



Published in Nairobi, Kenya
by Royallite Global.

Volume 5, Issue 4, 2024

Article Information

Submitted: 2nd July 2024

Accepted: 23rd September 2024

Published: 9th October 2024

Additional information is
available at the end of the
article

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ISSN: 2708-5945 (Print)

ISSN: 2708-5953 (Online)

To read the paper online,
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How to Cite:


Naceur Chihaoui, & Shadi Majed Alshraah. (2024). Addressing social challenges in Al-Kharj governorate: A proposal for improving education and employment opportunities. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 5(4). <https://doi.org/10.58256/ne5zse53>

Addressing social challenges in Al-Kharj governorate: A proposal for improving education and employment opportunities

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Abstract

Education has been argued to be how communities build socio-economic progress and integrate social inclusion at all levels. This proposal outlines a plan to enhance education and employment opportunities in the region, aiming to bridge gaps in skills and create pathways for sustainable livelihoods. The paper focuses on the education and employment challenges faced by the Al-Kharj community and the country at large. The study adopted a mixed method of collecting qualitative and quantitative data gathered from 973 participants. The data was comprehensively collected and analysed using interviews, surveys, and statistical and thematic analysis methods. The findings indicate that the community encounters both positive and negative trends in education and employment. The data shows that providing quality education is a massive challenge due to inadequate facilities, lack of professional workshops, and mismatch of educational content and labour market requirements. Firstly, interviews with a variety of stakeholders, mainly the natives, school lecturers, administration, and policy analysts, made it clear that these issues require effective strategies in order to be resolved. Regarding employment, the study suggests that education makes a great deal of difference as interviewees relate it to improving social cohesion and poverty alleviation. Based on the surveys and interviews conducted, the paper concluded that the solutions to education problems in Alkharj would need to be multi-faceted. Vocational training and the involvement of local companies will be efficient steps to close the gap between education and employment. The interviews and surveys affirm these conclusions, with the respondents mentioning the need to align education with current market needs and the broader benefits of improved education and employment opportunities.

Keywords: Al-Kharj Governorate, Education, Employment Opportunities, Social Challenges



Public Interest Statement

This study examines education and employment challenges in Al-Kharj governorate, focusing on the role education plays in socio-economic progress. Through a mixed-methods approach involving 973 participants, the research highlights issues like inadequate facilities, lack of professional training, and a misalignment between education and labor market needs. Interviews with stakeholders, including educators and policymakers, stress the need for effective strategies to address these problems. The study recommends vocational training and partnerships with local companies as key steps to bridge the gap between education and employment, promoting social cohesion and sustainable livelihoods in the region.

1. Introduction

As stated by Saudi vision, 2030 «Our economy will provide opportunities for everyone – men and women, young and old – so they may contribute to the best of their abilities ... One of our most significant assets is our lively and vibrant youth. We will guarantee their skills are developed and properly deployed.» Saudi vision 2030 vision enlighten education as the groundbreaking element to gain gender equality and gender empowerment (Golkowska, 2017). This paper will focus on the Alkharj Governorate, a region that confronts significant challenges in education and employment, as the core aspects of country's Vision 2030. These challenges may include limited access to quality education, a need for more infrastructure, a disconnection between the skills taught in schools and those required by the labour market, and insufficient sustainable employment opportunities. These issues result in socio-economic challenges manifested through high unemployment rates, income disparity, and reduced prospects for social mobility, resulting in poor welfare for many people. In the general perspective of Vision 2030, these educational and employment barriers matter significantly because the country's long-term plan refers to a diversified economy rather than oil and an equitable society through human capital development and job creation. This paper stresses the necessity of dealing with these challenges so that the local community in Alkharj Governorate can align with the country's strategic goals and vice versa since educational barriers can be remedied. Quality employment will benefit the local community and contribute to the nation's broader vision for a more prosperous and sustainable nation.

1.1. Study Background and Educational-Context

Alkharj Governorate is a region in Riyadh Province, Saudi Arabia, which is located 77 kilometres to the south of the capital, Riyadh. Both urban and rural communities inhabit its large land area. In Alkharj, the population varies, with most youth looking for jobs and education opportunities. From a socio-economic point of view, the governorate has experienced magnificent growth. However, it still faces some issues originating from its closeness to the capital and the impact of national economic events. The geographical location and population demographics contribute to different social problems, such as educational disparities and unequal employment opportunities. In this case, school systems might face a shortage of resources, leading to skills shortages and employment inequalities (Al et al., 2021).

In the same vein, education in Saudi Arabia was limited for most citizens until the mid-20th century. However, this changed with the establishment of the Ministry of Education in 1953 and the General Presidency for Girls' Education in 1959, which eventually merged. This transformation led to

a rapid expansion of education. Between 1953 and 1970, the number of boys' schools grew from 290 to 2,722, with an enrollment of over 400,000 students. At the same time, the number of girls' schools increased to 511, with about 7,000 students, including those in teacher training programs (Sayegh, 2009).

