Non-Academic Determinants Influencing Academic Performance: A Study of Services and Facilities at the University of Dhaka

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*Abstract:-*Universities are the bedrock for higher learning, creative thinking and innovation. Universities need to offer the desired infrastructure to create an enabling environment for learning, teaching and research to reach global standards in education. In Bangladesh, only a few studies have explored education quality of universities and most of these are on private ones and no study has been undertaken to assess basic infrastructural conditions in public universities, especially the Dhaka University. This paper intends to fill the gap by inquiring into the extent Dhaka University has made its physical infrastructure convenient for students and researchers and what resources are available for their learning.

Keywords: **University Infra-structure, Global Standards of Education, Private University of Bangladesh**

I. INTRODUCTION

Universities are the bedrock for higher learning, creative thinking and innovation. They seek to carve the complete person with wisdom and sensibilities. Universities need to offer the desired infrastructure to create an enabling environment for learning, teaching and research to reach global standards in education. Without adequate infrastructural support, both faculty and students are unable to realize their real potential. It is a truism that many public universities in Bangladesh languish under poor infrastructural conditions and thus deterred from giving the best education to their students. The Faculty of Arts building(FAB) of the University of Dhaka—the premier university in the country, is a case in point. Its architecture is archaic and physical facilities dilapidated. With the vast number of students often having to use small classrooms and remain contended with outmoded learning aids do not serve any academic purposes. The Faculty of Social Sciences building (FSSB) is a new structure that is yet to become fully functional, while the Faculty of Business Studies building (FBSB) illustrates a modern, self-sufficient edifice with adequate provisions for educational and recreational facilities.

This paper intends to fill the gap by inquiring into the extent Dhaka University has made its physical infrastructure convenient for students and researchers and what resources are available for their learning. To develop a better understanding a comparison between FAB,FSSBand FBSBis presented here. It will analyze perceptionsof students (the actual users of these facilities) on the level of their satisfaction in using them, the condition of and access to these facilities and to comprehend whether their views can be taken on boardby the university administration whenever it contemplates to bring about changes. Using five indicators, we compare the three faculty buildings and note the differences among them. The article is divided into seven sections. The methodology is followed by sections looking at the links between academic performance and learning environment, technology, student services, security, and design and décor. A conclusion completes the article.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study is mainly based on primary data. Secondary sources have also been used. Based on types of information needed here, I chose four methods of data collection. They are:

- Survey Method
- Questionnaire
- Interview
- Observation

III. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The academic environment is the milieu in which supports a student's learning experience. There is a popular saying that students gather more knowledge during their time at Dhaka University just by walking through the corridors than what they learn in their entire lifetime.

We recorded some negative responses about the adequacy of the academic environment on campus. According to some respondents, the academic atmosphere does not inspire them at all as they do not fulfill the requirements of the job market as students foresee challenges in their future jobs because what they learn may not fit with what they will be doing in practice. For instance, FBSB students need to learn how to practically interact with private sector volunteers rather than just being confined to learning theories. They consider academic environment uninspiring as it does not allow the involvement of private industry in influencing the structure of the curriculum through various initiatives, like career chats (*addas*), marketing fairs, etc. These may look like trivial issues, but for the students who come from different social and academic backgrounds restraining innovative thinking

and development may negatively affect the quality of their performance.

However, most of the departments in the threefaculties have rich collections of books in seminar rooms and students seem quite satisfied with how these meet their educational needs. Though there are complaints about inadequate sitting arrangements and missing books, these small libraries help to make their academic transition smooth. During our observation, we came across some excellent seminar rooms in the Departments of Mass Communication and Journalism, Islamic History, Arabic, Persian, Islamic Studies, Peace and Conflict, Population Science, Information Studies and Library Science, and Institute of Health Economics in FAB along with Management, Marketing, Accounting and Information Studies, Tourism and Hospitality Management Departments in FBSB. Contrarily, seminar rooms in the FSSB building depict a dismal picture with inadequate reading space and insufficient collection of books.

The students inFAB face less trouble than others in case of using photocopying and stationery outlets. Though many departments have their own photocopying machines, due to the higher cost of making copies, students of FBSB and FSSBare forced to come all the way to FAB where all the photocopying and stationery shops are located.

