

Exploring the experiences of Saudi mothers in the United States regarding the use of social networking sites of their adolescents

by

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B.S., King Abdul-Aziz University, 2002

M.S., Kansas State University, 2010

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Family Studies and Human Services  
College of Human Ecology

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Manhattan, Kansas

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## **Abstract**

We live in an era of constant communication, where Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are part of the technology revolution that has significantly altered our lives and means of communication. Adolescents are quick adopters of these sites; they spend a lot of their daily time interacting via these sites. Most parents in the United States strive to understand the purpose and function behind their children's use of these technologies. This study was aimed to explore the Saudi mothers' experiences with their adolescents in a different culture and country. The study focused on exploring the experiences, concerns, social and technical challenges, and strategies of Saudi mothers in the United States using qualitative methodology. A snowball strategy was used with specific Saudi student groups and organizations in the United States. The participants were Saudi mothers (N=13) who had adolescents (their ages are between 10 and 17 years old). The interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded, and analyzed through the lens of symbolic interaction theory. The findings revealed some benefits of using SNSs among adolescents such as learning new languages and practicing the adolescent's native language. On the other hand, the findings also showed great concern among mothers and challenges about their adolescents' use of SNSs. Also, the findings showed the roles of these mothers to protect, advise, and support their children regarding the use of SNSs. Mothers confirmed that when their adolescents use SNSs without control or supervision, it can cause problems that affect the adolescents, parents, and the relationships between them.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicated this work to my father Abdul-Hameed (Mercy upon him), and my mother Fadiyah (May Allah protect her), for all their sacrifices to light my way. May Allah reward them the full credit of every good deed that I have ever done or will ever do. To my beloved husband Dr. Adnan, for all his support, and sacrifices. May Allah protect him. To the kindest, most generous, and unique sister that Allah blessed me with, Aala'a. To those who brighten my days, my children; Abdul-Rahman, Abdul-Raheem, Soundos, Abdul-Kareem, and Istabraq. It is my honor to dedicate this humble work with all of you.

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

*Allah (God) says:*

*"O, Believers save yourselves and your dependents from the fire whose fuel are humans and stones." (Qur'an, 66:6)*

In the Holy Quran, Allah (God) gives a lot of guidance to parents on how to raise children. For instance, in this verse of Quran, Allah All Mighty asks believers to protect themselves and their families from Hell Fire by doing good deeds and becoming a good role model for their children so they can walk the right path. Parenting is not a privilege, but it is a great responsibility. Parents have the responsibility of educating their children to have good manners and guide them toward the obedience of Allah (Amini, 2014).

*Narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Umar:*

*Allah's Apostle said, "Surely! Everyone of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges: The Imam (ruler) of the people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects; a man is the guardian of his family (household) and is responsible for his subjects; a woman is the guardian of her husband's home and of his children and is responsible for them; and the slave of a man is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for it. Surely, everyone of you is a guardian and responsible for his charges."*

Prophet Mohammed (Allah's messenger: Peace Be Upon Him) guided parents on their responsibilities as well: The quote above by Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) is based on the responsibility that they will be held accountable and will be asked about it on the Day of Resurrection. The question is answered regarding which is the most important responsibility of the parents. It is the religious education of their children, the development of their morals, their education, and their future (Altalib, AbuSulayman, & Altalib, 2013). From an Islamic religious perspective, parenting is a great responsibility. Good parenting requires couples to acquire knowledge by educating and training themselves about parenting because their child's future depends on the upbringing that he/she receives (Amini, 2014).

We live in the era of a communications revolution where digital communications directly affect our lives (Kaul, 2012). Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are part of the communication technology revolution that has greatly altered our lives and means of communication. SNSs expand the personal social communications of the past (Donath, 2007). In fact, there are thousands of accounts being created every day on SNSs (Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009). One of the most common group of SNS users is adolescents, who spend a great deal of their daily time interacting via these sites (Ahn, 2011). Indeed, adolescents have high enthusiasm in using SNSs (Pujazon-Zazik & Park, 2010). From their advent, adolescents have indicated that they use these sites to stay in touch with peers, present themselves to others, and communicate with people better known to them (Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). SNSs have gained high popularity among adolescents, and they access them often and from just about anywhere (Sampasa-Kanyinga & Hamilton, 2015). According to Yardi (2013), millions of adolescents use SNSs, such as Facebook, every day. As such, most parents of adolescents in the United States strive to understand the purpose and function behind their adolescent children's use of these technologies (Yardi, 2013).

### **Personal Rationale**

As a mother of adolescent children, I am experiencing first-hand this expanding social networking site phenomenon, and it has become a major factor in my daily life. My children are online everyday using SNSs: interacting, texting, gaming, and communicating via many programs such as YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and more. Therefore, in terms of the parental responsibility in general, and the mother's role in particular, I am extremely interested in exploring mothers' experiences and concerns about their adolescent children and their use of SNSs every day. Therefore, in this study, I explored the mothers' social and technical challenges

using SNSs for their own personal use and in monitoring and interacting with their adolescent children.

### **Why Mothers and Adolescents?**

Adolescence is the period of time when most of an individual's biological, cognitive, psychological, and social characteristics are changing from what is typically considered to be what a "child looks like" to what an "adult looks like" (Lerner & Spanier, 1980). Indeed, this period of time involves the individual adopting changes in the self, family, and friends. Thus, it is a confusing and challenging time for the adolescent as well as for his/her family. According to Steinberg and Silk (2002), one of these changes is an alteration in parent-child relationships. Researchers studying the relationship between parents and adolescents explain that there is a different relationship between adolescents with their fathers and adolescents with their mothers. Adolescents tend to spend more time with their mothers and they feel more comfortable discussing their problems with them than their fathers. In general, the relationships between the adolescents with their mothers become deeper and closer than their relationships with their fathers (Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

Furthermore, we live in an era of rapidly changing technology in which the world has become a much smaller place through globalization (Ractham & Firpo, 2011). Adolescents are quick to adopt modern technology and become heavy users (Yardi, & Bruckman, 2011). In fact, I believe that this topic is vital and important to address in different fields of science, especially in family studies by research scientists and scholars, because this topic touches our daily lives and affects the relationships with those closest to us. Thus, investigating this issue from a maternal perspective has the potential to enrich the current body of research. Exploring the extent to which mothers have worries and reactions, or whether they have varying concerns, as

well as the level of difficulty faced by mothers in the use of this technology, is a necessary endeavor in our understanding of the effect of technology on the human experience.

### **Saudi Arabians in the United States**

For most immigrant families, living and raising children in a different culture creates significant challenges, especially when the parents deal with adolescents in the new culture (Maiter & George, 2003). In addition to raising their children in a different culture and environment, knowing how to maintain the parents' culture while passing it on to their adolescents is an entirely difficult task in itself (Kwak, 2003). Muslims who live in non-Islamic countries are exposed to many challenges (Abu-Ali & Reisen, 1999). Islam is not just a religion, it is a total and comprehensive way of life that leads individuals and families to a balanced way of living ("Islam – A comprehensive way of life," 2016). In fact, Muslims in non-Islamic cultures are exposed to many contradictions in their cultures, values, and their faith, (Abu-Ali & Reisen, 1999). For example, the adolescence period for a Muslim is not just about transitioning into adulthood, it also is a time when the practice of the Islamic faith is required, which makes adolescence a critical period. Muslim adolescents and their parents struggle with practicing their religion when in a Westernized environment; such as, the challenges of having to check and reassure that any food or drink they buy or eat is pork free and non-alcoholic. In school, during a physical education class, a Muslim girl would need to dress differently than other females in this situation, in which she would need clothing that would cover her body more deliberately than the rest to adhere with the Islamic requirements. Also, Muslims should not shake hands nor touch someone from opposite gender, it is difficult to do so in a situation that requires physical contact with the opposite gender such as playing in a physical education class with a mixed-gender team. Another struggle for Muslim adolescents and their parents is finding the time and place during



school hours to conduct daily prayers, as well as being excused from the school days when there are Islamic holidays (Ahmad & Szpara, 2003; Dagkas & Benn, 2006; Williams & Vashi, 2007). Living in any new culture affects adolescents as well as the relationships they have with their parents (Gebrekidan, 2014), but there are specific challenges for Muslim children in non-Islamic cultures.

Saudi families in the United States represent a growing population of families who are exposed to the challenges and difficulties in raising children within another country and culture. In 2005, an educational agreement was signed between former U.S. President George Bush and Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. This agreement was aimed to promote Saudi students to continue their education in the United States. The Saudi government would pay all their educational expenses. As a result of this agreement, the number of Saudi Arabian students in the United States increased significantly, becoming over 100,000 Saudi students in colleges and universities across the U.S.A. at any one time between 2005 and 2014 (Taylor & Albasri, 2014). My husband and I are graduate students and part of the King Abdullah Scholarship program in the United States of America. We came to the U.S. with four children whom we have raised during their transition from childhood to adolescence in the U.S. since 2005.

### **Purpose of Study**

This study was designed to explore experiences of Saudi mothers' with adolescents who live in the United States about the use of SNSs by their adolescent children. I was interested in the mothers' concerns and the social and technical challenges that they faced regarding their use of SNSs. Moreover, I aimed to discover the strategies mothers used to parent their adolescents regarding their use of SNSs.

## **Research Questions**

The overarching research question for this study was: What are Saudi mothers' experiences, concerns, social and technical challenges, and strategies regarding the use of Social Networking Sites among their adolescent children? This was further broken down into the following three specific research questions:

- 1- What are the mothers' experiences with their adolescents who use Social Networking Sites?
- 2- What are the challenges and concerns that Saudi mothers have regarding to the use of SNSs among their adolescent children?
- 3- What are the strategies that the mothers use regarding their adolescents' use of Social Networking Sites, and what is their advice to other mothers?

## Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Social Networking Sites are virtual platforms that allow users to connect online with each other (Abed, 2016). Barnes (2006) defined Social Networking Sites as a group of social websites that allow users to establish an online personal profile and share it with others. These sites provide means for their users' communication and interaction. The first step in using Social Networking Sites requires users to sign up as a member. To do that, the person goes through steps of providing personal information, such as name, country, city, physical address, e-mail address, online user name, personal photo, phone number, schools' names, and/or more other information that could identify the user (Hodge, 2006).

Social Networking Sites have attracted millions of people who use them daily (Ellison, 2007). These sites attempt to “hook” the users further by providing them with new ways to interact and communicate. These sites study their users' needs in order to employ the best means to attract them to use SNSs even more. The use of these sites is predicted to continue expanding and proliferating (Kallas, 2017). Moreover, people are increasingly relying on these sites as part of their daily communication; for example, WhatsApp has reached 1.3 billion active users monthly (Kallas, 2017). Furthermore, Facebook's monthly active users jumped from 1.94 billion in March 2017 to 2.01 billion in June 30, 2017 (Kallas, 2017). Some researchers have focused on the use of SNSs across cultures (Stanger, Alnaghaimshi & Pearson, 2017). Saudi Arabia witnessed a significant increase in the usage of SNSs as well (Al-Senaigy, Ahmad & Shafi, 2012). Moreover, Saudi Arabia has experienced the largest spread of social media use in the Arab world (Abed, 2016). According to Dwivedi et al. (2016), Saudi Arabia is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> globally regarding the number of user accounts on social media, with each individual having an average total of seven accounts.

