

**Students' Perception about Choice of Institution of Higher Study in Punjab -
A Comparative Study**

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Abstract

The higher education sector has become intensely competitive. In order to survive in the tertiary education market, universities have begun to behave as business entities by adopting more business strategies. The liberalisation of the tertiary education sector has resulted in an increased number of private institutions of higher learning. Due to privatisation and increase in competitive pressures, colleges and universities are now faced with the problem of competing for students to improve enrolment. The aim of the study was to study the prevailing scenario of choosing institutions for higher study and to do comparative study of public and private school students' perception on basis of identified factors. The present study covered different districts of Malwa region of Punjab. Data frame for the study is 2012-13 to 2016-17. The study is based on pooled data. The present study is exploratory and analytical in nature. The findings of the study provide an insight to the management of educational institutions that they should focus more on the attributes that are considered relatively important by the students. It is time for all those who are concerned with policymaking, planning, administration and implementation of higher education to revitalize the very thinking of the subject and put it on the right track.

Keywords: Higher Education, Privatisation, Students' Perception

Introduction

The higher education sector has become intensely competitive. In order to survive in the tertiary education market, universities have begun to behave as business entities by adopting more business strategies. Course choice among students in higher education represents an important decision and challenge. The two main aspects considered by students while making their choices typically include: course and grade satisfaction, and students' knowledge of their learning abilities. Similar to the importance of satisfying customers to retain them for profit-making institutions, satisfying the admitted students is also important for retention. It might be argued that dissatisfied students may cut back on the number of courses or drop out of college completely. Hence, the satisfaction → intention → retention link for students in higher education should be studied and carefully managed.

The present study focus on students' perception for choice of institution of higher Study with special reference to Malwa region of Punjab

Punjab, a well-known state of North India is a leader in providing education. The Punjab education system has witnessed a significant expansion in recent years, both in terms of number of institutions as well as students enrolment.

Punjab is one of the smaller State of India encompassing a total area of 50,362 square kilometers and having a population of 2.77 crores as per 2011 census. The economy of the State is fundamentally agrarian. The major cities of the State are Ludhiana, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Patiala and Bathinda. The State is divided into 5 divisions, 22 districts, 81 Tehsils, 86 Sub – Tehsils and 145 blocks. The State claims to have 60% of Sikh community and the official language of the State is Punjabi.

The present political leadership being aware of importance of educated Punjab has initiated number of reforms in education sector to encourage Public Private Partnership (PPP), under which number of private degree colleges, Professional colleges and Universities has come up. There are total 20 Universities in Punjab of which 10 are Government Universities and 9 are Private Universities while one is central University. Today, there are 506 Colleges in Punjab of which 48 are Govt. Colleges, 136 Private Aided Colleges, 19 University Constituent Colleges and 303 non-aided degree colleges.

Review of Literature

Ramalu et.al. (2013) Understanding factors that determine students' preferences in selecting higher learning institution would allow a comprehension of criteria that will attract more enrolment. This research provided a more focus study on the essential criteria that need to be met by the higher learning institution to cater the students' needs. To this end, questionnaires were administered to a sample of 1993 students from various institutions. The questionnaire asked students to rank and evaluate various social, educational and attitudinal factors in terms of their importance and influence in selecting a higher learning institution. The data were analysed by using a large-scale survey and quantitative analysis. For this purpose, a five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate factors influencing students' decision where responses ranged from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (extremely important). Following which, the factors were ranked based on

the average point of each factor. It was found that the factors (by ranking) that determine students' preferences in selecting higher learning institution are Quality of Education (Ranked 1); Campus Facilities and Atmosphere (Ranked 2); External and Financial Factors (Ranked 3); and Advertisement and Publicity (Ranked 4). **Kusumawati (2013)** explored the factors that influence student choice in the selection of an Indonesian Public University. Qualitative research through semi-structured interviews was carried out with 48 participants from Economics and Business study program in five Indonesian public universities in the two most populated regions. The data collection instrument was designed in English, translated into Indonesian, and translated back into English language and the purposive sampling technique was used to choose the sample. The study found that Indonesian students revealed that they made decisions based on a combination of several factors. Preliminary findings indicated that students considered 25 criteria for selecting an Indonesian public university. The five most important factors are cost, reputation, proximity, job prospect and parents. The findings imply that the factor mentioned by Indonesian students might be unique to Indonesia higher education context. By determining what is important to students when they choose universities, this study will help universities to promote their institutions and to have a greater knowledge about the underlying motivations of students for furthering study in higher education.

