



Examining the Important Values for Students' Parents Regarding the Educational Services Received by Their Children

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Abstract:

The purpose of this article is identification of factors which have significant effects on the perceived value of educational services by students' parents in Iran educational system. Furthermore, we explore the role these factor play on the evaluation of educational services by parents. The statistical population of this study includes the parents of students of all secondary private schools in Tehran at the year 2021 and 800 parents were selected using random sampling. The research tool is a questionnaire with 62 statements which were identified using interviews by experts. We collected 300 questionnaires after calculating validity and reliability. We used Principal Components Analysis (PCA) in order to extract factors with highest degree of determining power. Using four identified principal components, we run a linear regression for testing the significance of these factors. Our results show that all of four factors i.e. functional, social, emotional and epistemic value have significant impact on the perceived values by parents in Iran educational system.

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Introduction

The increased importance of the private preliminary education has led them to become a main media for transmitting knowledge, values, skills and culture through education. These roles are played by different sources for financing from the families of the students and from the national and local governments as well. Private schools as economic agents and social institutions develop the skills of the students, broaden the intellectual capital for any society to use it in a variety of positions. On the other hand, the tight dependence of private schools on students' families financing as well as the increased importance of parents' satisfaction regarding their children education has resulted in heightened competition among private educational institutions. The level of satisfaction of parents of the students with the quality of services provided by educational institutions has a significant impact on the institutions' reputations. Educational institutions understand the value which students' parents assign to the educational services received by their children because it influences their decision to expand the services as well as the attraction of new applicants. Parents' valuation has significant effect on the students' motivation and, consequently, their performance. (Kelly, 2004).

Despite the heightened importance of the factors which impact the parents' perceived evaluation of educational services both for parents and schools, little study exists that examine how education consumers perceive values from a range of factors. Sheth et al. (1991a, b) proposed the Theory of Consumption Values. Stafford (1994) based on this theory, devised a questionnaire and tested it on two

undergraduate groups. His analysis shows that the choices of groups are predominantly based on the desire for variety (the epistemic value) and scheduling imperatives (the conditional value). He concluded that a customer-oriented approach should be used in order to better understand the values students derive from the services they receive (Lai et al. 2012). Simmons (1997) applies the Sheth–Newman–Gross Theory of Consumption Values to study college choice in Australia. LeBlanc and Nguyen (1999) studied the service value in business education using a 33-item questionnaire. They employed the instrument using responses gathered from 402 students and finally recognized six important factors in service value. Their results suggest that the functional value has the most important impact on students' evaluation of educational service. Recently, Lai et al. (2012) examining 316 university students in china found that students' satisfaction mainly depends on functional values of educational services they received.

The effect of different values delivered by schools on parents' satisfaction with educational services which their children receive in educational institutions necessitates the study of the factors which creates these values as well as the impact which each value has on the parent's evaluation of educational services. Encountered with such effect, public policies as well as private educational institutions must properly address it by mentoring, devising and continuously evaluating programs in order to guarantee the providing of high quality education. Therefore, it is of great importance to understand how different values provided by private schools are related

to the evaluation of parents' from educational services. The two main objectives of this study are as follows: (1) identification of important factors which shape the different values that are important in parents' evaluation of educational services received by students in Iran educational system; (2) exploration of the role which these values play on the parents' evaluation of educational services delivered by schools. This study sought to answer the following research questions: what are most important values for parents in their evaluation of educational services received by their children? To what extent these values determine the students' parents' evaluation?

To fill the research gap concerning the values which are most important for parents regarding the educational services which their children receive, in the presents research, instead of examining the students' evaluation of educational values, we use the opinion of students' parents as the economic agents who choose schools based on the different values they assign to the educational services they expect their children receive in private schools. To best our knowledge, there is no similar research in the literature in an Iranian context.

From a practical point of view, by identification of important values for parents, this study also contributes to the literature on school choice, providing evidence about parents' preferred values for private schools in a developing country. This article analyzes parents' preferences for values which are delivered by schools and by conducting a robustness test, we also explores what values are important for parents of different gender, educational attainment and other demographic

characteristics when they choose a school.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we briefly describe theoretical background of the research. Section 3 presents the data, methodology and Analysis of the main results. Section 4 provides the discussion of main results. Discussion of results are provided in section 5. Finally, in section 6 we present the article conclusion.

