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Degrees or Disillusionment: A Study of Intellectual Frustration and Brain Drain Among English Graduates in Khulna City

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the growing issue of intellectual frustration and its connection to brain drain among English graduates in Khulna City. Although many students choose to study English because of their genuine interest in language and literature, they often face a clear mismatch between what they learn academically and what the Bangladeshi job market demands. Using a mixed-method, the research examines how institutional limitations such as limited academic resources and a strong memorization-based learning culture lead to feelings of alienation among students. The findings show that many graduates believe that job opportunities are not sufficient, while others are dissatisfied with expected salaries. These unfavorable conditions within the country act as strong push factors. On the other hand, the higher value given to foreign degrees and the visible success of peers living abroad work as pull factors that motivate graduates to migrate. By applying Push–Pull Theory, Marx's idea of intellectual labor, and Anomie Theory, this study demonstrates how the lack of recognition for intellectual skills pushes graduates to seek better opportunities and professional validation outside Bangladesh.

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Introduction

Higher education is often considered a pathway to personal growth, professional success, and social mobility. In Bangladesh, many students choose to study English because of their interest in language, literature, and critical thinking. English graduates are expected to develop intellectual abilities such as critical analysis, communication, and translation which are considered valuable in both academic and professional fields. However, concerns have emerged regarding the effectiveness of an English degree in the job market. Many students complete their degrees with strong theoretical knowledge but face difficulties in applying their skills in practical contexts. This creates a gap between academic learning and employment opportunities. As a result, graduates often struggle to find suitable jobs that match their qualifications and expectations. This mismatch between education and employment leads to a sense of intellectual frustration and alienation among graduates. They begin to feel that their academic efforts are not

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properly recognized or valued in the local context. At the same time, limited job opportunities, low-salary expectations, and lack of career growth further intensify this dissatisfaction. In contrast, foreign countries are often perceived as offering better opportunities, higher salaries, and greater recognition of academic qualifications. Thus, many graduates from the English department consider migration as a possible option to achieve professional success. Therefore, the issue of intellectual frustration is closely connected to the growing trend of brain drain among English graduates. In the context of Khulna City, this problem becomes more significant as opportunities are limited here compared to cities like Dhaka. Therefore, it is important to examine how intellectual frustration develops and how it influences graduates' decisions to seek opportunities abroad.

In Khulna City, a growing number of English graduates complete their degrees with strong academic qualifications yet find themselves unable to secure meaningful employment. Many students choose English programs with a genuine interest in language and literature. However, they encounter a significant mismatch between their academic training and the demands of the job market. The curriculum primarily emphasizes theoretical knowledge, whereas employers expect practical skills such as communication, computer, and professional writing skills. As a result, many graduates face limited job opportunities, low-salary expectations, and a lack of career growth. This situation leads to a feeling that their intellectual labor is undervalued within the local context. Consequently, graduates begin to feel disconnected from the purpose of their education, which contributes to intellectual frustration and a sense of disillusionment.

At the same time, foreign countries offer better employment opportunities, higher salaries, and greater recognition of academic qualifications. These conditions act as strong pull factors, while the local challenges function as push factors. Therefore, many English graduates consider migration to achieve professional validation and economic stability. For conducting the research, the formulated research questions are:

1. In which ways do the gap between acquired degrees and the demands of the job market create intellectual frustration among graduates in Khulna?
2. How do socio-economic, institutional and personal factors responsible for intellectual frustration and influence brain drain among English graduates?

Literature Review

Existing research on Bangladesh shows a strong concern for brain drain. Every year, a large number of postgraduate students pursue foreign scholarships. Farzana and Jamil (2025) note that access to superior education, higher-paying employment, greater living circumstances, and possibilities for personal and professional advancement are the primary motivators for migration. "The findings of regression analysis imply that, among the categories investigated, living conditions had the greatest influence on emigration decisions, whereas the effects of educational, economic, and political situations are not statistically significant in this group" (p. 255). The outrush of students to foreign countries may create a vacuum of intellectual and professional manpower in our country. This confirms that systemic failures in higher education are primary drivers of skilled migration. While Farzana and Jamil explored the broad reasons behind student

migration, the specific reasons such as the educational factor and frustration, remain an unexplored area.

