



A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF PARENTS: CHOOSING A GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR THEIR CHILD

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ABSTRACT

Most of the studies have been done regarding the impact of the socio-economic background of parents on the academic performance of children. But a few studies have highlighted about who are those people who prefer Government school for their children? What are the reasons for their choice of a school and do the choice of a school matter to them? The paper highlighted the factors which helped parents to choose a government primary school for their children. It was found that numbers of components played a significant role in the process of choice-making for parents.

KEYWORDS: Choice of School, Parents Role in Education, Government School, Gender, Stratification

INTRODUCTION

Parent's investment in children's education is "perhaps the most powerful intervention for enhancing learning achievement, in India as elsewhere. International evidence shows that, family background affects the probability of children being enrolled in, attending, and completing various levels of schools" (Chernichovsky and Meesook 1985; Jamison and Lockheed 1987; King and Lillard 1987; Smith and Cheung 1986; Wolf and Behrman 1984) Parents also resort to gender discrimination in school education. Aggarwal (2000) revealed that even in the choice of school, gender bias on the part of parents was quite evident. Girls were sent to government schools because they were entitled to various types of incentives whereas; Sharma (1999) noted that there was the prevalence of discrimination between girls and boys in the choice of schools. ASER (Annual Status of Education Report), 2014 claimed that many children in a family with less attention from parents or girls those who have more work at home go to Government school.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

To examine the bases on which parents choose a government primary school for their child.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Hoshiarpur, a district of Punjab. The locale of study is considered appropriate because it is the highest literate district of Punjab. With the period, Hoshiarpur has undergone huge development in all the fields such as setting up of colonies, malls, educational institutions, hospitals etc. It was a great research area to find out the differences in choice making for a government school by parents. Another reason for selecting Hoshiarpur was that no study has been conducted in this area even after a huge development in every field such as real estate, suburbanization and education etc. The study sample constituted of two primary government schools in two villages. All the parents of the students were selected as a sample. An interview schedule was used to collect data from the parents. Both open-ended and close-ended questions were used in the interview schedule.

One of the selected villages was Adamwal, located in Hoshiarpur Tehsil of Hoshiarpur district, Punjab with a total of 762 families residing. The Adamwal village has a population of 3429 of which 1744 are males while 1685 are females as per Population Census 2011. In Adamwal village, the population of children with age 0-6 is 369, which makes up 10.76 % of the total population of the village. Average Sex Ratio of Adamwal village is 966 that is higher than Punjab state average of 895. Child Sex Ratio for the Adamwal as per census is 984, higher than Punjab average of 846.

Adamwal village has a higher literacy rate compared to Punjab. In 2011, the literacy rate of Adamwal village was 87.65 % compared to 75.84

% of Punjab. In Adamwal male literacy stands at 92.04 % while the female literacy rate was 83.09 %.

The second selected village was Dhadda Fateh Singh, located in Hoshiarpur Tehsil of Hoshiarpur district, Punjab with a total of 319 families residing. The Dhadda Fateh Singh village has a population of 1560 of which 788 are males while 772 are females as per Population Census 2011.

In Dhadda Fateh Singh village population of children with age 0-6 is 157, which makes up 10.29 % of the total population of village. Average Sex Ratio of Dhadda Fateh Singh village is 937 that is higher than Punjab state average of 895. Child Sex

Ratio for the Dhadda Fateh Singh as per census is 963, higher than Punjab average of 846.

Dhadda Fateh Singh village has a higher literacy rate compared to Punjab. In 2011, the literacy rate of Dhadda Fateh Singh village was 84.59 % compared to 75.84 % of Punjab. In Dhadda Fateh Singh Male literacy stands at 86.72 % while female literacy rate was 82.30 %.

The study sample constituted of two Government Primary schools. Parents of a total of 186 students and parents of 70 total students from Government Primary School (GPS) Adamwal and Government Primary School (GPS) Dhadda Fateh Singh were considered for the sample. Therefore, the total sample size was 256 parents.

Table 1 Total Number of Students

Name of the School	Government Primary School (GPS) Adamwal	Government Primary School (GPS) Dhadda Fateh Singh
Boys	92	32
Girls	94	38
Total	186	70

Source: Computed from primary data, 2018

FINDINGS

Parents have their own choice in selecting a particular type of school for their children and this choice is based on several factors. Here, the reasons for choosing a particular type of school by the parents of both Government school students has been recorded. The reasons given by the parents were subjective in form but then those reasons were differentiated and listed in a particular series which has been discussed in the table below. One of the important and alarming findings was that the number of Scheduled Caste (SC) students were overrepresented in both the selected government schools. It was found that out of 186 students in

GPS Adamwal, 62.36 % (116) students were SC and 22.04% (41) students belonged to OBC. In the same way, out of 70 students GPS Dhadda Fateh Singh had 57.14% (40) SC and 34.28% (24) OBC students. However, only 08.57% and 15.59% of students belonged to the General category. Therefore the majority of the respondents were scheduled castes, i.e. 60.93% and other backward castes, i.e. 25.39%.

Table 2 elaborates the distribution of parents of both Government school children based on the reason given by the respondents for choosing a government school for their children.

