

Review Article

Education System in Creating Rural Livelihood Opportunities in Bangladesh: A Case of Educated Unemployed Rural Youths in Bogura District of Bangladesh

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Abstract

This study investigated the career aspirations, educational background, and employment status of educated unemployed rural youths in the study area (Garidaha and Sabgram), with a focus on their livelihood expectations and the potential for creating rural income-generating opportunities. Data were collected through a semi-structured questionnaire survey conducted in two unions (Garidaha and Sabgram), under Bogura Sadar and Sherpur upazila. A total of 200 respondents were selected based on three criteria: they completed graduation from National University–affiliated colleges in Bogura, they were currently unemployed, and they had remained unemployed or mostly underemployed since graduation. Findings indicate a significant shift in career preferences over time. During school years, many youths aimed to traditional professions such as teaching, the army, or medicine. However, as they advanced to college and adulthood, interest shifted toward government jobs, entrepreneurship (agricultural and non-agricultural), private sector employment, and small business ventures. Despite these aspirations, a clear mismatch exists between their educational achievements and actual employment conditions. Across all education levels—from SSC to postgraduate—most respondents remain unemployed or engaged in temporary, irregular work. Notably, 163 out of 200 participants reported inconsistency between their education and career expectations, largely due to inadequate technical and vocational skills relevant to rural job markets. The study also identifies abundant local livelihood opportunities rooted in natural, physical, human, financial, and social capital, including farming, small enterprises, tailoring, IT-based outsourcing, and cottage industries. Yet social perceptions and skill shortages discourage youths from pursuing these practical options. The study recommends strengthening vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and capacity-building initiatives through government and NGOs to better align education with market demands, promote youth empowerment, and support sustainable rural development.

Keywords

Education System, Rural Livelihood, Rural Youth

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1. Introduction

Youth unemployment is a critical issue in many developing countries, affecting economic growth and social stability. Bangladesh, with a population of around 166.37 million, has made significant progress in reducing poverty through initiatives by the government and NGOs. However, youth unemployment remains a major challenge. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) Labour Force Survey 2023, about 7.2% of the youth labour force (ages 15–29)—roughly 1.94 million youths—are unemployed [5, 8]. The problem is particularly pronounced among urban youth, with 10.5% unemployment (13.3% for females, 9.3% for males), while rural youth face 6.4% unemployment (3.5% for females, 9.8% for males) [5]. Moreover, a substantial portion of unemployed youth is educated: 31.5% have tertiary education, 21.3% secondary, and 14.9% higher-secondary education [8]. Beyond unemployment, over 20% of youth aged 15–24 are neither in education, employment, nor training (NEET), reflecting disruptions in labour market engagement, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic [6, 8, 9].

In 2016, there were 52 million youths aged 15–29 in Bangladesh. This was more than 33% of the total population (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics [BBS], 2016). This number is growing by about 2.2 million every year. Although population growth has slowed to 1.5% per year, more young people are entering the job market [1]. The job market, especially in rural areas, cannot keep up. There are not enough types of jobs for rural youth. [2, 7]

The government has taken steps to improve education. These include free primary education, reduced tuition fees, scholarships for girls, and meal programs. But the education system still does not give students the skills they need for jobs. Many rural youths finish school with general education degrees but lack useful, job-ready skills. At a job fair in Jashore, 30 companies tried to hire 10,000 software professionals. But out of 33,000 applicants, only 17 had the right skills [3]. This shows a serious gap between education and market needs.

Most young people still think success means getting a salaried job. They are not interested in self-employment or starting small businesses. There is also little support or training to help them become entrepreneurs. However, since Bangladesh is an agricultural country, it has many chances to create jobs through farming and small rural businesses—if supported well.

The idea of rural livelihoods comes from the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA). This approach was first used by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) in the 1990s. Later, other groups like IDS, IISD, and Oxfam used it too. Chambers and Conway [10] said a livelihood means the skills, resources, and activities people use to make a living. A sustainable livelihood can survive problems and protect the environment.