The use of Social Networking Sites as a modern way to communicate and share information with peers is a common phenomenon among younger generations (Singh & Gill, 2015). According to Jang and Dworkin (2014), the time that is spent using SNSs could be viewed as investing in social relationships. These days, adolescents are more likely to use SNSs than in the past because of the easier access the Internet through mobile devices than when desktop or laptop devices were required (Wu, Cheung, Ku, & Hung, 2013). In the past, and before mobile devices, it was easier for parents to monitor what their children were doing on the computer by placing it in a place where they could see them and control their Internet access (Haddon, 2015). The easier access to the Internet, through mobile devices such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones, makes monitoring the use of SNSs by adolescents very complicated for parents (Yardi & Bruckman, 2011).

## **Adolescence**

Adolescence is a transition time for a person from childhood to adulthood. Thus, during this transition, adolescents face significant biological, cognitive, psychological, and social changes as they become adults (Lerner & Spanier, 1980). The processes of adolescence and puberty take years to be completed; and adolescents can be very uneven in the ages of when puberty starts and the speed at which changes happen (Kipke, 1999).

According to Large (2005), because of these disparate changes, it is difficult to define the stage of adolescence and name it concretely (Large, 2005). Therefore, “developmental milestones” are usually approximate; thus, adolescence is parsed into three developmental stages by most of researchers: ages of 10-13 early adolescence, ages of 14–17 middle adolescence, and ages of 18 until the early twenties late adolescence (Collins & Steinberg, 2006, p. 6). According to Sanders (2013), the asynchronous changes in “physical, cognitive, and psychosocial

development” during adolescence could limit their abilities to perceive risk and assess it, which may lead to disagreements between adolescents' views with their parents (p.1). During adolescence the adolescent-parent relationship goes through considerable transformations (Collins & Steinberg, 2006).

## **Concerns**

Smartphones limit a parent's ability to monitor his or her adolescents' activities on SNSs (Mullen & Hamilton, 2016), which raises concerns and fears of parents (Yardi & Bruckman, 2011). According to Livingstone (2008), adolescence is a time that is characterized by taking risks and/or opportunities. SNSs provide opportunities for adolescents to express themselves and their identities. On the other hand, adolescents may take risks by revealing their personalities and identities to the world via SNSs, which may seem dangerous in the eyes of their parents. Because adolescents have the ability to adjust privacy features on their smartphones, as well as in their SNS accounts, SNSs provide the opportunity and features to enhance identity development of adolescents among their followers away from parents' authority and observations (Livingstone, 2008). Livingstone noted that SNSs are now the platforms adolescents use to manage their identities, social life, and daily lifestyles to express themselves to others (2008).

Madden et al. (2012) used a survey and interviews with teens and parents about privacy management while using social media. The researchers included 802 teens aged 12 to 17 years old and their parents in the United States. The results showed that 81% of parents were concerned about the kind of information that their adolescents share. Additionally, 72% of parents were concerned about their adolescents' interactions with people they do not know and 69% of parents were concerned about the academic future of their adolescents, and how that could be affected by their activity online. Finally, 69% of parents were concerned about how

their adolescents manage their reputation online, such as what they post and how they express themselves. Finally, American adolescents who are between 12 and 17 years old have over 400 friends on Facebook on average.

## **Experiences**

Parents have different experiences and reactions to their adolescents' use of SNSs. According to Mullen and Hamilton (2016), recent studies have shown that, with regard to adolescent children, parents primarily use SNSs as a means of monitoring their activities, whereas parents use SNSs a means of communication with their older children who do not live at home. Some parents who monitor their adolescents on SNSs have taken action by instituting rules to control adolescents' SNS use.

Madden and colleagues (2012) found that 75% of parents indicated their adolescents used a social networking site like Facebook or Twitter. They also found that 42% of parents have searched their adolescents' names online to see what information they have posted online about themselves, and 59% of parents had talked with their adolescents regarding their concerns about what their adolescents posted to their profile or account. Fifty percent of the parents utilized parental controls or other means of blocking, filtering, or monitoring their adolescents' accounts. Forty-four percent of parents reported having looked at the privacy policies of SNSs that their adolescents use, and 39% helped their adolescents set up privacy settings for a SNS (Madden et al., 2012). The study shows that there was a clear sign of concern that the parents had for their adolescent children using SNSs.

## Challenges

The use of SNSs by parents has become much more popular than before; it becomes a good opportunity to extend their own social networks through communicating and sharing information (Jang & Dworkin, 2014). A majority of parents of adolescents use SNSs to interact with their adolescents (Madden et al., 2012). The phenomenon of using SNSs was driven by adolescents, and often parents follow their adolescents into this phenomenon (Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). Madden and colleagues mentioned that parents often face some technical challenges with using SNSs. According to Shapiro and Margolin (2014), adolescents who have fully adopted SNSs, often become the experts for their parents regarding to the use of SNSs.

According to the 2015 Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) report, Internet use in Saudi Arabia increased from 13% to 64% through the years 2005-2014. This increased use resulted in increased use of SNSs. In addition, 42% of users reported that they are always online, connected to SNSs, and ready to respond when needed. Also, 43% of the users spent at least two hours daily using SNSs. On the other hand, there were users who had reported that they do not use SNSs. In fact, 13.7% of the Internet users said that they do not use SNSs because they required too much time to learn, and 9.5% of the users were concerned about their privacy (CITC).

In Saudi Arabia, as with all countries, culture has an impact on how people engage with SNSs. Thus, people's interactions on SNSs are highly associated with their cultural values and norms. For example, in Saudi Arabia, joining the family group or leaving it on a SNS would affect the face-to-face relationships among the family group members. Also, the online content a family or group member shares in posts or photos on a SNS should be accepted and not controversial among the group' members (Stanger et al., 2017). Therefore, adolescents'

interactions on SNSs likely affect parent-adolescent relationships regarding what they post or share on SNSs, and whether that respects or disregards their cultural values and rules, which adolescents are expected to follow.

Mullen and Hamilton (2016) mentioned that the relationships between parents and their adolescents could be affected by becoming social media friends with their adolescents on these sites; parents are trying to discover what their adolescents are posting online. On the other hand, adolescents are trying to be independent and having a degree of freedom by limiting parental capabilities for monitoring, and that is a part of the features of adolescence age identity development (Mullen & Hamilton, 2016). In general, SNS use increases the complexity of the parent-adolescent relationships during the adolescence period (Livingstone, 2002; Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). Shapiro and Margolin argued that adolescents are preoccupied with SNSs at all times. For example, they start their day by checking SNSs posts and messages. Parents see that SNSs are a priority for their adolescents, taking over the families' times, which could probably be linked with parent-adolescent conflicts (Shapiro & Margolin, 2014).

### **Gaps in the Literature**

Several studies have investigated the impact of cultures on the use of SNSs in the United States, Europe, and Asia. However, there is a shortage of studies investigating SNS usage in the Middle East (Stanger et al., & Pearson, 2017). According to Ong, Ang, Ho, Lim, Goh, Lee, and Chua (2011), despite the spread of popular SNSs among adolescents, there is a limited studies on this segment of global society. Therefore, the current study was focused on investigating Saudi Arabian families.

Mullen and Hamilton (2016) performed a quantitative study about adolescent-parent friendships on Facebook. They recommended performing qualitative studies for a deeper



understanding of these unique complex associations for researchers who are interested in adolescent-parent friendships on SNSs (Mullen & Hamilton 2016). Some recent qualitative studies have shown that using SNSs among adolescents have caused significant conflict between the parents and their adolescents regarding their adolescents' use of SNSs; moreover, the use of SNSs among adolescents has caused the loss of parental control over the adolescents' use of SNSs (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield 2008). Therefore, the current study focused on the experiences of mothers of adolescents.

I did not find any qualitative studies addressing Saudi mother-adolescent relationships regarding the use of SNSs. Specifically, no study has addressed mothers' concerns and experiences regarding their adolescents' using SNSs and whether there are any social or technical challenges facing mothers. This study was developed to address this gap in the literature, using Symbolic Interaction Theory as the theoretical framework (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993; Patton, 2015). This study's purpose was to explore the experiences, concerns, social and technical challenges of adolescents' mothers regarding the use of SNSs.

## **Chapter 3 - Methodology**

I conducted this study to explore Saudi mothers' experiences with their adolescent children's use of SNSs. The best path to achieve my goal was by using qualitative methodology in which I could listen to the mothers and learn from their experiences and stories with their adolescents to understand the challenges that mothers face, how they overcame the challenges, and the level of their concern. According to Patton (2015), personal narrative interviews allow us to understand things that we cannot directly observe as well as interpret things we do observe. Qualitative methodology enabled me to explore the expertise and experiences of Saudi mothers'. Through qualitative inquiry, I met with people, talked frankly about this phenomenon, and recorded the interviews as the best means of accomplishing the goals of my study.

### **Symbolic Interaction Theory**

Symbolic Interaction (SI) was founded by the social psychologist George Herbert Mead at the University of Chicago. Mead focused on the daily interactions among people and how they created meanings and interpretations (Aksan, Kısac, Aydın, & Demirbükten, 2009). Herbert Blumer continued Mead's work by applying it as a sociological theory and a research approach (Jeon, 2004).

Symbolic Interaction theory has been advanced by several other people such as Dewey (1930), Cooley (1902), Parks (1915), Mead (1934,1938), and others. Throughout the development of the theory, there is general agreement that SI is based on symbols and how we interact with these symbols to understand each other as we communicate. People give meanings to these symbols during their interactions. For example, when someone sends a text using a smiley face, the person who received it will understand that the sender is happy. The smiley face here is a symbol that shares the meaning of happy between people. As another example, if a

toddler consistently points to milk saying the word “momo” instead of "milk" or "I want milk," the parents will then understand what their baby wants milk and share the meaning with the child by using it as a reference to milk. SI is an interpretation to any action (Aksan et al. 2009), and meanings are the significant elements in SI (Jeon, 2004).

SI has become an important theory that is used in sociology, anthropology, education, and political science (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010). LaRossa and Reitzes (2009) have indicated that it also takes a special and significant place in Family Studies. They stated that SI has a more effective impact on Family Studies than any other theoretical perspective by aiding family specialists in understanding the roles of each family member and the social expectations for these members. Also, SI helps family specialists to recognize the meanings that the family creates and shares within its circle. Thus, through their social interactions, people improve their identities and self-concepts, which thereby allow them to estimate value to their family activities.

Symbolic Interaction theory is based on three assumptions First, the way people act towards an object or concept depends on the meaning the person gives to the object. Second, the meaning of this object or concept will socially emerge through the interaction of people with each other. Third, this meaning is further developed by the outcome of an interpretive process that people use to deal with the stimuli they face (Aksan et al., 2009; Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010). Therefore, the application of SI to the use of SNS communication would be, for example, when a mother responds to her son's funny text with a smiley face emoji. The meaning of this response reflects that the emoji communicates the idea of happiness for her. This smiley emoji will also be interpreted by the son and determine his response to his mother's text. This interpretive process of the back-and-forth communication between the mother and her son produces the meaning of their interactions via SNSs.

Symbolic interaction theory is a conceptual framework consisting of several important concepts and ideas: *Identity*, *Role*, *Interaction*, and *Context*. In fact, there are reciprocal interactionism relationships between the concepts of identity, role, interactions, and contexts, each one affecting the other (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). According to Gecas (1982), "Identity focuses on the meanings comprising the self as an object, gives structure and content to self-concept, and anchors the self to social systems" (p. 4). Thus, identity is one's self-view (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). According to Stryker (2008), "The concept of identity salience is a specification of self, elaborated from the multifaceted view of self; therefore, persons are seen as having multiple identities" (p. 7). Thus, the person's identity and concept of self is formed by society and has a direct link to his/her behavior (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). A mother may have multiple identities as a wife, sister, and a mother, and she sees and defines her identities according to her roles in each of these, usually focusing on the commitment and quality of her performances. The concept of self develops over time through the process of taking roles, and the reflected evaluation process as the basis of the symbolic interactionist perspective on formatting the self-concept among society (Gecas, 1982).

