

To Evaluate Preference of Parents Sending their Children to Public or Private Schools in District Karak

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Abstract

The study focused on evaluating preference of parents sending their children to public or private schools in District Karak. Objective of the study was to find out parental preference for the areas of academic standard, quality of staff, physical facilities, curriculum, cost-effectiveness, and quality of output. All the parents whose children were studying in private or public schools in District Karak were included in the population. There are three tehsils in District Karak. A total of 900 parents (300 from each tehsil) were included in the sample. Data was collected through a self-developed questionnaire. Content validity of the questionnaire was obtained through experts' judgement and reliability through Cronbach Alpha formula which was 0.75. The data was obtained in three categories, Public School, Private School, Don't know and was analyzed through statistical technique of Chi-square. Findings of the study were: parents of public schools' children favored public schools whereas parents of private schools' children favored private schools for areas of academic performance, quality of staff, commitment of staff, standard of curriculum, and confidence level of students; parents of both public and private schools' children favored public schools for teachers qualification, and physical facilities; parents of both public and private schools' children favored private schools for the area of expensiveness of education. Recommendations of the study were: the government may prepare fee and admission policy, and availability of physical facilities in private schools; the government may provide financial assistance to private schools for monthly salaries to teachers; modalities may be prepared to make teachers of public schools more punctual and regular.

Keywords: Public schools, private schools, parents' preference

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Introduction

There is a continuous trend of losing trust in public sector educational institutions by the public whether these institutions are of primary, secondary or higher level. At present education faces multi-dimensional challenges. These challenges range from poor management of allocating finances to declining output in the field of academic. The parents are really worried about the education of their children. They feel that educational institutions, as a whole, have ignored the basic responsibilities of schooling (Ajayi, 2000).

In these circumstances the education system has come to the level of collapse. A very poor infrastructure of education exists everywhere and the overall standard of educational facilities available in different institutions is generally un-satisfactory. The infrastructure of schools is poor, equipment is outdated, vehicles are un-serviceable, classrooms are overcrowded, man-power inadequate, academic calendar unstable and morale of the staff is low. All these factors present bleak picture of the situation (Okafor, Ogbe, Iheagwam, & Betiang, 2003).

The condition of the existing infrastructure of public educational institutions is very poor. Half-hearted efforts are being made for the improvement of this situation. It is obvious that parents are worried about the education of their children. They try to find out educational institution which may provide quality education to their children at whatever cost it may be? People feel that the standard of education generally determines success and failure in their lives. The opportunities in life of individual also depend on the quality of education which he has received. Therefore, parents are really worried and have a dream to provide quality education to their children (Okafor et al., 2003).

The private educational institutions are required to play their role in the above described situation. It may be mentioned that the Government alone cannot provide education facilities to all the people. In other areas e.g. electricity, roads, water and telecommunication, the government has also not been able to fulfill expectations of the public. So there remains trend in the policies of the government to join hands with private sector for provision of basic services to the masses. Although providing basic services is different from the provision of educational services.

Therefore, need was felt to carry out proper study on the preference of parents for private versus public schools in District Karak. A lot of educational institutions have been established in private sector and there is an increasing trend of competition between private and public sector schools in this area. Parents have been observed rushing towards different private schools for admission of their children. Focus of the study was to explore whether parents think that private schools provide quality education as compared to public schools. The study may help in finding out the areas of improvement which have made private schools more attractive for students and their parents.

Statement of the Problem

It is the primary responsibility of the government to provide quality education to the masses. Although the public sector endeavors to provide educational facilities to all the citizens but it is not possible. No doubt the education today faces multi-dimensional challenges in different areas. So the situation demanded that private sector may share the responsibility of providing educational facilities to the people. Gradually it was realized that probably private educational institutions have started attracting people more as compared to public sector. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to Evaluate Preference of Parents Sending their Children to Public or Private Schools in District Karak, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa.

