



EXPLORING THE GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE: EXPECTED SECTORS AND EARLY CAREER OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

In Bangladesh, public universities mainly offer political science programs both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Although outcome-based education has been introduced in all universities under the university grants commission, the outcome relating to the employability of political science graduates has become a pressing issue in higher education. Curriculum experts have raised questions about why academic rigor and reputation are not sufficient to adequately prepare these graduates for the labor market. In this backdrop, this paper explores the expected employment sectors, essential skills, and early career challenges of political science graduates from major public universities in Bangladesh. Semi-structured interviews with final-year and postgraduate students revealed their employment expectations, required competencies, barriers to securing jobs, and the perceived value of internships and networks. According to the interview, political science graduates aspire to careers in civil service, government ministries, NGOs, international development organizations, research think tanks, and consultancy. However, participants highlighted significant gaps between academic training and labor market requirements. While the curriculum of political science integrates up to date content and research-based textbooks, employers increasingly demand practical competencies such as policy analysis, data literacy, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and strong communication skills. According to the job agencies' requirements the graduates of political science lag behind in the job market due to the lack of internships, field-based training, and direct engagement with employers, which limited graduates' readiness to enter competitive job markets. Many postgraduates attend some training and workshops to strengthen credentials believing that additional certifications are necessary to secure quality employment. The findings underscore the urgent need for curriculum reform in political science programs, including the integration of applied learning, professional networks, and employer collaborations. In realistic and practical terms, internship opportunities, case-based teaching, and industry partnerships could significantly enhance graduates' career outcomes. This study contributes to the broader discourse on graduate employability in social sciences by offering evidence-based recommendations for aligning political science education with evolving job market demands in Bangladesh and similar contexts.

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KEYWORDS

Graduate Employability, Political Science Education, Public Universities, Career Outcomes, Skills Gap

INTRODUCTION

The employability of political science graduates is becoming an increasing concern worldwide. As the job market evolves, universities are making efforts to better equip students for these changes (Moulton, 2019). This study examines the types of jobs that political science graduates from major public universities in Bangladesh are likely to pursue. It also looks into the skills that employers prioritize and the challenges graduates face when transitioning from education to the workforce (O'Regan et al., 2023). By interviewing final-year undergraduate and postgraduate students, the study aims to uncover any gaps between what graduates are taught and what employers require (Yi et al., 2025). With the growing emphasis on employability within education, the findings can help universities adjust their programs to better prepare students for their future careers (Lewis, 2017).

BACKGROUND

In Bangladesh, public universities are the primary institutions offering political science programs (Ahmmed, 2013). These departments are well-regarded for their strong academic standards and the wide range of research topics they cover (Aziz, 2022). However, while these programs are of high quality, there has been limited effort to make the curriculum more aligned with the demands of the job market (Abir, 2024). Many public universities still follow a traditional curriculum, which tends to focus more on theoretical knowledge and less on practical skills or real-world experience (Kibria & Hasan, 2024). This gap in the curriculum is frequently pointed out by employers as a challenge when hiring political science graduates (Hasan & Sharmin, 2024).

In addition, although the political science departments at these universities have a strong research foundation, their connections with potential employers and stakeholders are often weak (Habib et al., 2023). Although many departments have agreements with national and international organizations, there are limited opportunities for internships, fieldwork, and hands-on training through these partnerships (O'Regan et al., 2023). This lack of employer involvement has made it difficult to prepare graduates for the workforce; where practical skills such as data analysis, policy assessment, and communication are highly valued (Yi et al., 2025).

Therefore, this paper aims to examine the current state of graduate employability in political science by identifying the gaps between academic training and labor market demands (Moulton, 2023). By focusing on these gaps, it will propose improvements for political science programs in Bangladesh's public universities. Again, it helps to better prepare graduates for successful careers in government, NGOs, research think tanks, and private consulting (Lewis, 2017).