IV. TECHNOLOGY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Technological accessibility is the extent to which technology is available to students, including those with disabilities, to enable them to use them for their educational pursuit. The significant factors that compelled five departments (Sociology, Political Science, Development Studies, Economics, and International Relations) to shift from the FAB to the newly-constructed FSSB were inadequate accommodation and difficulties in applying technology-based learning. FAB's antiquarian structure demotivated both teachers and students. The formerwas unable to use modern equipment like projectors, microphones, etc., some of which are essential for imparting teaching in the core disciplines. Moreover, the classrooms with no air conditioning facility, run-down electric devices, such as switches and tube lights using ballast, the absence of energy bulb holders, to mention a few, have created an unfavourable environment. Business students have positively responded to the technology they have access to in their building. Spacious computer labs and 24-hour wi-fi are some of the facilities they are enjoying.

On the other hand, the technical environment in the FAB is far from satisfactory. Its age-old architectural features serve as an impediment to bring about technological changes as these may make it lose its original characternot desirable for some. For this reason, most of the existing departments there cannot go for any worthwhile interior changes without affecting the building facade. FAB students are disappointed with the inferior quality of classrooms still featuring wooden benches, broken windows and doors, archaic blackboards, etc. Some classrooms next to the stairways must put up with a lot of noise and chaos. Nonetheless, having realized the necessity of providing accessible technology to create a better learning environment, some departments have been able, despite resource limitations, to improve conditions with well-groomed teaching areas equipped with modern paraphernalia. These departments include Music, Arabic, Persian, Public Administration, Islamic Studies, and Islamic History along with the Institute of Health Economics.

Catering to all the technological requirements, the FBSB appears to be the 'ideal' place in the University for improved student learning. This place indeed shows that if students are hemmed in by smart devices their learning urges grow. In other words, in this era of modern technology, traditional methods of learning may not fail students but increase their struggle towards academic success. That was the rationale behind the current technological transformation in FBSB. The departments there are no longer dependent on internal funding and collaborations with private sector has enabled them to install modern technology, which has had a positive impact on the students' mindset. The use of smart technology in their teaching and learning arrangements is suggestive of their goal of ensuring academic excellence. According to the faculty members, it is the proficient implementation of the digitalization process that would produce brilliance in the future. Business students seemed to be more than satisfied with the present technical condition of their respective departments as they know they can use some of the equipment easily that students in FAB and FSSB can only speculate of using.

Although the percentage is quite low, changes on every floor of the FAB are noticeable,but the number of departments going for technological changes is small. According to the respondents, technology helps transform student-teacher roles and relationships. In many ways, students assume the burden for their learning outcomes, while teachers take on the role of mentors and supervisors. Surely, technology lends itself as a multidimensional tool that aids the process. For example, students facing problems and seeking suggestions now directly connect with teachers at any time via the internet. For economically disadvantaged students, the university may be the only place where they have access to computers and the opportunity to integrate technology into their learning.
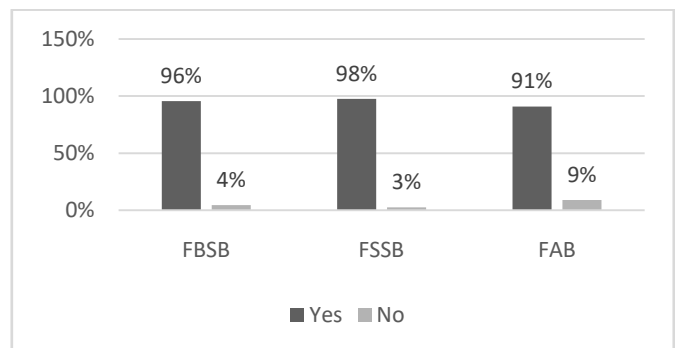

Figure 1: Survey about Effect of Technological Accessibility on Academic Performance

V. STUDENT SERVICES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Nowadays, a great deal of attention is paid to properly caring for students in higher studies for the full blossoming of their character. The purpose of freshening facilities is to keep the students' mind and soul refreshed and vibrant through supplemental institutional support for their healthy development, proper education and instruction. In higher studies, these facilities have a significant impact because most students come from various parts of the country and live away from their families in dorms (hostels/halls) or on their own. Institutions are there to provide the care otherwise given by parents or other persons who are entrusted to look after them. Proper care is critical to avoid negative manifestations in their behavior that may disrupt their healthy development. University campuses are places where students not only feed their minds but also their bodies and possibly both good and bad food habits get ingrained in the process. If we take a quick look at the food services offered in the FAB, FSSB and FBSB, these have stepped up their efforts in recent years by offering healthy eating options and responding to students' increased demands for more hygienic and allergen-free food items on campus.

