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*Research Article*

## Do Primary Schools Exist Only for Academic Achievement? The School Characteristics that Affect Parents' Private Primary School Preferences for Their Children

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### Abstract

In the research process, it was aimed to determine the factors affecting the private school preferences of primary school parents. The population of the study is the parents of students studying in private schools in the Anatolian side of Istanbul in the 2017-2018 academic year. The research group consisted of 205 volunteer parents whose children were students in different private schools in Üsküdar, Ümraniye and Kadıköy districts of the Asian side of Istanbul. A personal information form and a 41-item questionnaire were applied to the participants. As a data collection tool, "Private School Preference Criteria" questionnaire was formed by taking expert opinion. According to the findings obtained from the analysis of the data collected in the research, the factors affecting the reasons for parents to prefer private schools are listed in order of priority: the characteristics of management and academic staff, physical conditions of the school, economic resources, communication processes, artistic, sportive, social and cultural activities and the last one educational activities. According to the preference of the parents varies according to being a mother or father, three items of the physical conditions; two items in teaching activities and one item in artistic, cultural, sportive, social and cultural activities dimensions were determined. No item differentiated in the other two dimensions.

### Key Words

Private school • Primary school • Parents' primary school preferences • Academic achievement

\* This research is based on the second author's master's thesis.

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School is considered the most important institution in a society as it is the educational institutions that educate the generations of the future. Schools may be official or private institutions. Official schools are institutions where student selection cannot be made and where students attend as compulsory (Yılmaz, 2005). Official schools continue their activities as state-supported institutions in many countries (Candaş, Akkan, Günseli, & Deniz, 2011). As for private schools, they are institutions where students attend according to parents' preferences (Regulation on Private Education Institutions, 2012). In different countries like U.S. where parents prefer private schools for different reasons like smaller class size, relatively higher achievement levels of private schools or higher SES students (Goldhaber, 1996). Whereas in Malaysia, parents prefer private schools in terms of their syllabus, the environment and physical conditions of schools and as the third factor for the performances of schools (Yaacob, Osman, & Bachok, 2014). In this research conducted on why private schools are preferred, it is aimed to explain the reasons for preferring private primary schools and which characteristics of parents' preferences vary according to some characteristics of the parents?

Due to the expansion of private schools and the rise in demand for private schools, such a study was deemed necessary to be prepared. The percentage of number of private schools in the total number of schools and the percentage of students enrolled in private schools in the total number of enrolled students were 17.8% and 8.3% respectively, in 2017-2018 academic year. However, there was an important increase in both, the percentage of private schools and the percentage of students enrolled in private schools, in 2018-2019 academic year. The percentage of number of private schools in the total number of schools and the percentage of students enrolled in private schools in the total number of enrolled students were 19.2% and 8.7% respectively, in 2018-2019 (National Educational Statistics, 2019). The increase in the importance of private schools' place in today's education system is one of the main factors in the preparation of a study in this way. Private schools that respond to the requirements of the current age seem to be an important research subject because of this nature.

The main purpose of the research is to identify factors affecting the private school preferences of private primary school parents. In line with the purpose of the research, answers to the following problems were sought.

- What characteristics of schools do parents prioritize when choosing primary schools for their children?
- Are the school characteristics that parents prioritize as mothers or fathers different from each other when choosing schools for their children?
- What are the main reasons for parents to take their children from their school to another school?

## **Method**

### **Research Model**

The research was prepared according to the survey model. The survey models are research approaches that aim to describe a past or present situation, as it exists (Karasar, 2005). The research was conducted to determine the reasons for primary school parents' private school preferences and to identify the determining criteria in the preference process.

### **Study Group**

The sample of the study consisted of 205 parents of private schools in Üsküdar, Ümraniye and Kadıköy districts of the Anatolian side of Istanbul, selected by convenience sampling method. The researcher sent the

questionnaire to the parents of private schools who would like to answer this study. In this type of sampling, the researcher uses very little authority to select the sample and the universe is represented on the basis of proximity. This non-probability sampling method is used when there are time and cost constraints in gathering feedback (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2016).

Of the primary school parents who participated in the study, 67.3% were mothers and 32.7% were fathers. Looking at the age distribution of parents, the largest age group was 62.0% of 31-40 year olds and the smallest group was 3.9% of those aged 51 and above. Of the parents, 2.4% graduated from primary school and 4.4% from secondary school, while the largest educational group was college and university graduates with 56.6%.

Table 1

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Parents by the gender of the parents*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Kinship degree of the person filling out the questionnaire</i>	<i>Mother</i>	138	67.3
	<i>Father</i>	67	32.7

Of the primary school parents surveyed, 67.3% were mothers and 32.7% were fathers.

Table 2

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Parents by Age*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Age</i>	<i>Age 21-30</i>	18	8.8
	<i>Age 31-40</i>	127	62.0
	<i>Age 41-50</i>	52	25.4
	<i>51 and older</i>	8	3.9

When it is examined the age distribution of parents, the largest age group is 62.0% of 31-40 year olds and the smallest group is 3.9% of those aged 51 and above.

