

Students' Preference for Admission in Private Universities in Bangladesh: A Factor Analysis

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ABSTRACT:

Higher education in Bangladesh has expanded significantly. The country now has around 171 universities, including 55 public and 116 private institutions. This rapid increase shows that private universities are playing a significant role in the education sector. In the whole world private universities are in a very good position among the top-ranked universities. Bangladesh is no exception. At present many students prefer private universities over public universities for their higher studies. This study aims to investigate the key factors influencing students' preference for private universities in Dhaka Division of Bangladesh. This study is qualitative in nature and is based on both primary and secondary data. A sample of 384 currently enrolled students across various private universities in Dhaka division, Bangladesh, has been collected using Stratified sampling technique with a set of questionnaires designed for this study. The research employs an empirical analysis to identify all the variables that affect students' university choice. 20 educationalists are also interviewed for policy recommendations to make this private sector more effective and students friendly. Data has been collected, transcribed, tabulated and analyzed in terms of the research objectives. After the analysis, findings reveal that an easy and flexible admission process significantly encourages students to select private universities over public alternatives. Additionally, a modern and appealing campus environment with digital facilities, well-organized infrastructure, qualified and smart

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faculty, availability of preferred academic programs and specialized subjects appears, a vibrant academic atmosphere, student support services, career counselling, club activities etc. play a very important role in choosing private universities. The research concludes on the basis of factor analysis that, the combined four factors which are Academic, Convenience, Smart environment and Student support services positively affect students' preference toward private universities. Study also provides recommendations for the policymakers and institutional administrators to emphasize on these factors for the improvement of educational competitiveness in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Private Universities, Higher Education, Bangladesh, University Choice, Student Preference, Factor Analysis.

1. Introduction

Today, private universities are becoming very popular all over the world. Famous institutions like Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology are competing strongly with public universities by providing quality education and modern facilities. In Bangladesh, private universities are also doing very well. Many students prefer them because they offer better learning environments, updated courses, and good career opportunities. As the demand for higher education is increasing, more private universities are being established across the country. Their growing success shows that private universities are now playing an important role in the education system of Bangladesh. Over the last twenty years, the higher education scenario in Bangladesh has experienced significant changes. As the population of young, ambitious individuals seeking quality education continues to rise, the need for university-level studies has significantly grown. Currently, Bangladesh is home to around 171 universities, which include 55 public and 116 private ones. Among 116 private universities and this competitive situation the cost of the degrees offered from the universities are comparatively low and this positively affects students' preference for private universities. This notable increase in private universities indicates a fundamental change in how students consider higher education options. The rapid

growth of private universities highlights several socioeconomic factors, such as the restricted capacity of public institutions, the demand for adaptable and contemporary educational settings, and the rising focus on career-oriented degree offerings. Grasping the reasons that drive students' enrolment choices is essential for educators, administrators, and policymakers. This research particularly examines the students of the private universities of Dhaka Division, Bangladesh, the most populated and educationally dynamic area, to explore the factors that affect students' choice to attend private universities instead of public ones.

2. Literature Review

Bangladesh University Grants Commission (UGC) (2023), in the "Annual Report on Higher Education in Bangladesh," reported that the higher education sector of Bangladesh has expanded rapidly over the last decade, particularly through the growth of private universities where among 171 Universities only 55 are public Universities. The report highlighted that private universities are playing a very important role in increasing access to tertiary education and meeting the growing demand for higher studies among students in Bangladesh. Mehedi Hasan Emon Md et al. (2023) indicated that the Family Monthly Income, Cost of tuition fees, Opportunities for job outside the university, Parents/Guardians Income, Transportation Cost Current residence

