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Entitled

*BAHRAINISATION: FACTORS DISCOURAGING EMPLOYERS FROM RECRUITING NATIONALS IN  
THE PRIVATE SECTOR*

by

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Abstract

The growing level of unemployment among the nationals of the Arabian Gulf countries has become one of the chronic problems in the region. Like the rest of the GCC states, Bahrain has embraced nationalisation policy to solve this issue and provide citizens with productive employment in the private sector. However, it is generally understood that Bahrainis are not considered a favourable choice for employers in this sector (Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030). In addition, most of the private entities operating in Bahrain are not committed to Bahrainisation requirements. Therefore, this study aims at providing empirical evidence of the factors that discourage employers from recruiting Bahrainis in the private sector. It also aims at drawing policy recommendations to better inform policymakers of the factors that reduce Bahrainis' employability in this sector and hinder the Bahrainisation efforts. This study adopted the conceptual framework developed by Forstenlechner, Madi, Selim, and Rutledge (2012) to examine how socio-cultural, economic, regulatory, educational, motivational, and gender factors influence the perceptions of private-sector employers and affect their hiring decisions. Due to the paucity of relevant literature on Bahrainisation, the views of employers, executives and human resource managers working in the private sector were collated using a mixed-method approach. In particular, this research undertook both semi-structured interviews with employers and an employer survey using a pre-tested survey instrument. The findings of this study provided useful insights into the factors that deter employers from recruiting nationals in the private sector in Bahrain, thereby, adding to the growing body of knowledge on Bahrainisation and more generally to that on AME HR model (Afiouni, Karam, & El-Hajj, 2013). Findings of this research reveal that gender issues together with the socio-cultural, motivational and regulatory factors serve to reduce the willingness of employers to recruit Bahrainis in the private sector. Moreover, the socio-cultural factor and gender issues were found to have a greater impact on recruitment decisions than the motivational and regulatory factors. Findings also show that the educational attainment levels of Bahraini candidates are positively related to employers' willingness to hire from this cohort. All other things being equal, the average educational attainment levels of Bahrainis are likely to increase their employability vis-a-vis their expat counterparts. Finally, a significant relationship was not found between the economic factor and hiring decisions in the private sector in Bahrain.

**Keywords:** Bahrainisation, GCC labour market, Bahraini jobseekers, localization, recruitment decision, Gulf Cooperation Council, Bahrain.