Table 3

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Parents by Educational Level*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Parents' education level</i>	<i>Primary School graduate</i>	5	2.4
	<i>Secondary School graduate</i>	9	4.4
	<i>High School graduate</i>	37	18.0
	<i>College / University graduate</i>	11	56.6
	<i>Postgraduate Degree</i>	38	18.5

Of the parents, 2.4% graduated from primary school and 4.4% from secondary school, while the largest educational group was college and university graduates with 56.6%.

### Data Collection Tools

In the study, as a data collection tool, the questionnaire "Private School Preference Criteria" was created by taking expert opinion. The questionnaire consists of two parts: parent personal recognition questions and private school preference criteria. The details of the questionnaire used to collect the data in the study are as follows.

**Parent Personal Recognition Section.** In the questions created to describe the parents, three items were used: the parent's degree of kinship to the child (mother or father), the age of the parent, the educational level of the parent, the average monthly income of the family.

**Section of Private School Preference Criteria.** This section consists of the subsections of private schools preference criteria: physical conditions; educational activities; artistic, sportive, social and cultural activities; the characteristics of management and academic staff, communication processes, and economic resources. These sections contain criteria associated with the title. The section contains a total of 41 items prepared using five-point Likert scale. In order to investigate the factors affecting the private school preferences of primary school parents, a questionnaire consisting of six sections and a total of 41 items developed by the researcher was applied using literature review and expert opinion. The questionnaire was designed according to a five-point Likert scale with the options between 1 = 'I never take into account' and 5 = 'I definitely take into account' to be evaluated by the parents involved in the study. The sections of the questionnaire and the number of questions are as follows:

Physical Conditions of the School: 11 items

Educational Activities: five items

Artistic, Sportive, Social and Cultural Activities: six items

Characteristics of Management and Academic Staff: eight items

Communication Processes: seven items

Economic Resources: four items

Based on the assumption that the intervals included in the evaluation of the questionnaire items (1 = 'I never take into account' and 5 = 'I definitely take into account') are equal  $[(5-1)/5=0.80]$ . The following options, score ranges and levels were taken into account in the calculation and evaluation of the scores of the parents involved in the questionnaire on the factors (the questionnaire items) affecting their private schools preferences. The average score obtained indicates the parent's level of attention to the situation mentioned in that statement/item.

Option	Score Range	Level
I never take into account	1.00-1.80	Not important at all / very low
I do not take into account	1.81-2.60	Slightly important / low
I am undecided	2.61-3.40	Neither important nor unimportant (moderate)
I take into account	3.41-4.20	Important / high
I definitely take into account	4.21-5.00	Very important / very high

### Data Analysis

All the data collected from the parents involved in the questionnaire by Personal Information Form and Factors Affecting Primary School Parents' Private School Preferences Questionnaire were subjected to statistical analysis program. Before the data collected from the parents for the research were transferred to statistical analysis, it was checked whether these data were within the limits set in the questionnaire, and whether they contained errors and serious deficiencies. After that, it was determined that the data groups showed normality distribution by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test before the selection of statistical techniques to be applied depending on the determined objectives of the research. In order to summarize the demographic/personal characteristics of the parents, the frequency (*f*) and percentage (%) distributions of their variables were calculated.

In order to investigate the factors influencing the parents' preferences for private schools, their average scores ( $\bar{X}$ ) given to the questionnaire items and standard deviations (*sd*) were calculated. The unrelated (independent) samples t test was applied to examine whether parents' views on factors affecting their private school preferences differed according the gender of the parents.

### Findings

In this section, firstly, the levels of factors affecting the primary school parents' private school preferences were examined in general; then, it was looked at whether these criteria showed significant differentiation for the parents according to being a mother or father.

When the reasons for primary school parents' preferences for private schools were examined for the dimension of management and academic staff, the sub dimension with the highest value was that the school administrators communicated well with the parents. The lowest rated item by parents was the political opinion reflected by the school. Accordingly, in terms of management and academic staff, the parents involved in the study take into account the political opinion reflected by the school less than all other factors.

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics of Parents' Average Scores on Management and Academic Staff Characteristics*

<i>Item</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>sd</i>
<i>01. School administrators communicating well with parents</i>	4.72	0.50
<i>02. Experienced teachers working at the school</i>	4.56	0.71
<i>03. Political opinion reflected by the school</i>	4.15	1.00
<i>04. Religious opinion reflected by the school</i>	4.36	0.96
<i>05. The school's staff of teachers not changing frequently</i>	4.68	0.52
<i>06. Having full-time medical staff at the school</i>	4.44	0.70
<i>07. Having many young and dynamic teachers</i>	4.23	0.84
<i>08. Continuous lack of permanent school staff of teachers</i>	4.42	0.85
<i>Management and Academic Staff Characteristics</i>	4.45	0.46

When the descriptive statistics of parents based on the dimension of the physical conditions of the school are examined, the levels of the questionnaire for the factors affecting parents' private school preferences regarding

the dimension of the physical conditions of the school are generally high. The criterion that the parents who participated in the study put most importance among the physical conditions of the school is the importance that the school attaches to hygiene and cleanliness. The least important criterion for parents is that the school building is new.

