

Employment Outcomes of National University Graduates: Findings from Follow-up Tracer Study

Presented at the Annual BIDS Conference on Development (ABCD) 2023

Badrun Nessa Ahmed
Zulfiqar Ali
Rizwana Islam

Hotel Lakeshore, Dhaka
08 December 2023

Context and Motivation

- ❑ Educated unemployment (among tertiary level graduates) is high, and it is also increasing over time.
- ❑ According to LFS 2022, it has gone up from 11.2% in 2016/17 to 12% in 2022.
- ❑ Educated unemployment is more than twice the overall national unemployment according to LFS 2022.
- ❑ The Ministry of Education with support from the World Bank is implementing a project called the College Education Development Project (CEDP) among selected tertiary level colleges in Bangladesh.
- ❑ Some of the important objectives of CEDP include:
 - ✓ Improving teaching and learning environment in participating colleges.
 - ✓ Enhancing the employability of National University (NU) graduates.
- ❑ CEDP promotes institution-led activities through providing competitive grants and training.
- ❑ As part of its activities, and upon request from CEDP, two rounds of tracer studies were conducted by BIDS.
- ❑ The present study is based on the follow-up tracer study that was conducted in 2023.

Focus of the Tracer Study (TS) on Graduates

- ❑ **Both rounds were conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)**
 - First round covered: students who graduated in 2017
 - Follow-up round covered: students who graduated in 2018

- ❑ **The survey focuses on the following aspects:**
 - In-depth assessment of labor market outcomes and economic activities of graduates;
 - Socio-economic background of current student, motivation, financing arrangements and perceptions on college education and market relevance;
 - Teaching-learning environment in the colleges;
 - Employers' views on NU graduates and tertiary level college education;
 - Challenges the colleges faced and way forward.

Methodological Approach & Sampling

- ❑ Mixed method approach was used (i.e., quantitative and qualitative);
- ❑ Data were collected from FOUR category of respondents:
 - ✓ graduates,
 - ✓ students,
 - ✓ college principals, and
 - ✓ current employers of NU graduates.
- ❑ 4 sets of survey questionnaires were used to collect information.
- ❑ Qualitative approaches, such as, focus group discussion (FGD) with the teachers and the students; and key informant interviews (KII) with other relevant stakeholders were also carried out.

- ❑ Population of this study was the graduates of NU-affiliated colleges in Bangladesh.
- ❑ About 608 honors and master's colleges are affiliated with NU:
 - 437 are non-government, and 171 are government colleges;
- ❑ 10% of colleges were selected for survey.
- ❑ Sample size covers:
 - Colleges: 61 colleges (Government: 17, Non-government: 44)
 - Graduates: 1,340
 - Students: 670
 - Principals: 61
 - Employers: 100 (Public: 50; Private: 50)

Findings of the Study

Who Are The National University Students?

- ❑ Gender: 58% of the graduates are male and 42% are female;
- ❑ About 38% of the graduates hold a masters degree; and 62% hold an honors degree; and
- ❑ Academic results of the students are usually average.

