

## HISTORY AND CULTURE OF TUITION ACADEMIES: VOICING NATIVE'S PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

*The research was focused on socio-cultural dynamics of tuition academies assuming that degraded learning environment in government educational institutions in Pakistan have provided space for private tuition academies. The objectives of the research included: local perception of parents, teachers and students about tuition academies, link between social statuses and tuition trends, teaching techniques at schools and tuition academies and motivational factors for the students to join academies. Main findings of the study showed that educational institutions of primary and secondary level possess basic academic significance as they bear fundamental importance for scholastic grades and positions. Self-motivation for joining the private tuition academies by the students was one of the major stimuli whereas other factors like social status, trend or fashion also played a pivotal role in establishing bonds with the academies. Moreover, the research also thoroughly examined learning and teaching structures of government and private academic institutions.*

**Keywords:** Tuition academies, cultural determinants, motivation, learning environment, teaching structure.

### INTRODUCTION

The study was focused on exploration of the dynamics of tuition academies in Model Town Burewala to look into their role in enhancing the educational outlook of the area. Burewala is a Tehsil of Vehari District of Punjab province of Pakistan. The main motive of this research was to explore the concealed social and cultural factors which motivate students to join academies. This study was an attempt to investigate the impact of tuition academies on academic results, social causes of orientation towards joining tuition academies and to assess social, behavioral and psychological effects on the students. For a comparative account, the learning environment of government schools was also observed.

A review of the history of tuition academies reveals that from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century, academies were dominant form of schooling beyond the primary level in the United States (Baidae 1999). Until the 1880's, the number of academies and academy students outnumbered high schools and high school students. Stretching to other regions of the world, the education system of academies has become a universal phenomenon. The continuity and survival of academies is a major evidence for their importance and utility. Amongst many success stories, the London Tuition Academy established in 2005 is the most renowned. It is an independent private organization which has specialized in all academic levels including GCSE, O&A levels and university education. For the last few years, their vetted tutors have successfully served

London's vast multi-cultural community and have facilitated students with the capacity to achieve excellent grades in various subjects (LTA 2005).

In Pakistan, Rana Academy Lahore was the first Tuition Academy established in 1974. It started gaining popularity and soon it became one of the leading institutions of its own type. Its immense fame not only attracted the students from nearby areas but even from distant places. The good results produced by various branches of Rana Academy, encouraged a trend of opening tuition academies in other areas Punjab and Burewala is one of them. The concept of tuition academies in Burewala started in 1976.

It is believed that educational academies are performing a dual task of education and enculturation of the children. The complexity of issue has made it an interesting anthropological research project because a different perspective would be required to analyze the situation. Unlike educationist's explanation, the phenomenon of tuition academies requires an anthropological rationalization in the interpretation of cultural contexts provided by various stakeholders.

### **Hypothesis AND OBJECTIVES**

The research was based on a supposition that mortified environment in government educational institutions have provided breathing space for private tuition academies. Moreover, contemporary expertise and teaching practices have been effectively utilized by tuition academies to capture attention of students and parents. In the light of hypothesis, following objectives were set for this research:

- a. To identify and analyze factors responsible for joining tuition academies
- b. To compare learning environment at government schools and private tuition academies
- c. To examine the relationship between social status and tuition trends, and
- d. To enlist socio-cultural barriers in joining tuition academies

### **METHODOLOGY**

Every research needs some techniques and a certain methodology to ensure accurate and reliable findings. Methodology is like a driving skill in the field research and locale is vehicle of the community. Sample for this research was drawn through purposive sampling owing to the heterogeneity of the universe containing several social and economic strata. Total households identified for this study were sixty which were further divided into four categories. The first category of respondents belonged to the students of Middle, Metric and Intermediate level; second group of respondents was composed of teachers and professors belonging to government academic institutions as well as private tuition academies; third group of respondents was based on parents whose children were enjoying tuition facilities at private academies, whereas the fourth group consisted of parents who never allowed their children to join tuition academies. Formal as well as informal interviews were conducted to collect details related to various aspects of the topic. The communicative methods of research were supplemented through participant observation which on one hand helped to understand interactive patterns of the community and, on the other, to verify the information collected through other methods. Participant observation helped to differentiate between 'what they say and what they do'.

## FINDINGS

There is no denial to the fact that private tuition academies were reality of the day as in every nook and corner of the city one can find well established tuition academies along with many home tuition centers. There was an increasing trend towards joining the academies owing to the better performance in terms of good grades by the students. Through key informants, interviews and personal observations, it was established that consideration for professional education is highly regarded by the community, therefore, the role and importance of tuition academies has increased manifold. Majority of the parents, who can afford it, were willingly sending their children to the academies for extra coaching to ensure higher grades so that they can join professional colleges after completing their basic schooling. Moreover, it has become a social status to send children to expensive academies which, time and again, is boosted by the parents in their social interactions as a sign of prestige.

