

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	2
1. Introduction .....	2
2. Methodology .....	3
3. Statistical Landscape of Distributive Justice .....	3
3.1 Education Penalty Data Point .....	3
3.2 The NEET Tragedy .....	4
4. Arguments for the Ethical Triad of Failure.....	5
4.1 Commercialisation vs. Deontology .....	5
4.2 Skills Mismatch vs. Utilitarianism .....	6
4.3 Corruption & Violation of Professional Ethics .....	6
4.4 Cyber Ethics and the Digital Divide .....	6
4.5 Political Ethics and Gender Inequality .....	6
4.6 Environmental Ethics & Waste of Human Capital .....	7
4.7 Applied Ethics: Cheating & Skills Gap .....	8
4.8 Virtual Worlds, AI, and the Digital Divide of Tomorrow .....	9
4.9 Public Governance Ethics and Policy Failure .....	9
4.10 Responsibility Toward Family and Society .....	10
5. Critical Analysis and Normative Evaluation .....	11
6. Conclusion .....	13
References .....	14

# **The Ethical Implications of Bangladesh's Educational System on Unemployment**

## **Abstract**

This article examines the issue of Educated Unemployment in Bangladesh through an Ethical Lens using Normative and Applied Ethical frameworks. Although Bangladesh's Economic Narrative is one of Growth according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' Labour Force Survey for January 2024, the survey indicated that Educated Unemployment is approximately 13.5% of Fresh Graduates which indicates a Moral Failure on the part of the Education system in Bangladesh in failing to provide Fairness to all. This research will identify how the current Education System of Bangladesh does not provide Fairness to everyone, and we will analyze Utilitarianism, Deontological Ethics, and John Rawls' Theory of Justice and how these frameworks provide insight into Systemic Inequality resulting from the way Public Recruitment processes are executed in Bangladeshi Society as well as current Professional Ethics and Governance Transparency in relation to current conditions within the Educational Infrastructure in Bangladesh.

## **1. Introduction**

In ethics, we define ethical excellence as the pursuit of the True and Good. However, when we examine the current state of higher education in Bangladesh, we find the system reflecting the opposite, a waste of human potential. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data from 2024 reveals a disturbing trend where the unemployment rate for university graduates is nearly triple the national average. This means that education, which is intended to help people improve their lives and advance in society, is instead contributing to problems. For many, pursuing an education often results in taking on significant debt, and when they are unable to find a suitable job afterward, it can lead to feelings of hopelessness and frustration. So, instead of helping people succeed, the education system is actually trapping them in financial struggles and emotional stress.

This paper addresses the core questions of our course on why we study ethics to resolve moral conflicts. The conflict here lies between the State's promise and the government's failure to create a fair environment in which people can find employment and we will understand it through some ideas like Meta-ethics, Normative Ethics and Professional Ethics.

## **2. Methodology**

In this article, we will analyse the issues involved using three key theoretical perspectives: Utilitarianism, Deontology and Virtue Ethics as well as other theories related to justice

The concept of Utilitarianism refers to the actions that are moral if they promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number. In this paper, we will look at whether the mass production of graduates maximizes societal happiness or does it increase collective misery.

Deontology refers to the study of the nature of duty and obligation. Immanuel Kant, a renowned German philosopher, argued that we must treat humanity as an end in itself, never merely as a means. Here, we will examine whether universities are treating students as ends or as means, to be educated or as revenue sources

Virtue Ethics, another concept of ethics defined by Aristotle, which focuses on character development. We will criticize the lack of civic virtue in the corrupt recruitment process in every sector.

Finally, We will also explore Rawls' theory of justice to the disparity between rural university graduates and those from urban private universities.