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics of Parents' Average Scores for the Dimension of the Physical Conditions of the School*

<i>Item</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>sd</i>
08. <i>The importance the school attaches to cleanliness and hygiene</i>	4.76	0.54
07. <i>Having a quality security service at the school</i>	4.66	0.59
09. <i>Healthy and delicious meals served in school dining hall</i>	4.65	0.65
05. <i>Having the appropriate equipment at the school in line with the technological developments</i>	4.54	0.63
04. <i>The importance the school attaches to technological developments</i>	4.52	0.68
03. <i>The quality of the technical infrastructure (electricity, heating etc.) at the school</i>	4.45	0.65
06. <i>Having social facilities at the school such as laboratory, library, gymnasium, pool</i>	4.45	0.74
10. <i>The quality of transportation services of the school</i>	4.32	0.90
02. <i>The physical competence and attraction of classes</i>	4.30	0.78
01. <i>District/neighborhoods location characteristics of the school</i>	4.08	0.96
11. <i>Having a new school building</i>	3.76	1.15
<i>Physical conditions of the school</i>	<i>4,41</i>	<i>0,53</i>

When the descriptive statistics of the parents regarding the dimension of economic resources were examined, the parents stated that they definitely took into account the dimension of economic resources. When the criteria for the dimension of economic resources were examined, the highest criterion was that school prices were in line with the family budget and the lowest score was that social activities performed during the school year were free.

Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics of Parents' Average Scores for the Dimension of Economic Resources*

<i>Item</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>sd</i>
01. <i>The school fee in line with the family budget</i>	4.49	0.63
02. <i>Fairness of the school's scholarship policy</i>	4.47	0.78
03. <i>Social activities free of charge during the school period</i>	4.04	1.05
04. <i>Lack of high costs of books and stationery</i>	4.21	0.98
<i>Economic resources</i>	<i>4.30</i>	<i>0.69</i>

When the descriptive statistics of parents regarding the communication dimension were examined, the communication process that parents placed most importance on among the communication processes was the quality of teacher-parent communication. In terms of communication processes, parents who participated in the study take into account the ads given by the school less than all other factors.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics of Parents' Average Scores for the Dimension of Communication Processes*

<i>Item</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>sd</i>
<i>01. Comments made by other parents at the school</i>	3.80	0.97
<i>02. Reference of people</i>	4.09	0.81
<i>03. Ads given by the school</i>	3.05	1.15
<i>04. Teachers open to communication</i>	4.67	0.49
<i>05. Quality of teacher-parent communication</i>	4.75	0.48
<i>06. Teachers taking into account the wishes and demands of parents</i>	4.63	0.55
<i>07. Provision of parent participation in activities carried out during the academic year</i>	4.46	0.67
<i>Communication processes</i>	4.21	0.45

When the descriptive statistics of parents regarding the artistic, sportive, social and cultural dimension were examined, the most considered criterion for the parents involved in the study in terms of the activities they cared about most was sports activities carried out at the school. What the parents who participated in the study took into account least among artistic, sportive, social and cultural activities were the school's international memberships and the artistic activities carried out at the school.

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics of Parents' Average Scores for Artistic, Sportive, Social and Cultural Activities Dimension*

<i>Item</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>sd</i>
<i>01. Guidance work conducted within the school</i>	4.48	0.68
<i>02. The school's international memberships</i>	3.76	1.06
<i>03. Artistic activities carried out within the school</i>	4.12	0.84
<i>04. Sports activities carried out within the school</i>	4.24	0.84
<i>05. School participation in social responsibility projects</i>	4.29	0.77
<i>06. Additional study time and club activities provided by the school to students</i>	4.38	0.79
<i>Artistic, sportive, social and cultural activities</i>	4.21	0.64

When the descriptive statistics of the parents' average scores for the dimension of educational activities were examined, the criteria reaching the highest scores were common exams in high numbers and high success at English. When we look at the scores given to the items in this dimension, the lowest score was school uniforms of high quality and niceness.

Table 9

*Descriptive Statistics of Parents' Average Scores for the Dimension of Educational Activities*

<i>Item</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>sd</i>
<i>03. Foreign language education success of the school</i>	4.53	0.69
<i>02. TEOG achievement of the school</i>	4.21	0.93
<i>05. Amount of homework given daily</i>	3.80	1.10
<i>01. Old-dated establishment of the school</i>	3.49	1.12
<i>04. School uniforms of high quality and niceness</i>	3.29	1.22
<i>Educational activities</i>	3.87	0.75

Associated with the primary school period, descriptions of the subdimensions that affect private school preferences are mentioned above. If a comparison is made within subdimensions, the correct order from the most effective subdimension to the least effective one is as follows: management and academic staff characteristics; physical conditions of schools; economic resources; artistic, sportive, social and cultural activities; communication processes; and educational activities.