In villages, people survive through many activities like farming, non-farm jobs, and seasonal migration. They do whatever is needed to earn money and food. Since farming is

not enough for most, they also do things like carpentry, tailoring, electronics repair, and food processing. These activities need practical training and local support to grow.

The current education system in Bangladesh focuses too much on general knowledge. It does not match the needs and dreams of rural youth. It is necessary to know why formal education does not help them get jobs and also need to see if technical and non-formal education could work better. Recent evidence also emphasizes the importance of aligning education and training with labour-market needs and practical employability skills [11–13].

This study looks at the case of educated but unemployed youth in Bogura district. It aims to understand their job hopes, how useful their education is, and what jobs they might accept. It focuses especially on poor and excluded youth who are no longer in school. The study also checks if they would join training programs in skills like tailoring, motor mechanics, hairdressing, carpentry, electronics, or welding.

By studying these issues, it would hope to find ideas that can improve education, training, and job programs for rural youth. This could help reduce youth unemployment and support better rural development in Bangladesh.

Study objectives:

- 1) To explore the expectations of the educated unemployed rural youths of the study area in terms of livelihood options;
- 2) To examine the relevancy between the livelihood related expectations and the educational backgrounds of the core respondents of the study; and
- 3) To assess the potential for creating rural livelihood opportunities in the study area.

Youth is an important part of a country's population. Their educational qualification and employment opportunities are deeply related to the overall development of the country. Educated unemployment exists as a major challenge in developing countries like Bangladesh. Although the government has taken significant initiatives to expand and improve education, the general education system is failing to provide the rural youth with the job-oriented skills they need. As a result, a large number of highly educated youth spend their days unemployed.

The current study has become necessary for several reasons.

The study would help determine the mismatch between education and employment. Its findings would show whether the education of educated rural youth is supporting their desired careers and livelihoods, or whether there is a serious mismatch between the two.

To understand the vocational expectations of the youth, the study would examine the livelihood aspirations of educated rural youth and how these are changing over time, helping to reveal the reality.

The study would also identify livelihood and income-gen-

erating activities that are feasible at the local level and highlight opportunities in small businesses, agriculture, technical fields, and service-based employment. Evidence-based recommendations on making the education system more action-oriented, practical, and skill-based could be derived from this study.

Policymakers, NGOs, and development agencies could use these findings to design effective action plans. Ultimately, rural poverty reduction and sustainable development would be accelerated through the skill development of educated youth and the generation of local employment. Overall, this study would not only analyze the actual situation of educated unemployed youth but also provide an evidence-based foundation for formulating future programs related to education, skill development, and employment. Hence, the research is timely and appropriate.

2. Research Methods

This study investigated the career aspirations, educational background, and employment status of educated unemployed rural youths in the study area (Garidaha and Sabgram), with a focus on their livelihood expectations and the potential for creating rural income-generating opportunities. Data were

collected through a semi-structured questionnaire survey conducted in two unions (Garidaha and Sabgram), under Bogura Sadar and Sherpur upazila. A total of 200 respondents were selected based on three criteria: they completed graduation from National University-affiliated colleges in Bogura, they were currently unemployed, and they had remained unemployed or mostly underemployed since graduation.

Concerned teachers and other experts were interviewed to assess the challenges of the formal education system in creating rural livelihood opportunities. Additionally, information on the potentials of localized rural livelihood opportunities was gathered through semi-structured interviews with local employers, entrepreneurs, and other experts. Focus group discussion (FGD) sessions were also conducted to obtain collective group data. purposive sampling was utilized to select rural unemployed graduates.

3. Results

This section presents data related to the socio-economic background of the respondents, including their age, gender, educational qualifications, marital status, family type, household income and sources of income, as well as the primary and secondary occupations of their guardians.

3.1. Age

Table 1. Age Distribution of Respondents by Union.