Durglishvili's (2017) work provides a particularly relevant parallel, where he investigates a serious alienation between educational institutions and the labor market in Georgia. The scholar finds out that educational institutions offer programs which "are guided by a competitive environment of higher education" (Durglishvili, 2017, p. 15). That means they do not focus on the skills that are actually needed in the job market. According to Durglishvili (2017), employers in Georgia "request higher education diploma on such positions for which the high education qualifications is not necessary" (p. 17). This becomes more complex as employers train their own staff by "teaching them on spot" (Durglishvili, 2017, p. 20) when they cannot hire professionals. This shrinks job opportunities for those already qualified. These mismatches between educational institutions and job holders may leave students frustrated.

Zaman et al. (2024) fill a significant gap by identifying the key push and pull factors behind student migration. The study identifies the lack of quality education, high unemployment, corruption, political instability, discrimination, and environmental concerns as key push factors. A significant number of participants of this study identified the poor educational state in Bangladesh as the primary motivator for their decision to migrate. Besides, many students decide to migrate because of the higher unemployment rate in Bangladesh. As one participant has noted, "there are more opportunities for their subject-specific jobs in western countries" (Zaman et al., 2024, p. 13). Contrarily, the key pull factors are economic factors, living standards, career advancement, rule of law and justice, citizenship, peer influence and diversified culture, environment, and tourist places. Degrees earned abroad are highly valued not only in Bangladesh but also across many developed countries. In the private job market of our country, candidates with foreign degrees often receive preference. For instance, in the garments sector, many senior and decision-making positions are occupied by individuals who are either foreign nationals or hold foreign qualifications (Zaman et al., 2024, pp. 16–20).

The differences in acquired skills of tertiary level students and the demands of the job market are crucial factors for the students' frustrations. Hassan (2021) directly investigates this disconnect from the perspective of Bangladeshi employers. The study shows that employers prioritize communicative competence in English, including fluency, presentation, reading, writing, and practical workplace communication. Hassan further concludes that English language courses taught at Bangladeshi universities often do not adequately prepare graduates to meet workplace English requirements. This mismatch helps explain why some graduates struggle to meet employers' expectations.

Khairullaev (2025) explores key social factors like intense academic pressure, peer competition, high family expectations, financial stress, and upward social comparison via social media. These factors evoke frustrations among university students. Khairullaev (2025) notes that "upward social comparisons – seeing others as doing better – tend to have particularly harmful effects" (p. 102). Excessive academic workload and fear of failure undermine students' sense of competence, which, according to the author, results in "feelings of frustration, anxiety, and demotivation" (p. 100). The article further highlights how financial hardships can socially isolate students, making them feel inferior. These constant worries may lead them to frustration as they feel they are undervalued.

Hilmi's research was designed to understand what makes university students frustrated and how that frustration changes over their years of study. The study surveyed students to identify the specific situations or incidents that prevented them from

reaching their academic goals such as discrimination, unfair marking, oral and physical harassment etc. (Hilmi, 2015). This article proves that students feel frustration from the environment provided by the university. Hilmi mentioned various obstacles identified by the students that are stopping them to achieve their goal. One of the obstacles mentioned in the study is

> The second aspect of university life that received little mention is the study courses themselves. If those courses are out of date, irrelevant or too large, this creates negative feelings and makes learning an unpleasant experience since it becomes a waste of time. Such feelings make motivation to concentrate, absorb the information, understand and make connections between the different elements of information impossible. The result will be a negative learning experience which students do not want to continue or repeat. (Hilmi, 2015, p. 19)

This early disillusionment fuels their desire for brain drain. Consequently, many talented students seek better educational and career opportunities abroad, accelerating the brain drain phenomenon in developing countries.

Rahman and Rifat (2024) in their study on Bangladeshi students established a link between career frustration, depression and suicidal tendencies. They reported that socio-economic difficulties experienced by university students can contribute to severe mental anxiety and, in some cases, suicidal behaviour (Rahman & Rifat, 2024, p. 37). Under a pseudonym, Asif, a graduate student from JKKNIU, expresses his frustration with the authors. Despite his best efforts, he found it difficult to break into the job market after graduation (Rahman & Rifat, 2024, p. 33). Asif's statement reflects the lived experience of many Bangladeshi graduates. Prolonged unemployment, repeated rejection and mismatch between educational skills and the job market force students into mental suffering.

