightarrow$ BI	0.348	Medium
PBC $\rightarrow$ BI	0.538	Large
SN $\rightarrow$ BI	0.091	Small

4.5 Summary of Quantitative Findings

The quantitative analysis found that all three hypothesised relationships between the TPB constructs and Behavioural Intention (BI) were statistically significant. Attitude Toward Behaviour (ATB) showed the largest path coefficient, followed by Subjective Norms (SN) and Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC). The R^2 value of 0.840 indicates that ATB, SN, and PBC jointly explained 84.0% of the variance in BI, while the adjusted R^2 was 0.827. The effect size results showed that PBC and ATB made relatively larger contributions to BI than SN. Overall, the findings provide quantitative support for the application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in examining parents' behavioural intentions regarding private and international school selection in Subang Jaya.

4.6 Qualitative Data Analysis

This section presents the qualitative findings derived from semi-structured interviews with parents. Thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, which involves familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report as shown in Figure 4.3. This method facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the key elements influencing school choice in the Subang Jaya region. Braun and Clarke's theme analysis offers a flexible and rigorous approach for discerning patterns in qualitative data, appropriate for educational research contexts where contextual comprehension is essential.

Figure 4.3: Braun & Clarke's Thematic Analysis (2006)

Source: www.vroque.co



The themes are presented according to their frequency of mention across the interviews. Where two or more themes received the same number of mentions, they are assigned the same rank. The following subsections present the themes based on their frequency of mention, with supporting perspectives from the participating parents.

4.6.1 School Fee

School fees appeared as the most frequently mentioned theme, with 16 mentions across the interviews. Parents viewed the price of education as a measure of perceived worth in addition to being a financial commitment. Parents frequently assessed whether the costs would result in real academic or developmental gains for their children as well as affordability in relation to anticipated educational outcomes.

From the interview, **Parent X** stated: “Already prepared the amount of fee for the children to study in international school, hoping that the money pay out will tally with the education value outcome, just want the children to be happy acquiring education.” This reflects the expectation that the tuition fees must correspond with a positive and fulfilling educational experience.

Parent Y shared concerns about rising costs, saying: “They changed school because the existing school ridiculously increased the fee by 30% yearly without improving the quality of overall school quality.” This underscores how unchecked fee hikes without improvement in service quality can lead to school switching.

Meanwhile, **Parent Z** offered a contrasting view: “They send them to public school for free education and will keep the money for further education to college/university.” This demonstrates a long-term financial planning mindset, where early cost savings are redirected toward future academic investments.

According to Bunnell (2019), school affordability has become a primary concern for families selecting international education, especially in competitive urban markets.

4.6.2 Location / Convenience

Location and convenience ranked as the second most frequently mentioned theme, with 13 mentions across the interviews. Some parents were more willing to go farther if the school's offers fulfilled their expectations, while others valued proximity as a way to lessen daily stress and commuting time.

Parent A expressed that distance was not a concern when the school was deemed beneficial for her child: “Would not mind the distance if the school is good for the child. I’m willing to sacrifice the time for the best of my child. It is worth the investment, after all, I have only one child.”

In contrast, **Parent B** emphasized the toll of commuting, stating: “The distance of travelling really matters because I don't want to stress out the child and myself, knowing the traffic condition in Malaysia.” This highlights how logistical considerations can directly impact school selection, particularly in urban areas with high congestion.

Several other parents noted that **accessibility and convenience** were essential in their decision-making. **Parent B** also reflected on limited choices in the past: “There were not many schools to select at the time their children were studying, so we just selected the only international school available then.”

Meanwhile, **Parent C** stated that they used the government-provided default option: “We send the child to the public school that government assigned.”

These divergent perspectives demonstrate that there are multiple ways to define convenience, ranging from situational limitations and available options at the moment of enrolment to physical accessibility. School location can be an important consideration in parents’ school-selection decisions because proximity and accessibility may affect commuting convenience and compatibility with family routines, particularly in urban areas.

4.6.3 Teachers’ Quality

Teachers’ quality ranked the third most frequently mentioned theme, with eight mentions across the interviews. Parents consistently emphasised not only the academic competency of teachers but also their ability to engage, motivate, and support students beyond traditional teaching roles.

Parent G explained how her child's transformation was strongly linked to the quality of teachers at their current private school: "The teachers help my child in academic results. The teacher has a way to motivate my child that study is very important and teaches him many methods of study. My son loves this school compared to the previous much more expensive one. His learning attitude changed in this school. One of the reasons we left the previous school was the very high teacher turnover rate and the quality kept dropping. That's why we moved here."

Parent M elaborated on her belief that **experience** outweighs mere qualifications: "Teachers' quality plays an important role in educating a child. It doesn't mean a highly qualified teacher is a good teacher, an experienced teacher is often a better educator." She further shared her concern that while many international schools hire foreign teachers, "Their cultural differences create issues in communication with students and parents. I think local teachers are better."

Parent M also spoke about her transition from a public to an international school, due to the learning environment: "Teachers in public school limit students from asking questions in class. That's why I changed to an international school. So, my daughter could express herself more with critical thinking, to suit her personality. The class teacher communicates closely with me about her progress, and I can see her happy in this school. So, the decision to change school was correct."

Parent L shared a particularly impactful experience: "My son's international school assigned a mentor teacher when he first enrolled. This teacher helped him in weak subjects and brought his marks from D to A in one term. The school also initiated free after-school tuition, which really made a difference." These reflections demonstrate that teacher-student relationships, mentorship, and communication with parents all shape perceptions of quality teaching, beyond credentials alone.

Teachers who demonstrate both strong pedagogical skills and emotional intelligence can positively influence student achievement by fostering motivation and building trusting relationships in the classroom (Zhang & Sadowski, 2021).

4.6.4 Syllabus

The curriculum or syllabus was ranked as the fourth frequently mentioned by seven parents. Many parents expressed that international and private school syllabi such as IGCSE or IB, are more aligned with future academic aspirations and global opportunities. Several parents shared the perception that the IGCSE syllabus offered in private and international schools is more relevant for entry into college or university, particularly those abroad. It is seen as globally recognised and academically flexible.

“Unlike public schools, where subjects like History and Malay are must-pass, which are not relevant to many students pursuing further education, IGCSE focuses on globally relevant subjects. English, which is so important globally, is not even a must-pass in public schools,” one parent highlighted.

Parent Q, a foreigner, explained her reason for selecting the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme: “My son’s English is not good, so I chose the IB syllabus instead of IGCSE because it aligns better with his learning style and interests. IB supports his language development while allowing him to grow in other areas.”

Parent J shared her positive experience with the international curriculum structure: “International school has very little homework, so my children have more time to engage in other activities after school. It is better for their overall development.”

In addition, several parents selected international or private schools because English is the medium of instruction, and many schools also offer second languages such as Mandarin, French, Spanish or Japanese, which parents saw as a value-added feature.

Parent K added that syllabus relevance to future study abroad was a deciding factor: “The IGCSE syllabus will match my daughter’s study later in the UK.”

These responses reflect a strong parental preference for internationally recognised curricula that offer language flexibility, balanced academic load, and alignment with future education plans. Hayden and Thompson (2013) noted that international curricula such as the IGCSE and IB may be attractive to parents because of their international recognition and flexibility, particularly for families considering higher education opportunities abroad.