S/N	Age Range	Garidah	Sabgram
1.	Not Mentioned	00	01
2.	15–20	06	01
3.	20–25	95	35
4.	25–30	25	21
5.	30–35	09	07
	Total	135	65

In the research titled *"Education System in Creating Rural Livelihood Opportunities in Bangladesh: A Case of Educated Unemployed Rural Youths in Bogura District"*, a total of 200 respondents were interviewed, all aged between 15 and 35. This age range was chosen because it includes individuals who have passed the minimum age to complete SSC (or equivalent) and who still have up to five years to determine their livelihoods even after exceeding the age limit for government employment.

Among these 200 respondents, 135 were from the Garidah

Union. Of these, the majority (95 respondents) were aged between 20–25 years. Another 25 respondents were aged between 25–30 years, nine were between 30–35 years, and six were around the age of 15.

The remaining 65 respondents were from the Sabgram Union. Among them, the largest number (35 respondents) were also aged between 20–25, followed by 21 respondents between 25–30, seven between 30–35, one respondent around age 15, and one whose age was not reported.

The age group was deliberately selected in alignment with the main objective of the research.

3.2. Gender

Table 2. Gender Distribution of Respondents by Union.

S/N	Type	Garidah	Sabgram	Total
1.	Female	48	26	74
2.	Male	87	39	126
	Total	135	65	200

Among the 135 respondents from Garidah Union, 48 were female and 87 were male. In Sabgram Union, 26 respondents were female and 39 were male.

3.3. Village Names

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents by Village.

Sl.	Garidah Union Villages	No. of Respondents	Sabgram Union Villages	No. of Respondents
1.	Koltapara	10	Sabgram	16
2.	Garidah	14	Chandpara	12
3.	Mohipur	02	Chakalampur	03
4.	Mohipur Colony	25	Chakdhanai	13
5.	Kalsimati	11	Kshidrodhama	18
6.	Shibpur	12	Chaksarataj	03
7.	Chandijan	10	—	—
8.	Raninagar	11	—	—
9.	Chakpathalia	08	—	—
10.	Vrindavanpara	05	—	—
11.	Phulbari	06	—	—
12.	Joynagar	07	—	—
13.	Bongram	12	—	—
14.	Choto Phulbari	02	—	—
	Total	135		

Out of 32 total villages in Garidah Union, respondents were selected from 14 villages. Accessibility of respondents was prioritized in village selection. Prior to data collection, a list of educated unemployed youths was prepared with the help of the Garidah and Sabgram Union Parishads. Contact was made with individuals on the list, and interviews were conducted with those who agreed to participate.

The highest number of respondents (25) came from Mohipur Colony. Other notable counts include: Garidah (14),

Koltapara (10), Kalsimati (11), Shibpur (12), Chandijan (10), Raninagar (11), Bongram (12), Chakpathalia (08), and several other villages with fewer respondents.

In Sabgram Union, interviews were conducted in 06 out of 09 villages, again prioritizing accessibility. The highest number of respondents (18) came from Kshidrodhama, followed by Sabgram (16), Chandpara (12), Chakdhanai (13), and three respondents each from Chakalampur and Chaksarataj. No respondents were found from Chakjhapu and Buzargdhama.

3.4. Marital Status

Table 4. Marital Status of Respondents by Union.

S/N	Marital Status	Garidah	Sabgram
1.	Unmarried	95	40
2.	Married	39	25
3.	Divorced	01	00
4.	Separated	00	00
5.	Widow/Widower	00	00
	Total	135	65

To understand whether marital status plays a role in occupational choices—especially for women—information on marital status was collected. Among 135 respondents from Garidah Union, 95 were unmarried, 39 were married, and only

one was divorced. No widowed, widower, or separated respondents were found. In Sabgram Union, among 65 respondents, 40 were unmarried and 25 were married, with no one identified as divorced, separated, or widowed.

3.5. Educational Qualification

Table 5. Educational Qualification of Respondents by Union.