Objectives of the Study

To do comparative study of students' perception regarding choice of institution of higher study in Punjab on basis of identified factors.

Research Methodology

The present study is exploratory and analytical in nature. To collect primary data, the study employed survey method because data was collected from large number of respondents. The research instruments used for the collection of data was structured questionnaire and direct personal interview. First part comprises the statements to measure student's opinions and perceptions towards choice of institutions of higher study and second part consist of the decision making questions and sources of information for guiding choice of institution of higher study.

Multi stage sampling technique was adopted to select the students from the schools and this made the selected sample more representative of the universe. The study was confined to 14 districts of Malwa region of Punjab. The study included only those students who were in last

year of high school both at public and private high school. For selection of sample of students' purposive or judgemental sampling was adopted. A sample of 700 students was considered (50 from each district). t-test was adopted to analyse the significance of difference in students' perception regarding choice of institution of higher study in districts of Malwa region

Table 1: District-wise Literacy Rate of Malwa region of Punjab as per 2011 census

Region	District	Literacy Rate
Malwa	Mohali	83.8
	Ropar	82.2
	Ludhiana	82.2
	Fatehgarh Sahib	79.4
	Patiala	75.3
	Moga	70.7
	Faridkot	69.6
	Firozpur	68.9
	Fazilka	68.9
	Bathinda	68.3
	Sangrur	68.0
	Barnala	67.8
	Muktsar	65.8
	Mansa	61.8

Source: www.punjabdata.com

Analysis & Interpretation

Table 2 Significance of difference between Public and Private School for students' perception about choice of institution of higher study

	Private School						Public School					
	N	Mean	SD	t value	d.f.	P value	N	Mean	SD	t value	d.f.	p value
The institution for higher study is a private institution	307	4.07	1.17	61.02	306	0.00**	393	3.41	1.52	44.44	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study is a public institution	307	4.24	1.09	68.12	306	0.00**	393	4.07	1.16	69.67	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study is affiliated to a religious organisation	307	1.87	0.88	37.21	306	0.00**	393	2.08	0.96	42.86	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study is located in rural area	307	4.39	1.17	65.58	306	0.00**	393	4.04	1.47	54.62	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study is located in urban area	307	4.24	0.72	102.80	306	0.00**	393	4.05	0.74	109.11	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study offers some English programs.	307	3.21	1.31	42.93	306	0.00**	393	2.59	1.39	36.97	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study is comprehensive offering a variety of academic programs in diversified fields	307	2.96	1.35	38.37	306	0.00**	393	2.46	1.34	36.48	392	0.00**
Practical and hands on training is provided in the curriculum.	307	4.07	0.84	85.03	306	0.00**	393	4.08	0.84	95.84	392	0.00**
Curriculum focus on skill enhancement, employability and entrepreneurship	307	3.93	0.88	78.43	306	0.00**	393	3.95	0.86	91.27	392	0.00**

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The institution for higher study provides the environment and atmosphere which are conducive to learning	307	3.00	1.28	41.04	306	0.00**	393	2.55	1.27	39.72	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study is an international institution with English as medium of instruction	307	2.70	1.36	34.77	306	0.00**	393	2.34	1.23	37.82	392	0.00**
There are foreign students and faculty members making the institution for higher study a truly international community.	307	2.81	1.47	33.56	306	0.00**	393	2.08	1.33	30.94	392	0.00**
The institution has large percentage of doctorate faculty with research publications in highly reputed journals	307	2.74	1.43	33.53	306	0.00**	393	2.14	1.33	31.97	392	0.00**
Faculty members make use of effective teaching and learning methodology	307	2.70	1.43	33.07	306	0.00**	393	2.01	1.20	33.09	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study offers various extra-curricular activities on regular basis.	307	2.87	1.44	34.80	306	0.00**	393	2.46	1.28	37.99	392	0.00**
Students who graduate from institution has high rate of job prospects	307	2.86	1.59	31.40	306	0.00**	393	2.09	1.36	30.58	392	0.00**