to university campus, Availability of required program at the university, Academic reputation of the university, University Ranking, Financial assistance offered by the university, international recognition of the university play an influential role in university choice process. Chowdhury, MD (2023), in the study “Factors Affecting Employability of Private University Graduates in the Private Job Sectors of Bangladesh: A Gap between Expectation and Reality” investigated the factors of employability of private university graduates in Bangladesh from both students’ and employers’ perspectives but no attempts to find students’ choice for private universities. Hossain, M. and Rahman, M. (2022), in the study “Factors Affecting Students’ Choice of Private Universities in Bangladesh,” tried to find the major determinants influencing students’ decisions to enroll in private universities. The study reveals that academic reputation, quality of faculty, campus facilities, and availability of desired programs significantly influenced students’ preferences. Islam, S. and Ahmed, T. (2021), in the research titled “Students’ Perception toward Private Higher Education in Bangladesh,” investigated the perceptions and attitudes of students regarding private universities. The study revealed that flexible admission procedures, modern teaching methods, and career-oriented education positively affected students’ choices. However, the study was limited to students’ perceptions and did not include parents’ or employers’ viewpoints. Kabir, H. (2020), in his paper “Role of Private Universities in Expanding Higher Education in Bangladesh,” tried to focus on the contribution of private universities in increasing access to tertiary education. The researcher claims that private universities have become popular because of limited seats in public universities and increasing demand for higher education. The study emphasized accessibility and institutional flexibility as major attractions for students. Md. Aminul Islam¹ & Nehal Hasnain Shoron (2020) in “Factors Influencing Students’ Decision Making for Selecting University in Bangladesh” found that there is a significant association between the level of

education at which students first consider studying university and their choice about the university. Some other factors are university’s location, cost of tuition, availability of scholarship, students’ mother, friend and visits to campus play an influential role in university choice process. Study has been conducted on only two private universities in Bangladesh. Akareem, Salilul Husain & Hossain. Shahadat Syed (2012) showed that both administrative and faculty characteristics jointly express quality of education to a higher extent, whereas institutional features and students’ characteristics express quality of education to a moderate extent. The study also showed that perceptions toward quality of education depend on students’ current status and socio-economic background. According to Archer and Davison (2008) students and employers highly value communication skills, teamwork, leadership abilities, and practical knowledge. The study recommends that universities should develop both academic knowledge and soft skills to improve graduate employability and institutional attractiveness. Maringe, F. (2006), in the study “University and Course Choice: Implications for Positioning, Recruitment and Marketing,” concluded that students consider academic quality, institutional reputation, and career prospects as important determinants while selecting universities. The study found that students increasingly behave like consumers in the higher education market by evaluating costs and benefits before making their decisions. According to Bunt et al. (2005) interpersonal and communication skills are among the most important qualities expected from graduates. The researchers put emphasis and explained that universities providing extracurricular activities, teamwork opportunities, and practical learning environments are more successful in preparing students for employment. Kotler and Fox (1995), in their work “Strategic Marketing for Educational Institutions,” discussed that educational institutions must focus on academic quality, campus environment, student services, and institutional image to attract students. The present study titled “Students’ Preference for Admission in Private Universities in

Bangladesh: A Factor Analysis” attempts to identify the major factors from a vast list of variables affecting students’ preferences for private universities in Bangladesh through factor analysis.

3. Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

- To identify the variables that influence students’ preference for private universities in Dhaka Division, Bangladesh.
- To identify the key factors through factor analysis.
- To provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and university administrators to enhance educational competitiveness.

4. Methodology

The study is descriptive as well as exploratory in nature and based on both primary data and secondary data. The sample population for this study is composed of 384 newly admitted students from different private universities in Bangladesh and from 20 educationalists from Bangladesh. A stratified sampling technique was used to collect primary data by means of a survey, using self-administrated questionnaires from 384 respondents. Appropriate statistical analyses were used to satisfy the major objectives of the study such as bar diagram, weighted average, factor analysis etc. with the help of standard statistical applications such as SPSS and MS Excel.

4.1 Sampling and Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was designed specifically for this study and administered to a sample of 384 currently enrolled students across various private universities in Dhaka Division. The Stratified Sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation from different universities, disciplines, and academic years, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the collected data. Among the students 225 are male and 159 are female. All the students are from nearly same age group

between 18 to 21. 20 educationalists are also interviewed for policy recommendations to make this private sector more effective and students friendly.

