

## A study of factors influencing the choice of educational institution by the parents

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### Abstract

The choice of an educational institution by parents is influenced by multiple factors, including academic reputation, infrastructure, faculty quality, extracurricular opportunities, and financial considerations. This study explores these factors using an exploratory methodology to gain in-depth insights into parental decision-making processes. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 100 respondents. The study relies on semi structured questionnaires and interviews to collect the data. The findings highlight key determinants such as school reputation, curriculum, quality education and peer influence, which play a crucial role in parental choices. The research provides valuable insights for educational institutions seeking to align their offerings with parental expectations and improve their appeal to prospective students.

**Keywords:** Educational Institution; Parental Choice; Decision-Making; School Selection

### 1. Introduction

Education is fundamental right and parents play a very important role in ensuring their children receive quality education. One of the most important decisions that parents take regarding their children is the choice of their schools. A good education is often the base of a person's future life. Most parents take care to choose a suitable school for their children, spending sufficient resources in terms of time and money in the process. Various factors influence this decision, including academic reputation, location, cost, extracurricular activities, and personal recommendations. Research has shown that parents' choices of educational institutions are influenced by a combination of rational and intuitive factors (Goddard & Loeb, 2001). Academic reputation, location, and cost are often cited as key factors in parents' decision-making processes (Hensley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). Additionally, extracurricular activities and personal recommendations from friends and family can also play a significant role (Sosnowski, 2004). Furthermore, parents' choices may be influenced by their own experiences and values, as well as their aspirations for their child's future (Kahlenberg, 2003). The rise of online platforms and social media has also changed the way parents access and evaluate information about educational institutions (Mastrodicasa & Metcalf, 2013). This study aims to investigate the factors influencing parents' choices of educational institutions. Various factors influence this decision, including academic reputation, location, cost, extracurricular activities, and personal recommendations. Research has shown that parents' choices of educational institutions are influenced by a combination of rational and intuitive factors (Goddard & Loeb, 2001). Academic reputation, location, and cost are often cited as key factors in parents' decision-making processes (Hensley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). Additionally, extracurricular activities and personal recommendations from friends and family can also play a significant role (Sosnowski, 2004). Furthermore, parents' choices may be influenced by their own experiences and values, as well as their aspirations for their child's future (Kahlenberg, 2003).

The rise of online platforms and social media has also changed the way parents access and evaluate information about educational institutions (Mastrodicasa & Metcalf, 2013). This study aims to investigate the factors influencing parents' choices of educational institutions. School choice is a concept that allows parents to have the freedom to choose the best

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educational option for their children. When parents can choose the school that aligns with their values, goals, and preferences, they can ensure that their children receive an education that meets their individual needs (Kamal & Zunaid, 2006). Education is a social aspiration; it is seen and perceived as the gateway to good quality of human life. It is the key instrument to prosperity of an individual and the society.

### 1.1. Significance of the study

Several theoretical frameworks can be used to explain parents' choice of educational institutions. Rational choice theory posits that parents make rational decisions based on their assessment of the institution's quality and their child's needs (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Social capital theory suggests that parents' social networks and relationships influence their choice of institution (Lareau, 2000). Cultural capital theory proposes that parents' cultural background and values shape their preferences for educational institutions (Bourdieu, 1986). Several methodological approaches can be used to study parents' choice of educational institutions. Surveys and questionnaires can be used to collect quantitative data from parents (Kotler & Fox, 1995). Interviews and focus groups can be used to gather qualitative data and gain in-depth insights into parents' decision-making processes (Bosetti, 2004). Case studies can be used to examine specific educational institutions or contexts (Lareau, 2000). It is assumed that parents choose schools based on their own self-interest, or in this case the interest of their child; and Parents once they make their choice, feel a need to justify their decision and reveal symptoms of increased fulfilment after the fact (Neferity&singh 2013). From this study researcher want to know that how parents can take decisions about selecting the most appropriate school for their children based upon their needs and preferences.

In this present study, researcher try to find the factors which influencing the parent's choice of educational institutions for their children. It allows for a deeper understanding of the preferences, priorities and concerns of parents which in turn can inform strategic decision making, resource allocation and program development. By identifying these factors, institutions can better align their offerings with the needs and expectations of parent's ultimately fostering stronger partnerships and increasing student enrolment and retention. The findings of the study can have a direct impact on educational practices and policies. With the help of these factors children can get better education. The research objectives have been tackled as follows in the study:

#### *Objectives of the study*

- To identify the pattern in the choice of type of educational institution by the parents.
- To study the underlying patterns in parents' choice of institution w. r. t. their educational qualification.
- To study the underlying patterns in parents' choice of institution w. r. t. their occupation.
- To identify the factors influencing parents' choice of institution for their ward.

