

## **Parents' Choice Regarding School Selection for their Children's Education**

Hifzur-Rehman<sup>1</sup>  
Mushtaq Ahmad<sup>2</sup>  
Zubair Ahmad<sup>3</sup>

### **Abstract**

The study was aimed at exploring the reasons for the parents' preference regarding selection of private or government schools for the education of their children. The study was delimited to the parents of Sargodha district whose children were studying in either government or private schools. The sample of the study consisted of 183 parents selected through convenience sampling method. The data collected through a semi structured interview were analyzed by applying qualitative analysis method. The parameters of validation were taken under consideration while developing and finalizing the instrument. It was found that most of the parents select private schools for their children's education because of quality teaching, academic reputation of private schools and their convenient location. It is recommended for education officers concerned (Secretary schools, CEOs) to take practical steps to ensure the improvement of those areas (indicators) which attract the parents during selection of school for their children's education. They may improve quality of teaching and learning and consequently results in government schools by ensuring the maximum utilization of available resources, application of all effective teaching methods and techniques by teachers during their teaching and focusing students' learning progress during their supervision.

**Keywords:** parents' choice, school selection, children's education

---

<sup>1</sup>Subject Specialist, Govt. College for Elementary Teachers, Sargodha-Pakistan

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Education University of Sargodha, Sargodha-Pakistan

<sup>3</sup>Vice Principal, Govt. College for Elementary Teachers, Sargodha-Pakistan

## **Introduction**

Cruciality of decision regarding school choice among parents is a universal phenomenon. Parents living not only in under developed but also in developing and developed countries have to ponder while making this decision and their decision is always motivated by some reasons. Parents are the real decision makers to select school for their children, so their satisfaction becomes a decisive factor especially when they have numerous choices (Silverstein, 2005). In the context of competitive educational environment, variety of options is an important issue for parents (Friedman, Bobrowski & Geraci, 2006). Many students badly performed in exams because their parents selected improper schools for them (Lai, Sadoulet & Janvry, 2009). Government school system in Pakistan is working at different levels such as federal, provincial and local level along with a significant share of private sector. The emergence of private sector has furnished the parents with an opportunity of varied options of quality education for their children (Iqbal, 2011).

Parents' decision of school choice from government or private sector for their children's education is based on different reasons. According to Bast and Walberg (2004) while selecting school most of the parents consider their children's academic achievement and long term performance on top priority. Rehman et al. (2010) are of the opinion that parents send their children to private schools as they engage the students in activity based learning and produce better results in examinations. The quality of teaching at the high and middle level strongly affects parents' choice of school but this is not so influential at primary level. Parents think that private schools provide standard teaching in the subjects of English, mathematics and science and they have more competent teachers (Ahmed, Amjad, Habib, & Shah 2013). While indicating the reasons of parents' preference for private schools over government schools, Andrabi, Das, Khwaja, Vishwanath, and Zajonc (2007) state a great learning gap between government and private schools students, as private school students tend to outperform students from government schools in the same village. Survey report on "what parents want" by Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ, 2011), identifying the single most important factor among parents to select a school for their children was the ability of the school to prepare a student to fulfill their potential in later life. Parents' decision of school selection is greatly influenced by examination results of secondary school certificate (Rehman et al., 2010); and it depends upon the educational and socio-economic status of the parents.

Parents' demographics play an important role in selection of school. Parents having higher education preferably select private schools for the education of their children (Rehman, Khan, Tariq, & Tasleem, 2010). Parents' education and family income are the strong determinants of private school selection by parents (Andrabi, Das, & Khwaja, 2008; Iram, Hussain, Anwar, Hussain, & Akram, 2008; Lloyd, Mete, &

Sathar 2005; Alderman, Orazem, & Paterno, 2001). Educated parents give preference to private schools for their children's education (Awan & Zia, 2015). Parents' income and education, dissatisfaction from some specific school, teachers' qualification and school performance are the most important factors which affect parents' preference while selecting a government or private school for children's education (Rehman et al., 2010). Parents with high income are more likely to get their children admitted to private schools as compared to parents with low income and vice versa. But parents belonging to all socioeconomic groups favor private schools for girls than government schools. However, high fee of private schools keeps the students away from them (Awan & Zia, 2015). People living in urban areas have higher participation in private schools as compared to government schools in Nigeria (Ikoya, & Ikoya, 2009).