% of graduates with CGPA obtained

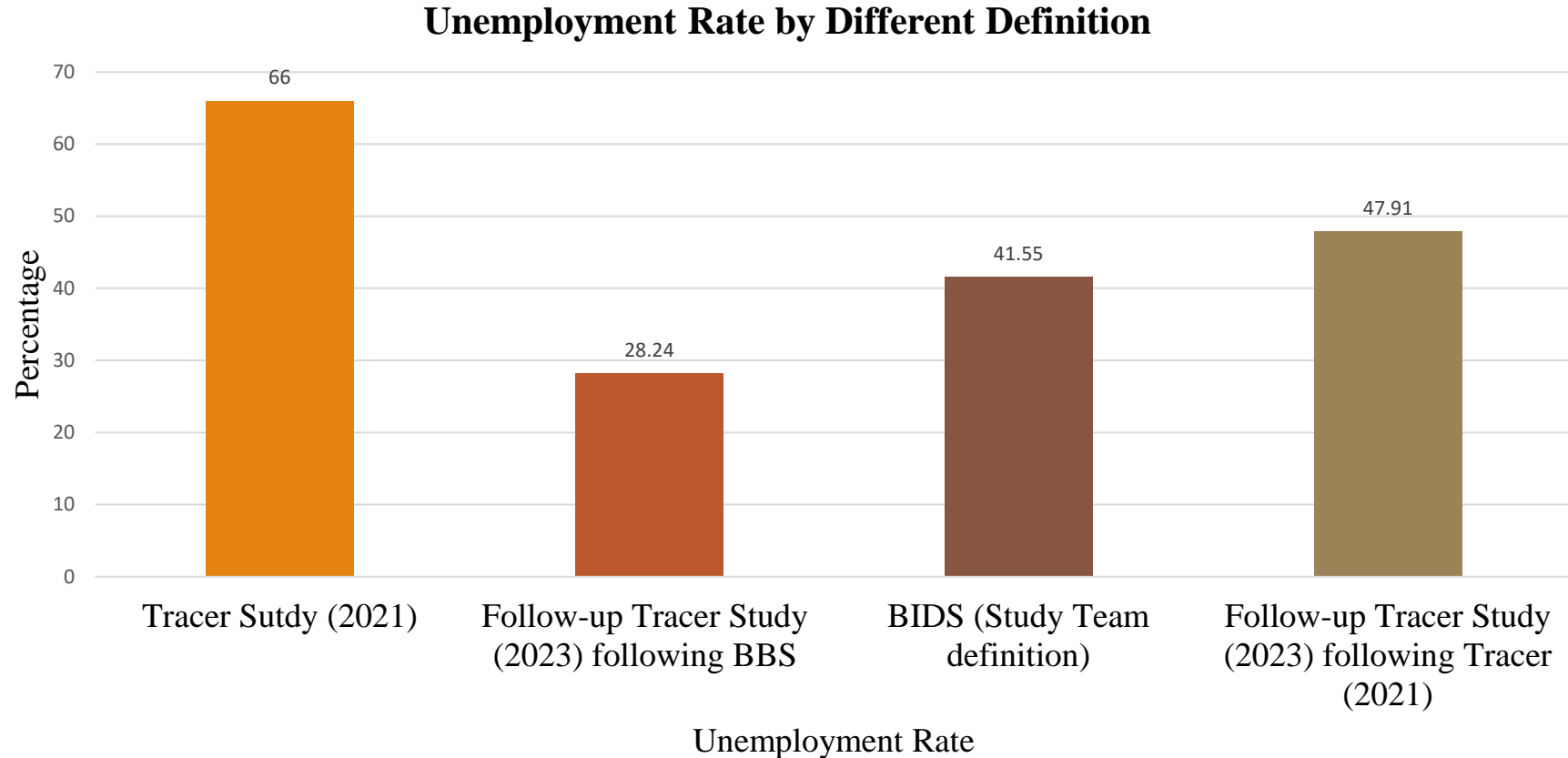
Major	%	Average CGPA	Major	%	Average CGPA
Bachelor in Science	3.82	3.00	Masters in Science	31.05	3.10
Bachelor in Social Science (BSS)	14.28	2.91	Masters in Social Science (MSS)	11.76	2.98
Bachelor in Arts	37.62	2.85	Masters in Arts	32.00	2.93
Bachelor in Business Administration/Commerce	44.26	2.89	Masters in Business Administration/Commerce	25.17	3.17

- ❑ Average household income and expenditures are Tk. 36,109 and Tk. 25,871 respectively;
- ❑ **Most students belong to lower middle-income families (73%);**

Graduates' Parental Background

Level of Education	Graduates (%) with Parent's Education		Graduates (%) with Parent's Occupation		
	Fathers' Education	Mothers' Education	Occupation	Fathers' Occupation	Mothers' Occupation
No education	15.1	26.4	Homemaker	-	97.61
Primary	25.1	41.7	Professional	4.12	0.54
SSC/Equivalent	26.0	24.8	Government employee	13.99	0.92
HSC/Equivalent	11.5	5.0	Private sector employee	13.60	0.39
Bachelor degree	13.3	1.6	Autonomous institution employee	2.10	0.08
Master's degree	8.5	0.4	Bank/Insurance institution employee	1.17	0.15
Others	0.5	0.2	NGO/Trust/Foundation employee	1.79	0.08
			Business	26.96	0.15
			Self Employed Activities	6.84	0.08
			Agriculture & agro-based occupations	29.45	-