Research Literature Review

Lovelock (1983) describes education as a service that provides "intangible actions targeted toward people's minds", and described "students as consumers". This description has been increasingly popular in the academic world (Singleton-Jackson et al. 2010). Hannaford et al. (2005) indicates that by evaluation of values which the educational institutions provide, providers of educational services can develop their services which consequently leads to higher students learning satisfaction (Ledden et al. 2007). Therefore, it is very plausible to use the theory of consumption values in the study of educational evaluation. Researchers (Lai et al., 2012) noted that perceived value is a necessary element for satisfaction. They also suggest demographic and social status of consumers may also affect perceived value and satisfaction exogenously.

In his seminal work, Sheth et al. (1991a) classifies consumption values into five major categories of values: (1) functional value, (2) social value, (3) emotional value, (4) epistemic value, and (5) conditional value. Functional value are related to the expected utility—mainly economic benefits—derived from the delivered service. Most striking examples of functional values in the secondary education

include the benefits students expect to receive such as high likelihood of university entrance, prosperous future job, high salary and etc. Social value are defined as the perceived benefit received from association with social groups. For examples, relationship with friends in classes and social activities schools are social values which are delivered by schools. Emotional value concerns the good feelings derived from delivered services. Whether students are glad while they learn in classes and whether they find classes interesting are related to the emotional values provided by schools. Epistemic value in educational institutions is described as the ability of the educational service to satisfy service users' desire for knowledge. Examples for this value include judgments about the quality of education students receive and course contents. Conditional value refers to consumer choice and judgment. For example, the size of the department and the number of students in a class are situational variables that can influence the value of the educational experience.

Reviewing literature shows recently the role of parents' view on educational outcome has been studied. For instance, Jacob and Lefgren (2007) showed that parents strongly prefer teachers whom principals describe as good at promoting student satisfaction, though they also value teacher ability to increase academic achievement. Recently parents' perceptions and beliefs about large-scale assessment systems have been studied (Currin et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2020 and Yan & Brown, 2021). Yan et al. (2021), Abbaspour et al. (2021) studied the factors influencing teachers' intentions to use formative assessment and suggested that parents might play a role in affecting teachers.

Before presenting our analysis, it is important to show why parents' views on different values provided by schools is important for the educational outcome. On one hand, it has been argued that in order to have a sustainable partnership between families and schools, knowing parents' view about the services provided by schools is crucial. Overall, it has been shown that parents and schools' personnel need to establish relation regarding their expectations of children's wellbeing, development and learning (O'Connor et al. 2019), since parents are an important part of the whole educational community (Adie et al., 2021). Furthermore, constant interaction between parents and school is important to know each other's duties and to build shared views (Atjonen, 2014). Chen et al. (2021) examining the issue of high education pricing showed that there is a positive correlation between cost of courses and effect of courses on graduates' future income. Gulicheva et al. (2017) introduced a concept called objective-program pricing which emphasized on the value which educational programs' objectives create.

On the other hand, school choice is one of the factors that increase the educational achievement of the students because it raises the competition among schools (Cullen et al, 2003; Lauen, 2009; Rabovsky, 2011). Based on this, several research has studied the factors which parent take into account when choose the schools for their children. Reviewing this strand of literature shows that parents consider several factors, including school quality, religious or moral instruction (Trivitt et al. 2011), the level of suitability of the school for their children (Teske et al.

2001) or whether the school is safe or not. (Kelly et al. 2013). Burgess et al. (2014) showed that most families have strong preferences for schools' academic performance. They also noted that parents also value schools' socio-economic composition and distance, which may limit the potential of school choice to improve academic standards.

In spite of several studies concerning the factors which are important for parents when choosing schools for their children, a remaining question is how parents combine these factors into different values? This article contribute to the literature by providing evidences about the most important values from the point of view of students' parents.

Research Method

Methodology

In this study, in order to construct the questionnaire, we use data obtained from with 18 individuals; 7 principals and vice principals, and 11 parents who enrolled their children in different private schools of Tehran. For obtaining consistent results, we categorized the parents into three groups. The grouping was mainly derived from a combination of parents' occupation, education and residential neighborhood. Finally, for our interview, we selected just those parents who belonged to the middle class strata. The interviews were mainly focused on the factors which are deemed to be most important for parents while they are choosing schools for their children. In order to understand how

students' parents evaluate educational and non-educational services that their children receive in a homogenous manner, we limited our target population to Tehran private secondary schools.

