Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Oct. - Dec. 2020, 9(4), 24-42
DOI: https://doi.org/10.20372/star.v9i4.03
ISSN: 2226-7522 (Print) and 2305-3372 (Online)
Science, Technology and Arts Research Journal
Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Oct. - Dec. 2020, 9(4), 24-42
Journal Homepage: https://journals.wgu.edu.et

Original Research

Level of School Engagement among Students: A Comparative Study between Private and Public Schools

Lelisa Chala
Department of Behavioural Sciences, Wallaga University, P.O. Box 395, Nekemte, Ethiopia

Abstract

Student engagement is critical to educational success and can be influenced by various factors, such as school characteristics. This study aimed to examine the differences in school engagement among students attending private and public secondary schools. A cross-sectional survey design with validated measures was used to collect data from a random sample of participants. This study included 650 students from both private and public secondary schools. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. The findings showed that both private and public school students had high levels of school engagement. However, students attending private schools showed significantly higher levels of emotion, cognition, behaviour, and overall engagement than their counterparts attending public schools. Additionally, female students demonstrated greater emotional engagement than male students, while no significant gender variations were observed in the levels of cognitive, behavioural, or overall school engagement. Addressing differences in school engagement requires the joint effort of various stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and the greater community. This collaboration is important because school engagement significantly affects students' academic achievement, social outcomes, and overall success.

Article Information

Article History:
Received : 10-10-2020
Revised : 16-11-2020
Accepted : 26-12-2020

Keywords:
Differences, engagement, gender difference, private school, public school

*Corresponding Author:
Lelisa Chala

E-mail:
lelisaha@gmail.com

Copyright@2020 STAR Journal, Wallaga University. All Rights Reserved.

INTRODUCTION

School engagement refers to how committed and involved students are in their education and school-related activities (Alrashidi et al., 2016; Fredrics et al., 2004). It includes factors like academic performance, attendance, participation in extracurriculars, and overall satisfaction with the learning environment (Alrashidi et al., 2016; Appleton et al., 2018). Researchers have shown a growing interest in studying school engagement because it is linked to positive educational outcomes in the long run (Appleton, 2018). Various factors at the individual, family, school, and community levels can influence students' levels of engagement.

Students' participation in education is significantly influenced by individual factors. The theory of self-determination (SDT) is crucial to understanding this phenomenon. Concerning SDT, individuals are compelled to

engage in activities that satisfy psychological criteria for autonomy, competence, and belonging (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In education, students who see their learning environment as supportive of their autonomy and competence are more willing to continue their studies (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Furthermore, research has demonstrated a good link between students' school participation and their efficacy perceptions. Self-efficacy refers to the confidence in an individual's academic abilities (Bandura, 1997). These findings underline the relevance of fostering an educational culture that supports students' sense of independence and competency as well as trust in their skills.

Studies have shown that parental participation, such as engaging in discussions about school-related matters, attending parent-teacher conferences, and assisting with homework, is positively linked to student engagement (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Smith et al., 2019). Additionally, research has highlighted the importance of strong parent-child relationships in promoting school engagement (Smith et al., 2019; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997). Positive and supportive interactions between parents and their children increase the likelihood of students being engaged in their education.

Several criteria were found to be critical markers of school-level involvement. One such feature is the quality of relationships between teachers and students. According to Baker (2006), good and supportive relationships between teachers and students are related to better engagement levels. Students are more engaged with their teachers when they get emotional support, teachers show interest in their lives outside of class, and a pleasant learning atmosphere is produced (Roorda et al., 2017).

Students' participation in school may also be impacted by variables at the community level. Research has found that access to community resources like libraries, parks, and after-school activities can increase children's participation (Fredricks et al., 2004). Furthermore, the socioeconomic situation of a family has an impact on students' involvement in school. Students from low-income areas may face additional challenges that hinder their engagement (Appleton et al., 2018). As a result, there are variations in school engagement between students attending private and public schools.

Different variables could separate private and public school students when it comes to academic commitment levels. Factors that impact academic performance gaps between economically varied pupils, including disparities in resource accessibility, funding differences, divergent instructional strategies, and variances within student populations, have been identified (Baker, 2014). Significant factors influencing the academic setting include the availability of chances that directly impact how involved students become.

To engage students and enhance academic performance, these factors must be understood. Increasing student engagement and ensuring sustainable success depends on fostering a positive school climate, encouraging parent involvement, and building a strong teacher-student relationship.

Statement of the problem

School engagement refers to the level of interest, commitment, and dedication that

students demonstrate in their education. It plays a crucial role in academic development, motivation, and overall well-being (Fredric et al., 2004). Both private and public schools aim to provide excellent education, but there are differences between the two types of institutions.

The differences in school engagement between private and public schools can be attributed to various factors, such as resources and funding, teacher quality and support, curriculum and instructional methods, class composition, parental involvement, and school culture and values (Baker, 2014; Borman & Dowling, 2008; National Centre for Education Statistics, NCES, 1997). Private schools have extra financial resources via tuition fees, which provide a wealthier learning environment (Borman & Dowling, 2008). On the other hand, public schools generally depend on government expenditures that are divided among several sectors. Limited funding may result in higher class sizes, outmoded facilities, fewer extracurricular activities, and a lack of specialised programmes.