## **3. The Statistical Landscape of Distributive Justice**

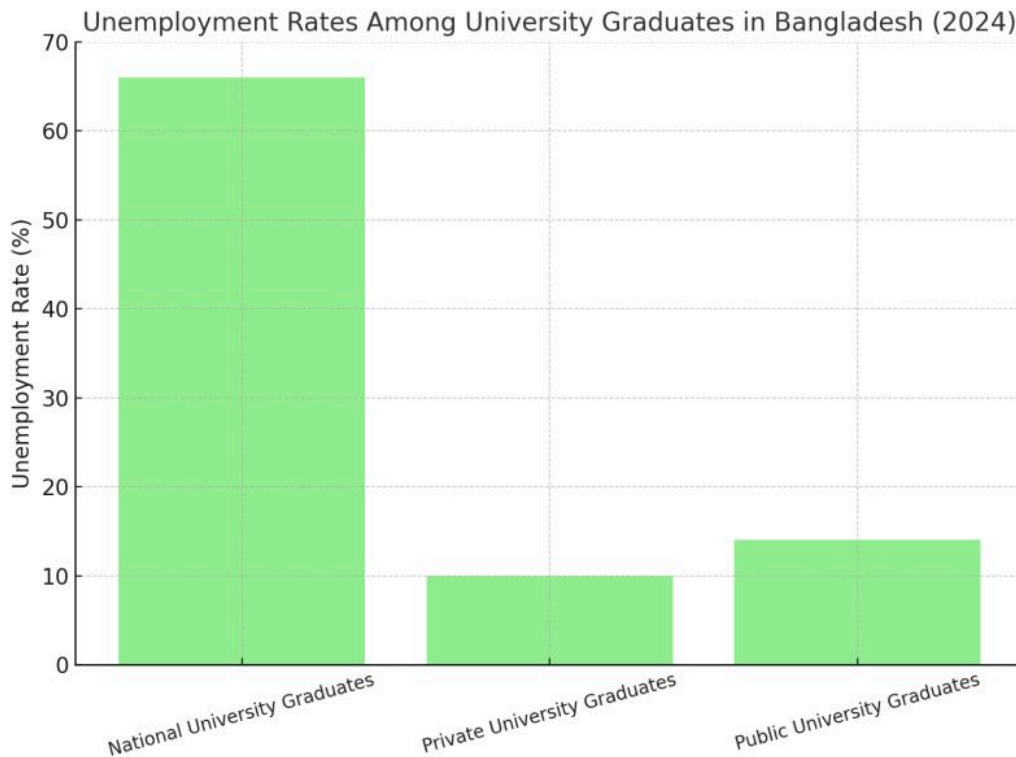
In Economic Justice, we know that society distributes both burdens and benefits in an equitable manner. Our current statistics indicate the opposite case

### **3.1 Education Penalty Data Point**

The employment rate for persons with minimal education is approximately 2.5% nevertheless, the unemployment rate for tertiary education graduates is approximately 13.5%. From this Ethical Perspective, the current system appropriately penalises those who have made investments in themselves to obtain a higher level of education.

Therefore, we are in violation of the Principles Associated with Retributive Justice, as it is proper to reward efforts made, rather than punish them.

