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## READING ACHIEVEMENT GAP BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS IS VISIBLE IN EGRA SCORES

### ABSTRACT

*There is a difference in reading proficiency between pupils who attend public and private schools. In this study, reading proficiency among fourth-graders in public and private schools was assessed and compared. 100 pupils from each type of school made up the study's final participant count of 200 grade 4 students. The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) results showed that the private school group outperformed the public-school group on each of the three subtasks. Particularly, more pupils in the private school group received proficient or advanced ratings on the EGRA. In terms of total EGRA scores, the private school group outperformed the public-school group, according to the t-test results. In comparison to the public-school group, the private school group's mean EGRA score was 12.5, while the latter was 10.5. These results imply that students who attend private schools outperform their public-school peers on the Early Grade Reading Assessment. It is crucial to remember that this study did not go into the underlying reasons for this discrepancy. Why private school children typically perform better on reading examinations requires further investigation.*

**Keywords:** Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), Public Schools, Private Schools, Reading Achievement Gap.

### Introduction

Within the dynamic and always changing realm of education, the pursuit of equality and equity continues to be of utmost importance. Educational systems across the globe have challenges in addressing inequities in reading achievement among students. One noteworthy aspect of this educational issue is the consistent discrepancy in reading performance between pupils attending public and private schools. This study aims to investigate the complex factors contributing to the disparity in reading achievement between public and private schools. It examines this gap by using Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) scores. In order to develop a thorough comprehension of this phenomenon, we rely on a diverse range of research findings and perspectives from other scholars. Our analysis encompasses recent studies as well as an exploration of historical perspectives.

A study, conducted by a few scholars to examine the complex relationship between several elements related to students, their home environment, and their school environment. The study specifically investigated the role of reading self-efficacy as a mediator in this relationship. This study highlights the importance of both individual and contextual factors in influencing reading achievement, providing a basis for

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comprehending the reasons behind differential performance across children, with some demonstrating exceptional reading abilities while others face difficulties in this domain.<sup>1</sup>

It has been explored that the topic of reading interest, reading self-efficacy, and reading competency among junior high school students, thereby enhancing our comprehension in this area. The insights provided by the author highlight the significance of intrinsic drive and self-confidence in promoting reading proficiency. This paves the way for further investigation into potential variations of these elements among children attending public and private schools.<sup>2</sup>

The researchers examined the levels of reading achievement in rural primary schools in China. The research highlights the international scope of the disparity in reading achievement, surpassing the confines of individual countries. Through an analysis of disparities within rural contexts, the outcomes of their research provide a more comprehensive outlook on the various causes that contribute to this division.<sup>3</sup>

In a study, an international investigation focused on talented students and effective schools, with a specific emphasis on reading achievement in Denmark, Sweden, and France. The cross-national study conducted emphasizes the significance of the educational system in influencing reading proficiency. This research offers a comparative perspective that allows for an examination of the division between public and private schools.<sup>4</sup>

In the realm of students with disabilities, Gilmour, Fuchs, and Wehby used a comprehensive investigation, known as a meta-analysis, to examine the disparity in reading achievement between students with disabilities and their non-disabled counterparts. The research emphasizes the importance of inclusive education and a curriculum that is accessible to all pupils, irrespective of their individual requirements.<sup>5</sup>

In a more localized context, research has been conducted in public elementary schools, offering a significant insight into the delivery of reading programs as seen by pupils. The insights provided by the authors illuminate the manner in which pupils view reading programs implemented in public schools, so presenting a vital component in comprehending the achievement gap.<sup>6</sup>

In a recent study, an investigation was made into how junior high school pupils' reading competency was affected by the choice of reading materials. The research emphasizes the importance of curricular decisions in influencing reading achievements, prompting inquiries into potential variations of these decisions between public and private educational institutions.<sup>7</sup>

Few scholars have made in their publications a valuable scholarly contribution by conducting a comparative multilevel study that establishes a connection between educational systems and gender disparities in reading. Although the core area of their research centers around gender disparities, their analysis of educational systems provides a valuable lens through which to examine the potential influence of systemic factors on differences in reading achievement.<sup>8</sup>

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In undertaking this research endeavor, our objective is to synthesize several strands of knowledge, encompassing historical and contemporary perspectives, in order to gain a deeper comprehension of the disparity in reading achievement between public and private schools. The primary objective of our research is to provide insights into educational policies, practices, and interventions that might effectively address the disparity in academic achievement. Our aim is to ensure that every student, irrespective of their school sector, is afforded an equitable opportunity to succeed in reading and, therefore, in their academic aspirations and future ambitions.