4.6.5 Facilities

Facilities ranked fifth theme, frequently mentioned by six parents, though their perspectives varied depending on educational priorities, child needs, and school conditions.

Parent G expressed a pragmatic view on school infrastructure, stating that facilities were not her priority when selecting a school: “I don’t concern so much about facilities. In Malaysia, specialised learning activities outside of school are inexpensive and more productive. In school, they only get one hour a week with more than 20 students in a class, it’s not effective.”

In contrast, **Parent B** said that facilities played a pivotal role in his school selection: “The facilities did impress me and helped me decide on the school. I want my child to explore all kinds of activities before choosing her favourite one. Of course, if there’s a good teacher as well, that’s a bonus.”

Despite such positive remarks, some parents shared concerns about facility upkeep. A few mentioned that while their children's international school initially had modern and attractive facilities, these deteriorated over time without proper maintenance. “In the beginning, the school looked very nice when it was new. But after a few years, it got run down,” one parent explained.

Parent Q, a foreigner, brought a different perspective, noting the value of natural facilities in public schools: “Public schools have more natural spaces such as big fields, outdoor sports like basketball and netball. I don’t like my child always being kept indoors.”

Meanwhile, **Parent C** emphasised **safety** over aesthetics, stating: “Facilities must be safe for children to use. Constant checking and regular upkeep are very important to me.”

These responses reveal that while some parents place importance on well-equipped and diverse facilities to enhance their child's development, others prioritise external learning opportunities, safety, or sustainability of infrastructure over initial appearances. Earthman (2004) emphasised that the condition and adequacy of school facilities can influence students’ learning and achievement, particularly through factors related to health, safety, human comfort, indoor air quality, lighting, and acoustics.

4.6.6 Academic Performance

Academic performance was cited as a crucial theme by five parents, ranking sixth in the qualitative analysis. However, perceptions varied, ranging from high academic expectations to broader concerns about student well-being and long-term goals.

Parent A emphasised the significance of a student's individual learning attitude over school type or system: “A student’s learning attitude is what really matters. Regardless of the type of school, some students in public schools excel, while others struggle in any school. It’s not always about the syllabus or the quality of teachers; it’s about the student.”

On the other hand, **Parent K** viewed academic outcomes as a direct reflection of school quality: “The first thing I asked when visiting a school was to see the academic results of their final-year students. Good results show the quality of teaching and learning. I will only enroll my child in a school with a strong academic record; other things don’t concern me.”

Parent B agreed with this outcome-driven approach, especially with university admission in mind: “Academic performance is extremely important, especially if you want to apply to top universities. There’s no compromise.”

Yet, others offered a more holistic perspective. **Parent J** challenged the traditional emphasis on grades: “Academic result is not everything. Just because a student excels in exams doesn’t mean they will be more successful in life. What matters most is mental health and a happy learning environment.” Similar to this perspective, other parents emphasized that their objective was academic adequacy rather than greatness. They were content as long as their children could qualify for college or university in the field of their choice, viewing it as a milestone for further growth.

These diverse responses show a spectrum of parental expectations, from those prioritising academic excellence as a school performance benchmark, to others who value emotional well-being and student autonomy in determining educational success. Marsh and Hau (2003) highlighted the importance of considering academic self-concept and its relationship with academic achievement when examining students’ educational outcomes.

4.6.7 Student Diversity

Student diversity was moderately cited as a contributing theme in school selection decisions, with four mentions overall, placing it at the 7th rank in the qualitative analysis. Parents shared differing views on the benefits and challenges of diversity within the school population, reflecting a range of educational priorities and cultural values.

Parent D specifically chose an international school for its multicultural student body, viewing it as an investment in his son's global social capital and future career: "I want my son to mix with students from different nationalities. This will help him mingle confidently across cultures and, hopefully, take over my global business in the future. I will only choose a large-scale, upper-class international school with many foreign students. I also enjoy meeting foreign parents during school events."

Conversely, **Parent J** noted that while international schools often have foreign students who may behave differently, she accepts these differences as part of growing up: "Foreign students can be more mischievous or naughty, and my children sometimes learn funny things from them. But I think this is fine, it's part of their growing years and learning about people."

On the other hand, **Parent Q** prioritised academic competitiveness over international exposure. She believed that local Chinese students typically perform better academically and influence others positively through a competitive spirit: "I prefer schools with more local Chinese students because they are more focused on academic achievement. That kind of environment pushes students to perform better. That's why I transferred my child to a Chinese private school, even though it's further from Subang Jaya."

These perspectives illustrate that while some parents view student diversity as a gateway to global competence and cultural fluency, others focus on its academic or behavioural implications, showing that diversity can be both a perceived advantage and a concern depending on parental expectations.

Banks (2008) emphasised that culturally diverse educational environments can provide opportunities for students to develop greater understanding and appreciation of cultural differences.

4.6.8 Student–Teacher Ratio

The student–teacher ratio, while not one of the most frequently mentioned themes (ranked 8th with three references), still emerged as a meaningful consideration for some parents who prioritized individual attention and personalised learning experiences.

Parent J shared that her decision to transfer her child to a new school was influenced primarily by class size: “I chose a school with fewer students because I want my child to get more attention in all aspects. That’s very important to me.”

Her perspective reflects a growing parental emphasis on the quality of classroom interaction over sheer institutional reputation or scale. Smaller class sizes are associated with greater individual attention from teachers, more active teacher–student interactions, and higher levels of classroom engagement, with these effects observed in both primary and secondary education (Blatchford et al., 2011).

4.6.9 Student Discipline

Although student discipline was one of the lower-ranked themes (9th place with only two mentions), it was still considered significant by some parents, particularly those who are concerned about the influence of peers and the long-term behavioural development of their children.

Parent D strongly emphasised the importance of school policies on student behaviour: “A school should not accept students with disciplinary issues. A report or background check must be conducted before offering a place. Some schools just take in any student because of business, and this will create disciplinary issues eventually and affect other students. This is what happened to my friend’s children’s school. I prefer a school with very strict discipline policy. Because when my child enters society later, I want him to follow the law and not violate rules, that’s what worries me most.”

This feeling embodies the conviction that educational discipline establishes the groundwork for ethical development and responsible citizenship. Parents who hold this view may expect schools to take proactive measures to maintain a safe and focused learning environment, consistent with research showing that clear disciplinary structures and supportive school

climates are associated with greater school safety and lower levels of bullying and victimisation (Gregory et al., 2010).

4.6.10 Social Status

Although ranked 8th among frequently mentioned theme, social status still played a role in some parents' decisions, particularly those embedded in social networks where educational choices are socially visible and value-laden.

Parent A candidly explained how social status influenced his choice: “This factor is important for my current status because most of my community send their children to international schools. There will be more common topics to talk about during gatherings. One drawback is my children have become more materialistic, buying expensive branded items and always going after limited editions to stay on the same level as their peers. Also, they tend to be more argumentative. In our culture, we don’t usually argue with parents, but now they often fight for what they call ‘fairness.’ They have developed strong individual thinking. There are pros and cons to this.”

