

## Perception towards Political Economy among General Public, Students and Public Officials in Bangladesh

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### **Abstract**

*The study aims to investigate perceptions of political economy among the general public, students, and public officials in Bangladesh, along with the factors influencing these perceptions. Employing a qualitative methodology, semi-structured questionnaires was used to gather insights from representative samples of each group. Purposive sampling was used to select participants, ensuring diversity in demographics and maintaining gender representation across tiers. Content analysis was then employed to analyze the data, identifying recurring themes and patterns. Findings reveal a lack of familiarity with political economy among the general public, while students, particularly from social science disciplines, display higher levels of understanding. Public officials, especially those in high-ranking positions, exhibit varying levels of familiarity, with notable gaps in practical application. These results highlight the need for targeted educational initiatives to enhance economic literacy and promote practical utilization of political economy knowledge. Ultimately, addressing these gaps is crucial for fostering informed decision-making, addressing socio-economic challenges, and promoting sustainable development in Bangladesh.*

**Keywords:** Political economy, Perception, Bangladesh, General public, Students, Public officials

### **Introduction**

Political economy, the interdisciplinary study of the interaction between political and economic processes, is crucial for understanding how societies allocate resources, make decisions, and shape public policies (Lange 2013). Within this framework, perceptions of political economy play a significant role, influencing individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and policy preferences. Understanding these perceptions is particularly vital in the context of Bangladesh, a country marked by complex socio-economic challenges and dynamic political dynamics (Basu, Devine, and Wood 2018; Lewis 2011). This study aims to investigate perceptions of political economy among various stakeholders in Bangladesh, including the general public, students, and public officials. By examining these perceptions, this study seeks to shed light on how individuals interpret and evaluate the interplay between politics and economics in the Bangladeshi context.

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This research is significant for several reasons; First of all, Perceptions are not just passive observations; they are active lenses through which individuals interpret and engage with the world around them (Witkin 1949). In the realm of political economy, these perceptions wield considerable influence (Evans and Andersen 2006), shaping public opinion, policy preferences, and even political behavior. For instance, studies have shown that individuals' perceptions of economic fairness and justice strongly correlate with their support for redistributive policies and social welfare programs (Alesina and La Ferrara 2000). Similarly, research has demonstrated how perceived economic opportunities and mobility affect voting behavior and political participation (Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Leighley 1995). Secondly, the impact of perceptions extends beyond the realm of electoral politics. Policymakers rely on public sentiment and attitudes towards economic issues to gauge the feasibility and acceptability of proposed policies (Erikson and Tedin 2019; Soroka and Wlezien 2010). For example, the success of austerity measures or tax reforms often hinges on public perceptions of their fairness and effectiveness (Barnes 2015; Graham 2002). Similarly, educators and curriculum designers must be attuned to students' perceptions of political economy to develop effective pedagogical strategies and foster critical thinking about economic issues (Kagawa 2007; Kilburn, Nind, and Wiles 2014; Lai and Lo 2011). Finally, civil society actors, including advocacy groups and non-governmental organizations, also recognize the importance of understanding and shaping perceptions of political economy (Beeson 2001; Hall and O'Dwyer 2017). By mobilizing public opinion and framing issues in ways that resonate with diverse constituencies, these actors can influence policy agendas and promote social change (Dür and Mateo 2014).

Perceptions shape public opinion, policy preferences, and political behavior (Broockman and Skovron 2018; Manza, Cook, and Page 2002). Understanding how different groups perceive political economy can provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and civil society actors seeking to address socio-economic challenges and promote informed decision-making. While existing literature in political economy provides valuable insights into economic structures and political processes, there remains a gap in understanding how individuals perceive and interpret these phenomena. By focusing on perceptions, this study contributes to filling this gap, enriching our understanding of the complex relationship between politics and economics.

The primary objectives of this research are as follows:

- To explore the perceptions of political economy among the general public, students, and public officials in Bangladesh.
- To identify factors influencing these perceptions, including socio-economic background, education, and political ideology.

- To assess the implications of these perceptions for policy formulation, public discourse, and civic engagement.

This study will employ a Qualitative methods approach, using Semi-structured questionnaire to gather comprehensive insights into perceptions of political economy. Surveys will be administered to representative samples of the general public, students, and public officials. After that data will be analyzed using content analysis. Following this introduction, the paper will proceed as follows: Section II will outline the research methodology, including sampling, data collection, and analysis procedures. Section III will present the Analysis of the study, followed by a Result of their implications in Section IV. Finally, Section V will offer concluding remarks and suggestions for future research.