Table 10

*The Result of t-Test Analysis Showing the Differentiation of Parents' Views on Physical Conditions of the School According to Being a Mother or Father*

<i>Item (Physical Conditions of the School)</i>	<i>Parent</i>	<i>Descriptive Sta.</i>			<i>t-Test</i>		
		<i>n</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>sd</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>01. District/neighborhoods location characteristics of the school</i>	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.07	1.00	0.22	203	0.824
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.10	0.89			
<i>02. The physical competence and attraction of classes</i>	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.28	0.84	0.72	203	0.475
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.36	0.64			
<i>03. School uniforms of high quality and niceness</i>	<i>Mother</i>	138	3.25	1.18	-0.78	203	0.437
	<i>Father</i>	67	3.39	1.31			
<i>04. The quality of the technical infrastructure (electricity, heating etc.) at the school</i>	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.46	0.65	0.32	203	0.748
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.43	0.63			
<i>05. The importance the school attaches to technological developments</i>	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.52	0.68	0.14	203	0.889
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.51	0.70			
<i>06. Having the appropriate equipment at the school in line with the technological developments</i>	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.57	0.63	0.93	203	0.352
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.48	0.64			
<i>07. Having social facilities at the school such as laboratory, library, gymnasium, pool</i>	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.43	0.81	0.52	203	0.603
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.49	0.59			
<i>08. Having a quality security service at the school</i>	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.77	0.58	2.13	203	0.044*
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.52	0.61			
<i>09. The importance the school attaches to</i>	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.82	0.49	2.23	203	0.027*

	<i>Father</i>	67	4.64	0.62			
10. Healthy and delicious meals served in school dining hall	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.74	0.57	2.05	203	0.047*
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.49	0.79			
11. The quality of transportation services of the school	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.36	0.85	0.86	203	0.389
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.24	1.00			
12. Having a new school building	<i>Mother</i>	138	3.72	1.15	0.69	203	0.489
	<i>Father</i>	67	3.84	1.15			

\* $p < .05$

Whether the parents' statements / items regarding physical conditions differ according to being a mother or father for those who participated in the questionnaire of the factors affecting parents' private school preferences was examined by independent samples t-Test and it was seen that statistically only three items (factors) in this dimension were evaluated significantly different (Items 7, 8 and 9). Accordingly;

It was found that parents' views on the school having a quality security service (Item 8) differed according to being a mother or father, and this difference was in favour of mothers [ $t_{(203)}=2.13$ ;  $p < .05$ ]. The mothers ( $\bar{X} = 4.77$ ), who participated in the study, took into account / put more emphasis on the school having a quality security service than the fathers ( $\bar{X} = 4.52$ ). It was found that the consideration levels of parents taking into account the importance the school attaches to cleanliness and hygiene (Item 9) also differed according to being a mother or father, and this difference was again in favor of mothers [ $t_{(203)}=2.23$ ;  $p < .05$ ]. The mothers ( $\bar{X} = 4.82$ ), who participated in the study cared more about the importance the school attaches to cleanliness and hygiene than the fathers who participated in the study ( $\bar{X} = 4.64$ ).

Finally, it was also found that parents' views on the school serving healthy and delicious meals in the school dining hall (Item 10) differed according to being a mother or father, and this difference was found one more time in favor of mothers [ $t_{(203)}=2.05$ ;  $p < .05$ ]. The mothers who participated in the study ( $\bar{X} = 4.74$ ), gave more importance to / took more account of the school serving healthy and delicious meals in the school dining hall than fathers did ( $\bar{X} = 4.49$ ).

When it comes to the parents' other statements / items regarding other physical conditions for those who participated in the questionnaire of the factors affecting parents' private school preferences, there is no significant difference between mothers or fathers' views (their views are similar) ( $p > .05$ ).

Table 11

*The Result of t-Test Analysis Showing the Differentiation of Parents' Views on Educational Activities According to Being a Mother or Father*

Item (Educational Activities)	Parent	Descriptive Sta.			t-Test		
		n	$\bar{X}$	sd	t	df	p
01. Old-dated establishment of the school	<i>Mother</i>	138	3.61	1.04	2.14	203	0.033*
	<i>Father</i>	67	3.25	1.26			
02. TEOG achievement of the school	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.31	0.84	2.16	203	0.032*

	<i>Father</i>	67	4.01	1.08			
03. Foreign language education success of the school	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.58	0.63	1.43	203	0.153
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.43	0.80			
04. Amount of homework given daily	<i>Mother</i>	138	3.76	1.07	-0.64	203	0.522
	<i>Father</i>	67	3.87	1.15			
05. Guidance work conducted within the school	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.48	0.70	0.14	203	0.888
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.49	0.64			

\* $p < .05$

Only two of the items regarding educational activities for those who participated in the questionnaire of the factors affecting parents' private school preferences differed depending on whether they are mothers or fathers (Items 1 and 2). Accordingly; it was found that the parents' views on the old establishment date of the school (Item 1) differed and this difference was in favor of the mothers [ $t_{(203)}=2.14$ ;  $p < .05$ ]. The mothers ( $\bar{X} = 3.61$ ) who participated in the study put a greater emphasis on / took more account of the fact that the school's establishment date is old than fathers ( $\bar{X} = 3.25$ ).

