

EMPIRICAL PAPER

Does Parental Patronage Influence Learning Outcomes? Evidence from Private Junior Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examined the influence of parental patronage on the learning outcomes of students in private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Methodology: A descriptive, cross-sectional survey design was adopted. Data were collected from 36 schools selected across six education districts using a multi-stage random sampling technique. A structured four-point Likert-scale questionnaire was used to measure parental patronage and perceived student learning outcomes. The data were analysed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results: The findings revealed no significant difference in learning outcomes among students attending low-, medium-, and high-fee private schools ($F(2, 33) = 1.043, p > 0.05$). Furthermore, parental patronage demonstrated a very weak, negative, and statistically non-significant relationship with students' learning outcomes ($r = -0.014, p > 0.05$). These results suggest that higher levels of parental involvement or financial commitment do not necessarily translate into improved academic outcomes in this context.

Novelty and Contribution: The study contributes empirical evidence to the discourse on determinants of learning outcomes in private education by demonstrating that parental patronage alone may not significantly influence students' academic performance in private junior secondary schools in Lagos State.

Practical and Social Implications: The findings suggest that school administrators and policymakers should prioritise improving institutional factors, including teaching quality, school infrastructure, and learning resources. Strengthening these elements may create a more conducive learning environment and enhance students' educational outcomes in the private secondary school sector.

Keywords: Parental Patronage, Learning Outcomes, Private Junior Secondary Schools, School Fees, Parental Involvement

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1 Introduction

Parental patronage plays a significant role in shaping the learning outcomes of students in junior private secondary schools in Lagos State. Scholarly research consistently underscores that parents' active involvement in their children's education positively influences academic achievement, school discipline, and students' overall development. Parental patronage, understood as the commitment of parents to support, provide resources, and engage in their children's schooling, serves as a critical mechanism through which educational performance is enhanced (Oni, 2024). Epstein's Comprehensive School Reform Model highlights parental involvement as a key factor affecting student achievement, suggesting that collaborative efforts between parents, teachers, and schools foster meaningful learning environments (Onkoba & Nyakwara, 2020). Parental patronage includes financial support, provision of learning materials, participation in school activities such as PTA meetings, and communication with teachers to monitor academic progress. These engagements have been empirically linked to better student attendance, higher test scores, and greater self-confidence among learners (Kumncho, 2018).

Patronage is the involvement of parents in the education of their children. Kingdon (2020) observed an increasing patronage of private schools in Nigeria, while enrolment in public schools is declining on a term-by-term basis. In other words, patronage is a measure of the loyalty education commands from the public, a factor intricately linked to its sustainability. The escalation of patronage emerges as the pivotal determinant for ensuring the unbroken trajectory of a product's existence, the perpetuation of a business's operations, and the enduring vitality of an organisation, as expounded by Njelita and Anyasor (2020). Nestled within the broader realm of patronage is the profound phenomenon of parental patronage, a dynamic force resonating within the educational landscape, an embodiment of parents' active engagement in their children's academic odyssey.

Parental patronage encompasses more than mere presence; it embodies the conscious and continuous involvement of parents in their children's educational pursuits. This engagement surpasses the role of mere enrollers, extending into realms where parents fervently advocate for their children's scholastic well-being, dedicating resources and efforts to nurture a holistic learning journey. This perspective is substantiated by the assertion of Sambo (2018) that parental patronage engenders a self-reinforcing cycle of educational advancement, thereby contributing to sustained improvements in the students' academic performance.

Parents' investment in the education of their wards through private schools is therefore targeted at some expectations. Parental patronage is underpinned by an intrinsic parental drive to secure the, most advantageous prospects for their children, particularly within the domain of education, an aspiration clearly articulated by Yaacob et al. (2014).

Further examination of the intricacies of parental patronage reveals a strong aspiration to propel children towards academic excellence, an objective that is ultimately realised through measurable learning outcomes. These learning outcomes emerge as a paramount concern for all education stakeholders, a metric that gauges the monumental educational investment undertaken both privately and collectively. A multitude of variables and institutions intersect to mould these learning outcomes, a lineup encompassing parents, educators, the calibre of school facilities, time management, peer interactions, and the broader learning environment. In this pursuit of deeper insight, researchers engage with critical questions aimed at unravelling the specific contributions of individual factors to educational outcomes.

