

PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PARENTS WITH DIFFERENT LINGUISTIC BACKGROUNDS

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Abstract

The study examined parental attitudes toward English language learning across four first-language groups: Urdu, Punjabi, Saraiki, and other regional languages, in two linguistically diverse cities of Pakistani Punjab. Guided by the tripartite model of attitudes, the research investigated cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. A total of 351 parents completed a validated parental-attitude questionnaire, and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to compare group differences. Across the overall attitude scale and each of the three subscales, ANOVA results indicated no statistically significant differences among the four first-language groups. These findings suggest that positive orientations toward English have become widespread and relatively uniform across linguistic communities in Punjab, reflecting English's symbolic, economic, and educational value in Pakistan's multilingual society. The study contributes to understanding parental language ideologies and highlights the need for future research exploring sociocultural, economic, and institutional variables that may shape parental engagement beyond linguistic background.

Keywords: parental attitudes, English language learning, multilingualism, first-language groups, cognitive, affective, behavioral, ANOVA.

Introduction

English occupies an important position in Pakistani society: it functions as an international lingua franca, a medium of instruction in many schools, and a marker of social mobility and economic opportunity (Abbas & Iqbal, 2018). Parents, through their beliefs, expectations and home practices, play a central role in shaping children's language learning trajectories, influencing choices about schooling, extracurricular support, and the relative prestige afforded to English as compared to regional and national languages (Islam, 2018). In multilingual settings such as the Punjab province, parental attitudes toward English may interact with parents' own linguistic background (e.g., Urdu, Punjabi, Saraiki, or other mother tongues), socioeconomic status, and educational experience to produce heterogeneous patterns of support for English learning (Javed, Ali, & Aslam, 2021). Despite a growing literature on learners' and teachers' attitudes, comparatively few large-scale, comparative studies have systematically examined how parents who speak different first languages, differ in their attitudes to English and whether those differences are associated with measurable demographic factors (Shah & Anwar, 2015; Shafique, 2024).

This study addresses that gap by comparing parental attitudes to English language learning across language groups in two demographically diverse cities of the Punjab: Lahore and Dera Ghazi Khan. A sample of 351 parents completed a validated attitudes questionnaire; between-groups differences were tested using one-way ANOVA to examine the influence of parents' first language on attitudinal subscales. The findings are intended to inform language policy, school-

family partnerships, and teacher outreach by revealing how language background and local context shape parental investment in English learning.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Attitudes Toward Language Learning

Attitudes are widely understood as psychological tendencies expressed by evaluating an object or idea with some degree of likeness or dis-likeness (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). Language attitudes constitute a central construct in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, reflecting individuals' evaluative judgments about a language, its speakers, and its associated cultural meanings. Early foundational work by Lambert (1967) demonstrated that attitudes toward a language are intertwined with ideological perceptions of power, status, and group identity, shaping both language learning behavior and intergroup relations. Subsequent scholarship has consistently affirmed that language attitudes are multidimensional constructs (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007), influencing how individuals perceive and respond to linguistic varieties. Contemporary researchers argue that language attitudes are socially constructed and deeply embedded in historical, political, and economic hierarchies (Baker, 2017; Garrett, 2010).

In language learning, attitudes influence motivation, engagement, and achievement (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Contemporary attitude theory emphasizes a tripartite model encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). Applied to English language learning, the cognitive component reflects beliefs and knowledge about English; the affective component relates to emotional reactions toward using or learning English; and the behavioral component concerns intentions and actions taken to support language learning. Each dimension influences parental decisions regarding children's exposure to and acquisition of English, making parental attitudes a multifaceted construct rather than a singular evaluative stance. In multilingual societies like Pakistan, language attitudes are shaped by the complex interplay of identity, socioeconomic aspiration, and language policy choices, with English frequently viewed as a gateway to global citizenship despite its limited local accessibility (Rahman, 2020).