It was found that the parents' views on the school's TEOG achievement (Item 2) differed according to being a mother or father, and this difference was again in favour of mothers [ $t_{(203)}=2.16$ ;  $p < .05$ ]. The mothers ( $\bar{X} = 4.31$ ), who participated in the study, placed more importance on / took into consideration the school's TEOG achievement than fathers ( $\bar{X} = 4.01$ ).

As for the parents' other statements / items regarding educational activities for those who participated in the questionnaire of the factors affecting parents' private school preferences, there is no significant difference between mothers or fathers' views ( $p > .05$ ).

Table 12

*The Result of t-Test Analysis Showing the Differentiation of Parents' Views on Artistic, Sportive, Social and Cultural Activities According to Being a Mother or Father*

Item (Artistic, Sportive, Social and Cultural Activities)	Parent	Descriptive Sta.			t-Test		
		N	$\bar{X}$	sd	t	df	p
01. The school's international memberships	Mother	138	3.62	1.09	2.62	203	0.009**
	Father	67	4.03	0.94			
02. Artistic activities carried out within the school	Mother	138	4.07	0.85	1.39	203	0.166
	Father	67	4.24	0.82			
03. Sports activities carried out within the school	Mother	138	4.20	0.86	1.18	203	0.239
	Father	67	4.34	0.79			
04. School participation in social responsibility projects	Mother	138	4.30	0.73	0.31	203	0.756
	Father	67	4.27	0.85			
05. Additional study time and club activities provided by the school to students	Mother	138	4.35	0.81	0.72	203	0.473
	Father	67	4.43	0,76			

\*\* $p < .01$

According to the independent samples t-Test conducted to investigate the parents' views on artistic, sportive, social and cultural activities, it was determined that the only difference between the parents' views was the one regarding the school's international memberships [ $t_{(203)}=2.62$ ;  $p < .01$ ]. The fathers ( $\bar{X}=4.03$ ) who participated in the study put a greater emphasis on / took more account of the fact that the school has international memberships than mothers ( $\bar{X}=3.62$ ). The other items (factors) related to artistic, sportive, social and cultural activities were similarly evaluated (taken into account) by the mothers and fathers involved in the questionnaire ( $p > .05$ ).

Table 13

*The Result of t-Test Analysis Showing the Differentiation of Parents' Views on Management and Academic Staff Characteristics According to Being a Mother or Father*

Item (Management and Academic Staff Characteristics)	Parent	Descriptive Sta.			t-Test		
		N	$\bar{X}$	sd	t	df	p
01. School administrators communicating well with parents	Mother	138	4.75	0.48	1.30	203	0.194
	Father	67	4.66	0.54			
02. Experienced teachers working at the school	Mother	138	4.60	0.68	1.17	203	0.242
	Father	67	4.48	0.77			
03. Political opinion reflected by the school	Mother	138	4.12	1.00	0.72	203	0.470
	Father	67	4.22	1.01			
04. Religious opinion reflected by the school	Mother	138	4.32	0.98	0.90	203	0.367
	Father	67	4.45	0.91			
05. The school's staff of teachers not changing frequently	Mother	138	4.70	0.49	0.51	203	0.614
	Father	67	4.66	0.57			
06. Having full-time medical staff at the school	Mother	138	4.41	0.71	0.91	203	0.363
	Father	67	4.51	0.66			
07. Having many young and dynamic teachers	Mother	138	4.21	0.84	0.47	203	0.641
	Father	67	4.27	0.85			
08. Continuous lack of permanent school staff of teachers	Mother	138	4.43	0.81	0.25	203	0.801
	Father	67	4.40	0.92			

\* $p < .05$

According to the independent samples t-test, which was conducted to investigate the differences between parents' views on management and academic staff characteristics, there is not any item for which the views of mothers and fathers differed significantly. Items related to management and academic staff characteristics were similarly evaluated by the mothers and fathers involved in the questionnaire ( $p > .05$ ).