### **Methodology**

This study will employ a qualitative methods approach to explore perceptions of political economy among various stakeholders in Bangladesh, including the general public, students, and public officials. The methodology will involve the use of semi-structured questionnaires designed to gather comprehensive insights into participants' perceptions of political economy. Surveys will be administered to representative samples of the target groups: students, public officials, and the general public. For the selection of participants, purposive sampling techniques will be employed. For students, approximately 30 individuals at the tertiary level, representing both social and natural science disciplines with exposure to or interest in political economy, will be recruited. Similarly, approximately 30 public officials will be selected using purposive sampling from various government departments and agencies. The general public will be sampled randomly, with approximately 30 individuals recruited from diverse demographic backgrounds. Gender representation will be maintained across the 3 tiers (students, public officials, general public) to ensure diverse perspectives are captured. Upon data collection, content analysis will be employed to analyze the qualitative responses gathered from the semi-structured questionnaires. This approach will involve identifying recurrent themes, patterns, and insights related to perceptions of political economy across the 3 participant groups. Additionally, the findings will be presented using graphical illustrations such as graphs and charts to enhance the clarity and visual impact of the results. Overall, this qualitative methodology aims to provide rich and nuanced insights into how individuals interpret and evaluate the interplay between politics and economics in the Bangladeshi context.

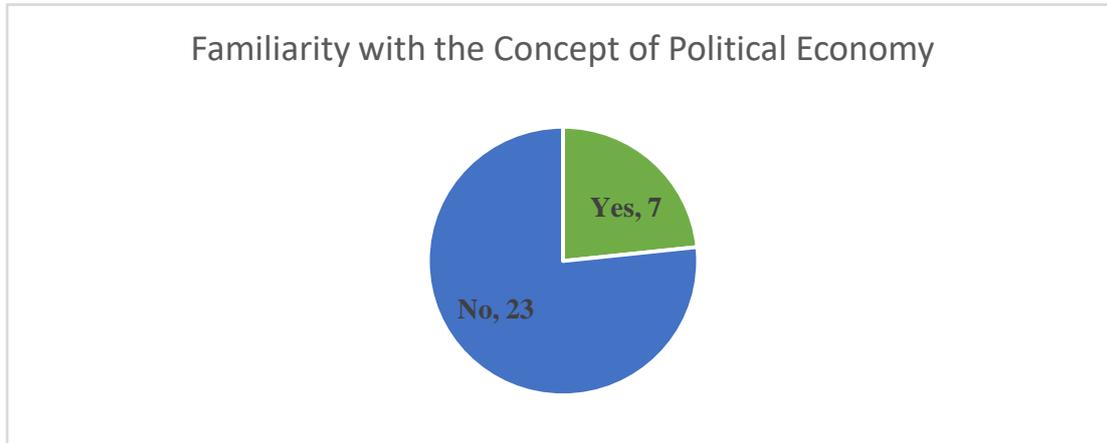
### **Analysis**

The analysis chapter will delve into the levels of familiarity, degree of knowledge, and application of political economy among the general public, students, and public officials. Through qualitative examination, this section

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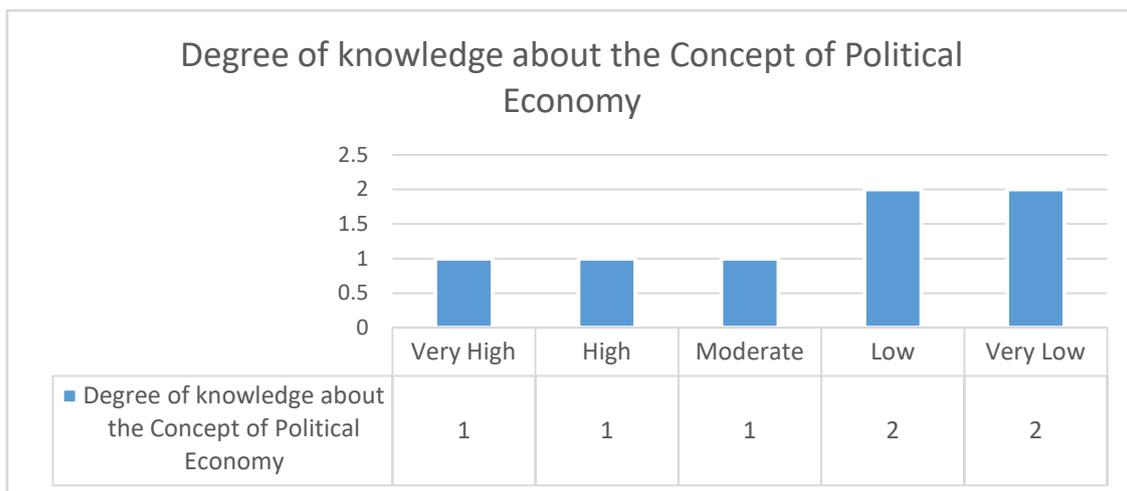
aims to provide insights into how different segments of Bangladeshi society perceive and engage with political economy using graphical illustrations.