Objectives of the Study

Following were the objectives of the study: -

1. To find out parental preference for academic standards of public versus private schools.
2. To explore parental preference for staff of public versus private schools.
3. To discover parental preference for physical facilities of public versus private schools.
4. To explore parental preference for curriculum of public versus private schools.
5. To find out parental preference for cost-effectiveness of public versus private schools.
6. To investigate parental preference for quality of output of public versus private schools.

Research questions

The study focused on answering the following research questions:-

1. Whether the parents think that private schools are academically better than public schools?
2. Whether the parents think that private schools have better quality teachers than public Schools?
3. Whether the parents think that private schools have better physical facilities than public schools?
4. Whether the parents think that curriculum in private schools is better than that of public schools?
5. Whether the parents think that private schools are more cost-effective than public schools?
6. Whether the parents think that quality of graduates of private schools is better than public schools?

Methods and Procedure

The accessible population of the study consisted of all the parents whose children were studying in public or private school in District Karak. There are 66 Public and 50 Private High Schools in District Karak. There are three Tehsils in District Karak i.e. Karak, Takhte Nasrati and Banda Daud Shah. Cluster random sampling technique was used for the selection of sample. In cluster sampling intact groups, not individuals are randomly selected. In stage one, three public schools and three private schools were randomly selected from each Tehsil. In stage two, 50 students were randomly selected from each school. As a result, 450 students from public schools and 450 students from private schools were selected. The parents of all these 900 students were included in the sample.

The study was descriptive in nature. The data was collected through survey technique. A questionnaire was developed for getting Parental Preference for Public versus Private Schools (PPPPS) and administered to the sample. The opinion of the parents was obtained in different areas such as academic performance, quality of staff, physical facilities, quality of curriculum, cost effectiveness, and quality of output. These areas were further broken into specific research questions. The questionnaire included 24 closed ended questions and one open ended question.

Data Analysis

The data was obtained and tabulated into three response categories i.e. Public School, Private School, and Don't Know. Since it was categorical data therefore it was analyzed on the basis of Chi- square.

Findings

On the basis of analysis of data following findings were obtained:-

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the frequency of parents favoring public schools or private schools in the area of their academic performance.

Table 1
Frequency of parents favoring public or private schools in area of academic performance

S. No	Area	Category	Response of Parents			χ^2	P
			Public	Private	UD		
1	Academic Performance	Parents of Public School	387	61	2	512.6	.000
		Parents of Private School	50	397	3		
2	External Exam	Parents of Public School	232	207	11	169.3	.000
		Parents of Private School	56	391	3		
3	Preparation for Higher Education	Parents of Public School	317	121	12	305.5	.000
		Parents of Private School	60	381	9		
4	Oral & Written communication	Parents of Public School	282	152	16	223.4	.000
		Parents of Private School	69	368	13		

N = 900, $p < .05$, $df = 2$

The table indicates that the parents were asked four questions in the area of academic performance. The table shows that p value (.000) is less than .05, level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It means that parents whose children study in public schools favored public schools and parents whose children study in private schools favored private schools for academic performance, performance of students in external examination, preparation of students for higher Education, and preparation of students for oral and written communication.

Ho 2: There is no significant difference in the frequency of parents favoring public schools or private schools in the area of quality of staff.

Table 2
Frequency of parents favoring public or private schools in area of quality of staff

S. No	Area	Category	Response of Parents			χ^2	P
			Public	Private	UD		
1	Quality of Faculty	Parents of Public School	414	30	6	228.0	.000
		Parents of Private School	206	233	11		
2	Qualification of Faculty	Parents of Public School	375	61	14	56.1	.000
		Parents of Private School	272	146	32		
3	Teachers' Commitment	Parents of Public School	401	37	12	224.7	.000
		Parents of Private School	191	227	32		
4	Teachers' Effectiveness	Parents of Public School	373	62	15	238.5	.000
		Parents of Private School	148	272	30		

N = 900, $p < .05$, $df = 2$

The table indicates that the parents were asked four questions in the area of quality of staff. The table shows that in these areas p value (.000) is less than .05, level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It means that parents whose children study in public schools favored public schools and parents whose children study in private schools favored private schools for quality of faculty, teachers' commitments, teachers' effectiveness. Parents of both streams of students favored public schools for qualification of teachers.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in the frequency of parents favoring public schools or private schools in the area of availability of physical facilities.