**TABLE 2
REASONS FOR OPTING A GOVERNMENT SCHOOL**

Reasons for opting a particular type of school	GPS Adamwal		GPS Dhadda Fateh Singh	
	Number (186)	Percentage 100%	Number (70)	Percentage 100%
Locality of school	171	91.93	56	80
Free education or negotiable expenditure	164	88.17	47	67.14
Qualified Staff and Infrastructure	116	62.36	18	25.71
Punjabi medium	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Government schools are best	91	48.92	22	31.42
Cannot afford a private school	178	95.69	66	94.28

Source: Computed from primary data, 2018

A maximum of 95.69 % and 94.28% parents of Government Primary School (GPS) Adamwal and Government Primary School (GPS) Dhadda Fateh

Singh respectively opted government school as they cannot afford a private school. However, majority of the parents, 91.93 % and 80% parents

of Government Primary School (GPS) Adamwal and Government Primary School (GPS) Dhadda Fateh Singh respectively choose government school due to its location. Because distance also made a huge difference in making selection of a particular type of school and parents admitted their children to government schools due to the less distance to be covered from their residence to reach the school. As the selected government schools were located within the village and were more accessible to the small children.

The third most important reason cited by the parents to choose a government school was free education. It includes free uniform, books and no fee. Moreover, scholarship to SC, OBC students.

However, infrastructure and qualified staff hardly matter to the parents. As only, 62.36 % and 25.71% parents of Government Primary School (GPS) Adamwal and Government Primary School (GPS) Dhadda Fateh Singh respectively opt government school due to infrastructure and staff qualification. Punjabi medium was not the choice of parents of either school.

Although parents of both the schools sent their children to the government schools they were not ready to claim government schools are best. As only 48.92 % and 31.42% parents of Government Primary School (GPS) Adamwal and Government Primary School (GPS) Dhadda Fateh Singh respectively felt that government schools are best. Similarly, the majority of the parents choose government school as they could not afford private schools for their children. The reasons given by parents for not opting a private school was unstable financial condition of families, high fee structure, irrelevant expenses in form of registration fee of functions, dresses and payments for participation in different competitions.

INFLUENCE OF NEIGHBOURHOOD FOR CHOOSING A GOVERNMENT SCHOOL

Neighbourhood plays an important role in creating influence on parents while choosing a particular school for their children. it was found that 60.53 % and 78% parents of Government Primary School (GPS) Adamwal and Government Primary School (GPS) Dhadda Fateh Singh respectively revealed that there is influence of their neighbourhood when they choose for a government school for their children but on the same time, they marked that even if neighbourhood influences one's choice in making selection of a particular school, one has to see his or her own family's socio-economic status.

One of the parents of village Adamwal marked " one has to see where do the children of the neighbourhood go for schooling because everyone wants to do better than others for their children, so to learn what is the best for children, it is important to take suggestions from the parents of children living in the neighbourhood.

On the other hand , 39.47 % and 22% parents of Government Primary School (GPS) Adamwal and Government Primary School (GPS) Dhadda Fateh Singh respectively informed that it does not make any difference to them where the children of neighbourhood goes for schooling because they try their best for their children and one has to see his or her income too for providing facilities to the children.

REASONS FOR OPTING A DIFFERENT SCHOOL AMONG SIBLINGS

Parents of both Government school children who opted for different schools for their children had their own set of reasons for making such differences among them. A majority of parents choose a different school for the siblings of their children due to higher classes as the present school being a Primary school was up to class fifth and the siblings of the children were elder and studied in class sixth onwards.

Socio-economic status of parents also played a significant role in choosing a different school among their children. Parents revealed that they could not afford a private school for all their children so they decided to send at least one child to a private school to provide a better quality of education.

The medium of instruction also made its contribution in decision making the power of parents for choosing a different school among their children. Parents choose a different school for their child's sibling due to medium of instruction which was Punjabi in the present school and they preferred that their second child (specific boy) must learn English medium.

Sometimes decision-making power for selecting a particular school for children of a family is not in the hands of parents rather some grandparents decided that in which school a particular child (girl or boy) will go? This type of case was revealed by 45 parents (17.57%, from both the schools) where grandparents decided the particular type of school for children. In addition to this, around 112 parents (43.75%) revealed that they decided that daughters to be admitted to government school whereas sons

to be admitted in private school and children had no say in this decision. Further, parents had two reasons for this, one reason being that girls are more serious in studies so they can study even in government schools irrespective of the thought that quality of education is not good enough in government schools ; secondly, boys need better education as they have to earn for the family and girls can even sustain their lives with low-level occupational jobs .

Moreover, some parents revealed that "madam hmaare bachhon ko kehti hai ki tum toh apne papa ki tarah dihadi hi kroge pdhna toh tumne hai nai" (teacher tells my children that you would work as daily wager like your father as you don't study). Therefore, parents expressed their resentment regarding the attitude of government school teachers and wanted to shift their children to private schools.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that students belonged to SC and OBC community were enrolled higher than General Category Students (only 35 students out of 256) in government schools of rural areas. Whereas the Scheduled Caste population is was less in both the selected villages. The SC population was 1578 out of total 3429 in village Adamwal and 602 out of total 1526 in village Dada Fateh Singh. Despite the less SC population in the sampled villages, students belonged to SC community were overrepresented in the government schools.

So it is the duty of the State, administrative officers, local panchayat and teachers and others to uplift the standard of government schools in rural areas in terms of infrastructure, students activities like sports, quiz competitions, introduction of English Medium, supportive and soft attitude of teachers. So that the marginalized section of the rural area should not felt compulsion or helplessness to send their children to government schools only.

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