Table 14

*The Result of t-Test Analysis Showing the Differentiation of Parents' Views on Communication Processes According to Being a Mother or Father*

Item (Communication Processes)	Parent	Descriptive Sta.			t-Test		
		n	$\bar{X}$	sd	t	df	p
01. Comments made by other parents at the school	Mother	138	3.80	0.96	-0.06	203	0.951
	Father	67	3.81	1.00			
02. Reference of people	Mother	138	4.11	0.77	0.41	203	0.685

	<i>Father</i>	67	4.06	0.89			
03. Ads given by the school	<i>Mother</i>	138	3.06	1.12	0.17	203	0.869
	<i>Father</i>	67	3.03	1.21			
04. Teachers open to communication	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.74	0.46	2.06	203	0.041*
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.55	0.56			
05. Quality of teacher-parent communication	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.80	0.42	2.32	203	0.022*
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.64	0.57			
06. Teachers taking into account the wishes and demands of parents	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.70	0.46	2.79	203	0.006**
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.48	0.68			
07. Provision of parent participation in activities carried out during the academic year	<i>Mother</i>	138	4.46	0.63	0.16	203	0.873
	<i>Father</i>	67	4.45	0.74			

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

For the parents involved in the questionnaire of factors affecting their private school preferences, it was found that the parents' views on the communication processes differed for three factors (Items 4, 5 and 6) depending on their being a mother or father. According to this; it was found that the parents' views regarding teachers' openness to communication (Item 4) differed on the basis of being a mother or father, and this difference was in favor of mothers [ $t_{(203)}=2.41$ ;  $p < .05$ ]. The mothers ( $\bar{X}=4.74$ ) who participated in the study put more importance on teachers being open to communication than fathers ( $\bar{X}=4.55$ ).

It was found that the levels of parents taking into account the quality of teacher-parent communication (Item 5) also differed according to being a mother or father, and this difference was again in favor of mothers [ $t_{(203)}=2.32$ ;  $p < .05$ ]. The mothers ( $\bar{X}=4.80$ ) who participated in the study cared more about the quality of teacher-parent communication than fathers who participated ( $\bar{X}=4.64$ ).

Finally, it was found that parents' views on teachers' consideration of parents' wishes and demands (Item 6) also differed according to being a mother or father, and this difference was again in favor of mothers [ $t_{(203)}=2.79$ ;  $p < .01$ ]. For the mothers ( $\bar{X}=4.70$ ) who participated in the study, that the teachers take account of the parents' wishes and demands was more important compared to the fathers ( $\bar{X}=4.48$ ).

When evaluated, for the parents who participated in the questionnaire of the factors affecting parents' private school preferences, there was no significant difference between mothers or fathers' views ( $p > .05$ ) regarding their other statements / items about the communication processes.

Table 15

*The Result of t-Test Analysis Showing the Differentiation of Parents' Views on Economic Resources According to Being a Mother or Father*

Item (Economic Resources)	Parent	Descriptive Sta.			t-Test		
		n	$\bar{X}$	sd	t	df	p
01. The school fee in line with the family budget	Mother	138	4.52	0.56	0.95	203	0.345
	Father	67	4.43	0.76			
02. Fairness of the school's scholarship policy	Mother	138	4.48	0.71	0.26	203	0.794
	Father	67	4.45	0.93			
03. Social activities free of charge during the school period	Mother	138	4.01	1.03	-0.58	203	0.566
	Father	67	4.10	1.10			
04. Lack of high costs of books and stationery	Mother	138	4.22	0.91	0.06	203	0.954
	Father	67	4.21	1.11			

\* $p < .05$

According to the independent samples t-Test conducted to investigate the differentiation of parents' views on economic resources depending on being mothers or fathers, the parents evaluated no items under this dimension differently. The items related to economic resources were similarly evaluated by the mothers or fathers involved in the study ( $p > .05$ ).

Table 16

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution According to Reason for Changing Private School the Child Attended Before*

<b>Reason for Changing School</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Communication problems with school staff (administrator/teacher/officer/security guard etc.)	18	24.0
Academic incompetency of the school	16	21.3
Better facilities of the school the child attending now	14	18.7
Cultural mismatch between the school and parents	8	10.7
Financial Reasons	5	6.7
We changed school when he/she started primary school after kindergarten	1	1.3
They didn't go to any other school	1	1.3
I transferred from public school to private school	1	1.3
Due to being appointed out of province	1	1.3
Due to end of stage (kindergarten-primary school)	1	1.3
School closed	1	1.3
School was sold	1	1.3
Selling the school to another institution	1	1.3
School closure	1	1.3
Miscommunication between students and their friends	1	1.3
Passing the exam	1	1.3
Moving out of province	1	1.3
Moving into a new house	1	1.3
Due to being appointed	1	1.3

When the reason was asked to the parents why they changed their children's previous private school, 19 different causes were identified. The first three reasons expressed most for school change were determined respectively as follows: "communication problems with school staff (administrator/teacher/officer/security guard, etc.)" with 24.0% (18 people), "academic incompetency of the school" with 21.3% (16 people) and "better facilities of the school the child is attending now" with 18.7% (14 people).

### **Discussion**

When the dimensions affecting parents' private school preferences were examined, the dimension that most affected parents' preferences was the management and academic staff characteristics of the private school. Following "management and academic staff characteristics", the dimensions affecting the parents' preferences for school from highest to lowest were as follows: "the physical conditions of the school"; "economic resources"; "communication processes"; "artistic, sportive, social and cultural activities"; "educational activities".

