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## **Strategic Choices for Educational Crossroads: Investigating the Variables in Parental Decision-Making for International Education**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research study is to explore the complex web of reasons that motivate parents to send their children to higher education institutions located in other countries. The study makes use of primary data in order to investigate a wide variety of factors that have an impact on this migration pattern. The objective of this study is to discover and quantify the underlying constructs that play a crucial role in molding parental decisions. This will be accomplished through the utilization of statistical techniques of factor analysis and percentage analysis. The purpose of this study is to disentangle the complex incentives that contribute to the internationalization of higher education. These motivations include optimistic future outlook, Demonstration Effect, Advantaged Foreign Education, Edged Abroad Education and Disadvantaged Indian Education. The findings not only add to the current body of research on the movement of international students, but they also provide educational institutions, governments, and stakeholders who are active in determining the future landscape of higher education around the world with useful insights.

**Keywords:** Parents, Indian Students, Abroad, International Students, Higher Education.

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## Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of global education, the pursuit of higher education abroad has become an increasingly prevalent phenomenon. Among the regions contributing significantly to this global academic diaspora, Punjab stands out as a notable player (Browne, E.,2017). The decision of parents to send their children abroad for higher education is a multifaceted and pivotal aspect of this trend, marked by a confluence of factors that shape the educational aspirations and trajectories of the younger generation (Academic Courses, 2019).

Punjab, with its rich cultural heritage and strong emphasis on education, has witnessed a remarkable surge in the number of students seeking academic opportunities beyond national borders. This was confirmed by a study conducted by PAU (Punjab Agricultural University), which states that around 74 percent of migration from Punjab has taken place during the years of 2016 to 2022 (Sharma, 2024). The reasons behind this surge are complex and interwoven with socio-economic, cultural, and educational considerations. This paper aims to delve into the intricacies of the decision-making process of parents in Punjab, exploring the factors that influence their choice to send their children abroad for higher education.

As the global economy becomes increasingly interconnected, parents in Punjab find themselves navigating the intricate balance between preserving cultural values and providing their children with access to world-class education. This paper seeks to unravel the motivations, challenges, and aspirations that drive parents in Punjab to opt for international education for their offspring (Ewers, M. C., & Lewis, J. M. (2008).

The significance of this research lies in its potential to shed light on the evolving role of parents in shaping the educational trajectories of their children in a globalized context. Parents play a crucial role in study abroad decisions as they shoulder the bulk of the costs for self-funded international students and participate actively in application of scholarship.the above mentioned study conducted by PAU (Punjab Agricultural University) also states that around 56 percent of the emigrants borrow money from financial and non financial institutions in order to fulfill their foreign dreams (Sharma, 2024). By understanding the dynamics at play in Punjab, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders can gain valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with this trend, paving the way for informed interventions and strategies.

The present paper tries to explore compelling reasons which force the parents to send their young wards abroad. For this, the paper has been divided into four sections including the present one, Chapter II discusses the database and methodology used for the analysis of this phenomenon, Section III delves into the results gathered from the data collected from the stakeholders and Section IV summarizes and derives the policy implications for the study.

## **Section II**

A rigorous convenient sampling procedure was used to pick a sample of 180 parents from Punjab for this research paper. The researcher directly engaged with sixty parents who were present outside IELTS test centers in the three districts of Punjab namely Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana which represented the three major geographical regions of the state i.e. Majha, Doaba and Malwa respectively. A well-organized questionnaire was used to gather their viewpoints on the matter of sending their children overseas for higher study. The researcher developed a comprehensive questionnaire that encompassed various aspects, including economic considerations, cultural influences, and educational expectations. In order to maintain uniformity, a standardized script was employed while elucidating the study to the participants. The ethical aspect was of utmost importance, since participants were provided with detailed information and their consent was sought, ensuring that their comments would be kept personal and anonymous. The gathered data underwent both factor analysis and percentage analysis to thoroughly investigate the underlying factors and prevalence among the parents included in the sample. This study recognizes the constraints of using a convenient sampling method and the fact that it is a cross-sectional study. However, it aims to provide valuable insights into the intricate decision-making processes of parents in Punjab when it comes to choosing international higher education for their children.

## **Section III - Results and Discussions**

In the third half of this paper, we examine the crucial elements of the study, beginning with an investigation of the demographic characteristics of the parents who comprise our meticulously chosen sample of 180 persons from Punjab. This section seeks to offer a comprehensive comprehension of the many socio-economic origins and cultural circumstances that influence the viewpoints of parents in the region on their children's decision to pursue higher education overseas. Following that, we delve into a thorough examination of the findings obtained from the

component analysis, revealing the complex interaction of economic circumstances, cultural influences, and educational expectations that arise as key determinants in the decision-making process. In this analysis, we want to understand the complex factors that influence the decisions made by parents in Punjab, providing significant insights into the wider discussion on international education trends in the region.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Parents**