Teacher quality and support are crucial for student engagement. Private colleges have greater freedom to hire highly qualified academics by providing attractive wages and bonuses. They may also provide customised attention and guidance. However, public schools may encounter difficulty in finding and maintaining highly skilled teachers owing to lower remuneration or inadequate resources for professional development.

Private and public schools often have different structures, resources, teaching approaches, and student demographics that can impact student engagement (Adediwura et al., 2016). Furthermore, research suggests that socioeconomic background influences school participation. Higher-income students tend to attend private schools, benefiting from additional resources and support networks. Conversely, poorer students are more likely to attend public schools, potentially facing resource constraints or insecure home environments (Borman & Dowling, 2008). These disparities can result in variations in the quality of education provided by different schools.

However, in the specific area where this survey was conducted, parents have expressed concerns about the level of student school engagement. Some argue that private schools excel at providing high-quality education and fostering students' intellectual interests, while others complain that private schools collect significant funds without providing additional educational quality or engaging learning experiences for students. Nevertheless, statistical data from national assessments indicate comparable passing rates for students, especially in Wallaga regional towns. Therefore, the results of this study may offer valuable insights to educators, policymakers, parents, and other stakeholders regarding the level of student school engagement between private and public schools. These insights can assist in making informed judgements about educational policies, resource allocation, teaching methods, and parental engagement initiatives.

This study aimed to investigate whether significant differences in school engagement exist between private and public schools in Wallaga Zonal Towns. To address this issue, the research questions below were examined.

1. What is the level of student engagement in private and public secondary schools?

2. Are there significant differences in student engagement levels between private and public secondary schools?
3. Is there a significant difference in engagement levels between male and female secondary school students?

The concept of school engagement

The word "level of school engagement" refers to the degree of attention, favour, and significant interest that students exhibit in their academic work and educational environment. Numerous studies have been undertaken on the topic of student-school collaboration, including its sources, consequences, and potential treatments. The "three-dimensional model" created by Fredrick et al. (2004) provides a fundamental basis for research on student participation. The combination of these communication traits—behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagements—may be understood as a three-pronged process in this paradigm in which all student participation is determined.

The word "behavioural engagement" refers to children's outward behaviour and school-related activities. It entails routinely attending courses, completing assignments, engaging in class discussions, and adhering to norms imposed by the school (Fredricks et al., 2004). Students who are behaviorally engaged are driven to actively participate in learning activities and exhibit responsibility for their academic work (Wang & Holcombe, 2010). On the other side, emotional engagement indicates how emotionally attached and interested students are in their educational experiences. It entails feeling as though school is engaging, pleasant, and a place where you belong (Fredricks et al. 2004). Students who are emotionally engaged are more likely to be intrinsically driven, have a good attitude towards learning, and feel pleased and fulfilled by their academic efforts (Dotterer et al., 2009). Cognitive engagement, as described by Fredericks et al. (2004), is a student's emotional devotion to learning, critical thinking, and academic topic comprehension. This includes youngsters' cognitive ability and intellectual curiosity (Wang & Eccles, 2013).

Furthermore, students' classroom engagement is associated with psychological outcomes. Motivated students enjoy their learning activities (Skinner et al., 2008). They demonstrate high levels of psychological well-being, social competence, and self-esteem (Skinner et al., 2008). Conversely, disengaged students may struggle academically, exhibit negative emotions such as boredom and dissatisfaction, and eventually drop out (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Differences in the level of school engagement among students

Studies show that students differ in their level of school engagement. According to studies comparing student academic participation in public and private schools (Fredricks et al., 2004; Johnson & Bolstad, 2018), students in private schools demonstrated stronger levels of cognitive engagement than their public school peers. However, Dogan (2015) noticed no noticeable difference in cognitive engagement between students in private and public schools, even though students at private schools reported greater levels of academic self-efficacy.

According to studies (Alrashidi et al., 2016; Appleton, 2018; Smith & Johnson, 2019), students in private schools demonstrated

higher levels of behavioural engagement than those in public schools, as revealed by their higher attendance rates, fewer disciplinary incidents, and greater involvement in extracurricular activities. In addition, a study comparing student engagement in private and public schools indicated that children in private schools assessed their ties to teachers, motivation to learn, self-esteem, and safety as being stronger than students in public schools (Adediwura et al., 2008). They demonstrated higher fervour, attention, and involvement in their academic work.

Additionally, compared to students in public schools, students in private schools were considered to be more emotionally engaged (Wang & Chen, 2014). Smaller class sizes, more personalised training from teachers, and a better sense of community engagement were mentioned as the explanations for this difference in private schools (Smith et al., 2010). However, it was reported that there was no discernible difference in emotional connectedness between students in private and public schools (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008), even though private school students were said to have higher levels of academic self-efficacy (Adediwer et al., 2008).

