

## DETERMINANTS OF PARENTAL CHILD'S SCHOOL PREFERENCES IN QATAR

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of “Quality Education”, “Developing Better Social Skills”, “Homework Assignment”, “Using Private Tutors”, “Charging School Fees” and “Nationality” on “Parental School Preference” using primary data collected from preparatory and secondary school teachers in Qatar.

**Methodology:** The population for this study consists of all parents in Qatar. The current study used a very large stratified sample size  $n = 1462$  that was determined by the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) using a 95% confidence interval estimate. The nine items used in this study are part of a huge questionnaire measuring attitude and parental child's school preferences. Kaisers-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and the Bartlett test of sphericity were used to determine the appropriateness of using factor analysis. What are more; principal axis factoring and oblique rotation extracted three factors?

**Main findings:** The representative sample Factor analysis extracted three dimensions (quality education, developing better social skills, homework assignment). The dependent variable (parental school choice) was regressed on the factor scores of these three extracted dimensions in addition to four independent variables (school fees, nationality, repeating a school grade, and parents' disappointment if their child doesn't go far in school). The results revealed that parental school choice is significantly determined by three explanatory variables: the quality of education, school fees, and nationality.

**Implications:** Raising standards for teachers should be a key element in educational quality. What's more, in the spirit of findings the policymakers in Qatar should make funding part of school fees for expatriates a priority.

**Novelty:** This article empirically correlates two main fields of educational research: Parental School Choice is given Quality of Education, Charging School Fees, and Nationality.

**Keywords:** *Quality education, Teachers, Factor analysis, Education reform, Parental school choice, School fees, Nationality.*

### INTRODUCTION

In 2001, the State of Qatar embarked on monolithic reform – *Education for a New Era* (EFNE) – to improve and modernize its K–12 education and thus meet the country's sustainable development goals. The aim of the reform was to depart from a traditional, rigid and bureaucratic schooling system to a model of education that is flexible, modern and diverse. Acting on recommendations provided by RAND Corporation, which was commissioned to evaluate Qatar's education system, Qatar rapidly shifted to a decentralized education system that allows for a variety of schooling options with different curricula, pedagogies, and resources ([Alfadala, 2015](#)).

Key to the EFNE initiative was the conversion of the Ministry of Education (public) schools into independent schools, a process that started in 2004. The establishment of the independent (government-financed) school model was based on four main pillars: *autonomy, accountability, variety, and choice* ([Brewer, Augustine, Zellman, Ryan, Goldman, Stasz, & Constant, 2007](#)). With the introduction of this new schooling system, schools are now held accountable for educating children to mandated standards and for the quality of their offerings, with reduced centralized oversight from the Ministry of Education ([Brewer et al., 2007](#)).

Central to the EFNE reform is the principle of choice that is meant to be a level educational playing field that allows parents access to choice in the school market. The intent was to provide a greater supply of schools in Qatar and ensure more educational choices available to parents. Recently, different market forces have led to expansive growth in Qatar's educational market, with demand for international schools still not matched by supply ([Nasser, 2017](#)). Accordingly, parents are now able to choose the school that best suits their children's needs and interests. This resulted in competition for students, a trend that urged government (public) schools to become more responsive to the needs and demands of families ([Zellman, Constant & Goldman, 2011](#)).

The need for foreign labor import in Qatar has resulted in the widely acknowledged fact that citizens amount to an undersized minority ([Beaugrand, 2006](#)). To contain the growing arrival of expatriate children, the number of private schools in Qatar has grown dramatically over the past decade or so within the past ten years or so [Done]. At present, Qatar's school system is

comprised of four types: Independent schools, international schools, community schools, and Arabic private schools. Moreover, “The school education in Qatar is controlled largely by two bodies – The Ministry of Education and Supreme Education Council. There are also privately managed independent schools in Qatar. The majority of these schools are managed and run for English speaking western expatriates, although local families to send their children to these schools. The schools are for children of American, British, German, French, Pakistanis, Indians, Egyptians, Japanese, Filipinos, and several other nationalities” ([onlineqatar, 2018](#)). On the one hand, from 2010, all public schools in Qatar have been converted to independent state-funded schools that are free for Qatari citizens and segregated “with girls and boys in separate schools” ([Brewer et al., 2011 :p. 4](#)).