This comment illustrates how school choice is embedded not only in educational goals but also in broader sociocultural and identity considerations. For some, private or international school attendance is a marker of socioeconomic class and modern parenting, but it can also shape children’s values, social behaviours, and identity formation in ways that challenge traditional norms.

This aligns with research showing that social class and community contexts influence educational choices, with middle-class families often drawing on their social, cultural, and economic resources when making school-selection decisions (Ball, 2003).

4.6.11 Reputation

Although "Reputation" ranked sixth in influence (with five mentions), several parents highlighted that the perceived standing of a school within the community, professional network, and online presence played an important role in their decision-making process.

Parent E shared: “I wasn’t very familiar with the academic aspects at first, but I had heard from other parents and read online that the school had a strong reputation. That gave me confidence it would be a good environment for my child. Later, I realised that Google reviews can be misleading—but so far, my son is happy at the school.”

Parent X implied that a reputable school is likely to be better at managing disciplinary issues, handling academic concerns effectively, and maintaining stronger governance practices. The trust in the school’s ability to uphold standards contributes significantly to a parent's sense of assurance.

Parent D also expressed that reputation was his top priority: “I will only select a reputable school above all other factors. Even from their social media and website design, I can already sense their image. If they can't present themselves well publicly, how can they be expected to run the school properly?”

Reputation frequently functions as a heuristic in the decision-making process, particularly for those selecting a school for the first time. It reduces the cognitive load required to compare multiple complex factors and increases confidence in the school’s value proposition. This aligns with Bosetti’s (2004) finding that school reputation and academic reputation are important considerations in parents’ school-selection decisions. Furthermore, a school's prominence on digital channels, including compelling social media material, aesthetically pleasing websites, and highlighted accomplishments, significantly influences its reputation and public trust.

4.6.12 Environment (Surrounding)

The surrounding environment of the school, both physical and social also played a significant role in parents’ school choice, with several participants expressing concerns about safety, neighbourhood organisation, and overall conduciveness for learning.

A few parents shared that they preferred schools located in Subang Jaya, highlighting that the area is well-organised, less congested compared to other townships, and has a neat, residential atmosphere. They appreciated the convenience of amenities and the perception that Subang Jaya is a safe and comfortable area for families.

Parent F provided a more personal account of how the school's surrounding environment influenced her decision to transfer her child: "I moved my daughter from the government-assigned school to an international school. One of the reasons was because I often saw the security guard sleeping during school hours. It made me question the school's safety and how seriously they take child protection. Also, the school is too close to busy roads or commercial zones. It just doesn't feel right for my children."

Such remarks indicate that environmental considerations extend beyond aesthetics or convenience to include concerns about traffic, accessibility, neighbourhood context, and safety. Recent research indicates that neighbourhood characteristics, school accessibility, and safety can influence how families evaluate and select schools (Billingham et al., 2024; Rich & Owens, 2023).

4.6.13 Other Factors: Social Media, Online Reviews, School Policy, Government Board Recognition, and Mission & Vision of the School

Although less frequently emphasized compared to other major themes, several additional elements were brought up by parents during the interviews. These include the school's presence on social media, online reviews, transparency in school policies, recognition by the Malaysian government, and the school's mission and vision. While these factors were not dominant across the interviews, they nonetheless contributed to shaping parental perception and decision-making.

Some parents mentioned that social media and online reviews influenced their initial impressions of a school. A few respondents shared that the school's digital presence could help form a positive image, with one stating that "online reviews and active social media platforms gave me an idea of the school environment and activities." However, one parent also expressed caution, noting that such reviews can be misleading or inauthentic.

Government recognition was raised as an essential baseline requirement. One parent emphasized, "The school must be recognized by the Government Board of Malaysia. That's non-negotiable." The mission and vision of the school was cited by a parent who appreciated having a clear educational direction. This respondent remarked that aligning with the school's values and long-term objectives added to their confidence in the institution. Finally,

transparency in school policies was valued by some parents, particularly one who appreciated that “everything was clearly laid out, with no hidden charges or ambiguous terms.” This clarity contributed to a sense of trust and professionalism.

Overall, while these factors did not rank among the top priorities for most parents, their mention indicates that such elements can still influence school choice when parents are comparing between otherwise similar institutions.

4.7 Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter presented the key findings from both quantitative and qualitative data on factors associated with parents’ choice of private and international schools in Subang Jaya. The quantitative results, analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), showed that Attitude Toward Behaviour (ATB), Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC), and Subjective Norms (SN) had statistically significant relationships with Behavioural Intention (BI). ATB demonstrated the largest path coefficient ($\beta = 0.496$), while PBC demonstrated the largest effect size ($f^2 = 0.538$). SN also showed a statistically significant relationship with BI, although its effect size was comparatively smaller ($f^2 = 0.091$). The model explained 84.0% of the variance in BI ($R^2 = 0.840$). These findings are consistent with the core propositions of Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), indicating that attitudes, perceived behavioural control, and subjective norms are relevant to parents’ behavioural intentions in the context of private and international school selection in Subang Jaya.

The demographic analysis revealed that most respondents were aged between 40 and 59, held at least a Bachelor’s degree, and reported mid- to high-level household incomes. A majority had one or two children currently enrolled in private or international schools, indicating that the respondents represented the target population relevant to the study.

The qualitative data, analysed using Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis, enriched the quantitative findings by providing detailed perspectives on parents’ experiences, considerations, and perceptions when selecting schools. The thematic analysis identified a range of themes, including school fees, location and distance, teacher quality, syllabus and curriculum, school facilities, school environment, academic performance, student diversity,

student–teacher ratio, student discipline, social status, school reputation, and other contextual factors such as social media, school policy, government board recognition, and school mission and vision. The themes are presented according to their frequency of mention across the interviews, with themes receiving the same number of mentions assigned the same rank.

These themes were mapped to the TPB constructs as presented in Table 4.13. Attitude Toward Behaviour (ATB) was reflected in parents' evaluations of curriculum and syllabus, teacher quality, school facilities, school environment, student–teacher ratio, and alignment with school mission and vision. Subjective Norms (SN) were reflected in social and interpersonal considerations, including peer influence, public perceptions, student diversity, and school reputation where these were associated with the views or expectations of others. Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) was reflected primarily in considerations related to affordability, location and accessibility, policy transparency, and other conditions that affected parents' perceived ability to make a feasible school choice.

Less frequently mentioned aspects, including social media presence, mission and vision, and school policy transparency, also provided insight into how some parents developed confidence in a school and assessed its alignment with their expectations and values. Although these themes were mentioned less frequently, their presence in the interviews indicates that parents' school-selection considerations extended beyond the more frequently mentioned factors.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that school selection is a multidimensional decision involving parents' evaluations of school attributes, perceived practical constraints, and social influences. The quantitative findings demonstrate statistically significant relationships between ATB, PBC, SN, and BI, while the qualitative findings provide contextual explanations of the specific school-related factors considered by parents. The integration of both sets of findings provides a more comprehensive understanding of parental school-selection decisions in Subang Jaya.

The following chapter interprets these findings in relation to existing literature and the Theory of Planned Behaviour, discusses their theoretical and practical implications, and presents recommendations for school administrators, educational stakeholders, and future research.

