THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE PARENTS IN CHOOSING THE SCHOOL FOR THEIR WARD WITH REFERENCE TO SCHOOL RELATED VARIABLES

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ABSTRACT

The educational system in India allows parents to have a choice when it comes to selecting a school for their children. Parents have become consumers in an educational market, and schools, now find themselves operating in a competitive space. The main objectives of the present study is to find out the factors that influence the parents in choosing the school for their ward with reference to school related variables. The study was conducted through descriptive survey method of research. Parents who have enrolled their children in rural and urban government, aided and self-finance schools in Erode district of Tamil Nadu were population of the study. Due to various factors such as time, area, the researcher employed purposive sampling technique in this study. The Parents School Choices Questionnaire (PSCQ) was developed and standardized by Anburaj and Ravivarman (2020) for data collection. The investigator personally visited the schools of the each and every parent with the prior permission of the headmasters to collecting data. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (**SPSS**) version 26.0 was used to analyses the collected data and all the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. The differential analysis shows that there is a significant difference between / among the parents of various types of school groups in the mean scores of school choices. It is recommended that parents, teachers and school authorities should take remedial measures to improve the academic performance of students. The study is useful to school administrators, faculty, parents, and students as stakeholders to mutually meet their objectives and goals as well as to contribute to school choice theory.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Excellence and quality assurance in education is of great concern to any responsible society, governments and parents. Parents enroll their wards in schools for their wards to have qualitative and functional education that will help the children to fit in to this competitive and dynamic society. It seems that schools are fulfilling these expectations of parents. But private secondary is entirely privately run without any financial assistance from the government. This implies that any one opting for schools must pay for this service. But an overwhelming percentage of our population lives below the poverty line and cannot pay for education in schools. Public schools on the other hand are open to all both rich and poor. Society and government cannot afford to toy with quality and excellence in public schools. The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence the parents in choosing the school for their wards. Other the factors have positive and negative influence in choosing schools.

II.   NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

School choice, as a concept, gives all parents and other consumers of education the power and opportunity to pick their kid's school. Similarly, it helps in empowering solid rivalry among schools, a phenomenon that influences schools to better serve parents by providing quality education and also meeting the needs of students. The concept of school choice can likewise be viewed as a public approach that permits a parent to pick a public or private and day or boarding school, irrespective of the location of the school. Parents, as purchasers of education, need the best for their children and realise what is to their greatest advantage, maybe more so than the government and the schools do. This makes it imperative for policy makers and implementers to understand the predictors of school choice. Schools might use this information to become more competitive by improving customer service and maintaining some of their institutional factors that influence parents' school choice. Again, it will help school managers to gain insight on ways of attracting prospective candidates by putting in place factors that can influence parents' choice in positive terms. This in the long run will help boost the funding and survival of the schools.

This study is significant to the practice of educational administration in many respects. It will provide additional knowledge and understanding of factors that influence school choice, particularly as it relates to government, aided and self-finance schools, by assessing the relationships and differences between school choice and eight select factors set out in the form of hypotheses testing. It will underscore the urgent need to understand what influences school choice, with the view to ultimately be able to use those factors that influence school choice to attract students to government, aided and self-finance schools as well as to other schools in order to improve enrollment figures to expected levels. The study examined the role of the school administration, faculty, parents, and students in a transformational approach to collectively meet the objectives and goals as well as to understand school choice theory, particularly on the decision-making process and factors which are associated with choice. The investigator desires to find the factor influence the parents' choice of schooling in their wards. Hence, the present study has a high need and importance at the present time.

III.   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors influencing parental perception on their preference for schools. This would help to understand the areas that schools are doing better and government could emphasis that areas for public schools to improve upon. Hence, the researcher selects the research topic entitled "**The factors that influence the parents in choosing the school for their ward with reference to school related variables**".

Operational Definitions

Operational definition gives the functional definition for the difficult and technical terms involved in the study. Some of the technical terms used in this study are influence, parents, parents in choosing the school, and ward. The definitions for these terms have been given below.

Influence

Influence refers to the ability of school related factors to have an impact on the decision making process of the parents on their preferred school.

Parent

Parent refers to the natural parent of biology or marriage, adoption, and guardian of the pre-schooled children, whom are committed with the task of child rearing and maintain the relation of parenthood with the children.

