

# CHALLENGES IN FINDING JOBS: A CASE STUDY ON INTERNATIONAL (BANGLADESHI) GRADUATES IN ESTONIA

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## ABSTRACT

Through qualitative interview, this study finds that international graduates in Estonia face several barriers, such as language proficiency, lack of skills, work experience, and networking. Those employment challenges affect the Estonian labor market as international students are also an asset to the host country. This study suggests Estonian Universities could undertake an initiative to help students overcome barriers, such as intensive courses in the Estonian language and other required courses. In addition, a few other recommendations to boost graduates' employment are presented, including career counselling, job fairs, and sponsored internships. However, proper steps should be taken by the government and universities to ensure international students are getting enough support during employment. Their skills and knowledge are an addition to Estonia's development and will contribute to economic growth

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## Introduction

Globalization in higher education has grown significantly during the past few years. In 2000, nearly 2 million students studied abroad as international students, and it has been predicted that there will be more than 8 million such students worldwide in 2030 (ICEF, 2019). This prediction indicates that Estonia will expect to see a rise in overseas students as it is doing internationally. There is much enthusiasm among students worldwide to study graduate and post-graduate education abroad. Nearly 6 million students account for outward migration, with a seven percent yearly growth, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022). Both the host country's university and the international students gain from this development (Mervis, 2019).

International students are essential resources for countries hoping to increase the skilled labor force. Attracting international students is essential for the future success of many nations (Islam, 2020). Because of this, wealthy nations constantly work to entice talent from around the globe. International workers, including those who attend regional institutions, are essential to many local tech enterprises. Countries like the UK, the USA, Canada, and Australia have lured international talent over the past ten years. To compete with large nations for the best and brightest foreign talent, small governments in European and Asian nations are not falling behind (Islam, 2020).

One of the most crucial resources for nations looking to boost the number of skilled workers is international students. Also, international students have become a highly sought-after global resource because they improve the demographic situation of the overaged Western world. As the employment rate is shrinking, countries have recognized the direct and indirect advantages international students provide to their host nations. International students offer more than just themselves and their tuition fees; they also bring a variety of present and future benefits to their host economies (Hughes, 2019). Numerous factors influence international students' choice and decision to pursue studies abroad. Getting permanent residency so that they can settle in the host country is the aspect that draws many migrants. However, many international graduates are particularly interested in finding career prospects after completing their education in a competitive

5 Challenges and barriers to finding jobs global labor market (Ng et al., 2019). Many overseas students are currently self-sufficient and seek employment as a return on their investment in their host country (Tran et al., 2020). Similarly, several factors influence international students to choose Estonian universities as study destinations. For instance, Estonia is one of the safest countries in the world (IEP, 2020), with relatively affordable tuition fees in all stages of primary and higher education (Republic of Estonia Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

The Estonian government has developed a skills forecasting system called OSKA. Based on the OSKA(2018) study's conclusions, Estonia will require more intelligent individuals in the future who are skilled in managing, developing, and managing technology. Technology may take the positions of routine workers; however, based on the same survey, Estonian university graduates will not be adequate for the employment market. Mainly, there are not enough graduates in the production, construction, science, education, and agriculture industries. In the meantime, there will be fewer jobs that merely require general education or less. From this forecast, it is clear that the Estonian labor market will need more local and international graduates in order to fulfill their vacancies. Also, the study confirms that future employees must prepare themselves with adequate IT skills to compete in the fast-forwarding job market (OSKA,2018).

Every year many international students graduate from Estonian universities. After graduation, most students try to secure a job in the Estonian market. As a result, those students had to deal with various challenges that made the transition from studying to working difficult. However, there is a severe concern among international students that their desire to enter the Estonian job market is not secure because of the gaps between foreign employees and local employers. Previously numerous studies have been published based on the job-finding struggles and challenges faced by international students. It is crucial for societies, employers, and universities to understand the barriers that affect the employment of international students in order to successfully overcome the challenges and successfully retain the precious asset these students are to their host country. In the Estonian international student context, a few numbers of study on job-finding challenges and barriers have been conducted.

