



Employability of University Graduates: A Study on the Graduates of Dhaka University

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This paper aims to find out the employment status and employability patterns of three batches of Dhaka University alumni.

Methodology: The study was conducted through a questionnaire survey. Data analysis included descriptive statistics and some parametric and non-parametric tests to compare employability of male-female and across different faculties.

Findings: The findings provided a detailed picture of graduate employment status. The employment rate is found to be much lower compared to national aggregates revealed from past studies. Moreover, the employed graduates are found to be somewhat under-employed in terms of salary, academic knowledge and qualifications. Although female graduates are found to have lower employment rate, their employments are perceived to have better fit with their academic knowledge and qualifications. Graduates of certain faculties such as Business Studies and Pharmacy showed higher employment rate compared to others whereas graduates of faculties which cater very specific technical knowledge such as law, Pharmacy and Biological Sciences portray lower level of under-employment.

Implications: Faculty members and university administration may use the findings of the study (low employment rate, and prevalence of underemployment) to negotiate the need for curriculum update and inclusion of employability skills in the curriculum and pedagogy.

Limitations and Future direction: Further, detailed research on the graduates of different faculties can pin-point what positive actions can be taken for disadvantaged students. This research is based only on data collected from recent graduates, further longitudinal research will shed light on how graduate employability has changed over time. Also inclusion of the employers' point of views is important for getting a comprehensive view of the scenario.



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1. Introduction

Graduate employability is a major concern for educators, policymakers and employers in Bangladesh. It is considered as one of the key measures of effectiveness and ranking of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). However, Very few studies have been conducted in Bangladesh that have specifically addressed graduate employability. Islam (1980) examined the unemployment rate, the length of the job-search process, and the value of the subject knowledge and other skills acquired during undergraduate studies in obtaining and performing jobs based on a longitudinal survey of 331 graduates from various HEIs conducted by the Foundation for Research on Educational Planning and Development (FREPD). Another recent study conducted by the Ministry of Education's Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) gathered information from undergraduates and graduates of 82 departments at 27 public and 9 private universities (Mahmud, Iqbal, Shahana, Islam, & Ibon, 2018). It aimed to find out how university education impacted university graduates' labor market outcomes in Bangladesh in terms of employment rate, type of job, time to find employment, sectoral distribution of employment, and relevance to labor market requirements. The study's findings show a 39 percent unemployment rate and a 6 percent self-employment rate. According to the study results, graduates of private universities have a greater employment rate (44%) than the graduates of public universities (32%). Within two to three years of graduation, one-third of the graduates got employment. When alternative forms of postsecondary education are taken into account, the problem of unemployment and a lack of high-quality jobs is much more pronounced. According to a World Bank report on higher education published in 2019, the unemployment rate for graduates of affiliated colleges is 46%, and just 19% of them are still working full- or part-time. Additionally, 75% of polytechnic graduates have to wait longer than a year to get their first jobs.

Earlier researches mentioned above, focused on the macro-tertiary level educational institutes as a whole and have portrayed lack of employability of the graduates at an aggregate level. But assessment graduate employability at the micro level, for particular HEI (a university, institute and/ or faculty), is essential for assessing performance of that HEI in the job market. Such studies will help the HEI to identify specific reasons behind under-employment and/or unemployment and thereby help in developing policies and programs to enhance employability. HEIs can also use the employability measures (if found to be promising) in their marketing communication to attract high caliber students. Hence, a thorough investigation of the employability of the graduates of the University of Dhaka—the Oxford of the East is of immense importance. The University of Dhaka is the premier and one of the finest producers of graduates in Bangladesh. It must also be noted that the new universities established over last few decades have Dhaka University alumni as teachers and in many cases their syllabus has been modeled after Dhaka University's existing syllabus. In this context, an in-depth understanding of the employability of the Dhaka University graduates will not only be useful for the University of Dhaka itself but also for the other universities / HEIs who are actually replicating Dhaka University in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, resource persons' (faculty members) profiles. This kind of study is also important for assessing University of Dhaka's position in the world ranking of higher educational institutes (HEIs), a pathway of nation branding.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Employability

Graduate employability is a critical component of a university's reputation and ranking, and a key deciding factor in a prospective student's decision-making process. Graduate employability means the capacity of a HEIs graduates to obtain and/or create work (graduateemployability.com). QS World University Ranking authority defines employability as the graduates' reputation among the employers (Laura, 2023). In other words, graduate employability means the prospective employers' appreciation about the graduates' ability to deliver work and professional behavior and the employers' eagerness to recruit the graduates. Hence, employability comprises of some attributes (e.g., knowledge and skill sets) to meet the labor market requirements, and some personal traits (e.g. adaptability, learning attitude, team work, leadership) related to work (Moumen and Mejjad, 2021). Starr-Glass, (2021) asserted that there are two perspectives of employability. The potential employee's view

employability as the quality and relevancy of the knowledge, skills, and competencies possessed and brought to the relevant labor market whereas the potential employers' view employability as the attributes, job-fit, and the work-related knowledge, skills, and competencies presented by the graduate candidate (Starr-Glass, 2021).

The changing nature of the graduate labor market has increased the importance of the employability notion. Due to globalization and the rapid advancement of technology specialization has given way to diversity in the workplace (Ilmakunnas & Ilmakunnas, 2011; Jackson, 1993). Employees often need to have knowledge of different fields, often unrelated to their primary area of expertise. Employability in this context entails an increase in the demand for skilled workers who can integrate work with both exogenous (which involves awareness of changes in the business environment and technology as well as the ability to navigate diverse cultures) and endogenous (which involves includes providing for client needs, traveling to new places, and starting discovery procedures.) characteristics of the firm (Datta et al., 2007).

For the purpose of this research employability is defined as graduate employment rate, getting opportunity to work in the preferred industry, and the rapidity in finding employment after graduation.

Other measures, such as salary sufficiency with respect to the desired living standards of the graduates, extent using the academic knowledge on the job, qualification and job requirement fit are used to further capture the adequacy of employment.

2.2. Graduate employability research in Bangladesh

Graduate employability has been a much-discussed issue in Bangladesh. As of 2019, one in every three graduates are unemployed (The Daily Star, 2019). One of the earliest research on graduate employability was published by the Bangladesh institute of development studies in 1980. The study asserted that there prevails an imbalance between the supply and demand of graduates in the labor market. The imbalance is resulted from mismatch between the knowledge & skill sets sought by the employers' and those acquired by the graduates'. It is also found that many (about 15%) graduates willingly deferred employment for higher education, and/or for getting jobs in their preferred sector which again evident the mismatch stated before (Islam, 1980).

Another study in 2001 also explored graduate employability as one of the main issues in the higher education sector in Bangladesh (Hossain, 2001). With a focus to portray graduate employability from both students' and employers' perspectives the study collected qualitative data interviewing stakeholders and provided some policy recommendations. Another study by Andaleeb (2003) evaluated the key qualities that university graduates perceive to be crucial for success in the job market. The study also have identified some person specific (e.g., communication skill, year of graduation, spontaneity, gender and others), and some HEI (reputation of the HEI and its faculty members, alumni network, campus politics and others) specific factors that influence employability of the graduates.