According to LaRossa and Reitzes (1993), the reciprocal relationships between identity and role are described as how identity reflects self-meaning in a specific role and role forms the self-concept about this role. Role can be understood as the part a person plays as an occupant of one or more social positions. It can also include the degree to which that person is able to put himself/herself in the place of another in order to understand the other's situation. Therefore, the roles of father, mother, sister, and friend vary from person to person based on how each defines the role. Also, the person's definition of his/her roles can change over time in reaction to his/her experiences (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). For example, my role as a mother has changed over time

in response to increased experiences and self-awareness as a mother; also, my self-concept regarding the role that I play changes from being a mother to being a wife.

The identity, role, and interaction concepts have reciprocal relationships. The self is developed by playing different roles through social interactions (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Therefore, the meanings are formed through our interactions with others (Aksan et al., 2009). As a result, we give meanings to ourselves, others, and situations (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Thus, the self develops through a process of social experiences (Lee, 1990). In fact, evaluating ourselves has significant influence on our behaviors; therefore, evaluating oneself will produce organized and consistent behaviors (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967). For example, the mother not only looks at her actions as a mother, but also looks at how society sees her actions as a mother and evaluates herself according to that, which has an influence on her behaviors as a mother.

Through the context of the connections between the individual and society, culture affects the individual's behavior and vice versa. Thus, the relationship between individual and culture is reciprocal (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Even though the meanings are formed through our interactions with others (Aksan et al., 2009), each situation may elicit different reactions from person to person or from time to time, according to their meanings of when the situation occurred (Johnson, 2008). Socialization is when we learn the symbols, attitudes, and beliefs of our culture. In fact, socialization processes are the results of the social influences on a person in a group or society (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). However, there could be conflict of understanding regarding the meanings between the person and the society, such as when the person's meanings reflects his needs at the moment, but the society's meanings are based on values. Therefore, moving into a new culture requires learning the meanings of this culture to be able to adjust (Johnson, 2008).

## **A Theoretical Perspective of Adolescent SNS Uses**

SI is an appropriate theory to understand how adolescents use SNSs in terms of who they communicate with, and the meanings of the communication symbols shared in SNSs (such as texting, emojis, images, videos about themselves, and profiles). It is important to explore these questions by directly listening to these mothers' experiences. Applying SI theory's assumptions to the current study helped to view Saudi mothers' roles with their adolescent children regarding adolescents' use of SNSs in a different culture. For example, it led me to ask: what is the impact of living in a new culture on the mothers and their adolescent children? SI helped me understand the meanings that the Saudi mothers share with their adolescents, and how that may change from when they were in Saudi Arabia. Indeed,

### **Research Questions**

What are Saudi mothers' experiences who live currently in the USA regarding their adolescent children's use of Social Networking Sites? This can be further broken down into the following three questions:

1. What are the mothers' experiences with their adolescents who use SNSs?
2. What are the challenges and concerns that Saudi mothers have regarding to the use of SNSs among their adolescent children?
3. What are the strategies that the mothers use regarding their adolescents' use of SNSs, and what is their advice to other mothers?

### **Participants**

Participants included 13 Saudi mothers who met the following criteria: 1) They must have one or more adolescent children between the ages of 10 and 17 years old; 2) The mothers and their adolescent children must use Social Networking Sites; 3) The participants must live in

the United States with their adolescent children for over a year; and 4) They must know English very well.

After receiving approval from the IRB at Kansas State University (see Appendix A), I recruited participants through specific Saudi students' groups and organizations in the United States. This includes: Saudis in the U.S., United States of America Scholarship recipients, members of Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission clubs in the United States, and the Association of Saudi Female Students via WhatsApp. In addition, participants who fit the criteria for this study were asked to nominate other candidates who they believe are a good fit for the study (snowball sampling). A total of 18 female graduate Saudi students in the United States indicated to me that they were interested in participating. However, a couple of the respondents did not return the pre-interview forms. Also, due to a technical problem, one of interview recordings was deleted directly after the interview was done. Another couple of the participants, after they returned the pre-interview forms, could not find a time that would work with both us, because they were too busy and we did not find the time to do the interview. This resulted in the 13 interviews that were included in the current study.

The participants were graduate students who were between 31- 42 years old. Twelve of them were doctoral students and two of them were master students. Most of them had more than two children and more than one adolescent child. All the mothers were married. Also, they were in the United States with their families for 2-10 years; three of them were mothers whose husbands were living away from them in Saudi Arabia. (See Table 1 for a summary of participant demographic data.)

## Procedure

I started to communicate with each one of the participants by sending them the pre-interview questions. The pre-interview questions saved interview time by answering some demographic questions before the interview. This helped me to study the case of the participant prior to the interview to make sure she fit the study criteria. Also, the pre-interview questions gave the participants an idea about the nature of the interview by answering some background questions about the topic.

After I received every one of the answers and reviewed it, we began to arrange a day and time that would work for both of us to do the interview. On the day of the interview, I made sure that my phone was fully charged, tested the recorder program and made sure it works, refreshed my mind by reviewing my questions and my notes. Subsequently, I started the interview by greeting the participant and we talked a little about her current life and what she was doing, such as her school or her children, to break the ice. Then, I read to her the consent letter and asked her if there are any questions that she felt uncomfortable to answer, or if she wanted to cancel the interview, she was free to do so; after that, I asked her if she is ready to start the interview, and I then started recording.

I conducted all the interviews in English to ensure accuracy and avoid translation issues. I utilized simple words in my questions that were appropriate for the pool of ESL speakers. The questions were open-ended, and the interviews were one-point-in-time collection of data that I audio recorded. I used conversational interview questions to explore the participants' experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge . (See Appendix B for the interview questions.) In addition to recording the interviews, I took real-time written notes.



The interviews lasted between 45 and 120 minutes. I used a voice recorder application in my smartphone to record all the interviews, then I saved copies of them in an online-storage. Before I ended each interview, I made sure that I have the contact information for the participant for any further question may I need later; however, I did not need to contact any of the mothers for follow-up interviews.

After each interview, I saved a copy of the record in my online-storage. Then, I started to transcribe the interview word by word. After that was completed, I reviewed the transcript while listening to the recording to be sure that there are no missing words. Finally, I saved a copy in my online storage and another copy on a hard drive.

## **Analyses**

The best way to analyze qualitative data is to repeatedly review the data until patterns and categories emerge. Thus, I coded my data by hand and analyzed it inductively, searching for patterns to discover common themes answering each research question throughout my data analysis. I read each interview many times searching for patterns and categories that answer my research questions. I also printed many copies of the data and cut them into parts, using colored and highlighted coding for each different idea, and then matching the pieces together that create themes according to the specific research questions. After that, I determined substantive significance based on what I found from the interviews and determined which feedback was most important, rearranging the data accordingly. To increase the quality of the analyses, I used co-analyst triangulation. A colleague trained in qualitative methods conducted separate analyses of the data. We then met to discuss findings, themes and categories until we came to agreement. In addition, an expert in qualitative methods, my major professor, verified the findings and coding schemes.

## **Credibility of Researcher**

From my perspective, we are in an era of fast-moving technology and social media, which are both rapidly evolving. My children are growing up in a time that is totally different from my childhood with regards to technology and the Internet. In fact, my children have at their disposal, tools, such as the Internet, that open the world up to them in a way that did not exist previously. Via the Internet we are able to listen, watch, contact, communicate, and buy/sell items from our computer as well as our smart phones. As a mother of four children between the ages of 16 and 25, I have witnessed firsthand the chronic use of SNSs by this younger generation. Moreover, our children are quick in learning how to deal with these new technologies and communicate with them. A part of my role and responsibility as a mother toward my children is to care for them, protect them, and have concern for what they are doing while using these new communication technologies.

As I have some experience using SNSs with my adolescent children, I chose to explore the effect of this behavior on the adolescents and listen to other Saudi mothers' experiences with their adolescents about the use of SNSs. I interviewed Saudi mothers who live with their adolescents in the United States for over a year and discovered their experiences. I have seen different levels of mothers' concerns, different experiences and stories, and different kinds and levels of challenges regarding the mothers' uses of SNSs. I had an impact on participants as I interviewed them about a vital topic that effects their everyday lives. I recorded my interviews and listened to them many times. Also, I asked some general questions and let each participant speak frankly, while guiding the discussion to stay on-topic.

During each interview, I maintained my role as an academic researcher, but I was also one of these mothers who live the same phenomena of having adolescents using SNSs. So, I was

able to understand their feelings, worries, concerns, cares, and challenges from an insider's perspective. This allowed me to show them my understanding and empathize with their feelings. At the same time, I tried to not be biased, judgmental, or critical while I was interviewing them, about what they were saying or feeling. On the other hand, to avoid bias during data analysis, I compared my findings with the existing literature, and I supported that with evidence and proofs from both sides that were documented by references. Moreover, I reviewed and discussed my work with two qualitative experts to avoid undue influence of my personal opinion or bias.

**Table 1 Participant demographic information**

Name	Ages	Child	Teens	Ages	Major	Education	State	Years in US
FA	42	3	2	16-17	Instructional technology	PhD	Ohio	6
KH	36	3	2	14-16	Nursing	PhD	Indiana	2
LI	38	3	2	13-17	Computer engineering	PhD	Alabama	10
SA	38	6	3	12-14-16	Curriculum & teaching	Master	Kansas	7
AY	32	3	1	13	Special education	PhD	Missouri	8
SM	33	3	2	14-15	Statistics	PhD	Kansas	4
HA	34	3	2	10-12	Curriculum & instructor	PhD	Texas	8
NL	34	3	2	13-14	Science of information & engineering management	Master	Texas	8
HL	35	2	2	12-14	Physics	PhD	Missouri	5
UM	40	6	3	13-14-17	Educational technology	PhD	Kansas	7
RM	31	2	1	11	Curriculum & teaching Education	PhD	Kansas	6
MV	38	3	2	10-15	Special Education	PhD	Michigan	10
MN	36	4	2	14-16	Instructional system technology	PhD	Indiana	6

## Chapter 4 - Results

### Introduction

In this chapter, I provide the findings of the research questions by presenting the themes, subthemes and textural descriptions of each research question in detail. The SNSs that mothers reported using included Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Instagram. For example, all of the participants said they use WhatsApp, Snapchat and Instagram. However, nine of the mothers responded that they share their accounts with their children in Snap Chat and eight on Instagram. In WhatsApp, five of the mothers' indicated that they share accounts with their adolescents. Four mothers mentioned that their adolescents use Facebook and share it with their parents. Moreover, there are other SNSs that were mentioned by some of these mothers like YouTube, Telegram, Line, and IMO. (See Table: 2)

**Table 2 The number of mothers and adolescents' users of SNSs**

SNS	Users of Mothers	Adolescents
WhatsApp	13	5
Snapchat	13	9
Instagram	8	8
Facebook	10	4

### **The First Research Question: What are the mothers' experiences with their adolescents who use Social Networking Sites?**

Mothers' stories and experiences were varied about the use of SNSs among their adolescent children. Some talked about how these sites were beneficial to their adolescent

children and others said that these programs are harmful. Also, mothers discussed their teens' identities and roles and how these had affected their children's actions, decisions, and advice.