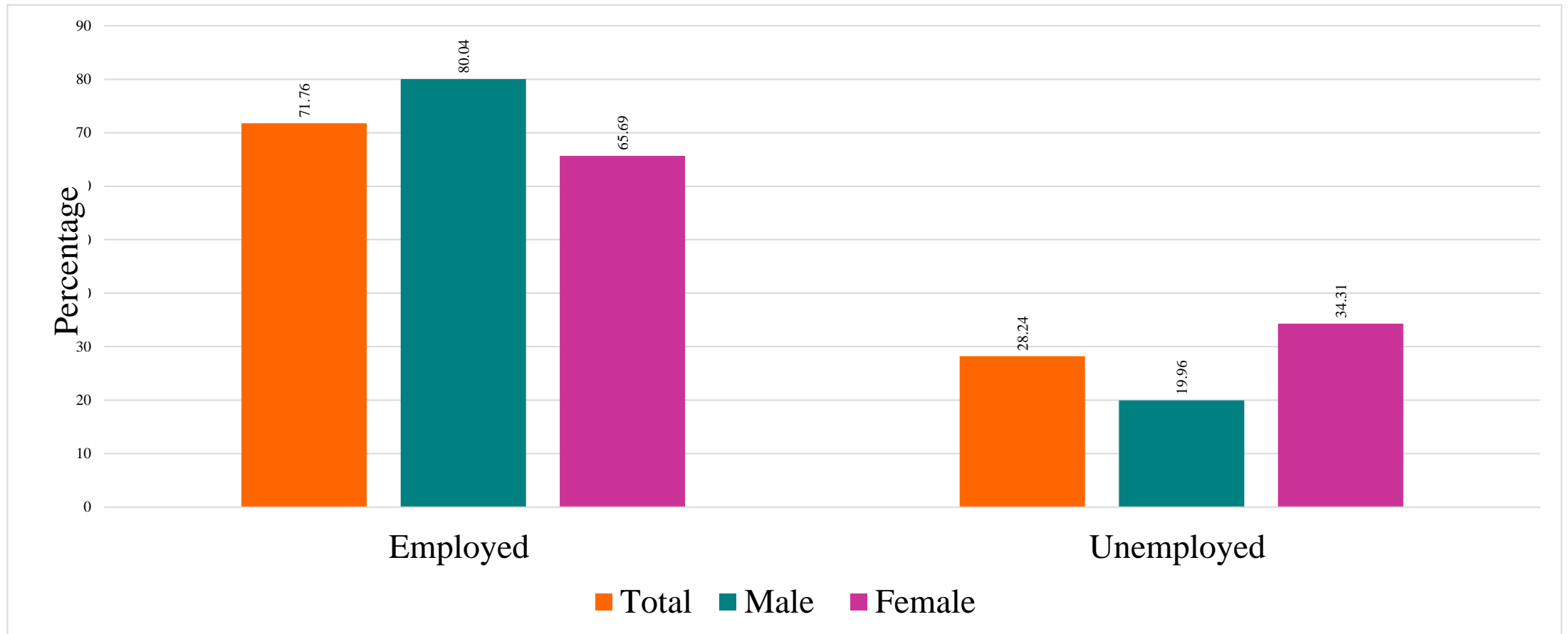
Employment Outcome of NU Graduates: Results from Tracer Studies



Trends in Employment Outcome of NU Graduates

Status	2015 (WB)	2018 (UGC)	2019 (WB)	2021 (BIDS)	2023 (BIDS)
Labor force participation rate	51%	65%	65%	88%	91%
% of unemployed	-	46%	46%	66%	28-48%

