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Assessing the Factors behind Choosing Universities for Higher Education: A Case of Bangladesh

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Abstract- Choosing the right university for higher education is a crucial issue in Bangladesh. There are some factors that play vital role in choosing the right university for higher study. Students like to evaluate those factors prior to choosing their universities. Such factors which are mostly evaluated by the students are reputation, tuition fees, location, permanent campus, teachers' quality, online service, IT facility, advertisement, and environment. Current exploratory study has identified reputation and online service as the most vital factors that play the most significant role in choosing university for higher education. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Primary data were collected from 60 students of public and private universities in Dhaka city. Multiple regression equation is used to identify dependent and independent variables, their relationship and impact on this research. Based on research questions, hypotheses were developed and tested accordingly.

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Assessing the Factors behind Choosing Universities for Higher Education: A Case of Bangladesh

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Abstract- Choosing the right university for higher education is a crucial issue in Bangladesh. There are some factors that play vital role in choosing the right university for higher study. Students like to evaluate those factors prior to choosing their universities. Such factors which are mostly evaluated by the students are reputation, tuition fees, location, permanent campus, teachers' quality, online service, IT facility, advertisement, and environment. Current exploratory study has identified reputation and online service as the most vital factors that play the most significant role in choosing university for higher education. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Primary data were collected from 60 students of public and private universities in Dhaka city. Multiple regression equation is used to identify dependent and independent variables, their relationship and impact on this research. Based on research questions, hypotheses were developed and tested accordingly.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The population of Bangladesh is increasing very rapidly. Compare to the number of universities available, number of students is huge. So to get an admission in reputed university is getting tougher day by day. The public universities in Bangladesh can accommodate a very scanty number of students. So a good number of students have to choose private university as their center for higher education. This particular study will help to find out which are the factors that students consider or evaluate for choosing a university for higher education in Bangladesh.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the factors that students evaluate before admitting for higher education in university level
- To identify the most significant factor(s) that attract students for choosing university

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III. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Once the research objectives are set the next logical step to achieve those objectives is to decide the methodology to be followed. This study has been done based on primary and secondary sources of data and information. Structured questionnaire and interview method were used to collect the primary data. Secondary data were collected from different local and international articles and journals, books, and websites.

a) Research Design

The study has made an endeavor to find out the factors contributing towards the choice of universities by the students in Bangladesh. A specifically designed questionnaire was used as a tool and the survey covered a sample of 60 participants who were the students of various universities in Bangladesh. The five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 - strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree was used for the questions to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with each of a series of statements related to the stimulus objects of the study. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21 was used as a statistical analysis tool.

The questionnaire was self-administered and distributed among the sixty respondents. Before giving the questionnaires, all the questions were explained to the participants so that they can easily complete the whole questionnaire. It was difficult to distribute the questionnaire to a large number of respondents due to time constraints, lack of resources, and budget. Therefore, convenient sampling method was used.

b) Research Questions

The research questions that were used to construct investigative questions in order to satisfactorily arrive at a conclusion about the study are:

- What are the factors that students consider for choosing university?
- Does Reputation have influence on choosing university?
- Does Tuition Fees have influence on choosing university?
- Does Location have influence on choosing university?
- Does Permanent Campus have influence on choosing university?

- Does Teachers' Quality have influence on choosing university?
- Does Online Service have influence on choosing university?
- Does IT Facility have influence on choosing university?
- Does Advertisement have influence on choosing university?
- Does Environment have influence on choosing university?

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses have been articulated.

H1: Reputation is the most important factor for choosing a university.

H2: Tuition Fees is the most important factor for choosing a university.

H3: Location is the most important factor for choosing a university.

H4: Permanent Campus is the most important factor for choosing a university.

H5: Teachers' Quality is the most important factor for choosing a university.

H6: Online Service is the most important factor for choosing a university.

H7: IT Facility is the most important factor for choosing a university.

H8: Advertisement is the most important factor for choosing a university.

H9: Environment is the most important factor for choosing a university.

Multiple regression equation is used to identify dependent and independent variables, their relationships and impact on this research. The multiple regression analysis model is given below-

$$Y \text{ (Choosing of university)} = x_1(\text{reputation}) + x_2(\text{Tuition Fees}) + x_3(\text{Location}) + x_4(\text{Permanent campus}) + x_5(\text{Teachers' Quality}) + x_6(\text{Online service}) + x_7(\text{IT facility}) + x_8(\text{Advertisement}) + x_9(\text{Environment})$$

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Choosing a higher education institute is very important decision for a student because higher study has the potential to change a person's life (Kusumawati, Yanamandram and Perera, 2010). Choosing a particular university is important factor by respondents for higher education (Shahid, Shafique and Bodla, 2012). Several researchers developed many models in this respect. Most studies that have tried to understand the university choice process could be included in one of the following categories: economic models, status-attainment models and combined models (Hossler, Schmidt and Vesper, 1999). The economic model can also refer as the human capital investment model. It assumes that students will

choose a particular institute because of greater benefits compared to others. The sociological model covers various individual and social factors (Calhoun, 1982). In the combined model, the factors in both economic and sociological factors are taken into considerations when explaining students' choice of higher education institution.