**Perceptions.** Some of the mothers reported positive experiences of their adolescents' using SNSs, while other mothers had negative experiences and negative perceptions regarding their adolescents' use of SNSs.

**Positive perceptions.** Some of the mothers described the useful way that their adolescent children used SNSs. For example, KH's children used SNSs to learn languages. KH talked about this experience:

*The good thing is my daughter and my son learned new languages as well. My daughter is speaking Turkish. Yeah, she learned that from watching the church series following the Turkish actors [on] Instagram. My son learned Japanese. He's not fluent in that, but, yeah, this is the benefit. This is one of the benefits, I can say*

Another mother indicated that her son has communicated using SNSs with their family in Saudi Arabia in Arabic. About this experience, AY said, "*Some time he uses it for Arabic. Yeah use that, he can now write to my family in Arabic. So he has good things how to use Snapchat or something like that.*" LI's adolescents also communicate with their families in Saudi Arabia. She said, "*I like it because they have some good moment that they can share it with family members. They communicate with them. This is the only thing that make contact with them and share stuff with each other.*"

Some mothers perceived SNSs positively because their adolescents became more social and made new friends by using SNSs. AY said, "*It's a benefit to enhance to communication and to social connecting with other friend.*" HL, said:

*I like that they are open for different people. Like they have their old friends from Saudi Arabia. They have friend from here. When we travel in summer, they have friend from different countries. So, they can connect with all of these people. They can get many experiences.*

MN talked about her daughter learning new languages and making new friends via SNSs:

*I like the way that she's trying to learn different languages by using social media. So, she's really interested in Asian languages, so she learned Korean, Japanese. And to me it was really amazing to see how she how her languages in those difficult languages are improved because using social media. So, and this is really great. In the other hand, it can I can see that she makes many friends around the globe.*

Mothers also viewed it positively when their children spent time practicing their hobbies on SNSs, such as taking pictures, dancing, singing, or shopping. For example, SM said,

*I like that they are doing something they like. Like for my daughter that she's taking photos and she is sharing these photos with others and others they encourage her I like that she's happy with this she is doing something she likes. So, I like them to do what they like. To spend their free time in something they like. Without hurting themselves, you know what I mean? I want them to be happy, so I'm satisfied with that. I am fine.*

Another mother said:

*I like for especially for the musically, I like for my girl to use it because it shows, it shows her challenge when she, when she acts. She dances. She like try to sing. So, I like it, I like it because it's,, it can like encourage her to like move, dance, interact then chatting with her friends. I like it. I like it. And then I like how she, how she can order. So, last night she showed me how she collects some clothes in her iPhone, so she showed me the prices.*

**Negative Perceptions.** Some mothers had negative reactions regarding the way that their adolescents used SNSs. These mothers believed these programs are harmful in some way to their adolescent children. Most of the mothers spoke about how they do not like their adolescents spending so much time using these sites. For example, even though KH talked about how she likes her daughters using SNSs for something they like, she also talked about the negative experiences regarding their use as well. She said, “*I dislike [that they are] spending all their time on their phones.*” Moreover, SA told me that she prefers her adolescents to spend their time with

family, instead of using SNSs. *“I don’t like is the time they spend, a long time using the Internet, and this is the issue between me and them. I need them to communicate with their brothers.”*

Another negative perception that the mothers had regarding their adolescent children’s SNS use is that adolescents post personal pictures without their parents' permission. Parents see these pictures as something private their children should not show to the world. UM said, *“I don't like kids to use it. I don't like when they put the personal about their self on social network and I don't like when they waste a lot of time when using social network.”* AY said, *“I don't like something special from my house. He just takes a picture and send it. Yeah. Like for his brother or something and we don't like to share it for anyone and he send it direct.”*

**Identities.** The concept of identity refers to the outcomes received from the adolescents' perception of using SNSs. In this study, one of the mothers had a unique experience. MN has two adolescent daughters who use SNSs every day. In fact, MN had talked about how the identities of her adolescents had affected their use of SNSs. Some adolescents use SNSs to enhance their personality whether they are social or not. However, the outcome of using SNSs among adolescents' regarding their identity, affected their personality.

**Positive outcomes with identities and using SNSs.** MN's older daughter uses SNSs to enhance her self-affirmation. MN described her oldest daughter as a shy girl. She talked about how she used Facebook to communicate with others. MN said:

*I'm following her in the Facebook and I thought everyone likes her. Whenever she posts something everyone likes what she post. She trying to be active. Yes. And I thought that everyone knows her because she has more than 500 [Facebook friends] from her school. But surprisingly, when I go to her school. no one knows her. No one even say hi to her because she didn't put her picture on her Facebook account. Because she went to high school and in the first two years she doesn't know English very well so. So, social media helped her positively to feel to feel she has a position in this world. She has something to say to the world and the world has something to say to her. At least electronically. I know it's not something real, but it help her to be to adapt the new situation.*



According to MN, *“Having many friends in social media doesn't mean having many friends in your real life.”* However, for a Saudi shy girl who lives in U.S.A. and does not have the good accent to communicate face-to-face, Facebook was her way to express herself, identity, and self-affirmation.

*Negative outcomes with identities and using SNSs.* MN indicated that her youngest daughter was trying to adopt the American culture and be a Muslim girl wearing hijab (headscarf) as well; however, she got bullied. MN said, *“She's struggling with identity and other stuff and social media is part of that.”* For that reason, MN told her daughter she could take off her hijab. About that MN said, *“To me hijab is just a worship. But there's other things that's more important (in Islam) and identity and these kind of stuff, I think there are more important than the practice of some worships.”*

MN described the bullying. *“Some mean boys they were trying to make fun of her. I mean they were making fun and then together and she was with them and then they violate. Then one of them took her hijab.”* MN's daughter (LN) did not tell her mother anything about what happened to her. The problem did not stop here, MN continued:

*Immediately after the election, maybe the second week of the official election day, yeah, the same guy who took off her hijab who attack her at the first semester, so this guy was showing people a picture of a man, and the caption was “LN's dad.” And they just distributed this for the whole grade. I mean, and they keep capturing and sending to each other this and then she talked with me. But before that, she didn't talk with me. She just showed me the picture. And I was shocked. I was shocked. I said, “Who did that?” And the funny thing, she didn't know the person. She didn't know who's this person. I mean, she didn't know this is Osama Bin Ladin.*

MN talked how bullying is very painful: *“This bullying hurts so much. And even if she said she moved, she's not, I mean this you know this will be in her heart forever, even for her*

*future... What happened, and I think this this starts face to face, but social media play a role, an important role for this.”*

**Carelessness.** The "carelessness" concept refers to the way that adolescents use SNSs without regard to the consequences in how the mothers talked about their experiences with their adolescents using SNSs. Three themes are included in this concept: mother's role, friends' role, and the role of culture and religion.

***Mother's role.*** Being a mother in a foreign country requires a woman to play multiple roles as a mother, especially when the father is away for periods of time. For example, FA is a PhD student in instructional technology. She is living with three of her adolescent children in the United States, while her husband is working in Saudi Arabia. She said that her youngest son used SNSs on a daily basis when he was in high school. FA spoke about her experiences regarding her son's careless use of SNSs. For example, FA told me how her son allowed his friends to use his phone and social networking program. She said:

*He had kind of a bad experience with Snapchat with one of his friends. They were at our house and his friends took a picture of him in a very silly position while he was holding a nerf gun at posted in Snapchat and then they had a problem at school... It was a shock for me of course because it was kind of a serious thing. And the school called me they said that we don't blame him because it was kind of a serious thing. And the school called me they said that, "We don't blame him, because we know that it wasn't his account. It was the others boy. But he was part of it. I try to be cooperative with the school and to try to analyze the situation and to maybe to calm down them because I didn't want to be a problem at the end. We are foreigner here. So I decided just to solve the problem with the school. With him I punished him because I felt that he was a part of the problem. S,o I mean he was punished, grounded for a while. Not to use his phone.*

FA also told me that she took the role to solve this problem with the school and with her son. She said, *"Being here as a single mom with them it's not easy also. And you know, of course, I would be blamed by everyone including their father."*

**Friends' role.** Some adolescents enjoy showing off via SNSs, which could encourage their peers to do similar things whether that is good or bad. About that, HL said, "*We always hear many stories about people, about how kids following people on these apps and they may affect our kids thinking and many things.*"

HL's 14-year-old daughter has a friend who lives in Saudi Arabia. One day, her daughter's friend ran away from her parents. When she ran away she used Snapchat to post her movements moment by moment. About this experience, HL said,

*Two weeks ago her friend, she's in Saudi Arabia, but she's run away from her house and she starts posting every minute by minute in the Snapchat. Like, every 15 minutes she posts on snap, "I'm here, I'm in the car. I'm in the restaurant." And she run from Al Medina to Jeddah.*

**The Roles of Culture and Religion.** Sometimes adolescents do not pay attention to the rules of their culture and religion when they post and share something inappropriate on SNSs, which puts them in trouble. For example, UA's daughter took a picture with her friends at a party and posted it on Snapchat. About this experience, UA said,

*One time one of my cousins told me, "Your daughter wear something it isn't good and put it on Snapchat." Because she was with American and she wears some short and they take a picture and put it on Snapchat. So, I get so mad and talk to her and took her phone and she told me she will not do it again.*

Similarly, NL's daughter took a picture with a famous person.

*Once, she went to the place that she met a famous person and she take picture with him. But she doesn't know how to take picture with strangers yet. So, he was like kind of hugging her. Then she post, she posted the pictures in her Instagram. I didn't realize that, if I did I will ask her to remove it before the problem coming, but unfortunately someone saw the pictures and send it to her father and it was a big huge problem was that because of culture and Islamic issue. I told her it's OK to take a picture with someone that famous, but you have to know how to tell him how to take the picture with you.*

NL talked about her feelings at that time: “*Oh my gosh it was awful. I really got scared because my husband was very, very mad very mad like I don't know. I thought he's going to do something bad.*” Therefore, her daughter learned a lesson. “*She learned it with the hard way. So, from that day she always like when she wants to post something she usually come to me and ask if it's okay to post it or not.*”

### **The Second Research Question: What are the challenges and concerns that Saudi mothers face regarding to the use of SNSs among their adolescent children?**

The findings in this study showed that mothers face many social and technological challenges regarding the use of SNSs among their adolescent children. Challenges are described as various struggles that the mothers encountered as they decided how to take action regarding their children’s SNS use. Concerns are described as the mothers' emotions about the use of SNSs by their children. The extent of mothers' concerns regarding their adolescents’ use of Social Networking Sites varied between those who do not feel any anxiety at present and those who have great concerns and fears. Also, mothers revealed that they tried to control their adolescents’ use of SNSs, and mothers talked about their concerns regarding losing control of the use of SNSs among their adolescents.

**Social and technical challenges.** The social and technical challenges concept refers to the multiple challenges that mothers faced regarding their adolescents' use of SNSs while they live and raise their children in the United States. Themes that are included in this concept are: Parenting Adolescents, Cultural and Religious Differences, and Application Features.

**Parenting Adolescents.** During the adolescence transition time, the children face biological, cognitive, psychological, and social changes as they become adults (Lerner &

Spanier, 1980). These changes impact their relationships with people surrounding them including their parents, which affects the parenting function.