The College of Education in Al-Kharj was initially established in 1403 AH as an intermediate college for girls, granting only diplomas. On 11/29/1414 AH, the General President for Girls' Education authorized its upgrade to a four-year college granting bachelor's degrees, effective from the 1416/1415 AH academic year. Later, the college expanded with a separate building for scientific departments in Al-Faisaliah, east of Al-Kharj. In 1423/1422 AH, a new history department was opened to meet regional needs.

In 1424/1423 AH, approval was granted to open admission to more female students in response to growing demand. By 1430/1429 AH, the college had joined King Saud University, but by the beginning of 1431 AH, it became part of Al-Kharj University, later renamed Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. This evolution highlights the significant strides made in Saudi education, particularly for women in Al-Kharj.

The state of education in Alkharj Governorate could be affected by several factors, such as infrastructure, quality of instruction, and accessibility of resources. Despite significant investment in learning facilities, many schools and colleges need more infrastructure and space to accommodate the increasing student population. Moreover, the problem of the quality of instruction arises, which is connected with the need for more skilled teachers and insufficient opportunities for their professional perfection. The social and cultural barriers determine the participation of those groups, especially women and those from rural areas (Alhawsawi & Jawhar, 2023). Such challenges affect not only the quality of education but also the capacity of the graduates to make a successful transition into the labour market. The educational system's failure to match the current labour market requirements is one-factor limiting young people's employment (Barry, 2021).

The labour market of Alkharj Governorate features an intricate range of staff participation levels and many industry gaps. These sectors occupy a critical position in the regional economy but offer fewer job opportunities than the labour market demands. There is a high unemployment level, mainly among the youth and the females. This indicates a more significant problem in the Saudi labour market (Al-Qahtani et al., 2020). This is because the graduate skills that were acquired do not match the labour force's needs of the employers (Baqadir, 2013). Due to this, some industries have a higher demand for poorly skilled workers, creating a problem for those with higher degrees in offices.

Al Kharj Governorate has instituted national and local policies and strategies to rectify its educational and employment challenges. The long-term strategic plan of Saudi Arabia – Vision 2030, suggests that the economy should be diversified and people should be educated and empowered through employment and education programs. Some programs aim to ensure women have higher labour participation through vocational training and strategic partnerships with the private sector (Altaweel, 2020). In addition, they focus on developing educational infrastructure, teachers' training, and a suitable curriculum to meet the needs of the labour market (Mandurah et al., 2022). Though these initiatives have shown promise, there are still several concerns, such as inertia to change, social-cultural barriers, and continuous investment for the success of education and employment programmes in the long run. They are just the basic instruments that must be reinforced to deal with the complex problems

of the Alkharj Governorate.

Almulla (2018) carried out a study concerning education in Saudi Arabia. The study indicates that the educational process in Saudi Arabia confronts significant challenges concerning teacher awareness, school resources, school curricula and student discipline. As such, the critical thinking skills of the students were only assessed as mean by the surveyed teachers. Also, teacher's abilities to influence school curricula and resources might be limited since these factors are typically influenced by other academic stakeholders like the Saudi government. His study demonstrated the nature of education in Saudi Arabia by reviewing related literature. To clarify, governmental institutions in Saudi Arabia still have significant administrative control over all fields of the national education system and this has sometimes negatively impacted the quality as well as the enhancement of educational practices at different levels. In fact, this is one of the primary causes behind the lack of self-criticism in Saudi society. Assuming 'why-questions' is still considered as a form of rebellion and generally regarded as culturally unsuitable, negative, and prone to pose difficulties among people.

Schneider (2005) stated the most problematic issue in secondary stages are due to some reasons such as, the curriculum puts the focus on the vocabulary and grammar competence with little focus on cultural aspects of the target language used outside classrooms, regarding contents, the content does not help students to improve student's self-learning. Finally, few interesting topics are inserted in the curriculum with scant modern teaching aids employed in classrooms. Hence, it is crucial that teachers and curriculum makers should provide language activities in such a way that students can relate these to their everyday situations. For example, creating community problems, issues and matters into the classroom because "it provides an opportunity to make learning more engaging and relevant because students have the opportunity to understand new material in terms of their own lives and realities" (p. 298).

1.2. Study Objectives

The primary focus of this paper is to address social challenges in Al-kharj Governorate as a system to improve education and employment opportunities. The following specific objectives are expected to be achieved:

1. To identify the critical barriers to access quality education and sustainable employment opportunities in Alkharj Governorate.
2. To propose practical strategies for improving education and promoting skill development to enhance employability.
3. To assess the potential impact of improved education and employment opportunities on the socio-economic well-being of individuals and communities in the governorate.

