

# 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

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**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.

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. The articles which were on

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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.

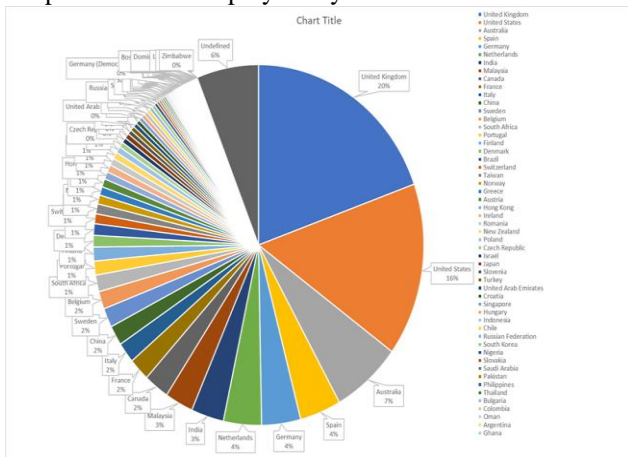


Figure 1: Country wise breakup of articles indexed in Scopus related to employability (1929 - 2018)

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.

COUNTRY/TERRITORY	No. of articles
United Kingdom	1536
United States	1223
Australia	535
Spain	317
Germany	300
Netherlands	292
India	251
Malaysia	218
Canada	194
France	161
Italy	145
China	140
Sweden	136
Belgium	125
South Africa	117
Portugal	99

Finland	98
Denmark	82
Brazil	81
Switzerland	70
Taiwan	70
Norway	63
Greece	60
Austria	58
Hong Kong	53
Ireland	53
Romania	51
New Zealand	48
Poland	45
Czech Republic	38
Israel	37
Japan	37
Slovenia	32
Turkey	32
United Arab Emirates	31
Croatia	30
Singapore	29
Hungary	27
Indonesia	27
Chile	25
Russian Federation	25
South Korea	24
Nigeria	23
Slovakia	19
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	<b>16</b>
Pakistan	15
Philippines	14
Thailand	14
Bulgaria	12
Colombia	12
Oman	11
Argentina	10
Ghana	10
Mexico	10
Cyprus	9
Viet Nam	9
Kuwait	8
Latvia	8
Qatar	8
Serbia	8
Iran	7
Kenya	7
Luxembourg	7
Macao	7
Germany (Democratic Republic, DDR)	6
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Lithuania	6
Bangladesh	5
Botswana	5
Costa Rica	5
Estonia	5
Sri Lanka	5
Uganda	5

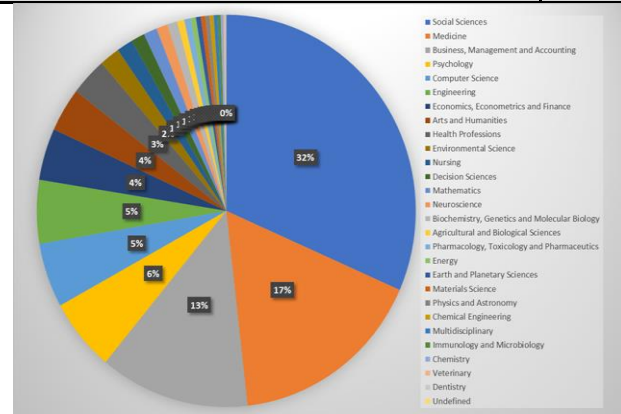
Bahrain	4
Ecuador	4
Ethiopia	4
Palestine	4
Peru	4
Algeria	3
Egypt	3
Iceland	3
Lebanon	3
Tunisia	3
Brunei Darussalam	2
Iraq	2
Malta	2
Mauritius	2
Morocco	2
Senegal	2
Sudan	2
Syrian Arab Republic	2
Tanzania	2
Ukraine	2
Venezuela	2
American Samoa	1
Armenia	1
Benin	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1
Cote d'Ivoire	1
Dominican Republic	1
Georgia	1
Greenland	1
Jamaica	1
Lesotho	1
Liberia	1
Liechtenstein	1
Macedonia	1
Myanmar	1
Namibia	1
Nepal	1
Panama	1
Puerto Rico	1
Rwanda	1
Uruguay	1
Zimbabwe	1
Undefined	477
<b>Total Articles</b>	<b>7868</b>

