

**THE HUMANITIES AS THE DEFAULT OPTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
EVIDENCE FROM BANGLADESH****Md. Jobaer Rahman Rashed,**

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ABSTRACT

In Bangladesh, higher education has experienced a remarkable growth during the last decades, which resulted in growing number of enrollments in both public and private universities. In this expanded environment a persistent correlation has emerged where a significant number of students come to this humanities/social science for the sake of convenience, rather than being their first choice. This phenomenon invites critical inquiry related to student choice behaviour, institutional capacity and labor market demand. The objectives of this study are: (I) To investigate why humanities are default choice as a subject at higher level of education; and (II) to find out what the main academic, socioeconomic and institutional factors of students' enrolment decision. In this research, the dependent variable is student enrolment in humanities fields and the independent variables consists of academic results at the secondary level, economic background, availability of seats in science & business fields and perceived opportunity for employment. In order to fulfill the goal of the research, a structured questionnaire was framed on available literature. The study gathered survey data from undergraduates who are enrolled in humanities undergraduate programs at the public and private universities in Bangladesh using a non-probability sampling method. In all, 200 questionnaires were sent out and 150 useable responses had been collected for final analysis. The descriptive statistics, the correlations and the general regression results to test each of the hypotheses proposed were calculated by using SPSS software. The results point to an academically ineligible, financially pinched, and selectively short-changed student when they sign up for humanities as a second (or third) choice. The paper concludes with a discussion of potential policy implications and suggestions for further research.

JEL CLASSIFICATION

I21, I23, Z13

KEYWORDS

Humanities education, higher education choice, academic tracking, Bangladesh, social sciences, student preference

1. INTRODUCTION

During the past few decades, higher education in Bangladesh has expanded "dramatically" with an increase in the number of universities and institutions from mere 12 to at least 50 between 2002 and 2018. This expansion has radically increased the accessibility of HE and serves to cater for a student body drawn from more diverse social economic backgrounds (Roshid & Hà, 2023). This growth has increased higher education participation but it also has revealed structural imbalances in the representativeness of students of academic disciplines, especially between career-oriented and humanities-social sciences.

Along with its many flaws, one of the most striking aspects of the Bangladeshi tertiary education system is a lopsided emphasis on humanities. Unlike patterns found in other advanced economies, where humanities enrollment is related to genuine academic interest or cultural bias, the selection of humanities in Bangladesh is generally more a matter of limited choice than of true preference. During your university admission you face a tough competition in limited merit seats for science, engineering, medical and business programs where all students can not find entrance to their favorite subjects except humanities but still maintain lowest entry prerequisites with enough seat space (Hossain & Sheikh, 2021).

It is well known that students' field of study selection is influenced by academic performance, social origin, institutions' means of entry and expectations regarding opportunities in the labor market. As reported in the literature, data collection shows that performance throughout high school at the secondary level is critical to qualifying for a competitive university program, especially in systems where merit-based selection and standardized admission tests are emphasized (Oyshi, 2021). In Bangladesh, early tracking in schools and subject-specific pathways further limit cross-discipline mobility, which sustains a system where studying humanities becomes the next best option for students who fails to meet high scores demanded by science- and commerce-based programs.

These constraints are exacerbated by socioeconomic factors. Students from low and middle-income families have to struggle with financial constraints that restrict their entry into programs that require heavy costs such as laboratories, private coaching or long durations but NEET-PG 2018 is not one of them! Consequently, the humanities disciplines – typically recognized as cheaper and more flexible (Barua et al., 2023) – recruit an above average number of students from credit-challenged backgrounds. These trends and patterns imply that participation in humanities is embedded in wider inequities of educational opportunity rather than only interest or ability.

Institutional capabilities and admission preferences are also key determinant of enrollment trends. Public institutions in Bangladesh are believed to provide higher quality education at lower cost, but seats for these centers of learning are extremely scarce compared to the demand. Admission tests of entry universities and strict meritocracy system keep many applicants away from the choice fields, but humanities act as meniscus to hold the overflow in much plugging of leaks (Mahlangu 2020). These kinds of institutional forces, have the effect of making the humanities the template programme in higher education.