1.3. Relevance of the Study

From both academic and socioeconomic perspectives, this study offered arrays of benefits, specifically to the people of Alkharj and the general Saudi community. This paper is significant as it addresses pressing social challenges in the Alkharj Governorate and contributes to efforts to enhance human capital development and socioeconomic empowerment. By identifying barriers and proposing practical solutions to improve education and employment opportunities, this study has the potential to catalyze positive change and foster inclusive growth in the region.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Education Challenges and Opportunities

In every economy, community members are critical to the education process, as Al Lily and Waibel (2021) pointed out. When community members actively participate in the educational process, the learning outcomes become more efficient. These studies imply that successful strategies can be established, including vocational training and partnerships with the private sector, to develop education and labour market linkages. Education plays a lead role in offering job chances, as research shows a correlation between the level of education and the chances of gaining employment. Almutairi (2023) reveals that investing in human capital via education draws out economic growth in Saudi Arabia, recognising the significance of educational policies in boosting a better economy (Almutairi, 2023). Similarly, according to Aldawsari (2022), the development of the education system can create more economic growth and lower the unemployment rate. The linkage between education and employment is shown by Singh et al. (2022), who explain that sustainable development goals centred on education and training enhance social empowerment and job creation. Research indicates that improving education produces a multiplier effect, helping graduates find jobs and escape poverty as time passes. Thus, the educational needs in Alkharj Governorate should be a concern not only for the individual but also for the more considerable socio-economic development of the region.

Employment barriers in the Alkharj Governorate region are the main components of social and economic challenges arising in the area. One of the most significant obstacles is the skills mismatch between the educational output and the labour market requirements. According to Baqadir (2013), Saudi Arabia's industrial field fails to provide education commensurate with the labour demands of the manufacturing industry, resulting in an excess of graduates needing more skills than employer's demand. This imbalance leads to an increase in unemployment rates among young people, and women in particular, who are highly vulnerable to job market difficulties. Aside from the skill gap, factors such as income inequality and inadequate access to resources affect employment. According to Al Lily and Waibel (2021), urban poverty in Saudi Arabia results from economic inequalities, which are a significant obstacle to individuals' job acquisition.

Another significant barrier is the need for more jobs, mostly in industries that traditionally supply steady employment. According to Taweel (2020), low-skilled workers, predominantly foreigners, have dominated Saudi Arabia's labour market, limiting opportunities for local personnel. This is a highly competitive environment in which many graduates need help finding suitable jobs, contributing to the region's high unemployment rate. Also, cultural factors might lead to exclusion. Barry (2021) considers employment outcomes in terms of socio-cultural structures. It is clear that discriminatory measures hinder female participation in the work sector; hence, this leads to the job gap.

The relationship between education and employment is significant when solving Alkharj Governorate's problems. An appropriate educational system can address the skills gap, matching the changes in the labour market. According to Almutairi (2023), education can be leveraged to stimulate economic growth through its strong effect on the labour market. According to Singh et al. (2022), education and employment have become the main instruments for social empowerment and sustainable job creation. Educational institutions provide students with the requisite skills and on-the-job training to prepare them for future employment.

Taweel (2020) has reinforced the correlation between college education programmes' objectives

and the job market's needs. So, we need to come up with curricula that are based on the demands of the industry. This strategy effectively bridges the skill gap and enhances the competitiveness of individuals in the workforce. Lily and Waibel (2021) mention a community-based education that involves the local population in planning and implementing programmes that target the adequacy of the labour market. This collaboration can be a common ground between education and employment through a smooth transition from school to work. Taken as a whole, these studies offer a broad idea involving education as a crucial tool for social justice and poverty reduction.

2.2.Economic Impacts

Promoting education and employment in Alkharj has led to varying socioeconomic developments in the community, which can be seen as real impacts of education, leading to poverty reduction and increased social inclusion. In the submission of Aldawsari (2022), quality educational systems remain a significant factor that amounts to economic growth in any nation. Similarly, Singh et al. (2022) argued that education and vocational training are critical in enhancing development and ensuring sustainable job opportunities as systems for social empowerment. Education can equip the job market with the right skills, leading to better job opportunities, reducing unemployment, and closing wage gaps (Alhawsawi & Jawhar, 2023). Almutairi (2023) also demonstrates the connection between education and poverty decline, asserting that investing in human capital through education can enhance economic outcomes and reduce poverty. When education opportunities increase, people are better positioned to secure jobs that alleviate their and their family's poverty, thereby improving social mobility.

The community-based approach is the most crucial element in designing solutions suitable for Alkharj Governorate's peculiarities. Through the active participation of local communities in developing educational programmes and employment initiatives, stakeholders can achieve context-tailored solutions that incorporate the region's culture (Lily and Waibel, 2021). Providing training and vocational skills helps to overcome the traditional obstacles to education and employment and the ones related to gender and cultural norms. Local population engagement results in higher impact and ownership among residents, eventually building social inclusion (Abdelwahed & Al Daghan, 2022).