Table 4.13: Summary of Qualitative Themes and TPB Mapping

The Relationship Between the Study Factors and the TPB Constructs

The findings presented in this study can be further interpreted in relation to the three constructs of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), namely Attitude toward the Behaviour (ATB), Subjective Norms (SN), and Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC). Consistent with the theoretical framework presented in Section 1.8, the factors examined in this study are considered relevant to these constructs because parents' school-selection decisions may be shaped by their evaluations of school attributes, perceived social influences, and their perceptions of the practical feasibility of selecting a particular school.

In this study, factors such as curriculum quality, teacher quality, school facilities, school reputation, student diversity, and social media information are primarily associated with parents' attitudes toward selecting a private or international school, as these factors may contribute to parents' beliefs and evaluations of the school. Peer influence and other forms of social influence are associated with subjective norms because they reflect perceived expectations or influences from significant others. School fees and location/accessibility are associated with perceived behavioural control because they relate to parents' perceptions of affordability, accessibility, and the practical feasibility of selecting a school.

The mapping does not imply that each factor operates exclusively through a single TPB construct. Rather, the mapping provides a theoretical interpretation of how the study variables relate to the underlying behavioural constructs of the TPB. The empirical findings reported in this chapter remain based on the statistical analyses conducted in the study.

Frequency/Rank	Factor	Description	Mapped TPB Construct
1	School Fees	Affordability and value for money were the most cited concern.	PBC
2	Location and Distance	Proximity, travel time, and traffic were critical factors for convenience and accessibility.	PBC

3	Teachers' Quality	The competence, experience, and approachability of teachers influenced parents' confidence in the school.	ATB
4	Syllabus / Curriculum	Preference for reputable and holistic curricula, such as Cambridge and IGCSE, influenced parents' evaluations of schools.	ATB
5	School Facilities	Modern, safe, and comprehensive infrastructure was perceived as contributing to the school experience.	ATB
6	School Environment	Positive atmosphere, safety, and supportive culture were valued by parents.	ATB
6	School Reputation	A trusted reputation, including information obtained through word-of-mouth and reviews increased parents' confidence in the school.	SN
7	Student Diversity and Peer Influence	Exposure to multicultural peers and socially positive environments was appreciated. Peer influence also reflected the social views and influence of others on parents' school-selection considerations.	SN / ATB

8	Social Media and Social Status	Branding, online presence, and perceived school prestige shaped parents' perceptions and evaluations of schools.	ATB
8	Student–Teacher Ratio	Smaller class sizes were associated with more personalised attention and care.	ATB
9	Government Board Recognition	Parents valued schools that were approved, recognised or monitored by relevant government authorities.	PBC
9	School Mission and Vision	Alignment with personal values or aspirations influenced some parents' evaluations of school suitability.	ATB
9	School Policy Transparency	Clear, consistent, and transparent policies increased trust and reduced uncertainty when considering a school.	PBC

Note: Themes are presented according to their frequency of mention across the interviews. Themes with the same frequency are assigned the same rank. The TPB mapping represents a theoretical interpretation of the qualitative themes and does not imply that each factor operates exclusively through one TPB construct.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a synthesis and discussion of the empirical findings of the study, together with the theoretical and practical implications arising from the quantitative and qualitative results. The chapter brings together the findings presented in the preceding chapters to provide an integrated understanding of the factors associated with parents' behavioural intentions when selecting private and international schools in Subang Jaya. Recommendations are subsequently proposed for school leaders, educators, and relevant educational stakeholders in the private and international school sectors.

The objective of this research was to examine the factors associated with parents' behavioural intentions when selecting schools, guided by Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The findings indicate that parental school selection involves a combination of attitudinal evaluations, perceived practical considerations, and social influences. This is consistent with previous research suggesting that school choice extends beyond academic performance and reputation to include a broader range of institutional, social, and personal considerations (Pillay, Rokis, & Saleh, 2022; Lim & Idris, 2020).

The increasing diversity of educational options, including national, private, and international school curricula, has further expanded the range of considerations available to parents when making school-selection decisions. The present study contributes to the existing literature by examining parental behavioural intentions through the TPB framework and by providing empirical evidence on the factors associated with school-selection intentions among parents in Subang Jaya. The quantitative PLS-SEM findings provide evidence of the relationships examined in the proposed model, while the qualitative findings provide additional contextual insights into the school-related considerations identified by parents.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the major findings in relation to the research objectives, theoretical framework, and existing literature. It then presents practical recommendations for school leaders and other educational stakeholders, followed by the limitations of the study and

recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes by summarising the overall contributions of the study to the understanding of parental school-choice behaviour in the Malaysian context.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide evidence that parents' behavioural intentions when selecting private and international schools in Subang Jaya are associated with their attitudes towards school-related attributes, their perceived behavioural control, and the influence of social factors. The quantitative PLS-SEM results showed that Attitude Toward Behaviour (ATB), Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC), and Subjective Norms (SN) were all significantly related to Behavioural Intention (BI). The qualitative findings further provided contextual explanations of the specific school-related considerations that parents discussed during the interviews. The integration of these findings provides a more comprehensive understanding of parental school-selection behaviour.

5.2.1 Attitude Toward Behaviour and Behavioural Intention

Attitude Toward Behaviour (ATB) demonstrated a statistically significant relationship with Behavioural Intention (BI), with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.496$, $t = 5.960$, and $p < 0.001$. Among the three TPB predictors, ATB recorded the largest path coefficient, indicating that parents' overall evaluations of the school and its attributes were strongly associated with their intention to select a private or international school. The effect size of ATB was $f^2 = 0.348$, which represents a medium effect.

This finding suggests that parents' intentions are influenced by how positively they evaluate the characteristics and educational experience offered by a school. The qualitative findings support this interpretation, with parents frequently discussing teacher quality, syllabus and curriculum, school facilities, school environment, student-teacher ratio, and school mission and vision. These factors represent attributes that parents evaluate when forming an overall perception of whether a school is suitable for their children. For example, parents discussed teachers' experience and approachability, curriculum choices such as Cambridge and IGCSE,

classroom environments, facilities, and the extent to which a school's educational approach aligned with their expectations.

The finding is consistent with previous research identifying school quality and institutional characteristics as important considerations in parents' school-selection decisions (Bosetti & Gereluk, 2016). The present findings further indicate that such evaluations can be understood within the TPB framework as components contributing to parents' attitudes towards the school-selection behaviour.

The practical implication for school leaders is that attention should be given not only to academic outcomes but also to the overall educational experience offered to students. Schools may strengthen parental perceptions by maintaining teaching quality, providing appropriate learning facilities, communicating curriculum strengths clearly, and demonstrating how the school environment supports students' academic and personal development. These actions may contribute to more positive parental evaluations of the school.

5.2.2 Perceived Behavioural Control and Behavioural Intention

Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) also demonstrated a statistically significant relationship with Behavioural Intention (BI), with $\beta = 0.180$, $t = 2.010$, and $p = 0.045$. Although the path coefficient was smaller than those of ATB and SN, PBC recorded the largest effect size among the three predictors, with $f^2 = 0.538$, indicating a large effect. This finding suggests that parents' perceptions of their ability to make and manage the school-selection decision remain an important component of their behavioural intention.