Despite the growing prevalence of private secondary schools in Lagos State, there remains a significant concern about the extent to which parental patronage influences students' learning outcomes (Akindipe, 2025). Many junior private secondary schools experience varied academic performance levels, which may be linked to differences in parental support, involvement, and resource provision. Yet, there is limited empirical understanding of how different dimensions of parental patronage directly affect students' academic achievements in this context. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the relationship between parental patronage and learning outcomes, providing insights into how parental engagement can be optimised to enhance educational success among junior secondary pupils in Lagos State. The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform teachers, policymakers, and parents about strategies to improve students' performance through strengthened parental involvement. This problem highlights the educational challenge, its context, and the need for investigation to guide improvements in the schooling system specific to private institutions in Lagos State.

The primary purpose of this study is to determine the level of parental patronage of private junior secondary schools and to assess students' learning outcomes across low-, medium-, and high-fee-paying institutions in Lagos State.

Significantly, this study is of immense value to educational stakeholders (private school owners, academic planners, principals of private junior secondary schools, proprietors, teachers, and policymakers). The study provides a framework for private school owners on the need to invest in education as a means of having adequate parental patronage, which takes precedence in contributing to students' learning outcomes.

Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. Is there a significant difference in students' learning outcomes across low- and high-fee-paying private junior secondary schools in Lagos State?
- ii. To what extent is parental involvement related to students' learning outcomes in private junior secondary schools in Lagos State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance to guide the study:

H0₁: There is no significant difference in the learning outcomes across low-, medium-, and high-fee-paying private junior secondary schools in Lagos State.

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between parental involvement and learning outcomes in private junior secondary schools in Lagos State.

2 Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in the Rational Choice Theory (RCT), which was originally propounded by economists and sociologists such as John Stuart Mill and later formalised and expanded by theorists including James S. Coleman and Gary Becker, with George Homans also contributing foundational work in 1961. The theory asserts that individuals make decisions motivated by self-interest, seeking to maximise personal gains while minimising costs through rational calculation based on available information. Despite some limitations, such as overlooking broader social contexts, cognitive complexity, creativity, and moral dimensions (Burns & Roszkowska, 2016), RCT remains relevant to this study. It provides a useful framework for understanding parental patronage of private schools as deliberate, rational decisions made to optimise children's educational outcomes. Parents in Lagos State's junior private secondary schools are seen as rational actors who invest resources, time, and involvement in their children's education to achieve the highest possible academic results. Therefore, RCT helps explain variations in student learning outcomes by framing parental engagement as calculated choices aimed at maximising educational benefits. This theoretical lens also guides policies and school practices that seek to enhance parental involvement for improved academic performance, aligning with existing literature that links parental expectations and resource allocation to student success. The Rational Choice Theory offers a solid foundation for analysing the motivations behind parental patronage and its impact on learning outcomes within this study's context.

Prior studies

Parental involvement has long been recognised as a critical factor influencing students' academic success. Paun (2024) found that parental involvement positively impacts students' academic outcomes by 42.1%, emphasising that active parental engagement in school and home settings nurtures learning and motivation. In the Nigerian context, Oni (2024) highlights that parental participation enhances not only academic achievement but also discipline and school governance effectiveness, yet challenges such as socioeconomic barriers and communication gaps can limit involvement. These studies underscore the multifaceted benefits of parental patronage in improving learning outcomes. Härmä (2013) documents the significant growth of private schooling in Lagos, attributing it largely to parental preferences shaped by economic status and perceptions of educational quality. A large majority of parents

prefer private schools in Lagos due to factors such as better infrastructure, smaller class sizes, and perceived higher education standards, even among low-income families. This trend reflects a rational choice by parents aiming to secure optimal academic outcomes for their children despite financial constraints, making parental patronage a strategic investment.

Parental support exhibits varying impacts across academic subjects. A study by Cayapan et al. (2025) notes significant positive relationships between parental engagement and student performance in subjects like English and Science, although mathematics performance showed no statistically significant link. This indicates that parental patronage may affect different learning areas differently, suggesting the need for targeted engagement strategies in specific subjects to maximise learning outcomes.

