A Preliminary Observation of Socio-Economic Status of the Students of Primeasia University in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Background: Bangladesh prioritizes higher education for socioeconomic advancement, encouraging private universities to boost academic opportunities. However, students at institutions like Primeasia University (PAU) face socioeconomic challenges that affect academic performance, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. This study investigates the socioeconomic determinants impacting PAU students' academic outcomes, with a focus on cumulative GPA (CGPA). Methods: A descriptive, cross-sectional survey was conducted among 200 textile engineering students at PAU, using structured questionnaires to gather data on socioeconomic status, nutrition, and academic performance. The sample was selected purposively from various semesters, and responses were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics. Results: Findings reveal that 95% of students come from rural areas outside Dhaka, relying heavily on parental financial support. Many live in shared, affordable accommodations, and a majority (65%) depend on low-cost food options, reflecting financial constraints. Academic performance shows variability, with only 25% achieving a CGPA above 3.5. Socioeconomic limitations, such as part-time work demands and housing conditions, negatively impact students' academic outcomes. Conclusion: Socioeconomic factors, including income, housing, and nutrition, significantly affect PAU students' academic success. Targeted support, such as scholarships, improved housing, and counseling, is recommended to promote equitable access to higher education and enhance academic performance. Addressing these socioeconomic disparities can strengthen educational equity, foster student success, and contribute to Bangladesh's economic growth.

Keywords: Socioeconomic Factors, Academic Performance, Private Universities, Higher Education Access, Educational Inequality

Significance | This study showed how socioeconomic factors influence academic success, informing targeted support policies to enhance equity in Bangladeshi higher education.

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Introduction

In the pursuit of national development, Bangladesh has prioritized expanding access to higher education, viewed as a critical driver of socioeconomic progress (Ministry of Finance [MoF], 2009). Consequently, the government has increased its approval of private universities to enhance academic opportunities and elevate the nation's standing in the global economy (MoF, 2012). Despite these efforts, many students at private institutions, such as Primeasia University (PAU), encounter challenges that inhibit optimal academic performance (Hossain et al., 2015). A significant contributor to this issue is students' socioeconomic background, which can impact their educational outcomes in various ways (Gabriel et al., 2016). PAU, established in 2003, aims to provide high-quality education and research opportunities (Sanzida et al., 2015). Known for its contributions to Bangladesh's textile industry,

PAU has garnered a reputation for excellence in teaching and community service, with a mission to foster human resources capable of driving national economic growth. However, a considerable proportion of students come from low-income families with limited resources, which often constrains their ability to achieve high academic success (Alam et al., 2014). Students face financial limitations that lead to issues with housing, food security, and other basic needs, all of which affect their educational engagement and performance (Nikhat, 2015). The debate on the determinants of student success has long been a focal point for researchers, emphasizing the role of socioeconomic status, academic resources, and environmental factors (Cooper et al., 2009). While it is understood that personal commitment, family support, and institutional quality play integral roles, there is less clarity on how these factors collectively impact student performance in the Bangladeshi context (Hossain et al., 2015). The study seeks to analyze the socioeconomic indicators affecting students at PAU and their correlation with academic performance, specifically focusing on CGPA as an indicator of success (Sanzida et al., 2015). This analysis draws on socioeconomic data, including family income, residential stability, nutritional intake, and access to essential resources. By understanding these factors, the study aims to provide insights that can inform policies to improve academic support for students in need (MoF, 2010).

Bangladesh's recent economic gains have resulted in notable improvements in several social indicators, such as poverty reduction, primary education enrollment, and gender equality in educational access (MoF, 2011). However, structural issues persist, and educational inequity remains a barrier (MoF, 2012). As of 2023, approximately 133,000 students are enrolled in private universities across Bangladesh, which account for almost half of the total university population. These institutions are vital in creating skilled professionals for the workforce, but financial barriers and varying levels of social support mean that students from rural or low-income backgrounds face unique obstacles in sustaining high academic performance (Gabriel et al., 2016).

