

# Pakistani Secondary School Teachers' Perspectives on Choice of Profession

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## Abstract

*The main aim of the present study was to find out the views of Pakistani secondary school language teachers about the reasons that were mentioned behind their career choice. The study was conducted among 14-secondary English language teachers. The study was qualitative in nature in which extensive and follow up interviews were used for the data collection. The data were analyzed through coding and thematic analysis. The findings of the current study exhibited that altruistic and intrinsic reasons were the two major causes behind their career choice but the one main theme which came to prominence was the "feminism" in teaching profession. Most of the females considered that teaching is really suitable for females because according to Pakistani culture the females feel more security and safety in teaching profession rather than in any other profession. In final section, implications and recommendations have been presented as well.*

**Keywords:** Teaching Profession, Secondary English Language Teachers, Career Choice

## Introduction

### Teaching as a profession

It is an absolute fact that the importance of teaching profession cannot be denied because nations progress due to teaching/learning process (Kamran, Abasimi & Congman, 2015). Further, the quality of education depends on the quality of teaching (Chakraborty & Mondal, 2015) and in turn the quality of teaching depends deeply on teachers' beliefs about the teaching profession because beliefs deeply affect the teachers' behaviors. Thus, in order to have quality teachers and teaching, it is noteworthy to have teachers with positive attitudes towards the teaching profession (Kamran et al. 2015) and this is particularly significant in case of foreign language teaching. In some societies, attitudes towards the teaching profession are positive (e.g., Mehmood, Akhter, Ch, and Azam, 2013) while in others it is not (e.g., Maliki, 2013). Since teacher shapes the generation of tomorrow therefore, the teachers can be considered as the distributors of knowledge. An education system will not benefit the nation without the total commitment of its teachers. Since the strength of an education system depends deeply on its teachers, therefore it is vital to give the right position and status to the teachers (Yong, 1994) in society. Proper value to the teaching profession was not given because many studies support that students who pursue teacher education programs are academically weak (Weaver, 1979; Kerr,



1983). Teaching profession in the Asian region did not attract the best qualified people (Wong, 1976). It was reported that a number of parents prevent their children to become teachers (Boyer, 1983; Gallup, 1984). Further it has been noted that teachers leave the teaching profession rapidly (Louis Harris & Associates, 1988; Smithers, 1990) and this is also the case for language teachers. Today's teachers are threatened with several negative aspects such as lack of discipline (Werthman, 1971; Comber & Whitefield, 1979; Gallup, 1983) but still due to these pressures why many more future teachers enter into teaching? This question should be addressed by the researchers. A bulk of the trainees preparing for language teaching at school level was found to be of average or below average academic ability because only few academically talented students are attracted to teaching (Yong, 1994).

### **Statement of the problem**

Teaching is considered as a good job. Why do people choose teaching as a profession? Logically various reasons are behind it for example being a noble profession and short working days and long holidays are the various reasons. But on the other side, proper value and status has not been given to teachers in some societies yet (Yong, 1994), therefore this discourages the folk to join the teaching profession. Even in Pakistan the status quo seems blurring. Some of the reasons are motivating to join the teaching profession while others are not. On one side, some of the reasons pull the people to join the teaching profession while on the other side some of the discouraging factors demotivate the people to become teachers. For example, altruistic reasons (Peritz, Teitelbaum, & Sor, 1989; Joseph and Green, 1986) and job security (Haubrich, 1960) pull the people to join the teaching profession but on the other side inadequate salaries are the reasons which hold back the people to join the teaching profession (Book, Freeman & Brousseau, 1985). Thus the status quo seems quite miserable. Being in Pakistani context, we are quite interested in knowing about the phenomenon under investigation to see that due to what reasons Pakistani teachers joined the teaching profession. This article is important in this matter to bring the Pakistani teachers' views into notice about their joining the teaching profession.

### **Significance of the study**

In the above lines we saw that the reasons behind the joining the teaching could be numerous. Some reasons compel the teachers to join the profession while others pull out the teachers from joining so the case goes on both sides which produce a gap in the research field. This gap led us to dig more into the matter about the problem under investigation to explore the specific reasons of Pakistani language teachers.

### **Research Objective**

The main objective of the current study was to find out the reasons that motivate teachers to join the teaching profession.

### Research Question

What were the some of the basic reasons for secondary English language teachers to join teaching as a career choice in Pakistan?

### Conceptual framework

The following conceptual framework was designed by the researchers from the past literature in the field about this issue.

