



## Factors Influencing Parents' Decisions in Choosing Early Childhood and Primary Education Institutions

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### ABSTRACT

#### Keywords:

Parents' School  
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This study aims to analyze the influence of curriculum, facilities, location, and brand image on parents' decisions to enroll their children at an integrated early childhood and primary education institution. Employing a quantitative approach with a survey design, data were collected from 55 parents of students in the 2025/2026 academic year selected from a population of 77 respondents. The data were obtained using a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to examine the relationships among variables. The results reveal that curriculum has a positive and significant effect on parents' school choice decisions, indicating that curriculum relevance, quality, and future orientation play a crucial role in shaping parental preferences. In contrast, school facilities and location do not show a significant influence, suggesting that these factors are perceived as basic requirements rather than key differentiators in the school selection process. Furthermore, brand image has a positive and significant effect and emerges as the most dominant factor influencing parents' decisions, as a strong school image fosters trust, reflects perceived educational quality, and enhances parental confidence. These findings imply that for newly established schools, the development of a strong and relevant curriculum supported by effective brand image management is essential to influence parents' enrollment decisions, while facilities and location function primarily as supporting factors rather than main determinants.

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## INTRODUCTION

Parents play a central role as primary decision makers in determining their children's educational pathways, making school choice a socially significant issue with long-term implications for human capital development. In contemporary societies, education is increasingly perceived not only as a means of knowledge acquisition but also as an investment in future social mobility,

character formation, and competitiveness. As a result, parents tend to carefully evaluate schools based on perceived educational quality, safety, and the extent to which schools support children's holistic development. Previous studies in the school choice literature indicate that parental decisions are shaped by a combination of rational evaluations, emotional considerations, and social influences, reflecting the complexity of educational decision-making processes (Hefniy & Alwahedi, 2025; Hikmah & Mudarris, 2026; Holidi, 2025; Syafiih, 2025). From a societal perspective, understanding how parents make school choices is important because these decisions collectively shape patterns of school demand, competition among educational institutions, and broader educational inequalities. Therefore, empirical research on factors influencing parents' school choice decisions is essential to inform educational policy, institutional strategy, and sustainable school development.

Despite the growing importance of parental decision-making in education, many parents face challenges in identifying schools that align with their expectations, values, and long-term aspirations for their children. The increasing diversity of educational institutions ranging from public schools to private, faith-based, and international-oriented schools has expanded parental options while simultaneously complicating the decision-making process (Khofsah, 2025; Kusumawati, 2025; Manshur, 2026). This situation often leads to information asymmetry, where parents rely on limited or symbolic indicators such as reputation, branding, or peer recommendations rather than comprehensive assessments of educational quality. In urban contexts, this problem is further intensified by intense competition among schools that promote various curricular innovations, facilities, and programs as markers of excellence. Consequently, parents may struggle to distinguish between core educational quality and peripheral attributes. This condition underscores a broader societal problem in which school choice decisions may not always be grounded in systematic evaluation, potentially affecting parental satisfaction and children's educational experiences. Addressing this issue requires empirical evidence on which school attributes truly influence parental decisions.

In urban areas such as Bandung, parental preferences in school selection have become increasingly complex due to the rapid growth of private educational institutions offering differentiated educational models. Schools actively compete by emphasizing distinctive curricula, modern facilities, character education, and innovative learning programs (Habibah, 2023; Hambali et al., 2023; Rijal, 2023). This competitive landscape positions parents as highly selective decision makers who compare multiple school attributes before enrolling their children. At the same time, newly established schools face particular challenges in building trust and attracting students despite offering competitive academic programs. Empirical observations indicate that while schools invest heavily in infrastructure and strategic locations, these factors do

not always translate into higher enrollment rates. Instead, parents often rely on perceived educational quality and institutional reputation when making decisions (Hidayatulloh & Iqna'a, 2025; Khoiroh et al., 2025; Kunta & Muslim, 2025; Tohet, 2024). Such phenomena suggest that not all school attributes carry equal weight in influencing parental choices. However, systematic empirical studies examining the relative influence of curriculum, facilities, location, and brand image in newly established integrated schools remain limited, highlighting the need for focused research in this context.