THIS STUDY

The number of political science graduates is growing, but there is little research on the sectors they enter and the challenges they face when moving from education to employment in Bangladesh (Ahmmed, 2013). This study focuses on identifying the job sectors that political science graduates are expected to enter. It also examines the skills that employers value and the challenges graduates face in finding employment (O'Regan et al., 2023). This is crucial for policymakers, universities, and employers, as it directly impacts how well educational programs prepare students for the job market (Yi et al., 2025). By understanding these issues, we can enhance graduate employability and ensure that political science education is aligned with the evolving needs of the job market (Moulton, 2023).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the job sectors that political science graduates from major public universities in Bangladesh are most likely to enter.
2. To explore the skills and abilities that political science graduates consider essential for securing a job and succeeding in their early careers.
3. To assess the challenges political science graduates encounter when transitioning from education to professional work.
4. To evaluate how internships, professional networks, and real-world projects can enhance the employability of political science graduates.
5. To suggest strategies for improving the curriculum and fostering collaboration between universities and employers to better align education with job opportunities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The employability of political science graduates has become a key topic in recent years, with universities striving to update their programs to better align with the job market's needs. Research from around the world indicates that the transition from education to work is not always smooth for political science graduates. Many encounter difficulties in finding jobs that match their skills and expectations. This review examines the main factors related to the employability of political science graduates, including the sectors they typically work in, the skills employers prioritize, and the challenges they face in securing employment.

Graduate Employability in Political Science

There is more research on job opportunities for social science graduates, including political science. Moulton (2023) says political science graduates often struggle to find jobs that match their degree. Many jobs need practical experience and specific skills. These skills are not always taught in university programs. As a result, there is more focus on internships, training, and working with employers to help students find jobs (Yi et al., 2025). Some graduates get jobs in public administration and research. Others find work in fields that are not related to their degree, like teaching or administrative roles in NGOs (Aziz, 2022).

Sectors of Employment for Political Science Graduates

Research shows that political science graduates enter a variety of sectors. In many countries, public administration and government jobs are considered the main career choices for political science graduates (Ahmmed, 2013). In Bangladesh, civil service is still the most popular sector. Many graduates aim to work in government ministries or public policy roles (O'Regan et al., 2023). The growth of the NGO sector and international development work has led many graduates to look for jobs in NGOs and global organizations (Habib et al., 2023). There are also more opportunities in corporate public affairs and consulting for graduates skilled in policy analysis and communication (Lewis, 2017).

At the same time, many political science graduates are entering fields like media, communications, and research think tanks. Kibria & Hasan (2024) notes that graduates with skills in data analysis, policy evaluation, and communication are more likely to succeed in these areas. However, these fields are competitive and often require strong networking, which can be tough for graduates without good professional connections (Moulton, 2023).

Skills and Competencies for Employability

Research shows that certain skills are crucial for political science graduates to secure good jobs. Yi et al., (2025) note that employers are increasingly looking for practical skills such as policy analysis, research methods, and communication abilities. Graduates with strong data literacy, especially in areas like monitoring and evaluation (M&E) or survey research, are often seen as more employable (O'Regan et al., 2023). However, many political science

programs focus mostly on theory, leaving graduates without the practical skills needed for high-quality jobs (Ahmed, 2013).

The demand for data literacy is growing in the job market (Lewis, 2017). While political theory remains important, the rise of evidence-based policymaking, particularly in international development and governance, means employers now prioritize graduates with data analysis skills (Habib et al., 2023). Employers in the public sector and NGOs are especially looking for graduates who can assist with policy evaluation, performance measurement, and data-driven decision-making (Kibria & Hasan, 2024).

Barriers to Employability

Several studies highlight the challenges political science graduates face in the job market. One key issue is the lack of practical experience, as employers often prefer candidates with internships or fieldwork (O'Regan et al., 2023). In Bangladesh, the shortage of formal internships and hands-on learning opportunities in political science programs has left many graduates unprepared for the workforce (Yi et al., 2025). This is particularly true in the public sector, where entry-level positions often require experience or connections that new graduates don't have (Aziz, 2022).