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 article 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**

SUBJECT AREA	No. of articles
Social Sciences	2475
Medicine	1367
Business, Management and Accounting	1039
Psychology	467

Computer Science	413
Engineering	404
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	331
Arts and Humanities	251
Health Professions	198
Environmental Science	116
Nursing	85
Decision Sciences	85
Mathematics	83
Neuroscience	95
Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology	81
Agricultural and Biological Sciences	56
Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceutics	49
Energy	40
Earth and Planetary Sciences	40
Materials Science	35
Physics and Astronomy	32
Chemical Engineering	31
Multidisciplinary	25
Immunology and Microbiology	22
Chemistry	22
Veterinary	13
Dentistry	12
Undefined	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7868</b>



**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**

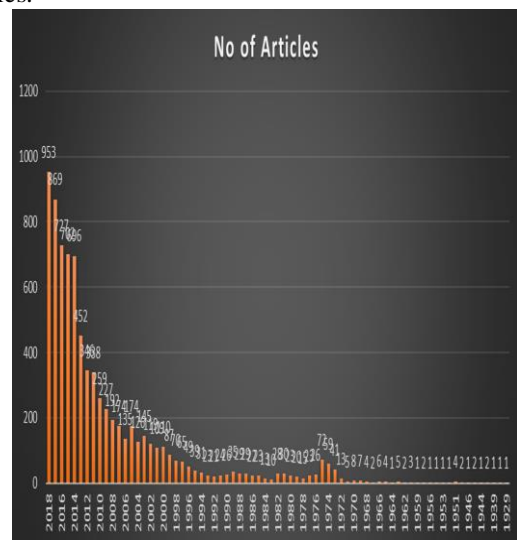
YEAR	No of Articles
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YEAR	No of Articles
2018	953
2017	869
2016	727
2015	702
2014	696
2013	452
2012	346
2011	338
2010	259
2009	227
2008	192
2007	174
2006	135
2005	174
2004	126
2003	145
2002	119
2001	109
2000	110
1999	87
1998	70
1997	65
1996	49
1995	39
1994	31
1993	23
1992	21
1991	24
1990	26
1989	35
1988	29
1987	29
1986	22
1985	23
1984	13
1983	10
1982	28
1981	30
1980	23
1979	20
1978	15
1977	23
1976	26
1975	72
1974	59
1973	41
1972	13
1971	5
1970	8
1969	7
1968	4
1967	2
1966	6
1965	4
1964	1
1963	5
1962	2
1961	3

YEAR	No of Articles
1959	1
1958	2
1956	1
1954	1
1953	1
1952	1
1951	4
1950	2
1946	1
1945	2
1944	1
1942	2
1939	1
1936	1
1929	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7868</b>

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.



**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 3: Summary of articles indexed in Scopus**

related to employability in KSA

Authors	Title	Year
Almutairi M.M., Hasanat M.H.A.	Predicting the suitability of IS students' skills for the recruitment in Saudi Arabian industry	2018
Santhosh D., Goverdhan C., Sangam K., Shailaja S., Roopa G.	Impact of english language teaching in technical education	2018
Rizwan A., Alsulami H., Elnahas N., Bashir M., Bawareth F., Kamrani R., Noorelahi R.	Impact of emotional intelligence on the academic performance and employability of female engineering students in Saudi Arabia	2018
Elgeddawy M.	Impact of analyzing open online educational video on university students' academic performance	2018
Zaryab A., Saeed U.	Educating entrepreneurship: A tool to promote self employability	2018
Varshney D.	Expatriates Go, Let Us Grow	2018
Faridi M.R., Ebad R.	Transformation of higher education sector through massive open online courses in Saudi Arabia	2018
Rhodes A., Danaher M.M., Kranov A.A.	Assessing students' foundation skills prior to the STEM majors	2017
Jamjoom Y.	Private higher education and graduate employability in Saudi Arabia	2016
Hadad G.E., Naimieb Z., Halili S.H., Abuzaid R.A., Siraj S.	Integrating employability skills in school curriculum	2014
Clementking A., Muhammad A.	Technology based learning analysis of CBCS model at KKU	2013

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.

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## 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.