**Figure 1**

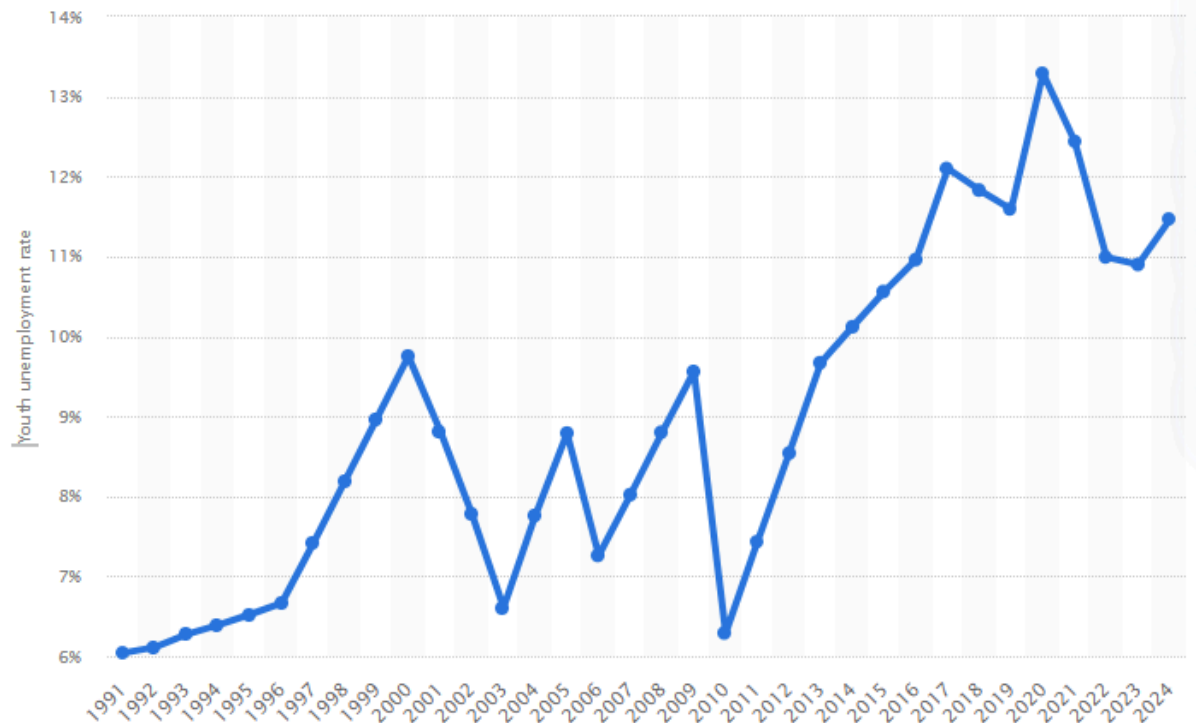


Note. The chart illustrates the Inverse Staircase of employment in Bangladesh. Unemployment Rate by Education Level, BIDS Data Visualization

### **3.2 The NEET Tragedy**

41% of youth are not in education employment or training (NEET). The ethical implications for Humanist Ethics are that this represents a basic violation of human dignity to inflict this much deprivation on a group of people. 12 million young people are being denied their right to work and contribute, and instead, they become dependent on other people for their very existence.

**Figure 2**



Note. Youth Unemployment Rate in Bangladesh 1991-2024. Statista

#### **4. Arguments for the Ethical Triad of Failure**

This section uses specific course terminology to argue for the systemic collapses discussed above.

##### **4.1 Commercialisation vs Deontology**

Argument: Private and Public Universities both institutions fail to fulfil Kant's Categorical Imperative by accepting students into programs with no employable future, merely for the purpose of collecting tuition. In doing so, these institutions treat each student as a cash cow means to an end rather than as future citizens.

Truth Deficiency: These institutions do not tell students an accurate picture regarding the degrees earned. This is ethically dishonest.

#### **4.2 Skills Mismatch versus Utilitarianism**

Argument: Under a utilitarian calculus, State should allocate funds to sectors with potential for utility, not to subsidize a generalist education leading to high employment rate, which offers negative returns in terms of financial gain and increased levels of frustrations among society. As a result the principle of greatest is literally inverted to greatest frustration.

#### **4.3 Corruption and Violation of Professional Ethics**

Argument: The syllabi for the Bangladesh Government Recruitment Process, as it pertains to government employment, would appear to be a direct contradiction to the concept of Ethical Governance through Transparency, openness and Ethical Behaviour.

The Bribery Culture: Professional Ethics was violated when a Primary School Teacher was appointed via Bribe, rather than through Merit otherwise, has ensured that next generation of Students will be taught Incompetent. Recruitment in medical colleges through bribe is another serious issue, one will become doctor with bribe, not his/her merit. And later he/she will be doctor who will treat others. It ensures next generation is taught by the incompetent.