The qualitative findings provide further context for this relationship. School fees were the most frequently mentioned theme, followed by location and distance. Parents discussed affordability, the overall value of school fees, travelling time, traffic conditions, and convenience when considering their school options. These findings indicate that parents may have positive attitudes towards a particular school but still need to consider whether the school is financially and practically feasible for their family.

This finding is consistent with recent research showing that practical considerations, particularly school proximity and cost, can influence parents' school-choice decisions

(Venketsamy & Miller, 2021). The qualitative findings also showed that transparency in school policies and fee structures could reduce uncertainty and support parents in making informed decisions. Government recognition was another consideration mentioned by some parents, particularly in relation to institutional legitimacy and confidence in the school.

The practical implication is that schools should recognise affordability and accessibility as part of the parental decision-making process. Clear fee structures, transparent communication of additional charges, accessible information about payment arrangements, and clear school policies may help parents assess whether the school is a feasible choice. Schools located in areas where transportation and traffic are significant concerns may also benefit from providing clear information about accessibility and available transport arrangements.

5.2.3 Subjective Norms and Behavioural Intention

Subjective Norms (SN) demonstrated a statistically significant relationship with Behavioural Intention, with $\beta = 0.258$, $t = 2.601$, and $p = 0.009$. The result indicates that social influences are associated with parents' intentions when selecting a private or international school. However, the effect size was $f^2 = 0.091$, which represents a small effect compared with ATB and PBC.

The qualitative findings provide insight into the social factors that may contribute to this relationship. Parents referred to peer influence, school reputation, student diversity, social status, and public perceptions of schools. Some parents considered recommendations or opinions from other parents, while others referred to online reviews, community perceptions, or the reputation of a school when forming their views. These findings suggest that parents may use information from their social environment as an additional source of reassurance when evaluating school options.

The finding is broadly consistent with literature emphasising the role of social networks, reputation, and social expectations in school-choice decisions (Bosetti & Gereluk, 2016). However, the relatively small effect size found in this study suggests that social influences, while statistically significant, may not contribute to behavioural intention to the same extent as

parents' own evaluations of school attributes or their perceived practical ability to make the choice.

For school leaders, this finding highlights the importance of maintaining a credible reputation and communicating accurately with parents and the wider community. Positive parent experiences, transparent communication, and consistent educational practices may contribute to favourable word-of-mouth and public perceptions. At the same time, schools should ensure that marketing and online communication provide accurate and verifiable information rather than relying solely on prestige or social status.

5.2.4 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrates that parental school selection is a multidimensional decision. The quantitative results established statistically significant relationships between ATB, PBC, SN, and BI, while the qualitative findings identified the specific school-related considerations through which these constructs were expressed in parents' accounts.

ATB was reflected primarily through parents' evaluations of curriculum and syllabus, teacher quality, facilities, school environment, student–teacher ratio, and alignment with school values. PBC was reflected particularly through affordability, location and accessibility, as well as considerations related to policy transparency and other practical conditions. SN was reflected through social and interpersonal considerations, including peer influence, school reputation, student diversity, and public perceptions.

The qualitative findings also demonstrated that parents did not rely on a single criterion when making school-selection decisions. Although school fees and location were the most frequently mentioned themes, parents also considered educational quality, teachers, curriculum, facilities, reputation, social environment, and institutional characteristics. Less frequently mentioned factors, such as social media presence, mission and vision, government recognition, and policy transparency, provided additional information that helped some parents assess the credibility and suitability of a school.

Taken together, the findings support the application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in understanding parental school-selection behaviour in Subang Jaya. Parents' intentions appear to be shaped by their evaluations of school attributes, their perception of whether the choice is financially and practically manageable, and the social information available to them. The mixed-methods findings therefore provide both statistical evidence and contextual understanding of the factors associated with parents' behavioural intentions.

Overall, the findings indicate that private and international school selection involves a combination of personal evaluation, practical considerations, and social influences rather than a single decision criterion. For school leaders, understanding these dimensions can support more responsive approaches to educational quality, fee and policy transparency, parent communication, and school positioning within the competitive Malaysian private and international education sector.

5.3 Recommendations

Grounded in the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed for school leaders, educators, and other educational stakeholders operating in the private and international school sectors in Subang Jaya and similar urban settings. The recommendations are intended to respond to the factors identified through the quantitative and qualitative findings, particularly affordability and accessibility, teacher quality, curriculum, school environment, parental engagement, reputation, and institutional transparency. Rather than focusing solely on operational improvements, the recommendations emphasise strategic approaches that may strengthen educational quality, parental confidence, and the long-term positioning of schools.

5.3.1 Strategic Scholarship and Financial Support Programmes

Given that school fees were the most frequently mentioned theme in the qualitative findings, schools should consider developing structured financial support programmes that recognise both academic merit and financial need. Such programmes could include partial scholarships, sibling support, achievement-based awards, and targeted assistance for families who demonstrate financial constraints.

Scholarship programmes may also be strategically linked to areas that contribute to the broader development and identity of the school, such as academic achievement, STEM-related activities, leadership, sports, arts, and community service. This approach would allow schools to attract students with diverse strengths while supporting accessibility and maintaining a strong educational profile.

Clear eligibility criteria, application procedures, renewal requirements, and scholarship conditions should be communicated transparently to prospective and existing parents. Schools should also evaluate the effectiveness of their financial support programmes periodically to ensure that they contribute to both student access and institutional objectives. Such initiatives may strengthen the perceived value of school fees while supporting a more diverse student population.

5.3.2 Strengthening Teacher Quality, Development and Retention

Teacher quality was one of the prominent themes identified in the qualitative findings and was associated with parents' evaluations of school quality. Schools should therefore adopt a comprehensive teacher-development strategy that extends beyond occasional training workshops.

Continuous professional development should include areas such as student motivation, differentiated instruction, curriculum development, classroom management, digital pedagogy, and appropriate use of educational technology. Schools may also consider structured teacher mentoring programmes in which experienced teachers support less-experienced colleagues through classroom observation, professional dialogue, and reflective practice.

Where appropriate, teachers could be encouraged to undertake recognised digital-pedagogy or technology-related professional development. Schools may also support appropriate participation in international professional-development programmes, conferences, or recognised external certification to expose teachers to emerging educational practices and international standards. AI-assisted educational tools may also be introduced responsibly to support lesson planning, resource development, feedback, and administrative efficiency, while maintaining teacher judgement and appropriate safeguards.

Teacher retention should be addressed alongside professional development. Competitive remuneration, opportunities for career progression, recognition of performance, supportive leadership, and reasonable workload management may contribute to greater staff stability. Consistent teaching quality and lower staff turnover can strengthen continuity of learning and parental confidence in the school.

Schools may also conduct periodic competency reviews to identify professional-development needs. Such reviews should be developmental rather than punitive and should be used to guide targeted support, mentoring, and professional growth.

5.3.3 Strengthening Parent–School Engagement

The qualitative findings indicate that parents value communication, trust, reputation, and clarity when evaluating schools. Schools should therefore develop structured mechanisms for meaningful parent–school engagement rather than relying primarily on conventional parent-teacher meetings.