### **Familiarity, Knowledge and Application of Political Economy among General Public**



**Figure 1:** Familiarity with Political Economy among the General Public

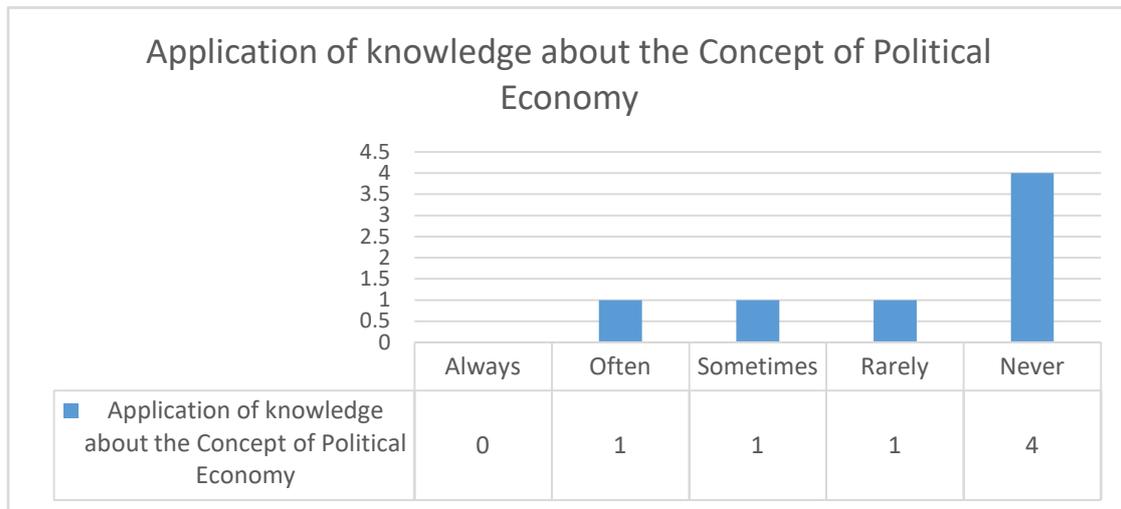
Figure 1 indicates that out of the 30 respondents from the general public surveyed, only 7 individuals reported familiarity with the concept of Political Economy. Among these respondents, 5 were male and 2 were female. Conversely, the majority of respondents, totaling 23 individuals, expressed a lack of familiarity with Political Economy. Within this group, 18 were female and 4 were male.



**Figure 2:** Degree of Knowledge about Political Economy among the General Public

Figure 2 indicates the range of knowledge levels about Political Economy among respondents from the general public. Out of the 7 individuals surveyed, the distribution of their knowledge levels is as follows: Among these respondents, 1 individual demonstrated a very high degree of

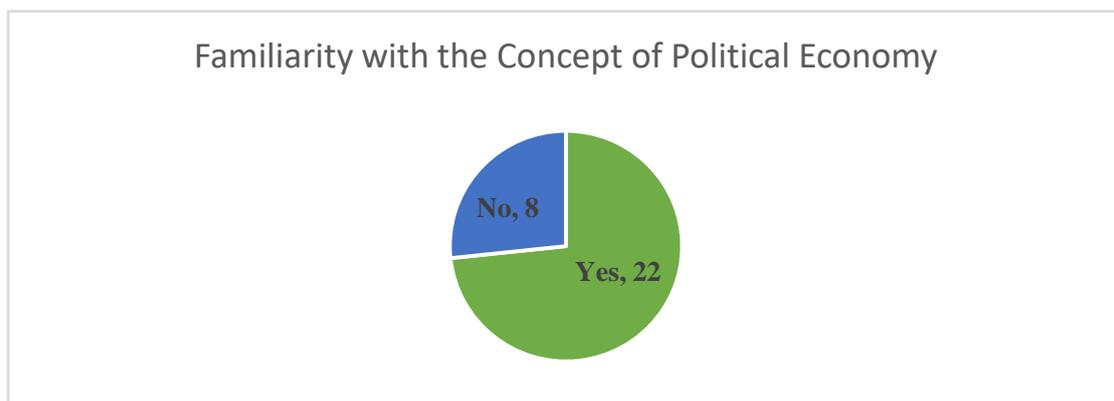
knowledge, while 1 exhibited a high degree of knowledge. Additionally, 1 respondent possessed a moderate degree of knowledge. On the lower end of the spectrum, 2 respondents had a low degree of knowledge, and 2 respondents had a very low degree of knowledge.