While existing research successfully identifies the general causes of brain drain, a significant knowledge gap remains regarding the relation between intellectual frustration and brain drain. Less research has focused specifically on graduates of the English Department; thus, this study seeks to fill that gap. Economic factors are often mentioned as primary motivators for brain drain, but the sense of disillusionment an educated youth faces when their intellectual labor is undervalued remains an underexplored area.

Theoretical Framework

This study can be studied in relevance to Push-Pull Theory, Marx's concept of intellectual labor and Anomie Theory. These three theories help understand the reasons why English graduates feel frustrated with their academic degree and intention to leave the country.

Push-Pull Theory explains why people migrate from one place to another. It says migration happens because of two factors: push factors and pull factors. Push factors are negative conditions in the home country that push people to leave. It creates dissatisfaction, frustrations and a lack of opportunity. In contrast, pull factors are the attractive conditions of another country that pull people toward it. It offers security, opportunity, better living conditions, etc.

This theory was originally developed by Everett S. Lee in 1966 in his well-known article "A Theory of Migration." Lee explained that migration decisions are influenced by conditions at the place of origin, conditions at the destination, and the obstacles between them. According to this perspective, individuals evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of staying in their home country versus moving to another place. As Lee

(1966) stated, “In every area there are countless factors which act to hold people within the area or attract people to it, and there are others which tend to repel them” (p. 50).

In the context of education and employment, push–pull factors are often connected with the relationship between educational goals and actual outcomes. Universities aim to develop intellectual capacity, critical thinking, and professional competence among students. However, when the curriculum pattern does not correspond with the practical demands of the job market, graduates may struggle to translate their academic achievements into meaningful employment. This gap between educational training and employment outcomes may create dissatisfaction and uncertainty among graduates.

This study explores several push factors operating in Bangladesh in the case of English graduates. These include unemployment, mismatch between English degrees and job market demands, low salary, lack of career growth, outdated curriculum, and limited recognition of intellectual skills. When English graduates complete their degrees but fail to find suitable jobs, they experience intellectual frustration. This frustration acts as a strong push factor. On the other hand, foreign countries offer pull factors such as better job opportunities, higher income, advanced education, social security, and respect for academic qualifications. Many English graduates believe that their skills will be better valued abroad. As a result, push factors from Bangladesh and pull factors from foreign countries together influence the decision to migrate. Thus, Push–Pull Theory helps this study understand how structural problems in education and employment push graduates out, while foreign opportunities pull them toward migration.

Karl Marx’s concept of intellectual labor highlights mental tasks such as thinking, teaching, writing, researching, and creating knowledge. In his seminal work, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx (1844/1959) argues that although labor has value, workers in capitalist systems often experience alienation when their work is not properly recognized. He explains that under these conditions, the worker "does not develop freely his mental and physical energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind" (p. 30). English graduates mainly perform intellectual labor. Their education trains them in language, literature, critical thinking, and communication. However, this intellectual labor is often undervalued in the Bangladeshi job market. Many employers prefer technical or business skills, while English graduates are offered low-paid jobs or irrelevant positions. Apart from tertiary-level education, there are limited opportunities in Bangladesh to work in fields related to literature, critical thinking, and communication. This creates a situation where graduates feel that their intellectual effort has no social or economic value. This feeling leads to intellectual frustration, loss of motivation, and disillusionment with the education system. From a Marxist perspective, this is a form of alienation, where graduates are separated from the value of their own labor. Therefore, Marx’s concept of intellectual labor helps explain why English graduates feel frustrated even after earning degrees, and how this frustration contributes to their desire to leave the country.