Another challenge is navigating unclear recruitment processes. Many graduates struggle with complex hiring systems, especially in government and NGO sectors. The lack of transparency, combined with a competitive job market, only makes things harder (Hasan & Sharmin, 2024; Moulton, 2023).

Credential inflation is also a growing concern, particularly in Bangladesh's public universities. As more graduates enter the job market, the value of a political science degree has diminished. Employers now often demand postgraduate degrees or additional certifications, especially in fields like research and consulting (Ahmed, 2013; Lewis, 2017).

Curriculum and Employer Collaboration

To address these challenges, the literature suggests universities improve their curriculum by adding practical training. This includes internships, case studies, and employer-led workshops (Kibria & Hasan, 2024). Universities should also build stronger connections with employers through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and industry partnerships. This would create more chances for students to engage with employers before graduation (O'Regan et al., 2023). These collaborations are vital in aligning academic training with labor market needs. They ensure that graduates have the skills to succeed in their careers (Yi et al., 2025).

Conclusion of Literature Review

The literature on graduate employability in political science highlights several areas for improvement. There are opportunities in public administration, NGOs, think tanks, and consulting. However, many graduates struggle with challenges like a lack of practical experience, unclear recruitment processes, and credential inflation. To address these issues, political science programs in Bangladesh's public universities should place more emphasis on applied learning. Additionally, stronger connections with employers are essential to enhance employability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We conducted semi-structured interviews with final-year undergraduate and postgraduate political science students from major public universities (n≈20–30; purposive + snowball sampling). The interviews, lasting 35–60 minutes, focused on expected sectors, skills in demand, entry pathways, and barriers. The audio was transcribed and thematically coded using an inductive-deductive approach by two researchers. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent and anonymization.

Table 1: List of Interview Questions

Research Objective	Interview Question
1. To identify the expected employment sectors for political science graduates from major public universities in Bangladesh.	1. What sectors do you think political science graduates from your university usually work in after graduation? 2. Which sector do you see yourself working in, and why? 3. How do you think the job market for political science graduates has changed in recent years? 4. Are there any new sectors that political science graduates should consider?
2. To explore the skills and competencies that political science graduates perceive as crucial for securing employment and succeeding in their early careers.	1. What skills do you think political science graduates need to get a job? 2. How important are skills like policy analysis, communication, and data literacy for getting a job, in your opinion? 3. Do you think your university's political science program teaches these skills well? If not, which skills need more focus? 4. Can you share an example of a skill or competency that helped you in your internships or career-related experiences?
3. To assess the barriers and challenges faced by political science graduates in transitioning from academic training to professional employment.	1. What do you think are the biggest challenges in finding a job after graduation with a political science degree? 2. Have you faced any difficulties in your job search so far? What were they? 3. Do you think the lack of practical experience or internships has made it harder for you and your peers to find a job? 4. How do you feel about the job market for political science graduates; do you think it's competitive?
4. To evaluate the role of internships, networks, and tangible outputs in enhancing the employability of political science graduates.	1. How important do you think internships are for improving employability for political science graduates? 2. Have you had any internship experiences? If so, how did they affect your career goals? 3. Do you think your university provides enough opportunities for internships or fieldwork? 4. How do professional networks (like alumni or faculty connections) help you in your job search or career planning? 5. How important are tangible outputs (like policy memos, research papers, or projects) in making a graduate more employable?

5. To recommend strategies for curriculum improvement and employer collaboration to bridge the gap between education and employment.	1. What changes would you suggest to the current political science curriculum to better prepare graduates for the job market? 2. How can your university improve its collaboration with employers to help political science students get jobs? 3. Do you think adding more practical learning (like internships or case studies) would help students transition into the workforce more easily? 4. What kind of support or initiatives would you like from your department to help you get a job after graduation?
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Interview Process

The interviews for this study were conducted with final-year undergraduate and postgraduate students from the political science departments of University of Dhaka and University of Chittagong. Below are the process:

Participant Selection

We used purposive sampling to select participants, focusing on final-year students in the political science departments of both universities. The goal was to get insights from students who were close to graduation and had clear career goals. We also used snowball sampling, where initial participants referred others who met the study's criteria.