Despite the sheer scope and prevalence of this phenomenon, there is scant empirical investigation on why the humanities constitutes a default choice in Bangladesh. Studies carried out to higher education in the country have concentrated on such issues as access, quality assurance, graduate employability and skills mismatch while not explicitly investigating ways students are directed into the humanities disciplines under limited choice environment (Akter, 2020). This is where the literature falls short, and a case can be made that there should be more rigorous scrutiny of the academic, socio- economic, and Institutional influences on the humanities.

This paper aims to fill this gap by exploring the reasons why the humanities function as a default setting for higher education in Bangladesh. In particular, the article explores how academic achievement, social class status and institutional entry requirements along with anticipated job opportunities shape students' enrollment choices. The key research question that this study seeks to address is:

Why do students in higher education in Bangladesh choose the humanities as their default option?

In answering this question, the study provides a number of contributions to the literature. First, it generates empirical insights about the way in which structural restrictions at the HEI level condition students' field-of-study decisions. Second, it develops insights into unintended consequences of capacity imbalances between academic disciplines. Finally, by including the Bangladeshi context, this study also provides policy-relevant implications for other developing countries that struggle to integrate higher education expansion with student aspirations and labor market demands.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Related literature and the study hypotheses are presented in the next section. This is succeeded by an account of the research methodology, discussion and representation of empirical findings, after which concluding comments are made that deal with further key implications and future avenues for research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In developing countries, the higher education systems are typically characterized by inequitable expansion, low institutional capacity, and inflexible entry systems that restrict students' academic paths. Cross-national studies

of access to higher education show that in systems where the supply of preferred (prestigious or vocationally oriented) fields of study is less than the available space when demand exceeds constraint, students' field-of-study choices are determined more by structural constraints and less by preference (Page & Scott-Clayton, 2013). In those systems, lower entry requirement and more vacancies academic fields tend to be a residual category for students who are excluded from more selective paths. It is this structural arrangement which forms important background for why the humanities often materialize as a residual in burgeoning higher education systems.

Academic achievement is what has often been recognized as the key gatekeeper in field of study assignment, particularly among systems largely reliant on merit-based groupings. Findings from a study on graduate educational outcomes in Bangladesh suggest that (in)equalities in academic achievement, particularly in mathematics and science, have a significant effect to the possibility of those passing Science- or technology-based University programs (Oyshi, 2021). At the secondary level, once academic "tracks" are prescribed, cross-disciplinary opportunities to choose a different path of study becomes circumscribed, further cementing stratified patterns of enrolment. Cross-national evidence also suggests that earlier academic achievement is a strong predictor of field-of-study choice, as lower-performing students tend to be overrepresented in noncompetitive fields regardless of their initial aspirations (Cázares, 2022). These results provide direct evidence for the assumption that academic performance has a substantial effect on student choice of humanities, and are in support for H1.

In addition to academic success, the social origin of students as well plays a strong role in access to higher education and choice of study programme. A wealth of empirical evidence shows that socioeconomic status influences both academic preparedness and the availability of economic resources, which combine to define postsecondary prospects. A meta-analysis of educational research provides evidence that students from low-social-class backgrounds "are consistently lagging behind" with respect to academic achievement and attainment (Sirin, 2005, p.327). In the context of Bangladesh, available evidence suggests that family income, parents' education, and place of residence significantly affect academic aspiration and performance of students in favor of those coming from disadvantaged background who are more likely to be enrolled in humanities and social science programs (Barua et al., 2023). These trends indicate that humanities participation is not just academically filtered but also socially sorted, providing strong theoretical and empirical support for H2 – low SES being linked to low enrollment in the humanities.

Furthermore, the structuring admissions practices of institutions also influence students' enrollment experience by controlling access to scarce academic resources. Literature on admission policies in higher education indicates that competitive entrance examinations, severe merit-ranking criterion and a shortfall of space within institutions serve as rationing devices when the capacity of the institution is below demand (Mahlangu, 2020). Under conditions like these, students denied entry into disciplines of their choice are actively guided into lower barrier-entry programs. Policy-oriented research on admission reform adds that such structural constraints have the potential to distort students' study pathways and cause involuntary placement in different fields of study instead of being guided by rational choice (Li & Xue, 2022). This dynamic is especially strong in the public universities of Bangladesh, where science and business departments are fiercely competitive, and humanities departments often function as absorptive zones. These institutional processes straightforwardly inform H3, which argues that enrollment in humanities disciplines is significantly determined by admission constraints.