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## 2. Methodology

This exploratory research aims to study the factors influencing parents' choice of schooling for their children. The study population includes parents of children aged 3-14 years across ten districts of Jammu Province. A multi-stage sampling method was employed, beginning with the random selection of one district, followed by the random selection of one zone within the chosen district, and finally, the purposive selection of 100 parents from the selected zone. Since no standardized tool existed to examine parental school choice, the researcher developed an interview schedule. This tool gathered personal details such as parents' names, their children's schools, educational qualifications, and occupations, along with in-depth questions related to the study objectives. Data collection involved group discussions and interviews, where the researcher ensured neutrality by avoiding leading questions and respecting respondents' perspectives. Parents' school choices were influenced by factors such as quality education, safety, infrastructure, curricular and co-curricular activities, and the availability of experienced teachers. The researcher conducted extensive one-on-one interviews, dedicating significant time to understanding parents' perspectives. With guidance from the supervisor, every effort was made to maintain ethical research standards and ensure a comfortable environment for respondents.

### 2.1. Data collection Procedure

Group discussions as well as interviews can be used to collect data. The researcher made every effort to stay away of any form of leading questions, suggestions, or divert from the intended course during the interviews. She additionally used care to ensure that the interviewees would not be bothered or embarrassed in any way by her questions or probing; instead, she listened patiently to their opinions and ideas and avoided herself between each response. The supervisor provided instructions and suggestions prior to the interview in order to ensure a successful outcome. Following that, the researcher had one-on-one meetings with the parents to conduct in-depth interviews with them. In order to conduct the study, the researcher had spent a significant amount of time with the respondents.

### 3. Interpretation and Analysis of data

#### 3.1. Objective 1: To study the Pattern in the choice of type of educational institution

**Table 1** Pattern in Parents' Choice of Schools for their wards (Prospective and Existing)

School Type	Locale wise distribution of school Choice		Total (%)*
	Rural (%)*	Urban (%)*	
Government	25	19	44
Private	20	36	56

\*total number of schools (N) = 100

Table 1 Depicts that the majority of the parents (56%) preferred private schools over the government schools. (36%) of the total parents who situated in urban area and (20%) in the rural areas choose private schools over government schools. It is also seen that few parents (25%) in rural areas and (19%) in urban areas prefer government school.

##### 3.1.1. Verbatim Responses from Parent Interviews

During the interview, it was found that in rural areas most of the parents choose government Schools. In the urban areas parents preferred private schools over the government Schools. When the researcher asked why they preferred Private schools over the government school, one of the interviewee replied by saying that, *"Although the fee structure in Government School is veryless as compared to the Private Schools I prefer Private schoolbecause private schools are well-managed and therefore the overallquality of education is better than Government schools"* Thus, poor management of government schools was one of the factor which drives parent away from sending their wards to government schools. Another parent opinion, *"Good result of Private schools shows that private schoolare far better than Government schools. This is because thereis a strong competition in Private schools, whereas in Governmentschool there is less competition"*

Good academic result of the students especially in board examination conducted by the State was another reason which makes the parents chooses Private schools over the government schools. The Sincerity of the teachers was also another factor which influenced the parents' decision of choosing schooling of their children. This is supported by the remarks made by one of the parents; *"Although most of the Government teachers are trained, yetthe performance of the students is very poor as compared toprivate schools because the Government teachers are less dedicated totheir work"* The quality of education is not much good in government schools as compared to the private schools. That is the main reason of the parents choosing private schools as compared to the government schools.

