

PARENTAL DECISION-MAKING IN SCHOOL SELECTION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL PREFERENCES

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Abstract

Education stand as one of the most vital aspects of our lives. In Pakistan, the education system is supported by a combination of public and private educational institutions. It serves as cornerstone for a country's socioeconomic advancement. Education helps to enhance human capabilities as not all skills are innate. The desire of almost all parents is to offer their children the highest quality education possible, leading them to carefully select the best schools available in the vicinity. The objective of the study is to find out the factors that encourage parents to choose school and to compare these factors among public and private school. The study was conducted in the city of Faisalabad, and all the parents of students in public and private primary schools in the city of Faisalabad were considered as the population of the study. Total 120 parents has been selected through proportionately to collect data of 60 parents from public school and 60 parents from the private school randomly to complete the sample size. The data was collected through well-structured questionnaire. Then the collected data was analyzed through statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) and t-test was applied to compare the factors influence parental choice among public and private school. The result showed that parents' satisfaction with public and private schools is subjective and dependent on a variety of factors. While some parents may find public schools to be the best fit for their child's needs and preferences, others may prefer the advantages offered by private schools. Ultimately, parents' satisfaction levels are influenced by their individual circumstances and the extent to which their chosen school meets their expectations and aspirations for their child's education. Parents who are looking for a controlled and encouraging environment find that public schools are good at upholding discipline and improving student performance and creativity.

Key words: Decision making, schools, education, SPSS.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge acquired through a systematic process in refers as Education and the quality education is the basic need and right of every child irrespective to gender for a better society. Countries with low literacy, may face many problems such as poverty, inequality, heinous crime gender discrimination, child labor, early marriages and many others. In Pakistan, by its constitution, provision of education is mandatory (Ahmed and Sheikh, 2014). Moreover, Education enables the individuals to develop their ability to think critically and enables them to solve problems in a better way. Children who acquire critical thinking skills can more remarkably explore and learn about their surroundings (Abrami *et al.*, 2015). It also helps youngsters develop social skills essential for forming strong relationships and connecting with others. Through schooling, students learn to cooperate in groups, respect variety, and exhibit empathy (Cook-Sather, 2020).

Furthermore, education is a vital human right that influences both individual and community growth. Children mostly spend their time in school, and the quality of education they receive directly relates to their future success. Parents always decide which school is best for their children. When deciding on a school for their children, they always consider many factors, including school quality, proximity, and academic performance are main factors. Scholar and

legislators have acknowledged the significance of parental involvement in school enrollment (Smrekar and Honey, 2015).

Parents seem to be more concerned these days with selecting the best schools for their kids. As a result, there is competition between private and public schools when parents have to select a school for their children. The educational path, social environment, and future opportunities of a youngster are significantly impacted by their choice of school. It is crucial to understand the different aspects parents take into account when making this important decision. When choosing a school for their children, parents take into account a number of factors, such as the school's academic standing, reputation for excellence in instruction, facilities, location, cost, ethos, extracurricular offerings, and overall scholastic environment (Jones *et al.*, 2015).

School choice affects children's academic success and school performance metrics. (Hastings and Weinstein 2008). Parents frequently identify academic performance and the proximity of schools to their residences as primary determinants of their selection (Exley, 2011). However, disparities in social classes exist among parents exercising their freedom to choose their child's school. (Hastings *et al.*, 2007; Allen *et al.*, 2014).

The attitudes, beliefs, and interests of parents significantly influence their educational decisions (Yaacob *et al.*, 2015). The decision-making process is complex and varied, with educational methodology serving as a crucial factor. Some parents may choose conventional, rigid educational models, while many support modern pedagogical methods that emphasize innovation and critical thinking. Moreover, elements such as graduation rates, standardized test scores, academic performance, and a challenging curriculum are frequently considered while selecting an educational institution.

(Verdiyani, 2016; Wuryaningrat *et al.*, 2023).

Parents satisfaction in schools is largely shaped by their contentment with various aspects of the educational environment. Studies conducted by researchers have shown that the factors influencing parental satisfaction are diverse and their significance can vary across different studies and countries (Badri *et al.*, 2010). Parent satisfaction is influenced by academic and non-academic factors (Friedman *et al.*, 2007). Additionally, parents are deeply concerned about safety and discipline, seeking institutions with strict disciplinary measures and a secure environment for their children (Barrett *et al.*, 2015; Krisbiyanto and Nadhifah, 2022; Perwita and Widuri, 2023).

