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Socioeconomic determinants of housing demand in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

The rate of urbanization is growing at a geometric level in the emerging countries as a result of industrialization. This cannot be disconnected with the volume of infrastructure that are required to meet the needs of the growing population in these urban areas. Housing, industrial plants, offices and hospitals among other real estate properties become very pertinent to meet the basic and industrial needs of the populace. Moreso, the diversification of the economy from oil, the increase in tourism, and the recent opening of real estate ownership to foreigners have spurred the current growth of the real estate market in Saudi Arabia. The socioeconomic factors which influence housing demand is crucial for policy making and proper planning; however, it has attracted limited body of research in Saudi Arabia. Hence, this study examines the socioeconomic factors which influence the housing demand in Saudi Arabia. A survey was conducted on 706 members of the public in the eastern province of the country. The results from a logistic regression reveal that income, the location of the house, social class, a sustainable and social environment, household size, and academic qualification have a positive and significant influence on housing demand. However, both housing price and interest rate have a negative influence on the housing demand; albeit, the negative impact of the housing price is significant, while that of the interest rate is not significant at 5% level. The result also discloses that males have a greater likelihood of demanding for house than females. These results have important implications for policy makers and all other stakeholders in the Gulf region's real estate sector towards developing a robust real estate policy and urban planning.

Keywords: Housing demand, socioeconomic factors, logistic regression, Saudi Arabia.

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1. Introduction

The real estate sector is central to national economic growth and development (Gao et al., 2024). It provides offices for companies, hospitals and clinical facilities for health practitioners and shelters for everyone (Roy et al., 2023). Apart from the fundamental needs of housing by all and sundry, it also serves as a store of value and an investment pathway for households and firms. The sector also creates employment opportunities for many others. There are studies which have found strong connection between real estate, social stability and economic development (Apergis, 2021; Glaeser and Gyourko, 2018). Housing demand acts as a strong base for urban development and economic stability, making the residential sector the largest component of the global real estate market (Melecky and Paksi, 2024). This has significantly contributed to the increase in the price of residential

houses in the urban centres (Akinwale et al., 2026). The rise in housing demand and eventual house prices are the results of economic, social, political and environmental factors that accompany the urbanisation of a particular area. Though the forces of demand and supply are applicable to the real estate market like other industries, the sector differs because buying and selling of property typically requires a longer time, making it somewhat illiquid.

There have been studies that examined the macroeconomic factors that drive housing demand, such as interest rate, inflation rate, national income level and gross domestic product, among others (Melecky and Paksi, 2024; Akinwale et al., 2026; Khan et al., 2023). A few other studies have also assessed the demographic and social factors that affect the housing demand (Jin et al., 2024; Al-Betawi et al., 2022; Zavisca and Gerber, 2018). Some of these factors can influence the investment decisions of individuals planning to own a home or invest in the real estate sector. Most recently, social and demographic changes in Saudi Arabia have had a great effect on the country's housing subsector. The country is graduating many young professionals who are starting new careers and new families, and therefore tend to aspire towards owning their own homes (Akinwale et al., 2026). Moreso, Saudi Arabia is expanding towards economies of the future such as renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, robotics, pharmaceuticals and many others, so real estate should gain from the demand for specialized facilities (Hadchity, 2024). Furthermore, the great efforts towards actualizing Vision 2030 of the country have spurred sectors such as tourism, entertainment, banking and retail which increase the demand for hospitality and retail spaces within a short period of time (Oladapo et al., 2024; Obaid, 2020). In addition to this, the recent openings of the Saudi Arabian real estate sector to non-citizens, by giving foreigners access to buy and own property in the country, has also contributed to the ongoing transformation in the real estate market. Moreover, the upsurge in housing demand driven by a growing young population has presented a substantial opportunity for real estate investors. However, there are myriad challenges associated with the increase in urban housing demand, particularly those related to planning habitable, secure and comfortable residential homes and neighbourhoods.