**Figure 3:** Application of Knowledge about Political Economy among the General Public

Figure 3 illustrates the frequency with which respondents from the general public apply their knowledge about the concept of Political Economy. Among the 7 individuals surveyed, the distribution of their application of knowledge is as follows: None of the respondents reported always applying knowledge about the concept of Political Economy. 1 respondent indicated often applying this knowledge, while another mentioned sometimes applying it. Additionally, 1 respondent stated rarely applying knowledge about Political Economy, while the majority, comprising four respondents, reported never applying this knowledge.

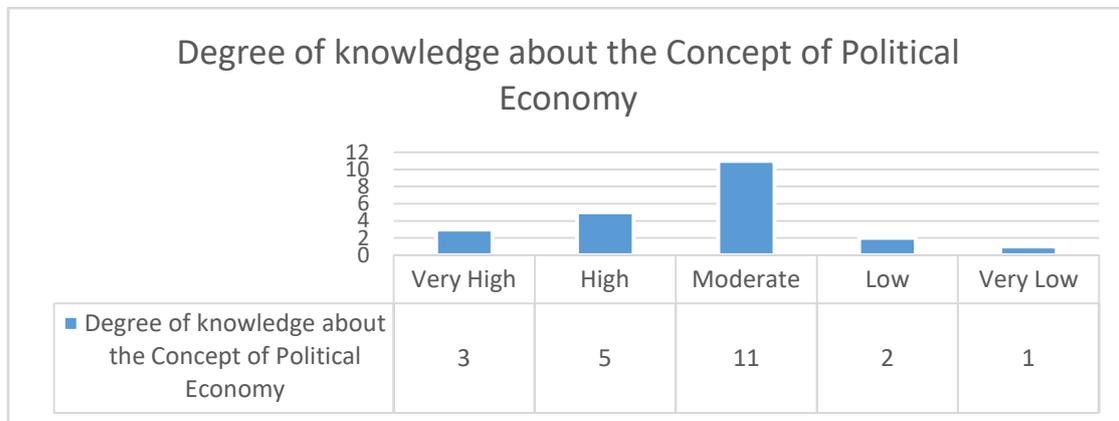
**Familiarity, Knowledge and Application of Political Economy Among Students**



**Figure 4:** Familiarity with Political Economy among Students

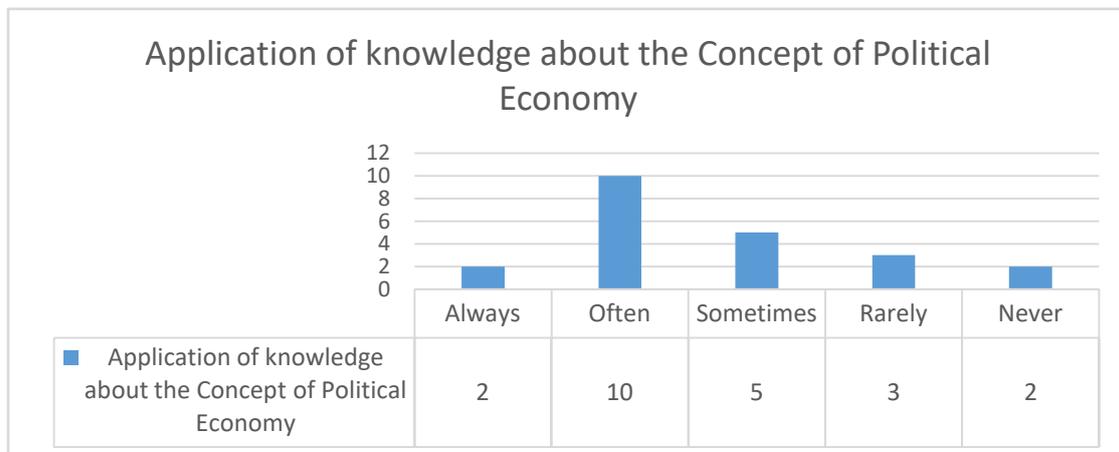
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Figure 4 provides insights into the level of familiarity with the concept of Political Economy among students. Out of the 30 students surveyed, a majority of 22 respondents reported familiarity with Political Economy. Among these respondents, 17 were from social science disciplines, while 4 were from natural science disciplines. Conversely, a minority of 8 students indicated a lack of familiarity with Political Economy. Within this group, 7 students were from natural science disciplines, and 1 student was from a social science discipline.