Parental involvement in education remains a complex and multidimensional concept that includes home-based involvement, school-based participation, and academic socialisation. Home-based involvement involves activities such as helping with homework and fostering discussions about school. School-based involvement includes attending meetings, volunteering, and engaging directly with school activities. Academic socialisation reflects parents' beliefs, expectations, and encouragement related to learning (Castro et al., 2015; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Recent research has identified a range of challenges to parental involvement. Personal barriers include parents' perceived lack of efficacy and feelings of disempowerment. Socio-economic factors like irregular work hours, poverty, and transportation difficulties impair engagement. Language and cultural differences frequently hinder effective communication, especially for migrant families. Furthermore, structural challenges within schools, such as inconvenient meeting times and insufficient communication channels, further limit parental participation (Eden et al., 2024; Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). To create effective partnerships, schools must understand these multifaceted challenges and develop flexible, inclusive strategies to support diverse families, helping to bridge the gap between parental intentions and actual involvement (Febiri, 2023).

A systematic review by Musengamana (2023) synthesises research showing that dimensions of parental involvement, home learning, homework assistance, and school-family communication substantially contribute to academic success. However, overly strict parenting or unrealistic academic expectations can negatively impact students. The review highlights that tailored approaches responding to diverse student and family contexts are crucial to sustaining productive parental patronage. Dixon et al. (2017) explore how family characteristics and parental preferences in Lagos influence school choice, with quality teaching, proximity, and school leadership ranking highly in parental decisions. These findings inform policy development aimed at encouraging parental engagement through school improvements and community outreach. Enhancing parental involvement, removing barriers, and promoting collaboration between parents and schools can significantly boost student learning outcomes in private junior secondary schools.

Recent policy implications and educational strategies in Lagos State reveal a comprehensive effort to transform the education sector through infrastructural upgrades, inclusive policies, and skill development programs (Usi et al., 2025). The Lagos State government, under the leadership of Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, is focusing on innovative and inclusive policies to enhance educational outcomes across urban and remote areas. The Special Committee on Rehabilitation of Public Schools (SCRPS) has significantly contributed to rehabilitating 386 existing classroom blocks and constructing 1,290 new ones across six education districts, addressing physical infrastructure challenges. Moreover, programs like the Job Initiative Lagos (JIL) and Eko Digital Initiative align educational strategy with workforce readiness by training over 13,000 students and youth in critical digital skills such as coding, data science, and digital marketing. These strategies highlight a commitment to bridging the gap between education and employment in a rapidly digitalising economy.

The policy framework also emphasises equitable access through initiatives such as the "Leave No Child Behind" policy, aimed at ensuring all children, including those in vulnerable groups, receive quality early childhood education. Studies on socio-economic influences on education in Lagos underscore the importance of targeted policies to mitigate economic barriers and enhance learning environments. Together, these policy implications and strategies depict Lagos State's proactive and multidimensional approach to improving educational quality, accessibility, and relevance, designed to accommodate the dynamic needs of its growing population and economy (Lagos State Ministry of Education, 2025; Olaofe et al., 2024; Nwoke et al., 2024).

Study revealed that learning outcomes among junior private secondary school students in Lagos State are significantly influenced by factors such as school facilities, instructional resources, and the quality of instruction. Ige and Aloh (2013) emphasise that ample school facilities and resource availability are crucial for enhancing the quality of education delivery, which directly impacts students' academic performance. Similarly, a study by Olaleye et al. (2024) found a positive correlation between adequate learning environments and students' academic achievements, underscoring the importance of infrastructure and resource provision.

Furthermore, policy changes and effective school management play vital roles. Ige and Odu (2024) argue that continuous evaluation and adaptation of educational policies are essential for improving learning outcomes, especially in rapidly expanding urban areas like Lagos State. Research by Anyamele (2023) highlights that curriculum content pertinent to the learners' socio-economic context enhances students' academic performance, thereby contributing to better learning outcomes. Hence, improving learning outcomes in Lagos State's private secondary schools requires a focus on infrastructural development, resource optimisation, curriculum relevance, and responsive policy frameworks.