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Students have good support from teachers	307	3.42	1.46	41.00	306	0.00**	393	2.55	1.33	37.99	392	0.00**
Institution have safe and friendly atmosphere	307	3.39	1.41	42.08	306	0.00**	393	2.51	1.40	35.53	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study has clear rules and regulations	307	3.27	1.28	44.69	306	0.00**	393	2.52	1.21	41.31	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study has its own admission, examination and selection procedures	307	2.99	1.56	33.48	306	0.00**	393	2.53	1.39	36.07	392	0.00**
It required preparation and personal efforts to pass the exam and get accepted to the institution for higher study.	307	3.41	1.42	41.94	306	0.00**	393	2.72	1.35	39.92	392	0.00**
The admission system of institution of higher study is highly competitive.	307	3.32	1.33	43.83	306	0.00**	393	2.51	1.22	40.78	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study has a good reputation for academic excellence.	307	2.64	1.51	30.63	306	0.00**	393	2.52	1.43	34.99	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study has a good reputation for qualified lecturers	307	2.97	1.29	40.21	306	0.00**	393	2.30	1.24	36.90	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study has good reputation for quality graduates	307	2.93	1.34	38.32	306	0.00**	393	2.45	1.22	39.69	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study has a good	307	3.36	1.33	44.17	306	0.00**	393	2.59	1.47	34.98	392	0.00**

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reputation for high technology in all its infrastructure and teaching and learning facilities												
The institution for higher study offers adequate quality library resources and services	307	2.63	1.14	40.36	306	0.00**	393	2.09	1.04	39.84	392	0.00**
The text books and related reference books available in relevance with the course content	307	2.84	1.28	39.04	306	0.00**	393	2.46	1.18	41.15	392	0.00**
The institution has well maintained computer labs and other supporting labs	307	2.62	1.23	37.41	306	0.00**	393	2.13	0.97	43.66	392	0.00**
There are well-facilitated boys and girls hostel	307	2.97	1.45	35.98	306	0.00**	393	2.28	1.29	35.23	392	0.00**
It is possible to join an exchange program or study abroad.	307	2.28	1.15	34.66	306	0.00**	393	1.75	0.94	37.07	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study provides career guidance and job placement counseling	307	2.76	1.11	43.57	306	0.00**	393	2.24	0.96	46.22	392	0.00**
The institution has good sport facilities and well maintained sports complex	307	3.14	1.29	42.65	306	0.00**	393	2.76	1.28	42.85	392	0.00**
The institution has beautiful campus	307	2.87	1.27	39.55	306	0.00**	393	2.86	1.33	42.64	392	0.00**
The institution has 24x7 medical officer and health care services inside campus	307	2.95	1.23	41.89	306	0.00**	393	2.83	1.26	44.41	392	0.00**
The institution has fleet of buses to ensure	307	2.95	1.31	39.43	306	0.00**	393	2.96	1.37	42.72	392	0.00**

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smooth transportation from distant areas												
The institution for higher study is in convenient location	307	3.59	1.11	56.50	306	0.00**	393	3.50	1.15	60.56	392	0.00**
The institution for higher study is not far from your residence	307	4.22	1.20	61.48	306	0.00**	393	4.22	1.27	65.83	392	0.00**
The living expenses (food, transport, accommodation etc.) of campus are available at cheaper rates	307	3.75	1.57	41.80	306	0.00**	393	4.18	1.15	72.22	392	0.00**
40) There are possibilities to apply for a scholarship	307	4.34	1.25	61.01	306	0.00**	393	4.45	1.08	82.08	392	0.00**
41) It is possible to apply for a loan for tuition fees.	307	4.34	1.01	75.45	306	0.00**	393	4.43	0.82	107.39	392	0.00**
42) It is possible to get a part time job on campus	307	4.31	0.91	82.62	306	0.00**	393	4.29	0.99	85.60	392	0.00**
D1_You consult with your parents	307	3.92	0.89	77.25	306	0.00**	393	3.80	1.02	73.54	392	0.00**
D2_You consult with your teachers	307	4.03	0.86	81.76	306	0.00**	393	4.05	0.87	92.81	392	0.00**
You consult with your counsellors	307	3.89	0.89	76.09	306	0.00**	393	3.92	0.88	88.19	392	0.00**
You consult with your family relatives	307	3.62	0.97	65.31	306	0.00**	393	3.67	0.87	83.96	392	0.00**
You consult with your friends	307	3.67	0.91	70.91	306	0.00**	393	3.64	1.02	70.40	392	0.00**
You get the approval or permission from your parent(s) before making any decision	307	4.19	0.98	74.73	306	0.00**	393	4.17	0.98	84.02	392	0.00**
You listen to your friends and follow their advice or	307	4.07	0.90	79.25	306	0.00**	393	4.13	0.93	87.86	392	0.00**