In Saudi Arabia, housing demand has undergone a significant transformation, driven by rapid urbanization, the country's Vision 2030 economic reforms, tourism growth, and shifting demographic trends (Arab MLS report, 2024). Factors such as employment stability, income levels, and locational convenience now play pivotal roles in shaping individuals' housing choices (Ekta and Vardhan, 2025; Melecky and Paksi, 2024). These evolving trends in the housing sector require potential homeowners and investors to properly evaluate their choices and the factors influencing them towards making the right decisions. However, in Saudi Arabia, there is a dearth of study on the socioeconomic determinants of housing demand in the country. Hence, the main objective of this study is to examine the socioeconomic factors that influence housing demand in Saudi Arabia. While sections 2 and 3 present the empirical literature and methodology of the study, sections 4 and 5 present the result discussion and conclusion of the study.

2. Literature Review

This study is premised on the theory of demand, which describes the demand for a product (such as a house) as a function of price and other social and economic factors, such as income, population, age, price of other products, location, taste and preferences of the household and many other variables. For instance, demand for housing is expected to have a negative relation to price and a positive relation to income and population (Henderson and Ioannides, 1986). Some of the empirical studies of housing demand and the socioeconomic factors related to this particular study are presented in this section. Zhan et al. (2025) investigated the socioeconomic determinants and the spatiotemporal patterns of homeownership rates in various cities of China from 2000 to 2020. The results emanating from the economic modelling show that household size, housing area per capita, and educational level of the household have a significant positive influence on housing demand in China. However, the percentage of migrant populations, the price of residential commercial housing, and the percentage of ethnic minorities exhibit steady and significant negative effects on housing demand. Itima (2025) explored the socioeconomic factors influencing the future housing demand of the residents of Nablus City, and the results showed that living around social relations, modernity of the house, affordability of the house through their income and their prestige are important determinants of their housing demand. Furthermore, Iqbal et al. (2025) in their study conducted in USA found that family size, age, income, size of the properties, house prices and income are some the crucial factors influencing housing affordability. In the study of Jin et al. (2024) conducted in Los Angeles metropolitan area in United States using an artificial intelligence framework known as Hapley Additive exPlanations (SHAP) technique to predict the housing price emanating from housing demand, it was found that income, location, age of housing and ethnic background determined the housing demand which affect the housing price in this area.

The study of Ozabor et al. (2024) conducted in Asaba city of Nigeria found that the main determinants of housing demand in the area are proximity to public transportation, proximity to security formation and residential housing cost. Another study (Akinyode et al., 2015) on socioeconomic determinants of housing demand conducted in the city of Ibadan in Nigeria using both interview and survey of the individual households living in the city. The outcomes of the study showed that level of education, level of income and status of employment are the primary factors influencing housing demand in the city of Ibadan in Nigeria. The outcomes of different studies from different cities within the same country revealed that the peculiarities and characteristics of a particular location determine the factors that could affect housing demand in that area. In the study of Belete and Yilma (2020), it was found that the most significant factors affecting housing demand in Addis Ababa at Ethiopia, are population growth and rapid urbanization. Hassan (2024) conducted a study on the effect of socio-economic factors on the Chinese housing market using a time series data obtained between 2014 and 2023. The results of the structural VAR model and impulse response function showed that the resident's disposable income is the most significant factors affecting housing demand and real estate prices. Gomaa (2022) investigated the socioeconomic factors affecting households' housing location and demand among the residents of Florida, United States of America using state-wide data from the National Household Travel Survey. The outcomes of this study showed that household income, race, housing type, size and structures are critical to the housing demand in a particular location. Furthermore, closeness to school, work place, family and friends are also found to be significant among the high-income groups. In addition, cost of housing and the quality of the neighbourhood also play an important role in determining demand for housing among the apartment dwellers. These outcomes provide the policy makers in Florida with the information on the factors that influence the residents' behaviour, which are useful for planning and policy making. Kleshcheva (2021) investigated the factors affecting housing affordability in Tatarstan, and the outcomes revealed that the cost of housing, the population size, the income level of people, the rates of inflation and loan interest are the major important socioeconomic factors shaping the housing demand in that region. The study of Garcia and Figueira (2021) using a survey of 46,003 respondents across European countries investigated the factors impacting homeownership in Europe. The study found that household income, educational level attained, age, number of children, gender, marital status, life insurance, stock, bond holding and job situation are the foremost socioeconomic factors impacting home ownership across the European nations. Meanwhile, when the respondents were disaggregated into four subcategories (Western, Eastern, Northern and Southern Europe), the results varied as some factors are peculiar to some regions than others.