In Alkharj Governorate, implementing sustainable approaches to education and employment issues is universally dependent on the cooperative efforts of multiple parties. Moshashai et al. (2020) affirm that in Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030 advocates for the inter-sector collaboration necessary to diversify the economy and create new jobs. Also, collaboration among educational institutions and the workplace can be a milestone in aligning educational programmes with labour market requirements and, as a result, offering students the necessary skills and experiences to manage a smooth transition into the work environment (Baqadir, 2013).

Successfully executed cooperation programmes can create far-reaching positive effects on the socioeconomic space of Alkharj Governorate, resulting in increased social inclusion and economic stability. Vocational training programmes that collaborate with the private sector are presented by Al Taweel (2020). They provide training with practical techniques and experience, resulting in better skills and a lower unemployment rate. These associations greatly benefit students and employers and prepare the skilled labour force for the industry. Partnerships foster collaborative problem-solving, leading to the development of innovative solutions that fundamentally address employment barriers. These assistance

programmes are designed to cater to the demands of the labour market and are inclusive and sustainable (Barry, 2021). This collaborative cooperation of community-oriented policies could bring about the socioeconomic reformation this district deserves and deserves to pursue.

2.3. Gap in the Literature

This study will bridge the current gap in the literature since there is limited research on the socio-economic challenges of Alkharj Governorate, especially those related to education and employment. Many studies have addressed the general education and job problems in Saudi Arabia, but more studies are needed to pinpoint the specific case of Alkharj. This paper will have a problem statement that points out that inequality in terms of quality education and stable employment is the cause of the slow development in Alkharj Governorate. Despite Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which targets economic diversification and enhances human capital, Alkharj's educational and employment-specific research still needs to be improved. This gap is significant because it prevents the creation of directed solutions that could lead to socio-economic improvement in the area.

The unique features of Alkharj Governorate, such as its location, population trends, and socio-economic differences, accentuate the divide even more. The current literature generally neglects such local charisma, paying more attention to national-level trends. Therefore, a study that identifies the significant obstacles to quality education and sustainable employment opportunities in Alkharj is necessary, considering the research's depth. The study seeks to bridge this gap by identifying the particular obstacles and putting forward effective measures that would help boost education and employment in the region. The research provides reliable information to complete the overall picture of the socio-economic dynamics in Alkharj and presents evidence-based recommendations consistent with the Vision 2030 objective. Conclusively, this research is expected to initiate development by providing examples of how education and employment can move the region socio-economically, eradicate poverty, and promote social equality.

3. Study Methodology

3.1. Study Approach

This paper is focused on education and employment in Alkharj Governorate through a mixed-method approach. This study approach utilizes qualitative and quantitative research methods to account for the significant focus of the study comprehensively. The qualitative approach involves semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. This aspect means that a more comprehensive picture of the barriers to education and employment can be generated, including cultural and socioeconomic factors which lead to these problems. The quantitative approach involves using surveys to gather numerical data that will be subjected to statistical measures. The main reason for this mixed method design is that it fits the study aims, which enables a thorough investigation of the key barriers to quality education and employment sustainability in Alkharj Governorate. Through qualitative and quantitative methods, the research analyzed the causes behind the problems and the trends that suggest a broader socioeconomic picture. This method is crucial in an environment like Alkharj, where the multi-faceted nature of the problems needs multiple perspectives. Moreover, the mixed-methods design assists data triangulation to ensure robust and reliable results.

3.2. Study Community

The study population was carefully selected to ensure that critical stakeholders in the education and economic system in Alkharj were engaged in this study. The participants spread across varying study groups, including residents, educational experts (lecturers and school principals), labour employers, women in political and economic leadership positions, and general policymakers and policy analysts. The involvement of educational experts makes it possible to get an inside view of the problems that can be encountered in providing quality education. Also, employers provide the elements of the labour market’s needs and the skills necessary for sustainable employment. Policymakers were incorporated to provide insight into the existing policies and programs targeting these issues.

Alkharj Governorate’s study population is demographically heterogeneous, with individuals comprising various age groups, genders, and socioeconomic status. This diversity can be an influential determinant of the outcomes that different demographic groups can face in gaining education and employment. For instance, Saudi women have been historically limited to workforce participation due to traditional practices, which may impact their engagement and perceptions in the study. In addition, younger residents may suffer different job challenges than the old generation as the labour market needs new industries and evolves into the future. The study considers these demographic features to ensure that the research results are representative of the community altogether, hence making the solutions developed more inclusive and effective.

3.3.Sampling and Sample Size

A convenient study sampling method was used to engage the relevant stakeholders across different groups. The choice of this sampling technique is mainly to ensure that the data collection processes do not constitute any concerns to the participants. We selected only people willing and ready to participate in the study. Using a convenient sampling method, 973 stakeholders participated in the study. A total of 16 participants from various groups participated in the surveys, while the remaining 957 were engaged in the surveys. The tables below detail the demographic features and the interview conventions used in the study.