It was found that the first three situations which the parents who participated in the study placed most emphasis regarding the "management and academic staff characteristics" dimension of the questionnaire were,

respectively, school administrators communicating well with parents; the school's staff of teachers not changing frequently; and experienced teachers working at the school. In the questionnaire of the factors affecting private school preferences, the situation which parents gave the least importance regarding the dimension of the management and academic staff characteristics was the political opinion reflected by the school.

Parents who participated in the study had high scores regarding the dimension of the “physical conditions of school” in the questionnaire of factors affecting their private school preferences. The first three situations that parents cared most about in the physical conditions of the school were that the school pays attention to cleanliness and hygiene; the school has a quality security service; and the meals served in the school dining hall are healthy and delicious. Among the physical conditions of the school, the situation which the parents involved in the study gave the least importance was the quality and niceness of the school uniforms.

Parents who participated in the study placed the most emphasis regarding the “economic resources” dimension of the questionnaire of factors affecting their private school preferences was the school fee in line with the family budget. The least important situation in the questionnaire regarding the economic resources dimension was that the social activities carried out during the school period were free of charge.

Finally, the first three situations that parents place the most importance on regarding the “communication processes” dimension of the questionnaire of factors affecting private school preferences were, respectively, the quality of teacher-parent communication; the openness of teachers to communication; and the teachers' consideration of wishes and demands of parents. The least important situation for them was the ads given by the school.

The first three situations which the parents involved in the study placed most emphasis regarding the “artistic, sportive, social and cultural activities” dimension of the questionnaire of factors affecting private school preferences were, respectively, additional study time and club activities the school provides for the students; participation of the school in social responsibility projects. The last two situations these parents gave the least importance were sportive activities carried out in the school and the school's international memberships, respectively.

The situations that parents cared most about in the dimension of the school's educational activities, which was in the second place, were that the school's central examination and foreign language education achievements were high. Regarding the educational activities of the school, the parents who participated in the study gave the least importance to that the establishment date of the school was old.

The first of the reasons for changing private schools according to parents involved in the study was communication problems with school staff. The second reason for changing schools was the academic incompetence of the school. The third reason for changing schools was cultural mismatch between the school and parents.

According to the findings obtained when the parents' reasons for preferring private schools were examined, the most important dimension for parents was the characteristics of the school's management and academic staff. The most effective item determining the reasons for parents' preferences was the school's emphasis on cleanliness and hygiene. In the study conducted by [Çelikten \(2010\)](#), the first factor affecting the parents' preferences for private schools was the fact that the educational staff was experienced and equipped. According

to Çelikten, the most important consideration of parents in their private school preferences was the staff of teachers. The findings obtained differ from those of Çelikten's (2010) study in terms of the most effective factor. Nevertheless, in both studies, these findings had high scores. According to the study conducted by Mermertaş (2014), the most effective factor determining private school preferences was the high success of the school in international examinations, which was included in the educational quality dimension.

According to the findings obtained by examining the reasons for parents' preferences for private schools, the least important factor for parents was the quality and niceness of school uniforms. It is possible to say that parents, while opting for private school, are least affected by school uniforms. There appears to be parallels between the results of the study conducted by Parlar (2012) and the findings. According to Parlar's study, the findings that least affected parents' private school preferences were the school's acceptance of students without exams and the poor quality of school uniforms. According to research findings by Çelikten (2010), the factor that least affected parents' private school preferences was that the school had an accurate advertising policy. In this respect, this finding obtained by the research conducted by Çelikten (2010) does not coincide with the findings. The school's advertising policy was an item that parents remained undecided in the study conducted by me. In Çelikten's study, the school's advertising policy had a minimal effect on the parents' preference process, while according to this research, what parents said was neither important nor unimportant. Not only did they not care much, but at least they did not find it unimportant at all. The fact that there is this kind of difference in the study can be explained in terms of the years when researches were conducted. Ads and media have been increasing in importance recently and reaching a position to affect people's lives. In the study conducted by Nohutçu (1999), the financial situation of the school was the factor that least affected the parents' preferences for private schools. The findings obtained and this result do not show any parallels. When looked at the findings obtained by Nohutçu (1999), it was stated by the parents who participated in the study that despite being above average, the financial elements did not affect as much as the other items. The fact that the study was conducted in 1999 may have been a variable affecting this situation. In the researches of the Kültür Koleji (1993) and Ergin (1993), it is seen that the financial issues were in the last place. Since the dates of the researches, it is possible to say that the impact of financial conditions has increased.

In the research, the factors that parents definitely took into account when preferring private schools for their children and gave high importance to them were stated below. Among the factors they definitely took into consideration regarding the physical conditions of the school were the physical competence and attraction of classes; the quality of the technical infrastructure of the school; the importance the school attaches to technological developments; having the appropriate equipment at the school in line with the technological developments; having social facilities at the school such as laboratory, library, gymnasium, pool; having a quality security service at the school; the importance the school attaches to cleanliness and hygiene; healthy and delicious meals served in school dining hall. The most important factor they took into consideration regarding the dimension of the physical conditions was the school's emphasis on cleanliness and hygiene.