A study done by BRAC university (Matin et al., 2004) found three major employability attributes. Subject knowledge in terms of both depth and breadth of knowledge, Communication ability as understanding and articulating knowledge, and general abilities such as work ethic, practical orientation, and boldness. The study concluded that these attributes weren't separate skills like many students perceived them to be; rather they were interlinked and how they shaped a graduate as a person was what recruiters really focused on. A follow-up study (Chisty, Uddin, & Ghosh, 2007) also done by BRAC found that corporate recruiters considered communication, area of specialization/major, the degree (especially Business and IT), and experience with corporate culture to be more important than academic results or university reputation. Studies done later on employability factors confirmed the rise in the employability of the graduates from computer science and information technology disciplines as the economy grew (Ahmed & Crossman, 2014)

Another way of looking at graduate employability had been through the concept of Work Integrated Learning (WIL). The WIL ethos is built on the idea of active learning, in which students proactively go from passively listening to actively participating in what is being taught in the classroom (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). In order to better prepare students for entry into the workforce, WIL combines traditional academic study or formal learning with exposure to practical employment in their chosen field of work. Interpersonal skills, concept and

analytical skills, oral communication skills, team skills, information literacy skills, written communication skills, self-management skills, learning and adaptation skills, and problem-solving are the nine generic talents that are most frequently identified in literature.

In this regard, Chowdhury (2020) recommended that integrating this approach (WIL) would help students develop the generic skills that has a highly positive impact on employability. Many other studies have confirmed the importance of these skills, or variations of them in the context of Bangladesh (Chisty et al., 2007; Chowdhury, 2020; Matin et al., 2004; Rahman et al., 2019; Sarker, Hashim, Haque, & Juhdi, 2021; Uddin, 2021).

So far, the research on graduate employability have focused on unemployment, the perception of employers and private university students on the relevant skills. The subjects of these studies were mainly on business, computer science, and IT graduates. There have been some wide-scale tracer studies (Hayashi, Garcia, & Islam, 2019; Mahmud et al., 2018); but there is no research focused on graduates from multiple disciplines in the context of Bangladesh.

This study explores the state of graduate employment of Dhaka University graduates in a comprehensive manner. Different aspects of employability i.e., employment status (Premand, Brodmann, Almeida, Grun, & Barouni, 2016), salary sufficiency (Fabbris & Scioni, 2018; Jayasingam, Fujiwara, & Thurasamy, 2018), type of organizations (Ang, 2015), application of academic skills (subject knowledge) and qualification and job requirement match are investigated in this study. Provide sufficient details to allow the work to be reproduced by an independent researcher. Methods that are already published should be summarized and indicated by a reference. If quoting directly from a previously published method, use quotation marks and cite the source. Any modifications to existing methods should also be described.

3. Research Objectives

The primary question of the study is: what is the employment status and employability of the graduates of the University of Dhaka, after two years of achieving their undergraduate degree? In the process, the researchers aim to draw a meso-level picture of the difference in employment patterns among graduates from different study programs and faculties of the esteemed university.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- a) Identify the employment status and adequacy of employment in terms of salary sufficiency, relevance / use of academic knowledge on the job, and qualification-job requirement match of the graduates of the University of Dhaka
- b) Compare the employment status and adequacy of employment between the genders and across different study faculties/disciplines (i.e., science, social science, arts, business, etc.) of the university

4. Methodology

Quantitative methods are used primarily to collect descriptive data about the employment status and other employment matrices of the graduates. A pragmatist worldview was taken during this research. An emphatic analysis of participants' responses had been performed to better understand their actions in light of their surrounding environment.

4.1. The Population and Sample

The population of the study comprises all the graduates of the University of Dhaka. But to ensure the relevance of the findings, sampling was done only from the graduates who completed undergraduate degrees during the years 2017, 2018, and 2019. They are graduates who recently entered the job market. Although the recent pandemic had a negative impact on the job market, by the time data collection was started the market has come around. Hence, the sampling frame comprises around 18,000 graduates who passed out during the years 2017, 2018, and 2019. The stratified random sampling (Malhotra and Dash, 2016) method was adopted. Different

faculties were considered to be the strata for this study. The adoption of the stratified sampling method ensured that students from all different faculties of the university are included in the sample in a representative manner. Faculty-wise representation is deemed important because graduates of different faculties usually have very different employment prospects. For example, due to the thriving growth of private sector businesses in general, rapid technology adaptation, and the concentration of certain industry sectors in the economy; graduates of certain faculties such as business, engineering, and pharmacy are likely to have better employment prospects than those of social science or arts faculties.

4.2. Questionnaire Design and Distribution

A questionnaire was designed to capture the detailed employment matrix of the graduates and to identify the factors affecting the under-employment and/or unemployment of the graduates. Participants were shown pertinent questions based on their answers on employment status.

The questionnaire was distributed via email to 1200 graduates chosen from the sampling frame of 18000 graduates. Later, they were persuaded through follow-up phone calls as such to enhance the response rate. A total of 587 responses were returned by the survey participants of which 540 responses were found to be complete and useable for data analysis.

4.3 Respondent Profile

Out of 540 respondents 344 (63.8%) were male and 196 (36.2%) were female. Respondents are almost equally distributed in terms of passing year; 169 (33.1%) completed their bachelor’s degree in 2017, 153 (30%) in 2018 and 188 (36.9%) in 2019.

Responses were collected from the graduates of 10 different faculties Dhaka University. Figure 1 presents the faculty-wise distribution of the respondents. As high as 152 responses (28.1%) are received from the graduates Business Studies faculty; 20.9% of the respondents are from arts faculty. The percentage of respondents from Social sciences, Biological sciences, Science, Engineering & technology, Earth & environmental sciences, Pharmacy, Fine arts, and Law faculties are respectively 13.9, 10.7, 9.1, 6.5, 5, 2.9, 1.8 and 0.9.

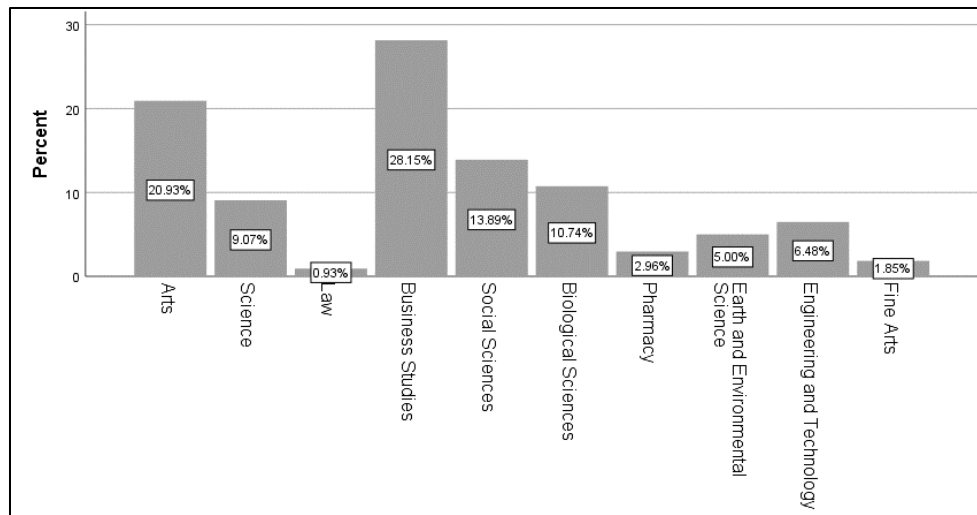


Figure 1: Faculty-wise distribution of the respondents

4.4. Data Analysis Technique

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis. The data was first used for illustrating a descriptive picture of the current status of graduate employment. Descriptive statistics showed these patterns by gender and faculty. Differences in responses were measured in terms of faculty and gender. For comparison between/among the groups independent sample t-test (in case of dichotomous grouping variable and ratio level variable of interest) , chi-square test (in case of multiple categories of the grouping variable and ratio level variable of interest), Kruskal wallies H test ((in case of multiple categories of the grouping

variable and ordinal level variable of interest) and Mann Whitney U-test ((in case of dichotomous grouping variable and ordinal level variable of interest) are adopted.

