Policy Research Journal
ISSN (E): 3006-7030 ISSN (P) : 3006-7022 Volume 2, Issue 4, 2024

PARENTAL PREFERENCES AND DECISION-MAKING IN SCHOOL CHOICE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLING

Dr. Saira[*1], Hafsah Khanum[2], Dr. Mobeen Ul Islam[3]

[*1]*Lecturer, Department of Education, University of Gujrat*
[2] *Associate Lecturer, Department of Education, University of Gujrat*
3 Assistant Professor, Department of Education, University of Gujrat

[*1]drsaira.iajz@uog.edu.pk, [2]hafsah.khanum@uog.edu.pk, [3]drmobeen.islam@uog.edu.pk

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16993138

Keywords

Article History
Received on 08 September 2024
Accepted on 23 September 2024
Published on 01 October 2024

Copyright @Author
Corresponding Author: *
Dr. Saira

Abstract

There are two main types of educational institutions in Pakistan: public and private. In addition to giving parents a wide range of options when choosing a school for their kids, this division has given the public and private sectors a competitive edge. Compared to earlier periods in Pakistan's history, education is now more commercialized in the private sector. The goal of the current study was to investigate parental preferences regarding school choice and identify any similarities or differences between public and private schooling. The study was restricted to elementary schools located in the District of Gujarat's rural areas. A self-created questionnaire was used to gather information from parents residing in the same neighborhood who send their kids to public or private elementary schools in the same neighborhood. The study concluded that parents prefer a public or private school for their children based on two factors: school-related factors like physical facilities.

INTRODUCTION

Parents can get involved in a number of areas of their child's education, but elementary school students are particularly reliant on their parents when it comes to choosing a school. Parental school choice raises demand for higher-quality teacher education, according to research by Hoxby (2002). He has listed a number of considerations that parents make when choosing a school for their kids, including the teacher's training, the institution's quality, and the teacher's dedication and subject-matter expertise. Bast and Walberg (2004) came to the conclusion that parents have the power to select the best school for their kids.

They came to the conclusion that the majority of parents base their school choice on their children's academic performance. They have also emphasized that parents have the information and incentives they need to choose the best school for their kids. According to research by Lai et al. (2009), parents occasionally choose the wrong school, and this can have a negative impact on their children's final exam scores. The study's sample consisted of Beijing middle school pupils.

One of the main elements influencing the choice of school is school quality. In the recent past, researchers were very interested in determining how school choice and educational quality relate to one another. According to Lloyd et al. (2002), parental school choice in rural Pakistan, particularly for girls, is heavily influenced by the quality and accessibility of schools. Poor school quality has been identified by Behrman et al. (1997) as one of the factors

contributing to dropout rates in rural Pakistan. Due to the safer environment, discipline, and increased emphasis on academics and curricula, parents prefer to send their children to private schools (Kraushaa, 1972; Erickson, 1986; Bauch, 1988; Greeley, McCready & McCourt, 1976). Research has shown that one of the main causes of the increase in private schooling is the subpar performance of elementary public schools (Lankford & Wyckoff, 1992; Buddin, Cordes & Kirby, 1998).

The characteristics of parents who opt for a non-public school for their children have been examined by Yand and Kayaardi (2004). They have identified the following as the factors influencing the parental decision regarding school choice: religion, socioeconomic statistics, family structure, and demographic characteristics. Compared to public schools, private schools provide a better learning environment. Because of this, private schools are producing better results than public schools with the same students and parents (Dronkers and Peter, 2003).

In public schools, teacher absenteeism is high and educational quality is subpar. These factors have promoted the involvement of the private sector in education (Tooley and Dixon 2005). According to Rehman et al. (2010), parents choose private schools for their children for a variety of reasons, including: Good student care; a progressive educational approach; a welcoming environment for guests; the development of self-assured students; satisfaction with the current fee structure; and activity-based learning. They have gone into further detail about the reasons why parents are unhappy with public schools. These include inadequate educational facilities, an inappropriate learning environment, disinterested teachers, packed classrooms, inappropriate teaching strategies, a lack of discipline, distaste for the medium of instruction, and a lack of focus on the social, moral, and physical development of the child.