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choices												
You seek the advice from the university students who already enrolled in the program/the university you are interested in.	307	3.89	1.05	65.20	306	0.00**	393	3.90	0.93	82.84	392	0.00**
You acquire information from the school counsellors or teachers before making choices	307	4.12	1.14	63.25	306	0.00**	393	4.13	1.05	78.32	392	0.00**
You search for the information from various sources and make your own decision based on that	307	4.03	1.05	67.10	306	0.00**	393	4.02	1.19	67.04	392	0.00**
You get advice and information from the alumni of the university you are interested in	307	4.33	0.87	87.15	306	0.00**	393	4.19	1.04	79.82	392	0.00**
You search for the information from various sources and make your own decision based on that	307	4.19	0.98	74.98	306	0.00**	393	4.21	1.10	75.64	392	0.00**

Table 2 indicates significance of difference between public and private school for students' perception about choice of institution of higher study. P value is equal to 0.00 and which is less than significant value 0.01 in case of all statements for choice of institutions of higher study. This indicates significant difference between public and private school students' perception about choice of institution of higher study.

Table 3: Comparison between Public and Private School for students' perception for choice of institution of higher study

Dimensions for Choice/School	Public (n=393)		Private (n=307)		t value	d.f.	p value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Type of University	13.61	3.04	14.58	2.34	4.63	698	0.00**
Curriculum	13.08	2.57	14.16	2.65	5.47	698	0.00**
Learning environment	15.83	6.21	20.78	8.00	9.21	698	0.00**
Admission Standard	10.28	3.61	12.98	4.46	8.85	698	0.00**
University Reputation	9.86	3.48	11.90	3.66	7.53	698	0.00**
University support System and services	21.60	4.63	24.87	5.71	8.38	698	0.00**
University Location	7.72	2.23	7.81	2.09	0.51	698	0.61
Financial Aid Expenses	17.3	2.44	16.7	2.95	-3.05	698	0.00**
Decision	17.28	3.23	20.41	4.11	11.28	698	0.00**
Information	17.06	2.74	18.24	2.64	5.77	698	0.00**

**Significant at 0.01 level and *Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3 shows comparison between public and private school for student's perception regarding choice of institution of higher study. P value is equal to 0.00 which is less than 0.01 in case of dimensions such as type of university, curriculum, learning environment, admission standard, university reputation, university support system and services, financial aid expenses, decision, information indicating significant difference between public and private school for choice of institutions of higher study. P value is 0.61 in case of dimension university location which is higher than 0.05 and indicate insignificant difference between public and private school.

Table 4: Gender-wise significance of difference in students' perception regarding choice of institution of higher study

Dimensions for Choice/Gender	Male (n=404)		Female (n=296)		t value	df	p value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Type of University	14.06	2.79	13.99	2.80	0.31	698	0.76
Curriculum	13.48	2.70	13.66	2.60	-0.86	698	0.39
Learning environment	18.04	7.52	17.95	7.38	0.15	698	0.88

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Admission Standard	11.48	4.28	11.45	4.15	0.08	698	0.94
University Reputation	10.67	3.84	10.88	3.49	-0.75	698	0.45
University support System and services	23.18	5.41	22.84	5.34	0.82	698	0.41
University Location	7.66	2.24	7.90	2.07	-1.45	698	0.15
Financial Aid Expenses	17.05	2.81	17.1	2.52	-0.36	678	0.73
Decision	18.79	4.02	18.47	3.86	1.04	698	0.30
Information	17.65	2.59	17.48	2.97	0.78	698	0.43

**Significant at 0.01 level and *Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4 indicate gender-wise significance of difference in students' perception regarding choice of institution of higher study. P value in case of dimensions type of university (0.76), learning environment (0.88), admission standard (0.94) and financial aid expenses is greater than level of significance 0.05. P value is 0.39 for dimension curriculum, 0.45 for university reputation, 0.41 for dimension university support system services. 0.15 for dimension university location, 0.30 for decision and 0.43 for information which is greater than level of significance 0.01. This indicates that there is insignificant difference in students' perception for choice of institution of higher study on basis of gender.

