

YOUTH ANXIETIES

# Entering the workforce AS A FRESH GRADUATE

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

Your quarter-life crisis presents itself with you having the daunting task of deciding what you want to do for the rest of your life, whether it's your personal life or your professional one. The crisis worsens for students who have graduated or are about to graduate soon, as the time for them to enter the workforce draws nearer. As the job market is highly unpredictable and competitive, this turns into a period of anxiety even for those who have their lives planned out and know exactly what they want to do. Those without direction have another battle to fight. Both demographics often face the same dilemma, which is that the entry-level salaries offered in most jobs do not live up to the expectations of young graduates or soon-to-be graduates.

Of course, there's the debacle of insufficient entry-level jobs being available in the first place, with most companies asking for candidates with prior work experience. Entry-level jobs in various fields are also being replaced by the advent of artificial intelligence

(AI). In the context of Bangladesh, this phenomenon is not particularly widespread yet. The more pressing problem for fresh graduates is finding an entry-level job that offers a liveable wage.

From an employer's perspective, it may make sense to offer a lower salary for those immediately starting at the workplace, as there's generally a learning curve to every job. Not to mention, it's widely assumed that a fresh graduate in our society has some financial support from their families as they get on their own feet. However, this is not always the case. A lot of students move to cities for higher education as well as to seek employment, which creates an added expense of solo accommodation and day-to-day costs. There's a fair number of students who bear the obligation to financially support their families, which means the low salary offered is more difficult for them to make do with.

Due to the nature of the job market and low entry-level salaries, graduates often find themselves straying further away from their fields for better-paying

jobs. The job market for Engineering graduates is extremely competitive, so they migrate to fields that have little relevance to their degrees. Employers also find it more lucrative to hire people with technical knowledge for a supposedly non-technical position, further intensifying an already competitive field.

Some graduates even go as far as to juggle several jobs right out of university. Those who sign up for low-paying internships or full-time jobs in their relevant fields end up doing something else on the side, leading to quick burnout and very little time for themselves. Some graduates often continue with their tuition gigs after graduating, which adds little experience of value to their résumés for future employment. Not to mention, the negative effects of a daily 9-to-5 are debated as it is; adding another job exerts immense pressure on the mind and body, as the added commute and extra hours are strenuous. The human body needs sufficient rest to remain productive, so stacking several jobs on top of one another is rather

counterintuitive.

Although the phrase "comparison is the thief of joy" has been drilled into us since childhood, we often cannot help but evaluate our own situation with that of those around us. Discussions about entering the workforce, starting salaries, and employment benefits end up feeling rather depressing. Inadvertently or otherwise, it also creates anxiety amongst those less fortunate than their relatively successful peers.

After a four-year degree, we often feel the need for a break, but it also feels like we'll lag behind if we choose to take it. It's important to remember, however, that it's alright to move at your own pace. Finding your footing will take time, and regardless of what the outcome is, it's crucial not to be overwhelmed by comparison or anxiety.

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ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

# The highs, lows, and how-tos of a long-distance relationship

TINATH ZAEBA

A long-distance relationship can feel like balancing on a thin line between comfort and chaos. There's beauty in it, a kind of strength, and also an ache that you know will be there. Two people connected by something invisible, separated by something as ordinary as geography, learn to love through absence. It's both a challenge and a chance to rediscover what love really means when touch and proximity are taken away.

The highs of a long-distance relationship often surprise those who expect only loneliness. What follows is a deepened sense of communication, a deliberate effort to talk, to listen, and to understand. You learn the art of expressing emotions through words instead of gestures, of making someone feel seen even from miles away. Each call brings you closer, and every reunion feels like the entire world is folding in on itself just to bring you together.

In long-distance relationships, independence grows alongside connection. Two of you will still grow as individuals, nurturing your own goals and identity, but with the comfort that someone is walking beside you, just on a different road. In a strange way, space allows love to breathe; it stops being about habit and becomes about choice. You might feel lonely, but you know you are never alone.

But the lows are real, and they arrive uninvited, even if expected. There will be nights when silence feels too heavy, when you start missing things you didn't know mattered, something as normal as a shared meal, a laugh, or even just the warmth of physical presence. Technology can only do so much; a screen cannot hold your hand or steady your breathing when the world feels too hard. Misunderstandings can stretch longer because messages can't always convey your intended tone.

There's also the uncertainty that creeps in: the question of how long the distance will remain and whether both hearts will still be as close when the waiting ends. It takes trust, patience, and a lot of stubborn hope to keep believing in something that can't always be seen.

In fact, trust is the base that keeps everything real. When distance removes

the comfort of physical presence, trust must show up in the basics: you have to do what you said you would, communicate when plans change, and be honest even when the truth is uncomfortable. Make it a habit to have hard conversations, to ask your partner if there's anything you can do better, and to actually tell your partner if you are insecure.

Over time, these simple actions create emotional security. You stop wondering if the other person cares because their behaviour proves it. Trust isn't a feeling that appears out of nowhere; it's the result of showing up for each other again and again, especially on the days when it would be easier not to.



ILLUSTRATION: ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

That's also why having a plan matters. Not a fixed, listed blueprint, but a shared direction. Preferably, before entering a long-distance relationship, knowing how long it will stay long-distance, or at least talking about what comes next, gives the relationship a sense of purpose. A plan is what turns waiting into preparing. It's a reminder that the distance is temporary, and every effort made now is an investment in something real and near.