As the students spend much of their time on campus around their respective departmental areas, they avoid going far to treat themselves to a healthy breakfast, lunch and snack. For the students,convenience is considered as a dominant value than other values influencing their food choices. However, food outlets in the FAB located in two common rooms (one on the ground floor and the other on the third) sell food items of inferior quality. Nevertheless, these are consumed because of the convenience in obtaining them. Breakfast items are available for those who are late for class, but lunch items are of low standard and unavailable after 2 pm. Male students seemed to prefer having lunch from the private food stalls at Milonand Mall *chattars* (areas). But female students prefer having food in female common rooms.

There is no food stall in the FSSB as such, and students get their breakfast and lunch from food stalls around the campus area, such as the several *chattars*, the Teacher Students Centre, Charukala Institute and even at residential halls. The FBSB food court offers a variety of delicious fast food items for lunch and evening snacks at a relatively higher price than other food stalls on campus.

The faculty canteen is one of the latest inclusions in the FBSB. Teachers have their meals at a discount and in a more hygienic environment. Food is also delivered to the teacher's lounge within the shortest possible time. According to the food stall people, faculty members in the FSSB and FAB avoid having lunch in the existing common rooms although they occasionally order snack items for breakfast.

According to the respondents, scarcity of spacious and clean common rooms is an everlasting problem in Dhaka University. Female students of all departments in the FAB share them. As there is no such place in the FSSB, female students from there need to go to FAB or IBA building and use the common rooms there for freshening themselves. As a result, these two common rooms are over-used and not adequately serviced.

The FBSB has recently established two well-furnished separate common rooms for both male and female students. In using these facilities, students here face less trouble. On the other hand, female respondents expressed their grievance about non-availability of proper and hygienic restrooms in their departments.

The common rooms, according to the female respondents, have become 'common' resting rooms of almost all female students of FAB and FSSB with even the prayer spaces becoming crowded. The staff there do not manage the situation, and the entire place still is noisy and chaotic all day long. So, they demand a common room, like the one in FBSB, restricted for access by FAB students only. According to male students, the prayer place on the ground floor is too small to accommodate them. Due to the congestion, male students offer their prayers in the mosque which is just next to the FSSB. The students in FBSB face lesser difficulty as they have a separate and spacious prayer place within their common rooms that provide enough space and time for prayer.

The FSSB has spacious and separated toilets and washrooms on every floor. So, students have no complaints, but they do think bathrooms need proper cleaning daily. The male respondents of FAB are much dissatisfied with the condition of toilets they use. They very often prefer using restrooms of nearby halls than using those of FAB. On the other hand, the FBSB students are highly satisfied with the washrooms of their respective departments and those in the common rooms. According to male respondents, inadequate drinking water, the absence of wash basins, hand sanitizers and drying devices increase the chances of diarrheal and gastrointestinal diseases that lead to frequent absenteeism. Remedial arrangements would serve to overcome barriers to education and achieve a sustainable impact on academic performance.

The female students of FAB use the toilets in their common rooms but demand an immediate increase in their numbers. Some respondents said that they often need to go to the FSSB to freshen up. Where girls do not have access to facilities like clean toilets and washroom, the impact goes much further than just causing inconvenience. For example, where there are no sanitation facilities for girls, they do not attend classes when menstruating. As a result, their academic activities are affected, performance adversely impacted upon and their right to education compromised.

VI. SECURITY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Campus security and safety is an essential feature because of the increasing political activities by the students and teachers and enduring political instability throughout the country. The

University administration is committed to providing students campus-wide safe environment for learning and to keep students well-informed about campus security. It also tries to ensure the protection of the surrounding areas where people live, work and visit. Based on the respondent's perspective, I explain below some major issues relating to security in the three buildings.

Social Science Building: The students of the FSSB seem quite satisfied with their safety and security system. Close-circuit Television Cameras (CCTV) are now being used for surveillance purposes. Five guards stay present at the parking area and perform their duties in shifts. According to the male respondents, as they have lecture sessions from early morning to late afternoon and they stay in the department for library work and group study, the overall environment of the building creates a sense of security among students and they feel free to come at any time and stay long hours. The guards make sure that after the closure of administrative operations, no person gets to enter the building.

