



RESEARCH PAPERS IN GEOGRAPHY

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**MIGRATION INTENTION AND PLACE
PREFERENCE FOR SAUDI UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS**

Dr. Mohammad A. Al-Gabbani

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Migration Intentions and Place Preferences for Saudi University Students

Abstract: The subject of this research is migration intentions and place preferences for a sample of 227 King Saud University students. The study intends to look at factors responsible for the decision to migrate; examine the characteristics of students who intend to migrate compared to those who plan to stay, and what type of places would they prefer or intend to live in if their migration intentions were to materialize. Saudi Arabian population is distributed among more than 10,000 settlements ranging in size from a small village to a large city. Presently, the country faces the problem of assigning university graduates into places not considered to be their first choice, especially villages and small towns, even if they are natives of these places. The importance of this study lies in showing whether there have been changes in migration plans and place preferences after the general improvement in quality of life in these settlements.

Analysis of research data indicated, contrary to what was hypothesized, that there still exist a strong tendency for migration especially from those residing in rural areas as well as in small and medium towns, and there is a clear preference for urban living particularly in the largest urban centers. Thus, based on the study findings, it is expected that there will be a continuous drift from small places towards the big cities, a process that will, in the end, deplete rural areas and small towns in particular from their better educated and skilled youth.

By analysing some variables believed to influence migration intentions and place preferences it was found that satisfaction with community or place of residence, its size and location to the nearest large urban center, all have significant impact on migration intentions and also have an influence on the type of places preferred by the sampled students. This study calls for a development strategy that responds to the demand of rural areas and small towns which are in great need for the introduction of production and service facilities. Resources of each region or province must be utilized or developed to the benefits of its population and the country at large in order to reduce further migration from these areas. Creating job opportunities and improving quality of life through the provision of services and infrastructural facilities will lead to the spread of development benefits and enhance, in the end, a positive interaction between urban and rural settlements in Saudi Arabia.