Nepotism: The Politicization of university teaching posts destroys the moral authority of academia. Teachers who are political appointees cannot teach Virtue Ethics because they lack virtue themselves.

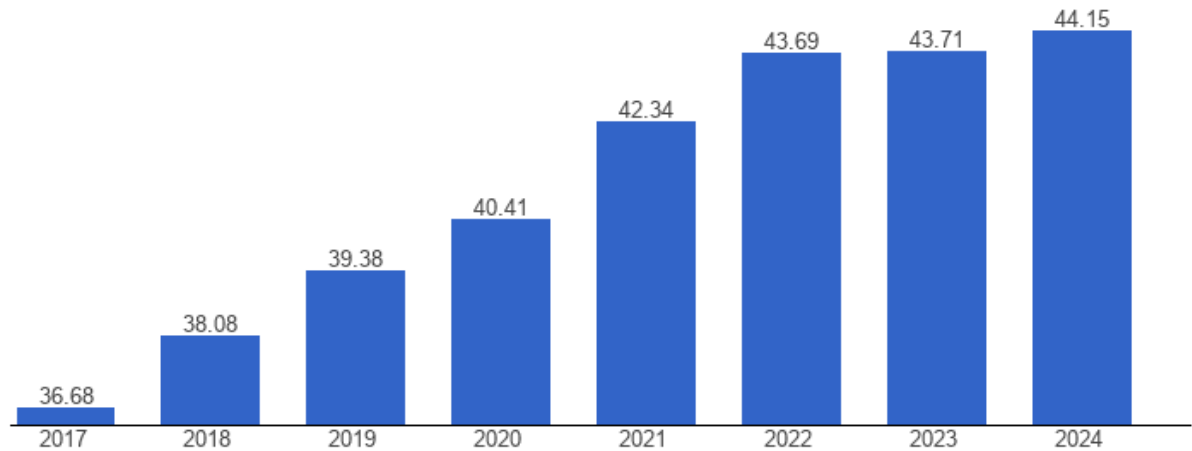
#### **4.4 Cyber Ethics**

The lack of digital literacy in the National University curriculum is a failure of Computer Ethics. By denying rural students access to modern tools, the system creates a Digital Apartheid, widening the gap between the rich urban students and the poor rural students.

#### **4.5 Political Ethics and Educational Inequality**

Labor statistics indicate that in Bangladesh, fewer than half of women of working age (43-44%) participate in labour force, while nearly 81% of men do so. The unemployment rate for young women particularly severe, with one estimate of youth female unemployment exceeding 20%. This is significantly above the national average. The gap in participation rates for women and men in the labour market is also graphically demonstrated in World Bank Data series and charts, which highlight the fact that as women's educational attainment increases, they are still underrepresented in terms of paid employment. Therefore, there is substantial evidence that the benefits of education are not being equally distributed between genders

**Figure 3**



Note. The chart illustrates Female labor force participation in Bangladesh from 2017 to 2024. The Global Economy

Viewing from the lens of justice, women have unequal opportunity to obtain access to higher education. As a result of having a degree after completing post-graduate studies, there were a significantly higher number of unemployed female college graduates than their male counterparts, and even more so for female students who graduated from colleges/universities with highest percentages of unprivileged students. Studies have shown that women who receive higher education degrees face significantly lower labour market absorption rates than do men with equivalent levels of education. Applying political ethical theories of liberalism and feminism to such issues, the political ethics of justice lens will see these statistics as violations of a fair equality of opportunity to receive equivalent returns on their institutions educations, based on the gender and socio-economic status of the recipient of that credential.