Table 1: Results of Demographic Features

Group	Categories	Frequency	Percentiles
Gender	Male	695	71.43%
	Female	278	28.57%
Age	Below 30 years	16	1.64%
	30-39 years	289	29.72%
	40 to 49 years	432	44.40%
	50 years and above	236	24.25%
Portfolio	Local Residents	357	36.69%
	Lecturers	31	3.19%
	School Administrators	279	28.67%
	Women in leadership positions	102	10.48%
	Policy Makers	71	7.30%
	Policy Analysts	133	13.67%

Employment Status	Employed	532	54.67%
	Unemployed	177	18.19%
	Employer of Labour	264	27.13%
Academic Qualifications	Below Masters	121	12.44%
	Masters	372	38.25%
	PhD	423	43.47%
	Post Doctorate	57	5.86%

The research population studied consisted of 973 people in the Alkharj Governorate. The data exhibited distinguishing features of the population. The gender distribution shows more males (71.43%) than females (28.57%). It could manifest such a gender imbalance in education and employment opportunities, which are of utmost significance in the research’s purpose of removing barriers to social inclusion. The above age distribution suggests a considerable proportion of people are in the working age group; this includes 29.72% in the 30–39-year category, 44.40% in the 40–49-year category, and 24.25% aged 50 years and older. This distribution, however, illustrates the presence of a diverse labour force in Alkharj, which in turn points out that dealing with work opportunities might significantly impact various age groups. Most respondents are employed (54.67%), while 18.19% are unemployed and 27.13% are employers. This combination provides the overall picture of the work environment needed to understand the employment-related issues in Alkharj. The results for the academic qualifications data show that more than one-third (38.25%) have a master’s degree, and an even more significant percentage (43.47%) hold a PhD. In comparison, 5.86% have a post-doctorate degree. These figures show that there must be highly educated people who can act as role models in dealing with education and unemployment challenges. Furthermore, the portfolio data indicate that school administrators constitute 28.67% of the sample data, policy analysts 13.67%, and policymakers 7.30%, suggesting that the study can open insights from individuals in influential positions to create better educational and employment policies. This population analysis stresses the need for interventions targeted towards the gender issue in society, the age differences, and the range of their academic qualifications to develop inclusive plans that would address the problem in the Alkharj community.

Table 2: Profile of Interview Participants

Group	Abbreviation	Repetition	Gender
Local Residents	LOR	LOR-1	Male
		LOR-2	Female
		LOR-3	Male
Lecturers	LEC	LEC-1	Female
		LEC-2	Male
		LEC-3	Male
School Administrators	SAD	SAD-1	Male
		SAD-2	Male
		SAD-3	Male
Women in Leadership	WIL	WIL-1	Female
		WIL-2	Female

Policy Makers	POM	POM-1	Male
		POM-2	Male
Policy Analysts	POA	POA-1	Female
		POA-2	Male

The table of interview participants illustrates distinct groups for which abbreviations represent their roles, repetition for the unique identifier, and gender. Among the residents (LOR), there are three participants: two males (LOR-1, LOR-3) and one female (LOR-2). The lecturers (LEC) group also has three participants: one female (LEC-1) and two males (LEC-2, LEC-3). The school administrators' (SAD) group includes three males (SAD-1, SAD-2, SAD-3). The Women in Leadership (WIL) group includes two females (WIL-1, WIL-2).

3.4.Data Collection Tools and Administration

The collection of quantitative data was accomplished through the use of digitally designed questionnaires. The survey items were constructed using a 5-point Likert scale. The survey items were created from the three research questions that anchor this study. This digital tool created a space for fast data collection and higher response rates, as the survey was allowed to be submitted at the participants' own pace.

Alongside the quantitative surveys, semi-structured interviews were also done with selected participants from different categories, such as residents, college lecturers, school administrators, women leaders, policymakers, and policy analysts. The interviews have thus helped us with the quality analysis while also aiding in a thorough investigation of the problems identified through the surveys. The semi-structured format gave adequate freedom to discuss items of interest while maintaining a uniform structure in all interviews. Interview questions embed personal experience with education and employment and barriers and improvements noticed. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or virtually to satisfy the interviewees' preferences and circumstances. This approach enabled gathering in-depth qualitative data, which captured the complex situations and the narratives behind the quantitative trends.

3.5.Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis process in this study is complex and divided into two parts: a statistical analysis of the quantitative survey data and a thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews. To conduct the surveys, statistical measures like percentile values, mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, and skewness will be utilized to analyze the distribution and central tendency of the responses. These data show the general trend and allow for the study of the variability of the respondents' opinions on education- and employment-related problems. The thematic analysis approach will be adopted for the semi-structured interviews to extract the main themes and patterns from qualitative data. Instead, this includes a transcription of interviews and an in-depth content analysis to track recurring topics, concepts, and relationships. Thematic analysis is used as the base for a detailed study of the narratives of individual participants concerning education and employment in the Alkharj region of the country.

4. Results and Discussions

This section encompasses both the study findings and an expansive discussion of them, which is the basis for segmenting the section into various subparts.