Table 5.14: Age-wise significance of difference in students' perception regarding choice of institutions of higher study

**Significant at 0.01 level and *Significant at 0.05 level

Dimensions for Choice/Age	16-17yrs (n=135)		17-18yrs (n=213)		18-19yrs (n=134)		19-20yrs (n=218)		F value	p value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Type of University	13.92	3.01	13.55	3.06	14.00	2.53	14.59	2.44	5.12	0.00**
Curriculum	13.45	2.79	12.94	2.51	13.34	2.59	14.35	2.56	11.24	0.00**
Learning environment	16.62	6.35	14.36	3.83	17.90	7.54	22.48	8.41	54.97	0.00**
Admission Standard	10.85	3.77	9.33	2.53	11.56	4.16	13.87	4.60	52.19	0.00**

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University Reputation	10.71	3.53	9.19	3.21	10.67	3.56	12.36	3.68	29.68	0.00**
University support System and services	22.34	4.90	20.56	3.76	23.37	5.31	25.67	5.83	38.72	0.00**
University Location	7.51	2.21	7.83	2.16	7.89	2.10	7.77	2.20	0.81	0.49
Financial Aid Expenses	17.01	2.78	17.09	2.71	17.27	2.45	17.00	2.77	0.32	0.81
Decision	18.70	3.91	17.90	3.74	19.10	4.04	19.10	4.05	4.13	0.01**
Information	17.86	2.67	17.00	2.85	17.46	2.58	18.05	2.74	5.92	0.00**

**Significant at 0.01 level and *Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4 indicate age-wise significance of difference in student's perception regarding choice of institution of higher study. P value is equal to 0.00 in case of dimensions type of university, curriculum, learning environment, Admission standard, university reputation, university support system and services and source of information which indicates that there is significant difference in students' perception regarding choice of institution of higher study on basis of age. P value is 0.01 in case of dimension decision which is equal to significant value 0.01 indicating highly significant difference in students' perception regarding choice of institution of higher study. P value in case of university location is 0.49 which is greater than level of significance 0.01 indicating insignificant difference in students' perception regarding choice of institution of higher study. In case of dimension financial aid expenses p value is 0.81 which is greater than significant value 0.05 highlighting insignificant difference in students' perception regarding choice of institution of higher study on basis of age.

Findings & Conclusions

There is significant difference between public and private school students' perception about choice of institution of higher study. There is significant difference in public and private school students' perception for choice of institution of higher study for dimensions such as type of university, curriculum, learning environment, admission standard, university reputation, university support system and services, financial aid expenses, decision, information. There is insignificant difference in public and private school students' perception for choice of institution of higher study for dimension university location. There is insignificant difference in public and

private school students' perception for choice of institution of higher study on basis of gender for all dimensions that is type of university, learning environment, admission standard and financial aid expenses, curriculum, university reputation, university support system services, university location, decision and information. There is significant difference in public and private school students' perception regarding choice of institution of higher study on basis of age in case of dimensions type of university, curriculum, learning environment, Admission standard, university reputation, university support system and services and source of information. There is highly significant difference in public and private school students' perception regarding choice of institution of higher study for dimension decision. There is insignificant difference in public and private school students' perception regarding choice of institution of higher study for university location and financial aid expenses on basis of age.

The findings of the study provide an insight to the management of educational institutions that they should focus more on the attributes that are considered relatively important by the students. The future of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) depends on their ability to attract and retain students, increase recognition and prestige. It is necessary to identify the key factors that influence the satisfaction of a customer's thereby creating competitive advantages.

Recommendations

- Vocationalisation of education should be one on priority basis. The skills should be gender sensitive in order to empower women. Firstly, there should be proper training institutes to tackle the need of qualified vocational teachers.
- In order to ensure quality in education social and learning motive should overcome the commercial motive.
- More stress should be laid on the concept 'Earning while Learning'. It will give practical knowledge of the life which is very necessary for one's existence.

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