Gender Disaggregated Employment Outcome of NU Graduates

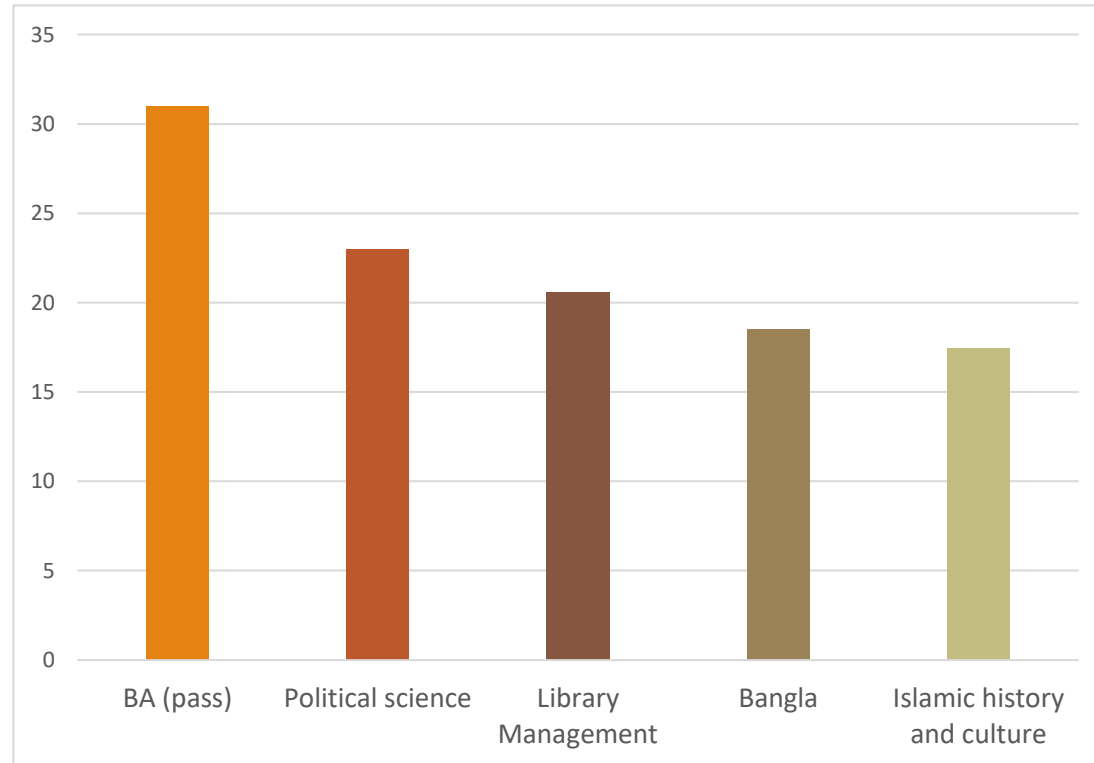


Types of Employment among NU Graduates

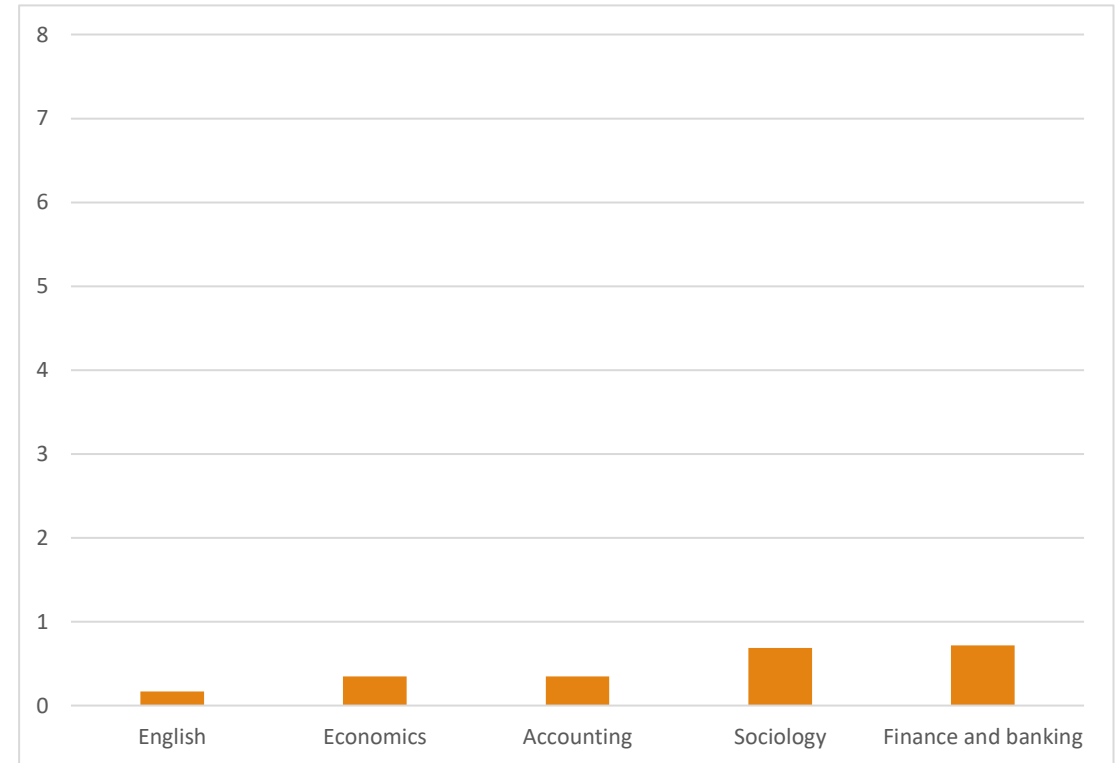
Status of graduates	Tracer study (2021) (%)	Follow-up tracer study (2023) following calculation of tracer study (2021) (%)	Follow-up tracer study (2023) (%)
Salaried employed	21	28.73	42.29
Self-employed	1.5	10.93	16.24
Unemployed	66	47.91	28.24
Full-time/Part-time study	7	12.40	-
Part-time work and study	-	-	13.22