#### **4.6 Environmental Ethics and Misallocation of Human Capital**

According to the British Council's Next Generation Bangladesh 2024 report, it shows a graph that indicates that, in 2022, there was a NEET youth population of approximately 41% as compared to 30% in 2017. Of the NEET population, 62% is represented by females. From an environmental standpoint, the chart depicts another form of waste of human potential to create products as similar to environmental waste. Therefore, the amount of years an individual could have produced goods has been wasted on an unfortunate waste of time, similar to the concept of environmental waste. Additionally,

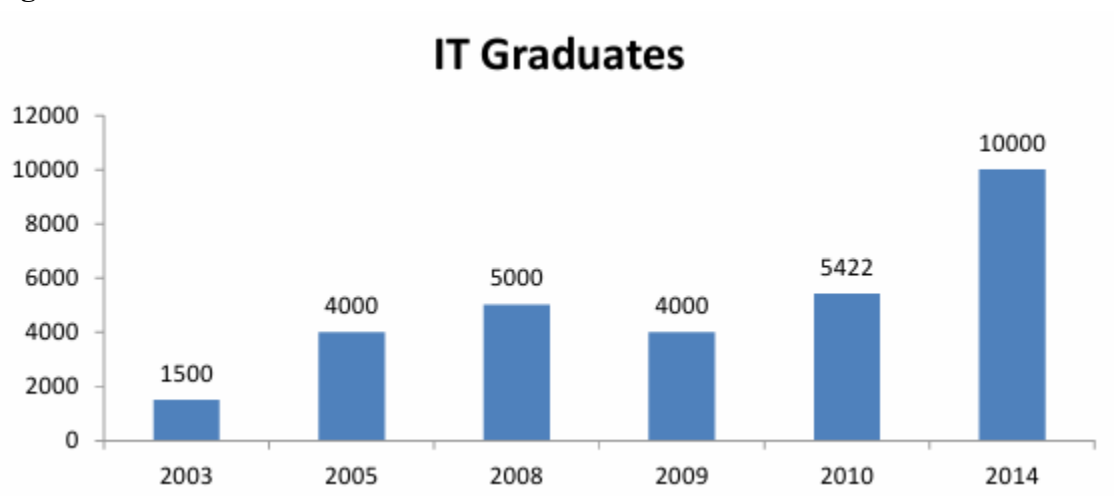
from an ethical standpoint, human capacity is limited to a finite amount of time, and any unused time during the prime years cannot be recycled without additional effort and expense.

Prothom Alo has also published a visual representation of data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) depicting inactive youth by region within Bangladesh, the NEET percentage across division varies from 38% to 44%. The variation in the NEET Rate across divisions suggests that the issue of inactive youth as a result of an underutilization of human capital is not simply an individual issue but rather systemic in nature. From an ethical standpoint, it brings about questions regarding intergenerational justice, the nation currently facing the climate change, allows millions of educated and citizens to be idle and not provide them with opportunities for training in Green jobs, Disaster Resilience and Sustainable Development careers.

#### **4.7 Applied Ethics in Corruption, Cheating and Classroom culture**

Numerous empirical studies and media articles provide evidence of dissatisfaction among employers in Bangladesh due to the lack of experience despite their degree. A Business Standard survey indicated that only 37% of employers had been satisfied with their new hire, and as a result, 93% of companies provided job training programmes to make up for lack for basic communication skills, problem solving abilities, and professionalism. This supports related research indicating large skills gaps between ICT and technology polytechnic graduates due, in part, to limited or outdated curriculum and minimal practical experience. The charts presented within these studies demonstrate the significant disconnect between how many qualified and available IT job seekers remain unemployed and are employed as unqualified individuals.

**Figure 4**



Note. Number of IT graduates joined the labor force, 2003-2014. Digital Bangladesh Report 2015. Ministry of Finance.