Distance is an important cause of private school selection for girls at primary level while at secondary level distance does not affect the school choice for female or male students as for older children transportation and safety may be a lesser issue. Although girls' enrollment is lower than those of boys in the total enrollment at school level. Parents more frequently opt for private school for girls than boys and distance may be one of the reasons for this decision (Ahmed et al., 2013). Distance from school to home is also an important determinant of school choice among parents (Andrabi et al., 2007). The distance of government schools tempt the parents to select private schools for their children (Awan & Zia, 2015).

Siddiqui (2007) states that children are commonly given physical punishment in government schools, this is the reason for children drop out at an early stage and parents' preference of private schools over government schools. The parent teacher interactive relation, school reputation, quality of education, administration role and activeness and student teacher relation are the factors highly considered by parents when they select a school for their children (Ahmad, Raheem, & Nawaz, 2014). One of the recognized major factors of parents' satisfaction with schools is communication and timely feedback from school regarding child's progress (Badri, Mason, & Mourad, 2010; Friedman, Bobrowski, & Markow, 2007; OFSTED, 2006).

Besides test scores, private schools have also tangible features related to school quality like physical infrastructure (availability of latrines and condition of school building) and student teacher ratio (Andrabi et al., 2007). Infrastructure of school can also impact parents' preference regarding school selection. Literature supports that washrooms and boundary walls like amenities influence parents' decision while choosing a school for their children (ASER, 2010). Parents think that private schools have better infrastructure so, they send their children to private schools (Ahmed et al., 2013).

Private sector has emerged as an important source for the provision of education in Pakistan for the last three decades. Both the sectors provide education at all levels (Rehman et al., 2010). Various aspects of government and private school systems

of Pakistan have remained under study in many researches so far. However, the existence of literature supporting on the one hand and denouncing on the other hand both the school systems induces to explore parents' reasons for the selection of a government or private school for the education of their children.

### **Statement of the problem**

Choice of school among parents for the education of their children is a crucial decision. Parents are the real decision makers to select school for their children, so their satisfaction becomes a decisive factor. In the context of competitive educational environment, variety of options is an issue for parents. The parallel existence of Government and private school systems has furnished the parents with an opportunity of varied options of education for their children. Both the options are available for parents, almost in both urban and rural localities. Some parents choose Government schools while others opt for private schools for their children's education. Hence the study was opted to investigate the factors which influence parents' choice of school.

### **Objective of the study**

Objective of the study was to explore the reasons for parents' preference regarding selection of private or government school for their children's education.

### **Research Questions**

The study was conducted to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the reasons behind parents' selection of private schools for the education of their children?
- ii. What are the reasons for parents' selection of government schools for the education of their children?

### **Methodology**

The study was exploratory in nature using qualitative research design. To explore the reasons for parents' preference regarding selection of private or government school for their children's education, it was necessary to know the views of parents. So a semi-structured interview was developed and used as a tool of data collection. The instrument was validated through opinion of five experts with Ph. D qualification. The study was delimited to the parents of Sargodha district. All the parents living in Sargodha district, whose children were studying in some government or private school, were the population of the study. The sample selected through convenience sampling consisted of 183 parents including 88 parents whose children were studying in government schools and 95 parents whose children were studying in private schools

from urban and rural areas. The data were collected through self visit to the parents. As the data were collected through holding interviews with parents in Urdu language so the interviews were translated into English language, having transcribed verbatim. The answers/responses of each parent were thematically analyzed and the answers having the same theme were placed in one category of school selection reason. Thus the responses were theme wise separated and included into different categories of reasons for school selection.

### **Findings of the study**

During interviews participants gave multiple responses/reasons for their selection of school. Thus some parents told more than one reason. Thirty nine participants among those parents whose children were studying in some private school told that they selected private school for their children's education on account of quality teaching. One participant out of these thirty nine expressed in these words

Quality of teaching in private schools is better as compared to government schools. Teachers plan and make preparation for teaching and they allow questioning during teaching, regularly assess, focus students' achievement during teaching and assign homework regularly.