Research instrument

Based on the results from the interviews, we designed our questionnaire. The questionnaire has two segments. First segment consists 62 statements on different values derived from our first phase and also adapted from literature. Each statement is measured on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating "non-important" and 5 indicating "very important". The second part contains eight questions capturing respondents' demographic information such as gender, age group, year of study, major field of study, home country/city, the location of their study, and the occupation and education.

Sampling and sample size

Our initial sample is all private secondary schools in Tehran at the beginning of the year 2021. To be in or sample, schools must satisfy several criteria. First, all schools which have been established in less than five years are excluded from our sample. Second, only schools with more than 100 students in each of past five years are remained in our sample. Finally, schools without historical data in past five years are not included in our sample. After utilizing these choosing measures, a sample of 686 schools is extracted.

Table 1 reports the sample selection procedure.

Table 1. Sample selection process

Total initial number of schools	1,053
Number of schools which have been established in less than 5 years	(134)
Number of schools with less than 100 students in past five years	(13)
Number of schools without historical data in past five years	(220)
Final sample used in the study	686

Method of collecting information

We contacted the principals of selected schools at the beginning of year 2021 and most of them agreed to cooperate in order to distribute the questionnaires. A list of parents' email addresses was then prepared and a package containing questionnaire, a cover letter on the purpose of the survey and instructions was electronically mailed to the parents. We distributed 800 questionnaires in March and April 2021 among the parents who enrolled their children in the final sample schools and received 300 usable ones, representing a response rate of 37.5%.

Descriptive data analysis shows that slightly less than 75% of respondents (n = 223) are female while 25% (n = 77) are male. In terms of year of study, 44% have 16 years of schooling, 28% have 18 years of schooling, 6% have more than 18 years of schooling. The rest have less than 12 years of schooling. Table 2 summarizes the demographic information of 300 respondents.

Table 2. Demographic information of respondents.

Gender of parents (respondents)				Parents' years of education							
Female		Male		< 12		16 years		18 years		>18	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
233	75%	77	25%	66	22%	132	44%	84	28%	18	6%

Data analysis method

In next step we conducted principal component analysis on 62 statements on perceived value using Microsoft EXCEL add-in XLSTAT 2018. In order to obtain meaningful factors, we only maintained constitutive statements with loadings higher than 0.5. Finally we obtained 13 statements which are reported in Table 3. All of these

statements are derived from the first phase. Table 2 shows how these 13 constitutive statements are classified into different principal factors including: (F1) functional value – the usefulness of services that students receive in schools regarding their future (F2) social value - the perceived utility derived from one's association with a specific social group (F3) epistemic

value - the ability of a service to satisfy one's desire for knowledge and (F4) emotional value - ability of a service to

arouse feelings or affective states. Most of these factors are given in Lai et al. (2012).

Table 3. Principal Component Analysis of perceived value

	Factor loadings			
	F1	F2	F3	F4
Functional values				
school helps enabling my children	0.76			
School has significant achievement	0.73			
School's Extra-curriculum helps my children	0.69			
School provides quality services	0.55			
Social Values				
My children have positive feeling to school		0.83		
School helps the formation of social identity in my children		0.79		
Environment of school creates loyalty in my children		0.68		
Epistemological Values				
School provides learning opportunity to my children			0.84	
Educational design of school affect the learning of my children			0.68	
Attitude of school to curriculum affect the learning of my children			0.59	
Emotional values				
School norms conform with my family values				0.73
School's management style conforms with my family values				0.64
my children have mental security in school				0.56

Table 4 presents that these four identified factors comprise approximately 55% of variation in all factors. The Cronbach's alpha

coefficients range from 0.79 to 0.85, all exceeding the acceptable level of 0.7 for internal consistency as Nunnally and Bernstein recommend (1994).

Table 4. Results of Principal Component Analysis of perceived value

	F1	F2	F3	F4
Eigenvalue	26.025	3.875	2.633	2.010
Variability (%)	41.977	6.249	4.247	3.242
Cumulative %	41.977	48.226	52.474	55.715
Cronbach's alpha	0.85	0.82	0.80	0.79

Regression Analysis

In next step a multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the contribution of each factor to the perceived value of educational services which received by parents' children.