Factors Affecting Parental School Choice

The study identified various elements that affect parents' decisions while choosing the most suitable school for their children. Family income is the primary factor in selecting schools for children's education (Rehman *et al.*, 2010). Dronkers and Avram (2010) posited that affluent and highly educated parents frequently select the most prestigious schools for their offspring. Furthermore, Siddiqui (2017) asserted that parental education significantly impacts school selection in Pakistan. Individuals with extensive formal education frequently choose private schools for their offspring. Conversely, parents with less formal education typically enroll their children in Madrassahs. The distinctions in parental preferences for schools are evident between private institutions and Madrassahs, but less obvious between government schools and private schools. Parents with higher educational attainment are more likely to make educated decisions regarding their children's education (Oiyer *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, the safety of children during their commute to and from school, as well as within the school environment, significantly influences parents decisions regarding their children's education in Pakistan (Shahzad and Ashraf, 2020). Geographical location encompasses not only convenience but also the environment of the school and the assurance it provides to parents regarding their children's safety. Safety became a paramount worry for parents. Ensuring school safety is a critical concern for both administrators and parents (Cantu *et al.*, 2021).

However, in Pakistan and other developing countries, the performance of the teachers is a crucial factors influencing parental school choice. When teachers perform well in the schools, the quality of education improves. This finding from reviewed articles underscores the importance of teacher quality in parent's decision -making process. Parents perceive that better-quality teachers and smaller class size lead to more personalized attention for their children, ultimately enhancing academic outcomes (Shahzad *et al.*, 2020).

Moreover, Parents usually think it's really important for schools to do well overall, not just academically. They want their kids to go to schools that consistently do better than others (West, 1992). That's why many parents prefer private schools that have higher academic results than average (Howley, 2000).

The objectives of the study were

- To investigate the factors that encourages parents during school choice for their children.
- To compare different problems faced by parents regarding school choice for their children both public and private school.
- To compare satisfaction level of parents regarding public and private school.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the city of Faisalabad and all the parents of students in public and private primary schools in the city of Faisalabad were considered the population of the study. The sample size of 120 has been determined through by keeping the population unknown with the confidence interval 9% and confidence level 95%. Proportionate sampling technique was applied to collect data from 60 parents from a public school and 60 parents from a private school randomly to complete the sample size. The data were collected through a well-structured questionnaire. Then, the collected data were analyzed through statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS), and t-test was applied to compare the factors influencing parental choice among public and private schools.

RESULTS

A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed, and 120 questionnaires, which were complete in all respect, were used for final analysis. The demographic information included the age, qualification, and occupation and school choice. Table 1 presents the demographics of the respondents.

Table No: 1 Socio-economic attributes respondents

Age	Public sector parents		Private sector parents	
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
20-30	14	23.3	29	48.3
31-35	15	25.0	20	33.3
36-40	21	35.0	9	15.0
above 40	10	16.7	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0	60	100.0
Qualification	Public sector parents		Private sector parents	
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Matric	3	5.0	4	6.7
Intermediate	7	11.7	7	11.7
Bachelor	17	28.3	18	30.0
Post graduate	15	25.0	29	48.3
M.PHIL	18	30.0	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0	60	100.0
Occupation	Public sector parents		Private sector parents	
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Business	9	15.0	5	8.3
job	23	38.3	33	55.0
farming	10	16.7	8	13.3

job and business	18	30.0	14	23.3
Total	60	100.0	60	100.0
School	Frequency (f)		Percentage (%)	
Private	60		50	
Public	60		50	
Total	120		100.0	

The data compares public and private sector parents based on age, education, jobs, and the schools their children attend. Public sector parents are mostly older, with many between 36-40 years. Private sectors parents are younger, with nearly half in the 20-30 age group. Public sector parents are more educated, with 30% having M.phil. degrees. Private sector parents have more post- graduate degrees (48.3%), but fewer have an M.Phil. Public sector parents work in a variety of areas, including jobs, business, and farming. Private sector parents are mostly in regular jobs (55%), with fewer involved in business or farming. Public sector parents work in a variety of areas, including job, business and farming .Private sector parents are mostly in regular jobs (55%), with fewer involved in business or farming. Both public and private sector parents send their children to private and public schools equally, with 50% in each.

Table No :2 Distribution of the respondents according to the compare satisfaction level of parents regarding public and private school.

Statements	Nature of institute	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	P-value
Satisfaction about school	Private	3.68	1.21	7.12	.000**
	Public	3.83	0.90		
Discipline learning	Private	3.88	1.04	6.55	.001**
	Public	3.92	0.88		
Excellent performance	Private	3.88	0.95	3.13	.005**
	Public	3.92	0.80		
Children confidence boost	Private	3.92	1.01	1.42	.040*
	Public	4.10	0.83		
School performance	Private	3.70	0.78	3.26	.000**
	Public	3.93	0.95		
Enhance students' creativity	Private	3.73	0.78	4.20	.000**
	Public	3.93	1.03		
Resources of school	Private	3.83	1.07	1.70	.000**
	Public	3.77	1.13		
Results of children	Private	3.90	1.05	-1.88	.055 ^{NS}
	Public	4.00	0.88		
School curriculum	Private	3.97	1.07	3.87	.120 ^{NS}
	Public	3.98	0.96		