Previous studies on school choice have identified multiple determinants influencing parental decisions, including academic quality, curriculum relevance, school culture, facilities, accessibility, and institutional reputation. Research by Schneider et al. (2000) and Bosetti (2004) emphasizes that parents consider both tangible and intangible school attributes, reflecting rational evaluations and value-based preferences. Curriculum quality has been widely recognized as a critical factor, particularly when it aligns with contemporary educational demands such as 21st-century skills, character education, and parental involvement (Susanti, Bukhori, & Dura, 2024; Prihantini, 2024). In addition, studies highlight the role of facilities in supporting effective learning environments and shaping parents' perceptions of school quality (Adeoye et al., 2025; Fanani & Hidayah, 2024; Kumala & Nadya, 2024; Munawwaroh et al., 2024). Location has also been examined as a practical consideration related to accessibility, safety, and time efficiency (Lavy & Mumford, 2020). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that school choice is a multidimensional process influenced by diverse factors.

Although existing research provides valuable insights into school choice determinants, several gaps remain. First, many studies examine these factors independently rather than within an integrated analytical model that captures their relative influence on parental decision-making. Second, prior research often focuses on well-established schools, leaving limited empirical evidence on newly established institutions that are still building their reputation and market position (Rahmadan & Shudiq, 2024; Samsi, 2025; Sholehah & Ichsah, 2025). Third, inconsistencies exist in research findings regarding the significance of facilities and location, with some studies identifying them as key determinants while others suggest they function merely as basic requirements. Moreover, limited attention has been given to the role of brand image as a strategic mediator that integrates perceptions of curriculum quality, trust, and institutional credibility (Keller, 2013; Kotler & Keller, 2016). These gaps indicate the need for empirical studies that simultaneously examine curriculum, facilities, location, and brand image to clarify their respective roles in shaping parents' school choice decisions.

This study offers novelty by integrating curriculum, facilities, location, and brand image into a single empirical model to examine their influence on

parents' school choice decisions within the context of a newly established integrated education institution. Unlike previous studies that emphasize physical or logistical attributes, this research highlights the strategic role of intangible factors, particularly brand image, in shaping parental trust and perceived educational quality. By focusing on an institution that has recently commenced operations, this study provides insights into how schools can position themselves effectively in competitive educational markets. Furthermore, the use of Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) enables a comprehensive analysis of complex relationships among variables, contributing methodologically to school choice research. Addressing these issues is important not only for advancing academic understanding but also for supporting evidence-based decision-making among educational practitioners and policymakers.

Based on the preceding discussion, the central research problem of this study concerns the extent to which curriculum, facilities, location, and brand image influence parents' decisions to enroll their children in an integrated early childhood and primary education institution. This study argues that while facilities and location serve as necessary supporting conditions, curriculum quality and brand image play a more decisive role in shaping parental preferences, particularly in newly established schools. The research hypothesizes that a relevant and future-oriented curriculum enhances perceived educational value, while a strong brand image builds trust and reduces uncertainty in parental decision-making. By empirically testing these relationships, this study contributes to the literature on school choice and educational management, offering practical implications for schools seeking to strengthen their strategic positioning and attract parental trust.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationships between curriculum, facilities, location, brand image, and parents' school choice decisions. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables the measurement of perceptions and attitudes using numerical data and allows for statistical testing of hypotheses across multiple variables. Quantitative methods are particularly appropriate for studies that aim to identify patterns, assess the strength of relationships, and test theoretical models in educational management research (Creswell, 2014). By applying this approach, the study sought to generate objective and generalizable findings regarding the factors influencing parental decision-making in school selection.

The research was conducted at a private school located in the Summarecon East Bandung area. This site was purposively selected due to its characteristics as a newly established integrated early childhood and primary education institution operating in an urban environment. The school represents a

competitive educational context where parents are exposed to multiple schooling alternatives, making it a relevant setting for examining school choice behavior. Additionally, the school's strategic location within a rapidly developing urban area provides a suitable context for analyzing the role of location alongside other school attributes in shaping parents' decisions.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to parents whose children were enrolled at the early childhood and primary education levels during the research period. The questionnaire was designed based on established indicators of each research variable, including curriculum, facilities, location, brand image, and parents' school choice decisions. Responses were measured using a Likert scale to capture the degree of agreement with each statement. The questionnaire was distributed directly to parents, ensuring that respondents had firsthand experience and knowledge of the school's educational services, thereby enhancing the relevance and accuracy of the collected data.

The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to examine the relationships among the research variables. SEM-PLS was selected because it is suitable for predictive research models, complex variable relationships, and relatively small sample sizes (Hair et al., 2019). The analysis involved evaluating the outer model to assess construct validity and reliability, including convergent and discriminant validity, followed by the assessment of the inner model to examine path coefficients and the strength of relationships between variables. Hypothesis testing was conducted to determine the significance of the proposed relationships. Data processing and analysis were carried out using SmartPLS software, consistent with its application in similar educational research contexts.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, several validity and reliability checks were conducted. Convergent validity was assessed through factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity was evaluated using the cross-loading criterion. Construct reliability was examined using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha to ensure internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). These procedures ensured that the measurement instruments accurately captured the intended constructs and that the results of the analysis were robust and reliable.

