MIND SET OF THE SAUDI JOBSEEKERS – AN INSIGHT INTO THE ATTITUDE OF THE SAUDI WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW

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ABSTRACT

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a fast growing, dynamic and diversifying economy is going through a transition phase. The swiftly changing preferences, standard of living and increased dispensable income have put the entire social and cultural setup of the Kingdom on a modernization conveyor belt. Saudis with their unique social and cultural background coupled with a deep religious input are very proud of their exclusivity and this gives rise to a strong inertia for change of any nature. The youth of the society feels the greatest pressure in terms of the glamour and glitter of the modern society and the sense of affection and belonging to the traditions and past. They are at a crossroads of sorts, quite akin with similar aged people in all the developing economies of the world. This state of affairs in which economic, social, psychological and environmental factors have a direct impact on the attitude of the youth, his behavior, goals and mission of life, needs to be probed and researched to understand the actual position and put forward solutions.

Key Words: Tribal society, Regional growth, Saudization, Economic growth, Private sector

INTRODUCTION

The youth of the Kingdom always remained a subject matter of study due to its plasticity and molding nature as it is commonly said “catch them young” and they are the ones who will lead the nation in the future on all fronts. Saudi Arabia has more than 50% of its population in the category of ‘youth’, who can work towards their own future and end up shaping and developing the future of the Kingdom. They are the ones who will take industrialization, manufacturing and social welfare to new heights on a national and international level. The Ministry of Labor showed its concern in this regard and thus conducted a survey about socio economic and psychological background of the job seekers. The questionnaire used in the survey was extensive giving enough scope for clarity, check and balance and true representation. The schedule was prepared by the Ministry of Economics and Planning.

Sample and Research Design

The Ministry of Labor in Saudi Arabia has collected information regarding the total number of applicants and number of those registered for jobs at different centers in Saudi Arabia. There were 155579 people under this category and this is the population in which
sample has to be taken. 3% sample was taken as the right size for the study. The sample was chosen randomly. The names were arranged alphabetically and one person after every 35th person in the list was chosen to whom the schedule was sent. The questions were clear and to the point in order to avoid any ambiguity. The schedules were clear and were sent to the marked person and later collected back for statistical processing. Those schedules that were lost in transit were also accounted for. Every care was taken that the study remains free from any bias. Chi square test was used to test the reliability of the data with 2% ± variance. The database/data mine was processed on. Dispersion was assessed and the coefficient of correlation for some attributes taken to have a deeper understanding of the results.4.

**Experimental Setup**

At the time of the study there were 24000 applicants for job seekers registration. Similarly, Abeeshi and Talib in their study took 173165 job requesters as census figure of their study.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 1. Job According to its Availability in the Private Sector and the Applicants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Groups</th>
<th>Job Requester’s Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Private Sector Occupation Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manager &amp; Service Manager</td>
<td>3275</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>2064</td>
<td>2.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialization in Fields</td>
<td>7970</td>
<td>4.60%</td>
<td>75432</td>
<td>9.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technicians in Scientific Fields</td>
<td>5093</td>
<td>2.94%</td>
<td>78579</td>
<td>10.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk Jobs</td>
<td>70247</td>
<td>40.57%</td>
<td>51492</td>
<td>6.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Jobs</td>
<td>12541</td>
<td>7.24%</td>
<td>27717</td>
<td>3.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Jobs</td>
<td>53639</td>
<td>30.98%</td>
<td>27506</td>
<td>35.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural and Animal Jobs</td>
<td>1584</td>
<td>0.91%</td>
<td>16471</td>
<td>2.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical Industry</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1.15%</td>
<td>26138</td>
<td>3.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Engineering</td>
<td>16833</td>
<td>9.72%</td>
<td>19732</td>
<td>25.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>173165</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>325131</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Abishi and Talib 2003