According to Alderman et al. (1996), even parents from low-income families have a need for adequate education. Additionally, they have seen a 30–40% gender gap in basic cognitive skill achievement due to variations in school availability. Numerous studies have shown that private schooling and parents' educational attainment are positively correlated. Scholars have found that parents with higher levels of education prefer to send their kids to private schools (Coleman et al., 1982; Noell, 1982; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Long & Toma, 1988; Lankford & Wyckoff, 1992).

Gallup Pakistan conducted a survey in 2009 on behalf of the Gilani Research Foundation. Seventy-four percent of Pakistanis have at least one school-age child, according to that survey. According to Gilani Poll (2009), 59% of respondents believed that private schools offered higher-quality education than public ones. According to The Bangladesh Observer (2004), private schools charge high tuition; most of them are located in cities, and they serve the wealthy and well-to-do.

Furthermore, they made it clear that these features of private schools are not limited to Pakistan's private system; rather, they are the most appropriate argument for the private educational system globally. All three educational levels—elementary, secondary, and higher—are served by both public and private institutions in Pakistan. Parents and students can choose between public and private schools. Compared to secondary and higher education levels, parents are more involved and concerned with the elementary school selection process. This study determined the factors that parents consider when choosing between public and private schools, as well as the similarities and differences in their educational priorities.

Sample of the Study

200 Parents of Grade-V students (100 parents sending their at least one child in Govt. School and 100 parents sending their at least one child in Private school) residing in the rural areas of District Gujrat were selected as sample of the study.

A self-developed Questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. Parent of the students studying in both Public and Private schools were contacted for data collection. Researcher developed a five points Likert Scale consisting of two parts:

Part I is about Factors Related to Parents and Part II is about Factors Related to School.

Table 1
Questionnaire for the Parents

	Part 1 (Factors Related to Parents)	No. of Questions
1	Socio-Economic Status	5
2	Parents' Education	1
3	Family Structure	5
4	Demographic Characteristics	5
	Part 2 (Factors Related to ASchool)	
1	Physical Facilities	5
2	Fee Structure	5
3	Teachers Quality	5
4	Pedagogical Approaches	5
5	Evaluation and Assessment Procedure	5
6	Discipline and Security	5
7	Curricular Activities	5
8	Co-Curricular Activities	5
9	Monitoring,	5
11	Admission Policy	5
10	Feed Back to the Parents	5
	Total Questions	**71**

Variables

1. Physical Facilities
2. Teachers Quality (Hoxby, 2002)
3. Pedagogical Approaches
4. Evaluation and Assessment Procedure (Buddin, Cordes & Kirby, 1998; Lankford & Wyckoff, 1992).
5. Discipline (Bauch, 1988; Erickson, 1986; Greeley, McCready & McCourt, 1976; Kraushaa, 1972; Rehman, et. all., 2010)
6. Curricular Activities (Bauch, 1988; Erickson, 1986; Greeley, McCready & McCourt, 1976; Kraushaa, 1972)
7. Co-Curricular Activities
8. Admission Criteria
9. Monitoring
10. Proper Feed Back
11. Parental Factors behind the School Selection (Yang and Kayaardi, 2004).

