# Career Readiness Evaluation and Skill Gap Identification: A Case Study on the Students of Rajshahi College

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## Abstract

Graduate employability is a growing concern in Bangladesh, where higher education expansion often fails to meet labor market needs. This study assessed career readiness and skill gaps among Rajshahi College students, focusing on academic background, soft and technical skills, and institutional support. Using a descriptive, quantitative design, data were collected from 95 students through structured questionnaires. Analysis with SPSS revealed that while students had clear career goals and strong resume-writing skills, deficiencies existed in curriculum relevance, communication, ICT application, and career services. Research and problem-solving abilities were moderate, but technical and presentation skills were limited. The study recommends labor market–aligned curricula, enhanced career counseling, and integrated skill training. Despite its single-institution and self-reported limitations, the findings provide insights for improving employability through curriculum and policy reforms.

**Keywords:** Academic Background, Career and Job Readiness, Soft Skills Gap, Technical Skill Gap, Institutional Support

## Introduction

Graduate employability has become a pressing concern in Bangladesh as the higher education system expands rapidly but struggles to align with labor market demands (World Bank, 2018). Employers increasingly emphasize competencies such as communication, teamwork, problem solving, and ICT literacy, yet many students graduate without these essential skills (Khatun, 2022; Chowdhury & Alam, 2020).

Career readiness frameworks, such as those developed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), stress the integration of both soft and technical skills alongside career management abilities (NACE, 2021). However, studies in Bangladesh reveal persistent soft skill gaps, limited exposure to emerging technical tools, and insufficient institutional support such as career counseling and internships (Hasan et al., 2024; ILO, 2020).

Against this backdrop, Rajshahi College provides a relevant case for examining how academic background, career and job readiness, soft skills, technical skills, and institutional support interact to shape students' employability. By identifying strengths and gaps, this research aims to offer insights for enhancing career development practices in higher education.

## Literature Review

**Academic Background:** While GPA, major, and disciplinary exposure signal initial employability, research shows that credentials

alone do not guarantee success in dynamic workplaces. Employers often note a mismatch between academic training and workplace needs, emphasizing that transferable competencies and higher-order skills must complement academic attainment (McKinsey & Company, 2012; World Bank, 2019).

**Career and Job Readiness:** Career readiness is increasingly defined through competency frameworks rather than academic outcomes alone. NACE (2021) identifies eight core competencies—including communication, teamwork, leadership, and technology—that align closely with employer expectations. Evidence shows that career management skills and employability perceptions strongly influence students' early career outcomes (Jackson & Wilton, 2017).

**Soft Skills Gap:** Soft skills such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and professionalism consistently rank highest in employer priorities. Yet studies in Bangladesh and South Asia reveal persistent deficits, contributing to underemployment and skill mismatches despite strong demand (Robles, 2012; World Bank, 2019).

**Technical Skill Gap:** Discipline-specific knowledge and ICT proficiency remain vital for productivity, but assessments highlight major deficits in applied technical skills among graduates. Employers report that students are less prepared than education providers assume, creating a continuing "technical skill gap" (McKinsey & Company, 2012; World Bank, 2018, 2019).

**Institutional Support:** Institutional mechanisms—such as career counseling, internships, and employer linkages—are central to bridging readiness gaps. Research links

structured career development and work-integrated learning to stronger employability outcomes (Jackson & Wilton, 2017), while policy reviews recommend expanding career guidance and placement services in Bangladesh (World Bank, 2018, 2019).

## Methodology

**Research Design and Methods:** A descriptive research design and quantitative methods were adopted for this study. Descriptive design was appropriate as it provides an accurate account of existing conditions, such as students' career readiness, without altering variables (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative methods were employed to gather measurable data from a large sample, ensuring objectivity and generalizability, while limited qualitative inputs added depth to the analysis (Bryman, 2016).

**Target Population**: The study population comprised 18,000 students enrolled in Rajshahi College, Bangladesh, across Arts, Science, Business Studies, and Social Science faculties (Rajshahi College, 2022).

**Sampling Procedure and Sample Size**: A stratified sampling procedure was applied in this study. Stratified sampling was used because the student population of Rajshahi College consists of distinct groups (faculties: Arts, Science, Business Studies, Social Science). This method ensures that each subgroup is proportionally represented in the sample, which increases the precision and representativeness of the findings (Creswell, 2014; Etikan & Bala, 2017). Using Yamane's (1967) formula at 95% confidence and 0.10 precision, the sample size was calculated as 95 students.