4.1.Results

4.1.1. Survey Results

The survey results are presented in accordance with the three objectives of the study. The results are presented in three tables as shown below.

Table 3: Results of the Barriers to Educational System in Alkharj

Items	Range	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
1. A lack of adequate educational infrastructure in Alkharj Governorate affects the quality of education.	1 to 5	14.38	0.82	0.26	-0.53
Students in Alkharj face significant barriers to accessing educational resources such as technology.	1 to 5	15.05	18.05	1.42	1.85
The shortage of qualified teachers in Alkharj schools is a significant barrier to providing quality education.	1 to 5	12.27	18.02	1.36	1.62
There is a mismatch between the skills taught in schools and the demands of the local labour market.	1 to 5	09.02	12.13	0.92	0.81
Cultural and societal expectations impact the ability of individuals to pursue certain educational and employment opportunities.	1 to 5	11.15	14.11	1.07	1.12

Table 3 identifies the main impediments to the educational system in Alkharj. The mean values show that the respondents most strongly agree with item 2 and that students meet many obstacles while getting educational resources like technology. The mean is 15.05, and the high standard deviation is 18.05. The high skewness of 1.42 and kurtosis of 1.85 may indicate a considerable disagreement with the statement, allowing considerable variations in the answer distribution. In the same way, item 3, about the scarcity of competent teachers, also has high skewness (1.36) and kurtosis (1.62), which means that all the participants agree that this is a significant problem. Categories (1, 4, and 5) have the remaining means with less skewness, and they show that these obstacles may have fewer opinions, or a milder effect compared to the barriers mentioned with the resources.

Table 4: Proposing Practical Strategies for Improving Education and Promoting Skill Development

Items	Range	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
6.Providing additional training and professional development for teachers would improve the quality of education in Alkharj.	1 to 5	17.62	19.79	1.23	1.90
Incorporating more technology in classrooms would enhance learning and better prepare students for the workforce.	1 to 5	18.98	19.73	1.35	1.87
Implementing vocational training programs would help align skills development with local employment opportunities.	1 to 5	17.96	16.75	1.08	1.44

Collabourating with local businesses and industries can provide students with valuable work experience and skills.	1 to 5	13.99	18.24	1.17	1.72
Establishing mentorship programs would offer guidance and support to students and young professionals entering the workforce.	1 to 5	14.99	11.69	0.95	1.21

Education strategies and skills development for employability are the main concerns of Table 4. The results demonstrate that item 7, which states that technology-based solutions should be implemented in classrooms, has the highest mean of 18.98 and a relatively high standard deviation of 19.73, suggesting strong support for technologically-based solutions. Items 6, 8, and 9 additionally have increased mean, implying that professional training, vocational programs, and industry collaborations are considered as working approaches. On the other hand, item 10, which covers mentorship programs, has a mean of 14.99 and a comparatively reduced standard deviation (11.69), skewness (0.95), and kurtosis (1.21), suggesting a more even distribution of the responses. Such results indicate that mentorship programs may be viewed differently or not as necessary as teachers’ training and technology.

Table 5: Assessing the Potential Impact of Improved Education and Employment Opportunities

Variable	Range	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
11.Improved education and employment opportunities would lead to greater socio-economic mobility for individuals in Alkharj.	1 to 5	15.02	3.62	0.21	-0.73
Better education and employment prospects would significantly reduce poverty levels in Alkharj Governorate.	1 to 5	14.93	3.71	0.29	-0.68
Increased access to education and employment would contribute to greater social cohesion and stability in the community.	1 to 5	14.82	3.82	0.33	-0.60
Enhanced education and skill development would lead to greater economic growth and diversification in Alkharj.	1 to 5	14.94	3.69	0.26	-0.64
Improved education and employment opportunities would enhance the overall quality of life for individuals and families in Alkharj.	1 to 5	19.59	0.88	1.12	0.72

Table 5 emphasizes the meaning of enhanced education and employment for people with low incomes. Item 11, where most respondents agree that the betterment of services would be boosted by economic growth, has a mean of 15.02 and a low standard deviation (3.62), indicating broad support among the respondents. The last three items, numbers 12 to 14, which underline poverty reduction, social

cohesion, and economic growth, have a similar tendency between 14.82 to 14.94 with variations in standard deviation between 3.69 to 3.82. Then, item 15 (which proposes that good education and employment will help to stimulate the overall quality of life) has a higher mean (19.59) and a lower standard deviation (0.88), demonstrating strong agreement and almost no difference among responses. The skewness (1.12) and kurtosis (0.72) for the item imply a solid consensus, showcasing the quality of life as an output due to better provisions of education and work.