Researchers also reported gender differences in school engagement. Fredericks and Eccles (2004) conducted a study that focused on gender differences in student participation in middle school. Research shows that females show higher levels of behavioural engagement than boys, including school attendance, participation, and extracurricular activities. This increased female behavioural engagement because they had stronger social skills and demonstrated adherence to school standards when highly involved (Sontam & Gabriel, 2012). Lietaert et al. (2015) examined gender differences in student participation in Dutch classes for 385 seventh-grade students. According to the survey data, men are less likely than women to participate.

In contrast, Wang and Eccles (2013) examined gender differences in student participation across secondary education. Their study found that men reported higher levels of cognitive engagement, such as effort, concentration, and inhibition, than women. They attributed this difference to men's stronger beliefs in their abilities and passion for education, which is often associated with STEM careers. For example, according to Voyer and Voyer (2014), males are more likely than females to participate in sports and physical activity.

In Ethiopia, gender variations in attendance have also been noted, with females attending school more often than boys (Tadesse and Tadesse 2019). This distinction might be attributed to gender roles and cultural expectations in Ethiopian society. Girls may have fewer social obstacles and have better educational objectives, which will increase their school attendance.

The examined literature presents a conflicting picture of the variations in academic involvement between students attending private and public schools. While some studies reveal great academic engagement among private students, other research finds no appreciable differences in elevated behavioural or emotional engagement among kids in public schools. These various findings may be attributable to variations in

the sample type, measuring methods, and environmental factors. The fact that these distinctions might vary among cultures must also be acknowledged.

Factors influencing differences in the level of school engagement

Several variables might have an impact on student involvement, and these variables may vary across private and public schools. Even though every school strives to provide a high-quality education, there are differences in each setting that may have an impact on how students behave. It is common knowledge that parents have a significant impact on their children's academic lives. According to Hill and Tyson (2009), children are more likely to be engaged in their education if their parents are involved by attending conferences, helping with homework, and mingling with teachers. According to Hamare and Pianta's (2005) study, a pleasant, courteous exchange between students and teachers also develops a sense of connection and excitement to keep taking part. Students who are secure in their academic ability are more likely to engage in extracurricular activities and take on challenges, according to Pajares (2006). Taylor et al. (2017) and Wang Eccles (2013) found that certain students are more inclined to engage when there is a friendly environment with clear expectations. Studies have shown that socioeconomic status plays a factor in the variation in pupils' levels of school involvement (Sirin, 2005; Smith et al., 2017). SES pupils often display greater levels of academic activity, such as active engagement in class, task completion, and a desire to excel academically. Students from lower SES backgrounds, on the other hand, often face obstacles such as restricted access to educational resources and a lack of parental participation, which may limit their involvement in school (Bradley & Corwyn, 2017). In addition, supportive peers, a feeling of community, and belonging may encourage more involvement (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Roorda et al., 2017). Student engagement is significantly influenced by the classroom environment, which includes the overall tone and peer dynamics (Wentzel, 2009). Students are more engaged when they are learning in classrooms that foster cooperation, inclusivity, and a sense of belonging. Since various families have various expectations and ideals for education, cultural norms and values might also be important (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Due to language and cultural differences, educators and students in Ethiopia could encounter extra difficulties. Understanding these factors and taking action to keep students engaged in their studies is essential since they might all have a negative impact on student engagement.

Measurement of Student-School Engagement

A few of the theoretical frameworks that have been used to investigate and quantify school involvement include the engagement-participation model (Finn, 1989), the incentive-engagement model (Skinner et al., 2008), and the expectancy-value theory (Eccles et al., 1998). These conceptual frameworks provide a full grasp of the elements affecting students' involvement in learning. An in-depth study on student participation in school was conducted by

Fredericks et al. (2004), who also supplied a range of evaluation tools, such as interviews, observations, and self-report questionnaires.

Wang and Eccles (2013) conducted a comprehensive analysis in order to gain a thorough understanding of the intricacies of school engagement. To examine children's behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement, they utilised self-report methods such as the School Engagement Measure (SEM). Meanwhile, Appleton et al. (2008) employed the Student Activity Instrument (SEI), a self-report questionnaire specifically designed to assess students' cognitive and attentional activity. Exploring student engagement from a motivational perspective, Skinner et al. (2008) developed the Behavioural and Emotional Involvement Rating Scale (BEERS). This research extensively explores the psychometric properties of the BERS and its implications for learning outcomes.

In the current research, the school involvement measure established by Dogan (2014) is applied. This questionnaire has been found to assess three dimensions of school involvement (behavioural, cognitive, and emotional) with excellent validity and reliability. The selection of this instrument for the current research was based on its clear and accessible language as well as its contextual sensitivity to the local setting.

Materials and Method

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design. With the use of this layout, researchers can gather information from a wide range of subjects all at once. This made it possible to get information from a lot of pupils all at once (Best & Kahn, 2006).

Population and sample of the study

The study sample consisted of secondary school students from three Wallaga Zonal towns: Gimbi, Naqamte, and Shambu. There were a total of 22,737 students, with 19,052 in public schools and 3,685 in private schools. The study included twenty-two secondary schools across the three zones. A sample size of 784 students was obtained using random sampling. To make comparisons easier, 392 pupils from each of the two types of schools, private and public were chosen. The proportional sample-size determination approach proposed by Yamane (1967) was used to determine the sample size.