## Literature Review

The research explores the complex association between educational institutions and disparities by conducting a correlational examination of reading proficiency among children enrolled in both public and private schools. The authors' objective in conducting this analysis is to provide insight into the possible discrepancies in reading proficiency between these two categories of educational establishments.

The researchers employ a correlational methodology to investigate the degree to which reading proficiency differs depending on the educational institution attended. Through the examination of students' reading achievement in public and private schools, this study offers valuable insights into the potential influence of school type on students' literacy skills.<sup>9</sup>

The "Tusome Early Grade Reading Activity" is a significant initiative in 2021 that aims to improve the reading skills of young pupils throughout their initial years of education. This study demonstrates the program's focus on enhancing literacy abilities during a critical period of growth. This highlights the importance of taking proactive measures to address inequities in literacy and cultivate a solid foundation in schooling. The study refers to a commitment to narrowing disparities in reading and promoting improved academic outcomes among students during their early educational experiences.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, some writers explore a novel methodology for tackling discrepancies in reading achievement. The primary emphasis of their research is the utilization of cooperative learning practices as a means to address and reduce the reading achievement disparity observed among Grade 8/Year 9 students who possess little literacy skills. This study employs a randomized controlled trial (RCT) approach to examine the efficacy of cooperative learning in enhancing reading outcomes. Through an examination of this particular approach, the research study makes a valuable contribution to the comprehension of instructional techniques aimed at improving reading abilities in those who face challenges in this area. This study emphasizes the potential of cooperative learning as a strategy to enhance inclusivity and foster fair learning experiences, specifically for students who encounter difficulties with reading.<sup>11</sup> Drummond and Nakamura (2021) conducted a comprehensive analysis of early grade reading exams in Central Asia, providing valuable insights into this topic. The researchers utilize factor analysis as a methodological approach to reveal the latent data structure present in

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reading evaluations conducted in the Kyrgyz, Russian, and Tajik languages. Through an examination of this particular approach, the authors provide valuable insights into the complexities associated with assessing reading abilities in multilingual settings. The research demonstrates a commitment to comprehending the intricacies of language-related difficulties in the field of education. The study makes a valuable contribution to the enhancement of assessment instruments used for evaluating early grade reading abilities, while also addressing the issue of linguistic diversity. As a result, this research enables more precise and fair evaluations of reading proficiency within the region.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, the research delves into the realm of early reading instruction in a private elementary school located in Bandung. This study indicates their participation in the Fifth International Conference on Language, Literature, Culture, and Education (ICOLLITE) in the year 2021. The findings of the study indicate that there is a need to prioritize the enhancement of early reading skills in the setting of a private educational institution. This study makes a valuable contribution to the wider academic conversation surrounding pedagogical practices and educational progress by providing valuable insights into early reading instruction tactics and experiences within a specific educational context.<sup>13</sup> The primary focus of Zaman's study is the assessment of reading strategies utilized by instructors in the early grades. This study highlights the significance of evaluating instructional approaches in order to improve reading proficiency. Through a thorough examination of this particular element, the present study makes a valuable contribution to the broader understanding of successful instructional approaches that have a significant impact on the literacy development of students during their formative years. This publication serves as a great scholarly resource for educators and researchers, providing significant insights into the pedagogical practices employed by early-grade instructors to cultivate excellent reading skills in their pupils.<sup>14</sup>

A few researchers investigate the influence of teachers on the gender disparity observed in reading performance. The study represents an inquiry into the possible impact of teachers on gender differences in reading achievement. Through its emphasis on this particular issue, the research study makes a valuable contribution towards enhancing our comprehension of the various factors that contribute to the disparity in educational achievements across genders. The study emphasizes the importance of instructional strategies and the social environment within the classroom in influencing reading performance in both male and female students. This study offers valuable insights on how to promote greater equity in educational settings and effectively address gender-related discrepancies in reading achievement.<sup>15</sup>