5. Results and Discussion

The findings of this research are summarized in five sections. The first section presents the overall employment status of the graduates. Further analysis with respect to the time to get a job, type or organization, current salary are reviewed. Also the respondents' views about the sufficiency of salary to maintain livelihood, job requirement and qualification match, relevance or the scope of using the academic skills in the job and qualification and salary match analyzed. The second section looks into whether any association exists between the respondents' faculty and employment status in terms of all the above-mentioned dimensions. The third section explores whether gender play role in employment status other associated measures of employability. The forth section analyzes different aspects of self-employment and the last section analyzes the reasons of unemployment.

5.1 Employment Status of the Respondents

Figure 2 presents employment status of the respondents. About 43% of the respondents reported that they are currently employed, 6% reported that they were once employed but currently unemployed, 5% reported to be self-employed. About 46% respondents are found to be unemployed.

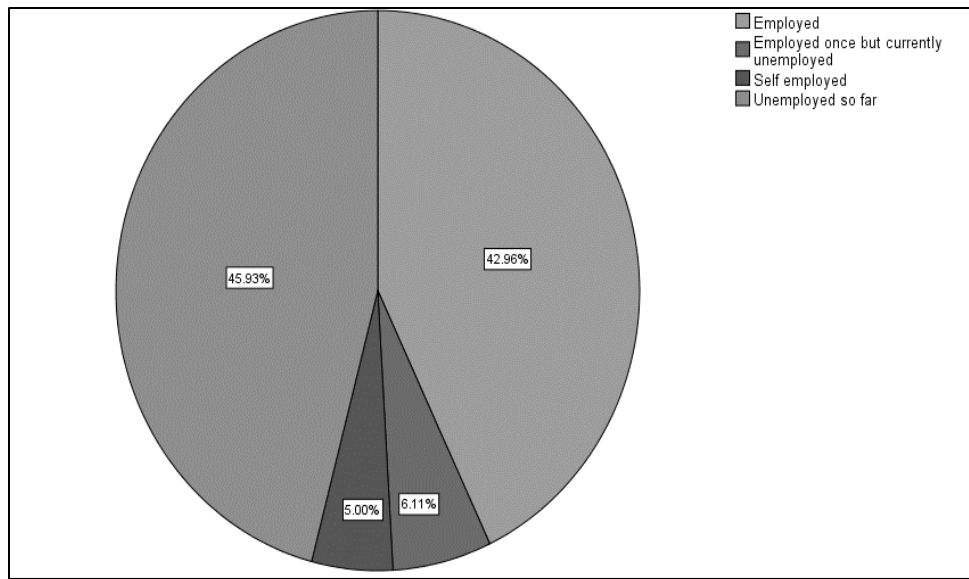


Figure 2: Employment status of respondents

Distribution of the currently employed graduates based on the type of organizations they are serving is presented in Figure 3. More than 58% of the employed graduates work for private corporations and about 23% are serving in government organizations and the rest 19% are working in non-government organizations (NGOs).

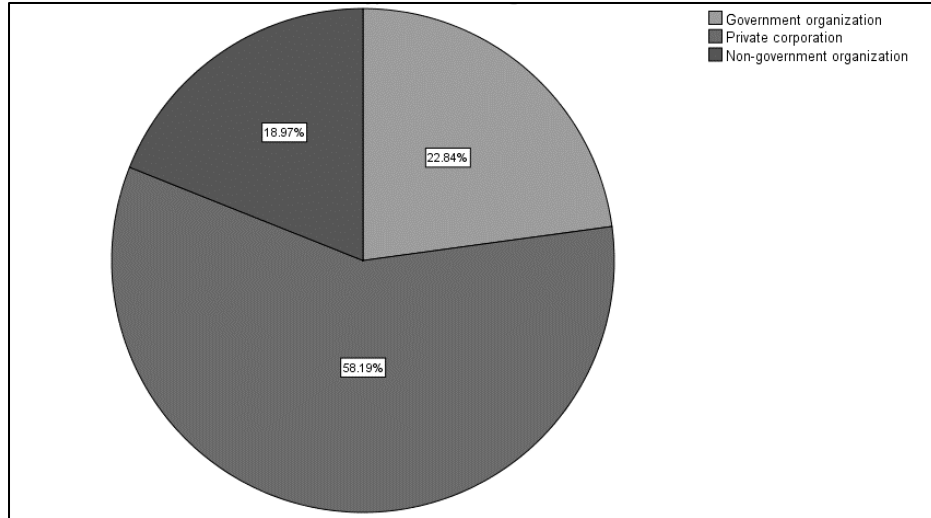


Figure 3: Distribution of employment across different types of organization

Further scrutiny of currently employed graduates reveal that slightly over 7% of them got their job before graduation, about 39% of the graduates got a job within a year after graduation. More than 31% of graduates got a job after 1 year but before 2 years of graduation. The rest 22% had to wait more than 2 years after their bachelors' degree to get a job (Figure 4).

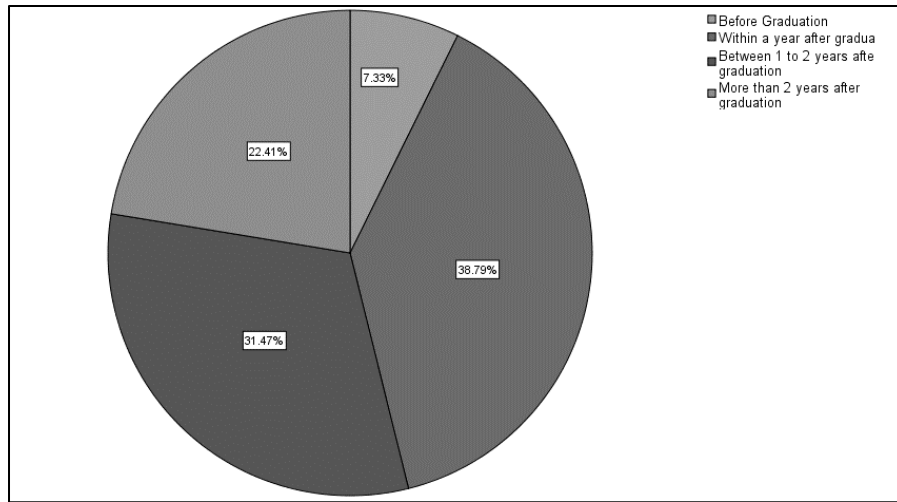


Figure 4: Distribution of the time after graduation to get a job

Current income level of the graduates is delineated in Figure 5. More than one third of the employed graduates get salaries below Tk30,000 per month; about 40% earn salaries between Tk30,000 to Tk60,000. Approximately 16% of the employed graduates are drawing salaries in the range of Tk60,000-Tk90,000 and close to 10% earn over Tk90,000 per month. The average salary of graduates thus turn out to be Tk53,500 per month.

To understand whether the respondents can maintain their desired living standard with the salaries they are getting from employment, the respondents were asked if they consider their salaries as sufficient. More than 45% of the respondents consider their salaries to be below par, meaning not adequate to maintain their desired living standard. Only about 16% of the employed graduates consider their salaries to be above par (more than adequate) and the remaining 38% consider their salaries as sufficient (Figure 6).