Schools may establish regular parent feedback mechanisms, such as termly consultation sessions, parent satisfaction surveys, digital feedback platforms, and structured parent forums. Where appropriate, a Parent Advisory Board or similar representative body could provide a formal channel through which parents contribute perspectives on areas such as communication, student well-being, school activities, and selected aspects of school improvement.

Digital engagement platforms can also provide parents with timely information about school activities, academic progress, policies, events, and important announcements. Parent feedback should be systematically reviewed, with schools communicating appropriate follow-up actions to demonstrate that feedback contributes to continuous improvement.

Such approaches can strengthen parent–school partnerships, increase transparency, and support parental confidence in school leadership. The objective should not be to allow parents to determine educational policy, but to establish constructive channels through which their experiences and concerns can inform appropriate school-improvement initiatives.

5.3.4 Enhancing Curriculum Through Real-World Preparedness

The qualitative findings identified syllabus and curriculum as an important consideration in parents' school-selection decisions. Schools should therefore ensure that curriculum delivery extends beyond examination preparation and provides students with opportunities to apply knowledge in authentic contexts.

Real-world preparedness can be strengthened through experiential learning activities such as:

- **Simulations and role-playing:** Activities such as job interviews, emergency-response scenarios, business negotiations, and presentations can develop communication, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.
- **Authentic projects:** Students can address real-world problems within their school or community and develop practical solutions to social or environmental issues.
- **Career exposure:** Guest speakers, career talks, workplace visits, and appropriate professional-shadowing opportunities can help students understand different career pathways.
- **Case-study learning:** Real-world cases can be used to develop critical thinking, ethical reasoning, analysis, and reflection.
- **Digital citizenship:** Students should develop the ability to navigate digital environments safely and responsibly, including evaluating online information, protecting personal information, and understanding responsible digital behaviour.

Where appropriate, schools may also incorporate emerging areas such as AI literacy, coding, entrepreneurship, sustainability, financial literacy, and global citizenship into existing curriculum or co-curricular programmes. These areas should complement rather than displace the school's core curriculum.

Such approaches can strengthen students' critical thinking, adaptability, communication, digital literacy, and preparedness for further education and employment.

5.3.5 Flexible Differentiated Instruction for Diverse Learners

Schools should adopt flexible differentiated instruction to respond to differences in students' readiness, learning needs, interests, and pace of learning. Rather than relying on permanent ability-based grouping, schools may use flexible grouping that allows students to move between groups according to their progress and the learning objectives of particular lessons.

Differentiated instruction can be supported through:

- flexible grouping and regrouping based on ongoing assessment;
- differentiated learning tasks and levels of challenge;
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles where appropriate;
- formative assessment to identify learning gaps;
- adaptive learning technologies where suitable; and
- individualised learning pathways and targeted academic support.

Teachers should receive appropriate training to implement these approaches effectively. Regular formative assessment can help teachers identify students who require additional support as well as those who would benefit from greater academic challenge.

This approach may provide the benefits of targeted instruction while reducing the risk of permanent labels or fixed expectations. Transparent communication with parents and regular monitoring of student progress are important to ensure that grouping remains flexible, evidence-based, and focused on student development.

5.3.6 Holistic and Supportive Admission Practices

Schools should consider adopting admission practices that assess students more holistically rather than relying excessively on academic performance or behavioural screening alone. While schools have a legitimate responsibility to maintain a safe and supportive learning environment, admission processes should also recognise individual student needs and the school's capacity to provide appropriate support.

A holistic admission process may consider:

- academic readiness for the intended year level;
- the student's learning needs and areas requiring support;
- social and emotional readiness;
- previous educational experience;
- the student's and family's expectations of the school;
- alignment between parent expectations and the school's educational values; and
- appropriate transition support for students entering a new educational environment.

Diagnostic assessments may be used to identify areas in which additional academic support is required. Where appropriate, trial or orientation activities may also help students and schools determine whether the learning environment is suitable.

Information from previous schools should be considered responsibly and in accordance with applicable privacy and admission requirements. Behavioural information should not be used simply to exclude students; rather, it should help schools determine whether appropriate support and resources can be provided.

A more holistic approach can help schools balance academic standards, student well-being, inclusion, and institutional capacity while providing families with clearer expectations before enrolment.

5.3.7 Considering Boarding and Residential Support Options

Where there is demonstrated market demand, private and international schools in Subang Jaya may consider whether boarding or residential support options would be feasible for their student population. Such provision could potentially serve families who live further from the school or have work commitments that make daily transportation challenging.

Any boarding initiative should, however, be based on evidence of demand, financial feasibility, safeguarding requirements, staffing capacity, and appropriate residential standards. Schools may consider partnerships with established residential facilities rather than immediately developing their own boarding infrastructure.

A well-managed residential programme could provide structured routines, supervised study periods, co-curricular opportunities, and opportunities for students to develop independence. However, boarding should be viewed as an optional strategic service rather than a universal requirement for school development.

5.3.8 Enhancing Fee Transparency and Policy Clarity

School fees and affordability were prominent considerations in the qualitative findings. Schools should therefore provide parents with clear, comprehensive, and accessible information about the total expected cost of education.

Schools should publish an updated fee structure that clearly identifies tuition fees, registration fees, deposits, annual increases where applicable, and additional charges such as uniforms, activities, technology, examinations, or other compulsory costs. Where fees are subject to change, schools should communicate the applicable terms and timing clearly.

Similarly, important institutional policies, including refund and withdrawal procedures, academic progression requirements, disciplinary procedures, scholarship criteria, and other relevant policies should be communicated in clear language and made readily accessible to parents.

Transparent communication can reduce uncertainty and allow parents to assess the financial and practical feasibility of a school before enrolment. It can also strengthen trust and reduce misunderstandings between schools and families. In a competitive private and international education environment, fee and policy transparency can therefore function not only as an administrative practice but also as an important element of institutional credibility.

5.3.9 Strategic Digital Branding and Marketing Communication

The qualitative findings indicated that some parents use school websites, online reviews, and social media as sources of information when evaluating schools. Schools should therefore treat

their digital presence as an extension of their communication, reputation, and information-management strategy.

School websites should provide accurate, current, and accessible information about curriculum, fees, policies, accreditation or recognition, student support, facilities, school activities, and contact information. Where appropriate and ethically permissible, schools may also provide information about examination achievements, university progression, student accomplishments, alumni outcomes, and co-curricular activities.

Schools should also use social media strategically to communicate authentic aspects of school life, including student activities, community engagement, educational programmes, achievements, and parent-related initiatives. Digital content should be factual, regularly updated, and consistent with the school's mission and values.

Virtual campus tours, online information sessions, and responsive digital enquiry systems may further improve accessibility for prospective families who cannot visit the school immediately. Schools may also explore AI-assisted enquiry systems for routine questions, provided that appropriate human oversight, data protection, and accuracy controls are maintained.

Digital communication should complement rather than replace direct engagement with parents. Given that some interview participants expressed caution about online reviews and perceptions, schools should prioritise accuracy, transparency, and credibility rather than relying solely on promotional messaging.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

Despite the valuable contributions of this study to understanding parents' behavioural intentions in selecting private and international schools in Subang Jaya, several limitations must be acknowledged.

Firstly, the research employed a cross-sectional design, capturing parental perspectives at a single point in time. As such, the findings do not reflect potential changes in attitudes or behaviours over time, particularly in response to external factors such as economic shifts, policy updates, or post-pandemic educational adaptations.