Rates of Employment by Subjects Studies

Subjects having highest % of unemployed graduates



Subjects having lowest % of unemployed graduates



Aspiration of the Graduates

Graduates' perception about their future

How optimistic are you about the future?	Govt.			Non-Govt.			All college		
	H	M	T	H	M	T	H	M	T
Not optimistic at all	2.4	1.7	2.0	3.2	8.3	4.0	3.0	3.9	3.3
Somewhat optimistic	13.7	8.3	11.0	17.3	18.3	17.4	16.4	11.6	15.1
Careless about the future	2.4	4.1	3.3	5.1	8.3	5.6	4.5	5.5	4.7
Optimistic/Hopeful	48.4	44.6	46.5	40.5	48.3	41.6	42.5	45.9	43.4
Very optimistic	33.1	41.3	37.1	33.8	16.7	31.4	33.6	33.1	33.5

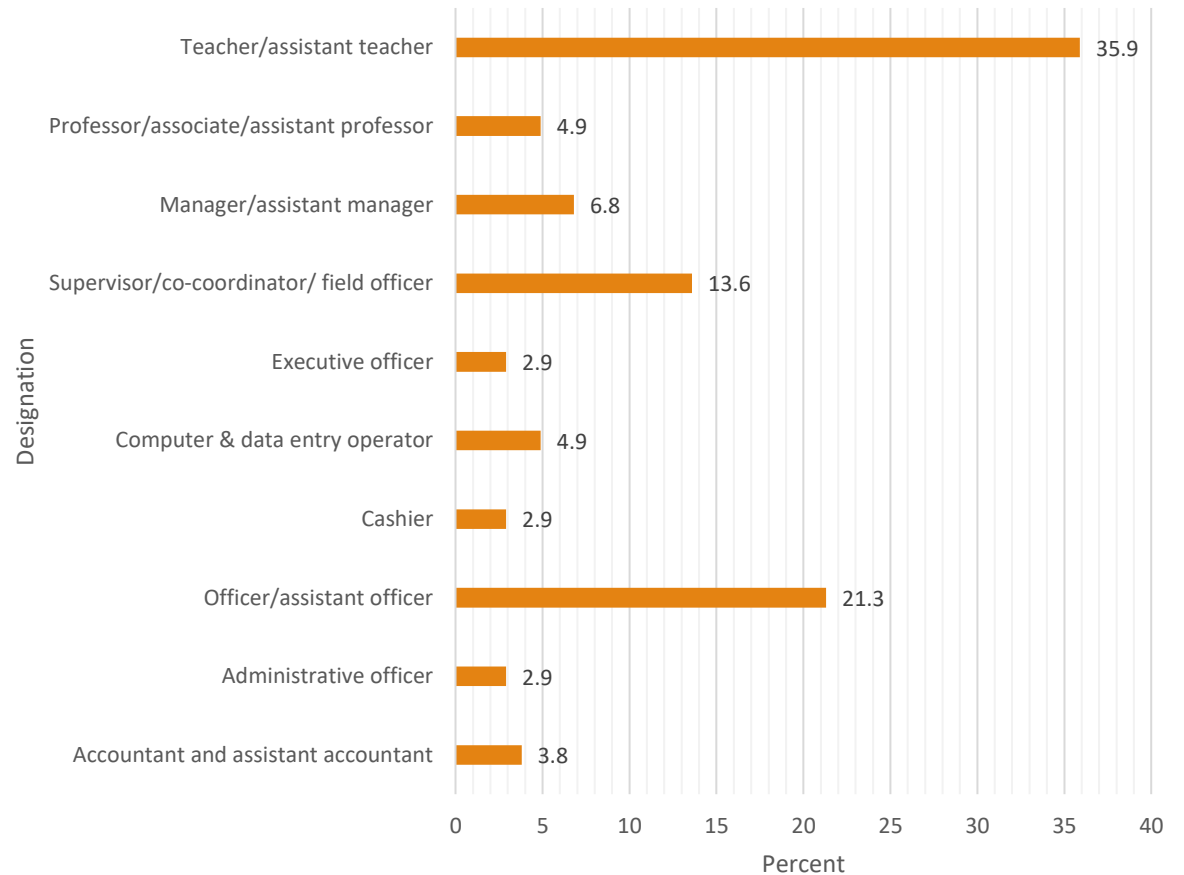
Aspiration of the Graduates (contd.)