4.1.2. Result of the Interview

The interview was also anchored on the three key objectives of the study. Through the objectives and in line with the recurring patterns in the interview transcript, various themes were identified. The themes are discussed below, with certain expressions from the interview transcript that anchor each theme.

a. The theme of Infrastructure and Resource Constraints

The participants underlined that Alkharj Governorate's limited infrastructure has a direct and detrimental effect on the quality of education. Some of the participants highlighted the negative impacts of poor educational infrastructure in the community, as seen below:

- i. *“Resource limitations, such as a lack of technology, hinder learning and reduce the quality of education in Alkharj,” said LOR-3. “Improving access to educational resources is key.”*

This idea includes problems like poor school infrastructure, as commented by LOR-1, the lack of educational materials and resources available for schooling, as commented by LOR-3, and no access to technology. Missing fundamental infrastructure makes it hard to provide a wholesome education atmosphere that meets modern educational needs.

b. The Theme of Lack of Qualified Teachers

One of the most common themes is the gap between institutional curricula and the skills needed in the market, as seen in the expression below:

- ii. *“Another significant barrier is the shortage of qualified teachers. We need more trained professionals to ensure students receive a high-quality education,” added LOR-2.*

One factor causing this mismatch is the presence of less-trained teachers, who fail to adequately prepare some students for jobs. With this theme highlighted, more education reforms ought to be carried out to match industries' needs and offer a solution to the scarcity of teachers.

c. The Theme of Socio-Cultural Barriers

Moreover, cultural values and societal stereotypes are significant barriers to quality education and job stability. Some of the participants identified various aspects of cultural factors that could form impediment to educational progress in the community, as seen below:

- iii. *“Cultural expectations can also play a role in limiting educational and employment opportunities,” commented SAD-1.*
- iv. *“For example, societal norms might influence which career paths are deemed acceptable, impacting access to certain fields” (WIL-1)*
- v. *SAD-2 echoed this sentiment, “Yes, socio-cultural factors can affect students' ability to pursue*

certain educational and employment opportunities. Addressing these cultural barriers is crucial to ensure equal opportunities for all.”

This topic features how social and cultural issues influence career options and similarly limit chances for individuals to advance through a particular educational and employment path. Societal norms and traditional obstacles can make building a platform fostering an inclusive and diverse educational environment hard.

d. The Theme of Strategic Partnerships and Mentorship as Solution

Participants recommended some techniques as means to upgrade education and stimulate expertise building, as seen in the comments below:

- vi. “Collaboration with local businesses and industries can offer students hands-on experience and help them develop relevant skills,” added POM-2. “This partnership approach creates a more direct path from education to employment.”*
- vii. POA-1 emphasized mentorship, “Establishing mentorship programs can support students as they transition into their careers. Having guidance from experienced professionals can make a significant difference in employability.”*
- viii. “We must foster industry partnerships to ensure that education is aligned with market demands,” concluded POA-2. “These collaborations can also provide students with job placement opportunities after graduation.”*

This theme focuses on partnerships between local businesses, industries, and educational institutions, mentorship programs, and vocational study. These strategies tend to function by equipping individuals with immediate skills and connections to industries, which makes it easier and seamless for them to join the job market.

e. The Theme of Teacher Training, Professional Development and Incorporation of Technology in the Education System

The last theme is the emphasis on the need to enhance teacher training through improved strategies and professional development practices, as seen in the comments below:

- ix. WIL-1 suggested, “One strategy to improve education is to offer more training and professional development for teachers. This can enhance the quality of instruction and ultimately benefit the students.”*
- x. POM-1 proposed, “Vocational training programs are crucial. They can bridge the gap between education and employment by providing students with the skills needed in the job market.”*

The participants also advocate for the inclusion of technological advancement in the education system, as seen below:

- xi. “Incorporating technology in classrooms can significantly improve learning outcomes,” commented SAD-2.*
- xii. “Providing students with modern tools and resources helps prepare them for the evolving demands of the workforce”, LEC-3 commented.*

Overall, the interview themes and transcripts directly focused on the challenges and also proffer practical solutions.

4.2. Discussions

The analytical part of this research covers the process of synthesis of the results of the survey and interview; it critically evaluates the key issues that hinder the provision of quality education and sustainable employment in Alkharj Governorate and comes up with pragmatic solutions for an effective education system and the socio-economic implications of improved education and employment. This triangulation system allows us to approach the research question from various angles.

The survey data displayed several problems with providing quality education in Alkharj. Likewise, the high average scores of the survey items “inadequate educational infrastructure (mean = 14.38) and “lack of qualified teachers (mean = 12.27) suggested that there are deep and persistent problems as far as educational resources are concerned. This corresponds to Al Qahtani et al. (2020), who have indicated similar challenges in other parts of Saudi Arabia. The interview results from residents and school administrators found a strong correlation between the inadequacy of infrastructure development and the insufficient number of teachers, which impacted schools in the area. LOR-1 identified the inadequacy of proper schools and the needed amenities like libraries and labs as the main obstacles (Al Mubarak, 2011). The survey also revealed a disparity between the skills taught in schools and the labour market needs in the local area (mean = 9.02), suggesting some inconsistency in education. This research is also supported by LEC-2, which claims that “we are training students to find jobs that do not exist in Alkharj.” Barry (2021), whose research was focused on the labour market skills gap, demonstrates how the skills gap due to educational reform is evident in the Saudi market.