Teacher teaching style	Private	4.22	1.10	3.57	.000**
	Public	4.05	1.01		

NS= Non-significant, *= significant, ** = Highly significant

Table 2 compares various positive aspects of private and public schools, presenting the means, standard deviations, t-values, and p-values for each aspect. For satisfaction about school, private schools have a mean score of 3.68 (tending towards agree), whereas public schools have a mean score of 3.83 (tending towards agree). The t-value is 7.12 with a p-value of 0.00, indicating a highly significant differences and suggests that overall satisfaction is higher in public schools. Regarding discipline learning, private schools have a mean score of 3.88 (tending towards agree) compared to 3.92 for public schools (tending towards agree). The t-value is 6.55 with a p-value of 0.001, showing a highly significant differences, indicating a slightly better perception of discipline learning in public schools.

For excellent performance, private schools have a mean score of 3.88 (tending towards agree), while public schools have a mean of 3.92 (tending towards agree). The t-value is 3.13 with a p-value of 0.005, indicating a highly significant difference, suggesting slightly better perceived performance in public schools. When it comes to boosting children's confidence, private schools have a mean score of 3.92 (tending towards agree), while public schools have a higher mean score of 4.10 (tending towards agree). The t-value is 1.42 with a p-value of 0.04, indicating a significant difference, suggesting that public schools are perceived to boost children's confidence more effectively.

School performance has a mean score of 3.70 for private schools (tending towards agree) and 3.93 for public schools (tending towards agree). The t-value is 3.26 with a p-value of 0.00, indicating a highly significant difference, suggesting better perceived performance in public schools. For enhancing students' creativity, private schools have a mean score of 3.73 (tending towards agree) compared to 3.93 for public schools (tending towards agree). The t-value is 4.20 with a p-value of 0.000, showing a highly significant difference, indicating that public schools are perceived to enhance students' creativity more effectively. Regarding resources of the school, private schools have a mean score of 3.83 (tending towards agree), while public schools have a mean score of 3.77 (tending towards agree). The t-value is 1.70 with a p-value of 0.00, indicating a highly significant difference, suggesting that private schools are perceived to have slightly better resources.

The results of children show a mean score of 3.90 for private schools (tending towards agree) and 4.00 for public schools (tending towards agree). The t-value is -1.88 with a p-value of 0.06, indicating no significant difference, suggesting similar perceptions of children's results in both types of schools. For the school curriculum, private schools have a mean score of 3.97 (tending towards agree) compared to 3.98 for public schools (tending towards agree). The t-value is 3.87 with a p-value of 0.12, indicating no significant difference, suggesting similar perceptions of the school curriculum in both types of schools.

Teacher teaching style has a mean score of 4.22 for private schools (tending towards strongly agree), while public schools have a mean score of 4.05 (tending towards agree). The t-value is 3.57 with a p-value of 0.00, indicating a highly significant difference, suggesting that private schools are perceived to have a better teaching style. Overall, the data suggests that public schools are generally perceived more favorably in aspects such as satisfaction, discipline learning, performance, boosting children's confidence, and enhancing creativity. However, private schools are perceived to have better resources and teaching styles. Some aspects, such as children's results and the school curriculum, show no significant difference between private and public schools.

Satisfaction level of parents regarding public and private school

Various positive aspects of private and public schools, presenting the means, t-values, and p-values for each aspect. For satisfaction about school, private schools have a mean score of 3.68 (tending towards agree), whereas public schools have a mean score of 3.83 (tending towards agree) which means that both are agree regarding the school satisfaction. Regarding discipline learning, private schools have a mean score of 3.88 (tending towards agree) compared to 3.92 for public schools (tending towards agree). Which means that both are agree regarding the discipline learning. School performance has a mean score of 3.70 for private schools (tending towards agree) and 3.93 for public schools (tending towards agree). Which means that both are agree regarding the School performance. Regarding resources of the school, private schools have a mean score of 3.83 (tending towards agree), while public schools have a mean score of 3.77 (tending towards agree). Which means that both are agree regarding the resources of the school

CONCLUSIONS

It was concluded that majority of the respondents in the study area were belong to the age category 25-30 years while majority of them were Post graduated and belong to the job as source of income. According to the data results parents make their decision between private and public schools based on a number of important aspects. Due to their higher

ratings in terms of discipline learning, student achievement, general contentment, and fostering innovation, public schools are typically preferred. Additionally, it's believed that these schools increase kids' confidence more successfully. Conversely, parents who feel that their unique teaching methods and superior resources will result in a higher caliber of education frequently select private schools. Parents' decisions are influenced by consistency and excellence in specific areas, even while there is no discernible difference in how the school curriculum and children's performance are perceived. Parents who are looking for a controlled and encouraging environment find that public schools are good at upholding discipline and improving student performance and creativity.

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