Instruments of data collection

The amount of student participation in schools was evaluated using the Student School Engagement Scale (Dogan, 2014). Engagement in behaviour, engagement in thought, and engagement in emotion make up the three parts of the measure. It also aids in determining the general degree of student participation in school. There were 31 parts in the instrument. The author of the scale conducted factor analysis and reliability studies on the instrument, involving 400 high school and middle school students. Exploratory component analysis revealed that the scale accounted for 46.74% of the total variance, with the 31 items categorised into three factors. The measure was associated with a scale measuring school atmosphere for the validity test, yielding a strong correlation of 51. The reliability of the instrument was reported to be 0.88 for emotional and behavioural engagement and 0.83 for behavioural engagement.

Before the final data collection, the instrument underwent careful revision to ensure the contextual meaning of the items at the local level. Three instructors in the Education and Behavioural Sciences department at Wallaga University reviewed and approved the instrument for measuring student school engagement. Following their comments, necessary revisions were made, and a pilot test was conducted with 200 secondary school students. Item-total correlations and reliability calculations were performed on responses from 165 students who provided complete responses. Two items were discarded from the instrument as their total item correlations did not surpass 0.30, as suggested by Cristobal et al. (2007). The Cronbach's alpha reliabilities for emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and overall engagement were 0.78, 0.84, 0.86, and 0.87, respectively. The items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The procedure for data collection

The researcher communicated with the secondary schools by sending a letter from the College of Education and Behavioural Sciences at Wallaga University. Discussions were then held with the school directors to discuss the study's objectives. The directors nominated two teachers to assist in data collection, and these teachers received brief training on how to collect data while respecting student rights. The researcher was present on the school campus while the students completed the questionnaire, ensuring the necessary information was obtained for the study.

Methods of Data analysis

The questionnaires returned by students were scanned optically to obtain complete responses. Any questionnaires that were incomplete or answered in patterns were discarded. Statistical Package for Social Sciences 25 was used for both data entry and analysis. Some entries were removed from the data after it was examined for statistical presumptions. The statistical significance level for the analysis was set at alpha = 0.05, and means and t-tests were computed.

Ethical considerations

The concept of the research was assessed by an expert from the College of Education and Behavioural Sciences at Wallaga University. The plan was submitted to the office of the research coordinator of the College of Education and Behavioural Sciences. The proposal was commented on by the staff members of the college. Constrictive remarks were incorporated and submitted to the university's research review board. The plan got approval from the board, and a budget was allotted for the research. Ethical concerns were followed throughout the examination, with no infringement on ethical problems.

Participants' Bio-data

A questionnaire was utilised to collect data. Data were obtained from private and public secondary school students. The participants of the study were selected from four private and four secondary schools. The background of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Respondents' characteristics

Variables	Options	Fr.	%
Gender	Male	330	50.8
	Female	320	49.2
School	Private	318	48.9
	Public	332	51.1
Family employability	Government	185	28.5
	NGO	76	11.7
	Self	389	59.8

As shown in Table 1, 339 (50.8%) male and 320 (49.2%) female students participated in the study. In terms of school type, 318 (48.9%) were from private secondary schools, while 318 (48.9%) were from public secondary schools. The majority of students' families (59.8%) were self-employed. Additionally, 28.5% of families were government employees, while 11.7% were employed by NGOs. These group sizes make it more suitable for statistical analysis. The analysis of the level of student school engagement is presented in the next section.

Student-School Engagement

A scale with three dimensions—emotional (10 items), cognitive (12 items), and behavioural (7 items) engagement—was used to measure the students' levels of school involvement. The items were scored on a Likert scale, with 1 being strongly disagreeing and 5 being strongly agreeing. A higher average rating score suggests higher levels of school involvement, whereas a lower score suggests greater levels of disengagement.

To determine the overall level of school engagement, the mean rating score of the scale was calculated. Additionally, the mean rating scores of the three subscales (behavioural, emotional, and cognitive) were utilised to measure the students' specific levels of school engagement. A larger mean indicates a higher level of school engagement, and vice versa. The response means rating scores (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the level of student school engagement are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Mean and Standard deviation on level of school engagement

Scale	**Schools**	
	private	Public
Emotional engagement	41.58(6.81)	39.34(6.638)
Cognitive engagement	54.27(4.76)	49.64(7.21)
Behavioural engagement	32.10(2.93)	29.83(6.76)
Total	127.94(9.71)	118.81(13.31)

Table 2 displays the assessment of student school involvement on the overall level of the school engagement measuring scale and across the three domains (emotional, cognitive, and behavioural). According to the mean results on the emotional engagement subscale, students at private secondary schools were found to be more emotionally engaged than those at public secondary schools (M = 41.58, SD = 5.81 vs. M = 39.34, SD = 6.38), respectively. Similarly, private secondary school students (M = 54.27, SD = 4.76) performed better than public secondary school students (M = 49.64, SD = 7.21) in terms of their level of cognitive participation. Secondary school students from both private (M = 32.10, SD = 2.93) and public (M = 29.83, SD = 6.76) schools displayed different levels of behavioural engagement. Regarding the overall level of school involvement, it was discovered that private secondary school students (M = 127.94, SD = 9.71) had a greater level of engagement than public secondary school students (M = 118.81, SD = 13.31).