Parents in Choosing the School

Parental choice refers to a parent's act of decision making to pick one option from a pool of several possibilities. Parental Choice is the behavior of parents as a customer of school service, the role of parent was previously confined to those who could afford to pay directly for their children's schooling or send them to private school. School choice referred as phrase that given to a broad range of programs offering students and their families' options to publicly provided school or selecting private school. In the present study the parents in choosing the school includes the dimensions namely, (1) quality of teaching, (2) environment of school, (3) vision of school, (4) curricular activities, (5) students discipline/morale, (6) school convenience, (7) school administration and (8) school basic infrastructure.

Ward

In the present study ward means parents whose children enrolled in government school, aided school and self-finance schools.

IV.   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the study.

1. To find out the levels of parent's school choices who have enrolled their children in various schools.

2. To find out the significant difference between / among the groups of demographic variables of parents in the mean scores of school choices.

3. To find out the correlation among the dimensions of school choices of parents.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following are the hypotheses of the study.

1. There is no high level of school choices among the parents.

2. There is no significant difference among the parents of various types of school groups in the mean scores of parent's school choices.

3. There is no significant difference between groups of children of rural and urban residence in the mean scores of parent's school choices.

4. There is no significant correlation among the dimensions of school choices of parents.

Limitation of the Study

There are several limitations on the scope of this study. The findings of the study are of limited generalizability in many respects with regard to the population generalizability. The subjects for the study are the 206 parents whose children enrolled in government schools; 190 parents whose children enrolled in aided schools and 191 parents whose children were enrolled in self-finance schools of Erode district in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. The findings are applicable to similar background. The temporal generalizability, the result of this study shall be generalized to similar other districts in India. The data were collected from the parents during 2020 - 2021. In a near future, due to policy of the government the change may happen among the variables which had been included in the study. Hence these results might be invalid across time. The result is also limited to the specific psychological tests. Constraint of money and time the investigator limit the samples only in Erode district, using purposive sampling technique, consisting of 587 parents.

Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations of the study are (1) The investigator confined his study with only the parents whose children enrolled in government, aided and self – finance schools. (2) The investigator confined his study to Erode district of Tamil Nadu. (3) The investigator conducted the study on the following 8 variables namely gender, type of school, residence of students, parents age, parent's educational qualification, parent's occupation, parent's annual income and community of the children. (4) The Parents School Choice Questionnaire (PSCQ) were studied in this research.

V.   RESEARCH METHOD

The study was conducted through descriptive survey method of research. The descriptive method has undoubtedly, been the most popular and most widely used research method in education. It helps in explaining educational phenomenon in terms of the condition or relationships that exist, opinions that are held by the parents whose children studying in schools; processes that are ongoing, effects that are evident; or trends that are developing. The main objective of the present study is to investigate about the factors that influence the parents in choosing the school for their ward. The investigator has adopted quantitative normative survey method in view of realizing the objectives of the study.

Population of the Study

A population may refer to all of any specified groups of human being or of non-human entities such as objects, geographical areas, time units, methods, test or schools. Since it is not possible to cover the whole population in descriptive studies, the researcher is to resort to sampling. The adequacy of sample depends upon our knowledge of the population as well as the method used in drawing the sample, which is secured by giving every member of the population specifiable chance of appearing in it. The investigator has tried as far as possible all care to ensure that the sample of this research study becomes a true representative. Parents who have enrolled their children in rural and urban government, aided and self-finance schools in Erode district of Tamil Nadu were population of the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The population for the present study is the parents who have enrolled their children in various categories of schools in Erode district of Tamil Nadu. Due to various factors such as time, area, the researcher employed purposive sampling technique in this study. List of names of schools were collected from Chief Educational Office (CEO) and parents' details collected from their wards school headmasters / principals of Erode district. A sample of 587 parents of Erode district from both rural and urban areas was purposively selected from the population after taking into account their interest to willingly respond on the questions. In this way the researcher collected the responses in the parents of Erode district of Tamil Nadu. The sample for the present

study consists of 587 parents who have enrolled their children in the primary, middle, high and higher secondary schools (government, aided and self-finance) in the Erode district of Tamil Nadu state. The sample shares 6.32 percent of the units of the population.

Tools Used for the Study

The success of any research endeavour is largely dependent upon the tools, which are used for the data collection. The following tool were selected and used by the investigator in the present study.