**Data Collection Instruments and Procedure**: Primary data were collected via

structured questionnaires (online and offline) from the students. The survey employed a five-point Likert scale range from 1(Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Secondary data were collected form Journals, books, reports, and institutional documents. Data collection occurred between July 2025 and August 2025.

**Pilot Study:** A pilot study was applied using 10% of total sample to test validity and reliability. After supervisor feedback correction questioner was used to conduct survey.

**Validity and Reliability:** Content validity was ensured through expert review by faculty members in career counseling and education. Pilot testing was conducted with 20 students (excluded from the final sample) to refine item clarity. Cronbach's Alpha values exceeded 0.70 for all subscales, confirming acceptable reliability (Hair et al., 2017).

**Data Analysis Techniques:** Data were analyzed with SPSS-20 using descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, SD).

## Results

**Demographic Data:** The study surveyed 95 students from Rajshahi College. A majority of respondents were female (64.2%), while males constituted 35.8%. Most students were pursuing their Honors degree (80%), with a smaller group enrolled in Masters (20%).

In terms of age, the largest segment fell between 20–24 years (74.7%), reflecting the typical undergraduate age range, while a few were older (25–28 years, 25.3%).

Respondents represented multiple academic years, with the highest concentration in the 3rd year (40%) and balanced participation from 4th year (20%) and Masters (20%). This

distribution ensures perspectives from both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Regarding academic year of admission, most belonged to 2021–2022 (43.2%) and 2022–2023 (24.2%), showing that recent cohorts were strongly represented.

Students came from diverse faculties, with the largest share from science (35.8%), followed by Social Science (26.3%), Business Studies (20%), and Humanities (17.9%). This spread indicates that findings capture insights across major academic streams.

Overall, the demographic profile suggests a balanced mix of students across gender, academic levels, faculties, and years of study, though slightly skewed toward younger cohorts and science disciplines.

**Academic Background:** Students moderately agreed that their academic performance and subject knowledge prepare them for future careers (M = 3.75; 3.65). However, lower scores on course relevance (M = 3.32) and analytical skill–oriented assignments (M = 3.28) indicate gaps between curriculum and job market needs.

**Career and Job Readiness:** This area showed strong results. Students reported clear career goals (M = 4.08), resume-writing ability (M = 4.05), and awareness of job opportunities (M = 3.94). However, preparation consistency (M = 3.69) and communication in formal settings (M = 3.67) remain moderate.

**Soft Skills:** Respondents felt confident in problem solving (M = 3.75) and teamwork (M = 3.68). The highest score was for knowledge of digital tools (M = 4.04), reflecting growing digital adaptability.

**Technical Skills:** Strengths emerged in basic research knowledge (M = 4.29) and analytical skills (M = 3.64). Lower ratings in digital tools (M = 3.18), PowerPoint preparation (M = 3.56), and ICT application familiarity (M = 3.40) highlight practical technical skill gaps.

**Institutional Support:** Students rated teacher support relatively high (M = 3.91). However, institutional services for CV writing, job applications, and interview preparation were weaker (M = 3.40), suggesting limited formal career support structures.

## Discussion

The findings highlight that student of Rajshahi College demonstrate moderate academic readiness, but their courses are not always aligned with current job market requirements, echoing prior research in Bangladesh on curriculum–employment mismatches (World Bank, 2019). Students expressed strong career and job readiness, with clear goals and CV-writing ability, consistent with studies showing that career self-management competencies improve employability outcomes (Jackson & Wilton, 2017).

In terms of soft skills, problem-solving and teamwork were positively rated, though communication remains only moderate. This supports evidence that soft skills, particularly communication, are highly demanded yet often underdeveloped among South Asian graduates (Robles, 2012; World Bank, 2019). Technical skills revealed a mixed profile: students rated themselves highly in research ability but weaker in digital tools and applied ICT, reflecting the persistent technical skills gap reported in national

and global studies (McKinsey & Company, 2012; World Bank, 2018).

Finally, while institutional support from teachers was appreciated, formal services for CV preparation, job applications, and interview practice were limited. This finding aligns with Bangladesh-focused policy recommendations emphasizing the need for stronger institutional career services and employer linkages (ILO, 2020; World Bank, 2018).

## Conclusion

The study found Rajshahi College students show career awareness, research competence, and digital adaptability but face gaps in communication, ICT, curriculum relevance, and institutional career support. To address this, reforms should align curricula with labor market needs, strengthen soft and technical skills, expand career services, and foster industry linkages. Findings can guide policy, curriculum, and institutional practices, though limited to one college and reliant on self-reports. Future research should compare institutions, track graduates over time, and integrate employer perspectives, with attention to gender differences in career readiness and skill gaps.

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