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Parental Attitude Towards Private Pre-primary Education in Thoubal District, Manipur

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Abstract

This study investigates parental attitudes in Thoubal district towards private Pre-primary education in Manipur, India, examining demographic factors like parental occupation, location, and education level. Employing a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 251 parents of children in 60 randomly selected private Pre-primary Schools. The standardised Parental Attitude Towards Preschool Education Scale (PATPES), consisting of 25 items developed by Venkatesan, 2018, assessed parental attitudes across dimensions such, as emotional support, academic involvement, and perceived importance of early education. Data were analysed using t-tests, ANOVA, and z-score. The analysis revealed a significant difference based on educational attainment, with undergraduate educated parents showing more favourable attitudes than those with higher qualifications. Conversely, no significant differences were found based on occupation or geographic location—rural and urban residency, indicating generally consistent attitudes across these variables. The findings underscore the need for targeted outreach programmes to bolster parental awareness and engagement in early education, especially among different educational backgrounds. This research has important implications for policymakers and educators who foster supportive parental attitude towards early childhood education, aiming to enhance academic outcomes within the socio-economically diverse communities.

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Introduction

Early childhood education is critical for a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development, forming the foundation for lifelong learning. According to the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), over 85 per cent of a child's brain develops by age six, underscoring the importance of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) during these formative years. Pre-primary education, often offered through private institutions, such as kindergartens and Montessori schools, is integral to this early development, as it prepares children for formal schooling by focusing on essential skills like literacy, numeracy, and social interaction (NEP 2020).

Parental involvement plays a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of early childhood education. Parental attitudes significantly influence children's educational choices and engagement, as they are the primary decision-makers regarding their children's schooling, including Pre-primary education (Epstein, 2011). Exploring the factors that shape these attitudes is essential to understand the demand for private Pre-primary education and addressing potential inequities. Research shows that parents' attitude towards Pre-primary education significantly influence the quality of their engagement in their children's learning process (Aggarwal, 2020). Positive parental attitudes are linked to higher levels of support and encouragement, which can lead to better academic outcomes for children (Morgan et al., 2011). However, attitudes towards Pre-primary education vary widely based on several factors, including parents' educational background, occupation, and geographic location (Siddiqui, 2014).

In Thoubal district of Manipur, where quality Pre-primary education remains limited, understanding parental attitudes is crucial for shaping effective early education programmes. Despite significant efforts by the government and private sector to expand Early Childhood Education (ECE), parental perceptions continue to play a crucial role in shaping the demand for and support of these services. This study explores parental attitude towards private Pre-primary education in Thoubal, examining how occupation, educational background, and urban or rural residency affect these views.

Review of Literature

Parental attitude towards education plays a crucial role in shaping children's educational experiences. Research indicates that engaged parents with positive attitude towards education can significantly enhance their children's learning outcomes. The attitude towards Pre-primary education can vary significantly based on demographic factors, such as occupation, education level, and geographic location (Fan and Chen, 2001). These factors shape parents'

educational choices for their children, affecting their access to quality early education. Understanding these dynamics is crucial in developing supportive policies to enhance accessibility to early childhood education. Studies by A.S. Devi and Meitei (2024) revealed that parents in Thoubal district prioritise private schools due to better career prospects for their children (Devi and Meitei, 2024).

Parent education levels significantly affect attitudes' towards private Pre-primary education. Research indicates that parent's educational backgrounds significantly influence their attitude towards education. A study on parental aspirations suggests that educated parents often have higher educational aspirations for their children, which could be extended to preferring private Pre-primary education for better foundational learning (Devi, and Meitei, 2024). Other studies suggest that parents with higher educational attainment often prefer private schooling, as they tend to prioritise quality education and are more informed about the educational landscape (Ghosh and Steinberg, 2022). Educated parents generally view early childhood education as a foundation for lifelong learning, with research showing that higher maternal education is associated with greater parental involvement (Erdener and Knoeppel, 2018).

In contrast, parents with lower educational backgrounds may demonstrate indifference or negative attitude towards Pre-primary education, limiting their child's access to and engagement in early educational opportunities (Ghosh and Steinberg, 2022). This disparity highlights the need to foster awareness and engagement among less-educated parents to help bridge the access gap in early childhood education. Studies suggest that children from families with higher parental education levels exhibit better school maturity and readiness, highlighting the critical role of parental awareness in shaping educational choices (Zeteroğlu and Kozan, 2020).