S/N	Qualification	Garidah	Sabgram	Total
1.	SSC	27	05	32
2.	Dakhil	07	04	11
3.	Technical SSC	00	00	00
4.	HSC	43	13	56
5.	Alim	15	02	17
6.	Technical HSC	09	03	12
7.	Diploma	03	02	05
8.	Degree	04	05	09
9.	Honours	11	14	25
10.	Fazil	01	01	02
11.	Masters	15	14	29
12.	Kamil	00	01	01
13.	Did not respond	00	01	01
	Total	135	65	200

In the current study, information about the educational qualifications of the respondents was very important. Among

the respondents, interviews were conducted with madrasas students and with students included in the technical education

system. Again, there were students in the general education system.

From the above table, it can be seen that among the respondents included in Garidah Union, 27 respondents passed the SSC examination under the general education system, 43 respondents passed the HSC examination, four passed the degree, nine passed the honors, and 15 respondents completed the master's. On the other hand, under the madrasa-based education system, seven passed the Dakhil, 15 passed the Alim, and one passed the Fazil. Under the technical education system, nine respondents passed the HSSC and three respondents completed the diploma.

On the other hand, among the respondents included in the Sabgram Union, five respondents passed the SSC examination under the general education system, 13 passed the HSC examination, five passed the degree, 14 passed the honors and 14 completed the master's. Under the madrasa-based education system, four passed the Dakhil, two passed the Alim, one passed the Fazil and one passed the Kamil. Under the technical education system, three respondents passed the HSC and two respondents completed the diploma. The educational qualification of the remaining one respondent could not be known.

3.6. Findings of the Study

The study reveals a significant evolution in the career aspirations of educated unemployed rural youths in the Bogura district, reflecting shifts in socio-economic conditions and gender roles. The respondents were asked: What is the education system, and how does it impact on livelihood. According to them, the education system is the structured way in which a society provides learning opportunities, knowledge, skills, and values to its population. It includes schools, colleges, universities, vocational training centers, and informal learning programs, and is usually guided by government policies or national curricula. Education systems are designed not only to teach subjects like math, science, and languages but also to prepare people for social participation, work, and personal development. They also said that the education system can increase or decrease livelihood opportunities.

According to respondent education impacts livelihood opportunities:

Table 6. Perceived Effects of the Education System on Livelihood Opportunities.

Increase opportunities	Decrease opportunities
Skill development: Education provides technical, vocational, and soft skills, making individuals employable or able to start businesses.	Mismatch with job market: If education is not aligned with the local economy or emerging industries, graduates may remain unemployed
Access to formal jobs: Higher education often opens doors to professional careers in healthcare, IT, government, and business.	Over qualification: Sometimes, having higher degrees may limit employment if local jobs do not require them, creating frustration and underemployment.
Entrepreneurship: Educated individuals can identify market gaps, manage resources, and innovate, leading to new income sources.	Poor quality education: Low-quality schools or outdated curricula may fail to equip learners with practical skills, keeping them stuck in low-income jobs.
Social networks: Schools and colleges connect people with mentors, peers, and job markets, increasing opportunities.	Inequality: Limited access to education for girls, marginalized groups, or rural populations can prevent social mobility.
	Rigid systems: Lack of vocational or flexible learning options can trap people in repetitive, low-skill work.

Initially, many youths desired traditional professions such as teaching, the army, and medicine. However, as they progressed through their education, interest shifted towards government jobs, entrepreneurship, and private sector opportunities, particularly among males. Despite these evolving aspirations, a pronounced mismatch exists between their educational qualifications and actual employment status, with many remaining unemployed or temporarily employed. Respondents identified various local income-generating opportunities, yet highlighted a critical lack of technical and vocational skills necessary to pursue these options. The findings underscore the

need for educational reforms to bridge the gap between qualifications and market demands, enhancing rural livelihood prospects.

To explore the expectations of the educated unemployed rural youths of the study area in terms of livelihood options;

The findings of the study reveal a dynamic shift in the career aspirations of educated unemployed rural youths over time, reflecting changing socio-economic conditions, gender roles, and livelihood opportunities. Initially, during their school years, the majority of youths expressed interest in traditional and idealistic professions, such as teaching, joining

the army or police, or becoming medicines or engineers. However, as they progressed through college and reached their current stage of life, their professional preferences changed significantly. Findings are described in detail table:

“Gender and aspiration of Educated Unemployed Rural Youths by Education Level”

Table 7. Gender and Career Aspirations of Educated Unemployed Rural Youth by Education Level.