(2) Expected job prospects are a second, albeit more contingent, determinant of individuals' field-of-study decisions. Economic models of higher education choice predict that individuals will be influenced to select into fields with higher labor market returns, measured by salary or employment probability (Hemelt & Marcotte, 2011). There is, indeed, empirical evidence that access to LMI might in this way impact on young people's academic choices directly by orienting expectations about what life after graduation might look like (Baker et al., 2018). The literature, however, also indicates that the role of job-related pressures decreases under limited choice. Tertiary employability research indicates that there is an impression among a number of employers that humanities graduates lead to a restricted career path, thereby underscoring the professional status gap through and against which they are positioned within institutions (Yorke, 2006). Despite this point of view, students still choose the humanities when alternatives are limited, suggesting that employment prospects do shape enrollment decisions but they cannot be presumed to explain why students enroll in certain programs rather than others.

This nuanced function of labor market expectations forms the theoretical underpinning for H4, which argues that perceived employment prospects are expected to matter to humanities enrollments as well, albeit in a lesser fashion.

In summary, the reviewed literature highlights that humanities enrollment in Bangladesh is embedded within an interrelated framework of academic, socioeconomic, institution-level and labor-market-related issues. Academic performance establishes eligibility for competitive programs, socio-economic background determines access to preparatory and financial resources, institutional admission rationing limits available options and perceived employment opportunities inform expectations within these constraints. This combined reasons why the humanities are so frequently a last resort, rather than a first choice. This theory-driven 'overview' has a cascading effect on the hypotheses this study proposed and afforded a logical leg for exploring the predictors of humanities enrollment in Bangladeshi higher education.

Objectives and Hypotheses Development

This paper is aimed at critically analyzing why humanities have become the default field of choice in higher education in Bangladesh. While student participation in Humanities is significant, there is scarce empirical evidence about the academic, socioeconomic and institutional factors that are behind it. Knowledge of these factors is critical for policymakers and higher education leaders interested in creating equitable, inclusive systems of education.

Following the literature review, we consider four main explanatory variables: academic achievement and socioeconomic background; institutional admission constraints (this does include psychometric tests); and perceived employment opportunities. These variables are investigated to identify their effect on Bangladeshi university students' choice of humanities disciplines.

Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To examine the effect of students' academic performance on enrollment in humanities disciplines.
- 2) To analyze the influence of socioeconomic background on students' choice of humanities as a field of study.
- 3) To assess the role of institutional capacity and admission structure in shaping humanities enrollment.
- 4) To investigate how perceived employment prospects affect students' enrollment decisions in humanities programs.

Drawing on prior empirical and theoretical studies, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: *Academic performance has a significant impact on students' enrollment in humanities disciplines.*

H2: *Socioeconomic background has a significant impact on students' enrollment in humanities disciplines.*

H3: *Institutional admission constraints have a significant impact on students' enrollment in humanities disciplines.*

H4: *Perceived employment prospects have a significant impact on students' enrollment in humanities disciplines.*

Research Model of the Study

Drawing from the literature review and the formulation of hypotheses, this study presents a conceptual research model to analyze the determinants of humanities enrollment in tertiary institutions in Bangladesh. The relationships between the independent variables, academic performance, socioeconomic background, institutional admission constraints and perceived job opportunities, and the dependent variable students' majoring in humanities disciplines is depicted in the research model.

The model presupposes that students select humanities programs not only based on individual taste, but in the context of multiple structural and contextual mechanisms. Performance at school determines access to competitive disciplines, while socioeconomic status determines familial provision for support and resources. Moreover, acceptance policies (small seats of the academy and severe merit-based selection) limit student choice. Finally, perceptions about job prospects shape students' aspirations for future types of work (though they frequently play a subsidiary role when choices are constrained).

Figure 1 presents the proposed research model of the study.