Ahmed et al. (2018) explored the determinants of housing demand in cities of Pakistan using the Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement survey between 2004 and 2011. The outcome revealed that house price has an inverse relationship with housing demand, and income has two effects. While permanent income has a positive relationship with housing demand, transitory income did not have any significant effect on housing demand, as many households did not seem to base their long-term decision on transitory income.

The study of Garabato and Ramada-Sarasola (2011) in Uruguay found that permanent income, age, education of head of household, and family living with spouse have a positive influence on residents' housing demand, while price has a negative influence. Meanwhile, when the housing market is divided into two, the formal housing market experienced a price and income-inelastic while the informal housing market witnessed price and income-elastic. This implies that the residents in the informal housing market react faster to changes in housing demand when the price of housing and their income change compared with those in the formal housing market who are relatively high-income earners.

The report of factors affecting housing demand in Australia was published by the Commonwealth of Australia (2008) after revealing some important socioeconomic factors among the residents in the country. The report showed that households with higher incomes tend to demand for high-quality and even second 'holiday' homes, especially in coastal regions. The higher income of some households was as a result of the decision of both partners to work instead of one of them. Moreso, while a decrease in household size due to separation/divorce, and late marriages has increased housing demand in some areas with lone-person households, population growth through immigration has significantly increased housing demand in many Australian cities. Furthermore, the cost of house rent has also increased the demand for houses as many residents started opting to buy their own personal house. In the study of Lindh and Malmberg (2008) regarding demographic factors and housing demand, it was revealed that age plays a significant role in housing demand among the Swedish. While the Swedish young adults have a greater likelihood of increasing rates of residential construction, there is a significant negative outcome for those who are aged 75 and beyond. This concludes that, as many developed countries are experiencing ageing populations, this makes the future outlook of the construction industry look bleak. A similar

study (Lin et al., 2025) was conducted in China among the urban households regarding their age and educational level in relation to housing demand. The results indicate that while population ageing negatively impacts on housing demand, education positively impacts it. The study concluded that China's population ageing is not likely to reduce housing demand as the current middle-aged generation is more educated and enlightened than the current old generation. The study of Thomas (2005) also found that population changes, migration and household formation are the main sociodemographic determinants of housing demand in Canada, and that the housing market will continue to grow with these factors even if interest rates increase. Clavijo et al. (2005) also examined the socioeconomic and financial factors influencing the housing market in Columbia housing market using the country's quarterly data between 1991 and 2004. The result indicates that households' disposable income, new housing prices and real interest rates on mortgage credit are the main determinants of housing demand in Columbia.

The evidence in the literature shows that the socioeconomic factors influencing housing demand vary, as some that are important in some localities are not important in other localities. The peculiarities of an area and the methods applied in analysis have made the discourse around this topic inconclusive. There seem to be more studies on macroeconomic determinants of housing demand and housing price than socioeconomic determinants in the Middle East and the Gulf region (Akinwale et al., 2026; Khan et al., 2023; Kabine, 2023; Obaid, 2020). Specifically, there are limited studies on the socioeconomic determinants of housing demand in Saudi Arabia despite the recent transformation in the housing market, such as allowing foreigners to own private real estate properties and opening the economy for great tourism in line with Vision 2030, among others. Hence, this study aims to investigate the socioeconomic factors influencing housing demand in Saudi Arabia.