Table 2
Personal Factors behind the School Selection

		Public (N=100)		Private (N=100)		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
		Socio-Economic Status					
Monthly Income	0-10000	72	72.0	15	15.0	87	43.5
	10000-20000	23	23.0	56	56.0	79	39.5
	20000-30000	5	5.0	12	12.0	17	8.5
	30000-40000			9	9.0	9	4.5
	50000 and Above			8	8.0	8	4.0

Profession	Govt. Job	63	63.0	30	30.0	93	46.5
	Non-Governmental Job	37	37.0	70	70.0	107	53.5
	Parental Education						
Parental Education	Uneducated	67	67.0	25	25.0	92	46.0
	Under Metric	29	29.0	53	53.0	82	41.0
	Metric	3	3.0	13	13.0	16	8.0
	Graduate	1	1.0	9	9.0	10	5.0
	Family Structure						
Family Type	Separate	50	50.0	73	73.0	123	61.5
	Joint Family	50	50.0	27	27.0	77	38.5
Number of Children	One	1	1.0	4	4.0	5	2.5
	Two	2	2.0	1	1.0	3	1.5
	Three	7	7.0	37	37.0	44	22.0
	Four	25	25.0	26	26.0	51	25.5
	Five and Above	65	65.0	32	32.0	97	48.5
Birth Order of the Child	First	31	31.0	22	22.0	53	26.5
	Second	38	38.0	51	51.0	89	44.5
	Third	13	13.0	19	19.0	32	16.0
	Fourth	4	4.0	6	6.0	10	5.0
	Fifth or above	14	14.0	2	2.0	16	8.0
	Demographic Characteristics						
Distance From Main City	15-20km	42	42.0	20	20.0	62	31.0
	Above	58	58.0	80	80.0	138	69.0

Table 2 shows data about parental personal factors of school choice including Socio-Economic Status, parental Education, Family Structure and Demographic Characteristics. Parents with higher education, with larger monthly income, doing Private Jobs, with separate family system and living away from the main City prefer a Private School for their child.

Table 3
Physical Facilities

Variables	School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
School Building	Public	100	3.58	1.165	1.810	.072
	Private	100	3.26	1.330		
Furniture/ Setting Place for the Students	Public	100	3.63	1.405	1.211	.227
	Private	100	3.39	1.399		
Play Ground	Public	100	4.00	1.318	10.066	.000
	Private	100	2.14	1.295		

Table 3 shows the condition of infrastructure (Physical Facilities) in Public and Private Schools. Data show that Public Schools have better facilities for the students such as School Building, Furniture and Play Ground.

Table 4
Teachers Quality and Methodology

Variables	School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value

						p-value
Qualification of Teacher/s	Public	100	4.09	.996	12.147	.000
	Private	100	2.09	1.311		
Rote Memorization	Public	100	3.70	1.049	3.364	.001
	Private	100	3.13	1.331		
Conceptual Learning	Public	100	2.23	1.448	-9.727	.000
	Private	100	4.17	1.371		
Activity Method	Public	100	2.25	1.533	-13.664	.000
	Private	100	4.53	.658		

Table 4 shows the Teachers Quality and Teaching Methodology adopted by the teachers of both Public and Private Schools. Parental opinion shows that teachers of Public Schools are more Qualified as compared to the Teachers of Private Schools. Public School teachers prefer Rote memorization whereas Private School Teachers focused on Conceptual Learning and activity method.

Table 5
Evaluation and Assessment Procedure

Variables	School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
Daily Oral Tests	Public	100	2.13	1.447	-12.770	.000
	Private	100	4.37	.991		
Weekly Tests	Public	100	1.86	1.287	-11.278	.000
	Private	100	4.04	1.442		
Monthly Tests	Public	100	4.42	1.027	.464	.643
	Private	100	4.35	1.104		

Table 5 shows the Evaluation and Assessment Procedure adopted by the teachers of Public and Private schools. Public School teachers evaluate the students' performance on Monthly bases whereas Private School Teachers evaluate students' performance through daily Oral Tests and Weekly Tests too along with Monthly Tests.