3 Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. Specifically, this study employed the cross-sectional survey design to investigate the parental patronage and learning outcomes in private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study is cross-sectional because it collected information from a representative subset of private schools as a population at a specific point in time. The study involves the quantitative methods of data collection to determine the relationships that exist among the variables of the study. The population for this study consisted of all the 2,044 approved private secondary schools in Lagos state, Nigeria, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Lagos State Ministry of Education (2025).

The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique. Lagos State was stratified into six Education Districts, from which six private junior secondary schools were randomly selected per district, resulting in a total of 36 schools. Although data were collected from 15 parents in each school, responses were aggregated at the school level to produce a single composite score for parental patronage per school. Thus, the unit of analysis for this study was the school (N = 36). This aggregation approach was adopted to align parental perceptions with school-level learning outcomes and to avoid unit-of-analysis errors.

The study utilised a self-structured questionnaire with a four-point Likert scale to gather data from parents. The items were responded to by rating the options on: Strongly agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2, and: Strongly disagree (SD) = 1. The questionnaire was subjected to a validity test through opinions suggested by an expert in the field of educational management and an expert in the field of test, measurement, and evaluation. This was done to ascertain the extent to which the items adequately represent the universe of all relevant items under study. The questionnaire's reliability was established to check the extent of internal consistency of the study instrument. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each instrument was calculated after the instrument had been administered among 30 respondents from the parents in two private schools that were not part of the sample but part of the population. The reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained. These values were considered appropriate for the adoption of the instruments for data collection. Data collected was analysed using inferential statistics, particularly, ANOVA and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation were used to test the research hypotheses one and two for this study.

4 Results

The hypotheses for this study were tested using ANOVA and Pearson Product-Moment

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the learning outcomes across low-, medium-, and High-fee-paying private junior secondary schools in Lagos State.

To test the hypothesis, Analysis of Variance was used. Data collected on learning outcomes were subjected to Analysis of Variance. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of the difference in learning outcomes across low-, medium-, and high-fee-paying private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

School fees	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
N30,000 - N100,000	2	92.00	7.071	5.000	28.47	155.53
N101,000 - N500,000	22	96.58	4.738	1.368	93.57	99.59
N500,000 and above	12	96.18	3.660	.780	94.56	97.80
Total	36	96.08	4.191	.698	94.67	97.50

Table 2 Level of significant difference in learning outcomes across low-, medium-, and high-fee-paying private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

	Sum of Squ.	Df	Mean Squ.	F	Sig.
Between Groups	36.561	2	18.280	1.043	.364
Within Groups	578.189	33	17.521		
Total	614.750	35			

The results in Table 2 show that there is no significant difference in the learning outcomes across low-, medium-, and high-fee-paying ($F(2, 33) = 1.043, (\rho) > 0.05$) private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. Thus, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference in the learning outcomes across low-, medium-, and high-fee-paying private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria, is not rejected.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between parental involvement and learning outcomes in private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

In order to test the hypothesis, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Analysis was conducted between parental involvement and learning outcomes. The scores of responses on items of parents' involvement were computed and used as a single variable to correlate with the percentage credit pass at credit level and above, including Mathematics and English Language (students' learning outcomes). The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Relationship between parental patronage and learning outcomes in private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

		Parental patronage	Learning outcomes
Parental patronage	Pearson Correlation	1	-.014
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.937
	N	376	36
Learning outcomes	Pearson Correlation	-.014	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.937	
	N	36	36

Source Field survey

Table 3 shows the correlation between parental involvement and learning outcomes, and the result shows that there exists a negative, very weak, and non-significant relationship between parental patronage and learning outcomes in private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria ($r = -.014, \rho > 0.05$). This suggests that as parental patronage strength increases, learning outcomes strength seems to decrease. It implies that parental patronage does

not significantly influence private junior secondary school students' learning outcomes in Lagos State, Nigeria. Hence, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between parental patronage and learning outcomes in private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria, is hereby not rejected.

5 Discussion

The first hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the learning outcomes across low-, medium-, and high-fee-paying private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that there is no significant difference in the learning outcomes across low-, medium-, and high-fee-paying private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. This suggests that factors beyond tuition costs play a crucial role in academic achievement. This finding challenges the common assumption that higher school fees directly correlate with better learning outcomes. While private schools, in general, may offer advantages in terms of resources and potentially teaching quality, the finding indicates that the specific level of fees charged within the private sector doesn't necessarily predict student performance. This finding is in disagreement with that of Nwajagu (2022), who emphasised the willingness and happiness of parents to pay the high school fees in expectation of better learning outcomes or student performance. However, Cansiz et al. (2019) discovered that family background, rather than school factors, played a big role in the performance of students, which harmonised with this finding.