The OSKA (2018) study reveals the importance of international graduates in the Estonian labor market, while the graduates are worried about their employment. Consequently, to bring 6 Challenges and barriers in finding jobs the obstacle affecting the connection between the Estonian labor market and international students, the author decided to do qualitative research on the challenges and barriers to finding jobs. This study aims to identify the challenges encountered by Bangladeshi students studying in Estonia. To achieve the aim, the author proposes the following research question- What are the challenges and barriers international (Bangladeshi) students face in finding jobs? What do international (Bangladeshi) students think universities can do to help their future students better prepare themselves to overcome these obstacles?

### **Literature review**

A recent study by Sofat (2021) found significant barriers to employment for international graduates after completing the study program, they are- Lack of professional and social capital networks; Discrimination; Transferable skills; Language proficiency; Visa policies and status; Lack of relevant work experience; Employability competencies. Lack of professional and social capital networks is one of the main concerns for graduates. According to Jenkins and Lane (2019), social capital refers to the value of social networks, connections with like-minded individuals, and relationships between international students and their personal and social networks, such as family, friends, and acquaintances.

Tufail (2019) discovered that while international students struggled to engage with the local community in their destination country, they could interact with international groups from their home countries or regions. Social networks can help international students locate work in their migrant community, which is a favorable aspect (Tufail 2019). On the other hand, some findings revealed that social networks could be a negative factor, limiting the acquisition of skills and information required to acquire skilled employment outside the migrant group (Tufail 2019). One of the most important abilities for a fruitful job search and career development is networking. However, finding professional networks in a new nation can be exceedingly difficult for many immigrants.

Building a network and breaking into the workforce is difficult due to language barriers. Even while speaking a common language, cultural communication patterns can differ (Hillgren et al., 2021). A study by Blackmore et al. (2017) focused on Chinese graduates' real-life experience in Australia finds that local networking increases the possibility of finding jobs, while graduates who struggle to expand their network end up limiting their job expectations. This study participant believed that if they were in China, they would be able to use their family and friendship networks to get work. However, in Australia, participants were required to gain social capital by employing techniques similar to those used by their fellow citizens to secure jobs. They were separated from the benefits provided by their home country context. The latest findings from Alho (2020) reveal that in Finland, Informal networks played a role in public sector recruitment; in detail, short-term positions were not necessarily available to public competition, and hence "who you know" is essential in the public sector.

Graduates can expand and deepen their broad Indian and non-Indian networks through educational organizations, institutions, and part-time work (Sofat, 2021). However, ethnic networks do exist at times, and they are exploitative and do not allow migrants to explore the market and fully meet individuals from various communities. 30% of jobs are filled through adverts, social media, newspapers, and approaching agencies, according to "Researching career opportunities in New Zealand" (2020). The remaining 70% of jobs are filled through networks instead of online advertisements in the so-called hidden job market. This highlights the value of networking as the top method for discovering opportunities in the untapped labor market. According to an interview by Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland seems to have a terrible time professionally and socially networking. Numerous factors have been cited, such as the lack of social interaction among Finns and difficulty finding contacts or venues for professional networking (Jinia et al., 2021).

Discrimination in employment relates to potential applicants unfairly acting based on demographic variables such as gender, sex, lack of acknowledgment of education and experience, and age (Wilson & Parker, 2007). An interesting fact was figured out from Alho's (2020) study; Finish company recruiters do not want to call Chinese applicants for interviews because of their names. Recruiters are unfamiliar with this kind of name, and it is hard for them to pronounce Chinese names. Consequently, changing the

applicant's name to Finish informal name brings out positive results in the job search. Some graduates are victims of discrimination based on their skin color and foreign background.(Alho,2020) Cameron et al.(2019) primarily focused on inequality in the Australian labor market. In their survey from two Australian institutions, participants said that labor discrimination was one of the major obstacles for graduates to find employment. Employers were found to hire graduates based on names that reflected their ethnicities, such as Chinese, Indian, or Middle Eastern. Graduates experienced unfair behavior and prejudiced hiring procedures. Tuttle and Chang-Hwan (2019), who described two forms of structural and institutional racism, observed discrimination in their study of the USA.