Non- Qatari enrollments in independent schools are rare and subject to individual school policy. Expatriates struggle to meet rising school fees in Qatar. As an example, “Birla Public School in Qatar charges Dh19,500 while schools of the same level in Dubai are charging significantly less” ([Gulf News & Qatar, 2018](#)). Al-Meraikhi states that “[E]xpat families whose children attend such schools also do not pay tuition, but they are expected to pay for additional services, such as book and bus fees” ([Al-Meraikhi, 2018](#)). These schools have the autonomy to establish their own methods of teaching and recruit their teachers and staff. Karkouti reports that “At all levels, public education is fully financed by the Qatari government. Education is provided at no cost to local students including textbooks, uniforms, transportation, and other necessities. In some instances, monthly allowances are provided” ([Karkouti, 2016; p. 183](#)). On the other hand, the majority of expatriate children in Qatar go to private schools with different languages and curricula. This diversity allows children to grow up to become global citizens. Tuition may differ significantly from private school to another. Qatari and non-Qatari citizens have access to full up – to – date information about in regard to schooling in Qatar but Qatari citizens prefer to send their girls to the independent schools segregated that are administered separately. Jakobsen states reports that “The traditions and practices of sex-segregation have been, and still are, firmly rooted in the Gulf societies” ([Jakobsen, 2010; p.21](#)). What’s more, the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics reports that “The percentage of male students was 49% and the proportion of females was 51%. The rate of female to male students amounted to 102% in the academic year 2014/2015 in all educational levels” ([Education in Qatar Statistical Profile, 2016; p.17](#)). A report by Evaluation Institute of the Supreme Education Council (SEC) notes that “Parents’ satisfaction with the quality of education provided to their children 80%; and parents’ satisfaction with the quality of the curriculum 75%” ([The Annual Report on Education in Qatar Schools, 2018](#)).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Existing research reveals that the subject of parental choice has been investigated extensively, as can be seen from studies conducted in the USA ([Hoxby, 2003](#)), Continental Europe ([Bagley, Glatter & Woods, 2005](#)), Australia ([Campbell, Proctor, & Sherington, 2009](#)) and Canada ([Davies & Aurini, 2011](#)). However, not enough is known about the decisions parents make regarding school choices in the Arabian Gulf states and the broader Arab region. Golkowska believes that “the scarcity of studies on the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) countries is striking” ([Golkowska, 2017; p.1](#)). This study seeks to fill this gap in the literature and provide an alternative perspective on this topic.

What parents look for when making choice decisions about the school their child(ren) will attend often depends on a range of academic, institutional or socio-cultural variables. Whereas some parents attach importance to school curriculum and materials ([Bosetti, 2004](#)) others are more concerned about issues related to academic achievement ([Hastings, Kane & Staiger, 2005](#)). For other parents, what matters more is commuting to school ([Wilson, Marshall, Wilson & Krizek, 2010](#)) in addition to the school environment, including health and safety, care, gender-sensitivity, provision of resources and facilities ([Yaacob, Osman & Bachok, 2014](#)). In general, however, the quality of education a school offers is the reason with the most significance for parents ([Burgess, Greaves, Vignoles & Wilson, 2015](#)), as is discussed in the paragraphs below.

### Quality of Education

Gibbons and Silva (2011) assert that there are indications that parents’ perceptions of school quality are mainly associated with a school’s academic performance that is generally reflected in test scores of students. A substantial body of research, however, has examined the quality of education perceived as a key factor influencing parents’ choice of school for their children ([Losike-Sedimo, 2011](#)). However, although the available literature remains inconclusive as to the meaning of education quality in relation to parental preferences when choosing a school, researchers agree on the main traits that characterize it ([Yaacob et al., 2014; Altenhofen, Berends & White, 2016](#)).

Specifically, many studies note certain traits of the quality of education that determine parents’ selection of school. One such trait is the school reputation. [Burgess, Greaves, Vignoles, and Wilson \(2009\)](#) suggest that a school’s reputation is based on the quality of instruction it provides. Villavicencio argues that reputation encompasses areas such as the quality of instruction and student achievement ([Losike-Sedimo, 2011](#)). For [Altenhofen, Berends, and White \(2016\)](#), parents select schools based on the school’s reputation of providing qualified teachers as well as teachers that care about their students.