Twenty six parents expressed that they selected the private school on the basis of academic reputation of school. One participant out of these twenty six stated that

*Academic reputation of private schools fascinates people and I am the same case.*

Nineteen parents told that they selected private school for their children education because of convenient location. One participant out of these nineteen stated thus

*Private schools are available in every town and locate in easy approach from residence that's why parents send children to private schools. Thus we can save our time that we have to spend during pick and drop.*

Twelve participants were of the opinion that they wanted the "development of different aspects of child's personality" so they chose the private school. According to ten parents their selection of private school was because of provision of religious education by private schools. Nine participants told that they selected private school on the basis of school discipline. One out of these nine participants expressed

*"Private schools teach discipline".*

Eight participants were of the view that they were attracted by the dedicated teachers of the private schools. Six parents told that the qualified teachers were the reason for selection of private school. Five parents stated that they chose private school because of holding of co-curricular activities in the school. Other five parents stated that they selected private school on account of activity based education. Four parents told that

they chose private school because of school- home communication. One out of these four expressed thus

*"Private schools properly convey information about the child".*

Three participants stated that private schools focus on English speaking, that's why they selected private school. Two parents told that their selection was on the basis of other people's recommendation, whereas standard curriculum, English medium and community involvement in school were the reasons stated by only one participant respectively.

During interviews with parents whose children were studying in some government school, forty one participants told that they selected government schools as these schools were not charging fee from students. One participant out of these forty one expressed in the words:

*Government schools collect only Farogh-e- Taleem fund and teach without any fee.*

Twenty participants told that the existence of facilities/infrastructure was the cause of their selection of government school. One participant out of these twenty expressed himself in these words:

*Government schools have better facilities like spacious & airy classrooms, science and computer labs, furniture and play grounds than private schools so I selected government school for my children.*

Fifteen parents told that the existence of qualified teachers was the reason of government school selection for their children's education. One out of these fifteen participants was of the view that:

*Government schools have more educated teachers than private schools so we should send our children to government schools to get benefit from these teachers.*

Fourteen parents stated that they selected the school in which their children were studying on account of quality teaching of the respective school. Eleven participants were of the view that they were:

*Attracted by the dedicated teachers of that government school*

Other eleven participants told that they selected the school on account of free provision of books by government. One out of these eleven participants stated that:

*Government schools give children books without cost.*

Ten participants expressed that they selected the school on the basis of academic reputation of school. Four participants told that they selected government school for the education of their children because they had uniform and standardized curriculum. One out of these four participants said

*Government schools have uniform and standardized curriculum.*

Three participants told that they chose government school because of holding of co-curricular activities in the school. Other three participants were of the opinion that they had no alternative to this school in which their children were studying so they chose that government school. Other three participants expressed that they selected government school:

*On the basis of school discipline in government schools*

Two participants told that they selected government school on the basis of reputation of government school administrators. One out of these two participants expressed thus:

*Principal of this school is famous for his good administration.*

Equal treatment with students, scholarships, religious education, moral education and permanent teaching staff were the reasons for government school selection separately stated by single participants.

## **Conclusions and Discussion**

Most of the parents select private schools for their children's education because of quality teaching, academic reputation of private schools and their convenient location. The findings of Iram et al., (2008) and Sudarshanam (2011) support this finding stating that quality of teaching is the most important factor of parents' satisfaction with school. The findings of Andrabi et al. (2007) and those of Ahmed and Sheikh (2014) are also in line with this finding as their findings state that parents select private schools for their children because of quality teaching at private schools. School performance is one of the most important factors which affect parents' school choice. Parents select private schools for their children as they produce better examination results (Rehman et al., 2010) and students studying in private schools outperform government school students (Andrabi et al., 2007; Amjad, 2012). Distance is an important determinant of school choice among parents (Andrabi et al., 2007). Parents send their children to private school when government school is at distance (Rehman et al., 2010).

The major reasons among parents for government schools selection are no charge of fee, existence of facilities/infrastructure and availability of qualified teachers. The findings of the existing studies (Andrabi, Das, & Khwaja, 2008; Iram et al., 2008; Lloyd, Mete, & Sathar, 2005; Alderman, Orazem, & Paterno, 2001; Awan & Zia, 2015; Rehman et al., 2010; Ahmed et al., 2013) conform to the findings of this study stating that family income is an important determinant of school choice. Facilities and infrastructure of school are considered by parents while selecting a school for children (Andrabi et al., 2007; ASER, 2010). Parents with low family income per month mostly opt government schools for their children (Awan & Zia, 2015; Rehman et al., 2010; Ahmed et al., 2013), they provide totally free education because government provides and finances for all facilities including building, furniture, library, hall and utilities as

water supply, electricity, and gas etc (Iqbal, 2012). Government schools have better infrastructure and physical facilities as compared to most of the private schools (Iqbal, 2005). Teachers' qualification is one of the most important factors which affect parents' preference while selecting a government or private school for children's education (Rehman et al., 2010). Government school teachers are more qualified relative to their counterparts in the private schools (Andrabi et al., 2007; Imran, 2008). Government schools have highly qualified and trained teachers (Iqbal, 2012).