### Analysis of contributing factors in joining Academies

There are lot of push and pull factors for students to join academies. Pushing factors are those which bring the attention of parents, boys and girls towards education and subsequently the role of academies in getting better education. That is why upcoming youth is more motivated to get higher education and obtaining good marks and grades. Parents want to educate their children and 73.26% parents preferred their children to join tuition academies. For obtaining high grades in examinations, 95% students agreed that they have joined tuition academies for this particular purpose. They stressed on good grades as a pre-requisite for admission in a professional college or better ranked university. The gender composition of students joining academies was more in favor of female as they were relatively larger in number at the tuition academies. In statistical terms, the ratio of male and female was 40% and 60%, respectively.

The role of a tutor in academies is of central importance because he/she is the person who gives additional, special or basic instruction to the students for a systematic learning. The attitude of the tutors towards students was reported respectful by 45% male students as they were satisfied with the way of teaching and interactions by the tutors. Around 50% female said that they easily share academic problems related to their studies with their tutors because in the school and college level teachers do not pay full attention to their students. One teacher explained the phenomenon, "There is lot of burden in schools and colleges. Therefore, teachers don't pay full attention to their students, cannot attend them personally and do not have a direct contact with the students. As a result of lack of empathy, students are moving towards the tuition academies". During field data collection, it was observed that students have an urge for joining academies due to lack of attention from teachers in government schools. Self-motivation was also above the 33% in ratio of the students who acquired knowledge and were very dedicated in their studies. The other factors (like tutor's behavior with the students and paying full attention to their students) played a vital role in their motivational approaches towards tuition academies. Tutors also motivated students to join academies and 25% of the teachers at government schools were highly convinced for joining the academies. On the other side, 42% of the interviewed parents were of the view that students should perform at the schools without any outside assistance. The discrepancy in views of teachers and parents regarding joining academies was extremely visible and both opinion groups had very strong points of views. Majority of the parents considered academies an additional burden on their household economy which they have to bear due to poor performance of the teachers at schools and colleges.

Environmental determinism in anthropology is a well-established notion which states that the surrounding environment (both material and non-material) has a direct impact on social institutions, and similar is true for the institution of education. Unhygienic school environment was observed in the target locale, 11% teachers and 25% students considered it as a barrier for learning. They were of the view that unhygienic school environment was also moving students towards tuition academies. Though education has brought socio-cultural changes in the area but due to unhygienic school environment, students were not feeling comfortable. According to a government primary school teacher, “the unhygienic school environment is very disturbing for the teachers and students but they don’t have required resources to get away with this pollution. Neither government nor the parents take any interest in improvement of learning environment at schools”. No doubt, teachers at their own urge students to keep school clean and tidy, but their sporadic efforts could not produce the desired results. Along with physical, social environment was another important point for this research. It is a generally prevailing notion that tuition centers and academies bring positive change in learner’s behavior. A great change was observed in behavior of learners towards their classmates and teachers; contrary to the government schools, learners at academies respect their teachers and teachers are also warmly guiding them. One respondent said that “learner’s behavior is more dependent upon the teacher’s behavior. If teacher is harsh with the students then students respond in the same manner; (but this is a rare situation) mostly teachers behave well with their students and students also respect their teachers.”

Tuition academies and centers are playing a vital role in the preparation of examination at various educational levels. Teachers suggest guess and model papers to prepare and revise the syllabus again and again and the ratio of 25% female students agree with it. According to 13.33% students, teachers focused mainly on the text books in schools, whereas, tuition academies are providing a variety of informative material for the exams. Due to this extra preparation, around 26% students of middle and metric level come from different areas of the town to join these academies. One female teacher respondent stated that “role of academies in the promotion of education depends upon the teachers; if teachers work hard and make the students to work hard too; the result will definitely be good marks and grades”. Another male teacher responded as “Tuition Academies are playing a vital role not only in the promotion of education, but also in the promotion of taking high-quality examination”.

Following table has presented responses of three groups, i.e., students, teachers and parents regarding the impact on grades after joining the academies. Students, particularly female were unanimous on the positive impact of coaching at tuition academies, female teachers were also more convinced than male counterpart.