Drawing on existing literature and previous studies on student performance, this research adopts a descriptive approach to investigate the socioeconomic conditions of PAU students and how these conditions influence academic achievement (Hossain et al., 2015). Past studies in similar contexts, such as those by Sanzida et al. (2015) and Alam et al. (2014), illustrate that factors like parental income, housing stability, and access to resources significantly impact student outcomes. The present study seeks to build on these findings by exploring specific conditions at PAU and providing a quantitative analysis of factors related to CGPA. The findings of this research can contribute to a broader understanding of the relationship between socioeconomic status and educational success

in Bangladesh, ultimately supporting initiatives to enhance educational equity and access for all students (Nikhat, 2015).

Materials and Methods

Research Design and Approach

This study adopted a descriptive research design to explore the socio-economic factors influencing the academic performance of students enrolled in the Textile Engineering Department at Primeasia University, Bangladesh. A cross-sectional survey was conducted to capture current socio-economic conditions, academic performance, and nutritional intake among students. This research approach was chosen to systematically collect quantitative data through structured questionnaires, allowing for the examination of socio-economic variables and their association with academic outcomes.

Study Area and Justification

Primeasia University, located in Dhaka, Bangladesh, was selected as the study site due to its prominent role in higher education within the country. The university is particularly renowned for its Textile Engineering Department, which attracts a significant number of students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The department offers a four-year Bachelor's degree in Textile Engineering with specializations in Yarn Manufacturing, Fabric Manufacturing, Wet Process Engineering, Apparel Manufacturing, and Industrial Production Engineering. Given its extensive academic offerings and its graduates' contributions to the textile and garment sectors, this department was purposefully selected as the focus of the study.

Population and Sampling

The study population comprised students enrolled in the B.Sc. Honors program in Textile Engineering at Primeasia University. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed to select the sample, focusing on students who have progressed through multiple semesters (batches 103, 111, 112, 113, 131, 132, and 133). A total of 200 students were included in the sample. This sample size was chosen to ensure adequate representation of the socio-economic diversity among students while remaining feasible for in-depth data analysis within the scope of the study.

Variables and Indicators

Three primary variables were investigated in this study: socioeconomic status, nutritional intake, and academic performance.

Socio-economic status was assessed through indicators such as gender, marital status, residential status (hostel, mess, family home, etc.), home district, source of educational funding, and monthly expenditure.

Table 1. Physical Information Status

Indicators	Age		Height			Weight			
Interval	16-20y	21-25y	4-5'	5-6'	6-7'	40-50kg	51-60kg	61-70kg	71-80kg
	118	82	11	127	62	14	141	37	8
Frequency	(59%)	(41%)	(5.5%)	(63.5%)	(31%)	(7%)	(70.5%)	(18.5%)	(4%)
and percent									

Table 2. Gender and Marital Status

Frequency and percent			
Gender Status		Marital Status	
Male	Female	Married	Unmarried
172(86%)	28(14%)	3(1.5%)	197(98.5%)

Table 3. Home District Status.

Name of District	Frequency and percent
Narayangonj(1*32=32)	32(16%)
Gazipur(1*19=19)	19(9.5%)
Sirajgonj(1*15=15)	15(7.5%)
Dhaka and Mymensing(2*10=20)	10(5%)
Bogra,Tangail and Comilla(3*8=24)	8(4%)
Kurigram and Kishorgonj(2*7=14)	7(3.5%)
Noakhali and Narsighdi(2*6=12)	6(3%)
Pabna ,Jamalpur and Barishal(3*5=15)	5(2.5%)
Feni and Naogaon(2*4=8)	4(2%)
Chapai Nawabgonj and Rajbari(3*3=9)	3(1.5%)
Natore,Chadpur, B.Baria, Bagerhat,Sherpur,Chittagong, Netrokana, Gaibanda,Rangpur and Faridpur(10*2=20)	2(1%)
Thakurgaon,Moulvibazar,Jhalakati,Bhola,Laxmipur,Hobigonj, Manikgonj,Nilphamari,Dinajpur, Munshigonj ,Shariatpur and Magura(1*12=12)	1(0.5%)
Total	200(100%)

Table 4. Residential Status

Frequency and percent			
Live own resident with parents	Hostel	Mess	Other
35(17.5%)	55(27.5%)	102(51%)	8(4%)