Table 6
Proper Feed Back

Variables	School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
The record of Weekly Test send to home	Public	100	1.89	1.246	-14.519	.000
	Private	100	4.22	1.011		
The record of Monthly Test send to home	Public	100	2.17	1.422	-5.427	.000
	Private	100	3.26	1.419		
Parents-Teacher meetings	Public	100	2.14	1.239	-14.054	.000
	Private	100	4.26	.860		
Reporting any disturbing act of student to Parents	Public	100	2.73	1.530	-5.677	.000
	Private	100	3.80	1.101		
Awareness about the Progress of Child	Public	100	2.09	1.156	-8.076	.000
	Private	100	3.47	1.259		

Table 6 shows the strategies and frequency of feedback to the parents about the process of the child by the Public and Private Schools. Parents reported that unlike the Public Schools, Private schools send weekly and monthly test

record to home and Parent-Teacher Meetings held regularly. Private School Management report parents at doing any disturbing act by their child and make them aware by the child's day to day progress.

Table 7
Discipline

Variables	School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
School starting Time	Public	100	2.72	1.735	-4.220	.000
	Private	100	3.65	1.359		
Staff Arrival	Public	100	2.54	1.275	-5.460	.000
	Private	100	3.58	1.415		
School close Timings	Public	100	2.37	1.178	-8.408	.000
	Private	100	3.73	1.109		
Child have Complaints about the School Affaires	Public	100	1.98	1.456	.049	.961
	Private	100	1.97	1.446		
School Authorities listen and solve the issues	Public	100	2.20	1.563	-6.378	.000
	Private	100	3.59	1.518		
Disciplined Environment	Public	100	2.24	1.471	-11.799	.000
	Private	100	4.29	.924		

Table 7 shows that in the perception of parents, Private Schools have more disciplined environment as compared to the Public Schools. Private schools start and ends at proper timings, staff of Private schools comes on time, School Authorities listen and solve the issues and there is a more disciplined environment in the Private Schools as compared to the Public School. Children have Complaints about School Affaires almost with the same proportion under the both Public as well as Private Schools.

Table 8:
Curriculum

Variables	School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
Satisfaction about the Curriculum	Public	100	1.88	1.166	-20.064	.000
	Private	100	4.55	.642		
Religious Curriculum	Public	100	2.46	1.527	-1.053	.294
	Private	100	2.69	1.562		
Develops Citizenship	Public	100	2.42	1.571	.183	.855
	Private	100	2.38	1.516		
Future Opportunities	Public	100	2.07	1.281	-8.674	.000
	Private	100	3.88	1.647		

Table 8 shows that comparison of Parental Perception about the curriculum of Public and Private Schools. Parents of the children studding in Private schools are more satisfied on the variable of overall satisfaction and future opportunities where as there is no significant difference found on the two variables, Religious curriculum and development of citizenship.

Table 9
Co-Curricular Activities

Variables	School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
Functions on National Days	Public	100	2.25	1.445	-6.485	.000
	Private	100	3.51	1.299		
School Authorities Encourage the Children to participate in Co-Curricular Activities	Public	100	2.52	1.521	-4.384	.000
	Private	100	3.42	1.379		
Co-curricular Activities as the best tool for Child Development	Public	100	3.23	1.852	1.555	.122
	Private	100	2.82	1.877		
Parental Encouragement to Participate in Co-Curricular Activities	Public	100	1.84	1.117	-7.919	.000
	Private	100	3.46	1.714		

Table 9 shows parental perception about the co-curricular activities in the Public and Private schools. Parents of the children studding in Private schools reported that the school of their children arrange functions on National day, school authorities encourage the children to participate in co-curricular activities and they also encourage their children to participate in co-curricular activities.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study was conducted to collect parental perception about school choice for their children. A comparison of parental perception about Public and Private schools was made to analyze the motive behind school selection and satisfaction level of the parents about the school of their child. The findings of the study demonstrate that Socio-Economic Status, Education of the parents, Family Structure and Demographic Characteristics play a crucial role in school choice. Parents with higher education, with larger monthly income, doing Private Jobs, with separate family system and living away from the main City prefer a Private School for their child.