Some of the Saudi mothers in the U.S. talked about parenting challenges. MV said, *“There are a lot of challenges with my kids for using social media or just this technology programs. They be less social and interact with people. So, it's affecting their social interaction.”* Also, HL said: *“So it's a really big challenge to have a teenager on social media.”* Also, MN said: *“Social media is just a factor of making things more complicated.”*

Mothers in this study mentioned how their adolescents have quickly adapted and have become experts in the use of these sites. Therefore, some of these mothers had to ask their children about how to use some apps. For example, LI said, *“Of course like any app when you are new to use that app It's going to be hard to discover the stuff but when you get to use it turns to be easy.”* LI said, *“To be honest, asking my kids”* is how she learns to use SNSs. Likewise, KH said, *“Sometimes my son helps me because he's interested in applications computers programming.”*

***Cultural and Religious Differences.*** Mothers' challenges with their adolescents using SNSs were also impacted by living in a different culture. MV talked about her adolescents and how using SNSs is a challenge to control: *“I challenge this because you know that's kind of you open your door to everyone to see your life.”* MNs point view was that all mothers share the same concern about using SNSs among their adolescents. According to her, the challenge is *“because we are coming from a different culture and living in a different culture this kind of culture conflict sometimes make our case more complicated.”* She said that being in the United States makes the use of SNSs by adolescents more complicated.

Another mother, LI also said, *“The most challenge I know here, you know, people here are very open. Even the kids. So, I’m trying my best to try to explain to my kids like there is some stuff that we cannot do it right. We shouldn’t try to watch it right now.”* Likewise, FA said, *“So that’s what I try to do is just to remind them that we still even if we live here we are still kind of different.”* LI also mentioned her challenges with her daughter, who uses SNSs a lot. She is always trying to explain to her daughter the differences in cultures and what is okay to post and what is not regarding the mother's culture and religion. LI said, *“I always with her try to show it, this is not right this is not us. This is not our culture. We try to have some limits.”* LI’s challenge was with her daughter to not post or share in SNSs what may be inappropriate to the Islamic religion and Saudi culture.

***Application features.*** Some mothers experienced technological challenges related to the devices and application features. Hence, a few of these mothers mentioned that some of SNSs have features that they do not like, and mothers are challenged to use these features with their adolescents. Concerning that, RM spoke about the challenge she faces with her son using Snapchat. *“The content that he was being exposed to and I didn’t know whether I should just say no more Snapchat because Snapchat is doing weird things.”* Also, RM talked about searching in YouTube. *“Like if you’re searching for something you know a lot of other things you’re not searching for, also pop up.”*

Another challenge regarding the SNS features was about Snapchat. One of the mothers (MN) had talked about the effect of the Snapchat feature on her adolescents, this feature attracted users to stay on the application for a longer period of time, so her daughter is constantly using it every day. This feature is called “Streaks.” MN said:

*The Snapchat designers, they are so smart. Because if you miss collecting the streak for one day, you will miss all of the streaks that you have been collecting*

*for the whole of the history. So, that to keep you attached and attracted to using the app every day.*

However, MN continued, *"I feel more comfortable with [using some] apps more than [other] apps. So, as I told you for the Instagram until now I didn't feel comfortable to use it in my everyday life."*

**Concerns.** In this study, mothers disclosed feeling concern about their adolescent children's use of SNSs in general, and a bigger concern about their uses of SNSs due to living in the U.S. The concept of "concern" was explained through four themes: time concerns, family relations, adolescents' usage, and adolescents' communications.

**Time concerns.** Most of the mothers were concerned about the cumulative amount of time that their adolescents spent using SNSs. They were worried that the teens are addicted to these sites. LI, who has three adolescents, talked about her youngest daughter: *"The eleven-year-old, this is my concern. She is addicted to these kinds of net, social networking."* LI also described her feelings about how all her adolescents spend their time on their phones: *"Sometimes sad because they're spending a lot of time on the phone. I don't know how to describe this concern."*

Likewise, KH talked about her opinion toward her two teens who use their phones a lot: *"I dislike is spending all their time on their phones."* Also, SM commented about how her two adolescents use SNSs: *"They spend more time on their smart phones talking to friends than going outside."* UA has three adolescents. She expressed her feelings about her adolescents' use of SNSs by saying, *"I just feel sad because they use it all the time here."* On the other hand, FA tries with her teens to decrease their use. She said, *"With the time I always of course I always ask them to limit their using of technology."*

**Family Relations.** Several of these mothers were worried about the impact of the overuse of SNSs among their adolescents on their family relationships. These mothers prefer their teens to be with their families instead of spending most of their time using SNSs. SA has three adolescent boys who use SNSs often. She said, *“Spending time on their phones. I feel like, we have conversation, sit as a family talking, playing with each other, sometimes, as I said, I turn the net off.”* MV talked about her two adolescents' use of SNSs that she does not want them to *“lose their life in front of the screen.”* She continued, *“I want to spend their life with me and have memory moments with their family.”* LI also told me about her feelings regarding the time that both her adolescents spend on SNSs:

*So, I start feel that they spend a lot of time on the social networking, which makes me feel like bad, because I want them to stop spending a lot of time on the phone and start thinking of family time, family meeting...I feel bad about it, like when they start not to get together and everyone busy with her own phone and with her friends not thinking of the other, like they have a family and they need to spend times with the family.*

**Adolescents' Usage.** Some of the mothers disclosed their concerns about the way their adolescents use SNSs. For example, MV told me about her concern. She said, *“I'm worried that they don't use it in a good way.”* Moreover, HL was concerned about what her children hid from her. She said, *“So, that's the most thing I concerned about, it's what they're hiding from me.”* Likewise, FA had a similar worry: *“As a mother, I feel worried about what about if she posts things that maybe I don't like but she doesn't allow me to see them.”* However, RM was concerned about what her son sees while he uses SNSs. She said, *“I was concerned about the content that he was being you know exposed to.”*

**Communicating with strangers.** Several mothers in this study had talked about their feelings and concerns about their adolescents' communication via SNSs, such as those who communicate with their adolescents via SNSs, and with whom they chat. For example, MV told



me about her feelings if she found out that her adolescents were communicating with a stranger. She said, *“I will be so worried if they like contact with the stranger.”* Also, RM was concerned, and she said, *“I would be very scared if it being like you know a predator. You know someone who is trying to abuse my son. You know, that's the number one thing I would be afraid of.”*

On the other hand, SM has a different opinion. If she was to find out her adolescents were communicating with a stranger, she said, *“I will feel upset but, I wouldn't feel mad at her, I would feel mad at the situation itself. As I told you, they are kids, so we need to talk to them, remind them what they should do, and give them a chance to learn.”*

Other mothers were concerned that their children were not able to distinguish between the real friends that they see in person and the online people that they just knew via chatting in the virtual world. RM, for example, was shocked when she heard people were talking on her son's video game. RM asked her son what that voice was, he said, *“These are just my friends online.”* Likewise, MN talked about her daughter, *“She wasn't aware of the difference between the face-to-face relationship and the social media or online relationship.”*

**Control.** The concept of "control" refers to the ways that mothers try to influence the use of SNSs by their adolescents or feeling concerned that they are losing this control. Taking action and being concerned are the themes explained in the "control" concept.

**Taking action.** Some of these mothers tried to take action by controlling and monitoring their adolescents' use of SNSs. For example, HA's adolescents cannot buy or download any application without her or her husband's permission because they used their accounts in the app store on their adolescents' phones. HA said, *“We have the password for the app store and they are not allowed to download anything without our approval. And I'm going to keep it this way until more couple of years.”* In addition, NL has her adolescents' accounts for SNSs on her

phone, NL said: “*I actually have their account in my phone, so I can log in and see what's going on.*”

FA tried that for a while, but later she lost that control. She said,

*The boys, they didn't allow me. For the youngest one, I created the account for him, so I know everything. But then later when he became more advanced in using technology, he decided to change the password, so I didn't know that much.*

**Being Concerned.** Even though some of these mothers tried to control the use of SNSs among their adolescents, other mothers began to feel concerned about losing control. MN argued that adolescents should be qualified enough to use SNSs. “*Our kids are open now to this social media without any qualifications.*” Therefore, MN was worried about controlling the use of SNSs among her adolescents. She said, “*I observed that I am losing control.*” Likewise, UA had the same feelings and concerns. She said, “*We lose control.*” Furthermore, AY also stated that it is hard to control adolescents' uses, “*for the teenager. It's hard to control them.*”

On the other hand, RM has a 10-year-old son who uses SNSs every day. RM, like other mothers, has controlled the use of devices with her son. RM said, “*He's still young and it's easy for me to control this aspect.*” However, RM was more concerned about the future and how she may lose this control. She said, “*I think it will be harder for me to have him have more control about the time limit about like content and all that.*”

### **The Third Research Question: What are the strategies that the mothers use with their adolescents regarding their use of Social Networking Sites, and what is their advice to other mothers?**

Mothers described different strategies they use to deal with their adolescent children and technology as a method of prevention. In addition, mothers mentioned the penalties they used with their adolescent children about their use of SNSs when they break the rules or exceed the

limit with using technology in general and SNSs especially. According to these experiences, mothers gave other mothers some parental advice about the use of SNSs among adolescent children.

**Protecting.** Most of the mothers in this study talked about one or more strategies that they used to protect their adolescents from the misuse or any potential risks of SNSs. Therefore, the protecting concept refers to the techniques and strategies that mothers applied with their children regarding the use of SNSs. Using technical strategies, rules, advice, and parenting strategies are the themes that are explained in the concept of protecting.

*Using technical strategies.* Some of these mothers applied technological strategies to control, monitor, or limit their adolescents' use of SNSs as a prevention method to protect them. One of the participants (MN) talked about the strategy that she applied to limit her children's use of the Internet. *"I am using parenting control to minimize their access to the Internet."* She also added, *"We are controlling only one hour of the Internet and this regulation policy is active until now."* HA stated that she and her husband use a software program in their children's devices as a way of protecting them by controlling the time that they use their devices and to whom they communicate with. She said:

*We have a software that we installed on their devices. We have it on the smartphones and we have it in our desktop that they use that controls the time that they use, and that we can also check everything that goes on their devices.*

In another strategy, the mothers shared the program or/and device passwords with their adolescent children. For example, LI is a mother of three adolescents. She said, *"I set up the password for them so, and we all share the same password."* Moreover, AY had told me that she has her children's accounts on SNSs and their passwords. She said, *"He gave me his password and I can open any program if I like to open from his phone."* Similarly, NL told me that she has

her children's accounts of SNSs on her phone: *“I actually have their account in my phone, so I can log in and see what is going on.”* Another mother (HL) said that she is the owner of her children's Snapchat and Instagram accounts so they use their mother's accounts. Regarding that, she said, *“So I’m the real owner for the account, all the messages come to me, so I can control these account[s].”*

**Rules and advice.** As a strategy for protecting adolescents from any potential risks regarding their use of SNSs, some of the mothers in this study described rules and/or gave advice to their children about their uses of SNSs. For example, LI told her children, *“The phone is not everything, it is not your life.”* LI also advised her children about their privacy on SNSs: *“Ok, this is not for personal stuff like there is a privacy.”* Moreover, LI told her children what they cannot watch on SNSs: *“I always tell them if something is not appropriate you cannot watch it.”*

In this study, I asked my participants whether they talked to their adolescents about privacy issues on SNSs or not. FA answered, *“I talked with them about privacy, who can see their walls on Facebook.”* In addition, HL talked with her adolescents about who they can add on SNSs. She said, *“You cannot add anyone without asking me.”* Also, FA had talked regarding her daughter's privacy: *“Not to post her picture in Facebook, and do not trust anyone.”* Likewise, KH spoke about what she told her adolescent: *“I am always telling them not to trust any other person on this application and I tell them people might lie about their identity and they should not talk to anyone they do not know.”* Also, HA asked her son to make his SNS's account private: *“He has to make it a non-public account.”* She added: *“Never to accept any stranger or have conversation with them.”* Similarly, NL told her daughter that she has to make her account private, just accept people that she knows, and she cannot post any picture of her without her hijab (headscarf).