Therefore, the results suggest that private and public secondary school students' levels of school involvement in general and emotional, cognitive, and behavioural engagement, in particular, were appreciable, with private school students showing more school engagement than their counterparts. Table 3 presents the test results for the statistically significant variations in the degree of school participation.

Table 3

School-type d*ifferences in the level of school engagement*

Scale	School type	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Emotional	Private	41.58	6.81	4.66	648	0.000
	Public	39.34	6.38			
Cognitive	Private	54.27	4.76	9.60	648	0.000
	Public	49.64	7.21			
Behavioural t	Private	32.10	2.93	5.52	648	0.000
	Public	29.83	6.76			
Total domain	Private	127.94	9.71	9.96	648	0.000
	Public	118.81	13.31			

A t-test of the variations in secondary school participation between private and public schools is shown in Table 3. The cutoff for statistical significance was p 0.05.

The results showed a significant difference in the mean score level of emotional engagement rating between secondary school students in private schools (M = 41.58, SD = 6.81) and public schools (M = 39.34, SD = 6.38) (t = 4.66, df = 648, p 0.00). This research found a substantial difference in emotional involvement between secondary school pupils in the study region who attended private and public schools. Private secondary

school students performed better than students in public secondary schools in terms of emotional involvement.

Additionally, there was a significant difference between secondary school pupils in public (M = 54.27, SD = 4.76) and private (M = 39.14, SD = 6.50) schools based on the mean ratings of cognitive engagement (t = 9.60, df = 648, p =.000). It was shown that there is a significant difference in the level of cognitive engagement between private and public secondary schools because students at private schools had higher levels of cognitive engagement.

Further, there was a statistically significant distinction between students in public secondary schools (M = 29.83, SD = 6.76) and private secondary schools (M = 32.10, SD = 2.93) in terms of mean behavioural engagement ratings (t = 5.52, df = 648, p =.000). As a result, it can be said that secondary school pupils in private schools showed more behavioural involvement in the classroom than their peers in public schools.

Additionally, there was a significant difference between secondary school students in private schools (M = 127.94, SD = 9.71), as opposed to public schools (M = 118.81, SD = 13.31), according to the test for a significant difference in mean scores of student school participation at the overall level (t = 9.96, df = 648, p = 0.000). Thus, it was determined that there is a sizable difference between secondary school pupils attending private and public schools in terms of their overall degree of school participation. Students in private secondary schools were shown to be more involved in their schools than their peers in public schools. Table 4 provides an assessment of gender disparities in the degree of school participation.

Table 4

Sex differences in the level of school engagement

Scale	Sex			
	Male		Female	
Emotional engagement	39.92	6.67	40.96	5.64
Cognitive engagement	51.85	6.76	51.97	6.35
Behavioural engagement	30.69	5.82	31.19	4.84
Total	122.46	13.33	124.12	11.63

Table 4 presents the mean score distributions of male and female student respondents across each subscale and total scale. Regarding emotional engagement, female students (M = 40.96, SD = 5.64) showed better rating mean scores for the level of emotional engagement than public school students (M = 39.92, SD = 6.67). In addition, female students (M = 51.97, SD = 6.35) had a higher mean score on the level of cognitive engagement than male students (M = 51.85, SD = 6.76). The mean score for behavioural engagement was also higher for

female students (M = 31.19, SD = 4.84) than for male students (M = 30.69, SD = 5.82). The mean score for the total degree of school involvement was greater for female students (M = 124.12, SD = 11.63) than for male students (M = 122.46, SD = 5.82). As a consequence, the findings imply that female students' levels of emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and overall school involvement were marginally higher than male students'. Table 5 displays the notable variations in the rating mean scores

Table 5

Sex differences in the level of school engagement

Scale	Sex	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Emotional	M	39.92	6.67	-2.13	648	0.033
	F	40.58	6.04			
Cognitive	M	51.85	6.76	-0.24	648	0.811
	F	51.97	6.35			
Behavioural	M	30.69	5.82	-1.20	648	0.230
	F	31.19	4.84			
Total domain	M	122.46	13.33	-1.69	648	0.091
	F	123.74	11.85			

Male and female students exhibit substantial disparities in the sub-dimensions and total degree of school involvement, as seen in Table 5. Male and female students had significantly different mean emotional school engagement scores (M = 39.92, SD = 6.67) and female students (M = 40.58, SD = 6.04), respectively (t = -2.13, df = 648, p = 0.033). Since female students were shown to be more emotionally involved than male students, it can be argued that there is a significant difference between the emotional involvement of male and female students.

However, there was no discernible difference in the mean score of the cognitive school participation rating between male and female students (M = 51.85, SD = 6.76) (t = -0.24, df = 648, p = 0.811). This finding shows that there are no obvious gender differences in secondary school pupils' engagement in cognitive learning.