4.2 Determination of sample size

The sample respondents have been determined by using the following formula suggested by Cochran. The formula used in this study is shown below:

Where:

e is the desired level of precision (i.e. the margin of error),

p is the (estimated) proportion of the population which has the attribute in question,

q is $1 - p$.

The z -value is found in a Z table.

Sample size for 95% confidence interval thus determined is 384. So sample size is 384.

After collecting data appropriate statistical analyses were used to satisfy the major objectives of the study.

To project the importance of factors concerning Students’ perspectives a structured questionnaire was administered with the following 5 point Likert scale: 1=not important, 2=less important, 3=moderately important, 4=very important, 5= most important.

4.3 Sample Distribution

Three hundred eighty four newly admitted students were interviewed from twelve private universities of Bangladesh. The sampled universities are: Asian University of Bangladesh, Dhaka International University, World University, City University, IUBAT, American International University Bangladesh, North South University, Northern University, Daffodil International University, Eastern University, University of Liberal Arts, and Manarat International University.

4.4 Limitations

- The main limitation of this study is data has been collected only from Dhaka City, and

the respondents are from different private universities in Dhaka.

- Another limitation of the study is that it is based on the graduates of the private universities in Bangladesh. It did not include the students from government universities. So, there is an ample scope to conduct further study by taking more samples with the inclusion of the government universities of Bangladesh in

future for obtaining more accurate results in this regard.

5. Data Analysis and Findings

5.1 List of variables

Students' preferences for private universities are influenced by different variables. Here is the list of variables considered in this study with their descriptions:

Table 1: List of variables with description

Variables	Description
Location of the campus	This variable tries to mean the distance of the university from the student's residence.
Transportation facilities and commuting time	Easy transport options and shorter commuting time improve attendance, convenience, and overall student satisfaction.
Flexible class schedule	Morning, evening, or weekend classes or sometimes online classes allow working students to balance study and other responsibilities, increasing institutional appeal.
Admission requirements and process simplicity	Simple, transparent less competitive admission procedures reduce stress and encourage quicker decision-making among applicants.
Availability of accommodation/hostel facilities	On-campus or nearby housing supports students from distant areas, making the university more accessible and convenient.
Tuition fees and overall cost (including scholarships/financial aid)	Affordable tuition, along with scholarships or financial aid, significantly influences students' ability and willingness to enrol.
Safety and security of the campus area	A secure campus environment builds trust among students and parents, strongly affecting admission decisions.
Administrative support and student services	Efficient administrative processes and responsive student services enhance student experience and satisfaction.
Availability of desired programs (e.g. BBA, CSE, EEE)	Offering preferred fields like BBA, CSE, EEE) directly impacts students' choice of university.
Curriculum relevance (updated syllabus aligned with job market needs)	Updated, industry-aligned curricula prepare students for the job market and increase institutional attractiveness.
Accreditation and reputation of the university	Recognized accreditation and strong reputation signal quality education and influence student preference
Quality of faculty (qualifications, teaching style, industry experience)	Experienced and qualified faculty improves teaching effectiveness and attracts students seeking quality education.

Teaching methods (interactive learning, case studies, practical focus)	Interactive, practical, and case-based approaches enhance learning engagement and effectiveness.
Research opportunities and academic resources	Access to research facilities and projects supports academic growth and motivates students toward higher studies.
Internship and job placement support	Strong career services and placement opportunities increase employability, making universities more desirable.
Class size and student-teacher ratio	Smaller classes allow personalized attention and better interaction, improving learning outcomes.
English-medium instruction and communication skills development	English-based education enhances communication skills and prepares students for global career opportunities.
Academic performance record and graduate success rate	High graduate success and strong academic results reflect institutional quality and attract prospective students.
Campus facilities (smart classrooms, labs, libraries, Wi-Fi)	Modern classrooms, labs, libraries, and internet access improve the overall learning environment.
Extracurricular activities and student clubs	Clubs and activities foster leadership, teamwork, and personal development beyond academics.
International exposure (exchange programs, foreign faculty ,credit transfer facilities)	Exchange programs, foreign faculty, and credit transfer facilities broaden students' perspectives and opportunities.
Modern infrastructure and aesthetic appeal of campus	Well-designed, modern campuses create a motivating and enjoyable academic environment for students.