MV told her daughter when she can use her SNSs: “*We will make a deal, so you will just use it when have free time.*” However, when MN and her husband decided to give their daughter a phone for the first time, they asked her to write a regulation:

*We gave her a paper and we asked her to do, for her to write the regulations that she thinks that our family will be aligned with. So, not us writing the regulations. She's the one. And she's the one who do this. She's the one who write the behavior. And I told her, “Are you to follow these regulations that you are the one who write this?” And she said, “Yes, I will do this.”*

**Parenting strategies.** In this study, mothers talked about the effect of their roles on the strategies that they applied as parenting their adolescents regarding the use of SNSs among their adolescents as a prevention method. For example, MN said: “*As a mom I cannot prohibit this from them, I cannot ask them to not use social media because to me it's not realistic. Everyone now uses it.*” As a mother, MN took the initiative and asked for help and advice from an adolescence counselor. She said, “*As a mother I tried to have third parties to help me.*” She added:

*Sometimes, I feel I cannot do, I do not know what is right and what is wrong for me as a parent to do. Should I force them? Should I give them the right to do whatever and they learn by themselves? What should I do?*

HA's parenting strategy was to open a conversation with her adolescents about some issues related to the use of SNSs and discussed that with them. She said:

*We have conversation with them about Internet bullying and cyber bullying and things like that...I'm very open in my conversation with them. I tell them that there are people who would like to kidnap kids and do bad stuff for them. And that's why I'm protecting you...I always prove them that I know more than they do...I always tell them, “Don't ever say that I'm not smart enough to figure things out. I'm very smart.”*

MN indicated that her role as a mother with her adolescent children is to increase her children's self-monitoring as a prevention method of the risks of using SNSs among her adolescents. She said:

*What I try all the time with my kids, it's to increase their monitoring, their self-monitoring with Allah, because to me this is the most important, to feel that they are watched here by Allah not by ourselves not by me as a mother.*

One of the parenting strategies that FA shared with me as a prevention method to protect her adolescents from any potential risks regarding their use of SNSs, was to look at her children's friends accounts on SNSs. FA said, *"I don't know what I have to do, and whether it's what should I do, I try sometimes to look more sometimes, I spent time also looking at their friends' accounts."*

RM's strategy was to take her children's phone before they go to sleep. She explained, *"I do check his phone and kind of monitor when he gives it back to me."* FA mentioned that she also does that: *"So sometimes when he's asleep I go to check his phone to see if there's any new messages. So, I look at what you see from his friend on Snapchat or anything else."* Moreover, SA confirmed that her strategy that she used was to collect all her children's devices at eight o'clock, so they can have some more family time.

**Punishment.** Mothers indicated that they "punished" their adolescents when the teens break the mothers' rules or overuse SNSs. The concept of punishment refers to the way that mothers choose to discipline their child because he or she broke her rules of using SNSs. Taking the adolescents' devices, limiting Internet usage, and talking with adolescents, were the three themes included in the concept of punishment.

***Taking the adolescents' devices.*** Mothers described several penalties they applied with their children because of many reasons that were related to the use of SNSs among their adolescents. The majority of these mothers talked about taking devices as a way of punishment when they refused to follow the rules of using SNSs or pass the time limit of using SNSs. For example, LI said, *"If they start misusing that they're going to be punished by taking away the*

*phone from them.”* Likewise, HA indicated if she found out there is something wrong regarding her adolescents' usage of SNSs, she will take away their devices. She said:

*I don't mind taking away their devices for the rest of their lives. I don't mind. I don't see it important that they are that they use their devices at all so if they are not following our exact rules about it then they lose the privilege.*

**Limiting Internet usage.** One of the mothers in the study said she prefers to limit her adolescents' usage of the Internet. SA talked about turning off the Internet at home if her children broke the rules, as a way of punishment. SA said, *“Like no Internet at home, I did this actually 3 hours 4 hours at home no Internet. They usually follow the rules, they know we will not allow them to use the Internet.”*

**Talking with adolescents.** KH said she did not like to punish her adolescents for breaking the rules of using SNSs. Instead, she preferred to talk and explain to her children about the situation. When KH was asked what she might do if she found out that her adolescent daughter had some conversations with a stranger on SNS. She answered:

*I'll let her block that person and change her account maybe. And I will talk to her in a kind way. Yeah, I don't, I really believe in, I don't believe in punishment. Any kind of punishment. I don't punish my kids at all. Even though small one, I can't, my heart don't allow me to do that. I can't really. I will just talk to her, advise her. I will ask. Maybe some specialized people their advice and see what to do.*

KH told me that the father's reaction will be different. She said, *“He's very strict about these things, I think. I don't know, but he might take her phone. I don't know, but maybe, yeah.”*

**Advising other mothers.** In the findings of this study, the Saudi mothers in the U. S. provided some advice to other mothers; especially mothers who live and raise adolescents in different cultures regarding the use of SNSs among their adolescents. The concept of advising refers to the essence of experiences and experiences the expert mothers are giving to others. The

concept of advising included three themes: trust adolescents, parents-adolescents' relationships, using SNSs, and monitor adolescents.

***Trust adolescents.*** The common advice that most of the mothers in this study talked about was “trust.” Mothers constantly mentioned the importance of giving trust to adolescents.

For example, SM advised mothers by saying:

*We should watch them and in the same time give them some space to feel like we trust them, between these situations. And I feel the good way to do that is talk to them a lot and become close to them, so if they find something wrong they will let us know.*

According to HA's experiences, mothers should not give all the trust to their adolescents regarding their use of SNSs. She said:

*Talk all the time with your kids about what and why and how to use it and never trust them 100 percent, even if you think you're doing a good job. And, you know, they are mature enough or whatever because you never know what new friends they are making. Sometimes like they have new different influence that you didn't know about, things happen. I mean you never know so always be there for your kids and always monitor what they are doing and be careful and teach them how to be careful.*

***Foster positive parent-adolescent relationships.*** Some of the mothers advised other mothers to have strong relationships with their adolescents. MV asked mothers to strengthen their relationships with their adolescents. SM said, “*Just be close with them and be friends with them. And then also watch them and direct them in a good way.*” In addition, HA discussed the importance of talking with adolescents about rules regarding their use of SNSs. MV talked about how she spoke with her adolescents in a friendly manner:

*Having an open conversation with them, they'll trust so they know that I'm just saying no for no reason. They understand my concern and they understand that I'm trying to protect them. And so far, it's working with us.*

MN also mentioned how to talk with adolescents and be close to them. She said, “*If we are improving our kids' critical thinking. I think we can save a lot of risks that they might be*



*facing.” In addition, RM indicated how important it is to be close and open-minded, to listen to children and let them feel comfortable to talk their mother: “I think that's why it's very important to not scare him away from talking to me. I feel like if I scare him too much he'll never tell me about when these things happened.”*

**Educate teens about using SNSs.** Many mothers advised that parents should educate their children on how to use SNSs. AY asked adolescents’ mothers who live in the U.S.A. to be careful and educate their adolescent the use of SNSs regarding the cultural and religious differences. She said, *“It is important for any parent to teach their children how to use the social networks.”* She continued, *“The culture is different and the teenager here they are facing a lot of challenge about everything about the specially religion and when we talk about how to use the network.”*

MN also stated the importance of preparing children and teaching them about the use of SNSs before allowing them to use these sites. She said:

*If you decide to give them when they become 10 years old, to tell them how they can use it. Because they sometimes, they don't know how to use it. So, tell them how you can, they can use it. And how they can deal with some risks and problems later on when they become more independent. I mean they will not ask you, even if you want to be more involved. They will not, they want to be more independent. So, it's ok if I did what I have to do as a mother for all of their all their earlier age inshallah [God's Willing] will be fine.*

Also, HL advised mothers who have adolescents using SNSs, saying: *“Let them try but be close to them.”* Likewise, NL spoke: *“Don't ask them to not using them because they will use if they obey you, they will use it without know without letting you know, let them go just be with them.”*

**Monitor adolescents.** Several mothers advocated for the importance of monitoring children’s use of SNSs. SA mentioned that it is the parent’s responsibility to watch and monitor

their children. She said, *“I feel like it’s their responsibility to watch their children.”* Moreover, RM said that age matters when we talk about monitoring the children’s use of SNSs: *“Age is different. I feel like when your kids are younger you definitely should have more monitoring on their network. But I’m not sure about like if my child son was like 17 would I still want to check his phone. I don’t think so.”* However, MN advice was to educate adolescents about self-monitoring, MN confirmed that she hates the philosophy of monitoring. She added:

*I am not a person who likes to block and monitor 100 percent. I think they need to have their own privacy. They need to feel that they are trusted and that’s good for them. So, if we monitor them in our house they might do something out of the house. So, what I try all the time with my kids, it’s to increase their monitoring their self-monitoring with Allah [God] because to me this is the most important to feel that they are watched here by Allah not by ourselves not by me as a mother.*

## Chapter 5 - Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of Saudi mothers who live in the United States with their adolescents about the use of social networking sites by their children. I aimed to discover the concerns that mothers feel, the challenges that mothers face, and the strategies that mothers apply when parenting their adolescents.

### Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

#### What are the mothers' experiences regarding the use of SNSs among their adolescents?

**Perceptions.** In recent years, researchers have increasingly investigated the use of social networking sites by adolescents, with a few also examining parental use. Parents of adolescents primarily use SNSs as a way of communicating with their adolescents and monitoring their activities (Madden et al., 2012). In the current study, Saudi mothers found SNSs helpful to keep in touch and communicate with their families and friends in Saudi Arabia using SNSs. Therefore, several of these mothers who used them before coming to the U.S., become more active while studying abroad, and others who never used them before, found it necessary to start using them to communicate with their families and friends. Another motivation to use SNSs that mothers mentioned was to follow their children on these sites and communicate with them.

According to Tzavela and Mavromati (2013), SNSs provide a useful tool that serves the adolescents' developmental needs. They can practice their social skills, be independent, and express their identities on these sites. Similar to these findings, mothers in this study found adolescents' use of SNSs as a good way to increase their social life, bridge new relationships, and stay in touch with their extended families back home. My findings supported the previous literature about adolescents' use of SNSs to express themselves in the virtual world, practice

their hobbies, and to engage in things that interest them such as taking pictures or online shopping. However, my findings added the understanding that adolescents use social networks to enhance their social and academic life by learning new languages and to strengthen their native language by practicing online communications via SNSs with people in their home country.

**Identities.** Livingstone (2008) found that SNSs are the platforms that provide opportunities for adolescents to express themselves and their identities. Adolescents use SNSs to manage their identities, social life, and daily lifestyles to express themselves to others. Similarly, the mothers in the current study described that their adolescents employed SNSs to enhance their identities. For example, participants indicated that adolescents with some social and communication difficulties or low self-esteem employed SNSs platforms to express themselves in easier ways, to express their identity and personality. My findings confirmed the previous literature, that adolescents during the development period struggle between their perception of themselves and how others view them (Tzavela & Mavromati, 2013). The adolescents of the mothers in this study used SNSs to convey their persona though some received negative feedback on their personality and identity because they were struggling with culture shock. Therefore, my findings align with the previous research literature that using SNSs affects the adolescent's identity, which can lead to either positive or negative outcome, depending on the user's experiences and needs.