Based on the theoretical framework and previous empirical studies on school choice and educational management, this study proposes several hypotheses to examine the influence of curriculum, facilities, location, and brand image on parents' decisions in selecting a school for their children. These hypotheses are formulated to empirically test the relationships between school attributes and parental decision-making within the context of formal education.

H1: Curriculum has a significant effect on parents' decisions to enroll their children in a school.

H2: School facilities have a significant effect on parents' decisions to enroll their children in a school.

H3: School location has a significant effect on parents' decisions to enroll their children in a school.

H4: Brand image has a significant effect on parents' decisions to enroll their children in a school.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

**Table 1. Results of Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability Tests**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Remark
Curriculum (X1)	0.909	0.923	Reliable
Facilities (X2)	0.943	0.957	Reliable
Location (X3)	0.899	0.914	Reliable
Brand Image (X4)	0.858	0.862	Reliable
Parents' Decision (Y)	0.944	0.948	Reliable

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

Based on Table 1, construct reliability in this study was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values. According to the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2019), a construct is considered reliable if both Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceed 0.70. The results indicate that all constructs in this study have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above the minimum threshold. Therefore, the measurement instruments used in this study are considered reliable and suitable for further analysis.

**Table 2. Discriminant Validity Test Results (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)**

	Brand Image (X4)	Facilities (X2)	Parents' Decision (Y)	Curriculum (X1)	Location (X3)
Brand Image (X4)	<b>0.766</b>				
Facilities (X2)	0.538	<b>0.786</b>			
Parents' Decision (Y)	0.767	0.542	<b>0.726</b>		
Curriculum (X1)	0.661	0.594	0.705	<b>0.741</b>	
Location (X3)	0.582	0.697	0.566	0.600	<b>0.718</b>

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

Based on the Fornell–Larcker criterion shown in Table 2, most constructs demonstrate adequate discriminant validity, as the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct (diagonal values) is greater than its correlations with other constructs. This indicates that the majority of constructs meet the discriminant validity requirement.

However, an exception is observed between Brand Image (X4) and Parents’ Decision (Y), where the correlation value between the two constructs (0.767) slightly exceeds the square root of the AVE for Brand Image (0.766). This condition suggests a strong conceptual closeness between these constructs, indicating that discriminant validity for this pair is not fully optimal, although the difference is marginal and still acceptable within an exploratory research context.

**Table 3. R-Square Test Results**

Variable	R-Square
Parents’ Decision (Y)	0.663

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

The R-square value for the Parents’ Decision variable is 0.663, indicating that curriculum, facilities, location, and brand image collectively explain 66.3% of the variance in parents’ school enrollment decisions. This value is categorized as strong, suggesting that the proposed model has substantial explanatory power.

**Table 4. F-Square Effect Size Results**

Variable	F-Square Value
Brand Image (X4)	0.382
Facilities (X2)	0.003
Curriculum (X1)	0.135
Location (X3)	0.003

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

The f-square analysis indicates that Brand Image (X4) has a strong effect on parents’ decisions, with an f-square value of 0.382, exceeding the threshold of 0.35. This finding suggests that parents’ perceptions of school image play a dominant and practically meaningful role in the decision-making process. Curriculum (X1) shows a small effect size (f-square = 0.135), indicating that it functions as a supporting factor rather than a primary determinant. Meanwhile, Facilities (X2) and Location (X3) have f-square values close to zero, indicating

negligible effects on parents' decisions. Overall, these results confirm that brand image is the most influential factor, followed by curriculum with a limited contribution, while facilities and location serve as basic, non-differentiating factors.

**Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results (Path Coefficients)**

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	T-Statistics	P-Values	Result
H1	Curriculum → Parents' Decision	0.312	2.646	0.008	Significant
H2	Facilities → Parents' Decision	0.049	0.329	0.742	Not significant
H3	Location → Parents' Decision	0.051	0.405	0.686	Not significant
H4	Brand Image → Parents' Decision	0.505	4.939	0.000	Significant

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

Based on the hypothesis testing results presented in Table 5, curriculum and brand image have significant effects on parents' decisions to enroll their children in school, whereas facilities and location do not exhibit significant effects. Curriculum has a path coefficient of 0.312 with a t-statistic of 2.646 and a p-value of 0.008, indicating that the first hypothesis is accepted. Brand image demonstrates the strongest influence, with a path coefficient of 0.505, a t-statistic of 4.939, and a p-value of 0.000, leading to the acceptance of the fourth hypothesis. Conversely, facilities and location both show t-statistic values below 1.96 and p-values above 0.05, indicating no significant effect on parents' decisions. Therefore, the second and third hypotheses are rejected.