The analysis of the table reveals that 41% applicants are seeking desk jobs whereas the jobs of this nature on offer are just 6.70% of the total jobs available. In case of service jobs, they are 36% of the available posts and almost an equal number of people have applied for them too, 30.98%. Service jobs do not need higher qualification as 49% of them are intermediate certificate holders and of these jobs are occupied by non Saudis 83% and 17% by Saudis. The agricultural and animal jobs are just 2.14% which is very understandable, as this sector is left for those based in the rural areas and only 0.91% applicants had applied for it. The basic engineering sector saw a big difference in the percentage of jobs available and the percentage of applicants applying for those jobs. There are 25.66% of the total jobs available in this sector and just 9.72% of the applicants have preferred basic engineering. One of the most important reasons for this is the lack of technical know how in the applicants. Only 2.94% of the applicants applied for jobs related to technicians in scientific fields because of a similar reason.

**View about technical and professional work**

Saudi Arabia in order to shift from an oil based economy to an industrial economy is emphasizing on non oil sector or on the items
which will take oil and gas as their base for value added production. His Excellency, Ali Al Naimi, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources addressing the Arab Economic Forum in Beirut on May 4, 2007 said that “the Kingdom is currently ranked no. 10 in the production of petrochemicals. The Kingdom aims to become no. 3 in the world in the petrochemical sector. In early 1980s the investment in this sector was less than US$ 500 million. This has grown to US$ 20 billion in 2000. The production will mark 100 million tons in 2015.” This indicates that there will be a massive expansion in this field in the country which will present technical and professional job opportunities in the future.

The Survey conducted on a 5 point scale, from always agreed to never agreed from the respondents in order to picturise their thinking and mental attitude towards technical and professional jobs.

Table 2. Views of Job seekers on technical and professional work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views about Technical and Professional Work</th>
<th>Always Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Agree</th>
<th>Never Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think the future will be for technical education</td>
<td>1211 34.3%</td>
<td>1098 31.3%</td>
<td>695 19.7%</td>
<td>328 9.3%</td>
<td>203 5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The technical education is less than academic education</td>
<td>777 22.1%</td>
<td>822 23.4%</td>
<td>958 27.3%</td>
<td>654 18.6%</td>
<td>302 8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t do technical work even at my home</td>
<td>662 18.7%</td>
<td>849 24%</td>
<td>354 10%</td>
<td>1114 31.5%</td>
<td>555 15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will advice my dear ones to go for technical education</td>
<td>1278 36%</td>
<td>1323 27.3%</td>
<td>475 13.4%</td>
<td>278 7.8%</td>
<td>197 5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The graduates of technical colleges find suitable jobs</td>
<td>740 21.1%</td>
<td>917 26.1%</td>
<td>891 25.4%</td>
<td>617 17.6%</td>
<td>349 9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need professional graduate institutes in the Kingdom</td>
<td>1220 34.7%</td>
<td>1239 35.2%</td>
<td>620 17.6%</td>
<td>284 8.1%</td>
<td>153 4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the technical work in the Kingdom is controlled by the incoming labor</td>
<td>1679 47.8%</td>
<td>986 28.1%</td>
<td>392 11.2%</td>
<td>295 8.4%</td>
<td>163 4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see that the society in the Kingdom views technical and professional work as inferior</td>
<td>761 22.1%</td>
<td>918 26.6%</td>
<td>933 27.1%</td>
<td>556 16.1%</td>
<td>277 8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Jobless Advantages Realization and Direction Description Survey Study 2005

A close study of the table reveals that 50% of the respondents feel that incoming technical labor is controlling and occupying new jobs. Similarly, they were aware of the job opportunities after military professional training and national arrangement for joint training. The schedule narrates that there is a positive new attitude towards professional and technical jobs. 65% respondents accept that future is with technical education and the Kingdom needs it.
47% of the people felt that graduates from technical colleges find suitable jobs and at the same time 48.7% of them felt that the society views technical and professional jobs as inferior. People understand the pulse of the society but at the same time they know that getting a technical degree or diploma will qualify them for a better job and improve their standard of living. This is a dilemma that the youth is facing in Saudi Arabia. Even 67% of them are ready to advice their close ones to take up technical education and training. It was also found that matching of the qualification available with job requirements is essential. 25% of the respondents refused to join technical jobs due to unsuitability to the job requirements. The analysis leads us to the fact that the view in the upcoming generation about technical and professional education and jobs is changing and they are seeing it in a more positive light now. The society’s view of technical education as inferior has been reported by several researchers in their studies\textsuperscript{5,6}.