Recruitment and Informed Consent

Participants were recruited through university announcements and direct communication with faculty members. They were informed about the study's objectives and the confidentiality of their responses. Each participant signed an informed consent form. This form explained that participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Interview Preparation

The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility. This helped explore participants' expectations and experiences. The questions aimed to cover employment sectors, key skills, barriers, the role of internships, and curriculum improvements for employability.

Interview Execution

Each interview lasted 35 to 60 minutes. They were conducted in person at the universities, in quiet rooms or common areas based on the participant's preference. Some interviews were held virtually for those unable to attend in person. All interviews were in Bengali to ensure comfort. The researcher or a trained assistant took detailed notes and recorded the interviews with consent.

Interview Protocol

The interviews started with a brief introduction to the study. Participants were encouraged to speak freely and assured of confidentiality. Open-ended questions allowed them to share their experiences. The questions were clear and neutral to capture accurate responses.

Data Collection and Recording

All interviews were audio-recorded with consent. The interviewer also took detailed notes, noting non-verbal cues and important points. After each interview, the recordings were transcribed for thematic analysis.

Method of Coding and Data Analysis

Thematic coding was used to analyze the data. This method helps identify patterns and themes within the interview transcripts. Below is a description of how the coding was carried out

Transcription of Interviews

Process: After the interviews, the research team transcribed the audio recordings verbatim into text. The transcription was done in Bengali to ensure accuracy and match the participants' language. The transcripts were reviewed multiple times to make sure no content was missed or transcribed incorrectly.

Output: The final transcripts included all verbatim responses, including pauses, emphasis, and non-verbal cues where needed. This helped capture the full depth of the interviews.

Initial Familiarization with the Data

Step 1: Reading the Transcripts

Before coding, both researchers carefully read all the transcripts to become familiar with the data. During this reading, they took notes on recurring themes and key insights that were relevant to the research goals.

Step 2: Identifying Preliminary Themes

In this step, the researchers identified initial themes or patterns in the data. These insights were noted, but they had not yet been developed into formal codes.

Creating the Initial Codebook

The codebook was created to make sure the analysis matched the research objectives. The initial codes came from:

- **Research objectives:** For example, questions about expected employment sectors were coded as "Sector Expectation."
- **Interview questions:** Each question was linked to a specific code for focus during analysis.
- **Key themes from literature:** If prior studies mentioned themes like employability barriers or required skills, they were added to the codebook to compare with new findings.

Types of Codes:

- **Descriptive codes:** These capture specific content or topics (e.g., "skills," "internships," "barriers").
- **Analytical codes:** These are broader, interpretive codes, like "opportunities for improvement" or "curriculum gaps."
- **In vivo codes:** These capture direct phrases or terms used by participants, such as "lack of hands-on training" or "networking."

Step 1: Open Coding

In the first phase, the two researchers independently reviewed the transcripts and applied codes to the data. They highlighted key phrases or sections that related to the interview questions or research goals. These were then assigned the most appropriate codes from the codebook. For instance, phrases such as "public administration" or "NGOs" were coded as "Sector Expectation." Phrases like "policy analysis," "communication," or "data analysis" were coded as "Key Skills."

Step 2: Axial Coding

After open coding, the researchers moved to axial coding. They organized the initial codes into broader categories by grouping related codes together and identifying relationships between them. For example, references to internships and project experience were grouped under the theme “Practical Experience.” Barriers such as lack of opportunities and unpaid internships were grouped under the theme “Barriers to Employment.”

Step 3: Selective Coding

In the final phase, selective coding was conducted to identify the core themes. The researchers focused on the most significant themes that directly addressed the research objectives. They ensured that each theme was thoroughly supported by the data.