Sl. No.	Aspirations	School		College		Current		Total
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
1	Teacher	57	42	33	20	00	01	153
2	Government Job	07	12	13	21	33	40	126
3	Business	02	06	01	14	06	24	53
4	Army	00	19	01	08	00	00	28
5	Entrepreneur (Agriculture)	00	00	00	00	09	19	28
6	Police	01	12	01	08	00	00	22
7	Engineer	01	15	01	02	00	00	19
8	Entrepreneur (Non-agriculture)	00	00	00	00	08	09	17
9	Doctor	04	09	01	00	00	00	14
10	Private Job	00	00	00	02	04	08	14
11	Government Job or Agri-entrepreneur	00	00	00	00	02	08	10

In the table presented above, the expectations of educated unemployed individuals regarding their preferred professions had changed over time. It was observed that the aspirations they held during their school years often shifted once they en-

tered college. In some cases, their interest in the same profession decreased, while in other cases, it increased.

Professions with Increased Interest: Government jobs, business, agricultural and non-agricultural entrepreneurship, private jobs.

Table 8. Professions Gaining Popularity among Respondents.

Profession	Professions gaining popularity
Government Job	19 students at school level → 34 at college → 73 at present. There was a significant rise in interest, especially among both male and female youths.
Business	08 at school → 15 at college → 30 at present. Interests in business were growing, particularly among males.
Entrepreneur (Agriculture)	No interest at school or college levels, but currently 28 youths (09 female, 19 male) expressed interest. This was a new and emerging trend.
Entrepreneur (Non-agriculture)	Previously zero interest; now 17 youths (08 female, 09 male) were interested.
Private Job	No interest during school or college; now 12 (04 female, 08 male) are interested.
Government Job or Agri-Entrepreneurship (combined)	Zero in school/college; currently 10 (02 female, 08 male) are interested.

The majority of respondents expressed a preference for pursuing government jobs. To understand the reasons behind this preference, their responses have been categorized and presented below.

Reasons for Choosing Government Jobs as a Profession:

Table 9. *Reasons for Choosing Government Jobs.*

Reason	Number of Respondents
Economic security	14
Social status	09
Family expectations	07
Job security	01
Economic security and social status	06
Economic security, social status, job security, and low work-related stress	06
Economic security and low work-related stress	01
Economic security, family expectations, and job security	01
Difficulty finding other jobs	01
Economic security, social status, family expectations, and job security	08
Economic security, social status, and family expectations	04
Economic security, social status, and job security	01
Economic security and family expectations	02
Economic security, opportunity to spend more time with family, and family expectations	07
Economic security and job security	02
Economic security, social status, job security, and satisfactory benefits	02
Social status and family expectations	01
Social status, being considered a good match for marriage, and family expectations	06
Economic security, social status, being considered a good match for marriage, family expectations, job security, low work-related stress, and satisfactory benefits	12
Opportunity to spend more time with family and family expectations	06
Job security and satisfactory benefits	01
Not applicable	99
Did not respond	03
Total	200

Professions with Decreased Interest:

Table 10. *Professions Losing Popularity among Respondents.*

Profession	Professions losing popularity
Teaching	99 students (57 female, 42 male) at school level → 53 at college → only 01 (male) currently. A sharp decline in interest.
Army	28 students at school/college → 0 currently. Interest has vanished.
Police	22 students at school/college → 0 at present. No current interest.

Profession	Professions losing popularity
Engineer	19 at school/college → none at present.
Doctor	14 at school/college → none currently interested.

4. Discussion

4.1. Career Aspiration Trends Among Rural Educated Youths

Over time, rural educated youths had shown a clear shift in career aspirations—from traditional and idealistic goals to more realistic, stable, and entrepreneurial pursuits. Interest in government jobs had increased significantly, with 73 youths eventually aspiring to such roles, compared to only 19 during their school years. This trend reflected a growing appreciation for the financial security, social status, and benefits these jobs offered.