Mothers' occupation and economic status also impact educational choices for Pre-primary schooling. Employed mothers, especially those in higher-paying jobs, tend to favour private schooling due to the perceived benefits, such as better facilities and educational quality (Devi and Saroh, 2023). Educated mothers working in professional fields often prefer private schools because they emphasise holistic development (Zeteroğlu and Kozan, 2020). On the other hand, less-educated mothers or mothers who are homemakers may prioritise affordability over quality, while still viewing private schooling as an investment in their children's future. Meanwhile, women in low-income or unstable jobs often focus on cost-effectiveness, opting for public schools or budget-friendly alternatives to ensure

education remains accessible despite their financial constraints. This economic divide reveals how financial considerations influence the choice between public and private education, underscoring the need for affordable and high-quality educational options.

Geographical location plays an equally critical role in shaping attitude towards Pre-primary schooling. Parents in urban areas often have greater access to resources and information about educational options, making them more likely to choose private schools for their children (Devi and Saroh, 2023). This preference is attributed to the better availability of private institutions in urban areas and enhanced access to educational resources and community support systems. In contrast, rural parents face structural and economic barriers, including limited schooling options and financial instability, which may create anxiety over educational decisions (Abbott-Chapman et al., 2017). Such constraints make it challenging for rural parents to access or prioritise private education, underscoring the need for supportive policies that improve rural access to quality education.

Research highlights that parental attitude towards Pre-primary education is influenced by educational level, economic status, and geographic location. Higher education, urban residency, and employment are linked to positive views on private Pre-primary schooling. For policymakers, these findings suggest the importance of addressing regional, economic, and educational inequalities to build a more inclusive early education system. Further, research should consider regional socio-cultural factors influencing parental attitudes, as recommended by Siddiqui (2014) and Widiake (1975), to support equitable access and developmental outcomes for all children.

Rationale of the Study

The rationale for this study stems from the critical role that Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays in shaping a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development. Pre-primary education, a key component of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), is essential for building a strong foundation for lifelong learning. Realising this, the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) emphasises the significance of providing high-quality early childhood education to all children. In this context, parental involvement and attitude towards private Pre-primary education become crucial, as they significantly influence a child's access to and engagement with educational opportunities.

Despite the well-documented benefits of early education, parental attitudes towards private Pre-primary education vary significantly across

different socioeconomic backgrounds and geographic locations. In India, especially in rural areas like the Thoubal district of Manipur, limited research has been conducted to explore how parents perceive Pre-primary education, particularly in private schools. This gap in the literature justifies the need for a region-specific study that examines the factors influencing parental attitudes, such as education level, occupation, and rural versus urban residence.

Understanding these attitudes is critical because parental perceptions shape decisions about their child's early education and affect their involvement in learning. In regions like Thoubal, where access to quality private Pre-primary education may be inconsistent, exploring how parents perceive the value of private Pre-primary education can help educators and policymakers to identify the areas for improvement. Furthermore, this study can contribute to policy development by providing insights into the factors that hinder or promote positive parental engagement in early education.

This study seeks to address gaps in the literature on parental attitude towards private Pre-primary education and propose interventions to improve parental perceptions. By promoting greater parental engagement, this study seeks to enhance educational outcomes for young children and advance equitable access to quality early education, as envisioned in the National Education Policy 2020.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the present study is stated as 'Parental Attitude Towards Private Pre-Primary Education in Thoubal District in Manipur.'

Objectives

1. To explore the attitude of mothers towards private Pre-primary education based on their occupations
2. To study parents' attitude towards private Pre-primary education based on their location— rural and urban areas
3. To explore parents' attitudes towards private Pre-primary education based on their educational level

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mothers' attitude towards private Pre-primary education based on their occupations.
2. There is no significant difference in parents' attitude towards private Pre-primary education based on their location—rural and urban areas.
3. There is no significant difference in parents' attitude towards private Pre-primary education based on their educational level.

Delimitation of the Study

The study is delimited to:

1. the parents of private Pre-primary schools in Thoubal District, Manipur;
2. the tool used; and
3. the sample size selected.

Research Methodology

In the present study, the investigator used the descriptive survey method.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consists of parents of children attending private Pre-primary schools in Thoubal district, Manipur. Sixty private Pre-primary schools were selected using a simple random sampling method. The final sample consisted of 251 parents (109 males and 142 females), representing a mix of both rural and urban areas.

Tools and Statistical Techniques

The study used a standardised tool for measuring parental attitude towards Pre-school education developed by A. Venkatesan, 2018. The tool includes 25 items that assess various dimensions of parental attitude, such as emotional support, academic involvement, and perceptions of the importance of early education. The data were analysed using statistical techniques using SPSS, including mean, standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA, and z-scores, Tukey's HSD test and Levene's Test.

Analysis and Interpretation

Objective 1: Mothers' Attitude Towards Private Pre-primary Education Based on their Occupations

The group statistics in Table 1 below reveals that 211 homemakers have a mean attitude score of 1.550 with a standard deviation of 0.4987. On the other hand, 40 working women have a slightly higher mean score of 1.650 with a standard deviation of 0.4830.