One reason for considering the security system was to know whether the female students feel safe on campus. They agreed that the staff and security measures have developed a positive image among female students. Though there is no effective and formal system of submitting complaints regarding assault, stalking, verbal abuse and threatening texts and emails, female respondents consider the cooperation of office staff and faculty members reassuring. But they also believe that departments need the help of police to prevent outsiders from entering and exiting the building at any time without proper identification and the guards should not be recruited merely to sit at entrance point and stand up and salute faculty members when they arrive and leave.
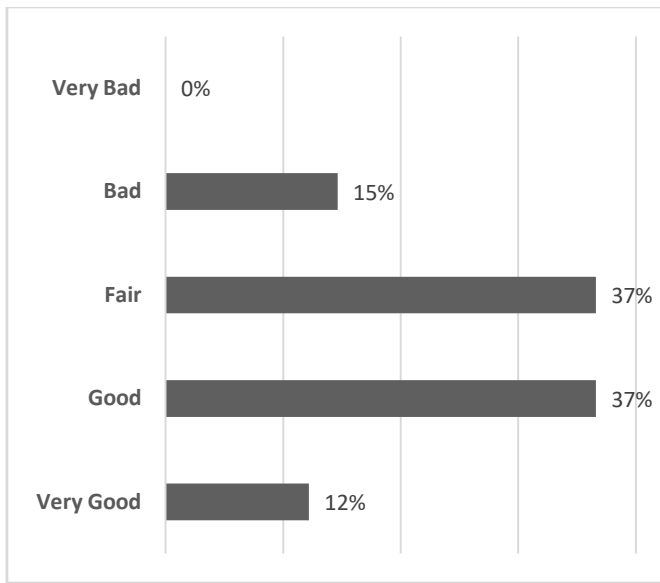

Figure 2: Rating of Security and Protection System at Faculty of Social Science Building by students

Business Building: In the FBSB, inclusion of CCTV cameras on every floor of the buildings, collapsible iron gates, waiting rooms for visitors, highly secured female common and prayer rooms accessible only to students of the Faculty, emergency exit for fire safety, and information desk have made the overall security system more than satisfactory for the students of the Faculty.

The Faculty authority has removed unnecessary entrance points and made two main gates to enter and exit. They have also recruited trained guards. Each department has a section in its administrative office to monitor CCTV cameras to ensure routine work without any impediment. One of the significant changes that satisfied the security freaks is the use of punch cards. No one without verified punch cards is allowed access to the computer labs and seminar rooms.

Some negative responses have also been recorded. Because there is no formal process of identifying visitors coming from within and outside the university to have meals in the food courts, it becomes difficult on the part of the guards to track everything happening around the area. As a result, stealing of technical equipment is often occurring and the culprits are not getting caught and punished, despite CCTV cameras.
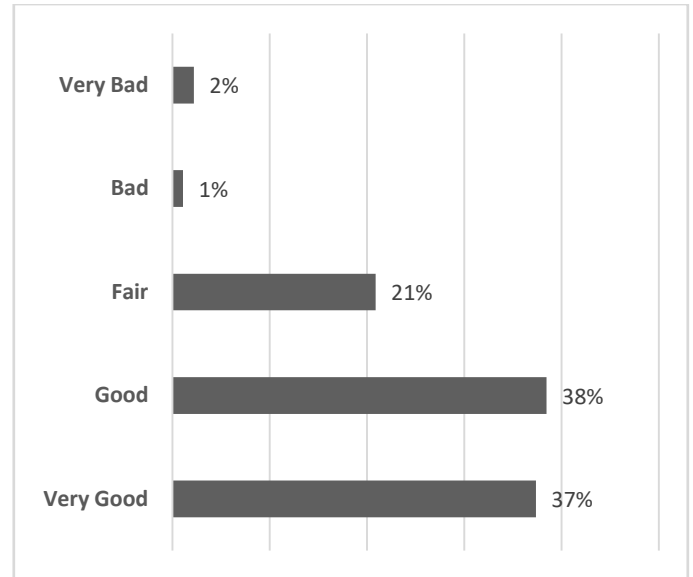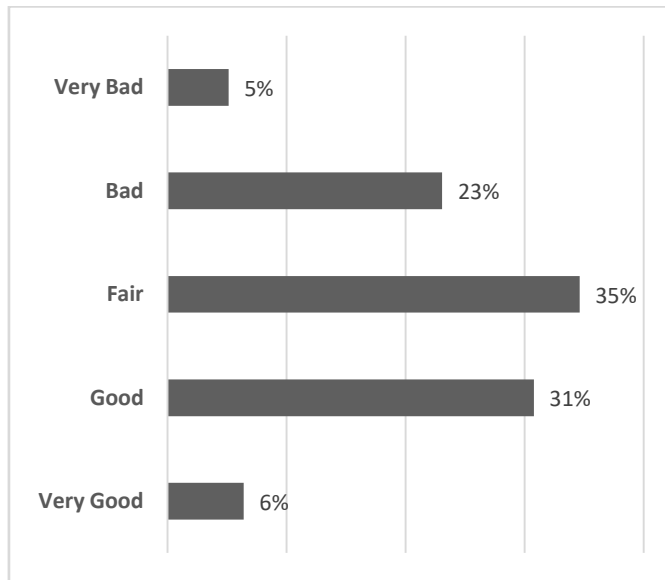