Ensuring Consistency and Reliability**Independent Coding**

To ensure reliability, the two researchers coded the transcripts separately. This allowed for unbiased and thorough identification of themes.

Inter-Coder Agreement

After coding independently, the researchers compared their results. They reviewed the codes assigned to each section of text and discussed any differences.

For example, if one researcher coded a response as “Barriers to Employment” and the other as “Sector Expectations,” they discussed their reasoning and worked together to clarify the correct code.

Resolution of Discrepancies

Discrepancies were resolved through discussion. If the researchers disagreed on how to code a specific piece of text, they revisited the context and made a final decision on the best code.

Codebook Refinement

As the coding progressed, the codebook was updated. New codes were added as new themes emerged that weren’t anticipated. For example, if “communication skills” emerged as a key theme, it was added to the codebook.

Final Thematic Analysis

After completing the final coding, the researchers identified key themes and subthemes that answered the research questions. These themes were then analyzed in light of the literature to draw conclusions about the employability of political science graduates.

Themes Identified

The main themes included sector expectations (e.g., government vs. NGOs), skills demand (e.g., data literacy, policy writing), and barriers to employment (e.g., lack of internships, recruitment transparency).

Subthemes

Subthemes were identified within broader categories. For example, under skills demand, subthemes included policy analysis, communication skills, and data analysis.

Results Reporting**Exemplar Quotes**

To illustrate key themes, quotes from participants were included. Each theme was supported by verbatim quotes that showed the depth of the data.

Reporting the Findings

The findings were shared in a narrative format. Each theme was discussed in relation to the research goals and compared with existing literature. This helped to provide insights into graduate employability, the skills employers seek, and the barriers to career entry.

Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations

All interviews followed ethical standards. Participants' identities were anonymized, and identifying details were removed from the transcripts. Participants were assured that their responses would only be used for academic purposes. The study was approved by the ethics committee at both Dhaka University and Chittagong University.

FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEW

The following findings came from interviews with three final-year political science students (pseudonyms: Amina, TARIQ, and RASHID) from Dhaka University. The interviews focused on understanding their employment expectations, perceived skills, career barriers, and strategies for improving graduate employability in political science.

Expected Employment Sectors

Amina expressed a strong interest in public administration, particularly the Bangladesh Civil Service. They believe public service aligns with their values and goals to contribute to national policy.

Tariq preferred working in NGOs or international development, aiming to contribute to grassroots development and human rights. They also showed interest in research/think tanks, focusing on policy analysis and advocacy.

Rashid was interested in media/communications, seeing political science training as useful for political journalism or media roles that influence public opinion. They also showed interest in corporate public affairs, applying skills in stakeholder relationships and public relations.

Skills and Competencies for Employment

Amina believes policy analysis and communication skills are crucial, especially in the public sector. They also mentioned that data literacy, such as monitoring and evaluation, is becoming more important.

Tariq stressed the value of fieldwork experience, noting that hands-on work in NGOs or international organizations builds valuable skills. They emphasized that knowledge in program evaluation and data analysis is important for success in development sectors.

Rashid highlighted the importance of research skills, especially for policy briefs and communication. These skills are essential for media and public affairs roles. Digital literacy and social media management were also seen as key for employability in modern media jobs.

Barriers to Employment

Amina pointed out the lack of internship opportunities as a major barrier. While there are some opportunities in government ministries, they are highly competitive and often unpaid, making them less accessible.

Tariq identified opaque recruitment processes in the NGO sector. Many positions are filled through informal channels or require connections, making it hard for graduates without networks to get in.

Rashid mentioned credential inflation as a challenge. They felt that while a political science degree is valuable, many employers in media and corporate sectors now expect master's degrees or additional qualifications to stand out in the hiring process.

Role of Internships, Networks, and Tangible Outputs

Amina emphasized that internships are essential for entering the civil service. Networks, like alumni connections, are also key for securing interviews and job placements.

Tariq talked about how fieldwork and internships with international organizations enhanced their sector understanding and networking opportunities. They also believed that policy memos and similar outputs would help in development roles.