Secondly, although the study adopted a mixed-methods approach within a pragmatic paradigm, the sample size for qualitative interviews remained relatively small and context-specific. Despite efforts to guarantee respondents' demographic and experiential diversity, the insights may only be applicable to similarly urbanised, middle-to-upper-class Malaysian groups.

Thirdly, data collection was confined to Subang Jaya, a well-developed suburban area with a high density of private and international schools. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent parental behaviours in rural or less-developed regions, where school choices are more limited and influenced by different socio-economic or cultural factors.

Additionally, the application of Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) provided a strong theoretical foundation. However, TPB primarily focuses on individual decision-making processes and may not account for more extensive systemic effects such as government policy shifts, marketing pressure from schools, or cultural expectations around education.

Importantly, the methodological structure of this study was guided by the Research Onion framework (Saunders et al., 2019), which offered coherence in aligning philosophical assumptions, methodological approach, and data collection techniques. While this structure strengthened internal consistency, certain choices within the Research Onion such as adopting a convergent parallel design and cross-sectional time horizon may have limited the scope for deeper longitudinal insight or emergent theory-building.

Finally, limitations emerged from the quantitative data's self-reported nature, which may introduce response bias. Some parents might have provided socially desirable responses, particularly on sensitive topics such as educational priorities or financial capacity. Moreover, the questionnaire survey was designed solely in English, potentially excluding or disadvantaging non-English proficient participants. The complexity of the English language used in certain survey items may have further affected response accuracy. Respondents with lower levels of English proficiency might have misinterpreted questions or left unanswered, which could distort the data and reduce the results' representativeness.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

5.5.1 Expand the Study to Other Geographical Locations

Future studies should explore school selection behaviours in other parts of Malaysia, including rural and suburban areas. This would help determine whether the factors influencing parents in Subang Jaya are consistent across different socio-economic, cultural, and geographic settings. Comparative analysis could uncover region-specific concerns or preferences.

Future studies could also compare parental school-choice behaviour across public, private, and international schools to determine whether the relative importance of curriculum, teacher quality, affordability, accessibility, reputation, and other factors differs across educational sectors. Cross-country comparative studies could further examine whether the factors identified in the Malaysian context are similarly observed in other education systems with different cultural, economic, and regulatory environments. Such comparisons would provide a broader understanding of whether the factors influencing parental school choice are context-specific or applicable across different educational systems.

5.5.2 Adopt a Longitudinal Research Approach

A longitudinal design is recommended to observe how parents' priorities and decision-making evolve as their children grow or as they gain more experience with the school. Tracking changes over time would provide deeper insights into school satisfaction and retention dynamics. Such an approach could also examine whether parents' behavioural intentions change after experiencing the actual quality of the school, its curriculum, teachers, facilities, and overall educational environment.

5.5.3 Integrate Extended TPB Constructs

While this study used Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour as its framework, future research may enhance the model by incorporating additional variables such as habitual behaviours, moral norms, or emotions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). These extensions could offer

a more comprehensive understanding of school choice decision-making. Future studies could also examine emerging factors associated with changes in parental decision-making, including the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education and school selection. As parents increasingly encounter AI-supported information, recommendations, and communication, future research could investigate whether AI adoption influences how parents search for, evaluate, and select schools.

5.5.4 Investigate Educational Policy and Regulation Influence

Further studies could investigate how school policies, transparency in governance, and accreditation standards affect parental trust and choices. Including viewpoints from school administrators and policymakers could broaden understanding of systemic influences on private and international school selection. Qualitative studies involving school leaders could further explore how school policies, management practices, curriculum decisions, and institutional strategies respond to parents' expectations and influence school choice.

5.5.5 Include Students' Perspectives

Future research may complement parental views with insights from students, especially those in secondary levels, to understand their perception of school environment, curriculum quality, and social dynamics. This dual perspective could yield a more complete picture of school effectiveness and satisfaction. Future studies could also examine the extent to which children influence their parents' school-selection decisions, particularly when children are older and more actively involved in educational choices.

5.5.6 Develop Complex Quantitative Models

Researchers should consider testing models that include mediating or moderating variables such as income level, parents' education background, or previous school experience. These factors could improve predictive understanding and provide further insight into the relationship

within the TPB framework. Future research could also examine whether emerging factors, such as sustainability practices and environmental considerations, moderate or influence parents' school-choice decisions. This may provide further insight into whether sustainability has become an important consideration in the selection of private and international schools.

5.5.7 Examine Role of Technology and Online Reputation

The influence of a school's digital presence via websites, online reviews, and social media on parental decision-making is an emerging area worthy of exploration. Future research could analyse how digital marketing and online visibility shape school perception and behavioural intention. In particular, future studies could investigate how social-media algorithms influence the information parents encounter, the schools that become visible to them, and their subsequent perceptions and school-selection decisions. As AI and other digital technologies become increasingly integrated into information search and decision-making, future research could also examine how these technologies interact with social media and online reputation in shaping parental school-choice behaviour.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented a comprehensive synthesis of the study's theoretical contributions, research findings, and practical implications, culminating in evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and school administrators. Grounded in Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (1991), the study demonstrated significant relationships between Attitude Toward Behaviour (ATB), Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC), Subjective Norms (SN), and parents' behavioural intentions to enrol their children in private or international schools. The study makes a theoretical contribution to the Theory of Planned Behaviour by applying the three core TPB constructs—Attitude Toward Behaviour, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioural Control—to the context of parental school-choice behaviour in Malaysia. The findings provide empirical evidence on how these constructs relate to parents' behavioural intentions when selecting private and international schools in Subang Jaya. This application of TPB to the school-choice context provides a basis for future researchers to further examine parental educational decision-making using the TPB framework.

The study also makes a methodological contribution through its convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, which combined quantitative and qualitative evidence to examine parental school-choice behaviour. The quantitative findings provided empirical evidence of the relationships between the TPB constructs and behavioural intention, while the qualitative findings provided additional insights into parents' considerations and experiences. The integration of both forms of evidence strengthened the overall understanding of the factors associated with parental school-choice decisions.

Building on these insights, the study proposed a range of actionable recommendations aimed at strengthening the appeal and performance of private and international schools. These include enhancing teacher quality, increasing scholarship opportunities, encouraging real-world experiential learning, implementing ability-based learning segmentation, and improving communication and transparency with parents. Furthermore, emphasis was placed on strengthening school branding through digital engagement, clarifying fee structures and policy transparency, and refining admission processes to ensure alignment with institutional values and quality standards. These findings provide a practical contribution for school administrators by identifying areas that may be considered when developing school improvement, marketing, admissions, communication, and parent-engagement strategies.

The study also has policy implications for educational authorities. The findings may assist relevant educational stakeholders in understanding the factors that parents consider when selecting private and international schools. In particular, considerations relating to affordability, accessibility, educational quality, transparency, and school reputation may inform discussions concerning information provision, regulatory practices, and the broader development of the private and international education sector in Malaysia. The findings may therefore provide useful evidence for educational authorities when considering policies and guidelines that support transparency and informed parental decision-making.