The structural discrimination found in the study showed that discrimination persisted even after completing college or working in a related industry since organizational policies may reflect ingrained biases that impact hiring foreign graduates. This study concluded that discrimination was a significant factor in American employment. In one study, the chances and career counseling services available to international students at their university were restricted by their skin color, nationality, and status (Pozdeeva, 2021) Age discrimination is another obstacle for international students to secure a job. A Swedish man over 35 finds it hard to get a job in the Finish labor market (Ding,2019). Also, another female student identified the age aspect as an obstacle to the job market. Despite age discrimination being illegal in Finland, she claimed that her age has occasionally been brought up during interviews (Dittmar & Indrenius, 2018).

Akhlaq Ahmad, a researcher from the University of Helsinki, discovered that a candidate's background influences their employability. A person just starting their career may have lower ambitions and be forced into lower-paying employment if they are constrained due to their racial or cultural background. Even second-generation foreigners who speak Finnish as a mother tongue and are familiar with local customs and traditions encounter prejudice when looking for work (YLE 2019). Despite having credentials and experience from recognized overseas jobs, businesses are discriminating against international graduates regarding employment. Indian graduates have fewer opportunities to be recruited despite having more experience than local graduates due to their race (Nagale and Stalder 2019). In finish job market. Racism and prejudice are two significant issues that many foreign job seekers encounter. Even though they have similar

abilities to those of a foreign applicant, this hurdle was brought up in the context of preference for hiring predominantly native Finns for professional positions. One of the reasons an international applicant would be rejected was their lack of knowledge of the Finnish language and immigration status. Even if they are not Finnish, their hiring chances may be reduced.(Pozdeeva,2021).

Transferable skills are in high demand in human resource management in the age of globalization."Specific talents that are directly created in real-life situations or via education and training and afterward transferred to real-life situations" are the definition of skills.(Nagale & Stalder, 2017).Transferable skills are abilities that may be used across Challenges and barriers in finding job areas and are crucial for developing human resources. Among the competencies listed are skills for learning, employment and entrepreneurship, personal growth, and active citizenship (Naimbar et al., 2019). Alternatively, essential competencies, soft skills, non-technical abilities, generic skills, or basic skills are used to construct transferable skills and abilities (Nagale & Stalder, 2017). According to Smith et al.'s (2018) research, Chinese accounting graduates felt that the most significant barriers to obtaining reputable accounting employment in Australia were a lack of generic abilities, including communication, problem-solving, and flexibility. Satyorini et al. (2018) find that communication is one of the necessary transferable abilities in the workplace. The ability to speak and write clearly in English or Indonesian, deliver financial reports, and negotiate in both languages are all examples of communication skills. The same study agreed that transferable abilities are acknowledged as vital for recruitment. New recruits with sufficient transferable abilities will be "immediately proficient in new workplace contexts" (Nagale & Stalder, 2017).

Graduates' communication abilities must be of a higher caliber, i.e., highly impressive or at least of a particular standard (Ab Rahman et al., 2019). With the globe becoming a more flexible and adaptive workforce, communication competence is a vital soft skill that demonstrates these recent graduates as influential team members who are individually responsible and have high integrity. The language used in meetings, presentations, and emails was one of the topics Ab Rahman et al.'s(2019) mentioned. Besides, University graduates frequently use informal language rather than the formal one expected in a professional workplace. Due to several worries, Australian businesses

said they were hardly willing to hire foreign graduates, with verbal or written communication being their primary concern when making that decision (Jackson,2017).

Language proficiency is a primary concern for international students everywhere. Several prevalent perspectives on human resource management contend that language should be seen as "a measurable skill and aptitude that the individual possesses to accomplish the job" (Angouri & Piekkari, 2018). The biggest obstacle for international students in Estonia is the language barrier when seeking employment or a career. Unless international students work in the I.T. industry, not many other professions require English because most people speak Estonian or Russian (Islam,2021). A study conducted by Pozdeeva(2021) found that the main barrier to employment for overseas graduates from Finland is a poor command of the language. A similar study by Ding(2019) revealed that several students thought the fact that the Finnish working environment still relies on communicating in Finnish but not so much on the actual task itself as on why learning the language was so crucial. He discovered that multiple job listings required candidates to have strong comprehension, speaking, and writing skills in Finnish, even though it was stated that English was the active language.