Male and female students did not significantly differ in the mean behavioural school engagement rating score (M = 30.69, SD = 5.82 vs. M = 31.19, SD = 4.84; t = -1.20, df = 648, p = 0.230). This result also implies that there are no discernible gender differences in behavioural school engagement in the secondary schools in the study region. Furthermore, there is no discernible difference in the total rating mean score between male and female secondary school pupils (M = 122.46, SD = 13.33; M = 123.74, SD = 11.85; t = -1.69; df = 648; p = 0.091). In light of

these findings, there were no appreciable differences in the degree of overall school engagement between male and female students in the study area over the study period.

Discussions

This research attempts to analyse the condition of and discrepancies in school engagement among secondary school students in private and public schools. School involvement covers three aspects: emotional, cognitive, and behavioural engagement. Differences in school participation across students were examined on these three variables and the overall measuring instrument. The following part includes a discussion of the outcomes.

Students' academic progress, general well-being, and future success heavily rely on their level of school participation. Factors such as resources, curriculum, teaching methods, and student-teacher interactions, influenced by the type of school (private or public), can significantly impact students' engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Johnson, 2019; Johnson & Bolstad, 2018; Smith, 2018). When students actively engage in learning, have a sense of connection to their school and education, and are committed to it, they experience a high level of school participation. The current data indicates that students in both private and public schools had above-average school involvement, suggesting a strong sense of belonging. The study by Fredricks et al. (2016) indicated that kids who feel secure at school are more likely to be highly engaged, attend courses often, and succeed academically. This conclusion is in line with what they discovered.

According to the present research, secondary school students in both private and public schools have shown a high degree of engagement with emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and general assessment techniques. However, compared to pupils in public schools, secondary school students at private institutions reported much higher levels of school involvement. Similar results from other research have shown that students at private schools are often more interested in their studies than their counterparts in public schools (Alrashidi et al., 2016; Appleton, 2018; NCES, 1997; Smith & Johnson, 2019). Tests on emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, behavioural engagement, and overall engagement were undertaken to ascertain differences in the levels of school commitment between male and female pupils. According to numerous studies, women generally exhibit higher overall levels of emotional engagement than men. For instance, a meta-analysis by Wang and Eccles (2013) demonstrated that women have more positive attitudes towards education than men, while Dotterer et al. (2009) found that women were more excited and glad to participate in school-related activities than men. The findings of this study were consistent with those of previous studies.

Conflicting findings have been found in studies looking at sex variations in specific components of school engagement. For example, while some researchers (Wang & Eccles, 2013) revealed no appreciable differences between boys and girls in terms of cognitive engagement, others (Fredricks et al.,

2004) reported that girls typically demonstrate slightly higher levels of cognitive participation. Male and female students did not differ significantly in the present study according to the statistical test, even though female students scored higher on average for cognitive engagement.

When it comes to behavioural engagement, which encompasses activities such as active classroom participation, adherence to school regulations, and completing assignments, research suggests that girls often demonstrate higher levels of involvement than boys. Studies have consistently reported that girls are more likely to stay on task and follow classroom rules compared to boys (Fredricks et al., 2004; Wang & Eccles, 2013). In the present study, although female students exhibited higher average scores for their level of school involvement, the test for differences did not reveal any significant variations in behavioural engagement between male and female students.

Studies looking at the general level of school participation have produced contradictory results. According to several studies, girls exhibit higher levels of enthusiasm and effort than boys when it comes to school engagement (Eccles et al., 1998). Other studies show that females typically outperform boys in the classroom due to their higher levels of involvement at school (Fredricks et al., 2004). Despite somewhat higher average mean score ratings for overall school engagement among female students in the current study, the test for difference did not produce statistically significant results confirming that male and female students of the present study had a comparable level of school engagement.

According to experts, numerous variables impact student involvement levels in school, including the classroom climate, instructional tactics, curriculum, student-teacher relationships, and individual student qualities. Smith (2018) claims that student involvement is generally stronger in private schools owing to lower class sizes, personalised attention, and the more difficult academic settings they provide. Conversely, Johnson (2019) believes that public school pupils have lower engagement levels owing to variables such as teacher-student relationships, school culture, and curriculum design. Private schools often have greater resources and technology to encourage student participation (Begna, 2017; Krommendyk, 2007; Seboka, 2003). These results have substantial consequences for education policy. To bridge the gap between the two groups, scholars argue to give more attention to public schools where a larger number of children attend.

Therefore, in the context of the present study, female secondary school students did not significantly differ from their male counterparts in terms of school involvement, except for emotional engagement. This suggests an opportunity for secondary school leaders to consistently foster similar levels of engagement among male and female students, promoting cooperative learning based on mutual respect.

Conclusions

This study aims to investigate the differences in school participation between students attending private and public secondary

schools. The data indicated that both private and public secondary school students displayed significant levels of school engagement. However, private school students exhibited higher levels of involvement across all aspects measured (emotional, cognitive, and behavioural). Additionally, there were gender disparities observed in emotional engagement, with females displaying higher levels of engagement compared to males. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing discrepancies in school engagement within the education sector as it can potentially impact academic achievements and access to better resources and opportunities. Public schools should prioritize improving their strategies for engagement and overall educational experiences to bridge this gap. This may include increased government attention and allocation of resources towards creating attractive learning environments, as well as ensuring the presence of qualified teachers and effective leadership.

Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained, the following recommendations are forwarded:

To bridge the gap in school engagement between secondary students in private and public schools, it is essential to implement the following recommendations: These policies seek to provide a high standard of education for every person and equitable opportunity for all pupils, regardless of the kind of school they attend.

1. The capacity of instructors is a significant aspect that may influence student attendance. Private schools often have greater resources to recruit and keep highly qualified staff members. Talented teachers must be given the chance to succeed in public schools as well to overcome this imbalance in the educational system. This may be accomplished by providing educators with competitive pay, opportunities for professional advancement, and welcoming work environments.
2. Parental participation is essential for encouraging academic performance and student engagement. This commitment is often greater in private schools because of the more intimate class sizes and ties to the local community. Public schools should aggressively encourage and support parental participation to close the gap.
3. Establishing a welcoming learning environment is essential to encouraging student participation. Prioritising the establishment of an inviting atmosphere in public schools is essential. This environment should embrace individual differences, celebrate diversity, and offer support to students from various socioeconomic backgrounds and academic capabilities. Providing counselling services as well as a wide range of extracurricular activities that cater to different interests are two concrete examples of how this can be achieved.
4. Creating strong bonds between teachers and students may encourage them to invest more emotionally in their studies. Regardless of a student's

gender, instructors need to make an effort to build caring and supportive relationships with them.

References

Adediwura, A. A., Oluwatosin, A. S., & Ajeigbe. O. T. (2008). Comparative Study Of Private And Public Schools Student Engagement And School Effectiveness Indicators. *IFE Psychologia: An International Journal, 16*(2). https://doi.org/10.4314/ifep.v16i2.23799

Alrashidi, O., Phan, H. P., & Ngu, B. H. (2016). Academic Engagement: An Overview of Its Definitions, Dimensions, and Major Conceptualizations. *International Education Studies, 9(*12), 41. https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v9n12p41

Appleton, J. J. (2018). *Student Engagement. Encyclopedia of Adolescence*, 3847–3856. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-33228-4_176

Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., & Furlong, M. J. (2008). Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct. *Psychology in the Schools, 45*(5), 369–386. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20303

Baker, B. D. (2014). Private Schooling in the US: Expenditures, Supply, and Policy Implications. *Journal of Education Finance, 39*(1), 3-28.

Baker, J. A. (2006). Contributions of teacher-child relationships to positive school adjustment during elementary school. *Journal of School Psychology*, *44*(3), 211–229. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2006.02.00

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W. H. Freeman and Company.

Bradley, R. H., & Corwyn, R. F. (2017). Socioeconomic status and child development. *Annual Review of Psychology, 68*, 201-226.

Begna, T. N. (2017). Public schools and private schools in Ethiopia: Partners in national development? *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE), 4*(2), 100-111, http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0402010

Best, J. W. & Kahn, J. V. (2006). *Research in Education* (10th edition), Pearson Education Inc., Cape Town.

Borman, G., & Dowling, N. M. (2008). Schools and inequality: A multilevel analysis of Coleman's equality of educational opportunity data. *Teachers College Record, 110*(11), 2496-2533.

Bradley, R. H., & Corwyn, R. F. (2017). Socioeconomic status and child development. *Annual Review of Psychology, 68*, 201-226.

Cristobal, E., Flavián, C., & Guinalíu, M. (2007). Perceived e-service quality (PeSQ): Measurement validation and effects on consumer satisfaction and website loyalty. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal, 17*(3), 317–340. https://doi.org/10.1108/09604520710744326

Dogan, U. (2014). Validity and reliability of student engagement scale. *Bartin University Journal of Faculty of Education, 3*, 309-403. doi:

10.14686/BUEFAD.201428190

Dogan, U. (2015). Student Engagement, Academic Self-efficacy, and Academic Motivation as Predictors of Academic Performance. *Anthropologist, 20*(3), 553-561. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298073196

Dotterer, A. M., McHale, S. M., & Crouter, A. C. (2009). The development and correlates of academic interests from childhood through adolescence. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 101*(2), 509–519. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013987

Eccles, J. S., Wigfield, A., & Schiefele, U. (1998). Motivation to succeed. In, W. Damon & N. Eisenberg (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: 3*. Social, emotional, and personality development (5th ed., pp. 1017-1095). John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Finn, J. D. (1989). Withdrawing from school. *Review of Educational Research, 59*(2), 117–142. https://doi.org/10.2307/1170412

Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2004). Parental influences on youth involvement in school. *Educational Psychologist, 39*(2), 91- 101.

Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(1), 59–109. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543074001059

Fredricks, J. A., Filsecker, M., & Lawson, M. A. (2016). Student engagement, context, and adjustment: Addressing definitional, measurement, and methodological issues. *Learning and Instruction, 43*, 1–4. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2016.02.002

Grayson, J. L., & Alvarez, H. K. (2008). School climate factors relating to teacher burnout: A mediator model. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(5), 1349-1363.

Great Schools Partnership. (2016). *Student engagement definition. The Glossary of Education Reform*. https://www.edglossary.org/student-engagement/

Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2005). Can instructional and emotional support in the first-grade classroom make a difference for children at risk of school failure? *Child Development, 76*(5), 949-967.