## School Fees

Many past studies confirm, a household's income often determines their school choice decision (Holme, 2002). Although wealth has been shown to correlate with child enrollment in government or non-government schools, research has not been consistent as to whether income is a determinant factor in the choice of school. Other research demonstrates that school fees are a very salient factor parents take into consideration when choosing a private or public school for their child(ren) (Hoxby, 2003). Affordability of tuition fees has been found to affect student enrollment, for the cost of tuition is viewed as an important deterrent that dissuades poorer parents from choosing particular schools for their children (The World Bank, 2009)

More recently, however, Lankford, Lee, and Wyckoff (1995) contend that income positively affects a family's choice of a private school. Buddin, Cordes, and Kirby (1998), for instance, argue that parents' decisions regarding the choice of a private school for their children are not associated with their income. However, school fees are not always the main reason why students from affluent backgrounds tend to choose private schools more than their low-income counterparts (OECD, 2012). More generally, it can be said that children from poorer households are less likely to attend private schools due to low family income (Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2017).

## Race, Ethnicity, Nationality

Kleitz and colleagues (2000) note that parental preferences regarding school selection are not different because of socio-economic background, race, or ethnicity and that parents, in fact, seek quality education. Whereas many studies have examined the relationship between race and ethnicity, and school choice, Goyette (2008) documented that research has not paid sufficient attention to the impact of the nationality construct on parental choice of school. Interestingly, existing literature on school choice and race or ethnicity demonstrates inconclusive and mixed results. It is worth to mention that recent research by Lacireno-Paquet and Brantley (2012) suggests that race and other social factors shape parents' preferences and perceptions of school,

In a study involving Irish, European Union (EU) and non-EU citizens, O'Mahony (2008) asked participants about the type of school they would choose for their child if all types of school were available to them as parents. Participants were given the following options: a school not under the management of a religious denomination a school under the administration of a subgroup within a religion, a school under management that provides for a common religious denomination, or another type of school. The findings yielded statistically significant differences between the three nationality groupings. Citizens of other EU member states probably choose a school not under the management of a religious denomination, compared to Irish nationals. Citizens from countries other than EU countries prefer another type of school (16.7%).

## NEED FOR THE STUDY

The need and significance of the current investigation are based on the review of the literature. Published research notes that increased demand for a "western" education" around the world has increased competition and made it tough for families to secure a place at the school of their choice. Newsweek's report about private schools states that "In addition to expat students, these schools can have a significant local student population as parents in the host country, eager to broaden the horizons and experiences of their children, enroll them as pupils. These schools teach an international curriculum, typically English or American will have English as their primary teaching language and will prepare pupils for a relatively seamless transition to higher education institutions beyond their country of residence" (NEWSWEEK, 2018). That is why the researchers in this study decided to investigate the problem of 'parents looking for leaving their existing schools in Qatar' as opposed to 'what parents look for when selecting schools in Qatar?' This study is based on Ecocultural theory which places the child into the context of families and education (Bernheimer, Gallimore, & Weisner, 1990). For this reason, data in this investigation were collected from the parents.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Considering school types available in Qatar, parents make decisions about the right school for their children in a context where the cost of tuition and the quality of education (the curriculum, pedagogy, resources, etc.) are key determinants of parental school choice. The objective of this study is to explore the determinants of parental choice of school. Using primary data collected from parents of preparatory and secondary school students in Qatar, this study examines the factors that drive parents to make specific school selections in Qatar. Our aim is to provide a perspective on the individual and contextual factors likely to predict the choice of school parents make.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the discussion above and drawing on the existing literature, we hypothesize that the quality of education, school fees, and parents' nationality determine the differences associated with parental school choice in the context of Qatar. Three lines of questioning guide this study:

1. What are the determinants of parental school choice in Qatar?
2. Are there any significant differences between parents' demographic characteristics and parental school choice?
3. Are school-related factors significantly associated with parental school choice?

## METHODOLOGY

The data needed for this study originate from a nationally representative survey of Qatari parents of students in preparatory (8th and 9th grades) and secondary (11th and 12th grades) schools. The survey was conducted by the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) in 2015

### Participants

The current study included 1462 parents representing all preparatory (grades 8 and 9) and secondary (grades 11 and 12) students' parents in Qatar. Two-thirds of the respondents lived between 10 and 20 years in Qatar, 72.3 % have a full-time job in and occupy jobs in almost all sectors in Qatar. What's more, 41.9% of the wives have full-time employment in almost all sectors in Qatar too. Almost one-fifth of the respondents had less than university education and one-third of them had a university education. The sample was comprised of 65.3% males and 34.7% females. With regard to grade level, the study involved 60% of parents whose children were in preparatory schools (grades 8 and 9) and 40% in secondary schools (grades 11 and 12). Looking at the type of school, 2.8% of parents had their children in Arabic private schools, 10.2% Community schools, 58.5% Independent schools, and 28.5% International schools.