There is a need to educate the youth and families that in the future technical education will have the upper hand in the job market and fetch high salary and therefore, they should go for technical education. Moreover, the Kingdom needs diversification and industrialization for its prosperity and growth and for industrialization it needs a highly technical and skilled workforce. This is only possible if the Saudis realize the goals of the government and blend them with their own life goals and acquire the best possible education available to them and be a party to the development of this Kingdom in the coming decades\textsuperscript{7}.

**Psychology of the Youth**

The youth of tomorrow are the leaders of tomorrow. They are the ones on whose hands the future of Kingdom rests. Therefore, it is essential to study their psychology and assess their mindset regarding growth, development, education and the government’s policies. The young brigade of today is technically savvy and is trying to be abreast with the technical revolution in the world. In Saudi Arabia internet has spread in all parts and high speed internet cafes are found all over the major cities in the Kingdom. People have access to high volumes of information to enrich their knowledge base and the same times have an easy way of keeping in touch and communicating professionally and socially. A study was conducted in order to find out how time is spent by young boys and girls. This study tried to explore the psyche of the youth of the nation in terms of how they placed themselves in the society in the world in terms of utilizing their free time to either widen their knowledge horizon or just use it as leisure time. People with an urge to develop and progress in their lives spend all their time focused on it in one or the other way, even their so called free time.

**Table 3. Views Of The Youth Regarding How They Spend Their Spare Time**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Way of Spending Leisure Time</th>
<th>Always Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Agree</th>
<th>Never Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spend most of my time</td>
<td>693 19.6%</td>
<td>1573 44.5%</td>
<td>305 8.6%</td>
<td>736 20.8%</td>
<td>228 6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend most of my time</td>
<td>454 12.8%</td>
<td>837 23.7%</td>
<td>313 8.9%</td>
<td>1291 36.5%</td>
<td>641 18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching Satellite TV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend most of my time</td>
<td>447 12.7%</td>
<td>927 26.4%</td>
<td>322 9.2%</td>
<td>1185 33.7%</td>
<td>637 18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surfing the internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: The Jobless Advantages Realization and Direction Description Survey Study 2005*
From the analysis of the table it is clear that a lot of the young people spend their time reading. 64% of them responded in affirmative to spending most of their time reading various books, magazines and journals. There was also difference in the nature of responses in terms of rural and urban respondents.

The study also reflects that watching TV and spending time on the internet form a major free time activity for the youth of Saudi Arabia. This focuses on the fact that they are abreast with the technological and scientific advances in the world and they look towards the advanced countries of the world and inspire to take their nation to the same heights of advancement and progress.

Social Relationship and Psychological Aspect

A survey was conducted that tried to assess the qualitative aspect of the life of the job seekers, specially the range of feelings – loneliness, frustration, worry, stress and the vision of the future. Statistical data has been collected about the frustration being common in 57% of the respondents. 55% of them treat it as a matter of the future and do not want to spoil their today and want to enjoy their lives to the fullest. 42% of the respondents agreed to the fact that they spend most of their leisure time with their jobless friends. The findings are a signal for immediate action to be taken in this regard for the future and stability of the society.

The level of frustration is very high and they feel they are although close to their families, they are neglected by them. The present situation sees the youth full of loneliness, disappointment and worry as they fear that their future is gloomy and he seeks refuge in the circle of friends in the similar mindset and not his equals in the workplace. This reflects on their current state of mind and their view or perspective of the future. Emotional balance and strength is extremely necessary for people at a young age to grow and advance in their chosen field of expertise. They should feel confident, happy and should develop a sense of belonging towards their family, friends, society and country in order to match their own goals and ambitions with those of the people close to them and the nation as a whole. They should realize that only their progress in life is not worthy enough and they need to think about the tomorrow of their country and join in making it technologically and commercially on the top of the list of the world.