Parents of the children studding in Public school are satisfied with the available Physical Facilities, Fee Structure and Teacher's Quality where as they are less satisfied with reference to the other variables such as Pedagogical Approaches, Evaluation and Assessment, Discipline and Security, Curricular Activities, Co-Curricular Activities, Monitoring and Admission Policy.

REFERENCES

Alderman, H., Orazem, P. F., & Paterno, E. M. (1996). *School quality, school cost, and the public/private school choices of low-income households in Pakistan* (Working Paper Series on Impact Evaluation of Educational Reforms, Paper No. 2). Washington, DC: World Bank.

Bast, J. L., & Walberg, H. J. (2004). Can parents choose the best schools for their children? *Economics of Education Review, 23*(4), 431–440.

Bauch, P. A. (1988). Is parent involvement different in private schools? *Educational Horizons, 66*(2), 78–82.

Behrman, J. R., Khan, S., Ross, D., & Sabot, R. (1997). School quality and cognitive achievement production: A case study of rural Pakistan. *Economics of Education Review, 16*(2), 127–142.

Buttin, R., Cordes, J. J., & Kirby, S. (1998). School choice in California: Who chooses private schools? *Journal of Urban Economics, 44*(1), 110–134.

Coleman, J., & Hoffer, T. (1987). *Public and private high schools*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Coleman, J., Hoffer, T., & Kilgore, S. (1982). *High school achievement: Public, Catholic, and private schools compared*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Dronkers, J., & Robert, P. (2003). *The effectiveness of public and private schools from a comparative perspective* (Working Paper SPS No. 2003/13). Florence, Italy: European University Institute, Department of Political and Social Sciences.

Erickson, D. A. (1986). Choice and private schools: Dynamics of supply and demand. In D. C. Levy (Ed.), *Private education: Studies in choice and public policy* (pp. 82–109). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Gallup Pakistan. (2009). *Gilani poll*. Islamabad: Gallup Pakistan, affiliate of Gallup International Association.

Greeley, A. M., McCready, W. C., & McCourt, K. (1976). *Catholic schools in a declining church*. Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward.

Hoxby, C. M. (2002). Would school choice change the teaching profession? *The Journal of Human Resources, 37*(4), 846–891.

Kraushaar, O. F. (1972). *American nonpublic schools: Patterns of diversity*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Lai, F., Sadoulet, E., & de Janvry, A. (2009). The adverse effects of parents' school selection errors on academic achievement: Evidence from the Beijing open enrollment program. *Economics of Education Review, 28*(4), 485–496.

Lankford, R. H., & Wyckoff, J. H. (1992). Primary and secondary school choice among public and religious alternatives. *Economics of Education Review, 11*(4), 317–337.

Lloyd, C. B., Mete, C., & Sathar, Z. A. (2002). *The effect of gender differences in primary school access, choice and quality on the decision to enroll in rural Pakistan* (Working Paper). New York, NY: Population Council.

Long, J., & Toma, E. (1988). The determinants of private school attendance, 1970–1980. *Economic Statistics, 70*, 351–356.

Noell, J. (1982). Public and Catholic schools: A reanalysis of "Public and Private Schools." *Sociology of Education, 55*(2), 123–132.

Rehman, N., Khan, J., Tariq, M., & Tasleem, S. (2010). Determinants of parents' choice in selection of private schools for their children in District Peshawar of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. *European Journal of Scientific Research, 44*(1), 140–151.

The Bangladesh Observer. (2004, July 7). Editorial: The commercialization of education. *The Bangladesh Observer*. Retrieved from http://www.bangladeshobserveronline.com/new/2004/07/07/editorial.htm

Tooley, J., & Dixon, P. (2005). *Private education is good for the poor*. Washington, DC: Cato Institute.

Yang, P. Q., & Kayaardi, N. (2004). Who chooses non-public schools for their children? *Educational Studies, 30*(3), 231–249.