Among the factors related to the communication processes, the items that parents took into account most were as follows: teachers' openness to communication; the quality of teacher-parent communication; the teachers' consideration of wishes and demands of parents; ensuring parent participation in activities carried out

during the academic year. The item taken into consideration most regarding communication processes was the quality of teacher-parent communication.

From among the factors regarding economic resources, the items parents considered most were the following: school fee in line with the family budget; the school's scholarship policy of high quality; and that the costs of books and stationery are not high. The most important consideration regarding economic resources was the school fee in line with the family budget. The family's sending their children to schools suitable for their economic conditions is an easier and more proper option in terms of livelihood.

Among the factors related to the educational activities, the items the parents took most into consideration were as follows: the school's success in the TEOG (central examination) and also in foreign language education.

Among the factors related to artistic, sportive, social and cultural activities, the item the parents considered most was the additional study time and club activities that the school provides to students. The least consideration in this area was the school's international memberships.

Among the factors that parents considered most related to management and academic staff characteristics were: good communication with parents; experienced teachers working at the school; religious views reflected by the school; non-frequent changes in the staff of teachers at the school; presence of young dynamic teachers in the staff. Among these factors, it was said that the most attention was paid to the fact that the staff of teachers did not change frequently. The families expressed the importance of this item in order to ensure the educational processes of the students who had a positive commitment to their teachers especially during primary school were not harmed. Indeed, during the primary school period in which frequently changes of educational staff occur, there may be disruptions in the educational activities of the students. When the results of the research conducted by [Çelikten \(2010\)](#) were examined, the most important factor that parents took into account in terms of their private school preferences was that the educational staff was academically experienced and equipped. When our findings were examined, experienced and equipped staff, despite being at a high level, was not the reason for preference expressed in the first place. According to [Çelikten \(2010\)](#), the primary reason for preference was experienced and equipped educational staff, while according to our findings the most important factor in the related field was non-frequent changes in the staff of teachers. The findings are close to each other, but do not show any direct parallels. As the reason for this, we can say that there is an intensive and frequent change of teacher staff at the end of the academic year within the private school. Indeed, the parents of the students who continue their education in the private school share with the school administration the difficulties they experience because of the change of the teacher staff.

According to the study conducted by [Nohutcu \(1999\)](#), determining factors in preferences for schools were expressed as follows: the characteristics of those serving in educational activities as the first priority; foreign language education as the second priority; personal services supporting the mental and physical development of children as the third priority. In the study conducted by [Nohutçu \(1999\)](#), the characteristics of administrators and teachers came to the fore, and according to our findings, they were again the characteristics of the school's management and academic staff. With this aspect, it can be said that the results of the studies are paralleled. Likewise, according to the study conducted by [Ergin \(1993\)](#), the quality of the teacher staff was the factor that most influenced the parents' preferences for private schools. On the other hand, in the study by [Smedley \(1995\)](#), it was expressed that the main factor affecting private school preferences was safety and security. The study,

contrary to expected, was based on students' safety rather than academic concerns. In the same study, two other factors that influence parents' decisions at a high level were the school's closeness to home and then academic factors.

According to the findings, when looking at the reasons for changing private schools, first, communication problems experienced by school staff and parents came to the fore. The second and third reasons that necessitated changing schools were, respectively, the lack of academic success of the school and the inability of the school-parent culture to match each other. According to [Parlar \(2006\)](#), the academic level of the students was the primary reason for parents to change private schools. The reason for this mismatch can be explained by conduction of researches at different dates. Communication problems in recent years have become more effective in changing schools.

According to the study by [Uysal \(2017\)](#), it was expressed that there was no meaningful relationship between parents' genders and private school preferences. In this study, differences were found to be significant in six different items in four dimensions according to the parents' being mothers or fathers.

This research is a study aimed at determining parents' private school preferences. The research includes findings that will contribute to private schools in terms of positioning themselves according to the recognition of parents' private primary school preferences.

In line with the findings of this study, private schools are advised to take into account the preference priorities of parents and the issues given priority on school preferences according to the parents' being mothers or fathers. In addition, private schools will take precautions by being informed about under which circumstances parents take their children from a private school where they attended and enroll in other schools.

Perhaps one of the most striking results of the study is that while parents prefer private primary schools, the dimension of "educational activities" scores the lowest. This is important for teachers to review both in-school and in-class teaching and learning processes, especially with regard to the concept of academic achievement. The findings about this dimension are considered to be an important issue that school founders and administrators, who are decision makers in private primary school management, should also focus on.

Private primary schools are alternatives to public primary schools in Turkey. Therefore, research that is more detailed should be done especially in the learning outcomes of both type of primary schools. Because effectiveness of schools depends on, what kind of outcomes, they can produce.

### **Ethics Approval**

I declare that the research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. There is no conflict of interest in the research. The authors received no financial support for the authorship, research, and/or publication of this article.

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