

# Factors affecting women working in the kingdom of saudi arabia

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Increasingly, Muslim women are involved in their countries' economy as part of the labour force. Saudi Arabia in particular has seen higher numbers of Muslim women become economically active. However, women around the world are disadvantaged in employment for social, cultural and other reasons, and it has been argued that this is particularly true of Muslim women, as in addition to the obstacles faced by women worldwide, they also face additional problems including religious factors, cultural issues and the lack of role-models to encourage enterprise and a culture of women in work. While Saudi Arabia, as a large producer of oil, has a healthy economy, women currently play only a minor role in the work force, and of women available for work, nearly 30% are unemployed, although there are signs that women are starting to play a larger role in the economy.

The study aims to examine the particular obstacles to full participation in the labour market for Muslim women, through looking at their experience in Saudi Arabia. In order to do this, it examines the nature of the social and cultural norms in Saudi Arabia to assess the role they play in oppressing women in the workforce, as well as looking at current legislation and its role. The role played by other factors including childcare, financial issues and personal perceptions is also considered.

A literature review analyses the background in detail, providing a context for the primary study. The literature review covers a number of general areas, for example the social, geographical and cultural factors which surround women's lives in Saudi Arabia, particularly the nature of the Islamic code which dictates behaviours. Statistics showing the current participation of

women in the workforce are given, and the nature of working life for women in Saudi Arabia is analysed.

The primary phase of the research was carried out through interviews with a mix of both quantitative and qualitative data was collected, in order to give a detailed picture of how women working in Saudi Arabia perceive the world of work, as well as one which is statistically valid and reliable. The rationale for taking this particular stance is discussed. 20 women from Saudi Arabia, currently studying in the UK were interviewed. Demographic data was collected, information about work experience and future work plans were also noted. The women were also asked in depth about barriers to working in Saudi Arabia, their awareness of laws and regulations in the workplace, attitudes to marital responsibilities and work, work and religion, and attitudes about gender roles in work. It was found that women face many challenges in the Saudi Arabian workplace, and that 60% of those interviewed were not planning to return to work there. Issues mentioned include the right to work in the same workspace as men, inequalities of pay, and limits on women taking managerial roles over men. It was concluded that the main issue is the cultural diversity between Islamic and non-Islamic societies. Recommendations for Saudi Arabian government, business organisations and the general population are made.

## **Project Details:**

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