Table 3

Frequency of parents favoring public or private schools in area of physical facilities

S. No	Area	Category	Response of Parents			χ^2	P
			Public	Private	UD		
1	Physical facilities	Parents of Public School	375	68	7	117.70	.000
		Parents of Private School	221	213	16		
2	Conducive environment	Parents of Public School	324	111	15	133.70	.000
		Parents of Private School	161	281	8		
3	Library facilities	Parents of Public School	374	60	16	95.81	.000
		Parents of Private School	244	187	19		
4	Laboratory facilities	Parents of Public School	399	37	14	30.56	.000
		Parents of Private School	334	95	21		

N = 900, p < .05, df = 2

The table indicates that the parents were asked four questions in the area of availability of physical facilities. The table shows that in these areas p value (.000) is less than .05, level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It means that the parents whose children study in public schools favored public schools and parents whose children study in private schools favored private schools for area of conducive environment. Parents of both streams of students viewed that physical, library, laboratory facilities are better in public schools as compared to private schools.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in the frequency of parents favoring public schools or private schools in the area of quality of curriculum.

Table 4

Frequency of parents favoring public or private schools in area of quality of curriculum

S. No	Area	Category	Response of Parents			χ^2	P
			Public	Private	UD		
1	Curriculum	Parents of Public School	354	88	8	69.95	.000
		Parents of Private School	238	184	28		
2	Curriculum implementation	Parents of Public School	311	120	19	167.31	.000
		Parents of Private School	118	300	32		
3	Student Centered Curriculum	Parents of Public School	311	113	26	155.10	.000
		Parents of Private School	125	278	47		
4	Co-curricular activities	Parents of Public School	335	90	25	89.90	.000
		Parents of Private School	197	215	38		

N = 900, p < .05, df = 2

The table indicates that the parents were asked four questions in the area of quality of curriculum. The table shows that in these areas p value (.000) is less than .05, level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It means that the parents whose children study in public schools favored public schools and parents whose children study in private schools favored private schools for areas of curriculum implementation, student-centered curriculum and co-curricular activities. Parents of both streams of students viewed that curriculum of public schools is better than private schools.

Ho5: There is no significant difference in the frequency of parents favoring public schools or private schools in the area of cost effectiveness.

Table 5

Frequency of parents favoring public or private schools in area of cost effectiveness

S. No	Area	Category	Response of Parents			χ^2	P
			Public	Private	UD		
1	Financial assistance	Parents of Public School	395	44	11	57.90	.000
		Parents of Private School	298	133	19		
2	Use of resources	Parents of Public School	291	140	19	45.70	.000
		Parents of Private School	190	232	28		
3	Profit Orientation	Parents of Public School	208	223	19	91.55	.000
		Parents of Private School	75	344	31		
4	Expensiveness	Parents of Public School	86	360	4	26.76	.000
		Parents of Private School	39	395	16		

N = 900, p < .05, df = 2

The table indicates that the parents were asked four questions in the area of cost effectiveness. The table shows that in these areas p value (.000) is less than .05, level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It means that the parents of both streams of schools viewed that public schools are given more financial assistance. On the other hand, private schools are more profit oriented and more expensive. Yet parents of public schools' children favored public schools and parents of private schools' children favored private schools for efficient use of resources.

Ho6: There is no significant difference in the frequency of parents favoring public schools or private schools in the area of quality of output.