### Sampling Procedures

The huge random sample for this investigation was selected using the sampling frame using the list provided by the Ministry of Education regarding public and private preparatory and secondary schools operating in Qatar. Using stratified random sampling whereby the target population is first divided into separate strata (using municipality), the representative sample was selected by the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI).

After obtaining approval from the Qatar University's Internal Review Board, the researchers determined the sample size using 95% confidence interval estimate and 0.025 precision (Margin of Error, i.e. how precisely we want to estimate the population proportion) assuming 40% is the expected true proportion of parents moving, or expecting to move, their kids out of their schools in Qatar. Furthermore, to ensure high standards and a very high rate of data collection, phone calls were made with parents to explain the purpose of the investigation and to take appointments for conducting interviews. Additionally, the supervisors of data collection at SESRI trained the data collectors properly and provided them with step-by-step instructions for conducting interviews successfully with the selected families. The interviewers were gender-matched with the respondents as recommended by Vercruyssen, Wuyts, and Loosveldt in face-to-face surveys (Vercruyssen et al, 2017). To reduce method biases as was recommended by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff especially at the response stage, the trained interviewer "assured respondents that there are no right or wrong answers and that they should answer questions as honestly as possible" (Podsakoff et al., p.888). What's more, the easy to understand questionnaire was undergone a robust process of development and testing. Following the implementation of the fieldwork survey, 1462 valid completed questionnaires were returned for analysis.

### Validity and Reliability

Seven items were measured using a five-point Likert type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), and two items were measured based on a frequency scale. (response options of not at all, once a week, twice a week, three times a week and four times or more a week). To test the construct validity of the questionnaire instrument, factor analysis is used to explain the total variation of the items with fewer dimensions (Karjaluoto 2007, p.39; Comrey & Lee 1992, p.7). What's more, Karjaluoto (2007, p.39) suggests that, in order to run a factor analysis successfully, the required amount of data is based on more than 100 observations. According to Comrey and Lee (1992, p.217) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2001, p.588) a sample size of 50 is very poor, 100 is poor, 200 is fair, 300 or more is excellent. In the current study, the sample size was 1462 parents; thus, the size of the data can be seen as excellent and suitable to execute a factor analysis.

To determine the suitability of using factor analysis, two statistical tests were employed: the KMO (Kaisers-Meyer-Olkin) and the Bartlett test of sphericity. First, the computed KMO (Kaisers-Meyer-Olkin) measure of sampling adequacy score of 0.794 scores was well above the recommended level of 0.50 (Table 1). Second, the computed Bartlett statistical test of sphericity was significant (Chi-Square = 1913, .05; P = 0.00), indicating that there are satisfactory inter-correlations between the items which allow us to perform factor analysis. Principal axis was used as an extraction method and oblique rotation was utilized as a rotation method (Table 2). Three factors (the quality of education, social skills, and homework assignments) were extracted using Eigenvalue greater than 1 "the one criterion" and explained 61.419% of the variation. The three dimensions that were extracted using factor analysis were reliable with Cronbach (alpha) values greater than 0.5.

## Simple Discriminant Analysis

Simple Discriminant Analysis was employed to test the relative importance of the independent variables to the explained variation in the dependent variable parental choice of school. The dependent variable (parental school choice) was measured using Yes/No options in response to the question: “If you have the financial ability and opportunity, would you move your child from school?” Parental school choice was then regressed on factor scores of the three-factor analysis dimensions (quality of education, social skills, and homework assignments) in addition to four more dichotomous (Yes/No) independent variables (nationality, grade retention (or repetition), school fees and disappointment if the child fails to go far in school). The regression equation is based on 899 valid questionnaires with no missing observations and it is found that the regression equation is highly significant ( $F = 40.991$ ,  $p = .000$ );  $R^2$  is 0.248. Tables 3 show that variation in parental choice of school is significantly determined by three explanatory variables (quality of education, participants’ nationality and the cost of tuition) out of seven independent variables. The Simple Discriminant Function is:

$$Z_y = \beta_1 Z_1 + \beta_2 Z_2 + \beta_3 Z_3$$

## MEASURES

### Dependent Variable:

*Parental School Choice:* This is the main dependent variable for our statistical analysis. In the questionnaire, parents were asked: “If you have the financial ability and opportunity, would you move your child from this school?” (with ‘yes’ and ‘no’ response options). The question also included an “Other” option (with an open-ended, “please specify” space) and an “I do not know” option. Since anyone scoring “I do not know” is not actually agreeing and none of the respondents answered the “open-ended question”, the researchers decided to look at “Yes” vs. all others. Missing stays missing in all cases! MacCallum and his colleagues believe that even though this practice is not recommended, it is similar to the practice of few articles published in very high prestigious journals such as *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Journals of Applied Psychology* and *Journal of Consulting Psychology* (MacCallum et al., 2002; pp: 29-30).

### Independent Variables:

The included independent variables were a mixture of factor scores and dichotomous dummy variables. All scaled items were analyzed using factor analysis and factor scores were computed for further analysis as mentioned under “Validity and Reliability”. All categorical variables were broken into two categories by looking at one category vs all others. Missing stays missing in all cases!

*Nationality:* For this categorical variable, parents were asked “What is your nationality?” and were given two options to select from (dichotomized into Qatari versus Non-Qatari). For the Non-Qatari option, a “please specify” space was provided.

*Quality of Education:* Parents were asked, “On a scale of 1-4, to what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?” (response options of strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree and strongly disagree). 1) The school is providing an excellent education to my child; 2) I recommend this school to my friends; 3) The curriculum is well prepared 4) The school prepares my child for university education and 5) My child enjoys going to school.

*School Fees:* In the questionnaire, parents were asked: “Does your child’s school charge tuition fees?” (With ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ response options).

*Social Skills:* In the questionnaire, parents were asked “In a typical day, how many hours does your child spend on video games” and “In a typical day, how many hours does your child spend on talking with friends” (response options of none, 1-2 hours, 3-4 hours, 5-6 hours, more than 6 hours).

*Homework Assignments:* Parents were asked two questions aiming to tap whether homework assignment is a factor that influences the parental choice of school. First, they were asked: “In general, how often does your child ask for help with his/her assignments?” (response options of always, sometimes, rarely and never). They were also asked: “In a typical week, how often do you check whether or not your child has done his/her homework?” (response options of not at all, once a week, twice a week, three times a week and four times or more a week). The list also included an “I do not know” option.

*Grade retention (Repetition):* Parents were asked, “Did your child repeat any grade in the past?” (With ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ response options).

*Parent disappointment if the child didn’t go far enough in school.* Parents were asked, “If your child did not actually go that far in school, would you be disappointed or otherwise?”

Due to publication word limitation, the researchers in this study focus solely on the findings that have yielded significant results. As such, the variables of *social skills*, *homework assignments*, *grade retention*, and *parental disappointment if the child*



*didn't go far enough in school* will not be discussed below since they were not significantly associated with parents' choice of school.

## RESULTS

The results concluded from Simple Discriminant Analysis show that three explanatory variables shape parental school choice and therefore support our research hypothesis that stipulates that parental school choice is determined by three explanatory variables: the quality of education, charging school fees, and nationality. To get more robust data and elaborate on these findings, we decided to use cross-tabulation and Chi-square analyses.

Results indicate a highly significant relationship between parents' school choice and the quality of education. Only around 10% of parents who agree that their children's school provides good quality education state they would consider moving their child(ren) to a new school if they have the financial ability, in comparison to 89.5% of parents who state they would not consider doing so (Tables 4).

The results also reveal that the relationship between parental school choice and nationality is highly significant. Indeed, non-Qatari parents (29.4%) are almost twice as likely as Qatari parents (16.7%) to report considering changing school for their child(ren) if they have financial ability (Table 5).

Parental school choice is also significantly associated with school fees. As is shown in Table 6, the results show that fee-paying parents (32.5%) are more likely to move their child (ren) from school if they have the financial ability, in comparison with parents who are not paying fees (18.7%).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results presented above, three factors are found to influence the choices parents to make about the school their children will attend. As was anticipated, a large majority of parents report reluctance to move their child(ren) to another school, perhaps owing to their satisfaction with the quality of education that their child (ren)'s current school provides. These results are in line with prior research that has consistently shown the main driver of parents' choice of school for their children is the quality of education the school offers ([Goldring & Phillips, 2008](#)).