Table 4. Social and Psychological Relationships of Youth in Saudi Arabia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Relationship</th>
<th>Always Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Agree</th>
<th>Never Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel I am lonely</td>
<td>618 17.3%</td>
<td>616 17.3%</td>
<td>434 2.2%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>819 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My relationship with my neighbors is good</td>
<td>1961 54.8%</td>
<td>1051 4.8%</td>
<td>175 4.9%</td>
<td>258 7.2%</td>
<td>134 3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My relationship with my family is good</td>
<td>2126 59.1%</td>
<td>975 27.1%</td>
<td>163 4.5%</td>
<td>229 6.4%</td>
<td>105 2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a fear regarding my future</td>
<td>1006 28%</td>
<td>985 27.4%</td>
<td>500 3.9%</td>
<td>707 9.7%</td>
<td>391 10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel frustrated and worried</td>
<td>848 23.4%</td>
<td>1250 24.6%</td>
<td>212 5.9%</td>
<td>929 25.7%</td>
<td>378 10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spend most of my time at home</td>
<td>1030 28.8%</td>
<td>999 27.9%</td>
<td>430 12%</td>
<td>726 0.3%</td>
<td>397 11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spend most of my time with friends who are not employed</td>
<td>568 16.6%</td>
<td>885 25%</td>
<td>281 7.9%</td>
<td>1274 36%</td>
<td>530 15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Jobless Advantages Realization and Direction Description Survey Study 2005
CONCLUSION

There is a negative relationship with education and loneliness where the level of education increases; one finds a decrease in loneliness. Another point worth noting is that there is also an inverse relationship between level of income and fear of the future. When the income of someone rises, it gives him a sense of security of the future and brings his fears down. The urban and rural backgrounds have a direct relationship with income disbursement. Further, knowledge about the programs run by the government reaches sparsely and that too quite late in the remote areas while the youth in the city are sharp and on the look out for information of this nature and clearly have a better an upper hand in utilizing such schemes and opportunities. It is the inclination to make use of these facilities provided by the government that is missing in them.

The statistical results indicate the importance of positive relationship between higher technologies based education and a higher remuneration. The focus should not just be on the major cities, the government should focus on smaller cities and villages where the youth need to join the mainstream of the Saudi economy and participate in the development and growth that has been envisioned by the leaders. The family as an institution needs to increase and improve its participation in the lives of the young girls and boys. They need to be shown the correct path and helped on the way to their future roles in the nation’s development. These young people should be asked as to what their true problems are and they should be solved at all levels, social and government. A sense of belongingness and a very strong sense of purpose and obligation towards the Kingdom should be developed in them so that they can utilize their abilities for the best of their mother land.

Recommendations

It is evident from the responses that there are certain groups in the society that need to be strengthened economically, socially and educationally. There are different ministries in the Kingdom that have their goals and objectives both long-term and short –term. Their work plans should be coordinated to avoid duplication of efforts. The prime need is to educate the masses, specially the youth and to inculcate in them:

1. The importance of learning and development of knowledge
2. The importance of training
3. The importance of choosing the right friend circle

REFERENCES

AUTHOR INDEX

Alka Vyas 28
Andrew G.S. Cuthbertson 1
Anjali Jain 76
Anubha Mutha 28
Baddah Saad Al Sebaie 89
B. Chakradhar 34
C. Alexander 20
C. B. Raju 41
Devaka K. Weerakoon 6
Harish Vyas 28
I. K. Mansoori 81
James J. Mathers 1
Juleric Tchouto 48
Keith F.A. Walters 1
K. Smith 20
Lai Xulong 6
Manish Mudgal 34
Mona Khare 76
Mukesh Pandey 70
P. Azadi 20
Phil Northing 1
Prabha Padmakaran 41
Prashant Baredar 70
Rajnish Shrivastava 34
Saman N. Gamage 6
Vikram Singh 62
Vishwambhar Prasad Sati 81
V.K. Sethi 70
Wasantha K.D.D. Liyange 6
Wei Qi Luo 1

● ● ● ● ●

98
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