Respondents	Students		Teachers		Parents		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Yes	15%	25%	10%	20%	5%	15%	
No	5%	-	3%	-	2%	-	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 %</b>						

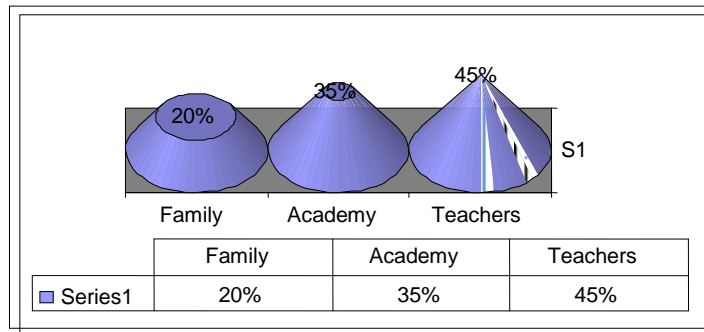
Source: Field Data

Amongst the parents, again it was the mothers who were more convinced about positive contributions of academies. One of the fathers commented that “tuitions are established for the satisfaction of parents; they think that after joining academies their children obtain high marks and grades.” While praising the role of academies, a male student said “after joining academies, students get good position in the exams.” Another respondent was of the view that “80% of the promotion of education is due to tuition academies”.

This study revealed that girls are more motivated to get higher education than boys. Girls feel comfortable in tuition academies and 40% male students agreed that girls were more motivated to join academies than boys. About 45% female students preferred to join tuition academies because their foremost intention is that they sought to compete with boys. In past, natives strongly opposed female education as they considered that education is harmful for their belief system. They thought that girls have no need to get education; if they get education; they will demand freedom and rights, this modernism will ‘grab’ the natives. Gradually this notion has been replaced with a positive thinking. The ratio of female education is increasing with the passage but 26% parents didn’t allow their daughters to join academies. The main reason to stop it at an earlier stage was to restrict their demands for higher education which may disturb social and cultural regulatory patterns at the family level.

A great majority (90%) of the respondents agreed that a successful education plan is dependent on three fundamental elements. These are: a) Family, b) Academy, c) Teacher

The responses of the respondents on this point have been reflected in a diagram below. The respondents, with a slight variation in hierarchy, agreed that in shaping an education plan family plays a one-fifth role, whereas academy and teacher are responsible for 80% of the rest of a plan.



Source: Field data

### Comparison of Learning Environment at Schools & Academies

Tuition academies were established in main town and privately owned. Individual as well as groups of investors have provided capital for furnishing and equipping these academies. To provide a competitive environment and to attract the students, these academies have been provided with modern teaching aids and logistic facilities. Besides much dissimilarity between private academies and government schools, one can find some fundamental parallels. Ironically, conceptual teaching and brain storming activities are the least interest of the teachers at academies and schools, so bookish language is preferred.

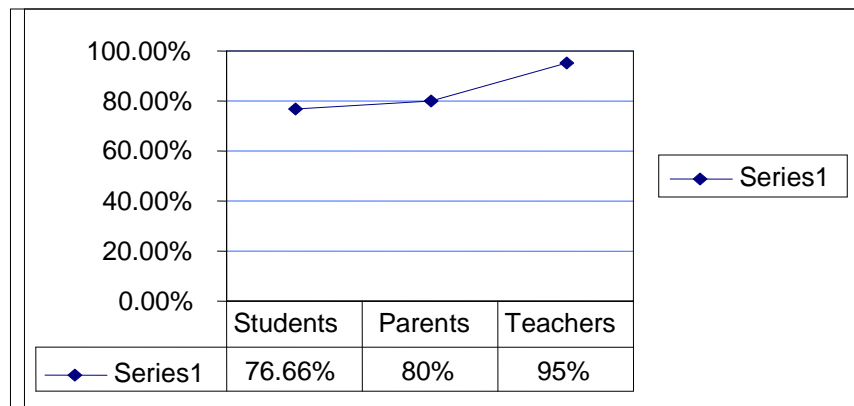
## Maintaining Quality

One of the fundamental identities of academies was their strict and regular quality check standards on studies. Empirical findings showed that 50% female students believed that teachers conscientiously check their tests and papers whereas 66% parents shared these views. Around 30% of the parents showed reluctance for sending their children to academies as they believed that their children did not need any tuition academy because in schools teachers checked their test carefully; their children performance is better in school.