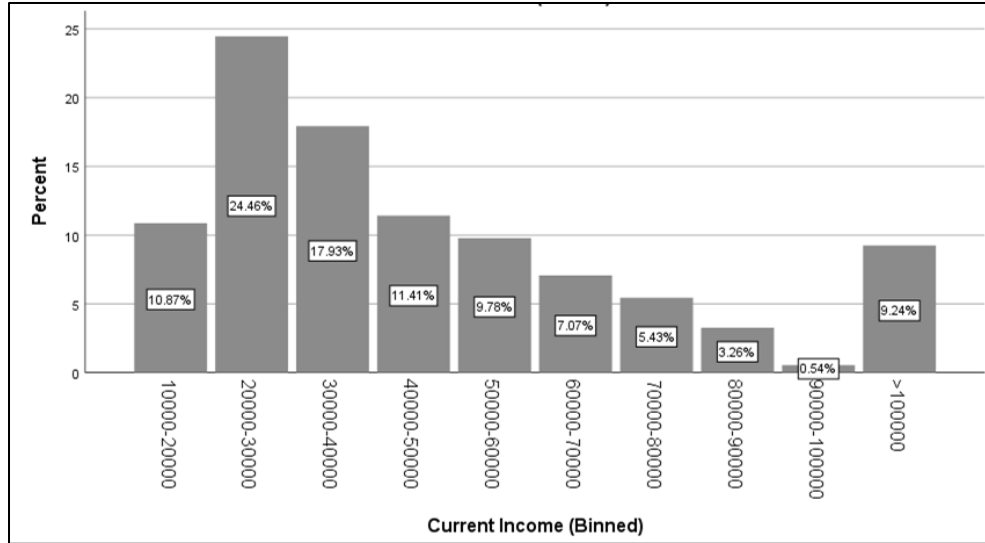


Figure 5: Income distribution of the employed graduates (in Tk per month)

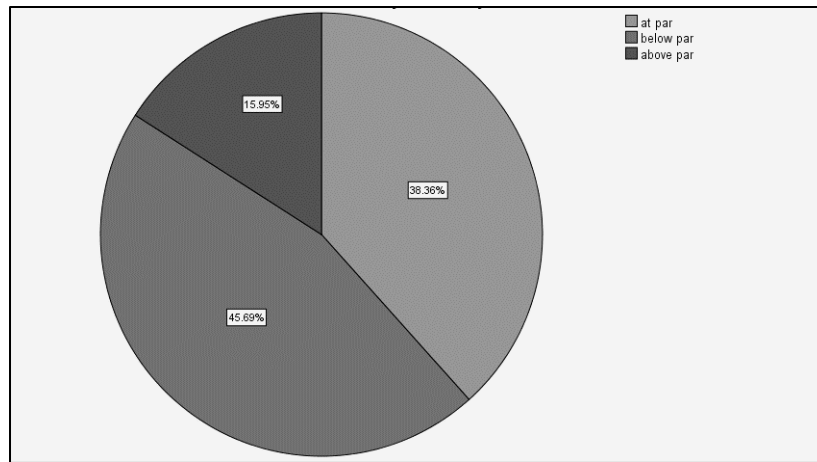


Figure 6: Salary sufficiency of the employed graduates

When asked whether the job requirement (as mentioned in the advertisement) matches with the qualifications of the graduate, about 60% of respondents agreed to some extent and the rest were either neutral (17%) or disagreed (23%) at varying degree (Figure 7).

With regard to the relevance of academic skills in their job, about 41% of the employed respondents agree that they have the scope to apply their academic skill sets in the job, about 19% strongly agree and 17% remain neutral to this notion (Figure 8). Approximately a quarter of the employed respondents disagree to the notion.

About one third of the respondents agree (at different degrees) that they are getting salaries that are appropriate for their qualifications. Approximately 40% of the respondents opine that their salaries do not match with their qualifications; the remaining 27% took neutral position in this regard (Figure 9).

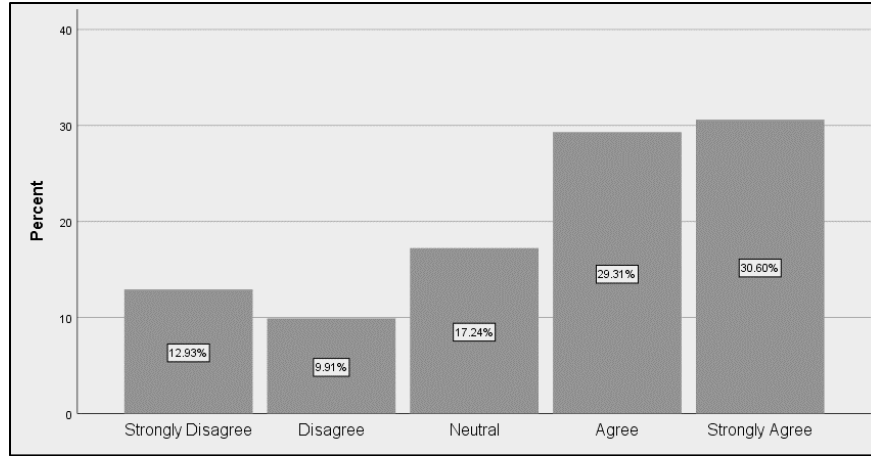


Figure 7: Matching of job requirements and qualifications

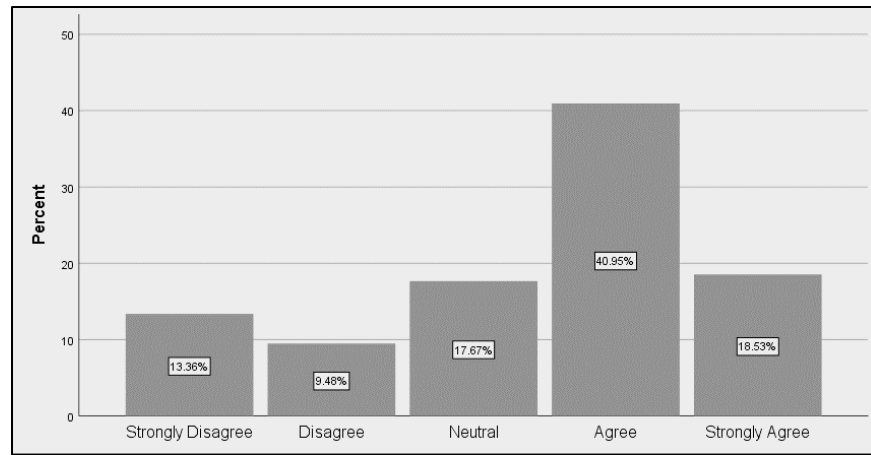


Figure 8: Relevance of academic skills in the job

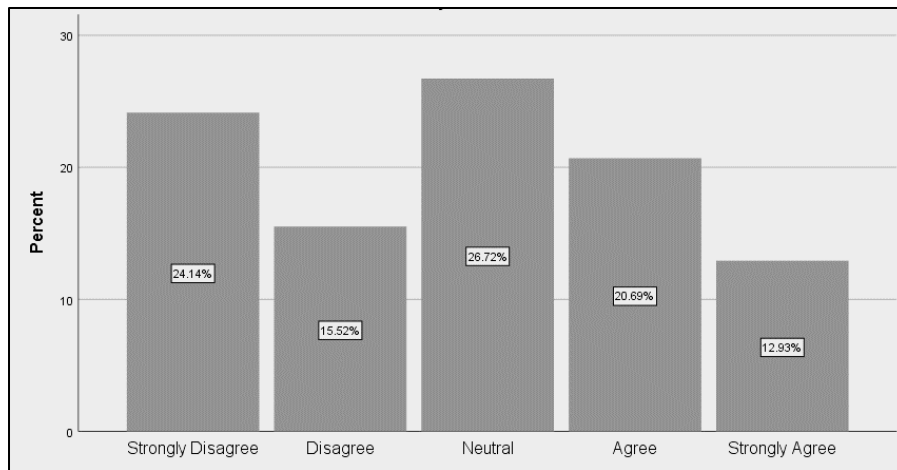


Figure 9: Salary and qualification fit

5.2 Faculty-wise Analysis of the Employment Status

Table 1 presents faculty-wise distribution of employment status of the respondent graduates. The percentage of employment is highest among the graduates of the faculty of business studies (59%) followed by pharmacy (50%), social science (44%), law (40%), fine arts (40%) and arts (38%) respectively. The unemployment rate is

highest among the graduates of the faculty of Earth and Environmental science (67%) followed by arts (61%), science (61%) and biological science (57%) respectively. Self-employment rate is highest among law (20%) and fine arts (20%) graduates. A quarter of the pharmacy graduates were once employed but currently unemployed. This proportion is 17% and 12% respectively for the engineering and technology graduates and science graduates.