Demographic Profile		Amritsar		Jalandhar		Ludhiana	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Father's Qualification	Illiterate	12	20	07	11.6	10	16
	Up to 10	15	25	09	15	10	16
	Up to 12	08	13.3	11	18.4	06	10
	Graduate	14	23.3	15	25	19	32
	Post-graduate	11	18.4	18	30	15	26
Mother's Qualification	Illiterate	18	30.0	18	30.0	16	26.6
	Up to 10	04	6.6	07	11.7	07	11.6
	Up to 12	08	13.4	08	13.3	08	13.4
	Graduate	18	30.0	07	11.6	09	15.0
	Post-graduate	12	20.0	20	33.4	20	33.4
Father's Occupation	Business (Non-Salaried)	56	93.0	51	85.0	37	61.6
	Service (Salaried)	04	7.0	09	15.0	23	38.4
Mother's Occupation	House Maker	19	31.5	16	26.6	21	35.0
	Business	17	28.5	20	33.4	25	41.6
	Service	24	40.0	24	40.0	14	23.4
Average Monthly Household Income	0-50K	26	43.4	16	26.6	19	31.6
	50K-1L	28	46.6	28	46.6	24	40.0
	1L and above	06	10.0	16	26.8	17	28.4

Source: Based on Survey

Table 1 depicts the Occupation and Income details of households in Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana. In Amritsar, mainly the fathers (93 percent) were non salaried while in Ludhiana 61.6 percent of them were doing their own business. Interestingly, it was seen that a very low proportion (21 to 35 percent) mothers were housemakers while, majority of the mothers were involved in businesses or service which highlighted that even educated parents were desperate to send their wards abroad.

Majority of parents sending their children abroad had their income (50000 to 1 lac). This could be attributed to the fact that the majority of middle-class families were keen to send their children to Canada for raise their standard of living.

On a whole, it was found that all the three districts of Punjab (Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana) observe a desperation in students to land on Canadian shores.

Among these parents, the major reasons were highlighted which were based on review of literature and the major factors selected by parents and the technique of factor analysis to get the most important factor responsible for the parents to send their children abroad. The selected variables were:

- B<sub>1</sub> Expectation for a promising career of their ward
- B<sub>2</sub> Societal pressure for sending their children abroad
- B<sub>3</sub> Expected improvement in standard of living of family
- B<sub>4</sub> Strenuous admission process in Punjab, India
- B<sub>5</sub> Outdated curriculum in institutes in Punjab, India
- B<sub>6</sub> High cut offs at Indian institutes
- B<sub>7</sub> High cost of education in Indian colleges
- B<sub>8</sub> Peer pressure among Indians
- B<sub>9</sub> Family Compulsions in India
- B<sub>10</sub> Reputation of chosen Institute in host country
- B<sub>11</sub> Personal safety in host country
- B<sub>12</sub> Quality of research in host country
- B<sub>13</sub> Better Teaching at Institutes in home country
- B<sub>14</sub> Expectation of Improvement in English speaking and writing
- B<sub>15</sub> Expectation of Admission in better globally ranked universities
- B<sub>16</sub> Provision of combination of courses in in host country
- B<sub>17</sub> Obtain better quality education in host country
- B<sub>18</sub> Expectation of earning higher income in host country

**Table 2: Results of Reliability Analysis/KMO and Bartlett’s Test**

Cronbach's Alpha	0.817	
Kaiser-Meyer-Ohlin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.703	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi Square	87.164
	Df	50
	Significance	0.001

Source: Based on Survey

Table 2 reflects the results of Cronbach alpha, KMO and Bartlett’s test. The value of Cronbach alpha was found to be 0.817 which highlighted high consistency among the variables in the questionnaire. KMO value was found to be 0.703>0.50 which indicated high reliability of all the factors. In addition to the KMO value, Bartlett's test of sphericity was found to be ( $\chi^2=87164$  and  $p=0.001$ ). These results showed that the results were highly significant (Academy. (n.d)..

**Table 3: Results of Factor Analysis**

Dimensions	Items	Factor Loadings					Communality	Eigen Values	% of Variance	Cumulative Variance
		F <sub>1</sub>	F <sub>2</sub>	F <sub>3</sub>	F <sub>4</sub>	F <sub>5</sub>				
Factor I	B <sub>1</sub>	0.719					0.813	2.164	21.175	20.175
	B <sub>16</sub>	0.623					0.786			
	B <sub>18</sub>	0.594					0.623			
	B <sub>5</sub>	0.828					0.549			
Factor-II	B <sub>2</sub>		0.612				0.713	1.623	18.971	39.146
	B <sub>8</sub>		0.524				0.782			
	B <sub>9</sub>		0.023				0.617			
Factor-III	B <sub>4</sub>			0.819			0.519	1.517	12.162	51.308
	B <sub>12</sub>			-0.717			0.628			
	B <sub>13</sub>			0.628			0.831			
	B <sub>14</sub>			0.514			0.712			
Factor-IV	B <sub>15</sub>				0.792		0.617	1.213	8.165	59.473
	B <sub>10</sub>				-0.819		0.812			
	B <sub>16</sub>				0.643		0.793			
Factor-V	B <sub>3</sub>					0.593	0.582	1.001	6.001	65.474
	B <sub>6</sub>					-0.432	0.617			
	B <sub>7</sub>					0.819	0.823			
	B <sub>11</sub>					0.749	0.495			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax and Kaiser Normalizations