A notable rise in entrepreneurial ambitions, particularly in agriculture-related and non-agriculture-related businesses, indicated a shift toward self-employment and income-generating activities. These areas, once ignored, began to attract a substantial number of youths—especially males—suggesting a response to changing opportunities in the rural labor market.

In contrast, interest in traditional professions such as teaching, army, police, engineering, and medicine declined sharply. While teaching was once the most preferred profession (with 99 students at school), only one individual ultimately aspired to it.

These trends highlighted a transformation in the mindset of rural youths—one that was shaped by emerging economic realities, employment challenges, and a growing desire for independence and self-reliance.

4.2. Possible Reasons for Changes in Profession Interest by Gender

4.2.1. Rise in Interest for Government Jobs (Both Genders)

- 1) Youths had valued government jobs because they offered job security, pensions, and social status.
- 2) Government employment was highly respected in rural communities.
- 3) More females had gained educational opportunities and were encouraged to pursue these roles.

4.2.2. Growing Male Interest in Entrepreneurship (Especially Agriculture)

- 1) Males had been attracted to agriculture entrepreneurship

due to new economic opportunities, government incentives, and improved market access.

- 2) Cultural norms had expected men to be the main breadwinners, so they preferred roles with potential for higher earnings and independence.
- 3) Males had been more encouraged to take risks involved in entrepreneurship.

4.2.3. Emergence of Female Interest in Non-Agriculture Entrepreneurship and Private Jobs

- 1) Women had been motivated to achieve economic independence.
- 2) Non-agricultural businesses and private jobs had offered more flexible working hours, helping women balance work and family responsibilities.
- 3) Growing social acceptance had allowed more women to work outside traditional roles.

4.2.4. Sharp Decline in Interest for Teaching (Especially Females)

- 1) Teaching jobs had offered lower remuneration compared to government jobs.
- 2) Youths had perceived limited career growth opportunities in teaching.
- 3) Female teachers had faced difficulties balancing professional demands with family responsibilities, which discouraged many from continuing.

4.2.5. Disinterest in Army, Police, Engineering, and Medical Professions

- 1) These professions had required extensive education and training, creating high competition and qualification barriers.
- 2) Youths had preferred less hardworking and more rewarding career paths.
- 3) Lack of role models in these fields in rural areas had reduced interest.
- 4) Gender barriers and stereotypes had discouraged females from pursuing these male-dominated fields.

4.2.6. Relevance between Educational Background and Livelihood Expectations

To examine whether there is any consistency between the respondents' educational qualifications and their career or

livelihood expectations, a comparative table has been presented below that illustrates their highest level of education alongside their preferred occupation.

Mismatch between Educational Qualification and Employment Expectation

Table 11. *Mismatch between Educational Qualification and Employment Expectation.*

Educational Qualification	Expectation	Current Status	Female	Male
Postgraduate (30)	Government job – 17 Temporarily employed – 10 Others: Entrepreneur (non-agriculture) – 01 Govt. job / Electrician – 01 Govt. job / Agricultural entrepreneur – 01 Outsourcing – 01	1. Unemployed – 20 Temporarily employed – 10	14	16
	Government job – 24 Business – 05 Agricultural entrepreneur – 04 Private job/Entrepreneur (non-agriculture) – 02 Others: Govt./Private job – 01 Govt. job / Agricultural entrepreneur – 01 Rural vet – 01 Private job – 03	Unemployed – 20 Temporarily employed – 20 No response – 01	14	27
Graduate (41)	Government job – 18 Agricultural entrepreneur – 15 Business – 12 Others: Govt. job Agricultural entrepreneur – 06 Private job – 05 Entrepreneur (non-agriculture) – 04 Outsourcing – 03 Electrician – 03 Govt. job / Business – 02 Driver – 01 Govt. job / Private job / Business – 01 Govt. job / Entrepreneur (non-agriculture) – 01 Tailoring – 01 Cattle farming – 01 Health worker – 01 Tuition – 01 Govt./Private job – 01 School teacher – 01	1. Unemployed – 44 Temporarily employed – 38 No response – 03	24	61
	Government job – 12 Agricultural entrepreneur – 09 Business – 07 Others: Entrepreneur (non-agriculture) – 05 Private job – 01 Tailoring – 01 Computer/web design – 01 Cattle farming – 01 Private job / Entrepreneur (non-agriculture) – 03 Govt. job / Agricultural entrepreneur – 02 Govt. job / Entrepreneur (non-agriculture) – 01	Unemployed – 41 Temporarily employed – 02 No response – 00	22	21
HSC (85)				
SSC (43)				