It has been studied to examine the correlation between socioeconomic position and the progression of reading skills in children hailing from disadvantaged socioeconomic homes. The research conducted by the authors, as published in the scholarly journal *Learning and Instruction*, investigates the influence of socioeconomic factors on reading proficiency, going beyond the traditional focus on linguistic and cognitive capacities. The study suggests further investigation of the intricate relationship between socioeconomic factors and literacy achievements, with a specific focus on underprivileged

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youngsters. This study emphasizes the necessity of taking into account comprehensive aspects when examining educational inequalities and emphasizes the significance of focused interventions aimed at addressing the disparity in academic performance. These findings contribute to ongoing conversations surrounding the promotion of fair and just education.<sup>16</sup>

It is studied that the efficacy of "Project Ready!" an early language and literacy program designed to mitigate the readiness disparity. The available literature indicates a need for more inquiry into the efficacy of this program in equipping young learners with the necessary skills and knowledge for achieving academic achievement. The study makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing discourse surrounding the reduction of preparation gaps among kids by placing emphasis on early language and literacy development. This study highlights the importance of implementing focused interventions to ensure that children commence their educational endeavors with a solid basis, potentially influencing the development of policies and practices aimed at reducing disparities in preparedness and fostering equal learning opportunities.<sup>17</sup> A study delves into the intricate elements that impact reading proficiency in individuals during their childhood and adolescence. The research findings suggest a thorough investigation of several risk factors that could potentially influence reading abilities. The research reveals associations between many risk variables and their collective impact on literacy outcomes. This study enhances our comprehension of the complex dynamics among different factors and their collective effect on reading performance. Through illuminating these processes, the study has the potential to provide valuable insights for educational programs and policies aimed at addressing various risk factors in order to improve reading proficiency and reduce gaps in academic achievement.<sup>18</sup>

It has been examined that concentrates on efficacious academic interventions inside the United States, specifically targeting the enhancement of early reading abilities. The study focuses on evaluating and improving approaches aimed at facilitating the early development of reading skills. Through a thorough analysis of academic interventions, the review serves to emphasize the significance of employing evidence-based strategies that have the potential to effectively enhance reading competence. This research makes a valuable contribution to the wider academic conversation surrounding educational interventions. It offers insights into potential strategies that educators and policymakers might employ to enhance early reading skills, ultimately impacting instructional methods and support systems within the United States.<sup>19</sup> In their study, few scholars employed a multi-level approach to investigate the academic achievement of upper elementary children on the STAAR Reading Exam. Specifically, they focused on comparing the growth trajectories of kids in rural and non-rural school districts. The present study proposes an investigation into the impact of geographic environment on the academic performance of pupils in reading examinations. This study aims to enhance comprehension regarding the influence of various types of school districts on academic achievements. Through the examination of growth trajectories, this study offers valuable insights into the potential discrepancies in reading achievement and emphasizes the necessity for focused tactics

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aimed at assisting students in diverse educational settings. These techniques are crucial in order to provide equal learning opportunities for all students.<sup>20</sup> The longitudinal research offers a significant contribution to the field by investigating the correlation between the developmental progression of children's word-level reading skills, teachers' stated concerns, and the corresponding interventions implemented. The research findings indicate a need to examine the alignment between kids' reading development, educators' concerns, and the support provided. This study sheds light on the fundamental relationship between instructor perspective, student progress, and intervention measures. Through the implementation of a longitudinal study, this research has the potential to reveal recurring trends and patterns over an extended period. This, in turn, can contribute to the improvement of educational practices and support systems, with a specific focus on addressing the changing reading requirements of students. Ultimately, this will lead to a more effective alignment between assessments, teacher observations, and interventions.<sup>21</sup>

It has been studied to examine the screening protocols employed in upper elementary grades, with a specific emphasis on the identification of fourth-grade pupils who exhibit a high likelihood of underperforming on the state reading assessment. The study entails an examination of strategies aimed at identifying reading difficulties at an early stage. This study contributes to the advancement of knowledge regarding the impact of prompt identification of academically challenged students on their academic achievements. The study provides valuable insights for educators and policymakers by focusing on fourth-grade pupils. It aims to enhance their reading performance and mitigate the likelihood of encountering academic challenges in subsequent years.<sup>22</sup> The study makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing discussion surrounding the achievement gap in reading proficiency. The authors specifically investigate the influence of measuring non-invariance across various types of schools. The present study examines the discrepancies in assessing reading proficiency among diverse educational environments. This study contributes valuable insights to the comprehension of the ways in which evaluation systems interact with diverse educational settings. By utilizing a longitudinal methodology, this study aims to identify and analyze patterns and changes in reading competence over an extended period. The findings of this research provide valuable insights into potential discrepancies and offer recommendations for addressing measurement difficulties, thus promoting fair and unbiased evaluation of reading proficiency across various educational institutions.<sup>23</sup>