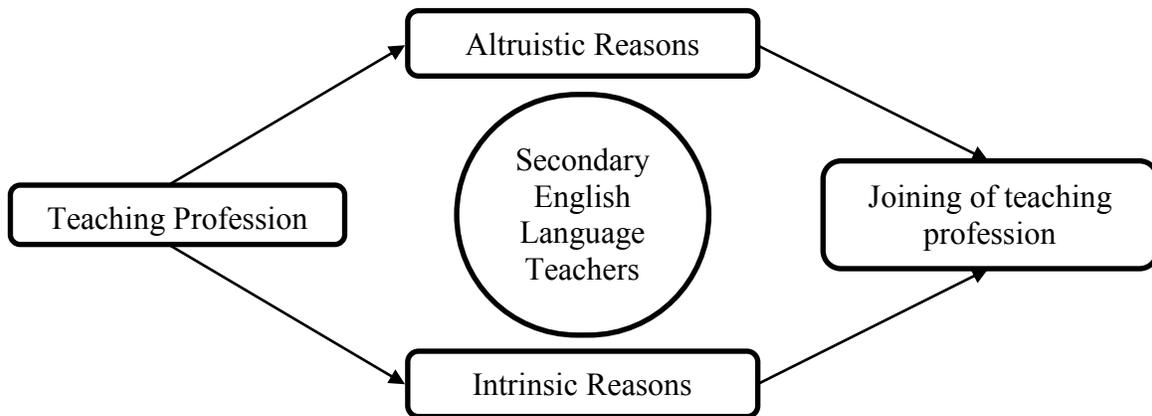


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

### Literature Review

Various studies have been done in the past. Some studies have supported the problem under investigation while results of other studies go against it. For example the negative approach of the community towards teachers (NEA, 1982) was one of them. The other studies of several researchers (e.g., Mazur & Lynch, 1989; Serow, Eaker & Ciechalski, 1992; Straker, 1988) which they did in the field, stated that the meager salaries and weak morale status (Hansford, 1992) were some of the causes that harshly affect the position of the teaching profession so much so that many people join the teaching only as a last option. Chapman (1983) and Grissmer and Kirby (1987) also discussed in their studies that lack of promotion in teaching as compared to other professions is the contributing factor which harshly effect the teachers to join this pious and noble profession. While Darling-Hammond (1984) and Webb (1985) clearly claimed that meager status associated with teaching profession was the main obstacle to attract the people towards this profession. Due to meager rank of the teaching profession, the large numbers of people ignore it and do not join. Another problem found in literature is unwelcoming workplace which affects the choice of teaching profession in the eyes of folk. This unwelcoming workplace problem was proved by studies of several researchers for example Darling-Hammond (1984), Rosenholtz (1989) and Billingsley and Cross (1991). Another important factor showed by Mazur and Lynch (1989) is the "Teacher burnout" that causes many teachers to leave the classroom early because this burnout factor is causing

the teaching profession in a very offensive manner. Due to burnout the teaching profession is losing its status every day. Straker (1988), in his study, found that well-qualified teachers in secondary schools are rare to find because teaching profession is considered not well suited for them. A survey was done in the US where it was found that those students whose scores were much higher in SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) examination were gone to study science, mathematics and engineering while the students who got lowest scores were gone to study the field of education i.e. the teaching profession (Carson, Huelskamp & Woodall, 1993). Vance & Schlechty (1982) studied more than 20,000 people. Their findings exhibited that teaching profession was joined by the people whose academic grade was much lower while the students whose academic grade was much stronger did not come to teaching. This status quo is same in the developed and developing countries therefore now-a-days the teaching profession is a matter of great concern for many. More research should be done in order to identify the needs of school teachers so that many more relevant factors and reasons should come into view. The present article was designed for the purpose to bring as many reasons as possible which the teachers consider for the joining the teaching profession.

## Research Method

### Participants and Context of the Study

The target participants for the mentioned study were secondary English language teachers in secondary schools in Dera Ismail Khan City in Pakistan. The secondary education is considered third early education in Pakistan after primary and middle stage education. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the teachers for extensive interviews. Teachers were approached by using the purposive sampling technique, and 14 teachers (9 females, 5 male) agreed to be interviewed. The demographic information is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Demographic Information of Participants

Teacher penname	Gender	Teaching experience in years
Alfaama	Female	3
Abhaama	Female	4
Ajaala	Female	9
Asaama	Female	6
Ajaada	Female	5
Adaaba	Female	2
Azlaana	Female	3
Aiqaan	Male	8
Armaghana	Female	2
Azjaana	Female	3
Albaan	Male	7
Alqaan	Male	6
Aosaaf	Male	1
Adnanaaz	Male	5

### Research design

In the current research study, we preferred to choose a qualitative method to determine the teachers' views about joining their teaching profession and thought that if qualitative method can bring some novel and promising results. So, in this case in-depth semi-structured extensive interviews were used as tool for data collection. The interviews were conducted face to face with selected 14 teachers (9 females, 5 male). The semi-structured interviews were thought to be more suitable as it permitted the researchers to enter into the interviewees' life to dig up deep the matter (Patton, 2002; Chan & Yuen, 2015). Interviews can also give us more data which is sometimes not possible with the questionnaires (Chan & Yuen, 2015) or other survey instruments. So, the researchers in the current study used the qualitative research method because it allows the respondents to give extra information (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012).