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended for education officers concerned (Secretary Schools, CEOs) to take practical steps to ensure the improvement of those indicators which attract the parents during selection of school for their children's education. They may improve quality of teaching and learning and consequently results in government schools by ensuring the maximum utilization of available resources in school, application of all effective teaching methods and techniques by teachers during their teaching and focusing students' learning progress during supervision by education officers. They may improve physical facilities/infrastructure in private schools by ensuring implementation of rules regarding establishment/registration and functioning of private schools by regular monitoring of their activities and forcing the owners of private schools to must have airy rooms and play grounds for students in their schools. Authorities should also got introduced and strictly implemented terms and conditions regarding fee structure for different categories of private schools in accordance with the facilities they provide to students so that the parents with low income may afford to get their children admitted to near private school when government school is at distance.

## **References**

- Ahmad, L. R., Raheem, A. R., & Nawaz, A. (2014). Factors affecting in selection of school for upcoming generation: A case study of Karachi urban areas, Pakistan. *Research Journal of Educational Sciences*, 2 (4), 1-7. Retrieved from <https://www.indus.edu.pk/publication/Publication-8.pdf>
- Ahmed, H., Amjad, S., Habib, M., & Shah, S. A. (2013). *Determinants of school choice: evidence from rural Punjab*, Pakistan (Working Paper No. 01-13). Lahore: Center for Research in Economics and Business, Lahore School of Economics. Retrieved from <http://www.creb.org.pk/uploads/Working/Complete.pdf>
- Alderman, H., Orazem, P. F., & Paterno, E. M. (2001). School quality, school cost, and the public/private school choices of low-income households in Pakistan. *Journal of Human Resources*, 36 (2), 304-326. Retrieved from <http://econ2.econ.iastate.edu/faculty/orazem/lahore.pdf>
- Amjad, R. (2012). Are private schools better at imparting learning than government schools? Islamabad: Annual Status of Education Report. Retrieved from [http://aserepakistan.org/document/aserep/2011/notes\\_aser\\_2011/Ravish%20Amjad.pdf](http://aserepakistan.org/document/aserep/2011/notes_aser_2011/Ravish%20Amjad.pdf)
- Andrabi, T., Das, J., & Khwaja, A. (2008). A dime a day: The possibilities and limits of private schooling in Pakistan. *Comparative Education Review*, 52 (3), 329-355. Retrieved from [https://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/akhwaja/papers/PrivateSchool\\_CER.pdf](https://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/akhwaja/papers/PrivateSchool_CER.pdf)