Table 1: Faculty-wise distribution of employment status

Faculty	Employed	Previously employed but currently unemployed	Self employed	Unemployed so far
Arts	38.10%	0.90%	0%	61%
Science	24.50%	12.20%	2%	61.20%
Law	40%	0%	20%	40%
Business Studies	59%	8%	9%	24%
Social Science	44%	3%	5%	48%
Biological Science	31%	3%	9%	57%
Pharmacy	50%	25%	0%	25%
Earth and Environment	33%	0%	0%	67%
Engineering and Technology	37%	17%	0%	45%
Fine Arts	40%	0%	20%	40%

However, Chi-square test results indicate that there is no significant difference in the employment rate of the graduates from different faculties. Similarly, the distribution of private, public and NGO sector employment and the time after graduation until getting a job persists across the faculties. However, mean earnings of the graduates vary across the faculties. Our data set reveal that the graduates of the Earth and Environmental Sciences faculty have the highest mean salary (Tk 95,000 per month) followed by the graduates of the faculty of Business studies (Tk 67,025 per month). The lowest mean income is reported by the graduates of the faculty of Law (Tk 22,500 per month) and Fine Arts (Tk 25,000 per month) respectively. However, the responses from some of the faculties are too low to conduct any inferential statistical analysis; hence the findings cannot be generalized.

Figure 10 presents the faculty-wise distribution of respondents' view of salary sufficiency. Majority of the graduates of the Faculty of Business Studies, Biological Science, Science, and Pharmacy view their salaries at par to maintain their livelihood. A commendable proportion of the graduates of the faculty of Arts, Social Science and Engineering and Technology view their salaries to be below par or inadequate to maintain their desired livelihood.

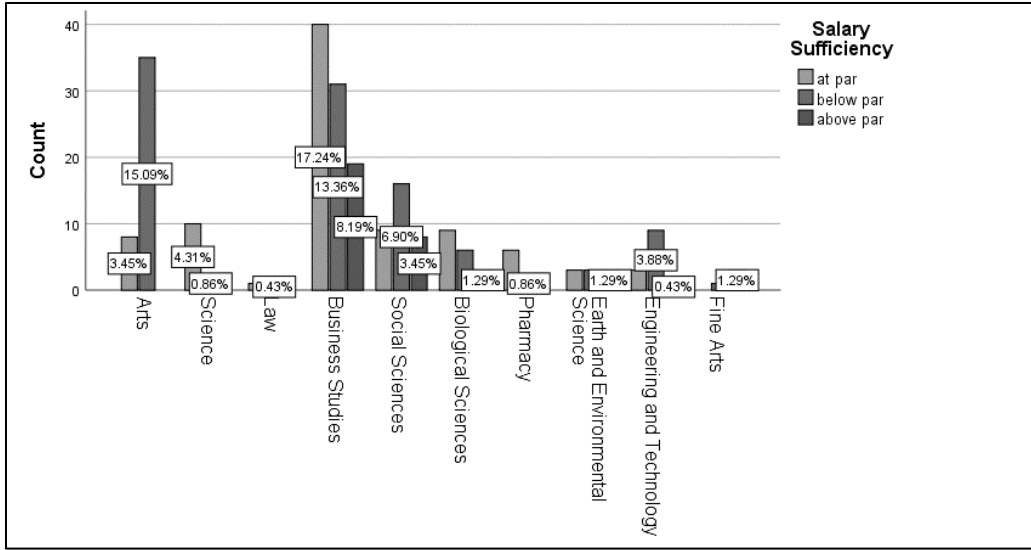


Figure 10: Faculty-wise distribution of the views of salary sufficiency

Job switching is not very common in Bangladesh, compared to that in the western countries. The majority (65.95%) of graduates responded their current job as their first job. However, the responses differ across the faculties. The scenario of faculty-wise job switching is presented in Figure 11. Business graduates has the highest rate of job switching, almost half (47.8%) the respondents have switched jobs.

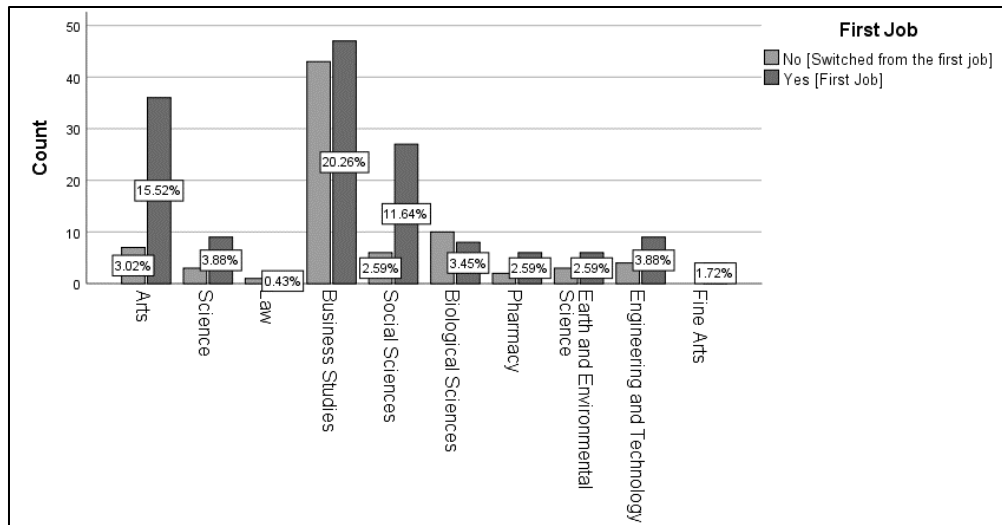


Figure 11: Faculty-wise incidents of job switching

A look at a population pyramid presented in Figure 12 for income bracket and job switching clearly reveals that job switching at higher income bracket (above Tk70,000 per month) result in even higher salaries in the new jobs. However, chi-square test result indicate that the views of salary sufficiency do not change after the job switching.