Further, a t-test was conducted to determine if this difference is statistically significant.

Table 1

Group Statistics

Category	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Homemaker (1)	211	1.550	0.4987	0.0343
Working Women (2)	40	1.650	0.4830	0.0764

Table 2
Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Standard Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	10.048	0.002	-1.171	249	0.243	-0.1002	0.0856
Equal variances are not assumed			-1.197	55.929	0.236	-0.1002	0.0837

Levene's test for equality of variances (Table 2) indicates a significant difference (F = 10.048, p = 0.002), meaning the assumption of equal variances is violated. Hence, the t-test for unequal variances is more appropriate. The t-test yields a t-value of -1.197 with 55.929 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.236, greater than the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, the difference in mean scores is not statistically significant.

We fail to reject the null hypothesis since the p-values (0.236 and 0.243) are above the 0.05 significance level. It indicates no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of homemakers and working women towards private Pre-primary education. The slightly higher mean score for working women does not demonstrate a meaningful difference between the two groups.

Objective 2: Parent's Attitude towards Private Pre-primary Education based on their Locations—Rural and Urban Areas

Table 3 shows that parents in rural areas (mean = 1.610) have a slightly higher attitude score towards Pre-primary education compared to parents in urban areas (mean = 1.526). However, the statistical significance of this difference must be tested using a t-test.

Table 3
Group Statistics

Location	Rural (1) Urban (2)	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Rural (1)	1.0	118	1.610	0.4898	0.0451
Urban (2)	2.0	133	1.526	0.5012	0.0435

Table 4
Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Standard Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	5.608	0.019	1.337	249	0.182	0.0839	0.0627
Equal variances are not assumed			1.339	246.669	0.182	0.0839	0.0626

Table 4 reveals that Levene's Test for Equality of Variances shows a significance value of 0.019, less than 0.05, indicating that the variances between the rural and urban groups are unequal. However, the t-test results with and without equal variances show a p-value of 0.182. This value is above the 0.05 significance level. The results indicate that the mean difference in attitude scores between rural (mean = 1.610) and urban (mean = 1.526) parents is not statistically significant, as the p-value is 0.182 (greater than 0.05).

Since the p-value is above 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H_0). It indicates no statistically significant difference in parents' attitude towards private Pre-primary education based on their locations (rural vs. urban areas). Hence, in this study, location does not appear to shape parents' attitude substantially towards private Pre-primary education in the district.

Objective 3: Parent's Attitude towards Pre-primary Education based on their Qualifications

The objective focuses on understanding how parents' educational qualifications influence attitude towards Pre-primary education.

Table 5
Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
7.971	2	248	0.000

As shown in Table 5, Levene's test assesses whether the variances across the groups (based on qualifications) are equal. The p-value is 0.000, less than 0.05, indicating that the variances significantly differ across qualification groups. Therefore, we proceed with caution in interpreting the ANOVA results since the assumption of homogeneity of variances has been violated.

Table 6
ANOVA Test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.965	2	1.983	8.521	0.000
Within Groups	57.700	248	.233		
Total	**61.665**	**250**			

The ANOVA test results from Table 6 show that the F-value is 8.521 with a p-value of 0.000, well below the significance threshold of 0.05. It indicates a statistically significant difference in parents' attitude towards private Pre-primary education based on their qualifications. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0), implying that parents' educational qualifications significantly impact their attitude towards private Pre-primary education in the region.

The Tukey HSD test was conducted to identify the significant differences between the qualification groups. Table 7 reveals a significant difference between parents with undergraduate qualifications and those with graduate and master-level qualifications. Parents with undergraduate qualifications have a higher mean attitude score towards private Pre-primary education compared to graduates (mean difference = 0.2288, p = 0.001) and masters (mean difference = 0.3274, p = 0.010). However, there is no significant difference between graduates and those with master's qualifications (p = 0.658).

Table 7
Multiple Comparison Test (Tukey HSD)

Comparison	Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard Error	Sig.
Undergraduate vs. Graduate	0.2288*	0.0639	0.001
Undergraduate vs. Masters	0.3274*	0.1117	0.010
Graduate vs. Masters	0.0986	0.1130	0.658

**The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.*

Table 8
Multiple Comparison of Means

Qualification	N	Mean Attitude Score
Master	22	1.364
Graduate	106	1.462
Undergraduate	123	1.691

The multiple comparison of means in (Table 8) shows that parents with undergraduate qualifications (mean = 1.691) have the most positive attitude towards private Pre-primary education, followed by graduates (mean = 1.462) and masters (mean = 1.364).

The results of the ANOVA and post-hoc tests indicate that parents' attitudes towards private Pre-primary education significantly differ based on their educational qualifications. Specifically, parents with undergraduate qualifications have a significantly more positive attitude towards private Pre-primary education than those with graduate and master-level qualifications.