5.2 Weighted Average of the variables

To project the importance of variables a structured questionnaire was administered with the 5 point Likert scale: 1=not important,

2=less important, 3=moderately important, 4=very important, 5= most important. Data has been collected from the students. After collecting data weighted average was taken and the result is shown as follows:

Table 2: Weighted average of the variables

Variables	WA
Location of the campus (proximity to home)	4.25
Flexible class schedules (morning/evening/weekend programs)	4.5
Transportation facilities and commuting time	4.5
Admission requirements and process simplicity	4.5
Availability of accommodation/hostel facilities	4.25
Tuition fees and overall cost (including scholarships/financial aid)	4.25

Safety and security of the campus area	4.25
Administrative support and student services	4.5
Availability of desired programs/majors	4.75
Curriculum relevance	4.50
Accreditation and reputation of the university	4.50
Quality of faculty	4.25
Teaching methods	4.01
Research opportunities and academic resources	4.01
Internship and job placement support	4.53
Class size and student-teacher ratio	4.22
English-medium instruction and communication skills development	4.12
Academic performance record and graduate success rate	4.33
Campus facilities (smart class rooms, lab, libraries, wifi etc)	4.33
Extracurricular activities and students' clubs	4.12
Modern infrastructure and aesthetic appeal of campus	4.33
International exposure (exchange programs, foreign faculty, global partnerships)	4.12
International exposure (exchange programs, foreign faculty, global partnerships)	4.12

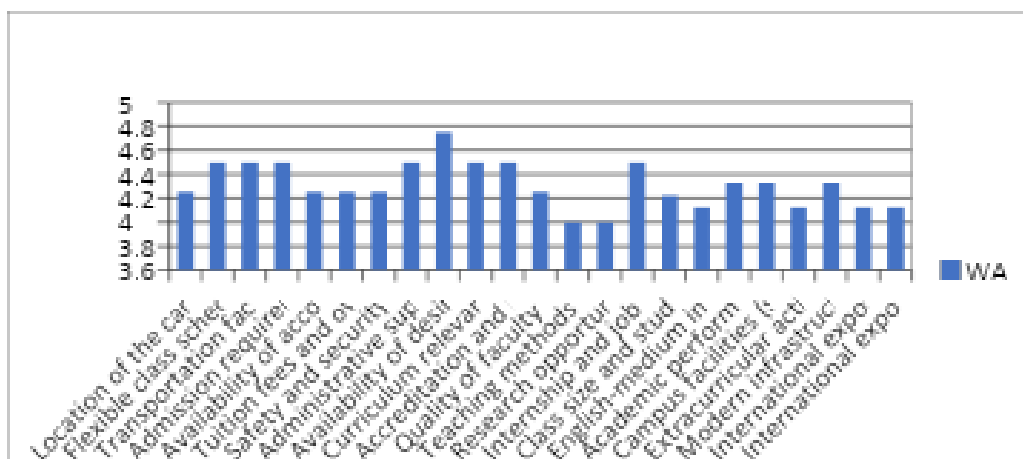


Fig- Weighted Average

5.3 Factor Analysis

For better organization of the study, several steps have been undertaken. Step one involves determining number of factors to be extracted for analysis based on scree plot and percentage of variances explained by each factor. Factors above the turning point in the scree plot are

chosen for the survey. To qualify for retention, desired cumulative variances explained by factors have been pre-specified at 60%. Step two involves rotation of retained factors for further interpretation. Orthogonal rotation technique using varimax rotation has been selected for this step.

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-meyer-olkin Measure of sampling adequacy	.698
Bartler's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Suare	1074.904
Df	210
Sig	.000

Table 4 presents a measurement of KMO and Bartlett's Test. The KMO statistic is 0.698, which is above the standard value of 0.5. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant at the 0.000 level ($p = 0.000$). These results indicate that the data are appropriate for factor analysis.