Table 5. Source of Expenditure's Money/Income

Frequency and percent				
Earning persons			Tuition	
Father	Mother	Brother	Part-time expenditure	Total expenditure
151(75.5%)	21(10.5%)	28(14%)	178(89%)	22(11%)

Table 6. Monthly Expenditure Status

Frequency and percent					
Interval (Tk.)	Rental cost	Food cost	Transport Cost (Resident to University)	Interval (KM)	Distance from Resident to University
500-1000	0(0%)	0(0%)	24(12%)	1-5	24(12%)
1001-1500	53(26.5%)	0(0%)	34(17%)	6-10	21(10.5%)
1501-2000	62(31%)	0(0%)	55(27.5%)	11-15	24(12%)
2001-2500	70(35%)	62(31%)	34(17%)	16-20	33(16.5%)
2501-3000	18(9%)	52(26%)	35(17.5%)	21-25	25(12.5%)
3001-3500	7(3.5%)	70(35%)	18(9%)	26-30	37(18.5%)
3501-4000	0(0%)	8(4%)	0(0%)	31-35	24(12%)
4001-4500	0(0%)	4(2%)	0(0%)	36-40	6(3%)
4501-5000	0(0%)	4(2%)	0(0%)	41+Above	6(3%)

Table 7. Food taking places

Frequency and percent				
Indicator	Home	Home caring	Road shop	Restaurant
Morning	53(26.5%)	0(0%)	130(65%)	17(8.5%)
Noon	14(7%)	12(6%)	144(72%)	30(15%)
Evening	20(10%)	0(0%)	156(78%)	24(12%)
Night	168(84%)	0(0%)	9(4.5%)	23(11.5%)

Table 8. Academic Results Status

Frequency and percent			
Interval on CGPA	SSC	HSC	Other (If any)	Honors from Primeasia University (Up to 11th semester)
2.00-2.25	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
2.26-2.50	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
2.51-2.75	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
2.76-3.00	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	33(16.5%)
3.01-3.25	0(0%)	13(6.5%)	0(0%)	41(20.5%)
3.26-3.50	8(4%)	11(5.5%)	0(0%)	43(21.5%)
3.51-3.75	5(2.5%)	16(8%)	0(0%)	50(25%)
3.76-4.00	18(9%)	16(8%)	0(0%)	33(16.5%)
4.01-4.25	15(7.5%)	35(17.5%)	0(0%)	Not applicable (NA)
4.26-4.50	38(19%)	24(12%)	0(0%)	NA
4.51-4.75	46(23%)	27(13.5%)	0(0%)	NA
4.76-5.00	70(35%)	59(29.5%)	0(0%)	NA

Nutritional intake was evaluated by gathering information on food sources and types of meals consumed by students, including eating habits (home-cooked meals, street food, restaurant meals).

Academic performance was measured by students' cumulative grade point average (CGPA) up to the 11th semester.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to gather quantitative information on socio-economic status, nutritional intake, and academic performance. The questionnaire consisted primarily of closed-ended questions, facilitating a standardized approach to data collection and enabling consistent responses from all participants. Researchers conducted face-to-face interviews to administer the questionnaire, ensuring clarity and completeness of responses.

Data Analysis

The structured questionnaire used in this study was developed based on established socio-economic and academic performance indicators identified in the literature. Following data collection, responses were coded and entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software for analysis. A univariate analysis, involving frequency and percentage distributions, was conducted to identify trends in socio-economic status, nutritional intake, and academic performance. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the highest and lowest values for each variable, facilitating a clear understanding of the range and central tendencies in the data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant university authorities prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and all respondents were informed of the study's objectives and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Data were anonymized to protect the privacy of participants, and informed consent was obtained before administering the questionnaire.

Results

The study reveals important findings about the socio-economic backgrounds and academic performances of students at Primeasia University (PAU), focusing on students enrolled in the textile engineering department. The results highlight various aspects of students' demographics, socio-economic status, and academic outcomes, with insights that can guide both university authorities and policymakers in making data-informed decisions to improve educational access and outcomes.

Demographics of Respondents

Out of the 200 students sampled, the majority (59%) are between the ages of 16-20, while 41% are in the 21-25 age group.

Height and weight data indicate that most students (63.5%) are between 5 and 6 feet tall and about 70.5% weigh between 51 and 60 kg, reflecting the general physical profile of the student body.