#### 3.2. Objective 2To study the pattern in parents educational Qualification

**Table 2** Pattern in Parents' Educational Qualifications

Parents Qualification	Locale wise distribution of Educational Qualification		Total (%)*
	Rural (%)*	Urban (%)*	
Matric	22	25	47
Intermediate	9	12	21
Graduation	8	11	19
Post graduation	6	7	13

\*total number of Parents (N) = 100

Table 2 shows the distribution of parents' educational qualifications across urban and rural areas. In both regions, a higher percentage of parents have attained lower education levels, with 25% of urban parents and 22% of rural parents having completed matriculation. The gap narrows slightly for intermediate education, with 12% of urban and 9% of rural parents holding this qualification. However, the disparity becomes more significant at higher education levels, with 11% of urban parents and only 8% of rural parents having completed graduation, and 7% of urban parents compared to 6% of rural parents holding post graduate degrees. Overall, the data reveals that urban parents tend to

have higher educational qualifications than rural parents, reflecting differences in access to educational resources and opportunities between the two areas.

### 3.2.1. Verbatim Responses from Parent Interviews

During interaction with the parent, it was found that the whether the parents are highly qualified or the parents with the less qualification choose the private schools instead of the government schools. The reasons for not choosing government schools according to some of the parents have some complaints regarding quality education, discipline etc. Therefore the parents were hesitating to send their children to the government school. Every parent wants that they will send their child to the best school in which they can get the quality education. One of the parents said that,

*"In Government schools they cannot give the quality education to the children. They only give the education related to books only they doesn't give extra knowledge to the students. This is not sufficient for the students to compete with others".*

Studies conducted in past gave the fact that increasing dissatisfaction with the quality of public schooling has given rise to calls for increasing the involvement of the private sector in education (kelkar 2006). The two main themes of parents explanations of why they sent their children to private schools are government schools are not good around here ,the teachers are often absent and don't work hard even when present and we want our children to learn english, and the private schools are english medium.

### 3.3. Objective 3 To study the pattern in Choices with respect to occupation.

**Table 3** Patterns in Parents' Occupational Choices

Parents Occupation	Locale wise distribution of Parents Occupation		Total (%)*
	Regular (%)*	Non regular (%)*	
Government	30	10	40
Private	34	26	60

\*total number of Parents (N) = 100

Table 1. 3 depicts that 30% of parents have government regular jobs. In comparison, 10% of parents have government non-regular jobs. For private jobs, 34% of parents have regular jobs. Meanwhile, 26% of parents have non-regular private jobs. . Parents with government jobs tend to choose private schools for their children, and most parents with non-regular private jobs also prefer private schools.

### 3.3.1. Verbatim Responses from Parent Interviews

Therefore it can be said that observation was the most practiced method applied for parents to select the school for their children. Even the parents with private jobs likes most of the parents said that education is the first priority for them while selecting the school for their children they will firstly observe the overall performance of the school in terms of academic and non academic. Parents like to send their child to the best school irrespective of their income In terms of academic they mostly observed the classroom performance of the students and in terms of non academic they mostly observed the co-curricular activities that the school provides. One of the parents said:

*"A school should have well balanced curricular and co-curricular activities. It helps in the overall development of the children".* Most of the parents said that they always observed that the school has good facilities through which their children got the quality education and learn new things which are better for their future. The reasons for choosing private schools are in order of poor infrastructure of government schools, lack of English medium education and insufficiency or absenteeism of government school teachers. One of the respondents said that *"Government school teachers are more trained as compared to private schools, yet the performance of students in Private school was far better than Government schools because of poor management in Government schools."*

Majority of the parents prioritize private school for their advanced curriculum, modern facilities, climate, discipline and academic standard were better than Government schools. The private schools have better resources and funds to provide possible facilities, library, games and sports. Most of the private schools give more opportunities to the students through which it will help in the overall development of the children. Many middle class parents prefer private schools even if they require financial adjustments, due to perceived better quality education and co-curricular activities. The Parents with low income choose low cost private schools over public schools due to concern about teacher's

accountability and co-curricular exposure. Some parents make financial sacrifices to afford private education. So that the parents can choose the private schools more irrespective of their occupation because private schools focus on curricular and co-curricular activities which will help in the overall development of the child.