3. Methodology

The primary data are collected from the members of the public in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. The province was selected because it has a diverse large number of people, both Saudi citizens and nationals from other countries who are expatriates in the country (Akinwale et al., 2022). It is a key industrial and energy hub of the country where the state-owned oil giant (Aramco) is situated (Alshraim et al., 2024). The cities include Dammam, Alkhobar, Dharan and Jubail have a huge number of businesses and international schools. The study adopts simple random sampling to obtain information from members of the public without excluding any individual, either by race, nationality or religion.

Considering various techniques used in previous studies (Israel, 2003; Greene, 1991) to determine the appropriate sample size for this research, a sample size of 385 was considered appropriate for this study. Meanwhile, a total of 732 responses were collected through the survey, and 706 were found useful for analysis after proper data cleaning. This sample size was considered suitable to accomplish a reliable and adequate statistical analysis.

The research instrument was designed based on information collected from past related empirical studies, as well as the feedback from 4 respondents during the initial questionnaire distribution. Their comments include rephrasing some questions in a simpler way that will make the respondents understand better, adding certain questions such as value of the land and social class which were previously not in the research instrument. Basic information about the respondents was asked in the first section of the questionnaire, which included *age, gender, household size, employment status, highest academic qualification and income of the residents*. Another section enquired about *their level of willingness and ability to own a house within the next three years*, measured on a 5-level scale ranging from 'very low level' to 'very high level'. This was used as a proxy for the dependent variable in the model. The last section sought information on the socioeconomic factors which could influence their housing demand. Respondents rated the level of importance of each factor in their decision to own a house using a 5-level scale from 'not important' to 'highly important'. The factors included the *price of the house, loan availability, location, real interest rate on mortgage, social and sustainable environment, proximity to the office, social class and land value*.

The logistic regression technique is adopted for analysing the model because the dependent variable is categorical and ordinal in nature. The categorical and ordinal characteristics of the dependent variable, ranging from 1 to 5, make ordered logistic regression an adequate technique to apply. The coefficient values of each factor represent their impact on housing demand, and are interpreted using odds ratios. Hence, positive impact depicts odd ratios above 1, while negative impact depicts odd ratios below 1.

4. Results Analysis and Discussion

The total number of responses that are found to be useful for proper analysis is 706. Table 1 shows that the majority (45%) of the respondents are between the ages of 25 and 34 years, and the least of the respondents (2.4%) are above 60 years and above. This corroborates the recently released report by the General Authority of Statistics in 2025 that 71% of the Saudi population is below 35 years of age, indicating a young population (AlAmir, 2025). There is almost an equivalent number of male and female respondents, with the percentage of males higher than females at just 7%. Also, Table 1 shows that majority (39%) of the respondents are 4-6 people in their households, and the least of the respondents (9.2%) are above 10 people in their households. The results show that 63% of the households are between 1 and 6 people, and 91% of the households have less than 10 people. The academic levels of the respondents are also revealed in Table 1, and the outcome shows that an overwhelming majority (80%) of the respondents have their highest academic qualification above a high school certificate. This means that a large number of the respondents are highly educated and are literate to make proper decisions or consultations regarding the housing market.

Table 1: Demographic data

Respondents' characteristics	Description	Frequency	%
Age (in years)	Less than 25 years	151	21.4
	25-34 years	316	44.8
	35-44 years	147	20.8
	45-60 years	75	10.6
	Above 60 years	17	2.4
	Total	706	100
Gender	Female	329	46.6
	Male	377	53.4
	Total	706	100
Household Size (Number of members of the family)	1-3 people	166	23.5
	4-6 people	275	39.0
	7-10 people	200	28.3
	Above 10 people	65	9.2
	Total	706	100
Highest Academic Qualification	Ph.D.	47	6.7
	Masters	116	16.4
	Bachelor degrees	328	46.5
	Diploma	50	7.1
	Technical colleges	22	3.1
	High school certificate	79	11.2
	Primary school certificate	27	3.8
	No formal education	37	5.2
	Total	706	100