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Method:**

The study used a mostly quantitative research methodology, which is consistent with the aim of evaluating and comprehending the disparity in reading achievement between public and private schools by analyzing EGRA scores. According to Mohajan, quantitative research is characterized by the examination and interpretation of numerical data through the utilization of statistical methodologies and graphical illustrations. This

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tool is well-suited for quickly managing and analyzing massive datasets, facilitating a methodical exploration of patterns and correlations inherent in the data. Furthermore, this tool facilitates a thorough assessment of the percentage of children who reach particular benchmarks for reading competency, those who fall within the average spectrum, and those who encounter challenges in reading. This element holds significant importance within the context of the present study.<sup>24</sup>

In order to effectively address the research issues, this study employs a quantitative methodology that involves the collecting of data, statistical analysis, and a comprehensive assessment of current literature to support the hypotheses, problem description, and data analysis techniques. The incorporation of quantitative research is consistent with the suggestion put up by Sheppard<sup>25</sup>, which posits that quantitative research has the potential to provide useful insights into the field of social work, particularly within educational settings, as exemplified in the present study. Through the utilization of quantitative assessment methods, such as the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) scores, a full comprehension of the variations in reading proficiency among individuals from varying backgrounds may be obtained. This is particularly relevant when considering the influence of different school types on reading accomplishment.

### **Research Design**

The chosen methodology for this study is a cross-sectional analysis, which aligns with the recommendation made by Kumari. A cross-sectional study is a research design that entails the collection of data from a population at a certain moment in time, characterized by the observation of subjects without any intervention in the research setting. Within the framework of this study, the utilization of a cross-sectional design is deemed very appropriate for the attainment of the research aims. The main objective of this study is to employ the EGRA toolkit assessment in order to ascertain reading comprehension challenges among fourth-grade children in Tando Allahyar. Kumari argues in favor of employing a solitary cross-sectional design, which effectively mitigates any potential disruptions to the school environment during data collecting. This approach enables a thorough evaluation of reading competency among a heterogeneous student population.<sup>26</sup>

### **Population of the Study:**

This study specifically targets fourth-grade kids residing in Tando Allahyar as the study population. The selection of this particular grade level was intentionally intended to especially target the reading challenges experienced by students at this pivotal phase of their educational journey (Sheppard, 2019). This study encompasses the involvement of a sample size consisting of 100 kids from private schools and an additional 100 students from public schools. The students will be assessed utilizing the EGRA toolbox subtask in order to detect and gain insight into their challenges with reading comprehension...<sup>27</sup>

### **Data Analysis:**

There will be two stages to the data collection process. First, information was taken from the primary classrooms using a quantitative technique. An EGRA toolkit was utilised on each individual participant's paper, and information was then collected and turned into an excel sheet. Data will then be analysed using percentages and presented in the form of a pie chart, graph, or table. Since the data will be gathered from primary-level class four IV, age and gender will continue to be independent variables. Therefore, both male and female respondents to this research will range in age from 8 to 10 years old. Additionally, the research will be carried out in accordance with research objectives. The sub-tasks of the EGRA toolkit will group it in accordance with the research questions that are intended to be addressed through data analysis. The information will be gathered in accordance with the sub-tasks of the EGRA toolkit and will be shown in table and graph form. Due to the population's location in rural Pakistan, after the data from class four has been collected, it will be compared to the national expectations in order to confirm the population's reading readiness and ability.

### **Comparing the Mean Scores of Two Groups Using the T-test:**

To determine if two groups are statistically significantly different from one another, a statistical test called the t-test is utilized. Following are the steps to run a t-test to compare two means.

1. Explain the null hypothesis and the alternative hypothesis.
2. Determine the level of relevance.
3. Apply the following formula to find the t-value:

Where the first series' mean is  $x_1$ , and the second series' mean is  $x_2$ ,

The first series' standard deviation is  $S_{12}$ , while the second series' standard deviation is  $S_{22}$ .