Another theoretical perspective that helps explain intellectual frustration among graduates is Anomie Theory, proposed by Émile Durkheim (1897/1951). Durkheim used the concept of anomie to describe a condition in which social norms become weak, unclear, or ineffective, leaving individuals without clear guidance about their roles and expectations in society. In the context of higher education, students often enter university with the belief that academic success will lead to stable employment and social mobility. However, when graduates face unemployment, underemployment, or jobs that do not correspond with their academic training, they may feel disconnected

from these social expectations. In a recent study, Tasfi and Mostofa (2024) highlight how this mismatch between social promises and actual opportunities can create similar confusion and frustration among graduates in Bangladesh.

For English graduates in Bangladesh, such a situation may occur when their academic training develops intellectual and analytical abilities, but the job market does not sufficiently recognize or reward those skills. As a result, graduates may experience feelings of disappointment and uncertainty regarding their professional future. From the perspective of Anomie Theory, intellectual frustration among graduates can therefore be understood as a reaction to the gap between educational aspirations and real-life outcomes. This sense of dissatisfaction may also contribute to the desire to seek opportunities abroad, where graduates believe their education and abilities might be more valued.

Method

This study follows a mixed method to explore intellectual frustration and brain drain among English graduates in Khulna City. Data are collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The close-ended questions are designed using a Likert scale to measure participants' perceptions, while the open-ended questions allow them to express personal experiences. Quantitative data are analyzed using percentages and presented in tables. On the other hand, qualitative responses are interpreted to support and explain the statistical findings.

The study focuses on English graduates from Khulna City as the target population. A sample of 120 participants is selected using purposive sampling. At the same time, convenience sampling is applied to collect data from easily accessible respondents. The data are collected from three universities which are Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna, Khulna University, and Jashore University of Science and Technology.

Primary data for this study are collected through a structured questionnaire distributed among English graduates from Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna, Khulna University, and Jashore University of Science and Technology. The questionnaire covers areas such as background information, academic experiences, views on curriculum relevance, perceptions of the job market, and intentions regarding migration. The questionnaire consists of both Likert-scale and open-ended questions to capture both quantitative and qualitative responses. In addition, secondary data are collected from books, journal articles, and previous research to support the study. The collected responses are analyzed using SPSS to build connections and recognize patterns among variables. Finally, the results are presented and documented following the American Psychological Association 7th edition to maintain clarity and academic consistency.

All ethical issues are carefully considered during the study. The purpose of the research is clearly explained to all participants. Participation is completely voluntary, and participants are free to withdraw at any stage. No personal information is recorded in the research report. The collected data is used only for academic and research purposes.

Results

The quantitative findings are organized into three areas: students' reasons for choosing English studies and their academic experience, perceptions of career prospects, and social and international influences on career decisions. The tables report

the distribution of responses across the five-point agreement scale, while the accompanying text highlights the main patterns rather than repeating every value.

Interest in English Studies and Academic Experience

According to Table 1 below, interest in English Language and Literature was the clearest positive reason for entering the program. A combined 60.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that genuine interest influenced their choice, whereas 23.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Responses were more divided when students evaluated whether the English program had met their initial expectations: 48.3% responded positively, 35.9% negatively, and 15.8% selected the neutral option. This pattern indicates that strong initial interest in the field did not necessarily translate into equally positive evaluations of the program experience.

Table 1. *Students' Interest in English Studies and Perceptions of the Academic Environment*

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. I chose English studies out of genuine interest in English Language and Literature.	9.2	14.2	15.8	42.5	18.3
2. My experience in the English program has matched my initial expectations.	9.2	26.7	15.8	43.3	5.0
3. The university environment supports intellectual development.	4.2	15.8	32.5	42.5	5.0
4. There are sufficient academic resources (such as journals, seminars, and books) available to support my studies.	6.7	21.7	20.0	42.5	9.2

Note. Values are percentages. SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neutral; A = agree; SA = strongly agree. Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

Perceptions of the broader academic environment were generally favorable, although substantial neutral responses remained. Nearly half of the respondents (47.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that the university environment supported intellectual development, while 32.5% were neutral. Similarly, 51.7% reported that sufficient academic resources were available to support their studies, compared with 28.4% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Overall, the responses in Table 1 point to a moderately positive academic experience, but they also show that students did not evaluate all aspects of the program in the same way.