## Language Difficulties

Social and cultural frictions and speaking of different languages/dialects are more common phenomenon among students. A language serves as the medium of instruction in the educational system but sometimes it involves serious problem. Children learn mother language unconsciously and they imitate the natural world around them according to cultural heritage. Their language is the representation of this imitation in symbols and combination of symbols expressed either in sounds or in written form. Thus when they make their conscious efforts to learn any other language, they are psychologically reluctant to do so. Historically, educational system at the primary level concentrates on one common language; Urdu. But now a day, educational policy decided that all courses at primary level as well as middle level will be in English language. The change of medium of learning and instruction has created a wide gap in absorption capacity of the students, particularly in rural settings. As a response to this issue, the data collected in the field reflected that teachers, parents and students agreed that a sudden shift in medium of instruction has caused many problems in studies, particularly at school level. All three categories of respondents admitted that English language has created many problems in understanding of the syllabus.

English Language Creates Hurdles in Learning Process



Source: Field data

Further probing reflected that the issue of English language is more problematic in government schools. The teachers/tutors at academies have better command on English language and they also work hard for better results of their students, otherwise they would lose their job which is a source of additional income for them. As academies are meant for extra coaching, therefore, teachers/tutors put their best efforts to solve problems related to studies and perform in an extra ordinary way. Teachers at government schools, on the other hand, are least concerned with learning problems of the students as they believe in doing their 'duty' of delivering lectures. The

concept of ‘pakki naukri (permanent employment) at government schools has made the teachers lethargic and non-concerned with problems of the students. It is also believed that majority of government teachers are under qualified, non-committed and ignorant towards their duty. They don’t have the capacity to deal with the problems of the students. Their own knowledge and proficiency of English language is sub-standard by any parameters.

### **Stress-free and Nonviolent Environment in Tuition Academies**

Data analysis showed a reflexive setting in tuition academies regarding student behavior, learning activity, teacher performance and teacher role. In tuition academies punctuality was key element in attending the classes and was strictly observed by students and teachers. In schools, teachers and even students do not reach at prescribed timings which were negatively affecting the learning environment. Around 75% of the interviewed students admitted that tuition centers provided stress free environment in comparison to government schools where teacher-student disconnect was very visible. Teachers deliberately created such an environment where students were afraid of teachers and hesitant in interacting with them. 20% of the students complained about social and academic environment at academies which were mostly related to favoritism on ethnic and lingual basis. Complaints about congested and suffocated place were also raised by the students and they associated it with an effort to maximize their profit by less spending on building, etc.

### **Determinants of Learning Aspirations**

The explorations conducted at field level revealed that after joining academies students learn four basic elements which help in expanding their learning capacity. These are:

- i. Communication skill
- ii. Confidence build-up
- iii. Social setting
- iv. Paper setting

### ***Communication Skills***

Effective communication occurs when the teacher receives what his students want to communicate and the students receive what the teacher wants to communicate. Communication between teacher and students is expressed through effective, cognitive, verbal, and nonverbal means. Effective teaching requires open communication; this is encouraged by a non-threatening atmosphere that fosters teacher and student resonance to each other’s existence. However, after joining academies, 35% students said that they improved their communication skill with one another. They better know how to converse with their parents as well as their teachers. The ratio of 27% parents endorsed the fact that their children have improved in ways of communicating and conversing with them.

### ***Confidence Building***

After joining academies, 75% students claim a raise in their confidence level and admitted that now they can easily share their educational problems with tutors than in the past. About 60% parents agreed that the confidence level of their children has improved from their previous level and 47% teachers admitted that students are less hesitant in discussing their educational problems with their teachers.

### ***Social Setting***

Although social setting is a vast concept but for this study it has been limited to general patterns of living of a student. So for our purpose it included: general attitude, obeying parents and teachers, and adhering to normative order of the society. The research results stated that 60% teachers agreed that students act according to the requirements of their social settings. About 65% of the parents also favored this point of view that after joining the academy, their child has socially grew up.

### ***Paper Setting***

Students improve their writing skills by concentration in examinations. The focus of the teaching is to enhance the ability of reproducing the text during the papers, which is provided for the preparation. Effective teaching is more than just doing something with learners. Facts analysis showed that there are different teaching techniques at school/college level as well as in academies. Research data showed that 40% teachers accepted that students knew better how to attempt the papers in the examinations and 53% parents said that their children had a better understanding of their papers. Total percentage of students believing in the same idea was 33%.

### **Social Status & Tuition Trends**

Field data revealed that the major reason for students to join academies was to enhance social status of their families by improving academic grades with the help of private tuition. This notion surfaced time and again that to be a student of a tuition academy is a sign of social prestige. It is important to note that a great majority of students (83%) and parents (89%) were concerned with metric and intermediate grades, because it plays pivotal role for setting future carrier direction as well as admission in professional schools/universities. When total strength of academies was analyzed in view of the levels of education, it was surfaced that 12% students joined in middle class, 27% for metric level, 40% for intermediate, 15% for graduation and only 6% for post-graduation. According to the owners of the academies, about 73% of the students are linked to the tuition academies at any stage of their schooling and this link with a tuition academy was proudly mentioned during social interactions.