Rashid discussed how internships in media outlets and public affairs firms helped them build portfolios of policy analysis and media pieces. They stressed that networks, especially through university events and faculty connections, play a significant role in job placement.

Recommendations for Curriculum Improvement and Employer Collaboration

Amina recommended universities add more practical training like internships, simulation exercises, and policy workshops. They also suggested stronger ties with government agencies to increase internship and job opportunities.

Tariq suggested closer collaboration with NGOs and international organizations, such as research projects, internships, and academic-industry conferences. They recommended a greater emphasis on project management and program evaluation within the curriculum.

Rashid proposed that universities partner with media organizations and corporate public affairs firms to offer students real-world experience. They also recommended adding digital media and media relations courses to better prepare students for the evolving media landscape.

The findings from the interviews show that political science graduates from Dhaka University have diverse career interests, particularly in public administration, NGOs, media, and consulting. However, they face significant challenges, such as limited internship opportunities, unclear recruitment processes, and credential inflation. To improve employability, universities should focus on providing more practical training and better collaboration with employers. Incorporating hands-on experiences into the curriculum will help bridge the gap between academic training and job market needs, preparing graduates for successful careers.

DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings are analyzed in relation to existing research and objectives. The key themes from interviews with political science graduates from Dhaka University are explored. The analysis focuses on their expected job sectors, essential skills, barriers to employment, and recommendations for improving the curriculum. It compares the findings with previous studies and highlights the implications for both education and the job market.

EXPECTED EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

The interviews show that political science graduates have diverse career interests. Many are interested in public administration, NGOs, international development, media, and corporate public affairs/consulting. A significant number prefer public administration, especially the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS), due to its stability and structure. This reflects Bangladesh's political context, where public sector jobs are highly valued (Ahmmed, 2013).

Graduates are also drawn to NGOs and international development, wanting to contribute to grassroots development or international policy. Some are interested in media and communication roles, using their political science knowledge in journalism or public relations. Additionally, corporate public affairs and consulting are areas of growing interest. Graduates aim to apply their skills in policy analysis and communication in these fields.

These findings match global trends. Political science graduates worldwide are attracted to sectors that require strong communication, analytical, and policy skills (Moulton, 2023; O'Regan et al., 2023). In countries like the U.S. and UK, many political science graduates enter the private sector or consulting firms, driven by demand for policy expertise (Yi et al., 2025).

In Bangladesh, however, the preference for public administration, particularly the BCS, is more pronounced. The BCS offers stable jobs, which is appealing in a country where job security is important (Aziz, 2022). The civil service remains the top career choice for graduates, unlike in other countries where public sector jobs are less popular than private sector roles (Moulton, 2023).

The findings also align with trends in the U.S. and UK, where political science graduates often pursue government or international organization careers. However, in Bangladesh, NGOs and private sector jobs are becoming more important. This shift reflects the country's increasing focus on global development and cooperation (Kibria & Hasan, 2024). Expertise in international development, human rights, and policy evaluation is seen as crucial for Bangladesh's growth in global policy (Habib et al., 2023).

The findings suggest a shift towards specialized roles in NGOs, international organizations, and consulting. This is driven by Bangladesh's growing involvement in global policy and development. As international cooperation expands, political science graduates will play a key role in shaping these organizations (O'Regan et al., 2023). This marks a shift from the traditional focus on public administration in Bangladesh.

Skills and Competencies for Employment

The interviews revealed that policy analysis, communication skills, and data literacy are crucial for securing a job. Participants emphasized the importance of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and survey skills. This aligns with the increasing need for evidence-based policymaking and accountability in governance. According to Lewis (2017), these skills are particularly valuable in sectors where policy impact is measured, such as NGOs and international development. Many graduates highlighted that strong data and evaluation skills enhance employability in competitive policy sectors.