The ethical nature of assessment collapses when examination systems are lenient with widespread cheating, leakages of examination questions, or students using other to write assignments. Research examining the level of unemployment among recent graduates has shown that many graduates have inadequate language and ICT skills. There is a disconnect between a student's grades and the skills they have mastered, which creates an applied ethical failure because students now see that the outcome of their education is more important than the sincere effort they put into their education. In long term, this environment in the classroom contributes to unethical conduct in the workplace because many of the students who cheated in order to receive a passing grade on their exam may also cheat in their professional career by cutting ethical corners for personal gain.

#### **4.8 Virtual Worlds, AI, and the Digital Divide of Tomorrow**

Reports on the ICT industry and graduate employment suggest that 40% of Bangladesh's workforce lacks necessary skills. One study found that 40% of all vacancies in Bangladesh for IT professionals were not filled due to absence of highly-qualified people. Each year, approximately 10,000 IT graduates enter the labour force, whilst other studies indicate that only 60% of the currently employed ICT workforce would be classified as either skilled or highly-skilled. All of the above illustrates how the digital divide continues to grow between IT graduates from well-resourced universities compared to those graduating from less equipped institutions, and the evidence obtained through research confirms that the technology talent landscape will continue to remain imbalanced due to uneven access to digital tools and training.

In the survey "Next Generation Bangladesh 2024", published by the British Council, youth in Bangladesh reported heavy use of social media, however they reported lacking the structured digital skills typically linked with employability. The graphs in this study show a substantial number of respondents were very concerned about unemployment and held strong opinions about education being a solution, this illustrates a painful paradox, in which youth see technology and education as pathways out of poverty, but the educational system has not offered these youth the tools needed to convert their use of digital media into useable skills that can be marketed. Ethically, this diminishes both fairness and autonomy, students are not given means to meet their expectations of a contemporary educational system.

#### **4.9 Ethics of Public Governance and Policy Failure**

The Bangladesh SDGs Progress Report 2025 indicates that the NEET rate has been static at approximately 40% since 2021 and that targets for SDG 8 have not been met. The tables and graphs within the report demonstrate that the NEET figure is far above the established target and indicates that government interventions have not led to significant changes in the direction of policy. This is in line with the BBS LF survey which shows

that youth unemployment rates are much higher than national average. The ethics of public governance call upon agencies to take action on the basis of policy failures when the establishment of a policy is based on evidence from the field year after year which has been supported by official statistics.

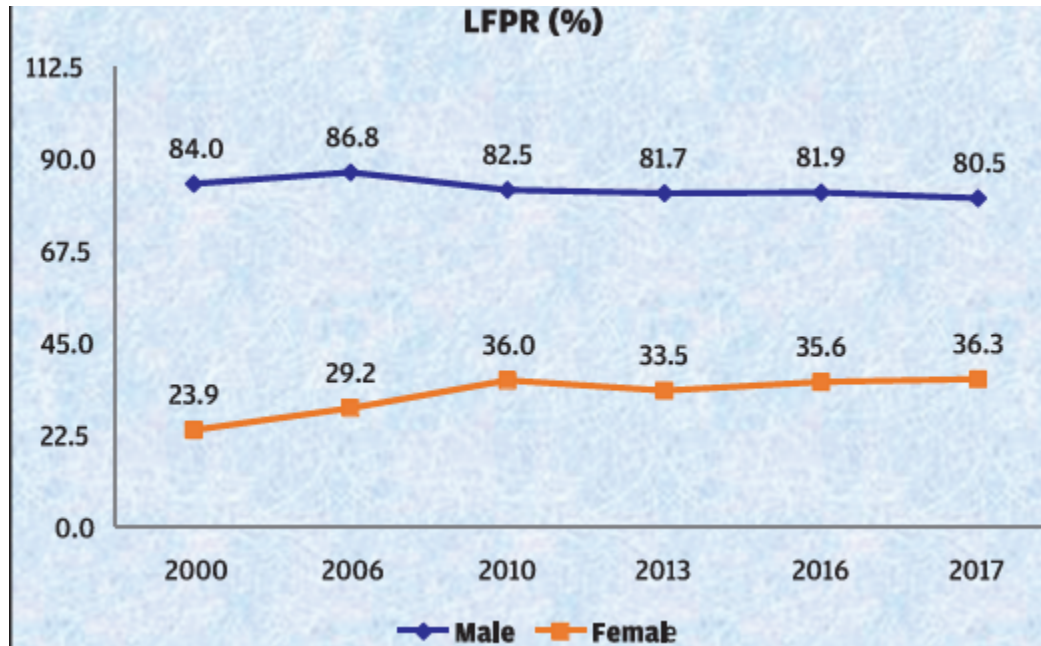
According to the Future Skills Report (LFS 2024). Media sources indicate that college graduates are among the highest unemployed demographics, with some sources indicating upwards of 30% in certain categories. In analyzing the same information and plotting it by Education Level. One will see the inverse staircase which goes against the Opportunity through Education concept respectively. Additionally have been slow and piecemeal.