The employment status of the respondents is also queried in Table 2, and the outcome shows that while 43% of them are working in a private establishment while 29% are working with government ministries and agencies. Meanwhile, the least of the respondents (9%) are running their own businesses while 19.4% are unemployed. Though the number of unemployed does not really connote those who are looking for jobs but cannot find, rather many of them are students in both undergraduate and postgraduate colleges that are not searching for jobs at the moment due to their academic pursuits. The result indicates that majority of the respondents possessed the

requirement of effective demand for a product/service. Also, a large number of respondents are earning between 10,000 and 20,000 riyals (equivalent of $2,600 and $5,300). Also, the least of the respondents (3.8%) are earning between 50,000 and 100,000 riyals (equivalent of $13,300 and $26,600). This indicates that majority of the respondents have income that will allow them to buy a house or apply for a mortgage. This is not unexpected as Saudi Arabia is classified as part of high-income countries. Table 2 also revealed the intention of the respondents to own a house, and 75% of them intend to occupy it for their personal residence while 25% of them intend to use it for rental income.

Table 2: Employment, income level and intention of owning a house

Respondents' characteristics	Description	Frequency	%
Employment	Private company	300	42.5
	Government Agency	204	28.9
	Self-employed	65	9.2
	Unemployed	137	19.4
	Total	706	100
Monthly income	Less than 10,000 riyals	224	31.7
	Between 10,000 and 20,000 riyals	271	38.4
	Between 20,000 and 50,000 riyals	184	26.1
	Between 50,000 and 100,000 riyals	27	3.8
	Total	706	100
Intention of owning a house	Occupy it personally	527	74.6
	For rental income	179	25.4
	Total	706	100

Table 3 displayed the results of the socioeconomic factors influencing housing demand in Saudi Arabia using a logistic regression model. The coefficients and odds ratios are displayed in parentheses beside each of the factors, respectively. The outcomes revealed that age [0.021; 1.02], proximity to the office [0.098; 1.10], income [0.379; 1.46], value of the land in the area [0.048; 1.04], social class [0.196; 1.22], social and sustainable environment [0.146; 1.16], house location [0.219; 1.24], household size [0.156; 1.169], academic qualification [0.143; 1.15] and loan availability [0.097; 1.09] have positive influence on housing demand. This means that with their coefficient values being positive and their odds ratios above 1, each of the aforementioned factors has a greater likelihood of increasing housing demand. However, interest rate [-0.002; 0.998], housing price [-0.076; 0.927], and gender [-0.151; 0.860] have a negative influence on housing demand. This indicates that these three factors will tend to reduce housing demand as their values increase. In terms of gender, the results indicate that female has a lower likelihood of demanding housing than males.

Table 3: Logistic regression results of the socioeconomic factors influencing housing demand

Factors	B Coefficient	Odds ratio	P-values
Value of the land	0.048041	1.0492	0.5237
Social class	0.195888***	1.2164	0.0086
Social and sustainable environment	0.146263**	1.1575	0.0442
Real interest rate	-0.00202	0.9980	0.9769
Price of house	-0.07616**	0.9267	0.0436
Monthly income	0.379128***	1.4610	0.0000
Location of the house	0.219000***	1.2448	0.0032
Household size	0.156255*	1.1691	0.0504
Highest academic qualification	0.142837***	1.1535	0.0008
Gender	-0.15074	0.8601	0.2925
Loan availability	0.092019	1.0964	0.1614
Proximity to the office	0.097690	1.1026	0.1841
Age	0.020903	1.0211	0.7883

*, **, *** indicates significant at 10% level, 5% level and 1% level respectively