**Figure 5:** Degree of Knowledge about Political Economy among Students

Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of knowledge levels regarding Political Economy among the 22 student respondents. Among these students, there were varying degrees of knowledge observed. 3 students demonstrated a very high degree of knowledge, while five students exhibited a high degree of knowledge. Additionally, eleven students possessed a moderate degree of knowledge, 2 students had a low degree of knowledge, and 1 student had a very low degree of knowledge.

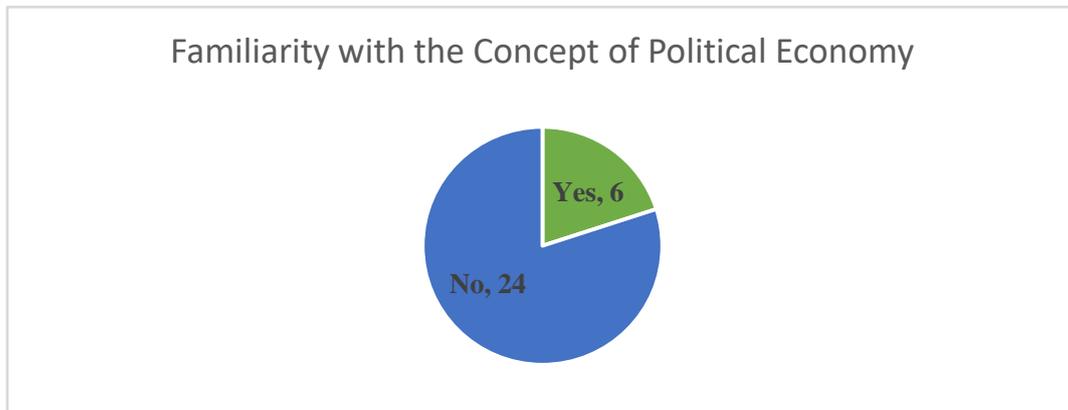


**Figure 6:** Application of Knowledge about Political Economy among Students

Figure 6 presents the frequency of applying knowledge about the concept of Political Economy among the 22 student respondents. Among these students, the distribution of their application of knowledge is as follows: 2 respondents reported always applying knowledge about the concept of

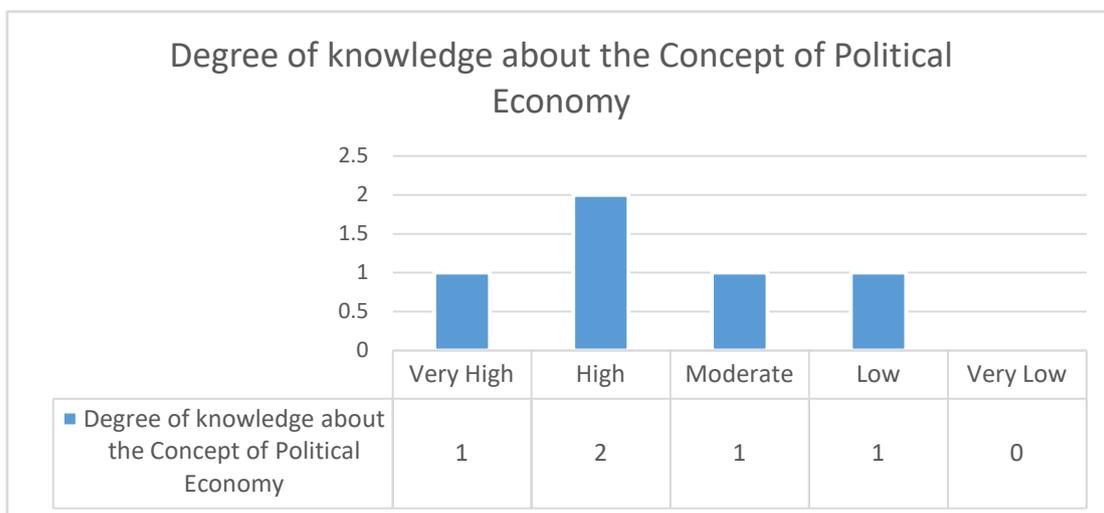
Political Economy, while ten respondents indicated often applying it. Additionally, five respondents mentioned sometimes applying knowledge about the concept, and 3 respondents stated rarely applying it. Lastly, 2 respondents reported never applying knowledge about the concept of Political Economy.