From the table above, it is evident that regardless of whether respondents had completed their education up to SSC or postgraduate level, the majority expressed a preference for government jobs as their primary occupational aspiration. However, their current employment status reveals a notable mismatch.

Among the 43 respondents who completed SSC, 41 remain unemployed. Only two are temporarily engaged in income-generating activities, though they do not consider these as their primary occupation.

Similarly, among the 85 HSC-level respondents, 44 are still not involved in any income-generating activity. Although 38 are temporarily employed, they continue to seek better and more stable job opportunities.

Among the 41 respondents with graduate degrees, 20 are temporarily employed, while the remaining 20 are unemployed. Despite their higher education, none have been able to

secure their desired occupation.

A similar trend is observed among the 30 postgraduate respondents: 20 are unemployed, and 10 are temporarily employed.

Thus, it becomes clear that regardless of educational attainment, there exists a significant inconsistency between the respondents' educational qualifications and their desired career paths. Recent research on graduate unemployment and employer expectations in Bangladesh similarly identifies skills mismatch and limited job readiness as important constraints [14-16].

When asked whether their education was relevant to their chosen career expectations, most respondents answered in the negative. In fact, out of 200 respondents, 163 reported that there is no consistency between their educational background and their career expectations.

Table 12. *Relevance between Education and Career Expectation.*

Response	Frequency
No	163
Yes	36
Partial	01
Total	200

In this study, respondents were asked whether their educational qualifications had helped them in determining their desired career path. Among them, 163 explained that although their career expectations were shaped by their academic education, they lacked the technical and vocational skills required for the available employment opportunities in rural areas. This skill gap has prevented them from pursuing their aspired livelihoods. The study found:

- 1) **Significant Employment Mismatch:** Despite higher academic qualifications, a large proportion of respondents remain unemployed or only temporarily employed, indicating a clear gap between educational attainment and actual employment status.
- 2) **Inconsistency between Education and Career Expectations:** The study found that 163 out of 200 respondents felt there was no alignment between their educational background and their desired career paths, highlighting a widespread perception of educational irrelevance.
- 3) **Lack of Technical and Vocational Skills:** Many respondents attributed their inability to achieve their livelihood goals to the absence of practical, job-ready skills in their education, especially skills suited to rural employment markets.

- 4) **Limited Impact of Higher Education:** Even postgraduate and graduate respondents failed to secure employment matching their expectations, suggesting that academic qualifications alone are insufficient in the current rural job landscape without complementary vocational or entrepreneurial training.

4.2.7. Potential Rural Livelihood Opportunities

Respondents were asked what types of income-generating activities could be locally created in their area that they could adopt as professions. In response, nearly everyone indicated that there were multiple opportunities for income-generating activities in their area. The professions they mentioned include:

- 1) Various types of small businesses
- 2) Cattle farming
- 3) Duck and poultry farming
- 4) Fish farming, tailoring
- 5) Outsourcing (information technology [IT]-related)
- 6) Kitchen gardening
- 7) Tea stall
- 8) Driving
- 9) Electrician

- 10) Agriculture
- 11) Nursery
- 12) Small-scale garment industry
- 13) Grocery store
- 14) Production of yogurt
- 15) Cottage industry

- 16) Handicrafts
- 17) Basket making, etc.