In terms of gender, 86% of the respondents are male, reflecting the gender distribution within the textile engineering department. Almost all students (98.5%) are unmarried.

Geographical Background and Accommodation

Most students (95%) come from districts outside the capital city, Dhaka, indicating a high representation of non-urban backgrounds among the student population. Narayangonj district tops the list with 16% of students, followed by Gazipur (9.5%) and Sirajgonj (7.5%).

Regarding accommodation, a significant portion (51%) of the respondents reside in shared living arrangements such as messes, while 27.5% live in hostels, 17.5% with family, and a minority with friends or relatives. This reflects a reliance on affordable housing solutions due to limited financial resources.

Socio-Economic Background and Funding Sources

Family remains the primary source of funding for educational expenses, with 75.5% of students relying on their fathers and 10.5% on their mothers. Some students (14%) also receive support from siblings, emphasizing the role of family contributions in financing education.

Many students (89%) contribute to their expenses through part-time work, primarily tutoring, with 11% of respondents covering their entire educational costs through such means. This suggests that students are actively engaged in managing their financial needs, likely influenced by limited household income.

Expenditure Patterns

Monthly rental costs for students vary, with the majority (35%) spending between Tk. 2001-2500, and 3.5% paying as high as Tk. 3001-3500. This variation reflects a mix of economic backgrounds and varying accommodation options available to students. Food expenses show similar diversity, with 35% of students spending Tk. 3001-3500 monthly, and a smaller fraction (4%) spending above Tk. 4000.

Transportation costs to the university are generally within Tk. 1501-2000 for 27.5% of students, and distances traveled are generally within 26-30 kilometers, reflecting the necessity for affordable and efficient travel options to accommodate students from further districts.

Nutritional Intake and Food Sources

Most students (65%) depend on affordable food options from road shops, with fewer students eating at home (26.5%) or restaurants (8.5%). The reliance on road shops and inexpensive dining indicates a constraint in financial resources, potentially impacting their overall nutrition.

For breakfast, lunch, and dinner, students continue to rely on road shops, with only a small percentage dining at restaurants or at home. This indicates that many students may lack access to regular, nutritious meals.

Academic Performance

Academic performance measured by CGPA highlights a broad range of achievements. For Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exams, a notable percentage (35%) of students achieved CGPAs between 4.76 and 5.00, with only 2.5% scoring between 3.51 and 3.75, indicating strong pre-university academic backgrounds.

However, the students' performance at university exhibits variability, potentially influenced by socio-economic constraints. Specifically, at the tertiary level (up to the eleventh semester), 25% of students attain a CGPA of 3.51-3.75, while 16.5% maintain a CGPA of 2.76-3.00. This range reflects challenges faced by students, possibly due to financial burdens, limited resources, or adjustments to higher academic demands.

Discussion

The study undertaken at Primeasia University in Bangladesh provides a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic factors impacting academic performance. The research emphasizes the influence of socio-economic status on educational outcomes, especially within the context of Bangladesh, where factors such as poverty, parental income, and geographic location significantly shape students' academic experiences. This study aligns with existing research on educational inequalities in low- and middle-income countries, which highlights the economic and social barriers that students from marginalized backgrounds often face.

Socio-Economic Challenges and Academic Performance

The results indicate that a significant proportion of students at Primeasia University come from outside the capital, Dhaka, with 95% of students residing in areas outside the city. This geographic distribution underscores the financial and logistical challenges faced by students who must relocate to urban centers to pursue higher education. Many students live in rented accommodations, such as hostels or messes, with 96% residing in these settings and only 40% having the option to live with relatives. The need for students to live away from home increases their living expenses and introduces challenges related to managing time, resources, and support networks. These findings highlight the influence of geographic location and associated living conditions on students' well-being and academic performance.

The study also reveals that 86% of the students rely on parental support for academic expenses, which is often derived from low-income sources such as minor jobs, small trade, and farming. This finding is significant as it highlights the limited financial resources

available to support students' education, potentially influencing their ability to perform academically. Research has consistently shown that financial stress affects academic focus and performance, as students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often have fewer educational resources, lower levels of parental support, and face higher levels of stress.