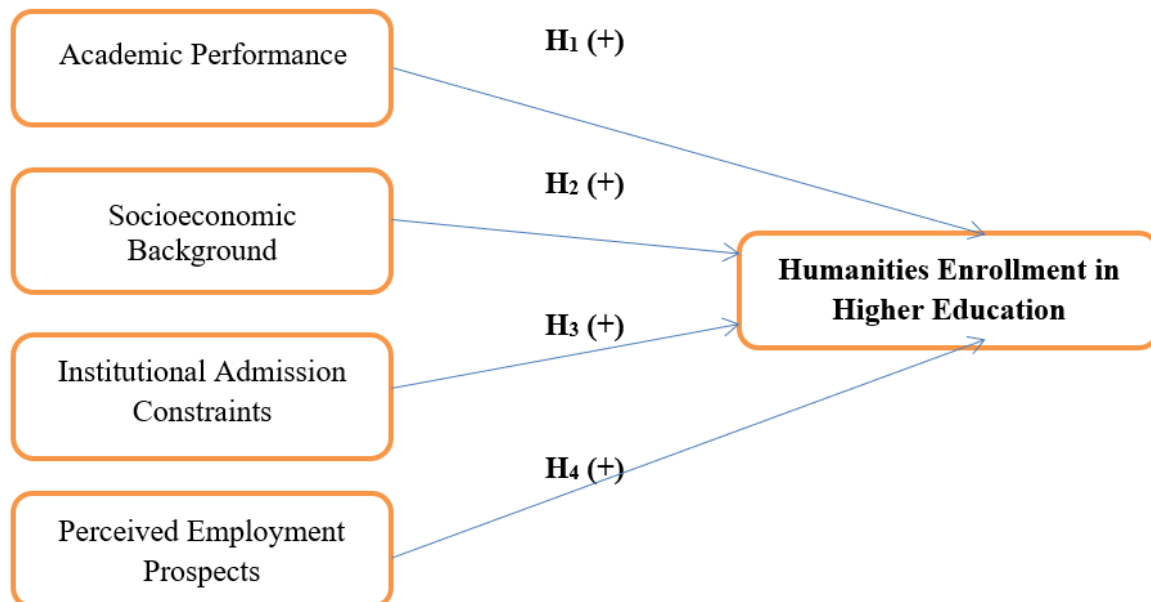


Figure 1: Research model of the study

3. METHODOLOGY

This is cross-sectional quantitative research exploring specific aspects related to the presence of the humanities as the default choice in Higher Education (HE) in Bangladesh. The population of interest was all undergraduate students currently studying humanities and social sciences in the chosen public and private universities. This sample was considered as appropriate as students had already undergone higher education academic field-of-study choice. As there was no available comprehensive sampling frame on the total number of undergraduate students enrolled in humanities programs at universities in Bangladesh during data collection, a non-probability sampling method was used (a common limitation found in higher education research conducted in developing countries) (Mahlangu, 2020; Li, 2022).

The research used online and offline survey instruments to gather data. Two hundred survey questionnaires were administered to undergraduate humanities students. Responses A total of 162 responses were obtained. We excluded 12 responses after a visual review for completeness and coherence because these lacked data or were incomplete. As a result, the final sample size analyzed statistically was $n = 150$, which is sufficient for multivariate statistics such as multiple regression (Cazarez, 2022).

The survey instrument included previously tested measurement scales taken from academic achievement, socioeconomic inequality, higher education admission systems and employability literature (Sirin, 2005; Baker, 2017; Li, 2022) with some contextual modifications to make it relevant in the Bangladesh Higher Education System. The questionnaire was divided in two parts. The first part comprised information about the respondents' demographics, such as age, gender, educational level achieved, family income and type of university (public or private). The second part comprised Likert-type items' representing the research constructs.

Academic achievement was assessed by four items taken from previous research on academic tracking and field-of-study choice (Oyshi, 2021; Alam, 2022; Cazarez, 2022). These items assessed students' perceived academic qualification and performance-based limitations when it comes to gaining university admission. The reliability was acceptable for the factor, with an internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) of 0.81 which was higher than the recommended value of 0.70.

Socioeconomic status was assessed by four items that referred to parental income, parental education, and financial constraints related to higher education decisions. These items were developed based on the relevant literature in socioeconomic and educational inequality (Sirin, 2005) as well as supported empirically by findings pertaining to the Bangladeshi context (ICMA Bangladesh, 2020; Rasouli, 2019). Its reliability coefficient was $\alpha = 0.78$, which is adequate internal consistency level.