1) The Parents School Choices Questionnaire (PSCQ) was developed and standardized by Anburaj and Ravivarman (2020)

Procedure of Data Collection

The investigator personally visited the schools of the each and every parent with the prior permission of the headmasters / principals. The head teachers were given prior information on the purpose of the visit and fixed an appointment convenient for the schools. The sample of parents involved for the study was seated comfortably in a spacious and well-ventilated hall. The place of collecting data was suggested by the parents. The time of each collecting data varied depending on the nature of the person collecting data as some parents were more vocal as compared to the others. The collecting data from 35 minutes to 1 hour in general. In total, data were collected from 206 parents whose children enrolled in government schools; 190 parents whose children enrolled in aided schools and 191 parents whose children were enrolled in self-finance schools. During data collection process, it was observed that some parents at onset of collecting data were hesitant but later they were relaxed. Researchers tried to include parents with varied cultural capital. For example, socio-economic status, parents' education and nature of job etc of various parents included in the sample were different from each other. The sample consisted of both type of parents who send their children in private and public schools to explore patterns behind their school choice and to explore whether school choice autonomy is better in the aspect that does not link to inequities in education. The data collected were converted into quantitative scores manually as per procedure given for each tool in the excel worksheet separately for the Parents School Choices Questionnaire (PSCQ). The data of the excel worksheets were imported into the Data Sheet of the SPSS version 26.0 for analysis.

Statistical Techniques Used for Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (**SPSS**) version 26.0 was used to analyses the collected data and all the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. The following statistical techniques were used for the analysis of the data: **Descriptive Statistics**: Mean, Standard Deviation and percentage analysis were employed to study the parents school choices. **Inferential Statistics**: The 't' and 'F' test and factor analysis was used to find the significant difference between means of the parent school choice used in the study in relation to various demographical and social variables of the parents.

VI.   ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Null Hypothesis – 1 There is no high level of school choices among the parents.

Table 1: The level of school choices among the parents

Variable	N0.	Low Level		Average Level		High Level	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Parents School Choices	587	75	12.8	440	75.0	72	12.3

Table 1 shows that the obtained levels of school choices felt by the parents. The obtained percentage of the three levels namely low level, average level and high level are 12.8%, 75.0 % and 12.3% respectively. The levels do not vary much among themselves. The 'average level' should have received very high responses. The frequency of responses must have been skewed on 'high level' rather than other two levels. However, the table reflects normal distribution. The hypothesis is accepted and concluded that there is a wider variation in the mean scores of school choices.

Null Hypothesis – 2

There is no significant difference among the parents of various types of school groups in the mean scores of school choices.

Table 2: Test of significant difference among the parents of various types of school groups in the mean scores of school choices

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F ratio	Level of Significance
Between Groups	28830.311	2	14415.156		
Within Groups	782594.956	584	1340.060	10.757	Significant
Total	811425.267	586			

It is observed from the table 2 that the obtained 'F' value 10.757 is greater than the critical value 3.01 at 0.05% level of significance. Hence, the stated null hypothesis is not retained. It is inferred that there is a significant difference among the groups with reference to types of school in their mean scores of school choices. The mean score of parent's school choices of the group of parents whose parents enrolled in aided schools comparatively higher than that other groups (government school, self - finance school). The difference may be due to school culture or style of school administration or fee structure or the product of all these factors. Separate research has to be conducted with this regard. It is concluded parents whose parents enrolled in aided schools excels in choices of school.

Null Hypothesis – 3

There is no significant difference between groups of parents of rural and urban school in the mean scores of school choices.

Table 3: Test of significant difference between groups of parents of rural and urban school in the mean scores of school choices

Background Variables		N	Mean	SD	t – value	Level of Significance
Locality of School	Rural	299	255.3177	37.63079	0.088	Not Significant
	Urban	288	255.5868	36.83582		

The above table 3 shows that the obtained 't' value 0.088 is less than the critical value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The stated null hypothesis is retained. It is concluded that the mean score of school locality of rural and urban parents' groups do not differ in parent's school choices. The group of urban school locality parents has got higher mean score than the group of rural parents in parents school choices. The difference may be due to school locality of parents.

Null Hypothesis – 4

There is no significant correlation among the dimensions of school choices of parents.