Below is a structured table format DFID [4] that outlines the various types of capital—Natural, Physical, Human, Financial, and Social—along with a brief discussion of each in the context of creating rural livelihood opportunities:

Table 13. Rural Livelihood Opportunities by Sustainable Livelihood Capital.

Type of Capital	Description	Potentiality of Desired Occupations in Study Area
Natural Capital	Referred to natural resources such as land, water, forests, and biodiversity.	Among the occupations that had potential in the study area, some were directly linked to natural resources. Examples included fish farming, livestock rearing, poultry farming, and nursery businesses. The natural resources required for such occupations—like water bodies and arable land—were abundantly available in the study area. Many respondents also inherited these resources as part of their ancestral property, which made it easier for them to engage in those occupations by utilizing available natural capital.
Physical Capital	Encompassed infrastructure such as roads, buildings, utilities, and technology. Included tools, equipment, and other productive assets.	The occupations mentioned by the respondents—such as grocery shops, yogurt production, cottage industries, and various small businesses—could have been supported by developing the necessary infrastructure, which was relatively easy to establish in the study area.
Human Capital	Represented the skills, knowledge, and experience of individuals within the community.	The occupations desired by the respondents' generally required technical skills. Since the respondents had mostly studied under the general education system, they lacked the necessary technical expertise, and in some cases, they had no relevant skills at all.
Financial Capital	Involved access to financial resources, including savings, credit, and investment.	The occupations mentioned in the study typically required very minimal investment. In this context, the respondents could invest in these locally viable occupations using personal savings or by accessing small loans.
Social Capital	Referred to the networks, relationships, social support, and trust within the community.	While initiating such occupations may have required social support or acceptance, it appeared that such support existed in the study area. However, highly educated respondents were often reluctant to engage in these types of work, as society expected them to pursue higher-status jobs. On the other hand, less educated individuals had lower expectations and seemed to face little or no social barriers when engaging in such occupations.

To reduce unemployment and improve rural livelihoods, the education system should include practical and vocational training. Support for small businesses and skill development can help young people find suitable work in their own communities.

5. Recommendations

Some recommendations are proposed to address youth unemployment and enhance livelihood opportunities for young people in rural areas. These recommendations are primarily based on developing their self-reliance and entrepreneurship through education, training, financial support, and changes in social attitudes.

- 1) Add Practical Skills to Education: The education system needs to include vocational and technical training so that students can learn job-ready skills.

- 2) Promote Local Job Opportunities: Awareness programs ought to be organized to inform youths about the potential of local income-generating activities.
- 3) Provide Skill Development Training: Government and NGOs are encouraged to offer training on farming, small business, IT, tailoring, and other useful skills.
- 4) Support Startups with Small Loans: Easy access to small loans or grants needs to be provided to help youths start their own businesses.
- 5) Encourage Entrepreneurship: Rural youths are advised to become self-employed through training, mentorship, and financial support.
- 6) Change Social Attitudes: Communities are expected to recognize that all honest jobs have value, and youths need not feel pressured to only pursue high-status jobs.
- 7) Create Job Matching Services: Local job centers or digital platforms can be developed to help match youths

with available job opportunities in their areas.

- 8) Promote Gender Inclusion: Special support may be extended to female youths to participate in entrepreneurship and local livelihood activities.
- 9) Link Education with Market Demand: Courses and training programs need to be aligned with the actual demands of the rural job market.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the connection between education and livelihood opportunities among educated unemployed rural youths. The findings show that most of them want government jobs, but very few have achieved that goal. Many respondents were either unemployed or only temporarily employed. Their education did not match their job expectations. Most of them said their education did not help them prepare for real jobs, especially in rural areas. The study also found that there were many local income-generating opportunities in the area, such as small businesses, farming, tailoring, and IT-based work. However, the youths lack the technical skills and training needed to take up these jobs. Many educated youths also avoid these local jobs because of social expectations.

Abbreviations

BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
ADB	Asian Development Bank
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
DFID	Department for International Development
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ILO	International Labour Organization
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
RDA	Rural Development Academy
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Author Contributions

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