Institutional limitations Institution-level admission restrictions were evaluated through five items on the availability of seats, outcomes of admission tests, competition and mechanism used for University meritbased selection. The measurement items used and adapted higher education admission policy and access literature (Mahlangu, 2020; Li, 2022; UEFISCDI, 2018). The internal consistency of this construct was high (Cronbach's Alpha 0.84).

Hoped for employment prospects were assessed with four items and were developed on the basis of literature related to labor market information, employability and students' career expectations (Baker, 2017; studies on students' perceptions of education and employability). These tools were designed to capture attitudes regarding job possibilities for humanities degrees among students. The reliability coefficient for this scale was $\alpha = 0.79$.

The criterion variable, enrollment in humanities as a default option, was scored according to 3 items reflecting whether enrolment in humanities was due more to restricted choice alternatives, academic exclusion or institutional factors rather than out of preference. The measure of this construct was guided by constrained-choice and field-of-study literature (Cazarez, 2022; Li, 2022; Mahlangu, 2020). The internal consistency of this construct was acceptable (Alpha=0.82).

All scale items were measured on a five-point Likert Scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 3 = neutral and 5 = strongly agree similar to other education and social science research (Sirin, 2005; Baker, 2017). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the variables, where appropriate, before data analysis to identify any missing variable values and outliers. Composite scores of each construct were computed by averaging item responses for the items in a given scale.

The data analysis was performed with SPSS (version 25/26). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic characteristics of respondents and the mean scores of study variables. Cronbach's Alpha was reported to evaluate the internal consistency reliability. To look for correlations among the dependent and independent variables, Pearson correlation analysis was used. Last, a multiple regression analysis was performed to test the proposed hypotheses and to examine the relative contribution of academic performance, socioeconomic background, institutional admission requirements, and perceived employment opportunities as determinants of the decision to default into humanities. Statistical inference was carried out at the 5% level of significance.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Demographic Statistics of Respondents

The participants of this research were undergraduate students of humanities and social science disciplines studying at different public and private universities in Bangladesh. Two hundred questionnaires were administered. Among these, 150 were received in a data useful for analysis and therefore behaved as sample size 150. Major demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of respondents

Demographic information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
18–20 years	42	28.0
21–23 years	71	47.3
24–26 years	26	17.3
Above 26 years	11	7.4
Gender		
Male	92	61.3
Female	58	38.7

Type of University		
Public	87	58.0
Private	63	42.0
Family Monthly Income		
Below BDT 20,000	49	32.7
BDT 20,000–40,000	61	40.6
Above BDT 40,000	40	26.7

Note: $n = 150$

The majority of respondents aged 21–23, indicating 47.3% of the sample, fourteen years had no one under it (see Table 1). A larger proportion of this sample were males (61.3%) than females (38.7%). A little more than half of the participants (58%) attended public universities. Family background based on household monthly income, nearly three quarters of students (73.3%) claimed to be from lower class and middle income families.

4.2. Correlation Analysis

Table 2 presents the correlation matrix between the dependent variable (humanities enrollment as a default option) and the independent variables (academic performance, socioeconomic background, institutional admission constraints, and perceived employment prospects).

Table 2. Correlation analysis

Variables	Mean	HED	AP	SEB	IAC	PEP
1. Humanities Enrollment as Default (HED)	3.91	1				
2. Academic Performance (AP)	3.74	0.402**	1			
3. Socioeconomic Background (SEB)	3.68	0.381**	0.455**	1		
4. Institutional Admission Constraints (IAC)	4.02	0.429**	0.476**	0.493**	1	
5. Perceived Employment Prospects (PEP)	3.59	0.344**	0.318**	0.361**	0.399**	1

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); $n = 150$

The outcomes suggest that each of the independent variables is significantly and positively related to humanities as a default choice at the 1 percent level. Institutional barriers show the highest link with humanities demand ($r = 0.429$), closely followed by academic achievement ($r = 0.402$).

4.3. Hypotheses Testing and Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. Table 3 presents the regression results.