### Data collection and data analysis

For the current research study 14-semi-structured interviews were administered face to face with selected teachers (9 females, 5 male) at secondary level. An interview guide with an open-ended design was used. Some extra and follow-up questions were also asked for more interpretation (Chan & Yuen, 2015) if the respondents wanted to give more detail about the problem under investigation. According to the main objective of the study, the following question with follow-up questions was asked in the interview.

- Why did you opt to be a teacher?
- What were the basic reasons behind it? Please explain them briefly.

Before the interviews were started, the interview questions were showed to some of the teachers. All interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the respondents and transcribed after the interviews were recorded. All the scripts of the interviews were analyzed according to the coding method of Miles and Huberman (1994). The codes were then divided according to the categories of the questions, and finally themes were created as was done in Chan and Yuen (2015) and Saldana (2009) as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Major, sub-categories, themes and codes

Major category	Sub-category	Themes	Codes
Secondary English Language Teachers Views	Reasons for teaching profession	Convey education	V-R-C-E
		Satisfy One's Research opportunities	V-R-S-R-O
		To make the subject easier.	V-R-M-S-E
		Favorite Profession	V-R-F-P
		Feminine Approach	V-R-F-App
		Prophetic Profession	V-R-P-P
		Interest in Languages	V-R-I-S

### Findings

The findings were mainly categorized according to the mentioned research question of the study. Major themes that emerged from the data gave much support to the views of teachers which they showed for teaching profession.

### Reasons behind the Selection of Teaching Profession

From the interviews of the findings there were many reasons that showed by the secondary EFL teachers that why they joined the teaching profession in which one of the main reasons was to convey his/her education to the next generation because next generation has to play its role in the development of society. For example, one female teacher Alfaama stated that:

*I want to utilize my education and I want to convey the education to children that's why I chose this (teaching) profession (Alfaama).*

Adaaba also expressed the same views as were shown by Ajaada above and stated that in addition to being a prophetic profession this profession also suits very best to the female teachers for example she expressed her views as:

*Teaching profession is a noble profession. I am in love with this profession. It's very noble profession. I like this profession. In this profession the females feel very safe. They feel like we are in safe hands (Adaaba).*

Aiqaan was an English language teacher in an urban school. He liked English to the core of his heart because according to his opinion a large quantity of research was taking place in English so he joined the teaching profession because he was interested in English and research for example, he stated it as:

*I chose (teaching profession) because the world large quantity of research is taking place in English. English is very important in the world. It is a big (important) branch of information technology so I chose to be an English teacher (Aiqaan).*

Azjaana stated that I joined the teaching profession as a teacher because I did my master degree in English but, the most important reason was that English covers the daily life that's why I joined the teaching profession. Her comments were as:

*As my subject in the master level was English; so that was the reason to become an English language teacher. Second thing was that English is related to all fields of life. It covers all areas of our life that's the reason I chose to be an English language teacher (Azjaana).*

Interestingly only Albaan stated that he joined the teaching profession accidentally. He stated that accidentally he came in the school and started teaching as was shown by his following comments:

*I think I am not a bound teacher. Accidentally I came here and start teaching. As my major in BS was linguistics and literature so it was much easier for me to teach linguistics and literature but I prefer to teach literature because that's much easier and conceptual. It is much easier to get concepts clear theoretically. It is much interesting.... however I joined the teaching profession accidentally (Albaan).*

Alqaan stated that I joined the teaching profession due to inclination of my mindset towards the English subject. In student life English was my favorite subject that's why I joined the teaching profession. He stated his view points as:

*I was preparing for medical test and I studied English well for that purpose. That's the reason I chose English at BS level because no other proper subject was available. Therefore, I chose English which was one of my favorite subjects and I became an English teacher (Alqaan).*

Aosaaf stated the same reasons as were stated by Alqaan in the above lines. Like Alqaan, Aosaaf also stated that he liked English very much and since he wanted to pursue his doctorate degree in English so he joined teaching profession as an English teacher but, on the other hand he was not satisfied with government and/ or head-school teacher because of low salary that's why he wanted to leave his teaching job and go on another side. An excerpt from his comments demonstrates this:

*I like it (English) very much. English is an everyday subject and there is a lot of research work here in English and I want to be a doctor in English (but) this is too much difficult question for me to answer you. I am not satisfied here from my job and from my teaching job because our government and our principal don't pay too much. Financial problems are here. And (now) I want to go other areas because English has a lot uses in other areas as well. (Aosaaf).*

Adnanaz stated that in past English was considered very tough subject but I wanted to make the English more interesting and easier. So I joined this profession. The following were his comments:

*Because it depends on mental interest that what is your interest? My interest was towards English especially towards research in English. Our students consider English a difficult and boring subject. We have to remove this concept from the minds of students because they come (up) with this concept. The senior students tell them that it is a boring subject therefore they make their minds that this subject is unable to read. So I joined this profession so that I*

*could make English more interesting and to make the English easier by interacting with students which is considered very difficult subject by students (Adnanaaz).*

Similarly in the last interview one female teacher said that:

*I joined this (teaching) profession because it is suitable for females.*

The other female teacher also showed agreement with this and she stated that according to her belief as:

*Teaching profession is very suitable for females because females cannot go to that place (in Pakistan) where a bunch of males are present for example in banks etc.*

### **Discussion**

Research over the last few years had produced and gave an extensive data which explained the reasons that were behind the selection of teachers in teaching profession. In the current research the main reasons behind the selection of teaching profession as career choice were altruistic and intrinsic reasons for example to convey education to children, to satisfy his / her research opportunities and needs and interest in English, and to make the English more interesting and easier for students, while the other participants chose the teaching profession as career choice because of intrinsic reasons for example teaching was considered as favorite, prophetic and, feminine profession. These reasons were considered as intrinsic reasons (motivations). These findings of the present study were confirmed by past research for example, in the literature, it is stated that altruistic and intrinsic motives had been the very best reasons in choosing the teaching as a career (Bastick 2000; Ewing and Manuel 2005; Goh and Atputhasamy 2001; Hayes 1990; Kyriacou and Coulthard 2000; Kyriacou, Kunc, Stephens, & Hultgren 2003; Low, Lim, Ch'ng, & Goh 2011; Manuel 2003; Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant 2003; Reid and Caudwell 1997; Spear, Gould & Lee 2000; Watt, Richardson, Klusmann, Kunter, Beyer, Trautwein, Baumert 2012; Watt and Richardson 2007; Yong 1994).

### **Conclusion**

The main aim of this article was to explore reasons that were behind the decision process of Pakistani secondary English language teachers to join the teaching profession. Generally due to various reasons, the motivated youth in Pakistan has a great motivation to join the teaching profession. Among those reasons according to the current article, we concluded that, altruistic, and intrinsic reasons were the two main reasons due to which Pakistani secondary teachers chose the teaching as a career. Similarly among intrinsic reasons the one unique result which determined by the current researchers through this article was the “feminism” of teaching profession. The females considered that due to cultural issues the females feel more security and safety in teaching rather than in any

other profession. We tried our best to contribute to the past literature in a more effective way on the basis of teachers' views. Based on the findings of the current study following implications are drawn for researchers and stakeholder.

### **Implications**

The Pakistani secondary English language teachers chose the teaching as a profession due to altruistic and intrinsic reasons. In case of female, the teaching profession in Pakistan is becoming more feminine because most of the female teachers in this research stated that teaching profession is more secure and safe for females. Females feel more safety in teaching because they have only to interact with the female students in schools or colleges while in other profession like in banking, police and, marketing etc. the females have to interact with males which creates disturbance for female folk.

### **Suggestions**

On the basis of conclusions and implications, the current study suggests some ideas for government and education department in Pakistan. However, these suggestions are not limited to government and education department in Pakistan only; researchers in other contexts can benefit from these findings. Following are the most important suggestions which this study has put forward for the further researchers:

- i) The Policy makers should know about the increasing “feminism” in teaching profession.
- ii) The researchers should do further research that why the females are so optimistic about teaching profession.
- iii) The Policy makers in Pakistan should take actions to avoid the feminization of the teaching profession.
- iv) The Policy makers should determine the social status of teachers in Pakistan.
- v) Teaching departments should focus on the attitudes of teachers towards the teaching profession.
- vi) More research should be done in developed and developing countries to determine the teachers' beliefs towards teaching profession to make the case better in their respective countries.
- vii) Finally, it is suggested for the future researchers to use other research techniques, such as classroom observations, focus group interviews, quantitative surveys, content analysis and / or review studies which would help to confirm the teachers' reported reasons about joining the teaching profession.

### **Contribution of the study**

Although various studies have been done on the same topic but, this very current study has made a unique contribution to the field of literature. It brought the findings of the female teachers with regard to feminizing the teaching profession. This contribution is

new and unique. Most of the female teachers stated that in Pakistani culture females are in greater number to join the teaching profession.

### Limitations of the study

The current research was limited to secondary English language teachers who were involved in English language education only. The small sample size ( $N=14$ ) limits the generalizability of the current research results (Chan and Yuen 2015). The current research can only be considered as qualitative small-scale research. Due to fixed resources, a larger sample was not feasible. More specifically, the interview method can lead to the subjective results in the current research, because it is based on teachers' self-reporting beliefs towards education system (Chan & Yuen 2015).

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