The identified factors are used in the multiple regression analysis as independent variables and the parents' overall satisfaction is the dependent variable. Table 5 shows the results of the regression.

Table 5. Results of multiple regression analysis

Source	Value	t Value	Pr > t
F1	0.556	6.756	<0.0001
F2	0.292	3.544	<0.0001
F3	0.286	3.471	<0.0001
F4	0.211	2.559	<0.01

Discussion of results

Table 5 shows that all four identified factors have significant impact on the students' parents' valuation when they make decision about the choice of private schools for their children. Furthermore, as one can see functional values (F1) have most significant effect on the parents' evaluation of services delivered by private schools. One of the main reasons that functional values are most important factor for the students' parents is scarcity of job opportunities in Iranian labor market for youths and also widening gap between the poor and the rich in Iran. According to the poverty and equity brief of the Islamic Republic of Iran provided by World Bank (World Bank, 2023) poverty in Iran has been on the rise in recent years, in line with a sharp contraction in per-capita GDP. Poverty in 2019 stood at 27.0 percent, an increase of almost 5 percentage points from the previous year, as a result of the severe economic recession and tightening of sanctions. The continuous increase in poverty has been matched by the worsening of inequality. Between 2014 and 2019, per-capita expenditure

of the poorest 40 percent of the population registered stronger contraction compared to the average, resulting in a shared prosperity premium of negative 1.11 percentage points. The disproportionate impact of the economic crisis on the poorest segments of Iran's population can be partly explained by sustained inflation dynamics.

Robustness test

In order to validate our baseline results, we use a propensity score matching (PSM) approach for eliminating the self-selection bias related to the respondents demographic characteristics. According to Figlio et al. (1997) and Beavis (2004), parent demographic characteristics such as parents' level of education and household income influences how parents choose the school for their children. Based on this, we divide the sample based on the median of each value. We define each respondent with values assigned higher than median as the treatment group and those with values lower than median as control groups. We then employ a logit regression with all covariates including

demographic characteristics to estimate the probability of being assigned to treatment and control groups. We eventually perform matching with a 0.1 caliper to obtain matched sample. Our new generated sample include 75 pairs.

In next step, we run the regression model in section 4.3 again using new matched sample. Table 6 reports the

new estimation results. The results suggest that our main finding is robust and the positive and significant relationship between different values and parents overall satisfaction level is not affected by the parents demographic characteristics.

Table 6. Results of regression with matched sample

Source	Value	t Value	Pr > t
F1	0.403	5.143	<0.0001
F2	0.171	3.412	<0.0001
F3	0.204	2.971	<0.0001
F4	0.141	2.123	<0.05

Conclusion

We conducted a two stage research on the factors which are important in determining the students' parents' perceived value of educational services provided by Iranian private secondary schools. Our results show that all of the identified values including functional, social, epistemic and emotional values have significant effect on the perceived value by the students' parents. However, the research shows that functional values have most significant impact on the valuation of educational services. Sources of functional values include concern of parents about their children future economic and social status regarding dismal economic and employment condition in Iran. Comparing our study with previous research shows that our results are in accordance with Chen et al (2021) and Gulicheva et al. (2017).

Our research is important both from the theoretical and practical point view. From theoretical point of view, it adds to the vast literature by highlighting the

positive association between different values provided by schools and evaluations of students' parents of educational services received by their children. From practical point view, our results are important for the Iranian and other emerging countries with similar economic, financial and institutional context for devising regulations with aim of promoting the quality of educational services provided by schools.

Research limitations

It is needless to say that every research' results is contingent upon the context and conditions of research. The most important limitation of our study is its cross-sectional nature. Our data collection process began at the beginning of year 2021 which was the climax of COVID-19 pandemic. Parents' priorities in such a critical circumstances are definitely altered relative to the normal situations.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest related to the publication of this article.

Ethical Considerations

During the implementation of this research and the preparation of the article, all national laws and principles of professional ethics related to the subject of research, including the rights of statistical community, organizations and institutions, as well as authors and writers have been observed. Adherence to the principles of research ethics in the present study was observed and consent forms were consciously completed by all statistical community.

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Conflict of Interest

According to the authors of the present article, there was no conflict of interest.

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