Perceptions of Career Prospects

According to Table 2 below, a less favorable pattern when the questions turn to employment and career prospects. Perceptions of employer recognition were mixed: 48.3% agreed or strongly agreed that employers in Bangladesh recognized the value of an English degree, while 30.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 20.8% remained neutral. However, respondents were more critical of the connection between their studies and available careers. More than half (52.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that there was a clear link between what is taught in the English department and existing career opportunities; only 30.0% expressed agreement.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of Degree Value, Employment Opportunities, and Salary Prospects

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
5. Employers in Bangladesh recognize the value of an English degree.	9.2	21.7	20.8	37.5	10.8
6. There is a clear connection between what is taught in the English department and available career opportunities.	9.2	43.3	17.5	25.0	5.0
7. Employment opportunities for English graduates in Bangladesh are sufficient.	17.5	45.0	14.2	17.5	5.8
8. Salary expectations for English-related jobs in Bangladesh are reasonable.	10.8	48.3	23.3	14.2	3.3

Note. Values are percentages. SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neutral; A = agree; SA = strongly agree. Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

Concerns became more pronounced for employment availability and salary expectations. As reported in Table 2, 62.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed that employment opportunities for English graduates in Bangladesh were sufficient, compared with 23.3% who agreed or strongly agreed. A similar pattern appeared for salary expectations: 59.1% viewed salaries for English-related jobs as unreasonable, whereas 17.5% responded positively. Taken together, these results suggest that respondents were more confident about the general value of an English degree than about the employment conditions and financial prospects associated with it.

Social and International Influences on Career Decisions

The responses in Table 3 show strong international and social influences on students' career thinking. A majority (56.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that observing peers working or studying abroad affected how they evaluated their own career paths, although 34.2% were neutral. Perceptions of international qualifications were clearer: 78.3% agreed or strongly agreed that foreign degrees or jobs were valued more highly than local qualifications in Bangladesh, while 5.8% disagreed.

Table 3. *Social and International Factors Related to Students' Career Decisions*

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
9. Observing peers working or studying abroad affects how I evaluate my own career path.	1.7	7.5	34.2	55.0	1.7
10. Foreign degrees or jobs are valued more highly than local qualifications in Bangladesh.	0.0	5.8	15.8	40.8	37.5
11. Family expectations influence my career decisions.	0.0	14.2	14.2	50.0	21.7
12. I have considered pursuing opportunities abroad at some point in my academic or professional journey.	3.3	3.3	14.2	62.5	16.7

Note. Values are percentages. SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neutral; A = agree; SA = strongly agree. Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

Family expectations were also prominent. Table 3 shows that 71.7% agreed or strongly agreed that family expectations influenced their career decisions. Moreover, 79.2% had considered opportunities abroad, compared with 6.6% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. This pattern suggests that respondents weighed domestic labor-market conditions alongside family expectations and international study and employment pathways.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the survey conducted among English graduates in Khulna City. It focuses on the underlying problem of intellectual frustration and examines the core reason for the brain drain issue.

Academic Motivations and Expectations

The graduates of the English department start their journey with a sense of hope and out of their own interest which is clear from their response. Most of the participants have responded that they chose this field because of a genuine interest in language and literature. This explains that the initial pull towards the subject is to learn rather than a pragmatic career choice.

However, as Marx (1844/1959) argued, when a person's creative and intellectual energy is poured into something that eventually feels disconnected from their life, they begin to experience alienation.

This frustration starts when expectations are not met. While many the participants felt their experience matched their expectations, a significant portion felt that it did not. This mismatch is the first seed of frustration. If a student enters a program expecting critical debate and deep analysis but finds something else, the intellectual labor they perform begins to feel meaningless. One participant highlighted this by saying there is a "Memorisation culture instead of critical discussion" and noted the struggle of having "large reading lists with limited access to books/journals." If the curriculum fails to create the teaching-learning culture that English department students hope for, frustration arises among the learners.

Institutional Support and the Learning Environment

The environment in which a student learns plays a huge role in their mental well-being. When asked if the university environment supports intellectual development, the participants have different perspectives. Around 32% of the respondents felt neutral about this, while 28% percent agreed. This lack of strong positive feedback shows that the learning environment has some shortcomings that need improvement. Furthermore, when asked about academic resources like journals and seminars, more than 35% of the students disagreed that they had enough support.