An Australian study by Gribble et al. (2017) revealed that international students had significant difficulties due to their lack of communication. A Chinese woman who participated in the discussion offered her impressions of Australia and noted that she had thought she had decent communication abilities before coming to Australia. She soon discovered that it was quite challenging to interact with the locals there in English. International graduates must learn the local language of their host nation. Students' lives can be made easier by learning the local language since this offers many opportunities, such as managing jobs and expanding local networks. Visa policies and status are another frequent obstacle to employment for international graduates. Estonian police and border guards issue temporary residence permits for international students. Unless work interferes with studies, this allows students to work an unrestricted number of hours in Estonia (Estonian Police and Border Guard Board, n.d.). An Australian study by Trans et al.(2019) discovers that the phrase "temporary" can occasionally cause uncertainty in the workforce. They think students on temporary visas can quit their jobs after a specific period and return to their native country after a specific period.



Additionally, the hiring and training processes take a lot of time and money. Due to this, from a general standpoint, recruiters will choose to select permanent residents over temporary visa holders. Similar findings were found in the study by Cameron et al. (2019), which stated that one of the key reasons employers do not hire graduates from other countries is that candidates do not have Australian citizenship or permanent residency. However, immigration law stating visa status was the biggest possible obstacle.

According to Work in Estonia (2022), If graduates find a job and the employer is willing to provide an invitation, they can apply for a temporary residence permit. The benefit for international graduates and employers is that the requirements for permission from the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund and the average salary criterion for foreigners do not apply to those who have obtained higher education in Estonia. In order to manage work permits in Estonia, it is vital to emphasize the value of managing jobs after graduation. As a result, foreign graduates in Estonia may face job obstacles to their visa status, as evidenced by earlier results (Rajani et al., 2018; Trans et al.,2019) showing that employers are reluctant to hire graduates from other countries. Lack of work experience is considered to be the most prominent global employment hurdle. Having prior employment experience can be crucial in determining whether an international student can get a position against the competition in the labor market while applying for a job in Estonia. Regarding employability, native students are most likely to outperform their international counterparts since they have valuable work experience that overseas students may lack. 45% of university students feel unprepared and lack the necessary experience to apply for employment or apprenticeships, based on the survey conducted by Pauli (2021). The study also reveals that although students are aware of the benefits of work experience for both themselves and employers, they struggle to obtain it, which poses a substantial obstacle to the employability of international students.

According to Tufail (2019), Employers believe that understanding the corporate environment enhances a worker's professionalism. Being a student at a university is entirely separate from being a professional at a corporation, and the two things cannot be compared. However, it is indeed equally crucial that the students have the opportunity to learn from the businesses. Because of this, they were finding internships or summer jobs is crucial for them as the initial step in developing a future(Tufail,2019). The study by [www.ijhsdr.com](http://www.ijhsdr.com)

Ng et al. (2019) also mentioned the issue of international students' work experience. Some individuals were more concerned with their professional experience than their academic activities. On the other hand, a few Chinese participants expressed a desire to pursue further education and obtain as many degrees as possible to match their real-world knowledge.

Tufail (2019) describes that if teachers organize their courses so that students work on more industry-focused projects rather than executing theoretical assignments with no real-world applications, students can obtain work experience while they are still in school. This kind of organization could also bring the self to believe in the student's mindset. As we have already revealed from the previous study (Blackmore et al., 2017), employers prefer to deal with candidates who collaborate with diverse groups and have prior local job experience rather than those with strong academic credentials (Blackmore et al., 2017). Employability competencies such as communication, presentation, teamwork, and time management are some of the skills employers look for while recruiting an employee. Ibad (2019) defined competencies as "individual requirements to fulfill required tasks that represent what a person knows and his capability." Employers want recent graduates to be job-ready in the twenty-first century by acquiring new competencies in addition to their academic background. Based on the research by Blackmore et al. (2017), employers in the accounting industry prefer graduates who can combine their education with work experience. According to the report, Big Four businesses prioritize hiring graduates with relevant job experience above those with vital academic records when hiring accounting graduates. Another study by Sofat (2021) also discussed a similar issue by indicating that many organizations prioritize skills and competencies when hiring recent graduates above academic credentials because practical knowledge is more helpful in the workplace than theoretical knowledge.