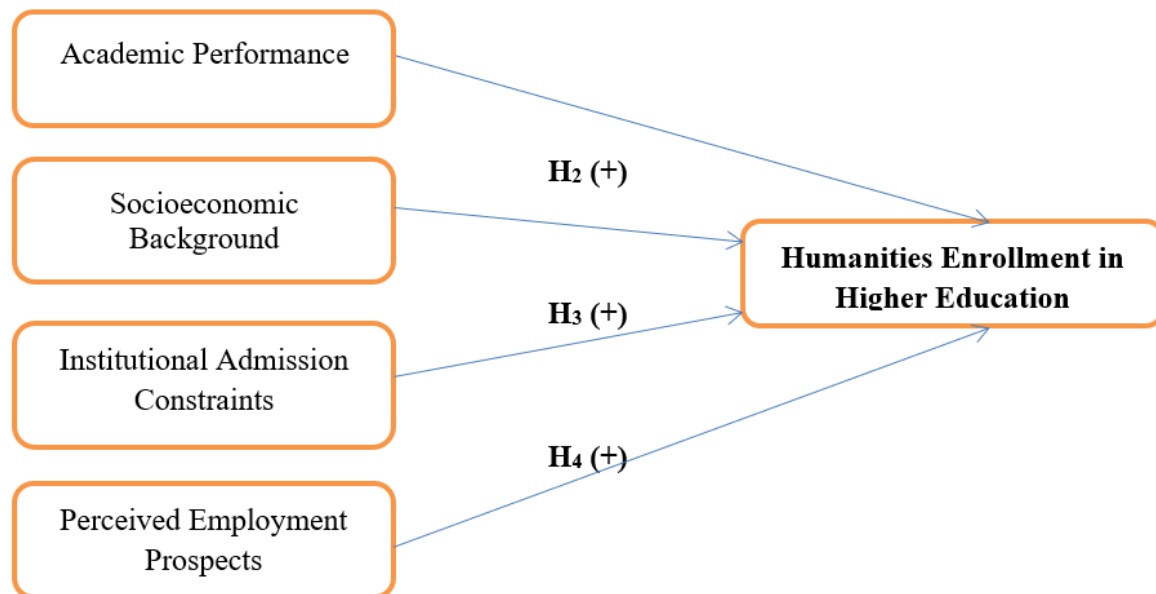
Table 3. Regression analysis

Independent variables	β value	t-value	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Academic Performance (AP)	0.241	3.112	0.002**	0.612	1.634
Socioeconomic Background (SEB)	0.219	2.874	0.005**	0.584	1.712
Institutional Admission Constraints (IAC)	0.287	3.906	0.000***	0.531	1.883
Perceived Employment Prospects (PEP)	0.198	2.641	0.009**	0.667	1.499

Note: $R^2 = 0.352$ (35.2%); Durbin-Watson value = 1.684; Dependent variable: Humanities; Enrollment as Default Option (HED); ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$ ($n = 150$)

Whereas with humanities as the default option, $R^2 = 0.352$ suggests that the four IVs explain approximately 35.2% of the variance in humanities enrollment. All hypotheses are accepted at the 5% significance level. Institutional admission factors was the most significant predictor, followed by academic achievement, socioeconomic status, and anticipated job market.

Regression Model with Standardized Coefficients

*Figure 2: Result analysis of regression coefficient**Table 4. Summary of hypothesis testing*

Hypotheses	Decision
H1: Academic performance has a significant impact on humanities enrollment	Accepted
H2: Socioeconomic background has a significant impact on humanities enrollment	Accepted
H3: Institutional admission constraints have a significant impact on humanities enrollment	Accepted
H4: Perceived employment prospects have a significant impact on humanities enrollment	Accepted

4. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

By empirically showing why humanities is the default choice in Bangladeshi settings, this study adds to the literature on higher education decision making behaviors. Aligning with previous literature on constrained choice and structural inequality in higher education, the results present that students' participation in humanities fields is more heavily influenced by systemic academic and institutional constraints rather than internal preference (Page & Scott-Clayton, 2016; Mahlangu, 2020). The proportion of variation in humanities enrollment that is explained by the regression model as a prediction model is 35.2 percent ($R^2 = 0.352$) default and this means that students' academic performance, socioeconomic status, institutional admissibility rules and employment prospect believe together help explain the variation in student's enrollment outcomes to a meaningful extent.