The findings also suggest that political science programs focus mainly on theory. Practical skills, such as data analysis, policy evaluation, and survey design, are not developed enough. Aziz (2022) and Yi et al., (2025) identified this gap between curriculum content and the labor market's needs. While understanding political systems and ideologies is important, graduates often struggle to apply this knowledge in real-world jobs.

Previous studies have shown that data skills are becoming more valuable, especially in NGOs and research think tanks. These sectors rely on data-driven decision-making (Yi et al., 2025). Graduates with expertise in M&E, data collection, and quantitative research are in high demand. These skills are critical for assessing the success of development programs and policy interventions (Habib et al., 2023). This trend is particularly relevant in Bangladesh, where the development sector is growing rapidly. Organizations now face increased pressure to use data for funding decisions, measuring outcomes, and making informed policy recommendations (Kibria & Hasan, 2024).

Despite the demand for these skills, political science programs in Bangladesh still focus mainly on theory. There is little emphasis on practical skills like policy analysis, program evaluation, and data literacy (Aziz, 2022). This gap highlights the need for a stronger focus on these competencies to better prepare graduates for the job market, especially in sectors where these skills are essential.

Barriers to Employment

The study identified key barriers to the employability of political science graduates. These include a lack of internship opportunities, unclear recruitment processes, and credential inflation. One major barrier is the difficulty in accessing internships, particularly in government ministries. This finding aligns with other studies that point to the lack of structured internship programs for political science students (Hasan & Sharmin, 2024).

Government internships, which are often seen as a route to public sector jobs, are highly competitive. Many are unpaid or only accessible through personal networks, making them less available to most graduates.

Credential inflation is another challenge, particularly in sectors like media and consulting. Employers are increasingly requiring master's degrees or additional certifications. This trend reflects broader global shifts in higher education and the job market (Moulton, 2023). As more graduates enter the job market with similar qualifications, employers raise the standards for entry-level positions. As a result, an undergraduate degree in political science is often no longer enough, pushing graduates to pursue further studies to remain competitive.

These barriers are not unique to Bangladesh but are faced by political science graduates worldwide. Employers often require work experience, but many graduates struggle to gain this due to a lack of internships and fieldwork opportunities (Aziz, 2022). Internships are essential for building practical experience and networks, but many political science departments in Bangladesh lack formal internship programs. This creates a significant challenge for students entering competitive job markets (Yi et al., 2025). O'Regan et al., (2023) also pointed out the gap between academic preparation and the real-world skills needed for employability in political science roles.

Credential inflation is a global issue. As Lewis (2017) points out, employers in competitive fields like media, consulting, and corporate public affairs now require advanced degrees or certifications for even entry-level positions. This reflects a broader trend in higher education, where degrees are increasingly seen as essential for securing employment, and additional qualifications are needed to stand out in crowded job markets (Moulton, 2023).

Role of Internships, Networks, and Tangible Outputs

Internships, professional networks, and tangible outputs (like policy memos and project reports) are key factors in improving employability. The study found that graduates with internships or those who created tangible outputs felt more confident in their job search. They also had clearer career paths. These experiences helped them develop practical skills that employers value, especially in sectors like NGOs, international development, and consulting, where hands-on experience is crucial (Yi et al., 2025). Internships were seen as a bridge between academic learning and professional practice, allowing graduates to apply their knowledge in real-world settings.

The findings align with previous studies that highlight the role of internships and networking in boosting employability. O'Regan et al., (2023) note that internships offer exposure to real-world work and increase job opportunities. Ahmmed (2013) adds that professional networks from internships can help graduates find job opportunities in fields like international development, research, and NGOs. Kibria & Hasan (2024) stresses the need for universities to build stronger connections with employers to create more internships and support networking.

The study also found that tangible outputs, like policy memos, project reports, and research papers, are important. These outputs show that graduates can perform tasks employers need. According to the literature, policy briefs and reports help graduates get jobs and show their ability to contribute to policy analysis and advocacy (Yi et al., 2025). Graduates with such outputs have a competitive edge in the job market.