#### **4.10 Responsibility for Family and Society**

According to Prothom Alo's breakdown of youth inactivity, approximately 12.9 million youths, or about 40% of the youth population are inactive members of society, while an additional 23 million youths remain on Welfare Assistance. The graphs contained within this article depict inactivity not as isolated instances, but rather as systemic problems affecting two-fifths of all youths. These realities create a moral and ethical obligation upon society to address the economic impact of youth inactivity and unemployment on the families located throughout this country, and especially to assist those families who supported their children's education with the expectation of future financial returns.

Simultaneously, research done on female labour force participation demonstrates that women's access to stable, decent employment correlates with measurable increases in their ability to make decisions on behalf of and contribute to the welfare of their households. Charts generated from these studies show a clear correlation between female employment, income, and a variety of indicators representing the level of autonomy women have in relation to working and providing for their families. Therefore, the evidence suggests that the failure to convert female education into employment not only results in economic loss but also represents a moral loss to families and communities because the positive impacts of women's contributions to society are not being realized.

**Figure 5**



Note. Male and Female LFPR: 2002 to 2017. LFS

## 5. Critical Analysis and Normative Evaluation

With these additional dimensions, political ethics, environmental ethics, applied ethics, digital ethics, and governance ethics, the moral indictment of the current system becomes even stronger.

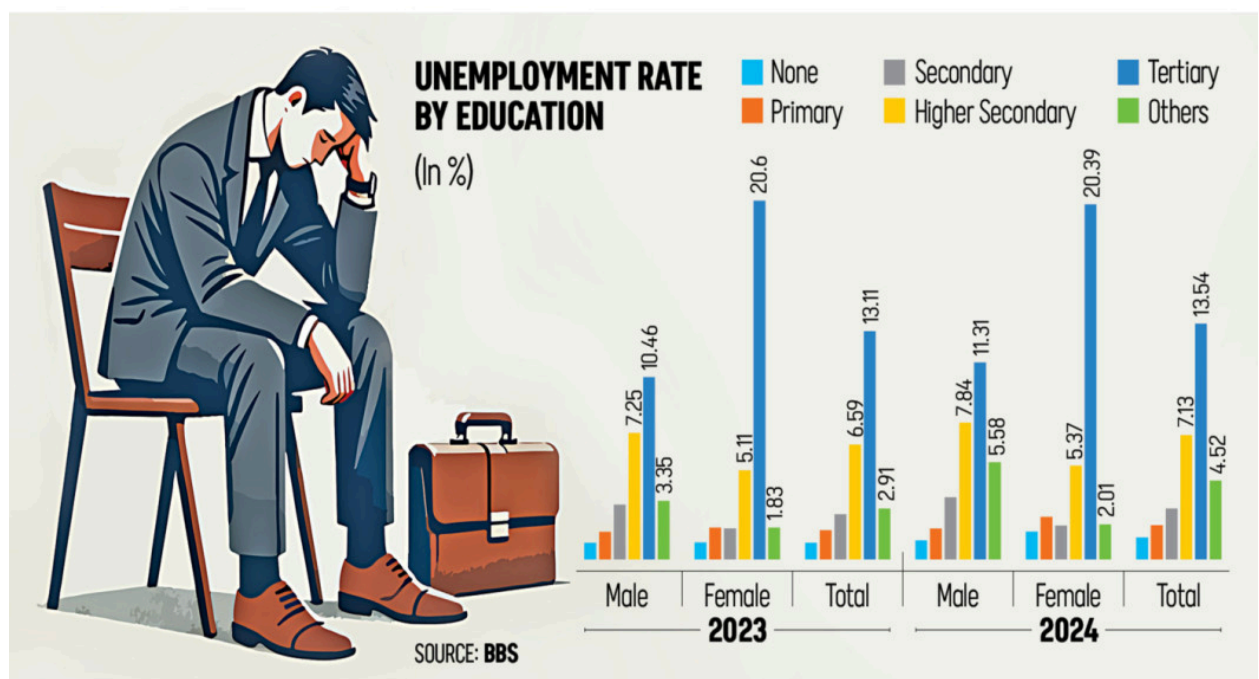
To begin with, from the perspective of consequentialism, the overall result of the current system is adverse. Rather than leading to an increase in the distribution of happiness and benefits for society, it leads to the opposite causing stress, underemployment, and wasted productive years of life. Furthermore the indirect negative impacts and increase the negative effect on the overall population much more that the graduate individually.