The survey results indicated some strategies for upgrading education and skill development. For example, high mean scores for the items “supplying training and professional development for teachers” (mean = 17.62; Table 4) and “more technology in classrooms” (mean = 18.98) provide a platform for the modernization of the educational approach. This also aligned with the idea of Alfawaz et al. (2014) that modernizing education would improve employment outcomes. Furthermore, the data provided the case for “vocational training programs” (mean = 17.96) and “collaboration with local businesses” (mean = 13.99). The interviewees’ voices supported the strategies. SAD-2 claimed that the curricula should align with the job requirements, and the vocational programs help students use practical skills in the workforce. This agrees with Taweel (2018), who showed the benefit of technical and vocational education in solving Saudi skill mismatches. In the final part of the study, we evaluated the socio-economic outcomes of enhanced education and employment. The survey findings (Table 5) revealed high recognition of the positive impact of improvements in education and employment on socio-economic mobility (mean = 15.02) and poverty eradication (mean = 14.93). The excerpts from the participant interviews showed that this is the case, with LOR-3 saying, “Education provides opportunities for people to rise out of poverty.” Li et al. (2023) conclusion, which links education to poverty reduction and inclusive growth, aligns with this.

Moreover, the survey answers indicated that the higher the education level and employment rate, the higher the level of social inclusion (mean = 14.82) and economic growth (mean = 14.94). This was validated by covering a spectrum of interviewees, including policy analysts and school administrators. POA-1 asserted that education encourages individuals to participate in community activities and form social connections, while LEC-3 highlighted the importance of employment opportunities in bolstering the economy. This is in line with the findings of Sarangi (2015) concerning the broader socio-economic benefits of education. In the end, the mentioned information from this paper’s survey and interview data

describes one consistent story that indicates the main obstacles to education and employment, practical solutions for the mentioned issues, and the socio-economic benefits of better education and employment opportunities. This multiple-source analysis provides a triangulated model that is consonant with and extends the existing research, thus shedding light on possible solutions to the problem of the Alkharj Governorate area.

5. Conclusions

Education has been argued to be how communities build socio-economic progress and integrate social inclusion at all levels. This paper addresses the social challenges in the Alkharj governorate, which aim to improve education and employment opportunities in the community and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The results of this study, focusing on Alkharj Governorate, show that the community faces both negative and positive trends in education and employment. This data signifies significant problems in implementing quality education, such as a shortage of learning facilities, fewer qualified teachers, and a gap between educational content and job market demands. Additionally, stakeholder interviews with the natives, lecturers, school management, and policy analysts were performed to confirm this finding and the need for a practical approach to solving these problems. The research postulates that good education plays a significant role in actualizing positive socio-economic changes. The interviewees link it with increased social cohesion and the fight against poverty. According to the survey and the interviews, the paper understood that solving education problems in Alkharj needs a multifaceted approach. It will comprise programs to erect educational facilities, improve the teaching staff's proficiency, and utilize modern technology in the classroom. Vocational training, along with partnerships with surrounding businesses, would decrease the gap between training and employment in the future. These interviews take us to the same conclusions, with the respondents stressing the need for education to be in sync with the current market and other benefits from education and providing employment opportunities.

The study's implications are not confined to the local area. Modernizing Alkharj Governorate's education and employment can reduce poverty, lead to social cohesion, and improve economic development. Accordingly, these effects call for connecting education with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 objectives, geared towards economic diversification and sustainable development. which must be integrated into the Vision 2030 as supported by Alshraah et al. (2024) «the importance of ongoing investment in gender-sensitive technology innovations aimed at maintaining momentum toward Vision 2030's goals» (p.99).

The research results also indicate the need for a collaborative attitude involving local community and business engagement to provide long-term solutions. Given the study's findings, several recommendations follow. Firstly, it is critical to enhance the educational facilities and resources in Alkharj, including schools having enough resources. Secondly, in-depth teacher training should be developed in order to remedy this problem of a shortage of competent teachers. Finally, vocational training and local businesses should be partnered to develop a direct route from education to employment. However, the stakeholders should uphold the community-based practice, facilitating unity and peace through education and employment opportunities. These suggestions, if implemented, could increase the socio-economic prosperity of people and towns in Alkharj Governorate as stated by Chihaoui et al. (2023) «policy makers should prioritise investments in technology-intensive initiatives targeted at poverty reduction and promoting opportunities for decent work» (p.230).

Funding:

“The authors extend their appreciation to Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University for funding this research work through the project number (PSAU/2024/01/28498)”

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Disclaimer Statement:

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Authorship and Level of Contribution

Both authors have participated substantially in the manuscript’s conceptualization, drafting, revision, and final approval.

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