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the curriculum has a positive and significant effect on parents' decisions to enroll their children in a school. This result is supported by a path coefficient of 0.312, a t-statistic of 2.646, and a p-value of 0.008, which is below the 0.05 significance threshold. These results confirm the first hypothesis (H1) and demonstrate that curriculum quality remains an important determinant in parental school choice. A well-structured, relevant, and future-oriented curriculum enhances parents' confidence that the school can support both the academic and character development of their children.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding aligns with Ornstein and Hunkins (2018), who emphasize that the curriculum represents the core of the educational process and reflects overall school quality. In the context of school choice, parents tend to perceive the curriculum as the primary value offering that signals academic rigor, educational direction, and readiness to prepare students for future challenges (Bosetti, 2004; Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000). Empirically, this result is consistent with previous studies indicating that curriculum relevance and innovation significantly influence parents' enrollment decisions (Susanti, 2024; Hidayat & Margono, 2023).

In contrast, the results reveal that school facilities do not have a significant effect on parents' decisions. This is evidenced by a path coefficient of 0.049, a t-statistic of 0.329, and a p-value of 0.742, leading to the rejection of the second hypothesis (H2). Although facilities are essential in supporting a conducive learning environment, their influence appears limited when basic standards have already been met. This suggests that facilities function more as supporting elements rather than decisive factors in parental decision-making.

Theoretically, this finding can be explained using Herzberg's Hygiene-Motivation Theory, which categorizes facilities as hygiene factors—elements that are expected as minimum requirements and prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily enhance preference or motivation (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Similarly, Earthman (2004) argues that while physical facilities contribute to learning effectiveness, they do not always serve as key differentiators once adequacy is ensured. Therefore, the non-significant effect of facilities reflects parents' tendency to prioritize strategic and perceptual attributes over physical infrastructure.

The analysis also shows that school location does not significantly influence parents' enrollment decisions, as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.051, a t-statistic of 0.405, and a p-value of 0.686. Consequently, the third hypothesis (H3) is not supported. Conceptually, location is associated with accessibility, distance, and safety; however, within the framework of school choice, geographic factors often serve as threshold criteria rather than decisive considerations (Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000). As long as the school remains reasonably accessible, parents tend to focus on qualitative attributes such as educational values and curriculum orientation.

Finally, brand image emerges as the most dominant factor influencing parents' decisions, with a path coefficient of 0.505, a t-statistic of 4.939, and a p-value of 0.000, confirming the fourth hypothesis (H4). This finding is consistent with Keller's (2013) concept of brand image as a set of strong, favorable, and

unique associations that function as signals of quality. Empirical evidence from previous studies also supports the significant role of brand image in school selection decisions (Sriwahyuni, 2024; Tarigan, 2024). A positive school image strengthens trust, reduces perceived risk, and enhances parents' confidence, particularly when evaluating relatively new institutions, thereby underscoring the strategic importance of brand image management in educational competitiveness.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides important insights into parents' school choice decisions by demonstrating that curriculum and brand image are the most influential determinants, with brand image emerging as the dominant factor. These findings suggest that parents place greater emphasis on strategic and perceptual attributes that signal educational quality, trustworthiness, and institutional credibility rather than on physical or geographical considerations such as facilities and location. The key lesson derived from this research is that, particularly in the context of relatively new schools, parents' decisions are shaped more by how the school is positioned and perceived than by tangible attributes that are considered basic or expected. Academically, this study contributes to the school choice literature by empirically confirming the central role of brand image as a quality signal in educational decision-making, while also reinforcing the importance of curriculum as a substantive indicator of educational value. The integration of marketing-based constructs with educational management perspectives strengthens the interdisciplinary understanding of parental decision behavior.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The research was conducted within a single institutional context and involved a relatively limited number of respondents, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings. In addition, the study focused exclusively on four explanatory variables, leaving room for other potentially influential factors such as tuition fees, teacher quality, service quality, parental socioeconomic background, and peer influence. Future research is therefore encouraged to employ broader samples, comparative or multi-site designs, and longitudinal approaches to capture changes in parental preferences over time. Incorporating additional variables and mixed-methods designs could also provide deeper insights into the complex decision-making processes underlying parents' school choice behavior.

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