A lot of criteria can work in choosing higher education institutions. Some researches show the importance of parents' decision on students' choice (Moogan and Baron, 2003; Domino, Libraire, Lutwiller et al., 2006; Yamamoto, 2006; Raposo and Alves, 2007; Al-Yousef, 2009). It is also found that a student's choice can be affected by their siblings, friends, peers, relatives, teachers and other influential people (Ceja, 2004; Ceja, 2006; Yamamoto, 2006; Pimpa and Suwannapirom, 2008; Wagner and Fard, 2009). Some researchers consider geographic location as an important factor as well as institutional characteristics include teaching quality, prestige, infrastructure, library, computer facilities, location, quality of the curricula, scientific research quality, administrative support, extracurricular factors (sports, leisure, canteens etc.) and the availability of exchanging programs with foreign universities (Veloutsou, Lewis and Paton, 2004; Wagner and Fard, 2009; Beneke and Human, 2010; Tavares, Tavares, Justino et al., 2008). Near to home factor plays critical role in choosing higher education institutions (Paulsen 1990, Raposo and Alves, 2007, and Dawes and Brown, 2005). It means location can be an important factor. Reputation of the institution is also a critical factor here (Moogan and Baron, 2003; Briggs, 2006; Ancheh, Krishnan and Nurtjahja, 2007; Wiese, van Heerden, Jordaan et al., 2009; Afful-Broni and Noi-Okwei, 2010). Along with all factors, students consider job prospect with much importance while choosing institutions (Dorel and Alexandra-Maria, 2006; Wiese, Van Heerden, Jordaan et al., 2009). However, cost of education is the most important factor from parents' point of view rather than a student's (Domino, Libraire, Lutwiller's et al., 2006). Financial aid or packages that include scholarships and grants increase the acceptability of a higher education institution (Kim, 2004; Govan et al., 2006; Hoyt and Brown, 2003). Future studies should take the limitations of this research paper into consideration at the design stage, so that research can be improved and accuracy further increased.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

a) Reliability Test

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha (a)	No. of Items
-.185	4

a. The value is negative due to a negative average covariance among items. This violates reliability model assumptions.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.317	2

Interpretation

4 items were selected for measuring the dependent variable and after conducting the reliability analysis for these items, the Alpha value was found -.185, which means that, there is an internal inconsistency of -18.5% among the 4 items. But after deleting the weak two factors, internal consistency was found 31.7% among the 4 items.

b) Reliability Test for Measuring Independent Variable

To measure the dependent and independent variable, 22 items were used. Among those, 4 items

were developed for measuring the dependent variable and rest of the 18 items were developed for measuring independent variable. 9 independent variables were used in the research. The number of independent variables and the respective items to measure them is given below-

Table 3

Independent Variables	No. of Items
Reputation	2
Tuition Fees	2
Location	2
Permanent campus	2
Teachers Quality	2
Online service	2
IT facility	2
Advertisement	2
Environment	2

After conducting the reliability test for the independent variables, the alpha values that were found for each of the independent variable is provided below in another table-

Table 4

Independent Variables	Alpha Values
Reputation	.516
Tuition Fees	.096
Location	.919
Permanent campus	.663
Teachers Quality	.656
Online service	.755
IT facility	.744
Advertisement	.210
Environment	.628

Alpha value of lower than 0.50 is not good but there are some variables that have higher alpha values which are good. So, there is mixed variables.

c) Regression Analysis

Before conducting the regression analysis, mean values for the consistent items of the dependent

and independent variables were identified. Then, the regression analysis was conducted by taking the mean values of the dependent variable and 9 independent variables. The result of regression analysis is placed below.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.881 ^a	0.761	0.755	3.5339

a. Predictors: (Constant), env, pc, ad, os, tf, tq, loca, rep, it

The value of R² indicates 76.1% of variation can be explained by these studied factors. Remaining 23.9% of variance is explained by the variables other than studied variables.

Table 6: Regression Equation Initiation

Coefficients(a)	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.630	.749		3.510	.001
rep	.164	.128	.215	1.283	.206
tf	.010	.071	.022	.135	.893
loca	-.022	.052	-.072	-.430	.669
pc	-.082	.127	-.141	-.647	.520
tq	.056	.097	.098	.581	.564
os	.129	.076	.309	1.702	.095
it	-.093	.110	-.197	-.843	.403
ad	.034	.096	.055	.350	.728
env	-.061	.089	-.127	-.680	.500

a. Dependent Variable: depvar

$$Y = 2.630 + .164x_1 + .010x_2 + (-.022x_3) + (-.082x_4) + .056x_5 + .129x_6 + (-.093x_7) + .034x_8 + (-.061x_9)$$

Here,
Y= Assessing the Factors behind Choosing Universities for Higher Education
X1=Reputation
X2=Tuition Fees
X3=Location
X4=Permanent campus
X5=Teachers' Quality
X6=Online service
X7=IT facility

X8=Advertisement
X9=Environment

d) Hypothesis Testing

1. H₀: Reputation is not the most important factor for choosing a university.
H₁: Reputation is the most important factor for choosing a university.