With the first hypothesis, on academic achievement, the findings are well grounded. The fact that the coefficient of academic performance is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.241$, $p(\beta) = 0.198$, $p < 0.05$) and correlation with humanities enrollment ($r = 0.344$), which indicates that students understand that they are not promising for finding job with humanities degrees but still... they choose it because alternative choices are in a way restricted. Findings such as these are in line with findings that labour market expectations matter for choice of field-of-study to the extent that students have real choices (Hemelt & Marcotte, 2011; Baker et al., 2018). Research on employability also indicates that humanities degrees are often seen to provide weaker direct labor market returns, but people continue to enroll in them when academic and system barriers limit entry to the disciplines they prefer (Yorke, 2006; Tomlinson, 2017). In situations of limited choice, however, the role of employment opportunity seems less significant.

Collectively, the results validate that humanities enrolment in Bangladesh is more an interplay of academic, social and institutional constraints rather than individual choice. Academic performance serves as a gatekeeping mechanism for competitive programs, socio-economic background determines the ability to access preparation

and financial resources, institutional admission processes constrain choices in limited ways, while perceived employment prospects shape what might be expected within these constraints. This composite pattern reflects wider international evidence on developing and transitional higher education systems, where expansion in the absence of equitable capacity distribution results in involuntary enrollment pathways (Page & Scott-Clayton, 2016; Roshid & Hà, 2023).

The importance of these findings for policy makers and university leaders can hardly be overstated. The strong effects of institutional admission constraints first point to a pressing urge to realign capacities among fields of study. Increasing the number of science, technology and business seats might ease the forced rerouting of students into humanities. Second, better academic preparation at the pre-college level—especially in mathematics and science—might increase students’ readiness for competitive programs and aid in cross-disciplinary mobility (Oyshi, 2021). Third, in view of sustained high numbers entering humanities programs, institutions need to spend resources on curricular changes and opportunities for interdisciplinary approaches and vocationally oriented education that will enhance the employability of graduates from these programs, mitigating the effects of default enrollment (Jackson 2014; Tomlinson 2017).

In sum, this study reveals that humanities enrolment is not a sign of its irrelevance, or students’ disliking towards it in Bangladesh; rather it is an outcome derived from structural forces within the system as whole. Preventing this problem will take concerted policy interventions that increase institutional capacity, lower socioeconomic barriers and increase the labor market and academic value of humanistic education.

CONCLUSION

This research has also tried to analyse why humanities have been the default choice of higher education in Bangladesh. It uses the lens of academic performance, socioeconomic origin, institution’s admission demands and students’ perceived occupational opportunities to offer empirical insights into the structural and individual level factors that patterns students’ choice of humanities fields of study.

In the light of correlation and regression results all these four explanatory variables are significant predictors of humanities enrollment as a de fault option. Academic ability and institutional admission restrictions emerged as powerful factors, pointing towards the fact that humanities subjects are likely to be a venue of student “diversion” via access or eligibility gates from more selective fields. Socioeconomic origin is also crucial, showing that inequality in access to higher education opportunities remains a persistent reality. If the perceived probability of finding a job affects enrolments, it seems to play a less strong role.

The results of this study suggest that the monopoly of humanities programme in the student enrolment in Bangladesh is not an outcome solely due to the preference among students, but it is also because the system has symptoms. So, policy-making and higher education management need to play a part in shaping more balanced approaches for the planning of higher qualifications by inventing institutional capacity in high-demand sectors but also improving academic preparation at earlier levels of study, as well as quality and humanities employability prosecution.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Notwithstanding the novel insights provided, this study has some important limitations that can be addressed in further research. The article had some limitations however, such as the use of quantitative research design based on survey and SPSS. In the future, qualitative methodologies (e.g., interviews and focus group discussions) can be used to further explore students’ decision tree of choosing a decision-making approach. These are particularly true since the sample was limited to undergraduate humanities students in Bangladesh. Further research could be comparative or multicomparative to verify if these trends hold in other developing countries. Future researchers could test additional mediating factors (e.g., parental influence, peer pressure, reputations of institutions or career counseling services) to obtain a broader understanding behind field-of-study choice. Longitudinal study designs could also assist in investigating patterns of the development of student academic preferences and career outcomes.

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