Source: Author's Calculations based on survey

This technique of principal component analysis was applied using SPSS 26.0. Table 6.10 reveals that out of eighteen factors chosen by students for sending their wards abroad, five major factors were withdrawn showing total variance of 65.474 percent. The eigenvalues lie between the range 2.164 to 1.001. The values of communalities lie between the range of 49.5 percent to 82.3 percent.

The first factor explained 20.175 percent total variation and was named as '*Optimistic Future Outlook*'. It included variables like (B<sub>1</sub>) expectation of a promising career, (B<sub>16</sub>) provision of better combination courses in Abroad, (B<sub>18</sub>) expectation of earning higher income in Canada and (B<sub>5</sub>) outdated curriculum in institutes of India.

The second factor included variables such as (B<sub>2</sub>) societal pressure in India, (B<sub>8</sub>) peer pressure among Indians and family compulsions in India (B<sub>9</sub>). This factor explained the variance of 18.971 percent of total variation and was named as '*Demonstration Effect*'

The third factor consisted of variables like (B<sub>4</sub>) strenuous admission process in home country, (B<sub>13</sub>) better teaching at institutes abroad (B<sub>14</sub>) expectation of improvement in English writing and speaking. It also included (B<sub>12</sub>) Quality of research in the home country which was a bipolar factor reflecting the migration of students taking place because of lack of research opportunities in Punjab, India. This factor shows a variance of 12.102 percent of the total. This factor was named as '*Advantage Foreign Education*'

The fourth factor was named as '*Edge Abroad Education*' explained 8.165 percent of total variation and includes three variables that are expectation of admission in better globally ranked university (B<sub>15</sub>), Expectation of better combination courses in Abroad (B<sub>16</sub>), Reputation of chosen institute in Abroad (B<sub>10</sub>). B<sub>10</sub> had negative factor loading and was termed as a bipolar variable which highlighted that foreign ranking of institutes was the major pull variable which influenced their decision to migrate.

Fifth factor had four variables which were (B<sub>6</sub>) high cut offs at Indian institutes and was a bipolar variable as students migrating abroad were those who were unable to secure their position in reputed institutes of Indians. The other variables were (B<sub>3</sub>) personal safety in Canada, expected improvement in standard of living (B<sub>11</sub>) and (B<sub>7</sub>) high cost

of education at Indian institutes. This factor showed 6.001 percent of total variance and was named as '*Disadvantaged Indian Education*'.

#### **Section - IV - Summary and Policy Implications**

Ultimately, this study has conducted a thorough analysis of the determinants that influence parents in Punjab when making the choice to send their children overseas for advanced education. The examination of the demographic characteristics of our sample has uncovered a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, highlighting the varied circumstances in which these decisions are formulated. The component analysis revealed the complex dynamics that influence parental choices, highlighting the importance of optimistic financial outlook, the role of demonstration effect, advantaged foreign education and the quandaries of the Indian education system.

The results emphasize the need of comprehensively understanding the incentives that influence parents in Punjab, since their choices not only affect individual families but also contribute to the wider context of global education patterns. In an era of growing global interconnectivity, it is imperative for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to recognize and tackle these problems.

#### *Proposed Policy Implications*

1. Economic assistance mechanisms: Introducing financial assistance methods, such as scholarships and grants, to reduce the financial strain on parents, therefore promoting greater availability of overseas education.
2. Cultural assimilation initiatives: Creating cultural integration initiatives that assist students and parents in overcoming the difficulties of acclimating to unfamiliar cultural settings, guaranteeing a more seamless transfer.
3. Academic Advisory Services: Creating educational counseling services to offer complete help to parents, providing insights into the wide range of educational options available worldwide and aiding in making well-informed decisions.
4. Advancing Regional Academic Superiority: The objective is to invest in and foster the growth of top-notch educational institutions in Punjab, thereby diminishing



the perceived need for overseas education and encouraging local talent to remain in the province.

5. Interdisciplinary Cooperation: Promoting cooperation among government entities, educational establishments, and private businesses to establish a conducive environment that tackles the diverse factors affecting parental choices.

By following these policy proposals, stakeholders can strive to establish an atmosphere that not only fosters informed decision-making among parents but also helps to the general improvement of the education landscape in Punjab. This method guarantees that the endeavor to obtain further education, whether within one's own country or abroad, is in harmony with the community's objectives and requirements, thereby promoting a more sustainable and inclusive educational model.

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