- Andrabi, T., Das, J., Khwaja, A. I., Vishwanath, T., & Zajonc, T. (2007). *Pakistan: Learning and educational achievements in Punjab schools (LEAPS): Insights to inform the education policy debate*. Retrieved from [http://www.leapsproject.org/assets/publications/LEAPS\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.leapsproject.org/assets/publications/LEAPS_Report_FINAL.pdf)
- ASER (2010). *Annual Status of Education Report Pakistan*. Lahore: South Asian Forum for Education Development (SAFED). Retrieved from <http://aserpakistan.org/document/aser/2011/.pdf>
- Awan, A. G., & Zia, A. (2015). Comparative analysis of public and private educational institutions: A case study of District Vehari-Pakistan. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6 (16), 122-130. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1079988.pdf>
- Badri, M. A., Mason, S. E., & Mourad, T. E. (2010). *Determinants of parent's satisfaction with subjects taught and the effects of school factors, parent's demographics and school's characteristics*. Abu Dhabi: Abu Dhabi Education Council. The paper presented at the International Academy of Business & Public Administration Discipline -2009 annual conference, Dallas, TX, USA. April 23-27, 2009. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/.../267709085>
- Bast, J. L., & Walberg, H. J. (2004). Can parents choose the best schools for their children? *Economics of Education Review*, 23, 431-440. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ730370>
- Frankel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2012). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (8<sup>th</sup> ed). New York: McGraw Hills.
- Friedman, B., Bobrowski, P., & Markow, D. (2007). Predictors of parents' satisfaction with their children's school. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 45 (3), 278-288. doi:10.1108/09578230710747811
- Friedman, B.A., Bobrowski, P. & Geraci, J. (2006). Parents' school satisfaction: ethnic similarities and differences. *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 44 (5), 471-86.
- Gay, L. R. (1981). *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Columbus: Carles E. Merrill Publishing Company.
- Government of Pakistan (2015). *Pakistan Education for All Review Report 2015*. Islamabad: Academy of Educational Planning and Management, Ministry of Education.
- Ikoya, P, O., & Ikoya, O.V. (2009). Determinants of rural-urban disparity in private sector participation in the provision and management of education in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 19(3), 225-231. Retrieved from <http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/JSS/JSS-19-0-000-09-Web/JSS-19-3-000-09-Abst-PDF/JSS-19-3-225-2009-671-Ikoya-P-O/JSS-19-3-225-2009-671-Ikoya-P-O-Tt.pdf>
- Imran, M. (2008). *A comparative study of quality of education in public and private secondary schools of Punjab* (unpublished doctoral dissertation). University Institute of Education and Research, Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi.
- Iqbal, M. (2005). *A comparative study of the organizational structure, leadership style and physical facilities of public and private secondary schools in Punjab and their effect on school effectiveness* (unpublished doctoral dissertation). Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore.
- Iqbal, M. (2011). *Education in Pakistan: developmental milestones*. Lahore: Paramount Publishers.
- Iqbal, M. (2012). Public versus private secondary school: A qualitative comparison. *Journal of Research and Reflection in Education*, 6(1), 40-49. Retrieved from <http://ue.edu.pk/jrre/articles/61004.pdf>
- Iram, N., Hussain, Z., Anwar, S., Hussain, I., & Akram, W. (2008). Determinants of child school choice in Punjab: Policy implications. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 23(2), 285-293. Retrieved from [http://www.academia.edu/4365741/Determinants\\_of\\_Child\\_School\\_Choice\\_in\\_Punjab\\_Policy\\_Implications](http://www.academia.edu/4365741/Determinants_of_Child_School_Choice_in_Punjab_Policy_Implications)
- ISQ. (2011). *What parents want?, Independent Schools Queensland Survey*. Retrieved from [http://www.aisq.qld.edu.au/files/Communications/survey/what\\_Parnets\\_Want\\_SurveyReport-2011.pdf](http://www.aisq.qld.edu.au/files/Communications/survey/what_Parnets_Want_SurveyReport-2011.pdf)
- Lai, F., Sadoulet, E., & Janvry, A.D. (2009). The adverse effects of parents' school selection errors on academic achievement: Evidence from the Beijing open enrollment program. *Economics of*

*Parents' Choice Regarding School Selection for their Children's Education*

- Education Review*, 28, 485–496. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0272775709000041>
- Lloyd, C. B., Mete, C., & Sathar, Z. A. (2005). The effect of gender differences in primary school access, type, and quality on the decision to enroll in rural Pakistan. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 53 (3), 685–710. doi: 10.1086/427042
- OFSTED. (2006). *Parents' satisfaction with schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/parents-satisfaction-schools>
- Rehman, N. U., 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. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266874609\\_Determinants\\_of\\_Parents'\\_Choice\\_in\\_Selection\\_of\\_Private\\_Schools\\_for\\_their\\_Children\\_in\\_District\\_Peshawar\\_of\\_Khyber\\_Pakhtunkhwa\\_Province](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266874609_Determinants_of_Parents'_Choice_in_Selection_of_Private_Schools_for_their_Children_in_District_Peshawar_of_Khyber_Pakhtunkhwa_Province)
- Siddiqui, S. (2007). *Rethinking education in Pakistan: Perceptions, practices, and possibilities*. Karachi, Pakistan: Paramount Publishing Enterprise.
- Silverstein, A. (2005). *Parent satisfaction survey: KS Maui campus*. Retrieved from [http://www.ksbe.edu/spi/PDFS/Reports/K-12/05\\_06\\_3.pdf](http://www.ksbe.edu/spi/PDFS/Reports/K-12/05_06_3.pdf)
- Sudarshanam, G. (2011). Survey on satisfaction of parents; a study of select school in Hyderabad city, Andhra Pradesh. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 8 (1), 1-17. Retrieved from [http://zenithresearch.org.in/images/stories/pdf/2011/Dec/zijmr/1\\_1\\_VOL%201\\_ISSUE8\\_ZEN.pdf](http://zenithresearch.org.in/images/stories/pdf/2011/Dec/zijmr/1_1_VOL%201_ISSUE8_ZEN.pdf)