**Carelessness.** Adolescents' believe they are invulnerable, invincible and that they cannot get hurt. Having these values contributes to teenagers measuring risks differently than adults (Wickman, Anderson, & Greenberg, 2008). SNSs provide opportunities and features for adolescents to express themselves and their identities. These opportunities and features may motivate adolescents to take risks such as revealing their private information to the world via

SNSs that may seem risky to their parents (Livingstone, 2008). In my study, mothers of adolescents described several negative experiences. These negative experiences were caused due to the risks adolescents were taking and that they were being careless in the way that they used SNSs without considering the consequences of their actions. However, in this study, the mothers reported having close relationships with their adolescents, so they believed their teenagers were able to feel comfortable and to express troubles or emotions to their parents.

### **What are the challenges and concerns of Saudi mothers regarding to the use of SNSs among their adolescent children?**

**Social and Technical Challenges.** According to Gebrekidan (2014), moving to a new culture impacts both the adolescents and their relationships with their parents. Furthermore, if this new culture is a non-Islamic culture, Muslim parents and their children will face many challenges that collide with their culture, values, faith, and religion (Abu-Ali & Reisen, 1999). In the current study, mothers reported multiple challenges and concerns that they faced when raising their children in a different culture. However, this study uniquely contributes to the literature by demonstrating the effects of adolescents' use of SNSs on their relationships with their parents. Mothers indicated the challenge of their adolescents' use of SNSs became more complicated because of the effect of the existing culture as different from their home culture, such as being in the U.S., which made these mothers feel worried and concerned. According to the mothers in this study, life in a non-Islamic culture is a big challenge for parents. Islam is not just a religion, Islam is a way of life. It is challenging for Muslims, and especially young people, to practice the rites of Islam at home and outside of the home when there are alternatives available. The Internet also adds to that challenge as children are able to be exposed to lot of things the parents wish the teens did not see. These mothers found it important to monitor their

children, teach them to self-monitor and have self-control, and teach them that they are watched and cared for by Allah (God).

**Concerns.** According to Shapiro and Margolin (2014), adolescents are preoccupied with SNSs, and parents believe that SNSs are the adolescents' priority that takes over family time, which could lead to parent-adolescent conflicts. My findings confirmed that mothers were concerned about the time that their adolescents spent using SNSs. Most of the mothers in this study reported that their adolescent' children spent too much time on SNSs, which negatively affected their family relationships. Mothers were worried about their children's social lives being negatively affected, so they preferred for them to spend their time with their family or going outside with their friends instead of being on SNSs all the time. Mothers also expressed concern about what their children were doing online, to whom they communicate, and what they might hide from their mothers.

**Control.** Jang and Dworkin (2014) mentioned that mothers use SNSs to communicate or/and to monitor their adolescent children. However, parents started to lose control over their adolescents' use of SNSs (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Similar to Subrahmanyam and Greenfield's findings, mothers in this study confirmed that they feel concerned about losing control over their adolescents' use of SNSs. Mothers also said that it is very challenging to control the adolescents' use because the teens constantly have their devices in their hands. Saudi mothers may be particularly concerned about this because in the United States adolescents readily have access to the Internet for free; and the government does not block websites, like is practiced in Saudi Arabia.

## **What are the strategies that the mothers use regarding to their use of Social Networking Sites, and what is their advice to other mothers?**

**Protecting.** According to Doty and Dworkin (2014), parents feel it is their responsibility to monitor their adolescents' online activities, so parents become “friends” with their adolescents on SNSs. Mullen and Hamilton (2016), however, indicated that the relationships between parents and their adolescents could be negatively affected by becoming friends on a SNS because parents try to know what their adolescents do on the SNS and their adolescents try to be independent and have a degree of freedom away from parental monitoring. Similar to Mullen and Hamilton’s findings, mothers in this study indicated that some adolescents did not like that their mothers were watching their stories on Snapchat, so the teens blocked their mothers. The mothers in this study, however, felt it was their responsibility to use whatever means they could to protect their adolescents from the dangers of SNSs.

**Punishment.** In my study, the mothers revealed strategies they used as punishment when their adolescents misused SNSs. These findings have yet to be addressed in other research studies. The mothers in this study employed strategies like taking their children's device from them for a couple of days or limiting their access to the Internet. A few of the mothers avoided 'punishing' their children and favored advising them on how to use SNSs.

**Advising Other Mothers.** Doty and Dworkin (2014) mentioned the best way to protect adolescents online is to build a strong parent-adolescent relationship; this relationship makes adolescents feel comfortable to disclose any negative experience they may face. Likewise, in the current study, experienced mothers of adolescents provided some advice to other mothers to build a strong foundation and relationship between themselves and their children. This is through

being sure that their adolescent is 'qualified' to get involved with a massive online community, setting up their program, keeping a distance, and being aware of their children's actions.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

The findings of this study addressed some gaps in the literature regarding Saudi mothers' experiences, concerns, and challenges that they face regarding their adolescent children's use of SNSs while they live in the United States. Interviewing Saudi mothers who live in the United States enriched the understanding of the broader phenomenon by focusing on a particular subgroup of parents and teens who face specific challenges. These mothers talked frankly and described their experiences, feelings, concerns, challenges, and strategies with their children in depth by reflecting on their roles with their children. Therefore, these interviews helped us to understand this phenomenon by talking with mothers who are currently experiencing this phenomenon.

The interviews were conducted in English to avoid translation problems. However, even though the participants speak English, I believe if the interviews had been conducted in Arabic, the mothers may have expressed themselves in a more fluent matter. Also, all the participants were highly educated, two of them have master's degree and the rest either have their PhD degree or are doctoral students. Interviewing mothers with less education, would provide an even broader understanding of the phenomenon. I focused solely on Saudi mothers. In the future, I would recommend including Muslim mothers from other cultures to provide a better understanding regarding impact of the culture.

### **Implications for Research**

Future research should test the findings and conclusions of this study quantitatively. I also believe that additional research should focus on the effect of culture and how that influences



the way adolescents use SNSs. It would be helpful to gather that data directly from the teens. Researchers also need to investigate the influence of the fathers in addition to the mother in parenting their adolescents regarding to their children's use of SNSs. Another research question I am interested in examining include: What impacts does SNSs have on the relationship between parents and adolescents?

I also recommend future studies and research to find:

- The correlation between the mother's knowledge about SNSs, limiting of adolescents' use and monitoring her children.
- The relationship between mother's knowledge about SNSs, if she addicted or not, and how her use affects her children's use.
- To focus more on what it is called "streak" feature on Snapchat and what is similar to it in addicting algorithms that keep that person constantly attached to SNSs.

### **Implications for Practice**

Valkenburg, Peter, and Schouten (2006) said that researchers and educators should pay more attention to the phenomenon of social media and social networking sites that are strongly attracting adolescents worldwide. O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) suggested that it is important for adolescents' parents to be aware of the nature of social media sites and how they are not always good environments. The findings of this study are helpful for family life educators, family therapists, high school and middle school counselors in the education system. These professionals can assist families as they increase their knowledge of digital technologies.

Williams and Merten (2011) mentioned that family cohesion is an important element to distinguish risk from benefit regarding the uses of social media among adolescents, which is increasing day-by-day. SNS use has the potential of both benefits and risks (David-Ferdon &

Hertz, 2007), and this was substantiated in the current study. Information from this study helps to identify mothers' concerns and to highlight ways to educate mothers on how to treat their children, how to deal with their SNS misuse, and how to avoid conflicts resulting from social media use. My suggestion is that those who work with families should provide good resources of sites and information that would be appropriate for both parents and their children of all ages, which would help them regarding social media issues. Moreover, they can encourage parents to educate their adolescents about being responsible, sensible, and respectful in using these media. Before giving an adolescent any device, parents could sign a contract with their adolescents, as was described by a mother in the current study. Then adolescents will be asked to write a regulations rules of how they should use the device and consequences if they did not follow these rules. This helps them build a sense of self-control and self-efficacy, both important tasks during adolescence.

According to Valkenburg, Peter, and Schouten (2006), adolescents' self-esteem is affected by the feedback that they receive via social networking sites on their profiles. Also, the findings of the current study showed that adolescents can learn by using social media. Therefore, I suggest that family life educators should take advantage of these technical features to enhance teens' learning and hobbies in different fields. In addition, the family life educators' can help parents learn about how to set rules and about appropriate tools that they can use in ways consistent with their own family values regarding the use of social media among their family members (Yardi, & Bruckman, 2011).

Family Life educators can educate children to make them aware of ways to protect themselves from the negative impact of SNSs, similar to the ways that they educate them on the awareness of sexual abuse. Therefore, one of my suggestions is to educate adolescents about

media literacy so they will be able to critically analyze media and take the right action toward aggressions on social media, which could help protect adolescents from being victims of aggression perpetrated by peers with new technology.

Ahn (2011) mentioned that the technical features of the social networking community have some impacts on the users' behavior, especially when that interacts with some human factors. Therefore, the findings in this study are helpful for programmers and cyber security to understand the family's and mother's needs regarding protecting their children from cyberbullying and other misuse via these sites to make them a safer environment. Moreover, to encourage parents to monitor their adolescents and control their use by educating them and making new applications or systems that help them.

According to Williams and Merten (2011), the use of social media among adolescents and parents has mixed implications on family relationships. As highlighted by several participants in this study, social media technology has the potential to strengthen family bonds by facilitating communication. Thus, my suggestion is that "Families and Technology" should become a standard part of any curriculum in family life education to help parents and families, in general, to learn how to use these new technologies to enhance their relationships and strengthen their connections. Also, to maintain families' values and religion regarding the use of social media among their family members especially for the Muslim communities in the U.S.A.

Myers-Walls, Ballard, Darling, and Myers-Bowman (2011), created the Domains of Family Practice Model. In this model, Family Life Educator (FLEs), Family Therapist (FT), and Family Case Manager (FCM) roles are distinguished from each other. Each would approach the issue of the use of social networking sites among adolescents in some different ways; however, they would have some similarities as well. In general, FLEs help families take an education and

knowledge approach, FTs take an emotional and mental health approach, and FCMs assist families who are navigating the legal and social regulation systems. I will provide implications for each role according to “journalistic” questions applied in the DFP Model: why?, what?, when?, for whom?, and how?

**Why:** The FLE’s purposes for working with families are to increase their knowledge and develop their skills by educating families about the advantages and disadvantages of SNSs usage among adolescents, increase literacy of social media, learn how to co-use social media with their children, and how to educate their children on taking the right action toward social media. The FT purposes of working with families are to help parents build strong relationships with their children, help families learn how to deal with their children’s addiction to SNSs, and how to deal with mental or emotional disorders related to SNS use among adolescents. The FCM purposes of working with families are to provide help to families, such as building a control system for Internet use at home, protection services on mobile devices, or/and help with legal issues of cyberbullying.

**What:** FLE content would focus on families’ needs for knowledge and education that are appropriate for all ages based on life-span developmental theory. This content would be based on research in the 10 FLE content areas, which include (a) families and individuals in societal contexts, (b) internal dynamics of families, (c) human growth and development across the life span, (d) human sexuality, (e) interpersonal relationships, (f) parenting education and guidance, (g) family resource management, (h) family law and public policy, (i) professional ethics and practice, and (j) family life education methodology (Myers-Walls et al., 2011). For example, FLE could provide a class to educate parents about how to use SNSs while keeping in mind the diversity of parents' ages, cultures, and background knowledge.