Recommendations for Curriculum Improvement and Employer Collaboration

To address gaps in the current political science curriculum, participants recommended adding more practical learning. They suggested including internships, simulation exercises, and policy workshops as core components. These hands-on activities would help bridge the gap between theory and practice, preparing graduates for the workforce. Participants also

emphasized the need for stronger collaboration between universities and employers through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and joint projects. This would give students industry-specific knowledge and experience (Kibria & Hasan, 2024).

A key recommendation was to integrate digital media and data analysis courses into the curriculum. As the political landscape evolves, especially in media and consulting sectors, digital skills are becoming increasingly important. Graduates noted that digital literacy, including managing social media and understanding data analytics, is essential for many political science careers. This is particularly true in media and public affairs. Employers now expect graduates to be skilled in both traditional and digital communication.

These recommendations align with broader calls for curriculum reform. Studies emphasize the need for more applied learning and real-world engagement in political science education (Lewis, 2017). Adding internships, field-based learning, and collaborative projects helps students transition from academia to the workforce (O'Regan et al., 2023). The demand for data analysis and digital media skills is growing, and graduates need these to stay competitive (Kibria & Hasan, 2024). This highlights the importance of adapting political science programs to meet current labor market needs.

The findings also stress the importance of university-industry partnerships for better employer collaboration. Research supports this, showing that stronger connections between universities and employers lead to better job outcomes for graduates (Moulton, 2023). Partnerships with government, NGOs, and the private sector can offer students real-world projects, internships, and job placements, improving their employability.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the employability of political science graduates from major public universities in Bangladesh. It focused on their job expectations, needed skills, and challenges in moving from academia to work. Interviews with final-year students at Dhaka University and Chittagong University offered insights and practical recommendations for improving career outcomes.

Graduates expect to work in public administration, NGOs, international development, media, and corporate consulting. Many prefer government jobs, especially in the Bangladesh Civil Service, due to stability. However, interest in development and media roles is growing, reflecting shifts in the job market. These findings align with global trends where political science graduates enter sectors like policy analysis, international relations, and public affairs (Moulton, 2023; Yi et al., (2025)). The focus on public administration in Bangladesh shows the civil service provides a stable career path (Ahmed, 2013).

The study also found key skills needed for employment, including policy analysis, communication, and data literacy. Graduates highlighted the importance of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and survey skills. These skills are increasingly important in evidence-based policymaking (Lewis, 2017). However, there is a gap between university theory and the practical skills employers require (Aziz, 2022; (Yi et al., 2025)). Graduates called for more hands-on training in data analysis and policy evaluation.

Barriers to employment include a lack of internships, unclear recruitment processes, and credential inflation. While internships are essential for experience, many are unpaid or competitive, limiting access for many. This matches findings from other studies on the difficulty of obtaining field-based experiences in Bangladesh's political science programs (Hasan & Sharmin, 2024). Credential inflation, especially in media and consulting sectors, where employers demand master's degrees, is a significant challenge (Moulton, 2023).

Internships, networks, and tangible outputs like policy memos and research papers are critical in enhancing employability. Graduates said internships helped them gain valuable

experience and build professional networks, which are key for securing jobs. The study supports previous research that shows the value of networking and practical experience (Yi et al., 2025). Tangible outputs help demonstrate skills to employers, especially in NGOs and consulting (O'Regan et al., 2023).

The study also recommends improving the curriculum and increasing employer collaboration. Graduates suggested more practical learning opportunities, such as internships, simulation exercises, and policy workshops. Stronger collaboration between universities and employers through MOUs and joint projects would help students gain real-world experience. These suggestions align with global calls for curriculum reforms focused on applied learning and industry engagement (Kibria & Hasan, 2024; Lewis, 2017).

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the importance of practical skills, internships, networking, and employer collaboration in improving the employability of political science graduates in Bangladesh. Universities should focus more on hands-on experience, digital literacy, and data analysis. Employers will also be crucial in helping graduates transition successfully into professional roles.

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