Cognitive Aspects: Beliefs and Perceived Value of English

The cognitive dimension reflects parents' beliefs, perceptions, and evaluative judgments about the usefulness of English. In Pakistan, English is widely perceived as a tool of socioeconomic mobility, access to quality education, and global competitiveness (Rahman, 2020). Parents often hold strong cognitive beliefs that English proficiency provides access to better career prospects, higher education, and social prestige (Abbas & Iqbal, 2018; Shafique, 2024). Cognitive evaluations also include perceptions of linguistic power, status, and identity positioning. For example, Urdu-speaking parents often associate English with cultural capital and elite schooling, while Punjabi or Saraiki-speaking parents may express more ambivalent beliefs, balancing English utility with concern for mother tongue maintenance (Islam, 2018; Javed et al, 2021). Thus, cognitive beliefs can vary across linguistic groups based on experiences, language ideologies, and historical exposure to English-medium schooling.

Affective Aspects: Emotional Orientation Toward English

The affective dimension relates to emotional responses such as pride, anxiety, enthusiasm, or resistance toward English. Positive emotional orientations such as excitement or aspiration can enhance willingness to support children's English learning (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Studies in Pakistan show many parents experience pride and aspiration when their children speak English, equating English fluency with modernity and intellectual distinction (Shah & Anwar, 2015). However, affective ambivalence is also observed. Some parents, especially those with limited

English proficiency themselves, may experience linguistic anxiety, insecurity, or alienation when interacting with English-dominant school environments (Rahman, 2020). Linguistic identity concerns also influence affective attitudes, as parents who strongly value regional languages like Punjabi may experience discomfort or guilt when prioritizing English over their heritage language (Javed et al., 2021). These affective stances shape parental encouragement, emotional support, and family language practices.

Behavioral Aspects: Intentions and Parental Practices

The behavioral dimension concerns parents' language-related actions, intentions, and investment patterns. Supportive behaviors include choosing English-medium schools, providing English literacy materials, hiring tutors, and creating English-speaking environments at home. Evidence shows that parents with positive cognitive and affective orientations toward English are more likely to make behavioral investments, such as enrolling children in private English-medium schools or supplementing learning with tuition centers (Shafique, 2024). Behavioral commitment, however, is shaped by socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds. Urban, Urdu-speaking parents generally report stronger behavioral efforts to cultivate English proficiency, while parents, especially in semi-urban contexts where different regional languages are used as native languages, may show milder behavioral commitment due to linguistic identity priorities or resource limitations (Islam, 2018). Therefore, behavioral attitudes represent the translational stage of beliefs and feelings into concrete parental practices, and differences can be meaningfully compared across linguistic groups.

Influence of Linguistic Background on Attitudinal Dimensions

Parents' first language plays a critical role in shaping all three components of attitude. Linguistic background influences value attribution, emotional connectedness or conflict, and decisions regarding home language use and educational investments. Urdu-speaking parents, historically more associated with urban, educated, and bureaucratic domains, tend to display stronger pro-English cognitive beliefs and behavioral commitments (Rahman, 2020). Punjabi-speaking parents often demonstrate a more culturally hybrid attitude, valuing English for socioeconomic reasons but favoring Punjabi for cultural identity and emotional attachment (Javed et al., 2021). This suggests that attitude toward English is not monolithic but intersects with sociolinguistic identities and local language ecologies.

Research Gap and Positioning of the Current Study

Although studies acknowledge parental attitudes toward English in Pakistan, few have compared attitudinal differences among parents from different first-language backgrounds. The present study addresses this gap by investigating how first language influences each attitudinal dimension among parents from two demographically diverse cities in Pakistani Punjab (Lahore & D. G. Khan); a context where linguistic diversity and English aspirations coexist.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. *Do attitudes towards toward English vary among parents belonging to different first-language groups?*
2. *To what extent do parents' cognitive beliefs about the value and importance of English differ across first-language groups*
3. *How do emotional attitudes toward English (e.g., pride, anxiety etc.) vary among parents belonging to different first-language groups?*

4. *Do parents' behavioral intentions for their children's English learning differ across first-language groups?*

Research design and rationale

A cross-sectional design was used to test mean differences across first-language groups. The tripartite attitude model (cognitive–affective–behavioral) provides the conceptual framework: each attitudinal component is measured with a separate subscale and analyzed both independently and together to understand how beliefs, emotions, and actions intersect in parental support for children's English learning.