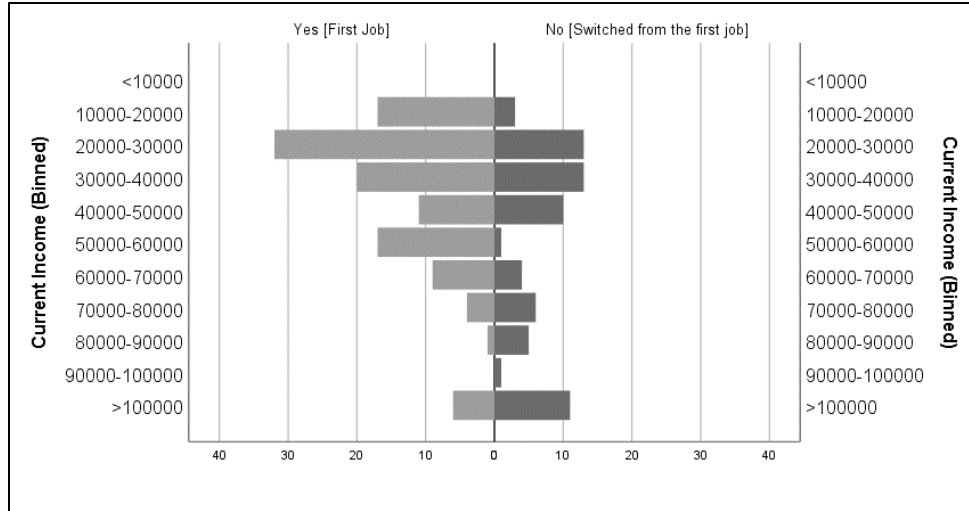


Figure 12: Population pyramid count current income binned by first job

For a faculty wise comparison of perceived relevance of academic skills, Kruskal Wallis H Test and pairwise comparison of the 10 faculties were performed. The faculties of biological science, law and earth and environmental science show the top three mean ranks whereas arts and fine arts faculties show the bottom two mean ranks. Which may indicate that the graduates of the faculties with higher mean ranks have larger scope for deploying academic knowledge on their jobs compared to the others. However, pair-wise comparison reveal that only the following pairs had a significant difference ($P \text{ value} \leq 0.05$): Fine Arts-Biological Sciences, Arts-Earth and Environmental Science, Arts-Biological Sciences, Social Sciences-Biological Sciences, Business Studies-Biological Sciences.

Kruskal Wallis H Test and pairwise comparison is also used to compare the qualification and job requirement match across the faculties. Results reveal that the graduates of fine arts and arts faculties in general have lower match between their qualifications and job requirements compared to the graduates of the faculties of law, pharmacy, biological science and others (at $P \text{ value} < 0.05$).

In terms of salary and qualification fit, the results of Kruskal Wallis H Test and pairwise comparison indicate that graduates of science, biological science, earth and environmental science, business studies, social science faculties have better salary-qualification fit than the graduates of arts, law and engineering and technology faculties.

5.3 Analysis of Employment Status With Respect to Gender

From the gender wise distribution of employment status presented in Figure 13, it becomes evident that there is a difference between the employment status of the men and female graduates. Lower percentage (11%) female are employed than their male (31.7%) counterparts. However, the percentage of self-employment is higher among the female (3.3%) graduates than that of the male (1.7%). Chi square test of association indicates that the differences are significant.

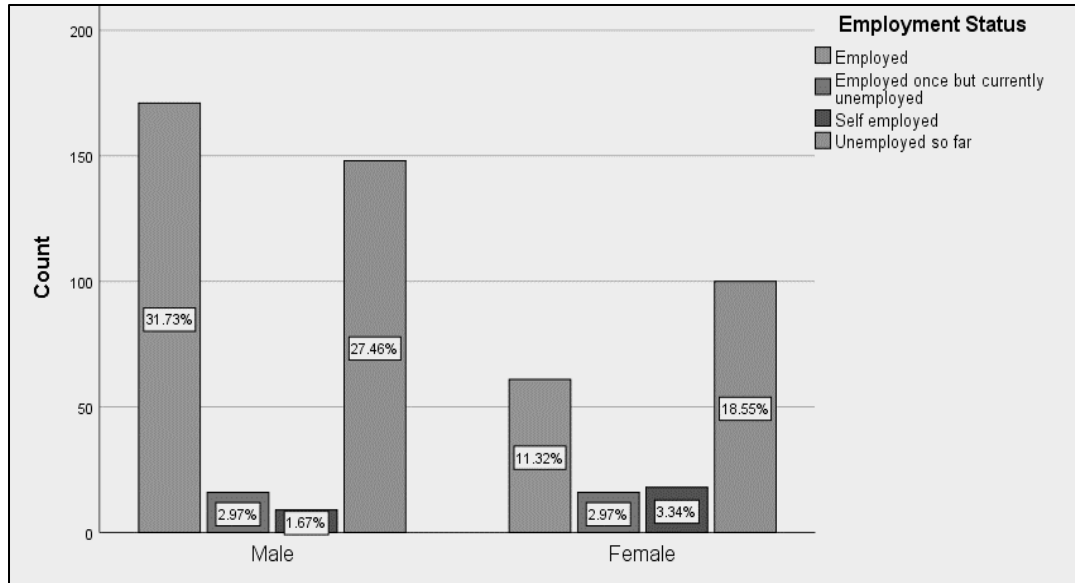


Figure 13: Gender-wise distribution of employment status

The results of t-test indicate that the difference in mean salary of the male (Tk 53,000 per month) and female (Tk 55,000 per month) graduates is not statistically significant (P value > 0.05).

Moreover, the Chi square test results did not reveal enough evidence to suggest any gender difference in terms of the graduates’ perception on salary sufficiency. Such a result matches with the close mean salary amount found above.

Figure 14 presents the population pyramid to compare the female and male graduates’ responses with respect to the relevance of academic skills in their current job. It is evident that the distribution of the responses are similar. For both the genders, majority view academic skills to be relevant in their current jobs.

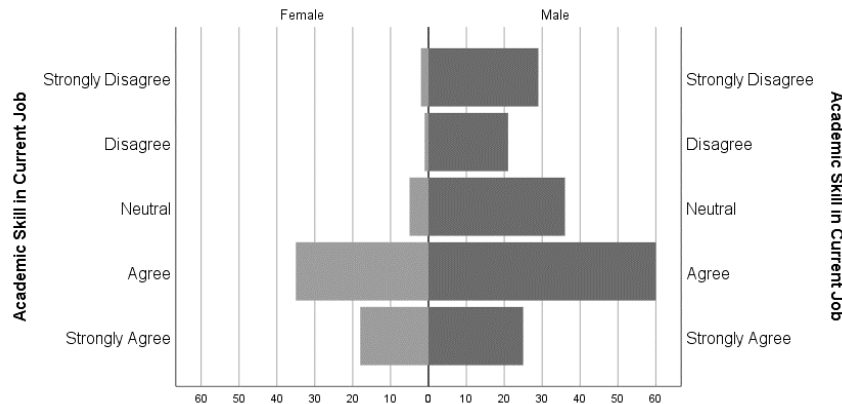


Figure 14: Population pyramid count relevance of academic skills in current job by gender

To compare the differences in responses with respect to the matching of graduates qualifications with the job requirements, independent Samples Mann- Whitney U test is conducted. The results presented in Figure 15 show that the male respondents view lower degree matching between their qualification and job requirements compared to the female.

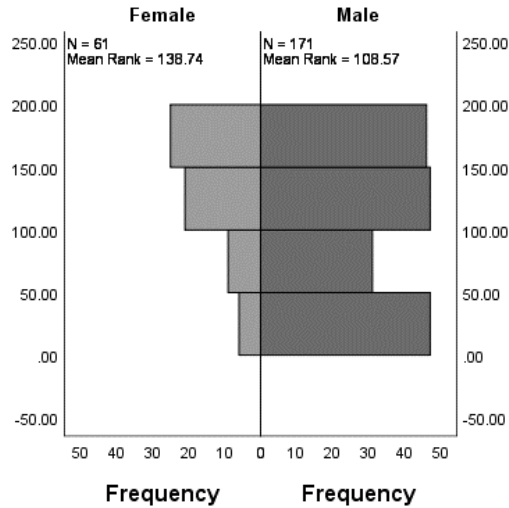


Figure 15: Mann-Whitney U Test results (Gender vs Qualification-Job Requirement Match)

Potential gender difference in qualification and salary fit is investigated using Mann-Whitney U test. The results are presented in Figure 16. Results reveal that female graduates find better fit between their salaries and qualifications compared to the male.