Table 4: Test of significant correlation among the dimensions of school choices of parents

		QOT	ENV	VIS	C.AC	DIS	CON	ADMI	INFRA	SC TOTAL
QOT	Pearson Correlation	1	.455**	-.120**	.758**	.745**	.440**	.726**	.695**	.822**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.003	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587
ENV	Pearson Correlation	.455**	1	.081	.444**	.529**	.238**	.425**	.532**	.623**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.051	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587

VIS	Pearson Correlation	-.120**	.081	1	-.067	.045	.091*	-.090*	-.102*	.237**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.051		.106	.273	.028	.029	.013	.000
	N	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587
C.AC	Pearson Correlation	.758**	.444**	-.067	1	.709**	.492**	.694**	.712**	.826**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.106		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587
DIS	Pearson Correlation	.745**	.529**	.045	.709**	1	.520**	.767**	.716**	.869**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.273	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587
CON	Pearson Correlation	.440**	.238**	.091*	.492**	.520**	1	.446**	.422**	.641**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.028	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587
ADMI	Pearson Correlation	.726**	.425**	-.090*	.694**	.767**	.446**	1	.699**	.793**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.029	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587
INFRA	Pearson Correlation	.695**	.532**	-.102*	.712**	.716**	.422**	.699**	1	.813**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.013	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587
SC TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	.822**	.623**	.237**	.826**	.869**	.641**	.793**	.813**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587	587
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).										
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).										

QOT - Quality of Teaching; ENV – School Environment; VIS – School Vision; C.AC – Curricular Activities; DIS – Students Discipline; CON – School Convenience; ADMI – School Administration; INFRA – School Infrastructure Facilities; and SC TOTAL – School Choice Total.

The above table 4 shows that there is a highly positive correlation among the dimensions of parent's school choices except quality of teaching versus school vision; school environment versus school vision; vision versus curricular activities; vision versus discipline; vision versus school convenience; vision versus school administration; vision versus basic infrastructure facilities. Hence the stated hypothesis is not retained. It is concluded that the dimensions of school choices are highly correlated with one another.

VII.   MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Following are the major findings of the study.

1. There is no high level of school choices among the parents.

2. There is a significant difference among the parents of various types of school groups in the mean scores of parent's school choices.

3. There is no significant difference between groups of children of rural and urban residence in the mean scores of parent's school choices.

4. There is a significant correlation among the dimensions of school choices of parents.

VIII.   RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

On the basis of findings, the investigator has given the following recommendations. The obtained percentage of the three levels namely low level, average level and high level are 12.8%, 75.0 % and 12.3% respectively. The levels do not vary much among themselves. The levels of parental school choices are unequal. Among the three levels of parental school choices might have got accumulation of frequencies on "average level". Instead, the levels have got less number of frequencies in high level. Since the parental school choice plays a significant influence on students' academic performance, parents need to have more care of their children's education. Even if parents are unable to assist their children with a specific subject area or skill, they can still play a vital role by actively involved in their children's education, encouraging students' feelings of competence and positive attitudes towards academic success. It is necessary for parents to have interaction and good rapport with the school teachers often for the betterment of their children's education. Though differences existed in the level of parental school choice, parents should care their children equally irrespective of the demographic differences, and arrange suitable learning environment at home and motivate their children to develop their own study habits for the betterment of their children.

The differential analysis shows that there is a significant difference among the parents of various types of school groups in the mean scores of school choices. It is evident from the study that parents differed in the selection of school for their children. Though all the government, government aided and private matriculation schools in Tamil Nadu state follow the same curriculum pattern, the expected educational outcomes are differed due to various school related factors that determine the differences in school choice.

The study reveals that significant correlation is found between quality of teaching and environment of school; quality of teaching and curricular activities; quality of teaching and students discipline/morale; quality of teaching and school convenience; quality of teaching and school administration; quality of teaching and school basic infrastructure; environment of school and curricular activities; environment of school and students discipline/morale; environment of school and school convenience; environment of school and school administration; environment of school and school basic infrastructure; curricular activities and students discipline/morale; curricular activities and school convenience; curricular activities and school administration; curricular activities and school basic infrastructure; students discipline/morale and school convenience; students discipline/morale and school administration; students discipline/morale and school basic infrastructure; school convenience and school administration; and school convenience and school basic infrastructure. These dimensions are influences one another; and also influences the choice of school selection of parents.

IX.   CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors influencing school choice among the parents. The differential analysis shows that there is a significant difference among the parents of various types of school groups in the mean scores of school choices. The study reveals that significant correlation among the dimensions are influences one another; and also influences the choice of school selection of parents. The results of the present study encourage educators to more fully understand what parents are looking for in a school. Such an understanding can broaden idea, and allows them to answer with a set of actions that are often more contemporary and network with parents' expectations. In doing this, there are benefits for schools and school systems in the adoption of a wider perspective. The findings of the study suggest that when considering parent choices among government, aided and private self-finance, it may be helpful to think in terms of choosing school for the wards.

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