Shahidul Islam

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Education

Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana
PhD in Economics — *August 2020 - current*
Master of Science — *May 2023*

University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Master of Social Science in Economics — *December 2015*
Bachelor of Social Science in Economics — *December 2014*

Research Interest

Labor Economics; Applied Microeconometrics; Economics of Education; Health Economics

Working Papers

"Alone" College Students' Academic Outcomes [JMP]
Abstract: This paper examines the academic outcomes of college students who are the sole representatives of their race, ethnicity, or nationality in a classroom setting, a situation referred to as being "alone." Specifically, I explore whether being the only student of a particular background in a course section has a causal effect on the academic outcomes of undergraduate students. To answer this, I exploit the random course and section assignment based on freshman students' course preferences at a large public college in the USA. I use actual course assignment data to define an instrument for the treatment of being *alone*. Conditional student's course preferences, the instrument (i.e., being assigned *alone*) is as good as random. The findings show that being the only student in a class by race or ethnicity impacts students' course grades negatively. Being alone in a class by students' racial, ethnic, or national attributes and academic attributes impacts course grades negatively. Being alone in a course by race or ethnicity and college reduces the course grade by 0.054 points for domestic students. Being alone by race or ethnicity and college in the same instructor-taught sections of the course reduces the course grade by 0.15 points. The empirical mechanism reveals that the negative *alone* effects are driven by positive peer effects. The inability of *not-alone* students to avoid negative peer effects for small peer group size derives the positive *alone* effect among heterogeneous peers, while homogeneous peers do not impact them differently by group size. The paper concludes with policy implications for course assignments for academically homogeneous students to avoid negative peer effects.

BinAbdulBaten, R., Islam, S., Islam, A., & Hossain, A. (2025). Does physician recruitment impact access and health of rural residents? Evidence from the 2014 recruitment of 6000 physicians in Bangladesh; Journal of Rural Health (*forthcoming*); with Redwan B.A. Baten, Azharul Islam, and Ahmed Hossian
*Abstract:*This study evaluates the impact of a 2014 policy that increased physician supply in rural Bangladesh, using Household Income and Expenditure Survey data from 2005-2016. A Difference-in-Differences model was applied to assess healthcare access and outcomes for rural residents compared to urban counterparts. Results show a 14 percentage point increase in rural visits to government doctors and a 15-point decline in private doctor visits. Reliance on informal care sources, such as pharmacy salesmen and traditional healers, decreased, while access to public medication improved. Overall healthcare costs for rural residents decreased, despite higher transportation and medicine costs due to increased utilization. Chronic conditions like heart disease and arthritis were more frequently reported, and travel time to healthcare providers was reduced. The intervention successfully enhanced healthcare access and utilization for rural residents.

Work in Progress

What Drived Grade Inflation in Higher Education? (with *Kevin Mumford*)

Abstract

Abstract: We study the evolution of grade inflation in U.S. higher education from 1990 to 2019 using multi-institution, course-level administrative records. Our empirical strategy decomposes the year-to-year increase in average grades into components associated with (i) improvements in student academic preparation, (ii) observed demographic composition, (iii) institution and discipline fixed effects, (iv) course-level characteristics, and (v) instructor-specific factors. This decomposition allows us to distinguish which portions of the observed rise in grades represent true "inflation" versus changes that reflect underlying shifts in student quality or course supply and selection. Consistent with the definition of inflation, variation attributable to stronger incoming students, changes in course offerings, and students' sorting into different types of courses should not be interpreted as grade inflation. In contrast, the portion linked to instructor-driven differences is typically considered inflationary in prior literature. However, our results show that instructor ranks account for only about one-quarter of the observed increase in grades over this period—substantially smaller than implied by conventional narratives. The findings refine our understanding of the drivers of grade inflation and highlight the importance of separating structural changes in higher education from true inflationary grading practices.

- **College Students' Performance in (potentially) Stereotypical Environment**
- **Effect of Feminizing of Primary Education Recruitment on Student Outcomes**

Conference presentations

2024 - Society of Labor Economists, Midwest Economic Association, Western Economic Association, Krannert Doctoral Symposium
2023 - Southern Economic Association

Peer-reviewed publications (pre-PhD)

- Khatoon, Rabeya, et al. "Aggregation, asymmetry, and common factors for Bangladesh's exchange rate–trade balance relation." *Empirical Economics*, 2021.
- Islam, S., and Hasan, E. "Is the Public Sector Wage Premium Real? Findings from Bangladesh." *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, 2020.
- Islam, S. "Age and Education Effects in the First Demographic Dividend of Bangladesh." *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, 2019.

Teaching Experience

Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana
Instructor

ECON 201 Principle of Economics	*Summer 2023; Fall 2025*

Teaching Assistant

ECON 650 Applied Microeconometrics	*Fall 2022, Fall, 2022, Fall 2024*
ECON 562 Econometrics I	*Fall 2022*
ECON 606 Microeconomic Theory I	*Fall 2021*
ECON 456 Urban Economics	*Fall 2022 & Spring 2023*
ECON 251 Microeconomics	*Fall 2020*
ECON 252 Macroeconomics	*Fall 2020*

Stamford University Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Instructor

Development Economics	*Fall 2016*
Econometrics I	*Spring 2017*

United International University, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Instructor
ECON 211 Microeconomics; ECON 212 Macroeconomics

Awards

Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana
James A. Papke Graduate Fellowship for the Study of Public Sector Economics *Fall 2020*
Summer Research Grant *Summer 2021*

Grants

USD 5,500 (*PI*), Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) Research Endowment Fund

Programming and Software Skills

Languages: Matlab, Python, LaTeX
Statistical Software: Stata, R

References

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Professor, Purdue University, Indiana, USA
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Kevin Mumford (Advisor)
Professor, Purdue University, Indiana, USA
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