

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS IN WORKING WITH SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS AND UNIVERSITIES

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OVERVIEW

- **Linguistic factors**
- **Cultural factors**
- **Cultural homogeneity and social stratification**
- **Academic factors**
- **Demographics**
- **Labor Force**
- **Societal impact of the scholarship**

LINGUISTIC FACTORS

- Arabic alphabet and script
- 28 letters (up to four different shapes dependent on position within the word)
- Write through lines (not on top of them)
- Right to left
- Strokes rather than a continuous flow
- Good Morning -> صباح جميل

LINGUISTIC FACTORS

- Adapting to opposite direction of movement when writing (and reading)
- Reading is affected because of the need to decipher
- Spelling/Vocabulary
- Vowels/consonants
- Omission of copula (*He absent*)
- No 'to have' 'to be' 'to do'

LINGUISTIC FACTORS

- Perfect and imperfect tense usage
- Imperfect tense in a subordinate clause refers to verb in the same tense in the main clause.
- *Arabic: The minister arrived(perfect) while he carries(imperfect) an important letter from the president.*
- *English: The minister arrived carrying an important letter from the president.*

Source: Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ruzic (1983)

ACADEMIC FACTORS

- **Academic integrity**
(plagiarism, citation, test taking)
- **Study skills**
- **Keyboarding skills**
- **Self-sufficiency**
- *"It can be fixed."*

ACADEMIC FACTORS

- Individual responsibility not valued over group
“Helping my brother”
- Everything is a negotiation (All is personal.)
- Academic expectations need to be clearly defined. *Provide specific examples.*

Homework

Class assignments

Group work

Citations

Internet use

Test taking protocols

COPING STRATEGIES

- Learning style: memorization vs. critical thinking
- Use campus resources
- Time management
 - Have to work harder than US counterparts
 - Balancing social and academic needs
 - Form study group
 - Submission of assignments

ACADEMIC FACTORS

- Oral tradition so students often have better speaking and listening comprehension (but do not adhere to organizational norms for academic presentations, poor note-taking skills)
- Large gaps between oral and textual skills
- Need to assess structure and language function in the light of academic goals

CULTURAL FACTORS

- Tribal (13k member royal family members; 4k princes)
- Religious Police-> Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (4k members) [2002 Mecca fire]
- Islam is the official religion-> Sunni (Wahhabi) dominant (10-15% are Shia)
- Gender-> males providers & protectors;
females nurtures & managers (within the home)
- Hierarchy (societal)
- Family structure-> extended; elders receive deference; influence business & govt.; family loyalty over friends or jobs; family compounds the norm; assume total family support
- Women2drive
- Wasta -> favoritism /nepotism/influence

Cultural homogeneity and social stratification

- Tribal trees-> ashraf (descended from the Prophet)
- Patrilineal lines(status maintained by the father's blood lines)
- Qabila descended from Adnan or Qahtan (status differentials watered down if intermarried with khadira)
- Khadira (non-tribal tradesmen, artisans, merchants, & scholars)
- Abd (Black Africans-> slavery officially abolished 1962)much intermarriage

TWENTY-SOMETHINGS

- http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/kingdoms_future_saudi_arabia_through_the_eyes_twentysomethings.pdf
- 145k studying in 30 countries
- US->3,153 self-pays;6,600 employer sponsored;71,026 King Abdullah Scholarships (began in 2005)
- Goal ->Move beyond an oil economy
- Societal impact of 150k plus students returning to Saudi Arabia?

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 2/3 of indigenous pop are under 30 (64% in 2012)
- By 2026 median age will be 30 (50% of the pop)
- 12% of Saudi 19.4 million citizens are 12-16 yrs. old
- Expect change (fewer restrictions) with such a young pop
- Providing jobs to be a severe unemployment climate
39.3% of those aged 20-24 ((million ex-pats)
- Fertility rate 1970= 7.8; 2012= 2.8
- 16-18% poor (3-3.5 million)

LABOR FORCE

- Saudi pop->28 million, (1/3 are foreign workers) 90% of workers in private sector are foreign/ 45 % women. About 57% Saudi women have university degrees, according to a recent study by Oxford Strategic Consulting.
- women make up only 15 % of the labor force. Roughly 60 % of women with Ph.D. degrees are not working, according to a recent study by Booz.
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/06/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-signals-openness-to-women-seeking-work.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

LABOR FORCE

- 335,000 new private-sector jobs for Saudis. 15 % of privately employed Saudis are women
- 300,000 Saudis enter the labor force each year
- Aggressive program to increase the number of Saudis in private businesses by offering incentives and penalties to private employers based on their number of Saudi employees
- Unemployed Saudi women [who want to work] is 34 percent — almost five times as great as the 7 percent unemployment rate for men, according to government figures.
- Those unemployed women are disproportionately college-educated. Saudis receiving unemployment benefits, 86 % are women, and 40 % of those women have college degrees.
- Two-thirds of the population is younger than 30,
- <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-struggles-to-employ-its-mosteducated-women-8312035.html>

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SAUDI UNIVERSITIES

- 24 Government universities

<http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/studyinside/Government-Universities/Pages/default.aspx>

- 9 Private universities (5 coed; 1 women; 3 men)

<http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/studyinside/privateedu/Pages/listphe.aspx>

- Princess Nora Bint Abdulrahman University (Riyadh)
(opened 2011) women only -> aspires to 50k enrollment

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/06/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-signals-openness-to-women-seeking-work.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

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