This lack of resources is a major push factor that can be explained by the Push-Pull Theory. If a Bangladeshi institution fails to provide the support for growth, the student intends to look elsewhere. One student stated in the open-ended section that "Resources are very low and at the same time most of the teachers are not proper qualified to fulfill the queries of students. Besides most of the teachers are not so friendly." This kind of institutional failure makes students feel neglected. According to Anomie Theory (Durkheim, 1897/1951), when social institutions fail to provide the promised path to success, the individuals within that system feel a sense of normlessness and confusion. In this context, the lack of proper resources and support creates a gap between students' educational goals and the means available to achieve them, leading to frustration and feelings of disconnection.

Competitive Nature of Job Market

The response, when asked about recognition of value in the job market, portrays the clear gap between degree and reality. Only about 26% of the participants believe that employers in Bangladesh truly recognize the value of an English degree. Even more concerning is that 52% of the participants feel there is no clear connection between what they learn in the classroom and the jobs available to them. This is a perfect example of how intellectual labor is devalued. English graduates spend years analyzing complex texts and theories. Yet when they graduate, they find that the job market only wants them for very specific, often paid jobs. A participant described, "I think, English Department students often feel intellectually frustrated because there is too much theory and not enough practical skills or clear career guidance." Another student added that they "read a lot of difficult theories from writers but do not always see how these ideas connect to real life or future jobs." When asked about job availability, the results were even more alarming. Over 62% of the graduates disagreed that employment opportunities are sufficient. This lack of opportunity is the primary push factor that leads to brain drain. Out of 32 employed participants, 18 are in the teaching profession. If there are no jobs or the employment opportunities are limited, the graduates may feel that their potential is being wasted. Marx's (1844/1959) concept of alienation helps explain this condition: graduates can become separated from the perceived value of their intellectual labor and degree. English graduates in Bangladesh may therefore experience a mismatch between their initial expectations and reality. According to Durkheim's (1897/1951) theory of anomie, this disconnect can foster a sense of normlessness and dissatisfaction. As a result, graduates often feel alienated from the value of their intellectual contributions and remain uncertain about their future.

Salary and the Cost of Staying

The available jobs do not match the expectations of English graduates. Nearly 60% of the respondents stated that the salary for English-related jobs in Bangladesh does not meet their expectations. Economic stability is a must to lead a better life. Therefore, low pay acts as a powerful push factor in pushing talent abroad. One participant elucidated this by saying, "the job market for English graduates feels uncertain, which creates anxiety and weakens academic motivation." This anxiety is not only about salary but also a fear of leading a static life. If the home country cannot offer an opportunistic career, the student tends to search for a better life abroad.

Peer Influence

While the domestic environment pushes students away, the international market pulls them in. The data table shows that observing peers who are already abroad has a massive impact on how local students evaluate their own career path. Nearly 56% percent of participants agreed that seeing their friends succeed in other countries makes them re-evaluate their own paths. This is another Pull factor for brain drain. Again, a huge number of participants agreed that foreign degrees or jobs are valued much more highly in Bangladesh than local ones. This creates a psychological impact as student who do not want a foreign degree might feel inferior to their peers who choose to study

or work overseas. This creates a situation were staying in the home country feels like a failure rather than a choice. This feeling of inferiority can also be interpreted through Anomie Theory (Durkheim, 1897/1951). In Bangladesh, students are told that education is the path to success. However, when success is only granted to those who leave, the local graduates feel a sense of normlessness. Besides, when a student spends years studying but sees that the market prefers a foreign certificate over their local degree, they may experience what Marx (1844/1959) described as alienation.

Family Pressure and the Weight of Expectations

Family pressure influences the choice to move abroad. The data shows that the majority agreed that family expectations are a major factor in their career decisions. In our culture, a degree is often viewed as a family investment rather than just a personal one. When graduates find that this investment does not lead to a proper salary, or when their skills do not get valued due to limited job opportunities, they experience a heavy sense of alienation. They feel they are failing not only themselves but also the families who supported them. From Marx's (1844/1959) perspective, this alienation happens because graduates are separated from the value of their own intellectual labor.