## **Methodology**

The author used a qualitative case study method to accomplish the research objective and answer the research questions. According to Mahajan (2018), qualitative research aims to develop new concepts and theories by methodically describing and interpreting

problems or events from the perspective of the person or population being examined. Also, the ability to define, detect, and investigate social phenomena from the participants is another advantage of conducting qualitative research (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2017). In this study, students will provide their experiences about their journey of managing jobs after graduation from Estonian universities in response to open-ended questions on the phenomena to analyze and draw conclusions.

The primary goal of this study is to compile the students' experiences, opinions, and feelings about this subject. A qualitative approach was seen to be the most effective means of achieving this. The study aims to determine the “Challenges faced by Bangladeshi graduates in Estonia” using the qualitative method. The author chose interviewees with the following characteristics: Graduated from Estonian universities and whose country of origin is Bangladesh; Graduate searching for employment or already employed; Wish to work in Estonia in their field of interest.

However, the author decided to use snowball sampling to get a specific sample for the study. Snowball sampling is a method of gathering information to access specific groups of people (Naderifar et al., 2017). The snowball sampling method is used because this study only focuses on a specific community. According to the study of Naderifar et al. (2017), snowball sampling can be used in several ways for research investigations, challenges and barriers in finding jobs community-based information generation, and program dissemination connected to education programs. Also, another reason for choosing snowball sampling is the female participants in this study. It was challenging for the author to find female Bangladeshi students who graduated. Because of this, snowball sampling is the best possible method, as one female participant can refer further female participants. The paper's author decided to choose Bangladeshi students as the focus group for this research. Therefore, to identify the core issues a Bangladeshi student faces while trying to manage a job in the Estonian labor market and the suggestion for universities better to prepare their future students for the competitive job market, a total of 18 Bangladeshi graduates were interviewed. However, after conducting sixteen interviews, the author decided to stop taking new samples because participants started repeating the same issue.

The below-mentioned procedure was followed to manage participant: Contact friends who belong to the target demographic or who knows someone with the desired characteristic. Request them to suggest other cases. Request new participants to recommend another person. In order to conduct this research, a semi-structured one-on-one interview with open-ended questions was conducted. This interview allows the interviewer to record the talk, take notes, and use them in the research process. A semi-structured interview naturally allows interviewees to share their extensive perspectives and experiences on the research's goal to collect rich, in-depth primary data. As previously noted, this study's qualitative data-gathering process involves interviewing students. There are a total of sixteen interviews. The author has chosen sixteen Bangladeshi students who graduated from Estonian universities and are either employed or looking for work to understand the problem at hand better.

Interviews and questionnaires were being prepared based on the literature analysis. The literature analysis highlights significant obstacles overseas students experience when it comes to challenges and barriers in finding jobs and looking for employment. The interview questionnaire was set up to make it possible to respond to the research questions. A total of 16 questions was asked of interviewees about their employment challenges and recommendation for universities. The total length of an interview is around 7 to 15 minutes.

The author decided to identify the sample population with a code name, such as R1 and R2, to keep the participant's privacy. The questionnaire for the interview was developed using previous research conducted by Antilla (2022). The questions are divided into three sections. The first four questions are added to get an depth background overview of the interviewee. Then, the rest of the questions are prepared to answer both research questions.

After the sample population's data is collected, thematic analysis is used to examine them. After the interview was complete, the author transcribed the recorded audio. During the transcription process, the author repeated the recorded audio to ensure the transcription was accurate. After the first transcription, the author reread it and removed unnecessary words to make it understandable for both the reader and the researcher.

For example, a few interviewees used 'like', 'but', and 'you know' so many times, and these have been removed. In the next stage, the author used Braun and Clarke's (2018) thematic approach for data analysis. In addition, both semantic and latent coding are used to capture the initial codes. The reason for using this mixed approach is to get both views of data, as it is easy to understand from the explanation by Byrne (2021).

Semantic codes are identified by looking at the data's explicit or surface meanings. The researcher looks no further than what a respondent has stated or written. The creation of semantic codes can be regarded as a descriptive data analysis targeted primarily at displaying the data's content as given by the respondent. Latent coding aims to find hidden meanings or underlying assumptions, ideas, or ideologies that may influence or inform the descriptive or semantic content of the data (Byrne, 2021). The author focused on organizing initial sub-themes from codes. After this, sub-themes are combined to get a meaningful theme. In the next stage, the author made primary maps for themes and sub-themes to get an overview of the scenario. Then started to reassess the primary themes and coherently organize them. Finally, the author developed a finalized thematic map with adequate supporting data.