Figure 3: Rating of Security and Protection System at Faculty of Business Studies Building by students

Arts Building: When we analyzed male perceptions, we learned that the area covering the FAB is near the Administrative Building, which deploy security police officers 24 hours a day. They patrol campus buildings, grounds and parking lots. They usually wear formal uniforms and are readily identifiable, as are the campus security vehicles that they drive. However, the recruited security personnel do not view their profession as a job or duty, but merely as a calling.

Security in the FAB depends on the complaint-action system. Students facing security problems lodge complaints to their respective departments or try to hammer out a solution with the help of political groups. Female respondents feel most

unsafe here because of they are not aware of such a protection system. But the overall security atmosphere of Dhaka University reassures them. Female respondentsoften complain that they often face verbal abuse and eve-teasing in the evening hours. The outsiders engage in this heinous practice and they get away with it very easily because of the absence of proper and effective security measures.

Figure 4: Rating of Security and Protection System at Faculty of Arts Building by students

VII. DECOR AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

In this study, we found that various aesthetic features influence student academic performance other than their personal needs. This study digs out these factors which contribute to behavior-building for active learning. The ornate features of a university can have a positive effect on the mind and further influence student learning.

According to the respondents, the combination of brilliantly painted walls, interactive whiteboards, murals, drawings and lavish display of various pedagogical materials forms the right atmosphere for teaching and learning. Since classrooms attempt to provide spaces where learning can take place uninterrupted by outside distractions, their layouts, designs and decor have a significant effect upon the quality of the educational experience.

The respondents of FAB and FSSB expressed their satisfaction with the designing of their departments. They agree that decorative features give them a 'feel good'sense but they are opposed to anything exaggerated that go against the basic architecture of these buildings. The respondents of FAB feel that too much innovation in their building will lead to losing its heritage. They are for retaining the current perspective, but internally departments should bring about simple but educative changes in decoration. Some respondents, however, complained about the absence of dustbins, proper sitting arrangements, dirty corridors, stained and mildewed walls, etc. Old graphics don't get thoroughly cleaned. Though full- and part-time cleaning is there, they don't do their job properly. The students are also callous in keeping the environment tidy.

The students in FBSB seem more conscious about ensuring cleanliness and hygiene compared to those in the other two buildings. The initiatives for decorating the corridors, sitting places, balconies, stairs, common rooms have satisfied them. They think embellishment boost the psychological makeup of an institution that promotes orderly behavior. Decorative accessories and objects encourage students' natural development.According to our respondents, decorative features silently work through students' mindset, bring visible changes in their behavior that motivate them to do better in their educational pursuits.

VIII. CONCLUSION

As per our general objective is concerned about exploring academic achievement by students of both FBS and Social Science, it is evident that availability of infrastructural facilities has very little to do with developing academic result but some of the facilities like well-planned and secured academic zone with enough space for group study, hygienic food courts, uninterrupted wifi service, classrooms with modern sitting arrangements and multimedia predominantly create a spark among the students which make them more confident and practical. Increased accessibility for academic performance has a stimulating effect. Issues with no or inaccessible technology are, by nature, invisible to the eyes of most students and even teachers who prefer the traditional way of teaching. Elements such as security systems, freshening amenities, internet accessibility and recreational activities contribute to a student's well-being during their university days but still they slip off the to-do lists and have overlooked for too long. So, the university administrators should realize that spending on non-instructional activities is not entirely to blame for the rising cost of higher education; it also helps in building the future career of students.

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