Table 4: Total Variable Explained

Component	Initial Eigen Values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	%of variance	Cumulative %	Total	%of variance	Cumulative %
1	4.893	23.303	23.303	4.893	23.303	23.303
2	3.511	16.715	40.018	3.511	16.715	40.018
3	2.402	11.441	51.459	2.402	11.441	51.459
4	1.903	9.065	60.524	1.903	9.065	60.524

The data from Table 3 shows cumulative variances explained by four factors reached the desired level. Based on this table and analysis of the scree plot, the first four factors are selected for retention. A varimax rotation was conducted at this stage.

Table 5: Rotated Component Matrix

Variables	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Availability of desired programs/majors	.787			
Curriculum relevance	.781			
Accreditation and reputation	.771			
Quality Faculty and Teaching Method	.767			
Class size and student-teacher ratio	.731			
English-medium instruction	.716			
Research opportunities	.710			

Location of the campus		.793		
Flexible class schedule and teaching method		.775		
Transportation facilities		.775		
Admission requirements and process simplicity		.785		
Tuition fees and overall cost		.735		
Campus facilities (smart classrooms, labs, libraries, Wi-Fi)			.859	
Modern infrastructure and aesthetic appeal			.881	
Extracurricular activities and student clubs			.789	
International exposure			.781	
Administrative support and student services				.863
Internship and job placement support				.863
Safety and security of the campus area				.881
Availability of accommodation/hostel facilities				.835
Administrative support and student services				.863

The Exploratory Factor Analysis identified four significant factors that influence students' preference for admission in private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Variables with high factor loadings (generally above 0.70) were

grouped under the same factor, indicating strong relationships among those variables. Variables can be classified into four factors from the highest loading variables.

Tables 6: Factors and variables

Factors Number	Factors	Name of the variables
1.	Academic	Availability of desired programs/majors, Curriculum relevance, Accreditation and reputation, Quality Faculty and Teaching Method, Class size and student-teacher ratio, English-medium instruction and communication skills, Research opportunities.
2.	Convenience	Location of the campus, Flexible class schedule and teaching method, Transportation facilities, Admission requirements and process simplicity, Tuition fees and overall cost
3.	Smart environment	Campus facilities (smart classrooms, labs, libraries, Wi-Fi), Modern infrastructure and aesthetic appeal, Extracurricular activities and student clubs, International exposure
4.	Student support services	Administrative support and student services, Internship and job placement support, Safety and security of the campus area, Availability of accommodation/hostel facilities

Factor 1-Academic: The highest loading variables in this factor are Availability of desired programs/majors, Curriculum relevance, Accreditation and reputation, Quality of faculty, Teaching methods, Research opportunities, Class size and student-teacher ratio, English-medium instruction and communication skills, Academic performance record and graduate success rate. This factor includes variables related to teaching quality, learning content, and academic outcomes referring to the quality and effectiveness of education provided by the university and that's why named as Academic factor. Total variance explained by this factor is 23.303%.

Factor 2- Convenience: Variables comprising this factor are- Location of the campus, Transportation facilities and commuting time, Flexible class schedules, Admission requirements and process simplicity, Tuition fees and overall cost. This factor covers aspects that make studying easier and more manageable in terms of time, cost, and accessibility and named as Convenience factor. Convenience factor relate to how easy and affordable it is for students to attend the university. Location, transport, flexible schedules, simple admission, and reasonable costs play a key role in decision-making. Total variance explained by this factor is 16.715%.

Factor 3- Smart Environment: This factor explains 11.441% variance. Variables included here are- Campus facilities (smart classrooms, labs, libraries, Wi-Fi), modern infrastructure and aesthetic appeal, Extracurricular activities and student clubs, International exposure. Smart environment refers to the modern and supportive campus setting. It focuses on advanced facilities, technology, attractive infrastructure, extracurricular activities, and global exposure that improve students' overall experience.

Factor 4- Student Support Services: Variables included here are- Administrative support and student services, Internship and job placement support, Safety and security of the campus area, Availability of accommodation/hostel facilities.