Socio-Economic Background of Primeasia University Students
The socio-economic profile of students at Primeasia University includes a considerable portion of lower- to middle-income families. The majority of respondents report family incomes ranging between BDT 20,001-50,000 monthly, categorizing them as middle-class in the context of Bangladesh. The study's data reveal that students from lower economic backgrounds primarily depend on part-time work, especially tutoring, to supplement their expenses. However, the additional time commitment required for part-time work may detract from their focus on studies, negatively impacting academic outcomes.

Compared to previous studies on other Bangladeshi universities, Primeasia University's students display similar socio-economic constraints. Studies by Alam et al. (2014) and Sanzida et al. (2015) illustrate that socio-economic backgrounds heavily influence academic choices, particularly in private universities where higher fees can limit access for students from lower-income backgrounds. Additionally, Nikhat (2016) noted that socioeconomic status directly impacts emotional intelligence and resilience among students, which can affect their academic engagement and persistence.

Housing and Living Conditions as Determinants of Academic Success

A critical finding of this study is the impact of students' living conditions on their academic performance. With a significant number of students residing in messes or hostels, the lack of a stable and supportive home environment may limit their ability to concentrate on studies. Gabriel et al. (2016) demonstrated that living conditions, such as noise levels, personal space, and availability of study materials, can affect students' academic motivation and performance. Inadequate living conditions, such as poor sanitation or crowded spaces, may also impact health, further affecting students' ability to perform academically.

Furthermore, the distance many students travel to attend university, as evidenced by the data on transportation expenses and time spent commuting, adds an additional layer of challenge. These logistical challenges can lead to fatigue, reduced study time, and, consequently, lower academic performance. The study's findings indicate a need for support mechanisms, such as affordable housing closer to campus or transportation assistance, to alleviate these challenges.

Influence of Academic Background and Parental Support

Academic performance in the study is measured by students' cumulative grade point averages (CGPA), with the highest CGPA range among students being 3.51-3.75 and the lowest 2.76-3.00. These findings correlate with the students' socio-economic backgrounds, where students from lower-income families may lack access to resources such as tutoring, supplemental study materials, or technology, which are often crucial for academic success. Moreover, the study highlights that most students depend on family members for financial support, though families often have limited resources themselves.

Previous studies by Hossain et al. (2015) and Alam et al. (2014) show similar trends, where family income, parents' education levels, and academic support significantly influence students' educational outcomes. Parental involvement is also seen as crucial; when parents understand the academic demands and challenges of higher education, students tend to perform better. However, students from economically disadvantaged families may not receive the same level of guidance and support due to financial and educational constraints within their households.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The study's findings have important implications for policymakers and educational institutions. Addressing socioeconomic disparities among students is essential for improving overall academic performance and reducing educational inequality. Some recommended actions include:

Financial Support and Scholarships: Offering more financial assistance, scholarships, and work-study opportunities could alleviate the financial burden on students from low-income families, allowing them to focus more on their studies.

Improving Student Housing: Ensuring affordable and accessible housing near university campuses could reduce students' commuting time, minimize stress, and improve their living conditions, contributing to better academic outcomes.

Enhanced Counselling and Academic Support Services: Providing academic counselling and support services specifically targeted at students facing financial and socio-economic challenges can offer guidance, motivation, and resources to help them succeed.

Parental Engagement Programs: Universities can initiate programs to involve parents and educate them about the academic demands and support systems available, fostering a more supportive environment for students.

Collaborative Partnerships with Industries: Establishing partnerships with local industries can provide internship opportunities and reduce financial pressures on students, especially those enrolled in applied fields like textile engineering.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated how socioeconomic factors significantly impact academic performance among students at Primeasia University, particularly in the textile engineering department. Students from lower-income backgrounds often face financial challenges, inadequate housing, and limited access to resources, all of which hinder their educational engagement and academic outcomes. The research underscores the need for targeted support, such as financial aid, affordable housing, and academic counselling, to address these challenges. By implementing policies that promote educational equity such as expanded scholarships, better housing options, and industry partnerships universities and policymakers can help bridge socioeconomic gaps and foster a more inclusive academic environment conducive to student success. Addressing these issues is critical to empowering students and driving broader socioeconomic progress in Bangladesh.

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