Still, even the best plans need warmth and love to work. This is where love languages come in, which refers to the way we show affection. Everyone speaks a slightly different one, generally through words, acts, gifts, time, or touch. But when you're apart, the usual gestures might not

work, so you have to create your own. Maybe it's sending a voice note every morning, writing a letter, or watching the same film at the same time. Whatever it is, it's important to discuss it beforehand and to keep it consistent throughout the relationship. The trick is to make the ordinary special, to keep inventing new ways of saying you care without always needing to say it.

Another layer often overlooked is learning attachment styles. Some people crave reassurance, some crave space, and others simply hover somewhere in between. These are known as anxious, secure, avoidant, or disorganised attachment styles.

same book, or even just staying on call while you both work. These small, shared acts create a thread that weaves your lives together beyond the distance. They remind you that love doesn't depend on location; it grows through intention. In fact, that's one of the most important components. Both individuals need to put in the intentional effort of making sure their relationship doesn't just survive but thrives, because a long-distance relationship needs both partners to be on board.

What many people don't understand is that a long-distance relationship isn't about surviving until you meet again; it's about learning how to love through waiting. There will be dips — in mood, in patience, in WiFi (a good piece of advice is to get strong WiFi; it's an investment), but each moment apart also sharpens what truly matters. It's not just a test of how strong you are alone but how committed you are together.

What keeps the relationship alive isn't constant communication or grand gestures. It's the daily choice to stay, to show up, to listen, and to keep building bridges out of words, time, and care. Love, when stretched across distance, becomes something softer and stronger all at once. It teaches you that connection isn't just about presence but also about persistence. It's about knowing that even when you stand miles apart, your hearts are still learning to meet halfway again and again.

In the end, the best advice is simple: keep choosing each other, even when it's hard. Celebrate small milestones. Speak kindly, even when tired. Laugh, plan, dream, and keep making tiny bridges out of words and effort. Distance might stretch your connection, but it can't weaken what's built on intention.

After all, love doesn't only exist where you stand; it also lives in the space between, patiently waiting for you both to meet halfway. And it's always worth it in the end.

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# The disruptive force of Substack in the world of independent media

AAQIB HASIB

If you have never used Substack before, the platform might appear as just another simple newsletter service. As you initially browse the site, it might come off as a cacophony of various interests, presented in a blog-style format.

However, the more you use Substack, the more you will realise that it might just be the future of independent media. And when I say independent media, I am not just talking about the news.

Corporate media is more than just mainstream news platforms like *The New York Times* and *Fox News*. It also refers to the scores of lifestyle, fashion, technology, food, wellbeing, health, and entertainment publications that are driven by the dollars of billionaires and influence our consumption choices.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

In such a media environment, where funding from corporations often shapes the direction of modern-day news content, it is refreshing to see that many media organisations and individual journalists operating on Substack are funded through their subscribers. This offers a level of transparency which warrants that our valuable money is going toward funding actual information and not corporate hogwash.

Don't believe me? Just visit Sidestack's directory of Substack newsletters and writers and look under the category for news, sports, business, and world politics, just to name a few, and you will see exactly what I mean. Sidestack is an independently created, open-source site that acts like a directory or phonebook for Substack. With this, you can track down exactly the kind of Substack you are looking to follow or read. Personally, I follow Mehdi Hasan's *Zetee*—the British-American journalist's independent media platform that has been built on Substack.

Not only does Substack allow you to create a news-blog site, it also lets you raise funding directly from your readers. *Zetee*, for example, has a paid tier that gives you access to all of the latest reports from the platform. However, for those looking for a free option, *Zetee* has a variety of articles available to read for free, albeit the free-tier users usually can access them a week later.

Even better is the fact that Substack recently added the option to host video podcasts on the site and then distribute them to audio-podcast platforms like Apple and Spotify directly through Substack.

Moreover, unlike other websites, you are not greeted by a deluge of cheap advertisements the moment you click onto any Substack site. Instead, depending on whose Substack you visit, you are greeted by an option to subscribe to keep up with the specific site or the option to become a paying member. As such, you can just focus on the topic at hand, without constant distractions getting in your way.

In an ever-evolving media landscape, where most of the evolution is happening in all the wrong directions, a free-to-use platform like Substack is a godsend. It lets new independent media companies and even individual journalists take control over their content, while allowing them to build a loyal and organic audience.

# HOW SUBSTACK BECAME MY COSY CORNER OF THE INTERNET

IRINA JAHAN

Bed rotting and doomscrolling are terrible long-term "strategies" for your health. They have left our attention spans in shambles, and like everyone else, I also resolved to do something about it. It's now safe to say that a hobby rehabilitation is on the horizon, as reading has made a refreshing comeback into my life.

Ironically, algorithms are not the antagonists of my story. In fact, much of this return to reading has been possible thanks to Substack—the internet's new favourite publishing site.

Substack's stack (pun unintended) of captivating newsletters and blogs has become a delightful retreat from scrolling Instagram. I suppose one could best describe it as the nice and cosy corner of the internet where the best contemporary writers are flocking to write their thought-provoking pieces.

The quality of content here is definitely higher, but one cannot ignore the fact that it is basically another social media platform at the end of the day. The exposure to new ideas here feels like a good trade-off right now, but eventually, one needs to grapple with the issue surrounding the overconsumption of content online.

Until then, Substack remains my favourite app on the internet, and I would unapologetically recommend it to anyone seeking something that could spark curiosity or simply lead them to some excellent book or movie recommendations.