Population and sampling

Parents (mother or father) of students enrolled at intermediate level in two different cities of Pakistani Punjab (Lahore & D.G. Khan) where the first is the larger urban center and the second is a smaller but diverse city.

A total of 351 parents responded to the survey and approximately equal number of parents took part in the study from both the selected cities. Stratified cluster sampling was used to select a representative sample. Within each city, two public colleges, one for boys and one for girls were proportionally sampled as primary clusters; parents attending parent–teacher meetings or contacted via college rosters were requested to respond to the survey. Quotas were used to approximate representation of the region's dominant first-language groups (Urdu, Punjabi, Saraiki, Other languages).

Instrumentation:

A standardized tripartite attitude to English self-report instrument with three subscales (8 items each): *Cognitive Beliefs*, *Affective Orientation*, and *Behavioral Support*, was adapted for the current research. Items were developed from existing validated attitude and parental-involvement measures and adapted to Pakistani sociolinguistic realities.

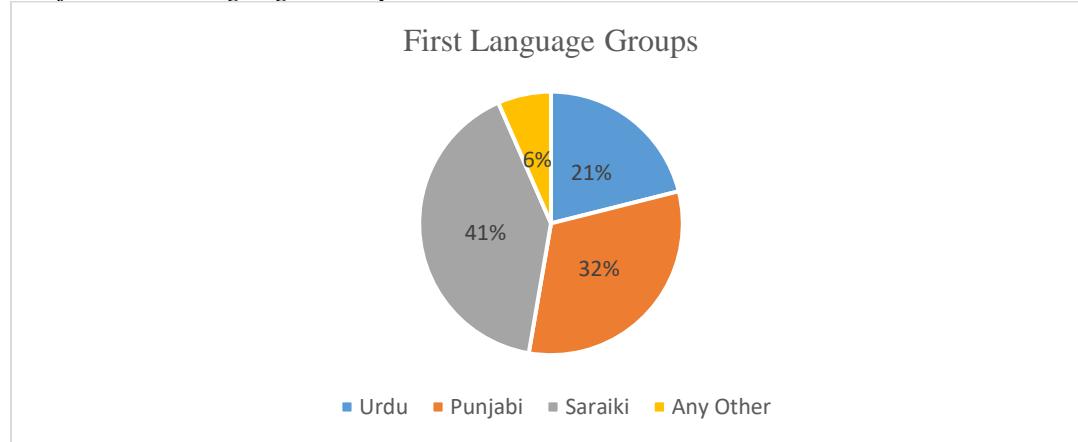
Findings of the Study

Urdu, Punjabi and Saraiki were reported as the three major languages spoken as first languages by the participants. A small number of respondents mentioned some other regional languages like Kashmiri, Balochi etc. as their first language and for the sake of convenience they were collectively put in the category of "any other language".

The graph below visually elaborates the frequency of major first language groups:

Graph.1

Major First Language Groups



For the statistical analysis, the sub variables of the scale that include cognitive aspect, Affective aspect and the behavioral aspect were computed separately and One Way ANOVA was applied on all the sub-variables along with the main construct of attitudes toward English to analyze the variances. The findings of each test have been elaborated in the following section.