Hill, N. E., & Tyson, D. F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. *Developmental Psychology, 45*(3), 740–763. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015362

Johnson, B. (2019). Understanding School Engagement In Public Schools: An Empirical Investigation. *Educational Psychology Review, 37*(2), 78-

Johnson, R. B., & Duffett, A. (2018). Parent and family involvement in education, 2017–2018. *Phi Delta Kappan, 100*(3), 8-15.

Johnson, S., & Bolstad, R. (2018). School sector and student engagement: Comparing public and private schools. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 39*(1), 121-138.

Krommendyk, M. (2007). The association between school choice and school climate: Comparing school climate in private religious, charter, and public schools. Dissertations. 885.

https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dissertations/885

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher, 35*(7), 3-12.

Lietaert, S., Roorda, D., Laevers, F., Verschueren, K., & Fraine, B. (2015). The gender gap in student engagement: The role of teachers' autonomy support, structure, and involvement. *The British journal of educational psychology, 85* (4), 498-518. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep. 12095.

National Center for Education Statistics. (1997). *Public and Private Schools: How Do They Differ?* https://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/97983.pdf

Pajares, F. (2006). Self-efficacy beliefs in academic settings. *Review of Educational Research, 66*(4), 543-578.

Roorda, D. L., Jak, S., Zee, M., Oort, F. J., & Koomen, H. M. Y. (2017). Affective Teacher-Student Relationships and Students' Engagement and Achievement: A Meta-Analytic Update and Test of the Mediating Role of Engagement. *School Psychology Review, 46*(3), 239–261. https://doi.org/10.17105/spr-2017-0035.v46-3

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness.* The Guilford Press. https://doi.org/10.1521/978.14625/28806

Sabbott. (2013, December 13). *Student Engagement Definition. The Glossary of Education Reform*. https://www. edglossary.org/student-engagement/

Seboka, B. (2003). *School choice and policy response: A Comparative context between private and public schools in Urban Ethiopia. International Conference on African Development Archives.* 59. https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/africancenter_icad_archive/59

Sirin, S. R. (2005). Socioeconomic status and academic achievement: A meta-analytic review of research. *Review of Educational Research, 75*(3), 417-453.

Skinner, E. A., Kindermann, T. A., & Furrer, C. J. (2008). A motivational perspective on engagement and disaffection: Conceptualization and assessment of children's behavioural and emotional participation in academic activities in the classroom. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 68*(3), 493-525.

Smith, A. (2018). Exploring Factors Affecting School Engagement In Private Schools. *Journal Of Education Research, 25*(3), 45-

Smith, A., Francis, B., & Osborne, M. (2017). The role of socioeconomic status in children's academic achievement trajectories: A systematic review. *Sociology of Education, 90*(4), 334-353.

Smith, R., & Johnson, M. J. (2019). School engagement: A comparison of private and public school students. *Journal of School Choice, 13*(1), 57-76.

Smith, T. E., Reinke, W. M., Herman, K. C., Huang, F. (2019). Understanding Family–School Engagement Across and Within Elementary and Middle-School Contexts.

American Psychological Association. 34(4}, 363–375. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/spq0000290

Smith, T. M., Peterson, K. D., & Merwin, M. M. (2010). *High school dropout and completion rates in the United States: 2007 (NCES 2010-117).* National Center for Education Statistics.

Sontam, V., & Gabriel, G. (2012). Student Engagement at a Large Suburban Community College: Gender and Race Differences. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 36,* 808 - 820. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2010.491998.

Tadesse, S., & Tadesse, T. (2019). Socioeconomic Status and School Engagement Among Ethiopian Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Educational Resources. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 28*(7), 1906-1916.

Taylor, L. C., Clayton, J. D., & Rowley, S. J. (2017). Academic socialization: Understanding parental influences on children's school-related development in low-income, African American families. *Journal of Family Issues, 38*(2), 209-233.

Voyer, D., & Voyer, S. D. (2014). Gender differences in scholastic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 140*(4), 1174–1204. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036620

Wang, M. T., & Chen, Q. (2014). Developmental trajectories of academic performance, self-concept, and task values across the elementary school years. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 106*(3), 963-980.

Wang, M. T., & Holcombe, R. (2010). Adolescents' perceptions of school environment, engagement, and academic achievement in middle school. *American Educational Research Journal, 47*(3), 633-662.

Wang, M.-T., & Eccles, J. S. (2013). School context, achievement motivation, and academic engagement: A longitudinal study of school engagement using a multidimensional perspective. *Learning and Instruction, 28*, 12–23. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2013.04.002

Wentzel, K. R., Caldwell, K. (1997). Friendships, peer acceptance, and group membership: relations to academic achievement in middle school. *Child Development, 68*, 1198–1209. doi: 10.2307/1132301

Wentzel, K. R. (2009). Peers and academic functioning at school. In K. H. Rubin, W. M. Bukowski, & B. Laursen (Eds.), *Handbook of peer interactions, relationships, and groups* (pp. 531–547). The Guilford Press.