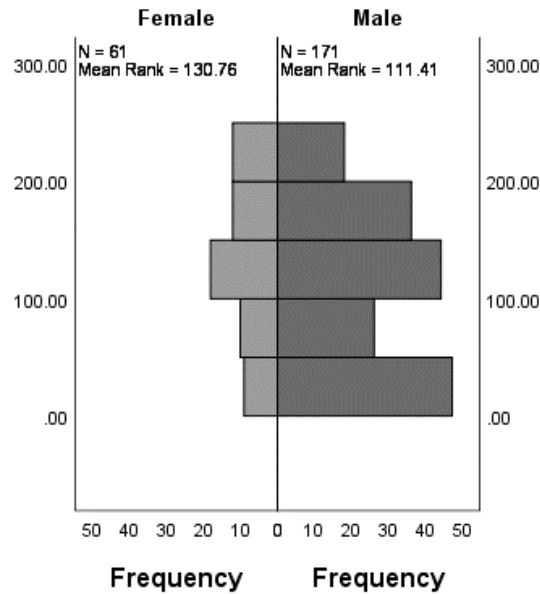


Figure 16: Independent sample Mann Whitney U test (Gender vs Salary and Qualification fit)

5.4 Analysis of the self-employed

About 45% of the self-employed graduates are providing professional services (such as legal advices, freelancing software and IT solutions, data analysis and business consultancy); 20% joined in family businesses and the rest 35% have established their own start ups (Figure 17). Around 50% of the self-employed are from the faculty of business studies and two third of them are female graduates.

When asked about the relevance academic skills in their current occupation, 56% of them asserted that academic skills are highly relevant. The response pattern remained same regardless of them joining in family businesses, establishing startups or professional services. Pair wise comparison showed no significant differences among the responses of the graduates involved in different types of enterprises.

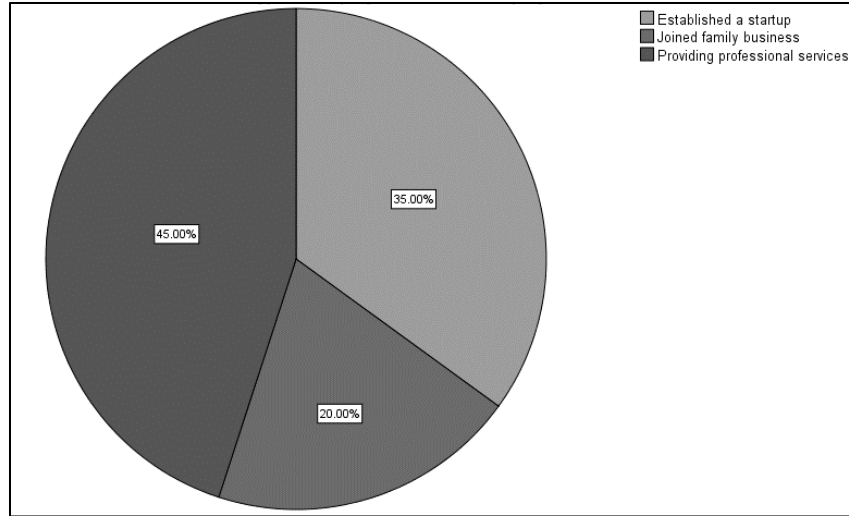


Figure 17: Types of ventures of the self-employed graduates

Female self-employed graduates expressed their strong agreement to the statement that they can apply their academic skill set in their ventures (Figure 18).

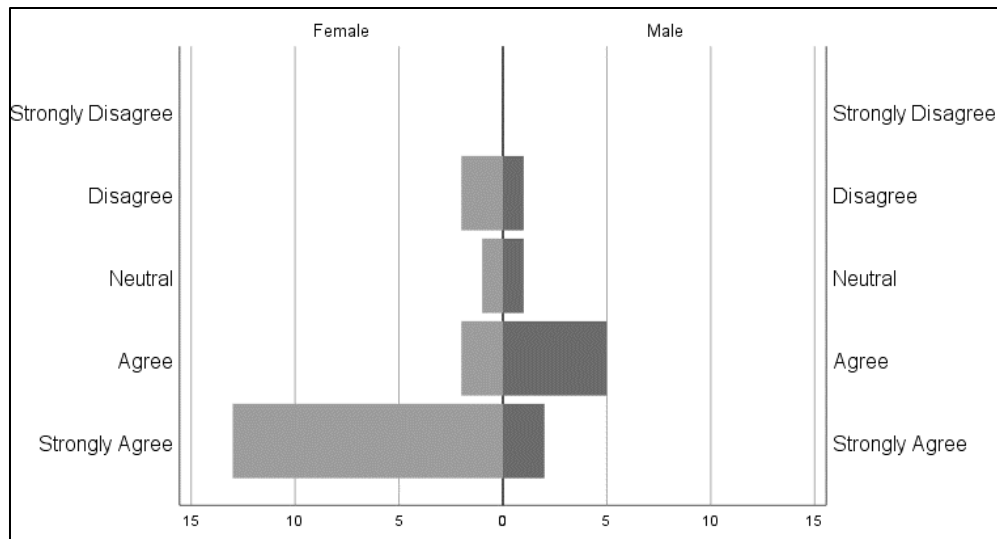


Figure 18: Relevance of Academic skill in ventures of the self-employed by gender

In terms of salary, male respondents in general view their earnings to be insufficient and miss-matched to their qualifications, but the females consider their earnings to be sufficient and matched to their qualifications positively about the same statement (Figure 19).

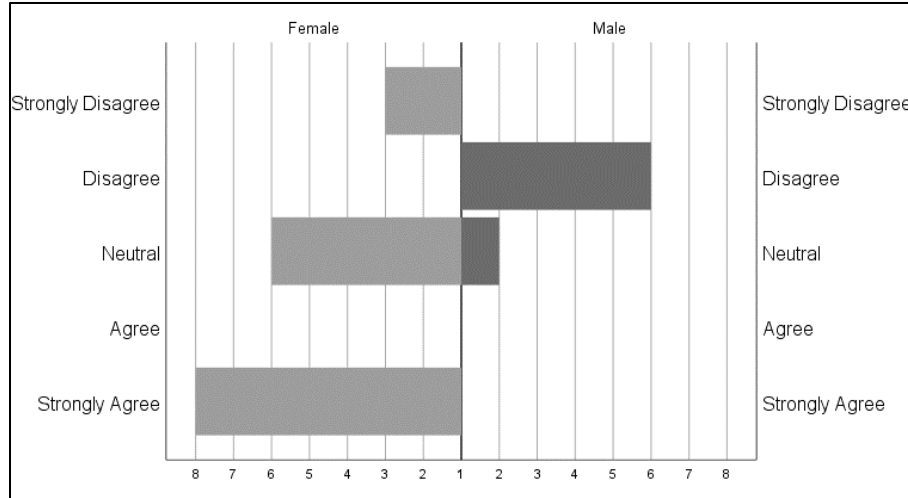


Figure 19: Earnings and qualifications match of the self-employed by gender

5.5 Analysis of the unemployed

When asked about the reasons of unemployment, it is found that 64% had not received any job offer till the time of the survey; around 25% got job offer(s) but did not join to pursue better opportunities and 11% did not try for any job time the time of survey (Figure 20). The gender wise comparison showed similar pattern in terms of the reasons remaining unemployed.