Table 6

Frequency of parents favoring public or private schools in area of quality of output

S. No	Area	Category	Response of Parents			χ^2	P
			Public	Private	UD		
1	Higher academic quality	Parents of Public School	324	108	18	314.78	.000
		Parents of Private School	13	371	12		
2	Chance of employment	Parents of Public School	297	114	39	170.68	.000
		Parents of Private School	109	300	41		
3	Social skills	Parents of Public School	299	120	31	183.10	.000
		Parents of Private School	103	315	32		
4	Confidence	Parents of Public School	317	117	16	298.36	.000
		Parents of Private School	64	368	18		

N = 900, p < .05, df = 2

The table indicates that the parents were asked four questions in the area of quality of output. The table shows that in these areas p value (.000) is less than .05, level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It means that parents whose children study in public schools favored public schools and parents whose children study in private schools favored private schools for areas of academic quality, chance of getting employment, social skills, and confidence level.

Discussion

Analysis of the data revealed that parents of public schools' children favored public schools whereas parents of private schools' favored private schools for the areas of academic performance, preparation for higher education, preparation of students for oral and written communication, quality of staff, commitment of teachers, teachers effectiveness, conducive environment for teaching and learning, quality of curriculum, co-curricular activities, better chance of getting employment, better social skills and confidence level of graduates.

Another finding of the study was that parents of both public and private schools' children favored public schools for the areas of teachers' qualification, availability of physical facilities, libraries facilities, and lab facilities. This finding provides very interesting insight. The parents of private schools' children feel that public schools are better than the private schools in these areas but still they have opted for admitting their children in private schools. This indicates that although public schools have more facilities as compared to private schools but they do not utilize it effectively. Therefore, there is lack of trust in public schools on the parts of parents.

Third finding of the study was that parents of both public and private schools' children admitted that education in private schools is expensive. They admit that private schools are profit oriented and expensive as compared to public schools but still opt for admission in private schools. One possible answer to this trend may be that despite expensiveness of private schools, parents prefer it for the efficient use of resources, preparation of students for oral and written communication and performance of students in external examination.

These findings are quite in line with the findings of the study of Adebayo (2009), the study of Osman, et al (2014), the study of Iqbal (2012), the study of Zia & Awan (2015), and the study of Almani, et al. (2012).

Conclusions

On the basis of analysis of data and findings of study, following conclusions were drawn:

The parents of public schools' children favored public schools and parents of private schools' children favored private schools for the areas of academic performance, external examination, higher education, oral and written communication, quality of faculty, commitment of faculty, teachers' effectiveness, conducive environment, curriculum implementation, student-centered curriculum, co-curricular activities, use of resources, chance of getting employment, social skills and confidence of students.

The parents of both public and private school's children favored public schools for areas of qualification of faculty, physical, library, and laboratory facilities, standard of curriculum and financial assistance to schools.

The parents of both public and private school's children favored private schools for areas of expensiveness of education and profit orientation.

Recommendations

On the basis of findings and conclusions, following recommendations were offered.

The parents of public and private schools opined that education in private schools is expensive. It is therefore recommended that the Government may frame some standard policy regarding the fee and other charges of the private schools.

The parents viewed that public schools have better physical, library and laboratory facilities. It is therefore recommended that private schools may be instructed to make these facilities available while granting them registration.

The parents of both public and private school's children gave their opinion that teaching staff of public schools is more qualified. It is therefore recommended that some policy may be prepared for the selection of teachers for private school. There may be minimum qualification level for the teachers of private schools.

The parents of both public and private school's children opined that more financial assistance is given to public schools. It is therefore recommended that the government may provide financial assistance to private schools for the monthly salary to teaching staff.

The parents of private school's children viewed that teachers of private schools are more committed and more effective. It is therefore recommended that public schools Principals may be given in-service management training.

The parents of private school's children viewed that students of private schools are more confident. It indicates that teachers of public schools display autocratic behavior in classroom which has adverse effect on confidence level of students. It is therefore, recommended that teachers of public schools may be guided to create democratic environment in the classroom.

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