The number of people in the first group is  $n_{(1)}$ , and the number of people in the second group is  $n_{(2)}$ .

4. To calculate the degrees of freedom, use the formula  $df=n_1+n_2-2$ .
5. To get the crucial value of t, use a calculator or t-distribution table.
6. Compare the calculated t-value to the essential t value.
7. Make a decision regarding whether to reject the null hypothesis. (Field, 2013).

### **Results**

Using a purposive sampling technique, a sample of 200 kids (100 from public schools and 100 from private schools) was selected for the study. Both student groups took the EGRA test, and the results were recorded for further tests.



**Familiarity with Word Reading**

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics of the Score for Familiarity with Word Reading

Descriptive Statistics	Group	
	Public	Private
Familiarity with word reading		
N	100	100
Mean	1.26	2.93
Std. Error of Mean	.118	.121
Median	1.00	3.00
Std. Deviation	1.177	1.208
Variance	1.386	1.460
Skewness	1.068	-.600
Std. Error of Skewness	.241	.241
Kurtosis	1.106	.070
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.478	.478
Range	5	5
Minimum	0	0
Maximum	5	5

The public school group's mean score was 1.10, according to Table 4.1, with a standard error of the mean of 0.208. This demonstrates that, on average, public school pupils did worse on this test than their private school counterparts. The median score for the kids in public schools was 0, meaning that 50% of them obtained results that were less than 0. The standard deviation of the public school group's score was 2.082, indicating that they were more uniformly distributed than the students in the private school group. The score variance for the public school group was 4.333, which was less than the score variance for the private school group. The score distribution for the public school group showed a positive skewness of 1.373, which indicates that lower values were weighted more heavily than higher values. The skewness standard error for the public school group was 0.241. The kurtosis of the score distribution for the public school group was negative at -0.119, indicating a very flat distribution. The kurtosis standard error for the public school group was 0.478. The range of scores for the public school group was 5, with a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of 5.

Table 4.2: Frequency Distribution of the Score for Familiarity with Word Reading

Score	Students from Public School		Students from Private School	
	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency

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0	29	29	4	4
1	36	65	12	16
2	23	88	9	25
3	6	94	44	69
4	4	98	24	93
5	2	100	7	100
Total	100		100	

Table 4.2 displays the frequency distribution and cumulative frequency distribution for the student groups from public and private schools taking the EGRA exam's subtest on familiarity with word reading. The table displays the cumulative frequency for each score for each group separately. The scores range from 0 to 5. The public school group's most frequent score was 1, with a frequency of 36. According to the cumulative frequency for this score of 65, 65 students took this test and received a score of 1 or below. The least frequent outcome in this category was 5, as only two individuals achieved a flawless score.

The private school group's most frequent score was 3, with a frequency of 44. According to the cumulative frequency for this score of 69, 69 students received a score of 3 or lower on this section of the exam. The least frequent score in this group was 5, since only 7 pupils achieved a flawless score. Each of the 100 students in this group obtained a score in this section of at least 5 or less, according to the cumulative frequency of this score, which is 100.

The cumulative frequency distribution can be used to acquire a deeper understanding of how the scores for the two groups were distributed. In the case of the Public school group, for instance, we can observe that 94 pupils, or the majority of the students, obtained a score of 2 or worse on this section of the exam. The fact that 69 of the students in the private school group received a score of three or lower shows that most of the students in this group received a score higher than three.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 present the findings of the initial assessment as pie charts, and Figure 4.3 presents diagrammatic comparisons of the two outcomes.

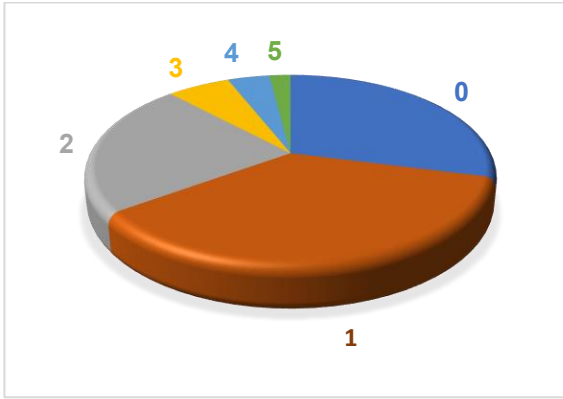


Figure 4.1: Distribution of Score for Familiarity with Word Reading (Public School)