Past research has shown that parents' decisions regarding school choice are determined by the failure of the state (public) school system to meet their aspirations and expectations (Lucey and Reay, 2002). Various aspects of schooling impact the way parents perceive the quality of education that schools offer. For example, academic achievement, the curriculum, the school environment, school-family communication, parental involvement and the quality of staff are all associated with overall parental satisfaction, as has been demonstrated in studies by [Friedman, Bobrowski, and Markow \(2007\)](#) and [Goldhaber \(2000\)](#).

We also expected to find a relationship between school fees and parental school choice. The results of our study indicate that tuition fees constitute an important factor that influences parents' school choice decisions. Our findings suggest that fee-paying parents are more likely to move their children to another school compared to non-fee-paying parents if they have the financial ability to do so. In Qatar, all fee-paying schools are private and parents who pay school tuition are those with children attending private schools. A possible explanation for our results may be that the fee-paying parents who are likely to opt for a different school appear to aspire to or be attracted to schools that provide better education, providing they can afford to pay school fees. These results confirm previously reported findings that the fees schools charge strongly affect parents' school choices ([Bosetti, 2004](#) and [Hoxby, 2003](#)).

Looking at the education system in Qatar, it is evident that private schools, which constitute an important component of the school market, are increasingly competing for the delivery of services that satisfy the needs of parents and their children. In fact, the choice has triggered inter-school competition, which has, in turn, engendered an increase in pressure on private schools, a point captured by [Altenhofen, Berends, and White \(2016\)](#) and [Betts \(2005\)](#). The international schools market is now big business in Qatar and these schools offer services that vary in quality as well as in the fees they charge. As a whole, the school choices available in the market reflect the variety in order to accommodate the needs of families from different backgrounds.

The results concluded from the present study may be interpreted in light of the entitlements and benefits Qatari and expatriate employees are respectively entitled to in Qatar. Most employees in Qatar receive an education allowance to assist with tuition fees. This allowance determines parents' choice of school. Perhaps, if they have a higher allowance, they would opt for a different school. The education allowance accorded to employees is determined depending on the employees' qualifications, experience and the organization they work for. Where the school fees are in excess of the education allowance, the parent (employee) is responsible for paying the difference.

Our study's results further reveal that a majority of parents are pleased with their children's current schools and would not consider moving their children to another school, even if they have the financial ability. Based on this study's data, it appears

that Qataris are less likely to move their child(ren) to another school if they have the financial ability, compared to expatriate parents. These findings need to be interpreted against the backdrop of the school system and the local culture in Qatar.

In the case of Qatari parents, one may argue that the local culture plays a key significance in determining parents' school choice. In particular, it is clear that Qatari students tend to have a preference for attending public (government-financed) independent schools, which are all single-gender schools. It is worth noting that gender is an important determinant of school choice in Qatar as is evidenced by the existence of single-sex schooling at all government school levels. Even at the national (Qatar) university level, male and female students are all enrolled in separate programs. Interestingly, our results related to nationality are also revealing as parents' nationality constitutes an important driver of the choices they make regarding school.

Our results may also be understood in the light of the central role the Arab-Islamic culture plays in the daily lives of Qatari citizens. More specifically, in Qatar and the Arabian Gulf region, the subjects of Arabic and Shari'ah (Islamic studies) are indisputably highly valued as necessary at different levels of schooling (Karmani, 2011). These results perhaps need to be interpreted as implying Arabic and Shari'ah (Islamic studies) are decisive when families choose a school for their children. This is especially so considering the perceived threat that some believe the teaching of English presents to Arabic and/or Islam (Hudson, 2013). Charise (2007, p. 10) refers to the teaching of English in the Gulf countries as "an ideological burden which cannot be dismissed as benign nor regarded as any less palpable than the explicit religiosity of Arabic in the Islamic context."

### LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One limitation of this study is its sole focus on the factors that determine parental school choice in Qatar. The study would benefit from also investigating questions about the effects of school choice on student enrollment patterns. Another limitation lies in the use of a survey research method confined to a sample of parents. Utilizing follow-up interview data, for instance, would illuminate this study and provide an in-depth perspective of the data.