Table. 1

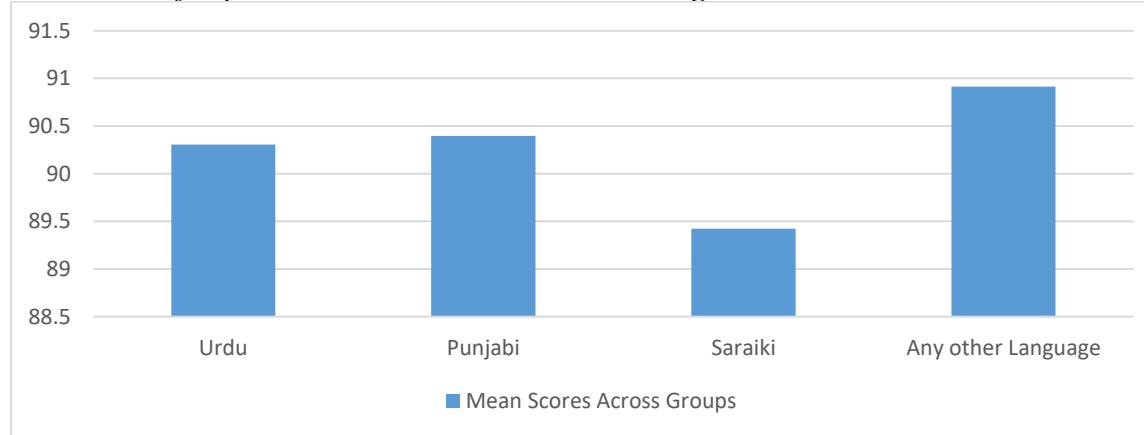
One Way ANOVA for effect of parents' first language on their attitudes toward English
 Group Statistics (Descriptive) ANOVA Main

First Language	N	Mean	Lavene statistics	Sum of Squares	Eta Square	Df	F	Sig.
Urdu	74	90.31	2.968	Between Gps	91.460	0.003	3	.364 .779
Punjabi	111	90.40		Within Gps	29032.595		347	
Seraiki	143	89.42		Total	29124.055		350	
Any other language	23	90.91						
Total	351	90.02						

Table 1. elaborates the results of One Way ANOVA for the effect of parents' first language on their overall attitudes toward English. Prior to the ANOVA, Levene's test for homogeneity of variances was performed to assess whether the assumption of equal variances was met. The Levene's statistic was 2.968 ($p > .05$), indicating that the variances across groups were not significantly different. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was satisfied, and the ANOVA results can be considered valid. The ANOVA results confirmed that there was no statistically significant difference in the attitudes among the four groups. The p -value = .779 is considerably greater than the conventional significance level of .05, indicating that there is no significant difference in parents' attitudes toward English.

Graph.2

Mean scores for parents' overall attitudes toward English



As shown in the above graph, the descriptive statistics showed differences in mean behavior scores among the groups. However, these differences appeared minimal. Moreover, the effect size, measured by Eta squared ($\eta^2 = .003$), was extremely small. According to conventional benchmarks ($\eta^2 = .01$ small, .06 medium, .14 large), this value suggests a negligible effect of group type on behavior. The findings suggest that group membership had no significant impact on parents' attitudes toward English. Although minor numerical differences in mean scores were observed, these differences were not statistically or practically meaningful.