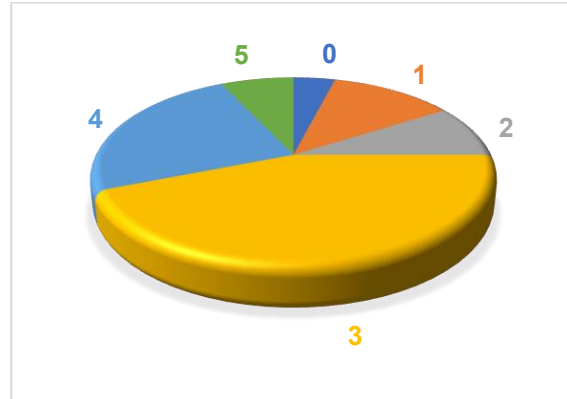


Figure 4.2: Distribution of Score for Familiarity with Word Reading (Private School)

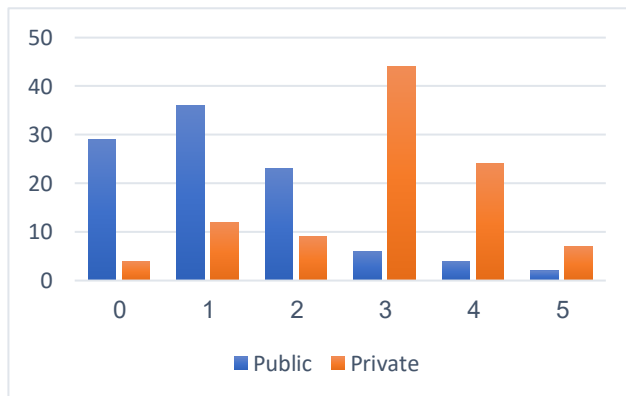


Figure 4.3: Comparison of Score for Familiarity with Word Reading

The mean score for the Public School group was lower than that of the Private School group. The difference in mean score between the two groups, which was -1.670, indicated that the Private School group had a mean score that was 1.670 points higher than the Public School groups. The statistical significance of this difference is indicated by the p-value, which is less than 0.05. The equality of the variances between the two groups is what the two-sample t-test relies on. However, this assumption could not always be true. A t-test with unequal variances must be performed in order to verify the results. The Independent Samples Test table displays the results in separate rows for each of the two hypotheses.

The test results under the supposition of equal variances are displayed in the first row of the table. The p-value for the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is greater than .05. As a result, the null hypothesis of equal variances cannot be ruled out. So long as the variances are identical, the t-test can be performed. The t-test findings show that the p-value is less than .05. As a result, we can rule out the null hypothesis of equal means and come to the conclusion that the scores on familiarity with word reading between the two student groups differ significantly.

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The test results under the presumption of unequal variances are shown in the second row of the table. Because the p-value for the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is less than .05, we can rule out the null hypothesis of equal variances. Therefore, the t-test ought to be conducted with the presumption that the variances are not equal. The t-test findings show that the p-value is less than .05. As a result, we can rule out the null hypothesis of equal means and come to the conclusion that the scores on familiarity with word reading between the two student groups differ significantly.

### **Discussion and Key Findings:**

The study discovered a substantial difference between Kenyan students attending public and private schools in terms of their competence with word reading. The public school group's mean score was lower than the private school group's. This result is in line with earlier studies that discovered pupils in private schools typically achieve more academically than those in public schools.

There are several reasons why this result might have occurred. One explanation is that private schools might be more equipped than public ones. This might include things like more qualified instructors, fewer class sizes, and improved instructional materials. Private schools might also have greater standards for its kids, which might inspire them to work harder. Last but not least, private schools can have a more stringent admissions procedure, which might guarantee that pupils are more ready for academic achievement.

The results of this study have significant policy and educational ramifications. In order to ensure that every student has the chance to succeed, policymakers should think about methods to raise the standard of instruction in public schools. This might entail raising financing for public schools, offering teachers additional assistance, and creating academic standards that are more demanding. In order to close the accomplishment gap between children in public and private schools, educators must also be aware of it. This can entail offering struggling students more support, providing more enrichment opportunities, and fostering a more difficult learning environment.

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