Levene's test indicates unequal variances across groups, so results must be interpreted cautiously. Nonetheless, the ANOVA test confirms a statistically significant difference in attitudes based on qualifications ($p = 0.000$). Post-hoc comparisons reveal the key differences between undergraduate parents and the other two groups (graduate and master). At the same time, there is no significant difference between graduates and master's degree holders.

Thus, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and conclude that parents' qualifications significantly affect their attitudes towards private Pre-primary education. This finding suggests that parents with lower educational attainment (undergraduates) tend to have a more positive attitude towards private early education than more educated parents in the region.

Discussion

The study on parental attitude towards private Pre-primary education in Thoubal district aligns with the existing research on the influence of socioeconomic factors in early childhood education. Consistent with Erdener and Knoeppel (2018), the study found no significant difference between homemakers and working mothers, suggesting that employment status does not impact attitude towards early education. This finding reflects the broader argument that awareness shapes parental engagement more than occupational roles (Epstein, 2011). The slightly higher average score of the rural parents (1.61) compared to the urban parents (1.53) aligns with Devi and Meitei (2024), who observed a rising preference for private schools in rural areas due to perceived long-term benefits. Furthermore, parent's educational qualifications were a key determinant, with undergraduate degree holders showing the highest favourability (mean = 1.69). It supports Ghosh and Steinberg's (2022) argument that moderately educated parents recognise the role of early education in future academic success. These findings highlight the need for targeted outreach, as emphasised by Siddiqui (2014), to bridge educational disparities and promote equitable access, aligning with the objectives of the NEP 2020.

Conclusion

This study, conducted in Thoubal district, Manipur, sought to understand parental attitude towards private Pre-primary education. The research focussed on 251 parents from diverse backgrounds, examining the influence of occupation, location, and educational qualifications on their perceptions of early education. The analysis revealed that mothers' employment status did not significantly impact their attitudes. Both homemakers and working women showed comparable levels of support, indicating that the perceived value of early education transcends occupational differences. Similarly, no significant differences were observed between the attitudes of parents residing in the rural and urban areas. It suggests a growing awareness and acceptance of private Pre-primary education across geographical boundaries.

The study found that parental educational attainment was a key factor influencing attitude towards early education in private Pre-primary schools in the region. Surprisingly, parents with undergraduate degrees displayed the most positive views compared to those with higher qualifications. This unexpected finding suggests that parents with less formal education may perceive private Pre-primary education as a vital opportunity for their children's development, perhaps recognising its potential to bridge the educational gaps that they experienced.

Recommendations

These findings highlight the need for a targeted outreach and awareness programmes that cater to the diverse socioeconomic and educational backgrounds of parents in the Thoubal district. Building upon the strengths identified in the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- *Awareness campaigns:* Comprehensive awareness campaigns should be implemented, emphasising the crucial role of early childhood education in a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development. To reach a wider audience, these campaigns should leverage diverse media platforms, including community workshops, printed materials, radio programmes and social media.
- *Parent-teacher engagement programmes:* Regular parent-teacher interactions through meetings, workshops, and seminars can facilitate open dialogue and address parental concerns. These platforms can provide valuable insights into private Pre-primary education objectives, methodologies, and expected outcomes, fostering a deeper understanding of the learning process.
- *Collaboration with educational institutions:* Strong partnerships between private Pre-primary schools, local government authorities, and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) can help to

effectively disseminate information about early education programmes and available resources.

- *Special focus on educated parents:* Tailored programmes should be designed to engage parents with higher educational qualifications, addressing their specific concerns and perspectives. Providing detailed information on the cognitive and emotional benefits of early childhood education through channels that resonate with this demographic, such as academic workshops or online resources, may be effective.
- *Improving access to quality private pre-primary education:* Policies should prioritise enhancing accessibility and quality in private Pre-primary education across the rural and urban areas. Ensuring affordability and maintaining high educational standards are crucial to building trust and encouraging a wider participation.
- *Developing educational materials:* Creating easily accessible educational resources, such as books, pamphlets, and e-resources, that explain the importance of early childhood development can empower parents to make informed decisions. Translating these materials into local languages will ensure wider accessibility and comprehension.
- *Continuous professional development for teachers:* Investing in continuous professional development for private Pre-primary teachers can equip them with the latest pedagogical techniques and enhance their ability to engage with parents effectively. Well-trained teachers can serve as valuable resources, bridging the gap between home and school environments.

The recommendations aim to establish a supportive early childhood education ecosystem in Thoubal district by addressing parents' unique needs and perspectives, particularly those with moderate to low favourability. This collaborative approach ensures quality private Pre-primary education for all children, benefiting the individual children and the community. Increasing parental awareness on the importance of early education in the holistic development of a child will contribute to a brighter future.

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