**When:** FLEs deal with families' current needs, challenges, and problems. In fact, they educate families to cope with the current difficulties in context of their culture, values, and beliefs and help prepare them for future challenges in order to improve the current and future functionalism of the family. For example, a FLE could educate families about how to avoid cyberbullying getting addicted to social media. On the other hand, FT people cope with the past and current issues of the family. In fact, they would focus on something that has happened and, on its causes, and patterns in order to improve the current and future functionalism of the family. For example, FT people would work with adolescents addicted social media, so they study the elements that cause and improve their use of social sites. However, FCM people usually work with the current and immediate crises of family problems and try to solve them and improve the current functionalism of the family, which could affect the current and future functionalism of the family. For example, parents would go to FCM to help them in solving legal issues regarding a sexual harassment through SNSs to which their child is exposed. Regarding the time of work with families, FLE, FT, and FCM share the current time and their goal is to improve the current functionalism and wellbeing of the family.

**For whom:** FLEs provide services for all individuals and families who are willing to attend and commit to learning in an educational environment. In fact, each program also has its own potential participants. For example, some programs are designed to be for the parent and others are for children. In the area of SNSs, there could be a workshop session for parents about how to educate their children on the use of social media. However, there could be a program for adolescents about how to protect themselves from bullying via social media. On the other hand, FTs are targeting all individuals, couples, and families who are experiencing specific types of problems. In specific, it is for those who have been identified and diagnosed with functional

difficulties, crisis, or trauma and would be willing to participate in a therapeutic environment. For example, FT would provide a therapeutic treatment program for a family that has a child who is exposed to some aggression via SNSs by peers. Regarding FCMs, they would be targeting the eligible families who are at risk or demonstrate a need for assistance in legal and societal regulations. For example, FCMs would provide services to any families that have adolescents who are exposed to cyberbullying and being attacked by their peers. In fact, the target population for services that are provided by FLE, FT, and FCM as we see are different; however, they are all similar in that the main target is the family that is in need of help.

**How:** The techniques and methods that FLEs use should be based on a clear vision about their target population and their needs. The community needs would be assessed by surveys or recommendations from representatives of the target population. It is important to keep in mind that FLE programs will reach multiple families who may contain multiple cultures as well. Regarding adolescents' uses social media, FLEs could make a parents' discussion meeting where families can meet and share their experiences with their children that would be facilitated by an educator in FLE. However, techniques and methods that are used by FT will be; first, by diagnosing the family problems; then, making a treatment plan that is based on particular theories or philosophies; third, establishing a therapeutic alliance with the family; and, being sure that will occur in private setting. Accordingly, a family of a child that is experiencing depression due to an addiction to using social media and gaming would first diagnose the problem with the FT specialist. Then the specialist would make a treatment plan that is based on the theories and research, and then they would establish a therapeutic alliance with the family. The techniques and methods that are used in FCM will include an assessment of the problem and case planning. Thus, they work with individual families and assess their needs. In fact, the work with families to

build well-being and security. For example, FCM would help families of adolescents who are exposed to harassment via using SNSs by sitting with the family, assessing the problem, setting a plan, coordinating community services to stop the perpetrator, and help the family by planning for a more secure future. Indeed, all these programs are aimed to provide help and support families either by working individually or as the group.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, social networking sites make our lives easier when communicating with others. However, the side effects of using them without control or supervision for our adolescent children may cause a lot of problems that affect the children, parents, and the relationships between them. Yardi (2013) argued that there are millions of parents trying to understand what their adolescents do on social media and why. In fact, she recommended that it is important to educate parents on how to set boundaries regarding the use of technology to help teach their children how to have self-control. Moreover, parents should understand the impact of the overuse of social media and be able to control the technology instead of technology controlling them. From this study, most of these mothers try their best to protect their adolescents from the misuse of SNSs and to strengthen the bonds between them and their children. Saudi mothers try to update their knowledge about new technology and SNSs, so they could be closer to their children, understand what they are doing, and know how to protect them. Yardi and Bruckman (2011) said that parents need to keep a balance between the parents' authority with the adolescents' autonomy and privacy. In their results, they suggested the need for helping parents to develop technical competency by designing systems that support authoritative parenting practice. In my opinion, life in a non-Islamic culture is a big challenge for us, as Saudi mothers in the United States. Islam is not just a religion, Islam is a way of life. It is challenging for

Muslims, and especially young Muslims to practice the rights of Islam at home and outside. Adding to that challenge, would be the Internet and new technology that exposes our children to a world without boundaries. Therefore, for specialists and family educators it is important to build specific programs that find solutions and give support to Muslim families and communities in the United States. On the other hand, it is very important for parents to increase and educate them on self-monitoring, self-control, and teach them that they are constantly being watched and cared by Allah (God). This study helped to understand and sympathize with other mothers' concerns, challenges, and experiences and to learn from their strategies that they used to protect or punish their adolescents regarding their use of SNSs.



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## Appendix A - IRB Approval



University Research Compliance Office

TO: Dr. Walter Schumm  
Family Studies and Human Services  
311 Justin Hall

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair   
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 03/20/2018

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Experiences and Concerns of Saudi Mothers About Their Adolescents Children's Use of Social Networking Sites."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is approved for one year from the date of this correspondence, pending "continuing review."

APPROVAL DATE: 03/20/2018

EXPIRATION DATE: 03/20/2019

Several months prior to the expiration date listed, the IRB will solicit information from you for federally mandated "continuing review" of the research. Based on the review, the IRB may approve the activity for another year. If continuing IRB approval is not granted, or the IRB fails to perform the continuing review before the expiration date noted above, the project will expire and the activity involving human subjects must be terminated on that date. Consequently, it is critical that you are responsive to the IRB request for information for continuing review if you want your project to continue.

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

- There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.  
 There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

## Appendix B - Pre-Interview and Interview Questions

Thank you for your interest and willingness to participate in my research study about the use of social networking sites by mothers and their teens. Please complete the following questions and return them to me before the interview. This information will help us make the best use of our time during the interview.

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Please circle your marital status.
  - Never Married
  - Married
  - Widowed
  - Other: (\_\_\_\_\_)
3. Are you currently a student? Yes    No
4. Please circle the highest level of education you have completed.
  - High School
  - Some college
  - Completed college degree
  - Some graduate study
  - Completed a graduate degree
  - Other:(\_\_\_\_\_)
5. What is/was your area of study or degree? \_\_\_\_\_
6. If you are married, what is the highest level of education your husband has completed?
  - High School
  - Some college
  - Completed college degree
  - Some graduate study
  - Completed a graduate degree
  - Other:(\_\_\_\_\_)

7. Do you work?            Yes    No
- If yes, what is your job? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Which of these describes your monthly income?
- \$0 to \$1999
- \$2000 to \$3999
- \$4000 to \$5999
- \$6000 to \$7999
- \$8000 to \$9999
- \$10,000 to \$11,999
- \$12,000 to \$13,999
- \$14,000 and greater
- Prefer not to answer
9. Do you have a government scholarship?    Yes    No
10. Do you receive financial support from others in SA?            Yes    No
11. Do you get any other financial aid?    Yes    No
12. How long have you been in the United States? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months
13. Please list each computer / smartphone / tablet technology you have and use.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
14. Do you use Social Networking Sites (SNSs) such as; Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Instagram, Line, etc.? Yes    No
15. If yes, please list which SNSs you use. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
16. Please list your children's ages and whether they use social networking sites.

Child's Age	Does s/he use SNSs?	
_____	Yes	No
_____	Yes	No
_____	Yes	No
_____	Yes	No
_____	Yes	No
_____	Yes	No
_____	Yes	No

17. Please list each computer / smartphone / tablet technology your adolescents' children have and use: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Interview Questions**

Time of Interview:

Beginning time:

Ending time:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee Pseudonym:

## **Research Questions**

- 1- What are the mothers' experiences with their adolescents who use Social Networking Sites?
- 2- What are the challenges and concerns that Saudi mothers have regarding to the use of SNSs among their adolescent children?
- 3- What are the strategies that the mothers use regarding to their adolescents' use of Social Networking Sites, and what is their advice to other mothers?

## **Background Questions**

- 1- Please tell me about your experience of coming to the U.S.A.
- 2- Describe to me please your life here (how long you've been here, do like the life here, who is/are here with you, when was the last time did you visit KSA)?
- 3- Could you please talk to me more about your family? Your children?
  - a. What are their educational levels/areas?
  - b. How do you describe your adolescents' personalities?
- 4- Tell me about when you started using SNSs:
  - a. When you started, why, and what kind of SNSs you began with?
  - b. How do you describe your knowledge and how easy it is for you to use technology?
  - c. How do you learn how to use a new phone, tablet, or laptop?
  - d. Is there any SNS that you chose not to use? Like what?
- 5- Describe your use of SNSs.

## **Experience Questions**

- 1- Tell me your adolescents' stories when they started using SNSs?
- 2- Tell me a time when you talked with your adolescents about using the SNSs?
  - a. Set the rules of using
    - i. Time of using SNSs
    - ii. Privacy of using SNSs

- 3- How would you describe what you know about your adolescents' SNSs uses?
  - a. Tell me what do you like about the use of SNSs among your adolescents? Why?
  - b. Tell me what do you dislike about the use of SNSs among your adolescents?  
Why?
- 4- Tell me a time when you were concerned about your adolescents using SNSs? What caused the concern? How did you feel? What did you do?
- 5- How would you describe the way(s) you and each one of your adolescents communicates via SNSs?
  - a. What kind of posts or comments do you share with each other?
  - b. When do you use SNSs to communicate?
  - c. How do you feel about using SNSs with your teenaged children?
- 6- If I would follow your adolescents' social networking accounts, what might I find?
  - a. In what language/s do they communicate?
  - b. What kinds of topics do they usually share?
  - c. Which SNSs do they use mostly?
  - d. How many followers do they have in SNSs?
  - e. How many SNS accounts do they follow?
- 7- From your experience, please, describe a time when unexpected thing/s have happened to you with your adolescents with using SNSs.

### **Challenges Questions**

- 1- There are always challenges in using SNSs; describe to me:
  - a. What challenges you have faced in these sites.
  - b. Which one is challenging to use? Why?

- 2- What would you do if you found something inappropriate or something you don't like on your adolescent's profile?
  - a. How would you feel?
  - b. What action would you take?
- 3- Let's imagine that you find out that one of your adolescents is communicating with a stranger online via a SNS;
  - a. How would you feel?
  - b. What would you first think?
  - c. What action would you take?
- 4- From your experience, what is the biggest challenge for parents (especially mothers) of adolescents who use SNSs?
- 5- How do you feel about parents monitoring their children's use of SNSs?
  - a. What are appropriate ways for parents to monitor?
  - b. What are inappropriate ways?
- 6- What do you think should be the role of government, school, relative, friend, and parents to educate and/or protect adolescents from misuse of SNSs?

### **Closing Questions**

- 1- From your experiences, could you please in three words
  - a. Describe your use of SNSs?
  - b. Describe the uses of SNSs by your adolescents?
  - c. Describe your feeling of your adolescents using SNSs?
- 2- What advice would like to give to other mothers of adolescents who use SNSs?



- 3- If you could change something in SNSs that would make them better for adolescents, what would that be?
- 4- Is there anything you want to add?