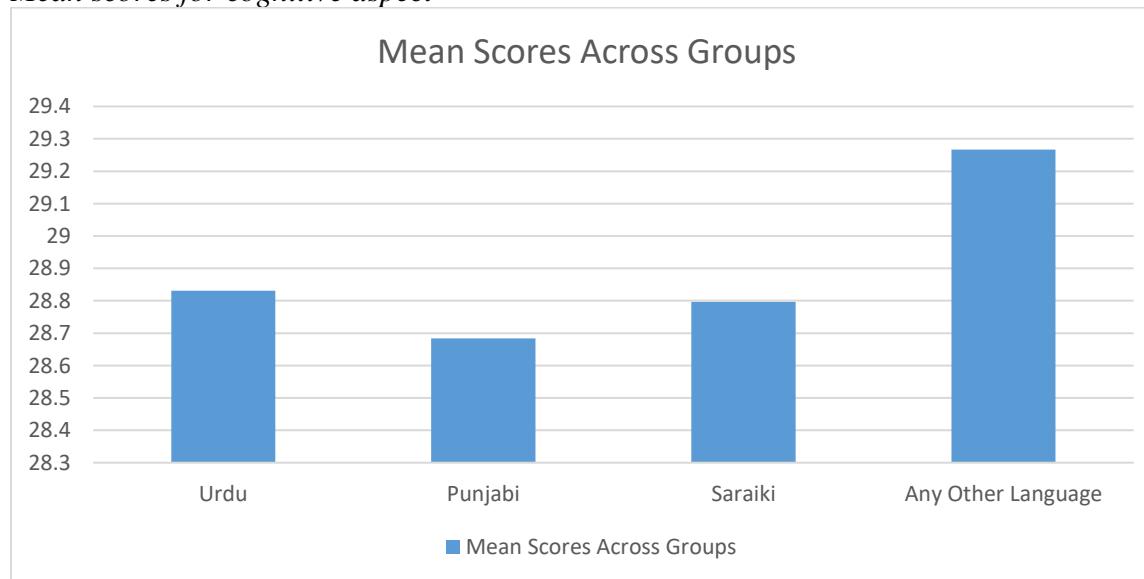
Table 2

One Way ANOVA for effect of parents' first language on cognitive attitudes toward English

Table 2. describes the results of One Way ANOVA for the effect of parents' first language on the cognitive aspect of their attitudes toward English. Levene's test for homogeneity of variances was performed to assess whether the assumption of equal variances was met. The Levene's statistic was 2.478 ($p > .05$), indicating that the variances across groups were not significantly different. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was satisfied, and the ANOVA results can be considered valid. The ANOVA results confirmed that there was no statistically significant difference in parents' cognitive attitudes. The p -value = .898 is considerably greater than the conventional significance level of .05, indicating that there is no significant difference in the cognitive attitudes of the participants.

Graph.3

Mean scores for cognitive aspect



As shown in the above graph, the descriptive statistics showed small differences in mean behavior scores among the groups. Moreover, the effect size, measured by Eta squared ($\eta^2 = .001$), was extremely small. The findings suggest that group membership had no significant impact on parents' cognitive attitudes toward English. Although minor numerical differences observed in the mean scores may be due to some other factors.

Table. 3

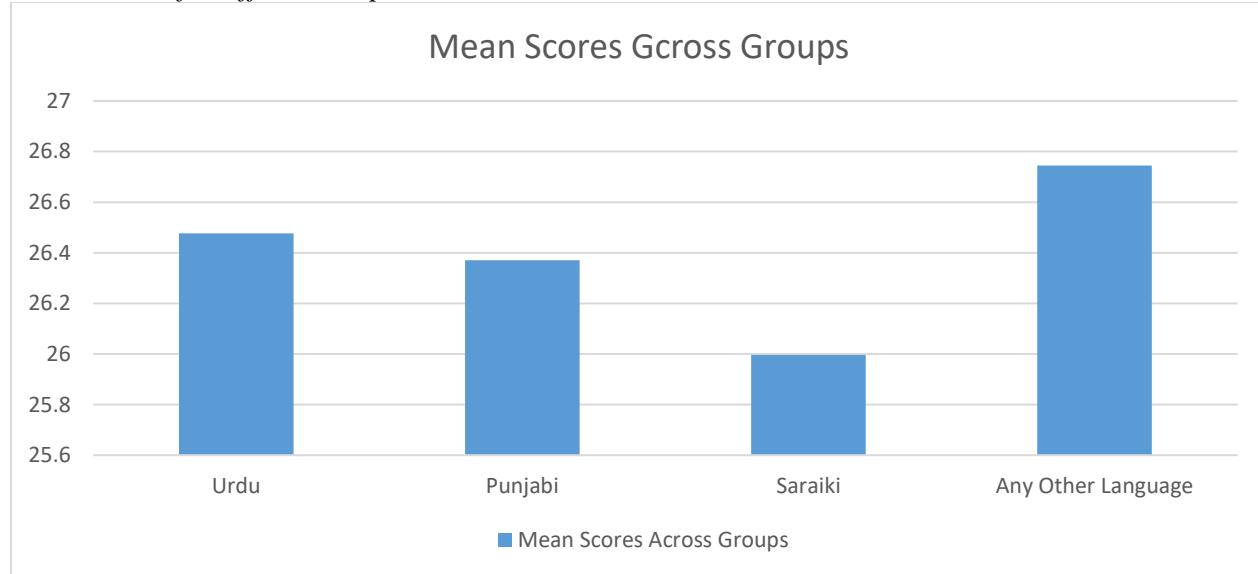
One Way ANOVA Test for effect of parents' first language on affective attitudes toward English
 Group Statistics (Descriptive)