Apart from the positive effect, the income of residents has the most significant impact on housing demand as it has the highest coefficient and odds ratio [0.379; 1.46] compared with other factors under study, and it is also significant at 5% level of significance. Next to income, location of the house and social class of people also has a crucial impact on housing demand, with odds ratio values of 1.24 and 1.22 respectively, and they both have a significant impact on housing demand at 5% level of significance. The social and sustainable environment in terms of a green and eco-friendly environment which provides fresh air and a pollution-free ambience also impacts housing demand at 5% level of significance. This implies that people tend to value a good, eco-friendly environment in their consideration for home purchase. The results of income, social class and sustainable environment are similar to the findings of related studies (Itima, 2025, Hassan, 2024, Dzramado et al., 2024). The household size in terms of the number of people living in a family has a significant impact on housing demand at a 10% level of significance. Furthermore, the academic qualification of the respondents has a significant impact on their housing demand at 5% level of significance. This implies that those who have high qualifications tend to demand housing more than those with low qualifications. This could be as a result of the fact that they are exposed to housing demand and understand how it works, and possibly because they seem to earn much more than those with a lower qualification. The outcome of the academic qualification and household size are in tandem with what Zhan et al. (2025) and Garabato and Ramada-Sarasola (2011) found in their studies. Although, value of the land, loan availability, proximity to office and age are positive but they are not statistically significant at either 5% or 10% level of significance. Few studies (Garcia and Figueira, 2021; Garabato and Ramada-Sarasola, 2011) also corroborate the positive influence of age on housing demand, but differ from Lindh and Malmberg (2008), who found age to have a significant impact. This indicates that the likelihood of demanding for house increases as one gets older, but this is not statistically significant which could be as a result of the Saudi culture that allows many young adults to live with their parents and bond with one another for a long time. Furthermore, while the result indicates that both interest rate and housing price have a negative impact on housing demand as expected, housing price has a significant impact on housing demand at a 10% level of significance, but interest rate is not statistically significant. The outcomes of the negative impact of housing price and interest rate are in line with other related studies (Zhan et al., 2025; Kleshcheva, 2021). This could be as a result of the fast response of housing demand to a change in the price of properties, whereas the interest rate has not exhibited high volatility in Saudi Arabia which does not warrant any panic on the part of the households. While the negative impact of interest rate on housing demand is expected, the insignificant impact could be as a result of the ethical and sociocultural ways of financing housing properties in Saudi Arabia which require very low and stable charges from the mortgage institutions. Also, the outcome of gender reflects that male seems to have a higher demand for housing than females, and this is actually expected as men are referred to as the main providers of means of sustenance in the Arab nations, although it is not statistically significant at

10%.

There is a need for the policy makers to plan strategically as the population, tourism and economic activities are growing at a faster pace in Saudi Arabia. One of the implications of this study is for the policy makers to encourage the banks and other real estate financial providers to make funds available at a much lower rate so as to build more houses in various locations. This will prevent a dense population in certain areas that could lead to high rents for the residents. Moreso, the property developers and real estate investors should also take into consideration an eco-friendly, green and sustainable environment as this seems to be a very important factor that determines housing demand. Therefore, the government should make a regulation that will ensure a green support mechanism and green finance investment for the stakeholders in the real estate sector.

5. Conclusion

The real estate market in Saudi Arabia has shown its investment opportunities and a strong market trend since the aftermath of COVID-19. The government has also come up with a new real estate law, which allows foreigners to own real estate property, and this marks a major shift in the real estate market of the country. This study investigates the socioeconomic factors affecting housing demand in Saudi Arabia using a logistic regression. The results reveal that age, proximity to the office, income, value of the land in the area, social class, social and sustainable environment, house location, household size, academic qualification and loan availability have a positive influence on housing demand. However, interest rates and housing prices have a negative influence on housing demand. Meanwhile, male tends to have a greater likelihood of housing demand than females, and this is expected as males are referred to as the main provider of the family in Arab countries. Furthermore, income and housing price have a significant impact on housing demand, whereas interest rate is not statistically significant in influencing housing demand in Saudi Arabia.

The future studies need to consider longitudinal data, which are collected over two to three years, instead of cross-sectional data collected at a point in time. This will provide the trend behaviour of the respondents over time. Moreso, the future studies could also consider comparing the other five gulf countries and/or other middle east and north African countries.

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