**Familiarity, Knowledge and Application of Political Economy Among Public Officials**



**Figure 7:** Familiarity with Political Economy among Public Officials

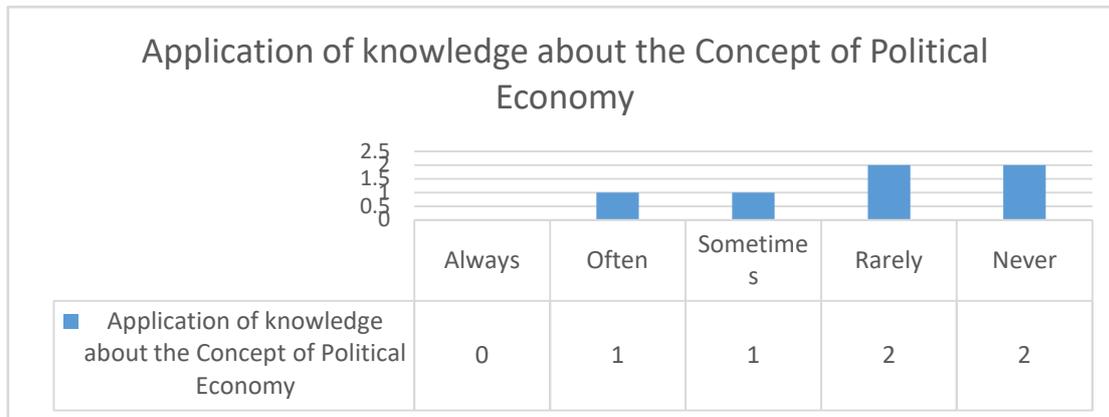
Figure 7 provides insights into the level of familiarity with the concept of Political Economy among public officials. Out of the 30 public officials surveyed, the majority, totaling 24 respondents, reported being unfamiliar with Political Economy. Among these respondents, 20 belonged to high-ranking officials, while 4 were low-ranking officials. Conversely, a minority of 6 public officials indicated familiarity with Political Economy. Interestingly, all 6 of these respondents belonged to the high-ranking category.



**Figure 8:** Degree of Knowledge about Political Economy among Public Officials

## Perception towards Political Economy

Figure 8 outlines the distribution of knowledge levels regarding Political Economy among the 6 public officials surveyed. Among these officials, there were varying degrees of knowledge observed. Specifically, 1 official demonstrated a very high degree of knowledge, while 2 officials exhibited a high degree of knowledge. Additionally, 1 official possessed a moderate degree of knowledge; and 1 official had a low degree of knowledge. Interestingly, none of the officials reported having a very low degree of knowledge about Political Economy.



**Figure 9:** Application of Knowledge about Political Economy among Public Officials

Figure 9 illustrates the frequency of applying knowledge about the concept of Political Economy among the 6 public officials surveyed. The distribution of their application of knowledge is as follows: None of the respondents reported always applying knowledge about the concept of Political Economy. 1 respondent indicated often applying it, while another mentioned sometimes applying it. Additionally, 2 respondents stated rarely applying knowledge about the concept, and 2 respondents reported never applying it.

### Findings

The findings chapter provides a detailed examination of the data collected during the study, focusing on the perceptions, knowledge levels, and application of Political Economy concepts among different participant groups. Drawing on the analysis of survey responses from the general public, students, and public officials, this chapter presents a comprehensive summary of the key findings. The findings are given below;

- According to Figure 1; among the 30 respondents from the general public surveyed, only 7 individuals (23.3%) reported familiarity with the concept of Political Economy. This indicates a relatively low level of awareness among the surveyed population. Interestingly, within the group of respondents familiar with Political Economy, there were 5

males and 2 females, suggesting a balanced distribution across genders. However, the majority of respondents, totaling 23 individuals (76.7%), expressed a lack of familiarity with Political Economy. Within this larger group, there were notably more females (18) than males (4) who reported unfamiliarity with Political Economy. This disparity in familiarity highlights potential differences in exposure to economic concepts among different segments of the general public.