In terms of its contribution to knowledge, this study extends understanding of parental school-choice behaviour within the Malaysian context, particularly among parents considering private and international schools in Subang Jaya. By examining school-choice behaviour through the TPB framework and integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence, the study provides context-specific empirical insights into the factors associated with parents' behavioural intentions. The findings may serve as a reference for future research examining school choice and parental decision-making in other Malaysian regions and educational settings.

The study's limitations were also critically acknowledged. These include reliance on self-reported data, the potential for language-related exclusion due to the English-only questionnaire, the constraints of a cross-sectional time frame, and the geographic limitation to Subang Jaya. Although the Research Onion framework (Saunders et al., 2019) provided a coherent methodological foundation, the selected cross-sectional time horizon restricted the study's capacity to capture longitudinal behavioural shifts. Moreover, while the convergent parallel mixed-methods approach facilitated triangulation of data, the relatively small and context-specific qualitative sample limited deeper exploration of emerging parental motivations.

In light of these constraints, future research should consider adopting longitudinal and mixed-method designs, incorporating additional theoretical models beyond TPB, and expanding the sample population to include a broader range of socio-economic, linguistic, and regional groups. Enhancing inclusivity through multilingual survey instruments and more diversified qualitative sampling strategies would also provide a more nuanced and representative understanding of parental school selection behaviour across Malaysia.

Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of parental school-choice behaviour by providing theoretical, methodological, practical, policy, and knowledge contributions within the Malaysian private and international school context. The findings provide a foundation for further research and offer relevant insights for school administrators and educational authorities seeking to better understand the factors associated with parents' educational choices.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Quantitative Sampling Questions Design

Section A: Participant Particulars	Reference
- Age - Gender - Education Level - Monthly Household Income - Number of children - Number of school-going children - Current type of school attended	Ejorango, R. M., Siregar, A. M., & Sit, S. (2024). <i>Influence of demographic profile on school absenteeism among kindergarten learners</i> . World Journal of Education and Humanities Research, 4(1), 45–60.
Section B: Attitude Toward Behaviour (ATB)	Reference
- You believe that an international/private school provides a better quality of education than public schools? - Do international and private schools offer a more holistic educational approach? 10. You feel confident your child will have better career opportunities after attending an international/private school. - The tuition fees of international/private schools are justified by their educational offerings. - You believe that your child's overall well-being is better supported in an international/private school environment.	Saminathan, V. (2021). <i>Parents' Attitude Towards Private Schools</i> . International Journal of Educational Research and Technology, 12(1), 45–52.
Section C: Subjective Norms (SN) – Social Factors	Reference
- Your spouse/partner encourages/supports the decision to choose an international/private school. - Your peers and friends recommend international or private schools. - You feel societal pressure to send your child to an international or private school. - Parents in your community influence your choice of school for my child. - You often discuss school choices with family and friends before making a decision.	Fong, K. (2019). <i>How parents assess and mobilise information from social networks in choosing schools</i> . Social Forces, 98(3), 1223–1249.
Section D: Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)	Reference
- You can afford the tuition fees of an international/private school without financial strain. - Transportation and school location make it easy for your child to attend an international/private school. - You can easily compare school options in Subang Jaya. - The admission process for international/private schools is straightforward and manageable. - Your work-life balance allows you to be actively involved in your child's education at the international/private school.	Yaacob, N. A., Osman, M. M., & Bachok, S. (2015). <i>An assessment of factors influencing parents' decision making when choosing a private school for their children: A case study of Selangor, Malaysia</i> . Procedia Environmental Sciences, 28, 406–417.
Section E: Behavioural Intention (BI)	Reference
- You are planning to enrol your child in an international/private school in the future. - If financial constraints were removed, you would choose an international/private school. - You feel positive about the long-term benefits of international/private schooling. - You are actively researching different international/private schools for enrolment. - You believe international/private schooling aligns with your family's values and aspirations.	Yaacob, N. A., Osman, M. M., & Bachok, S. (2015). <i>An assessment of factors influencing parents' decision making when choosing a private school for their children: A case study of Selangor, Malaysia</i> . Procedia Environmental Sciences, 28, 406–417.

Appendix B: Qualitative Sampling - Interview Questions Design

Interview Guide Questions

1. Attitudes on School Selection

- a. What are the most important factors you consider when selecting a private or international school for your child?
- b. How do you perceive the quality of education provided by private or international schools in Subang Jaya?
- c. What do you think are the benefits of enrolling your child in a private school instead of a public school?
- d. Are there any concerns or drawbacks you associate with private schools?

2. Role of Social Pressure on School Selection

- a. Who are the most influential people in your decision to choose a private or international school for your child? (e.g., spouse, family members, friends, other parents)
- b. Have you felt any pressure from your social circle to choose a particular type of school? If so, how has it influenced your decision?
- c. How does the reputation of a school among parents and the community impact your decision-making?
- d. What role do social media and online reviews play in your school selection process?

3. Challenges Influencing the Choice of School Selection

- a. What challenges do you face when selecting a private or international school for your child?
- b. How do factors such as school fees, location, and curriculum influence your ability to enrol your child in a particular private or international school?
- c. What strategies do you use to gather information and compare private and international schools before making a decision?
- d. Have you ever had to reconsider your school choice due to financial or logistical constraints?

4. Additional Insights on Influencing the Choice

- a. Can you explain your experience in the school selection process?
- b. What advice would you give to other parents who are choosing a private or international school?
- c. Are there any specific policies or improvements that would make private or international schools in Subang Jaya more attractive to parents?

PARENT/GUARDIAN SURVEY FORM

Participant Consent Form

Title of Study: *Exploring Factors Influencing Parents' Choice of International and Private Schools in Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.*

Researcher: **Wendy Gan Ai Ling** - Doctoral Candidate

Institution: **European International University (EIU Paris)**

You are invited to participate in this research study. This study aims to explore the psychological, social, and contextual factors influencing parents' decision-making process when selecting international and private schools in Subang Jaya, Selangor.

Participant is voluntary, and all responses will remain anonymous and confidential. The questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes. You may withdraw at any time without penalty. All data collected will be used solely for academic purposes.

By clicking 'Next', and continuing with this survey, you are confirming that:

- You have read and understand the purpose of the study.
- You voluntarily agree to participate.
- Your responses will remain confidential and only be used for academic research and publication purposes.

If you agree to participate, please click “**Next**” to proceed.

Appendix D: Consent Form for Qualitative Survey

Participant Consent Form

Title of Study: *Exploring Factors Influencing Parents' Choice of International and Private Schools in Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.*

Researcher: **Wendy Gan Ai Ling** [Doctoral Candidate]

Institution: **European International University (EIU Paris)**

You are invited to participate in this research study. This study aims to explore the psychological, social, and contextual factors influencing parents' decision-making process when selecting international and private schools in Subang Jaya.

Participation is voluntary, and all responses will remain anonymous and confidential. This interview will take approximately 30 minutes. You may withdraw at any time without penalty. All data collected will be used solely for academic purposes.

By proceeding with this interview, you acknowledge that:

- You have read and understood the purpose of the study.
- You voluntarily agree to participate.
- Your responses will only be used for academic research and publication purposes.
- I consent to participate in this research study.

Signature (Optional): _____ Date: _____