Table 7

Independent Variables	Standardized Regression Coefficient (β)	P
Reputation	.215	.206

From the table, it is seen that Reputation has a positive effect on factors behind choosing universities for higher education in Bangladesh. Since the beta value is positive (.215) and the effect of Reputation is significant as the P value is .206, the null hypothesis is rejected.

2. H₀: Tuition Fees is not the most important factor for choosing a university.
H₁: Tuition Fees is the most important factor for choosing a university.

Table 8

Independent Variables	Standardized Regression Coefficient (β)	P
Tuition Fees	.022	.893

It is seen that Tuition Fees has a positive impact on factors behind choosing universities for higher education in Bangladesh. Since the beta value is

positive (.022) and the effect of Tuition Fees doesn't have significance as the P value is .324, the null hypothesis is accepted.

3. H_0 : Location is not the most important factor for choosing a university.

- H_1 : Location is the most important factor for choosing a university.

Table 9

Independent Variables	Standardized Regression Coefficient (β)	P
Location	-.072	.669

From the table, it is revealed that Location has a negative effect on factors behind choosing universities for higher education in Bangladesh. Since the beta value is negative (-.072) and the effect of Location doesn't have significant impact as the P value is .669, the null hypothesis is accepted. It means Location is not the most important factor for choosing a university.

4. H_0 : Permanent campus is not the most important factor for choosing a university.

- H_1 : Permanent campus is the most important factor for choosing a university.

Table 10

Independent Variables	Standardized Regression Coefficient (β)	P
Permanent campus	-.141	.520

From the above table, it is seen that Permanent campus has a negative effect on Factors behind choosing universities for higher education in Bangladesh. Since the beta value is negative (-.141) and P value is .520, the null hypothesis is accepted. So, Permanent campus is not the most important factor for choosing a university.

5. H_0 : Teachers' Quality is not the most important factor for choosing a university.

- H_1 : Teachers' Quality is the most important factor for choosing a university.

Table 11

Independent Variables	Standardized Regression Coefficient (β)	P
Teachers' Quality	.098	.564

It is seen that Teachers' Quality has a positive effect on Factors behind choosing universities for higher education in Bangladesh. Since the beta value is positive (.098) the P value is .564, null hypothesis is accepted. It means Teachers' Quality is not the most important factor for choosing a university.

6. H_0 : Online service is not the most important factor for choosing a university.

- H_1 : Online service is the most important factor for choosing a university.

Table 12

Independent Variables	Standardized Regression Coefficient (β)	P
Online service	.309	.095

It is seen that online service has a positive effect on factors behind choosing universities for higher education in Bangladesh. As the beta value is positive (.309) and P value is .095, the null hypothesis is rejected. It means online service is the most important factor for choosing a university.

7. H_0 : IT facility is not the most important factor for choosing a university.

- H_1 : IT facility is the most important factor for choosing a university.

Table 13

Independent Variables	Standardized Regression Coefficient (β)	P
IT facility	-.197	.403

It is seen that IT facility has a negative effect on factors behind choosing universities for higher education in Bangladesh. Since the beta value is negative (-.197) and P value is .403, the null hypothesis is accepted. It means IT facility is not the most important factor for choosing a university.

8. H_0 : Advertisement is not the most important factor for choosing a university.

- H_1 : Advertisement is the most important factor for choosing a university.

Table 14

Independent Variables	Standardized Regression Coefficient (β)	P
Advertisement	.055	.728

It is seen that Advertisement has a positive impact on factors behind choosing universities for higher education in Bangladesh. As the beta value is positive (.055) and P value is .728, the null hypothesis is accepted. It means Advertisement is not the most important factor for choosing a university.

9. H_0 : Environment is not the most important factor for choosing a university.
 H_1 : Environment is the most important factor for choosing a university.

Table 15

Independent Variables	Standardized Regression Coefficient (β)	P
Environment	-.127	.500

It is seen that Environment has a negative effect on factors behind choosing universities for higher education in Bangladesh. Since the beta value is negative (-.197) and P value is .403, the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, Environment is not the most important factor for choosing a university.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The R^2 value is 76.1% which states that the independent variables explain the dependent variable in a high manner. After conducting the regression analysis, it is found that Reputation and Online Service are the most important factors behind choosing universities for higher education in Bangladesh. There are also some extraneous factors which affect the students' choice of universities for higher education in Bangladesh.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Universities are playing a pivotal role in the educational process of Bangladesh. The university selection criteria may vary among the students. But reputation of the university and available online service are the two main influencing factors that play the most vital role in choosing universities for higher education.

It is recommended that universities should focus more on their reputation and online service to enhance students' preference.

VIII. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It is acknowledged that the work here is exploratory study because previously no study was done in this context in Bangladesh. The present study is conducted among the students at various universities in Dhaka city. So, the sample size was small. The survey took some time due to personal visits. Time constraints and costs are also the limitations of this study. The current study directs future researchers to increase sample size and conduct longitudinal study that could provide a better insight by identifying and testing the significance of extraneous factors.

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