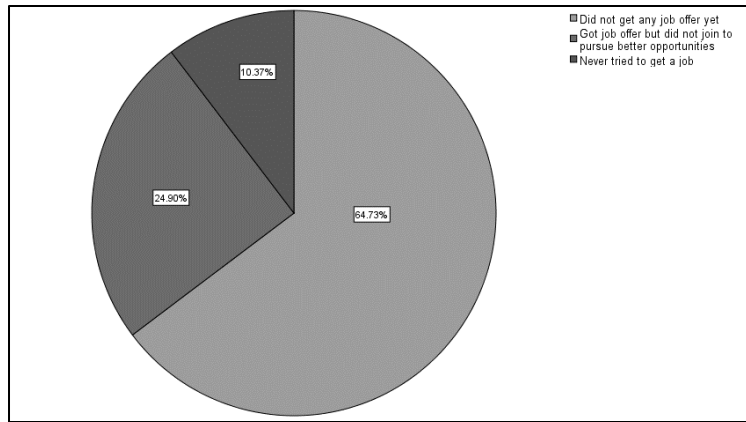


Figure 20: Reasons unemployment

An analysis of the unemployed graduates in relation to the passing years of their bachelor’s degree is presented in Figure 21. It is evident that larger proportion (14.16%) of older graduates are still unemployed because they are trying for better opportunities while rejecting some job offers they already got. In case of younger graduates a good proportion (9.75%) had not yet started seeking jobs at the time of this survey. Perhaps they were still pursuing higher education (Master’s degree).

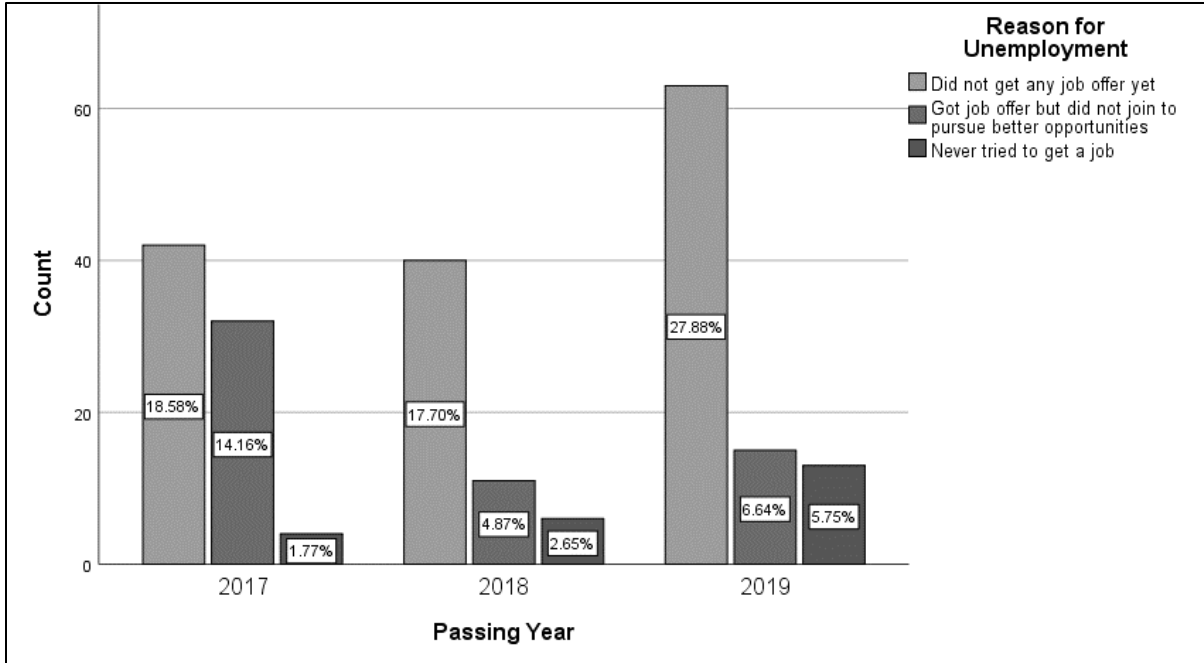


Figure 21: Passing year wise comparison of unemployed graduates

6. Conclusion

The study found an exhaustive cross-sectional view of the current status of employment and employability of the graduates of the University of Dhaka. The results show that 46% of the graduates are unemployed, whereas 48% are either employed or self-employed. As of a report by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the country's unemployment rate is 4.37 percent. University graduates make up roughly 46% of the entire unemployed youth population (Statistics, 2002). A million graduates fight annually for a limited number of public or private positions. According to world bank tertiary education review, the unemployment rate among people with university education credentials was 11.2 %, which is significantly higher than the national average of 4.2 % in 2017 (Rahman et al., 2019). Hence, the rate of employment of the recent graduates of Dhaka University is much lower compared to aggregate rate found in previous years. Recent outbreak of COVID 19 may be a reason behind this huge surge in unemployment rate.

More than half of the employed graduates work for private organization and approximately a quarter of them work for government organizations. About 39% of the employed graduates got their first job within a year of graduation. Average salary of the graduates is about Tk53000 per month.

With regard to adequacy of employment, 46% of the graduates consider their earnings as insufficient. The prevalence of insufficient earnings is highest in private sector, followed by government sector and NGOs respectively. Approximately 41% of the employed graduates asserted negatively about the relevance of their academic knowledge for their jobs. Responses, with regard to qualification and job requirement match are found to be similar. Hence, it can be concluded that Dhaka University graduates are somewhat under-employed in terms of salary, academic knowledge and qualifications. The fact of under-employment is also evident from the findings that a significant portion (6%) of graduates were employed earlier but left the job(s) in search of better job opportunities and/or to pursue higher education.

When compared between the male and female graduates; females are found to have lower employment rate. However, significantly higher percentage of the female graduates are found to be self-employed. No significant difference is found between the mean salaries of the male and female graduates. But higher proportions of the female graduates consider their salaries to be sufficient, fit with their qualification, adequate application of

academic knowledge and qualification & job requirement match. Which indicate that female graduates have lower level of under-employment as compared to the male graduates.

From faculty-wise comparison no significant difference was found in employment rate. However, the graduates of Earth and environmental science and Business studies faculty demonstrate the highest mean salary. Law and fine arts graduates are found to draw the least mean salary. Although the majority of the graduates of Business Studies, Pharmacy and Biological Science consider their salaries to be sufficient and good-fit with their qualifications job switching is prevalent among them. This means, switching jobs do not change the graduates' views about their salaries.

In terms of use of academic knowledge and qualification-job requirement match the responses of the graduates of the faculties of law, pharmacy and biological science depict higher average rank than those of the other faculties. Which means the graduates of certain faculties (e.g., law, pharmacy and biological sciences) are rightly/adequately employed compared to others in terms of academic knowledge and qualification.

The findings of this research will serve as a baseline for any future research to be done on employability of the graduates of Dhaka university, or other public universities Faculty members and university administration may use the findings (low employment rate, and prevalence of underemployment) to negotiate the need for curriculum update and inclusion of employability skills (identified by other researches) in the curriculum. They may also revise the pedagogy to nurture employability skills of the students. Further, detailed research on the graduates of different faculties can pin-point what positive actions can be taken for disadvantaged students. This research is based only on data collected from recent graduates, further longitudinal research will shed light on how graduate employability has changed over time. Also inclusion of the employers' point of views is important for getting a comprehensive view of the scenario.

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