### 3.4. Objective 4 To find out reasons for the choices of educational institution by Parents

**Table 4** Reasons for Parents' Choice of Educational Institutions

	Theme	Percentage	
		Yes	No
1	Academic Consideration		
1.1	Academic Reputation	75%	25%
1.2	Educational Qualification & experience	77%	23%
2	Financial Aspects		
2.1	Tuition Fees	34%	66%
2.2	Expensive school had superior facilities	71%	29%
3	School Facilities and resources		
3.1	Co-curricular activities	82%	18%
3.2	Larger school with more resources	55%	45%
3.3	Smaller schools for Personalised experience	45%	55%
4	School Environment and Safety		
4.1	Safety & Security is the top priority	92%	8%
5	Parent Background and influence		
5.1	Educational Background	44%	56%
5.2	Occupation	62%	38%
5.3	Professional values	53%	47%
6	Social influence		
6.1	Presence of child's friend	40%	60%
6.2	Recommendations from other parents	42%	58%
7	School size and structure		
7.1	Larger schools with more resources	55%	45%
7.2	Smaller schools for personalised experience	39%	61%
8	Language of instruction		
8.1	Multilingual instruction	72%	28%
8.2	Language of instruction	65%	35%

\*total number of Parents (N) = 100

Parents consider several factors when choosing a school for their children. The most important are the school's academic reputation (75%) and the qualifications and experience of the teachers (77%). Financial factors, like tuition fees, matter less, with only 34% considering them important. However, 71% prefer schools with excellent facilities, showing they are willing to invest in quality education. School facilities, especially co-curricular activities like sports and clubs, are very important to parents (82%). Some parents prefer larger schools with more resources (55%), while others like smaller schools for a more personalized experience (45%). Safety and security are the top priority for 92% of parents, highlighting the need for a safe learning environment. Parents' backgrounds also play a role in their decisions. Factors like their own education (44%), jobs (62%), and professional values (53%) influence their choices. Social factors, such as having friends at the school (40%) or getting recommendations from other parents (42%), have

some effect but are not as important. Language of instruction is another key factor. 72% of parents value multilingual education, and 65% focus on the specific language of instruction, showing that language skills are increasingly important in today's global world.

The results show that parents focus on academic success, safety, and a well-rounded environment when choosing schools for their kids. While factors like cost and social connections matter, they're not as important as quality education and a secure setting. Parents appreciate both large schools with plenty of resources and smaller schools that offer more personal attention, indicating they want a mix of both. There's also a strong preference for multilingual education and languages like English, reflecting the growing importance of language skills in today's global world. Parents believe that experienced, qualified teachers, along with good facilities and extracurricular activities, play a big role in a child's overall growth. Personal factors, like parents' jobs, values, and recommendations from other parents, also influence decisions, though to a lesser extent. Overall, parents consider a combination of academic quality, safety, resources, and language when selecting the best school for their children.

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#### 4. Major findings of the study

- Parents in both urban and rural areas prefer private schools over government schools.
- Quality education is the primary factor influencing school selection.
- Highly educated parents prioritize qualified teachers, quality education, and good infrastructure, while less qualified parents focus mainly on infrastructure and education quality.
- Both government and private job holders consider curricular and co-curricular activities crucial in school selection.
- Academic success, safety, and a well-rounded learning environment outweigh cost and social factors in school choice.
- Parents value both large schools with ample resources and smaller schools offering personalized attention, emphasizing a balanced education approach.
- Multilingual education, particularly English, is highly preferred due to global language demands.
- Experienced teachers, good facilities, and extracurricular activities are key to overall child development.
- Personal factors like professional background, values, and peer recommendations influence decisions but play a secondary role.
- Ultimately, parents seek a mix of academic excellence, safety, resources, and language options when selecting schools.

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#### 5. Conclusion

Concluding the present study it can be said that most of the parents prefer private schools over the government schools. Parents have suggested various deciding factors for preferring schools i. e. good infrastructure and good environment, Professional qualification of Teachers and good academic performance. They have explained that the government schools which were available in the area have very poor infrastructure, academic performance and qualified but less dedicated teachers. The study also found out that the deciding factors for professionally qualified /Higher education parents are good infrastructure and quality education, Professional qualification of Teachers and good academic performance. For Graduate parents the factors which influenced their decision are scattered around good infrastructure and good environment, Moral education and discipline, Good academic performance, Professional qualification of teachers, good Location and Safety. For self educated parents the factors are good infrastructure and good environment and the professional qualification of teachers. It was also found out that the infrastructures in government schools are in poor conditions especially in government primary schools in rural areas. It was also seen that the parents with the government job as well as private jobs choose private schools more than the government schools because private schools provide more facilities to the students. They can offer curricular as well as co-curricular activities to the students which help them in the overall development of the children.

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#### Compliance with ethical standards

##### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

### *Statement of informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. The participants were informed about the study, their rights and the confidentiality of their responses.

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