## **Barriers to graduate employment**

### *Local language proficiency from the interview*

It is evident that a lack of Estonian language proficiency is one of the main challenges for graduate employment. In Estonia, several jobs require Estonian language proficiency, and even having Russian language proficiency is an advantage for getting a job. Due to this, graduates are suffering from managing their positions. During the explanation of job search experience, respondent R6 narrated the language issue, which is below mentioned: "It was quite stressful because most of the jobs require Estonian language proficiency and some of the jobs said that if I have Russian language proficiency that will be an advantage. However, as I did not have any language proficiency other than

English, I was facing a lot of problems regarding this.” Also, another participant mentioned language as a graduate employment barrier in a similar way; R13 said: “Well, as Estonia is small, and there are not so many multinational companies. So I would say it is a challenge for language to find a job for the graduate, for the people who graduate from the university.” One of the respondents tried to manage a customer support job so that he could start his career. However, he was also stunned by the language requirement.

According to R2's statement: “I was searching this job for customer support. I was trying to go to the customer support field first to enter it to some company, and everybody asked me you need to have Estonian language, at least B1 or something.” However, only some respondents have a favorable view of language proficiency. From their experience, they feel that the situation is changing gradually. They mentioned two main reasons for the increment of English-speaking jobs: the growth of startups and the increment of multinational companies. Interviewee R1 expressed that when he came to Estonia in 2017, he only found a few positions to apply for English-speaking jobs. Nevertheless, currently, Estonian startups brought English-speaking job opportunities. As he mentioned in his interview: “/.Apart from this currently, it's improved a lot because there are a lot of Estonian startups and therefore, the startups, rely on foreign manpower. As you can see everywhere else, all the great stuff started off in Estonia, mostly the foreigners, and especially the students are working. So nowadays there are plenty of positions in English languages. So I think it goes back to the language again.” In addition, Respondent R12, a fresh graduate, faced challenges during his employment search. Still, he managed to get a job in a foreign company, which he broadly mentioned from his experience. His statement is below mentioned: “/. But somehow we made it like there were lots of foreign companies coming over to Estonia. So they prefer English skills and at the same time like how to say what you can produce yourself productive method of working. So we got. I believe this challenge is getting up apprehended right now.”

### **Lack of work experience**

This study finds that graduates have insufficient work experience and are struggling to enter the Estonian job market. Employers are keen to hire someone with relevant work

experience, which is becoming a serious concern for new graduates. This situation is understandable from the recent rejection of a software development graduate due to a lack of work experience. He is currently doing a food delivery job for survival. Participant R7, the sufferer of rejection, describes the whole story in his interview: “Actually I would not say discrimination because recently I have applied to one job interview and I was called for the first interview. There was this HR, not HR, this somebody is responsible for this interview. So, I was interviewed then, and I had a 30-minute conversation with her, and everything was okay. Then next Monday, she asked me, and she gave me access to meet with the developer and QA manager. And I have done this code, this task, and later I was confirmed like, you have done this task. And then next, after the following week, they told me, Okay, we have found somebody with more experience, and we can't offer you the job.”

Another two respondent expressed their disappointment about work experience. Respondent R5 described the new graduate's problems as an Estonian employer undervaluing an internship unless it is from any known company, and R5 mentioned that: “/...They(employers) do not understand that newly fresher student who just finished his graduation, how we do the job, how he has the experience, maybe he has some internship. But I think if anyone does not get into any internship in any renowned company, then they do not give them priority. ” The other respondent, R6, was also asked by an employer to show previous internship experience as an advantage for getting another internship. R6 said: “ /...And also, for one internship that required any other internship experience, which will be a plus. For an internship, I also require experience, so this is ridiculous.” So, the worst sufferer of less work experience is the one who will manage his first job. Getting the first job is crucial for the job market fresher, and the importance of the first job is explained in the statement of R1: “Basically getting the first job was the best challenge. After that, it is like a consequence that one after another you have a connection. Somehow you have to relate to other people, relate to your job, and that other people will hire you from your experience if you are doing good in the sector. So yeah, it is kind of.”