In light of the results presented above, a number of recommendations are provided for policy and decision making. Officials in the Ministry of Education in Qatar are asked to ensure that available school choice options address parents' needs and preferences; there is a need to further promote educational opportunity and equity for all. This will aid in precluding perpetuation or exacerbation of segregation based on race, nationality or income. Rapidly soaring tuition fees leave many families struggle to meet rising education costs in Qatar. To realize the promise of public school choice for all and make schools affordable, there is a pressing need for interventions to restrict tuition, curb segregation and enhance equity for both Qatari and non-Qatari students.

Further research is needed to discover in greater detail the personal motives and other context-specific factors that explain parental school choice decisions as well as the impact of such decisions on student enrollment at school. Schools in Qatar appeal to different families from different social, cultural and nationality backgrounds. To better understand parent's choice decisions, additional research is therefore required to assess in greater depth how parents who indicate they prefer a certain school type differ from those who would choose to send their children to another.

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**Table 1:** KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.794
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1913.050
	df	36
	Sig.	.000

**Table 2:** Factor Analysis Structure Matrix

	Component		
	1	2	3
Quality 42_2 : The school is providing excellent education to my child	.824	.040	-.024
Quality 42_ I recommend this school to my friends:	.805	.155	-.132
Quality 42 _ 6: The curriculum is well prepared	.780	.086	-.008
Quality 42 _4 : The school prepares my child for university education	.748	-.046	-.053
Accept 42_1 : My child enjoys going to school	.591	.377	-.171
Q21_2 Develop Better Social Skills : In a typical day, how many hours does your child spend on Video games	.094	.815	.063
Q21_5 Develop Better Social Skills : In a typical day, how many hours does your child spend on Talking with friends	.075	.780	-.201
Q18_ Homework how often does your child ask for help with his/her assignments?"	-.018	.088	-.782
Q19_ Homework: "In a typical week, how often do you check whether or not your child has done his/her homework?"	-.150	-.044	.779

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
 Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization

**Table 3:** Simple Discriminant Analysis

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.625	.139		11.717	.000
	Quality Education is Good	-.201	.013	-.460	-15.568	.000
	Develop Better Social Skills1	.002	.013	.005	.168	.866
	Homework Assignment	-.004	.013	-.009	-.304	.761
	Q1_What is your nationality?	-.100	.034	-.106	-2.946	.003
	Q11_Did your child repeat any grade in the past?	.093	.053	.053	1.755	.080

Tuition 36_Does your child's school charge tuition fees?	.085	.031	.098	2.780	<b>.006</b>
Q41_Disappointed: If your child did not actually go that far in school, would you be very disappointed?	-.014	.017	-.025	-.851	.395

a. Dependent Variable: Q43: If you have the financial ability and opportunity, would you move your child from school

**Table 4:** Q43: If you have the financial ability and opportunity, would you move your child from school \* Good Quality Ed Cross-tabulation

		Good QualityEd		Total	
		Disagree	Agree		
Q43: If you have the financial ability and opportunity, would you move your child from school	Yes	Count	270	51	321
		% within GoodQualityEd	34.7%	10.5%	25.3%
	No	Count	509	437	946
		% within GoodQualityEd	65.3%	89.5%	74.7%
Total		Count	779	488	1267
		% within GoodQualityEd	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Table 5:** Q43: If you have the financial ability and opportunity, would you move your child from school \* Q1\_ What is your nationality? Cross-tabulation

		Q1_ What is your nationality?		Total	
		Qatari	Non-Qatari		
Q43: If you have the financial ability and opportunity, would you move your child from school	Yes	Count	67	249	316
		% within Q1_ What is your nationality?	16.7%	29.4%	25.3%
	No	Count	335	598	933
		% within Q1_ What is your nationality?	83.3%	70.6%	74.7%
Total		Count	402	847	1249
		% within Q1_ What is your nationality?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Table 6:** Q43: If you have the financial ability and opportunity, would you move your child from school \* Tuition 36 \_ Does your child's school charge tuition fees? Crosstabulation

		Tuition 36 _ Does your child's school charge tuition fees?		Total	
		Yes	No		
Q43: If you have the financial ability and opportunity, would you move your child from school	Yes	Count	197	116	313
		% within Tuition 36 _ Does your child's school charge tuition fees?	32.5%	18.7%	25.5%
	No	Count	409	504	913
		% within Tuition 36 _ Does your child's school charge tuition fees?	67.5%	81.3%	74.5%
Total		Count	606	620	1226
		% within Tuition 36 _ Does your child's school charge tuition fees?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%