This factor includes services and support systems that help students throughout their academic journey and career preparation. Student support services refer to the assistance provided by the university to ensure student well-being and success. These include administrative help, career support, safety, and accommodation facilities. This study reveals that this factor plays an important role in taking decision to get admitted in private universities in Bangladesh. The total variance explained by this factor is 9.065%.

6. Discussion

The study aimed to identify the major factors affecting students' preference for admission in private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The findings revealed that students' university selection decisions are influenced by several interrelated dimensions. Based on the rotated component matrix and total variance explained analysis, four significant factors were extracted and retained. The "Total Variance Explained" table showed that the four extracted factors together explained 60.525% of the total variance, which is considered satisfactory in social science research. Among the extracted components, the first factor accounted for the highest proportion of variance (23.303%), followed by the second factor (16.715%), the third factor (11.441%), and the fourth factor (9.065%). Since all four components had eigenvalues greater than 1, they were retained for further interpretation. The scree plot analysis also supported the retention of these four factors, and Varimax rotation was applied to obtain a clearer factor structure. The rotated component matrix identified the first factor as Academic Quality and Institutional Reputation, including variables such as curriculum relevance, accreditation, quality faculty, research opportunities, and availability of desired programs. This indicates that academic excellence and institutional credibility are the most influential considerations for students when choosing a private university. The second factor Convenience which includes Accessibility, Flexibility, and Cost

Consideration, campus location, transportation facilities, flexible class schedules, admission process simplicity, and tuition fees. This suggests that affordability and convenience significantly affect students' enrolment decisions. The third factor Smart Environment focuses Campus Facilities and Student Development, emphasized the importance of modern infrastructure, smart classrooms, extracurricular activities, international exposure, and overall campus environment. Students appear to prefer universities that provide a technologically advanced and engaging learning atmosphere. Finally, the fourth factor, Student Support, Career Opportunities, and Safety, highlighted the role of administrative support, internship and job placement services, and campus security. The strong loading of safety and security indicates that students highly value a secure educational environment alongside career-related support services.

7. Conclusion

In the present scenario of Bangladesh, many students do not want to go through the hassle of the public university admission process. On the other hand the quality of private universities has improved significantly. Many universities offer affordable tuition fees, smart environment, satisfactory students' support services etc. Considering all these issues the study concludes that students' preference for private universities in Bangladesh is influenced by a combination of academic, convenience, smart environment, and student support service factors. Students at present are less interested in taking challenges and much load. Besides that in Bangladesh many private universities are doing very well with compared to public universities. Focusing these issues the present study has been conducted. The findings reveal that flexible admission procedures, availability of desired academic programs, qualified faculty members, modern campus facilities, and career-oriented education significantly encourage students to choose private universities over public institutions. In addition, factors such as transportation convenience, class flexibility, student counselling, extracurricular activities,

and internship opportunities also play an important role in shaping students' decisions. The factor analysis confirms that academic quality, convenience, smart learning environment, and student support services positively affect students' preferences toward private universities. Therefore, private universities have become an important contributor to expanding higher education opportunities in Bangladesh by meeting the changing needs and expectations of students. The study also highlights that maintaining educational quality, modern infrastructure, and employability-focused learning is essential for sustaining competitiveness in the higher education sector.

8. Recommendations from Educationalists

- Some top private universities should reduce their tuition fees to make quality education more affordable and accessible for deserving students.
- Private universities should improve academic quality by updating curricula according to current job market demands.
- Private universities should recruit qualified and experienced faculty members to ensure effective teaching and learning and should also put emphasis on teachers' job satisfaction and course load.
- Teachers' training should be arranged and the training module should be upgraded in the context of present scenario.
- Strong collaboration between faculties of foreign universities should be developed to enhance the knowledge-sharing platform, promote academic excellence, and improve their standing in the global ranking.
- Strong collaboration with the industries should be increased to provide practical experience and employability skills.
- Research culture should be much improved in all the private universities to

take Bangladesh to a further height in tertiary education sector.

- Policymakers should ensure proper monitoring and accreditation systems to maintain educational standards in all private universities.

10. Author Declaration

- This research paper is an original work based on both primary and secondary data. The authors take the full responsibility for the originality and academic integrity of this paper.
- The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research paper.

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