Like all other cultural phenomenon, the linking up with tuition academies was not as straight as it appeared. The universal paradigm of 'binary opposition' equally existed here. Natives of the town of Burewala, like any other society in the world, had their own standards of right and wrong, honor and shame, wisdom and foolishness, loss and benefit, modernity and backwardness as well as education and change. As the emergence of tuition academies on modern lines was relatively new phenomenon, therefore, resisting endeavors should not be considered as an unusual socio-cultural response. Some of the significant 'socio-cultural barriers' identified during the research have been discussed hereunder.

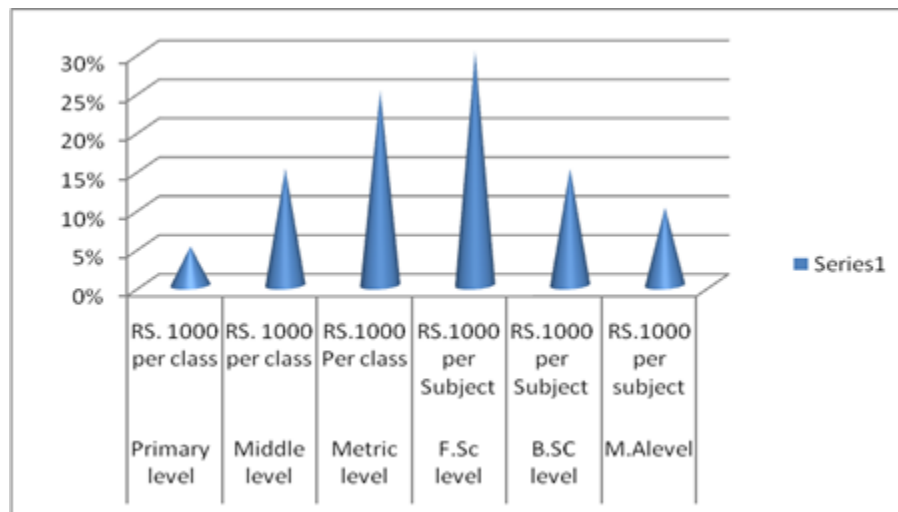
### ***Co-education***

One of the recent educational surprises has been the questioning of co-education and the re-examination of single sex schooling. Co-education was the major hindrance for female to join up tuition academies. Parents did not allow their daughters to join academy due to close and frequent interaction with males. 20% of the parents were not sending their adult daughters to tuition academies due to co-education.



### High Expenses

At tuition academies and centers; tuition fees were very high. On average, it was Rs 1,000/subject for science subjects at intermediate and graduation level. It was Rs 1,000/class for primary, middle and metric levels. For education at schools, parents have to bear economic burden for books, notebooks, stationary and allied expenses for transport and pocket money. In addition to this, if parents have to send their children to private academies, it becomes a substantial economic burden for middle class families and they prefer not to send their children for tuition.



Source: Field data

### Pardah and Honor

*Pardah* (veil) in town of Burewala is not as simple as it appears to be in Pakistani metropolis. It is a systematic avoidance of any kind of physical or symbolic interaction with men. According to the socio-cultural perspective, sending girls to academies threatens the local norms of gender segregation. There are still many families in rural areas where female mobility is restricted due to *pardah*. (Rashida, 2007) ‘A girl is highly under threat of *pardah*-lessness if she goes to school’ and this statement was approved by 35% students and 45% parents.

### CONCLUSION

The topic and locale selected for this research have direct relevance with the town of Burewala which is commonly known in the area as “City of Education” and has a history of tuition academies more than a decade. The main motive of this research was to explore the social and cultural realities causing joining of tuition academies. The major motivating factors, according to research findings, included social status, motivation for higher grades, better learning environment, quality teachers, competitive setting and better opportunities for personality building. The poor learning situation at government schools also acted as a push factor. It is fact that poor performance of government academic institutions provided space for private tuition academies. Stress free and non-violent environment in tuition academies had attracted students and parents. It was also a fact that emergence of academies has made education a sellable product and only rich can buy this. Poor was excluded from quality learning and it had implications for female gender, as well.

One of the major reasons of success of academies was related to the organized program of learning and imparting education. The tutors were well worse with examination techniques and allied controlling mechanisms like monthly reports supported by a well elaborated system of rewards like stars, prizes and awards, as well as interactions with parents. Academies, therefore, have become an integral part of the society as they are catering for the need of quality education.

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