## Networking

Networking is a crucial part of taking a step ahead in the hiring process, and this study's interviewees have mixed views. Employers usually tend to call up applicants for interviews who have the reference. Reference is an advantage for people who have friends or ex-colleagues to get a referral from, while graduates with a lack of connections are the one who needs to catch up in the job race. The respondent, R12, an experienced job-searching campaigner, is well aware of this issue. He got a job through his friend's referral to an Estonian startup company. He expresses the importance of referrals in the below-mentioned statement: “/...So then I realized that I did have some sort of idea from the first job in Estonia, that most of the employers, tend to invite people for an interview through referrals, which is a part of the networking thing.” The same participant also struggled to manage a job in a different field. As he attempted to enter another sector, he was concerned that the previous referrals would be undervalued. The R3 statement exposes this concern: “/...However, later on, the contact that I made from that(first) job was not sufficient. Because people that my ex-colleagues, they were not working in the same industry that I wanted to work for. Many of them even didn't know my face even though we work for the same company.”

The respondent R10 figured out another exciting issue. She mentioned that Estonian employers sometimes hire employees without posting about vacancies on the job portal. This uncovered hiring process is another reason that affects graduates' employment, and graduates who lack social or professional networking might end up not getting those job calls. R6 mentioned this issue while talking about the reason for unemployment; the statement is the following: “/... And the third one could be, how much you know people. Because sometimes, some companies do not post jobs on the job searching portal. Sometimes they ask their internal employees to find someone. So if you have that networking, you will be easily reached.” On the contrary, the same interviewee mentioned an impactful strategy for networking. In her opinion, job seekers can do networking on social media such as LinkedIn, which can be called digital networking. She believes this kind of networking could help graduates to manage jobs efficiently.



The 33-year-old female graduate, R6, described his opinion: “/...One thing I want to mention if you don't have personal connections, it may not be a problem. If you have virtual connections, maybe on some social network like LinkedIn. If you are connected with people from different fields or your field of interest, then they will post some jobs or they will react to some other job posts, which will appear on your news feed. You can reach those hiring managers for the job. Also, I will recommend definitely posting a status that you are looking for a job and you're open to work. If someone comments on your post, then some hiring managers may see your posts and maybe reach you. ”

### **Lack of skills**

Graduates feel they lack skills, restricting them from entering the Estonian labor market. Due to this, the author came up with a lack of skills as a theme from two sub-themes: lack of job search skills and employable skills. Job searching experience varies from person to person because job searching experience depends on individual skills. Making an attractive resume, finding out relevant contacts, and how to write a convincing cover letter; are all related to job-searching skills. Due to limited knowledge of CV preparation, participant R2 was struggling to manage his job. He expresses this in his interview, which is the following: “So I have faced challenges, wanting to switch my career from UI designer to QA. So everything was new, because this QA, is just this job, job description, where this position is vital from the beginning from the requirement part. So I was struggling with understanding, how should I build my CV and how should I prepare for a work environment myself, and this kind of experience.”

A resume is the first initiative to impress an employer with knowledge and skills. Without doing so, R10, a respondent in this study, had to go through multiple rejections. R3 said: “Finding a job actually requires a good resume I would say. When I started finding a job, my resume was not so much good. So I got the several rejections.” Additionally, employability skills are also needed for a successful job search. Examples of skills that employers expect from job seekers are time management, communication, and teamwork. However, employers first want job-related knowledge from job seekers, and those without it suffer the most. Participant R6's statement gives a view of this issue, which is the following: “I think recruiters look for someone even though you do not have

experience, I think they look for someone who knows what to do and how to do it. If you have the knowledge, then you can develop any skills that are required for the position. But if you do not have the knowledge, it will be a tough situation.” Also, this study finds that Bangladeshi students lack communication skills, hindering job opportunities. Participant R1 mentioned a lack of confidence in communication as a reason for unemployment. He said: “ /...In this case, what I have noticed if I compare it to the community people of my country. Also of the fellow region, the immigrants in Estonia from the Asian region, then I see that communication skill, even when it's about English. So there is another factor tied to the communication broadly, which is being hesitant to communicate converse with the Estonian people.”