Graduates' perception about their life compared to their parents

How do you think your life will be compared to your parents?	Govt.			Non-Govt.			All college		
	H	M	T	H	M	T	H	M	T
Very good	36.3	18.2	27.3	30.3	15.0	28.1	31.8	17.1	27.9
Good	55.6	76.0	65.7	57.8	63.3	58.6	57.3	71.8	61.2
Remain the same	3.2	3.3	3.3	7.0	8.3	7.2	6.1	5.0	5.8
Bad	1.6	2.5	2.0	2.7	11.7	4.0	2.4	5.5	3.3
Very bad	3.2	-	1.6	2.2	1.7	2.1	2.4	0.6	1.9

Types of Work the Graduates are Involved in and Employers' Opinion about Their Skills Level and Performance

- ❑ A large proportion of the NU Graduates are working as teachers or assistant teachers (36%).
- ❑ According to the employers, ICT (90%), English Language (90%), Communication (78%), Problem-solving (75%), and Teamwork (61%) are the most important areas that they would like to see among the graduates they employ.
- ❑ Employers value soft skills in addition to academic qualifications and would also like the colleges to strengthen training in ICT, communication, and language skills.



Challenges the Colleges Face

- ❑ Attendance of students in the NU affiliated colleges is very poor.
- ❑ Adverse teacher-student ratio.
- ❑ Lack of regular training for the teachers.
- ❑ Lack of incentives for the teachers also.
- ❑ Bangla is widely used in lectures, exams and communications; while this should not be a problem, but it doesn't fully align with the expectations of the employers.
- ❑ Collaboration with the industry is virtually non-existent.
- ❑ Many subjects the colleges offer have very low demand in the job market (General History, Islamic History, Political Science, Philosophy, etc. are a few example among them).
- ❑ Other problems include lack of internship programs, absence of alumni association, absence of career counseling services, no job-fair arrangement, lack of short course, and compulsory language and technical courses, etc.

Implications for Policy

- Strengthening teaching capacity:
 - Recruiting required number of quality teacher
 - Providing them with regular training (both subject-based and pedagogical)
- Improving teaching-learning environment in the colleges:
 - Improving physical facilities with modern equipment (multi-media classrooms, ICT lab, etc.)
 - Ensuring quality teaching and learning
 - Improving/revising exams/students evaluation system
 - Introducing feedback system on the quality of teaching
- Introducing market-based learning facilities and extra-curricular activities (various clubs, etc.)
- Providing students with the opportunities to gain practical exposure to their field of study through presentations, teamwork, research and internships.
- Establishing direct links with the prospective employers/industries (i.e., internships, career counselling, job fairs, etc.)
- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation; and conducting periodic graduate tracking.

Thanks for your kind attention!!