This feeling of alienation and intellectual frustration is the primary cause behind the decision to leave. From the perspective of Anomie Theory (Durkheim, 1897/1951), when the structural path to a stable career is broken, graduates may feel lost and disconnected from their own society. This explains why most participants considered moving abroad at some point in their academic journey. Their decision is a direct response to the frustration of being in a system that does not offer their expected salary, enough opportunities, social recognition or fails to address their intellectual frustrations. For these students, migration is the only way to escape this sense of failure.

Open-ended Questions

The open-ended section provides the most natural response. When asked about the main reasons for frustration, the most common answer was the "mismatch between academic curriculum and job market." Students feel they are being prepared for a world that does not exist. One respondent noted that "English graduates face frustration because job opportunities are limited" and that there is a "lack of job opportunity in their own field."

Another insightful comment was as follows:

> English is a language-based subject, while Bangla is the mother tongue of Bangladesh. Many graduates from other departments cannot express their ideas clearly in English. So, students with strong English skills get a natural advantage in the job market.

This shows that the frustration is not just about the lack of jobs, but the lack of confidence that the education system should have provided. Instead of feeling empowered, the graduates feel small and unprepared.

Suggestions from the Graduates

The participants also offered clear solutions on how to reduce this disillusionment. The most recurring idea is to connect English studies to real life. They suggested the

curriculum should be redesigned from a strictly theoretical approach to include practical courses. One student recommended including "courses on academic writing, editing, content writing, translation, ELT, and media skills to connect studies with jobs."

Others focused on the way students are taught, suggesting "more seminars, presentations, and open debates so students can think critically instead of reproducing notes." There is a strong desire for the university to become a place of active learning rather than passive memorization. By reforming assessment methods and providing "clearer career guidance and internship opportunities," the university could help bridge the gap that currently pushes students to leave.

Conclusion

The findings reveal a considerable gap between English degree programs and the demands of the job market in Khulna. Although many students enter English programs because of a genuine interest in English language and literature, their academic experiences do not always translate into clear career opportunities. The curriculum is perceived as emphasizing theoretical knowledge, whereas employers tend to prioritize practical and professionally relevant skills. This mismatch contributes to intellectual frustration among graduates, particularly when their academic efforts are accompanied by limited employment opportunities and relatively low salary expectations. At the same time, foreign qualifications and overseas employment are widely perceived as offering greater prestige and better prospects, which may encourage graduates to consider opportunities abroad. Viewed through Marx's (1844/1959) concept of alienation and Durkheim's (1897/1951) concept of anomie, these findings suggest that graduates may experience a sense of disconnection and uncertainty when the education system does not provide a sufficiently clear pathway from academic achievement to professional success.

Several measures may help reduce this gap and address the intellectual frustration and potential brain drain among English graduates. Universities could strengthen the practical orientation of English programs by incorporating courses such as academic and content writing, translation, English language teaching, and media communication. Teaching practices could also place greater emphasis on critical discussion, presentations, problem-solving activities, and other forms of interactive learning rather than relying heavily on memorization. In addition, better access to journals, seminars, workshops, career counseling, and internship opportunities could help students develop relevant competencies and understand changing labor-market expectations. Stronger collaboration between universities and employers would also be useful in aligning academic preparation with workplace requirements. At a broader level, expanding employment opportunities and providing more competitive salary structures may help graduates perceive that their knowledge and intellectual contributions are adequately recognized within Bangladesh.

The findings should nevertheless be interpreted in light of several limitations. The study involved a relatively small group of participants from Khulna City, which limits the extent to which the results can be generalized to English graduates across Bangladesh. Furthermore, the study relied primarily on questionnaire responses, which

may reflect participants' perceptions, emotions, and levels of knowledge about employment conditions rather than objective labor-market circumstances. Future research could therefore include larger and more diverse samples from cities such as Dhaka and Chittagong and incorporate the perspectives of employers who recruit English graduates. Further studies might also examine how specific curriculum reforms influence students' motivation, employability, and career expectations. Longitudinal research following graduates after completing their degrees, particularly those who pursue study or employment abroad, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how intellectual frustration, career opportunities, and decisions to migrate develop over time.

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