## **Discussion**

In this section, the author demonstrates the similarities and differences between the theoretical part and the findings. In the end, the applicability of this study is explained, A previous study by Islam (2021) mentioned that the local language restricts students from entering the Estonian job market. This study also agreed with it; however, it reveals that English-speaking jobs are gradually increasing in startups and multinational companies. Literature suggests that networking is an effective method for exploring host countries' labor markets. This study similarly emphasizes networking importance and elaborates how networks help to get an advantage in attracting recruiters. Also suggest, getting into the Estonian professional network is a process to get information regarding internal hiring. Internal hiring exists in Estonia and other countries; for instance, Estonia's neighboring country Finland has a similar issue (Alho,2020). Helpful information about digital networking is broadly explained in the findings. In short, increasing connections with the employer through online platforms can help students to know about new jobs. At the same time, they can inform employers about their availability to work.

The lack of work experience is a severe concern of graduate employment in both findings and literature. Employers reject graduates for not having prior work experience. An exciting fact this study figured out is that Estonian employers underestimate internships from unpopular companies. Although the internship is a pathway for gaining

experience, the underestimation of internships makes it complex to manage a job. Even for internships, only some employers ask to show previous internship experience, bringing back the lack of experience issue. While the literature mentioned internships to overcome work experience (Tufail, 2019), this study finds it hard for students to manage internships in Estonia. The theoretical part discusses employability skills such as time management, teamwork, and communication. These are the same soft skills; that Estonian employers also look for while recruiting graduates. The author finds that job-searching skills are also needed to overcome employment challenges, but the literature did not specify them. Among the job search skills, the study discovered that preparing an understandable CV is the most critical skill to get attention from employers. On the other side, the author does not find noticeable discrimination and visa status as employment barriers, though those two have also emerged from the literature. In the interview, two participants discussed hiring process discrimination; one was unsure whether it was discrimination, while the other incident was unsatisfactory for the author to bring it as a barrier. In addition, each participant refused that they did not face any visa policies or status issues while finding a job.

Regarding the university's role in securing graduates' employment, the literature elaborates that changing the curricula and connecting them to the practical world is efficient. The study finds that university curricula are satisfactory for its students, and two internships are good enough to connect students with the working world. It is also apparent from the findings that there is room for improvement, increasing the intensity of a few courses, sponsored internships, job fairs, and career counseling. While these proposals arrive from findings, the literature did not specify those issues. The main noticeable difference between the literature and the result is that the author uses a different approach to show the relationship between barriers. In Estonia, Bangladeshi students who lack proficiency in the local language are not getting enough job opportunities. This lack of job opportunities develops a lack of experience issue. Similarly, lack of work experienced students are unfamiliar with the professional network. As a result, they need more referrals and internal hiring information.

However, this study result is helpful for future international students, the Estonian government, and the university. Students can understand which barriers affect their employment in the Estonian labor market. Also, future graduates can prepare themselves

to overcome obstacles and make their employment-finding journey easier. The Estonian government can use this study result to figure out possible solutions to keep students as skilled workers in the country. The reason to do so is that the OSKA (2018) report shows Estonian graduates will not be sufficient for the labor market. International students are the perfect substitution to overcome future labor shortages. Estonian universities can understand students' lack and organize curricula to connect students with the working world.

### **Conclusion**

The literature found significant barriers to employment worldwide. However, the finding of this study shows that in Estonia, the local language is a concern for graduates, though the growth of startup and multinational companies is bringing English-speaking job environments. Secondly, the freshers are going through a tough time because of having lack of experience. Also, Graduates trying to explore different job sectors find themselves in the same position. Networking is on the following list as an obstacle. Due to a lack of referrals and a professional network, students need help attracting employers. The internal hiring procedure also highlights the importance of having a professional network. Skills are necessary to manage a job, but graduates with a lack of job-doing and searching skills are the primary sufferers. It is evident barriers exist; solutions are also needed to make life easier for graduates. The possible initiative by universities that could help students overcome barriers is intensive courses, including Estonian language and other necessary courses. In addition, a few other proposals are also discussed to improve graduates' employment: career counseling, arranging job fairs, and sponsored internships. However, a few limitations of this study could also be found. Due to limited time, the author decided to do this study on only Bangladeshi graduates and this lack of diverse population size. This study was conducted based on Bangladeshi graduates, while there are also several universities with international students from different backgrounds. For future studies, more interviews or different methodologies could be used to improve the results. So, the author suggests that future work is needed to get international students' overall views from different universities.

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