First Language	N	Mean	Levene statistics	ANOVA Main				
				Sum of Squares	Eta Square	Df	F	Sig.
Urdu	74	26.48	1.211	Between Gps 20.139	0.008	3	.949	.417
Punjabi	111	26.38		Within Gps 2454.063			347	
Seraiki	143	26.00		Total 2474.203			350	
Any other language	23	26.75						
Total	351	26.27						

Table 3. elaborates the results of One Way ANOVA for the effect of parents' first language on their affective attitudes toward English. The Levene's statistic for this test remained 1.211 ($p > .05$), indicating that the variances across groups were not significantly different. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was satisfied, and the ANOVA results can be considered valid. The ANOVA results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in the affective attitudes to English among the four groups. The p -value = .417 is considerably greater than the conventional significance level of .05, hence, here also it emphasizes that the observed differences in mean scores may be due to some other factors rather than a true effect of mother tongue.

Graph. 4

Mean scores for affective aspect



The graph shows slight differences in mean behavior scores among the groups. However, these differences appeared minimal. Moreover, the effect size, measured by Eta squared ($\eta^2 = .008$), was also very small. According to conventional benchmarks ($\eta^2 = .01$ small, .06 medium, .14 large), this value suggests a small effect across groups. The findings suggest that mother tongue had no significant impact on affective aspect of parents' attitudes toward English.

Table. 4

One Way ANOVA Test for effect of parents' first language on behavioral attitudes toward English

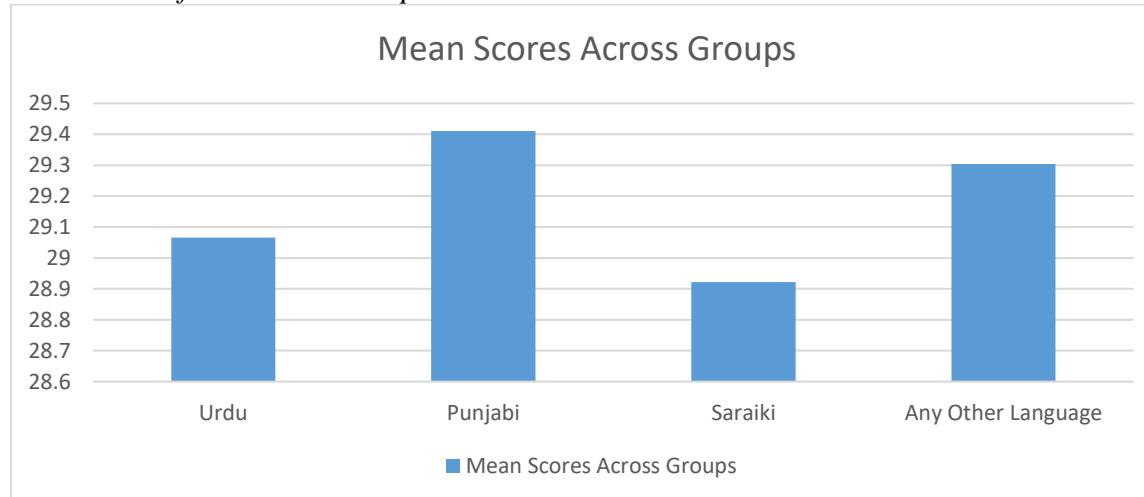
Group Statistics (Descriptive)