The second point of concern is related to the Deontological evaluation of major stakeholders frequently breaching their obligations. In their respect, universities are being dishonest when they promote their educational institutions as a stepping stone to career success while, at the same time, being aware that large positions of their programs are of little to no value or relevance. Public officials are breaching their duties of care by ignoring available data and evidence and refusing to implement changes to the manner in which enrollment, curriculum, and the recruitment are executed. Employers are violating

their obligations not to exploit their employees to live a decent lifestyle, while also requiring their employees to have degrees and work extremely long hours.

Third, according to Rawls' concept of justice, there is no justifications for the inequalities produces by this system. While Rawls allows for inequalities, they must always be benefit to the least advantaged, hiweever it is clear that the greatest benefit is going to those who are already in the privileged position within Bangladesh, such as urban elite, private education institution owners, and people with strong networks. Those students from rural areas or the first generation to obtain an education receive degrees that have less market value, can place greater financial burdens on them, and have fewer job opportunities, despite the fact that many of them worked harder that their counterparts in urban areas to get an education.

**Figure 6**



Note. The chart illustrates the unemployment rate of both female and male from 2023-2024. BBS

Ultimately, Virtue Ethics should also be considered when looking at the character traits that are encouraged by this system. When comparing the traits that this system encourages with those that are traditionally encouraged. It is evident that the society within this system rewards dishonesty and cunning, cynicism, and shortcutting success. This has led to the students learning that cheating is a viable option, connections outweigh competency, and institutions never accept blame, which erodes the moral fabric

of the society over time, because the same individuals that will teachers, doctors, and professionals are taught that integrity is a choice.

## **6. Conclusion**

Demographic Dividend is on track to quickly turn into Demographic Disaster. People who are educated in Bangladesh do not experience great unemployment because of policy realities, they are living through a great moral failure as well.

### **Ethical Judgement**

The current system does not pass the justice test, Utility or Virtue

### **Recommendations**

Promote Utility, move funding to maximize societal utility. Promote Ethics of Profession, use this as transparency, as a way to audit all public recruitment and hiring by universities. Teach Applied Ethics, include professional ethics in all curriculums of all disciplines to combat and prevent corruption within future workforces. Ethics directs us towards good living. As our current educational institutions tell that youth how to live by saying that bribery, nepotism and mediocrity is good living. Therefore, we must change the deadly syllabus before this session ends.

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