- Figure 2 provides insight into the range of knowledge levels regarding Political Economy among respondents from the general public. Out of the 7 individuals surveyed, the distribution of their knowledge levels varied. Among these respondents, 1 individual (14.3%) demonstrated a very high degree of knowledge, indicating a deep understanding of Political Economy concepts. Additionally, 1 respondent (14.3%) exhibited a high degree of knowledge, suggesting a strong grasp of the subject matter. Furthermore, 1 respondent (14.3%) possessed a moderate degree of knowledge, indicating a reasonable understanding of Political Economy concepts. However, on the lower end of the spectrum, 2 respondents (28.6%) had a low degree of knowledge, indicating a limited understanding of the subject. Similarly, 2 respondents (28.6%) had a very low degree of knowledge, indicating minimal familiarity with Political Economy concepts. This distribution highlights the diversity in knowledge levels among respondents from the general public, ranging from individuals with a profound understanding to those with minimal knowledge of Political Economy.
- Figure 3 illustrates the frequency with which respondents from the general public apply their knowledge about the concept of Political Economy. Among the 7 individuals surveyed, there is a varied distribution in their application of knowledge. None of the respondents reported always applying knowledge about the concept of Political Economy, indicating a lack of consistent application of acquired knowledge in real-world scenarios. However, 1 respondent indicated often applying this knowledge, suggesting a relatively frequent utilization of Political Economy concepts in their decision-making or daily activities. Similarly, another respondent mentioned sometimes applying knowledge about Political Economy, indicating occasional usage of acquired knowledge in relevant contexts. Additionally, 1 respondent stated rarely applying knowledge about Political Economy, implying infrequent application of acquired knowledge in practical situations. Interestingly, the majority of respondents, comprising four individuals, reported never applying knowledge about Political Economy, highlighting a significant portion of the surveyed population with limited or no practical

application of acquired knowledge in Political Economy. This distribution underscores the need for further exploration into the factors influencing the application of Political Economy knowledge among the general public, as well as potential strategies for promoting its practical utilization in decision-making and civic engagement.

- Figure 4 offers insights into the level of familiarity with the concept of Political Economy among students. Among the 30 students surveyed, a majority of 22 respondents (73.3%) reported familiarity with Political Economy. Notably, a significant portion of these respondents, comprising 17 students, belonged to social science disciplines, suggesting a higher exposure to economic concepts within this academic field. In contrast, 4 respondents from natural science disciplines also reported familiarity with Political Economy, indicating a degree of cross-disciplinary interest in economic issues. Conversely, a minority of 8 students (26.7%) indicated a lack of familiarity with Political Economy. Within this smaller group, the majority, consisting of 7 students, belonged to natural science disciplines, while only 1 student was from a social science discipline. This distribution highlights potential disparities in exposure to economic concepts across academic disciplines and underscores the importance of promoting interdisciplinary understanding of Political Economy among students.
- Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of knowledge levels regarding Political Economy among the 22 student respondents. Among these students, a range of knowledge levels was observed. Notably, 3 students (13.6%) demonstrated a very high degree of knowledge, indicative of a deep understanding of Political Economy concepts. Additionally, five students (22.7%) exhibited a high degree of knowledge, suggesting a strong grasp of the subject matter. Furthermore, the majority of students, comprising eleven individuals (50%), possessed a moderate degree of knowledge, indicating a reasonable understanding of Political Economy concepts. However, there were also students with lower levels of knowledge, as evidenced by 2 students (9.1%) with a low degree of knowledge and 1 student (4.5%) with a very low degree of knowledge. This distribution highlights the diverse range of knowledge levels among student respondents, emphasizing the importance of tailored educational approaches to accommodate varying levels of understanding and promote deeper engagement with Political Economy concepts across academic disciplines.
- In Figure 6, the frequency of applying knowledge about the concept of Political Economy among the 22 student respondents is presented. Among these students, there is a diverse distribution in the

application of their knowledge: 2 respondents (9.1%) reported always applying knowledge about Political Economy, suggesting a consistent integration of economic principles into their decision-making processes or daily activities. Additionally, a significant portion of students, comprising ten respondents (45.5%), indicated often applying knowledge about Political Economy, indicating a frequent utilization of economic concepts in relevant contexts. Moreover, five respondents (22.7%) mentioned sometimes applying knowledge about the concept, implying occasional usage of acquired knowledge in relevant situations. On the other hand, 3 respondents (13.6%) stated rarely applying knowledge about Political Economy, indicating infrequent application of economic principles in practical scenarios. Lastly, 2 respondents (9.1%) reported never applying knowledge about the concept of Political Economy, highlighting a subset of the surveyed population with limited or no practical application of acquired knowledge in this area. This distribution underscores the varying degrees of engagement with Political Economy concepts among student respondents, with implications for promoting practical utilization and enhancing understanding of economic principles within academic and real-world contexts.