First Language	N	Mean	Levene statistics	ANOVA Main				
				Sum of Squares	Eta Square	Df	F	Sig.
Urdu	74	29.066	.749	Between Gps 15.943	0.003	3	.366	.778
Punjabi	111	29.411		Within Gps 5042.601			347	
Seraiki	143	28.922		Total 5058.545			350	
Any other language	23	29.304						
Total	351	29.132						

Table 4. describes the outcomes of One Way ANOVA for the effect of parents' first language on their behavioral attitudes toward English. The Levene's score for this test was .749 (p > .05), which indicates that the variances across groups were not significantly different. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was satisfied, and the ANOVA results can be considered valid. The ANOVA results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in the attitudes among the four groups. The p-value = .778 is indicates no significant difference in the behavioral aspect of participants' attitudes toward English language.

Graph. 5

Mean scores for behavioral aspect



The graph indicates slight differences in mean behavior scores among the groups. Additionally, the effect size, measured by Eta squared ($\eta^2 = .003$), was extremely small. According to conventional benchmarks ($\eta^2 = .01$ small, .06 medium, .14 large), this value suggests a negligible effect of group type on behavioral attitudes toward English. The findings suggest that first language had no significant impact on parents' behavioral attitudes toward English. Although minor numerical differences in mean scores were observed, these differences were not statistically or practically meaningful.

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine whether attitudes toward English differed significantly across the four participant groups. Although slight variations were observed in the descriptive statistics, the one-way ANOVA results indicated no statistically significant differences. These findings suggest that group membership did not exert a meaningful influence on participants' attitudes.

The small effect size in almost all the tests indicates that group membership accounted for very small variance in scores. This highlights the possibility that other variables not included in this analysis; such as personal motivation, social influences, economic factors, or educational experiences may have a stronger impact on parents' attitudes towards English language and English language learning of their children.

Despite the non-significant outcomes, these results hold practical value. They suggest a degree of attitudinal consistency across different groups, which may be interpreted positively: indicating uniform exposure or stable behavioral patterns across the sample. This consistency can inform educators, policymakers, and practitioners that attitudes do not necessarily need to be group-differentiated, at least for the construct examined in this paper.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should consider incorporating additional variables: including motivational, cultural, socio-economic, or psychological factors may offer deeper insights into sources of variation. Moreover, larger and more diverse samples may help detect meaningful group differences that may not emerge in relatively homogeneous populations. Finally, tracking behavioral changes over time may reveal patterns that cross-sectional designs cannot capture.

Conclusion

This study set out to determine whether significant differences existed in parents' attitudes toward English across four participant groups. The findings revealed no statistically significant differences among the groups, indicating that group membership did not play a significant role in shaping participants' attitudes toward English. Although slight variations were observed in mean scores, these differences were negligible both statistically and practically, as reflected in the very small effect size.

The results underscore the relative consistency and similarity in patterns across the sample. This suggests that the factors influencing language attitudes may be shared across groups or that the variables examined were not sufficiently distinct to produce measurable differences. The findings also highlight the complexity of language attitudes as a construct, reinforcing the notion that it is shaped by a combination of cognitive, emotional, social, and contextual influences rather than group categorization alone.

While the current study did not reveal significant group-based variation, it contributes to the broader body of research by emphasizing the need to investigate additional determinants of language attitudes. Future research should consider expanding the range of variables, enhancing sample diversity, and employing mixed-method or longitudinal approaches to gain a deeper understanding of attitudinal patterns and the factors that influence them.

Overall, this study provides a foundation for further exploration and encourages the adoption of more comprehensive research designs to capture the multifaceted nature of human behavior.

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