Graduate Employability in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: A future research Agenda

Mohammed H Alwethainani, Zuraina Dato Mansor

Abstract: In recent decades, a growing body of literature has emerged to illustrate the strong pressure on education institutions to prepare graduates for the world of work. This challenge has intensified since the expansion of higher education process that reframed the policy debate and placed the smooth transition from school-to-work and the employability of graduates at the forefront of education policy. In this scenario it is imperative to analyze the research trends in this area of research. The present study examined the research articles published in this area till 2018. The data was collected using the Scopus database to analyze the research trends in this area. The study findings have clearly highlighted that majority of the research in the field of employability is conducted in developed countries and this area of study is under explored in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The findings also showed that the research related to the factors contributing towards Saudi graduates’ employability is one area which needs to be studied.

Index Terms: Literature Review, Employability, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Saudization.

I. INTRODUCTION

The theory of employability can be difficult to identify however, there were many studies which suggest attributes and factors that contribute to the idea of being employable. In this section, the study discuss theories that are employed and develop a theoretical framework which explains the relationships between the variables of interest, such perceived protean career, and career building skills, personality trait and employability, additionally, the study developed model based on these theories and conceptual framework is presented. Saudi Arabia or Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is reforming its economy to keep phase with the new development of the global market. However, the kingdom’s core citizen graduates are still facing with an issue like the unemployment among themselves. The tradition in this kingdom is it becomes automatic for the graduates to secure a job but this is no longer feasible due to the changing phase of the economy, contributed by the technological development and the shift in paradigm from an administrative-based to a rapidly developing and an industrialized state. However, unemployment is considered to be a worldwide growing trend and as a matter of fact, there is a growing trend towards unemployment among graduates as the worldwide issue [1]. Therefore, graduates in worldwide need to refocus their capabilities and improved their employability skills in order to meet the required skills and competencies wanted by the employers [2],[3].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In general, the world sees Saudi as a country which is having a relatively healthy economic due to its main source from oil revenue which accounts for 92% incomes and the prospect of non-oil growth of 4-5% in 2015 to 2018, [4]. Saudi also enjoys comparatively lower inflation rate, and the economic growth has been above the trend, and it is sufficiently able to offer a wide range of employment opportunities to the citizen. However, the labor market is highly lopsided. The better-educated Saudis’ working class is primarily employed in the public sector and most of the highly skilled and the highest paid jobs in the private sectors are held by the foreigners. The reasons for these are mentioned as the locals have the lack of employability competencies required by the private sectors [5],[6] and lack the willingness to work and the general preference for a particular job/sector [7]. Further, according to the GCC Economic Outlook Report (2014)[8], Saudis are not specializing in fields such as engineering, industrial and media: Only 12% of the fresh Saudi’s graduates were from streams that are related to media studies in 2012, whereas only 13% from engineering and science streams. A vast majority of the citizen goes to the humanities, Islamic studies and business management and administration. With regards to the composition of the labor force in according to the sectors, services sectors, technical skills jobs are mostly occupied by expatriates, while the locals occupy the administrative jobs. In the manufacturing sector, Saudis occupy just 22%. While in general, in 2012, out of the total 10.6 million paid employment people of Saudi, there were 44% locals and the remaining 56% were expatriates [9].

III. METHODOLOGY

The study used a systematic literature review approach to study the research trends in the field of Graduate Employability in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The researcher used the key word employability to search for the articles related to this area [10],[11]. The study included only the articles indexed in SCOPUS database and published till the year 2018, to understand the research trend. A total of 7868 articles related to employability was included for this study. The articles were then analyzed using the Scopus database feature of analysis search.
employability was further analyzed by reading the content and analyzing the area of research and their conclusions.

IV. FINDINGS

The findings from the systematic literature review was divided into mainly three criteria for analysis, firstly the country the research article was published, secondly, the subject area and the third criteria was the number of articles published. The figure 1 shows the country wise breakup of articles indexed in Scopus related to employability between the year 1929 and 2018. The analysis shows around 36% of the articles in this research area is published in countries like United Kingdom and United States. The research related to employability is underexplored in the Middle East region. Table 1 gives the Country wise breakup of articles indexed in Scopus related to employability.

Figure 1: Country wise breakup of articles indexed in Scopus related to employability (1929 - 2018)

The country wise breakup given in the Table 1 clearly highlights the lack of studies related to employability in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). In more than seven decades only a total of 16 articles is published in the area of employability.

Table 1: Country wise breakup of articles indexed in Scopus related to employability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY/ TERRITORY</th>
<th>No. of articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saudi Arabia</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macao</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (Democratic Republic, DDR)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Similarly, the analysis on the subject area has shown that almost 50% of the articles published in this area of research is in the subject area of social science and business management. This is shown in the figure 2 which gives the subject wise breakup of the articles related to employability published and indexed in Scopus. Table 2 shows the breakup of the articles published in each of the subject area.