- Figure 7 sheds light on the level of familiarity with the concept of Political Economy among public officials. Among the 30 public officials surveyed, a majority of 24 respondents (80%) reported being unfamiliar with Political Economy. Notably, the majority of these unfamiliar respondents, comprising 20 individuals, belonged to high-ranking positions within their respective organizations, suggesting a widespread lack of exposure to economic concepts among senior leadership. Additionally, four respondents from low-ranking positions indicated unfamiliarity with Political Economy, highlighting a similar trend across different levels of authority within the surveyed population. Conversely, a minority of 6 public officials (20%) indicated familiarity with Political Economy. Interestingly, all six of these respondents belonged to the high-ranking category, suggesting a potential correlation between seniority and familiarity with economic concepts among public officials. This distribution underscores the need for targeted educational initiatives and capacity-building efforts to enhance economic literacy and promote informed decision-making among public officials across all levels of authority.
- In Figure 8, the distribution of knowledge levels regarding Political Economy among the 6 public officials surveyed is outlined. Among these officials, a spectrum of knowledge levels was observed. Notably, 1 official (16.7%) demonstrated a very high degree of knowledge, indicative of a profound understanding of Political Economy concepts. Additionally, 2 officials (33.3%) exhibited a high

degree of knowledge, suggesting a strong grasp of the subject matter. Furthermore, 1 official (16.7%) possessed a moderate degree of knowledge, indicating a reasonable understanding of Political Economy concepts. Conversely, 1 official (16.7%) had a low degree of knowledge, suggesting a limited understanding of the subject. Interestingly, none of the officials reported having a very low degree of knowledge about Political Economy.

- In Figure 9, the frequency of applying knowledge about the concept of Political Economy among the 6 public officials surveyed is outlined. The distribution of their application of knowledge is diverse: None of the respondents (0%) reported always applying knowledge about the concept of Political Economy, indicating a consistent lack of utilization of economic principles in their decision-making processes or daily activities. Interestingly, 1 respondent (16.7%) indicated often applying knowledge about Political Economy, suggesting a relatively frequent utilization of economic concepts in relevant contexts. Additionally, another respondent (16.7%) mentioned sometimes applying knowledge about the concept, implying occasional usage of acquired knowledge in relevant situations. However, 2 respondents (33.3%) stated rarely applying knowledge about Political Economy, indicating infrequent application of economic principles in practical scenarios. Furthermore, 2 respondents (33.3%) reported never applying knowledge about the concept of Political Economy, highlighting a significant portion of the surveyed population with limited or no practical application of acquired knowledge in this area. This distribution underscores the varied engagement with Political Economy concepts among public officials surveyed, with implications for promoting practical utilization and enhancing understanding of economic principles within their decision-making processes. Ongoing education and training initiatives may be necessary to encourage greater application of Political Economy knowledge in addressing socio-economic challenges effectively.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis and findings presented in this study provide valuable insights into the perceptions, knowledge levels, and application of Political Economy among different demographic groups, including the general public, students, and public officials. Among the general public, a significant portion demonstrated a lack of familiarity with Political Economy, with only a minority reporting familiarity with the concept. Furthermore, while some individuals exhibited varying degrees of knowledge about Political Economy, many lacked practical application of this knowledge in their daily lives. In contrast, students, particularly those

from social science disciplines, displayed a higher level of familiarity with Political Economy. However, there were still variations in knowledge levels and application frequency among student respondents, suggesting the need for tailored educational approaches to promote deeper engagement with economic concepts across academic disciplines. Among public officials, a majority reported unfamiliarity with Political Economy, particularly among high-ranking officials. While some officials demonstrated a moderate to high degree of knowledge about Political Economy, there were notable gaps in practical application, with many indicating infrequent or nonexistent utilization of economic principles in decision-making processes. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of enhancing economic literacy and promoting practical utilization of Political Economy knowledge across different segments of society. Addressing these gaps through targeted educational initiatives, capacity-building programs, and policy interventions is essential for fostering informed decision-making, addressing socio-economic challenges, and promoting sustainable development. By equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills, they can be empowered to navigate complex economic landscapes and contribute meaningfully to shaping a prosperous future for Bangladesh.

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