However, Olabisi et al. (2022) postulated poor supply of professionally qualified teachers and poor funding as the causes of poor learning outcomes in private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. In the opinion of Ekpeyong and Joseph (2020), if parents pay more attention to the education of their children, they make more scholastic academic achievements. This submission corresponds with the findings of the study.

Furthermore, the test of the second hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between parental patronage and learning outcomes in private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. This suggests that the study finds that the level of parental involvement (or patronage) in a child's education at a private junior secondary school in Lagos State is not a determining factor in that child's learning outcomes. In simpler terms, the study found that the extent to which parents are involved in their child's education in these schools will not significantly affect how well the child performs academically.

This finding aligns with that of Agogbua et al. (2021) that the primary determinant factor in ensuring excellent teaching and learning is school facilities, in that students of private junior secondary schools fared better academically than those of public secondary schools. It is a tool for measuring educational growth and development. Ahmodu and Sheu (2018) upheld this submission and added that school facilities come at a high cost to the school structure, and if they are not properly managed and conserved, they will disrupt students' academic performance, which aligns with the findings of this study.

In alignment with the findings, Adamu et al. (2022) observed that the school facilities or equipment are inadequate and that most classrooms are short of required facilities. This results in low-quality teaching and learning at this level in private junior secondary schools in Lagos State. The authors compare this with public schools, which often exhibit a poor maintenance culture, meaning that school facilities are rarely maintained. The finding is consistent with the conclusion of Ahmodu and Sheu (2018) and Sambo (2018) that school facilities are essential materials that must be put in place and considered for the school system's objectives to be met; the availability of those facilities determines the quality of instruction and student performance in the school.

6 Conclusion

This study examined the influence of parental patronage on the learning outcomes of students in private junior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that parental patronage did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with students' learning outcomes. Similarly, no significant differences were observed in learning outcomes among students attending schools with varying tuition fee levels. These results suggest that parental financial commitment and involvement alone may not be sufficient determinants of students' academic success in private secondary schools. Rather, institutional factors such as the quality of teaching, availability of qualified personnel, and adequacy of school facilities appear to play a more substantial role in shaping students'

educational achievement. Therefore, improving the quality of the learning environment and strengthening instructional capacity may be more effective strategies for enhancing students' academic outcomes.

Social and Practical Implications of the Study

The findings of this study carry important implications for school administrators, policymakers, and parents. For school administrators, the results highlight the need to prioritise the improvement of school infrastructure, teaching quality, and learning resources in order to create a conducive learning environment. Policymakers and educational authorities should ensure adequate funding, monitoring, and maintenance of school facilities to support effective teaching and learning processes in private schools. Additionally, schools should develop structured parental education programmes to guide parents on effective ways of supporting their children's learning at home. Strengthening communication channels, such as regular progress reports and parent-teacher conferences, may also enhance collaboration between schools and families. Collectively, these efforts can help build a supportive educational ecosystem that promotes improved student learning outcomes.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. First, the study relied on a cross-sectional survey design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships between parental patronage and students' learning outcomes. Second, the data were collected only from parents in private junior secondary schools within Lagos State, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other educational contexts or regions. Third, the study focused primarily on parental patronage and did not examine other potentially influential variables, including teacher quality, school leadership, classroom practices, and students' socio-economic backgrounds. Future studies should consider adopting longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to provide deeper insights into the dynamics of parental involvement and student achievement. Additionally, further research could explore context-specific factors affecting learning outcomes in private schools and identify strategies that strengthen collaboration among schools, parents, and communities.

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Data Availability Statement

The data produced and analysed during this research is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflict of Interest

The authors state that they have no known competing financial or personal interests that could have influenced the outcome of this research.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

Generative artificial intelligence tools were employed only to support language editing, including improvements in grammar, clarity, and formatting. These tools were not involved in the research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, or the development of the study's conclusions. The authors accept full responsibility for the authenticity, accuracy, and integrity of the manuscript.

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