Table 2: Subject area wise breakup of articles indexed in Scopus related to employability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT AREA</th>
<th>No. of articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics, Econometrics and Finance</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Humanities</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Professions</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Science</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Sciences</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroscience</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural and Biological Sciences</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceutics</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth and Planetary Sciences</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials Science</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics and Astronomy</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical Engineering</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multidisciplinary</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immunology and Microbiology</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentistry</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undefined</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Articles</td>
<td>7868</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Subject area wise breakup of articles indexed in Scopus related to employability (1929 - 2018)

The breakup given in the table 2 clearly concludes that majority of the research area is under the subject of social sciences and business management. The analysis shows that topic is well researched in these subject areas. The third criteria used for the analysis is the number of articles published, the figure 3 shows the trend of the number of articles published related to employability, the trend shows there is a steady increase in the number of articles in this area. Table 3 shows the number of articles indexed in Scopus related to employability from the year 1929 to 2018.

Table 3: Number of articles indexed in Scopus related to employability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>No of Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Retrieval Number: C12481083S219/2019©BEIESP
DOI:10.35940/ijrte.C1248.1083S219
Published By:
Blue Eyes Intelligence Engineering & Sciences Publication

814
Although there is an increase in the number of articles published every year, the study focused on the graduate employability in KSA is scarce. There were about 953 articles published in this area in the year 2018, however majority of these articles published are from the western countries.

Table 3: Summary of articles indexed in Scopus

Figure 3: Number of articles indexed in Scopus related to employability

The summary of these three analyses has clearly shown that there is a need to explore the employability of the graduates in KSA. In the next stage further analysis was conducted on the 16 articles where the study was conducted in KSA, this is to understand the gap in the literature in the studies on employability. The analysis on the research on employability had shown that the first article was published in the year 2011 and this area of research came into prominence recently. However, out of these 16 articles only 12 articles were related to employability and the other 4 articles were either not related or it was conducted by a author from KSA but the sample used for the study was not from KSA [12]-[16]. Table 4 shows the details of these articles in this area of research [17]-[22].

Table 4: Details of articles in this area of research
Majority of the studies in the research area of employability, used the quantitative method and they studies variables varied from one study to another. Some of the variables used and topics covered in these studies are soft skills, self-regulated learning (SRL), and academic achievement of students, Emotional intelligence, Academic performance, Discourse level, critical thinking, deep learning, and future employability, educational programs in developing the entrepreneurial intentions, changing labour market, government policies and employment, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and its paradigm shift towards open global education, General Education Foundation Skills Assessment (GEFSA), learner’s suitability potential.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

we can see that most of the past literature has been focused on skills for employability indicators. In addition, some literature has suggested that over depending on skills only are not enough to promote employability especially with the current situation where jobs are less or even when there are jobs but there is a skill mismatch. However, the review of literature clearly highlighted that the factors contributing towards KSA graduate’s employability is one underexplored area. The future research must be focused in this area. The future recommendation for research in this area would be the study on factors contributing to the employability with career strategies as a mediator.

REFERENCES


---

Table: related to employability in KSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almutairi, M.M., Hasanat M.H.A.</td>
<td>Predicting the suitability of IS students’ skills for the recruitment in Saudi Arabian industry</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santhosh D., Goverdhan C., Sangam K., Shailaja S., Roopa G.</td>
<td>Impact of English language teaching in technical education</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elgeddawy M.</td>
<td>Impact of analyzing open online educational video on university students’ academic performance</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaryab, A., Saeed U.</td>
<td>Educating entrepreneurship: A tool to promote self employability</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varshney D.</td>
<td>Expatriates Go, Let Us Grow</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faridi M.R., Ebad R.</td>
<td>Transformation of higher education sector through massive open online courses in Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhodes A., Danaher M.M., Kranov A.A.</td>
<td>Assessing students’ foundation skills prior to the STEM majors</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamjoom Y.</td>
<td>Private higher education and graduate employability in Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clementking A., Muhammad A.</td>
<td>Technology based learning analysis of CBCS model at KU</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Technology Based Learning Analysis of CBCS Model at KKU. *Int. J. Emerg. Technol. Learn.*, 8(3).

**AUTHORS PROFILE**

**Mohammed Alwethainani,** Faculty of Economics and Management, University Putra Malaysia. *Corresponding author’s email: wathnani@yahoo.com*

**Zuraina Dato Mansor,** Faculty of Economics and Management, University Putra Malaysia.